Ainsworth William Harrison

Guy Fawkes: or, The Gunpowder Treason: An Historical Romance

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Содержание

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TO MRS. HUGHES, KINGSTON LISLE, BERKS

My dear Mrs. Hughes,

You are aware that this Romance was brought to a close during my last brief visit at Kingston Lisle, when the time necessary to be devoted to it deprived me of the full enjoyment of your society, and, limiting my range – no very irksome restriction, – to your own charming garden and grounds, prevented me from accompanying you in your walks to your favourite and beautiful downs. This circumstance, which will suffice to give it some interest in your eyes by associating it with your residence, furnishes me with a plea, of which I gladly avail myself, of inscribing it with your name, and of recording, at the same time, the high sense I entertain of your goodness and worth, the value I set upon your friendship, – a friendship shared in common with some of the most illustrious writers of our time, – and the gratitude I shall never cease to feel for attentions and kindnesses, little less than maternal, which I have experienced at your hands.

In the hope that you may long continue to diffuse happiness round your own circle, and contribute to the instruction and delight of the many attached friends with whom you maintain so active and so interesting a correspondence; and that you may live to see your grandsons fulfil their present promise, and tread in the footsteps of their high-minded and excellent-hearted father, – and of *his* father! I remain

Your affectionate and obliged friend,
W. Harrison Ainsworth.

Kensal Manor House, Harrow Road,
July 26, 1841.

PREFACE

The tyrannical measures adopted against the Roman Catholics in the early part of the reign of James the First, when the severe penal enactments against recusants were revived, and with additional rigour, and which led to the remarkable conspiracy about to be related, have been so forcibly and faithfully described by Doctor Lingard,[1] that the following extract from his history will form a fitting introduction to the present work.

"The oppressive and sanguinary code framed in the reign of Elizabeth, was re-enacted to its full extent, and even improved with additional severities. Every individual who had studied or resided, or should afterwards study or reside in any college or seminary beyond the sea, was rendered incapable of inheriting, or purchasing, or enjoying lands, annuities, chattels, debts, or sums of money, within the realm; and as missionaries sometimes eluded detection under the disguise of tutors, it was provided that no man should teach even the rudiments of grammar in public or in private, without the previous approbation of the diocesan.

"The execution of the penal laws enabled the king, by an ingenious comment, to derive considerable profit from his past forbearance. It was pretended that he had never forgiven the penalties of recusancy; he had merely forbidden them to be exacted for a time, in the hope that this indulgence would lead to conformity; but his expectations had been deceived; the obstinacy of the Catholics had grown with the lenity of the sovereign; and, as they were unworthy of further favour, they should now be left to the severity of the law. To their dismay, the legal fine of twenty pounds per lunar month was again demanded, and not only for the time to come, but for the whole period of the suspension; a demand which, by crowding thirteen payments into one, reduced many families of moderate incomes to a state of absolute beggary. Nor was this all. James was surrounded by numbers of his indigent countrymen. Their habits were expensive, their wants many, and their importunities incessant. To satisfy the more clamorous, a new expedient was devised. The king transferred to them his claims on some of the more opulent recusants, against whom they were at liberty to proceed by law, in his name, unless the sufferers should submit to compound, by the grant of an annuity for life, or the immediate payment of a considerable sum. This was at a time when the jealousies between the two nations had reached a height, of which, at the present day, we have but little conception. Had the money been carried to the royal coffers, the recusants would have had sufficient reason to complain; but that Englishmen should be placed by their king at the mercy of foreigners, that they should be stripped of their property to support the extravagance of his Scottish minions, this added indignity to injustice, exacerbated their already wounded feelings, and goaded the most moderate almost to desperation." From this deplorable state of things, which is by no means over-coloured in the above description, sprang the Gunpowder Plot.

The county of Lancaster has always abounded in Catholic families, and at no period were the proceedings of the ecclesiastical commissioners more rigorous against them than at that under consideration. Manchester, "the Goshen of this Egypt" as it is termed by the fiery zealot, Warden Heyrick, being the place where all the recusants were imprisoned, the scene of the early part of this history has been laid in that town and its immediate neighbourhood. For the introduction of the munificent founder of the Blue Coat Hospital into a tale of this description I ought, perhaps, to apologize; but if I should succeed by it in arousing my fellow-townsmen to a more lively appreciation of the great benefits they have derived from him, I shall not regret what I have written.

In Viviana Radcliffe I have sought to portray the loyal and devout Catholic, such as I conceive the character to have existed at the period. In Catesby, the unscrupulous and ambitious plotter, masking his designs under the cloak of religion. In Garnet, the subtle, and yet sincere Jesuit. And

[1] Vide *History of England*, vol. ix. New Edition.

in Fawkes the gloomy and superstitious enthusiast. One doctrine I have endeavoured to enforce throughout, – Toleration.

From those who have wilfully misinterpreted one of my former productions, and have attributed to it a purpose and an aim utterly foreign to my own intentions, I can scarcely expect fairer treatment for the present work. But to that wider and more discriminating class of readers from whom I have experienced so much favour and support, I confidently commit this volume, certain of meeting with leniency and impartiality.

Book the First.
THE PLOT

Their searches are many and severe. They come either in the night or early in the morning, and ever seek their opportunity, when the Catholics are or would be best occupied, or are likely to be worse provided or look for nothing. They willingliest come when few are at home to resist them, that they may rifle coffers, and do what they list. They lock up the servants, and the mistress of the house, and the whole family, in a room by themselves, while they, like young princes, go rifling the house at their will.
Letter to Vers'egan, ap. Stonyhurst MSS.

What a thing is it for a Catholic gentleman to have his house suddenly beset on all sides with a number of men in arms, both horse and foot! and not only his house and gardens, and such enclosed places all beset, but all highways laid, for some miles near unto him, that none shall pass, but they shall be examined! Then are these searchers oft-times so rude and barbarous, that, if the doors be not opened in the instant they would enter, they break open the doors with all violence, as if they were to sack a town of enemies won by the sword.
Father Gerard's MS.

CHAPTER I.
AN EXECUTION IN MANCHESTER, AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

More than two hundred and thirty-five years ago, or, to speak with greater precision, in 1605, at the latter end of June, it was rumoured one morning in Manchester that two seminary priests, condemned at the late assizes under the severe penal enactments then in force against the Papists, were about to suffer death on that day. Attracted by the report, large crowds flocked towards the place of execution, which, in order to give greater solemnity to the spectacle, had been fixed at the southern gate of the old Collegiate Church, where a scaffold was erected. Near it was a large blood-stained block, the use of which will be readily divined, and adjoining the block, upon a heap of blazing coals, smoked a caldron filled with boiling pitch, intended to receive the quarters of the miserable sufferers.

The place was guarded by a small band of soldiers, fully accoutred in corslets and morions, and armed with swords, half-pikes, and calivers. Upon the steps of the scaffold stood the executioner, – a square-built, ill-favoured personage, busied in arranging a bundle of straw upon the boards. He was dressed in a buff jerkin, and had a long-bladed, two-edged knife thrust into his girdle. Besides these persons, there was a pursuivant, – an officer appointed by the Privy Council to make search throughout the provinces for recusants, Popish priests, and other religious offenders. He was occupied at this moment in reading over a list of suspected persons.

Neither the executioner nor his companions appeared in the slightest degree impressed by the butcherly business about to be enacted; for the former whistled carelessly as he pursued his task, while the latter laughed and chatted with the crowd, or jestingly pointed their matchlocks at the jackdaws wheeling above them in the sunny air, or perching upon the pinnacles and tower of the neighbouring fane. Not so the majority of the assemblage. Most of the older and wealthier families in Lancashire still continuing to adhere to the ancient faith of their fathers, it will not be wondered that many of their dependents should follow their example. And, even of those who were adverse to the creed of Rome, there were few who did not murmur at the rigorous system of persecution adopted towards its professors.

At nine o'clock, the hollow rolling of a muffled drum was heard at a distance. The deep bell of the church began to toll, and presently afterwards the mournful procession was seen advancing from the market-place. It consisted of a troop of mounted soldiers, equipped in all respects like those stationed at the scaffold, with their captain at their head, and followed by two of their number with hurdles attached to their steeds, on which were tied the unfortunate victims. Both were young men – both apparently prepared to meet their fate with firmness and resignation. They had been brought from Radcliffe Hall – an old moated and fortified mansion belonging to a wealthy family of that name, situated where the close, called Pool Fold, now stands, and then recently converted into a place of security for recusants; the two other prisons in Manchester – namely, the New Fleet on Hunt's Bank, and the gaol on Salford Bridge, – not being found adequate to the accommodation of the numerous religious offenders.

By this time, the cavalcade had reached the place of execution. The soldiers drove back the throng with their pikes, and cleared a space in front of the scaffold; when, just as the cords that bound the limbs of the priests were unfastened, a woman in a tattered woollen robe, with a hood partially drawn over her face, – the features of which, so far as they could be discerned, were sharp and attenuated, – a rope girded round her waist, bare feet, and having altogether the appearance of a sister of Charity, sprang forward, and flung herself on her knees beside them.

Clasping the hem of the garment of the nearest priest, she pressed it to her lips, and gazed earnestly at him, as if imploring a blessing.

“You have your wish, daughter,” said the priest, extending his arms over her.”Heaven and our lady bless you!”

The woman then turned towards the other victim, who was audibly reciting the *Miserere*.

"Back, spawn of Antichrist!” interposed a soldier, rudely thrusting her aside.”Don't you see you disturb the father's devotions? He has enough to do to take care of his own soul, without minding yours.”

“Take this, daughter,” cried the priest who had been first addressed, offering her a small volume, which he took from his vest,”and fail not to remember in your prayers the sinful soul of Robert Woodroofe, a brother of the order of Jesus.”

The woman put out her hand to take the book; but before it could be delivered to her, it was seized by the soldier.

“Your priests have seldom anything to leave behind them,” he shouted, with a brutal laugh,”except some worthless and superstitious relic of a saint or martyr. What's this? Ah! a breviary – a mass-book. I've too much regard for your spiritual welfare to allow you to receive it,” he added, about to place it in his doublet.

“Give it her,” exclaimed a young man, snatching it from him, and handing it to the woman, who disappeared as soon as she had obtained possession of it.

The soldier eyed the new-comer as if disposed to resent the interference, but a glance at his apparel, which, though plain, and of a sober hue, was rather above the middle class, as well as a murmur from the crowd, who were evidently disposed to take part with the young man, induced him to stay his hand. He, therefore, contented himself with crying,”A recusant! a Papist!”

“I am neither recusant nor Papist, knave!” replied the other, sternly; “and I counsel you to mend your manners, and show more humanity, or you shall find I have interest enough to procure your dismissal from a service which you disgrace.”

This reply elicited a shout of applause from the mob.

“Who is that bold speaker?” demanded the pursuivant from one of his attendants.

“Humphrey Chetham of Crumpsall,” answered the man:”son to one of the wealthiest merchants of the town, and a zealous upholder of the true faith.”

“He has a strange way of showing his zeal,” rejoined the pursuivant, entering the answer in his note-book. “And who is the woman he befriended?”

“A half-crazed being called Elizabeth Orton,” replied the attendant. “She was scourged and tortured during Queen Elizabeth's reign for pretending to the gift of prophecy, and was compelled to utter her recantation within yonder church. Since then she has never opened her lips.”

“Indeed,” exclaimed the pursuivant: “I will engage to make her speak, and to some purpose. Where does she live?”

“In a cave on the banks of the Irwell, near Ordsall Hall,” replied the attendant. “She subsists on the chance contributions of the charitable; but she solicits nothing, – and, indeed, is seldom seen.”

“Her cave must be searched,” observed the pursuivant; “it may be the hiding-place of a priest. Father Campion was concealed in such another spot at Stonor Park, near Henley-on-Thames, where he composed his '*Decem Rationes*;' and, for a long time, eluded the vigilance of the commissioners. We shall pass it in our way to Ordsall Hall to-night, shall we not?”

The attendant nodded in the affirmative.

“If we surprise Father Oldcorne,” continued the pursuivant, “and can prove that Sir William Radcliffe and his daughter, both of whom are denounced in my list, are harbourers and shelterers of recusants, we shall have done a good night's work.”

At this moment, an officer advanced, and commanded the priests to ascend the scaffold.

As Father Woodroofe, who was the last to mount, reached the uppermost step, he turned round and cried in a loud voice, “Good people, I take you all to witness that I die in the true Catholic religion, and that I rejoice and thank God with all my soul, that he hath made me worthy to testify my faith

therein by shedding my blood in this manner." He then advanced towards the executioner, who was busied in adjusting the cord round his companion's throat, and said, "God forgive thee – do thine office quickly;" adding in a lower tone, "*Asperge me, Domine; Domine, miserere mei!*"

And, amid the deep silence that ensued, the executioner performed his horrible task.

The execution over, the crowd began to separate slowly, and various opinions were expressed respecting the revolting and sanguinary spectacle just witnessed. Many, who condemned – and the majority did so – the extreme severity of the laws by which the unfortunate priests had just suffered, uttered their sentiments with extreme caution; but there were some whose feelings had been too much excited for prudence, and who inveighed loudly and bitterly against the spirit of religious persecution then prevailing; while a few others of an entirely opposite persuasion looked upon the rigorous proceedings adopted against the Papists, and the punishment now inflicted upon their priesthood, as a just retribution for their own severities during the reign of Mary. In general, the common people entertained a strong prejudice against the Catholic party, – for, as it has been shrewdly observed, "they must have some object to hate; heretofore it was the Welsh, the Scots, or the Spaniards, but now in these latter times only the Papists;" but in Manchester, near which, as has been already stated, so many old and important families, professing that religion, resided, the case was widely different; and the mass of the inhabitants were favourably inclined towards them. It was the knowledge of this feeling that induced the commissioners, appointed to superintend the execution of the enactments against recusants, to proceed with unusual rigour in this neighbourhood.

The state of the Roman Catholic party at the period of this history was indeed most grievous. The hopes they had indulged of greater toleration on the accession of James the First, had been entirely destroyed. The persecutions, suspended during the first year of the reign of the new monarch, were now renewed with greater severity than ever; and though their present condition was deplorable enough, it was feared that worse remained in store for them. "They bethought themselves," writes Bishop Goodman, "that now their case was far worse than in the time of Queen Elizabeth; for they did live in some hope that after the old woman's life, they might have some mitigation, and even those who did then persecute them were a little more moderate, as being doubtful what times might succeed, and fearing their own case. But, now that they saw the times settled, having no hope of better days, but expecting that the uttermost rigour of the law should be executed, they became desperate: finding that by the laws of the kingdom their own lives were not secured, and for the carrying over of a priest into England it was no less than high treason. A gentlewoman was hanged only for relieving and harbouring a priest; a citizen was hanged only for being reconciled to the Church of Rome; besides, the penal laws were such, and so executed, that they could not subsist. What was usually sold in shops and usually bought, this the pursuivant would take away from them as being Popish and superstitious. One knight did affirm that in one term he gave twenty nobles in rewards to the door-keeper of the Attorney-General; another did affirm, that his third part which remained unto him of his estate did hardly serve for his expense in law to defend him from other oppressions; besides their children to be taken from home, to be brought up in another religion. So they did every way conclude that their estate was desperate; they could die but once, and their religion was more precious unto them than their lives. They did further consider their misery; how they were debarred in any course of life to help themselves. They could not practise law, – they could not be citizens, – they could have no office; they could not breed up their sons – none did desire to match with them; they had neither fit marriages for their daughters, nor nunneries to put them into; for those few which are beyond seas are not considerable in respect of the number of recusants, and none can be admitted into them without great sums of money, which they, being exhausted, could not supply. The Spiritual Court did not cease to molest them, to excommunicate them, then to imprison them; and thereby they were utterly disenabled to sue for their own." Such is a faithful picture of the state of the Catholic party at the commencement of the reign of James the First.

Pressed down by these intolerable grievances, is it to be wondered at that the Papists should repine, – or that some among their number, when all other means failed, should seek redress by darker measures? By a statute of Elizabeth, all who refused to conform to the established religion were subjected to a fine of twenty pounds a lunar month; and this heavy penalty, remitted, or rather suspended, on the accession of the new sovereign, was again exacted, and all arrears claimed. Added to this, James, whose court was thronged by a host of needy Scottish retainers, assigned to them a certain number of wealthy recusants, and empowered them to levy the fines – a privilege of which they were not slow to avail themselves. There were other pains and penalties provided for by the same statute, which were rigorously inflicted. To withdraw, or seek to withdraw another from the established religion was accounted high treason, and punished accordingly; to hear mass involved a penalty of one hundred marks and a year's imprisonment; and to harbour a priest, under the denomination of a tutor, rendered the latter liable to a year's imprisonment, and his employer to a fine of ten pounds a-month. Impressed with the belief that, in consequence of the unremitting persecutions which the Catholics underwent in Elizabeth's time, the religion would be wholly extirpated, Doctor Allen, a Lancashire divine, who afterwards received a cardinal's hat, founded a college at Douay, for the reception and education of those intending to take orders. From this university a number of missionary priests, or seminarists, as they were termed, were annually sent over to England; and it was against these persons, who submitted to every hardship and privation, to danger, and death itself, for the welfare of their religion, and in the hope of propagating its doctrines, that the utmost rigour of the penal enactments was directed. Among the number of seminarists despatched from Douay, and capitally convicted under the statute above-mentioned, were the two priests whose execution has just been narrated.

As a portion of the crowd passed over the old bridge across the Irwell connecting Manchester with Salford, on which stood an ancient chapel erected by Thomas de Booth, in the reign of Edward the Third, and recently converted into a prison for recusants, they perceived the prophetess, Elizabeth Orton, seated upon the stone steps of the desecrated structure, earnestly perusing the missal given her by Father Woodroofe. A mob speedily collected round her; but, unconscious seemingly of their presence, the poor woman turned over leaf after leaf, and pursued her studies. Her hood was thrown back, and discovered her bare and withered neck, over which her dishevelled hair streamed in long sable elf-locks. Irritated by her indifference, several of the by-standers, who had questioned her as to the nature of her studies, began to mock and jeer her, and endeavoured, by plucking her robe, and casting little pebbles at her, to attract her attention. Roused at length by these annoyances, she arose; and fixing her large black eyes menacingly upon them, was about to stalk away, when they surrounded and detained her.

“Speak to us, Bess,” cried several voices. “Prophesy – prophesy.”

“I *will* speak to you,” replied the poor woman, shaking her hand at them, “I *will* prophesy to you. And mark me, though ye believe not, my words shall not fall to the ground.”

“A miracle! a miracle!” shouted the by-standers. “Bess Orton, who has been silent for twenty years, has found her tongue at last.”

“I have seen a vision, and dreamed a dream,” continued the prophetess. “As I lay in my cell last night, meditating upon the forlorn state of our religion, and of its professors, methought nineteen shadowy figures stood before me – ay, nineteen – for I counted them thrice – and when I questioned them as to their coming, – for my tongue at first clove to the roof of my mouth, and my lips refused their office, – one of them answered, in a voice which yet rings in my ears, 'We are the chosen deliverers of our fallen and persecuted church. To us is intrusted the rebuilding of her temples, – to our hands is committed the destruction of our enemies. The work will be done in darkness and in secret, – with toil and travail, – but it will at length be made manifest; and when the hour is arrived, our vengeance will be terrible and exterminating.' With these words, they vanished from my sight. Ah!” she exclaimed, suddenly starting, and passing her hand across her brow, as if to clear her sight, “it was no dream – no vision. I see one of them now.”

"Where? where?" cried several voices.

The prophetess answered by extending her skinny arm towards some object immediately before her.

All eyes were instantly turned in the same direction, when they beheld a Spanish soldier – for such his garb proclaimed him – standing at a few paces' distance from them. He was wrapped in an ample cloak, with a broad-leaved steeple-crowned hat, decorated with a single green feather, pulled over his brows, and wore a polished-steel brigandine, trunk hose, and buff boots drawn up to the knees. His arms consisted of a brace of petronels thrust into his belt, whence a long rapier depended. His features were dark as bronze, and well-formed, though strongly marked, and had an expression of settled sternness. His eyes were grey and penetrating, and shaded by thick beetle-brows; and his physiognomy was completed by a black peaked beard. His person was tall and erect, and his deportment soldier-like and commanding. Perceiving he had become an object of notice, the stranger cast a compassionate look at the prophetess, who still remained gazing fixedly at him, and throwing her a few pieces of money, strode away.

Watching his retreating figure till it disappeared from view, the crazed woman tossed her arms wildly in the air, and cried, in a voice of exultation, "Did I not speak the truth? – did I not tell you I had seen him? He is the deliverer of our church, and is come to avenge the righteous blood which hath been this day shed."

"Peace, woman, and fly while there is yet time," cried the young man who had been designated as Humphrey Chetham. "The pursuivant and his myrmidons are in search of you."

"Then they need not go far to find me," replied the prophetess. "I will tell them what I told these people, that the day of bloody retribution is at hand, – that the avenger is arrived. I have seen him twice, – once in my cave, and once again here, – even where you stand."

"If you do not keep silence and fly, my poor creature," rejoined Humphrey Chetham, "you will have to endure what you suffered years ago, – stripes, and perhaps torture. Be warned by me – ah! it is too late. He is approaching."

"Let him come," replied Elizabeth Orton, "I am ready for him."

"Can none of you force her away?" cried Humphrey Chetham, appealing to the crowd; "I will reward you."

"I will not stir from this spot," rejoined the prophetess, obstinately; "I will testify to the truth."

The kind-hearted young merchant, finding any further attempt to preserve her fruitless, drew aside.

By this time, the pursuivant and his attendants had come up. "Seize her!" cried the former, "and let her be placed within this prison till I have reported her to the commissioners. If you will confess to me, woman," he added in a whisper to her, "that you have harboured a priest, and will guide us to his hiding-place, you shall be set free."

"I know of no priests but those you have murdered," returned the prophetess, in a loud voice, "but I will tell you something that you wot not of. The avenger of blood is at hand. I have seen him. All here have seen him. And you shall see him – but not now – not now."

"What is the meaning of this raving?" demanded the pursuivant.

"Pay no heed to her talk," interposed Humphrey Chetham; "she is a poor crazed being, who knows not what she says. I will be surety for her inoffensive conduct."

"You must give me surety for yourself, sir," replied the pursuivant. "I have just learnt that you were last night at Ordsall Hall, the seat of that 'dangerous temporiser,' – for so he is designated in my warrant, – Sir William Radcliffe. And if report speaks truly, you are not altogether insensible to the charms of his fair daughter, Viviana."

"What is this to thee, thou malapert knave?" cried Humphrey Chetham, reddening, partly from anger, partly, it might be, from another emotion.

“Much, as you shall presently find, good Master Wolf-in-sheep's-clothing,” retorted the pursuivant; “if you prove not a rank Papist at heart, then do I not know a true man from a false.”

This angry conference was cut short by a piercing scream from the prophetess. Breaking from the grasp of her captors, who were about to force her into the prison, she sprang with a single bound upon the parapet of the bridge; and utterly regardless of her dangerous position, turned, and faced the soldiers, who were struck mute with astonishment.

“Tremble!” she cried, in a loud voice, – "tremble, ye evil-doers! Ye who have despoiled the house of God, – have broken his altars, – scattered his incense, – slain his priests. Tremble, I say. The avenger is arrived. The bolt is in his hand. It shall strike king, lords, commons, – all! These are my last words, – take them to heart.”

“Drag her off!” roared the pursuivant, furiously.

“Use care – use gentleness, if ye are men!” cried Humphrey Chetham.

“Think not you can detain me!” cried the prophetess. “Avaunt, and tremble!”

So saying she flung herself from the parapet.

The height from which she fell was about fifty feet. Dashed into the air like jets from a fountain by the weight and force of the descending body, the water instantly closed over her. But she rose to the surface of the stream, about twenty yards below the bridge.

“She may yet be saved,” cried Humphrey Chetham, who with the by-standers had hurried to the side of the bridge.

“You will only preserve her for the gallows,” observed the pursuivant.

“Your malice shall not prevent my making the attempt,” replied the young merchant. “Ha! assistance is at hand.”

The exclamation was occasioned by the sudden appearance of the soldier in the Spanish dress, who rushed towards the left bank of the river, which was here, as elsewhere, formed of red sandstone rock, and following the course of the current, awaited the next appearance of the drowning woman. It did not occur till she had been carried a considerable distance down the stream, when the soldier, swiftly divesting himself of his cloak, plunged into the water, and dragged her ashore.

“Follow me,” cried the pursuivant to his attendants. “I will not lose my prey.”

But before he gained the bank of the river, the soldier and his charge had disappeared, nor could he detect any traces of them.

CHAPTER II.
ORDSALL CAVE

After rescuing the unfortunate prophetess from a watery grave in the manner just related, the soldier snatched up his cloak, and, taking his dripping burthen in his arms, hurried swiftly along the bank of the river, until he came to a large cleft in the rock, into which he crept, taking the prophetess with him, and thus eluded observation. In this retreat he continued upwards of two hours, during which time the poor creature, to whom he paid every attention that circumstances would admit, had so far recovered as to be able to speak. But it was evident that the shock had been too much for her, and that she was sinking fast. She was so faint that she could scarcely move; but she expressed a strong desire to reach her cell before she breathed her last. Having described its situation as accurately as she could to the soldier – who before he ventured forth peeped out to reconnoitre – he again raised her in his arms, and by her direction struck into a narrow lane skirting the bank of the river.

Pursuing this road for about half a mile, he arrived at the foot of a small knoll, covered by a clump of magnificent beech-trees, and still acting under the guidance of the dying woman, whose voice grew more feeble each instant, he mounted it, and from its summit took a rapid survey of the surrounding country. On the opposite bank of the river stood an old hall, while further on, at some distance, he could perceive through the trees the gables and chimneys of another ancient mansion.

“Raise me up,” said Elizabeth Orton, as he lingered on this spot for a moment. “In that old house, which you see yonder, Hulme Hall, I was born. I would willingly take one look at it before I die.”

“And the other hall, which I discern through the trees, is Ordsall, is it not?” inquired the soldier.

“It is,” replied the prophetess. “And now let us make what haste we can. We have not far to go; and I feel I shall not last long.”

Descending the eminence, and again entering the lane, which here made a turn, the soldier approached a grassy space, walled in on either side by steep sandstone rocks. At the further extremity of the enclosure, after a moment's search, by the direction of his companion, he found, artfully concealed by overhanging brushwood, the mouth of a small cave. He crept into the excavation, and found it about six feet high, and of considerable depth. The roof was ornamented with Runic characters and other grotesque and half-effaced inscriptions, while the sides were embellished with Gothic tracery, amid which the letters I.H.S., carved in ancient church text, could be easily distinguished. Tradition assigned the cell to the priests of Odin, but it was evident that worshippers at other and holier altars had more recently made it their retreat. Its present occupant had furnished it with a straw pallet, and a small wooden crucifix fixed in a recess in the wall. Gently depositing her upon the pallet, the soldier took a seat beside her on a stone slab at the foot of the bed. He next, at her request, as the cave was rendered almost wholly dark by the overhanging trees, struck a light, and set fire to a candle placed within a lantern.

After a few moments passed in prayer, the recluse begged him to give her the crucifix that she might clasp it to her breast. This done, she became more composed, and prepared to meet her end. Suddenly, as if something had again disturbed her, she opened wide her glazing eyes, and starting up with a dying effort, stretched out her hands.

“I see him before them!” she cried. “They examine him – they adjudge him! Ah! he is now in a dungeon! See, the torturers advance! He is placed on the rack – once – twice – thrice – they turn the levers! His joints snap in their sockets – his sinews crack! Mercy! he confesses! He is led to execution. I see him ascend the scaffold!”

“Whom do you behold?” inquired the soldier, listening to her in astonishment.

“His face is hidden from me,” replied the prophetess; “but his figure is not unlike your own. Ha! I hear the executioner pronounce his name. How are you called?”

"Guy Fawkes," replied the soldier.

"It is the name I heard," rejoined Elizabeth Orton.

And, sinking backward, she expired.

Guy Fawkes gazed at her for some time, till he felt assured that the last spark of life had fled. He then turned away, and placing his hand upon his chin, became lost in deep reflection.

CHAPTER III.
ORDSALL HALL

Soon after sunset, on the evening of the events previously related, the inmates of Ordsall Hall were disturbed and alarmed (for in those times of trouble any casual disturbance at night was sufficient to occasion alarm to a Catholic family) by a loud clamour for admittance from some one stationed at the farther side of the moat, then, as now, surrounding that ancient manorial residence. The drawbridge being raised, no apprehension was entertained of an attempt at forcible entrance on the part of the intruder, who, so far as he could be discerned in the deepening twilight, rendered yet more obscure by the shade of the trees under which he stood, appeared to be a solitary horseman. Still, for fear of a surprise, it was judged prudent by those inside the hall to turn a deaf ear to the summons; nor was it until it had been more than once repeated in a peremptory tone, that any attention was paid to it. The outer gate was then cautiously opened by an old steward, and a couple of serving-men, armed with pikes and swords, who demanded the stranger's business, and were answered that he desired to speak with Sir William Radcliffe. The steward rejoined that his master was not at home, having set out the day before for Chester: but that even if he were, he would take upon himself to affirm that no audience would be given, on any pretence whatever, to a stranger at such an unseasonable hour. To this the other replied, in a haughty and commanding voice, that he was neither a stranger to Sir William Radcliffe, nor ignorant of the necessity of caution, though in this instance it was altogether superfluous; and as, notwithstanding the steward's assertion to the contrary, he was fully persuaded his master *was* at home, he insisted upon being conducted to him without further parley, as his business would not brook delay. In vain the steward declared he had spoken the truth. The stranger evidently disbelieved him; but, as he could obtain no more satisfactory answer to his interrogations, he suddenly shifted his ground, and inquired whether Sir William's daughter, Mistress Viviana, was likewise absent from home.

“Before I reply to the question, I must know by whom and wherefore it is put?” returned the steward, evasively.

“Trouble not yourself further, friend, but deliver this letter to her," rejoined the horseman, flinging a packet across the moat. “It is addressed to her father, but there is no reason why she should not be acquainted with its contents.”

“Take it up, Olin Birtwissel,” cried the steward, eyeing the packet which had fallen at his feet suspiciously; “take it up, I say, and hold it to the light, that I may consider it well before I carry it to our young mistress. I have heard of strange treacheries practised by such means, and care not to meddle with it.”

“Neither do I, good Master Heydocke,” replied Birtwissel. “I would not touch it for a twelvemonth's wages. It may burst, and spoil my good looks, and so ruin my fortunes with the damsels. But here is Jeff Gellibronde, who, having no beauty to lose, and being, moreover, afraid of nothing, will pick it up for you.”

“Speak for yourself, Olin,” rejoined Gellibronde, in a surly tone. “I have no more fancy for a shattered limb, or a scorched face, than my neighbours.”

“Dolts!” cried the stranger, who had listened to these observations with angry impatience, “if you will not convey my packet, which has nothing more dangerous about it than an ordinary letter, to your mistress, at least acquaint her that Mr. Robert Catesby, of Ashby St. Legers, is without, and craves an instant speech with her.”

“Mr. Catesby!” exclaimed the steward, in astonishment. “If it be indeed your worship, why did you not declare yourself at once?”

“I may have as good reason for caution as yourself, Master Heydocke," returned Catesby, laughing.

"True," rejoined the steward; "but, methinks it is somewhat strange to find your worship here, when I am aware that my master expected to meet you, and certain other honourable gentlemen that you wot of, at a place in a clean opposite direction, Holywell, in Flintshire."

"The cause of my presence, since you desire to be certified of the matter, is simply this," replied Catesby, urging his steed towards the edge of the moat, while the steward advanced to meet him on the opposite bank, so that a few yards only lay between them; "I came round by Manchester," he continued, in a lower tone, "to see if any assistance could be rendered to the unfortunate fathers Woodroofe and Forshawe; but found on my arrival this morning that I was too late, as they had just been executed."

"Heaven have mercy on their souls!" ejaculated Heydocke, shuddering, and crossing himself. "Yours was a pious mission, Mr. Catesby. Would it had been availing!"

"I would so, too, with all my soul!" rejoined the other, fervently; "but fate ordained it otherwise. While I was in the town, I accidentally learnt from one, who informed me he had just parted with him, that your master was at home; and, fearing he might not be able to attend the meeting at Holywell, I resolved to proceed hither at nightfall, when my visit was not likely to be observed; having motives, which you may readily conjecture, for preserving the strictest secrecy on the occasion. The letter was prepared in case I should fail in meeting with him. And now that I have satisfied your scruples, good master steward, if Sir William be really within, I pray you lead me to him forthwith. If not, your young mistress may serve my turn, for I have that to say which it imports one or other of them to know."

"In regard to my master," replied the steward, "he departed yesterday for Chester, on his way to join the pilgrimage to St. Winifred's Well, as I have already assured your worship. And whoever informed you to the contrary, spoke falsely. But I will convey your letter and message to my young mistress, and on learning her pleasure as to receiving you, will instantly return and report it. These are dangerous times, your worship; dangerous times. A good Catholic knows not whom to trust, there are so many spoilers abroad."

"How, sirrah!" cried Catesby, angrily, "do you apply that observation to me?"

"Far be it from me," answered Heydocke, respectfully, "to apply any observation that may sound offensive to your worship, whom I know to be a most worthy gentleman, and as free from heresy, as any in the kingdom. I was merely endeavouring to account for what may appear my over-caution in detaining you where you are, till I learn my lady's pleasure. It is a rule in this house not to lower the drawbridge without orders after sunset; and I dare not, for my place, disobey it. Young Mr. Humphrey Chetham, of Crumpsall, was detained in the like manner no later than last night; and he is a visitor," he added, in a significant tone, "who is not altogether unwelcome to my mistress – ahem! But duty is no respecter of persons; and in my master's absence my duty is to protect his household. Your worship will pardon me."

"I will pardon anything but your loquacity and tediousness," rejoined Catesby, impatiently. "About your errand quickly."

"I am gone, your worship," returned the steward, disappearing with his companions.

Throwing the bridle over his horse's neck, and allowing him to drink his fill from the water of the moat, and afterwards to pluck a few mouthfuls of the long grass that fringed its brink, Catesby abandoned himself to reflection. In a few moments, as the steward did not return, he raised his eyes, and fixed them upon the ancient habitation before him, – ancient, indeed, it was not at this time, having been in a great measure rebuilt by its possessor, Sir William Radcliffe, during the latter part of the reign of Elizabeth, in the rich and picturesque style of that period. Little could be distinguished of its projecting and retiring wings, its walls decorated with black and white chequer-work, the characteristic of the class of architecture to which it belonged, or of its magnificent embayed windows filled with stained glass; but the outline of its heavy roof, with its numerous gables, and groups of tall and elaborately-ornamented chimneys, might be distinctly traced in strong relief against the warm and still-glowing western sky.

Though much gone to decay, grievously neglected, and divided into three separate dwelling-houses, Ordsall Hall still retains much of its original character and beauty; and viewed at the magic hour above described, when the changes produced by the lapse of years cannot be detected, it presents much the same striking appearance that it offered to the gaze of Catesby. Situated on the north bank of the Irwell, which supplies the moat with a constant stream of fresh water, it commands on the south-west a beautiful view of the winding course of the river, here almost forming an island, of Trafford Park and its hall, of the woody uplands beyond it, and of the distant hills of Cheshire. The mansion itself is an irregular quadrangle, covering a considerable tract of ground. The gardens, once exquisitely laid out in the formal taste of Elizabeth's days, are also enclosed by the moat, surrounding (except in the intervals where it is filled up) a space of some acres in extent. At the period of this history, it was approached on the north-east by a noble avenue of sycamores, leading to within a short distance of its gates.

As Catesby surveyed this stately structure, and pondered upon the wealth and power of its owner, his meditations thus found vent in words: – "If I could but link Radcliffe to our cause, or win the hand of his fair daughter, and so bind him to me, the great attempt could not fail. She has refused me once. No matter. I will persevere till she yields. With Father Oldcorne to back my suit, I am assured of success. She is necessary to my purpose, and shall be mine."

Descended from an ancient Northamptonshire family, and numbering among his ancestry the well-known minister of the same name who flourished in the reign of Richard the Third, Robert Catesby, – at this time about forty, – had in his youth led a wild and dissolute life; and though bred in the faith of Rome, he had for some years abandoned its worship. In 1580, when the Jesuits, Campion and Persons, visited England, he was reconciled to the church he had quitted, and thenceforth became as zealous a supporter and promoter of its doctrines as he had heretofore been their bitter opponent. He was now actively engaged in all the Popish plots of the period, and was even supposed to be connected with those designs of a darker dye which were set on foot for Elizabeth's destruction, – with Somerville's conspiracy, – with that of Arden and Throckmorton, – the latter of whom was his uncle on the maternal side, – with the plots of Bury and Savage, – of Ballard, – and of Babington. After the execution of the unfortunate Queen of Scots, he devoted himself to what was termed the Spanish faction, and endeavoured carry out the schemes of a party, who, distrusting the vague promises of James, were anxious to secure the succession to a Catholic, – the Infanta of Spain, or the Duke of Parma. On the insurrection of the Earl of Essex, he took part with that ill-fated nobleman; and, though he escaped condign punishment for the offence, he was imprisoned and heavily fined.

From this time his career ran in darker channels. “Hunger-starved for innovation,” as he is finely described by Camden, – imbued with the fiercest religious fanaticism, – eloquent, wily, resolute, – able alike to delude the powerful and intimidate the weak, – he possessed all the ingredients of a conspirator. Associating with men like himself, of desperate character and broken fortunes, he was ever on the look out for some means of retrieving his own condition, and redressing the wrongs of his church. Well informed of the actual state of James's sentiments, when, on that monarch's accession, confident hopes were entertained by the Romanists of greater toleration for their religion, Catesby was the first to point out their mistake, and to foretel the season of terrible persecution that was at hand. On this persecution he grounded his hopes – hopes, never realized, for the sufferers, amid all the grievances they endured, remained constant in their fidelity to the throne – of exciting a general insurrection among the Catholics.

Disappointed in this expectation, – disappointed, also, in his hopes of Spain, of France, and of aid from Rome, he fell back upon himself, and resolved upon the execution of a dark and dreadful project which he had long conceived, and which he could execute almost single-handed, without aid from foreign powers, and without the co-operation of his own party. The nature of this project, which, if it succeeded, would, he imagined, accomplish all or more than his wildest dreams of ambition or fanaticism had ever conceived, it will be the business of this history to develope. Without going

further into detail at present, it may be mentioned that the success of the plot depended so entirely on its secrecy, and so well aware was its contriver of the extraordinary system of espionage carried on by the Earl of Salisbury and the Privy Council, that for some time he scarcely dared to trust it out of his keeping. At length, after much deliberation, he communicated it to five others, all of whom were bound to silence by an oath of unusual solemnity; and as it was necessary to the complete success of the conspiracy that its outbreak should be instantaneously followed by a rise on the part of the Catholics, he darkly hinted that a plan was on foot for their deliverance from the yoke of their oppressors, and counselled them to hold themselves in readiness to fly to arms at a moment's notice. But here again he failed. Few were disposed to listen to him; and of those who did, the majority returned for answer, “that their part was endurance, and that the only arms which Christians could use against lawful powers in their severity were prayers and tears.”

Among the Popish party of that period, as in our own time, were ranked many of the oldest and most illustrious families in the kingdom, – families not less remarkable for their zeal for their religion than, as has before been observed, for their loyalty; – a loyalty afterwards approved in the disastrous reign of James the Second by their firm adherence to what they considered the indefeasible right of inheritance. Plots, indeed, were constantly hatched throughout the reigns of Elizabeth and James, by persons professing the religion of Rome; but in these the mass of the Catholics had no share. And even in the seasons of the bitterest persecution, when every fresh act of treason, perpetrated by some lawless and disaffected individual, was visited with additional rigour on their heads, – when the scaffold reeked with their blood, and the stake smoked with their ashes, – when their quarters were blackening on the gates and market-crosses of every city in the realm, – when their hearths were invaded, their religion proscribed, and the very name of Papist had become a by-word, – even in those terrible seasons, as in the season under consideration, they remained constant in their fidelity to the crown.

From the troubled elements at work, some fierce and turbulent spirits were sure to arise, – some gloomy fanatics who, having brooded over their wrongs, real or imaginary, till they had lost all scruples of conscience, hesitated at no means of procuring redress. But it would be unjust to hold up such persons as representatives of the whole body of Catholics. Among the conspirators themselves there were redeeming shades. All were not actuated by the same atrocious motives. Mixed feelings induced Catesby to adopt the measure. Not so Guy Fawkes, who had already been leagued with the design. One idea alone ruled him. A soldier of fortune, but a stern religious enthusiast, he supposed himself chosen by Heaven for the redemption of his Church, and cared not what happened to himself, provided he accomplished his (as he conceived) holy design.

In considering the causes which produced the conspiracy about to be related, and in separating the disaffected party of the Papists from the temperate, due weight must be given to the influence of the priesthood. Of the Romish clergy there were two classes – the secular priests, and the Jesuits and missionaries. While the former, like the more moderate of the laity, would have been well-contented with toleration for their religion, the latter breathed nothing but revenge, and desired the utter subversion of the existing government, – temporal as well as ecclesiastical. Men, for the most part, of high intellectual powers, of untiring energy, and unconquerable fortitude, they were enabled by their zeal and ability to make many proselytes. By their means, secret correspondence was carried on with the different courts of Europe; and they were not without hope that, taking advantage of some favourable crisis, they should yet restore their church to its former supremacy. To these persons, – who held as a maxim, “*Qui religionem Catholicam deserit regnandi jus omne amisit*," – Catesby and his associates proved ready and devoted agents. Through their instrumentality, they hoped to accomplish the great work of their restoration. To Father Garnet, the provincial of the English Jesuits, of whom it will be necessary to speak more fully hereafter, the plot had been revealed by Catesby under the seal of confession; and, though it subsequently became a question whether he was justified in withholding a secret of such importance to the state, it is sufficient for the present purpose to say that he did withhold

it. For the treasonable practices of the Jesuits and their faction some palliation may perhaps be found in the unrelenting persecution to which they were subjected; but if any excuse can be admitted for them, what opinion must be formed of the conduct of their temperate brethren? Surely, while the one is condemned, admiration may be mingled with the sympathy which must be felt for the unmerited sufferings of the other!

From the foregoing statement, it will be readily inferred that Sir William Radcliffe, a devout Catholic, and a man of large possessions, though somewhat reduced by the heavy fines imposed upon him as a recusant, must have appeared an object of importance to the conspirators; nor will it be wondered at, that every means were used to gain him to their cause. Acting, however, upon the principles that swayed the well-disposed of his party, the knight resisted all these overtures, and refused to take any share in proceedings from which his conscience and loyalty alike revolted. Baffled, but not defeated, Catesby returned to the charge on a new point of assault. Himself a widower (or supposed to be so), he solicited the hand of the lovely Viviana Radcliffe, Sir William's only child, and the sole heiress of his possessions. But his suit in this quarter was, also, unsuccessful. The knight rejected the proposal, alleging that his daughter had no inclination to any alliance, inasmuch as she entertained serious thoughts of avowing herself to heaven. Thus foiled, Catesby ostensibly relinquished his design.

Shortly before the commencement of this history, a pilgrimage to Saint Winifred's Well, in Flintshire, was undertaken by Father Garnet, the provincial of the Jesuits before mentioned, in company with several distinguished Catholic personages of both sexes, and to this ceremonial Sir William and his daughter were urgently bidden. The invitation was declined on the part of Viviana, but accepted by the knight, who, though unwilling to leave home at a period of so much danger, or to commit his daughter to any care but his own, even for so short a space, felt it to be his duty to give countenance by his presence to the ceremonial.

Accordingly, he departed for Chester on the previous day, as stated by the steward. And, though Catesby professed ignorance on the subject, and even affirmed he had heard to the contrary, it may be doubted whether he was not secretly informed of the circumstance, and whether his arrival, at this particular conjuncture, was not preconcerted.

Thus much in explanation of what is to follow. The course of Catesby's reflections was cut short by the return of the steward, who, informing him that he had his mistress's commands to admit him, immediately lowered the drawbridge for that purpose. Dismounting, and committing his steed to one of the serving-men, who advanced to take it, Catesby followed his conductor through a stone gateway, and crossing the garden, was ushered into a spacious and lofty hall, furnished with a long massy oak table, at the upper end of which was a raised dais. At one side of the chamber yawned a huge arched fire-place, garnished with enormous andirons, on which smouldered a fire composed of mixed turf and wood. Above the chimney-piece hung a suit of chain-armour, with the battle-axe, helmet, and gauntlets of Sir John Radcliffe, the first possessor of Ordsall, who flourished in the reign of Edward the First: on the right, masking the entrance, stood a magnificent screen of carved oak.

Traversing this hall, Heydocke led the way to another large apartment; and placing lights on a Gothic-shaped table, offered a seat to the new-comer, and departed. The room in which Catesby was left was termed the star-chamber – a name retained to this day – from the circumstance of its ceiling being moulded and painted to resemble the heavenly vault when studded with the luminaries of night. It was terminated by a deeply-embayed window filled with stained glass of the most gorgeous colours. The walls, in some places, were hung with arras, in others, wainscoted with dark lustrous oak, embellished with scrolls, ciphers, and fanciful designs. The mantel-piece was of the same solid material, curiously carved, and of extraordinary size. It was adorned with the armorial bearings of the family – two bends engrailed, and in chief a label of three, – and other devices and inscriptions. The hearth was considerably raised above the level of the floor, and there was a peculiarity in the construction of the massive wooden pillars flanking it, that attracted the attention of Catesby, who

rose with the intention of examining them more narrowly, when he was interrupted by the entrance of the lady of the mansion.

Advancing at a slow and dignified pace, Viviana Radcliffe courteously but gravely saluted her guest; and, without offering him her hand, motioned him to a chair, while she seated herself at a little distance. Catesby had seen her twice before; and whether the circumstances under which they now met might have caused some change in her demeanour he could not tell, but he thought her singularly altered. A year ago, she had been a lively, laughing girl of seventeen, with a bright brown skin, dark flowing tresses, and eyes as black and radiant as those of a gipsy. She was now a grave, collected woman, infinitely more beautiful, but wholly changed in character. Her complexion had become a clear, transparent white, and set off to great advantage her large, luminous eyes, and jetty brows. Her figure was tall and majestic; her features regular, delicately formed, and of the rarest and proudest class of beauty. She was attired in a dress of black wrought velvet, entirely without ornament except the rosary at her girdle, with a small ebony crucifix attached to it. She wore a close-fitting cap, likewise of black velvet, edged with pearls, beneath which her raven tresses were gathered in such a manner as to display most becomingly the smooth and snowy expanse of her forehead. The gravity of her manner, not less than her charms of person, seem to have struck Catesby mute. He gazed on her in silent admiration for a brief space, utterly forgetful of the object of his visit, and the part he intended to play. During this pause, she maintained the most perfect composure, and fixing her dark eyes full upon him, appeared to await the moment when he might choose to open the conversation.

Notwithstanding his age, and the dissolute and distracted life he had led, Catesby was still good-looking enough to have produced a favourable impression upon any woman easily captivated by manly beauty. The very expression of his marked and peculiar physiognomy, – in some degree an index to his character, – was sufficient to rivet attention; and the mysterious interest generally inspired by his presence was not diminished on further acquaintance with him. Though somewhat stern in their expression, his features were strikingly handsome, cast in an oval mould, and clothed with the pointed beard and trimmed mustaches invariably met with in the portraits of Vandyck. His frame was strongly built, but well proportioned, and seemed capable of enduring the greatest fatigue. His dress was that of an ordinary gentleman of the period, and consisted of a doublet of quilted silk, of sober colour and stout texture; large trunk-hose swelling out at the hips; and buff boots, armed with spurs with immense rowels. He wore a high and stiffly-starched ruff round his throat; and his apparel was completed by a short cloak of brown cloth, lined with silk of a similar colour. His arms were rapier and poniard, and his high-crowned plumed hat, of the peculiar form then in vogue, and looped on the “leer-side" with a diamond clasp, was thrown upon the table.

Some little time having elapsed, during which he made no effort to address her, Viviana broke silence.

“I understood you desired to speak with me on a matter of urgency, Mr. Catesby,” she remarked.

“I did so,” he replied, as if aroused from a reverie; “and I can only excuse my absence of mind and ill manners, on the plea that the contemplation of your charms has driven all other matter out of my head.”

“Mr. Catesby,” returned Viviana, rising, “if the purpose of your visit be merely to pay unmerited compliments, I must at once put an end to it.”

“I have only obeyed the impulse of my heart,” resumed the other, passionately, “and uttered what involuntarily rose to my lips. But,” he added, checking himself, “I will not offend you with my admiration. If you have read my letter to your father, you will not require to be informed of the object of my visit.”

“I have not read it,” replied Viviana, returning him the packet with the seal unbroken. “I can give no opinion on any matter of difficulty. And I have no desire to know any secret with which my father might not desire me to be acquainted.”

“Are we overheard?” inquired Catesby, glancing suspiciously at the fire-place.

“By no one whom you would care to overhear us,” returned the maiden.

“Then it is as I supposed,” rejoined Catesby. “Father Oldcorne is concealed behind that mantel-piece?”

Viviana smiled an affirmative.

“Let him come forth, I pray you,” returned Catesby. “What I have to say concerns him as much as yourself or your father; and I would gladly have his voice in the matter.”

“You shall have it, my son,” replied a reverend personage, clad in a priestly garb, stepping from out one side of the mantel-piece, which flew suddenly open, disclosing a recess curiously contrived in the thickness of the wall. “You shall have it,” said Father Oldcorne, for he it was, approaching and extending his arms over him. “Accept my blessing and my welcome.”

Catesby received the benediction with bowed head and bended knee.

“And now,” continued the priest, “what has the bravest soldier of our church to declare to its lowliest servant?”

Catesby then briefly explained, as he had before done to the steward, why he had taken Manchester in his route to North Wales; and, after lamenting his inability to render any assistance to the unfortunate priests, he went on to state that he had accidentally learnt, from a few words let fall by the pursuivant to his attendant, that a warrant had been sent by the Earl of Salisbury for Sir William Radcliffe's arrest.

“My father's arrest!” exclaimed Viviana, trembling violently. “What – what is laid to his charge?”

“Felony,” rejoined Catesby, sternly – "felony, without benefit of clergy – for so it is accounted by the present execrable laws of our land, – in harbouring a Jesuit priest. If he is convicted of the offence, his punishment will be death – death on the gibbet, accompanied by indignities worse than those shown to a common felon.”

“Holy Virgin!” ejaculated Father Oldcorne, lifting up his hands, and raising his eyes to heaven.

“From what I gathered, the officers will visit this house to-night," continued Catesby.

“Our Lady be praised, they will not find him!” cried Viviana, who had been thrown into an agony of distress. “What is to be done in this frightful emergency, holy father?” she added, turning to the priest, with a supplicating look.

“Heaven only knows, dear daughter,” replied Oldcorne. “You had better appeal for counsel to one who is more able to afford it than I am, – Mr. Catesby. Well aware of the crafty devices of our enemies, and having often eluded their snares himself, he may enable you to escape them. My own course is clear. I shall quit this roof at once, deeply and bitterly regretting that by entering it, I have placed those whom I hold so dear, and from whom I have experienced so much kindness, in such fearful jeopardy.”

“Oh, no, father!” exclaimed Viviana, “you shall not go.”

“Daughter,” replied Oldcorne, solemnly, “I have long borne the cross of Christ, – have long endured the stripes, inflicted upon me by the adversaries of our faith, in patience; and my last actions and last breath shall testify to the truth of our holy religion. But, though I could endure aught on my own account, I cannot consent to bring misery and destruction upon others. Hinder me not, dear daughter. I will go at once.”

“Hold, father!” interposed Catesby. “The step you would take may bring about what you are most anxious to avoid. If you are discovered and apprehended in this neighbourhood, suspicion will still attach to your protectors, and the secret of your departure will be wrung from some of the more timid of the household. Tarry where you are. Let the pursuivant make his search. I will engage to baffle his vigilance.”

“He speaks the truth, dear father,” returned Viviana. “You must not – shall not depart. There are plenty of hiding-places, as you know, within the mansion. Let them be as rigorous as they may in their search, they will not discover you.”

“Whatever course you adjudge best for the security of others, I will pursue,” rejoined Oldcorne, turning to Catesby. “Put me out of the question.”

“My opinion has already been given, father,” replied Catesby. “Remain where you are.”

“But, if the officers should ascertain that my father is at Chester, and pursue him thither?” cried Viviana, suddenly struck by a new cause of alarm.

“A messenger must be immediately despatched after him to give him warning,” returned Catesby.

“Will you be that messenger?” asked the maiden, eagerly.

“I would shed my heart's best blood to pleasure you,” returned Catesby.

“Then I may count upon this service, for which, rest assured, I will not prove ungrateful,” she rejoined.

“You may,” answered Catesby. "And yet I would, on Father Oldcorne's account, that my departure might be delayed till to-morrow.”

“The delay might be fatal,” cried Viviana. “You must be in Chester before that time.”

“Doubt it not,” returned Catesby. “Charged with your wishes, the wind shall scarcely outstrip my speed.”

So saying, he marched irresolutely towards the door, as if about to depart, when, just as he had reached it, he turned sharply round, and threw himself at Viviana's feet.

“Forgive me, Miss Radcliffe,” he cried, “if I once again, even at a critical moment like the present, dare to renew my suit. I fancied I had subdued my passion for you, but your presence has awakened it with greater violence than ever.”

“Rise, sir, I pray,” rejoined the maiden, in an offended tone.

“Hear me, I beseech you,” continued Catesby, seizing her hand. “Before you reject my suit, consider well that in these perilous seasons, when no true Catholic can call his life his own, you may need a protector.”

“In the event you describe, Mr. Catesby,” answered Viviana, “I would at once fulfil the intention I have formed of devoting myself to Heaven, and retire to the convent of Benedictine nuns, founded by Lady Mary Percy, at Brussels.”

“You would much more effectually serve the cause of your religion by acceding to my suit,” observed Catesby, rising.

“How so?” she inquired.

“Listen to me, Miss Radcliffe,” he rejoined, gravely, “and let my words be deeply graven upon your heart. In your hands rests the destiny of the Catholic Church.”

“In mine!” exclaimed Viviana.

“In yours,” returned Catesby. “A mighty blow is about to be struck for her deliverance.”

“Ay, marry, is it,” cried Oldcorne, with sudden fervour. “Redemption draweth nigh; the year of visitation approacheth to an end; and jubilation is at hand. England shall again be called a happy realm, a blessed country, a religious people. Those who knew the former glory of religion shall lift up their hands for joy to see it returned again. Righteousness shall prosper, and infidelity be plucked up by the root. False error shall vanish like smoke, and they which saw it shall say where is it become? The daughters of Babylon shall be cast down, and in the dust lament their ruin. Proud heresy shall strike her sail, and groan as a beast crushed under a cart-wheel. The memory of novelties shall perish with a crack, and as a ruinous house falling to the ground. Repent, ye seducers, with speed, and prevent the dreadful wrath of the Powerable. He will come as flame that burneth out beyond the furnace. His fury shall fly forth as thunder, and pitch upon their tops that malign him. They shall perish in his fury, and melt like wax before the fire.”

“Amen!” ejaculated Catesby, as the priest concluded. “You have spoken prophetically, father.”

“I have but recited a prayer transmitted to me by Father Garnet," rejoined Oldcorne.

“Do you discern any hidden meaning in it?” demanded Catesby.

"Yea, verily my son," returned the priest. "In the '*false error vanishing like* smoke,' – in the *'house perishing with a* crack,' – and in the '*fury flying forth as* thunder,' – I read the mode the great work shall be brought about."

"And you applaud the design?" asked Catesby, eagerly.

"*Non vero factum probo, sed eventum amo*," rejoined the priest.

"The secret is safe in your keeping, father?" asked Catesby, uneasily.

"As if it had been disclosed to me in private confession," replied Oldcorne.

"Hum!" muttered Catesby. "Confessions of as much consequence to the state have ere now been revealed, father."

"A decree has been passed by his holiness, Clement VIII., forbidding all such revelations," replied Oldcorne. "And the question has been recently propounded by a learned brother of our order, Father Antonio Delrio, who, in his Magical Disquisitions, putteth it thus: – 'Supposing a malefactor shall confess that he himself or some other has laid Gunpowder, or the like combustible matter, under a building – '"

"Ha!" exclaimed Catesby, starting.

" – 'And, unless it be taken away,'" proceeded the priest, regarding him fixedly, "'the whole house will be burnt, the prince destroyed, and as many as go into or out of the city will come to great mischief or peril!'"[2]

"Well!" exclaimed Catesby.

"The point then arises," continued Oldcorne, "whether the priest may make use of the secret thus obtained for the good of the government, and the averting of such danger; and, after fully discussing it, Father Delrio decides in the negative."

"Enough," returned Catesby.

"By whom is the blow to be struck?" asked Viviana, who had listened to the foregoing discourse in silent wonder.

"By me," answered Catesby. "It is for you to nerve my arm."

"You speak in riddles," she replied. "I understand you not."

"Question Father Oldcorne, then, as to my meaning," rejoined Catesby; "he will tell you that, allied to you, I could not fail in the enterprise on which I am engaged."

"It is the truth, dear daughter," Oldcorne asseverated.

"I will not inquire further into this mystery," returned Viviana, "for such it is to me. But, believing what you both assert, I answer, that willingly as I would lay down my life for the welfare of our holy religion, persuading myself, as I do, that I have constancy enough to endure martyrdom for its sake, – I cannot consent to your proposal. Nay, if I must avouch the whole truth," she continued, blushing deeply, "my affections are already engaged, though to one with whom I can never hope to be united."

"You have your answer, my son," observed the priest.

Catesby replied with a look of the deepest mortification and disappointment; and, bowing coldly to Viviana, said, "I now depart to obey your behests, Miss Radcliffe."

"Commend me in all duty to my dear father," replied Viviana, "and believe that I shall for ever feel bound to you for your zeal."

"Neglect not all due caution, father," observed Catesby, glancing significantly at Oldcorne. "Forewarned, forearmed."

"Doubt me not, my son," rejoined the Jesuit. "My prayers shall be for you.

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[2] Confitetur maleficus se vel alium posuisse pulverem vel quid aliud sub tali limine, et nisi tollantur domum comburendam, principem interiturum, quotquot urbem egredienturque in magnam perniciem aut periculum venturos. – Delrio *Disq. Mag.*, lib. vi. cap. i. [*Edit.* 1600.]

Gentem auferte perfidam
Credentium de finibus,
Ut Christo laudes debitas
Persolvamus alacriter.”

After receiving a parting benediction from the priest, Catesby took his leave. His steed was speedily brought to the door by the old steward; and mounting it, he crossed the drawbridge, which was immediately raised behind him, and hastened on his journey.

CHAPTER IV.
THE SEARCH

Immediately after Catesby's departure, Heydocke was summoned to his mistress's presence. He found her with the priest, and was informed that in all probability the house would be visited that night by the messengers of the Privy Council. The old steward received the intelligence as he might have done his death-warrant, and looked so bewildered and affrighted, that Viviana half repented having acquainted him with it.

“Compose yourself, Master Heydocke,” she said, trying to reason him out of his fears; “the search may not take place. And if it does, there is nothing to be alarmed at. I am not afraid, you perceive.”

“Nothing to be alarmed at, my dear young lady!” gasped the steward. “You have never witnessed a midnight search for a priest by these ruffianly catchpoles, as I have, or you would not say so. Father Oldcorne will comprehend my uneasiness, and excuse it. The miscreants break into the house like robbers, and treat its inmates worse than robbers would treat them. They have no regard for decency, – no consideration for sex, – no respect for persons. Not a chamber is sacred from them. If a door is bolted, they burst it open; a cabinet locked, they tarry not for the key. They pull down the hangings, thrust their rapier-points into the crevices of the wainscot, discharge their fire-arms against the wall, and sometimes threaten to pull down the house itself, if the object of their quest be not delivered to them. Their oaths, abominations, and menaces are horrible; and their treatment of females, even of your degree, honoured mistress, too barbarous to relate. Poor Lady Nevil died of the fright she got by such a visit at dead of night to her residence in Holborn. Mrs. Vavasour, of York, lost her senses; and many others whom I could mention have been equal sufferers. Nothing to be alarmed at! Heaven grant, my dear, dear young lady, that you may never be fatally convinced to the contrary!”

“Suppose my apprehensions are as great as your own, Master Heydocke," replied Viviana, who, though somewhat infected by his terrors, still maintained her firmness; “I do not see how the danger is to be averted by idle lamentations and misgivings. We must meet it boldly; and trust to Him who is our only safeguard in the hour of peril, for protection. Do not alarm the household, but let all retire to rest as usual.”

“Right, daughter,” observed the priest. “Preparations for resistance would only excite suspicion.”

“Can you depend on the servants, in case they are examined?” asked Viviana of the steward, who by this time had partially recovered his composure.

“I think so,” returned Heydocke; “but the threats of the officers are so dreadful, and their conduct so violent and outrageous, that I can scarcely answer for myself. I would not advise your reverence to remain in that hiding-place,” he added, pointing to the chimney-piece; “they are sure to discover it.”

“If not here, where shall I conceal myself?” rejoined Oldcorne, uneasily.

“There are many nooks in which your reverence might hide,” replied the steward; “but the knaves are so crafty, and so well experienced in their vocation, that I dare not recommend any of them as secure. I would advise you to remain on the watch, and, in case of alarm, I will conduct you to the oratory in the north gallery, adjoining Mistress Viviana's sleeping-chamber, where there is a panel in the wall, known only to myself and my master, opening upon a secret passage running many hundred yards underground, and communicating with a small outbuilding on the other side of the moat. There is a contrivance in this passage, which I will explain to your reverence if need be, which will cut off any possibility of pursuit in that quarter.”

“Be it so,” replied the priest. “I place myself in your hands, good Master Heydocke, well assured of your fidelity. I shall remain throughout the night in this chamber, occupied in my devotions.”

"You will suffer me to pray with you, father, I trust?" said Viviana.

"If you desire it, assuredly, dear daughter," rejoined Oldcorne; "but I am unwilling you should sacrifice your rest."

"It will be no sacrifice, father, for I should not slumber, even if I sought my couch," she returned. "Go, good Heydocke. Keep vigilant watch: and, if you hear the slightest noise without, fail not to give us warning."

The steward bowed, and departed.

Some hours elapsed, during which nothing occurred to alarm Viviana and her companion, who consumed the time in prayer and devout conversation; when, just at the stroke of two, – as the former was kneeling before her spiritual adviser, and receiving absolution for the slight offences of which a being so pure-minded could be supposed capable, – a noise like the falling of a bar of iron was heard beneath the window. The priest turned pale, and cast a look of uneasiness at the maiden, who said nothing, but snatching up the light, and motioning him to remain quiet, hurried out of the room in search of the steward. He was nowhere to be found. In vain, she examined all the lower rooms, – in vain, called to him by name. No answer was returned.

Greatly terrified, she was preparing to retrace her steps, when she heard the sound of muttered voices in the hall. Extinguishing her light, she advanced to the door, which was left ajar, and, taking care not to expose herself to observation, beheld several armed figures, some of whom bore dark lanterns, while others surrounded and menaced with their drawn swords the unfortunate steward. From their discourse she ascertained that, having thrown a plank across the moat, and concealed themselves within the garden until they had reconnoitred the premises, they had contrived to gain admittance unperceived through the window of a small back room, in which they had surprised Heydocke, who had fallen asleep on his post, and captured him. One amongst their number, who appeared to act as leader, and whom, from his garb, and the white wand he carried, Viviana knew must be a pursuivant, now proceeded to interrogate the prisoner. To every question proposed to him the steward shook his head; and, in spite of the threats of the examinant, and the blows of his followers, he persisted in maintaining silence.

"If we cannot make this contumacious rascal speak, we will find others more tractable," observed the pursuivant. "I will not leave any corner of the house unvisited; nor a soul within it unquestioned. Ah! here they come!"

As he spoke, several of the serving-men, with some of the female domestics, who had been alarmed by the noise, rushed into the hall, and on seeing it filled with armed men, were about to retreat, when they were instantly seized and detained. A scene of great confusion now ensued. The women screamed and cried for mercy, while the men struggled and fought with their captors. Commanding silence at length, the pursuivant proclaimed in the King's name that whoever would guide him to the hiding-place of Father Oldcorne, a Jesuit priest, whom it was known, and could be proved, was harboured within the mansion, should receive a free pardon and reward; while those who screened him, or connived at his concealment, were liable to fine, imprisonment, and even more severe punishment. Each servant was then questioned separately. But, though all were more or less rudely dealt with, no information could be elicited.

Meanwhile, Viviana was a prey to the most intolerable anxiety. Unable to reach Father Oldcorne without crossing the hall, which she did not dare to attempt, she gave him up for lost; her sole hope being that, on hearing the cries of the domestics, he would provide for his own safety. Her anxiety was still farther increased when the pursuivant, having exhausted his patience by fruitless interrogatories, and satisfied his malice by frightening two of the females into fits, departed with a portion of his band to search the house, leaving the rest as a guard over the prisoners.

Viviana then felt that, if she would save Father Oldcorne, the attempt must be made without a moment's delay, and at any hazard. Watching her opportunity, when the troopers were occupied, – some in helping themselves to such viands and liquors as they could lay hands upon, – some in

searching the persons of the prisoners for amulets and relics, – while others, more humane, were trying to revive the swooning women, she contrived to steal unperceived across the lower end of the hall. Having gained the passage, she found to her horror that the pursuivant and his band were already within the star-chamber. They were sounding the walls with hammers and mallets, and from their exclamations, she learnt that they had discovered the retreat behind the fire-place, and were about to break it open.

"We have him," roared the pursuivant, in a voice of triumph. "The old owl's roost is here!"

Viviana, who stood at the door, drew in her breath, expecting that the next moment would inform her that the priest was made captive. Instead of this, she was delighted to find, from the oaths of rage and disappointment uttered by the troopers, that he had eluded them.

"He must be in the house, at all events," growled the pursuivant; "nor is it long since he quitted his hiding-place, as this cushion proves. We will not go away without him. And now, let us proceed to the upper chambers."

Hearing their footsteps approach, Viviana darted off, and quickly ascending the principal staircase, entered a long corridor. Uncertain what to do, she was about to proceed to her own chamber, and bar the door, when she felt her arm grasped by a man. With difficulty repressing a shriek, she strove to disengage herself, when a whisper told her it was the priest.

"Heaven be praised!" cried Viviana, "you are safe. How – how did you escape?"

"I flew upstairs on hearing the voices," replied Oldcorne. "But what has happened to the steward?"

"He is a prisoner," replied Viviana.

"All then is lost, unless you are acquainted with the secret panel he spoke of in the oratory," rejoined Oldcorne.

"Alas! father, I am wholly ignorant of it," she answered. "But, come with me into my chamber; they will not dare to invade it."

"I know not that," returned the priest, despairingly. "These sacrilegious villains would not respect the sanctity of the altar itself."

"They come!" cried Viviana, as lights were seen at the foot of the stairs. "Take my hand – this way, father."

They had scarcely gained the room, and fastened the door, when the pursuivant and his attendants appeared in the corridor. The officer, it would seem, had been well instructed where to search, or was sufficiently practised in his duty, for he proceeded at once to several hiding-places in the different chambers which he visited. In one room he detected a secret staircase in the wall, which he mounted, and discovered a small chapel built in the roof. Stripping it of its altar, its statue of the Virgin, its crucifix, pix, chalice, and other consecrated vessels, he descended, and continued his search. Viviana's chamber was now the only one unvisited. Trying the door, and finding it locked, he tapped against it with his wand.

"Who knocks?" asked the maiden.

"A state-messenger," was the reply. "I demand entrance in the King's name."

"You cannot have it," she replied. "It is my sleeping-chamber."

"My duty allows me no alternative," rejoined the pursuivant, harshly. "If you will not admit me quietly, I must use force."

"Do you know to whom you offer this rudeness?" returned Viviana. "I am the daughter of Sir William Radcliffe."

"I know it," replied the pursuivant; "but I am not exceeding my authority. I hold a warrant for your father's arrest. And, if he had not been from home, I should have carried him to prison along with the Jesuit priest whom, I suspect, is concealed within your chamber. Open the door, I command you; and do not hinder me in the execution of my duty."

As no answer was returned to the application, the pursuivant commanded his men to burst open the door; and the order was promptly obeyed.

The chamber was empty.

On searching it, however, the pursuivant found a door concealed by the hangings of the bed. It was bolted on the other side, but speedily yielded to his efforts. Passing through it, he entered upon a narrow gallery, at the extremity of which his progress was stopped by another door, likewise fastened on the further side. On bursting it open, he entered a small oratory, wainscoted with oak, and lighted by an oriel window filled with stained glass, through which the newly-risen moon was pouring its full radiance, and discovered the object of his search.

“Father Oldcorne, I arrest you as a Jesuit and a traitor,” shouted the pursuivant, in a voice of exultation. “Seize him!” he added, calling to his men.

“You shall not take him,” cried Viviana, clinging despairingly to the priest, who offered no resistance, but clasped a crucifix to his breast.

“Leave go your hold, young mistress,” rejoined the pursuivant, grasping Oldcorne by the collar of his vestment, and dragging him along; “and rest thankful that I make you not, also, my prisoner.”

“Take me; but spare him! – in mercy spare him!” shrieked Viviana.

“You solicit mercy from one who knows it not, daughter,” observed the priest. “Lead on, sir. I am ready to attend you.”

“Your destination is the New Fleet, father,” retorted the pursuivant, in a tone of bitter raillery; “unless you prefer the cell in Radcliffe Hall lately vacated by your saintly predecessor, Father Woodroofe.”

“Help! help!” shrieked Viviana.

“You may spare your voice, fair lady,” sneered the pursuivant. “No help is at hand. Your servants are all prisoners.”

The words were scarcely uttered, when a sliding panel in the wall flew open, and Guy Fawkes, followed by Humphrey Chetham, and another personage, sprang through the aperture, and presented a petronel at the head of the pursuivant.

CHAPTER V.
CHAT MOSS

The pursuivant was taken so completely unawares by the sudden appearance of Guy Fawkes and his companions, that he made no attempt at resistance. Nor were his attendants less confounded. Before they recovered from their surprise, Humphrey Chetham seized Viviana in his arms, and darting through the panel, called to the priest to follow him. Father Oldcorne was about to comply, when one of the soldiers, grasping the surcingle at his waist, dragged him forcibly backwards. The next moment, however, he was set free by Guy Fawkes, who, felling the man to the ground, and interposing himself between the priest and the other soldier, enabled the former to make good his retreat. This done, he planted himself in front of the panel, and with a petronel in each hand, menaced his opponents.

“Fly for your lives!” he shouted in a loud voice to the others. “Not a moment is to be lost. I have taken greater odds, and in a worse cause, and have not been worsted. Heed me not, I say. I will defend the passage till you are beyond reach of danger. Fly! – fly!”

“After them!” vociferated the pursuivant, stamping with rage and vexation; “after them instantly! Hew down that bold traitor. Show him no quarter. His life is forfeit to the king. Slay him as you would a dog!”

But the men, having no fire-arms, were so much intimidated by the fierce looks of Guy Fawkes, and the deadly weapons he pointed at their heads, that they hesitated to obey their leader's injunctions.

“Do you hear what I say to you, cravens?” roared the pursuivant. “Cut him down without mercy.”

“They dare not move a footstep,” rejoined Guy Fawkes, in a decisive tone.

“Recreants!” cried the pursuivant, foaming with rage, “is my prey to be snatched from me at the very moment I have secured it, through your cowardice? Obey me instantly, or, as Heaven shall judge me, I will denounce you to my Lord Derby and the Commissioners as aiders and abettors in Father Oldcorne's escape! – and you well know what your punishment will be if I do so. What! – are you afraid of one man?”

“Our pikes are no match for his petronels,” observed the foremost soldier, sullenly.

“They are not,” rejoined Guy Fawkes; “and you will do well not to compel me to prove the truth of your assertion. As to you, Master Pursuivant," he continued, with a look so stern that the other quailed before it, “unwilling as I am to shed blood, I shall hold your life, if I am compelled to take it, but just retribution for the fate you have brought upon the unfortunate Elizabeth Orton.

“Ha!” exclaimed the pursuivant, starting. “I thought I recognised you. You are the soldier in the Spanish garb who saved that false prophetess from drowning.”

“I saved her only for a more lingering death,” rejoined Guy Fawkes.

“I know it,” retorted the pursuivant. “I found her dead body when I visited her cell on my way hither, and gave orders to have it interred without coffin or shroud in that part of the burial-ground of the Collegiate Church in Manchester reserved for common felons.”

“I know not what stays my hand,” rejoined Guy Fawkes, fiercely. “But I am strongly tempted to give you a grave beside her.”

“I will put your daring to the proof!” cried the pursuivant, snatching a pike from one of his followers, and brandishing it over his head. “Throw down your arms, or you die!”

“Back!” exclaimed Guy Fawkes, presenting a petronel at him, “or I lodge a bullet in your brain.”

“Be advised by me, and rush not on certain destruction, good Master Pursuivant,” said the foremost soldier, plucking his mantle. “I see by his bloodthirsty looks that the villain is in earnest.”

“I hear footsteps,” cried the other soldier; “our comrades are at hand.”

"Then it is time for me to depart," cried Guy Fawkes, springing through the secret door, and closing it after him.

"Confusion!" exclaimed the pursuivant; "but he shall not escape. Break open the panel."

The order was promptly obeyed. The men battered the stout oak board, which was of great thickness, with their pikes, but it resisted every effort, nor was it until the arrival of a fresh band of soldiers with lights, mallets, chisels, and other implements suitable to the purpose, that it could be forced open. This accomplished, the pursuivant, commanding his attendants to follow him, dashed through the aperture. As they proceeded singly along the narrow passage, the roof became so low that they were compelled to adopt a stooping posture. In this manner they hurried on until their further progress was stopped by a massive stone door, which appeared to descend from above by some hidden contrivance, no trace of bolt or other fastening being discernible. The flag fitted closely in channels in the walls, and had all the appearance of solid masonry. After examining this obstacle for a moment, the pursuivant was convinced that any attempt to move it would be impracticable, and muttering a deep execration, he gave the word to return.

"From the course it appears to take," he observed, "this passage must communicate with the garden, – perhaps with the further side of the moat. We may yet secure them, if we use despatch."

To return to the fugitives. On arriving at the point where the stone door was situated, which he discovered by the channels in the wall above-mentioned, Guy Fawkes searched for an iron ring, and, having found it, drew it towards him, and the ponderous flag slowly dropped into its place. He then groped his way cautiously along in the dark, until his foot encountered the top of a ladder, down which he crept, and landed on the floor of a damp deep vault. Having taken the precaution to remove the ladder, he hastened onwards for about fifty yards, when he came to a steep flight of stone steps, distinguishable by a feeble glimmer of light from above, and mounting them, emerged through an open trap-door into a small building situated at the western side of the moat, where, to his surprise and disappointment, he found the other fugitives.

"How comes it you are here?" he exclaimed, in a reproachful tone. "I kept the wolves at bay thus long, to enable you to make good your retreat."

"Miss Radcliffe is too weak to move," replied Humphrey Chetham; "and I could not persuade Father Oldcorne to leave her."

"I care not what becomes of me," said the priest. "The sooner my painful race is run the better. But I cannot – will not abandon my dear charge thus."

"Think not of me, father, I implore you," rejoined Viviana, who had sunk overpowered with terror and exhaustion. "I shall be better soon. Master Chetham, I am assured, will remain with me till our enemies have departed, and I will then return to the hall."

"Command me as you please, Miss Radcliffe," replied Humphrey Chetham. "You have but to express a wish to insure its fulfilment on my part."

"Oh! that you had suffered Mr. Catesby to tarry with us till the morning, as he himself proposed, dear daughter," observed the priest, turning to Viviana.

"Has Catesby been here?" inquired Guy Fawkes, with a look of astonishment.

"He has," replied Oldcorne. "He came to warn us that the hall would be this night searched by the officers of state; and he also brought word that a warrant had been issued by the Privy Council for the arrest of Sir William Radcliffe."

"Where is he now?" demanded Fawkes, hastily.

"On the way to Chester, whither he departed in all haste, at Viviana's urgent request, to apprise her father of his danger," rejoined the priest.

"This is strange!" muttered Guy Fawkes. "Catesby here, and I not know it!"

"He had a secret motive for his visit, my son," whispered Oldcorne, significantly.

"So I conclude, father," replied Fawkes, in the same tone.

“Viviana Radcliffe,” murmured Humphrey Chetham, in low and tender accents, “something tells me that this moment will decide my future fate. Emboldened by the mysterious manner in which we have been brought together, and you, as it were, have been thrown upon my protection, I venture to declare the passion I have long indulged for you; – a passion which, though deep and fervent as ever agitated human bosom, has hitherto, from the difference of our rank, and yet more from the difference of our religious opinions, been without hope. What has just occurred, – added to the peril in which your worthy father stands, and the difficulties in which you yourself will necessarily be involved, – makes me cast aside all misgiving, and perhaps with too much presumption, but with a confident belief that the sincerity of my love renders me not wholly undeserving of your regard, earnestly solicit you to give me a husband's right to watch over and defend you.”

Viviana was silent. But even by the imperfect light the young merchant could discern that her cheek was covered with blushes.

“Your answer?” he cried, taking her hand.

“You must take it from my lips, Master Chetham,” interposed the priest; “Viviana Radcliffe never can be yours.”

“Be pleased to let her speak for herself, reverend sir,” rejoined the young merchant, angrily.

“I represent her father, and have acquainted you with his determination,” rejoined the priest. “Appeal to her, and she will confirm my words.”

“Viviana, is this true?” asked Chetham. “Does your father object to your union with me?”

Viviana answered by a deep sigh, and gently withdrew her hand from the young merchant's grasp.

“Then there is no hope for me?” cried Chetham.

“Alas! no,” replied Viviana; “nor for me – of earthly affection. I am already dead to the world.”

“How so?” he asked.

“I am about to vow myself to Heaven,” she answered.

“Viviana!” exclaimed the young man, throwing himself at her feet, “reflect! – oh! reflect, before you take this fatal – this irrevocable step.”

“Rise, sir,” interposed the priest, sternly; “you plead in vain. Sir William Radcliffe will never wed his daughter to a heretic. In his name I command you to desist from further solicitation.”

“I obey,” replied Chetham, rising.

“We lose time here,” observed Guy Fawkes, who had been lost for a moment in reflection. “I will undertake to provide for your safety, father. But, what must be done with Viviana? She cannot be left here. And her return to the hall would be attended with danger.”

“I will not return till the miscreants have quitted it,” said Viviana.

“Their departure is uncertain,” replied Fawkes. “When they are baulked of their prey they sometimes haunt a dwelling for weeks.”

“What will become of me?” cried Viviana, distractedly.

“It were vain, I fear, to entreat you to accept an asylum with my father at Clayton Hall, or at my own residence at Crumpsall,” said Humphrey Chetham.

“Your offer is most kind, sir,” replied Oldcorne, “and is duly appreciated. But Viviana will see the propriety – on every account – of declining it.”

“I do; I do,” she acquiesced.

“Will you entrust yourself to my protection?” observed Fawkes.

“Willingly,” replied the priest, answering for her. “We shall find some place of refuge,” he added, turning to Viviana, “where your father can join us, and where we can remain concealed till this storm has blown over.”

“I know many such,” rejoined Fawkes, “both in this county and in Yorkshire, and will guide you to one.”

"My horses are at your service," said Humphrey Chetham. "They are tied beneath the trees in the avenue. My servant shall bring them to the door," and, turning to his attendant, he gave him directions to that effect. "I was riding hither an hour before midnight," he continued, addressing Viviana, "to offer you assistance, having accidentally heard the pursuivant mention his meditated visit to Ordsall Hall, to one of his followers, when, as I approached the gates, this person," pointing to Guy Fawkes, "crossed my path, and, seizing the bridle of my steed, demanded whether I was a friend to Sir William Radcliffe. I answered in the affirmative, and desired to know the motive of his inquiry. He then told me that the house was invested by a numerous band of armed men, who had crossed the moat by means of a plank, and were at that moment concealed within the garden. This intelligence, besides filling me with alarm, disconcerted all my plans, as I hoped to have been beforehand with them – their inquisitorial searches being generally made at a late hour, when all the inmates of a house intended to be surprised are certain to have retired to rest. While I was bitterly reproaching myself for my dilatoriness, and considering what course it would be best to pursue, my servant, Martin Heydocke, son to your father's old steward, who had ridden up at the stranger's approach, informed me that he was acquainted with a secret passage communicating beneath the moat with the hall. Upon this, I dismounted; and fastening my horse to a tree, ordered him to lead me to it without an instant's delay. The stranger, who gave his name as Guy Fawkes, and professed himself a stanch Catholic, and a friend of Father Oldcorne, begged permission to join us, in a tone so earnest, that I at once acceded to his request. We then proceeded to this building, and after some search discovered the trap-door. Much time was lost, owing to our being unprovided with lights, in the subterranean passage; and it was more than two hours before we could find the ring connected with the stone door, the mystery of which Martin explained to us. This delay we feared would render our scheme abortive, when, just as we reached the panel, we heard your shrieks. The spring was touched, and – you know the rest."

"And shall never forget it," replied Viviana, in a tone of the deepest gratitude.

At this juncture, the tramp of horses was heard at the door; and the next moment it was thrown open by the younger Heydocke, who, with a look, and in a voice of the utmost terror, exclaimed, "They are coming! – they are coming!"

"The pursuivant?" cried Guy Fawkes.

"Not him alone, but the whole gang," rejoined Martin. "Some of them are lowering the drawbridge, while others are crossing the plank. Several are on horseback, and I think I discern the pursuivant amongst the number. They have seen me, and are hurrying in this direction."

As he spoke, a loud shout corroborated his statement.

"We are lost!" exclaimed Oldcorne.

"Do not despair, father," rejoined Guy Fawkes. "Heaven will not abandon its faithful servants. The Lord will deliver us out of the hands of these Amalekites."

"To horse, then, if you would indeed avoid them," urged Humphrey Chetham. "The shouts grow louder. Your enemies are fast approaching."

"Viviana," said Guy Fawkes, "are you willing to fly with us?"

"I will do anything rather than be left to those horrible men," she answered.

Guy Fawkes then raised her in his arms, and sprang with his lovely burthen upon the nearest charger. His example was quickly followed by Humphrey Chetham, who, vaulting on the other horse, assisted the priest to mount behind him. While this took place, Martin Heydocke darted into the shed, and instantly bolted the door.

It was a beautiful moonlight night, almost as bright as day, and the movements of each party were fully revealed to the other. Guy Fawkes perceived at a glance that they were surrounded; and, though he had no fears for himself, he was full of apprehension for the safety of his companion. While he was debating with himself as to the course it would be best to pursue, Humphrey Chetham shouted to him to turn to the left, and started off in that direction. Grasping his fair charge, whom he

had placed before him on the saddle, firmly with his left arm, and wrapping her in his ample cloak, Guy Fawkes drew his sword, and striking spurs into his steed, followed in the same track.

The little fabric which had afforded them temporary shelter, it has already been mentioned, was situated on the west of the hall, at a short distance from the moat, and was screened from observation by a small shrubbery. No sooner did the fugitives emerge from this cover, than loud outcries were raised by their antagonists, and every effort was made to intercept them. On the right, galloping towards them on a light but swift courser, taken from Sir William Radcliffe's stables, came the pursuivant, attended by half-a-dozen troopers, who had accommodated themselves with horses in the same manner as their leader. Between them and the road leading to Manchester, were stationed several armed men on foot. At the rear, voices proclaimed that others were in full pursuit; while in front, a fourth detachment menaced them with their pikes. Thus beset on all sides, it seemed scarcely possible to escape. Nothing daunted, however, by the threats and vociferations with which they were received, the two horsemen boldly charged this party. The encounter was instantaneous. Guy Fawkes warded off a blow, which, if it had taken effect, must have robbed Viviana of life, and struck down the fellow who aimed it. At the same moment, his career was checked by another assailant, who, catching his bridle with the hook of his pike, commanded him to surrender. Fawkes replied by cleaving the man's staff asunder, and, having thus disembarrassed himself, was about to pursue his course, when he perceived that Humphrey Chetham was in imminent danger from a couple of soldiers who had stopped him, and were trying to unhorse his companion. Riding up to them, Guy Fawkes, by a vigorous and well-directed attack, speedily drove them off; and the fugitives, being now unimpeded, were enabled to continue their career.

The foregoing occurrences were witnessed by the pursuivant with the utmost rage and vexation. Pouring forth a torrent of threats and imprecations, he swore he would never rest till he had secured them, and urging his courser to its utmost speed, commanded his men to give chase.

Skirting a sluice, communicating between the Irwell and the moat, Humphrey Chetham, who, as better acquainted with the country than his companions, took the lead, proceeded along its edge for about a hundred yards, when he suddenly struck across a narrow bridge covered with sod, and entered the open fields. Hitherto Viviana had remained silent. Though fully aware of the risk she had run, she gave no sign of alarm – not even when the blow was aimed against her life; and it was only on conceiving the danger in some degree past, that she ventured to express her gratitude.

“You have displayed so much courage,” said Guy Fawkes, in answer to her speech, “that it would be unpardonable to deceive you. Our foes are too near us, and too well mounted, to make it by any means certain we shall escape them, – unless by stratagem.”

“They are within a hundred yards of us,” cried Humphrey Chetham, glancing fearfully backwards. “They have possessed themselves of your father's fleetest horses; and, if I mistake not, the rascally pursuivant has secured your favourite barb.”

“My gentle Zayda!” exclaimed Viviana. “Then indeed we are lost. She has not her match for speed.”

“If she bring her rider to us alone, she will do us good service," observed Guy Fawkes, significantly.

The same notion, almost at the same moment, occurred to the pursuivant. Having witnessed the prowess displayed by Guy Fawkes in his recent attack on the soldiers, he felt no disposition to encounter so formidable an opponent single-handed; and finding that the high-mettled barb on which he was mounted, by its superior speed and fiery temper, would inevitably place him in such a dilemma, he prudently resolved to halt, and exchange it for a more manageable steed.

This delay was of great service to the fugitives, and enabled them to get considerably ahead. They had now gained a narrow lane, and, tracking it, speedily reached the rocky banks of the Irwell. Galloping along a foot-path that followed the serpentine course of the stream for a quarter of a mile,

they arrived at a spot marked by a bed of osiers, where Humphrey Chetham informed them there was a ford.

Accordingly, they plunged into the river, and while stemming the current, which here ran with great swiftness, and rose up above the saddles, the neighing of a steed was heard from the bank they had quitted. Turning at the sound, Viviana beheld her favourite courser on the summit of a high rock. The soldier to whom Zayda was intrusted had speedily, as the pursuivant foresaw, distanced his companions, and chose this elevated position to take sure aim at Guy Fawkes, against whom he was now levelling a caliver. The next moment a bullet struck against his brigandine, but without doing him any injury. The soldier, however, did not escape so lightly. Startled by the discharge, the fiery barb leaped from the precipice into the river, and throwing her rider, who was borne off by the rapid stream, swam towards the opposite bank, which she reached just as the others were landing. At the sound of her mistress's voice she stood still, and allowed Humphrey Chetham to lay hold of her bridle; and Viviana declaring she was able to mount her, Guy Fawkes, who felt that such an arrangement was most likely to conduce to her safety, and who was, moreover, inclined to view the occurrence as a providential interference in their behalf, immediately assisted her into the saddle.

Before this transfer could be effected, the pursuivant and his attendants had begun to ford the stream. The former had witnessed the accident that had befallen the soldier from a short distance; and, while he affected to deplore it, internally congratulated himself on his prudence and foresight. But he was by no means so well satisfied when he saw how it served to benefit the fugitives.

“That unlucky beast!” he exclaimed. “Some fiend must have prompted me to bring her out of the stable. Would she had drowned herself instead of poor Dickon Duckesbury, whom she hath sent to feed the fishes! With her aid, Miss Radcliffe will doubtless escape. No matter. If I secure Father Oldcorne, and that black-visaged trooper in the Spanish garb, who, I'll be sworn, is a secret intelligencer of the pope, if not of the devil, I shall be well contented. I'll hang them both on a gibbet higher than Haman's.”

And muttering other threats to the same effect, he picked his way to the opposite shore. Long before he reached it, the fugitives had disappeared; but on climbing the bank, he beheld them galloping swiftly across a well-wooded district steeped in moonlight, and spread out before his view, and inflamed by the sight he shouted to his attendants, and once more started in pursuit.

Cheered by the fortunate incident above related, which, in presenting her with her own steed in a manner so surprising and unexpected, seemed almost to give her assurance of deliverance, Viviana, inspirited by the exercise, felt her strength and spirits rapidly revive. At her side rode Guy Fawkes, who ever and anon cast an anxious look behind, to ascertain the distance of their pursuers, but suffered no exclamation to escape his lips. Indeed, throughout the whole affair, he maintained the reserve belonging to his sombre and taciturn character, and neither questioned Humphrey Chetham as to where he was leading them, nor proposed any deviation from the route he had apparently chosen. To such remarks as were addressed to him, Fawkes answered in monosyllables; and it was only when occasion required, that he volunteered any observation or advice. He seemed to surrender himself to chance. And perhaps, if his bosom could have been examined, it would have been found that he considered himself a mere puppet in the hands of destiny.

In other and calmer seasons, he might have dwelt with rapture on the beautiful and varied country through which they were speeding, and which from every knoll they mounted, every slope they descended, every glade they threaded, intricacy pierced, or tangled dell tracked, presented new and increasing attractions. This charming district, since formed into a park by the Traffords, from whom it derives its present designation, was at this time, – though part of the domain of that ancient family, – wholly unenclosed. Old Trafford Hall lies (for it is still in existence,) more than a mile nearer to Manchester, a little to the east of Ordsall Hall; but the modern residence of the family is situated in the midst of the lovely region through which the fugitives were riding.

But, though the charms of the scene, heightened by the gentle medium through which they were viewed, produced little effect upon the iron nature of Guy Fawkes, they were not without influence on his companions, especially Viviana. Soothed by the stillness of all around her, she almost forgot her danger; and surrendering herself to the dreamy enjoyment generally experienced in contemplating such a scene at such an hour, suffered her gaze to wander over the fair woody landscape before her, till it was lost in the distant moonlit wolds.

From the train of thought naturally awakened by this spectacle, she was roused by the shouts of the pursuers; and, glancing timorously behind her, beheld them hurrying swiftly along the valley they had just quitted. From the rapidity with which they were advancing, it was evident they were gaining upon them, and she was about to urge her courser to greater speed, when Humphrey Chetham laid his hand upon the rein to check her.

“Reserve yourself till we gain the brow of this hill,” he remarked; “and then put Zayda to her mettle. We are not far from our destination.”

“Indeed!” exclaimed Viviana. “Where is it?”

“I will show it to you presently,” he answered.

Arrived at the summit of the high ground, which they had been for some time gradually ascending, the young merchant pointed out a vast boggy tract, about two miles off, in the vale beneath them.

“That is our destination,” he said.

“Did I not hold it impossible you could trifle with me at such a time as this, I should say you were jesting,” rejoined Viviana. “The place you indicate, unless I mistake you, is Chat Moss, the largest and most dangerous marsh in Lancashire.”

“You do not mistake me, neither am I jesting, Viviana,” replied the young merchant, gravely. “Chat Moss *is* the mark at which I aim.”

“If we are to cross it, we shall need a Will-o'-the-wisp to guide us, and some friendly elf to make firm the ground beneath our steeds," rejoined Viviana, in a slightly-sarcastic tone.

“Trust to me and you shall traverse it in safety,” resumed Humphrey Chetham.

“I would sooner trust myself to the pursuivant and his band, than venture upon its treacherous surface,” she replied.

“How is this, young sir?” interposed Guy Fawkes, sternly. “Is it from heedlessness or rashness that you are about to expose us to this new danger? – which, if Viviana judges correctly, and my own experience of such places inclines me to think she does so, – is greater than that which now besets us.”

“If there is any danger I shall be the first to encounter it, for I propose to act as your guide,” returned Humphrey Chetham, in an offended tone. “But the treacherous character of the marsh constitutes our safety. I am acquainted with a narrow path across it, from which the deviation of a foot will bring certain death. If our pursuers attempt to follow us their destruction is inevitable. Viviana may rest assured I would not needlessly expose so dear a life as hers. But it is our best chance of safety.”

“Humphrey Chetham is in the right,” observed the priest. “I have heard of the path he describes; and if he can guide us along it, we shall effectually baffle our enemies.”

“I cry you mercy, sir,” said Viviana. “I did not apprehend your meaning. But I now thankfully resign myself to your care.”

“Forward, then,” cried the young merchant. And they dashed swiftly down the declivity.

Chat Moss, towards which they were hastening, though now drained, in part cultivated, and traversed by the busiest and most-frequented railroad in England, or the world, was, within the recollection of many of the youngest of the present generation, a dreary and almost impassable waste. Surveyed from the heights of Dunham, whence the writer has often gazed upon it, envying the plover her wing to skim over its broad expanse, it presented with its black boggy soil, striped like a motley garment, with patches of grey, tawny, and dunnish red, a singular and mysterious appearance.

Conjecture fixes this morass as the site of a vast forest, whose immemorial and Druid-haunted groves were burnt by the Roman invaders; and seeks to account for its present condition by supposing that the charred trees – still frequently found within its depths – being left where the conflagration had placed them, had choked up its brooks and springs, and so reduced it to a general swamp. Drayton, however, in the following lines from the Faerie Land, places its origin as far back as the Deluge: —

> – Great Chat Moss at my fall
> Lies fall of turf and marl, her unctuous mineral;
> And blocks as black as pitch, with boring augers found,
> There at the General Flood supposed to be drown'd.

But the former hypothesis appears the more probable. A curious description of Chat Moss, as it appeared at the time of this history, is furnished by Camden, who terms it, "a swampy tract of great extent, a considerable part of which was carried off in the last age by swollen rivers with great danger, whereby the rivers were infected, and great quantities of fish died. Instead thereof is now a valley watered by a small stream; and many trees were discovered thrown down, and lying flat, so that one may suppose when the ground lay neglected, and the waste water of brooks was not drained off into the open valleys, or their courses stopped by neglect or desolation, all the lower grounds were turned into swamps, (which we call *mosses*,) or into pools. If this was the case, no wonder so many trees are found covered, and, as it were, buried in such places all over England, but especially here. For the roots being loosened by too excessive wet, they must necessarily fall down and sink in so soft a soil. The people hereabouts search for them with poles and spits, and after marking the place, dig them up and use them for firing, for they are like torches, equally fit to burn and to give light, which is probably owing to the bituminous earth that surrounds them, whence the common people suppose them firs, though Cæsar denies that there were such trees in Britain."

But, though vast masses of the bog had been carried off by the Irwell and the Mersey, as related by Camden, the general appearance of the waste, – with the exception of the valley and the small stream, – was much the same as it continued to our own time. Its surface was more broken and irregular, and black gaping chasms and pits filled with water and slime as dark-coloured as the turf whence it flowed, pointed out the spots where the swollen and heaving swamp had burst its bondage. Narrow paths, known only to the poor turf-cutters and other labourers who dwelt upon its borders, and gathered fuel with poles and spits in the manner above described, intersected it at various points. But as they led in many cases to dangerous and deep gulfs, to dismal quagmires and fathomless pits; and, moreover, as the slightest departure from the proper track would have whelmed the traveller in an oozy bed, from which, as from a quicksand, he would have vainly striven to extricate himself, – it was never crossed without a guide, except by those familiar with its perilous courses. One painful circumstance connected with the history of Chat Moss remains to be recorded – namely, that the attempt made to cultivate it by the great historian Roscoe, – an attempt since carried out, as has already been shown, with complete success, – ended in a result ruinous to the fortunes of that highly-gifted person, who, up to the period of this luckless undertaking, was as prosperous as he was meritorious.

By this time the fugitives had approached the confines of the marsh. An accident, however, had just occurred, which nearly proved fatal to Viviana, and, owing to the delay it occasioned, brought their pursuers into dangerous proximity with them. In fording the Irwell, which, from its devious course, they were again compelled to cross, about a quarter of a mile below Barton, her horse missed its footing, and precipitated her into the rapid current. In another instant she would have been borne away, if Guy Fawkes had not flung himself into the water, and seized her before she sank. Her affrighted steed, having got out of its depth, began to swim off, and it required the utmost exertion on the part of Humphrey Chetham, embarrassed as he was by the priest, to secure it. In a few minutes all was set to rights, and Viviana was once more placed on the saddle, without having sustained further

inconvenience than was occasioned by her dripping apparel. But those few minutes, as has been just stated, sufficed to bring the pursuivant and his men close upon them; and as they scrambled up the opposite bank, the plunging and shouting behind them told that the latter had entered the stream.

“Yonder is Baysnape,” exclaimed Humphrey Chetham, calling Viviana's attention to a ridge of high ground on the borders of the waste. “Below it lies the path by which I propose to enter the moss. We shall speedily be out of the reach of our enemies.”

“The marsh at least will hide us,” answered Viviana, with a shudder. “It is a terrible alternative.”

“Fear nothing, dear daughter,” observed the priest. “The saints, who have thus marvellously protected us, will continue to watch over us to the end, and will make the path over yon perilous waste as safe as the ground on which we tread.”

“I like not the appearance of the sky,” observed Guy Fawkes, looking uneasily upwards. “Before we reach the spot you have pointed out, the moon will be obscured. Will it be safe to traverse the moss in the dark?”

“It is our only chance,” replied the young merchant, speaking in a low tone, that his answer might not reach Viviana's ears; “and after all, the darkness may be serviceable. Our pursuers are so near, that if it were less gloomy, they might hit upon the right track. It will be a risk to us to proceed, but certain destruction to those who follow. And now let us make what haste we can. Every moment is precious.”

The dreary and fast darkening waste had now opened upon them in all its horrors. Far as the gaze could reach appeared an immense expanse, flat almost as the surface of the ocean, and unmarked, so far as could be discerned in that doubtful light, by any trace of human footstep or habitation. It was a stern and sombre prospect, and calculated to inspire terror in the stoutest bosom. What effect it produced on Viviana may be easily conjectured. But her nature was brave and enduring, and, though she trembled so violently as scarcely to be able to keep her seat, she gave no utterance to her fears. They were now skirting that part of the morass since denominated, from the unfortunate speculation previously alluded to, “Roscoe's Improvements.” This tract was the worst and most dangerous portion of the whole moss. Soft, slabby, and unsubstantial, its treacherous beds scarcely offered secure footing to the heron that alighted on them. The ground shook beneath the fugitives as they hurried past the edge of the groaning and quivering marsh. The plover, scared from its nest, uttered its peculiar and plaintive cry; the bittern shrieked; other night-fowl poured forth their doleful notes; and the bull-frog added its deep croak to the ominous concert. Behind them came the thundering tramp and loud shouts of their pursuers. Guy Fawkes had judged correctly. Before they reached Baysnape the moon had withdrawn behind a rack of clouds, and it had become profoundly dark. Arrived at this point, Humphrey Chetham called to them to turn off to the right.

“Follow singly,” he said, “and do not swerve a hair's breadth from the path. The slightest deviation will be fatal. Do you, sir,” he added to the priest, “mount behind Guy Fawkes, and let Viviana come next after me. If I should miss my way, do not stir for your life.”

The transfer effected, the fugitives turned off to the right, and proceeded at a cautious pace along a narrow and shaking path. The ground trembled so much beneath them, and their horses' feet sank so deeply in the plashy bog, that Viviana demanded, in a tone of some uneasiness, if he was sure he had taken the right course?

“If I had not,” replied Humphrey Chetham, “we should ere this have found our way to the bottom of the morass.”

As he spoke, a floundering plunge, accompanied by a horrible and quickly-stifled cry, told that one of their pursuers had perished in endeavouring to follow them.

“The poor wretch is gone to his account,” observed Viviana, in a tone of commiseration. “Have a care! – have a care, lest you share the same fate.”

“If I can save you, I care not what becomes of me,” replied the young merchant. “Since I can never hope to possess you, life has become valueless in my eyes.”

"Quicken your pace," shouted Guy Fawkes, who brought up the rear. "Our pursuers have discovered the track, and are making towards us."

"Let them do so," replied the young merchant. "They can do us no farther injury."

"That is false!" cried the voice of a soldier from behind. And, as the words were uttered, a shot was fired, which, though aimed against Chetham, took effect upon his steed. The animal staggered, and his rider had only time to slide from his back when he reeled off the path, and was ingulfed in the marsh.

Hearing the plunge of the steed, the man fancied he had hit his mark, and hallooed in an exulting voice to his companions. But his triumph was of short duration. A ball from the petronel of Guy Fawkes pierced his brain, and dropping from his saddle, he sank, together with his horse, which he dragged along with him into the quagmire.

"Waste no more shot," cried Humphrey Chetham; "the swamp will fight our battles for us. Though I grieve for the loss of my horse, I may be better able to guide you on foot."

With this, he seized Viviana's bridle, and drew her steed along at a quick pace, but with the greatest caution. As they proceeded, a light like that of a lantern was seen to rise from the earth, and approach them.

"Heaven be praised!" exclaimed Viviana: "some one has heard us, and is hastening to our assistance."

"Not so," replied Humphrey Chetham. "The light you behold is an *ignis fatuus*. Were you to trust yourself to its delusive gleam, it would lead you to the most dangerous parts of the moss."

And, as if to exhibit its real character, the little flame, which hitherto had burnt as brightly and steadily as a wax-candle, suddenly appeared to dilate, and assuming a purple tinge, emitted a shower of sparks, and then flitted rapidly over the plain.

"Woe to him that follows it!" cried Humphrey Chetham.

"It has a strange unearthly look," observed Viviana, crossing herself. "I have much difficulty in persuading myself it is not the work of some malignant sprite."

"It is only an exhalation of the marsh," replied Chetham. "But, see! others are at hand."

Their approach, indeed, seemed to have disturbed all the weird children of the waste. Lights were seen trooping towards them in every direction; sometimes stopping, sometimes rising in the air, now contracting, now expanding, and when within a few yards of the travellers, retreating with inconceivable swiftness.

"It is a marvellous and incomprehensible spectacle," remarked Viviana.

"The common folk hereabouts affirm that these Jack-o'-lanterns, as they term them, always appear in greater numbers when some direful catastrophe is about to take place," rejoined the young merchant.

"Heaven avert it from us," ejaculated Viviana.

"It is an idle superstition," returned Chetham. "But we must now keep silence," he continued, lowering his voice, and stopping near the charred stump of a tree, left, it would seem, as a mark. "The road turns here; and, unless our pursuers know it, we shall now quit them for ever. We must not let a sound betray the course we are about to take."

Having turned this dangerous corner in safety, and conducted his companions as noiselessly as possible for a few yards along the cross path, which being much narrower was consequently more perilous than the first, Humphrey Chetham stood still, and, imposing silence upon the others, listened to the approach of their pursuers. His prediction was speedily and terribly verified. Hearing the movement in advance, but unable to discover the course taken by the fugitives, the unfortunate soldiers, fearful of losing their prey, quickened their pace, in the expectation of instantly overtaking them. They were fatally undeceived. Four only of their number, besides their leader, remained, – two having perished in the manner heretofore described. The first of these, disregarding the caution of his comrade, laughingly urged his horse into a gallop, and, on passing the mark, sunk as if by magic,

and before he could utter a single warning cry, into the depths of the morass. His disappearance was so instantaneous, that the next in order, though he heard the sullen plunge, was unable to draw in the rein, and was likewise ingulfed. A third followed; and a fourth, in his efforts to avoid their fate, backed his steed over the slippery edge of the path. Only one now remained. It was the pursuivant, who, with the prudence that characterized all his proceedings, had followed in the rear. He was so dreadfully frightened, that, adding his shrieks to those of his attendants, he shouted to the fugitives, imploring assistance in the most piteous terms, and promising never again to molest them, if they would guide him to a place of safety. But his cries were wholly unheeded; and he perhaps endured in those few minutes of agony as much suffering as he had inflicted on the numerous victims of his barbarity. It was indeed an appalling moment. Three of the wretched men had not yet sunk, but were floundering about in the swamp, and shrieking for help. The horses, as much terrified as their riders, added their piercing cries to the half-suffocated yells. And, as if to make the scene more ghastly, myriads of dancing lights flitted towards them, and throwing an unearthly glimmer over this part of the morass, fully revealed their struggling figures. Moved by compassion for the poor wretches, Viviana implored Humphrey Chetham to assist them, and, finding him immovable, she appealed to Guy Fawkes.

“They are beyond all human aid,” the latter replied.

“Heaven have mercy on their souls!” ejaculated the priest “Pray for them, dear daughter. Pray heartily, as I am about to do.” And he recited in an audible voice the Romish formula of supplication for those *in extremis*.

Averting her gaze from the spectacle, Viviana joined fervently in the prayer.

By this time two of the strugglers had disappeared. The third, having freed himself from his horse, contrived for some moments, during which he uttered the most frightful cries, to keep his head above the swamp. His efforts were tremendous, but unavailing, and served only to accelerate his fate. Making a last desperate plunge towards the bank where the fugitives were standing, he sank above the chin. The expression of his face, shown by the ghastly glimmer of the fen-fires, as he was gradually swallowed up, was horrible.

“*Requiem æternam dona eis, Domine*,” exclaimed the priest.

“All is over,” cried Humphrey Chetham, taking the bridle of Viviana's steed, and leading her onwards. “We are free from our pursuers.”

“There is one left,” she rejoined, casting a look backwards.

“It is the pursuivant,” returned Guy Fawkes, sternly. “He is within shot,” he added, drawing his petronel.

“Oh, no – no! – in pity spare him!” cried Viviana. “Too many lives have been sacrificed already.”

“He is the cause of all the mischief,” answered Guy Fawkes, unwillingly replacing the petronel in his belt, “and may live to injure you and your father.”

“I will hope not,” rejoined Viviana; “but, spare him! – oh, spare him!”

“Be it as you please,” replied Guy Fawkes. “The marsh, I trust, will not be so merciful.”

With this, they slowly resumed their progress. On hearing their departure, the pursuivant renewed his cries in a more piteous tone than ever; but, in spite of the entreaties of Viviana, nothing could induce her companions to lend him assistance.

For some time they proceeded in silence, and without accident. As they advanced, the difficulties of the path increased, and it was fortunate that the moon, emerging from the clouds in which, up to this moment, she had been shrouded, enabled them to steer their course in safety. At length, after a tedious and toilsome march for nearly half a mile, the footing became more secure, the road widened, and they were able to quicken their pace. Another half mile landed them upon the western bank of the morass. Viviana's first impulse was to give thanks to Heaven for their deliverance, nor did she omit in her prayer a supplication for the unfortunate beings who had perished.

Arrived at the point now known as Rawson Nook, they entered a lane, and proceeded towards Astley Green, where perceiving a cluster of thatched cottages among the trees, they knocked at the door of the first, and speedily obtained admittance from its inmates, a turf-cutter and his wife. The man conveyed their steeds to a neighbouring barn, while the good dame offered Viviana such accommodation and refreshment as her humble dwelling afforded. Here they tarried till the following evening, as much to recruit Miss Radcliffe's strength, as for security.

At the young merchant's request, the turf-cutter went in the course of the day to see what had become of the pursuivant. He was nowhere to be found. But he accidentally learned from another hind, who followed the same occupation as himself, that a person answering to the officer's description had been seen to emerge from the moss near Baysnape at daybreak, and take the road towards Manchester. Of the unfortunate soldiers nothing but a steel cap and a pike, which the man brought away with him, could be discovered.

After much debate, it was decided that their safest plan would be to proceed to Manchester, where Humphrey Chetham undertook to procure them safe lodgings at the Seven Stars, – an excellent hostel, kept by a worthy widow, who, he affirmed, would do anything to serve him. Accordingly, they set out at nightfall, – Viviana taking her place before Guy Fawkes, and relinquishing Zayda to the young merchant and the priest. Shaping their course through Worsley, by Monton Green and Pendleton, they arrived in about an hour within sight of the town, which then, – not a tithe of its present size, and unpolluted by the smoky atmosphere in which it is now constantly enveloped, – was not without some pretensions to a picturesque appearance. Crossing Salford Bridge, they mounted Smithy-Bank, as it was then termed, and proceeding along Cateaton-street and Hanging Ditch, struck into Whithing (now Withy) Grove, at the right of which, just where a few houses were beginning to straggle up Shude Hill, stood, and still stands, the comfortable hostel of the Seven Stars. Here they stopped, and were warmly welcomed by its buxom mistress, Dame Sutcliffe. Muffled in Guy Fawkes's cloak, the priest gained the chamber to which he was ushered unobserved. And Dame Sutcliffe, though her Protestant notions were a little scandalized at her dwelling being made the sanctuary of a Popish priest, promised, at the instance of Master Chetham, whom she knew to be no favourer of idolatry in a general way, to be answerable for his safety.

CHAPTER VI.
THE DISINTERMENT

Having seen every attention shown to Viviana by the hostess, – who, as soon as she discovered that she had the daughter of Sir William Radcliffe of Ordsall, under her roof, bestirred herself in right earnest for her accommodation, – Humphrey Chetham, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, – it was past midnight, – expressed his determination to walk to his residence at Crumpsall, to put an end to any apprehension which might be entertained by the household at his prolonged absence.

With this view, he set forth; and Guy Fawkes, who seemed to be meditating some project which he was unwilling to disclose to the others, quitted the hostel with him, bidding the chamberlain sit up for him, as he should speedily return. They had not gone far when he inquired the nearest way to the Collegiate Church, and was answered that they were then proceeding towards it, and in a few moments should arrive at its walls. He next asked the young merchant whether he could inform him which part of the churchyard was allotted to criminals. Humphrey Chetham, somewhat surprised by the question, replied, “At the north-west, near the charnel,” adding, “I shall pass within a short distance of the spot, and will point it out to you.”

Entering Fennel Street, at the end of which stood an ancient cross, they soon came in sight of the church. The moon was shining brightly, and silvered the massive square tower of the fane, the battlements, pinnacles, buttresses, and noble eastern window, with its gorgeous tracery. While Guy Fawkes paused for a moment to contemplate this reverend and beautiful structure, two venerable personages, having long snowy beards, and wrapped in flowing mantles edged with sable fur, passed the end of the street. One of them carried a lantern, though it was wholly needless, as it was bright as day; and as they glided stealthily along, there was something so mysterious in their manner, that it greatly excited the curiosity of Guy Fawkes, who inquired from his companion if he knew who they were.

“The foremost is the warden of Manchester, the famous Doctor Dee," replied Humphrey Chetham, “divine, mathematician, astrologer, – and if report speaks truly, conjuror.”

“Is that Doctor Dee?” cried Guy Fawkes, in astonishment.

“It is,” replied the young merchant: “and the other in the Polish cap is the no-less celebrated Edward Kelley, the doctor's assistant, or, as he is ordinarily termed, his seer.”

“They have entered the churchyard,” remarked Guy Fawkes. “I will follow them.”

“I would not advise you to do so,” rejoined the other. “Strange tales are told of them. You may witness that it is not safe to look upon.”

The caution, however, was unheeded. Guy Fawkes had already disappeared, and the young merchant, shrugging his shoulders, proceeded on his way towards Hunt's Bank.

On gaining the churchyard, Guy Fawkes perceived the warden and his companion creeping stealthily beneath the shadow of a wall in the direction of a low fabric, which appeared to be a bone-house, or charnel, situated at the north-western extremity of the church. Before this building grew a black and stunted yew-tree. Arrived at it, they paused, and looked round to see whether they were observed. They did not, however, notice Guy Fawkes, who had concealed himself behind a buttress. Kelley then unlocked the door of the charnel, and brought out a pickaxe and matk. Having divested himself of his cloak, he proceeded to shovel out the mould from a new-made grave at a little distance from the building. Doctor Dee stood by, and held the lantern for his assistant.

Determined to watch their proceedings, Guy Fawkes crept towards the yew-tree, behind which he ensconced himself. Kelley, meanwhile, continued to ply his spade with a vigour that seemed almost incomprehensible in one so far stricken in years, and of such infirm appearance. At length he paused, and kneeling within the shallow grave, endeavoured to drag something from it. Doctor Dee knelt to assist him. After some exertion, they drew forth the corpse of a female, which had

been interred without coffin, and apparently in the habiliments worn during life. A horrible suspicion crossed Guy Fawkes. Resolving to satisfy his doubts at once, he rushed forward, and beheld in the ghastly lineaments of the dead the features of the unfortunate prophetess, Elizabeth Orton.

CHAPTER VII.
DOCTOR DEE

"How now, ye impious violators of the tomb! ye worse than famine-stricken wolves, that rake up the dead in churchyards!" cried Guy Fawkes, in a voice of thunder, to Doctor Dee and his companion; who, startled by his sudden appearance, dropped the body, and retreated to a short distance. "What devilish rites are ye about to enact, that ye thus profane the sanctity of the grave?"

"And who art thou that darest thus to interrupt us?" demanded Dee, sternly.

"It matters not," rejoined Fawkes, striding towards them. "Suffice it you are both known to *me*. You, John Dee, warden of Manchester, who deserve to be burnt at the stake for your damnable practices, rather than hold the sacred office you fill; and you, Edward Kelley, his associate, who boast of familiar intercourse with demons, and, unless fame belies you, have purchased the intimacy at the price of your soul's salvation. I know you both. I know, also, whose body you have disinterred – it is that of the ill-fated prophetess, Elizabeth Orton. And if you do not instantly restore it to the grave whence you have snatched it, I will denounce you to the authorities of the town."

"Knowing thus much, you should know still more," retorted Doctor Dee, "namely, that I am not to be lightly provoked. You have no power to quit the churchyard – nay, not so much as to move a limb without my permission."

As he spoke, he drew from beneath his cloak a small phial, the contents of which he sprinkled over the intruder. Its effect was wonderful and instantaneous. The limbs of Guy Fawkes stiffened where he stood. His hand remained immovably fixed upon the pommel of his sword, and he seemed transformed into a marble statue.

"You will henceforth acknowledge and respect my power," he continued. "Were it my pleasure, I could bury you twenty fathoms deep in the earth beneath our feet; or, by invoking certain spirits, convey you to the summit of yon lofty tower," pointing to the church, "and hurl you from it headlong. But I content myself with depriving you of motion, and leave you in possession of sight and speech, that you may endure the torture of witnessing what you cannot prevent."

So saying, he was about to return to the corpse with Kelley, when Guy Fawkes exclaimed, in a hollow voice,

"Set me free, and I will instantly depart."

"Will you swear never to divulge what you have seen?" demanded Dee, pausing.

"Solemnly," he replied.

"I will trust you, then," rejoined the Doctor; – "the rather that your presence interferes with my purpose."

Taking a handful of loose earth from an adjoining grave, and muttering a few words, that sounded like a charm, he scattered it over Fawkes. The spell was instantly broken. A leaden weight seemed to be removed from his limbs. His joints regained their suppleness, and with a convulsive start, like that by which a dreamer casts off a nightmare, he was liberated from his preternatural thraldom.

"And now, begone!" cried Doctor Dee, authoritatively.

"Suffer me to tarry with you a few moments," said Guy Fawkes, in a deferential tone. "Heretofore, I will freely admit, I regarded you as an impostor; but now I am convinced you are deeply skilled in the occult sciences, and would fain consult you on the future."

"I have already said that your presence troubles me," replied Doctor Dee. "But if you will call upon me at the College to-morrow, it may be I will give you further proofs of my skill."

"Why not now, reverend sir?" urged Fawkes. "The question I would ask is better suited to this dismal spot and witching hour, than to daylight and the walls of your study."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Dee. "Your name?"

"Guy Fawkes," replied the other.

"Guy Fawkes!" echoed the Doctor, starting. "Nay, then, I guess the nature of the question you would ask."

"Am I then known to you, reverend sir?" inquired Fawkes, uneasily.

"As well as to yourself – nay, better," answered the Doctor. "Bring the lantern hither, Kelley," he continued, addressing his companion. "Look!" he added, elevating the light so as to throw it upon the countenance of Fawkes: "it is the very face, – the bronzed and strongly-marked features, – the fierce black eye, – the iron frame, and foreign garb of the figure we beheld in the show-stone."

"It is," replied Kelley. "I could have singled him out amid a thousand. He looked thus as we tracked his perilous course, with his three companions, the priest, Chetham, and Viviana Radcliffe, across Chat Moss."

"How have you learned this?" cried Guy Fawkes, in amazement.

"By the art that reveals all things," answered Kelley.

"In proof that your thoughts are known to me," observed Dee, "I will tell you the inquiry you would make before it is uttered. You would learn whether the enterprise on which you are engaged will succeed."

"I would," replied Fawkes.

"Yet more," continued Dee. "I am aware of the nature of the plot, and could name to you all connected with it."

"Your power is, indeed, wonderful," rejoined Fawkes in an altered tone. "But will you give me the information I require?"

"Hum!" muttered Dee.

"I am too poor to purchase it," proceeded Fawkes, "unless a relic I have brought from Spain has any value in your eyes."

"Tush!" exclaimed Dee, angrily. "Do you suppose I am a common juggler, and practise my art for gain?"

"By no means, reverend sir," said Fawkes. "But I would not willingly put you to trouble without evincing my gratitude."

"Well, then," replied Dee, "I will not refuse your request. And yet I would caution you to beware how you pry into the future. You may repent your rashness when it is too late."

"I have no fear," rejoined Fawkes. "Let me know the worst."

"Enough," answered Dee. "And now listen to me. That carcass having been placed in the ground without the holy rites of burial being duly performed, I have power over it. And, as the witch of Endor called up Samuel, as is recorded in Holy Writ, – as Erichtho raised up a corpse to reveal to Sextus Pompeius the event of the Pharsalian war, – as Elisha breathed life into the nostrils of the Shunamite's son, – as Alcestis was invoked by Hercules, – and as the dead maid was brought back to life by Apollonius Thyaneus, – so I, by certain powerful incantations, will allure the soul of the prophetess, for a short space, to its former tenement, and compel it to answer my questions. Dare you be present at this ceremony?"

"I dare," replied Fawkes.

"Follow me, then," said Dee. "You will need all your courage."

Muttering a hasty prayer, and secretly crossing himself, Guy Fawkes strode after him towards the grave. By the Doctor's directions, he, with some reluctance, assisted Kelley to raise the corpse, and convey it to the charnel. Dee followed, bearing the lantern, and, on entering the building, closed and fastened the door.

The chamber in which Guy Fawkes found himself was in perfect keeping with the horrible ceremonial about to be performed. In one corner lay a mouldering heap of skulls, bones, and other fragments of mortality; in the other a pile of broken coffins, emptied of their tenants, and reared on end. But what chiefly attracted his attention, was a ghastly collection of human limbs, blackened with pitch, girded round with iron hoops, and hung, like meat in a shambles, against the wall. There were

two heads, and, though the features were scarcely distinguishable, owing to the liquid in which they had been immersed, they still retained a terrific expression of agony. Seeing his attention directed to these revolting objects, Kelley informed him they were the quarters of the two priests who had recently been put to death, which had been left there previously to being placed on the church-gates. The implements, and some part of the attire used by the executioner in his butcherly office, were scattered about, and mixed with the tools of the sexton; while in the centre of the room stood a large wooden frame supported by trestles. On this frame, stained with blood and smeared with pitch, showing the purpose to which it had been recently put, the body was placed. This done, Doctor Dee set down the lantern beside it; and, as the light fell upon its livid features, sullied with earth, and exhibiting traces of decay, Guy Fawkes was so appalled by the sight that he half repented of what he had undertaken.

Noticing his irresolution, Doctor Dee said, “You may yet retire if you think proper.”

“No,” replied Fawkes, rousing himself; “I will go through with it.”

“It is well,” replied Dee. And he extinguished the light.

An awful silence now ensued, broken only by a low murmur from Doctor Dee, who appeared to be reciting an incantation. As he proceeded, his tones became louder, and his accents those of command. Suddenly, he paused, and seemed to await a response. But, as none was made, greatly to the disappointment of Guy Fawkes, whose curiosity, notwithstanding his fears, was raised to the highest pitch, he cried, “Blood is wanting to complete the charm.”

“If that is all, I will speedily supply the deficiency,” replied Guy Fawkes; and, drawing his rapier, he bared his left arm, and pricked it deeply with the point of the weapon.

“I bleed now,” he cried.

“Sprinkle the corpse with the ruddy current,” rejoined Doctor Dee.

“Your commands are obeyed,” replied Fawkes. “I have placed my hand on its breast, and the blood is flowing upon it.”

Upon this the Doctor began to mutter an incantation in a louder and more authoritative tone than before. Presently, Kelley added his voice, and they both joined in a sort of chorus, but in a jargon wholly unintelligible to Guy Fawkes.

All at once a blue flame appeared above their heads, and, slowly descending, settled upon the brow of the corpse, lighting up the sunken cavities of the eyes, and the discoloured and distorted features.

“The charm works,” shouted Doctor Dee.

“She moves! she moves!” exclaimed Guy Fawkes. “She is alive!”

“Take off your hand,” cried the Doctor, “or mischief may ensue.” And he again continued his incantation.

“Down on your knees!” he exclaimed, at length, in a terrible voice. “The spirit is at hand.”

There was a rushing sound, and a stream of dazzling lightning shot down upon the corpse, which emitted a hollow groan. In obedience to the Doctor's commands, Guy Fawkes had prostrated himself on the ground: but he kept his gaze steadily fixed on the body, which, to his infinite astonishment, slowly arose, until it stood erect upon the frame. There it remained perfectly motionless, with the arms close to the sides, and the habiliments torn and dishevelled. The blue light still retained its position upon the brow, and communicated a horrible glimmer to the features. The spectacle was so dreadful that Guy Fawkes would fain have averted his eyes, but he was unable to do so. Doctor Dee and his companion, meanwhile, continued their invocations, until, as it seemed to Fawkes, the lips of the corpse moved, and an awful voice exclaimed, “Why have you called me?”

“Daughter!” replied Doctor Dee, rising, “in life thou wert endowed with the gift of prophecy. In the grave, that which is to come must be revealed to thee. We would question thee.”

“Speak, and I will answer,” replied the corpse.

"Interrogate her, my son," said Dee, addressing Fawkes, "and be brief, for the time is short. So long only as that flame burns have I power over her."

"Spirit of Elizabeth Orton," cried Guy Fawkes, "if indeed thou standest before me, and some demon hath not entered thy frame to delude me, – by all that is holy, and by every blessed saint, I adjure thee to tell me whether the scheme on which I am now engaged for the advantage of the Catholic Church will prosper?"

"Thou art mistaken, Guy Fawkes," returned the corpse. "Thy scheme is not for the advantage of the Catholic Church."

"I will not pause to inquire wherefore," continued Fawkes. "But, grant that the means are violent and wrongful, will the end be successful?"

"The end will be death," replied the corpse.

"To the tyrant – to the oppressors?" demanded Fawkes.

"To the conspirators," was the answer.

"Ha!" ejaculated Fawkes.

"Proceed, if you have aught more to ask," cried Dr. Dee. "The flame is expiring."

"Shall we restore the fallen religion?" demanded Fawkes.

But before the words could be pronounced the light vanished, and a heavy sound was heard, as of the body falling on the frame.

"It is over," said Doctor Dee.

"Can you not summon her again?" asked Fawkes, in a tone of deep disappointment. "I had other questions to ask."

"Impossible," replied the Doctor. "The spirit is fled, and will not be recalled. We must now commit the body to the earth. And this time it shall be more decently interred."

"My curiosity is excited, – not satisfied," said Guy Fawkes. "Would it were to occur again!"

"It is ever thus," replied Doctor Dee. "We seek to know that which is interdicted, – and quench our thirst at a fountain that only inflames our curiosity the more. Be warned, my son. You are embarked on a perilous enterprise, and if you pursue it, it will lead you to certain destruction."

"I cannot retreat," rejoined Fawkes, "and would not, if I could. I am bound by an oath too terrible to be broken."

"I will absolve you of your oath, my son," said Dr. Dee, eagerly.

"You cannot, reverend sir," replied Fawkes. "By no sophistry could I clear my conscience of the ties imposed upon it. I have sworn never to desist from the execution of this scheme, unless those engaged in it shall give me leave. Nay, so resolved am I, that if I stood alone I would go on."

As he spoke, a deep groan issued from the corpse.

"You are again warned, my son," said Dee.

"Come forth," said Guy Fawkes, rushing towards the door, and throwing it open. "This place stifles me."

The night has already been described as bright and beautiful. Before him stood the Collegiate Church bathed in moonlight. He gazed abstractedly at this venerable structure for a few moments, and then returned to the charnel, where he found Doctor Dee and Kelley employed in placing the body of the prophetess in a coffin, which they had taken from a pile in the corner. He immediately proffered his assistance, and in a short space the task was completed. The coffin was then borne towards the grave, at the edge of which it was laid while the burial-service was recited by Doctor Dee. This ended, it was lowered into its shallow resting-place, and speedily covered with earth.

When all was ready for their departure, the Doctor turned to Fawkes, and, bidding him farewell, observed,

"If you are wise, my son, you will profit by the awful warning you have this night received."

"Before we part, reverend sir," replied Fawkes, "I would ask if you know of other means whereby an insight may be obtained into the future?"

“Many, my son,” replied Dee. “I have a magic glass, in which, with due preparation, you may behold exact representations of coming events. I am now returning to the College, and if you will accompany me, I will show it to you.”

The offer was eagerly accepted, and the party quitted the churchyard.

CHAPTER VIII.
THE MAGIC GLASS

The old College of Manchester occupied, as is well known, the site of the existing structure, called after the benevolent individual by whom that admirable charity was founded, and whom we have ventured to introduce in this history, – the Chetham Hospital. Much, indeed, of the ancient building remains; for though it was considerably repaired and enlarged, being "very ruinous and in great decay," at the time of its purchase in 1654, by the feoffees under Humphrey Chetham's will, from the sequestrators of the Earl of Derby's estates, still the general character of the fabric has been preserved, and several of its chambers retained. Originally built on the foundation of a manor-house denominated The Baron's Hall, – the abode of the Grelleys and the De la Warrs, lords of Manchester, – the College continued to be used as the residence of the warden and fellows of the Collegiate Church until the reign of Edward the First, when that body was dissolved. On the accession, however, of Mary, the College was re-established; but the residence of the ecclesiastical body being removed to a house in Deansgate, the building was allowed to become extremely dilapidated, and was used partly as a prison for recusants and other offenders, and partly as a magazine for powder. In this state Dr. Dee found it when he succeeded to the wardenship in 1595, and preferring it, notwithstanding its ruinous condition, to the house appointed for him elsewhere, took up his abode within it.

Situated on a high rock, overhanging the river Irk – at that time a clear stream, remarkable for the excellence of its fish, – and constructed entirely of stone, the old College had then, and still has to a certain extent, a venerable and monastic appearance. During Dee's occupation of it, it became a sort of weird abode in the eyes of the vulgar, and many a timorous look was cast at it by those who walked at eventide on the opposite bank of the Irk. Sometimes the curiosity of the watchers was rewarded by beholding a few sparks issue from the chimney, and now and then, the red reflection of a fire might be discerned through the window. But generally nothing could be perceived, and the building seemed as dark and mysterious as its occupant.

One night, however, a loud explosion took place, – so loud, indeed, that it shook the whole pile to its foundation, dislodged one or two of the chimneys, and overthrew an old wall, the stones of which rolled into the river beneath. Alarmed by the concussion, the inhabitants of Hunt's Bank rushed forth, and saw, to their great alarm, that the wing of the college occupied by Doctor Dee was in flames. Though many of them attributed the circumstance to supernatural agency, and were fully persuaded that the enemy of mankind was at that instant bearing off the conjuror and his assistant, and refused to interfere to stop the conflagration, others, more humane and less superstitious, hastened to lend their aid to extinguish the flames. On reaching the College, they could scarcely credit their senses on finding that there was no appearance of fire; and they were met by the Doctor and his companion at the gates, who informed them that their presence was unnecessary, as all danger was over. From that night Doctor Dee's reputation as a wizard was firmly established.

At the period of this history, Doctor Dee was fast verging on eighty, having passed a long life in severe and abstruse study. He had travelled much, had visited most of the foreign courts, where he was generally well received, and was profoundly versed in mathematics, astronomy, the then popular science of judicial astrology, and other occult learning. So accurate were his calculations esteemed, that he was universally consulted as an oracle. For some time, he resided in Germany, where he was invited by the Emperor Charles the Fifth, and retained by his brother and successor, Ferdinando. He next went to Louvain, where his reputation had preceded him; and from thence to Paris, where he lectured at the schools on geometry, and was offered a professorship of the university, but declined it. On his return to England in 1551, he was appointed one of the instructors of the youthful monarch, Edward the Sixth, who presented him with an annual pension of a hundred marks. This he was

permitted to commute for the rectory of Upton-upon-Severn, which he retained until the accession of Mary, when being charged with devising her Majesty's destruction by enchantments, – certain waxen images of the Queen having been found within his abode, – he was thrown into prison, rigorously treated, and kept in durance for a long period. At length, from want of sufficient proof against him, he was liberated.

Dee shared the common fate of all astrologers: he was alternately honoured and disgraced. His next patron was Lord Robert Dudley (afterwards the celebrated Earl of Leicester), who, it is well-known, was a firm believer in the superstitious arts to which Dee was addicted, and by whom he was employed, on the accession of Elizabeth, to erect a scheme to ascertain the best day for her coronation. His prediction was so fortunate that it procured him the favour of the Queen, from whom he received many marks of regard. As it is not needful to follow him through his various wanderings, it may be sufficient to mention, that in 1564 he proceeded to Germany on a visit to the Emperor Maximilian, to whom he dedicated his "*Monas Hieroglyphica*;" that in 1571 he fell grievously sick in Lorrain, whither two physicians were despatched to his aid by Elizabeth; and that on his recovery he returned to his own country, and retired to Mortlake, where he gathered together a vast library, comprising the rarest and most curious works on all sciences, together with a large collection of manuscripts.

While thus living in retirement, he was sought out by Edward Kelley, a native of Worcestershire, who represented himself as in possession of an old book of magic, containing forms of invocation, by which spirits might be summoned and controlled, as well as a ball of ivory, found in the tomb of a bishop who had made great progress in hermetic philosophy, which was filled with the powder of projection. These treasures Kelley offered to place in the hands of the Doctor on certain conditions, which were immediately acquiesced in, and thenceforth Kelley became a constant inmate in his house, and an assistant in all his practices. Shortly afterwards, they were joined by a Polish nobleman, Albert de Laski, Palatine of Suabia, whom they accompanied to Prague, at the instance of the Emperor Rodolph the Second, who desired to be initiated into their mysteries. Their reception at this court was not such as to induce a long sojourn at it; and Dee having been warned by his familiar spirits to sell his effects and depart, complied with the intimation, and removed to Poland. The same fate attended him here. The nuncio of the Pope denounced him as a sorcerer, and demanded that he should be delivered up to the Inquisition. This was refused by the monarch; but Dee and his companion were banished from his dominions, and compelled to fly to Bohemia, where they took refuge in the castle of Trebona, belonging to Count Rosenberg. Shortly afterwards, Dee and Kelley separated, the magical instruments being delivered to the former, who bent his course homewards; and on his arrival in London was warmly welcomed by the Queen. During his absence, his house at Mortlake had been broken open by the populace, under the pretence of its being the abode of a wizard, and rifled of its valuable library and manuscripts, – a loss severely felt by its owner. Some years were now passed by Dee in great destitution, during which he prosecuted his studies with the same ardour as before, until at length in 1595, when he was turned seventy, fortune again smiled upon him, and he was appointed to the wardenship of the College at Manchester, whither he repaired, and was installed in great pomp.

But his residence in this place was not destined to be a tranquil one. His reputation as a dealer in the black art had preceded him, and rendered him obnoxious to the clergy, with whom he had constant disputes, and a feud subsisted between him and the fellows of his church. It has already been mentioned that he refused to occupy the house allotted him, but preferred taking up his quarters in the old dilapidated College. Various reasons were assigned by his enemies for this singular choice of abode. They affirmed – and with some reason – that he selected it because he desired to elude observation, – and that his mode of life, sufficiently improper in a layman, was altogether indecorous in an ecclesiastic. By the common people he was universally regarded as a conjuror – and many at first came to consult him; but he peremptorily dismissed all such applicants; and, when seven females, supposed to be possessed, were brought to him that he might exercise his power over the evil spirits, he refused to interfere. He also publicly examined and rebuked a juggler, named Hartley, who

pretended to magical knowledge. But these things did not blind his enemies, who continued to harass him to such a degree, that he addressed a petition to James the First, entreating to be brought to trial, when the accusations preferred against him might be fully investigated, and his character cleared. The application, and another to the like effect addressed to parliament, were disregarded. Dee had not been long established in Manchester when he was secretly joined by Kelley, and they recommenced their search after the grand secret, – passing the nights in making various alchymical experiments, or in fancied conferences with invisible beings.

Among other magical articles possessed by Doctor Dee was a large globe of crystal, which he termed the Holy Stone, because he believed it had been brought him by “angelical ministry;” and “in which,” according to Meric Casaubon, “and out of which, by persons qualified for it, and admitted to the sight of it, all shapes and figures mentioned in every action were seen, and voices heard.” The same writer informs us it was “round-shaped, of a pretty bigness, and most like unto crystal.” Dee himself declared to the Emperor Rodolph, “that the spirits had brought him a stone of that value that no earthly kingdom was of such worthiness as to be compared to the virtue and dignity thereof.” He was in the habit of daily consulting this marvellous stone, and recording the visions he saw therein, and the conferences he held through it with the invisible world.

Followed by Guy Fawkes and Kelley, the Doctor took his way down Long Mill Gate, and stopping at an arched gateway on the left, near which, on the site of the modern structure, stood the public school, founded a century before by Hugh Oldham, Bishop of Exeter, – he unlocked a small wicket, and entered a spacious court, surrounded on one side by high stone walls, and on the other by a wing of the College.

Conducting his guest to the principal entrance of the building, which lay at the farther end of the court, Doctor Dee ushered him into a large chamber, panelled with oak, and having a curiously-moulded ceiling, ornamented with grotesque sculpture. This room, still in existence, and now occupied by the master of the school, formed Doctor Dee's library. Offering Fawkes a chair, the Doctor informed him that when all was ready, Kelley should summon him, and, accompanied by his assistant, he withdrew. Half an hour elapsed before Kelley returned. Motioning Guy Fawkes to follow him, he led the way through several intricate passages to a chamber which was evidently the magician's sacred retreat. In a recess on one side stood a table, covered with cabalistic characters and figures, referring to the celestial influences. On it was placed the holy stone, diffusing such a glistening radiance as is emitted by the pebble called cat's-eye. On the floor a wide circle was described, in the rings of which magical characters, resembling those on the table, were traced. In front stood a brasier, filled with flaming coals; and before it hung a heavy black curtain, appearing to shroud some mystery from view.

Desiring Fawkes to place himself in the centre of the circle, Doctor Dee took several ingredients from a basket handed him by Kelley, and cast them into the brasier. As each herb or gum was ignited, the flame changed its colour; now becoming crimson, now green, now blue, while fragrant or noxious odours loaded the atmosphere. These suffumigations ended, Dee seated himself on a chair near the table, whither he was followed by Kelley, and commanding Fawkes not to move a footstep, as he valued his safety, he waved his wand, and began in a solemn tone to utter an invocation. As he continued, a hollow noise was heard overhead, which gradually increased in loudness, until it appeared as if the walls were tumbling about their ears.

“The spirits are at hand!” cried Dee. “Do not look behind you, or they will tear you in pieces.”

As he spoke, a horrible din was heard, as of mingled howling, shrieking, and laughter. It was succeeded by a low faint strain of music, which gradually died away, and then all was silent.

“All is prepared,” cried Dee. “Now, what would you behold?”

“The progress of the great enterprise,” replied Fawkes.

Doctor Dee waved his wand. The curtains slowly unfolded, and Guy Fawkes perceived as in a glass a group of dark figures; amongst which he noticed one in all respects resembling himself. A priest was apparently proposing an oath, which the others were uttering.

“Do you recognise them?” said Doctor Dee.

“Perfectly,” replied Fawkes.

“Look again,” said Dee.

As he spoke the figures melted away, and a new scene was presented on the glass. It was a gloomy vault, filled with barrels, partly covered with fagots and billets of wood.

“Have you seen enough?” demanded Dee.

“No,” replied Fawkes, firmly. “I have seen what is past. I would behold that which is to come.”

“Look again, then,” rejoined the Doctor, waving his wand.

For an instant the glass was darkened, and nothing could be discerned except the lurid flame and thick smoke arising from the brasier. The next moment, an icy chill shot through the frame of Guy Fawkes as he beheld a throng of skeletons arranged before him. The bony fingers of the foremost of the grisly assemblage were pointed towards an indistinct object at its feet. As this object gradually became more defined, Guy Fawkes perceived that it was a figure resembling himself, stretched upon the wheel, and writhing in the agonies of torture.

He uttered an exclamation of terror, and the curtains were instantly closed.

Half an hour afterwards, Guy Fawkes quitted the College, and returned to the Seven Stars.

CHAPTER IX.
THE PRISON ON SALFORD BRIDGE

On the following morning, Guy Fawkes had a long and private conference with Father Oldcorne. The priest appeared greatly troubled by the communication made to him, but he said nothing, and was for some time lost in reflection, and evidently weighing within himself what course it would be best to pursue. His uneasiness was not without effect on Viviana Radcliffe, and she ventured at last to inquire whether he apprehended any new danger.

"I scarcely know what I apprehend, dear daughter," he answered. "But circumstances have occurred which render it impossible we can remain longer in our present asylum with safety. We must quit it at nightfall."

"Is our retreat then discovered?" inquired Viviana, in alarm.

"Not as yet, I trust," replied Oldcorne; "but I have just ascertained from a messenger that the pursuivant, who, we thought, had departed for Chester, is still lingering within the town. He has offered a large reward for my apprehension, and having traced us to Manchester, declares he will leave no house unsearched till he finds us. He has got together a fresh band of soldiers, and is now visiting every place he thinks likely to afford us shelter."

"If this is the case," rejoined Viviana, "why remain here a single moment? Let us fly at once."

"That would avail nothing, – or rather, it would expose us to fresh risk, dear daughter," replied Oldcorne. "Every approach to the town is guarded, and soldiers are posted at the corners of the streets, who stop and examine each suspected person."

"Heaven protect us!" exclaimed Viviana.

"But this is not all," continued the priest. "By some inexplicable and mysterious means, the designs of certain of the most assured friends of the catholic cause have come to the knowledge of our enemies, and the lives and safeties of many worthy men will be endangered: amongst others, that of your father."

"You terrify me!" cried Viviana.

"The rack shall force nothing from me, father," said Fawkes, sternly.

"Nor from me, my son," rejoined Oldcorne. "I have that within me which will enable me to sustain the bitterest agonies that the persecutors of our Church can inflict."

"Nor shall it force aught from me," added Viviana. "For, though you have trusted me with nothing that can implicate others, I plainly perceive some plot is in agitation for the restoration of our religion, and I more than suspect Mr. Catesby is its chief contriver."

"Daughter!" exclaimed Oldcorne, uneasily.

"Fear nothing, father," she rejoined. "As I have said, the rack shall not force me to betray you. Neither should it keep me silent when I feel that my counsel – such as it is – may avail you. The course you are pursuing is a dangerous and fatal one; dangerous to yourselves, and fatal to the cause you would serve. Do not deceive yourselves. You are struggling hopelessly and unrighteously, and Heaven will never assist an undertaking which has its aim in the terrible waste of life you meditate."

Father Oldcorne made no reply, but walked apart with Guy Fawkes; and Viviana abandoned herself to sorrowful reflection.

Shortly after this, the door was suddenly thrown open, and Humphrey Chetham rushed into the room. His looks were full of apprehension, and Viviana was at no loss to perceive that some calamity was at hand.

"What is the matter?" she cried, rising.

"The pursuivant and his men are below," he replied. "They are interrogating the hostess, and are about to search the house. I managed to pass them unperceived."

"We will resist them to the last," said Guy Fawkes, drawing a petronel.

"Resistance will be in vain," rejoined Humphrey Chetham. "They more than treble our number."

"Is there no means of escape?" asked Viviana.

"None whatever," replied Chetham. "I hear them on the stairs. The terrified hostess has not dared to deny you, and is conducting them hither."

"Stand back!" cried Guy Fawkes, striding towards the door, "and let me alone confront them. That accursed pursuivant has escaped me once. But he shall not do so a second time."

"My son," said Oldcorne, advancing towards him; "preserve yourself, if possible. Your life is of consequence to the great cause. Think not of us – think not of revenging yourself upon this caitiff. But think of the high destiny for which you are reserved. That window offers a means of retreat. Avail yourself of it. Fly! – Fly!"

"Ay, fly!" repeated Viviana. "And you, Humphrey Chetham, – your presence here can do no good. Quick! – they come!"

"Nothing should induce me to quit you at such a moment, Viviana," replied Chetham, "but the conviction that I may be able to liberate you, should these miscreants convey you to prison."

"Fly! – fly, my son," cried Oldcorne. "They are at the door."

Thus urged, Guy Fawkes reluctantly yielded to Oldcorne's entreaties and sprang through the window. He was followed by Chetham. Viviana darted to the casement, and saw that they had alighted in safety on the ground, and were flying swiftly up Shude Hill. Meanwhile, the pursuivant had reached the door, which Chetham had taken the precaution to fasten, and was trying to burst it open. The bolts offered but a feeble resistance to his fury, and the next moment he dashed into the room, at the head of a band of soldiers.

"Seize them!" he cried. "Ha!" he added, glancing round the room with a look of disappointment, "where are the others? Where is the soldier in the Spanish garb? Where is Humphrey Chetham? Confess at once, dog!" he continued, seizing the priest by the throat, "or I will pluck the secret from your breast."

"Do not harm him," interposed Viviana. "I will answer the question. They are fled."

"Fled!" echoed the pursuivant in consternation. "How?"

"Through that window," replied Viviana.

"After them!" cried the pursuivant to some of his attendants. "Take the soldier, dead or alive! And now," he continued, as his orders were obeyed, "you, Father Oldcorne, Jesuit and traitor; and you, Viviana Radcliffe, his shelterer and abettor, I shall convey you both to the prison on Salford Bridge. Seize them, and bring them along."

"Touch me not," rejoined Viviana, pushing the men aside, who rudely advanced to obey their leader's command. "You have no warrant for this brutality. I am ready to attend you. Take my arm, father."

Abashed at this reproof, the pursuivant stalked out of the room. Surrounded by the soldiers, Viviana and the priest followed. The sad procession was attended by crowds to the very door of the prison, where, by the pursuivant's commands, they were locked in separate cells.

The cell in which Viviana was confined was a small chamber at the back of the prison, and on the upper story. It had a small grated window overlooking the river. It has already been mentioned that this prison was originally a chapel built in the reign of Edward the Third, and had only recently been converted into a place of security for recusants. The chamber allotted to Viviana was contrived in the roof, and was so low that she could scarcely stand upright in it. It was furnished with a chair, a small table, and a straw pallet.

The hours passed wearily with Viviana as they were marked by the deep-toned clock of the Collegiate Church, the tall tower of which fronted her window. Oppressed by the most melancholy reflections, she was for some time a prey almost to despair. On whatever side she looked, the prospect was equally cheerless, and her sole desire was that she might find a refuge from her cares in the

seclusion of a convent. For this she prayed, – and she prayed also that Heaven would soften the hearts of her oppressors, and enable those who suffered to endure their yoke with patience. In the evening provisions were brought her, and placed upon the table, together with a lamp, by a surly looking gaoler. But Viviana had no inclination to eat, and left them untouched. Neither could she prevail upon herself to lie down on the wretched pallet, and she therefore determined to pass the night in the chair.

After some hours of watchfulness, her eyelids closed, and she continued to slumber until she was aroused by a slight noise at the window. Starting at the sound, she flew towards it, and perceived in the gloom the face of a man. She would have uttered a loud cry, when the circumstances of her situation rushed to her mind, and the possibility that it might be a friend checked her. The next moment satisfied her that she had acted rightly. A voice, which she recognised as that of Humphrey Chetham, called to her by name in a low tone, bidding her fear nothing, as he was come to set her free.

"How have you managed to reach this window?" asked Viviana.

"By a rope ladder," he answered. "I contrived in the darkness to clamber upon the roof of the prison from the parapets of the bridge, and, after securing the ladder to a projection, dropped the other end into a boat, rowed by Guy Fawkes, and concealed beneath the arches of the bridge. If I can remove this bar so as to allow you to pass through the window, dare you descend the ladder?"

"No," replied Viviana, shuddering. "My brain reels at the mere idea."

"Think of the fate you will escape," urged Chetham.

"And what will become of Father Oldcorne?" asked Viviana. "Where is he?"

"In the cell immediately beneath you," replied Chetham.

"Can you not liberate him?" she continued.

"Assuredly, if he will risk the descent," answered Chetham, reluctantly.

"Free him first," rejoined Viviana, "and at all hazards I will accompany you."

The young merchant made no reply, but disappeared from the window. Viviana strained her gaze downwards; but it was too dark to allow her to see anything. She, however, heard a noise like that occasioned by a file; and shortly afterwards a few muttered words informed her that the priest was passing through the window. The cords of the ladder shook against the bars of her window, – and she held her breath for fear. From this state of suspense she was relieved in a few minutes by Humphrey Chetham, who informed her that Oldcorne had descended in safety, and was in the boat with Guy Fawkes.

"I will fulfil my promise," replied Viviana, trembling; "but I fear my strength will fail me."

"You had better find death below than tarry here," replied Humphrey Chetham, who as he spoke was rapidly filing through the iron bar. "In a few minutes this impediment will be removed."

The young merchant worked hard, and in a short time the stout bar yielded to his efforts.

"Now, then," he cried, springing into the room, "you are free."

"I dare not make the attempt," said Viviana; "my strength utterly fails me."

"Nay, then," he replied; "I will take the risk upon myself. You must not remain here."

So saying, he caught her in his arms, and bore her through the window.

With some difficulty, and no little risk, he succeeded in gaining a footing on the ladder. This accomplished, he began slowly to descend. When half way down, he found he had overrated his strength, and he feared he should be compelled to quit his hold; but, nerved by his passion, he held on, and making a desperate effort, completed the descent in safety.

CHAPTER X.
THE FATE OF THE PURSUIVANT

Assisted by the stream, and plying his oars with great rapidity, Guy Fawkes soon left the town far behind him; nor did he relax his exertions until checked by Humphrey Chetham. He then ceased rowing, and directed the boats towards the left bank of the river.

“Here we propose to land,” observed the young merchant to Viviana. “We are not more than a hundred yards from Ordsall Cave, where you can take refuge for a short time, while I proceed to the Hall, and ascertain whether you can return to it with safety.”

“I place myself entirely in your hands,” she replied; “but I fear such a course will be to rush into the very face of danger. Oh! that I could join my father at Holywell! With him I should feel secure.”

“Means may be found to effect your wishes,” returned Humphrey Chetham; “but, after the suffering you have recently endured, it will scarcely be prudent to undertake so long a journey without a few hours' repose. To-morrow, – or the next day, – you may set out.”

“I am fully equal to it now,” rejoined Viviana, eagerly; “and any fatigue I may undergo will not equal my present anxiety. You have already done so much for me, that I venture to presume still further upon your kindness. Provide some means of conveyance for me and for Father Oldcorne to Chester, and I shall for ever be beholden to you.”

“I will not only do what you desire, Viviana, if it be possible," answered Chetham; “but, if you will allow me, I will serve as your escort.”

“And I, also,” added Guy Fawkes.

“All I fear is, that your strength may fail you,” continued the young merchant, in a tone of uneasiness.

“Fear nothing then,” replied Viviana. “I am made of firmer material than you imagine. Think only of what *you* can do, and doubt not my ability to do it, also.”

“I ever deemed you of a courageous nature, daughter,” observed Oldcorne; “but your resolution surpasses my belief.”

By this time the boat had approached the shore. Leaping upon the rocky bank, the young merchant assisted Viviana to land, and then performed the same service for the priest. Guy Fawkes was the last to disembark; and, having pulled the skiff aground, he followed the others, who waited for him at a short distance. The night was profoundly dark, and the path they had taken, being shaded by large trees, was scarcely discernible. Carefully guiding Viviana, who leaned on him for support, the young merchant proceeded at a slow pace, and with the utmost caution. Suddenly, they were surprised and alarmed by a vivid blaze of light bursting through the trees on the left.

“Some building must be on fire!” exclaimed Viviana.

“It is Ordsall Hall, – it is your father's residence,” cried Humphrey Chetham.

“It is the work of that accursed pursuivant, I will be sworn,” said Guy Fawkes.

“If it be so, may Heaven's fire consume him!” rejoined Oldcorne.

“Alas! alas!” cried Viviana, bursting into tears, “I thought myself equal to every calamity; but this new stroke of fate is more than I can bear.”

As she spoke, the conflagration evidently increased. The sky was illumined by the red reflection of the flames; and as the party hurried forward to a rising ground, whence a better view could be obtained of the spectacle, they saw the dark walls of the ancient mansion apparently wrapped in the devouring element.

“Let us hasten thither,” cried Viviana, distractedly.

“I and Guy Fawkes will fly there,” replied the young merchant, “and render all the assistance in our power. But, first, let me convey you to the cave.”

More dead than alive, Viviana suffered herself to be borne in that direction. Making his way over every impediment, Chetham soon reached the excavation; and depositing his lovely burthen upon the stone couch, and leaving her in charge of the priest, he hurried with Guy Fawkes towards the Hall.

On arriving at the termination of the avenue, they found, to their great relief, that it was not the main structure, but an outbuilding which was in flames, and from its situation the young merchant conceived it to be the stables. As soon as they made this discovery, they slackened their pace, being apprehensive, from the shouts and other sounds that reached them, that some hostile party might be among the assemblage. Crossing the drawbridge – which was fortunately lowered, – they were about to shape their course towards the stables, which lay at the further side of the Hall, when they perceived the old steward, Heydocke, standing at the doorway and wringing his hands in distraction. Humphrey Chetham immediately called to him.

“I should know that voice!” cried the old man, stepping forward. “Ah! Mr. Chetham, is it you? You are arrived at a sad time, sir – a sad time – to see the old house, where I have dwelt, man and boy, sixty years and more, in flames. But one calamity has trodden upon the heels of another. Ever since Sir William departed for Holywell nothing has gone right – nothing whatever. First, the house was searched by the pursuivant and his gang; then, my young mistress disappeared; then it was rifled by these plunderers; and now, to crown all, it is on fire, and will speedily be burnt to the ground.”

“Say not so,” replied the young merchant. “The flames have not yet reached the Hall; and, if exertion is used, they may be extinguished without further mischief.”

“Let those who have kindled them extinguish them,” replied Heydocke, sullenly. “I will not raise hand more.”

“Who are the incendiaries?” demanded Fawkes.

“The pursuivant and his myrmidons,” replied Heydocke. “They came here to-night; and after ransacking the house under pretence of procuring further evidence against my master, and carrying off everything valuable they could collect – plate, jewels, ornaments, money, and even wearing-apparel, – they ended by locking up all the servants, – except myself, who managed to elude their vigilance, – in the cellar, and setting fire to the stables.”

“Wretches!” exclaimed Humphrey Chetham.

“Wretches, indeed!” repeated the steward. “But this is not all the villany they contemplate. I had concealed myself in the store-room, under a heap of lumber, and in searching for me they chanced upon a barrel of gunpowder – ”

“Well!” interrupted Guy Fawkes.

“Well, sir,” pursued Heydocke, “I heard the pursuivant remark to one of his comrades, 'This is a lucky discovery. If we can't find the steward, we'll blow him and the old house to the devil.' Just then, some one came to tell him I was hidden in the stables, and the whole troop adjourned thither. But being baulked of their prey, I suppose, they wreaked their vengeance in the way you perceive.”

“No doubt,” rejoined Humphrey Chetham. “But they shall bitterly rue it. I will myself represent the affair to the Commissioners.”

“It will be useless,” groaned Heydocke. “There is no law to protect the property of a Catholic.”

“Where is the barrel of gunpowder you spoke of?” asked Guy Fawkes, as if struck by a sudden idea.

“The villains took it with them when they quitted the store-room," replied the steward. “I suppose they have got it in the yard.”

“They have lighted a fire which shall be quenched with their blood," rejoined Fawkes, fiercely. “Follow me. I may need you both.”

So saying, he darted off, and turning the corner, came in front of the blazing pile. Occupying one side of a large quadrangular court, the stables were wholly disconnected with the Hall, and though the fire burnt furiously, yet as the wind carried the flames and sparks in a contrary direction, it was possible the latter building might escape if due precaution were taken. So far, however, from this

being the case, it seemed the object of the bystanders to assist the progress of the conflagration. Several horses, saddled and bridled, had been removed from the stable, and placed within an open cowhouse. To these Guy Fawkes called Chetham's attention, and desired him and the old steward to secure some of them. Hastily giving directions to Heydocke, the young merchant obeyed, – sprang on the back of the nearest courser, and seizing the bridles of two others, rode off with them. His example was followed by Heydocke, and one steed only was left. Such was the confusion and clamour prevailing around, that the above proceeding passed unnoticed.

Guy Fawkes, meanwhile, ensconcing himself behind the court-gate, looked about for the barrel of gunpowder. For some time he could discover no trace of it. At length, beneath a shed, not far from him, he perceived a soldier seated upon a small cask, which he had no doubt was the object he was in search of. So intent was the man upon the spectacle before him, that he was wholly unaware of the approach of an enemy; and creeping noiselessly up to him, Guy Fawkes felled him to the ground with a blow from the heavy butt-end of his petronel. The action was not perceived by the others; and carrying the cask out of the yard, Fawkes burst in the lid, and ascertained that the contents were what they had been represented. He then glanced around, to see how he could best execute his purpose.

On the top of the wall adjoining the stables he beheld the pursuivant, with three or four soldiers, giving directions and issuing orders. Another and lower wall, forming the opposite side of the quadrangle, and built on the edge of the moat, approached the scene of the fire, and on this, Guy Fawkes, with the barrel of gunpowder on his shoulder, mounted. Concealing himself behind a tree which overshadowed it, he watched a favourable moment for his enterprise.

He had not to wait long. Prompted by some undefinable feeling, which caused him to rush upon his destruction, the pursuivant ventured upon the roof of the stables, and was followed by his companions. No sooner did this occur, than Guy Fawkes dashed forward, and hurled the barrel with all his force into the midst of the flames, throwing himself at the same moment into the moat. The explosion was instantaneous and tremendous; – so loud as to be audible even under the water. Its effects were terrible. The bodies of the pursuivant and his companions were blown into the air, and carried to the further side of the moat. Of those standing before the building, several were destroyed, and all more or less injured. The walls were thrown down by the concussion, and the roof and its fiery fragments projected into the moat. An effectual stop was put to the conflagration; and, when Guy Fawkes rose to the boiling and agitated surface of the water, the flames were entirely extinguished. Hearing groans on the opposite bank of the moat, he forced his way through the blazing beams, which were hissing near him; and snatching up a still burning fragment, hastened in the direction of the sound. In the blackened and mutilated object that met his gaze, he recognised the pursuivant. The dying wretch also recognised him, and attempted to speak; but in vain – his tongue refused its office, and with a horrible attempt at articulation, he expired.

Alarmed by the explosion, the domestics, – who it has already been mentioned were confined in the cellar; – were rendered so desperate by their fears, that they contrived to break out of their prison, and now hastened to the stables to ascertain the cause of the report. Leaving them to assist the sufferers, whose dreadful groans awakened some feelings of compunction in his iron breast, Guy Fawkes caught the steed, – which had broken its bridle and rushed off, and now stood shivering, shaking, and drenched in moisture near the drawbridge, – and, mounting it, galloped towards the cave.

At its entrance, he was met by Humphrey Chetham and Oldcorne, who eagerly inquired what had happened.

Guy Fawkes briefly explained.

“It is the hand of Heaven manifested by your arm, my son,” observed the priest. “Would that it had stricken the tyrant and apostate prince by whom our church is persecuted! But his turn will speedily arrive.”

“Peace, father!” cried Guy Fawkes, sternly.

"I do not lament the fate of the pursuivant," observed Humphrey Chetham. "But this is a frightful waste of human life – and in such a cause!"

"It is the cause of Heaven, young sir," rejoined the priest, angrily.

"I do not think so," returned Chetham; "and, but for my devotion to Viviana, I would have no further share in it."

"You are at liberty to leave us, if you think proper," retorted the priest, coldly.

"Nay, say not so, father," interposed Viviana, who had been an unobserved listener to the foregoing discourse. "You owe your life – your liberty, to Mr. Chetham."

"True, daughter," replied the priest. "I have been too hasty, and entreat his forgiveness."

"You have it, reverend sir," rejoined the young merchant. "And now, Master Heydocke," he added, turning to the steward, "you may return to the Hall with safety. No one will molest you more, and your presence may be needed."

"But my young mistress – " said Heydocke.

"I am setting out for Holywell to join my father," replied Viviana. "You will receive our instructions from that place."

"It is well," returned the old man, bowing respectfully. "Heaven shield us from further misfortune!"

Humphrey Chetham having assisted Viviana into the saddle, and the rest of the party having mounted, they took the road to Chester, while Heydocke returned to the Hall.

CHAPTER XI.
THE PILGRIMAGE TO ST. WINIFRED'S WELL

Early on the following morning, the party, who had ridden hard, and had paused only for a short time at Knutsford to rest their steeds, approached the ancient and picturesque city of Chester. Skirting its high, and then partly fortified walls, above which appeared the massive tower of the venerable cathedral, they passed through the east-gate, and proceeding along the street deriving its name from that entrance, were about to halt before the door of a large hostel, called the Saint Werburgh's Abbey, when, to their great surprise, they perceived Catesby riding towards them.

“I thought I could not be mistaken,” cried the latter, as he drew near and saluted Viviana. “I was about to set out for Manchester with a despatch to you from your father, Miss Radcliffe, when this most unexpected and fortunate encounter spares me the journey. But may I ask why I see you here, and thus attended?” he added, glancing uneasily at Humphrey Chetham.

A few words from Father Oldcorne explained all. Catesby affected to bend his brow, and appear concerned at the relation. But he could scarcely repress his satisfaction.

“Sir William Radcliffe *must* join us now,” he whispered to the priest.

“He must – he *shall*,” replied Oldcorne, in the same tone.

“Your father wishes you to join him at Holt, Miss Radcliffe,” remarked Catesby, turning to her, “whence the pilgrimage starts to-morrow for Saint Winifred's Well. There are already nearly thirty devout persons assembled.”

“Indeed!” replied Viviana. “May I inquire their names.”

“Sir Everard and Lady Digby,” replied Catesby; “the Lady Anne Vaux and her sister, Mrs. Brooksby; Mr. Ambrose Rookwood and his wife, the two Winters, Tresham, Wright, Fathers Garnet and Fisher, and many others, in all probability unknown to you. The procession started ten days ago from Gothurst, in Buckinghamshire, Sir Everard Digby's residence, and proceeded from thence by slow stages to Norbrook and Haddington, at each of which houses it halted for some days. Yesterday, it reached Holt, and starts, as I have just told you, to-morrow for Holywell. If you are so disposed, you will be able to attend it.”

“I will gladly do so,” replied Viviana. “And since I find it is not necessary to hurry forward, I will rest myself for a short time here.”

So saying, she dismounted, and the whole party entered the hostel. Viviana withdrew to seek a short repose, and glance over her father's letter, while Catesby, Guy Fawkes, and Oldcorne, were engaged in deep consultation. Humphrey Chetham, perceiving that his attendance was no further required, and that he was an object of suspicion and dislike to Catesby, – for whom he also entertained a similar aversion, – prepared to return. And when Viviana made her appearance, he advanced to bid her farewell.

“I can be of no further service to you, Viviana,” he said, in a mournful tone; “and as my presence might be as unwelcome to your father, as it seems to be to others of your friends, I will now take my leave.”

“Farewell, Mr. Chetham,” she replied. “I will not attempt to oppose your departure; for, much as I grieve to lose you – and that I do so these tears will testify, – I feel that it is for the best. I owe you much – more – far more than I can ever repay. It would be unworthy in me, and unfair to you, to say that I do not, and shall not ever feel the deepest interest in you; that, next to my father, there is no one whom I regard – nay, whom I love so much.”

“Love! Viviana?” echoed the young merchant, trembling.

“Love, Mr. Chetham,” she continued, turning very pale; “since you compel me to repeat the word. I avow it boldly, because – ” and her voice faltered, – "I would not have you suppose me ungrateful, and because I never can be yours.”

"I will not attempt to dissuade you from the fatal determination you have formed of burying your charms in a cloister," rejoined Humphrey Chetham. "But, oh! if you *do* love me, why condemn yourself – why condemn me to hopeless misery?"

"I will tell you why," replied Viviana. "Because you are not of my faith; and because I never will wed a heretic."

"I am answered," replied the young merchant, sadly.

"Mr. Chetham," interposed Oldcorne, who had approached them unperceived; "it is in your power to change Viviana's determination."

"How?" asked the young merchant, starting.

"By being reconciled to the Church of Rome."

"Then it will remain unaltered," replied Chetham, firmly.

"And, if Mr. Chetham would consent to this proposal, *I* would not," said Viviana. "Farewell," she added, extending her hand to him, which he pressed to his lips. "Do not let us prolong an interview so painful to us both. The best wish I can desire for you is, that we may never meet again."

Without another word, and without hazarding a look at the object of his affections, Chetham rushed out of the room, and mounting his horse, rode off in the direction of Manchester.

"Daughter," observed Oldcorne, as soon as he was gone, "I cannot too highly approve of your conduct, or too warmly applaud the mastery you display over your feelings. But – " and he hesitated.

"But what, father?" cried Viviana, eagerly. "Do you think I have done wrong in dismissing him?"

"By no means, dear daughter," replied the priest. "You have acted most discreetly. But you will forgive me if I urge you – nay, implore you not to take the veil; but rather to bestow your hand upon some Catholic gentleman – "

"Such as Mr. Catesby," interrupted Viviana, glancing in the direction of the individual she mentioned, who was watching them narrowly from the further end of the room.

"Ay, Mr. Catesby," repeated Oldcorne, affecting not to notice the scornful emphasis laid on the name. "None more fitting could be found, nor more worthy of you. Our Church has not a more zealous servant and upholder; and he will be at once a father and a husband to you. Such a union would be highly profitable to our religion. And, though it is well for those whose hearts are burthened with affliction, and who are unable to render any active service to their faith, to retire from the world, it behoves every sister of the Romish Church to support it at a juncture like the present, at any sacrifice of personal feeling."

"Urge me no more, father," replied Viviana, firmly. "I will make every sacrifice for my religion, consistent with principle and feeling. But I will not make this; neither am I required to make it. And I beg you will entreat Mr. Catesby to desist from further importunity."

Oldcorne bowed and retired. Nor was another syllable exchanged between them prior to their departure.

Crossing the old bridge over the Dee, then defended at each extremity by a gate and tower, the party took the road to Holt, where they arrived in about an hour. The recent conversation had thrown a restraint over them, which was not removed during the journey. Habitually taciturn, as has already been remarked, Guy Fawkes seemed gloomier and more thoughtful than ever; and though he rode by the side of Viviana, he did not volunteer a remark, and scarcely appeared conscious of her presence. Catesby and Oldcorne kept aloof, and it was not until they came in sight of the little town which formed their destination that the former galloped forward, and striking into the path on the right, begged Viviana to follow him. A turn in the road shortly afterwards showed them a large mansion screened by a grove of beech-trees.

"That is the house to which we are going," observed Catesby.

And as he spoke, they approached a lodge, the gates of which being opened by an attendant, admitted them to the avenue.

Viviana's heart throbbed with delight at the anticipated meeting with her father; but she could not repress a feeling of anxiety at the distressing intelligence she had to impart to him. As she drew near the house she perceived him walking beneath the shade of the trees with two other persons; and quickening her pace, sprang from her steed, and almost before he was aware of it was in his arms.

"Why do I see you here so unexpectedly, my dear child?" cried Sir William Radcliffe, as soon as he had recovered from the surprise which her sudden appearance occasioned him. "Mr. Catesby only left this morning, charged with a letter entreating you to set out without delay, – and now I behold you. What has happened?"

Viviana then recounted the occurrences of the last few days.

"It is as I feared," replied Sir William, in a desponding tone. "Our oppressors will never cease till they drive us to desperation!"

"They will not!" rejoined a voice behind him. "Well may we exclaim with the prophet – 'How long, O Lord, shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear? Shall I cry out to thee suffering violence, and thou wilt not save? Why hast thou showed me iniquity and grievance, to see rapine and injustice before me? Why lookest thou upon them that do unjust things, and holdest thy peace when the wicked devoureth the man that is more just than himself?'"

Viviana looked in the direction of the speaker and beheld a man in a priestly garb, whose countenance struck her forcibly. He was rather under the middle height, of a slight spare figure, and in age might be about fifty. His features, which in his youth must have been pleasing, if not handsome, and which were still regular, were pale and emaciated; but his eye was dark, and of unusual brilliancy. A single glance at this person satisfied her it was Father Garnet, the provincial of the English Jesuits; nor was she mistaken in her supposition.

Of this remarkable person, so intimately connected with the main events of the history about to be related, it may be proper to offer some preliminary account. Born at Nottingham in 1554, in the reign of Queen Mary, and of obscure parentage, Henry Garnet was originally destined to the Protestant Church, and educated, with a view to taking orders, at Winchester school, whence it was intended he should be removed in due course to Oxford. But this design was never carried into effect. Influenced by motives, into which it is now scarcely worth while inquiring, and which have been contested by writers on both sides of the question, Garnet proceeded from Winchester to London, where he engaged himself as corrector of the press to a printer of law-books, named Tottel, in which capacity he became acquainted with Sir Edward Coke and Chief Justice Popham, – one of whom was afterwards to be the leading counsel against him, and the other his judge. After continuing in this employment for two years, during which he had meditated a change in his religion, he went abroad, and travelling first to Madrid, and then to Rome, saw enough of the Catholic priesthood to confirm his resolution, and in 1575 he assumed the habit of a Jesuit. Pursuing his studies with the utmost zeal and ardour at the Jesuits' College, under the celebrated Bellarmine, and the no less celebrated Clavius, he made such progress, that upon the indisposition of the latter, he was able to fill the mathematical chair. Nor was he less skilled in philosophy, metaphysics, and divinity; and his knowledge of Hebrew was so profound that he taught it publicly in the Roman schools.

To an enthusiastic zeal in the cause of the religion he had espoused, Garnet added great powers of persuasion and eloquence, – a combination of qualities well fitting him for the office of a missionary priest; and undismayed by the dangers he would have to encounter, and eager to propagate his doctrines, he solicited to be sent on this errand to his own country. At the instance of Father Persons, he received an appointment to the mission in 1586, and he secretly landed in England in the same year. Braving every danger, and shrinking from no labour, he sought on all hands to make proselytes to the ancient faith, and to sustain the wavering courage of its professors. Two years afterwards, on the imprisonment of the Superior of the Jesuits, being raised to that important post, he was enabled to extend his sphere of action; and redoubling his exertions in consequence, he so

well discharged his duties, that it was mainly owing to him that the Catholic party was kept together during the fierce persecutions of the latter end of Elizabeth's reign.

Compelled to personate various characters, as he travelled from place to place, Garnet had acquired a remarkable facility for disguise; and such was his address and courage, that he not unfrequently imposed upon the very officers sent in pursuit of him. Up to the period of Elizabeth's demise, he had escaped arrest; and, though involved in the treasonable intrigue with the king of Spain, and other conspiracies, he procured a general pardon under the great seal. His office and profession naturally brought him into contact with the chief Catholic families throughout the kingdom; and he maintained an active correspondence with many of them, by means of his various agents and emissaries. The great object of his life being the restoration of the fallen religion, to accomplish this, as he conceived, great and desirable end, he was prepared to adopt any means, however violent or obnoxious. When, under the seal of confession, Catesby revealed to him his dark designs, so far from discouraging him, all he counselled was caution. Having tested the disposition of the wealthier Romanists to rise against their oppressors, and finding a general insurrection, as has before been stated, impracticable, he gave every encouragement and assistance to the conspiracy forming among the more desperate and discontented of the party. At his instigation, the present pilgrimage to Saint Winifred's Well was undertaken, in the hope that, when so large a body of the Catholics were collected together, some additional aid to the project might be obtained.

One of the most mysterious and inexplicable portions of Garnet's history is that relating to Anne Vaux. This lady, the daughter of Lord Vaux of Harrowden, a rigid Catholic nobleman, and one of Garnet's earliest patrons and friends, on the death of her father, in 1595, attached herself to his fortunes, – accompanied him in all his missions, – shared all his privations and dangers, – and, regardless of calumny or reproach, devoted herself entirely to his service. What is not less singular, her sister, who had married a Catholic gentleman named Brooksby, became his equally zealous attendant. Their enthusiasm produced a similar effect on Mr. Brooksby; and wherever Garnet went, all three accompanied him.

By his side, on the present occasion, stood Sir Everard Digby. Accounted one of the handsomest, most accomplished, and best-informed men of his time, Sir Everard, at the period of this history only twenty-four, had married, when scarcely sixteen, Maria, heiress of the ancient and honourable family of Mulshoe, with whom he obtained a large fortune, and the magnificent estate of Gothurst, or Gaythurst, in Buckinghamshire. Knighted by James the First at Belvoir Castle, on his way from Scotland to London, Digby, who had once formed one of the most brilliant ornaments of the court, had of late in a great degree retired from it. “Notwithstanding,” writes Father Greenway, “that he had dwelt much in the Queen's court, and was in the way of obtaining honours and distinction by his graceful manners and rare parts, he chose rather to bear the cross with the persecuted Catholics, *et vivere abjectus in domo Domini*, than to sail through the pleasures of a palace and the prosperities of the world, to the shipwreck of his conscience and the destruction of his soul.” Having only when he completed his minority professed the Catholic religion, he became deeply concerned at its fallen state, and his whole thoughts were bent upon its restoration. This change in feeling was occasioned chiefly, if not altogether, by Garnet, by whom his conversion had been accomplished.

Sir Everard Digby was richly attired in a black velvet doublet, with sleeves slashed with white satin, and wore a short mantle of the same material, similarly lined. He had the enormous trunk hose, heretofore mentioned as the distinguishing peculiarity of the costume of the period, and wore black velvet shoes, ornamented with white roses. An ample ruff encircled his throat. His hat was steeple-crowned, and somewhat broader in the leaf than was ordinarily worn, and shaded with a plume of black feathers. His hair was raven black, and he wore a pointed beard, and moustaches. His figure was tall and stately, and his features grave and finely formed.

By this time the group had been joined by the others, and a friendly greeting took place. Guy Fawkes was presented by Catesby to Sir William Radcliffe and Sir Everard Digby. To Garnet he

required no introduction, and Father Oldcorne was known to all. After a little further conversation, the party adjourned to the house, which belonged to a Welsh Catholic gentleman, named Griffiths, who, though absent at the time, had surrendered it to the use of Sir Everard Digby and his friends.

On their entrance, Viviana was introduced by her father to Lady Digby, who presided as hostess, and welcomed her with great cordiality. She was then conducted to her own room, where she was speedily joined by Sir William; and they remained closeted together till summoned to the principal meal of the day. At the table, which was most hospitably served, Viviana found, in addition to her former companions, a large assemblage, to most of whom she was a stranger, consisting of Anne Vaux, Mr. Brooksby and his wife, Ambrose Rookwood, two brothers named Winter, two Wrights, Francis Tresham, – persons of whom it will be necessary to make particular mention hereafter, – and several others, in all amounting to thirty.

The meal over, the company dispersed, and Viviana and her father, passing through an open window, wandered forth upon a beautiful and spreading lawn, and thence under the shade of the beech-trees. They had not been long here, anxiously conferring on recent events, when they perceived Garnet and Catesby approaching.

“Father, dear father!” cried Viviana, hastily, “I was about to warn you; but I have not time to do so now. Some dark and dangerous plot is in agitation to restore our religion. Mr. Catesby is anxious to league you with it. Do not – do not yield to his solicitations!”

“Fear nothing on that score, Viviana,” replied Sir William, “I have already perplexities enow, without adding to them.”

“I will leave you, then,” she replied. And, as soon as the others came up, she made some excuse for withdrawing, and returned to the house. The window of her chamber commanded the avenue, and from it she watched the group. They remained for a long time pacing up and down, in earnest conversation. By and by, they were joined by Oldcorne and Fawkes. Then came a third party, consisting of the Winters and Wrights; and, lastly, Sir Everard Digby and Tresham swelled the list.

The assemblage was then harangued by Catesby, and the most profound attention paid to his address. Viviana kept her eye fixed upon her father's countenance, and from its changing expression inferred what effect the speech produced upon him. At its conclusion, the assemblage separated in little groups; and she perceived, with great uneasiness, that Father Garnet passed his arm through that of her father, and led him away. Some time elapsed, and neither of them re-appeared.

“My warning was in vain; he *has* joined them!” she exclaimed.

“No, Viviana!” cried her father's voice behind her. “I have *not* joined them. Nor *shall* I do so.”

“Heaven be praised!” she exclaimed, flinging her arms around his neck.

Neither of them were aware that they were overheard by Garnet, who had noiselessly followed Sir William into the room, and muttered to himself, “For all this, he *shall* join the plot, and she *shall* wed Catesby.”

He then coughed slightly, to announce his presence; and, apologizing to Viviana for the intrusion, told her he came to confess her previously to the celebration of mass, which would take place that evening, in a small chapel in the house. Wholly obedient to the command of her spiritual advisers, Viviana instantly signified her assent; and, her father having withdrawn, she laid open the inmost secrets of her heart to the Jesuit. Severely reprobating her love for a heretic, before he would give her absolution, Garnet enjoined her, as a penance, to walk barefoot to the holy well on the morrow, and to make a costly offering at the shrine of the saint. Compliance being promised to his injunction, he pronounced the absolution, and departed.

Soon after this, mass was celebrated by Garnet, and the sacrament administered to the assemblage.

An hour before daybreak, the party again assembled in the chapel, where matins were performed; after which, the female devotees, who were clothed in snow-white woollen robes, with wide sleeves and hoods, and having large black crosses woven in front, retired for a short time, and

re-appeared, with their feet bared, and hair unbound. Each had a large rosary attached to the cord that bound her waist.

Catesby thought Viviana had never appeared so lovely as in this costume; and as he gazed at her white and delicately formed feet, her small rounded ankles, her dark and abundant tresses falling in showers almost to the ground, he became more deeply enamoured than before. His passionate gaze was, however, unnoticed, as the object of it kept her eyes steadily fixed on the ground. Lady Digby, who was a most beautiful woman, scarcely appeared to less advantage; and, as she walked side by side with Viviana in the procession, the pair attracted universal admiration from all who beheld them.

Everything being at last in readiness, and the order of march fully arranged, two youthful choristers, in surplices, chanting a hymn to Saint Winifred, set forth. They were followed by two men bearing silken banners, on one of which was displayed the martyrdom of the saint whose shrine they were about to visit, and on the other a lamb carrying a cross; next came Fathers Oldcorne and Fisher, each sustaining a large silver crucifix; next, Garnet alone, in the full habit of his order; next, the females, in the attire before described, and walking two and two; next, Sir Everard Digby and Sir William Radcliffe; and lastly, the rest of the pilgrims, to the number of fourteen. These were all on foot. But at the distance of fifty paces behind them rode Guy Fawkes and Catesby, at the head of twenty well-armed and well-mounted attendants, intended to serve as a guard in case of need.

In such order, this singular procession moved forward at a slow pace, taking its course along a secluded road leading to the ridge of hills extending from the neighbourhood of Wrexham to Mold, and from thence, in an almost unbroken chain, to Holywell.

Along these heights, whence magnificent views were obtained of the broad estuary of the Dee and the more distant ocean, the train proceeded without interruption; and though the road selected was one seldom traversed, and through a country thinly peopled, still, the rumour of the pilgrimage having gone abroad, hundreds were stationed at different points to behold it. Some expressions of disapprobation were occasionally manifested by the spectators; but the presence of the large armed force effectually prevented any interference.

Whenever such a course could be pursued, the procession took its way over the sward. Still the sufferings of the females were severe in the extreme; and before Viviana had proceeded a mile, her white, tender feet were cut and bruised by the sharp flints over which she walked; every step she took leaving a bloody print behind it. Lady Digby was in little better condition. But such was the zeal by which they, in common with all the other devotees following them, were animated, that not a single murmur was uttered.

Proceeding in this way, they reached at mid-day a small stone chapel on the summit of the hill overlooking Plas-Newydd, where they halted, and devotions being performed, the females bathed their lacerated limbs in a neighbouring brook, after which they were rubbed with a cooling and odorous ointment. Thus refreshed, they again set forward, and halting a second time at Plas-Isaf, where similar religious ceremonies were observed, they rested for the day at a lodging prepared for their reception in the vicinity of Mold.

The night being passed in prayer, early in the morning they commenced their march in the same order as before. When Viviana first set her feet to the ground, she felt as if she were treading on hot iron, and the pain was so excruciating, that she could not repress a cry.

“Heed not your sufferings, dear daughter,” observed Garnet, compassionately; “the waters of the holy fountain will heal the wounds both of soul and body.”

Overcoming her agony by a powerful effort, she contrived to limp forward; and the whole party was soon after in motion. Halting; for two hours at Pentre-Terfyn, and again at Skeviog, the train, towards evening, reached the summit of the hill overlooking Holywell, at the foot of which could be seen the ruins of Basingwerk Abbey, and the roof of the ancient chapel erected over the sacred spring. At this sight, those who were foremost in the procession fell on their knees; and the horsemen

dismounting, imitated their example. An earnest supplication to Saint Winifred was then poured forth by Father Garnet, in which all the others joined, and a hymn in her honour chanted by the choristers.

Their devotions ended, the whole train arose, and walked slowly down the steep descent. As they entered the little town, which owes its name and celebrity to the miraculous spring rising within it, they were met by a large concourse of people, who had flocked from Flint, and the other neighbouring places to witness the ceremonial. Most of the inhabitants of Holywell, holding their saintly patroness in the deepest veneration, viewed this pilgrimage to her shrine as a proper tribute of respect, while those of the opposite faith were greatly impressed by it. As the procession advanced, the crowd divided into two lines to allow it passage, and many fell on their knees imploring a blessing from Garnet, which he in no instance refused. When within a hundred yards of the sacred well, they were met by a priest, followed by another small train of pilgrims. A Latin oration having been pronounced by this priest, and replied to in the same language by Garnet, the train was once more put in motion, and presently reached the ancient fabric built over the sacred fountain.

The legend of Saint Winifred is so well known, that it is scarcely necessary to repeat it. For the benefit of the uninformed, however, it may be stated that she flourished about the middle of the seventh century, and was the daughter of Thewith, one of the chief lords of Wales. Devoutly educated by a monk named Beuno, who afterwards received canonization, she took the veil, and retired to a small monastery (the ruins of which still exist), built by her father near the scene of her subsequent martyrdom. Persecuted by the addresses of Caradoc, son of Alan, Prince of Wales, she fled from him to avoid his violence. He followed, and inflamed by fury at her resistance, struck off her head. For this atrocity, the earth instantly opened and swallowed him alive, while from the spot where the head had fallen gushed forth a fountain of unequalled force and purity, producing more than a hundred tons a minute. The bottom of this miraculous well is strewn with pebbles streaked with red veins, in memory of the virgin saint from whose blood it sprung. On its margin grows an odorous moss, while its gelid and translucent waters are esteemed a remedy for many disorders. Winifred's career did not terminate with her decapitation. Resuscitated by the prayers of Saint Beuno, she lived many years a life of the utmost sanctity, bearing, as a mark of the miracle performed in her behalf, a narrow crimson circle round her throat.

Passing the chapel adjoining the well, built in the reign of Henry the Seventh by his mother, the pious Countess of Richmond, the pilgrims came to the swift clear stream rushing from the well. Instead of ascending the steps leading to the edifice built over the spring, they plunged into the stream, and crossing it entered the structure by a doorway on the further side. Erected by the Countess of Richmond at the same period as the chapel, this structure, quadrangular in form, and of great beauty, consists of light clustered pillars and mouldings, supporting the most gorgeous tracery and groining, the whole being ornamented with sculptured bosses, pendent capitals, fretwork, niches, and tabernacles. In the midst is a large stone basin, to receive the water of the fountain, around which the procession now grouped, and as soon as all were assembled, at the command of Father Garnet they fell on their knees.

It was a solemn and striking sight to see this large group prostrated around that beautiful fountain, and covered by that ancient structure, – a touching thing to hear the voice of prayer mingling with the sound of the rushing water. After this, they all arose. A hymn was then chanted, and votive offerings made at the shrine of the saint. The male portion of the assemblage then followed Garnet to the chapel, where further religious rites were performed, while the female devotees, remaining near the fountain, resigned themselves to the care of several attendants of their own sex, who, having bathed their feet in the water, applied some of the fragrant moss above described to the wounds; and, such was the faith of the patients, or the virtue of the application, that in a short time they all felt perfectly restored, and able to join their companions in the chapel. In this way the evening was spent, and it was not until late that they finished their devotions, and departed to the lodgings provided for them in the town.

Impressed with a strange superstitious feeling, which he could scarcely acknowledge to himself, Guy Fawkes determined to pass the night near the well. Accordingly, without communicating his intention to his companions, he threw a small knapsack over his shoulder, containing a change of linen, and a few articles of attire, and proceeded thither.

It was a brilliant moonlight night, and, as the radiance, streaming through the thin clustered columns of the structure, lighted up its fairy architecture, and fell upon the clear cold waves of the fountain, revealing the blood-streaked pebbles beneath, the effect was inexpressibly beautiful. So charmed was Guy Fawkes by the sight, that he remained for some timestanding near the edge of the basin, as if fascinated by the marvellous spring that boiled up and sparkled at his feet. Resolved to try the efficacy of the bath, he threw off his clothes and plunged into it. The water was cold as ice; but on emerging from it he felt wonderfully refreshed. Having dressed himself, he wrapped his cloak around him, and, throwing himself on the stone floor, placed the knapsack under his head, and grasping a petronel in his right hand, to be ready in case of a surprise, disposed himself to slumber.

Accustomed to a soldier's couch, he soon fell asleep. He had not long closed his eyes when he dreamed that from out of the well a female figure, slight and unsubstantial as the element from which it sprang, arose. It was robed in what resembled a nun's garb; but so thin and vapoury, that the very moonlight shone through it. From the garments of the figure, as well as from the crimson circle round its throat, he knew that it must be the patroness of the place, the sainted Winifred, that he beheld. He felt no horror, but the deepest awe. The arm of the figure was raised, – its benignant regards fixed upon him, – and, as soon as it gained the level of the basin, it glided towards him.

CHAPTER XII.
THE VISION

Before daybreak on the following morning, Garnet, who had been engaged in earnest conference with Catesby during the whole of the night, repaired to the sacred spring for the purpose of bathing within it, and performing his solitary devotions at the shrine of the saint. On ascending the steps of the structure, he perceived Guy Fawkes kneeling beside the fountain, apparently occupied in prayer; and, being unwilling to disturb him, he paused. Finding, however, after the lapse of a few minutes, that he did not move, he advanced towards him, and was about to lay his hand upon his shoulder, when he was arrested by the very extraordinary expression of his countenance. His lips were partly open, but perfectly motionless, and his eyes, almost starting from their sockets, were fixed upon the boiling waters of the spring. His hands were clasped, and his look altogether was that of one whose faculties were benumbed by awe or terror.

Aware of the fanatical and enthusiastical character of Fawkes, Garnet had little doubt that, by keeping long vigil at the fountain, he had worked himself into such a state of over-excitement as to imagine he beheld some preternatural appearance; and it was with some curiosity that he awaited the result. Glancing in the same direction, his eye rested upon the bottom of the well, but he could discern nothing except the glittering and blood-streaked pebbles, and the reflection of the early sunbeams that quivered on its steaming surface. At length, a convulsion passed over the frame of the kneeler, and heaving a deep sigh he arose. Turning to quit the spring, he confronted Garnet, and demanded, in a low voice —

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.