

## The Gunpowder Plot: Fact or Royal Plot? 1605 <sup>1</sup>

“Ages to come will be in doubt whether it were a fact or a fiction.”

—Sir Edward Coke <sup>2</sup>



THE GUNPOWDER PLOT CONSPIRATORS, VIZ., GUY FAWKES, ROBERT CATESBY, THOMAS PERCY, JOHN WRIGHT, CHRISTOPHER WRIGHT, ROBERT WINTER, THOMAS WINTER AND THOMAS BATES.

“A strange letter, from a strange hand, by a strange messenger; without date to it, name at it, and (I had almost said) sense in it. A letter which, even when it was opened, was still sealed, such the affected obscurity therein.”

—Fuller <sup>3</sup>

“Tis well known, that many of the papists then and now have denied the fact, and imputed the whole of the affair to the artifice of Salisbury [Robert Cecil] and we are told, that others of opposite principles have confidently asserted, ‘that there never was any such thing’ really as the Gunpowder Plot, but that it was a plot of King James’ contriving, to endear himself unto the people.”

—William Harris <sup>4</sup>

Friar Roger Bacon, (1214–1292 or 1294) whose works were written at Oxford about the year 1270, has expressly named the ingredients of gunpowder as a well-known composition, to which was then used for diversion purposes:

‘An artificial fire that shall burn at any distance, can be composed of salt-petre [rock salt] and other ingredients; and afterwards a noise like that of thunder, and flashes as of lightning may be produced in the air, more terrible than those caused by nature itself; for a small quantity of the composition, not exceeding a cubical inch, in bulk, duly applied, makes a dreadful noise, with violent flushings: and this may be done several ways, whereby a city or an army may be destroyed. These are very wonderful things, if one knew how to use them with the just quantity of proper ingredients. We learn this experiment from that puerile amusement prepared in many parts of the world, to wit, that an instrument being made of the size of a cubic inch, from the violence of that (alt

<sup>1</sup> Based on the Domestic and Foreign State Papers dealing with the Reign of James I., preserved at the Public Record Office, and at the British Museum (Additional MSS. 6178)

<sup>2</sup> On the trial of the gunpowder conspirators

<sup>3</sup> *Church History*, Book X., P. 32

<sup>4</sup> (a) William Harris. *An Historical and Critical Account*, 1753 (b) Causabon. *Of Credulity and Incredulity*, Vol. I., P. 202, 8vo, London, 1668

called salt-petre, such a horrible sound is produced in bursting so lender a thing, namely, a scroll of parchment, that it greatly exceeds thunder in sound, and the sunbeams in brightness of fire.’<sup>5</sup>

The common story respecting the invention of gunpowder was about the year 1320 when one Bartholdus Schwartz, a German monk and student in alchemy, then much in fashion, having in the course of his work mixed salt-petre, sulphur and nitre in a mortar, and partly covered it with a stone, by some accident it took fire and blew the stone with great violence to a considerable distance. Thus by one accident furnishing the hint of gunpowder, its use, and a piece of ordnance proper for using it; and it is worthy of observation, that stones were thrown from mortars at a considerable elevation, long before point blank shooting was attempted. Besides Schwartz mentioned, many more are named to have discovered gunpowder, such as, Salmoneus, Albertus, and Magnus, but upon such slender grounds as to be not worth confuting. With respect to Schwartz, it is possible the story may be true, but it does not at all follow that gunpowder was not before known; it being more than probable that the same discovery may have been made by more than one person. Many of the authorities above cited seem to prove that gunpowder was known in the East long before the invention attributed to Schwartz, and some of them even add ordnance.

King James was entertained in Stamford for the Easter term. It would be his first visit to Burghley House now inherited by Thomas Cecil, Burghley’s son and elder brother to Robert Cecil. On April 27, 1603, James removed himself from Burghley House towards Oliver Cromwell’s and dined at Sir Anthony Mildmay’s. The same day, being:

‘Wednesday in Easter week, there were thirteen persons slain and blown in pieces with gunpowder by misfortune, at the gunpowder-mill at Radcliffe, and did much other hurt in divers places.’<sup>6</sup>

Should the above account have been a practice of the Gunpowder Plot, it can only be assumed at this point, whilst the Court of James itself was unpolished and unmannered; it was so far from being civil to women that the Ladies, even Anne the Queen, could hardly pass by the King’s apartment without receiving some disrespect.<sup>7</sup> On such a morning of Tuesday November 5, 1605, which day was appointed for the opening of a new Parliamentary session, London rang with the news that in the course of the night a diabolical plot had been discovered; the King and legislature were to have been destroyed at a blow. In a chamber beneath the House of Lords had been found a great quantity of gunpowder, and with it a man, calling himself John Johnson, who fully acknowledged his intention to have fired the magazine while the royal speech was being delivered, according to custom, overhead, and so to have blown King, Lords, and Commons into the air. At the same time, he doggedly refused to say who his accomplices were, or whether he had any. Johnson, whose true name was presently

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<sup>5</sup> *Antiquarian Repertory*, 1784

<sup>6</sup> Howes’ *Chronicle*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*,

found to be Guy, or Guido Faukes,<sup>8</sup> proved a most obstinate and unsatisfactory witness, and obstinately refused to give any evidence which might incriminate others. But the actions of his confederates quickly supplied the information which he withheld.

It was known that the cellar, in which the powder was found, as well as a house adjacent, had been hired in the name of one Thomas Percy, a Catholic and perhaps a kinsman, certainly a dependent of the Earl of Northumberland. It was now discovered that he and others of his acquaintance had fled from London on the previous day upon receipt of intelligence that the plot seemed at least to be suspected. Of one we may mention is Sir Dudley Carlton (*b.*1572) who was Secretary to the Earl of Northumberland, which a few years later had nearly been the cause of bringing his promising career to a very unsatisfactory termination; for when detained in France by the illness of Lord Norris, with whom he had made a tour through Spain, he was summoned to England by the Lords of the Council at the discovery of the plot, and on suspicion of his having been implicated in it from his connection with his former patron, he was placed in confinement; but on clearing himself was liberated. This suspicion, however, for some time acted unfavourably on Carlton's fortunes till the year 1610 when he was appointed to succeed Sir Henry Wotton in the Embassy at Venice; the honour of Knighthood was then conferred upon him; but he was soon afterwards appointed Ambassador to the States-General, where he remained from 1616 to 1628, with an interval of one year (1625) then joined with the Earl of Holland as Ambassador Extraordinary to the Court of France, to excuse the King's abrupt dismissal of Henrietta Maria's French attendants. But this part of his history belongs to the Reign of Charles, whose confidence and favour he enjoyed in a very high degree.<sup>9</sup>

Returning to our course, not many hours later, the fugitives were heard of in Warwickshire, Worcestershire, and Staffordshire, the native counties of several amongst them, attempting to rally others to their desperate fortunes, and to levy war against the Crown. For this purpose they forcibly seized cavalry horses<sup>10</sup> at Warwick, and arms at Whewell Grange, a seat of Lord Windsor. These violent proceedings having raised the country behind them, they were pursued by the Sheriffs with what forces could be got together, and finally brought to bay at Holbeche, in Staffordshire, the residence of one Stephen Littleton, a Catholic.

There proved to have been thirteen men in all (including Guy Fawkes) who had been participators in the alleged treason: Guy Fawkes; Francis Tresham; Robert Catesby; Thomas Percy; Robert Winter; Thomas Winter; John Wright; Christopher Wright; John Grant; Robert Keyes; Ambrose Rookwood; Sir Everard Digby and Thomas Bates.

On Friday, November 8, three days after the discovery, Sir Richard Walsh, Sheriff of Worcestershire, attacked Holbeche. Catesby, Percy, and the two Wrights were killed or mortally wounded in the assault. The others were taken prisoners on the spot or in its neighbourhood, with the exception of Robert Winter, who accompanied by their host, Stephen Littleton, contrived to elude capture for upwards of two months, being at last apprehended in

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<sup>8</sup> So he himself always wrote it

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Birch. *The Court and Times of James the First*, Vol. I., 1848

<sup>10</sup> Also described as 'Great Horses' or 'Horses for the great Saddle'

January 1606 at Hagley Hall, Worcestershire. All the prisoners were at once taken up to London, and being there confined, were frequently and diligently examined by the Council, to trace if possible, further ramifications of the conspiracy, and especially to inculcate the Catholic clergy.

‘The great object of the government now was to obtain evidence against the priests.’<sup>11</sup>

Torture, it is evident, was employed with this object. On December 4 we find Cecil complaining that he could obtain little or no evidence against the really important persons:

‘Most of the prisoners, have willfully forsworn that the priests knew anything in particular, and obstinately refuse to be accusers of them, yea, what torture so ever they be put to.’<sup>12</sup>

On January 15, 1606, a proclamation was issued declaring that the Jesuit fathers, John Gerard, Henry Garnet, and Oswald Greenway (or Tesimond), were proved to have been ‘peculiarly practisers’ in the treason, and offering a reward for their apprehension.

‘One of those priests that were taken at Abington’s house in Worcestershire (of whom I doubt not but you have often heard) hath, within these two days, killed himself in the Tower by ripping up his belly with a blunt knife which he had to eat his meat. His name was Owen, born in Oxford, and was a servant to Garnet, the provincial Jesuit.’<sup>13</sup>

Before this all happened, on October 26, ten days before the meeting of Parliament, a Catholic peer, Lord Mounteagle, received an anonymous letter, and couched in vague and incoherent language, warning him to absent himself from the opening ceremony. This document Mounteagle at once took to Cecil, who ‘promptly divined’ its meaning and the precise danger, indicated, although he allowed James to fancy that he was himself the first to interpret it when it was shown to him five days later.<sup>14</sup>

A French writer<sup>15</sup> has observed that the plots undertaken under Elizabeth I., and James I., have this feature in common, that they proved, one and all, extremely opportune for those against whom they were directed. To this law the Gunpowder Plot was no exception. Whatever be the true history of its origin, it certainly placed in the hands of Cecil a most effective weapon for the enforcement of his favourite policy, and materially strengthened his own position. Without doubt the sensational manner of ‘discovery’ largely contributed to its success in this respect; and if this were ingeniously contrived for such a purpose, may it not be that a like ingenuity had been employed in providing the material destined to be so artistically utilized? At the

<sup>11</sup> Gardiner. *History of England*, Vol. I., P. 267. Ed. 1883

<sup>12</sup> Robert Cecil writing to Favat. (Copy) Brit. Mus. MSS. Add. 6178, fol. 625

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Birch. *The Court and Times of James the First*, Vol. I., 1848, Clement Edmondes writing to Sir Thomas Edmondes on March 6, 1605

<sup>14</sup> This is made clear from a comparison of Cecil’s private letter to Cornwallis and others in Winwood’s *Memorials*, Vol. II., P. 170 with the official account published in the Discourse of the manner of the Discovery of the Plot

<sup>15</sup> M. L’Abbé Destombes. *La persécution en Angleterre sous le règne d’Elizabeth*, P. 176

period with which we have to deal, the Chief Minister of James I., was Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, the political heir of his father, Burghley and of Walsingham, his predecessor in the office of Secretary. It is clear that he had inherited from them ideas of Statesmanship of the order then in vogue, and from nature, the kind of ability required to put these plots successfully in practice. Sir Robert Naunton describes Cecil in the following extract:

‘This great Minister of State and the staff of the Queen’s declining age, though his little crooked person <sup>16</sup> could not provide any great supportation, yet it carried thereon a head and a headpiece of vast content, and therein, it seems, nature was so diligent to complete one, and the best, part about him, as that to the perfection of his memory and intellectuals, she took care also of his senses, and to put him in *Lynceos oculos*, or to pleasure him the more, borrowed of Argus, so to give him a perfective sight. And for the rest of his sensitive virtues, his predecessor had left him a receipt, to smell out what was done in the conclave; and his good old father was so well seen in the mathematicks, as that he could tell you throughout Spain, every part, every ship, with their burthens, whither bound, what preparation, what impediments for diversion of enterprises, counsels, and resolutions.’

The author then proceeds to give a striking instance to show ‘how docible’ was Cecil. While enjoying the entire confidence of Queen Elizabeth, Cecil was engaged in a secret correspondence with King James, which she would have regarded as treasonable and which he so carefully concealed that for a century afterwards and more it was not suspected. There remains the other indubitable fact, that while similarly trusted by James, and while all affairs of states were entirely in his hands, he was in receipt of a secret pension from the King of Spain, <sup>17</sup> the very monarch any communication with whom he treated as treason on the part of others. It is certain that the Earl of Essex, when on his trial, asserted that Cecil had declared the Spanish Infanta to be the rightful heir to the Crown, and though Cecil vehemently denied the imputation, he equally repudiated the notion that he favoured the King of Scots. We know, moreover, that one who as Spanish Ambassador had dealings with him, pronounced him to be a venal traitor, who was ready to sell his soul for money, while another intimated that it was in his power to have charged him with ‘unwarrantable practices.’ Similarly, we hear from the French Minister of the ingrained habit of falsehood which made it impossible for Cecil to speak the truth even to friends; and, from the French Ambassador, of the resolution imputed to the same Statesman, to remove from his path every rival who seemed likely to jeopardize his tenure of power.

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<sup>16</sup> R.O. *Dom. James I.*, Vol. XV., P. 105: Cecil’s composure was but little above five feet in height, and, in the phrase of the time, “Crouchback.” King James, who was not a man of much delicacy in such matters, was fond of giving him nicknames in consequence. Cecil wrote to Sir Thomas Lake, October 24, 1605: “I see nothing that I can do, can procure me so much avor, as to be sure one whole day what title I shall have another. For from Essenden to Cranborne, from Cranborne to Salisbury, from Salisbury to Beagle, from Beagle to Thorn Derry, from Thorn Derry to Parret which I hate most, I have been so walked, as I think by it I come to Theobalds, I shall be called Tare or Sophie.”

<sup>17</sup> (a) Digby to the King, S.P., *Spain*, Aug .8. (b) Gardiner. *History*, Vol. II., P. 216

Queen Elizabeth I., died on March 24, 1603. As there were some prejudices against the accession of a foreigner, and as the Crown had not always descended in a regular succession, the Privy Council did not immediately upon the notice of Elizabeth's death proclaim James King, but spent several hours in deliberating together, and in feeling each other's pulses on this most important subject. In these circumstances the High Sheriff of Hampshire took a bold and decided part, which proved his attachment to the House of Stewart. Instead of waiting for the orders of the Council in London, the result of whose deliberations could not, with any certainty, be known; the instant he heard that Elizabeth was no more, he hurried over to Winchester, from his seat in its neighbourhood, and there proclaimed James I., King of England. This was Sir Benjamin Tichborne, of a family more ancient in this county than the conquest who had been Knighted by Elizabeth in 1601 in her progress to Basing. It may seem extraordinary that Elizabeth should lavish her favours on known Catholic Recusants; as the Mayor of Winchester, Sir Henry Tichborne, Lord Montague, and the Earl of Southampton just to name a few who were; yet so the case stood. She knew how to retain the laws in favour of those who pleased her.<sup>18</sup>

Sir Robert Carey waited under the windows of the Palace at Richmond, until a token ring was thrown to him from the window, with which he posted off to Scotland, and was cordially received by James, as the bearer of tidings of great joy.

‘Very early on Saturday, I took horse for the north, and rode to Norham about twelve at noon, so that I might have been with King James at supper time: but I got a great fall by the way, that made me shed much blood. I was forced to ride at a soft pace after, so that King James was newly gone to bed by the time I knocked at his gate. I was quickly let in, and carried up to his chamber. I kneeled by him, and saluted him by his titles of King of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland.<sup>19</sup> The King gave me his hand to kiss, and bade me welcome. He inquired of the manner of Queen Elizabeth's death and sickness. He asked what letters from the Privy Council. I told him none; yet had I brought him a blue ring from a fair Lady, which I hoped would give him assurance that I reported the truth. He took it and looked upon it, and said, ‘It is enough; I know by this you are a true messenger.’

King James kept a constant and private correspondence with several persons of the English Court during many years before Elizabeth died. Among them was Lady Scroope, sister to Sir Robert Carey mentioned above, to whom his Majesty sent, by Sir James Fullerton, a sapphire ring, with positive orders to return it to him by a special messenger as soon as the Queen was actually expired. Lady Scroope had no opportunity of delivering it to her brother, whilst he was in the Palace of Richmond; but waiting at the window till she saw him at the outside of the gate, she threw it out to him; and he well knew to what purpose he received it.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> (a) Nichols. *Progresses of King James I.*, Vol. I., 1828 (b) Drake's *History of York*, P. 130

<sup>19</sup> Other accounts add, that Carey was a deplorable spectacle, his face being stained with the blood from his fall, which he had not paused to wash away

<sup>20</sup> Brydges' *Peers of King James*, P. 413

‘Then he [James] committed me to the care of the Lord Hume,<sup>21</sup> charging him that I should want for nothing. He sent for his surgeons to attend me, and, when I kissed his hand to withdraw, he said these gracious words: ‘I know you have lost a near Kinswoman,<sup>22</sup> and a loving Mistress; but here, take my hand, I will be as good a master to you, and will requite this service with honour and reward.’<sup>23</sup>

The King, a few days after, asked Carey what reward he wished, who replied to be made a gentleman of his bed-chamber, and after to taste of his bounty.

‘I was then sworn of his bed-chamber, and that very evening I helped to take off his clothes, and stayed till he was in bed. Upon the report of the Queen’s death, the East Border broke forth into great unruliness, insomuch as many complaints came to the King thereof. I was desirous to go to appease them, but I was so weak and ill of my head, that I was not able to undertake such a journey; but I offered that I would send any two deputies, that should appease the trouble and make them quiet, which was by them shortly after effected. Now I was to begin a new world; for, by the King’s coming to the Crown, I was to lose the best part of my living. For my office of Wardenry ceased, and I lost the pay of forty horse, which were not so little both as £1.000 per annum. Most of the great ones at Court envied my happiness, when they heard I was sworn of the King’s bed-chamber; and in Scotland I had no acquaintance; I only relied on God and the King. The one never left me, the other, shortly after his coming to London, deceived my expectation, and adhered to those that sought my ruin.

Lord Corke<sup>24</sup> offers his opinion and some insight on Carey’s sayings that will further lead us to understand King James’ true character:

‘Neither the severities of Osborne, nor the more just censure of Rapin, nor several bitter strokes that have been vented by every late writer against James have wounded that Monarch so effectually as what here falls from Sir Robert Carey’s pen. Osborne may be said to write with rage; Rapin not to be totally free from prejudice; most of the others, to swim with the stream, and not to give themselves sufficient time to weigh the good and evil; but the author of these *Memoirs* appears so evidently void of that haste which

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<sup>21</sup> Wood’s *Douglas*, Vol. I., P. 736: “Alexander Hume, sixth Lord Hume, was served heir to his father November 1, 1580, in the offices of Sheriff of Berwick and Bailie of Laudurdale. He stood high in the favour of King James; and is very instrumental in suppressing the insurrection of Bothwell in 1592, for which he had a grant of the dissolved Priory of Coldingham. Being a Roman Catholic, he made his repentance in the New Kirk, before the Assembly, on his knees, May 17, 1594; and in 1599 he was sent on a secret Embassy to Rome, to gain the favour of the Roman Catholic Princes, as a necessary precaution towards facilitating James’ accession to the English throne. He was sworn a Privy Counselor to James whom in April 1603 he entertained at Dunglass, and accompanying the King to England, was there naturalized. He was created Earl of Hume and Lord Dunglass, to him and his heirs male whatever, March 4, 1604–5; had charters of the benefices of Coldingham and Jedburgh, united into the temporal Lordship of Coldingham, May 20, 1610; and of East Gordon and Fogo, February 7, 1612. He died April 5, 1619.”

<sup>22</sup> Sir Robert Carey and his sister were cousins, in the third degree to Queen Elizabeth by descent from Mary Boleyn and William Carey

<sup>23</sup> From Sir Robert Carey’s autobiography

<sup>24</sup> Lord Corke. *Sir Robert Carey’s Memoirs*

accompanies revenge, that what he here says of himself and his royal Master may be depended upon as a truth; a truth that shows how unhappily King James was governed by favourites, and how easily he forgot his promises.'

The hurried expedition of Carey was quickly followed by an express from the English Privy Council, inviting James to come to London, and take possession of his hereditary right, as he had been proclaimed, on March 24, 1603, King of England, by the title of James I., and the inhabitants that night lighted innumerable bonfires; we may presume, therefore, that grief for the loss of their late mistress, was confined to a few bosoms;<sup>25</sup> the expense of James and his train in his journey from Scotland, appears, from an authenticated statement, to have been £10.752. The funeral charges of Queen Elizabeth were £17.498.<sup>26</sup> The State Papers present Carey as being unable to disguise his selfishness:

'At the same time, they greatly reprobate the officiousness of the self-appointed envoy, Carey; this probably caused his hoped-for reward to be delayed some months. He mourns over his disappointed hopes, in his auto-biography, with so little disguise of selfishness, that his lamentations are truly laughable.'

This much is certain, that, whatever its origin, the Gunpowder Plot immensely increased Cecil's influence and power, and for a time, even his popularity, assuring the success of that anti-Catholic policy with which he was identified. Cecil, in reward of his services on this occasion, received the Garter on May 20, 1606, and was honoured on the occasion with an almost regal triumph. Of the proceedings subsequent to the Plot we are told that:

'In passing these laws for the security of the Protestant Religion, the Earl of Salisbury exerted himself with distinguished zeal and vigour, which gained him great love and honour from the Kingdom, as appeared in some measure, in the universal attendance on him at his installation with the Order of the Garter, on 20 May, 1606, at Windsor.'<sup>27</sup>

Welwood<sup>28</sup> is of opinion that Cecil was aware of the plot long before the 'discovery,' and that the famous letter to Mounteagle was 'a contrivance of his own.' Oldmixon writes:<sup>29</sup>

'Notwithstanding the general joy, there were some who insinuated that the plot was of the King's own making, or that he was privy to it from first to last.'

Carte<sup>30</sup> does not believe that James knew anything of it, but considers it 'not improbable' that Cecil was better informed. Burnet<sup>31</sup> complains of the impudence of the papists of his day, who

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<sup>25</sup> Devereux B. Walter. *Lives and Letters of the Devereux Earls of Essex, in the Reigns of Elizabeth, James I., and Charles I.*, Vol. II., 1853

<sup>26</sup> Nichols. *Progresses of King James I.*, Vol. I., 1828

<sup>27</sup> Birch. *Historical View*, P. 256

<sup>28</sup> *Memoirs*, P. 22

<sup>29</sup> *History of England, Royal House of Stuart*, P. 27

<sup>30</sup> *General History of England*, Vol. III., P. 757

<sup>31</sup> *His Own Times*, Vol. I., P. 11

denied the conspiracy, and pretended it was an artifice of Cecil's to engage some desperate men into a plot, which he managed so that he could discover it when he pleased.

Fuller<sup>32</sup> bears witness to the general belief, but considers it inconsistent with the well-known piety of James. Bishop Kennet, in his November 5 sermon at St. Paul's in 1715 talks in a similar strain. So extreme indeed does the incredulity and uncertainty appear to have been, that the Puritan Prynne is inclined to suspect Bancroft, the Archbishop of Canterbury, of having been engaged in the conspiracy; while one of the furious zealots who followed the lead of Titus Gates, mournfully testified that there were those in his day who looked upon the powder treason as upon a romantic story, or a politic invention, or a state trick, giving no more credence to it than to the histories of the 'Grand Cyrus, or Guy of Warwick, or Amadis de Gaul,' or Jack the Giant Killer. Bevil Higgons says:

'This impious design, gave the greatest blow to the Catholic interest in England, by rendering that religion so odious to the people. The common opinion concerning the discovery of the plot, by a letter to the Lord Mouteagle, has not been universally allowed to be the real truth of the matter, for some have affirmed that this design was first hammered in the forge of Cecil, who intended to have produced this plot in the time of Queen Elizabeth, but prevented by her death he resumed his project in this Reign, with a design to have so enraged the nation as to have expelled all Roman Catholics and confiscated their estates. To this end, by his secret emissaries, he enticed some hot-headed men of that persuasion, who, ignorant whence the design first came, heartily engaged in this execrable powder treason. Though this account should not be true, it is certain that the Court of England had notice of this plot from France and Italy long before the pretended discovery; upon which Cecil framed that letter to the Lord Mouteagle, with a design to make the discovery seem the more miraculous, and at the same time magnify the judgment of the King, who by his deep penetration was to have the honour of unraveling so ambiguous and dark a riddle.'<sup>33</sup>

Brewer<sup>34</sup> declares it to be quite certain that Cecil had previous knowledge of the design, and that the 'discovery' was a fraud. Lodge<sup>35</sup> is of the same opinion, and so is the author of the *Annals of England*. Jardine<sup>36</sup> inclines to the belief that the government contrived the letter to Mouteagle in order to conceal the means by which their information had in reality been obtained.

Regarding the conspirators, we offer a brief biography of each and begin with Thomas Winter (b.1572) who was a Worcestershire gentleman of good family. He was a relative of several of his fellow-conspirators, namely Catesby, Tresham, Grant, and of course his elder brother, Robert Winter. Percy and the Wrights were relations, so that the plot was quite a family affair.

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<sup>32</sup> *Church History*, Book X., P. 39

<sup>33</sup> *A Short View of the English History*, P. 296

<sup>34</sup> Note to Fuller's *Church History*, Book X., P. 39 and to the Student's Hume

<sup>35</sup> *Illustrations*, Vol. III., P. 172

<sup>36</sup> *Criminal Trials*, Vol. II., P. 68

Moreover, Catesby's son married one of Percy's daughters. Thomas Winter was also a connection by marriage of Lord Mounteagle, to whom the famous letter revealing the conspiracy was addressed. He was, so Father Gerard says:

‘A reasonable good scholar, and able to talk in many matters of learning, but especially in philosophy or histories very well and judicially. He could speak Latin, Italian, Spanish, and French. He was of mean stature, but strong and comely, and very valiant. He was very devout, and zealous in his faith.’

If Thomas Winter was chosen for the plot, it was on account of his skill in languages and his soldierly reputation.

We next come to John Wright (*b.1567*) who was the eldest son of a Yorkshire gentleman. He was a good swordsman, and very fond of using that weapon when a young man, being rude and quick-tempered, though slow of speech. According to Gerard, he became a Romanist about the year 1600 but it is far more likely that he had been received into the Church some five years or more before that date, for as far back as 1596 he had awakened the suspicions of the government by his close friendship with Catesby. If John Wright was chosen for the plot, it was on account of his being a handy man.

Our famous Guy Fawkes (*b.1570*) is our next entry. He came of a race of ecclesiastical lawyers, which was also connected with one or two well-known county families. His parents were (from the accession of Elizabeth, at any rate) Protestants, and he was their only son. His father, Edward Fawkes, Registrar of the Consistory Court, dying in 1578, his mother married a gentleman named Baynbridge, of Scotton, in the county. Fawkes seems to have been on good terms with his step-father, who is reported to have persuaded him to become a Roman Catholic; but soon after his coming of age he left Yorkshire for the Continent, and enlisted in the service of the Spaniards occupying Flanders. His service in the Spanish army readily enough explains the change of his Christian name into Guido. Whilst in Spain, Gerard reports that those who knew him:

‘Affirm that as he did bear office in the camp under the English Coronel <sup>37</sup> on the Catholic side, so he was a man every way deserving it whilst he stayed there, both for devotion more than is ordinarily found in soldiers, and especially for his skill in martial affairs and great valour, for which he was there much esteemed.’

In 1595 Fawkes assisted in the capture of Calais, and in 1604, at Catesby's request, he came over to England, Catesby and Winter having ‘desired one out of Flanders to be their assistant.’ As Fawkes had left his native county for the Continent when quite a young man, he was consequently not known in London, and it was this reason that induced Catesby to allot to him the task of looking after the powder and of firing the mine, for his presence at Westminster would not attract attention. Fawkes, before returning to England, had been employed as a delegate of the Jesuits in the mission to obtain aid from Spain after the death of Elizabeth. This

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<sup>37</sup> Sir William Stanley

fact offers some speculation that Cecil knew of him, even if he was not known in London. If Fawkes was chosen for the plot, it was on account of his military qualities, and his face being unknown to the government spies.

Next we have Thomas Percy, a person of great influence among the conspirators. Indeed, next to Catesby, he was the most important amongst them. He seems to have acted as Catesby's First Lieutenant. It was he who hired within the precincts of Westminster Palace the little dwelling next to the Parliament House, and it was he who obtained possession of the cellar where the powder was eventually deposited. As soon as the news of the abortive plot leaked out in London on November 5, it was described at first as 'Percy's Conspiracy'. In common with so many of his confederates, Percy was of illustrious lineage, being a scion of the great feudal house of Northumberland. He was an agent of the head of the family, Henry, the ninth Earl, the political enemy of Cecil. Authorities differ, however, as to how nearly he was related to the Earl. The nearness of the connection has been exaggerated, and he was no nearer in blood to the head of his house than a third or distant cousin. With this opinion Father Gerard agrees, when he declares that:

'He [Percy] was not very near in blood, although they called him cousin.'

Of the Earl of Essex, Percy was a warm admirer and devoted adherent. On the accession of James whom he had visited (shortly before Elizabeth's death) with a view to getting from him a promise to help the English Catholics, a promise which that Monarch deliberately broke, Percy became quite a turbulent recusant in spite of his position in his patron's household. If Thomas Percy was chosen for the plot, it was on account of his position at Court and in Lord Northumberland's house hold.

Christopher Wright (*b.*1571) our next conspirator, was actively engaged in the Essex revolt, and had been employed as one of the delegates of the Jesuits on the mission to the Court of Spain. According to Father Gerard, he was:

'A grave and sober man, and of great wit and sufficiency, as I have heard divers say that were well acquainted with him. His virtue and valour were the chiefest things wherein they could expect assistance from him; for, otherwise, his means were not great.'

Christopher Wright's close intimacy with Lord Mordaunt brought that nobleman into grave trouble with the government, in the same way as Percy's intimacy with his patron Northumberland, proved injurious to that unsuspecting peer. At Catesby's advice, the care of the conspirators' house at Lambeth, used by them as their London rendezvous, was entrusted to the stern and undaunted Keyes who was an old and faithful servant of Catesby, to whom he was devotedly attached, and by whom he was admitted into the confederacy as one upon whom his powerful Master could implicitly rely, and who would prove useful as a humble messenger carrying dispatches between the conspirators. If Christopher Wright was chosen for the plot, it was on account of his being stout-hearted and a handy man.

Next we have John Grant, a Warwickshire gentleman. His residence in Norlook, being situated between Warwick and Stratford, he was well descended, and connected with several old families in the shires of Warwick and Worcester. Although, according to Father Greenway, Grant was of a taciturn disposition, in the opinion of Gerard he was of a very fierce and mettlesome temper, and implicated with his friends in the Essex rebellion. Catesby's chief reason for enrolling him as a member of the confederacy, seems to have been the fact that Grant's 'walled and moated' residence would provide an excellent rendezvous for those who were to foment an armed rising in the Midlands. He was a devout Roman Catholic, and on the eve of his death on the scaffold expressed himself:

'Convinced that our project was so far from being sinful as to afford expiation for all sins committed by me.'

If John Grant was chosen for the plot, it was on account of his fortified house. We now have Robert Winter, elder brother of Thomas, and son-in-law of John Talbot of Grafton, an influential Roman Catholic, whom the conspirators tried vainly to intrigue into connection with their schemes. Robert Winter possessed the estate of Huddington in Worcestershire. On first hearing of the plot, he expressed his utmost detestation of the whole concern; but eventually permitted himself to be cajoled into joining it, probably at the instance of his brother. His heart, however, was never in the business, and he took no part in stowing away the gunpowder, therefore deserted Catesby before the last stand was made at Holbeach. If Robert Winter was chosen for the plot, it was on account of his wealth and his relationship to the Talbots, and other great Roman Catholic families.

We then have Ambrose Rookewood (*b.1577*), a gentleman of an old family in Suffolk, which had remained Roman Catholic, notwithstanding the severe persecution of several of its members under Elizabeth. Ambrose was the eldest son of his parents, and on his father's death, some four years before he joined the conspiracy, he became a very wealthy man. His wife, Elizabeth Tyrwhit, was a Lady of remarkable beauty, by whom he had two sons. The elder of these quickly wiped out the stain on his name incurred by his father's treason, and was actually Knighted by the very King whom his father had plotted to destroy. Rookewood was drawn into the plot by Catesby, whom he 'loved and respected as his own life,' and who overcame his scruples against 'taking away so much blood' by assuring him, so it seems, that the scheme had received the approbation of his confessor. In Rookewood's stable at Coldham Hall there was an especially fine stud of horses, and Catesby, who selected each conspirator for some particular reason likely to prove advantageous to his plans, had long coveted Rookewood's steeds.<sup>38</sup> If Ambrose Rookewood was chosen for the plot, it was on account of his wealth and his horses.

The honourable name of Sir Everard Digby was next in line as the only gentleman in regard to birth, education, and behaviour amongst his fellow-conspirators. This theory is, of course, fallacious in the extreme. He was not, for instance, so well educated or so learned as Thomas

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<sup>38</sup> Ambrose's grandson, also named Ambrose, was hanged in 1696, for being concerned in a plot to kill or kidnap King William III

Winter; he was no better born than at least six of his confederates nor, indeed, so nobly descended as was Percy; in private life he was not more esteemed or better behaved than Ambrose Rookwood; whilst as a soldier, his reputation was not equal to that of Fawkes, nor, as a swordsman, either to that of Catesby or John Wright. In a word, he is erroneously supposed by the man in the street to have been the only respectable person engaged in the Gunpowder Plot. Yet Digby became a favourite of Elizabeth, and cut quite a gay figure at Court, his ample fortune, no doubt, being a considerable factor in his advancement. His father, a gentleman owning estates in Rutlandshire, had died when Digby was quite a child, and had left him a ward of the Crown, or, as we should now term it, award of Chancery. If Sir Everard Digby was chosen for the plot, it was on account of his social position, his friendship with influential Roman Catholics, and his wealth.

To Francis Tresham (*b.*1568) we now come, who was related to the Winters, Catesby, and Lord Mounteagle, and was the eldest son of Sir Thomas Tresham, of Rushton, Northamptonshire, a most ardent Roman Catholic, but chiefly famous for his building operations, an interesting account of which has been compiled in an illustrated treatise by Mr. Alfred Gotch.<sup>39</sup> One of the most remarkable results of his enterprise was the erection of a triangular Lodge at Rushton, built in honour of the Trinity, the idea running through the whole building being *Three*;<sup>40</sup> which was the shape of the house being an equilateral triangle, thirty-three feet in length, the floors three in number, three windows on each floor, triangular rooms, *etc.* He was also involved in the Essex rebellion; for which outbreak he, or rather his father, was very heavily fined, and narrowly escaped execution. Francis Tresham had also been a party to Father Garnet's schemes for obtaining aid from Spain, so if he was chosen for the plot, it was on account for the sake of his cash.

Allowing us to leave the short biographies of the conspirators, we mention that Robert Catesby, who was an unscrupulous and cunning as he was, selected each conspirator to join the plot on account of his possession of some special quality that would particularly forward the interests of the great design. In addition to the main plotters, Catesby gathered a Robert Keyes who was chosen on account of his loyalty, and last a Thomas Bates who was chosen on account of his being a useful and trustworthy messenger.

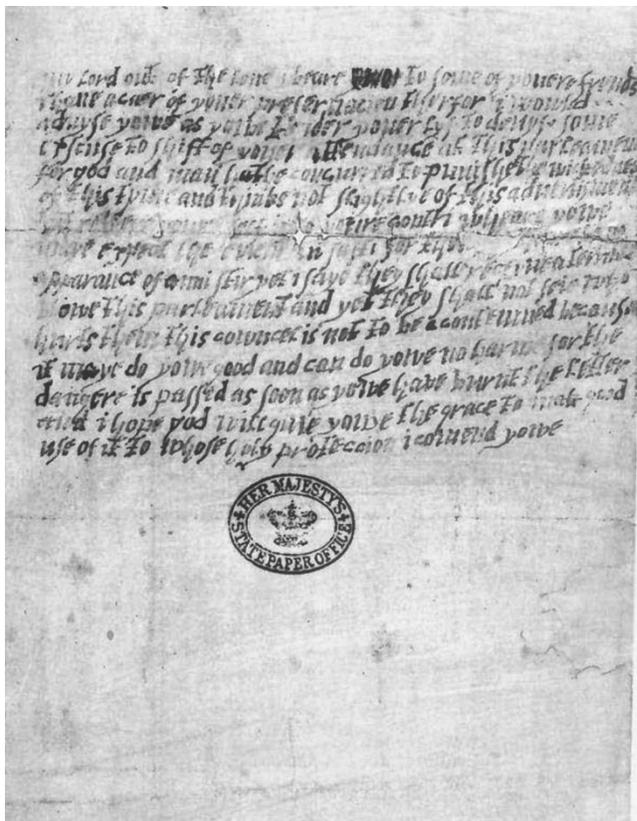
It is an extraordinary fact that so many of the plotters should have been engaged in the Essex rebellion in 1601. This may suggest that Essex was secretly supported by the Jesuits. Yet, of all the mysterious incidents enveloped in the traditional story of the Gunpowder Plot, none has taken so strong a hold upon the popular imagination as has the famous warning letter, undated and unsigned, written to Lord Mounteagle. We shall investigate the authorship of this letter further down.

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<sup>39</sup> Published in Northampton and in London in 1883

<sup>40</sup> *Vide* Mr. Gotch's plans

The receipt of this letter by Mounteagle is generally understood to have formed the sole means whereby the plot was discovered, and the lives of King, Lords, and Commons were saved; but, it is evident that the government evidently had some knowledge of what was going on prior to the delivery of the letter to Mounteagle at Hoxton, on Saturday October 26, 1605.



The Mounteagle Letter

At the same time, it is perhaps rather too wide a definition to refer to all the Members of the government as being possessors of this information. It would be more correct to name instead only Cecil, who seems to have known of the existence of the plot quite six weeks before the receipt of the letter. It may even be argued that he was aware of it as much as three months earlier.

But its authorship is not the only puzzle that awaits solution in connection with this letter, for the personal character of Lord Mounteagle himself is almost as much a puzzle.

William Parker, Lord Mounteagle inherited his title in right of his mother, Elizabeth Stanley, heiress of the third Lord Mounteagle, or Monteagle. He was the eldest son of Henry Parker, Lord Morley, who died in 1618. Mounteagle did not succeed to his father's title until thirteen years after the plot, and he is always known to historians by his earlier title. It would, however, be more correct to call him Lord Morley, for he was summoned to Parliament before he died as Baron Morley and Mounteagle, of which the first-named was by far the oldest dignity. Mounteagle was, at the date of the receipt of the mysterious letter in his early thirties, and had married a sister of Francis Tresham, the conspirator, in company with whom he had joined in the Essex rebellion, and had been very heavily fined for his pains. A personal friend of both Father Henry Garnet and Robert Catesby, it is clear that he sanctioned the Jesuit missions to the King of Spain, and until the accession of James remained a staunch Roman Catholic of the faction directed by Garnet and his colleagues. He frequently met Catesby from the time of the construction of the plot down till the autumn of 1605. This is a circumstance that has been conveniently ignored by those writers who maintain that he was not in any way privy to what was going on among his old allies. That he may, all the time, have been acting, as has been suggested, as a spy on the part of Cecil is probable.

Late on Friday October 25, 1605, Mouteagle gave orders that he would take supper the following day at his house at Hoxton. This sudden notice seems to have surprised his servants. To Hoxton he and his household repaired, and when:

‘Ready to go to supper at seven of the clock at night,<sup>41</sup> one of his footmen, whom he had sent of an errand over the street, was met by an unknown man, of a reasonable tall personage, who delivered him a letter.’

The letter was immediately brought to Mouteagle, who handed it to a gentleman in his household, named Warde, and told him to read it aloud. Its contents ran as follows:<sup>42</sup>

‘My Lord out of the love I bear to some of your friends<sup>43</sup> I have a care of your preservation therefore I would advise you as you tender your life to devise some excuse to shift of your attendance at this parliament for god and man hath concurred to punish the wickedness of this time and think not slightly of this advertisement but retire yourself into your country where you may expect the event in safety for though there be no appearance of any stir yet I say they shall receive a terrible blow this Parliament and yet they shall not see who hurts them this Council is not to be contemned because it may do you good and can do you no harm for the danger is passed as soon as you have burnt the letter and I hope god will give you the grace to make good use of it to whose holy protection I commend you.’

Various attempts have been made to explain the nature of the danger alluded to in the letter, which the King and Cecil at the time, and others since, have understood as in allusion to the danger of the plot. Jardine describes it as ‘mere nonsense’.<sup>44</sup> But the meaning clearly is the danger of the letter being discovered. The Council may do him good, and can do him no harm, except through the danger of keeping the letter, which being burnt, the danger is past. James’ attention was specifically called by Cecil to that passage in the letter to Monteagle:

‘The danger is passed as soon as you have burnt the letter.’

This passage brought them to the conclusion that blowing up by gunpowder was meant, and ordered that all the cellars and places adjoining the Houses of Parliament should be searched, but that the search should be put off until the night of November 5. There is no allusion intended to the danger of the plot, as that, unlike the danger of the discovery of the letter, could not be affected by burning the letter. Yet, this letter somehow offered particulars to a Gunpowder Plot, or to poking a finger at thirteen plotters. It mentions no names, no dates, and no facts. Also, the ostentatious manner in which Mouteagle directed Warde who was, it should be noted, an intimate friend of Thomas Winter, to read the letter, is in keeping with all

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<sup>41</sup> Cecil in his letter to Cornwallis, Ambassador at Madrid, on November 9, 1605, gives the hour as six o’clock

<sup>42</sup> There is also a copy in Dom. S.P. James I., November, 1605, Vol. XVI

<sup>43</sup> The writer originally wrote ‘you,’ instead of ‘some of your friends,’ but erased the word

<sup>44</sup> *Gunpowder Plot*, P. 73 (1835)

his other actions in connection with this enigmatic epistle's arrival.<sup>45</sup> By handing the letter to Warde to read aloud, Mouteagle affected to pretend that such a letter was beneath his notice, and that he merely regarded the message as the production of a lunatic or a practical joker. We remember that Thomas Warde was Mouteagle's Secretary, who was known to Mouteagle as a friend of some of the conspirators (as Mouteagle himself was), and one of whom, Warde, the next morning told of the receipt of the letter:

‘As a plan concocted by Mouteagle and Tresham to stop the plot, and at the same time to secure the escape of their guilty friends, the little comedy at Hoxton was admirably concocted.’<sup>46</sup>

Neither the official version nor any State Paper mentions the place where the letter was delivered, which in such a mysterious matter would be the first inquiry. ‘Own lodging’ at that time signified a person's house. Hoxton is generally stated to have been the place of delivery, which was then a single street in the outlying suburb on the great North Road; at a house which Mouteagle is known to have occupied, belonging to his brother-in-law, Francis Tresham; and this ownership may have been Cecil's reason for not naming it, which so curious an omission seems to imply.

The style of handwriting of the letter, as seen in the facsimile, is not from a familiarity of thirty years with old scripts, apart from the disguise, the hand that an educated person would write at the time, but is essentially a commonplace and, no doubt intentionally, rather slovenly style of handwriting. The use of small i's for the first person seems, in view of modern usage, to suggest an illiterate writer; but educated writers, even the King, then occasionally lapsed into using them. In the Correspondence of James with Cecil that was published by the Camden Society in 1861, both the King and Cecil occasionally make use of small ‘i's’ the latter also uses them in his general correspondence. In our letter, however, they are consistently and may have been purposely used, to avert suspicion from being the work of an educated person; though an illiterate appearance would rather cause such a letter (if genuine) to be disregarded, than to deter a nobleman from attending the opening of Parliament, for which leave or license was required. The handwriting has been variously ascribed, but the direction of this inquiry is indicated by the incautious admission made by Coke, the Attorney-General at the trial, respecting the real manner in which the plot was discovered. Cecil's careful instructions to Coke for the trial are with the State Papers, in which he says:

‘Next, you must in any case, when you speak of the letter which was the first ground of discovery, absolutely disclaim that any of these [the conspirators] wrote it, though you leave the further judgment indefinite who else it should be.’<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> The exact state of the relations existing between Warde and some of the plotters is a mystery yet to be solved. Warde may have been entirely in his Master's confidence, and may have expected the letter's arrival

<sup>46</sup> Gardiner. *What Gunpowder Plot Was*, P. 124, 1897

<sup>47</sup> State Papers, Domestic, James I., XIX. 94

Cecil in this effect requires Coke by absolutely disclaiming that any of the conspirators wrote (he does not say 'sent') the letter to Mouteagle, and by which alone the treason was discovered, to declare in Court, as upon the authority of the government, that therefore none of the conspirators divulged the plot; which, in any case, could be true only so far as the disclosure to the government was concerned. Coke, however, for some reason perhaps because he was not fully in Cecil's confidence, respecting the letter, describes the real manner of the discovery, according to his own knowledge. Towards the close of his speech for the prosecution, he said:

'The last consideration is concerning the admirable discovery of this treason, which was by one of themselves who had taken the oath and sacrament, as hath been said against his own will; the means by a dark and doubtful letter to my Lord Mouteagle.'

Tresham was throughout the only unwilling conspirator, but he did not take the oath sacrament; only seven or eight of the thirteen conspirators did so. Coke's closing argument together with Cecil's statement that none of the conspirators wrote the letter shows that the divulging of the plot preceded the sending of the letter, which was not, therefore, as is popularly supposed, the means by which the plot was discovered, except to the general public. And in a letter from Cecil to Cornwallis, written on November 9, 1605:

'No wise man could think my Lord Mouteagle to be so weak as to take any alarm to absent himself from Parliament upon such a loose advertisement.'

Hitherto those who have attempted this identification have invariably sought amongst such as are likely to have written the letter for a handwriting resembling the disguised writing, which seems a strange method of investigation, as surely the object of a disguised hand would be to make the general appearance as unlike the writer's ordinary hand as possible? Cecil, in his letter to Cornwallis, particularly describes the writing as being 'in a hand disguised,' and he, like Mouteagle, would know not only the writer, but how the letter came to be written.

The writing being in a set and rather large character, such is the style they have sought for and found, but in a much more refined hand and without arriving at any satisfactory result. It seems, however, reasonable to suspect that this set and rather large character may be what principally constitutes the disguise, and that the writer's ordinary hand would be different. The manner in which the lines are forced upwards at the right side, shows that the writer has had difficulty in maintaining the large, set, regular character which would push an unpracticed hand in that direction. Among the more prominent peculiarities, as seen in the facsimile, the writer invariably uses the long 's' as an initial letter in the ten examples that occur, even when the letter is not a capital. Such consistent use was usual in legal but not in private hands, though within a word the long 's' was very common. The 't's' are peculiar; being made with a twist or short line at foot, crossed midway projecting from each side, while a stroke is put on the top as a disguised, or elaborated touch. The 'w's' finish with a side loop. Some of the 'g's' show flat tops; the cipher portion being commenced from the left side with a stroke along the top. The tails of the 'y's' are brought forward. The 'hanger' portion of the 'h's' invariably

drags below the line which, though not unusual, again indicates in the numerous examples that occur the writer's habit; while an unusually broad quill has been used to further the disguise.

In an expert examination of handwriting undertaken in 1916, showed that the angle at which the pen is held, as indicated by the long strokes, and the spacing between the lines which a writer naturally uses, have also to be considered being the basis of handwriting, the first movements that are made in learning to write, and become each writer's characteristics in those respects.<sup>48</sup>

Notwithstanding this apparent indifference, Mounteagle hastily set out, after supper for London, and gave the letter to Cecil, whom he found entertaining some of the principal Ministers of state, such as Suffolk, Northampton, Worcester, and Nottingham. The fact that all these Statesmen were to be found late on a Saturday night with Cecil in London, clearly suggests that they had been brought together by Cecil for the special purpose of receiving this letter, the arrival of which was expected. Speed had blinded suspicions; however, researchers today are not blinded by speed.

Cecil's story that the receipt of the letter took him entirely by surprise, and that its contents proved an enigma to him, is very cleverly told, but is a concoction not to be believed. He omits the fact that, although the letter was received late at night, he lost not a minute in placing it before his colleagues, who were all [suspiciously] close at hand when Mounteagle received post from Hoxton. Cecil's letter relating to the account was sent to Sir Charles Cornwallis, the British Ambassador in Spain, four days after the *fatal day* of November 5, so there is no doubt but that Cecil knew a plot was in progress, before the anonymous letter to Lord Mounteagle appeared: Cecil acknowledges as much in another letter to Cornwallis.<sup>49</sup> Dr. Welwood boldly asserts, when speaking of King James that:

'The only uncontroverted treason that happened in his Reign, was the Gunpowder Plot; and yet the letter to Lord Mounteagle, that pretended to discover it, was but a contrivance of his own, the conspiracy being discovered to him before, by Henry IV., of France; through the means of M. de Rosny, afterwards Due of Sully.'<sup>50</sup>

It is much to be deplored that this letter written by Cecil to Cornwallis has not met with closer attention at the hands of historians, for to those able to read, as it were, between the lines, the contents reveal some important facts about the discovery of the plot. For example, Cecil's letter completely contradicts the old story that the government knew nothing of a plot till the arrival of Mounteagle's letter:

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<sup>48</sup> In each specimen of William Vavasour's handwriting, including the anonymous letter, the long strokes are generally at the same angle, and the spacing between the lines (except in No. 3) is throughout generally similar, while his brother George's hand is in each respect quite different. We shall see further on why this particular person's handwriting is mentioned

<sup>49</sup> Sir Thomas Cornwallis, Knight, groom-porter to Elizabeth I., and James I

<sup>50</sup> French Ambassador in England

‘I had sufficient advertisement that most of those that now are fled (being all notorious Recusants) with many other of that kind, had a practice in hand for some stir this Parliament.’

As to the writer’s excuse that he was less forward in causing a strict inquiry to be made than the Lord Chamberlain, it is easy to see that Cecil’s object was not to show his hand too much, but to let others obtain some credit for discovering what was already known to him. That Cecil was well posted up in the facts, and felt quite secure as to the result of his preparations, is evident from the account he renders as to how he determined not to inform the King until the last moment. His astuteness in making no open move thus deceived Catesby, and culminated in the ruin of the unsuspecting conspirators. And Bund-Willis<sup>51</sup> says that it is more than likely that at this time Cecil knew of the whole plot. Rumours of something to be done when Parliament met, were already floating abroad, and a man like Cecil who had his spies all over the country, was almost sure to have heard of it. That this was in place was evident. Among the Cecil papers at Hatfield<sup>52</sup> there is the following letter, the writer of which seems to be unknown:

Anonymous Letter among the Cecil papers at Hatfield  
3 Report Hist. MSS. Commission, Vol. IV., P. 148

Who so ever finds this box of letters let him carry it to the King’s Majesty; my Master little thinks I knows of this, but in riding with him that brought the letter to my Master to a Catholic gentleman’s house onward of his way into Linkonsher (Lincolnshire) he told me all his purpose, and what he meant to do; and he being a priest absolved me and made me swear never to reveal this to any man.

I confess myself a Catholic and do hate the Protestant religion with my heart and that I detest to consent either to murder or treason. I have blotted out certain names in the letters because I would not have either my Master or any of his friends trouble about this; for by his means I was made a good Catholic; and I would to God the King was a good Catholic that is all that harm I wish him; and let him take heed what petitions or supplications he takes of any man; and I hope this box will be found by some that will give it to the King that it may do him good one day.

I mean not to come to my Master any more, but will return unto my country from whence I came. As for my name and country I cancel that; and God make the King a good Catholic; and let Sir Robert Cecil and my Lord Chief Justice look to themselves.

We may now offer some investigation undertook as to who the authorship of the notorious Mouteagle letter lies upon. In order to do this, we need to go back to Francis Tresham, the planner of the triangular Lodge at Rushton.

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<sup>51</sup> Bund-Willis J.W. *State Trials*, Vol. I., 1879

<sup>52</sup> 3 Report Hist. MSS. Commission, Vol. IV., P. 148

Tresham, in September 11, 1605, succeeded his father, Sir Thomas Tresham (a great sufferer for the Roman Catholic religion), in an inheritance of at least £500.000 a year, in present money; after having, as he says, spent most of his time overburdened with debts and wants, and resolves within himself to spend his days quietly. His first cousin we remember was Robert Catesby, being hard-up with funds exhausted in financing the Gunpowder Plot, seeing in Tresham the chance of obtaining a further supply (though previously distrusting him), induces him, in the interests of their religion, to join the conspiracy, of which he becomes the thirteenth, and last, sworn conspirator on October 14, 1605. Catesby is careful to impose the oath of secrecy before fully disclosing the plot; of which Tresham, on hearing, entirely disapproves, and endeavours to dissuade his cousin from, or even to defer it; meanwhile offering him the use of his own purse if he will do so. Deciding he cannot prevail with him, he is very urgent that the Lords Mounteagle and Stourton, particularly the former, may be warned, each having married Tresham's sisters; but Catesby can give no definite assurance. Tresham then intends, as he says, to get the conspirators shipped away, and to inform the government by some unknown, or anonymous means.

Tresham has a serving-man named William Vavasour, who attended Sir Thomas Tresham, and who, with his elder brother, George Vavasour (whose education Tresham has particularly encouraged), and their sister Muriel (gentlewoman to Lady Mounteagle who is the daughter of Muriel Lady Tresham) are favoured dependants of the Tresham family, being the children of an old and much valued Catholic servant. Both George and William are confidentially employed by Tresham as amanuenses, in transcribing religious, or treasonable, treatises of the time.

Lord Mounteagle unexpectedly orders a supper to be prepared on October 26, 1605, at his house at Hoxton (belonging to his brother-in-law Tresham), and where he has not been for some months. As he is about to go to supper, a letter is handed to him by his footman, to whom it has been given in the street by 'an unknown man of a reasonable tall personage,' who knows that he will find him at so unfrequented a residence. Mounteagle opens the letter, which is anonymous, pretends he cannot understand it, and shows it to his secretary, Thomas Warde, who, he is aware, is familiar with some of the conspirators; whom Warde, the next evening, tells of the receipt of the letter, which Mounteagle at once takes to the King's Palace at Whitehall, about three miles away, where he finds Cecil with other Lords of the Council together assembled, ready for supper.

'Who it was that wrote this letter to the Lord Mounteagle was never known, or how it came that King James suspected its meaning to be what it really was, is a great part a mystery to this day.' (Kennett)<sup>53</sup>

The government censors or suppresses the name of the place where the letter was delivered. The conspirators and the Jesuit priests, who are involved in the plot through the confessional, at once suspect Tresham; and Catesby and Winter directly charge him with having betrayed them, which he denies, while urging them to escape to France and giving them money for the

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<sup>53</sup> Cobbett. *State Trials*, 1809

purpose. Although Tresham is a sworn conspirator, he alone remains behind and at large, after Fawkes is arrested on November 4–5, 1605, and flight of the others into the country, and offers his services to the government. A week later he is taken to the Tower, where being ill, his wife and serving-man, William Vavasour, and a maid servant constantly attend him; an indulgence never under any circumstances permitted to anyone who was really a prisoner and upon a capital charge there. Becoming worse, he dictates a letter for Vavasour to write to Cecil, retracting a statement that he has been induced to make respecting Father Garnet, and dies December 23, 1605.

This letter, or dying statement, being misunderstood, is considered to be so incredible that the writing is particularly inquired into. Vavasour thereupon, in the presence of the Lieutenant of the Tower, writes an untrue statement (consequently using a hand quite different from his ordinary writing and, in itself, identical with the writing of the anonymous Mouteagle letter) asserting that his Master's dying statement was written by Mrs. Tresham (though in every way proper for Vavasour to have written), which she at once repudiates and says that Vavasour wrote it. He is then examined in the Tower by Chief Justice Popham and Attorney-General Coke, when he confesses that he wrote the dying statement at his Master's dictation; and had denied it 'for fear.' Fear of what? In case the writing should bring into question some other and less innocent letter written by him for his Master? This statement, written by Vavasour was signed by Tresham, who asked his wife to deliver it personally to Cecil, and within three hours died:

Francis Tresham's Last Statement  
Written by William Vavasour  
December 23, 1605

I being sent for before your Lordships in the Tower, you told me of (that) it was confessed by Mr. Winter, that he went upon some employments in the Queen's time into Spain and that your Lordship did nominate to me out of his confession all the party names that were acquainted therewith *namely 4 besides himself* and yet said that there were some left for me to name. I desired your Lord that I might not answer thereunto because it was a matter that was done in the Queen's time and since I had my pardon.

Your Lordship's would not accept of that answer, *but said that I should be made to speak thereunto. And I might thank myself if I had been worse used than I had been since my coming to the house*, I told your Lordship (*to avoid ill usage*) that I thought Mr. Walley<sup>54</sup> was procured to write his letter for the furthering of this journey.

Now my Lord, having bethought myself of this business (being too weak to use my own hand in writing this) which I do deliver here upon my salvation to be true as near as I can call to mind, desiring that my former confession may be called in and that this may stand for truth. It was more than I knew that Mr. Walley was used herein, and to give your Lordship proof besides my oath, I had not seen him in sixteen years before, nor never had message nor letter

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<sup>54</sup> *Walley* was one of Father Garnet's aliases as was *Darcy, Roberts, Farmer* and *Henry Philips*

from him and to this purpose I desired Mr. Lieutenant to let me see my confession who told me I should not unless I would enlarge it which he did perceive I had no meaning to do.

Francis Tresame  
24 m'ch 1605 [-6].  
This note was of my own handwriting  
By me Willia' Vavasore.

The portion printed in italics of Tresham's above statement, was underlined by Coke for omission when the statement was read at the trial. The '4 besides himself,' having reference to Mouteagle, was therefore suppressed; the other suppressions in the statement were made for obvious and unfair reasons. Upon Tresham's death, the Lieutenant of the Tower writes to Cecil:

'He died this night, about two of the clock after midnight, with very great pain; for though his spirits were much spent and his body dead, alay above two hours in departing.'<sup>55</sup>

Tresham's death, being so opportune for Mouteagle, if not for Cecil, has been attributed to poisoning; but in Stow's *Annals*<sup>56</sup> it is stated to have been occasioned by 'strangury', though giving the date of his death incorrectly as November 22. Ten years later a subsequent Lieutenant of the Tower was executed for poisoning a state prisoner.

Later, having left no male issue, Tresham's inheritance passes to his brother, who is described as of Rushton, when created a Baronet on the institution of that Order by James, the very King whom the plotters intended to destroy; and although a baronetcy at that time was merely a monetary distinction or transaction, some discrimination was no doubt made in the bestowal or disposal of that dignity, which probably would not have been conferred upon Catesby's son, who was then living, even if he had been able to afford it after the forfeiture of his family inheritance.

The Attorney-General, at Father Garnet's trial on March 28, 1606, pronounces Vavasour as being, in his opinion, 'deeply guilty' in the treason; yet he is not even brought to trial, while other serving-men are tried and executed; although Cecil expressly declares that he will esteem his life unworthily given him, when he shall be found slack in bringing to prosecution and execution all who are in any way concerned in the treason; and his exertions in the matter are accounted to be so successful, that he is rewarded with the Order of the Garter. Francis Tresham's inheritance remains in the family; and his serving-man, the 'deeply guilty' William Vavasour, goes free.

When Garnet returned from Rome in 1585, as Superior of the Jesuits in England, he made the Tresham acquaintance, being a prominent Roman Catholic family, when Francis Tresham was

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<sup>55</sup> Lieutenant of the Tower to Cecil, December 23, 1605, State Papers, Domestic, James I., xvii. 56

<sup>56</sup> P. 880 (1615)

eighteen. Garnet was not their confessor, and the acquaintance had dropped for at least sixteen years before the Spanish Treason in 1602. Garnet's statement, made on March 23, 1605–06, after Tresham's death, is:

‘I knew him about eighteen years ago, but since discontinued my acquaintance until the time between his trouble in my Lord of Essex's tumult and the Queen's death.’

Garnet would have neither motive nor inclination to shield Tresham, whose betrayal of the plot had brought Garnet to the Tower. He might otherwise have discerned Tresham's real meaning in his statement of ‘sixteen years before,’ which the contemporary Jesuit Father Gerard correctly interprets as before 1602 in his narrative of the plot. It was not Garnet's complicity in the Spanish Treason in the previous Reign (for which he had his pardon) that the government cared about, and that so shook Cecil, but simply Tresham's dying statement being misunderstood to mean that he had not seen Garnet for the past sixteen years, which is all, at present, we should be concerned with. So Tresham lied in his dying statement and Cecil knew, for he says at the trial:

‘Mr. Tresham in his lifetime accused you, Garnet, before the Lords, yet now upon his salvation, he under his hand did excuse you, being at the very point of death, saying he had not seen you in sixteen years, which matter, I assure you, before you were taken shook me very much. But, thanks be to God, since the coming of the King, I have known so much of your doctrine and practices, that hereafter they shall not much trouble me.’

Vavasour was then examined in the Tower by Popham and by Coke, when he confessed that he wrote the dying statement at his Master's dictation, and had denied it through fear, which could only arise from having written some other and less innocent letter for him. Upon the evidence of the handwriting alone, William Vavasour was the writer of that letter sent to Mounteagle. The original letter is framed and exhibited upon a pedestal in the Museum of the Public Record Office. His variety of styling his handwriting conclusively proves him to be the author, but most probably was also the ‘unknown man of a reasonable tall personage’ who is so quaintly described in the government story as having delivered the letter.

Coke evidently knows, or suspects, that Vavasour wrote the warning letter; and he cannot understand why he is not brought to trial. He therefore expresses his opinion of Vavasour's guilt as strongly as possible, and even describes him with what for an Attorney-General in ordinary circumstances would be a singular redundancy of legal expression, as being ‘deeply guilty’ in the treason. No one would know better than Coke that in high treason itself the law makes no distinction whatever of degrees of neither guilt, nor can there even be an accessory: once participant, whatever the part played may be, all alike are principals. Coke's statement in Court has been officially in print for over four hundred years, yet no investigator seems to have noticed it and so have been led to inquire what was done to Vavasour, by which alone a clue might have been obtained to the writer of the letter.



Sir Edward Coke (b.1550–51)

Sir Edward Coke, the surname of Coke evidently of British origin, being derived from the British word *coc*, or *coke*, a chief, has been described by his grandson, Roger Coke, and tells us that he usually rose at three o'clock in the morning, and, in his time, the Courts seldom sat later than noon.

The business of a barrister having the most extensive practice would then leave him ample space for a very careful and extended course of study. The cases, too, in Coke's day, principally involved questions of real property: these were rare, and others not more important were trivial ones of defamation of character. Trials on bills of exchange were then nearly unknown. There are not more than two or three reported cases of this description previously to the time when Coke quitted the bench.

Few cases then occurred of the kind, which now so incessantly occupy the attention of the Courts. The labours of the judges were light.

Coke had for his contemporaries at the Bar, some of the ablest lawyers which England has produced; men alike distinguished for their learning and their probity. Among the foremost of these were Edmund Plowden, the author of the *Commentaries*, who was born in Shropshire in 1519; Francis Bacon, by far the most distinguished and the most formidable of all Coke's rivals, who was born in 1561 at York House, or York Place in London; Thomas Egerton, first Lord Ellesmere, of no doubt, possessed great suavity of manner, united with great dignity of deportment. It was usual for many persons, in his time, to visit the Court of Chancery, for the purpose of seeing the manner of its venerable judge:

'And happy were they,' says the facetious Fuller, 'who had no other business there.'<sup>57</sup>

Of other eminent persons beside Coke was Sir George Croke who possessed a rare memory, prompt invention, and quick apprehension. (Grimstone) It appears that Croke was indefatigably industrious. This is shown by his *Reports*, which were not published until after his death and rank high as legal authorities. The first edition of these appeared in 1657. We should also mention Henry Yelverton who was born at Islington in 1566 and readers will remember when Somerset fell into disgrace, Yelverton nobly refused to plead against his benefactor, and, in consequence, was committed to the Tower, but was speedily released. And there were, besides these persons, Hobart and Tanfield, afterwards Chief Justices Heath and Dodderidge.

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<sup>57</sup> *Cheshire Worthies*, P. 176

The government seems to have fallen into a wild state of terror in 1605; arrest followed arrest in rapid succession and by November 26 no less than forty-six persons were in custody in different places. A Privy Council letter was sent to Sir Julius Caesar, Sir Roger Wilbraham, Sir Edward Phillips, Sir John Croke, Sir Edward Coke, Sir John Dodderidge, Sir Francis Bacon, Sir Walter Cope, Sir George Moore and Sir Henry Montague, authorizing further search apprehensions and commitment. November 19 saw a Privy Council letter sent to the same persons, directing an examination of the persons apprehended and found chargeable with a suspicion of the conspiracy, and enclosing a list of persons to be examined. A general form of interrogation was drawn up which was to be ministered to those who were to be examined. The Commissioners acted promptly on these instructions; they held examinations on November 23 and 29; on December 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 30 during this time they examined twenty-six persons; they afterwards examined seven more.

After the capture of Fawkes, no time was lost in taking him before the Privy Council, and he was actually brought before the King in his bed-chamber before four o'clock in the morning. This feverish haste to question him is another point in favour of the supposition that the details of the plot were already well known to Cecil. After leaving Whitehall, Fawkes was sent under a strong guard by water to the Tower, where the King directed the Lieutenant that he was to be tortured. James sent down in his own handwriting directions for Fawkes' torture:

‘If he will not otherwise confess the gentlest tortures are to be first used unto him and so on step by step to the most severe. And so God speed your good work.’



**Guy Fawkes brought before King James**

That these directions were carried out strictly we have ample proof. Fawkes' confession signed by him remains to this day and the way in which the single name Guido is written shows that the process had been carried on step by step to the utmost of James' wishes. To how many more the torture was applied does not appear, but we may be sure that the King did not scruple to order or his Ministers to use it where they thought it necessary and at last Coke had got what evidence he deemed sufficient and towards the end of January all was ready for the trial.

Of the thirteen conspirators originally engaged in the plot, no less than eleven were either captured or killed within a period of four days from the fatal day of November 5. Of these eleven men, Catesby, Percy, and the Wrights were dead; Fawkes was in the Tower; Digby, Thomas Winter, Grant, Keyes, Bates, and Rookewood were on their way and under arrest. Of the remaining pair, Francis Tresham was in London, but not yet actually arrested; and Robert Winter was in hiding. By November 12, Tresham also was under lock and key, so that, if we omit the fugitive Robert Winter (the least important of the band), we find the government's measures for the repression of the conspiracy, both at Westminster and in the Midlands, had been so skillfully executed that it had only taken the authorities seven days to kill or imprison all those who had been actively engaged in the Gunpowder Plot.

Of the original number of thirteen, only eight of the conspirators survived to be committed for trial. These eight, namely, Thomas Winter, Guy Fawkes, John Grant, Robert Winter, Ambrose Rookewood, Thomas Bates, Robert Keyes, and Digby, were arraigned at Westminster Hall, on January 27, 1606, before a Commission consisting of the Lord Chief Justice Sir John Popham; the Lord Chief Baron Sir Thomas Fleming; Sir Peter Warburton a Judge, and the Earls of Salisbury, Northampton, Nottingham, Suffolk, Worcester and Devonshire. Sir Everard Digby was separately arraigned, and tried and sentenced immediately after the conclusion of the case against his friends. The Privy Council for the Crown was Sir Edward Philips and Sir Edward Coke.

The trial from beginning to end was a mere farce. The prisoners, after having to listen to a very long, by no means truthful, and very violent speech from Coke, and having heard their several examinations, confessions, and voluntary declarations, as well of themselves, as of some of their dead confederates read out, were merely asked, what they could say, wherefore judgment of death should not be pronounced against them, and the trial was virtually over, so far as the hearing of their case was concerned. The conspirators met their fate with courage, considering the terrible nature of their punishment. Tied to separate hurdles, they were dragged, lying bound on their backs, through the muddy streets to the place of execution, there to be first hanged, cut down alive, drawn, and then quartered.

Fawkes, weak and ill though he was, seems to have suffered the least, for he was dead by the time his body was taken down. Rookewood lived until he reached the quartering block. Keyes, breaking the rope, was probably killed by the knife; whilst Digby was in full possession of all his senses on being cut down, and even felt the pain of a bruise on the head when his body fell to the ground.

‘That beast Waad,’ as Raleigh called him, had been appointed Lieutenant of the Tower about eleven weeks before the capture of Fawkes at Westminster. Prior to his appointment, however, he had held several very important diplomatic and political posts. He had faithfully served Burghley, and was destined, in the matter of the Gunpowder Plot, to serve with equal fidelity his son, Robert. Sir William Waad, under Elizabeth, had been Secretary to Walsingham, and afterwards Clerk of the Privy Council. He had been sent on frequent diplomatic missions to Madrid, Paris, and the Low Countries. In 1588 he was elected a Member of Parliament, and in 1601 represented Preston, where his Protestant zeal made him very unpopular among the Roman Catholics of Lancashire. Soon after the accession of James, he was Knighted and in August 1605 he was at Cecil’s request, appointed Lieutenant of the Tower.

We mention this person here, since he will also come to our attention further on, being as an unraveller of plots, Waad certainly seems to have enjoyed a unique career. He had, in fact, been connected with the detection, or attempted detection, of almost every conspiracy hatched in England during the eventful twenty years antecedent to the Gunpowder Plot. He had ransacked the belongings of Mary, Queen of Scots, at the time of Babington’s conspiracy; he had taken a prominent part in the discovery of the mysterious Lopez affair; he had helped to suppress the Essex rebellion in 1601; he had been employed in the matter of the proceedings of Cobham and Raleigh, as regards their connection with Father Watson’s conspiracy. He was, therefore, likely to prove, in the eyes of the government, an ideal gaoler for the conspirators and Jesuits captured after the failure of the Gunpowder Plot, as well as for Raleigh. Even the illustrious Sir Francis Bacon took time in November 1605 to write to Tobie Matthews regarding the plot, so much turmoil it had caused:

‘Sir, I perceive you have some time when you can be content to think of your friends; from whom since you have borrowed yourself, you do well, not paying the principal, to send the interest at six months day. The relation which here I send you enclosed carries the truth of that [the Gunpowder Plot] which is public; and though my little leisure might have required a briefer, yet the matter would have endured and asked a larger.’

On January 23, 1606, the chief matter in Parliament handed over a project for the making of the fifth day of November a holiday forever:

‘In thankfulness to God for our deliverance, and detestation of the papists.’ (Birch).

And of memorial peculiarities, we may only turn to the correspondence between Thomas Lorkin and Thomas Puckering, dated June 30, 1613, to be given an example:

‘My last letters advertised you of what had lately happened concerning Cotton, who yielding himself to the King’s clemency, doth nevertheless utterly disavow the book, and constantly denieth to be the author of it. Hereupon, his study hath been searched, and there divers papers found, containing many several pieces of the said book, and (which renders the man more odious) certain relics of the late Saints of the Gunpowder Treason, as one of Digby’s fingers, Percy’s toe, some other part either of Catesby or

Rookwood (whether I well remember not), with the addition of a piece of one of Peter Lambert's ribs, to make up the full mess of them. If the proofs which are against him will not extend to the touching of his life, at least they will serve to work him either misery or affliction enough.'<sup>58</sup>

The greatest precautions were taken to prevent Catholics securing relics. From Campion's execution, a young man who dropped his handkerchief into the blood on the ground was taken and committed. Another contrived to possess himself of a finger, and later on, an arm was taken from the gate where it was nailed. Father Parsons managed to buy the rope in which his martyred friend was bound or hanged, and died with it round his neck. Parsons had hired lodgings near Bridewell Church, and close to the Thames, a most convenient meeting-place for priests and other Catholics, and also for the work of his publications. It was more suitable for this purpose because it belonged to a Protestant bookseller, and so was not likely to be suspected. Here, Parsons deposited his stock of rosaries, medals, crucifixes, and pious objects he had brought from Rome.<sup>59</sup>

The following account of the execution of the Gunpowder conspirators, is taken in general



The Gunpowder conspirators' execution

from a Narrative in the Harleian Miscellany,<sup>60</sup> but contains some circumstances derived from other sources. The account given in the Harleian Miscellany is partial, and cannot be considered as a faithful relation of what took place. It is however, the only account to be found, excepting one given by Father Greenway which, on the ground of partiality, appears to be equally objectionable.

The prisoners, after their condemnation and judgment, being sent back to the Tower, remained there till the Thursday following, on which day four of them, Digby, Robert Winter, Grant and Bates, were drawn upon sledges and hurdles to a scaffold erected at the western end of St. Paul's Churchyard. Great pains were taken in the city to render the spectacle of the execution all positioned as possible. Among other arrangements made in order to be prepared against any

<sup>58</sup> Thomas Birch. *The Court and Times of James the First*, Vol. I., 1848

<sup>59</sup> Dom Bede Camm. *Lives of the English Martyrs*, Vol. II., 1914

<sup>60</sup> Vol. III., P. 121

popular tumult, a precept issued from the Lord Mayor to the Alderman of each ward in the city, requiring him to:

‘Cause one able and sufficient person, with a halbard in his hand, to stand at the door of every several dwelling-house in the open street in the way that the traitors were to be drawn towards the place of execution there to remain from seven in the morning until the return of the Sheriff.’<sup>61</sup>

Narrative in the Harleian Miscellany  
Vol. III., P. 121

Now these four above-named being drawn to the scaffold, made on purpose for their execution, first went up Digby, a man of a goodly personage, and of manly aspect; yet might a wary eye, in the change of his countenance, behold an inward fear of death, for his colour grew pale and his eye heavy; notwithstanding that he enforced himself to speak, as stoutly as he could.

His speech was not long, and to little good purpose, only, that his belied conscience being but indeed a blinded conceit, had led him into this offence, which in respect of his religion, alias indeed idolatry, he held no offence, but, in respect of the law, he held an offence, for which he asked forgiveness of God, of the King, and the whole Kingdom; and so, with vain and superstitious crossing of himself, betook him to his Latin prayer, mumbling to himself, refusing to have any prayers of any but of the Romish Catholics; went up the ladder, and, with the help of the hangman, made an end of his wicked days in this world.

After him went [Robert] Winter up the scaffold, where he used few words to any effect, without asking mercy of either God or the King for his offence; went up the ladder and, making a few prayers to himself, staid not long for his execution.

After him went Grant, who abominably blinded with his horrible idolatry, though he confessed his offence to be heinous, yet would fain have excused it by his conscience for religion; a bloody religion, to make so bloody a conscience; but better that his blood, and as much as he was, should be abed by the justice of the law, than the blood of many thousands to have been shed by his villainy, without law or justice. Having used a few idle words to ill effect, he was, as his fellows before him led to the halter; and so, after his crossing of himself, to the last part of his tragedy.

Last of them came Bates, who seemed sorry for his offence, and asked forgiveness of God and the King, and of the whole Kingdom; prayed to God for the preservation of them all, and, as he said, only for his love to his Master, drawn to forget his duty to God, his King, and country, and therefore was now drawn from the Tower to St. Paul’s Churchyard, and there hanged and quartered for his treachery. Thus ended that day of business.

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<sup>61</sup> Repertories in the Clerk Office

The next day, being Friday, were drawn from the Tower to the old palace in Westminster, over against the Parliament House, Thomas Winter the younger brother, Rookwood, Keyes, and Fawkes the miner, justly called 'the Devil of the Vault;' for had he not been a devil incarnate, he had never conceived so villainous a thought, nor been employed in so damnable an action.

[Thomas] Winter first being brought to the scaffold made little speech, but seeming after a sort, as it were, sorry for his offence, and yet crossing himself, as though those were words to put by the devil's stockades, having already made a wound in his soul; of which he had not yet a full feeling, protesting to die a true Catholic, as he said; with a very pale and dead colour went up the ladder, and after a swing or two with a halter, to the quartering-block was drawn, and there quickly dispatched.

Next him came Rookwood, who made a speech of some longer time, confessing his offence to God in seeking to shed blood, and asking therefore mercy of his Divine Majesty; his offence to the King, of whose Majesty he likewise humbly asked forgiveness, and his offence to the whole state, of whom in general he asked forgiveness; beseeching God to bless the King, the Queen and all his royal progeny, and that they might long live to reign in peace and happiness over this Kingdom. But last of all, to spoil all the pottage with one filthy weed, to mar this good prayer with an ill conclusion, he prayed God to make the King a Catholic, otherwise a Papist, which God for his mercy ever forbid; and so beseeching the King to be good to his wife and children, protesting to die in his idolatry, a Romish Catholic, he went up the ladder, and, hanging till he was almost dead was drawn to the block, where he gave his last gasp.

After him came Keyes, who, like a desperate villain, using little speech, with small or no show of repentance went stoutly up the ladder, where, not staying the hanging man's turn he turned himself off with such a leap, that with the swing he brake the halter, but, after his fall, was drawn to the block, and there was quickly divided into four parts.

Last of all came the great devil of all, Fawkes, alias Johnson, who should have put fire to the powder. His body being weak with torture and sickness, he was scarce able to go up the ladder, but yet with much ado, by the help of the hangman, went high enough to break his neck with the fall; who made no long speech, but after a sort, seeming to be sorry for his offence, asked a kind of forgiveness of the King and the state for his bloody intent; and with his crosses and idle ceremonies, made his end upon the gallows and the block, to the great joy of the beholders, that the land was elided of so wicked a villainy.