

THE
FIFTH OF NOVEMBER;

OR,

GUNPOWDER TREASON.



LONDON :

PUBLISHED FOR THE PROTESTANT ASSOCIATION, 6, SERJEANTS'-INN, FLEET-STREET,
BY HATCHARDS, RIVINGTONS, SEELEYS, NISBET, DALTON,
AND ALL BOOKSELLERS.

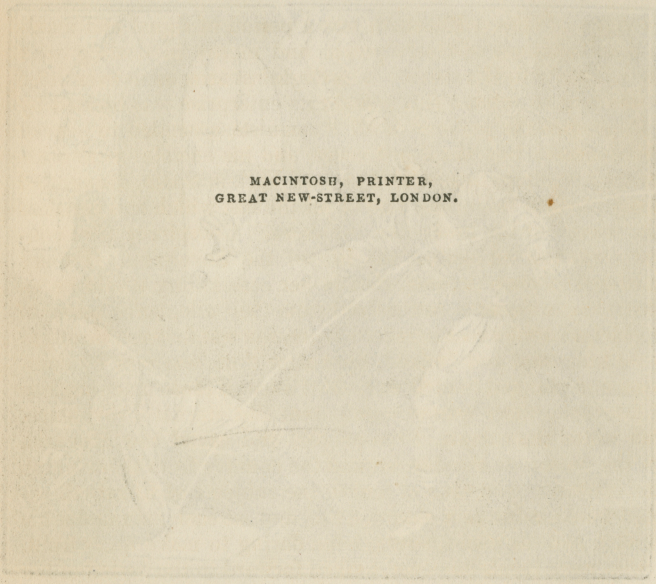
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MACINTOSH, PRINTER,
GREAT NEW-STREET, LONDON.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY THE
PRINTERS AND PUBLISHERS,
10, ABINGDON STREET, LONDON, E.C. 4.

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THE reign of Queen Elizabeth was a period of signal and manifold manifestations of God's power and mercy in dealing with nations faithful to His truth. The mightiest armament ever fitted out was sent to subdue this island : its enterprise was blessed by the Pope, and the prayers of all Romanists ascended to heaven for its success ; but the Lord arose, and his enemies were scattered : a few straggling vessels arrived back in Spain, dismantled and defeated, to tell of the fate of all the rest which had perished in the waves, or lay broken on the shore. Conspiracy after conspiracy was formed against the life of the Sovereign. Popery proclaimed in plain accents, that in her case killing would be no murder, her subjects were absolved from their allegiance, some of her principal nobles rose in rebellion, treason was fostered throughout the kingdom, and Ireland, time after time, was rent by commotion and plunged in civil war. But over all these machinations and disorders, there was an omnipotent and eternal Providence, which stilled the tumult of the people, and saved the Monarch from the poison or the dagger, and the country from the triumph of the traitor. And thus at length the subjects of Elizabeth regarded hers almost as a charmed life, and sat each man under his own vine and his own fig-tree, none daring to make him afraid. All who were loyal, however, looked forward to the period of her death with deep anxiety, not knowing what new jealousies might be fomented, or what new perils braved. It was indeed a time of great solicitude, for Elizabeth had governed with so firm and steady a hand, had chosen for her counsellors such wise and honest ministers, and had been blessed with such remarkable prosperity, that her people having experienced the blessings of this kind of sway, might well dread the rule of a stranger. This feeling, in the quaint and homely, but forcible language of the time, is expressed in the Preface of the translation of the English

Bible, wherein it is presented and dedicated to Elizabeth's successor, King James:—

“Great and manifold were the blessings, most dread Sovereign, which Almighty God, the Father of all mercies, bestowed on us the people of England, when first he sent your Majesty's Royal person to rule and reign over us. For whereas it was the expectation of many, who wished not well unto our Sion, that upon the setting of that bright occidental star, Queen Elizabeth of most happy memory, some thick and palpable clouds of darkness would so have overshadowed this land, that men should have been in doubt which way they were to walk; and that it should hardly be known who was to direct the unsettled state; the appearance of your Majesty, as of the sun in his strength, instantly dispelled those supposed and surmised mists, and gave unto all that were well affected exceeding cause of comfort; especially when we beheld the Government established in your Highness, and your hopeful seed, by an undoubted title, and this also accompanied with peace and tranquillity at home and abroad.

“But among all our joys, there was no one more filled our hearts, than the blessed continuance of the preaching of God's sacred Word among us, which is that inestimable treasure which excelleth all the riches of the earth; because the fruit thereof extendeth itself, not only to the time spent in this transitory world, but directeth and disposeth men unto that eternal happiness which is above in heaven.”

It was indeed a great mercy to the nation that Almighty God had raised up to Queen Elizabeth such wise counsellors as prepared for King James's accession to the throne; who, by the energy of their movements, established him in its possession on the Queen's death before the disaffected had time to concert resistance, or to rally round the standard of a Pretender. And it was also a manifestation of great mercy to this nation, that there was provided as Elizabeth's successor, one so well calculated for such troublous times as King James—a man with a deep-rooted abhorrence of the soul-destroying heresies of Rome, yet of a moderate and tolerant disposition. To him at once the hearts of the population turned, and, as if by magic, was the possessor of the crown changed, without the unsettlement of one single law, or the shedding of one drop of blood, or the oppression of one single subject.

And here fell the hopes of the Church of Rome. Elizabeth was dead; that event had happened which they had striven to hasten, and for which they had so earnestly longed, and yet they were no nearer to their loved supremacy. At once, therefore, all among them who had both stake in the country and a degree of independence of Jesuit influence, resolved to pursue the system of conciliating the new Government, and, as if willingly and

cheerfully, disclaimed hostility to the King or the national institutions. Not so the many Romanists and the Jesuits, in whom the principles of their Church were more deeply seated. They had thus lost their leaders, but they were resolved not to lose their end; they could no longer engage in powerful conspiracies, but were driven to secret cabals, and from open rebellion to private murder. Of one plot, by some of those men concerted, we have now to give a description, and truly it may be called in the Act of Parliament commemorating the Event, and ordered to be read in churches, "An Invention So Inhuman, Barbarous, and Cruel, As The Like Was Never Before Heard Of."* We mean the famous (or infamous) *Gunpowder Treason*.

The conspirators were thirteen in number:—

Robert Catesby,	Sir Everard Digby,
Robert Winter,	Ambrose Rookwood,
Thomas Percy,	Francis Tresham,
Thomas Winter,	John Grant,
John Wright,	Robert Keys,
Christopher Wright,	Guy Faukes,

And Bates, the servant of Catesby.

Three Jesuits also, Garnet, Gerard, and Tesmond, who was also called Greenway, were aware of the design, if they did not counsel and arrange it; for never, indeed, as has been well remarked by Sir Edward Coke, was there a treason in those days without a Jesuit at the bottom of it; and such probably is the case now.

Of these conspirators, Catesby, Rookwood, Tresham, Percy, and Sir Everard Digby, were men of wealth and ancient family. Guy Faukes was an adventurer who had served under the Spanish King as a soldier, and who appears to have been bigoted in his religion, and ready for every desperate enterprise to maintain it. Bates was Catesby's servant, taken into the conspiracy, and sworn to secrecy, when it was feared that he knew or suspected it, and the rest all appear to have been men of education and property.

King James the First ascended the throne in the early part of 1603. At that time the plan had been conceived by Catesby. For nearly three years therefore was secrecy kept of one of the most horrible massacres ever contemplated by the unregenerate heart of man. So tight is the seal of the confessional! so benumbing to the conscience is Popery!

Catesby first communicated his design to Thomas Winter and John Wright, the former of whom engaged Guy Faukes to join it. Subsequently Percy joined them, and they met in a room near St. Clement's Church, Catesby and Winter alone knowing

* Publications of Protestant Association; Handbill, No. 6, price 1s. per 100.

the whole plan, and keeping it partially and for a time secret from the rest. It was there determined that an oath of secrecy should be imposed; and accordingly, having each taken it on a Primer, they heard mass from the Jesuit Gerard, and at his hands received the sacrament. The whole scheme was then revealed to Percy, Faukes, and Wright, and all readily agreed to engage in it. The plan was, that they should undermine the House of Lords, place a quantity of gunpowder underneath it, and by this, when the King should open Parliament, blow it up, with the Prince of Wales, the nobles, and the Commons; that Percy in the panic, having an office at Court, and access to the palace, should seize the Duke of York, and that a body of Papists should assemble on Dunsmore Heath, under pretence of a hunting-match, to seize also the Princess Elizabeth, who was then on a visit to Lord Harrington, in Warwickshire.

A house adjoining the House of Lords was then hired by Percy, who employed Faukes as his keeper, under the name of Johnson. Gunpowder was procured from Flanders, and placed in a house at Lambeth, where Catesby frequently lodged; and this house was then intrusted to Keys, who at this period (the summer of 1604), was admitted into the conspiracy. Thus far their proceedings had gone, when Parliament was adjourned till the ensuing February, 1605. The conspirators consequently left town, and travelled in various directions to avoid suspicion. They assembled again, however, very shortly, and after some unexpected delays in getting possession of Percy's house, which sometimes was used for Parliamentary business, they commenced operations by beginning, on the 11th December, 1604, to dig through the wall which separated his house from the cellar of the House of Lords. Here they worked till Christmas-eve; but then finding that Parliament was again adjourned to the following October, they ceased for a time their labours. In spring, they added Christopher Wright and Robert Winter to their party, recommenced operations, and went on with them until Easter. The wall through which they had to penetrate was nine feet thick, and of a very hard substance; and none of them being at all accustomed to manual labour, they made slow progress. It was therefore with great delight that they seized an opportunity of hiring the cellar of the House of Lords itself, which happened to be to let about this time; an opportunity which they regarded as a remarkable omen of success. The plan then having been communicated to Bates (the servant of Catesby), who with Catesby and Winter received absolution from Tesmond the Jesuit on confessing it, and to Sir Everard Digby, Tresham (who supplied money towards its expense), and subsequently to Rookwood and Grant, it only remained to convey their materials privately into the cellar, and to make arrangements at home and abroad to

follow up with success their scheme, when the first fearful blow should be struck. And now Parliament having been again prorogued, a definite day (the ever-memorable 5th of November, 1605), was fixed for its opening. The powder was placed in readiness, arrangements were made for its ignition, and on the discovery that the Prince of Wales would not be present with his father, a plan was settled for his capture. And thus was this deed of darkness carried to the point of execution. Ten days only had to elapse before the fatal moment; all things were prepared, and the whole Romanist body, though not acquainted with the particulars, looked anxiously forward to some great catastrophe, by which, they were told, their despotism was once more to be established. The Government had information from abroad that something treasonable was going on; but so carefully and successfully was it veiled, that they could gain no clue to the conspiracy, of which in silent apprehension they waited the issue. But man's extremity is God's opportunity. The time had come for the baffling of the traitors' impious design. By a process the most remarkable, this foul secret was to be dragged to light, and the monarchy, freedom, and the religion of the nation saved from annihilation.

On the evening of the 26th October, by an unknown hand, the following letter was left at the house of Lord Monteagle, a Roman Catholic:—

“ My Lord,

“ *Out of the love I bear to some of your friends, I have a care of your preservation; therefore I would advise you, as you tender your life, to devise some excuse to shift off your attendance at this Parliament; for God and man have 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 at this Parliament, and yet they shall not see who hurts them. This counsel is not to be contemned, because it may do you good, and can do you no harm; for the danger is past, as soon as you have burnt the letter: and I hope God will give you the grace to make a good use of it, to whose holy protection I commend you.*”

Thus personally and publicly threatened, and evidently as one of the Parliament, Lord Monteagle at once conveyed the letter to King James's celebrated Minister, Cecil, Earl of Salisbury. Whence the letter came, however, it was impossible for him to tell, nor indeed to this day has it been ascertained, though it is probable that it was written by Tresham, who was related to Lord Monteagle, and might naturally be anxious to save his life. Nor could he assist in discovering its meaning. Cecil, also, and the rest of the Council whom he consulted, were baffled; but deeming

it of importance they resolved to lay it before the King; which was accordingly done on the 31st of October. James was a man of little courage, and therefore was much disposed to view it seriously. His father, too, had perished by an explosion of gunpowder, and this might, under the circumstances, naturally occur to him. He therefore at once suggested that the sentence, "*They shall receive a terrible blow at this Parliament, and yet shall not see who hurts them,*" meant an attempt by gunpowder on the assembled Parliament; and he thought the sentence, "*for the danger is over as soon as you have burnt this letter,*" meant as quickly as you have burnt this letter, which seemed to confirm his opinion. Subsequently this impression appears also to have been made on the Council and the Lord Chancellor, by whom on the following day (Saturday, the 2d inst.) it was determined that a search of the vaults of the House of Lords should be made. This delay deceived the conspirators. Through Lord Monteagle's servant they had heard of the letter, and that it had been carried to the Council; but finding that no search was made, their hopes revived, and trusting that the letter had been disregarded, they stationed Faukes, on Monday, the 4th inst., in charge of the train, with a watch in his pocket (in those days an unusual ornament), by which he might know the exact hour to fire it. On that day the search was made as had been determined, but it extended no further than to the cellar of Percy's house, in which the Lord Chamberlain saw Guy Faukes, and a large quantity of fuel, which excited sufficient suspicions to induce him at once to return to the Council and announce the facts. Lord Monteagle also then stated his belief that Percy was the writer of the letter. But this report of the Lord Chamberlain was only the foundation of an opinion, that it was intended to consume the House of Lords by fire, a plan which did not seem to answer the description in the letter of the intended blow. King James insisted on the necessity of a more narrow search, being still convinced that the fuel was placed there to conceal the gunpowder. At midnight, therefore, Sir Thomas Knivet, a magistrate of Westminster, with a small band, suddenly proceeded to the search, and there in the cellar was Faukes, who had just completed all his arrangements, and was about, for a time, to leave his post of iniquity and peril. Going further they found, on removing the coals and wood, first, one barrel of gunpowder, and then more, till at length the number of thirty-six was discovered. Guy Faukes was then searched, and on him they found matches, the watch, and arms. At four o'clock in the morning, Sir Thomas Knivet returned to Whitehall, the whole Council was at once assembled, and there, a few hours before the time concerted for launching them all into eternity, stood before them the detected conspira-

tor ;—a memorable and marvellous proof of God's never-failing providence, and of His faithfulness and power. To Him, to Him alone, be praise ascribed for the discovery. *He* in whose hands are the hearts of men, who turneth them whithersoever He will, had caused a conspirator, whose conscience allowed him to sacrifice hundreds, to interpose to save one. *He* had by that interposition thrown light on this dark and awful treason, just at the moment when the train was ready for its explosion.

The other conspirators fled. Within one hour after Sir Thomas Knivet's return they heard of the discovery through a message left at Lord Monteagle's, summoning him to assist in the search for Percy: and at once most of them started for Warwickshire, where they assembled to concert future measures, as they had before arranged. Meanwhile London was in the height of excitement; the intelligence, probably with many exaggerations, was conveyed from man to man, and thence into the country, where at once revived that determined spirit of abhorrence of Popery, the foul author of so many crimes, the parent of so many perils to this nation, which afterwards so long and so usefully reigned in the hearts of Englishmen.

The hour for retributive justice was now at hand. The conspirators, forsaken on all sides, were hunted through the country, till wearied and despairing, they took refuge in the house of Stephen Littleton, at Holbeach, in Staffordshire. Here they were speedily surrounded and assailed by the Sheriff. A contest ensued, in which some gunpowder exploded, whereby the house was set in flames, and Catesby, Rookwood, and Grant were seriously injured; even by the very instrument of destruction they had prepared for others! The Sheriff's men now gained entrance, and a furious struggle ensued; Catesby and Percy fought back to back with desperate courage, and at length fell, slain it is said by the same shot. The two Wrights were also killed, Rookwood and one of the Winters were wounded, and the rest were captured. Tresham was captured in London, and Robert Winter, Garnet, and Sir Everard Digby, were arrested soon after. Of these, Tresham died in prison, and the rest were brought to trial, and paid the penalty of their crimes.

Tresham and Sir Everard Digby confessed their guilt; Faukes, Thomas Winter, and Bates, Robert Winter, Grant, and Rookwood, did likewise, afterwards. From their confessions and examinations, and the speech of Sir Edward Coke on the trial, much useful information may be collected; and in the latter, especially, the important facts are insisted on, that even prior to the Reformation, this country, by several Acts of Parliament, had renounced subjection to the See of Rome; that the proceedings

of the Jesuits in England were not of a treasonable character till after the Bull of Pope Pius the Fifth had been published to authorize such conduct; and that during the reign of Elizabeth, the executions of Romanists in all cases were not for their religion, but for gross acts of treason.

It was discovered that the influence of Garnet the Jesuit had been exerted to stimulate the conspirators, when even Catesby shrunk from sacrificing so many Roman Catholic Peers with the other victims. And though in this manner he was a party to one of the foulest tragedies ever designed, though on his trial he not only equivocated but justified equivocation, he was held as a martyr after his execution, a straw was exhibited on which his blood had dropped, and on which there was said to be a miraculous picture of his face. At Rome a print of this straw was published and sold, and he was declared a martyr by the Pope, who also beatified him in due form. Whether Romanists now pray *to* him or *for* him, we are not concerned to inquire, and can merely lament the "strong delusion" of men, some of them of the highest degree of intellect, who can revere this wicked plotter in a treason, which for iniquity and cold-blooded cruelty has and can have few parallels.

Had the King been a Papist, and the conspirators Protestants, the discovery of so fearful a design would have been the signal for a general persecution. Less than thirty years before, Paris and all the chief towns of France, on the mere imagination of a conspiracy, were (on St. Bartholomew's day) drenched with blood; in Spain and Italy the most dreadful persecutions were going on; in Ireland, soon after, there was a fearful massacre of Protestants; and fifty years afterwards, in Tyrol there were inflicted on the Protestant population, cruelties which beggar description. Such was then the spirit of Popery. But it was different with Protestant England. *So cautiously did King James abstain from curbing and discouraging Romanism to the extent which many deemed necessary for self-defence, that he was himself suspected by no small portion of his people of a leaning to Popery.* He restored to the children of the traitors their forfeited estates, and seemed, in fact, more anxious than ever to conciliate all foes.

The Romanists in the present day have endeavoured to escape from the odium of this transaction; but their attempts are fruitless.* The conspirators were (with the exception of Bates

* That there was such a plot, is attested by the papers in the State Paper Office; by the Act of Parliament passed to perpetuate a grateful recollection of the goodness of God in delivering the Church and nation from the meditated destruction; by the Religious service enjoined to be used by the Church each fifth of November; and by our State Trials, in which, at great length, is given a minute account of the various proceedings relative to the Plot, and its defeat.

and Faukes) men capable of judging between right and wrong, who advisedly and deliberately took up the cause, received the sacrament after swearing secrecy in it, and were not only absolved, but encouraged by their priests. And the principles upon which they proceeded are the principles which, to this day, are inculcated by the Church of Rome. The third Canon of the Fourth Lateran Council, expressly anathematizes and excommunicates each prince who does not "cleanse his country of heretical filth," and gives power to the Pope to absolve the vassals of such a prince from their oaths of allegiance. This Fourth Lateran Council is expressly recognised by the last General Council, the Council of Trent, all of whose decrees every Papist undoubtedly admits; and Reiffensteul,* a class-book of the College of Maynooth, where, to the shame of British Protestants, Popish priests are educated at the nation's cost, quotes that canon no less than eighteen times. Cardinal Bellarmine, too, and others of the very highest Popish authorities, have over and over again asserted the principles on which the 5th November conspirators acted,—principles which in the chief standard books of the *unchangeable* Church of Rome may be found to this day. It is, therefore, absurd to suppose (nothing can be more so) that the principles on which these men acted are obsolete or extinct. Such a supposition can only lead to dangerous alliances with an Antichristian system, or gender a false peace with them, who even now, we believe, though in ways more calculated in these times to effect their purposes, are plotting the ruin of the British institutions, and destruction of the independence of the monarchy.

When Parliament met after the discovery, an Act was passed at once to record and to commemorate the event. In it the three estates of the realm solemnly acknowledged the great mercy of God in saving them and the nation from the fearful catastrophe. Have we not still cause for thankfulness on the same account? Had success attended the design, had the King and chief nobles, and dignitaries, and commoners of the land perished, had the heir of the throne been seized, and success been achieved by men who could so wickedly act on such diabolical principles, this nation, probably, would not now be as she is, the most free, and the most powerful in the world, but like other Popish lands, like Spain, Portugal, and Ireland, torn, distracted, and degraded; or like Austria, Bavaria, and Italy, the seat of despotism and ignorance, of poverty, and of crime. The Bible, which so soon after that conspiracy was by King James's command carefully translated from the original, and published in the vulgar tongue, would be a sealed book, and the

* See Nos. 2 and 19, Publications of the Protestant Association.

freedom and happiness, the peace and enlightenment with which it has pleased God to bless this favoured land, would have been lost, probably for ever. Rooted in blood, the offspring of foul and wholesale murders, the new Government would have been settled and established by foreign force, and consequently would be compelled to oppress, in order to govern a reluctant people. But it was not the destiny of this country thus to suffer. The treason was discovered, the blow averted, and the kingdom saved. Well then may we yearly commemorate this wonderful deliverance, acknowledging in it the power and mercy of the Lord, and trusting that if we return to "the old paths," and become faithful to His truth, He will continue to be gracious, saving us as a nation, and our sovereign and rulers in particular, from all the assaults of secret treason and of open violence.

Nor, let it be remembered, is the national escape from the Gunpowder conspiracy the only event which we have to commemorate on the 5th November. On that day, in the year 1688, there landed in England William Prince of Orange, by whom, through the mercy of Almighty God, our Church and nation were delivered from Popish tyranny and arbitrary power.* The reigning monarch, James the Second, had endeavoured to subvert the liberties of the people, and to abolish their religion; but in due season, while all his plans were proceeding, the Lord raised up for our forefathers a zealous and noble deliverer, by whom the schemes of the Monarch were defeated, and the rights of the people were recognised and established. At that time the Constitution was settled by the wisdom of some of the most eminent statesmen that ever lived,—happy would it have been for the country if that settlement had never been disturbed! But for the blessings which, while it lasted entire, the Constitution produced to us as a nation—for the privileges which the remainder of it now imparts, let us still be humbly grateful to the Giver of every good and every perfect gift, remembering what marvellous mercies we have formerly experienced; and on that recollection, thanking God and taking courage in our struggle for the principles which, in days gone by, were purchased so dearly, and were cherished so fondly, by the reformed and liberated inhabitants of this favoured island.

* See Form of Prayer and Thanksgiving to be used yearly upon the Fifth day of November.

Published by the Protestant Association, The Gunpowder Plot, 1s. per 100. No. 6, Fifth of November, 1605, 1s. per 100. Also, the 5th of November. By J. LORD, Esq. 3s. per 100.