

**WILLIAM HARRISON
AINSWORTH**



**GUY
FAWKES**

William Harrison Ainsworth

Guy Fawkes

Enriched edition.

Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Paige Caldwell

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Table of Contents

[Introduction](#)

[Synopsis](#)

[Historical Context](#)

[**Guy Fawkes**](#)

[Analysis](#)

[Reflection](#)

[Memorable Quotes](#)

[Notes](#)

Introduction

Table of Contents

Set at the combustible frontier between private belief and public order, William Harrison Ainsworth's *Guy Fawkes* turns a national memory into a drama of conscience, secrecy, and fear, tracing how devotion hardens into resolve, how surveillance breeds counterplot, and how the echoing spaces of cellars, chapels, and corridors carry the footsteps of men who would remake the state, while the same corridors whisper of families, neighbors, and magistrates struggling to choose between mercy and duty, so that every candle lit in prayer seems to throw a shadow shaped like treason, and every oath sworn in safety trembles against the percussion of approaching catastrophe.

An early Victorian historical novel with pronounced Gothic inflections, *Guy Fawkes* is set in early seventeenth-century England during the tensions that surround the 1605 Gunpowder Plot, moving between northern districts and the precincts of Westminster under King James I. Ainsworth was among the most widely read popular novelists of his day, and this work appeared in serial and book form in the early 1840s, when mass-circulation periodicals were reshaping literary culture. The novel marries antiquarian interest to narrative urgency, using the familiar public story as a frame for a tale of clandestine meetings, religious pressure, and the perils of political conspiracy.

Without rehearsing outcomes known to history, Ainsworth begins with the climate of suspicion that hems in recusant households and follows the tightening circle of plans that seek to answer coercion with a single, shattering blow. The narration is omniscient yet intimate, ornamented with archaizing diction, dense description, and

topographical specificity, so that passages of rapid pursuit or secret tunneling alternate with reflective pauses and eerie tableaux. The tone is atmospheric and conspiratorial rather than judicial, drawing readers into councils, chapels, and byways where loyalties are tested, while the serial origins of the book foster a cadence of cliffhangers and returns.

At its heart, the novel interrogates the combustible interplay of faith, law, and power: how persecution nourishes zeal, how zeal threatens communities, and how states, in defending themselves, risk compromising the liberty they claim to preserve. Ainsworth is attentive to dilemmas of oaths and obedience, to the wearying logistics of secrecy, and to the ways public rituals can mask private terrors. The religious divide is rendered not as abstraction but as lived texture—codes, hiding places, fasts, and festivals—so that debates over conscience emerge from rooms filled with dust, smoke, and whispered prayer. Violence is contemplated as both sin and temptation.

Although the title names a single figure, the book is shaped by a chorus of perspectives that includes conspirators, clerics, magistrates, and laypeople accidentally swept into the undertow of events. Fawkes himself is drawn as a disciplined soldier of fortune turned instrument of a collective design, his resolve magnetized by a promise of deliverance and shadowed by inward reckonings. Around him, Ainsworth stages debates about obedience and absolution, family duty and political loyalty, creating scenes in which affection clashes with ideology. The result is moral chiaroscuro rather than hagiography or denunciation, allowing readers to infer motives while feeling the pressure of circumstance.

Readers will notice Ainsworth's relish for architecture and landscape—manor houses, riverbanks, lanes, and the vaulted spaces of the city—arranged as both realistic settings and symbolic chambers of intent. Like the historical

romances of Walter Scott, the novel uses documented events as scaffolding for invented encounters, but its Gothic coloration and serialized rhythm lend it a sharper taste for peril, disguise, and nocturnal ceremony. Antiquarian detail anchors the scenes without slowing them unduly; costume, weapons, proclamations, and penalties emerge as part of the drama. The prose favors cadence and tableau, cultivating a pageant of anxiety whose beats are designed for return reading.

For contemporary readers, the book retains force as a meditation on radicalization, state power, and the everyday costs of sectarian division, themes that speak to ongoing conversations about security, tolerance, and dissent. It also illuminates how the Victorian imagination curated the national past, shaping festivities and symbols that still surface every autumn in public memory. Without presuming to resolve the ethical riddles it raises, the novel invites deliberation about means and ends, about when resistance protects liberty and when it imperils it. As narrative, it offers suspense and atmosphere; as reflection, it asks how belief becomes action, and at what price.

Synopsis

Table of Contents

William Harrison Ainsworth's *Guy Fawkes; or, The Gunpowder Treason* is a Victorian historical romance that reimagines the 1605 conspiracy against King James I. Blending documented figures with invented characters, Ainsworth stages the plot within a world of recusant households, watchful officials, and religious strain. The narrative moves from the north of England to London, threading civic spaces, country halls, and shadowed vaults. Though framed as an adventure, the book continually pauses over questions of conscience, obedience, and the perilous meeting of zeal and policy. Its central figure, Guy Fawkes, emerges within a network led by Robert Catesby, whose designs gather force.

In early chapters, Ainsworth locates the tension in Lancashire, where Catholic gentry face searches and penalties for harboring priests. The Radcliffe household at Ordsall Hall becomes a focal point: Viviana Radcliffe embodies devout loyalty and filial duty, while the young merchant Humphrey Chetham, a Protestant of means, stands for civic prudence and forbearance. Raids, informers, and the pressure of oaths create an atmosphere of siege. Into this setting comes Guy Fawkes, a soldier seasoned in the Low Countries, whose resolute faith and practical skills make him both a protector and a catalyst. Personal ties begin to tangle with perilous public causes.

As the circle of malcontents coheres, Ainsworth follows meetings among Robert Catesby, Thomas Percy, the Wrights, the Winters, and their associates. Their grievance centers on broken hopes for toleration and the continuing disability of English Catholics. A decisive scheme takes shape: to strike the opening of Parliament with powder

placed beneath the Lords. Fawkes, experienced in munitions, is singled out for guard and execution of the technical design. Oaths, secrecy, and careful logistics define this phase, while the tale underscores the difference between political desperation and pastoral counsel, sketching the wary distance maintained by clerical advisers amid rising fervor.

London provides the novel's labyrinth: rented cellars, shifting leases, river traffic, and the guarded approaches to Westminster. Ainsworth dramatizes the labor of tunneling and the opportunistic discovery of a more direct access, the stockpiling of barrels, and the steady watch set over them. The conspiracy's discipline is tested by impatience, scarcity, and fear of betrayal. Priestly figures, including Henry Garnet, appear as voices urging restraint, introducing the period's disputed doctrine of equivocation and the moral cost of political violence. Surveillance sharpens through informants and courtiers in Robert Cecil's orbit, while the conspirators debate timing, targets, and the perils of delay.

The domestic strand persists as Viviana's steadfast piety and Chetham's measured integrity intersect with Fawkes's unbending purpose. Ainsworth uses these ties to place private conscience against public action, suggesting alternatives to retaliatory force without simplifying the pressures that drive resistance. Allegiances carry emotional consequences: compassion threatens to soften resolve, while loyalty demands sacrifice. Rumors of anonymous warnings and sudden scrutiny spread through court and city, tightening the story's coil. The pace accelerates as movements must be concealed from constables and watchers, yet the narrative remains attentive to inner scruple, the pull of mercy, and the fear of igniting wider ruin.

The approach to the parliamentary opening furnishes the book's tense set-pieces. Oaths are renewed, disguises arranged, and watches kept by river and door. Ainsworth

lends Gothic color to nocturnal vigils, echoing roofs, and the black water of the Thames, while processions and ceremonies promise a glittering target. Fawkes occupies a solitary station of responsibility, his endurance tested by fatigue, alarm, and expectation. Across the city, courtiers and officers move with increasing purpose. The conspirators' calculated quiet meets the state's measured caution, and the narrative holds on the brink, balancing secrecy and discovery, design and conscience, without preempting the crisis itself.

Beyond its immediate intrigue, the novel probes the boundaries between faith and fanaticism, law and oppression, daring and recklessness. Ainsworth situates a notorious episode within lived textures of worship, hospitality, surveillance, and rumor, showing how grand designs depend on fragile trust and ordinary movements. The romance elements do not dissolve the politics; instead, they pose humane alternatives and sharpen the cost of action. Written for a popular Victorian audience, the book helped fix the modern legend of Guy Fawkes while inviting skepticism toward simple heroes or villains. Its resonance endures in debates over extremism, security, and the ethics of resistance.

Historical Context

Table of Contents

William Harrison Ainsworth's *Guy Fawkes; or, The Gunpowder Treason* was issued in serial form in 1840 and published as a book soon after, at the outset of the Victorian era. Ainsworth, a popular novelist associated with the historical romance and the controversial "Newgate" school, fashioned narratives from notorious crimes and public legends. Writing amid a renewed taste for Gothic pageantry and antiquarian detail, he drew heavily on chronicles, state trials, and printed depositions. The novel dramatizes the Gunpowder Plot within a richly reconstructed milieu, fusing political history with romantic adventure for an expanding middle-class readership eager for vivid retellings of formative national crises.

Set chiefly in 1605, the story unfolds in London and across northern England under the early Stuart monarchy of James I. The central institutions are the English Parliament, the royal court, and the established Church of England, all intertwined with a powerful privy council and a maturing bureaucratic state. The Houses of Parliament at Westminster, with their vaulted undercrofts and rented storerooms, provide the narrative's focal space. Court politics and patronage shape decisions on religion and security. Regional strongholds, recusant households, and roads between York, Lancashire, and the capital link local Catholic communities to national power, situating private conscience within public governance.

The novel's background rests on Elizabethan religious policy and conflict. After Pope Pius V's 1570 bull *Regnans in Excelsis* excommunicated Elizabeth I, Parliament expanded penal laws against recusancy, imposing fines for absence from Anglican services and restricting Catholic practice.

Jesuit and seminary priests—many trained at Douai and Rheims—conducted clandestine missions; Edmund Campion's arrest and execution in 1581 emblemized the risks. War with Spain culminated in the Armada's failure in 1588, sustaining suspicions of Catholic disloyalty. By the turn of the century, Catholic gentry maintained networks of protection, safe houses, and covert worship, conditions that inform the conspirators' secrecy and the government's vigilance.

James VI of Scotland succeeded Elizabeth in 1603 as James I of England, uniting the crowns and raising expectations among English Catholics for moderated enforcement. The Hampton Court Conference of 1604 addressed Puritan grievances rather than easing Catholic penalties, while the Treaty of London (1604) ended open war with Spain without resolving domestic religious tensions. Early in the reign, the Bye and Main Plots (1603) prompted increased surveillance. The Secretary of State, Robert Cecil—soon Earl of Salisbury—consolidated intelligence networks. The period saw renewed fines for recusancy and oaths testing allegiance, sharpening the divide between private belief and public loyalty that animates the narrative.

The Gunpowder Plot centered on a plan to destroy the House of Lords during the state opening of Parliament scheduled for 5 November 1605, intending to kill the king, leading ministers, and attending peers. Robert Catesby organized the conspiracy; key associates included Thomas Percy, Thomas and Robert Wintour, the Wright brothers, and Guy Fawkes, an experienced soldier. The group secured access to an undercroft beneath the Lords and stored barrels of gunpowder there. A warning letter delivered to William Parker, Lord Monteagle, in late October triggered searches at Westminster. The discovery of Fawkes guarding the caches framed the government's case and defines the plot's turning point.

Guy (Guido) Fawkes was born in York in 1570 and educated at St Peter's School. After converting to Catholicism, he left England in the 1590s to fight for the Spanish in the Netherlands, gaining military experience with siegeworks and munitions. He used the name Guido while abroad and sought Spanish support for an English Catholic restoration, traveling to the Iberian Peninsula in 1603. Recruited by Robert Catesby in 1604, Fawkes brought technical expertise prized by the conspirators. His Yorkshire origins, continental service, and links to exiled networks made him a figure who embodied transnational Catholic militancy and domestic disaffection in the post-Armada generation.

After the plot's exposure, interrogation proceeded under the authority of the Privy Council and warrants from the king, who permitted torture in the Tower of London in exceptional cases. Confessions were extracted and presented at trials in Westminster Hall. In 1606 Parliament passed the Observance of 5th November Act, establishing an annual day of thanksgiving; bonfires and sermons marked enduring public remembrance. New oaths of allegiance and tightened enforcement followed. This apparatus of surveillance, legal ritual, and commemoration demonstrates how the early Stuart state converted crisis into political theater, a context Ainsworth mines to depict ceremony, spectacle, and the shaping of national memory.

Ainsworth's treatment reflects Victorian preoccupations with crime, authority, and faith. Published after the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1829 and amid the Oxford Movement's revival of Anglican ritual from 1833, the work revisits an episode long used to signal "No Popery" sentiment, even as the era debated toleration. His historical romance, indebted to Walter Scott and disseminated via the mass periodical press, blends documented events with melodramatic color while avoiding overt polemic. By staging clandestine worship, court ceremonials, and Parliament's grandeur, the

novel interrogates loyalty and conscience and critiques the uses of state power, surveillance, and spectacle in forging British identity.

Guy Fawkes

Main Table of Contents

Preface.

BOOK THE FIRST. THE PLOT.

- Chapter I. An Execution in Manchester, at the Beginning of the Seventeenth Century.
- Chapter II. Ordsall Cave.
- Chapter III. Ordsall Hall
- Chapter IV. The Search.
- Chapter V. Chat Moss.
- Chapter VI. The Disinterment.
- Chapter VII. Doctor Dee.
- Chapter VIII. The Magic Glass.
- Chapter IX. The Prison on Salford Bridge.
- Chapter X. The Fate of the Pursuivant.
- Chapter XI. The Pilgrimage to St. Winifred's Well.
- Chapter XII. The Vision.
- Chapter XIII. The Conspirators.
- Chapter XIV. The Packet.
- Chapter XV. The Elixir.
- Chapter XVI. The Collegiate Church at Manchester.
- Chapter XVII. The Rencounter.
- Chapter XVIII. The Explanation.
- Chapter XIX. The Discovery.
- Chapter XX. The Departure from the Hall.

BOOK THE SECOND. THE DISCOVERY.

- Chapter I. The Landing of the Powder.
- Chapter II. The Traitor.
- Chapter III. The Escape Prevented.
- Chapter IV. The Mine.

Chapter V. The Capture of Viviana.
Chapter VI. The Cellar.
Chapter VII. The Star-chamber.
Chapter VIII. The Jailer's Daughter.
Chapter IX. The Counterplot.
Chapter X. White Webbs.
Chapter XI. The Marriage in the Forest.
Chapter XII. The Fifth of November.
Chapter XIII. The Flight of the Conspirators.
Chapter XIV. The Examination.

BOOK THE THIRD. THE CONSPIRATORS.

Chapter I. How Guy Fawkes was Put to the Torture.
Chapter II. Showing the Troubles of Viviana.
Chapter III. Huddington.
Chapter IV. Holbeach.
Chapter V. The Close of the Rebellion.
Chapter VI. Hagley.
Chapter VII. Viviana's Last Night at Ordsall Hall.
Chapter VIII. Hendlip.
Chapter IX. Whitehall.
Chapter X. The Parting of Viviana and Humphrey Chetham.
Chapter XI. The Subterranean Dungeon.
Chapter XII. The Traitor Betrayed.
Chapter XIII. The Trial.
Chapter XIV. The Last Meeting of Fawkes and Viviana.
Chapter XV. Saint Paul's Churchyard.
Chapter XVI. Old Palace Yard.
Chapter XVII. The Last Execution.

**TO MRS. HUGHES,
KINGSTON LISLE, BERKS.**

My dear Mrs. Hughes,

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

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

Your affectionate and obliged friend,
W. Harrison Ainsworth.

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

PREFACE.

[Table of Contents](#)

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

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

“The execution of the penal laws enabled the king, by an ingenious comment, to derive considerable profit from his past forbearance. It was pretended that he had never forgiven the penalties of recusancy; he had merely forbidden them to be exacted for a time, in the hope that this indulgence would lead to conformity; but his expectations had been deceived; the obstinacy of the Catholics had grown with the lenity of the sovereign; and, as they were unworthy of further favour, they should now be left to the severity of the law. To their dismay, the legal fine of twenty pounds per lunar month was again demanded, and not only for the time to come, but for the whole period

of the suspension; a demand which, by crowding thirteen payments into one, reduced many families of moderate incomes to a state of absolute beggary. Nor was this all. James was surrounded by numbers of his indigent countrymen. Their habits were expensive, their wants many, and their importunities incessant. To satisfy the more clamorous, a new expedient was devised. The king transferred to them his claims on some of the more opulent recusants, against whom they were at liberty to proceed by law, in his name, unless the sufferers should submit to compound, by the grant of an annuity for life, or the immediate payment of a considerable sum. This was at a time when the jealousies between the two nations had reached a height, of which, at the present day, we have but little conception. Had the money been carried to the royal coffers, the recusants would have had sufficient reason to complain; but that Englishmen should be placed by their king at the mercy of foreigners, that they should be stripped of their property to support the extravagance of his Scottish minions, this added indignity to injustice, exacerbated their already wounded feelings, and goaded the most moderate almost to desperation." From this deplorable state of things, which is by no means over-coloured in the above description, sprang the Gunpowder Plot.

The county of Lancaster has always abounded in Catholic families, and at no period were the proceedings of the ecclesiastical commissioners more rigorous against them than at that under consideration. Manchester, "the Goshen of this Egypt" as it is termed by the fiery zealot, Warden Heyrick, being the place where all the recusants were imprisoned, the scene of the early part of this history has been laid in that town and its immediate neighbourhood. For the introduction of the munificent founder of the Blue Coat Hospital into a tale of this description I ought, perhaps, to apologize; but if I should succeed by it in arousing my fellow-townsman to a more lively appreciation of the great

benefits they have derived from him, I shall not regret what I have written.

In Viviana Radcliffe I have sought to portray the loyal and devout Catholic, such as I conceive the character to have existed at the period. In Catesby, the unscrupulous and ambitious plotter, masking his designs under the cloak of religion. In Garnet, the subtle, and yet sincere Jesuit. And in Fawkes the gloomy and superstitious enthusiast. One doctrine I have endeavoured to enforce throughout,—Toleration.

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

* * * *

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

BOOK THE FIRST. THE PLOT.

[Table of Contents](#)

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

Letter to Vers'egan, ap. Stonyhurst MSS.

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

Father Gerard's MS.

CHAPTER I.

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

[Table of Contents](#)

More than two hundred and thirty-five years ago, or, to speak with greater precision, in 1605, at the latter end of June, it was rumoured one morning in Manchester that two seminary priests, condemned at the late assizes[1] under the severe penal enactments then in force against the Papists, were about to suffer death on that day. Attracted by the report, large crowds flocked towards the place of execution, which, in order to give greater solemnity to the spectacle, had been fixed at the southern gate of the old Collegiate Church, where a scaffold was erected. Near it was a large blood-stained block, the use of which will be readily divined, and adjoining the block, upon a heap of blazing coals, smoked a caldron filled with boiling pitch, intended to receive the quarters of the miserable sufferers.

The place was guarded by a small band of soldiers, fully accoutred in corslets and morions, and armed with swords, half-pikes, and calivers. Upon the steps of the scaffold stood the executioner,—a square-built, ill-favoured personage, busied in arranging a bundle of straw upon the boards. He was dressed in a buff jerkin, and had a long-bladed, two-edged knife thrust into his girdle. Besides these persons, there was a pursuivant[2],—an officer appointed by the Privy Council to make search throughout the provinces for recusants, Popish priests, and other religious offenders. He was occupied at this moment in reading over a list of suspected persons.

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

At nine o'clock, the hollow rolling of a muffled drum was heard at a distance[1q]. The deep bell of the church began to toll, and presently afterwards the mournful procession was seen advancing from the market-place. It consisted of a troop of mounted soldiers, equipped in all respects like those stationed at the scaffold, with their captain at their head, and followed by two of their number with hurdles attached to their steeds, on which were tied the unfortunate victims. Both were young men—both apparently prepared to meet their fate with firmness and resignation. They had been brought from Radcliffe Hall—an old moated and fortified mansion belonging to a wealthy family of that name, situated where the close, called Pool Fold, now stands, and then recently converted into a place of security for recusants; the two other prisons in Manchester—namely, the New Fleet on Hunt's Bank, and the gaol on Salford Bridge,—not being found adequate to the accommodation of the numerous religious offenders.

By this time, the cavalcade had reached the place of execution. The soldiers drove back the throng with their pikes, and cleared a space in front of the scaffold; when, just as the cords that bound the limbs of the priests were

unfastened, a woman in a tattered woollen robe, with a hood partially drawn over her face,—the features of which, so far as they could be discerned, were sharp and attenuated,—a rope girded round her waist, bare feet, and having altogether the appearance of a sister of Charity, sprang forward, and flung herself on her knees beside them.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The soldier eyed the new-comer as if disposed to resent the interference, but a glance at his apparel, which, though plain, and of a sober hue, was rather above the middle

class, as well as a murmur from the crowd, who were evidently disposed to take part with the young man, induced him to stay his hand. He, therefore, contented himself with crying, "A recusant! a Papist!"

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

This reply elicited a shout of applause from the mob.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Her cave must be searched," observed the pursuivant; "it may be the hiding-place of a priest. Father Campion was concealed in such another spot at Stonor Park, near Henley-on-Thames, where he composed his '*Decem Rationes*'; and, for a long time, eluded the vigilance of the commissioners.

We shall pass it in our way to Ordsall Hall to-night, shall we not?"

The attendant nodded in the affirmative.

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

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

As Father Woodroofe, who was the last to mount, reached the uppermost step, he turned round and cried in a loud voice, "Good people, I take you all to witness that I die in the true Catholic religion, and that I rejoice and thank God with all my soul, that he hath made me worthy to testify my faith therein by shedding my blood in this manner." He then advanced towards the executioner, who was busied in adjusting the cord round his companion's throat, and said, "God forgive thee—do thine office quickly;" adding in a lower tone, "*Asperge me, Domine; Domine, miserere mei!*"

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

The execution over, the crowd began to separate slowly, and various opinions were expressed respecting the revolting and sanguinary spectacle just witnessed. Many, who condemned—and the majority did so—the extreme severity of the laws by which the unfortunate priests had just suffered, uttered their sentiments with extreme caution; but there were some whose feelings had been too much excited for prudence, and who inveighed loudly and bitterly against the spirit of religious persecution then prevailing; while a few others of an entirely opposite persuasion looked upon the rigorous proceedings adopted against the Papists, and the punishment now inflicted upon their priesthood, as a just retribution for their own severities during the reign of Mary. In general, the common people entertained a strong

77 Slow matches were lengths of treated cord that burned slowly and were used to ignite gunpowder or firearms, while touchwood (tinder) was combustible material for lighting fires; together they indicate tools for applying fire to powder or fuses.

78 Ordsall Hall is a historic manor near Salford in Lancashire associated with the Radclyffe/Radcliffe family; the inscription 'Viviana Radcliffe, Ordsall Hall' names a woman and place linked in the book to suspected Catholic recusant circles, though the specific individual may be fictional or only partially documented in surviving records.

79 A classical allusion to Gaius Mucius (Mucius Scaevola), a legendary Roman youth famed for his stoic bravery before the Etruscan king Porsenna (he reputedly thrust his hand into a fire to show courage). The comparison is used here to praise the prisoner's resolute demeanour.

80 Sir Edward Coke (1552-1634) was a leading English jurist and politician who served as Attorney General and Chief Justice; this title refers to his public remarks on the 1605 Gunpowder Plot, a widely reported early-17th-century legal and political proceeding.

81 In early modern English law, 'high treason' was the capital offence of betraying the sovereign or state (e.g., plotting the monarch's death or levying war), and it carried the severest legal penalties and attainder.

82 This phrase refers to the historical practice of 'drawing' a condemned person to the execution site—commonly dragged behind a horse, sometimes tied by the heels—used in executions for treason in early modern England.

83 A historical torture device (also called Skevington's Daughter) used in Tudor and later prisons that compressed

the body in an iron framework, causing extreme pain and difficulty breathing.

84 A very small, cramped cell historically used in the Tower of London in which a prisoner could neither stand upright nor lie down fully; it was employed for punishment and harsh confinement.

85 A Latin phrase in the king's warrant, roughly 'and thus by degrees to the lowest', meaning in context that interrogators should begin with gentler tortures and escalate step by step to harsher measures.

86 Nicholas Owen (c.1562–1606) was a Jesuit lay brother and skilled builder of secret hiding-places for Catholic priests (so-called 'priest-holes'); he was captured during the post-plot investigations and died in government custody in 1606.

87 An early name for the settlement now commonly called Leamington Spa; in the early 17th century it was a small village rather than the later spa town it became in the 18th–19th centuries.

88 A long-barrelled gun or light cannon used in the 16th–17th centuries for artillery or long-range musketry; the term can refer to both a ship/field cannon and a large hand-gun depending on context.

89 A Latin legal phrase (posse comitatus) meaning the 'force of the county,' referring to the body of able-bodied men whom a sheriff could summon to aid in law enforcement; used in historical English law and practice.

90 A named royal official in the passage, Sir Richard Walsh served as the county sheriff (a royal appointee responsible for local law enforcement) and here leads a posse pursuing

the conspirators; sheriffs in early 17th-century England organised arrests and raised local forces when needed.

91 In the narrative this phrase names a local armed detachment led by Sir Richard Walsh that pursues the fugitives; it represents the kind of county troop or militia raised by authorities after the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot in the early 17th century.

92 Hagley is a village in Worcestershire, England, home to Hagley Hall and its park; in the book it denotes the Littleton family seat where the fugitives seek shelter, set in the early 1600s.

93 Weoley Castle is the site of a medieval fortified manor near present-day Birmingham (Northfield); by the 17th century it was already a ruin and is now a protected historic site.

94 An archaic word for rabbits (also spelled 'coney'), commonly used in early modern English to refer to rabbits kept or hunted for meat and fur.

95 A warrener is a person employed to manage a warren (an area set aside for breeding and keeping rabbits); the role involved protecting, breeding and trapping rabbits for food or fur.

96 Hendlip House was a large manor near Droitwich in Worcestershire noted for its thick walls, chimneys and secret chambers used to shelter Catholic priests; the house is historically associated with concealment of Jesuits after the Gunpowder Plot and was later demolished.

97 A 'priest's-hole' is a small concealed chamber or recess built into walls, chimneys, or floors in recusant Catholic houses to hide clergy during searches in the 16th-17th

centuries, often constructed by specialist craftsmen such as Nicholas Owen.

98 A halberdier is a guard or soldier armed with a halberd (a combined spear-and-axe polearm); halberdiers often served as ceremonial or palace guards in early modern Europe.

99 Misprision of treason is a common-law offence meaning the concealment or failure to report knowledge of treasonous activity, punishable even if the concealer was not an active participant.

100 A water-gate entrance to the Tower of London on the River Thames, historically used to bring prisoners and goods into the Tower; it became associated with the arrival of accused traitors and other high-profile prisoners.

101 Guards responsible for custody and supervision within the Tower of London (historically the prison staff who escorted and looked after prisoners), a role distinct from later ceremonial duties of Yeoman Warders.

102 A city in northwest England; in the period following the events described it was the town to which Humphrey Chetham returned and where he became a wealthy merchant and benefactor.

103 A reference to the charitable institutions endowed by Humphrey Chetham in Manchester — notably Chetham's Library and an associated hospital/charitable school — founded by his bequest and established in the mid-17th century to benefit the town's needy and for educational purposes.

104 Mr. Tresham denotes Francis Tresham, an English Catholic implicated in the Gunpowder Plot who was arrested and died in the Tower of London in 1605; he has been