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A MERRY CHRISTMAS.

"AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM."

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Fresh Light on History.

From the Tablet.

FATHER GERARD, S. J., ON THE GUNPOWDER PLOT.

In our issue of last week we quoted from The Western Mail a short paragraph summarizing a lecture on the Gunpowder Plot, given by Father Gerard, S. J., at Cardiff. The South Wales Argus, of November 7, supplied its readers with the following lengthy report of the lecture:

Father Gerard, who spoke entirely without notes, said: The account of the Gunpowder Plot published by the Government of King James I., has in its main outlines been implicitly accepted ever since at least in this country; but the complicity of the Catholics as a body has long been discredited by respectable historians. The complicity of Father Garnet, the Jesuit, has been the subject of interminable discussion, with the result that Mr. Gardiner, the latest and best of our historians, who has given special attention to this period, pronounces the account given by Garnet of himself to be in all probability "the exact truth." But while in these details there is admitted to be doubt, it has always been believed that to a great extent the history of the conspiracy is known with absolute certainty. As Jardine puts it, "The outlines of the transaction were too notorious to be suppressed or disguised; that a design had been formed to blow up the Parliament House, with the King, the Royal Family, the Lords and Commons, and that this design was formed by Catholic men for Catholic purposes, could never admit of controversy or concealment." This, however, is the very question to be discussed to-night.

CECIL AT LEAST COGNIZANT OF THE PLOT.

Reasons will be given, which seem difficult to answer, to show that even in its main outlines the Government story is certainly untrue; that it was invented to conceal the truth; and that all the evidences point unmistakably to the conclusion that Cecil (Earl of Salisbury) the King's Prime Minister, if he did not actually organize the plot, at least knew of it long before the pretended discovery, and worked it for his own ends. This was the belief at the time and for long afterwards, not only universally amongst Catholics, but amongst intelligent Protestants. Osborne speaks of its management as "a neat device of the Treasurer's, he being very plentiful in such plots." Goodman, Anglican Bishop of Gloucester, says that he "would first contrive a plot and then discover it, to show his service to the State, and the more odious and hateful the treason were, his service would be the greater and more acceptable. We are told on the authority of Lord Cobham, that James himself used afterwards to call the 5th of November "Cecil's holiday," and Archbishop Usher is quoted as frequently saying that if Papists knew what he knew, the blame of the Gunpowder treason would not lie on them. In the reign of Charles II we find an ultra-Protestant writer complaining that some in his days looked upon this plot as a romantic story, or politic invention, or State trick, and class it with fables of the character of Jack the Giant-killer. Out of a mass of evidence this must suffice. A French writer remarked that the plots of the reigns of Elizabeth and James have this common feature—that they proved highly advantageous to those against whom they were directed. In the time of Elizabeth these plots were unquestionably a favourite device of Walsingham, as those of Squires and Parry, while it is certain that he knew all along of Babington's conspiracy and worked it for the destruction of Mary Queen of Scots. Walsingham's successor as secretary was Cecil, and his contemporaries unanimously judged him capable of doing the like. At this time he was threatened with the loss of that power, which he valued above all things. The King did not like him; the nobility were jealous of him; the people hated him; and he had powerful rivals ready to supplant him. He especially dreaded the influence of the Catholic party, whom the King seemed inclined to favour. For a time at least the Gunpowder Plot relieved him from his difficulty and made him all-powerful. It must be added that while he was

Prime Minister of England he was in receipt of a secret pension from the king of Spain. The Catholics of England had been cruelly persecuted under Elizabeth. The Penal Laws, in the words of the late Lord Coleridge, were "as wild and savage as any since the foundation of the world." They hoped for toleration from James, who assured them they should have it, and who did at first greatly mitigate their sufferings. Then suddenly the policy was changed, and they were persecuted more severely than ever, so it was said that the times of Elizabeth, though most cruel, were the mildest and happiest, in comparison with those of James. This inevitably excited disappointment and indignation, and it was not wonderful that some violent and turbulent spirits among them should be ready for violent remedies. The conspirators were eminently such characters. So well known were they that nine years previously, when the Queen was ill, it had been proposed to lock them up as a precautionary measure, they being "hunger starved for innovations" and "turbulent spirits." They had all, or nearly all, been engaged in various treasonable actions, and in particular in the rebellion of Essex, when some of them had narrowly escaped the gallows. This being so, as Lord Castlemaine says, it was no hard thing for a Secretary of State "to know of them as men fit for his purposes." The story of their proceedings told by the Government is incredible. According to this, so secretly did they work that those at the head of affairs had no suspicion of danger till the eve of the session of Parliament, when warning was given by an anonymous letter to Lord Mounteagle. "Never," it was said, "was treason more secret and ruin more apparently inevitable."

DETAILS OF THE PLOT UNTRUSTWORTHY.

But the details will not bear examination. First, we are told these men known as desperate characters, hired a house close to the House of Lords. From this they dug a mine through the intervening garden, and then endeavored to break through the foundation of the Parliament House so as to construct a chamber inside for their gunpowder. The wall was nine feet thick, and at it they worked for at least six weeks, getting only half way through. If this really happened, it is impossible that the Government should not have known of it. What became of the earth and stones which they dug out? How did they bring in unobserved the timber needed to prop up their tunnel? Above all, what of the noise made in beating through the wall? The neighbourhood was thickly populated, there were people constantly in the building above them, and the sound of their picks must have resounded far around. It is almost impossible to believe that this work at the mine ever took place; the more so, as when the House of Lords was taken down, no trace of the breach in the wall appears to have been found. The story goes on that after a time the conspirators discovered that between them and the Peers' Chamber was a large room commonly described as a "cellar," which it was not. It was above ground, running the whole length of the building, 70 feet long and more than 24 feet wide, which had been used for storing coals. This they hired, and abandoned the mine. Meanwhile they had bought their powder, and stored it across the Thames at Lambeth. This again suggests many questions. We are told that there were four tons of it, purchased in the name of three or four of the chief conspirators, just the men known to have been most dangerous. How did they, without exciting suspicion, procure this quantity? Then it had to be ferried across the river, hauled up the Parliament stairs, wheeled down Parliament-place—a much frequented locality—and in under the Parliament House. And all without the Government having any idea of what was going on! We must remember that this same Government had its spies everywhere, was informed of all that was passing, especially amongst the recusants, could intercept letters from Paris to Brussels, or Rome to Naples, and had information of what passed in the Papal Court before it reached the Catholics. Yet they were said to have known nothing of the Gunpowder Plot till the day before Parliament met. The end of the story is equal-

ly strange. Cecil saw the letter to Mounteagle two days before the session, and we have it from himself that he at once divined that there was gunpowder under the House of Lords for the purpose of blowing it up. Yet for ten days he did nothing. Not till the morning of the 5th itself was the search made which "discovered" it, and then he talked of the "miraculous" nature of this discovery so shortly before the intended catastrophe. There is certainly some colour for Bishop Goodman's view, that all was contrived for stage effect. But would any man in his senses have left a store of powder so long in such a place in the hands of a man like Guy Fawkes, if he had thought there was any harm in it? It would be interesting to know what would have happened if a match had been applied to that powder. The conspirators appear to have been disappointed with it, for they suspected it to have become "dank." More remarkable still, after the "discovery," searching enquiries were made about everything else—even as to where the conspirators had procured their crowbars and their beaver hats; but about the powder no word was ever breathed! Of it we hear no more, and the Lords assembled that very day above the "cellar" where much of it, at least, must still have been. Moreover, for 73 years afterwards this "cellar" continued to be let out in the same careless fashion, and filled with all sorts of lumber, so the "discovery" could not have caused the great terror it was supposed to have aroused. In 1678 Sir Christopher Wren reported this letting of the cellar to be unsafe, and then, not before, was instituted the traditional "search" on the eve of Parliament. More extraordinary still, and altogether bewildering, is the fact, vouchsafed for by the landlady of the house hired by the conspirators, that on the 4th of November Fawkes had carpenters and other work-folk in his house to repair it. What was the sense of putting a house in order on the Monday which was to be blown to pieces on the Tuesday? Besides would these workmen fail to notice the mine or other suspicious circumstances? Moreover, Speed says that during a session this house served the Peers as a withdrawing room, being only let between the sessions of Parliament. The session beginning on November 5th, it would be in the occupation of the Peers and their attendants. How was Fawkes to keep possession and carry on his operations unperceived? How was he to get into the cellar? and how was he to get out of it without exciting the notice of the guards and crowds of spectators who accompanied the Royal procession and surrounded the House of Parliament? It is said that he was to have been taken by a boat from the Parliament stairs to a ship waiting to carry him into Flanders. But a strong flood-tide was running, making London Bridge impassable down stream. All this, as has been said, is quite bewildering.

BOGUS CATHOLIC PLOTS.

We have, moreover, clear evidence that, long before this, the Government, through its secret agents, were "working" a Catholic plot, with the special object of implicating priests, and men of position. Eighteen months earlier—just when the Gunpowder Plot was started—one of their "setters" offered to implicate sixty priests and Jesuits, and was told that twenty would do, provided they were big fish, and was given names of such as would serve the purpose. Several other documents might be quoted to the same effect, and Cecil himself unguardedly admits that before the Mounteagle letter he had information of a "practice" intended against the Parliament, even by the actual conspirators. Bancroft, Archbishop of Canterbury, declared that it was always necessary to insinuate a "Judas" among the Catholics, and there was strong reason for believing that this affair was managed through Thomas Percy, one of the principal "conspirators." He had till three years before been a Protestant, and very wild and licentious in his life. He then became a Catholic, and apparently a very fervent one, being so described both by others and himself. Nevertheless, as is proved by papers in the State Paper Office, he had two wives living, one in London and one in Warwickshire. Sir Francis Moore, an eminent lawyer, told Bishop Goodman, that having occasion to be out late at

nights, he had more than once seen Percy coming out of Cecil's house at two in the morning, and "wondered what his business was there." Again Percy, having been absent in the North, returned to London on Saturday, November 3rd. Of this Cecil makes a great mystery, declaring that he had with infinite difficulty discovered the fact from Fawkes. There is, however, in the State Paper Office a pass, dated October 25th, to Percy, from the Lords Commissioners of the North, to post to London on the King's especial business, and charging all mayors and sheriffs to supply him with three good horses on the road. It would not be hard for the Secretary of State to learn the movements of one who travelled in this fashion. But, it will be objected, Percy fled with the others from London, and when they were overtaken at Holbeche, in Staffordshire, he, with three others, was shot dead. It must, however, be remembered that, as is attested by Lord Castlemaine, it was commonly believed to be no uncommon thing, when the game had been secured, to hang the spaniel that had caught it, "that his patron's art might not be suspected;" and in this case there were sundry highly suspicious circumstances. There was no need of shooting anybody, for the rebels had no fire arms, and might all easily have been captured. The men killed were just the most important witnesses, being the original conspirators—Catesby, Percy, and John Wright, with his brother. This fact excited much comment at the time, and, as Goodman tells us "many did not stick to affirm the great statesman, sending to apprehend these traitors, gave special charge and direction for Percy and Catesby, 'Let me never see them alive,' who, it may be, would have revealed some evil counsel given." It is at least remarkable that the man who shot Percy, John Streete, was granted a pension of 2s. a day (equal to £1 at present) for life. More suspicious still is it, that in its published narrative the Government thought it necessary to explain how it happened that Percy was killed and not taken; giving a reason which will not bear investigation, viz., that the King's messengers could not get down in time, the distance being over 100 miles, the roads being bad, and the days short, but there were three days to do it in, and the fugitives had done it in one, though they had not relays of horses at every post, like the King's servants. Moreover, though the latter could not get down in three days, they contrived to get up to London with the news in one. A word in conclusion on an all-important point. There can be no possible doubt that in the proceedings which followed, the Government employed without scruple every species of fraud and untruthfulness. Their published accounts are admitted on all hands to be of no historical value whatever, being full of deliberate and studied fabrication and falsification of evidence. In that which they presented in court they did not stick at what amounts to plain forgery, as Mr. Jardine admits, and they tampered with documents and garbled them, as suited their purpose, withholding all that told in favor of the accused and presenting all that told against them. They also freely employed torture, under which Guy Fawkes was compelled to sign his so-called confession. No reliance can possibly be placed in a story marked with such features. In fine, were the evidence against Father Garnet and the other Catholic priests, of which so much has been heard, one-tenth part as strong as that against the Government of James I., it would long ago have been accepted as conclusive. The more the facts are investigated, the more are all the threads found to lead in one direction, and that confirms the opinion which startled me when I first heard it expressed by the late Father Joseph Stevenson, whose authority as an historian few will gainsay—"The Gunpowder Plot was the biggest swindle ever floated."

Smacks of the Catechism.

Looking at the distressed condition of Ireland, at present, one is reminded of a rather witty retort recently given by a Tipperary cooper, when asked what Ireland was like. With true Hibernian wit he said, "Ireland is a place of punishment where the Irish people must suffer for a time before they can go to America."—Irish American.

Father Kavanagh at the Catholic Truth Society.

After the routine business had been transacted Rev. Father Kavanagh, S. J., was called upon for his promised dissertation on the meaning and scope of that ancient English constitutional privilege called "Benefit of Clergy."

Explaining that it originally meant a right to change of venue on the part of a cleric under accusation who claimed to be judged by the Bishop's court, Father Kavanagh traced it in its changing forms from Henry II to the early days of this century. Originally churchmen alone could claim it, afterwards it was allowed to all "clerks," that is, persons who could read and write and it was even extended to peers, who might not be able to sign their own names and also to women. The crimes of arson and treason were always outside the privilege in question.

In concluding Father Kavanagh referred to the misconception of the phrase on the part of a certain writer who spoke of a man sentenced to death "without benefit of clergy" as if the phrase meant that he was denied the last sacraments, which it certainly did not mean. There followed a short discussion and then Father Kavanagh read a lecture on the "gunpowder plot" by his old friend, Father Gerard, one of the ablest of the English Jesuits. The reading which was accompanied by a running commentary, was listened to with marked attention and was a startling and unanswerable showing up of the greatest swindle that was ever floated. This lecture we reprint above.

Mr. J. J. Golden moved a vote of thanks which was seconded by Father O'Dwyer, O. M. I.

Amongst other speakers, Father George, O. M. I., and Father LaRue, S. J., of St. Boniface College, made some remarks and useful suggestions.

Letter From Mr. Tardivel.

QUEBEC, Dec. 17th, 1895.

DEAR SIR AND CONFRERE,

I should have thanked you sooner for your very kind tho' too eulogistic notice of my novel, POUR LA PATRIE; but the issue of the NORTHWEST REVIEW, 11 Sept., containing said notice, reached me just as I was about leaving for a month's visit to the United States, and thus escaped my attention. For believe me, as a rule, I always read your valuable paper with care. It was a "mutual friend" who drew my attention to your article and sent me a copy of the number containing it. Though late in doing so, I thank you most heartily for your kind praise of my "effort." I see you understand me much better than many of my confreres nearer home, some of whom have not said a word about my book, whilst others are trying to scare the provincial government out of the idea of distributing among the school children the 500 copies bought from the editors without solicitation on their part or on mine. And probably they will succeed. So those 500 copies of my work will be left to the RATS, as La Patrie devoutly wishes!

"NON EST PROPHETA SINE HONORE, NISI IN PATRIA."

Thanking you once more, I remain
Yours fraternally,
J. E. TARDIVEL,
Editor of La Verite.

HIS GRACE AT EDMONTON.

Consecrates the New Hospital and Receives Addresses From the People.

Archbishop Langevin with Bishop Grouard and Father Lestanc, reached Edmonton on Thursday of last week, and received a warm welcome both there and later on at St. Albert. On Sunday His Grace consecrated the new hospital at Edmonton, and addressed a large audience made up of the leading citizens. Later on an address from the Catholics of the town was read and presented by Mr. N. D. Beck, Q. C., and in response His Grace made a vigorous speech dealing with the school question. He ridiculed the proposition for a commission to enquire into a matter that had been so prominently before the public for five years, and declared that Catholics must have their rights.