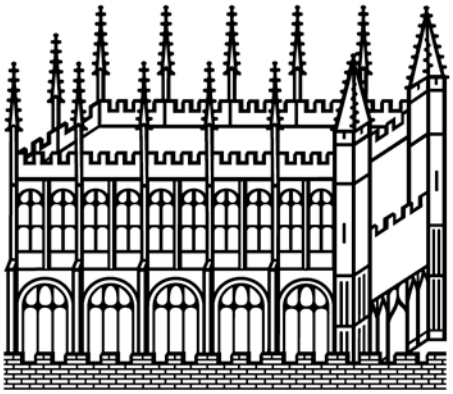

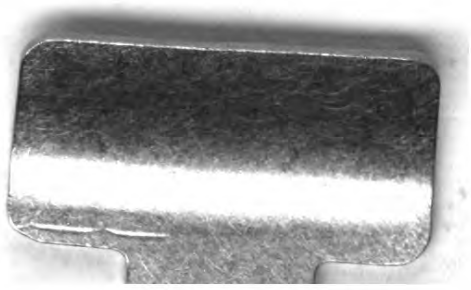

THE
HEADSMAN OF WHITEHALL

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BY

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AUTHOR OF "WHO KILLED AMY ROBSART?"
"A HISTORY OF THE GUNPOWDER PLOT," ETC.

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"There has existed much doubt and discussion respecting the identity of the King's Executioner. Several persons have been named for the unenviable honour, and sufficient materials might be collected on the subject to form a curious and entertaining treatise."

J. H. JESSE.

. . . . . .

"He nothing common did, or mean,
Upon that memorable scene."

MARVELL.

PREFACE

THAT genial and gentle person, Mr Dick, experienced, so we are told, some considerable difficulty in keeping King Charles' head out of his famous "Memorial." To a certain extent I seem to have suffered from the same malady. While engaged, a few years back, in working upon the history of the reign of Charles I., I was struck with the extraordinary discrepancies existing in the works of some of our leading historians concerning their accounts of the King's execution. The descriptions of that event furnished, notably, by David Hume and Miss Strickland proved on examination to be extremely inaccurate and misleading; whilst I found that no writer had been successful in solving the mysteries connected, *inter alia*, with the meaning of the mystic word "Remember!"; the disputed site of the scaffold; the size and shape of the block; the identity of the masked headsman, and that of his disguised assistant.

After concluding my researches, the King's head still seemed so completely and constantly to interfere with my further labours that I determined, at length, in order to satisfy my curiosity, to compile the following pages, which are intended to

comprise a brief record of the "White King's" last hours on earth, as well as of the actions of those resolute men responsible for his execution, of whom the principal was Oliver Cromwell.

I beg to tender my sincere thanks to Mr EDMUND GOSSE, Librarian to the House of Lords, for his kindness in permitting me to make a thorough examination of the (original) death-warrant to execute King Charles; to the Rev. P. H. DITCHFIELD, F.S.A., for putting me in the way of procuring some interesting information relating to the "Dinton Hermit"; to Mr F. G. STEPHENS, for answering a question of mine in *Notes and Queries* concerning Richard Brandon, the headsman; to COLONEL LEETHAM, Secretary of the Royal United Service Institution, for courteously showing me the old prints of the King's execution preserved at the Banqueting-house, Whitehall, and for calling my attention to Sir Reginald Palgrave's views on the exact site of the position of the scaffold; and to the EDITOR of *The Gentleman's Magazine* for permitting me to republish, in the form of a chapter here, an article of mine which appeared in that journal.

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The Headsman of Whitehall

CHAPTER I

UNSOLVED HISTORICAL RIDDLES

I

In the chronicles of English history there are recorded many mysterious events, often of the highest human interest, as well of political importance, yet enveloped in mystery so profound as to baffle, in the quest of their true interpretation, the diligent researches of the student. Of such mysteries one of the first, in chronological order, that remains unsolved to this day is the death of William II. in the New Forest. The general verdict of writers learned in the history of his age tends to favour the theory that Rufus was the victim of a carefully-planned and wide-reaching conspiracy, with Sir Walter Tyrrel acting as one of its directors. From our knowledge of the fact

that rumours and warnings of ill omen had reached the royal party on the eve of its progress through the Forest, it is clear that a storm was brewing which was likely to burst at no distant date. Priests and monks, who hated the headstrong Rufus, had let drop sinister suggestions of impending mischief. That the King's death, therefore, was the result of an accident it seems futile to believe. The old school-tale of an arrow glancing off a tree is too plausible for credence. That William Rufus was murdered admits of little doubt; but by whom, is the question. Sir Walter Tyrrel may, or may not, have sped the arrow on its way; but there is no proof that he was in the Red King's company at the fatal moment, and the mark of a sword-thrust is said to have been found on the corpse. An ugly stone, erected amid the loveliest of sylvan scenery, now marks the site where, according to tradition, the monarch fell, but he would be rash indeed who should undertake to show that it has been placed on the correct site.

Similar obscurity enshrouds the end of Richard II., the Black Prince's son, whose death is generally referred to by historians, in vague terms, as having occurred at Pontefract Castle, Yorkshire. Supposing, nevertheless, that he departed this life at Pontefract, we are not possessed of any satisfactory intelligence as to how [1] or when he died. By some authorities we are told that he was stabbed to death there; by others that he was poisoned; and so on. But it has yet to be proved that he died at Pontefract after all, for among his contemporaries most diverse opinions as to Richard's fate were rife. It was commonly reported that, having escaped from the Castle, he had been seen in Scotland, if not also in Wales. A corpse, on the other hand, purporting to be the deposed King's, was exhibited in London, but it was objected that the little shown of the face bore

[1] Any more than we are in the case of Edward II. Without challenging the accuracy of the legend that he died at Berkeley Castle, we can still relegate to fiction the tales of his fearful tortures, piercing shrieks, and his captors' constant cruelties.

a resemblance to the features of a certain priest recently deceased.

In attempting to account for the extraordinary disappearance of the youthful Yorkist Princes in the Tower, and their "wicked uncle's" complicity in the same, a tremendous controversy has been ingeniously worked up by partisan scribes. Surely it is little short of absurd to contend that Richard III. was guiltless of his nephews' blood! Even if Shakespeare went to extremes in painting Richard's portrait in colours of too dark a hue, there yet remains nothing to challenge the credibility of the verdict passed on the affair by such authorities as Francis Bacon and Sir Thomas More.

The controversy raging over the fate of the little Princes in the Tower forms a fitting prologue to an inquiry into the identity of that attractive adventurer known as Perkin Warbeck, who, if the (somewhat unlikely) story of his mother's connection with Edward IV. be true, may have been a natural, instead of a legitimate, descend-

ant of that monarch after all. It has been urged by the defenders of Richard III. that popular opinion in England must have favoured the theory that one of the Princes, at anyrate, had not been killed in the Tower, otherwise Perkin's preposterous claims could not have gained such powerful public sympathy, and Henry VII., much to his chagrin, failed altogether to discover where the remains of the Princes were interred.

Under the Tudors we have to puzzle over historical riddles obstinately defying solution. The mystery surrounding the death of Lord Robert Dudley's wife[1] at Cumnor Place, near Oxford, has yet to be cleared up. Over the question of the authenticity of the "Casket Letters" rival schools of historical thought continue to wrangle, as they do over the dependent character of Mary Queen of Scots, whose

[1] Amy Robsart. She was not Countess of Leicester, as stated in Scott's "Kenilworth." She died fifteen years before the celebration of the festivities at Kenilworth Castle described by Scott.

personal beauty has been much exaggerated, as her original portraits bear fatal evidence.

That so dark and desperate a conspiracy as that devised by Robert Catesby, with the object of blowing up with gunpowder King, Lords, and Commons, in one fearful blaze, should include some unexplained incidents in its history is not surprising. Of these, the principal is the mystery concerning the authorship of the famous anonymous letter written to Lord Monteagle.

But the reign of James I. of England and VI. of Scotland takes in other mysteries as well. The strange story of the Gowries has yet to be explained, and, despite the pleas advanced by many erudite historians who look upon the King as the victim of a plot, I am content to fall in with the general opinion expressed in Perth at the time, to the effect that James was not the victim but the promoter of a plot, which was successful, to slay the Gowries. Later on, James I. had only his own miser-

able habits to blame when, after the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury, he was threatened by Somerset, his fallen favourite, with the disclosure of a secret which would shake the throne to its foundations. Unless, menaced Somerset, both he and his lady were saved from the block it should be the worse for James, who was so fearful of what the prisoner might divulge[1] that two men were placed by him at the trial, with instructions to gag him if it should become necessary. Somerset and his Countess, proved to be guilty, were let free, nevertheless, and retired into the country, where they passed away the rest of their existence in enmity with each other.

Of the several explanations offered in elucidation of the royal clemency and cowardice, the most startling (and improbable) is that James ran the risk of being denounced by Somerset as the assassin of his son, Henry, Prince of Wales; but the

[1] *Vide* four letters, written early in May 1618, by James I. to the Lieutenant of the Tower.

combined efforts of historical and medical research tend to demonstrate, without doubt, that the elder brother of Charles I. succumbed to the ravages of an attack of what we should now term typhoid fever. Far more likely is it that Somerset—who was a Scot, advanced to English honours, on account of his good looks and pleasing manners—besides being acquainted with many unpleasant details concerning the King's private life, was also aware of the real truth relating to his share in the death of the Gowries.

If in so shameful and sanguinary an event as the pretended "Popish Plot" there should remain none of its items still wrapped in mystery, it would be astonishing. The cause of the death, or rather the reason of the mysterious murder, of Sir Edmund Godfrey is unknown, although recent research strongly suggests that he was assassinated at the instigation of the Jesuits, who had strong reasons, as had the Duke of York (James II.), for requiring his removal.

Coming down to the long reign of George III., we are confronted with the wholly unprofitable discussion, seemingly interminable, concerning the actual authorship of the letters signed "Junius." Who wrote these letters? Was it Sir Philip Francis? To the minds of the majority of painstaking persons who have wasted their time in the futile task of endeavouring to throw light upon this absurdly overrated matter it was Francis, and no other. Lord Macaulay, indeed, claims to have hit upon some indelible marks in corroboration of the identity of Francis with "Junius." But Macaulay's logic here, as elsewhere, is far from being conclusive, and there exist numerous elaborate arguments to be advanced with considerable force against the claims of Sir Philip Francis.

The above may be reckoned a fair sample of the principal mysteries occurring in our annals since the Conquest, although there are also many minor affairs, of a similar nature, by no means devoid of interest. What, for instance, was the secret which

the Duke of Monmouth, after receiving sentence of death, wished to be allowed to impart to James the Second's private ear? Why was Blood, the armed burglar, who tried to steal the regalia, not punished (he was, instead, rewarded) for his crime? Did the Duke of Wellington ride over to meet Blücher in private conference the night before Waterloo? Who was the author of "Leycester's Commonwealth"? What were the true circumstances of the cause of Mr Benjamin Bathurst's disappearance in 1809?

II

But no single date in the calendar of mysteries can vie, numerically at least, with Tuesday, 30th January 1649, which is big with the burden of several obscure affairs needing elucidation, and whose inner history is yet to be revealed. Concerning such an event as the execution of Charles I., it would naturally be imagined that every incident thereat would have been faithfully

noted and described, but such by no means has been the case.

The precise position, for example, of the scaffold is still a subject of controversy. It cannot be proved out of which window of the Banqueting-house Charles I. stepped out to meet his death. The meaning of the mystic word "Remember!" uttered to Juxon by the King, has never been interpreted. Another subject of debate is connected with the shape of the block, whilst the identity of the masked and disguised headsman and his assistant has yet to be discovered. But even after the King's death the list of mysteries ceases not. Although the corpse of Charles I. was solemnly buried at St George's, Windsor, the locality of the coffin was not discovered until the year 1813. This is the more extraordinary, as the site is described in the following contemporary account:—[1]

> "The Lords[2] betook themselves to the search of a convenient place, for

[1] "England's Black Tribunal."

[2] Hertford, Lindsey, Southampton, and Richmond.

> the burial of the corpse, the which after some pains taken therein, they discover a vault in the middle of the Quire, wherein, as is probably conjectured, lyeth the body of King Henry VIII., and his beloved wife, the Lady Jane Seymor, both in coffins of lead: in this Vault, there being room for one more, they resolve to inter the body . . . upon the coffin were these words set
>
> KING CHARLES, 1648."[1]

Lord Clarendon also confirms this, for he states that: "At last there was a fellow of that town [Windsor] who undertook to tell them the place where, he said, there was a vault, in which King Henry the Eighth and Queen Jane Seymour were interred. As near that place as could conveniently be they caused the grave to be made." Clarendon goes on to state that, at the Restoration, the body was not identified or reburied with greater pomp, because the grave could not be found, although the

[1] Old style.

Earls of Southampton and Lindsey went to Windsor, where "they could not satisfy themselves in what place or part of the church the royal body was interred; yet, where any concurred upon this or that place, they caused the ground to be opened at a good distance, and upon such inquiries found no cause to believe that they were near the place."

Another mystery is that surrounding the authorship of the famous book, published soon after the King's death, under the title of "Εικων βασιλικη." Of this volume, which had a huge sale, the authorship was originally ascribed to the late King's own pen. Nowadays the writer is usually held to have been Dr Gauden, Bishop of Exeter, afterwards translated to Worcester. But that Charles I. may have written a few of the papers contained in the book is not improbable,[1] and Gauden, or somebody else,

[1] "I have been assured by Mr Levett (one of the pages of his bed-chamber) that he hath not only seen the MS. of that book among his Majesty's papers at the Isle of Wight, but read many of the papers himself" (Sir Philip Warwick's "Memoirs").

may have built up the bulk of the text upon the slender foundations laid by the King. That Gauden performed, or claimed to have performed, some important service on behalf of the royal cause was recognised officially at the Restoration, hence his promotion; yet the literary style of the "King's Book" is superior to that of Gauden's other compositions. To my mind it is possible that Charles referred to his private papers when telling Bishop Juxon to "Remember!" In the last letter written by Charles I. to his son and successor he mentions, *inter alia* :

> "These papers, with some others, wherein I have set down the private reflections of my conscience, and my most important thoughts," etc.

This epistle, confided to Dr Juxon's care, evidently dealt with political papers of great value. Why, therefore, should not the warning word "Remember!" have referred to them and their security?

It is worthy of comment, in connection

with the final scene on the scaffold, that no decisive conclusion has yet been arrived at in explanation of the delay that intervened between the time of Charles' arrival at Whitehall and the time when he was led out to die. Although the King reached Whitehall soon after ten A.M.,[1] he was not killed until about four minutes past two in the afternoon. It had been thought likely that the delay was due to the fact of the incomplete condition of the scaffold. No particular hour, moreover, had been assigned for the execution. According to the vague terms of the warrant, it was to take place at any time between ten A.M. and five P.M.

The delay may reasonably have been due to the circumstance that the Parliament leaders were busy getting a proclamation printed prohibiting the Prince of Wales being recognised as Charles II., and they wished to have copies of this ready for circulation by the moment the King was

[1] Ludlowe asserts that he arrived soon after eight o'clock; but he is, I think, in error here.

dead. As soon as they were ready copies were sent off, post haste, into the provinces. But another reason for the delay is, to my mind, forthcoming in the fact that great difficulty had been experienced in finding an executioner; otherwise, taking into consideration the dire danger liable to arise in the form of an attempted rescue, the military authorities would never have allowed so large a crowd to collect, and wait, "in the open street"—to use their own expression—for so long a time.

Charles had passed the previous night at St James's Palace, and his rest, therefore, could not have been disturbed, as several writers pretend, by the noise of the carpenters constructing his scaffold. "About ten of the clock," says "England's Black Tribunal," "the King was brought to Whitehall . . . about twelve of the clock he ate a bit of bread and drank a glass of claret, from thence about one o'clock[1] he

[1] It is necessary to caution the casual reader against accepting as at all correct the account of the King's execution related by Miss Strickland in her memoir

was accompanied by Dr Juxon and Colonel Tomlinson through the Banqueting-house, adjoining to which the scaffold was erected between Whitehall gate and the gate leading into the Gallery from St James's." [1]

Bishop Juxon behaved at Whitehall with about as much dignity as his master. He lived to reap his reward at the Restoration, when he was created Primate, but failing health, resulting from old age, prevented his enjoying a long tenure of his exalted office. He little liked Charles II., who little liked him. Although leading a devout life, Juxon was quite a "sporting parson," and rode hard with his own pack of hounds.

Charles I. displayed at the eleventh hour a calm and courteous dignity of bearing hardly to have been expected from a person of his irritable temperament. "The King's manners," as Hallam states, "were not

of Queen Henrietta Maria. Amongst other errors, she tells us that this Queen was twenty-six years younger than her lover, Harry Jermyn. As a matter of fact, he was not five years her senior.

[1] The scaffold stood, therefore, in the road opposite to where the "Horse Guards" now stands.

good. He spoke and behaved to ladies with indelicacy in public.[1] . . . He had, in truth, none who loved him, till his misfortune softened his temper." It was the great curse of his career that he had an impediment in his speech—an affliction of which he was keenly sensible, and which often caused him to appear unduly cold and reserved to those about his person. We have an instance of this recorded in a letter written (14th March 1636) by the Countess of Leicester to her husband in Paris,[2] in which she relates:

> "Since my comeing to this towne, I have beene twice at the Court, because I did not see the King the first time, but from the Queene I receaved the Expectations of her Favor to you. In his Majestie; I found an Inclina-

[1] Joanna Bridges, the second wife of the famous Jeremy Taylor, was a daughter of Charles I.

[2] The greater part of Lord Leicester's salary as Ambassador to France was never paid to him by Charles, although promised on "the word of a king." He recovered some of it at the Restoration.

> tion to shew me some Kindness, but he could not find the Waie; as last he told me, that he perceaved I was so kind to my Husband, when he was with me, which kept me leane, for he thought me much fatter than I used to be. This short speeche was worse to me than absolute silence, for I blushed, and was so extreemlie out of Countenance that all the Companie laughed at me."[1]

As Fairfax commented, the King was "in his own nature very stiff." In personal appearance, too, Charles was not so good-looking as depicted by the brush of the courtly Van Dyck. A man of short stature, with shifty eyes, and an enlarged knee, he was, in reality, of a very commonplace exterior.

Finally, in dealing with the mysteries

[1] After the King's death his two children left in England, the Duke of Gloucester and the Princess Elizabeth, were entrusted to Lady Leicester's care. Miss Strickland erroneously states that they were entrusted to the care of the Countess of Carlisle.

surrounding the King's decapitation, we have to refer to the shape of the block. Was it a high block or a low block? To cut a long and bitterly contested discussion short, I venture to declare decisively in favour of the low block. According to a contemporary Spanish account, it was "un leño de pie y medio de largo y medio de alto"—*i.e.* eighteen inches long by only six high. The untrustworthy old prints which represent King Charles kneeling before a high block were mostly engraved abroad, and generally depict, in error, the headsman and his assistant without masks. In one celebrated picture the man painted holding the axe is not the headsman at all, but Fairfax, who actually objected to the King's execution instead of forwarding it! The King, in fact, as all original records relate, complained of the lowness of the block, and of his consequent prostrate position before it.

CHAPTER II

THE WARRANT TO EXECUTE CHARLES I.

WHATEVER may be thought by deponents of rival political schools concerning the justice or injustice of the King's execution, it cannot be denied that the signatures attached to his death-warrant were subscribed under conditions signally wanting in decency. The behaviour of some of the regicides when signing the warrant was most disorderly. Oliver Cromwell and Henry Marten smeared each other's cheeks with ink; whilst Cromwell, according even to a Puritan source, repeatedly laughed and jeered. Colonel Richard Ingoldesby was practically forced to sign by General Cromwell, as he stated, in his defence, at the Restoration, when this plea was accepted, and he was the only one of those (still living) whose names were affixed to the warrant to receive a free

pardon. Clarendon even ventures to assert that "Cromwell, taking Ingoldesby's hand in his, and putting the pen between his fingers, with his own hand wrote 'Richard Ingoldesby.'" Facsimiles of the signatures of Oliver Cromwell, with that of Bradshawe, I append herewith:[1]

[1] Although there is not much resemblance between the two signatures, I am somewhat inclined to believe Clarendon's story. At the Restoration, Ingoldesby's was significantly the only name omitted from the list of the regicides—who had signed the King's death-warrant—

Oliver Cromwell's behaviour throughout these proceedings was characteristic. At a dinner, given at Whitehall a few days before the King's death, Ludlowe relates how "Cromwell took up a cushion, and flung it at my head, and then ran down the stairs; but I overtook him with another, which made him hasten faster than he desired." As a young man, at some Christmas festivities at his uncle's house in Huntingdonshire, some of his pranks were of so nasty a nature that the guests seized him, and ducked him in a neighbouring pond. At the wedding of his daughter, Frances Cromwell, with Robert Rich, Oliver "threw about sack-posset among all the ladyes to soyle their rich clothes, whiche they tooke as a favour; and also wett sweetmeates; and daubed all the stooles where they were to sit with wett sweetmeates; and pulled of Rich his peruque, and would have throune

sent up by the Commons to the House of Lords, and approved as correct by both Houses. Ingoldesby was knighted later on by Charles II.

it in the fire, but did not, yet sate upon it." Similar proceedings occurred at the marriage of his daughter, Mrs Claypole. We also hear of his inviting some of his sergeants to dinner, and then ordering them, at the last moment, to go away, and let some privates eat their repast. For the coach accident attending Oliver Cromwell and Secretary Thurloe in Hyde Park (1654) the Protector was solely to blame, as his free use of the whip caused the six fresh greys, just presented to him by the Duke of Holstein, to bolt. In the same year we hear of Oliver Cromwell's presence in Hyde Park to witness "a hurling of a great ball by fifty Cornish gentlemen of the side, and fifty on the other; one party played in red caps, the other in white. The ball they played withal was silver, and designed for that party which did win the goal."

To return to the death-warrant, signed under such peculiar circumstances, we find the text of it "Given under Ye hands and Seals of

Jo. Bradshawe
Tho. Grey (Lord Grey of Groby)
O. Cromwell
Edw. Whalley
M. Livesey (Sir Michael Livesey)
John Okey
J. Dañers (Sir John Danvers)
Jo. Bourchier (Sir John Bourchier)
H. Ireton
Tho. Mauleverer (Sir Thomas Mauleverer)
Har. Waller (Sir Hardress Waller)
John Blakiston
J. Hutchinson
Willi. Goffe
Tho. Pride
Pe. Temple (Sir Peter Temple)
T. Harrison
J. Hewson
Hen. Smyth
Per. Pelham
Ri. Deane
Robert Tichborne
H. Edwards
Daniel Blagrave
Owen Rowe
William Purefoy
Ad. Scrope
James Temple
A. Garland
Edm. Ludlowe
Henry Marten
Vinct. Potter
Wm. Constable (Sir William Constable)
Rich. Ingoldesby
Willi. Cawley
Jo. Barkestead
Isaa. Ewer
John Dixwell
Valentine Wanton
Symon Mayne
Tho. Horton
J. Jones
John Moore
Gilbt. Millington
G. Fleetwood
J. Alured
Robt. Lilburne
Will. Say
Anth. Stapley
Gre. Norton (Sir Gregory Norton)
Tho. Challoner
Tho. Wogan
John Venn
Gregory Clement
Jo. Downes
Tho. Wayte
Tho. Scott
Jo. Carew
Miles Corbe t"

Curiously enough, we cannot be certain as to the exact date when the above signed the warrant to execute the King, although the body of the text was actually drawn up the day "*before*" Charles was sentenced to death! It is improbable that it was signed on 28th January. The 29th seems a likelier day, although much evidence is forthcoming in favour of both the 26th and 27th. The latter date has been accepted by so learned an authority as Dr Gardiner; but Ludlowe distinctly says the 29th, as suggested by the wording of the text. One authority opines that not merely the text, but even the very signatures, were completed "*before*" the King was sentenced to death! But the strongest evidence of all favours the theory that the signatures were not all affixed on the same day, and, perhaps, not even in the same place (the Painted Chamber, Westminster). The tradition that some of them were penned at Thomas Challoner's house in Clerkenwell is by no means unlikely to be true.

As I have already commented, the circumstances under which the death-warrant was signed were decidedly degrading. No more appropriate criticism, harsh though it be, of these proceedings has been compiled than that of J. H. Shorthouse ("John Inglesant")—though Cromwell was not a brewer—as is evidently implied in the following passage: "A revolting coarseness marks every detail of the tragic story; the flower of England on either side was beneath the turf or beyond the sea, and management of affairs was left in the hands of butchers and brewers. Ranting sermons, three in succession, before a brewer in Whitehall, are the medium to which the religious utterance of England is reduced, and Ireton and Harrison in bed together, with Cromwell and others in the room, signed the warrant[1] for the fatal act."

[1] This was not the death-warrant, but the special order to the executioner, authorising him to decapitate the King.

CHAPTER III

THE REGICIDES

BEFORE entering upon an inquiry into the identity of the masked and bearded headsman who killed the King, it will be proper to render some account of those resolute men, commonly known as the regicides, who were responsible for the fatal tragedy of 30th January 1649. Of these persons, the most active was Oliver Cromwell, whose determination to decapitate the King at all hazards was the means of overcoming the scruples of several of his more merciful colleagues. "I tell you," said he to Algernon Sidney, "we will cut off the King's head, with the crown upon it!"

By the term "regicides" I refer here to all those who signed the death-warrant,[1] also to John Lisle, George Joyce, Hugh

[1] Although sixty-seven Commissioners were present in court when sentence of death was passed upon

Peters, and Colonels Axtell, Hacker, and Tomlinson. The history of many of these men supplies us with some very romantic details. At the Restoration the fate attending the majority of those who had signed the warrant was either death or captivity for life. Even when Ludlowe, aged seventy, who had escaped abroad, paid a visit to England, in the reign of William and Mary, over forty years after Charles' execution, attempts were made to arrest him, and he again fled the country. But those who had got away abroad were by no means safe. Some were seized in Holland, and illegally extradited. John Lisle was assassinated in Switzerland. The life of Algernon Sidney, who had actually denounced the King's execution, was attempted in Germany. In North America two of the regicides were hunted from cover to cover like wild beasts.

John Bradshawe, president of the tribunal

Charles I., nine (Lisle, Hammond, Love, Allen, Tomlinson, Hevingham, Andrewes, Harvey, and Holland) did not sign the warrant.

before which Charles was arraigned, was born in 1602, and died in October 1659, thus escaping the violent death, which would certainly have met him, had he lived another year. He was a Cheshire gentleman by birth, and a lawyer. He has incurred much obloquy for having tried Charles I.; but it is a fact that he refused at first to do so, and reluctantly was persuaded to take his seat upon the bench at the last moment. In 1653 he opposed the growing despotism of Cromwell, as he did again later, and suffered in consequence. Buried in Westminster Abbey, his remains were dug up at the Restoration, and hanged in chains. At the King's trial he wore a high beaver hat, lined with steel, now preserved in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford.

Thomas, Lord Grey of Groby, afterwards quarrelled with Cromwell, and died in 1657. He was bigoted and superstitious, and consulted Lilly, the astrologer, as to whether January was a propitious month for the King's execution.

Edmund Whalley, whom the advisers of Charles II. strained every nerve to catch, fled to North America, and died, in hiding, there about 1675.[1] He fought valiantly in the Civil War, and under the Commonwealth.

Sir Michael Livesey eluded capture, and went abroad, dying (so it was given out) in 1664, but I have reason to believe that he was seen alive after that date in Devonshire.

John Okey fled to Holland, but was extradited, and hanged. He was originally a drayman.

Sir John Danvers died in 1655.

Sir John Bourchier died about a month after the Restoration, whilst his case was under consideration. To the last he approved of the King's execution.

Henry Ireton, Lord Deputy of Ireland, died at Limerick, 1651. Born in 1611, he studied at Trinity College, Oxford. He fought valiantly during the Civil War,

[1] Miss Strickland erroneously states that he was pardoned by Charles II.

and in Ireland. He was a most capable governor of Ireland. He married Cromwell's daughter Bridget, who afterwards married his colleague, Fleetwood. Buried at Westminster, Ireton's remains were dug up at the Restoration.

Sir Thomas Mauleverer died in 1655, and John Blakiston, formally a tradesman, in 1649.

John Hutchinson of Owthorpe, whose "Memoirs," compiled by his noble and devoted wife, forms a standard work on the history of his time, died in captivity at Sandown Castle, Kent, on Sunday, 11th September 1664. He had opposed the autocracy of Oliver Cromwell.

William Goffe, we are told by Mr Allan Fea, in his "Secret Chambers and Hiding-places," "had many narrow escapes from capture in North America, where he fled with Whalley. What is known as 'Judge's Cave,' in the West Rock, some two miles from the town of New Haven, Conn., afforded them shelter." He died, probably, in the spring of 1680.

Colonel Thomas Pride, Cromwell's staunch adherent, was born of mean parentage, and was by profession a drayman. Oliver Cromwell, in one of his boisterous humours, knighted him with a faggot-stick. Luckily for himself, Pride died before the Restoration, surviving the Protector by a few weeks only. In the "Court and Kitchin of Mrs Joan Cromwell" there is a graphic narration of how Oliver and Pride threw napkins across the tables at a party: "While all of that table were engaged in the scuffle, the noise whereof made the members rise before the sweetmeats were set down, and, believing dinner was gone, go to the pastime of gambols, and be spectators of his Highness' frolics." The disturbance had commenced by Pride's throwing a jelly to, or rather at, a lady, whereupon Cromwell threw a table-napkin at him.

Sir Peter Temple expired in the Tower, 1663.

Thomas Harrison, the son of a butcher at Newcastle, was hanged, October 1660.

He was cut down from the gallows in the full possession of all his senses, and butchered to death with the most revolting cruelty. He had strength enough to strike the executioner after being cut down.[1]

John Hewson escaped to France, dying at Rouen, 1662.

Henry Smyth, sentenced to death, lived on in captivity, and died in Jersey, 1668.

Peregrine Pelham died prior to the Restoration.

Richard Deane, having previously proved himself a good soldier on land, showed himself to be a most skilled and courageous captain at sea, under Admiral Blake. He died in action with the Dutch, 1653.

Robert Tichborne, formerly a linen-draper, died in the Tower, 1682.

Humphrey Edwards died in 1658.

Daniel Blagrave fled abroad, dying in 1668.

[1] In Inderwick's "Sidelights on the Stuarts" Harrison is incorrectly described as a gentleman of good family having an estate in the county of Durham.

Owen Rowe, a silk mercer, died in the Tower, Christmas Day, 1661.

William Purefoy died in 1659. Adrian Scope was executed in 1660. James Temple died a prisoner in Jersey, 1668. Augustine Garland died a prisoner in (probably) Tangiers.

Edmund Ludlowe escaped to Switzerland, where he resided chiefly at Vevay, and consorted with many republicans, who had also found it convenient to leave England. He wrote there his most valuable "Memoirs," and died in 1692, after paying a flying visit to England.

Henry Marten, the gay and the witty, whose immorality incurred, on two public occasions, the scathing censures, first of Charles I., secondly of Oliver Cromwell, died a captive at Chepstow Castle, 1680.

Vincent Potter was respited after being sentenced to death. Details as to his later career are wanting.

Sir William Constable, dying in June 1655, was buried at Westminster, but his remains were exhumed. Sir Richard

Ingoldesby, a kinsman of Cromwell, not only escaped punishment at the Restoration, but was, as I have said, rewarded. He entered Parliament, and became a Knight of the Bath, dying in 1685. His capture of General Lambert, 22nd April 1660, probably influenced Charles II. in his favour.

Sir Hardress Waller died a prisoner, probably in Jersey, 1666.

William Cawley, son of a Mayor of Chichester, joined Ludlowe, and died at Vevay, 1666. His remains, brought over to England in secret, were buried in Sussex.

John Barkestead, caught in Holland, was hanged at Tyburn, 1662. Isaac Ewer died in Ireland, 1650. John Dixwell fled to Germany, thence to America, and died in Connecticut, 1688. Valentine Wanton died, 1661, in Flanders.

Symon Mayne of Dinton, Bucks, died in the Tower, 1661. Local tradition still asserts that a retainer of his executed Charles I.

Thomas Horton, once a falconer, died in

Ireland, 1649. John Jones was hanged at Charing Cross, 1660. John Moore died prior to the Restoration. Gilbert Millington died a prisoner in Jersey, 1666.

General George Fleetwood, although son-in-law to Oliver Cromwell, received a pardon. He died, having survived three wives, in 1692.

John Alured died before the Restoration. Robert Lilburne died at St Nicholas Island, Plymouth, 1667. William Say, nominated at first to preside at the King's trial, before Bradshaw accepted the post, joined Ludlowe abroad, and died in 1667. He acted, *pro tem.*, as Speaker of the House of Commons in January 1660. Anthony Stapley and Sir Gregory Norton died before the Restoration.

Thomas Challoner died at Middleburg, 1661. Thomas Wogan died in Holland, 1668. John Venn died suddenly, prior to the Restoration; according to a Royalist rumour he committed suicide. Gregory Clement was hanged, 1660. He might have escaped, but for his voice having been

recognised in a crowded room in London by a blind man.

John Downes died in prison. Considering that he only signed the warrant under protest, he should (like Ingoldesby), have been pardoned. He is said to have burst into tears when Bradshawe sentenced Charles to death.

Thomas Wayte, the son of a publican, died in Jersey, 1670. Thomas Scott was hanged at Charing Cross, 1660, as was John Carew. Miles Corbet met the same fate in 1662.

The company that signed the warrant was composed of men drawn from all ranks in life. The deed was attested by lawyers, such as Say, Corbet, Bradshawe, Garland, and Mayne; by gentlemen of ancient lineage, such as Grey, Bourchier, Mauleverer, Temple, and Waller; by persons of indifferent reputation, such as Marten, Pride, and Millington; by religious men, such as Carew, Hutchinson, and Corbet; by plebeians, such as Okey, Harrison, Hewson,

Wayte, Ewer, and Barkestead; and by distinguished soldiers, such as Ludlowe, Deane, Fleetwood, Ireton, and Oliver Cromwell.

But few of those who signed the warrant played any prominent part in the subsequent government of the country by Cromwell. Many of the regicides even became his avowed enemies. Nearly all detested his autocracy, although they were not all bold enough to confess it. "Had I suspected," said Marten, "that the axe which took off the King's head should have been made a stirrup for our first false general, I should sooner have consented to my own death than his." How deeply Cromwell was hated by staunch republicans can be gathered by reference to the "Memoirs," compiled by Ludlowe and Mrs Hutchinson.

Those of the regicides responsible for the order of carrying out the execution left no stone unturned to prevent Charles I. being rescued at Whitehall. Strict injunctions were issued to the military to break up the crowd so soon as the axe had fallen. The

Rev. Philip Henry, an eye-witness, relates: "Immediately after the stroke was struck there was, according to order, one troop marching from Charing Cross towards King Street, and another from King Street towards Charing Cross, purposely to disperse and scatter the people, and to divert the dismal thoughts which they could not but be filled with." Owing to the cold weather the people were probably not sorry to move on.

In spite of the soldiers, numerous successful attempts were made to dip handkerchiefs in the royal blood. Such articles were thereafter reputed to possess magical powers, and as early as June (1649) we read of a girl at Deptford, named Baillie, being "cured" of blindness and sores by touching her eyes and limbs with a kerchief dipped in the blood of "King Charles the Martyr!"[1]

[1] There is actually a church, at Tunbridge Wells, dedicated to "King Charles the Martyr."

CHAPTER IV

THE GREAT UNKNOWN

INTENSE curiosity was evinced by the large crowd which witnessed the execution of Charles I. to ascertain the identity of the mysterious man in the mask who acted as the headsman. But not only did his name remain a secret, but his assistant's also was concealed from the irate public. Moreover, in official circles likely to be well informed, the mystery reigned as profound as it did among the lower classes. Only Oliver Cromwell, and one or two of his intimate colleagues, appear to have known who the executioner really was, and they kept their information to themselves. "Several persons," says J. H. Jesse, "have been named for the unenviable honour, and sufficient materials might be collected on the subject to form a curious and interesting treatise."

It was rumoured in London that Richard Brandon, the public hangman, had resolutely refused to kill the King. Threats or bribes were of no avail. His determination to have nothing to do with the deed had continued, it was said, unshaken. Yet it seemed unlikely that the disguised man was new to his trade. A novice could hardly have swung the axe with so much skill. The King's death had been instantaneous, and the spectators were spared the horrors which attended the butchery of Margaret Pole, Countess of Salisbury, in 1541, and of the Duke of Monmouth in 1685.

Suspicions concerning the supposed connection of certain notable people with the deed were soon rife in London. Even Cromwell's name was mentioned. The following forms, I think, a comprehensive list of those persons who were variously accused by the public voice at the time, or after the Restoration, of having struck the fatal blow: — William Hulet, Captain Foxley, Phineas Payne, Christopher

Allured, Hugh Peters, Colonel George Joyce, William Walker, Richard Brandon, Colonel Foxe, Henry Porter, Oliver Cromwell, Lord Stair, a drover (name unknown), John Bigge, Major Sydenham, Giles Dekker, Gregory Brandon, and a trooper (name unknown). From this list we can at once—so far as there being any possibility of their having been the headsman is concerned—eliminate the names of Lord Stair, Cromwell, Gregory Brandon, Phineas Payne, and Christopher Allured. In Lord Stair's case an *alibi* can be proved. Gregory Brandon has merely been mistaken by some writers for his son Richard,[1] who was often called "Young Gregory." Payne and Allured were only accused, at the Restoration, of having said they would willingly have acted on the scaffold. There existed no possibility of their actually having been on the scaffold. They did nothing more than approve of the deed. Cromwell was

[1] In Inderwick's "Sidelights on the Stuarts" the author erroneously states that Gregory Brandon executed Charles I., assisted by his son Richard.

looking on at the execution from a window in the palace. There is also no evidence forthcoming to connect either Henry Porter, Giles Dekker, or Captain Foxley with the deed. The claims of the remainder I will now examine, as below.

William Hulet, an Ironside, was formally tried for his share in the deed in October 1660. After being convicted by the jury, and sentenced to death by the Lord Chief Baron, he was pardoned, and released. The evidence at the trial had been far from conclusive, and further information in favour of his innocence was laid before the judge just after the conclusion of the trial. He was a serjeant, and was employed at Whitehall in keeping the crowd in order, nothing more.

Archbishop Tenison, when rector of St Martin's-in-the-Fields, was summoned one night (but too late) to hear the confession of a dying man. The inmates of the house where the man died asserted that the man had stated that he had slain Charles I. According to them, he said he had been one of

Oliver Cromwell's soldiers, and after every man in his troop had been asked, but refused, to kill Charles, Cromwell had made them draw lots. He drew the fatal lot, and struck the blow.

Hugh Peters,[1] the military chaplain, had so loudly clamoured for Charles' death that it is not surprising he was suspected of having actually caused it. He was conspicuous by his absence at Whitehall on 30th January, and it was rumoured in consequence that he was on the scaffold, acting either as the headsman or as his assistant. The truth is, however, that illness kept him at home that day, and he was not present at Whitehall. Peters was the person who suggested having ropes and pulleys brought on to the scaffold, in order to pinion Charles in his prostrate condition should he decline to lie down before the low block. One Tench of Houndsditch knocked, at Peters' order, four staples into the scaffold. A contemporary couplet runs :

[1] Although always called "Peters" by modern writers, he signed his name "Peter."

"The best man, next to Jupiter,
Was put to death by Hugh Peter."

William Walker, a soldier, so it appears from the account given of him at the trial of Colonel Axtell, was present on duty at the King's execution. Born at Sheffield, 2nd September 1621, he was buried there, 16th November 1700. Local tradition affirms that on several occasions he confessed to having killed the King. He was a man of very good education, was specially skilled in mathematics, and popular with his Yorkshire neighbours. That he was the headsman seems improbable, or he would have taken pains to conceal himself during the reigns of King Charles' sons. According to one witness giving evidence at Axtell's trial, Walker was the headsman, and Hulet his assistant.

Colonel Foxe, suspected at one time of being the headsman, assumed the *alias* of Captain Goodfellow. There is no original evidence to connect him with the deed, though in Lord Leicester's "Journal" he figures as following:—

> "The executioners were two; and disguised in sailors' clothes; with visors and peruques unknown; yet some have a conceit that he who gave the stroke was one Colonel Foxe, and the other Captain Joyce, but that is not believed."

Colonel Joyce, mentioned by Leicester, was the smart young officer who had carried off the King from Holdenby. He was the son of a tailor. Lilly the astrologer relates:

> "The next Sunday but one after Charles I. was beheaded, Robert Spavin, secretary unto Lieutenant-General Cromwell at that time, invited himself to dine with me, and brought Anthony Peirson, and several others, along with him to dinner: their principal discourse all dinner-time was only who it was that beheaded the King; one said it was the common hangman; another Hugh Peters; others also were nominated, but none concluded. Robert Spavin, so soon

as dinner was done, took me by the hand, and carried me to the south window; saith he:

"'These are all mistaken, they have not named the man that did the fact: it was Lieutenant-Colonel Joyce. I was in the room when he fitted himself for the work, stood behind him when he did it; when done, went in again with him; there is no man knows this but my master, viz. Cromwell, Commissary Ireton, and myself.'

"'Doth not Mr Rushworth know it?' said I. 'No; he doth not,' said Spavin."

William Lilly, who gave this information in cross-examination before a Parliamentary Committee, after the Restoration, went on to declare that on other occasions also Spavin had testified thus against Joyce. Moreover, in another of his works Lilly says: "Many have curiously inquired who it was that cut off his head. I say he that did it is as valiant and resolute a man as lives, and one of a competent fortune." Although

Joyce was of humble origin, Lilly clearly refers here again to him, for Joyce had made a considerable amount of money during the war. In Wood's "Fasti" he is described as "a madman that would do anything Cromwell bid."

At the Restoration every effort was made by the Crown to trace Joyce[1]; but he escaped abroad, and resided some time at Rotterdam. After leaving there in 1670 nothing more is heard of him, and the date and place of his death are unknown.

A tradition exists to the effect that the headsman was a drover, or ploughman, from the shires of either Huntingdon or Cambridge, in the employ of Oliver Cromwell. Summoned to London by Cromwell, he is said to have returned, after killing the King, to St Ives, where he lived on a pension,[2] or on a balance of the big sum paid to him for his work.

[1] Inderwick ("Sidelights on the Stuarts") erroneously states that Joyce was arrested in London, but was soon released.

[2] Inderwick ("Sidelights on the Stuarts") confuses

John Bigge, born at Dinton, Bucks, in 1629, was a clerk in the employ of Symon Mayne. He died in 1696, and I cannot find any proof stronger than mere village gossip to connect him with the deed. It has escaped the notice of those writers who have accused him of having killed the King that he was not twenty years of age when the execution took place at Whitehall. During the last twenty-five years of his career Bigge developed melancholia, and led the life of a pre-Reformation hermit. During this period he dwelt in a cave, subsisting on charity for food, and dressed himself in a most peculiar way. His shoes were famous for their countless patches.

Against Major Sydenham, a native of Dorset, no proof is definitely adduced that he was actually the headsman, but only that he had wanted to be the headsman. Sydenham was killed in battle in Scotland.

The headsman, whoever he was, declined

this drover with the dead man visited by Archbishop Tenison.

to perform his task until a special warrant had been signed, sealed, and delivered into his hands. Many writers have confused this warrant to the executioner with the more important warrant signed by the regicides mentioned in the last chapter.

At the trial of Colonel Axtell the following evidence, tendered by Colonel Huncks, shows that this special warrant to the headsman was not signed until a few minutes only intervened before the King's death :—

> "*Huncks* :—'That day the King died, a little before the hour he died, I was in Ireton's chamber, where Ireton and Harrison were in bed together; there was Cromwell, Colonel Hacker, Lieut. - Col. Phayer, Axtell, and myself, standing at the door; the warrant for the execution was there produced. . . . Cromwell addressed himself to me, commanding me by virtue of that warrant, to draw up an order for the executioner; I refused it, and upon refusing it, there happened some cross pass-

ages. Cromwell would have no delay. There was a little table that stood by the door, and pen, and ink, and paper being there, Cromwell stepped and writ — I conceive he wrote that which he would have me write. As soon as he had done writing, he gives the pen over to Hacker. Hacker, he stoops, and did write (I cannot say what he writ); away goes Cromwell, and then Axtell; we all went out, afterwards they went into another room.'

"*Counsel*: 'What followed?'

"*Huncks*: 'Immediately, the King came out, and was murthered.'"

That both Hacker and Axtell were acquainted with the executioner's name seems probable, notwithstanding their denials. At the Restoration, Hacker informed the Lieutenant of the Tower that the headsman was a major in the army, but that he could not remember this officer's name.

The King, we are told, was so calm and collected on the scaffold that, on "a gentle-

man" pressing close to the axe, Charles exclaimed: "Pray, take heed of the axe! Hurt not the axe, which may hurt me!" During his walk from St James's to Whitehall he conversed with Dr Juxon, and pointed out a tree which he remembered, when a boy, seeing his elder brother, Henry, plant. After his death, when his body rested for the night at Whitehall, the story goes that Cromwell came to examine it, raising the coffin lid with the help of a sword borrowed from one Bowtell, a soldier on guard.[1]

That the King's corpse was actually interred at Windsor admits of no doubt. The tale that it was secretly buried in the country is a mere invention, and more evidence even is forthcoming in support of the tradition that Oliver Cromwell's body was not, after all, buried in Westminster Abbey, but lies hidden at Newburgh Priory, Yorkshire.

[1] "I am of opinion that it is very likely that the story of Cromwell's visit to the body of Charles I. is true" (Dr Gardiner).

CHAPTER V

RICHARD BRANDON

It was no mere chance that led Richard, son of Gregory Brandon, to become the public executioner of London, for if ever a son was brought up to pursue the family calling he was. There remains, indeed, much that is peculiarly repulsive in the record of Richard's boyhood. From his earliest years he is said to have delighted in witnessing the ravages of pain. Cruelty to animals was his pastime. To be a headsman and hangman was his supreme ambition. In private life he was notoriously immoral, and once (if not twice) lay in prison on a charge of bigamy. So early did he emerge from the obscurity of his home in Whitechapel to assist his father, Gregory Brandon the hangman, that the mob of the metropolis discriminated little

between the pair, and dubbed the one "old"[1] and the other "young" Gregory.

Mr Brandon, senior, had already achieved notoriety outside his profession, for he had tried to attain official recognition as a "gentleman" by a trick. In the year 1616 he had craftily laid a trap, through which the Garter King-of-Arms was induced to make him a grant of coat-armour. That Brandon must have then been a man of some means seems probable, as his scheme was concocted by dint of bribing officials at the Heralds' College. Ralph Brooke, York Herald, sent a "suborned person" to Sir William Segar, the Garter King, and applied for arms on behalf of a gentleman named Brandon, who was described as an Englishman residing in Spain. Segar, not suspecting Brandon's identity, gave the requisite permission, and a copy of some Spanish coat appears to have been devised for Gregory's use. The trick was,

[1] Gregory Brandon's predecessor as hangman was Derrick; his immediate successors were R. Brandon, Dunn, Jack Ketch, and Rose.

nevertheless, detected soon after, and James I. put both Segar and Brooke in prison.

Richard Brandon's catalogue of victims was most remarkable. In a contemporary letter he is quaintly described as "Gregory the Second, Son of the Destinies, Terror to Treason, Arch Arme-Strong of the Axe, Knight of the Horse, Ruler of the Rope, and Lord of the Triple Territory"; in May 1641 he decapitated Lord Strafford; in January 1645 Archbishop Laud; in March 1649 the Duke of Hamilton, Lord Capel,[1] and Lord Holland, in addition to a whole host of less notable offenders. To Lord Capel he is alleged to have confessed to having killed the King. He received from Capel five guineas as a decapitation fee; from Lord Holland ten guineas. Capel, Laud, Strafford, Hamilton, and Holland were all slain by him, respectively, with one stroke of his axe.

So soon as Charles I. was sentenced to death Brandon vowed that, on this occasion,

[1] Inderwick ("Sidelights on the Stuarts") erroneously states that Gregory Brandon killed Lord Capel.

he would not undertake the duties of his office as executioner. Offers of increased pay were made to tempt him, but were refused, and if he really did kill the King it is certain that he was taken to the scaffold at the last by main force. Owing to the fact that both the headsman and his man wore masks, with false beards and periwigs, and that Brandon's refusal had become public property, it was not until after his death that Brandon was named as the executioner. Lord Leicester, indeed, writes in his contemporary "Journal":

> "This I heard for certain, that Gregory[1] Brandon, the common hangman of London, refused absolutely to do it,[2] and professed that he would be shot, or otherwise killed, rather than do it."

The Earl of Leicester, therefore, accepts Brandon's refusal as final, and entertained no idea of his having changed his mind.

Within a fortnight of Richard Brandon's

[1] *i.e.* Richard.
[2] *i.e.* to kill the King.

death[1] certain satirical tracts, were published in London, purporting, *inter alia*, to furnish a death-bed confession by him, to the effect that it was he who had slain Charles I. Presuming these tracts to be truthful, then Richard Brandon was the actual headsman, and a neighbour of his the masked assistant. That, as these papers state, Brandon was, on the morning of 30th January, conveyed to Whitehall by a troop of soldiers is probably correct, and he was seen there by a boatman just after the execution. But we have to ascertain his movements during the interval between his arrival and departure. To throw light on the many conflicting issues at stake, our best course will be to deal, *seriatim*, with the evidence adduced on both sides — *i.e.* both for and against Brandon's complicity in King Charles' execution—viz.:

[1] Brandon's burial certificate, in the parish church of Whitechapel, reads as follows:—"1649. Buriall. June 21st. Rich. Brandon, a man out of Rosemary Lane. This R. Brandon is supposed to have cut off the head

In Support of R. Brandon's Identity with the actual Executioner

1. The contents of the "Confession," and of two other similar papers, in the Thomason Collection, published, June 1649, proclaiming Richard Brandon as executioner, and as having confessed to the deed.
2. Evidence given at the trial of William Hulet.
3. Evidence given to the judge immediately after Hulet's trial.
4. The release of William Hulet, after having been sentenced to death.[1]
5. The skill with which the headsman delivered the (one) blow.
6. The presence of Brandon at Whitehall on 30th January.
7. Richard Brandon's burial certificate,

of Charles I." This last sentence is in different handwriting to the first portion.

[1] The reader must again be cautioned here against Miss Strickland's inaccuracies concerning Hulet.

in which he is referred to as the probable executioner.

8. Richard Brandon's alleged confession to Lord Capel.
9. The probability that the headsman was not alive at the Restoration.
10. The testimony of Mary Brandon, Richard's widow.
11. Evidence of John Rooton, a sheriff's officer, accusing Brandon of having confessed the deed to him on the evening of 30th January 1649.
12. The headsman's politeness to the King. A man of higher rank might not have been so submissive.[1]

In Support of Richard Brandon's Innocence

1. That Brandon confessed to Lord Capel is a "story," the accuracy of which cannot be proved.

[1] Miss Strickland, with characteristic inaccuracy, tells us that Brandon asked the King's forgiveness on the scaffold, but that Charles refused it!

2. The fact that the headsman was very carefully disguised. Had he been the common hangman so much mystery would not have been so necessary.
3. The extraordinary delay, occurring at Whitehall, prior to the King being led out to die.
4. Evidence of Abraham Smith, a waterman, at Hulet's trial, to the effect that Richard Brandon confessed to him, a few minutes after Charles' death, that he had, indeed, taken his axe to Whitehall, but that another person had wielded it.
5. Richard Brandon denied, on several occasions, that he had killed the King.
6. Brandon's vow to have nothing to do with the deed.
7. The contradictory reports concerning the sum of money paid to Brandon as a fee.
8. The note added to Brandon's burial certificate is not in the same writing

as the earlier portion of the entry, and refers to him as the "supposed" executioner.

9. R. Brandon may have been the headsman's assistant.[1]
10. The "Confession," and the other two tracts, may have been mere vulgar forgeries. They do not appear to have attracted any marked public attention.
11. Supposing the actual headsman to have been a man of position, he would probably have tried to make a scapegoat of Brandon.
12. Colonel Axtell's denials that he knew the headsman's name.
13. Colonel Hacker's statement to the Lieutenant of the Tower that the executioner was a Major in the army.

[1] Sir William Dugdale says in his "Diary" that the King's "head was throwne doune by him y^{t} tooke it up; bruised y^{e} face." Miss Strickland, calmly referring to Dugdale as her authority, makes him say that William Hulet took up the head, and wilfully bruised it!

14. In a contemporary letter we are told that Brandon refused £200 to kill the King, and that the assistant was a republican colonel, formerly a brazier, and his assistant a Puritan minister.

To sum up on the whole case: the mass of evidence in support of Brandon's identity with the headsman remains undeniably strong and suggestive. It is, indeed, far more convincing than that adduced against any other of our candidates. With the exception of Lilly's testimony concerning Joyce, there exists nothing beyond rumour to connect any other but Richard Brandon with the deed. Lilly's evidence is, nevertheless, worthy of respect, for he was in no particular prejudiced against Joyce, and seems to have entertained no doubt as to the correctness of Robert Spavin's information. The acute anxiety of the Government to capture Joyce, after the Restoration, rather tends to support the theory that he was the man, and he may have been the "Major" referred to by Colonel Hacker.

Before closing this chapter, dealing with the part played, presumably, by Brandon on this eventful 30th of January, it is noteworthy that this same day was a peculiarly unlucky date in the annals of the house of Stewart, as was even the month itself. It was on 10th January (1642) that Charles I. left London to commence the Civil War. It was on 10th January (1645) that Laud was executed. On 30th January (1647) the Scots, having made over Charles to the Parliament, retreated to Scotland, leaving him in the hands of his enemies. It is also a little-known fact that Prince Charles Edward Stewart, the young Chevalier, died on 30th January (1788). All his biographers erroneously give the date as the thirty-first. This is accounted for by his household wishing to conceal from the public that Charles Edward had died on the anniversary of his great-grandfather's execution. As a matter of fact, the Prince had died not later than nine P.M. on the thirtieth; but his attendants gave out that he had lingered till after daylight on the

following morning. Curiously enough, his widow is said to have died on 29th January (1824), although it is not improbable that she too really departed this life on the luckless thirtieth.

CHAPTER VI

LAST HOURS OF CHARLES I.

I

Sir Thomas Herbert,[1] the faithful servant of King Charles, has left us a most interesting record of his master's last hours on earth, together with an account of an extraordinary dream which he had, whilst sleeping in the royal chamber, on the eve of the execution. The story of the King's doings is well worth reproduction here, as it serves to correct many of the fanciful legends which have passed into circulation.

I quote from Herbert, as below:

"That night, after which sentence was pronounced in Westminster-Hall, Colonel Hacker (who then commanded the guards

[1] Herbert, famous as a traveller and an author, was born at York, 1606. He was created a baronet, 1660, and died, 1682. He refers to himself in his "Memoirs" as "Mr Herbert."

about the King) would have plac'd two musketeers in the King's bed-chamber, which his Majesty being acquainted with, he made no reply, only gave a sigh; howbeit the good Bishop and Mr Herbert, apprehending the horror of it, and disturbance it would give the King in his meditations and preparations for his departure out of this uncomfortable world; also representing the barbarousness of such an act, they never left the Colonel till he reversed his order by withdrawing these men.

"After the Bishop was gone to his lodging, the King continu'd reading and praying more than two hours after. The King commanded Mr Herbert to lie by his bedside upon a pallat, where he took small rest, that being the last night his Gracious Sovereign and Master enjoy'd; but, nevertheless, the King for four hours or thereabouts, slept soundly, and awaking about two hours afore day, he open'd his curtain to call Mr Herbert; there being a great cake of wax set in a silver basin, that then as at all other times, burned all night; so

that he perceiv'd him somewhat disturbed in sleep; but, calling him, bad him rise, 'For (said his Majesty) I will get up, having a great work to do this day'; however, he would know why he was so troubled in his sleep? He reply'd, 'May it please your Majesty I was dreaming.' 'I would know your dream,' said the King.

"'May it please your Majesty,' said I, 'I dreamed that as you were making ready, one knocked at the bed-chamber door, which your Majesty took no notice of, nor was I willing to acquaint you with it, apprehending it might be Colonel Hacker. But knocking the second time, your Majesty asked me, if I heard it not? I said I did; but did not use to go without his order. Why then go, know who it is, and his business. Whereupon I opened the door, and perceived that it was the Lord Archbp. of Cant., Dr Laud, in his pontifical habit, as worn at Court; I knew him, having seen him often. The Archbp. desired he might enter, having something to say to the King. I acquainted your Majesty with

his desire; so you bad me let him in. Being in, he made his obeysance to your Majesty in the middle of the room, doing the like also when he came near your person; and, falling on his knees, your Majesty gave him your hand to kiss, and took him aside to the window, where some discourse pass'd between your Majesty and him, and I kept a becoming distance, not hearing anything that was said, yet could perceive your Majesty pensive by your looks, and that the Archbp. gave a sigh; who, after a short stay, again kissing your hand, returned, but with face all the way towards your Majesty, and making his usual reverence, the third being so submissive, as he fell prostrate on his face on the ground, and I immediately stept to him to help him up, which I was then acting, when your Majesty saw me troubled in my sleep. The impression was so lively, that I look'd about, verily thinking it was no dream.'

"The King said my dream was remarkable but he is dead; yet had we conferred together during life, it is very likely (albeit

I loved him well) I should have said something to him which might have occasioned his sigh.

"'Herbert (said the King), this is my second marriage-day; I would be as trim to-day as may be; for before night I hope to be espoused to my blessed Jesus.' He then appointed what cloaths he would wear; 'Let me have a shirt on more than ordinary,' said the King, 'by reason the season is so sharp[1] as probably may make me shake, which some observers will imagine proceeds from fear.' . . . Soon after came Dr Juxon, Bishop of London. . . . His Majesty then bad me withdraw; for he was almost an hour in private with the Bishop; and being call'd in, the Bishop went to prayer; and reading also the 27th chapter of the gospel of St Matthew, which relateth the passion of our Blessed Saviour. The King, after the service was done, ask'd the Bishop, 'If he had made choice of

[1] Sir Philip Warwick records that it was a very cold day; a week previously we find Evelyn mentioning the Thames being frozen over.

that chapter, being so applicable to his present condition?' The Bishop reply'd, 'May it please your Majesty, it is the proper lesson for the day.' . . .

"Colonel Hacker then knock'd easily at the King's chamber-door. Mr Herbert being within, would not stir to ask who it was; but knocking the second time a little louder, the King bade him go to the door. He guess'd his business. So Mr Herbert demanding, 'Wherefore he knocked?' The Colonel said, 'He would speak with the King.' The King said, 'Let him come in.' The Colonel in trembling manner came near, and told his Majesty, It was time to go to Whitehall, where he might have some further time to rest. . . . Through the garden the King passed into the park, where making a stand, he asked Mr Herbert the hour of the day; and taking the clock[1] into his hand, gave it to him, and bade him keep it in memory of him; which Mr Herbert keeps accordingly. The King

[1] "A silver clock that had hung by the bedside."

had several companies of Foot drawn up, who made a guard on either side as the King passed, and a guard of halberdiers in company went, some before, and others followed; the drums beat, and the noise was so great as one could hardly hear what another spoke. Upon the King's right hand went the Bishop, and Colonel Tomlinson on the left, with whom his Majesty had some discourse by the way." . . .

Herbert, although not actually an eye-witness of his master's death, was close at hand, within Whitehall Palace, and wrote the following account of the King's sojourn there prior to being led out to die:—

"The King passed along the galleries[1] unto his bed-chamber, where after a little repose, the Bishop (Juxon) went to prayer; which, being done, his Majesty bid Mr Herbert bring him some bread and wine, which being brought, the King broke the manchet and eat a mouthful of it, and drank

[1] On his arrival from St James's Palace.

a small glass-full of claret wine, and then was sometime in private with the Bishop, expecting when Hacker would the third and last time give warning. Meantime, his Majesty told Mr Herbert which satin night-cap he would use, which being provided, and the King at private prayer, Mr Herbert addressed himself to the Bishop, and told him the King had order'd him to have a white satin-cap ready, but was not able to endure the sight of that violence they upon the scaffold would offer the King." . . .[1]

II

Herbert, in continuing his narrative, makes an interesting reference to another matter connected with the execution, the truth of which has never been hitherto explained—*i.e.* the participation of Fairfax,[2] then the commander of the Parliament's army, in the King's death. Was he, or

[1] Herbert, therefore, did not go on to the scaffold, but remained inside Whitehall.

[2] Thomas, third Lord Fairfax (1612-1671).

was he not, an accessory before the fact to that deed?

The general opinion of historians is that Fairfax was opposed to the King's execution, and even meditated preventing it, but was thwarted in his design by falling into a trap laid for him by Oliver Cromwell,[1] whereby he was kept engaged at prayer in Harrison's room whilst the execution was taking place. He was, moreover, loyal enough to help Monck to accomplish the Restoration, after which he lived peacefully in Yorkshire, unmolested by Charles II. But it seems almost incredible, nevertheless, that he, the commander-in-chief of the army, was powerless to raise his little finger to prevent the men under his control killing their King; and that, although present in Whitehall Palace at the time, he was ignorant of what was going on seems equally difficult of explanation. Herbert, nevertheless, relates that he and Juxon "went into the Long

[1] "Out of the stupidity of his soul, he was throughout outwitted by Cromwell" (Clarendon).

Gallery, where chancing to meet the General (Fairfax), he ask'd Mr Herbert how the King did? Which he (Herbert) thought strange (it seems thereby the General knew not what had passed, being all that morning, as indeed at other times, using his power and interest to have the execution deferr'd for some days, forbearing his coming among the officers, and fully resolv'd, with his own regiment to prevent the execution, or have it deferr'd till he could make a party in the army to second his design; but being with the officers of the army then at prayer, or discourse in Colonel Harrison's apartment) . . . his question being answer'd, the General seem'd much surprised; and walking further in the Gallery, they were met by another great Commander (Cromwell), who knew what had so lately passed;[1] for he told them that they should have orders for the King's burial speedily."

Some further light is, perhaps, cast upon Lord Fairfax's attitude by reference to a

[1] The King's execution.

very rare tract,[1] which has apparently escaped the notice of all Oliver Cromwell's biographers. This tract contains a report of an extraordinary sermon—half religious, half political—delivered by Cromwell in a London house, prior to setting out on his Irish expedition. In it he refers as following to Fairfax:—

> "It is true (Beloved) the Generall is a stout and valiant man, and hee hath great appearance of God in him; but fitter farre to be passive than active in the Affaires of State, hee is fitter for a Charge than a Councell: and the truth is (as I may tell you under the Rose) he wants brains to do anything of moment. But, indeede, this I must say for him, hee is a man doth not seek himselfe, I never found him will-

[1] "A most Learned, Conscientious, and Devout-exercise; held forth the last Lord's day, at Sir Peter Temple's, in Lincolnes-Inne-Fields; by Lieut.-Generall Crumwell. As it was faithfully taken in Characters by Aaron Guerdon. London, Printed in the yeere 1649."

full, but willing allwaies to submit to better judgements than his own. For when Sedgwick (that false and loose Priest) of Covent Garden, upon the King's Tryall, had writ to his Lady,[1] to advise him to remit the execution of that just Sentence, and to wash his hands of his death; hee (honest man) presently acquainted me with the businesse and shewed me the Arguments given to perswade him against it; and freely referred all to my judgement; and the 28. of January at night I went to him in Queene Street, attended with 2 Troopes of my own Regiment, to remove the scruples hee made upon that Rascally Priest's letter, or to secure him by force in case hee had contracted more, and would not bee satisfied. But hee (good man)

[1] Lady Fairfax, who caused the famous interruption at the trial of Charles I. She "had not that reverence for the Church of England as she ought to have had" (Clarendon).

gave me thanks for my paines and told me I had fully resolved him."

From this it will be seen that Cromwell, rather than let the King live, had arranged, if necessary, to kidnap his superior officer, the commander-in-chief of the army!

Preaching from "Romans xiii. 1," as a text, Cromwell in this discourse makes some most quaint and amusing remarks about women and their souls. In his opinion, apparently, a handsome woman is rarely a good woman. On this subject he relates:

"When I came before Pembrooke Castle, my landlady where I quartered (who had once beene a Malignant, and then but newly crept into the State of Grace) shee had a Good Soul within her, shee was brimme-full of the Spirit, and yet she was very handsome; which is strange, for seldom we find a perfection without an imperfection, commonly women that

> are faire without, are either false or foule within. . . . When I came in Yorkshire, I met with Mrs Lambert (the espoused of the honourable and valiant Saint M. G. Lambert) she is a Woman, not very fair, I confess, but of as large a Soule, and as full of the Spirit as any I have ever met with. And yet, I say, shee was was not very beautious or comly, for shee is something foggy and sunburnt (which is strange in that cold country)."

In the same discourse—at which several women were present—Cromwell more than once refers to the very strong personal part taken by himself in bringing about the King's execution. "In a word," he says, "it was I that cut off the King's head. It was I that cut off the heads of Hamilton, Capell, and Holland." Speaking of the scurrilous remarks made upon his private character and personal appearance, Cromwell remarks: "It's true I have a hot liver, and that's the cause my face and nose are

red;[1] for my valour lies in my liver, not in my heart."

This strange discourse was typical of the great Puritan soldier and statesman. In his daily life, and in that of his colleagues, religion was so intermingled with politics that it is hard to recognise where the one begins and the other ends. The dashing General, who made himself master by force of arms of England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, could "hold forth," when occasion served, like any "tub-thumper" of our day. He was as fond of preaching as he was of fighting. But, in consonance with the custom of his time, his "sermons" were often noted more for their length than for their erudition.

"Where to bury the King," Herbert goes on, "was the last duty remaining. By some historians 'tis said that the King spoke something to the Bishop concerning his burial. Mr Herbert, both before and after the King's death, was

[1] "He was of a sanguine complexion, naturally of such a vivacity, hilarity, and alacrity, as another man is when he hath drunken a cup of wine too much" (Baxter).

frequently in company with the Bishop, and affirms that the Bishop never mentioned anything to him of the King's naming any place where he would be buried; nor did Mr Herbert hear him at any time declare his mind concerning it. . . . Whereupon, Mr Herbert made his application to such as were then in power, for leave to bury the King's body in King Henry VII.'s chappel among his ancestors; but his request was deny'd, this reason being given, that probably it would attract infinite numbers of all sorts thither, to see where the King was buried, which (as the times then were) was judged unsafe and inconvenient. Mr Herbert acquainting the Bishop therewith, they then resolv'd to bury the King's body in the royal chappel of St George within the Castle of Windsor. . . . Upon which considerations Mr Herbert made his second address to the Committee of Parliament, who, after some deliberation, gave him an order, bearing date the 6th of February 1648 (1649), authorizing him and Mr Mildmay to bury the King's body

there. . . . This is memorable, that at such time as the King's body was brought out of St George's Hall; the sky was serene and clear, but presently it began to snow, and fell so fast, as by that time they (the mourners) came to the west-end of the royal Chappel, the black velvet pall was all white (the colour of innocence) being thick covered with snow. So went the 'White King' to his grave, in the 48th year of his age, and the 22nd year and 10th month of his reign."

Much as our sympathies may be excited by reading Sir Thomas Herbert's and other Royalists' accounts of the King's funeral, we must not forget, in common fairness, the harshness of King Charles himself in refusing to allow the rites of private burial to another. When Sir John Eliot, whom Charles I. practically murdered, died a prisoner in the Tower of London, his family made the very reasonable request that they might remove his body to Cornwall for interment. Charles spitefully refused, brutally declaring: "Let Sir John Eliot's body be

buried in the church of that parish[1] where he died!" His corpse was buried, therefore, in the little chapel of St Peter-ad-Vincula, on Tower Green—that mournful and ancient shrine, where rest the headless trunks of Lady Jane Grey, Queen of England for ten days; Sir Thomas More, the witty, the learned, and the brave; Cardinal Fisher, the aged Bishop of Rochester; John Dudley, the ambitious Duke of Northumberland; his rival, Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, the Protector; Queens Anne Boleyn and Catharine Howard; and the Scottish Jacobite lords, Kilmarnock, Balmerino, and Lovat.

III

During the last few days of the King's life a most determined attempt to prevent his execution was made by the Ambassadors from the States-General, Albert Joachim

[1] "No stone marks the spot where he lies, but, as long as Freedom continues in England, he will not be without a monument."

and Adrian Paw, who arrived in London on 26th January. They vainly petitioned both the Parliament and the principal officers of the army to abandon, or even to postpone, the execution. The following is, in their own words,[1] an account of their efforts:—"Yet, having seen yesterday, as we passed by Whitehall, that preparations were making which were said to be for the execution, and having conferred for a long time this morning with the Commissioners of the Crown of Scotland, to save, if possible, the King's life, we still continued to request of Parliament, through our Secretaries, either an answer or another audience; and, endeavoured by the intervention of the Scottish Commissioners, to speak once more to the Generall (Fairfax), and met him about noon at his secretary's house in Whitehall. The General was, at length, touched by our animated and pressing entreaties, and declared that he would go directly to Westminster, and recommend to Parliament to grant the answer and the reprieve we re-

[1] As related by them in a letter sent to the Hague.

quested, and that he would take a few Officers of note with him to support the application.

"But we found, in front of the house in which we had just spoken with the General, about 200 horsemen; and we learned, as well on our way as on reaching home, that all the streets, passages, and squares of London were occupied by troops, so that no one could pass, and that the approaches of the City were covered with cavalry, so as to prevent anyone from coming in, or going out. We could not, and we knew not in consequence what further to do. Two days before, as well previous to as after our audience, we had, by trustworthy persons, been assured that no proceeding or intercession in this world could succeed, and that Almighty God alone could prevent the execution being carried out; and of this the Scottish Commissioners, with great pains, had warned us. And so it turned out; for the same day, between two and three o'clock, the King was taken to a scaffold, covered with black,

erected before Whitehall. . . . We dare not send your High Mightinesses the further particulars that we learn in many quarters, confidential or public, on this event, as the passage is very difficult, all the sea-ports being closed."

CHAPTER VII

RICHARD BRANDON'S CONFESSION

IN the month of June 1649, immediately after Richard Brandon's death, there was published in London the following tract[1] (quarto), the contents of which I reproduce verbatim as below :—

The
Confession
of the
Hangman
concerning
His beheading his late Majesty the King
of Great Britain (upon his death-bed)
who was buried on Thursday
night last, in White Chap-
pell Church-yard,
with the manner
thereof.

[1] From the rare copy, in the Thomason collection, in the British Museum.

"Upon Wednesday last (being the 20. of this stant June 1649) Richard Brandon, the Executioner and hangman, who beheaded his late Majesty, King of Great Britain, departed this life; but during the time of his sickness was much troubled, and exceedingly perplexed in mind, yet little shew of repentance, for remission of his sins, and by past transgressions, which had so much power and influence upon him that he seemed to live in them, and they in him. And upon Sunday last, a young man of his acquaintance going into to visit him, fell into discourse, asked him how he did, and whether he was not troubled in conscience for cutting off the King's head?

"He replyed, Yes! by reason that (upon the time of his tryall and at the denouncing of Sentence against him) he had taken a vow and protestation, Wishing God to perish him, body and soul, if ever he appeared on the scaffold to do the act, or lift up his hand against him.

"Further acknowledging, that he was no sooner entered upon the scaffold, but im-

mediately he fell a trembling, and hath ever since continued in like agony.

"He likewise confessed, that he had 30 pounds for his pains, all paid to him in half Crowns, within an hour after the blow was given, and that he had an Orange stuck full of cloves, and a handkercher out of the King's pocket, as soon so he was carryed off from the scaffold; for which Orange he was proffered 20 shillings by a gentleman living in Whitehall, but refused the same, and afterwards sold it for 10s. in Rosemary lane.

"About 6 of the clock at night, he returned home to his wife, living in Rosemary lane, and gave her the money, saying 'That it was the deerest money that he ever earn'd in his life.' Which propheticall words were soon made it manifest; for it appeared that ever since he hath been in a most sad condition, and upon the Almighties first encouraging of him with the Rod of meeknesse, and the friendly admonition of divers friends, for the calling of him to repentance, yet he persisted in his vicious Vices, and

would not hearken thereunto, but laying raging and swearing, and still pointing at one thing or another, which he conceived visible before him.

"About 3 days before he dyed he lay speechlesse, uttering many a sigh and heavy groan, and so in a most desperat manner departed from his bed of sorrow. For the buriall whereof, great store of Wines were sent in, by the Sheriff of the City of London, and a great multitude of people stood waiting to see his Corps carryed to the Church-yard, some crying out, 'Hang him Rogue, bury him in the Dung-hill;' others pressing upon him saying, 'They would quarter him, for executing of the King;' insomuch that the Church-wardens and masters of the Parish were fain to come for the suppressing of them, and (with great difficulty) he was at last carryed to White chappell Church-yard, having (as it is said) a bunch of rosemary at each end of the coffin, on the top thereof, with a Rope tyed across from one end to the other.

"And a merry conceited Cook living at the sign of the Crown, having a black Fan (worth the value of 30 shillings) took a resolution to rent the same in pieces, and to every feather tyed a piece of pack-thread dyed in black ink, and gave them to divers persons, who (in derision) for a while, wore them in their hats.

"Thus have I given thee an exact account and perfect relation of the death of Richard Brandon, to the end that the World may be convinc'd of those calumnious speches, and erroneous suggestions, which are dayly spit from the mouth of Envy, against divers persons of great worth and eminency, by casting an odium upon them, for the execution of the King; it being now made manifest that the aforesaid Executioner was the only man that gave the fatall blow, and his man that wayted upon him was a Ragman living in Rosemary lane."

CHAPTER VIII

CHARLES I. AT WHITEHALL

TAKING it for granted that no inquiry into the identity of the executioner who slew Charles I. can be deemed in any sense complete without its including some detailed examination into the history of the King's last day on earth, I purpose to deal below at greater length with those vexed questions bearing upon the tragedy at Whitehall, to which I have made brief allusion above.

When the King proceeded to Whitehall from St James's Palace on the morning of 30th January he appears to have been dressed in a long black velvet jacket, with a waistcoat of crimson silk, and grey stockings. Proceeding through St James's Park, he walked between Bishop Juxon and Colonel Tomlinson, with Sir Thomas Herbert just behind him. Arrived at White-

hall, Charles, according to Lord Leicester, went "into the chamber where he used to lie, where he continued at his devotion, refusing to dine (having before taken the Sacrament) about an hour before he came forth only, he drank a glass of claret wine, and eat a piece of bread."

So far, so good. But we now have to face the inevitable question as to how the King reached the scaffold. Out of which window did he step? It is, at anyrate, not disputed that, in order for him to reach the scaffold, raised outside the windows, a passage had been expressly broken through a wall.

But the authorities in accord as to this point henceforth differ, variously favouring the following means of exit:—

1. The second window[1] (on the first floor) of the Banqueting-house: reading from left to right, facing the hall;

[1] The authorities now in charge of the Banqueting-house at Whitehall (occupied by the Royal United Service Institution) believe that the King went out of this window.

2. The third window;
3. The window of a small (temporary) structure, abutting from the northern extremity of the Banqueting-house, facing "the open street";[1]
4. The middle window: counting the windows as seven in number on the first floor.

As to which of these four apertures whence the King came out I decline to make what can, after all, be no better than a guess. The ancient controversy concerning the actual window appears unlikely ever to be terminated satisfactorily. Of the numerous contemporary prints of the execution not one can be accepted as an authentic guide; and as to the aperture cut temporarily through the wall, there remains nothing to mark or identify its place. It may have been an opening made through the outside wall, through which Charles could walk straight on to the platform; it may have been an interior aperture

[1] With this theory I cannot agree: the window of this building was not, apparently, large enough.

made from one of the rooms into a passage; or it may have been an enlargement of one of the windows.

As to the precise position of the scaffold, about which one would think there could be no room for doubt, but which, nevertheless, has also been made a subject of debate, I think we may safely assume that it was erected in front of the windows of the Banqueting-house, "before the Great Gate of Whitehall," and not at either extremity of the Banqueting-house.

Of the meaning of the mystic word "Remember!" the secret seems unlikely ever to be revealed. But it is probable that the importance of its interpretation has been much exaggerated. Inquirers into its interpretation should be novelists rather than historians. Of the several attempts to supply an answer to the riddle nearly all fall little short of absurdity. The very story of Juxon being called before a Committee of Regicides, before whom he was severely cross-examined as to the meaning of "Remember!" seems to be,

as Milton called it, "a tricked-out fiction, embellished with the effusions of sensibility in order to entrap the attention of the populace. But, though I do not deny," he continues, "that one or two of the Commissioners might perhaps have briefly interrogated the Bishop on the subject, I do not find that he was either purposely called before them, or deliberately and scrupulously interrogated, as if it were a matter of their general solicitude and care."

John Milton's remarks deserve the notice of those who have undertaken to lay down the law on the matter without having previously fortified themselves with any historical evidence to adduce in support of their theories. Miss Strickland, for example, takes it for granted that by "Remember!" Charles referred to the fact that he had only parted with the portrait of his wife at the last moment of his existence — at that terrible moment so well described in Andrew Marvell's verse:

"That thence the royal actor borne
The tragic scaffold might adorn,
While round the armèd bands
Did clasp their bloody hands,
He nothing common did or mean
Upon that memorable scene;
But with his keener eye
The axe's edge did try;
Nor called the Gods with vulgar spite,
To vindicate his helpless right;
But bowed his comely head
Down, as upon a bed."

Finally, in closing our review of this catalogue of mysteries, so far as the question of the shape and size of the block be concerned, I wish to submit, as my last word on this subject, that if Charles I. was not decapitated on a "low" block, or slab, then he was not beheaded after the fashion obtaining at the time. Why, for instance, should he not have been beheaded on the same kind of block as were, shortly after him, Capel, Hamilton, and Holland? These noblemen, prostrated at full length, rested their heads on a bar of wood only a few inches above the floor of the scaffold. If, too, a "low" block was not

used, then why were so many contrivances arranged for pinioning the King's limbs? How could these have been fastened had he been beheaded in the act of kneeling before a "high" block?

The axe used to decapitate Charles I.[1] was brought from the Tower of London. The following is the text of the warrant ordering its delivery at Whitehall:—

"That the Officers of the Ordnance within the Tower of London, or any other Officer or Officers of the Store within the said Tower, in whose hands or custody the bright Execution Axe for the Executing Malefactors is, do forthwith deliver unto Edward Dendy, Esq., Serjeant at Arms, attending this Court; or his Deputy or Deputies, the said Axe; and for this or either of their so doing, this shall be their Warrant."

[1] It is a curious fact that Richard Cromwell nearly lost his life almost on the same spot where Charles I. lost his. When visiting his father at Whitehall, in 1658, the staircase gave way, and Richard narrowly escaped receiving mortal injuries.

CHAPTER IX

THE "WHITE KING'S" GRAVE

Sir Henry Halford, physician to George III. and the Prince Regent (George IV.), has left the following interesting account of the official opening of the tomb of Charles I. in St George's Chapel, Windsor:—

"On completing the mausoleum, which his present Majesty [George III.] has built in the tomb-house, as it is called, it was necessary to form a passage to it from under the choir of St George's Chapel. In constructing this passage, an aperture was made accidentally in one of the walls of the vault of King Henry VIII., through which the workmen were enabled to see not only the two coffins, which were supposed to contain the bodies of King Henry and Queen Jane Seymour, but a third also, covered with a thick velvet pall, which from Mr Herbert's narrative

might fairly be presumed to hold the remains of Charles I.

"On representing the circumstances to the Prince Regent, H.R.H. perceived at once that a doubtful point in history might be cleared up by opening this vault. . . . This was done on the 1st of April last [1813], the day after the funeral of the Duchess of Brunswick, in the presence of H.R.H., accompanied by the Duke of Cumberland, Count Münster, the Dean of Windsor, Benjamin Charles Stevenson, and Sir Henry Halford [the writer].

"The vault is covered by an arch, half-a-brick in thickness, is seven feet two inches in width, nine feet six inches in length, and four feet ten inches in height, and is situated in the centre of the choir, opposite the eleventh Knight's stall, on the Sovereign's side.

"On removing the pall, a plain leaden coffin, with no appearance of ever having been enclosed in wood, and bearing an inscription, 'King Charles, 1648,' in large legible characters, on a scroll of lead

encircling it, immediately presented itself to the view: a square opening was then made in the upper part of the lid, of such dimensions as to admit a clear insight into its contents. These were, an internal wooden coffin, very much decayed, and the body carefully wrapped in cere-cloth, into the folds of which a quantity of unctuous or greasy matter, mixed with resin, as it seemed, had been melted, so as to exclude, as effectually as possible, the external air. . . . At length, the whole face was disengaged from its covering. The complexion of the skin of it was dark and discoloured. The forehead and temples had lost little or nothing of their muscular substance; the cartilage of the nose was gone; but the left eye, in the first moment of exposure was open and full, though it vanished almost immediately: and the pointed beard, so characteristic of the period, was perfect. The shape of the face was a long oval; many of the teeth remained; and the left ear, in consequence of the interposition of the unc-

tuous matter between it and the cere-cloth, was found entire. . . .

"When the head had been entirely disengaged from the attachments which confined it, it was found to be loose, and without any difficulty was taken up, and held to view. It was quite wet, and gave a greenish tinge to paper and linen which touched it. The back part of the scalp was entirely perfect, and had a remarkably fresh appearance; the pores of the skin being more distinct, as they usually are when soaked in moisture; and the tendons and ligaments of the neck were of considerable substance and firmness. The hair was thick at the back part of the head, and in appearance nearly black. A portion of it, which has since been cleaned and dried, is of a beautiful dark brown colour. That of the beard was a redder brown. On the back part of the head it was more than an inch in length, and had probably been cut so short for the convenience of the executioner, or perhaps by the piety of friends soon after death, in

order to furnish memorials of the unhappy King.

"On holding up the head, to examine the place of separation from the body, the muscles of the neck had evidently retracted themselves considerably; and, the fourth cervical vertebra was found to be cut through its substance transversely, leaving the surfaces of the divided portions perfectly smooth and even, an appearance which could have been produced only by a heavy blow, inflicted with a very sharp instrument, and which furnished the last proof wanting to identify King Charles I. After this examination of the head,[1] . . . without examining the body below the neck, it was immediately restored to its situation,

[1] W. P. Frith, R.A., mentions, in his "Autobiography," his being shown by a verger at Windsor a piece of King Charles' skin. The verger had been employed as a boy to help the carpenters in exhuming the King's body. According to his account, the King's head slipped on being taken out, and fell on the floor—much to the annoyance of the Prince Regent. He picked up a piece of skin off the King's neck, which had become detached, and kept it as a relic.

the coffin was soldered up again, and the vault closed.

"Neither of the other coffins bore any inscription. The larger, supposed on good grounds to contain the remains of Henry VIII., measured six feet ten inches in length, and had been enclosed in an elm one of two inches in thickness: but this was decayed, and lay in fragments near it."

Although the tomb of Charles I. had remained unopened from 1649 to 1813, the vault containing it was explored in the reign of William III., when a casket, containing the remains of an infant daughter of the Princess (afterwards Queen) Anne was laid upon the coffin of the "White King."

CHAPTER X

THE GREATEST OF THE REGICIDES

THE character of no illustrious man in English history has been made the subject of more continuous, or more acute controversy, than that of the mighty Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of the Realm. Ever since his death, the dispute concerning him carried on by rival schools of political thought has been bitter in the extreme. For over one hundred years at least his detractors held their own, and the Royalist view of the great Puritan predominated; but early in the nineteenth century a reaction against Lord Clarendon's estimate of Cromwell's character set in, and Thomas Carlyle and his disciples carried all before them, with the result that they have converted Cromwell into a kind of sinless legendary hero, who never committed a political error as a statesman, who never

made a mistake in strategy or in tactics as a general, or who never was guilty of any serious moral fault. The consequence of all this has been that, during the course of the last fifty years, the output of Cromwellian literature has been enormous. Panegyric after panegyric has appeared, but not one of these works has, to my knowledge, given us the real Oliver Cromwell. We have had him described with fair fidelity as a statesman and as a soldier, but not as a man. Carlyle and his school have given to the world a Cromwell carved out of marble, and not a mortal being made of flesh and blood.

Eminent critics, such as Dr Gardiner, John Morley, Thomas Carlyle, Lord Rosebery, and a whole host of lesser luminaries, have made no real attempt to describe the human element in Oliver Cromwell. They write as if they were themselves devoid of any sense of humour, and consequently fail to recognise the strong fund of humour that was latent in Cromwell. They have utterly failed to obey Cromwell's

own precept, as delivered to Sir Peter Lely, his portrait painter, to whom he declined to pay a single stiver if a wrinkle or a pimple were left out!

To paint Oliver Cromwell as he really was would not be to detract an iota from his genius. I cannot see that it detracts in any way from his fame as a statesman because he had been "gay" in his youth. His wild oats were sown early, like those of many other great and successful men. Yet his ardent admirers (especially Mr John Morley) are furious at the very idea of his being considered a "fast" young man; and Cromwell himself candidly confessed that his youth had been very wild. Mr Morley even ridicules the story of Cromwell's going to visit the King's dead body at Whitehall, although it is practically accepted by both Dr Gardiner and Dr Frith.

In private life Oliver Cromwell was very far from being the hard, stern, emotionless person of his idolators' creation; nor did he lead the plain, sober, austere existence of the typical stage Puritan. His household

was conducted on very cheerful lines. Up to the last he tried as much as he could to lead his old career of a country gentleman. He hunted, drove, shot, played bowls, smoked large quantities of tobacco, and was very fond of hawking. He was devoted to music, and paid his organist a large salary. He even permitted dancing, and at the marriage of his daughter Frances the ball he gave in her honour was not over till five in the morning. The expenses of his household were enormous, and offended the Puritans to such an extent that Mrs Hutchinson sorrowfully terms "his Court full of sin and vanity." To the field sports of the Cavaliers he made no objection; and when a Lincolnshire nobleman asked Whalley if Cromwell would give his consent to some local horse races taking place as usual, the General was instructed to reply that the Protector held no dislike whatever to the racing, provided that it was not made an excuse for large bodies of Royalists to collect together to discuss politics. Cock-fighting, bear-baiting, and duelling, however,

were put down by the Protector with a strong hand.

Oliver Cromwell was essentially a nervous man. By this I do not mean to say he was a timid man, but that he was of a highly-strung nervous temperament. When Charles I. arrived at Westminster, on the first day of his trial, Cromwell, peeping out of a window, "turned as white as the wall," and exclaimed excitedly: "My masters, he is come!" Richard Baxter described him as being naturally so hilarious and excitable that a stranger might have taken him for a person given to drinking too much wine.

That Oliver Cromwell was principally, if not entirely, responsible for the execution of King Charles I. cannot be doubted. Once his mind had been made up that the King's death was politically imperative he overcame all opposition to his plans for putting Charles to death. Many of those who commenced by helping him to place the King on his trial tried to draw back at the last, and demurred at having to sign the death-warrant. Cromwell, however,

compelled them to sign. It was he, and he alone, also, who prevented Fairfax from endeavouring to save the King. Every detail of the arrangements for carrying out the execution was superintended by Cromwell. He was not going to desert the ship, he explained, when port was in sight.

Oliver Cromwell was decidedly a lucky individual. But all great people are lucky. "I do not want clever men," said Napoleon when choosing his generals, "but lucky men." Cromwell's luck was extraordinary, even though he died on his "fortunate day," the anniversary of his two chief victories.[1] It was lucky for him, during his race to power, that death so soon carried off three illustrious competitors, who ranked far higher than he did in the estimation of the Parliament, in Pym, Hampden, and Eliot. Luck, and luck alone, came to his rescue at Dunbar, after he had been completely out-manœuvred by Leslie.

[1] The popular story that Cromwell died during the progress of a tremendous storm is not correct. The storm was quite over before Cromwell died.

To describe Cromwell as a republican seems to be little short of absurd. His "Commonwealth" was very far from being a free republic. He was, in fact, as Lord Protector, the most absolute and autocratic king that has ever reigned in England, Henry VIII., perhaps, excepted. By the true republican party he was heartily detested. Judge Bradshawe, Colonel Hutchinson, Sir Harry Vane, Algernon Sidney, Ludlowe, Marten, Downes, Lord Grey of Groby, and Harrison, all fiercely opposed him soon after he had assumed the reins of Government. Plot after plot was hatched by extreme republicans to destroy or to depose him. He ruled Great Britain by the power of the sword, not by the will of the people. Martial law became the order of the day, and the country was parcelled out amongst his major-generals, as if it had been captured from a foreign foe.

The greatest blot on Oliver Cromwell's character was his cruelty in warfare. The story of his Irish massacres is too well

known, and too horrible, for repetition here; but it seems to have been generally overlooked that he behaved also most brutally in England to his prisoners of war. Large numbers of Cavaliers captured on the field of battle were constantly being sent across the seas to serve as slaves in the West Indies. They were often driven along the roads to Bristol, the port of embarkation, in a most pitiable condition, and under most tantalising circumstances. In one instance, indeed, the mayor of a town through which these captives were marched indignantly and effectually protested against the indecent cruelty with which his fellow-countrymen, many of whom were gentlemen by birth, were treated. In all these proceedings Cromwell comforted himself with the assurance that he was doing the work of Heaven by killing the "malignants." In his terrible theology the more merciful teachings of the Messiah held no place. To the dictates of the commandment of love, as laid down in the New Testament, he and his paid no heed. He took Joshua

as his model, and regarded the Cavaliers just as the Israelite leader did the unfortunate inhabitants of the Promised Land. It was the letter of Old Testament law, and not the spirit of the New, that the Puritans obeyed. In all his victories on the field of battle, and in all his triumphs as a politician, just as in all his failures, he took no credit, nor attached any blame, to himself. He always argued that his success, or his discomfiture, had been the work of Almighty God. When expelling the members of the "Long Parliament" he asserted that he had sought the Lord night and day to avoid adopting drastic measures, but that the Lord had forced him to act as he did. In Ireland it was the same: in slaughtering men, women, and children, at Drogheda and at Wexford, he excused himself on the ground that he was merely executing the "righteous judgment of the Lord" upon the wicked. Again, when the mists cleared away on the morning of the battle of Dunbar, and the incautious Scots were seen in the

sunshine descending the hill, Cromwell, standing up in his stirrups, exultingly exclaimed: "Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered!"[1]

[1] First verse of the sixty-eighth Psalm.


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