

**ADVENTURES PERILOUS, BEING THE STORY
OF THAT FAITHFUL AND COURAGEOUS
PRIEST OF GOD, FATHER JOHN GERARD,
S. J., WHO, AFTER A LIFE OF ADVENTURE
AND MANY HAIBREADHT ESCAPES, CAME
AT LENGHT INTO A PLACE OF PEACE**

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Adventures perilous, being the story of that faithful and courageous priest of God, Father John Gerard, S. J., who, after a life of adventure and many hairbreadth escapes, came at length into a place of peace by E. M. Wilmot-Buxton

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E. M. WILMOT-BUXTON

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BY

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"ANSELM," ETC., ETC.

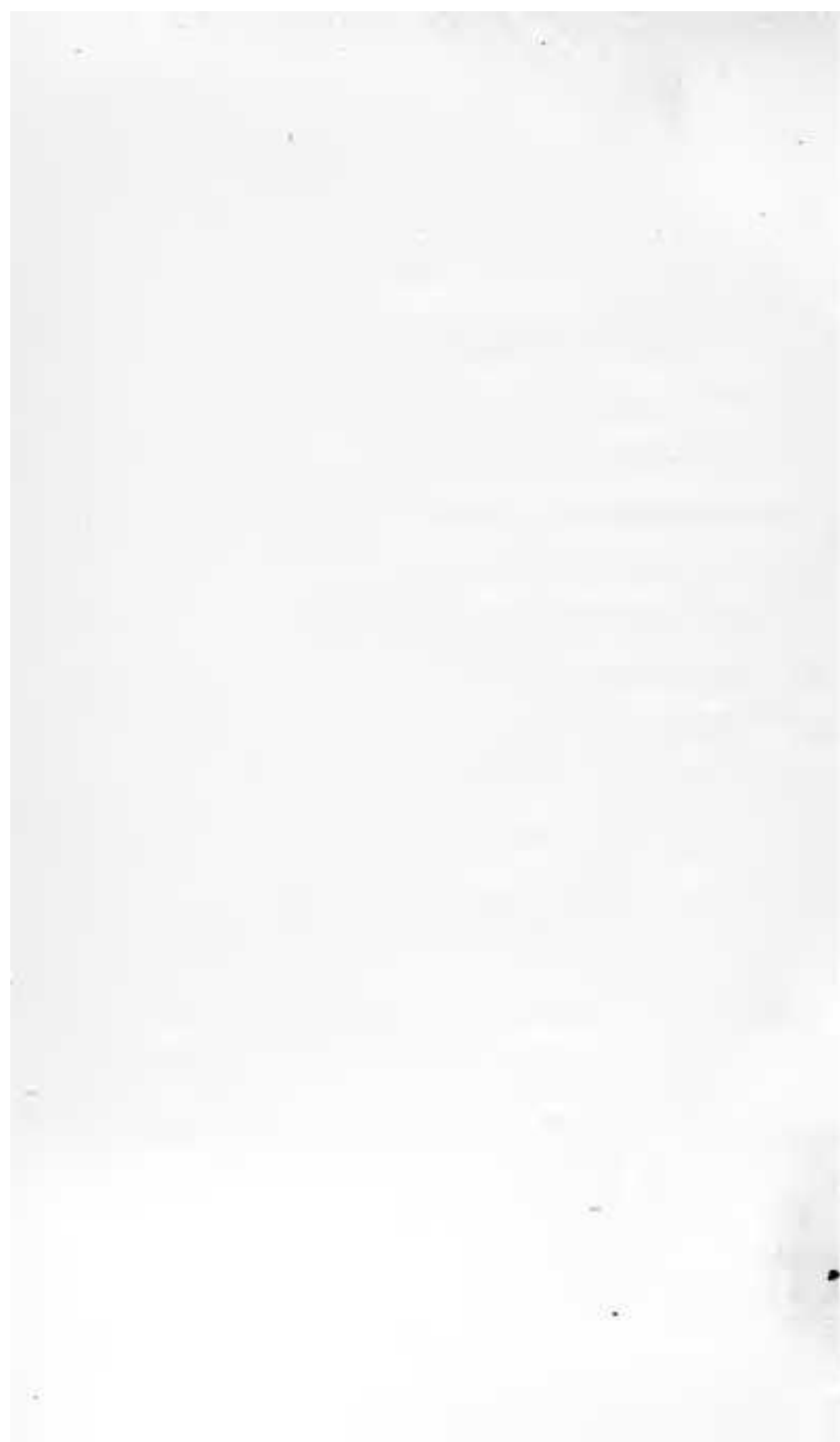
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PREFACE

I DON'T know whether Harrison Ainsworth's *Tower of London* is as much read as it used to be. I don't know whether that is where boys nowadays are lucky enough to learn the fascination of royal processions and royal executions ; of torture chambers and fantastical escapes ; of intriguing ambassadors and splendid plotting lords ; of gigantic warders and strutting dwarfs and jovial cooks and the ghosts of queens. For that all boys have grown so old as to have outgrown all this I never will believe. Somewhere they must learn it, and then refresh their learning by *The Yeomen of the Guard*. Whether or no Ainsworth's book be all the way quite accurate—and in plenty of points (who denies it ?) it surely isn't!—and although the immortal opera doesn't, for one episode even, pretend to be, romance is in both book and opera ; romance is there, vivid and vigorous ; and when once romance has brought alive for us a Tower or a Windsor Castle, we shall never be quite poor-minded enough to dwell content in suburbs, however neat ; nor thin-souled enough to feel our best thrills in a music-hall, however noisy.

But we have the chance of a more rich and real romance than anything the novelist and librettist and composer have bequeathed to us. I say it in all

seriousness: no novel, no play, can come near the recital of those real happenings of some of which *Adventures Perilous* reminds us.

Father John Gerard didn't die a martyr; still he was hanged for hours by the wrists, in the grinding agony of those iron gauntlets, till the sweat poured from his limbs, and the very jailers wept. (And yet, over those hands and wrists, too swollen now to pass through coat-sleeves, next day, again and yet again, those same iron gauntlets were rammed and he was left hanging by them.) And through it all, and through the desperate mood that came upon him with it, he still could pray and jest and answer boldly and shrewdly, and think tenderly for others.

And as for prisons, you have here a good choice of them: the Southwark Counter prison, the Marshalsea, the "Clink" (and that is a name at which a modern Tommy will open his eyes when he learns its history!); and the various strongholds of the Tower itself: and then, the secret communications between cells; and the dangerous dealings with the outside world; and the letters written in lemon juice, or, better, orange juice (for while lemon-juice writing shows up when steeped in water or held to fire, and then fades and again can be revived, orange-juice writing is washed out quite by water, though it fades no more once heat has made it legible); and the actual incredible escape from Tower into Thames.

And short of prisons, the secret rooms and hiding-

places: in chimneys, under stairs, refuges to which priests fled at mid-Mass or from broken sleep—keeping a presence of mind so perfect that once one of them took thought, actually, to *turn his mattress* and make his friends turn theirs, that *the cold side might be uppermost*, and that the invading pursuivant might at once conclude those beds had not been slept on!

These, and a hundred more things like them, are outside things, I very well know. And yet it is this element of gaiety, of laughter, of rapid enterprise and adventure, of sport, that I want to indicate. These priests, who could play at cards, "and play well, too," as one great lady incredulously cried, who were as good with horse or dog or falcon as anybody, who took the whole household aback by the transformation of their whole personality once they appeared in vestments, and yet were their *own true selves* throughout, never coarse or complaisant in disguise, never hypocrites in their cassocks, who could ask a huntsman gaily: "Is there, do you think, no sport in holding the true Faith against a crowd of persecutions?" and could end a hard day's riding by crying to the horseman at their side: "May you one day ride as bravely into the true Church as you have ridden to hounds to-day!"—don't they answer perfectly to the definition which, we read, rose spontaneously to the most reluctant lips, of "very gallant gentlemen"?

"Gentlemen"! They certainly were that. And