

**THE SIEGE OF BRIDGWATER — MRS. WYNDHAM'S " LOVE TOKEN " — SYDENHAM HOUSE — NARROW ESCAPE OF THE GENERALS — BURNING OF EASTOVER — THE SURRENDER — FAIRFAX'S LETTER TO THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.**

THE prolonged dispute and ultimate war between Charles I. and his Parliament (set out at length in any English History), had a most disastrous effect with regard to Bridgwater, as it led to the siege and surrender of the town. In April, 1645, the Prince of Wales (afterwards Charles II.) summoned a Council of loyal justices of the West of England to meet him on the 23rd of the month at Bridgwater Castle, to consult on the best mode of preserving the West against the Parliamentarians. Here it was agreed that the Western "Counties would in a very short time (a month at the utmost) raise and arm 6,000 foot, besides the Prince's Guards, which would be full 2,000 more. \*

About the beginning of July, Sir Thomas Fairfax, the General, and Lieutenant-General Cromwell, with Major-General Massey, entered Somerset, which county (with the exception of Taunton, which was defended by the redoubtable Robert Blake) was then altogether in the power of the King. Lord Goring, who commanded the Royal army, withdrew his forces from Taunton, and advanced against Fairfax. A sanguinary battle near Langport resulted in the complete routing of the Royal army, and Lord Goring fled to Bridgwater, being pursued to the walls of the town. About 300 Cavaliers were killed, and upwards 2,000 taken prisoners. Fairfax, in a letter dated July 10th, 1645, thus reported with reference to this battle:—

*"The fight was very hot, and lasted about two hours. About three o'clock Goring himself was got to Bridgwater, Prince Charles being gone from thence before, and Lord Hopton with him, to Barnstaple, with three troops of horse, to raise what forces they could in those parts to join with those that were to come from Grenville. Rupert was gone to the King before. Sir John Berkeley was drawn off for some discontent or other towards Exeter, but, it is believed, is returning with Grenville. The Cavaliers seem to be very sorrowful for their losses, including 300 slain and left dead on the place; divers officers carried dead and some wounded into Bridgwater. The prisoners, numbering 2,000, included the following Six colonels, some of which are notorious incendiaries; 14 lieutenants, colonels and majors; 100 captains and other officers of note. There were also captured 1,200 horse, 40 colours of horse and foot, 4,000 arms, pistols, carbines, firelocks, muskets, pikes, and two pieces of ordnance, six*

*cartloads of ammunition, powder, match, and all their bag and baggage which they left on the field."*

Fired with the success at Langport, Fairfax turned his attention to Bridgwater, his army being drawn up on Weston Moor, near Penzoy Pound, a little more than two miles from the town. Here the men, being very weary with their previous exertions, were allowed two days' rest to refresh themselves, and gather in provisions as well as they could without money, as a daily expected supply had not come to hand.

On Saturday, July 12, Bridgwater was "viewed" by Cromwell and Fairfax (the former of whom conducted the subsequent siege), who approached as closely as possible to take note of the preparations for defence. It is related that Mrs. Wyndham, the wife of the Governor, fired a gun at Cromwell, whilst he was near the works, and killed an officer who stood by his side. Mrs. Wyndham afterwards sent a messenger to the General to ask if he had received her "love token," adding that if he were a courtier he would return the compliment!

The two Generals found that the town was strongly fortified, a deep ditch, 30 feet wide, having been dug all round it, communicating with the river, and filled with water at every tide; a garrison consisting of 1,800 soldiers, a strong castle, mounted with forty guns, two pieces of ordnance, and a great number of arms left by Lord Goring a few days previously. The examination concluded, Cromwell made a speech to his men, in the course of which he described how he thought the town might best be stormed, viz., by blocking up the water passage at places, and crossing over into the town. He then sent 1,500 horse and dragoons to the western side for that purpose; 3,000 others were sent to the northern side, and Major-Gen. Massey, with Col. Weldon's brigade, having his headquarters at Hamp House, camped on the south-west side, and erected several batteries on the adjoining hill in order to annoy the town. It was thus almost completely surrounded, which prevented any relief or supplies from coming in.

The next move was to clear the adjoining country of the foe, which was soon done. Sydenham-house, the residence of a long line of lordly owners, was surrendered with a hundred prisoners, and according to one of Fairfax's letters, dated from Chedzoy, 150 prisoners were taken in Borough bridge church by Colonel O'Bey, the edifice being then garrisoned by the Roundheads. Fairfax and Crom-

well again reconnoitred Bridgwater on the 14th July, and in crossing the river near Dunwear they had a narrow escape of their lives, their boat being nearly capsized by the "bore."

A council was afterwards called, but no decision was arrived at. Sir Thomas Fairfax, considering that "*old soldiers were fit for long marches, young ones for hot service,*" and that his army, now flushed with victory, was surrounded by a friendly population, decided, in favour of storming the town, and preparations at once went forward. The great guns were brought up, scaling ladders prepared and brought in, with other necessaries, by the country people. Two regiments were sent off to strengthen Massey, and three other regiments to assist in the struggle on the north side.

The eventful march began at midnight, every man having a brush faggot to throw into the ditch to aid in making a firm footing. The scaling ladders were brought up, and the whole force silently reached the entrenchments from the northern side. Here, however, it was unexpectedly found that the water was ten feet deep. About one o'clock the two Generals came up and stopped further action, Fairfax having received information that their intentions were known to the garrison within, and the water being also too deep to be forded with the help of their appliances. It had been learnt also that those within the town were much divided amongst themselves, and the idea was suggested that the place might be gained by easier means than bloodshed. The troops then withdrew to their quarters.

On the 15th July at a Council it was decided to surround the town and reduce it by blockade. The army then began to make walls and lines, with approaches to very near the town. It was determined to make these lines defensive from within as well as from without, and 6,000 horse and foot, out of the 15,000 available were put at the work, the remainder of the army being kept ready for action in case of any alarm. The preparations, after going forward for some days, were given up for various good reasons, the principal of which was the difficulty of fording the river to keep up communication.

After further consideration the storming of the town was again decided on. The astute Fairfax had learnt that the inhabitants were "*fearful and distracted,*" and were "mostly of Godly people, guided by a worthy minister, Mr. Devenish, who would do all he could to induce the people to yield, and that they

would at any moment rise and assist him. He learnt also that the soldiers were on constant duty, that provisions were plentiful, and mills only were wanted to grind the corn (there being only one mill in Blake-street). It was therefore decided to give the garrison no rest, to keep up their watchfulness by continued alarms, but that delay would be simply useless if only with the view of shortening provisions.

The circuit of the town was not large, but as already stated it was well defended, and all approach was difficult, especially on the Eastover side. A work had been erected at the east end of St. John's field and another between it and Dunwear, whilst between the North Gate and the West Gate was a battery which well defended both positions.

On Saturday, the 18th July, Fairfax rode through the river, and after again viewing the enemy's works, placed his batteries. The constant activity of the General was the subject of public remark. Difficulties never daunted him: simply saying, "*Come, let us trust God,*" he took means to overcome them. When the storming of the town was finally decided on, he said to a minister in his army, "*Commend us all to Christ, the Lord teach us all.*" It is related that the discipline in his army was well sustained, swearers and drunkards were severely punished; if an officer offended after one admonition he was cashiered, and only again received on humble acknowledgment and promise of future amendment. The Cavaliers with whom they came in contact were the very opposite, being full of oaths, imprecations, and blasphemies. It is related of one that he swore that he would serve the devil well here on earth, in order to insure favour at his hands in hell, whilst another expressed the hope that his ribs might be made a grid-iron on which to broil the souls of the Roundheads.

Sunday, July 20, was spent in religious exercises by all who could be spared from the works. In the morning, Mr. Hugh Peters, and in the afternoon Mr. Bowles, and another Puritan named Bowers, gave addresses of encouragement to the soldiers, "*urging them on every design they went about to look upon Christ in all their actions, and to be valiant in His cause.*" After these services the large army was drawn up upon the fields by Horsey and Bower. Cromwell, with five regiments, lay in St. John's and Castle Field, and six other regiments lay at Chedzoy. From this latter twelve hundred men were drawn by lot — 600 foot for the attack, 400 to act under Col. Hewson,

and 200 under Major Dove. It was arranged that Major-General Massey should give a great alarm on the south side, while the men drawn by lot should storm on the north. In the evening the men were drawn up again, and Mr. Peters exhorted them as much by force as persuasion to act valiantly and do their duty. The men with one voice made answer, and waited in impatient eagerness for orders to commence the fray.

All the preparations being complete, the fateful moment came, and as soon as it was dark that Sunday evening the men drew to their posts. About two o'clock on the following (Monday) morning they marched up to the works *"freely, cheerfully, and with great joy, not doubting that the Lord would perfect the work He had begun by them."* Both Generals had approved of some bridges designed by Col. Hammond to span the moat or to float if required. Eight of these had been made 30ft. long, and were brought up on waggons and smartly laid, although not without difficulty, by the officers of the train, assisted by some firelock men.

All being ready, the signal, three guns, was given for both sides to attack together, and the forlorn hope, consisting of the drawn men, began to file over the rudely-constructed bridges. Some of them unfortunately gave way, and the men had to wade or swim to the other side, which they did amid a shower of bullets from the defenders and the blazing of ordnance from the Castle. After a severe fight they succeeded in forcing an entry by the bridge, and drove off the defenders into the market-place and into the church. The *"fort royal"* was next assaulted and taken, and its cannon, being in a line with the market-place, were turned in that direction with deadly effect. By the bridge stood a new house belonging to Mr. Harvey, and being in a position prejudicial for the defence, its destruction had been ordered. Mr. Harvey, who was Lord of the Manor, succeeded, however, *"by much strong influence,"* obtaining leave for it to stand. It was then fortified with guns, which were also turned towards the market-place.

Meanwhile a party let down the draw-bridge at St. John's forced the east gate, whereupon Captain Reynolds entered Eastover with some of Lord Cromwell's regiment, and scoured the streets, driving the defenders, who were, principally Sir John Stawell's regiment, to the bridge and over the river. The gate there was instantly closed, by the Royalists, the drawbridge raised, prevent-

ing Reynolds from following further. This part of the town being cleared, 500 foot came to the bridge and surrendered themselves, and were forthwith plundered. They belonged to a regiment from Pembroke, and being well disposed to the Parliament 300 of them at once took the covenant and joined Sir Thomas Fairfax, saying they were proud to be taken by such an enemy. They were afterwards sent to their own garrison at Pembroke, which required strengthening. Besides these prisoners there were taken five pieces of ordnance, 60 horses, and a quantity of rich booty. Twenty men only were killed, and about 100 wounded, though in the dim morning, from the fierceness of the struggle, it was at first feared that a thousand might have been slain. In the twilight, however, the unfortunate defenders fired high and the shots passed over. Colonel Hewson, who had led this attack, had at one time been a shoemaker; and to the many congratulations he received, he replied humbly, *"We are unprofitable servants, of ourselves we can do nothing."*

The soldiers were greatly inspirited by their success, hoping eagerly now the one side, was secured to them, to soon reduce the whole town. A report of the victory was dispatched to Parliament by Major Butler, who thereby netted a reward of £30.

Col. Wyndham, the governor of the Castle, was much enraged at the unexpected loss, and determined to use every means to dislodge the victors. He commenced to fire hot shots into Eastover, and that part of the town was soon in flames, and continued burning fiercely until the evening of the next day. Hardly a house escaped, but Major Cowell, with the flames raging round him, kept his ground with the guard entrusted to him, ready to check any sally. Fairfax was sadly troubled at this wholesale destruction, but when the Royalists rang the bells of St. Mary's for joy, or to annoy him, his displeasure was increased to anger. At five o'clock he sent a trumpeter into the town with a summons to surrender, but the Governor haughtily made answer that he would listen to no such proposal, and at once commenced strengthening his position. Accordingly a second storming was ordered for the following day (Tuesday), Massey, without, on the south side, to act simultaneously with those within on the north side. This plan was changed for a general alarm, which, however, produced no result on the brave defenders. A second trumpeter was sent, who was met with the defiant answer that they would all fight

whilst there was a man left. Mrs. Wyndham, who was a most intrepid woman, laying her hand on her bosom, said to the messenger, "Tell your masters that the breasts which gave suck to Prince Charles shall never be at their mercy; we will hold the town to the last!" The Roundhead Generals saw that the Governor was obstinate, and again prepared to storm. Before commencing, however, "lest the innocent should suffer with the guilty," Fairfax generously sent a trumpeter to announce that all women and children might come out safely, and allowed them two hours' grace. For this unexpected gallantry and tenderness Col. Wyndham returned his best thanks, and Fairfax's permission was taken advantage of by about 800 souls, including Mrs. Wyndham, Lady Stawell,, Lady Hawley, Mrs. Warre, &c.

At five o'clock the storming began with the great guns and the mortar pieces taken from the King at Naseby, which, playing on the town with fireballs and hot iron, and aided by a shower of red hot "hoggets" from the musketeers, fired it in three places. The wind being strong the fire quickly increased, so that it was soon burning in twenty places, especially in the neighbourhood of the Cornhill, St. Mary-street, and High-street. From the fact that the tradesmen themselves set fire to several houses in Silver-street, Friarn-street and Pig's Cross, "to be rid of the garrison," it may naturally be understood that they were not very warm-hearted partisans, and probably but for the ardour of Col. Wyndham, "one too guilty of the misery of the place," and the presence of the thousand men left at Bridgwater by Goring, after his disaster at Langport, "they would have thrown in their lot with the Parliamentarians at the earliest stage.

The flames and smoke from the burning houses, the imprecations of the soldiers, and the roar of musketry and cannon, wrought such a terror on the inhabitants that they began to wish they were safe with their wives. At length Tom Elliott, one of the King's pages, described as "he that ran away with the Great Seal," came to the besiegers to ask for a treaty or terms. To this the General fiercely made reply that as the Governor had brought such misery on himself in declining previous offers he would not listen to him, but if he would submit he would be met with mercy. Elliott came back in a few minutes with the following propositions:—

1 That the Governor and officers should march away with their horses and pistols, and the common soldiers with their arms, and

have a safe convoy to Exeter.

2. That the inhabitants of the town might either stay, or have liberty to go with them..

3. — That the like liberty should be given to the clergy.

To this Sir Thomas Fairfax produced his terms

1. That all should have quarter for their lives.

2. That the soldiers should march out without being stripped of their clothes.

3. That the townsmen should enjoy their habitations without- plunder.

4. That the gentlemen and others should be left to the disposal of the Parliament.

5. That six hostages should be sent out to him.\*\*

With this answer Elliot returned, and soon came back again, accompanied by Sir John Heale, with a reply that the Governor and the gentlemen could not agree to the terms. Fairfax at once drew off, as if all conference were at an end, and gave orders to the soldiers to stand to their duty. Alarmed at this, Elliot went and begged him to delay a little till he again saw the Governor, offering at the same time to leave Sir John Heale as hostage. Fairfax expressed his approval, and Elliot returned to the Governor. As he passed, the soldiers cried out to him that if any within took off a slate or endeavoured to stop the fires in any way the cessation should be void, and they would fall on and take all advantage.

Ultimately Wyndham gave way, being probably driven to- do so by the townsmen. It is easy to understand the passionate demands of the inhabitants for a cessation of hostilities. Drawn into a conflict in which they had everything to lose and. nothing to gain, they saw as the result their household goods and property, the fruits of their industry and toil, fast becoming a prey to the flames, which they dared not attempt to quench lest a worse fate befel them; surrounded by the dead and dying, whose groans and cries added to the misery of that eventful evening, it is no wonder they cried, "Mercy, mercy, for the Lord's sake!"

At nine o'clock Elliot came with the message that the garrison would surrender, on the terms mentioned by the General. The following gentlemen were sent as hostages:— Sir John Heale, Sir Hugh Wyndham † (son of the governor), Major Sydenham, Mr. Speke, Mr. Waldron, and Mr. Warre, and in ex-

change the victors sent other hostages into the town.

The next morning (Wednesday), the 23rd July, the garrison formally surrendered, and the conquerors entered. It is related, to the credit of the soldiers, that they refrained from all violence and injury, and the terms of surrender were honestly kept. An incident occurred in the day which caused great alarm. The General and his officers were standing in the town, when a stack of about 1,000 muskets exploded close to them, but fortunately all escaped.

The prisoners numbered 1,500 soldiers, besides 120 officers, and a great number of gentlemen of note, and what the chronicler describes as "a goodly store of fat priests," with two Bishops amongst them. 800 horses fell into the hands of the victors, 5,000 stand of arms, 44 cannon, including the "Lord Generals warming piece," and the twisted piece familiarly known as "Prince Rupert's pocket pistol," 10 loads of ammunition, 44 barrels of gunpowder, 400 cwt. of match, victuals for 2,000 soldiers for two months, all the baggage which Lord Goring left behind, a quantity of good booty belonging to Col. Wyndham and other gentlemen, stored for safety. †† Further there were secured provisions for several months, with 600 oxen, and £100,000 worth of plate, jewels and money. The reason for so much treasure being found in the town was that the Cavalier gentry had, from various adjacent parts, sent their valuables to Bridgwater for safety, Col. Wyndham having assured them, as well as the King, that the place could never be taken. The colours and standards were principally burned.

Col. Wyndham that night took up his quarters at Westonzoyland, having only the horse that carried him, and many others were in similar and even worse plight, having only the clothes they wore. 2,200 soldiers marched off under convoy also to Weston, others were sent to London, and numbers enlisted in the Parliamentary army and went to Ireland.

The Commissioners with the army next collected the many good things dispersed through the town, "all faire spoil," sold a part of them in the market place on the 25th, and from the proceeds distributed amongst the soldiers three shillings per man. The remainder was disposed of in London, giving five shillings each to the men.

The property of the lord of the manor, Mr. Harvey, suffered greatly during the two years the Royalists had held the town; his estate had been sequestered, without any allowance

to his wife and children, and he had now not a bed left to lie upon. He afterwards made an effort to obtain compensation for his many losses, which amounted to a total of £4000; it is not known with what success.

On the 22nd, at midnight, just after the conclusion of the treaty, Sir Thomas Fairfax sent a report of his success to Parliament, and we subjoin a copy, with all its typographical and other errors —

*To the Honorable William Lenthall, Esq.,  
Speaker of the House of Commons.*

*Mr. Speaker, — I Dispatched hence Letters yesterday to the Committee of both Kingdoms, which gave some accompt of God's Blessing upon our endeavours, in the storm of Bridgewater. On Monday morning last, we gained that part of the Town which lyes on this side of the River, and therein above 600 prisoners, divers officers of quality and two peece of Ordnance. The Enemy fired that part of the Town wherein we were immediately after our entrance, which continuing all that day, and the next night, burned down all the houses, except two or three. Yesterday, perceiving an obstinate resolution in the Enemy not to yield the Town, I was forced to use those extremitities for the Reducing of it, which brought them immediately to a Parley, and in short to yield the Town, upon no other terms then bare quarter: We entered the town this day, thirty-eight peece of Ordnance, above one thousand prisoners, and amongst them divers persons of great quality, as you will perceive by the List enclosed. I have not much time to spend here, and therefore did immediately dispose the Command of it for the present, to Col. Birche, as Govenour, wherein I doubt not of your Approbation: and I believe the Commissioners of the army will offer something further concerning him, for the future settlement of the place; He is a Gentleman of known worth and integrity, and his Regiment at present with Major-General Massey, and I believe with God's blessing, give you a good account of it: There was found in the Town a Commission from Prince Charles to one Philips a Gentleman of this County, to raise a Regiment of clubmen (which I have sent by Mr. Peters). I am very desirous to give some encouragement to the Army for their many services, and especially for their honest and sober demeanour this day towards the Prisoners and Town, in refraining that violence and injury which hath oftentimes brought dishonour upon most of the Armies in this Kingdom, which may be an encouragement to them in the like for the future. I make no doubt but you will be well satisfied in what I shall do, but I assure you it shall be with as little burthen to the State as may be. I beseech you, Sir, take into your consideration the*

*necessities of the Army for a speedy supply of money, cloathes, and other provisions wherewith the Bearer Master Peters will more particularly acquaint you ; who can likewise informe you more largely in all particulars of this late Action than I can now write. I remain,*

*Your most Humble Servant,*

**THO. FAIRAX.**

*July 23, 1645. Eight at night.*

A List of the Prisoners and Persons taken at the Storming of Bridgwater by Sir Tho. Fairfax.

Hostages for the delivering up the Town.

Sir John Heal,  
Sir Hugh Windham  
Master Waldron  
Master War  
Master Speake  
Major Sydenham

Thos. Elliot, *Agent.*

*Coll. Winham, Governor*

*Coll. Robert Phillips*

*Coll. Dyer, of Horse*

*Coll. Chester*

*Lieut.-Coll. Cooper*

*Lieut.-Coll. Overton*

*Lieut.-Coll. Pitman*

*Lieut.-Coll. Miller*

*Lieut.-Coll. Moon.*

*Major Sydenham*

*Major Buskin*

*Captains*

*Capt. Atkin, Read, Winter, Bessey, Foulks, Cularu, Tilsdey, Clarke, Boyse, Nash, Vine, Richard Brag, Clapton, John Brag, Harvey.*

*For Horse. Rawley, Wyatt, Littleton, Roberts, Hilliard, Byham,\*\*\* Jervoy, Fry, Pryan, Philips, Consull, Pitman, Dyamond.*

*Lieutenants Stoughton, Bond, Hamond, Caymohd, Howell, Martyn, Johnson, Greenwood, Kelsey, Cowley, Burkin, Barnet, Lane, Powell, Johnson, Hanham.*

*Cornets White, Clarke, Pet, Haynes, Read, Clack.*

*Ensigns Bissey, Allen, Morgan, Wake, Parfit, Tuenie, Tonke, .Sheare, Sleaford, Leyton, Bincham, Griffin, Stamp, Joanes, Bettison, Edwards, Huggen, Belchar, Hutlen, Willis. Higligate.*

*Quatermasters Yokney, Bell, Marlow, Tellow, Colling-bridge, Esmond Gasse.*

*Commissaries Holman, Muston senior, Muston junior, Calmet, Warman. — Mordant,*

*Spring. Engineer and his man.*

This letter was afterwards printed in pamphlet form (4to London, July 28, 1645), one or two copies of which are still extant.

The House of Commons voted the messenger £20, and ordered, all ministers in the several Churches throughout the city of London on the next Lord's Day to return hearty thanks to God for the decisive victory thus gained by the Parliamentary troops. On Monday, July 25th, two other letters arrived in London — one from Major Gen. Massey, and the other from Mr. Sec. Lushworth. On the following day Mr. Hugh Peters, the General's messenger, brought further intelligence, and prepared to give a personal narrative from his own observations. When it was known he was at the door he was bidden to enter, and the House heard what he had to say. He also produced a number of papers, showing the plans laid by the King's friends to ensnare the Clubmen. He also told of the finding of a commission (which he produced) from Prince Charles, dated the previous January, giving a Mr. Phillips authority to raise a regiment of horse and dragoons, and a regiment of foot. Letters of thanks were sent to the General and his officers, and Mr. Peters, for his services, was ordered to be paid a reward. of £100.

It will be noticed that Fairfax, in his letter, had expressed a wish that some encouragement should be given his soldiers for their honest and sober demeanour towards the prisoners and the town, and for restraining themselves from the violence which had before been usual in similar cases. Conformably to this wish, in addition to a sum of £3,000 which had left London on the 24th to pay the men, £5,000 more was raised and sent him to be disposed of entirely as he should think fit.

" *So fell Bridgwater,*" remarks an old chronicler, " *that strong, well-manned, well-provisioned town, which was expected to cost many, many gallant lives and a siege of many months.*" The town, however, was left in a pitiable condition. Among the borough documents there is preserved an interesting letter from General Fairfax, dated December 2, 1647, asking that taxes, &c., should be made as light as possible for Bridgwater, on account of its great losses by fire during the last siege, " *almost one-third part thereof being burnt down to the ground.*"

Meanwhile the army of Fairfax marched off, and rested at Martock on the following Sunday. Here there was a public thanksgiving for the success which had crowned their efforts at Bridgwater. The more stress was

laid upon the victory, inasmuch as Bridgwater was the last Loyalist stronghold of any consequence in the West of England, and gave the Parliament a chain of garrisons from the Bristol to the English Channel, and cutting off all communication between the Loyalist forces in the West and the rest of England.

Portions of the wide moat frequently referred to above, existed for a great number of years, but its complete course cannot now be traced, being filled up and built over, and no part now remains. Moat-lane, recently changed to Albert-street, indicates its direction in the western part of the town.

About a fortnight previous to the above events, the siege of Taunton was raised. The town had been gallantly held by Robert Blake, afterwards the celebrated admiral, for several months against the King's troops, under Col. Wyndham, the governor of Bridgwater, who had been deputed to reduce the town. He made several sallies from Bridgwater, but without effect. One incident occurring just previously to the siege of Bridgwater, may be recorded here. Sir Francis Bodington, a brave but brutal soldier, at the head of a marauding party from Bridgwater Castle, made himself conspicuous by outrages. One day he met a local clergyman on the road between Bridgwater and Taunton, to whom he shouted in his rude voice, "Who art thou for, Priest?". The clergyman answered mildly, "For God and his Gospel." Thereupon Dodington drew a pistol and shot him through the heart.

At the close of 1645 an order was received in the town for the dismantlement of the castle, which caused much indignation. Petitions were prepared and forwarded to the two Houses of Parliament, praying that the order might not be carried into effect. The House of Lords passed over their petition to the Lower Chamber, and in the House of Commons on March 2nd, 1646, it was "Resolved that this House Do adhere to the former order, for the dis-garrisoning, slighting, and dismantling the works of Bridgwater."



\* Clarendon, vol. iv., p. 639

\*\* *Weekly Intelligencer*, July 29th, 1645.

† In the restoration of St. Decuman's Church in 1886, there was found a large slab, bearing (among others) the following inscription:— "Here lyeth the body of Sir Hugh Wyndham, of Kinsford, Knt., who deceased the 20th day of July, 1671, in the 48th year of his age."

" Here lies beneath this rugged stone,  
One more his prince's than his own;  
And in his martered father's warrs.  
Lost fortune, blood—gained naught but scarrs ;  
And for his sufferings as reward,  
Had neather countenance or regard ;  
And earth affording noe rele.fe,  
Is gone to heaven to ease his greefe."

†† In a book of pamphlets in the British Museum, presented by George III., is a paper entitled "III. *Greate Victories*," containing the folio wing list of the spoil taken at the storming of Bridgwater:— " *The Lord and Governor*, 5. knights, 6 colonels, 15 lieut.-colonels and sergeant-majors, 100 officers, the Dean of Wells, 40 gentlemen of note, 1000 prisoners, 200 malignant priests, 40 pieces of ordnance, 800 horses, 5000 arms, 200 barrels of gunpowder, many ladies of mention, and all Goring's carriages and baggage money, plate, jewels and other treasure valued worth £100,000." In the same book there are other pamphlets bearing on the struggle, especially one entitled "A Fuller Relation from Bridgwater since the last fight; wherein is declared the fierce and terrible storming of the town by firing it in 3 several places, and the necessity thereof." Most of the pamphlets which were published at the time agree with regard to details, but one of them declares it was "the wicked and malicious Irish in the Castle" who were to be blamed for the terrible burnings which occurred.

\*\*\* The following is taken from an old newspaper, *Mercurius Aulieus*, published at the time, a copy of which is now in the British Museum:— "Now as this groundless rebellion usually drives them into horrible contradictions, so they (the Parliamentarians) generally rail at us for doing anything which they themselves practice; for it is discreditable what vain pamphlets have been spent in railing at such who would have had Brown to deliver Abingdon to his Majesty, though they have been since busy to bribe overdivers of his Majesty's garrisons; more particularly the town of Bridgwater, in Somerset, was fairly bid for this last week, for Col. Blake, the rebel governor of Taunton Castle, offered £1,000 to Capt. Byham, of the garrison of Bridgwater, to betray that town to them. The captain, a courageous mid hearty Royalist, immediately acquainted Col. Wyndham, the governor, who bid him continue the treaty and get what he could from Blake. The articles were agreed upon that Blake and his fellow rebels should march towards Bridgwater on Sunday night last, February 2nd; the captain being then on guard was to let down the drawbridge and unlock the turnpike to let them in at four o'clock in the morning, for which

The Siege of Bridgwater  
Chapter IX of Sydney Gardner Jarman. *History of Bridgwater*, 1889

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*they were to give him £100, whereof he received £50. The rebels came accordingly, and the captains kept punctual word with them, for just at that hour the rebels, 1,000 horse and foot, came near the town. Capt. Byham let down the bridge and unlocked the turnpike, insomuch Capt. Wenyys, a Scot, who led on the rebels, came upon the bridge and cried " Follow me, all our own," but at that instant Capt. Byham gave fire to a piece of ordnance (charged with case shot) which despatched that eager Scot and many other dead in the place, there were 50 killed and had the garrison been as ready to follow the commander, few of those rebels had retreated back to Taunton. As to Capt. Byham he is to take advice with some able lawyers to recover the rest of his £1,000, for that he kept his promise both in letting down the bridge and unlocking the turnpike, but we hear the captain is fully satisfied, having already £50 in money and another 50 in rebels."*