LINCOLN IN 1644.[1]

By EDWARD PEACOCK, Esq., F.S.A.

From what we see and hear around us one would imagine that writing history was one of the easiest things imaginable. Every day there are lectures given about it, and every week history books are published. There are literary men among us who have so thoroughly mastered the art of writing about past times that, to use a simile of Cervantes, they toss their speculations out into the world by the dozen, like fritters. Very amusing this must be, we do not doubt, to the writers, and we have even met with readers who profess to admire this kind of work, but then such persons are only to be found among those who have none, or but the very slightest interest in past times. They read history as they do novels, and are much worse employed when engaged in the former than the latter occupation. There is probably no period of our annals that has had so much nonsense written about it as the era known as the Great Civil War. It has been the battle ground for more senseless controversies than we care to mention, or even think of, but there have been very few persons who have seriously set themselves to work to ascertain what did really happen, and what were the causes, near and remote, which produced that sad catastrophe. At present I can but deal with a very small fragment of it. A mere chip, indeed, and of this very little bit I cannot tell you much. I am limited by two causes. I do not know nearly all that persevering research might yet recover about it, and there will not be time to give, even in the most skeleton outline, an account of such facts as have come to my knowledge.

In the great war of the seventeenth century Lincoln-

[1] Read at the Annual Meeting at Lincoln, July 28th, 1880.

shire was remarkably fortunate; few battles or sieges took place within her limits. If we leave out of count Lincoln, there was no serious fighting except at Ancaster, Gainsburgh, and Winceby. Lincoln, however, suffered on more than one occasion, but even our capital was mercifully spared when we contrast her fate with that of Bristol, Gloucester, Leicester, and many other towns of less note.

A few dates not seemingly connected with this city must be mentioned that what follows may be intelligible. On the 4th of January, 1642, although no blood was spilt, took place the first great act in the civil war. On that day the King endeavoured to arrest the five leaders of the Parliamentary Opposition, Pim, Hampden, Haselrig, Holles, and Strode. The attempt was a failure. Six days afterwards the King left Whitehall, and the breach between himself and the Parliament was past remedy. There was now an immediate prospect of war. The Queen went to Holland to sell certain of the Crown jewels and her own personal ornaments. The money which these made was turned into munitions of war, and landed on the coast of Yorkshire. On the 23rd of April the King, accompanied by a large following of the cavalier gentry of Yorkshire, demanded to be admitted within the fortifications of Hull, and was refused entrance by Sir John Hotham, the governor. On the 22nd of August the Royal Standard was raised at Nottingham, and two months later the battle of Edgehill, or Kineton Heath, was fought on the borders of Warwickshire, and ere evening closed Charles's General, the Earl of Lindsey, the noblest of our Lincolnshire cavaliers, Sir Edward Verney, the Royal Standard bearer, and Lord Saint John were cold in death, or helplessly dying of their wounds.

It is certain that until blood had really been spilt Lincolnshire men never comprehended the seriousness of the issues that were before them. They did not realize that they were about to be plunged into all the horrors of civil war. The slaughter at Edge Hill brought all men face to face with this. Lincolnshire folk have never been in their nature warlike. They have preferred building churches and abbeys, draining fens, and reclaiming heaths, to the excitements which come of bloodshed,

but they have, on every occasion, shewn themselves to be sufficiently brave when battle has become a necessity. This was evident in our last great civil strife, for no sooner was it clear to them that the cause must be settled by the sword, than Lincolnshire joined itself with Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Essex, and Huntingdonshire, in a Puritan league, under the name of the seven associated counties. The object of this Eastern Association was to keep the peace within its own limits, and to assist the Parliament in carrying on the war in the more Royalist part of the country.

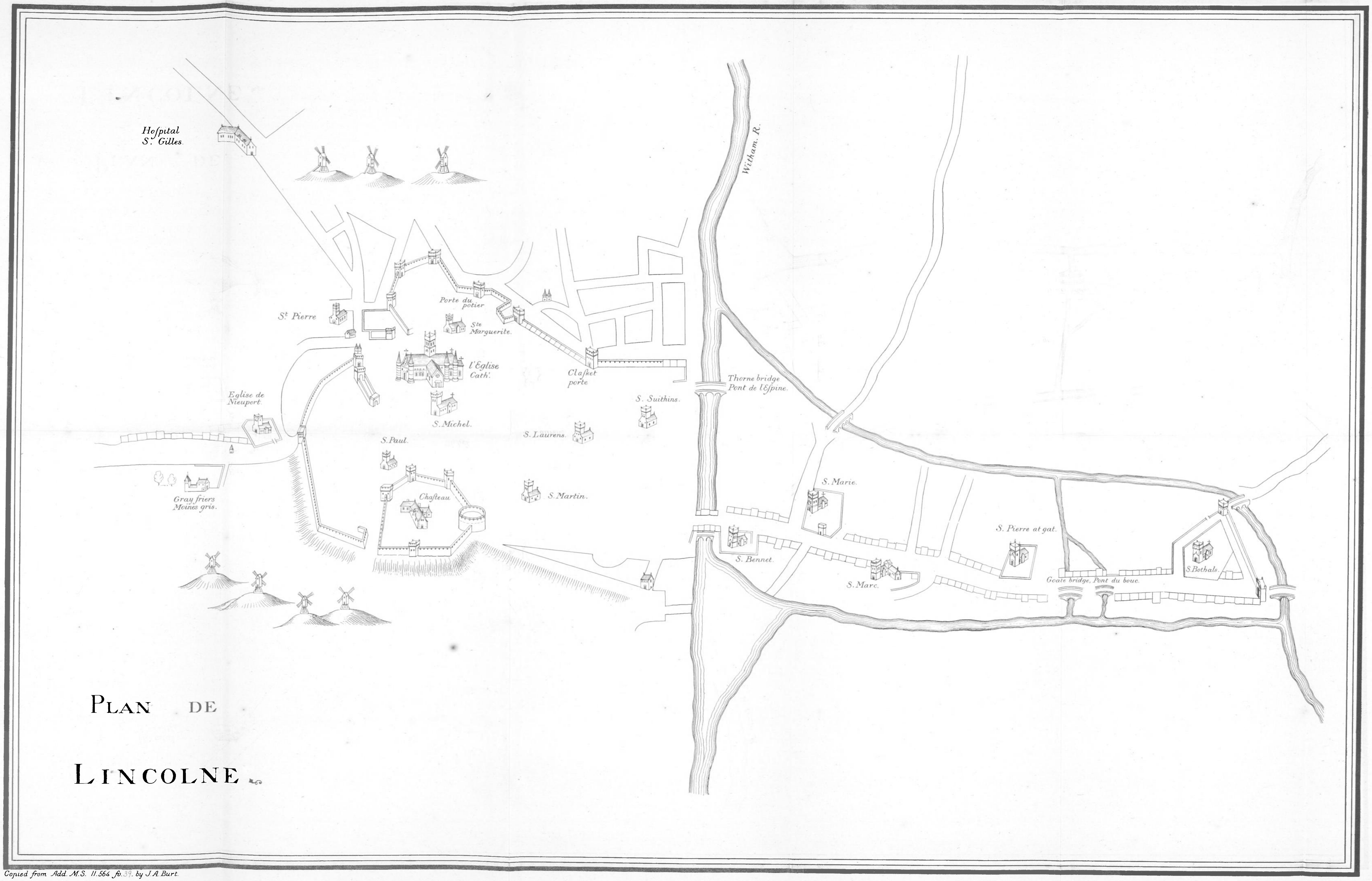
Lincolnshire, it must be borne in mind, was a distinctly Puritan shire. Several of the nobility and higher gentry, as, for instance, the Berties, Monsons, Heneages, Pelhams, Scropes, and Dalysons, were Royalists, and suffered most heroically in the King's cause, but many of the noble houses, nearly all the lesser gentry, and the midde class, sympathised ardently with the Parliament. We are fortunate in having had preserved for us a list which, although far from perfect as regards people of small note, contains the names of nearly all our Puritan gentry. It is a catalogue of the persons indicted at Grantham Sessions, before Peregrine Bertie and Sir John Brooks, for high treason. This list was printed on the 10th of May, 1643.[1] It is too long to read in full, but a few well known names must be mentioned. Among peers we have the Earl of Lincoln and Lord Willoughby of Parham, afterwards follow Sir Thomas Trollope of Caswick, Baronet, the ancestor of Lord Kesteven, Sir John Brownlow of Belton; Sir Edward Ayscough of South Kelsey, and members of the families of Saville, Massingberd, Rosseter, Welby, Fines, Witchcott, Disney, Coney, and Skipwith. In fact, there is scarcely one of our old Lincolnshire houses that is not represented in this catalogue.

Notwithstanding the overwhelming preponderance of political Puritanism in this county, it must not be supposed that the Parliamentarian cause was unresisted here. The King had visited Lincoln in July, 1642, and

[1] Printed at the end of a quarto tract, entitled *a Declaration of the Commons Assembled in Parliament, upon two letters by Sir John Brooks.* London: Edw. Husbands, 1643.

seems to have made a most favourable impression, not only on those with whom he was in political sympathy, but also on all persons of every class who came in contact with him. It had probably some effect on Lord Willoughby of Parham, the Lord Lieutenant of Lincolnshire, and the person intrusted by the Parliament with the duty of levying horse and foot for the protection of the shire. He served his masters faithfully, but we never find in his conduct any of that personal violence which disgraced some of those who fought on the same side. Lincoln, as the capital of the county, and the chief fortress also, was the place of all others he was most bound to defend; this he did to the best of his ability. The old fortifications were restored, and the inside of the city north of the river, rendered capable of defence. In those days it was completely walled round, except on the river margin and on the western side from the castle to the river. A wall must, I think, have existed here in the middle ages, but, from the careful plan made about this time, it seems to have been swept away and replaced by an earthen rampart. When this earthwork was raised I have no means of knowing. It seems not improbable, however, that it was cast up by Lord Willoughby, in the early days of the wars.

In the month of July, 1643, Lincoln was still in the hands of the Parliamentarians. There does not appear to have been a military commander. Affairs seem to have been managed by the committee for the county appointed by the Parliament. Though no engagement worthy of the name of a battle took place, skirmishing was going on in various parts of the north of Lincolnshire. Brocklesby and Swinhope were plundered by guerillas, and at this period much of the wanton damage from which our churches suffered was inflicted. Gainsburgh was at this time a Royalist garrison, under Lord Kingston. The time was come for him to act on the offensive. He, therefore, made arrangements with the Royalist garrison at Newark for a combined attack, and their united forces, amounting to 3,000 men, were told off for this duty. The place was very strong, and it did not seem possible to take it by assault, so treachery was determined upon.



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Vicars, the Puritan historian, gives so graphic an account of what followed that I shall quote his words. They are interesting, not only as a contemporary narrative, but as a specimen of the literary style of the time :—

"First, they within the town were to seiz upon the Parliament's committee there, then upon the magazines and on all the Parliament's forces within the town, those 3,000 cavaliers being secretly and suddenly let in by night. . . And as proeme and preamble to the ensuing tragedie or treacherie, Serjeant Major Purfrey had let into the town, at a back gate, about sixty bloodie cavaliers, all of them disguised in countrie marketmen's habits, who were all hid and sheltred (as it was credibly enformed) in the Deane's house in Lincolne. Now Major Purfrey had no sooner parted from them, having laid these hell hounds safe, as he thought, in their kennels, and going about to fit his other agents and instruments for the completing of this desperate designe, but sodainly he and his brother were seized on by the Committee, who at that very instant . . . had received intelligence from the Major of Hull . . . that a treacherie was also intended against Lincoln by the Purfreyes, yet all the while, till this information came, the Committee knew nothing of the plot, nor of the 60 cavaliers already let into the town . . . yet [they] set good guards about the town and at the gates especially, and so went to bed as at other times, only, I say, relying under God on the care and diligence of their especiall guard. . . But just about 12 of the clock at night, those 60 desperate cavaliers burst out of their dens . . . and marched immediately toward the magazines . . . but instantly upon their coming it pleased the Lord that by the discharge of one piece of cannon by a plain mean fellow of the town, who never discharged a piece before in his life, ten of them were sodainly killed. The centinells also perceiving their approch gave fire at them & thereupon fired two peices of ordnance more upon them and slew many of them and the rest retreated. The town also hereupon took the alarm, and being risen and up in armes, put all the rest of those disguised marketmen of treacherie and hucksters and venters of villany to the sword except

Captain Dallison, Serjeant-Major Williamson, and some others of quality whom they detained prisoners."[1]

It would be tedious to quote Vicar's involved narrative at greater length. The result was that the 3,000 Newark and Gainsburgh cavaliers, seeing the plot discovered, made a hasty retreat, and the Parliamentarian Committee were for a time left in the quiet possession of Lincoln. Shortly after this, however, Lincoln fell into the hands of the Royalists. How this happened I know not. The ordinary printed authorities give no information, and I have been able to learn nothing from manuscript sources. It is probable that the Parliamentarians found it necessary to gather their forces together at fewer centres as the war went on, and that Lincoln was vacated by them, and that the cavaliers took possession of it without the effusion of blood.

As time went on, the Parliament became more and more potent in the Eastern Shires. In the latter end of April, 1644, the Earl of Manchester was at Huntingdon. From thence he marched to Oundle, Stamford, and Grantham, dispersing the small bodies of cavaliers he met with on his way. Early in May he arrived before Lincoln, and encamped on the brow of the hill near Canwick. The lower part of the city beyond the river had been fenced by fortifications of a temporary nature, and was made "very strong." Manchester at once sent a trumpet demanding the surrender of the place, but received what he thought an uncivil answer, taunting him with a reverse which the Parliamentarians had received before Newark a few days before. On the following day a party of horse was sent in the direction of Gainsburgh, who took some prisoners, and reported that a strong body of some five or six thousand men, under the command of Lord Going, were coming to the relief of Lincoln. On receiving this information, the Earl of Manchester dispatched 2,000 horse, under the command of Oliver Cromwell, who was at that period his lieutenant-general, to meet the enemy, and hinder them from coming near Lincoln.

[1] John Vicars, *Jehovah-Jerah. God in the Mount or Englands Parliamentarie Chronicle*, London. 4to. 1644, p. 372.

On the following day the lower part of the city was attacked, and taken with little loss. This skirmish must have been a very slight affair, for Vicars, the Parliamentarian chronicler, says that the low-town was taken "without the losse of any on our side."[1] The Royalists, on their retreat, endeavoured to set fire to the low-town, but were happily unsuccessful. On Monday, May 6th, the Castle was stormed, further delay would have been advantageous, but Manchester was in dread of Goring's horse, which Cromwell was still watching. On the Saturday before there had been a heavy fall of rain, which made the sides of the hill very slippery, and was a great disadvantage to the besiegers. The attack began in the grey of the morning. The signal given was the letting off of six pieces of ordnance at once. It must, I imagine, have taken place on the south-western side. "Our foot," says an anonymous letter writer, who was evidently present, "never left running till they came to the top of the hill, which would have been enough to tire a horse." When they arrived at the Castle walls the besiegers set up their scaling ladders, many of which proved too short, for the walls were very high —as high as London walls — Vicars says[2]—some, however, were long enough, and the Parliamentarians swarmed in under a fire, not only of shot, but also of "mighty stones," cast down upon them from the Castle walls. Over the walls, however, they got, and, when once in, the danger was really over. The garrison, which seems to have been composed, not of trained soldiers, but of peasantry gathered from the neighbourhood, and probably, in many cases, pressed into the service, at once fled, begging for quarter, and saying "they were poor array men." About fifty of these were put to the sword, twenty being killed in the yard of the Castle. Only eight men were killed of the besieging force; most of these met their deaths from the stones thrown down from the ramparts.

A list of the prisoners taken on this occasion was sent to London, and has been preserved for us in a contem-

[1] John Vicars, *God's Arke overtopping the world's waves*. London. 4to., 1646, p. 219.
[2] *Ibid.* 221.

porary pamphlet.[1] Nearly all the persons who can be identified were Lincolnshire, Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire gentry. Among the more prominent names are those of Sir Frances Fane, the governor, Sir Charles Dalyson, Colonel and Captain Baude of Somerby near Grantham, Captain Quadring, Ensign Ralph Artington of Milnthorpe, near Leeds, Sergeant William Clerk of Ashby, my own ancestor Captain Richard Woodruffe of Ranskill, and two members of the Skipwith family. About 700 common soldiers were taken prisoners; nearly all of them consented to enter the service of the Parliament. All the pillage of the upper city was given to the victorious army.

It was on this melancholy occasion that the Minster was so wantonly injured. Nearly all the stained glass, with which every window was rich, was broken, the tombs of the dead defaced, and every monumental brass within the building carried away. Popular rumour and the writers of partizan history who represent gossip when at its worst have constantly affirmed that these atrocities were due to Oliver Cromwell.—Cromwell has indeed, to bear the blame not only of his own acts, but of every deed of destruction that has been perpetrated by reformers, Puritans, churchwardens, and architects during the last three centuries. In the popular mythologic history he has become the arch destroyer, just as in France, West Germany, North Italy, and the Rhine country Karl the Great is looked upon as the great constructor. If you make enquiries about an old building anywhere between Helvoet Sluys and Florence you are sure to be told that it was founded by Karl, and so in England every old ruin is thought to have been reduced to its present state by the order of the great Protector. Perhaps, as Mr. Matthew Arnold is reported to have said about a very different matter, "On the breast of the huge Mississippi of falsehood called history, a foam bell more or less is of no consequence." Certainly it is of no matter to the dead, but if history is to be known at all, it is well for us that it should be history of the right sort, truth not falsehood, and in this case it is capable of demonstration that Oliver had no more to do with the miserable

[1] *A true Relation of the taking of the Citty, Minster and Castle of Lincolne.* London. 4to, 1644, p. 4.

destruction we so much lament than has the present dean and chapter. The person on whom the responsibility rests is the Earl of Manchester.

From this time forward Lincoln remained for some years in the hands of the Parliamentarian authorities. Lincolnshire men were fighting bravely on both sides. Nathaniel Fiennes of Brumby Wood Hall, Samuel Sheffield of Croxby, and Edward Rosseter of Somerby, near Brigg, each commanded a troop of Lincolnshire Horse for the Parliament at the battle of Naseby, and Lord Bellasyse of Worlaby, Sir George Heneage, and more than one member of the house of Bertie served their royal master while he had armies in the field.

After the autumn of 1645 the land for some time had peace, the revolution was slowly making its way by intrigues in Parliament and by quarrels between the Parliament, the army, and the city of London, and lastly, between the two great factions in the army. At length, in the summer of 1648 it began to be whispered that a wonderful and horrible thing was about to happen, that the king, now a prisoner, was to be tried for his life; there were rumours, too, afloat that it might even be possible that he would be put to death without trial. This latter course, which would have been a crime with many precedents for it, never seems to have seriously occurred to any, even of the most extreme of the Anti-Monarchist leaders. There is authority for stating that Thomas Harrison and others of the Regicides viewed it with horror. The idea that a king should be murdered or tried for his life filled men's minds with terror unspeakable. The world had had, it is true, many examples of the murder of kings, but no body of men had ever ventured to put "The Lord's anointed" upon his trial.

We, with more than two hundred years of later experience, can but faintly picture to ourselves what the effect was when the news was first told in whispers. All England was once more wrapped in the flames of war. A great part of the fleet revolted, put their Admiral (Thomas Rainborowe) on shore, and declared for the King.[1] In Yorkshire, Lancashire, Northamptonshire, Essex, Wales,

[1] *Archaeologia*, xlvi, p. 36.

and Kent, the cavaliers flew to arms, and they were joined by many of the Presbyterian party who had aforetime fought on the side of the Parliament. Had the Royalists at this juncture possessed a competent leader, it is not impossible that the whole future course of history might have been very widely different. Pontefract Castle, the key of the north as it was termed, had fallen into the hands of the Royalists by the strategy of Colonel John Morris, a Yorkshire gentleman, of Emshall, near Doncaster. The desperate state of affairs in other parts of England rendered it impossible that prompt measures should be taken against Pontefract at once, and the consequence was that it became a centre for operations against South Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, and Nottinghamshire. Late in June, a party of horse, under the command of that dashing cavalry officer and devoted loyalist, Sir Philip Monckton of Cavill (the direct ancestor, I may remark, of the present Viscount Galway), sallied forth from Pontefract Castle, and made themselves masters of the Isle of Axholme. The gentry of the neighbourhood and their retainers flocked to join them from all sides—members of the families of Byron, Cholmeley, Saltmarsh, Dolman, Constable, Lassels, Langton, Savile, Wombwell, Morley, and Fitzrandal were there, among many others equally worthy of note, whose names sound as music to those who love to dwell upon the memories of that heroic time. They ferried over the Trent at Gainsburgh, and marched at once on Lincoln, where they took the Bishop's Palace, captured several prisoners, killed a certain Mr. Smith, a person who had rendered himself especially odious by having been employed in the sequestration of the Royalists' estates. I fear the Lincoln Puritans fared as badly at their hands as their Royalist neighbours had done from the other party in 1644—they were plundered without mercy, and we are told that all the prisoners in the castle, even those confined for murder and felony, were set at liberty.

After Lincoln had suffered all that they chose to inflict, the band retreated once more to Gainsburgh. Colonel Rosseter of Somerby, near Brigg, the Parliamentary officer who had commanded a body of the Lincolnshire horse at the memorable field of Naseby, was at this time Governor of Belvoir Castle. He, as soon as this outbreak came to

his ears, despatched messengers to Northampton, Leicester, Nottingham, and Derby, begging for all the cavalry that could be spared. On Sunday evening, July 2, he had about 550 men under his command. The next morning he set off for Gainsburgh; on his way he had the good fortune to fall in with some other troops coming from Lynn, under the command of Captain Taylor. Rosseter and his forces slept that night in Waddington Fields, near Lincoln. At three o'clock the next morning (Tuesday, July 4), they marched through Lincoln and there fell in with a man who had been a prisoner in the hands of the Royalists, who told them that they were now marching in the direction of Newark. This news caused Rosseter to change his plans. He cut across the country directly to the point at which he believed them to be. He reached a spot within a mile of Newark that night, where he was informed that the Cavaliers had encamped in Bingham Field. The next morning the Parliamentary leader came up with them among some beans in the parish of Willoughby. He at once gave battle. The Cavaliers' war cry was *Jesus*, that of the Puritans *Fairefax*. Neither party seem to have had any infantry. It was a hand to hand fight on horseback. So intense and personal was the hate that inspired the combatants, that all order was lost, and for a time, Royalist and Puritan were blended in one fierce struggling mass. The victory, notwithstanding the courage and devotion of the Cavaliers, was naturally with the trained soldiers of the Parliament. About two hundred of those who were best mounted made their escape, the rest were left dead on the field or taken prisoners.[1]

Here my story must end. Lincoln and Lincolnshire were henceforth spared from the horrors of war. The Royalist movements of the summer and autumn of 1648 had no leading spirit to organise them, no common centre of action, they were therefore stamped out one by one by the forces of the Parliament, and did but hasten, if, indeed, they did not cause, the great tragedy which they were undertaken to avert.

[1] A list of some of the prisoners taken in the Battle of Willoughby is given in Rushworth's *Historical Collections* part iv, vol. II, p. 1183, but a more complete catalogue may be seen in a contemporary pamphlet entitled *An Impartial and True Relation of the Great Victory obtained . . . , [by] Col. Edw. Rosseter, Tuesday July 5, 1648.*—London, Edw. Griffin, 4to, 1648.