

THE POPISH PLOT

Daniel de la Place

to Henry Herbert (1654–1709), M.P. for Bewdley (1677–1679)

London, Thursday, 14 November 1678 *(OS)*

Your letter to Captain Herbert I delivered this morning, but when I desired him to send you an answer he said he did not know whether you deserved one, seeing you doubted of the necessity of your being in Parliament when all lies at stake—religion, King, and government; a greater necessity there can be never.

Cooper has no letter for you. Pray let Mrs. Magdalen know by these that I have been with Mrs. Snoden, who tells me that on Friday last she sent her the thread demanded by the shoemaker, who was then to send down some shoes.

Sir, I make it my business to pick up news for you in coffee-houses and among acquaintance, and to cull the true from the false, which is by far the harder task, for nothing comes abroad, though true, but under ten or twenty faces or disguises. People's spirits being heated give them not leave to keep measure; therefore I beg your pardon for a mistake or error in my last, where I named Mr. Foley instead of Mr. Powell; the story is true in itself, as you see in the *Gazette*, but the man mistaken.

The notes of Parliament you might have had, if I had orders for them; therefore I could write you but what I could gather here and there and my memory could bear; the notes not being everywhere, and being stopped two or three times this session. However, this I can say, that nothing material or considerable has escaped me. The news you will find on the other side, after I have subscribed myself, Sir, your most humble and obedient servant.

With the *Gazette* you will have enclosed a printed letter which came out today, and which I send you more upon another man's commendation than upon my own judgment.

Mr. Powell, mentioned in the *Gazette*, is thought to have been trepanned by three or four papists, who had promised him to procure him a pass from the Duke of York for a ship, for a sum of an £100, which, the morning that he was missing, he carried near Temple Bar to a cutler's house, who is a Papist. Several other persons are missing since the discovery of the plot, and two men have been found this week drowned in the Thames, not known yet, as I hear.

There lies at this present time in the Abbey Church, Westminster, exposed there to be seen by order of the Parliament, an unknown dead man found about Ratcliff without any visible wounds upon his body, unless his neck be broken. He seems to be a lusty man, between fifty and sixty years of age, and supposed by some to be a captain or master of a ship.

Tuesday in the House of Commons a committee is appointed to examine Atkins.¹

Ordered, that Justice Row do attend the House to give an account of the examination he has taken concerning a fire happened in the stables of Sir George Wakeman last Sunday was seven-night. Here you must know that several fires have been of late, and some persons apprehended on suspicion.

Voted, an address to the King that Sir William Godolphin² may be recalled to answer an accusation of high treason exhibited against him, for he is one of the plotters. And that the oaths of allegiance and supremacy be tendered to all men in the Inns of Court and Chancery.

¹ Samuel Atkins, Samuel Pepys' clerk, was arrested for the murder of Sir Edmund Godfrey, but later released.

² Sir William Godolphin (1634–1696), M.P. for Camelford (1665–1679) and English Ambassador to Spain (1671–1678). Charles recalled him from Madrid, but Godolphin converted to Catholicism and refused to return to England.

Wednesday was the fast. The Archbishop of Canterbury preached before the Lords, and Dr. Stillingfleet³ before the Commons. The sermons ordered to be printed.

Whereas I told you in my last that the Commons did not like the form of prayers composed for the fast, and by address desired another, and another prayer was made and printed. I should have added that that did not please neither, so that they voted another address on Sunday last, which produced that bare prayer I sent you with the book.

Thursday, 14 November. The Commons have ordered to have an account of all the justices in the several counties of England, and of all those that have been turned out these 7 years past.

Mr. Secretary reports that the King has sent his revoking letters for Sir William Godolphin, and that he has ordered commissions to be issued out. I suppose 'tis in pursuance of his proclamations against Papists.

Ordered an address to the King that the oaths of allegiance and supremacy be tendered to all the Queen's menial servants except Portuguese and the Duchesses of York.

An address to have some of Coleman's letters printed.

An address for a general pardon for Bedloe.

The debate for the Duke of York's removal from the King's presence and counsels adjourned to Monday.

They say that Atkins, Mr. Pepys' servant, is a cunning rogue that denies all things.

Rebecca Warner, ed. *Epistolary Curiosities, Series the First. Consisting of Unpublished Letters of the Seventeenth Century Illustrative of the Herbert Family* (Bath: Cruttwell, 1818):117–120. [modernized]

³ Edward Stillingfleet (1635–1699), Dean of Saint Paul's, widely regarded as the most able Anglican orator of his generation.