

H.M. TOWER OF LONDON

The Anniversary Address given by Major-General W. D. M. Raeburn, C.B., D.S.O., M.B.E., to the 49th Annual General Meeting of the Society, held in the Tower of London, 15th June, 1972.

MAY I first welcome you all to the Tower. I believe that your Society has met here once before and I am very happy that it should continue to do so as, I am sure, is the Master of the Armouries.

I have been asked to speak to you for half an hour or so on some aspect of the Tower. Clearly I am not qualified to speak on its architecture and, indeed, you had an address on this subject last year from Mr. Curnow. I must therefore devote myself to people and events. There is no time, however, to cover the span of our history from the completion of the White Tower in William II's reign to the present day, nor would it be fruitful. There were many uneventful years and there are lacunae in the records.

In its time the Tower has been a fortress, a palace and a prison. It was a fortress not only to defend London but also to overawe it, as was so clearly shown by the importance attached to its control at the start of the Civil Wars of the seventeenth century. As the eighteenth century progressed the role of fortress gradually declined or rather was converted into that of a military garrison. Such it remained until not long ago. Now, sadly enough, the only uniformed presence is that of the Guard, which changes daily. Despite Harrison Ainsworth, the Tower never suffered a direct attack—Sir Thomas Wyatt in 1553 never got further than Ludgate Hill. In 1381 it was, however, temporarily captured by default by Wat Tyler's mob, and the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Chancellor were dragged out and murdered on Tower Hill.

It has been said that strong kings used the Tower as a palace and weak ones as a fortress. This may or may not be true but it is a fact that it was the sovereign's chief residence until Tudor times. Henry VIII was, I suppose, the first monarch to spend more of his time elsewhere and, though Queen Mary I used it more and was married by proxy to Philip of Spain in St. John's Chapel, Elizabeth I would not live here since as princess she had been a prisoner in the Tower. The royal apartments south of the White Tower were demolished in the seventeenth century, chiefly in the time of the Commonwealth.

The Tower has housed the Regalia off and on since the reign of Henry III and permanently since Henry VIII, except for one interval during the Commonwealth when the greater part was dispersed, and another during the last war when the Crown Jewels were kept elsewhere. The Tower during its history has also housed the Royal Mint, the Royal Menagerie, the Royal Observatory, the State Records and the Courts of Justice; and it has also been an arsenal. This last use is perpetuated by, on the one hand, the Armouries, and on the other the London District Ordnance centred in the Brass Mount.

It is, however, as a state prison that the Tower is most famous and it is to this use that I shall devote the remainder of my talk, after a digression on the Command of the Tower. The Command of the Tower has, since 1078, been vested in the Constable under the direct control of the Sovereign, and to this day the Constable retains the right of direct access to Her Majesty. The present Constable, Field-Marshal Sir Richard Hull, is the 151st in a succession that contains many names famous in our history. Three Archbishops of Canterbury have held the post, namely Thomas Becket, Stephen Langton and Hubert Walter. The 91st Constable was John Holland, Duke of Exeter, who fought at Agincourt (1415) and is said to have introduced the rack into England. This was once known as "the Duke of Exeter's Daughter" and made, with "the Scavenger's Daughter", "the Scottish Maiden" and "the Iron Maiden of Nurnberg" a nice quartet of ladies. It seems rather unfair that these nasty things were made female but, when I read about the activities of some of our more ferocious ladies, I begin to wonder. The 111th Constable (1660), Sir John Robinson, had the unusual distinction of being Constable and Lieutenant of the Tower and Lord Mayor of London at the same time. The Duke of Wellington was Constable for twenty-six years (1826-52) and did much to rescue the Tower from desuetude. Among other things, he filled in the moat and established 10 p.m. as the time for the ceremonial locking of the gates.

The Constable's subordinate is the Lieutenant. There are records of only five Lieutenants in mediaeval times but the office has been filled continuously since Tudor days. From then until about the end of the eighteenth century the Lieutenant exercised the Command on behalf of the Constable and resided in what is now the Queen's House but was then called the Lieutenant's Lodgings. There have been some interesting Lieutenants. The 18th, Sir Thomas Brydges, was on Lady Jane Grey's scaffold; and the 21st, Sir Edward Warner, lost his post because Catherine Grey, the wife of Edward Seymour, Earl of

Hertford, conceived and bore a child in the Bell Tower while she was supposed to have no access to her husband. In 1615 Sir Gervase Helwys was hanged in irons for his complicity in the poisoning of Sir Thomas Overbury by the agents of Frances Howard, Countess of Essex, and of Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset. During the Civil Wars two Lord Mayors held the Lieutenancy.

It appears that at times during the eighteenth century, and increasingly in the nineteenth century, the actual command was exercised by the Deputy-Lieutenant or the Major. Certainly in 1746 the Deputy-Lieutenant was resident in the Lieutenant's Lodgings, where he was host to the Jacobite lords awaiting execution. Since 1874 the Command has fallen to the Resident Governors, of whom I am the 8th. I am the 2nd Governor to be also Keeper of the Jewel House.

I shall now return to the Tower's use as a prison, and shall start with three general propositions. Firstly, Tower prisoners were State prisoners, not common criminals, and were, I should say, almost without exception of noble or gentle blood or status. Secondly, there were no dungeons in the popular sense. Prisoners were kept in any available space in the towers or the residents' lodgings. The Bloody Tower and the Queen's House are well known as places of imprisonment for notable persons. Lady Jane Grey was held in the Gentleman Gaoler's lodgings on Tower Green, on the site now occupied by the Chief Warder's quarters. Lady Jane's husband and father-in-law were in the Beauchamp Tower under Mary I, and Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, was in the Develin or Devereux Tower under Elizabeth. The Jesuit, Gerard, was also imprisoned under Elizabeth, in the Salt Tower. In earlier times prisoners were held in the White Tower, from which Griffith ap Llwellyn in Henry II's reign fell to his death while trying to escape. The treatment of prisoners varied not only with their offence but with their pocket. Those who could pay seem on the whole to have been well fed. Those imprisoned for offences with religious implications seem to have been treated worst. Thirdly, torture has always been illegal under the Common Law. It was, however, undoubtedly used in the fifteenth, sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries under the royal prerogative. Torture was used in England to assist interrogation and not as a punishment, and it seems on the whole to have been used only on those already considered guilty in order to extract the names of accomplices. There was no formal torture chamber and the rack, "the Scavenger's Daughter" and the gauntlets were set up where most convenient.

The last part of my talk concerns those of royal blood imprisoned in the Tower. The first of these we can be reasonably certain was John Balliol, imprisoned by Edward I after the Battle of Dunbar in 1296 and forced to renounce the Scottish throne. He may be accounted lucky for William Wallace, not of royal blood, met a traitor's death a few years later for bearing arms against the English. If Robert Bruce, who was of royal blood, had been captured he would undoubtedly have met the same fate: three of his brothers did. Though Robert escaped, his son David II was imprisoned by Edward III for eleven years, not all in the Tower, after his defeat at Neville's Cross in 1346. The Scottish king had invaded England to take the pressure off his French allies, and in the next two hundred years Scotland was to pay a heavy price for the Auld Alliance in a series of defeats and frustrations that led through Homildon Hill and Flodden to Solway Moss in 1542.

As David Bruce's captivity was ending, Scotland's French ally, John II, called the Good (the Chivalrous would have been more appropriate), arrived at the Tower with his son Philip, both having been captured at Poitiers (1356). John remained for five years and it will be remembered that, after the payment of his ransom, he returned to captivity in England on a point of chivalrous punctilio and died there. His son Philip, called the Bold, became the first Valois Duke of Burgundy. From France's point of view it might have been better had he also died in England for in Charles VI's reign he, with Charles's brother, Louis of Orleans, originated the feud of the Burgundians and Armagnacs which so weakened France that she became an easy prey for Henry V of England. The opportunity was taken by Henry V, and the discontent in England aroused by the disasters in France after his premature death were among the causes of the Wars of the Roses and of Henry VI's murder.

Another royal prisoner was James I of Scotland, who was more or less kidnapped at sea in 1406, kept for a while in the Tower, and not released till 1423. With James I began the dynastic involvement of the rulers of England and Scotland, for James married Joan Beaufort, the grand-daughter of John of Gaunt and the great-aunt of Henry VII. This marriage was one of the causes that led to the union of the crowns of England and Scotland in 1603.

In 1415 the Battle of Agincourt brought to the Tower Charles, Duke of Orleans, the father of Louis XII, whose ransom was not paid until 1440. In the illuminated book of his poems given by Henry VII to

his bride, Elizabeth of York, is a representation of the poet's captivity in the White Tower.

Henry VI met his death in the Wakefield Tower in 1471 and his death is commemorated annually in that tower on 21st May by a short service during which lilies and roses are laid before the altar by the Provosts of Henry's two foundations of Eton and King's College, Cambridge. Nearby is the Bloody Tower where, as everyone knows, Edward V and his brother were placed in 1483 and were never seen again.

In Tudor times several descendants of Henry VII found themselves prisoners in the Tower, the chief being Princess Elizabeth who, as I have said, found herself in the Bell Tower after Wyatt's rebellion. The experience so affected her that when Queen she never came to the Tower. Henry VII's daughter Mary Tudor, the widow of Louis XII, was by her second marriage the grandmother of Lady Jane Grey, whose imprisonment and death I have already mentioned. Mary's sister, Catherine, secretly married the Protector's son, Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford, and was imprisoned by Elizabeth I. Catherine was here for seven years and died in 1568, shortly after her removal to another prison.

Margaret, Countess of Lennox, the daughter of James IV's widow, Margaret Tudor (Henry VII's other daughter) by her second husband Archibald, Earl of Angus (Bell-the-Cat's grandson), was imprisoned in the Tower on three occasions and an inscription on one of the stone fire-places in the Lieutenant's Lodgings commemorates her second imprisonment. Henry VIII had first put her in the Tower in 1537 for contemplating marriage with Anne Boleyn's uncle, Thomas Howard, Earl of Norfolk. Then in 1566 she returned under Elizabeth for arranging the marriage of her elder son Henry, Lord Darnley, to Mary, Queen of Scots. The last time was for marrying her younger son, Charles, to Bess of Hardwick's daughter, Elizabeth Cavendish. The Countess died in a house in Hackney in 1578. Her grand-daughter, Arabella Stuart, was heir to James I of England after his children. In 1610 Arabella secretly married her cousin, William Seymour, Catherine Grey's son, later Duke of Somerset. Both were imprisoned, he in St. Thomas's Tower and she at Vauxhall, whence she was sent north and on the way halted at East Barnet. Both escaped, she in male clothes and he dressed as a carter, but they failed to meet. William reached Ostend but Arabella's French ship was intercepted off Calais by H.M.S. Adventure. She was returned to captivity in the

Lieutenant's Lodgings, where she died insane in 1615.

The last royal prisoner was James, Duke of Monmouth, Charles II's natural son by Lucy Walter. The Duke was imprisoned in the Bell Tower before his execution on Tower Hill in 1685.

Charles I was never in the Tower but his two chief supporters, Sir Thomas Wentworth and Archbishop Laud, only left it for the scaffold. After the Restoration the regicides and other Commonwealth leaders were prisoners here. In 1716 and again in 1746-47 the Jacobite lords came here before their execution.

Thanks to television we tend today to regard the history of the Tower as mainly Tudor. Perhaps I have shown that it has played a greater and more tragic part in the history of the royal House of Stuart from the time of Robert II's successor to the abandonment of the Jacobite cause by Prince Charles Edward's brother, Henry, Cardinal York who, though maintaining his right to the throne of England and Scotland, realised that he would never be accepted. On his death the Stuart male line became extinct.

I shall close with some modern history. In both World Wars the Tower was a garrison and a prison. In the first war it housed several convicted German spies, who were shot in the old miniature range in the East Casemates where the Ancient Monuments Depot now stands. Among the more celebrated prisoners of that war was Roger Casement and we hold the delivery warrant of Prisoner No. so and so signed by the General Officer commanding the London District. For the Constable's benefit the warrant was annotated by the Governor, "Prisoner No. so-and-so is Sir Roger Casement". Casement was not executed in the Tower but at Pentonville. In the last war one German spy only was shot, in the miniature range, though several others were imprisoned in the Tower. The last prisoner of consequence was Rudolf Hess, who spent four nights in the Queen's House after being brought from Scotland. It looks very much as if the days of the Tower as a prison are now over. Historically this is a pity, though I am very glad not to have the responsibility of entertaining the sort of prisoner who, were it not so, might be committed to the Tower.