

few scenes of historic and literary interest. Yonder church, due north, in the middle distance, that seems to lead so unquiet and gloomy a life among the furnaces, — a true type of the Church militant, — had for its minister, many years ago, one Mr. Thomas Moss, who wrote, amid the smoke, a little poem known to every English reader, — “The Beggar’s Petition.” In an opposite direction there may be seen, when the sun shines, an old building, in which the conspirator Garnet, whose head wrought miracles on the straw amid which it was cast,* and several of the other Gunpowder Plot conspirators, secreted themselves for many days in a cavity in the wall. I have already referred to the scene of the old British battle, and of the assassination of St. Kenelm, both full in view; and to the literary recollections that linger around Hagley and the Leasowes, both full in view also. But the prospect is associated with an immensely more ancient history than that of the

*The miracle of the straw seems to have been considerably less remarkable than the belief in it. A young Jesuit-presumptive, attached to his reverend brother the “Martyr Garnet,” had possessed himself, by way of relic, of one of the bloody ears of straw, stained by contact with the gory head, and stored it up in a bottle. Looking at it shortly after, he saw through the glass, on one of the chaff sheathes, the miniature semblance of a human head surrounded by a glory, and called on several of his co-religionists to admire the miracle. It was, however, unsafe in those days for Jesuits to work miracles in England. Tidings of the prodigy got abroad; law proceedings were instituted at the instance of the Privy Council; and though straw, bottle and Jesuit, had prudently disappeared, witnesses were cited to give evidence in court regarding it; among the rest, a painter named Bowen. And the painter’s testimony was very amusing, and much to the point. He had seen the miniature head on the straw, he said; there could be no doubt of that; but then he had quite as little doubt that he could make as good, or even a better head, on an ear of straw, himself. And such was the miracle on the faith of which it was held that either Garnet was innocent of the Gunpowder Plot, or the Gunpowder Plot laudable in itself.