

The British Civil Wars: Choosing Sides

Source-Based Activities

Activity 2: Be careful what you wish for!

Background

When the Civil War broke out, Robert Pierrepont (the father of Henry Pierrepont, whose speech you read in Activity 1) tried not to take sides for as long as he could. Here Lucy Hutchinson, the wife of the Parliamentary governor of Nottingham, describes what happened to him when he finally chose a side.

Source 2: An extract from Lucy Hutchinson's memoirs, page 80

My Lord, professing himself to him rather desirous of peace and fully resolved not to act on either side, made a serious imprecation on himself in these words. 'When.' Said he, 'I take arms with the King against the Parliament, or with the Parliament against the King, let a canon-bullet divide me between them;' which God was pleased to bring to pass a few months after; for he, going in to Gainsborough and there taking arms for the King, was surprised by my Lord Willoughby and. After a handsome defence of himself, yielded, and was put prisoner onto a pinnace, and sent down the river to Hull, when my Lord Newcastle's army, marching along the shore shot at the pinnace, and being in danger the Earl of Kingston went up upon the decks to show himself and to prevail with them to forebear shooting; but as soon as he appeared, a canon bullet flew from the King's army and divided him in the middle.

Hutchinson, L (1973) *Memories of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson with the fragment of an autobiography of Mrs Hutchinson Edited with an introduction by James Sutherland*. London, Oxford University Press

Key words:

Pinnace: a small boat used to carry passengers and mail and to help larger ships by guiding them or bringing them supplies or messages.

Imprecation: Curse

Yielded: gave up/surrendered

Forebear: stop doing something

Read the extract from Lucy Hutchinson's memoirs above, and answer the following questions:

1. What did Robert Pierrepont say he hoped would happen to him if he fought against either the King or Parliament?
2. Which side did Robert Pierrepont choose?
3. What happened to him?

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