

## “Esquire Marsh.”

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If there is one man, not of our Society, whose character and memory deserve to be held by us in affectionate and grateful remembrance more than another, it is the “Esquire Marsh,” of George Fox’s *Journal*.

For several generations at least, the identity of the Esquire was unknown amongst us. Several historians of the various Marsh families have, however, endeavoured to solve the mystery of the impenetrable Esquire, but it remained with the present writer, when engaged in compiling a family history<sup>1</sup> principally relating to the Quaker branches of the Kent family of Marsh, to solve the mystery, and certainly nothing else in connection with this undertaking afforded him such sincere pleasure.

Richard March, Esquire, as is the correct orthography, was born about 1589. His father was, perhaps, Francis March, who was living in 1632, to whom was demised, that year, certain sequestered lands of the Earl of Cleveland in trust for John March, the Esquire’s brother, who died in 1641.

Esquire March held the position of Gentleman Usher to both Charles I. and Charles II., *i.e.*, he was one of the court officials, whose duty it was to usher or introduce visitors into the royal presence. He also held the office of “Dailywaiter,” perhaps, however, an identical one. Fox says he was also “one of the Bedchamber to the King,” *i.e.*, “Groom of the Bedchamber.” Besides these posts, he held, in both reigns, the office of “Keeper-General of His Majesty’s Stores in the Tower of London” and elsewhere, otherwise “Master of the Ordnance in the Tower.” He was, moreover, a Justice of the Peace for co. Middlesex.

We first hear of the Esquire on the occasion of an important event of his life, when, in 1621, a licence was issued by the Bishop of London for Richard Marche, of Stepney, co. Middlesex, bachelor, to marry Sarah Adee, of

<sup>1</sup> *History of the Ancient Family of Marsh, . . . c. 1326-1903, and in Particular that Branch of the Family settled at Folkestone, with an Account of Descendants . . . 1520-1903. Compiled from original and other Sources. 1903.*

Hadleigh (now called Monken Hadley), widow of Thomas Adee, late of Stepney aforesaid, gent.

As early as 1637, March held the office of storekeeper at the Tower, and in 1643 was dismissed from his post by the Parliament for his loyalty to the King.

In 1645, apparently, he accompanied his royal master at the battle of Naseby, and remained with the King as his page in the Isle of Wight, and probably until the fateful year of 1649.

In 1647, "Richard Marche, Esq., his Majesty's servant," was sworn to attend Prince Charles (later, Charles II.), in the same capacity as with his father, and with the usual allowance.

In 1652, information was given to the Parliament, that a chest of plate, weighing 429 $\frac{3}{4}$ ozs., belonging to Lord Byron, D.C.L., of Newstead Abbey, whose estate was to be sold, and who was exempted from the act of pardon, was in possession of one Solomon Smith, of St. Katherine's, near the Tower, or of Richard Marche and his wife, Sarah, or others by their delivery. The said plate being seized, Richard Marche, then of Limehouse, begged the restoration of several parcels of this plate, given to his wife, Sarah, by Sir John Byron (later, Lord Byron), in 1642 for £75, and which was to be kept unless redeemed, but nothing was paid. Eventually March purchased the said plate at 4s. 10d. per ounce, which realised £103 17s. 2d.

In 1659/60, Pepys, the diarist, says, "I went to White Hall, and did stay at Marsh's with Simons, Luellin, and all the rest of the Clerks of the Council, who, I hear, are all turned out," etc. Again, "To White Hall, where I met Will. Simons and Mr. Mabbot at Marsh's, who told me how the House at this day voted that the gates of the City should be set up at the cost of the State."

On the restoration in 1660, we find "Richard Marche was sworn Gentleman Usher and Dailywaiter by my Lord of Dorset, and desires to be so continued, which was agreed to."

The same year, the Esquire, as keeper of H.M. Stores, and Edward Sherburne, clerk of H.M. Ordnance, petitioned for restoration to their places granted them by patent for life by the late King, from which they had been excluded seventeen years, being, without cause, dis-

possessed of them and their dwellings in the Tower. After some considerable difficulty and delay, March was reinstated.

The same year, the Esquire is mentioned as issuing certificates relating to the office of gamekeeper in Waltham Forest, and to that of Dr. Edward Warner, as physician in ordinary to the King.

In 1660 also, we have the first reference to “ Esquire Marsh ” in Fox’s *Journal*. George Fox had been apprehended at Swarthmore, imprisoned in Lancaster jail, and *habeas corpus* had been sent down, and he was liberated on parole. Fox says,<sup>2</sup>

Then travelling on, visiting Friends’ meetings, in about three weeks of my coming out of prison, I reached London, Richard Hubberthorn and Robert Widders being with me. When we came to Charing Cross, multitudes of people were gathered together to see the burning of the bowels of some of the old King’s judges, who had been hung, drawn, and quartered.

This was in October :

We went next morning to Judge Mallet’s chamber, who was putting on his red gown, to go sit upon some more of the King’s judges. He was very peevish and froward, and said I might come another time. We went again to his chamber when Judge Foster was with him, who was called the Lord Chief Justice of England. With me was one called Esquire Marsh, who was one of the bedchamber to the King. When we had delivered to the Judges the charge that was against me, and they had read to those words, “ that I and my friends were embroiling the nation in blood,” etc., they struck their hands on the table. Whereupon I told them, “ I was the man whom that charge was against, but I was as innocent of any such thing as a newborn child, and had brought it up myself ; and some of my friends came up with me without any guard.”

After some debate, and Fox promising to “ appear to-morrow about ten o’clock at the King’s Bench bar in Westminster Hall,” he was dismissed, Judge Foster saying, “ If he says yes, and promises it, you may take his word.”

Next day I appeared at the King’s Bench bar at the hour appointed, Robert Widders, Richard Hubberthorn, and Esquire Marsh going with me. I was brought into the middle of the court ; and as soon as I came in, was moved to look round, and turning to the people, said, “ Peace be among you,” and the power of the Lord sprang over the court. The charge against me was read openly. The people were moderate, and the judges cool and loving ; and the Lord’s mercy was to them.

<sup>2</sup> *Journal*, edition 1901, vol. i., pp. 485-492.

Fox pleaded his innocent cause so admirably that in spite of Judge Twisden "beginning to speak some angry words," Judges Foster and Mallet, to whom Fox appealed, said, "They did not accuse me, for they had nothing against me."

Then stood up Esquire Marsh, who was of the King's bedchamber, and told the judges, "It was the King's pleasure that I should be set at liberty, seeing no accuser came up against me." They asked me, "Whether I would put it to the King and council?" I said, "Yes, with a good will." Thereupon they sent the sheriff's return, which he made to the writ of *habeas corpus*. . . . On perusal of this, and consideration of the whole matter, the King, being satisfied of my innocency, commanded his secretary to send an order to Judge Mallet for my release, which he did. . . . Thus, after being a prisoner more than twenty weeks, I was freely set at liberty by the King's command, the Lord's power having wonderfully wrought for the clearing of my innocency.

Shortly after this, Fox was again in difficulty, owing to the insurrection of the Fifth Monarchy Men, and the City was in an uproar and unsafe.

I stayed at Pall Mall, intending to be at the meeting there; but on the Seventh-day night, a company of troopers came and knocked at the door. The servant letting them in, they rushed into the house, and laid hold of me; and there being amongst them one that had served under the Parliament, he put his hand to my pocket, and asked, "Whether I had any pistols?" I told him he knew I did not carry pistols, why therefore ask such a question of me, whom he knew to be a peaceable man?

Others of the soldiers ran into the chambers, and there found in bed Esquire Marsh, who, though he was one of the King's bedchamber, out of his love to me came and lodged where I did. When they came down again, they said, "Why should we take this man away with us? We will let him alone." "O," said the Parliament soldier, "he is one of the heads, and a chief ringleader." Upon this the soldiers were taking me away, but Esquire Marsh, hearing of it, sent for him that commanded the party, and desired him to let me alone, for he would see me forthcoming in the morning.

In the morning before they could fetch me, and before the meeting was gathered, there came a company of foot soldiers to the house and one of them, drawing his sword, held it over my head.

Fox was then taken to Whitehall, and on being asked what he was, replied, "A preacher of righteousness." "After I had been kept there two or three hours, Esquire Marsh spoke to Lord Gerrard, and he came and bid them set me at liberty."

These side-lights to the Esquire's character are extremely interesting, but one wonders where he first made Fox's acquaintance ; possibly he had heard of him favourably at Court.

In 1661, the Esquire petitioned the King from Whitehall relating to the sequestration of his estates, for which he had to compound during the late troubles.

We must pass over other mention of March, and come again to Fox's *Journal*.

In 1665-66, George Fox suffered his cruel incarceration in Scarborough Castle, where his virtuous character eventually commanded the kindness and respect of the officers and soldiers, who would say, “ He is as stiff as a tree, and as pure as a bell ; for we could never bow him.” And the Roman Catholic governor, Sir Jordan Crosland, said that “ whatever good he could do for me and my friends he would do it, and never do them any hurt ;” and Fox adds, “ He continued loving to his dying day.”

Fox had previously related that :

Afterwards, the governor growing kinder, I spoke to him when he was going to London to the Parliament, and desired him to speak to Esquire Marsh, Sir Francis Cobb (so called) and some others ; and let them know how long I had lain in prison, and for what ; and he did so. When he came down again, he told me that Esquire Marsh said he would go a hundred miles barefoot for my liberty, he knew me so well ; and several others, he said, spoke well of me. From which time the governor was very loving to me.<sup>3</sup>

Fox writes : <sup>4</sup>

After I had lain prisoner above a year in Scarbro' Castle, I sent a letter to the King, in which I gave him “ an account of my imprisonment, and the bad usage [as to accommodation, etc.] I had received in prison ; and also that I was informed, no man could deliver me but he.”

After this, John Whitehead being at London, and being acquainted with Esquire Marsh, went to visit him, and spoke to him about me ; and he undertook, if John Whitehead would get the state of my case drawn up, to deliver it to the master of requests, Sir John Birkenhead, and endeavour to get a release for me. So John Whitehead and Ellis Hookes drew up an account of my imprisonment and sufferings, and carried it to Marsh ; and he went with it to the master of requests, who procured an order from the King for my release.

<sup>3</sup> *Journal*, vol. ii., pp. 66, 67.

<sup>4</sup> *Journal*, vol. ii., pp. 69, 70.

So Whitehead went to Scarbro' with it, and Sir Jordan Crosland discharged Fox freely, giving him a written passport,<sup>5</sup> dated 1st September, 1666.

In 1668, Fox adds :<sup>6</sup>

While I was in London, I went one day to visit Esquire Marsh, who had showed much kindness both to me and to Friends ; I happened to go when he was at dinner. He no sooner heard my name, than he sent for me up, and would have had me sit down with him to dinner, but I had not freedom to do so. Several great persons were at dinner with him, and he said to one of them who was a great Papist, " Here is a Quaker whom you have not seen before."

Here follows a disputation between the Papist and Fox, in which George Fox came out best :

" O," said Esquire Marsh to the Papist, " you do not know this man, if he would but come to church now and then, he would be a brave man."

After some other discourse, I went aside with Justice Marsh into another room, to speak with him concerning Friends ; for he was a Justice of Peace for Middlesex, and being a courtier, the other Justices put much of the management of affairs upon him. He told me " he was in a strait how to act between us and some other Dissenters. For," said he, " you cannot swear, and the Independents, Baptists, and Fifth-monarchy people say also they cannot swear ; therefore" said he, " how shall I know how to distinguish betwixt you and them, seeing they and you all say it is for conscience' sake that you cannot swear ? " I answered, " I will show thee how to distinguish. They, or most of them, thou speakest of, can and do swear in some cases, but we cannot swear in any case."

Fox proceeds to explain, and states the case of a Friend who prosecuted a thief, but the former had the oath of allegiance tendered him, and because he refused it, the Quaker was imprisoned and the thief liberated. " Justice Marsh said, ' That judge was a wicked man.' ' But,' said I, ' if we could swear in any case, we would take the oath of allegiance to the King, who is to preserve the laws that are to support every man in his estate. . . So that thou mayest easily distinguish and put a difference between us and those people.' "

Fox concludes :

Justice Marsh was afterwards very serviceable to Friends in this and other cases ; for he kept several, both Friends and others, from

<sup>5</sup> This document is now in D. (Spence MSS. ii. 308.)

<sup>6</sup> *Journal*, vol. ii., pp. 100-104.

being præmunired. When Friends were brought before him in time of persecution, he set many of them at liberty; and when he could not avoid sending to prison, he sent some for a few hours, or for a night.

At length he went to the king, and told him, “ he had sent some of us to prison contrary to his conscience, and he could not do so any more.” Wherefore he removed his family from Limehouse, where he lived, and took lodgings near St. James’s Park. He told the king that “ if he would be pleased to give liberty of conscience, that would quiet and settle all; for then none could have any pretence to be uneasy.” And, indeed, he was a very serviceable man to truth and Friends in his day.

This is the last we hear of the Esquire in the *Journal*. We now proceed to speak of his family.

By Sarah Adee, his wife, Esquire March had, at least, two children, George and Joyce, of whom the latter was presumably the elder. She married John Fowke, Esq., of an ancient family, who acquired, through his wife, considerable estates at Stepney. He apparently owned the “ capital messuage ” of Clayberry, Barking, near Woodford Bridge, and by will, dated 1686, he left his estate in Tower street and Water Lane, in the parish of St. Dunstons-in-the-East, London (part of the Esquire’s estate), to the Governors of Christ’s Hospital, London, upon trust for the maintenance and education of eight poor boys in the said Hospital. He was also a benefactor to Bethlehem Hospital.

By his wife, Joyce March, John Fowke was the lineal ancestor of the present Sir Frederic F. C. Fowke, Bart., of Lowesby, co. Leicester, and of the Singletons of Mell, co. Louth, and Hazeley Heath, Hants.

It is an interesting fact that we have amongst us visible connecting links with the worthy Esquire.

Under date 1669, we find J. Williamson writing to the Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, that

Richard Marche, an ancient and faithful servant to his Majesty, has applied for a letter of recommendation in favour of his grandchild, a young scholar at Westminster, to be chosen away to Oxford the next election, he being of years and proficiency sufficient to render him deserving of that encouragement.

Later this year, the King himself writes to the Warden and Fellows of New College, Oxford, that

Our old servant, Richard Marsh, has sued to us to recommend his grandchild, John Fowkes, now Winchester scholar, for a fellowship in

your college ; we grant him our letters, on account of Marsh's services to our late father and ourselves, and of the learning and laudable endowments of the grandchild, and beg that he may be chosen at the next election.

Of George March, the Esquire's son, we have, unhappily, nothing good to relate. We first hear of him in 1638, when he is mentioned in the Council register, where is a pass for George Marche, aged 12 years [born circa 1626], son of Richard March, of the Tower, London, to travel into foreign parts for three years, with a proviso *not to go to Rome*. Alas ! one fears this foreign travel was the ruin of his character.

In 1660, "young Mr. Marche says you [Charles II.] promised him to be squire of the body when you were in Scotland ; these are places of great trust." The word "respited" is annexed. The next year, George March is named as adjutant in the King's Guards, under Charles, Lord Gerrard, Captain, and previously named by Fox.

In 1664/5, George March petitioned the King for the reversion of Dungeness Lighthouse, etc., and in 1668, we learn that Richard Marche, complains that hisson, George, in pretence of a debt of £300, has got all his deeds and settlements, and made them over to Edward Yonger.

This complaint was addressed to the Lord Keeper, who was instructed to reconcile the parties, if possible, they being so nearly related and both his Majesty's servants.

George March, unlike his father, was a persecutor of Friends, and this phase of his character, added to his other misdeeds must have vexed the righteous soul of his virtuous sire. He is named in Besse's *Sufferings of the Quakers*,<sup>7</sup> together with another Justice, William Ryder, as coming to a Quakers' meeting at Mile End Green, 17th July, 1664, with constables and soldiers, and placing a guard at the gate. Upon that eminent preacher, Alexander Parker, speaking, and commencing, "In the name of the Lord," one of these Justices (so called), profanely cried out, "In the name of the Devil pluck that fellow down." They then took down the names of all present, being thirty-two, and committed them to the filthy prison of Newgate, for three months.

<sup>7</sup> Vol. i., p. 394.



At Hicks's Hall, 10th October, 1664,<sup>8</sup> George March was one of ten Justices (!) (including that notorious persecutor, Sir John Robinson, Knt., Lieutenant of the Tower), who committed seven Friends for transportation to Barbadoes for attending meetings. One of these Friends, Hannah Trigg, a poor girl of only fifteen, died from the effects of the pestilential air of Newgate, and was buried in the felons' burial place there, to the intense grief of her afflicted parents.

We now come to note the decease of the excellent Esquire, as recorded in Richard Smyth's *Obituary*, as follows: “1671/2, March 18th. Old Mr. Marsh, store-keeper of ye Tower, died, aged 83 years, buried ye 22.”

Unfortunately he does not tell us where, but probably at the church of St. Dunstan's-in-the-East, Tower Street, where Strype records was buried in 1697, aged 62, Francis March, born at Limehouse, who went to Cyprus when aged 16, and became a Merchant; he, doubtless, was of the Esquire's family, presumably a nephew.

Richard Marche, of the Tower of London, Esquire, made his will, 29th April, 1671; proved at London<sup>9</sup> by the oath of testator's daughter, Joyce Fowke, the 1st April, 1672. He directs his body to be decently buried “where my loveing wife lyes buried.”

Imprimis, I appoint all former settlements of my inheritance to stand according to the purport and true meaning of them, and doe charge and command my sonne, George Marche, Esq., upon my blessing, to performe and make good what he is ingaged and bound unto, either in Law or Equity, more especially that he confirme the award lately made between us by the Lord Bishops of London and Rochester, and confirmed by a decree of the High Court of Chancery. And as for all my debts, goods, etc., and the summes due to me from the King's most excellent Majesty (whom God preserve), in respect of my places and offices as Gentleman Usher to his Majesty or Keeper Generall of his Majesty's Stores in the Tower of London or elsewhere, I give and bequeath to my daughter, Joyce Fowke, widd[ow] (excepting my great cabinet which standeth in my chamber at Whitehall, for that I give to my grand-daughter Dorothy Wrothe). And I make my daughter, Joyce Fowke, widd[ow], sole executrix.—Signed, Ri : March.

It is somewhat singular that a catalogue of old deeds, issued a few years since by James Coleman, of Tottenham,

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* i., pp. 399, 400.

<sup>9</sup> P.C.C. 50 Eure.

included a contemporary copy of this interesting probate. Moreover, the present writer purchased in London at the time he was engaged in his *History of the Families of Marsh*, an original State Paper, dated 1640, signed by the veritable Esquire, as in his will, "Ri : March." This is now safely preserved at Devonshire House.

Such are the principal biographical details we have been able to glean relative to this most worthy man.

When we consider the intolerance and persecuting spirit of the seventeenth century, which was by no means confined to the ungodly, the humane and Christian character of the venerable "Esquire Marsh" can only be compared to "an oasis in the desert," and "a light shining in a dark place." It was, in fact, far more in keeping with the best traditions of the nineteenth than with those of the seventeenth century.

The Esquire was indeed a Daniel in his age, and, whilst living in a shamelessly licentious and dissolute Court, which his righteous soul must daily have loathed, he did his duty in his day and generation, fearing God; and he was deservedly honoured, not only by all virtuous men, and by the "martyred King," but even by Charles II., who, bad as he was, appreciated his sterling character and his faithful and devoted loyalty and service.

J. J. GREEN.

N.B.—The principal sources of information for this paper, in addition to those previously alluded to, are the State Papers, Domestic Series.

FACSIMILE OF SIGNATURE.