

A Short Account of John Reckless and his Family.

PART I.

All students of his *Journal* are familiar with the graphic account of George Fox's visit to Nottingham in 1649, his testimony in St. Mary's church there, and the subsequent conversion of the Head Sheriff, but as the account shows us something of the character of John Reckless, a character fully confirmed by his after life as shown by the Minute Books of the Society of Friends at Nottingham, it seems better to introduce him in George Fox's own words. We wonder, as we read, whether the Sheriff and his wife were amongst the congregation who, as George Fox says, "looked like Fallow Ground," on that memorable First-day. After preaching in the church, George Fox tells us he was taken away by the officers, and put into "a nasty stinking prison." He then goes on:—

But that day the Lord's Power sounded so in their Ears, that they were amazed at the Voice, and could not get it out of their Ears for some time after; they were so reached by the Lord's Power in the Steeple-house. At Night they took me out of Prison, and had me before the Major, Aldermen and Sheriffs of the Town.¹ . . . They examined me at large; and I told them how the Lord had moved me to come. Then, after some Discourse had passed between them and me, they sent me back to Prison again. But sometime after, the Head Sheriff, whose Name was John Reckless, sent for me to his House; and when I came in, his Wife met me in the Hall, and said, "Salvation is come to our House." And she took me by the Hand, and was much wrought upon by the Power of the Lord God: And her Husband, and Children and Servants were much changed; for the Power of the Lord wrought upon them. And I lodged at the Sheriff's House and great Meetings we had in his House. . . . And this Sheriff sent for the other Sheriff, and for a Woman they had had Dealings with in way of Trade; and he told her before the other Sheriff that they had wronged her in their Dealings with her (for the other Sheriff and he were Partners) and that they ought to make her Restitution; This he spake Chearfully. But the other Sheriff denied it, and the Woman

¹ William Nix, Mayor; John Reckless, Richard Watkinson, Sheriffs—Cropper, *Sufferings of the Quakers in Notts*, 1892, p. x.

said, She knew nothing of it. But the friendly Sheriff said it was so; and that the other knew it well enough: And then having discovered the Matter, and acknowledged the Wrong done by them, he made Restitution to the Woman; and exhorted the other Sheriff to do the like. And the Lord's Power was with this Friendly Sheriff and wrought a mighty Change in him; and great Openings he had. And on the next Market Day following, as he was walking with me in the Chamber, in his Slippers, he said, "I must go into the Market and preach Repentance to the People." And accordingly he went in his Slippers into the Market, and into several Streets, and preached Repentance to the People.

The name of Reckless appears in the first register of the Parish Church of St. Mary's, Nottingham. On 24th September, 1581, Richard Reckeles married Jone Roo; and in January, 1583, George Recklesse, sonne of Richard Recklesse, was baptised.

Although I have made a very careful search of the early registers in the parishes of St. Mary, St. Peter, and St. Nicholas, Nottingham, I have been unable to find the name of John Reckless in the baptismal registers. As I have also been unable to find any record of his marriage, it is probable that his wife was not a native of Nottingham. As the name of Richard appears amongst his descendants, it is possible he may have been a son of the Richard Reckeles whose marriage I have noted.

John Reckless, Recklesse, or Wrecklesse, is sometimes described as Maulster, sometimes as Ironmonger. He had a large family, and the following were born after he became a Friend, as their names appear in the Friends' Register:—Hannah, born 6 iii. 1650. Nathaniell, 27 x. 1653. Benjamin, 15 xii. 1655. Mary, — v. 1658. Of Nathaniell I find no further mention, so it is possible he died young, though his death does not appear on the Register.

In a letter from James Nayler to George Fox² in 1654, the writer states, "That night I came to Nottingham, I sent for Rice Jones & he came & John Reclese with him, we was a great while together."

A tract, entitled *A Real Demonstration of the True Order in the Spirit of God, and of the Ground of all Formality & Idolatry, with a few words unto such as are concerned*

² Swarthmore MSS. lii. 75.

in it, London, 1663, dated from Nottingham, xi., 1663, is signed by John and Hannah Reckless amongst others.

Besse³ mentions that in 1666 John Reckless and John Hart were committed to prison for absenting themselves from "the National Worship."

In the same year, George Fox paid another visit to Nottingham and to John Reckless.

In Eleventh Month, 1670, an address *To the King and both Houses of Parliament*, on the sufferings of Friends in Nottinghamshire, was signed by over two hundred Friends of that county, including John, Joseph, Samuel, and Hannah Reckless, and Hannah Reckless, Jun.

In 1671, when the Women's Quarterly Meeting in Nottinghamshire was first settled, John Reckless's wife and daughter Hannah, and Anne Reckless, who might have been a daughter-in-law or sister, were "appoynted and named for publicke Service" (see THE JOURNAL, vol. v., p. 137).

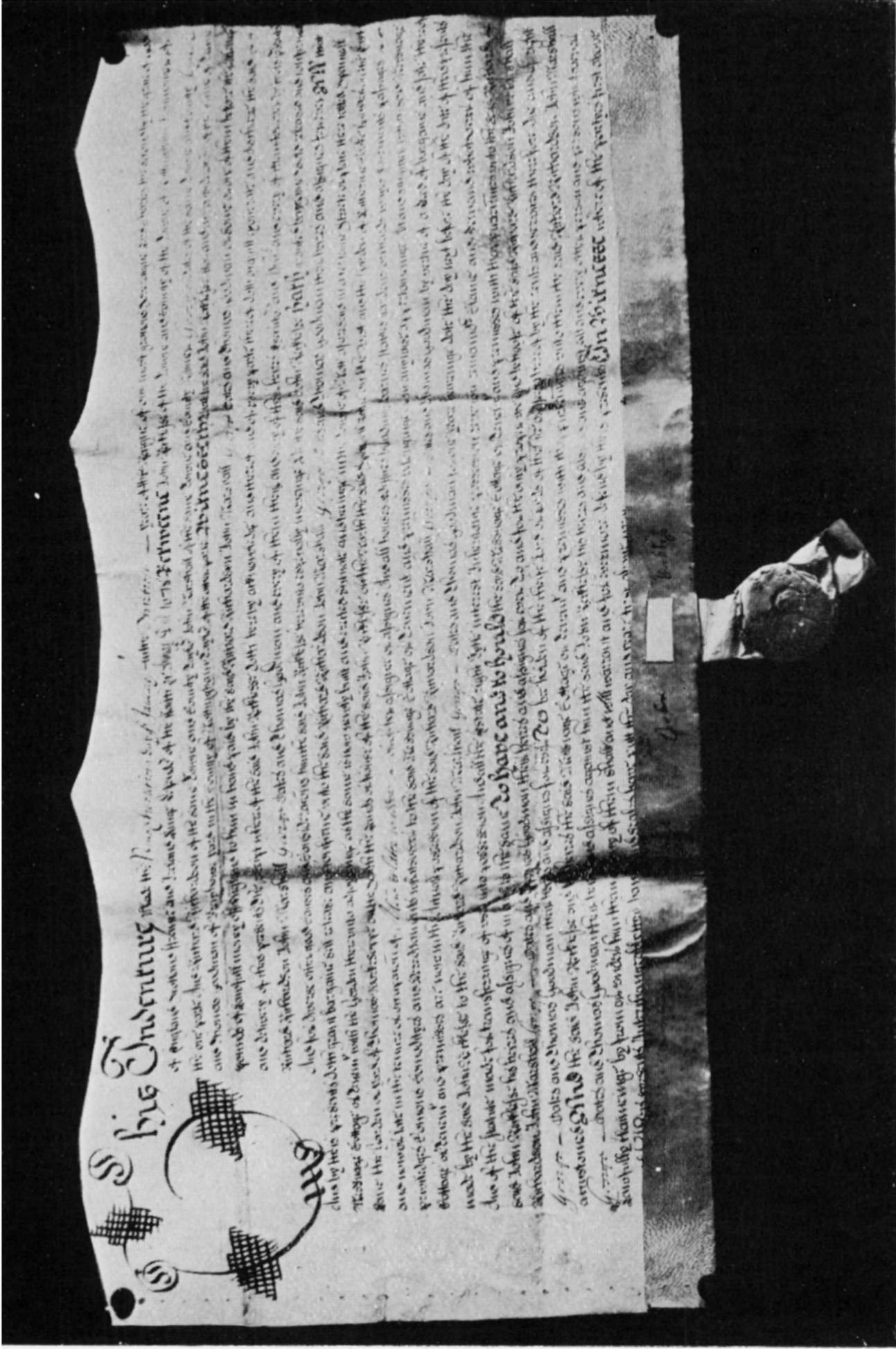
In 1674, John Reckless wrote a short Testimony to his friend, William Smith, of Besthorpe, which was printed in *Balm from Gilead*, 1675.

In 1674, a piece of land, situated on the South side of Walnut Tree Lane in a certain place near to the Castle Hills, Nottingham, was purchased as a Burial Place for Friends, and a Declaration of Trust dated 9th of January, 1675, shows that William Watson, of Nottingham, Yeoman, John Recklesse, of the same, Malster, Richard Richardson, of the same, taylor, and John Hart, of the same, Chandler, were the first trustees.

The Death Register shows us that 17 iii. 1675, John Recklesse lost his wife, and that she was buried in her garden. And on 12 i. 1677 his son John died; he does not seem to have been a very active member of the Society, as we do not find his name on the Minute Books.

Yearly Meeting Instructions to Quarterly and Monthly Meetings from two sundry meetings in London, the one being on the 27th and the other on the 31st of the Third Month, 1675, were addressed "ffor John Wreckless, a shoppkeeper, Nottingham"; also further Instructions from London, 18th of Eighth Month, 1675, were addressed to him.

³ *Sufferings*, i. 553.



Photo]

INDENTURE FOR SALE OF PROPERTY—JOHN RECKLESS TO FRIENDS. (See page 61.)

[Rachel L. Manners.

In 1677, we find by George Fox's *Journal* that he was again in Nottingham ; Fox writes, " I had a Meeting with Friends at his [John Reckless] house that Evening, after I came thither, and another the same day in Friends publick Meeting-house which was peaceable and well."

By an Indenture " made the nineteenth day of January in the thirtieth year of the reign of our most gracious Sovereigne Lord Charles the second⁴ by the grace of God of England, Scotland, ffraunce & Ireland king defendo of the ffaith ye Anness Deo 1678," we find that John Reckless sold property in Spaniel Lane, Nottingham, to Friends, which was used for a Meeting House, and by this deed, which states that the property was bounded by the "lands or house of the said John Reckless on the North," I have been able to identify the house where he lived, a photograph of which it is hoped will appear in the next number of THE JOURNAL. It is curious to note that there are two Indentures exactly the same in every particular, except that in one the property is said to be sold for £10 and in the other for five shillings. I am unable to offer any explanation of this.

The Meeting House in Spaniel Lane was rebuilt in 1737, and was used by Friends till 1847, when a new Meeting House was built in Park Street ; the old property was sold to, and used by the members of the Catholic Apostolic Church ; they built a new frontage, but the Meeting House is still standing and can be seen from the back of John Reckless's old house.

25. x. 1679, John Recklesse, senr., died, and was buried in his garden.

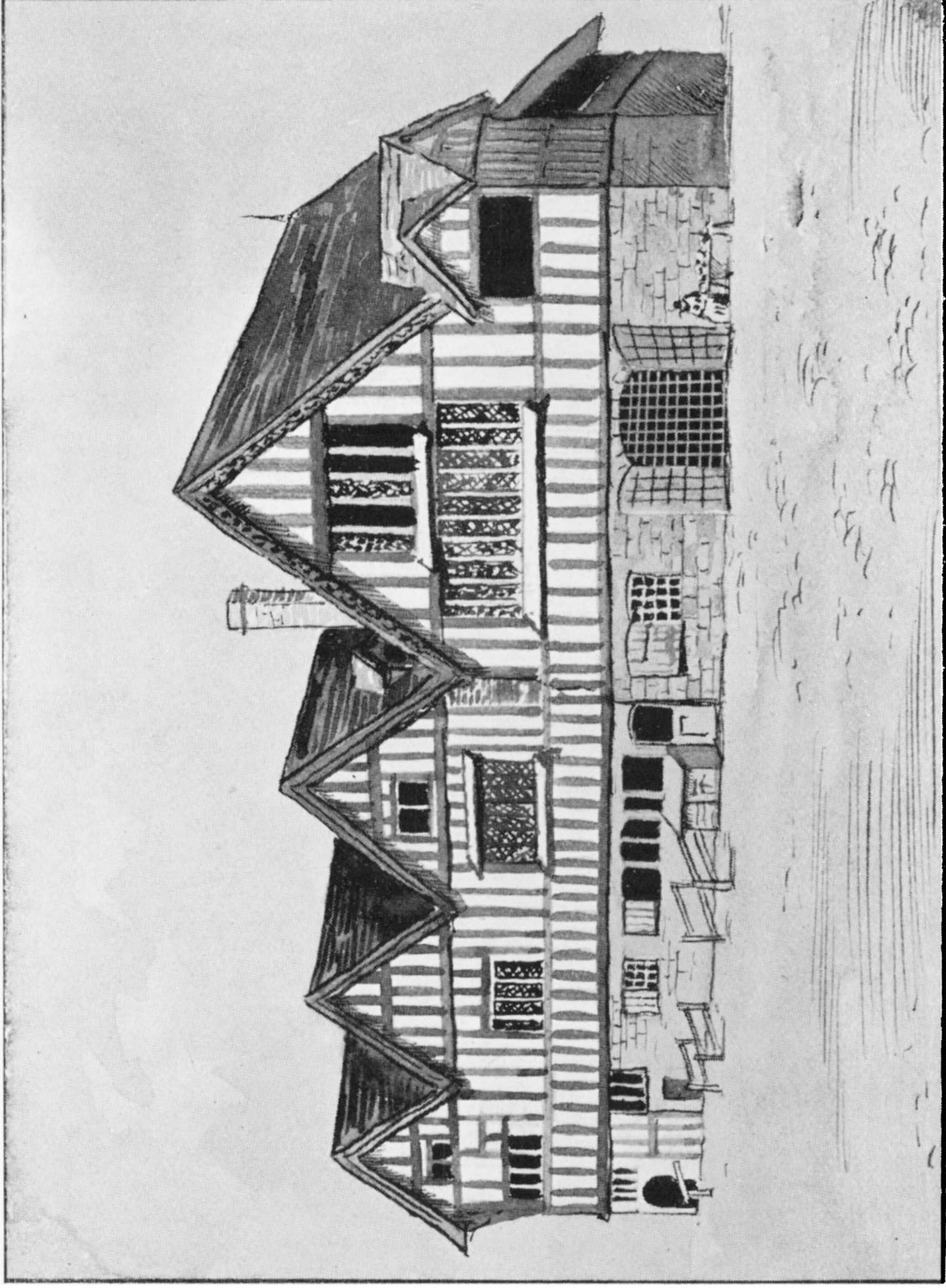
Search has been made at Somerset House and also at York for the record of probate or administration of the will of John Reckless, but unfortunately without success.

EMILY MANNERS.

To be continued.

[I have again gratefully to acknowledge the kind help of A. S. Buxton, Esq., for drawing, and of my daughter, Rachel L. Manners, for photograph of deed.]

⁴ The accession is dated from 1649.



From a drawing by A. S. Buxton.

OLD GUILDHALL AND PRISON, NOTTINGHAM. (See page 62.)

