

The Sufferings of John and Mary Stanley, of Cladswell, Worcestershire.¹

1694. Something written by John Stanley² with his own hand, as touching himself, and Mary his deceased wife, respecting what they passed through during the time they lived together, which was 21 years and 8 months, his wife being taken from him into peace with the Lord, the 2nd of 9th month, 1693.

John, the son of Foulke Stanley & Frances his wife, was baptized according to the Protestant way the 3rd of Jan. 1648, & was strictly brought up by my parents therein until the age of nineteen years, at which time the Lord in His great Love opened my understanding, & by His power through his servant Richard Moore, I was convinced of God's everlasting truth, & in a measure preserved in the same unto this day, blessed & for ever blessed be His Holy name, saith my soul. When I came to the age of three & twenty, I took a wife amongst

¹ Transcribed by Caroline W. Pumphrey, from a typed copy of a tattered sheet of foolscap once belonging to the late Stanley Pumphrey, of Worcester, and considered by him one of his most valuable possessions. A similar MS. in the same handwriting is in the possession of a member of another branch of the family. It is probable that John Stanley was the writer of both manuscripts. *The print has not been corrected by the original manuscript.*

This MS. is printed by permission of Josiah Newman, F.R.Hist.S. (a descendant of the Stanleys), who has in hand a compendious history of the Stanley and allied families, which history will trace back to remote periods the lineage of several Quaker families, and demonstrate the fact (often ignored) that among the early Friends there were numerous members of families of outward rank and position.

² John Stanley, of Cladswell, parish of Inkberrow, yeoman, married, firstly, Mary, daughter of William Reading of Linn, Co. Stafford, 20 xii. 1671. She died, s.p., at Cladswell, 4 ix. 1693. He married, secondly, at Worcester, 12 l. 1694/5, Elizabeth Chandless, widow, of Worcester, late of Perton, Co. Stafford, whose maiden name was Somerford. She became the mother of five children, and died at Cladswell, 23 l. 1732. John Stanley died at Cladswell, 1 iv. 1706. The descendants of John and Elizabeth Stanley are to be found in large numbers among Friends to-day.

For further particulars of the Stanley and Somerford families in addition to the proposed history thereof by Josiah Newman, F.R.Hist.S., already referred to, see *The Journal of George Fox; Brown's Evesham Friends*, pp. 214 ff.

Friends, according to the order of Truth, whose maiden name was Mary Reading, & the Lord made her a help-mate to me every way both inwardly & outwardly. Soon after we were married the Lord suffered us to be tried for His truth's sake, & in a measure gave us strength to bear the same patiently, blessed for ever be His name. When the Priest that I had been a hearer of, being Vicar of the Parish, perceived that I had taken a wife contrary to their way, & came not to hear him or pay him, he was soon filled with envy against us, & forthwith began to prepare war against us. Now my land lyeth in two Priests' Tythings, the Priest of the Parish, & the Prebend's place belonging to the College of Hereford. First, the Priest that was the Prebend sued at law my Mother, who, he said, was several years behind with him for Tithe. When the Bailiffs came to arrest her, finding her so weak in bed, that she could not lift her hand up to her head, they blessed themselves, & said they would not meddle with her lest she should die under their hands & went their way. Then John Harris, the Prebend, let the suit fall, & he began again with me, & said he would make me an example to the whole parish. So he sub-pœned me into the Exchequer, & soon after sent me to prison for my Mother's debt for the most part, from my tender wife whom I had been married to but half a year, & from my weak Mother that could not help herself. There he left me from the 12th of Seventh month, 1672, to the last of the Fifth month, 1673, & would not suffer me to go off the Castle grounds all that time to see my tender wife & weakly mother. But the Lord in his love preserved my wife faithful & she bore testimony nobly for God & His truth against the oppression & cruelty of Tithe, & encouraged me to be content & to bear my imprisonment patiently, for she believed the Lord in His due time would set me at liberty again, for we were not only called to believe, but to suffer for His Name's sake. And after a time the King granted an act of Grace by which I had my liberty. Soon after the Prebend understood that I had my liberty, & was home again, he caused me to be served up to London again into the Exchequer. But I left my cause to the Lord, & never appeared by an Attorney. So he sued out a Writ of

Institution as they call it, & sued me in County Court, & got an execution against me & sent his Bailiffs, & took from me six cows, being all we had, which my wife & I were made willing to part with for the Lord's sake. The cows were valued at that time worth £24, but they were put up to sale for what they could get, for there were few people that knew how they came to them that would meddle with them. But the lawyer's kinsman bought the worst of them, & the lawyers & bailiffs parted the rest between them for their share. But the Lord according to His promise to the faithful is not wanting; after some time our stock increased & we had six cows again, thanks be given to the Lord. And after some time the Vicar of the Parish where I live, demanded tithe of hay & corn & Easter dues, as he calleth them, which he said was unpaid from the time that we left hearing him unto that day. Now part of the time I was under age, & was a servant to my mother, & as the former Priest had pressed, so this envious parson pressed against me, serving me into the Exchequer, issuing a Writ of Institution, & taking three cows from me. His bailiffs William Getley & W^m Wested sold them about the 14th of Fourth Month, 1680. The three cows were worth about £10, which were taken from me for about £3 demanded, which covetous evil practice still made the Priests odious & manifest unto us & all that observed the evil of their way. Now about this time the old Prebend died, & his successor farmed the Prebend's part of the Tithe to two neighbours, namely Richard Harriot, & Richard Glover. So these men began to deal with us as their master did, & served me up to the Exchequer, & issued a writ of Justicion, & sued me again in the County Court, & got execution against me, & sent Bailiffs, & took from us six cows more, & one two-year old heifer big in calf, being all we had. They took them to the Market Place, & sold them, & never gave us an account. This was about the 10th of Twelfth Month, 1680. The seven cows were valued at about twenty pounds. But the Lord according to His wonted mercy gave me & my wife free contentment, & we could witness the saying fulfilled of those who "suffered joyfully the spoiling of their goods" for the Lord's sake. My tender

wife would often say, "Husband, let us commit our cause to the Lord, & seek no revenge, but be ready to do them any good we can." It was a great comfort to me to see the wife of my bosom not only take part with me in suffering, but also speak a word of comfort to me with advice & encouragement to me. After while she lived to see one of them come to decay in his estate that had dealt so unneighbourly with me, & she would put me on to lend him money or anything he wanted, which I did, so that we might show no ill will against him for anything he had done to us, but leave all to the Lord who rendereth to every one according to their deeds done in this life. So my wife & I lay still & contented in the will of the Lord, & saw the Priests & Tithemongers begin to be troubled & concerned at what they had done to us. For the Lord pleaded our cause in their hearts, & they were weary of suing us. Notwithstanding we did not spend one shilling in law with them. After they had wearied themselves they consulted together that when harvest came they would take it off our land. So they proceeded, never heeding us nor our fences. But they would go & break in & take what they pleased, sometimes a load in one place when we had carried some off the place before. Or at another time they would take the tenth cock or sheaf. Seeing these things my wife & I sometimes have considered that innocent suffering most becomes the Gospel of Christ. And we have gone to them and told them that it was for the sake of Christ, who put an end to all these things, that we could not pay them their unjust demands & not out of covetousness. Neither did we quarrel with them for coming on our ground & breaking open our hedges & gates, nor strove with them to keep them out by strong hand, but suffered innocently, committing our cause to the Lord, which always gave most satisfaction to both my wife & myself. Since she is taken from me, it arose in my heart to write this & leave it behind me, when it shall please the Lord to take me hence, for the encouragement of those that come in my room, to be faithful to God & dwell in His Truth, & not to be afraid of mortal man whose breath is soon gone. For this is my testimony, He will not forsake those that suffer for His Name's sake. J.S.