

Charles Lynch, of Lynchburg, Va.¹

John and Charles Lynch, sons of Charles and Sarah Clark Lynch, were the founders of Lynchburg, Va. The Clark family were Friends, and, after the father's death, the children, with their mother, became members of Cedar Creek Monthly Meeting. Their father left them the owners of large tracts of land. John, the elder brother, kept the home place, where Lynchburg now stands. In 11th January, 1755, Charles Lynch and Anne Terrill were reported "clear" of other engagements by the Meeting at Cedar Creek, and the following day were married and started for what was then a far western home—the undeveloped lands in Bedford County, where the buffalo still roamed and Indians were plentiful.

As soon as his new home at Green Level was finished, Charles Lynch helped to build and organise a Quaker Meeting. This was the first public place of worship in that part of Virginia; and when the Meeting was broken up by the Indians (it was during the French and Indian War) he removed the congregation to his own house, where his armed negroes could ward off their attacks.

It has been said that it is difficult to over-estimate the influence of these Quaker pioneers (of whom Charles Lynch was chief) in establishing better relations with the Indians, and fostering a spirit of peace and justice amongst the neighbours.

Lynch soon became a leading man, and already in 1763 had great wealth in the form of tobacco, cattle and slaves. He was asked in 1764 to become a member of the Assembly, but refused as inconsistent with his Quaker principles. But in the excitement of Stamp Act days, when it was difficult to get a proper Representative from the West, he saw differently, and in 1764, at the age of thirty-five, was elected to the House of Burgesses, and held his seat until the colony became an independent State.

It was then necessary that he take the oath, and in December, 1767, "Charles Lynch is disowned" for taking "Solemn Oaths" from the little Meeting he had fostered and cared for, and where his words of "admonition" had been heard. In heart he was not greatly changed, and he raised his children Friends.

When the Revolutionary struggle began he helped raise and enlist troops for home protection. His Quaker principles prevented him from going into the army for a time, but finally "the Court of Bedford" in 1778 "doth recommend to his Excellency the Gov., Chas. Lynch, as a suitable person to exercise the office of Col. of Militia," he saw the need and accepted. At this time in his history occurred the event that has made his name famous—a conspiracy in his home neighbourhood that he promptly put down with the help of his troops, and caused its

¹ From *Dorothy Payne, Quakeress*, by Ella Kent Barnard, 1909. See THE JOURNAL, vii. 38.

leaders to be sentenced and imprisoned, thereby exceeding his legal powers.

In Richmond, Jefferson, then Governor, had fled from the capital, where all was in confusion, and there was much excuse for his action.

With "his Rough Riders of the West" and his son, a lad of sixteen, he marched against Benedict Arnold and then to North Carolina in time to be present at the battle of Guilford Court House, when he won the commendation of that other Quaker General, Nathaniel Greene, who kept him with him, until after the surrender of Cornwallis. His services are described by Robert E. Lee in his history of his father's regiment.

At the end of the war Lynch again took his seat in the Assembly, before which he brought up the unlawful action he had taken during the war. The result was the following Act, which was passed by the Virginia Legislature after the Revolution:—

"Whereas, divers evil-disposed persons in the year 1780 formed a conspiracy and did actually attempt to levy war against the commonwealth, and it is represented to the present General Assembly that Charles Lynch and other faithful citizens, aided by detachments of volunteers from different parts of the State, did in timely and effectual measures suppress such conspiracy, and whereas the measures taken for that purpose may not be strictly warranted by law, although justifiable from the imminence of the danger, Be it therefore enacted that the said Charles Lynch and all other persons whatsoever concerned in suppressing the said conspiracy or in advising, issuing or exacting any orders or measures taken for that purpose, stand indemnified and exonerated of and from all pains, penalties, prosecutions, actions, suits and damages on account thereof.

"And that if any indictment, prosecution, action or suit shall be laid or brought against them or any of them for any act or thing done therein, the defendant or defendants may plead in bar and give this act in evidence"—"Atlantic Monthly" (December, 1901), Thomas Walker Page, and "Friends' Records of Cedar Creek Monthly Meeting."

1675. "A return made by the constables of Baldock, of the goods that they tooke away from the quakers for their meeting as followeth:—

			£	s.	d.
James Caudell, 2 paire of shooes	..	..	00	05	00
Anthony Fage, 2 bushell of malte	..	..	00	05	00
Richard Shephard, 1 dozen of candles	..	..	00	04	06
John Izard (?) 6 paires of stockings	..	..	00	05	00

And if it please your worship here is all that we could come at for all the gates and doores were all lockt that we could come at, noe more of there goods therefore we would desire your worship not to be very strict with us for we have done our endeavours for to get them all distrayned."

From the *Hertfordshire Sessions Rolls*.