

## A School in Ilchester Jail, 1662.

Our readers will, we think, be interested in the following account of a school conducted by Quaker prisoners in Ilchester, extracted from the Book of Sufferings for the County of Somerset, belonging to Bristol and Somerset Q.M., now on deposit in D. The Gospel principle of loving enemies and doing good to those who hate, receives here a forcible illustration.

There is one thing remarkeable & fitt to be recorded amongst what hath happned vnto friends in the day of their sufferings and time of impresonm<sup>t</sup> w<sup>ch</sup> is this in or about the Eight moneth 1662 the number of friends being increased to aboue 100 prisoners in Ilchester for the testimony of truth and the Comon Jayle being not large enough to containe them w<sup>th</sup> the debt<sup>r</sup>s felons & other malefact<sup>r</sup>s w<sup>ch</sup> were committed to the same Jayle (something it may be through the Civility of the Keeper), severall friends were admitted to be att a great house in the same Towne called the ffryery<sup>r</sup> w<sup>ch</sup> was large &

<sup>r</sup> This is the earliest reference to the Friary, Ilchester, which has been found. John Whiting in *Persecution Exposed*, under date 1680, writes: "I was removed from the Ward (or old Nunnery) to the Friery, a great House at the other end of the Town, where were many Friends Prisoners as aforesaid; and a very fine comfortable time we had together; and in the great Hall there, used to keep our Meetings, especially on first Days; and many brave Meetings we had there; many Friends coming in out of the Country to it; and most publick Friends that came that Way (and some on purpose) coming to visit us. . . . We had also, belonging to the Friery, a large Orchard of about 4 acres, walled about, where we used to walk, and where I had many a solitary, as well as comfortable Season of Retirement."

John Whiting gives us a delightful picture of an episode between the Duke of Monmouth and the Quaker Prisoners in the Friary. The Duke in his progress in the West passed through Ilchester "with some Thousands on Horse-back attending him." He was at the time extremely popular. "The Affections of the People ran exceedingly after him," Whiting naively remarks.

Prison rules at the Friary were fairly lax, for Whiting continues: "We stood in the Friery-Gate as he rode through the Town, and as he passed by, taking Notice of so many Quakers together with their Hats on, he stop'd and put off his Hat to us. . . . We could not but have a Respect to him for his Affability, and therefore were the more concerned for him when his Fall came." Surely a subject which might delight an artist's fancy! The graceful and popular Duke doffing his plumed hat to a group of Quaker prisoners, noticeable for remaining covered, in the midst of popular enthusiasm.

Quarterly Meetings were held in this commodious prison, until a certain persecuting Justice gave orders for the Friary doors to be locked up.

convenient, the owner being content on reasonable Termes to spare certaine roomes in the said house for that purpose. And freinds being thus separted from their owne families & Jmploym<sup>ts</sup> yet were willing to improue any opportunity for the doinge of good even to their enemyes, and severall of them being well quallified for that purpose did as the lord putt it into their hearts give forth a publique manifestation of their purpose to teach Schoole, and that all people that would send their children vnto them, they would freely teach them to read or write and cast account, wherevpon many children were sent and in little more then one monethes tyme the schoole was increased to neare the number of 70 schollers, w<sup>ch</sup> through the Lords blessing & friends industry many of them profited in Learning very much. That it was reported that some had gained more in two weeks there then in halfe a yeere else where before & many were preparing to send there children, But such was the old enmity to trueth appearing in this generation espetially in the priests (who generally in all ages have been the Ring Leaders in doing mischief) That great complaints were made to the rulers against friends and the Keeper (as reported) for suffering this good service to be done one Dier priest of Jchester being a chiefe agent herein And herevpon friends were forbidden any more to teach the children, which they could not refraine to doe while the children came vnto them, But the priest being restlesse to see this good vndertakement goe on, about the first day of the 10<sup>th</sup> moneth 1662—One G. Waters a rude man was sent to the house with violence forct out the children who yett (the people being loath to loose this great benefitt w<sup>ch</sup> they freely received) sent many of them againe the next day, but the rage of the enemy increasinge the same G. W. then came againe & carried three of the friends who were principally imployed in that service viz<sup>t</sup> John Anderdon<sup>2</sup> Mathew Perin<sup>3</sup> & Henry LAVOR<sup>4</sup> from the house

<sup>2</sup> John Anderdon was born about the year 1624, near Bradford in Devonshire. He was of a good family and "was bred a Scholar," and practised law, afterwards becoming Secretary to General Desborough in the West. His business frequently took him to London, and it was on one of these visits, in 1658, when in great sorrow at the death of his wife, that he attended a Quakers' Meeting and became convinced through the preaching of Francis Howgill. Later he kept a goldsmith's shop at Bridgwater,

called the ffryery to the Comon Jayle, who yet the same day in the eveninge were pmitted to goe backe againe to their lodginge, the outcrye of the people being on the prison<sup>r</sup>s behalfe against such vsage. And so this good service thus freely faythfully & industriously pformed by friends during this short tyme in their prison (to the great advantage of severall children) was to the great discontent of many people wholy prohibited, the wch<sup>ch</sup> as the Continuance of it for that small tyme did not a Little publish a true testimony for the Trueth & rendred friends a good savour vnto many which formerly were enemyes rather then otherwise, So the dissolvinge of it

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where he opened his house for meetings and himself became a preacher. He was a great sufferer for his convictions. Whiting says of him: "He was a man of note in the world, . . . and was a Prisoner in all, from first to last, near Twenty Years." He was released by the King's Charter of Release, 1672, but was again in prison in 1675. Whiting describes him as "a Man of Repute, a good Schollar, and Scribe . . . skill'd in the Languages, especially Greek and Latin; and understood the Law, so that many came to him for Advice." He died at the Friary, 20th of First Month (Mar.), 1684/5, aged 60, and was buried at Bridgwater.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Perrin (d. 1690) was a merchant of Taunton. Refusal to swear was the cause of his commitment to Ilchester Gaol in 1662. The following year sentence of praemunire was passed upon him; and from a letter addressed to prisoners in Newgate, London, subscribed by Perrin and others, it is evident that he was no longer in the comfortable quarters at the Friary.

Matthew Perrin married Hannah Lovel in 1680, when, presumably, an old man; there was one daughter, Honor, born the following year. This marriage is referred to by William Beaton of Puddimore in a letter to Matthew Perrin, 12 mo., 1680, in which he expresses the hope that "her [Hannah Perrin's] company doe not wholy shut out the remembrance of thy former friends w<sup>th</sup> whome thou hast had such familyer acquaintance." Several letters from Thomas Salthouse to Matthew Perrin are among the Swarthmore MSS., c. 1688, in which he is invariably addressed as "my very loveing ancient and honourable friend."

<sup>4</sup> Henry LAVOR (d. 1683) was of Yeovil. His name appears in *F.P.T.* as one of the first receivers of Truth in Somersetshire.

At the time of the trial of Thomas Salthouse at Taunton, in 1657, Henry LAVOR was present, and with eleven other Friends withdrew from the Court and drew up a letter for the Judge, testifying to the falseness of the accusations brought forward. (Wastfield, *Testimony*, 1657, p. 63.)

The Bristol MSS. include a paper drawn up by Henry LAVOR and forty-four influential Friends of Somerset, who met at Glaston[bury] in 1659, endorsed "Proposals and Agreements of Friends." The fact that Henry LAVOR's name heads the list of those signing, would imply that he held an important position in the Meeting.

D. possesses a quarto pamphlet by LAVOR entitled *Replies made to the Antiqueries of Thomas Lye*, 1657

did not a Little also manifest the envy malice & wickednesse of such who were the chiefe procurers thereof, and made them even stinke in the nostrills of sober men, And so in all truth gained advantage, Jn w<sup>ch</sup> is the Joy of the faythfull, And the worst of enemyes confest that it was a good act and service, but against the Law as they sayd, and therefore though good not to be continued. And in this disservice to the Countrey one Will<sup>m</sup> Swanton also a prisoner for debt (though he had his son freely taught by friends) was active to suppress the schoole— Note That the said priest Dyer & his wife also in a short tyme after dyed & so left their children fatherlesse & without a mother to bring them vpp.

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### Needy Friends in the West of England.<sup>1</sup>

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JN<sup>o</sup> WINTER, Tradewever. Aged ab<sup>t</sup> 70 years and Not able Labour at his Trade of a wever but Sweep Streets, and Labours Verry Industrious in what he Can Gett Jmploy.

ANNE CAPE, Trade Spinster. Aged about 30 years : Single woman Earnes ab<sup>t</sup> 3<sup>d</sup> p<sup>r</sup> day—when she hath Labour which is Now Scarce.

WILL<sup>m</sup> CLARKE, Trade Comb<sup>r</sup>. Aged about 45 : is a Verry Laborious Industrious man where he hath Labour which is—Now halfe wanting—he hath a wife, and fife Children y<sup>e</sup> youngest ab<sup>t</sup> 18 months & none Erns Mutch.

MARY BURFORD Desires E<sup>d</sup> pool to Speek of her fammilly being Best Known to him.

ROGER NOTT, Trade Comb<sup>r</sup>. Aged ab<sup>t</sup> 43 & a wife & famillye of Seven Children The Eldest a Girdle ab<sup>t</sup> 14 & is an Honest Man & would Labour if work was plenty.

ROB<sup>t</sup> NORTHAM, Trade Comb<sup>r</sup>. Aged ab<sup>t</sup> 74 and is a worthy Honest man and would Labour to y<sup>e</sup> best of hiss abillity if he Could have Labour which is mutch wanting.

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Out of monuments, names, wordes, proverbs, traditions, private recordes, and evidences, fragments of stories, passages of bookes, and the like, we doe save and recover somewhat from the deluge of time.

<sup>1</sup> Extracts from a Memorandum Book in the possession of Fox Bros. & Co., Ltd., of Wellington, Somerset, written between the years 1750 and 1772.