"Extracts from State Papers relating to Friends, 1654 to 1672"

PROF. G. LYON TURNER, M.A., Editor of *Original Records of Early Nonconformity under Persecution and Indulgence*, 1911, and Treasurer of the Congregational Historical Society, has kindly prepared the following paper on the contents of the latest set of Journal Supplements, *Extracts from State Papers*:—[1]

A most valuable piece of work, admirably done. A store of first-hand material for the historical student; of chief value no doubt to the historian of Quakerism, but incidentally and collaterally of great interest to the historian of other types of Nonconformity as well. As with everything handled by the Editor, it is clearly arranged and in the best form; and as with everything which issues from the press of Headley Brothers, neat and clean and tasteful in type and setting. Covering two very different periods of English history, these State Papers show the infant Society of Friends in the same sad condition of "Sufferers" in both, yet in both brave in their unconquerable patience and fearless in their testimony; and State officials mainly occupied in the attempt to restrain and suppress them, largely because they are urged to it by the officials of the Church.

The two periods are the last years of the Commonwealth (1654-1660), and the first years of the Restored Monarchy (1660-1672); the first including the whole of Oliver's Protectorate, and the second the first half of the reign of Charles. But another fact is true of both these periods. The persecution is at the hands of sub-

[1] *Extracts from State Papers Relating to Friends, 1654 to 1672.* Transcribed by Charlotte Fell Smith, and edited by Norman Penney, F.S.A., F.R.Hist.S., with Introduction by R. A. Roberts, F.R.Hist.S., pp. 365 and four indexes, 12s. ($3.50) net, in brown cloth, gilt top. London: Headley Brothers, and New York: Friends' Book and Tract Committee, 144 East 20th Street.

ordinates; any sympathy or clemency is from the head of the State in both. But from opposite principles. Oliver Cromwell was a man of intense religious convictions who could respect religious conviction in others even when it took forms very different from his own. Charles Stuart was a man of no religious conviction at all; one so absolutely indifferent to all religion and morality that, personally, he would give liberty and indulgence to all, so long as they left him liberty and gave him means to indulge in the luxuries of a brilliant court and of a numerous harem.

Oliver's strong and lofty character inclined him to give equal liberty to all who had lofty spiritual ideals, and were honestly working for the moral and religious regeneration of the people; while Charles's easy good nature was naturally expressed in his Declaration at Breda, and his Declaration of Indulgence in 1672, so that, though he was compelled to give prestige and preference to the re-established Episcopal Church, he was quite willing to consider the tender conscience of those who could not in all things conform to it.

But in both periods, the fundamental principles of the Friends made it inevitable that they should incur the hostility of two influential classes of the community, the Justices of Peace in things civil, and an ordained and salaried ministry in things religious. So firmly were they convinced of the absolute freedom of the Spirit's working in both worship and ministry that to them all salaried ministers were mercenaries, and all ordained ministers were priests; and in those early days they did not hesitate publicly to denounce them as hireling priests, and to interrupt their worship as bondage to the letter.

So implicit and persistent too was their obedience to Christ's command "Swear not at all" that their inflexible refusal to take an oath in any court of justice made the humanest of Justices appear their enemies, because the laws of the realm gave the Justices no option but to insist upon it.

There was of course a great and vital difference between the attitude towards them of a Puritan ministry under the Protectorate and the Anglican clergy under the Monarchy.

Under the Protectorate, in the first instance it was the Friends who attacked the ministers and publicly disturbed their services, though the too natural consequence was to turn many of the ministers into open and often bitter public enemies. But under the Monarchy the clergy needed no personal provocation. In their indignant championship of their vested interests in an episcopal and priestly hierarchy, in an ordered public ritual and the administration of mystic sacraments, they persistently attacked and pursued the Friends. First in the ecclesiastical courts, Churchwardens and clergy alike "presented" them for neglecting public worship, for refusing to attend it in their own parish churches, or for disrespectful conduct when present, for their contempt of the Sacraments, by refusing to receive the Lord's Supper themselves, or to accept baptism for their children, and "denying" marriage by priests in steeple-houses and burial by them in parochial churchyards; and when the ecclesiastical courts had done their worst in admonitions and fines and excommunication, the Church handed them over to the State to imprison or transport them as banned and præmunired persons.

But perforce, in both periods, Justices of the Peace could not but appear their enemies by their insistence on the oath in giving evidence in any court of law; while, on the Restoration of the Monarchy, there was this added trouble, that in assuming any public office, or if brought under suspicion by any malicious informer, it was so easy to offer them the Oath of Allegiance and Supremacy, and to accuse them of disloyalty when they refused to take it, although they refused not because it demanded allegiance and obedience, but because it was a point of conscience with them not to take an oath at all.

All that a Justice could do to favour them was to fail to press the oath at the risk of being accused of disloyal leniency himself; while this legal difficulty made it all too easy for an unsympathetic, prejudiced, or bigoted magistrate to protract their imprisonment indefinitely, remanding the prisoner from session to session and from year to year.

From one or other of these causes the gaols throughout this period had many Quakers in them.

These State Papers give several lists of Quaker prisoners. One of over 120, in 1658, speaks of the state of things under Oliver. But the numbers vastly increase under the Monarchy. In 1663, we find 214 Baptists and Quakers of London in Newgate prison alone; and 463 Quakers are reported in the provincial gaols. In 1666/7 several are reported in York Castle; in 1670 we have a list of over 210 in Nottinghamshire alone, and as late as May 8, 1672, nearly two months after the issue of the Declaration of Indulgence, between 500 and 600 are named as still in prison, nearly all of whom are Quakers.

And from these prisoners of hope, in many of the most pathetic and significant of these papers, comes the cry of Remonstrance, of Protest, and Appeal, in all but one notable instance[2] passing over all subordinates, even those in highest places and of greatest influence, and addressed direct to the supreme head of the State; pleading simply the justice of their cause, and the piteousness of their fate.

To Oliver comes a Remonstrance from the prisoners of Exeter, and a Protest from Gilbert Latey. Appeals are sent to him from Ilchester and Reading Gaols; and Petitions from those at large for their brethren in prison, from the Friends in London and Westminster for mercy for poor James Nayler, and from Quakers in the provinces for 115 incarcerated in the different county gaols.

And to Charles the Second come appeals—dignified, fervent, prophetic—from Francis Howgill in Appleby, from John North in Scrooby, from Henry Jackson in Warwick, from Ambrose Rigge in Horsham, from Charles Bayly in the Tower of London, from above 210 in Nottinghamshire alone, and from over 125 Long-time Prisoners in different county prisons.

Nor, in most cases, are these appeals made in vain. The response is generally prompt—either ordering directly immediate release, or, as in the case of Oliver, the closest scrutiny of each case, with a ready pardon in every instance of a miscarriage of justice.

In the case of Charles, indeed, his pardons and indulgencies are always outrunning the persecutions of

[2] Penn to Arlington, see pp. 279-286.

Quakers by his subjects from their places of power in Church and State. In these pages we have his General Pardon for Quakers in 1661, a special application of the Act of Oblivion. We have also three General Pardons for them in 1672—one issued May 8, a second in June, and a third in August.

The first specified "all those persons called Quakers now in prison for any offence comitted relateing only to his Ma^tie and not to the prejudice of any other person"; but excluded the non-payment of tithes, legacies, debts or fines from the offences to which this pardon could apply. To the payment of the first and last of these, however, Quakers had conscientious objection; the "tithes" being the "hire" of state-endowed priests, and the "fines" having been imposed in most cases in ecclesiastical courts whose authority they did not recognise.

The second made it clear that the suspension of Penal Statutes against Nonconformists (which had been published in the Declaration of Indulgence three months before), applied to Quakers so far as they committed the offences of "not comeing to Church & heareing divine service" and "frequenting seditious conventicles"; and it distinctly named the offence of "refuseing to take the Oath of Allegiance and Supremacy"—which so directly flowed from their conscientious objection to take any oath at all, as covered by his Majesty's gracious pardon.

But the third was broader and more definite than either, and in so many words included the two offences—excluded [no doubt under pressure from the ecclesiastics on the Council (the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London)] from the pardon of May—adding to the particulars just mentioned "all p^rmunires Judgem^ts Convic̃ons, Sentences of Excommunicac̃on & Transportac̃on thereupon and of all ffynes Amerciam^ts paines penalties and forfeitures thereby incurrid, with Restituc̃on of Lands & Goods &c."

It is quite noteworthy that the reports here given of the activity and increase of the Quakers, as well as of their Conventicles and of the means taken to repress them, come not from the common informer, but from those in high places; from Mayors, and Justices, from Officers

and Governors of County Gaols; whereas about other sectaries these base spies are very busy.[3]

By the scare of the abortive Yorkshire Rising in 1663/4—just as previously through the Venner Insurrection though to a less extent—suspicions were falsely fastened on many Quakers (as well as on other Nonconformists), inherently unlikely as it was that the followers of Fox would take to plottings and military measures to achieve their ends; so that we have here reports of Quaker soldiers, subtle insinuations as to the superior quality of Quakers' horses; most diligent searches made for Quaker literature (as dangerously factious and seditious) as well as printers and distributors; and amusing alarms aroused by official ignorance of the simple meaning of the "Monthly Meeting" and the innocent object of the collections made at Quaker Meetings, when they lit on allusions to these in intercepted letters.

The geographical distribution of these papers is worth indicating, however unreliable as an index to the local distribution of Friends. From the central belt of England and Wales come comparatively few; one each from Derby, Cambridge and Nottingham; two or three from Suffolk, Berks and Oxford. But there are many from the North; few of them from Northumberland and Durham; but several from Cumberland (chiefly Carlisle), from Westmorland and Yorkshire. They come from all the three Ridings of Yorks. Whitby seems their centre in the North Riding; Hornsea, Hull and Hollym figure in the East Riding; and in the West Riding, Thorner, Leeds and Skipton. But where the three counties meet—Yorks, Westmorland and Lancashire—there the interest is focussed; and no series of papers in this volume is of such vital value as those that centre round Swarthmoor and Margaret Fell—whether concerning her or issuing from her pen—vividly telling the story of her valiant championship of Fox, and their right of meeting; of her imprisonment, and the sequestration of her estates; of the sordid clamour for them by her apostate son; and of their final award to her two daughters.

[3] A most interesting series is preserved reporting the Conenvticles in the City of London in the two years immediately following the first Conventicle Act (1663-5).

From London, and the "country" south of it, however, the papers are both numerous and interesting. In London we have them from Giles Calvert in the Gatehouse prison; about Dr. Otto Faber close to Barnards Castle; concerning London conventicles in 1666-7; and most vivid of all, the papers which tell of the war on Conventicles in Southwark and Tower Hamlets in 1670 and 1671; specially in '70, when the King was absent on his fateful visit to Dover, so that a bigoted Lord Mayor and an equally ardent persecutor, the Governor of the Tower, were free to work the newly-passed second Conventicle Act for all that it was worth.

In Kent, papers of fascinating interest tell us of Quakerism in Cranbrook, Goudhurst, Canterbury and Dover. For Surrey we have a single paper from Sheere. Of Sussex we learn there are Quakers in every corner of the "country" (*i.e.*, county); we have the Mary Carver papers from between Shoreham and Brighton, we have the powerful voice of Ambrose Rigge from Rotherfield, and the "bitter cry" from Horsham Gaol which issued in the release of the Quakers lying there in 1662/3.

A few of these papers concern Hampshire, Dorset, Wilts, Devon and Cornwall. We learn of 140 incarcerated in Dorchester; and of as many in Salisbury both in 1663 and 1670; while from Devon news comes of the Quaker strength in Plymouth, Falmouth and Exeter.

But papers of the utmost value are the many which centre in Bristol. In the Protectorate, attention is drawn to Quaker manners; but under the Monarchy, the trouble, begun by insisting on the Oath of Allegiance, is increased and multiplied by the persecuting violence of bigoted Anglicans. The Address of Charles Bayly from Newgate Gaol; the plea of Mrs. Curtis, daughter of a strong Anglican, Alderman Yeamans; the lively scenes enacted over the bailing out of three Quaker prisoners (Speed, Taylor and Jones) between two namesakes who are no relatives, Sir John Knight, Baronet, the High Church Mayor, and John Knight the Sugar Boiler, the stalwart but rather violent champion of the Friends; gave them a place and standing in the City which made persecution of them no easy task. Evidently the noble refusal mentioned in one of these papers, by the crew of a Bristol

ship, to ship three other Quakers to Barbados simply because convicted for a third offence under the Conventicle Act, bespeaks a strong interest in the city, and great sympathy with the Quakers on the part of their fellow citizens; giving them the confidence to break open their Meeting-house after it had been closed and nailed up against them, and boldly to march to and from their meetings past the City Council House, in full view of the magnates of the city.[4]

So much is there of thrilling interest in this one volume for members of the Society of Friends.

But there is not a little of interest for Nonconformists of other types.

Those lists in the First and Second Series of "Justices of Peace"—and of Quakers and others judged fit to hold the office—will well repay the closest and most persistent study, in the light of local as well as central records. To not a few, it is rather "painful" reading to find amongst "such that are in Commission in the County of Northampton" . . . who have "all allong given ther power unto the beast and have fought with the Lambe, and to this day thinke they doe god good servise in Imprissoning of his servantes"; or among the "persecuting men" of other counties, men of the Presbyterian and Congregational denominations who are mentioned in *Original Records of Early Nonconformity*, as reported in the Episcopal Returns of 1669 as holding Conventicles in their houses at the risk of fine and imprisonment, or figuring in the Indulgence documents of 1672 as licensed either to teach or to hold services in their houses. But it is well to know the facts, and to realise how easily the spirit of persecution may creep into a liberal-minded soul when in the place of influence and power.[5]

To anyone conversant with only the outstanding features of the romantic career of Col. Thomas Blood—one of the leaders of the rebellion in Dublin in 1661 and the attempt to seize Dublin Castle, one of the movers in

[4] These papers, read in the light of the City records, make a thrilling story of conflict between the pride of office, the bigotry of a State Church, and the enthusiastic courage of spirits made free by the Spirit of God.

[5] I have examined these lists and could give the particulars in several instances.

the abortive rising in Yorkshire, the forcible rescuer of Mason (who had taken part in it and been captured) when escorted on his journey from the Tower of London to the Castle of York, the daring assailant of Duke of Ormond on his way from a mayoral banquet to his house, and above all the man who nearly succeeded in his attempt to take the Crown Jewels from the Tower—it is almost startling to find him mentioned in the same letter which refers to Quakers imprisoned in the Old Bailey.

But so it is, Blood and his captured associates are still incarcerated in the Tower of London; and Sir John Robinson, Governor of the Tower, writing to Joseph Williamson, tells him how Lord Arlington, when dining with him, gave him "Warrants for the releasm^{t} of old Blood & Perrott, and for the [continued] confinem^{t} of young Blood." And this release was only the natural sequel to the pardon which the King had granted Blood senior as the result of the personal interview accorded him with the Royal brothers Charles the King and James the Duke of York. But more than this, under date of May 23, '72, we have an entire letter from Blood himself to the Earl of Arlington begging the release of others besides Quakers who are still incarcerated for offences committed under the second Conventicle Act.

One name, moreover, is mentioned in these papers —of a fame more widespread than any I have mentioned— and in a connection which puts one important event of his life in quite a new light. It is that of the Immortal Dreamer, John Bunyan. Under the disguise of the singular mis-spelling "John Bunion," it, with those of John Fenn the Bedford hatter and deacon of Bunyan's Church, and of John Dunne of Bolnhurst, stands as part of a list for Bedford County, which (with lists from thirty other Counties), is printed here as "a true List of the Names of such Persons comonly called Quakers & others which are by vertue of an Order of Councill of the 8th of May last past to be inserted in a generall Pardon." The natural inference from this would be that on the 8th of May John Bunyan was still in Bedford County gaol. True Dr. Brown shows that the gaoler must have given his Nonconformist prisoners considerable

freedom to go hither and thither on *parole* to teach and worship with their Nonconformist brethren. The Church books cited by Dr. Brown show that in January John Bunyan had been chosen as their pastor and John Fenn as their deacon; and though the oft-repeated legend is not by any means true that John Bunyan's licence under Charles's Indulgence was one of the first to be taken out, application had been made for licences, as early as the last day in April or the first day of May. Bunyan's licences were issued on the 9th of May, the day after the General Pardon was declared, for himself and John Fenn.[6] He and his friends were doubtless, by this time, pretty confident of his release and licence; but we see from this paper that his name did not appear in the General Pardon till the very day before his licence was issued.

Enough has been said, I trust, to show the great interest and historical value of the contents of this volume. The more carefully it is searched and the more thoroughly it is used, the more amply will its publication be justified.

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[6] The fact is that the first batch of licences, over seventy in number, were issued on the 2nd of April, and their entries occupy eight pages and a half of Entry Book 38A; while other batches were issued on the 11th, on the 13th, on the 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, 22nd, and 30th of April, and on the 1st and 2nd of May before we reach the first of the many issued on the 8th day of May. And we do not come upon the licence-entries for "John Bunyan to be a Congregational Teacher" and for "his friend Josias Roughead's howse in ye Towne Bedford" till the 93rd page of the Entry Book, its first and second lines.

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3 mo. 1703. Gaudy-Glitterring or shining culloured halfe Silke Stuffs (or Stript silke handkerchiefs) unbecoming the plainness of our profession, friends are not to buy sell nor wear . . .

3 mo. 1703. Friends are not to reach after every prospect of Gain without regard to what hurt or incumbrance it may bring upon the minde.

9 mo. 1705. Gardens friends are advised to make plain and rather plant or sett such profitable things as may be of service then to make fine Knotts set or make needless things only to sattisfie a vain curious minde.

Minutes of the NATIONAL HALF-YEARS MEETING held in Dublin.