

Supplement No. 14—Sufferings of Quakers in Cornwall

PROBABLY few Friends are aware of an old brown folio volume, measuring 12½ by 17½ inches with a beautifully embossed leather cover, which is occasionally shown to visitors to Friends House. The writing, though clear to the student accustomed to such caligraphy, is not such as would induce the ordinary reader to spend much time on it ; there are many insertions between the lines, and some pages appear to have undergone considerable revision. This old volume contains a full account of the persecution and sufferings endured by Friends in Cornwall in the years 1655 to 1792. Though it has been most painstakingly and skilfully repaired, it is not suitable for general handling, and Dr. Norman Penney, F.S.A., has conferred a benefit on all students of this period of English history by editing the text and arranging for it to be printed as a Supplement¹ to *The Journal of the Friends Historical Society*. Strictly, the printed copies contain only a portion of the original, namely the pages written by Thomas Lower, dating from 1655-1686, the remaining pages, dealing with the years 1691-1792, having been omitted as of minor importance.

This book is primarily of interest to historical students, to whom it constitutes a valuable source of raw material. It has a different interest for those of us, of long Quaker ancestry, who may find therein links with our ancestors and collaterals the study of which will pleasantly occupy many an hour. The entries are not without humour—often so subtle as to be lost in brief quotations—yet none the less pleasant because so much of it is unconscious. Romance, too, is there in many a quaint disguise, for love beat as

¹ *Record of the Sufferings of Friends in Cornwall, 1655 to 1686*, with Introduction by L. Violet Holdsworth, pp. xv + 152, 7s. 6d. (\$2.15), post paid. London : Friends Historical Society, Friends House, Euston Road, N.W.1 ; Philadelphia, Pa., Anna W. Hutchinson, 304 Arch Street.

strongly in Quaker hearts in Cornwall as it did and does elsewhere.

Several well-known names flit across the pages of this old record; among them may be mentioned Thomas Lower, M.D., step-son-in-law of George Fox, who appears to have copied the record from various documents; Loveday Hambly, beloved in her own life-time and again during the past few years as a result of Violet Holdsworth's *A Quaker Saint of Cornwall*, George Bewley, Ann Upcott and Thomas Salthouse. One wonders whether Henry Grubb was related to the quondam editor of the *British Friend* and whether the Tregelles now living are closely related to those in the Record; the index contains eighteen columns filled with names in small type and it is impossible in a short review to allude to more than two or three.

The headings to the pages give some interesting clues to their contents: "Opening shop on Christmas Day," "Persecutors stricken with fever," "A horse stolen and sold," "Fined for a preacher fled," "Advice in true love," and "Chief Justice Jeffreys"—all entice the reader to study at least those pages, though these headings have been selected at random and do not by any means reveal all the treasures of this old record.

Friends who have spent a few days at Launceston, either on holiday or business, will remember the thrill they experienced when they visited the Castle and spent a moment or more in "George Fox's prison" therein. Such Friends will probably find an additional interest in the forty or so references to Launceston in this record, for naturally so important a prison played a large part in the sufferings of Cornish Friends.

It would be a pity to spoil the book for some readers by selecting quotations of special interest; the book must be read through quietly to be enjoyed. It is not a volume for hasty reading, but one which gives its sweetest treasures to those who believe in the wisdom of stepping aside for awhile from the rush of life.

It is now many years since Friends suffered imprisonment for the "offences" mentioned in this record, and though the imprisonment of many Conscientious Objectors in the War of 1914-1918 should remind us that such imprisonments may recur unexpectedly at almost any time, we do well to

remember the intensity of sufferings undergone by our ancestors—physical or spiritual—in their endeavours to “stand fast in the faith.”

Can any of us who are Friends read even half-a-dozen entries from this old volume without a sob in our throats and a profound feeling of thankfulness for the simple and sturdy thoroughness with which our spiritual ancestors in a remote part of the country bore their testimonies, did what they believed right regardless of consequences, and in so doing built a foundation and to some extent a structure of great value to us to-day?

In her charming introduction Violet Holdsworth writes: “The story is given here from one point of view only. The reader must imagine for himself the perplexity of these county justices and parish constables when confronted with such stubbornly conscientious law breakers; simple yet unterrified men and women who could be ‘dirted and hurted’ or sent to languish for long months or years in gaol, but could not be prevented from meeting together to find God in the silence in their own homesteads, and who utterly refused to attend divine worship in ‘the old masshouse’ or to do even seemingly trivial actions that their conscience forbade.”

At the end of the volume is an interesting Appendix containing a long letter from Thomas Lower in Launceston Gaol, to George Fox in London, relating the former’s interview with Judge Jeffreys.

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The Research Fellowship held by Horace Fleming, M.A., now Warden of the Mary Ward Settlement, in Tavistock Place, has resulted in the publication of *The Lighted Mind: The Challenge of Adult Education to Quakerism* (London: Friends’ Book Centre, Euston Road, N.W.1, pp. 72 + x, 1s. 6d. net).

The Friends’ Literature Committee has published, for the Yorkshire Friends’ Service Committee, a pamphlet by Edith J. Wilson—*Church Government in the Society of Friends* (London: Friends’ Book Centre. 2d.).