

The Great Revival at Malton in 1652

RICHARD FARNSWORTH, in a letter to Margaret Fell, in 1652, said that 200 people had met recently in Malton to wait upon the Lord, and had continued together for three or four days, scarce parting from one another day or night. "I was with them. Twice the mighty power of the Lord was made manifest. Almost all the room was shaken."¹ Previously George Fox had convinced of the Truth a young woollen-draper of Malton, Roger Hebden by name, who had an estate at Appleton-le-Street, where visitors to the beautiful pre-Norman church will find against its exterior south wall a Hebden tomb. A little book, now very rare, entitled *A Plain Account of the Christian Experiences of Roger Hebden*, published in 1700, five years after his death, tells the story of the life of this intrepid missionary. At the time Roger was convinced Christopher Halliday, of Malton, and William Pearson, of Settrington, also became Quakers, but Roger was the most active leader in local work. The remarkable impression which he made upon the district is evident from the testimonies printed in the little book referred to, and written by responsible people in Malton and Kirbymoorside.

This particular revival at Malton is the subject of a striking passage in William C. Braithwaite's *Beginnings of Quakerism*.² "Upon Roger Hebden", he writes, "was poured out the spirit of prayer and prophecy, and a great work of the Lord took place, which recalls on a small scale the autos-da-fé by which luxurious Florence paid homage to the holy zeal of Savonarola. 'The men of Malton', with we opine, the sturdy woollen draper at their head, burnt their ribbons and silks and other fine commodities, 'because they might be abased by pride.'"

It is known that among other persons taking a prominent part in these meetings was a certain Jane Holmes who had been ducked as a scold for crying her message through Malton. She was taken to York Castle where she was

¹ J. W. Rowntree: *Essays and Addresses*, p. 17.

² pp. 71-72.

attacked by fever and afterwards, according to a letter written by John Aldam, fell into a "wild, airy spirit which was exalted above the cross, which kicked against reproof and would not come to judgment".¹ She was visited by Aldam and other Friends, but without effect.

Additional, if not wholly reliable information about this disturbing character is given by one of the depositions in York Castle, headed as follows :

*Deposition from The Castle of York, No. 52.*²

JANE — FOR ABUSING MINISTERS, ETC.

August 24th, 1652. Before Sir Richard Darley, Kt.

The editor of this Collection of depositions says that the accused person, whose surname was unknown, must have been labouring under some extraordinary religious delusion. She seemed to have made a great sensation at Malton where, according to him, there was at this time a large number of weak and credulous people. Possibly she might have been a member of the Family of Love.

The case was brought up by Robert Hickson, of New Malton, clerk and preacher of the word there, who said that this Jane ——— had come about three weeks before and had endeavoured by delusion to draw his people away from him, telling the people that he was a blind guide, a thief and a robber.

One of the witnesses, Thomas Dowsley, of New Malton, said that his wife did usually resort to Roger Hebden's house and did not come home any night until 12 o'clock, and some nights not at all; also that his son Thomas had denied true obedience unto him. He alleged that the said Jane ——— was the only instrument of drawing his wife and son from him and the cause of tumults and assemblies at unseasonable times of the night. He added that she was an immoral person.

Major Baildon, of New Malton, said that this Jane ——— had drawn the affection of his wife from him. "He went to Roger Hebden's house and found the said

¹ Swarthmore Colln. III, 40.

² *Depositions from the Castle of York.* Surtees Society, Vol. XL, 1861.

Jane and his wife among 100 people, and he desired his wife to go home, and she said that she would not go . . . and some of that party threw him violently down the stairs and put him in danger of his life and struck him on his breast."

Without assenting to this description, we are driven to the conclusion that Jane Holmes was exceptionally unbalanced mentally and that on the whole her behaviour may be said to have been the cause of some of the criticisms directed against Quakers in Malton and the district. No record of her final fate has been found.

The immense effect of these happenings in Malton is best illustrated by the fact that an anonymous tract¹ was printed in London before the end of the year which "denounced Quaking and entranced faction" and the "unchristian practises and opinions" of the people concerned. The tract contains the words: "Whether when about Malton there are towards 200 or 300 neglecting their callings, young and old, to compare notes of their entranced madness, it concerns not a church, nay, a Commonwealth, if it were no more than Pagan, to look to it and prevent the growth of further mischief."

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¹ *The Querers and Quakers Cause at the Second Hearing, 1653. Essays and Addresses*, p. 17.