

Laythes MSS.

THOMAS LAYTHES (1628-1701) of Dailhead in Cumberland was convinced of Friends' principles in 1659 and became one of the pillars of Quakerism in that county. Though he suffered for his faith more than once he is not mentioned in Besse nor in most of the other sources of biographical information like *Piety Promoted* or *Whiting's Memoirs*. Fox mentions being at his home in 1663. Heretofore our principal knowledge of him has come from two small spiritual autobiographical pieces published fifteen years before his death.

There is in existence a leather bound quarto letter book filled in a small hand from cover to cover with pieces which Thomas Laythes has copied into it. The pagination (322 pages) and the elaborate table of contents are also in his hand. The time of writing is indicated by this colophon, "And now this 9 day of 7th month 1700 I am come to the end of my Booke which I began with in 1689 being about 11 years Time." The volume shows no signs of its transmission in private hands or through dealers, except the name on the inside front cover, "Joseph King Murray." This Friend was born in 1836, the son of Lindley and Mary Ann (King) Murray of Flushing, L.I. He died First Month 13, 1916. The book was disposed of by his heirs about 1934 to a book dealer in New York City who courteously allowed me to examine it. The volume has since been purchased by Friends House Library in London.

The contents resemble in form and thought much of the usual seventeenth century Quaker writing. There are letters addressed by T.L. to priests and "great men" often with the usual formulation of numbered queries. There are "the examples", i.e. instances of local persecutors of Quakerism visited by divine judgments. There are testimonies to deceased Friends, epistles to or from Friends' meetings, and short essays on religious subjects. One of the most interesting parts is the second, containing letters to Thomas Laythes from persons better known than he is in Quaker history, including Thomas Dockray and Thomas Salthouse, who write of events at Lancaster or Swarthmore, John Banks,

John Burnyeat, James Dickinson, Richard Richardson. Of American interest are the letter of James Dickinson written from Barbadoes, 14th of 8th month, 1691, a time of severe distemper on the island (p. 223) and an undated " Loving Salutation to all the Churches of God and Faithful Brethren in England " from Friends in Maryland, a " darke corner of the Earth and remote place where the Lord hath scattered us and where some of us have had our natural birth " .

Little of the volume has appeared in print, even among the printed pieces of Thomas Laythes. But the account of Fox's death circulated from the Second Day Morning's Meeting was printed with his Journal and about forty-five pages at the end of the MS. include pieces of Edward Burrough that were printed.

Among the biographical facts we learn that Thomas Laythes was born " on or before the 26th day of August 1628 as doth appear by the register at Crostwhaite ". Richard Richardson was his last schoolmaster. He married in 1651 and was convinced at Swarthmoor on the 2nd day of 8th month, 1659, where he attended his first Friends' meeting. He was imprisoned in 1660 and again in 1664. His wife died in 1691 and in 1699 he married Esther Huntington of Keswick. Evidently the marriage was criticized in some quarters. Thomas Laythes enters carefully the meeting minutes and the marriage certificate.

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