

First Publishers of Truth in London

By HENRY J. CADBURY

THE *FIRST PUBLISHERS OF TRUTH*, published by Norman Penney in 1903-7 included, beside the ninety papers collected in London in Portfolio 7, several that were derived from independent and local sources. Some of these came to his notice only in time for inclusion in the appendix, and others he published later in this *Journal* when they came to light. (See summary, xxxi, 2.) Since his death in 1933 at least four additional items have been printed here, the first of them being of considerable importance, viz. xxxi, 3-19 (Lancashire), 20 (Warwickshire), xxii, 51f (Staffordshire), 53 (Lancashire, Hawkshead).

But lost primitive documents are sometimes recovered in another way. As Rendel Harris will bear me witness, they may survive imbedded in a later writing. A *FPT* item of this kind for London may be detected in *A Brief Narrative of the Life and Death of Gilbert Latey*, etc. (1707, with at least four later editions). The material for London published by Norman Penney from Portfolio 7 (Nos. 46-51) is mainly, I think, there by mistake, belonging to two other types of central collections made by Friends, viz. *Sufferings* (No. 46), and *Testimonies* (to deceased publishers of truth; Nos. 47-49). We have evidence of such collections; indeed, a separate questionnaire for the latter in 1682 is mentioned by Penney in confusion with that for the publishers of truth (p. 2). Ellis Hookes, the scribe of Nos. 47-49, was the collector and editor of both "Sufferings" and "Testimonies". The other two papers are, however, relevant and show how a full fifty years after the events search was made for persons whose memory went back to the beginnings of London Quakerism. Two were found to supply signed statements in 1706 and 1707, viz. William Spurry of Ross (No. 50) and Walter Miers of Southwark (No. 51). Endorsing the latter in 1710 Benjamin Bealing refers apparently to two similar papers previously received and entered but not discovered by Norman Penney (*FPT*, p. 167, n. 15).

Now Gilbert Latey was as early a convert and as continuous a Londoner as either Spurry or Miers. He had been a more active and conspicuous Friend than either of them. He was actually a member of the Meeting for Sufferings, the body collecting the

material. If reports of "eyewitnesses from the first" were wanted he was certainly available. His nephew, Richard Hawkins, in the biography mentioned, says explicitly (p. 6) that Gilbert Latey prepared a statement on the subject and implies, I think, that it is used in what immediately follows. This is repeated in the preface where he says, "the following passages of the life of my deceased dearly and well beloved uncle came chiefly from himself as to what relates to and was brought to pass in the last century at the first breaking forth of the blessed Truth in this great city; and much of the latter part of his time was within the compass of my own knowledge (we having lived together above forty and two years)." To be sure, Latey is mentioned in the narrative derived from him and in the third person, and some phrases are evidently additions but otherwise the passage is exactly similar in form to the usual local returns about First Publishers, e.g. No. 51, answering precisely the questions phrased by the Meeting for Sufferings in 7th Month, 1704 as "What public Friends first came to the respective counties, and who received them, and what meetings they were instrumental to settle, and what success attended their labours" (p. 2). It is true that Latey died in ninth month (November) 1705, a date earlier than that of the other two London replies mentioned, but he may well have written earlier than they, as did some correspondents from more distant counties. In fact, similar questions had been asked and answered on previous occasions. As late as the 22nd of the 6th month 1705 he was able and interested to write (again from his first-hand knowledge) of the origin of the association of women Friends in a central London meeting (*Life*, pp. 145-9).

The following is the full text as published by Hawkins (pp. 6-18). Except for the passages which I have enclosed in square brackets it may be substantially and almost verbatim Latey's own reply to the questionnaire. Why Hawkins had a copy and why Portfolio 7 has not a copy we do not know. Much of the information is in the parallel accounts in *FPT*, though they make no mention of the meetings in the Strand (2), Spitalfields, Wheeler Street, Stepney and Ratcliff. As might be expected, Latey could draw upon his own experience to tell, as the other accounts do not, of the women who became ministers, and of the meetings at Kingston (connected with John and Ann Fielder, his wife's parents), Hammersmith (his own meeting) and Greenwich. Even though the account is already in print (rather edited in some reprints), its intrinsic interest and the recovery of its probable origin in connection with the "First Publishers of Truth" justify the printing of it *in extenso* under that title. Notes on most of the persons and places will be found in *FPT* or *Camb. Jnl.* or *Short Jn.* On a few others notes

are here added. Of course, the modern authority on the subject is still Beck and Ball, *The London Friends' Meetings*, 1869.

THERE being few in this city now left who came so early into the vineyard of the Lord, [he was] willing, as near as [he could] remember, to give some account to the present and succeeding age, how the truth prevailed, and also the names of the ministering Friends, that in those early days first visited this city, and parts adjacent, and were made instruments in the Lord's hand for turning many from darkness to light, and though they are now all gone to their rest, their faithfulness to the Lord, good works and great labours, are still fresh in memory, and the many jeopardies and sufferings they passed through, in their obedience to the Lord, cannot be forgotten by such as were eye-witnesses, who now are reduced to few in number, yet the Lord's power, still being the same, hath plentifully raised more witnesses, bearing a faithful testimony to the same truth and power of God that the ancients came forth in ; and the Lord's work prospers.

The first who brought the glad tidings to this city were, Francis Howghill, Edward Burroughs, Thomas Aldham, George Fox, Richard Huberthorn, John Audland, Ambrose Rig, James Naylor, and others ; by whom many were turned to the Lord ; and by his everlasting power their hearts were opened to receive those his messengers into their houses, and to offer up the same, to have meetings therein for the service of the Lord. Among these was Simon Dring, who then lived in Watling-street, but sometime after removed into Moorfields, where he also continued to have a meeting in his house on the first-days of the week in the afternoon. About this time also [as before related], Sarah Matthews, a widow, in Whitecross-street, had a meeting at her house, which was continued on the first-days in the morning for some time. Another meeting was at Humphrey Bates his house, at the sign of the Snail, in Tower-street ; another meeting at Samuel Vasse's, at the Helmet in Basinghall-street ; another at Glasiers' Hall in Thames-street, where Gerard Roberts was convinced, and gave way to have a meeting at his house, which was in the street called Thomas Apostles ; where ministering Friends generally met till the year 1666. Another meeting was at William Woodcock's house, who lived in the Strand, between the great gate of

Sommerset House and the Water gate thereto belonging. There were divers other meetings in the suburbs, and in Southwark; at William Shewen's in Barnaby-street; Daniel Flemming's in Blackman-street; Henry Clark's on the Bank-side; and at Worcester House in the Strand.

The work of the Lord thus prospering, and Truth increasing, many both sons and daughter were convinced and made help-meets in the Gospel; among the latter in these early days came forth in a publick testimony Anne Downer, who afterwards was the wife of our honourable Friend George Whitehead; who at this time also had a publick testimony to bear for the Lord, and had his service in other parts; so that he came not to this city till about the year 1656. About the time of Ann Downer's thus coming forth, Ruth Brown in her tender years received the truth, and was afterwards in the early days marri'd to our Friend William Crouch; who are both still living. And the Lord raised up his servants, Sarah Blackbury, Ann Gould, and Elizabeth Peacock, who all came forth in a publick testimony for the Lord, his name and truth.

It being now about the year 1655, Friends found a concern upon them to have some settled meetings, for the sake of those who yet sat in darkness, that they might come and hear the truth declared, and be turned to the Lord; whereupon a meeting was settled, and the place is still continued for a meeting, being known by the name of the meeting at Sarah Sawyer's: The next public meeting was about the same year settled at the Bull and Mouth in Martin's le Grand, near Aldersgate, which is still continued there; there were also about this time several other meetings at divers Friends houses; as one at the widow Webb's, in Jacob-street in Southwark, which growing large was removed to a public meeting-house provided at Horsleydown, which meeting is still continued; and another in Spittlefields, which was removed, and a publick place opened for a meeting in Wheeler-street, which hath also continued there ever since; and soon after, another at Stepney, near Mile-End, which grew large, and was after removed, and a new meeting-house built at Ratclife, and is continued in the same place to this day. Another meeting also was settled at the Sign of the Peel, near Hicks's Hall, which is likewise continued in the same place.

[Now Gilbert, being one among the first fruits to the Lord in this great city, and through the light of Christ, furnished with a very quick discerning, and sound judgment, was made serviceable in his hand to help in settling the church in Discipline and good order, and long continued a pillar in the house of our God, retaining his integrity to the last.] And now the Truth having gained upon many in divers parts of the city, suburbs, and country adjacent, they offered up themselves and their houses for the Truth's sake, amongst whom in these times of hardship and tryal, were the worthy servants of the Lord, John Fielder, and Ann his wife, who were convinced at Kingston upon Thames ; and as faithful followers of the Lamb, not only received the Lord's ministers, who laboured in his work and service, but also gave up their house for a meeting-place ; and accordingly a meeting was there settled ; and Oliver, then called Protector, residing much at Hampton-Court, this meeting became of great service, and many were there convinced and turned to the Lord, and directed to wait in silence, for the arising of the pure gift in themselves. Several who then belonged to Oliver's household, were also convinced at this meeting, and continued faithful ; of whom there are some yet [viz. in 1706] alive.

About the year 1658 there were several other meetings in parts about this city, as one at Mitcham for some time, where Friends suffered prtty much ; another in like manner at Croydon, another at Walworth, another also at Lambeth-March, another at Thomas Hackleton's, at the Bank-side, near the Faulcon ; another at the Bankside, near Southwark, at Henry Clark's ; these being all in the county of Surry. Thus the Lord's work prospered, who according to the prophecy of the prophet Joel, that in the latter times he would pour out his spirit upon sons and daughters, servants and handmaids, that they should prophesy, hath in these times measurably made good his promises by sending forth his servants and handmaids, to make known his truth, and declare his name, in the demonstration of his mighty power ; among others in this Gospel-day, Sarah Blackbury came to the town of Hammersmith, in Middlesex, being five or six miles out of the city to the westward, and there desired to have a meeting ; and the Lord wrought so on one Hester Matson, who lived there, that she received this servant of the Lord

into her house, and acquainted her husband thereof, at his coming home (he then belonging to a brew house in Westminster, rarely came to his wife and family above once a week) ; and she desired he would give leave that a meeting might be appointed at their house, which he consented to. But it being at this time, according to the saying of old (" They shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my Name's sake ") the evil doers, even to this day, hating the light ; when the second meeting was to have been, he being a man of an high spirit, and having given ear to the calumnies and bad reports which his fellow-servants and others had possessed him with, would not permit the meeting to be at his house, notwithstanding his former promise ; whereupon his wife and some few more went to Chiswick, a town to the westward by the water-side, hardly a mile farther, and for some time had a meeting there, at William Bond's house : But it being pretty quickly thought fit to remove nearer Hammersmith, a place was accordingly provided near the Lime-kilns, by the water-side ; which place was and is called the Hope, being about mid-way between the two towns ; [at which Gilbert Latey was a frequent visiter thereof]. In a while after, the meeting was brought back to Hammersmith, and there continued forty-nine years, and still remains a meeting ; [during which time, he was a frequent attender, and in measure supporter thereof, being as a nursing father thereto ; and the Lord blessed his unwearied labour of love.]

About this year there was a meeting at Barking in Essex, which is still continued & and about this time another at Greenwich, in the house which was the King's, [which Gilbert was a frequent visitor of, and often went in great hazard by reason of a rude sort of people, by whom both they and other Friends, in going and coming were often sorely stoned ;] and the rude people were so wickedly bent that when the Friends were met, they would throw many stones in through the windows, and sometimes did thereby fetch the blood from several ; in all which the Lord upheld and supported Friends ; so that, notwithstanding the rage of the enemy, they kept up the meeting till the coming of King Charles, who then took possession of the house.

About the year 1658, a young man who was named George Bayle, an apprentice in the New Exchange in the

Strand, was convinced, and was a very hopeful young man ; and some time after went for France, and he being never more heard of, was supposed to be privately murdered there for his zeal for the Lord and his truth, in bearing testimony against their idolatry and superstition.

John Woolman's Journey in England

The following has been found by Samuel Graveson in the minutes of Hertford Quarterly Meeting deposited in the Library at Friends House.

At a Quarterly Meeting held 6th mo. 16th, 1772 . . . Our Friends John Woolmer, William Hunt & Thomas Thornborough from America being likewise Present in the Course of their religious Visits to this Island, their Company, and Labour of Love was likewise greatly to our Comfort and satisfaction.

John Woolman had left London the previous day, and a fortnight later he was at Banbury. William Hunt of Guilford, North Carolina, John Woolman's cousin, was one of the foremost American Quaker ministers of his day. Thomas Thornborough of New Garden, N.C., was his nephew. They sailed together from Philadelphia on a religious visit to "Old England" in the same ship in which John Woolman afterwards sailed, exactly a year later. Gunmere : *Journal and Essays of John Woolman*, 518.

From Ratcliff M.M. Papers—Vol. I

- 1649 James Strutt the son of James¹ and Mary Strutt was Borne the 24 day of the 9 mo. 1649 in Waping & for contience sacke Cold not sprenkel him.
- 1651 John Strutt the son of James & Mary Strutt was Borne the 26 day of ye 8 mo. 1651 in Ratlife & was sprinkeled in ouer house but knoe not that he was Registered.
- 1653 Joseph Strutt the son of James & Mary Strutt was Borne the 9 day of the 7 mo. 1653 nere the grene Bancks in Wapping & for contience sacke Cold not have him sprinkeled.

¹ James Strutt (c. 1619-1700) of Wapping and Ratcliff, was a ship-master who suffered much for his refusal to arm his ships at a time when all ships were ordered to carry guns. *Journal of George Fox* (Camb.), II, 429.