

George Fox's Papers

“WHEN George Fox died in January 1690-1691 he left instructions looking towards the publication of all his writings in a series of volumes. Much of the material for the purpose he himself had already collected, endorsed, listed and partly edited. His literary executors and the officials of English Quakerism carried out his wishes to the extent of three large folio volumes: the *Journal* (1694), the *Epistles* (1698), and the *Doctrinals* (1706), but the material was found to be very extensive and by the time the *Journal* was published it became necessary to prepare an elaborate catalogue of all the extant papers and epistles, both printed and unprinted, that remained available, of the Founder's authorship. The result was the *Annual Catalogue of George Fox's Papers*, now long preserved in Friends' Reference Library, Friends House, London, though all but unused for over two centuries.

“This large demy folio MS. volume of some 900 pages in all includes about 300 pages of catalogue arranged as follows. The papers of George Fox are grouped by the presumed year of their origin. Each entry consists of (1) a serial number, (2) a quotation of part of the wording of the piece, (3) the month, day and place of writing, when such were known, and (4) a reference to such prior collections of Fox's writings as contained the piece. . . . Of the wording of the piece a title or endorsement, if any, would be given first. In any case the first words of the piece would be given—from five to twenty-five words. In many cases the last five or ten words were also entered. . . . The Catalogue was begun in 1694 and was continued for three or four years. There are very few bits of writing in it later than 1698. It was almost certainly the work of Mark Swanner. . . . Another important part of the work was the alphabetical index. This was arranged to list the important first or last words of each piece, and was doubtless used for the purpose of detecting duplicates in order that they might not be entered twice, or if entered twice might be supplied with appropriate cross references. . . . Certain collections of Fox's papers that were catalogued either not at all or only incompletely are much more fully entered in the index.”

These extracts are from Henry J. Cadbury's preface to his edition, with omissions and additions, of the *Annual*

Catalogue of George Fox's Papers, compiled in 1694-1697 (Philadelphia, Friends' Book Store, and London, Friends' Book Centre, 1939, 21s., pp. vii + 219).

This great MS. volume, of somewhat obscure purpose, barely noticed by Quaker historians, received some attention in 1928 from Dr. Theodor Sippell, who concentrated his enquiry on the list he found in it of books in George Fox's library, described in volume xxviii of this Journal (1931).

The catalogue contains some 5,000 entries, and the index some 15,000, representing perhaps 4,000 separate papers. Its great bulk and complexity presented problems to which Henry J. Cadbury, in 1932 and in several years following, brought his flair for elucidation and discovery as well as ample opportunity for study. The result is seen in the quarto canvas bound volume under review, produced from typescript by a photo-lithographic process that greatly reduces the cost of issuing small editions of scholarly publications such as this.

In preparing the catalogue for the press, entries relating to papers printed in or before 1698 have been omitted. The editor has also discovered by diligent and widespread enquiry, some 400 papers by George Fox which escaped the original cataloguers and which are now scattered in numerous MS. collections and printed books. These are incorporated in the volume in distinctive type.

The majority of the volumes and bundles of MS. material which were the object of the original cataloguer's care have now been lost, but at least fifteen of these collections are still to be found in the Library at Friends House, London.

There is a full descriptive bibliography of the various manuscript sources contributing to the original catalogue, and a second bibliography of the supplementary sources from which the editor gathered the additional papers missed by the first cataloguers.

For future students of the life and writings of George Fox this printed catalogue helps to make accessible a quantity of source material which was previously very obscure and brings together a great number of papers which are widely scattered. It should prove useful in all comprehensive Quaker libraries. For students who cannot visit Friends House a particular paper required can often be supplied by one of the photofacsimile processes.