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Editorial

The presidential address for the year 1950 was delivered at Friends House on Thursday, 6th July, by Alfred B. Searle. The address aroused much interest as a welcome contribution to our knowledge of a traditional Quaker testimony. Alfred Searle's paper, "Friends (Quakers) and Arbitration" has already been printed in full in the September 1950 number (vol. 16, N.S., no. 3) of *The Journal of the Institute of Arbitrators (Incorporated)*, pp. 53-90.¹

Among other material, this number includes a study by Dr. W. A. C. Stewart, Professor of Education at the University College of North Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent, concerning school punishment methods and their development, from the early days of Ackworth until the end of last century. We are also glad to print two short contributions from Dr. Henry J. Cadbury, and a bibliographical note by Dr. Geoffrey Nuttall which clears up some obscure points in early Quaker controversy.

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Quaker Literature

THE flood of pamphleteering which can be conveniently dated from 1640 when events were hastening towards civil war between King and Parliament and which can be studied in the great Thomason Collection of tracts² now in the British Museum had a profound influence on the

¹ Published by the Institute, 10 Norfolk Street, London, W.C.2. Price 1s. There is a copy in the library at Friends House.

² Catalogue available in the library at Friends House.

development of English prose as a vehicle for the conveyance of ideas on all sorts of topics to all conditions of people.

The place Friends took in this field of activity deserves more study than has been given to it. Opponents were known to jeer at them for their lack of learning, for their misuse of the English language and even (in that age of diversities of spelling) for their orthography. Nevertheless, that they were able to produce passages of beauty as well as hold their own in hard-hitting polemics, shows that Friends were not without craftsmen in their efforts to publish Truth by the written and printed word.¹

Of the early Friends, some, like Samuel Fisher, had already received a formal education to a high degree, and Quakerism came too late to have any decisive influence on their style and composition; many doubtless had received an education insufficient to give them complete command of language (John Audland was said not to have been able to write two lines of good English together); but there are others competently educated and practised in the spoken word, on whose writing the impact of Quakerism may be expected to show some influence. Hasty pamphleteering does not lend itself to distinguished writing, but it may produce clear and workmanlike sentences which (unless ruined by the compositor) convey the writer's meaning.

As the years pass the emphasis shifts from the pamphlet for the day (many also unnecessarily enshrined in bulky folio volumes of *Works*) to the spiritual diary of the soul's journey. These last, being works of contemplation, may be expected to have stylistic merits, and we know some were widely read and they have an established place in English literature. It is however the earlier works, the forerunners, whose ephemeral interest has long since passed, but which may still repay study as tracers to the student of literary development.

Today there are signs of revived interest in seventeenth century theology, but many aspects of the varied life of that troubled period are still overlooked. The increased literary activity which marked the middle of the century is a reflection of increased intellectual activity dating from King James's Authorized version of the English Bible, 1611, and from the junction of Puritan religious movements with political trends which came apparent during the reign of Charles I, and which together worked in the ferment of ideas of the two decades at the mid-century. The period of freedom in printing came at a time when ideas had free play and when men had become well accustomed to the use of the printed word in religious and political activity.

The part taken by the not inconsiderable Quaker output deserves study—in general from the literary point of view, and in particular aiming to resolve such questions as the amount to which Friends were indebted to tracts and polemics for their growth under the Republic and consolidation after the Restoration.

¹ See Luella M. Wright: *Literature and Education in Early Quakerism* (University of Iowa, 1933).