

Some light on Charles II and Friends

ALTHOUGH the reign of Charles II was the period of longest and worst persecution for Quakers, there were some cordial relations between the monarch and these subjects. Robert Barclay had family ties with the Stuarts and addressed his famous Apology to the King in a rather individual way. Repeatedly William Penn, Margaret Fell and other well-known Friends appealed personally to him on behalf of prisoners. It was Charles who soon after his accession sent a mandamus to the authorities in Massachusetts Bay colony to stop the execution of his Quaker subjects, and who promoted the release of a large list of Friends in England by the great pardon in 1672. One day in between Pepys' diary could report (December 21, 1667) "The Quakers had very good words from the King himself".

A unique personal relationship is suggested by the case of Richard Carver. He is brought to our attention anonymously by a letter from Ellis Hookes in London to Margaret Fox, dated January 16, 1669/70. It tells how among those applying on behalf of Friends directly to the King was "one that is John Grove's mate.¹ He was the man that was mate to the master of the fisher-boat that carried the King away, when he went from Worcester fight; and only this Friend and the master knew of it in the ship, and the Friend carried him ashore on his shoulders. The King knew him again, and was very friendly to him; and told him he remembered him, and of several things that was done in the ship at the same time". Ellis Hookes explains that this Friend in the past had never sought anything for himself, but now asked for the release of 110 Friends mentioned on a paper that he brought, who had for six years been imprisoned with praemunire. A month later Ellis Hookes writes of a later visit to the king by the same Quaker seaman, "He had a fair and free opportunity to open his mind to the King; the King has promised to do for him, but willed him to wait a month or two longer".

These letters were published quite accurately in a

¹ For John Grove of London, "a choice Friend and Sailor", see Thomas Ellwood's *Life* under 1670.

valuable collection called *Letters, &c., of Early Friends* in 1841, edited by A. R. Barclay, and were re-published in the rare Birmingham periodical *Monthly Record* for 10th month 1878, under the heading "Letters of Early Friends". Thomas W. Marsh in *Some Records of the Early Friends in Surrey and Sussex*, 1886, pp. 71-73, reprinted at length the latter account on the assumption [or knowledge?] that Richard Carver was a Sussex Friend.

For the identification of this former benefactor of the monarch we are indebted to one of the many brief endorsements by George Fox. On the first mentioned letter he wrote in his scrawly hand: 'paseges consarning richard carver that carred the King of his backe.'

The general situation is well summarized in this account. "The event with which this Quaker seaman was associated—the escape to France of Charles II after the battle of Worcester in 1651—was preceded by adventures of thrilling interest. . . . For forty days, under various disguises, he moved from place to place; and eventually having arrived at Brighton, then an inconsiderable place,—a mere fishing village—his friends engaged the captain of a fishing smack to land him and Lord Wilmot in France." When they drew near a harbour the tide failed and there they went forward in a cock boat, and finally in shallow water carried on the backs of sailors ashore. The barge in which they made this final voyage is described as a coal barge not above 60 tons, and had as master one Nicholas Tattersall. The crew was four men and a boy. They left the night of October 4 from near Brighton and arrived next morning at Fackham on the French coast.¹

Samuel Pepys collected several different reminiscences of these events in writing. The King himself was an eager reporter of his experiences, and as late as 1680 he gave Pepys an interview which the latter took down in shorthand, and next day supplemented it with notes based on answers by the King to questions. One of these additions gives this information: "One of the sailors was named Thomas Tuppen, the mate was Richard Carver, and the ship's name was *The*

¹ Those who remember Henry Marriage Wallis, of Reading, will recall also his "Ballad of King Charles & Richard Carver" (printed in "Many Measures", 1934). H.M.W. allowed himself some historical licence, but the poem gives a racy version of a memorable episode in Quaker history. It identifies the Fackham of the narrative, on the French coast, with Fécamp.

Surprise". Thus Charles himself confirms George Fox's identification of the sailor. These notes were published by William Matthews in 1966 in *Charles II's Escape from Worcester*, p. 83.

Later events can be culled from other sources. According to the registers of Munster Quarterly Meeting in Ireland, Richard Carver, shipmaster of London, died at Cork, 8 month 19, 1670.¹ After his death his widow appealed directly to the King by letter. That was printed in *Extracts from State Papers relating to Friends* (1911), p. 158,² as though it belonged about 1662, but it is undated, and of course is later.

She writes:

My late husband, Richard Carver, was not only an honest and faithful subject to thee, but (by the providence of God) was made an instrument of great service unto thee in the day of thy calamity to carry thee from the English shore between Shoreham and Brighton into France, gladly serving thee, O King, in thy then great distress, though he knew if he had been discovered he must have lost his life for it, whereas if he could have discovered thee to thine enemies he might have had one thousand pounds. Yet neither did the promise of such a reward, nor his own poverty with the hazard of his life tempt him to unfaithfulness, but then, and to the day of his death did remain faithful to the King, desiring no other reward of the King in his lifetime than the delivery of some of his friends (called Quakers) out of prison, but it pleased not the King to answer his request.

It will be seen how exactly her review agrees with what we learned of the case from other sources. But she herself is now ready to ask a personal favour. She concludes:

And whereas after some time, my husband dying. I was left a poor and desolate widow with three small children. I therefore do request that the King would be pleased (in tenderness and nobility) on consideration of my deceased husband's faithfulness and service to thee, to [?] consider the low estate of me and my fatherless children, knowing that he that shews mercy shall find mercy.

MARY CARVER, the late wife of Richard Carver.

This letter shows by its plain language (thy, thee), and its good diction, either an educated Quakeress, or a literate writer on her behalf.

¹ Joseph Smith, *Supplement to a Descriptive catalogue of Friends' books*, 1893, p. 76.

² With reference: S.P.D. lxvi. 54. *Cal.* 1661-2, p. 616.

I find only one other reference to the family. It is in the Register of deaths of London and Middlesex Quarterly Meeting: there is none under marriages or births. It says: Isaac Carver, died of teething 6 m. 14, 1671 aged about 1 year, son of Mary, a widow of the parish of Magdalen, Bermondsey, belonging to Southwark Monthly Meeting, and was buried in Southwark burial ground.

It is a surprising coincidence that in 1690, nearly forty years after Charles II escaped to France, his brother James II, defeated in Ireland at the Battle of the Boyne, likewise was assisted in flight to France by a Quaker. At least according to information sent to the editor (John Barclay) of the *Life of Joseph Pike* Francis Randall, of Randall's Mills near Enniscorthy, being known to the King, defended him from capture by Randall's own employees, and sent his son with fresh horses to escort him to Duncannon Fort where a French ship of war was waiting to receive him.¹

Further evidence of the king's personal predilection towards lenient treatment of Friends (at least during the first half of his reign, and so far as he found possible) is provided by a document of 23 August 1662, issued on the occasion of the arrival of his queen Catherine of Braganza in the capital.

This is printed below from a single issue of one of the more long-lived of the newsbooks, *Mercurius Publicus*, Numb. 34, Published by Authority. From Thursday Aug. 21 to Thursday Aug. 28, 1662, pp. 568-69.²

Westminster Satturday Aug. 33 [sic.]

We told you last week of the affection and Loyalty of the Common Councel and City of *London*, exprest in their gift of five hundred pounds *per annum* to Sr. *Richard Browne* for the vigilant care in his Majesties service as Major General of that City: And now we should acquaint you with that Renowned City's large demonstrations of duty and affection to the King's and Queen's Majesty on the River *Thames* this 23. of *August*, being the day of her Majesties first coming to *Whitehall*. To particularize the several

¹ See *The Life of Joseph Pike*, London, 1837, pp. 108, 109.

See also "The runaway king, 1690" in Isabel Grubb's *Quaker home-spuns*, 1932, pp. 35-43, 141-42.

² For the value of contemporary British newspapers as source of early Quaker history see my remarks in *J.F.H.S.*, vol. 50 (1963), pp. 94-96.

The newsbook from which the quotation is printed is now deposited in the Haverford College Quaker Collection.

Companies, Barges, Representations of the Mercers, Drapers, Merchant-Tailors, Goldsmiths, &c is neither possible nor proper for this place, therefore we shall onely say (which none but the absent will deny) that the oldest person alive never saw the Thames more or more nobly covered, than it was on this great and happy occasion, the benefit whereof redounds also to such as have not deserved it, as you may perceive by this following Letter from his Majesty to the Lord Mayor of *London*, and others Commissioners and Justices for Goal-delivery of Oyer and Terminer, and of the Peace for *London* and *Middlesex*.

Charles R.

Right trusty and well beloved, and Trusty and well beloved, We greet you well. We are informed that there are several persons who go under the name of Quakers, or other names of separation, now in the Gaols for London and Middlesex, for being at unlawfull Assemblies, who yet profess all Obedience and Allegiance unto us. We would be glad that all our Subjects could be brought to agree in an Uniform Worship of God, and we hope that the foresight of the Dangers which they runn into by a willfull contempt of the Laws, and our present indulgence, may prevail with some of these persons, to reduce them to a better Conformity. And therefore we do willingly lay hold of this time and occasion of publick Joy for the first coming of our dear Consort the Queen to our Royal Palace at Westminster, to declare this our Royal pleasure unto you, That you cause all such of the said persons in our Gaols for London and Middlesex, who have not been Indicted for refusing the Oath of Allegiance, nor shall appear to you to have been Ringleaders or Preachers at their Assemblies, to be enlarged. Given at Hampton Court this 22th day of August, 1662.

By His Majestie's Command,
EDWARD NICHOLAS

The royal letter is found also in the Public Record Office and was published in *Extracts from State Papers Relating to Friends* (1911), p. 150.¹ It was also paraphrased in *A Monthly Intelligence relating the affairs of the people called Quakers in and near about the City of London* (1662), which included later events. This in turn was reprinted in full in Joseph Besse, *Collection of the Sufferings*, 1753, i. 382-87. Its earliest publication is almost certainly the newsbook which I have quoted. See Braithwaite, *Second period of Quakerism*, chap. 2 for the general context. The pageant on the Thames is noted in the diaries of this date of Evelyn and Pepys, who both witnessed it.

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¹ With reference: S.P.D. Entry Book 3, p. 80. *Cal.* 1661-2, p. 466.