

Baptists in Worcestershire

Extract from John Noake's Worcester Sects (1861)

[page 145] Among the earliest dissenters from the Christian church were those who opposed the practice of infant baptism. As early as the fifth century, ecclesiastical councils found it necessary to decide against and anathematise themselves as schismatics; but it is rare indeed that opinions are put down by opposition – a fact which finds a remarkable illustration in the case of the Baptists, who in the twelfth century are said by Mosheim to have amounted to 80,000. the Rev. F. Bosworth (Bristol) remarks that the views of the Baptists could only have been manifested by their opposition to infant baptism, [p.144] because immersion was regularly practiced by the church, as proved by Bede and other early writers; and in the constitutions of the Bishop of Worcester, in 1240, it is written – "We order that in every church there be a baptismal font of proper size and depth, and the trine immersion (three times) be always practiced. " The existence of Baptists as a distinct sect did not commence till the days of Luther, when the name Anabaptists was given them as one of reproach and contempt, their doctrine, it was believed, being blended with fanatical and lawless principles, opposed to the morals and good order of society. Of the Baptists in England prior to the Reformation but little is known; but their name then appears among the various sects who were struggling for civil and religious liberty. Crosby states that about 1532 the Baptists began to be publicly known and persecuted, and in 1535 ten Anabaptists were put to death in sundry places of the realm. In a list of books published by John Owen, the first printer in Worcester, I find an octavo (date 1551), *A Dialogue between the seditious Anabaptists and the true Christian, about obedience to the Magistrates*; and (same year) *The most frutefull Dialogues, treating upon the Baptism of Children, very necessarie to be read of all Christians in these most paryllouse times*; by John Heron (or Vernon). Under Henry VIII the Baptists [p 147] were exempted from every act of grace, imprisoned, tortured, burnt and banished. Elizabeth was not far behind in her cruelty to them: and it was in relation to these unhappy victims of Protestant persecution that Fox addressed his well known letter to that Queen, begging that "the piles and flames of Smithfield, so long ago extinguished by yr happy government may not be revived". It was not till the end of the sixteenth century that the Baptists in England began to assume a denominational position. Dutch Baptists sought a shelter in this country from the persecutions of their own land. Here they formed churches; and English Baptists who had resided in Holland returned home early in the seventeenth century, and spread their opinions widely. In 1640, there were five Baptist congregations in London, and throughout the provinces churches were rapidly gathered by Cox, Oates, Denne, Jeffry, Fisher, Miller, Gifford and Tombs. The latter laboured in Worcestershire and the adjoining counties: "but Coppe (says Baxter) baptised more than any other man I ever heard of, witness Warwickshire, Oxford, and part of Worcester." In August 1642, the Anabaptists are classed with "Popish recusants and other separatists", in a declaration made by the Grand Jury for the county of Worcester, which was assented to by the Sheriff, as also by Lord Coventry and [p 148] other magistrates, pledging themselves to maintain the Protestant religion against all sectaries. By the year 1649 the Baptists had "lifted up their heads and increased above all the sects in the land" and the principal officers in many of the regiments had adopted their principles; but soon after the restoration of royalty, articles of visitation were exhibited to ministers, churchwardens, and others, making enquiry, among other things, for "convicted Papists, known Anabaptists" &c., who were to be diligently looked after in every parish. About the year 1653 the Baptists united in an association. The Midland Association, formed in 1655, represented Warwick, Moreton, Bourton-on-the-Water, Alcester, Tewkesbury, Hook Norton and Derby. Worcester is supposed not to have formed a separate congregation of Baptists till three or four years after that date; nor did they join the associated churches till probably about 1701, although ten years before that period twelve associations had been formed, consisting of 107 churches.

In many of the early Baptist churches were men of enthusiastic minds, who were easily wrought upon by the extraordinary events of those stirring times, and by their eccentricity and strong language brought great discredit on the body to which they were attached. In the time of Cromwell some of those enthusiasts believed [p149] themselves to have been commissioned by God Himself, and appeared regardless of earthly control: prominent among these were Teakes and Powell, of Blackfriars, who introduced into their sermons most of the subjects debated in Parliament, and advocated the principles of their sect with a force and extravagance at once fanatical and fantastical. Their favourite topic was the Dutch war: God, they maintained, had given Holland into the hands of the English; it was to be the landing place of the saints, whence they should proceed to pluck the Whore of Babylon from her chair, and establish the kingdom of Christ on the continent; and when Cromwell declined to carry out their extreme views he was publicly denounced in their sermons as the beast in the Apocalypse, the old dragon, and the man of sin. Teakes and Powell were summoned before him to answer for their language, but they repeated it in his face. The Dutch ambassador went to hear these men preach, "but good God", says he, "what cruel and abominable and most horrid trumpets of fire, murder and flame!"

It was clear that the Protector was afraid of meddling too much with these firebrands, of whom there were many both in the army and the Parliament who entertained republican opinions and were adverse to Cromwell's assumption of supreme power, though the great body of their congregations [p150] wisely submitted to his government. Mr Barebone, the pastor of a Baptist church in Fleet Street, gave name to Cromwell's little Parliament, of which he was a prominent member. Some Baptists also were admitted into Cromwell's committee of triers, for the selection of sitting clergymen for the various parishes throughout the country.

The Baptist ranks were much thinned, about the year 1650, by new sects arising out of the agitated waters of the great ocean of religious controversy. Among those new lights were Diggers, Levellers, Ranters and Quakers. The Diggers first appeared in Surrey, digging the commons and planting them with roots, saying that the time was arrived when the people were to be restored to freedom and to enjoy the fruits of the earth. But the Quakers were the most uncompromising opponents of the Baptists, and several of the manifestoes or confessions of faith put forth by the latter in the seventeenth century were aimed against the obnoxious followers of Fox, who put no faith in ordinances, or means of grace, or the Scriptures as a rule of faith or practice. Many of the Baptist members were excommunicated for adopting these doctrines. Baxter and other good moderate men who in vain attempted to conciliate the discordances and amalgamate the various sects of Protestants, [p151] by proposing the adoption of certain general principals of communion whereby they would have been placed on the simple ground of the sincere profession of our common Christianity, complains strongly of the belligerent propensities of the Baptists and their opposition to all overtures for peace and unity:

"The Anabaptist party", he says "consisted of some (but fewer) sober, peaceable persons, orthodox on other points, but withal of abundance of young transported zealots, and a medley of opinionists, who all hasted directly to enthusiasm and subdivision, and by the temptation of prosperity and success in arms, and the policy of some commanders, were led into rebellious and hot endeavours against the ministry and other scandalous crimes, and brought forth the horrid sects of Ranters, Seekers and Quakers, in this land ... There were but few of them that had not been the opposers and troublers of faithful ministers, in this way strengthening the hands of the profane."

Yet at another time he speaks in a more kindly tone:

"For the Anabaptists themselves (though I have written and said so much against them) as I find most of them were persons of zeal in religion, so many of them were sober, godly people, and differed from others but on the point of infant baptism, or at most in the points of predestination, free will and perseverance.

[p152] And notwithstanding their opposition to other sects, and especially to the Established Church (whose edifices they were wont to denominate "steeple houses") and although they suffered much persecution, even during the Commonwealth, they take the credit of having always inculcated and practised liberty of conscience. One of their number – Roger Williams – is represented by the historian of the Baptists in America as the first Governor who proclaimed and practised that liberty towards all denominations of Christians. Nevertheless this toleration did not extend to the two great bugbears of Prelacy and the Papacy, which all classes of dissenters felt to be a common ground for the concentration of their forces in the great battle against those who carried the mark of the beast.

Among the distinguished men who in the seventeenth century espoused the Baptist cause were Mr Robert Brown, of White Lady Aston, Mr Francis Cornwall, MA, Emmanuel College, and Mr John Tombes, BD.

In Palmer's Nonconformists' Memorial, vol. iii, p 413, is as follows:

"Mr Robert Brown of White Lady Aston, was a Fifth Monarchy man, and wrote against hearing the parish minister. Dr Stillingfleet remarked of his Jerubbaal, that it contained the [p153] substance of all that had been said by the old Brownists. He was generally esteemed a good scholar; he died at Plymouth in consequence of excessive preaching. He appears to have been of the Baptist denomination. Crosby mentions him, but adds nothing to the above account. Mr James says there was a Baptist minister of this name, and doubtless the same person, who in 1670 resided in London, and in 1678 at Worcester. He was that year invited to succeed Mr Hardcastle at Broadmead, Bristol; but in April 1679, he was settled at Westmancote, Worcestershire. In an account of the Baptist church at Plymouth it is said they have their unanimous call to the Rev. Robert Brown, a minister of Paedobaptist [footnote says that this is thought to be a mistake] persuasion, then preaching at Worcester. The letter is dated 30th of 11th month 1687. Mr Brown accepted the call, but the happiness the church promised themselves from his piety and talents was of short duration, for after enjoying them about three months this good and great man fell asleep in the arms of his Redeemer, 22 February, 1688. As a tribute of regard the church erected a monument in their meeting to perpetuate his memory".

Mr Tombs (mentioned above) was an excellent disputant, who had been educated at Oxford and was well versed in Greek and Hebrew. To this great and good man's adherence to Baptist views may be attributed much of the success and advancement of that cause in Worcestershire and the [page154] surrounding districts. Through his influence with the committee of triers, and high estimation in which his character was held, many Baptist ministers were assigned to church livings in this county. Tombes was born at Bewdley in 1603, and having made rapid proficiency at Oxford, became lecturer at Magdalen Hall at the age of twenty-one, and subsequently adopted Baptist views. He laboured at Worcester, Leominster, Ross, Bewdley, Hereford, Ledbury, Bristol, London and other places, and was one of the most popular preachers of his day. He formed the Baptist churches at Bewdley, Leominster and Hereford, argued in Latin with the Assembly of Divines, and had the best of it in a public disputation with Baxter, which took place at Bewdley on New Year's Day 1649, before a crowded audience. After a chequered career, during which he held several church livings, lectureships &c., was ejected, fled from place to place, robbed and once narrowly escaped with his life, he retired to Salisbury at the Restoration, married a rich widow, conformed to the church (though only as a lay communicant), and died at the age of seventy-three. He had the advantage of Baxter both in learning and argument, and it required no

small share of both to put to silence the many enemies of the Baptist creed and discipline, who were constantly putting [p. 155] forth the grossest calumnies, founded on a small modicum of apparent truth. Their protests and replies to these calumnies may be found in their confessions of faith edited by Mr Underhill in 1854. As a specimen of the ridiculous matters brought to bear against them, it may be here stated that D'Assigny names, on his list of Anabaptists, the "Leg-of-mutton" Baptists, so denominated because at the celebration of the Lord's Supper they were said to sit down at table and feast themselves with legs of mutton and other meats. But the fact was, that in those days many of the congregation came from far, and it was necessary after the communion that they should be refreshed before being dismissed to their distant homes. The records and confessions of the Baptists bear on their face the character of truth and honesty, sufficiently to refute the calumnies circulated against them; and in regard to conscientiousness and self-denial I may be allowed to make one brief quotation from the books of Fenstanton church, where, in January 1694, one John Cropper was baptised and ... "Observe (says the record) it was at that time a hard frost and deep snow, and yet no hurt ensued: God will be honoured in His own ways, and protect His servants in the obeying of His commands. Let none be afraid to venture into the water when the season is cold, lest they [p 156] be laid in their graves before the weather be warm ... John Cropper, senior elder".

The Baptist society at Worcester seems to have been established about the year 1658, under the pastorate of Mr Thomas Fecknam; but the Restoration of Charles II, the Savoy conference, the Act of Uniformity and other measures taken by the enemies of religious liberty, reduced the non-conformists generally, and the Baptists in particular, to a distressing condition. Fecknam was soon lost sight of, and the society at Worcester was broken up for about eight years. By the Townsend MSS, I find that on the 28th of March 1661, Mr Townsend and Mr G. Symonds, two of the Worcestershire justices, released out of the Castle gaol at Worcester fourteen Baptists and a great number of Quakers, on their promise to appear at the next gaol delivery. In the Worcester county records, the gaolers list of prisoners in the year 1667 included Thomas Fecknam, who was said to be the leader of the Quakers, and who had then been in gaol three years for refusing to take the oath of allegiance. No doubt this was the Baptist minister, as the various religious denominations were often confounded together in those times. Thomas Fecknam had now and then some liberty accorded to him, but the gaoler reported that "this kindness had wrought no conformitie or submission in him."

[p 157] The meetings of the Baptist Midland Association also were discontinued or held in great secrecy till 1690, it being unsafe for dissenting ministers to appear in public, although at the same time Roman Catholics were coming forth from their lurking places and were received graciously by the King. Venner's insurrection gave occasion and excuse for an order in Council, followed by a proclamation, forbidding all sectaries to meet in large numbers or at unusual times, though the Baptists, Independents and Quakers severally published their detestation of Venner's proceedings and urged their prayer for toleration.

The Presbyterian clergy too, were exposed to rude insults, pretended plots were laid to their charge, and many of them being ejected from the church, joined the Baptist and other congregations. In 1664-5 the Conventicle and Five-Mile Acts became law, and were followed by the Test Act. Dissenters' meetings were then broken up or exposed to gangs of vulgar informers. Between the years 1660 and 1688 it has been estimated that 60,000 nonconformists were incarcerated, 5,000 of whom died in prison, while their confiscations and loss of property amounted to between twelve and fourteen millions sterling! Baptists at that time were hotly persecuted; and as they held their meetings in secluded places, spies everywhere abounded. The governor of Deal [p 158] Castle, a bitter opponent of the Baptists, hearing that a few of them intended meeting in a lonely field in that neighbourhood, determined himself to apprehend them: noiselessly approaching, he heard their voices, ...listened... found they were praying for him ...returned home without attempting their

capture ... became deeply impressed ... joined the very body he had persecuted, and was their pastor. Such periods indeed try men. [footnote says: see paper by Rev F. Bosworth, Bristol]

In this state of things it need scarcely be said that the Baptist society in Worcester again suffered greatly, and independently of state persecution they seem to have lost ground by internal division, as about that time a Mr Pardoe was minister of a separate congregation of Baptists here; and from a document which I shall shortly produce it would appear that he entertained Arminian views of universal redemption, such as are adopted by General Baptists, while the old flock were probably Calvinistic or Particular Baptists. William Pardoe was imprisoned at Worcester in 1664, and continued in confinement nearly seven years; and in the gaoler's list of prisoners in Worcester prison for the year 1667 and again in 1683 he figures as a Quaker; but, as I have before stated, the officials of those days were not exact in their descriptions. He afterwards travelled on foot from place to place [p 159] to preach and was the author of several works. He died at Worcester in 1692, after having seen the interior of many prisons, and being excommunicated, was said to have been buried in a garden in Lowesmoor, where his body, with that of his wife, were discovered early in the present century while some persons were digging for building purposes. Mr Chambers, the author of *Biographical Illustrations of Worcestershire*, states that some persons then remembered the stone which had been erected to his memory, and adds that there was at Leominster a full account of Mr Pardoe in MS. Crosby says, "Mr William Pardoe was a worthy, humble, self-denying preacher, and a great sufferer for his religion ... a very useful man, and blessed with great success in his ministerial work. He lived mostly about Worcester, was sometimes in Yorkshire, and wrote some part of his *Behania's Walks* in Worcester prison, and some part of it in Leicester prison".

Mr Eccles, pastor of the Bromsgrove congregation, and who had been baptised by Mr Tombes, was a severe sufferer by the persecution, being seized while preaching, greatly abused, and put into a dungeon in Worcester gaol, and here it was stated "he might have lain, had not his Divine Master raised him up a friend in Mr Swift, who was one of the members for the county of [p 160] Worcester". To the honour of that gentleman be it recorded that he was not ashamed of the cause of a poor imprisoned Baptist minister, but was bound for him in the sum of £1,000 in order to procure his liberty. Mr Eccles commenced his calling when but a youth, at the age of fifteen or sixteen, being known as "the boy preacher". Judicious people, however, will never value very highly the crude fruit of such precocious preaching, forced to a certain ripeness before its time. Robert Hall and many other orators had occasion to lament the mistakes made in their too early efforts, and probably a larger number of authors the *cacoethes scribendi* which first induced them to write. A magazine contributor has succinctly expressed a wholesome opinion on this point: "Let us (says he) have the mature thing: give us intellectual beef rather than intellectual veal." An elegy written on Mr Eccles's death contained the following stanzas:

"With fervent zeal the Gospel seed he sows
Which Bromsgrove, Bewdley, largely from him mows;
In active youth and manhood here his charge
Christ's work he plies with approbation large."

Under James II the condition of dissenters was somewhat ameliorated, for although that monarch was no friend to them or their cause, he promoted toleration to a certain extent, in order that the Catholics might receive benefit from it. [p 161]

When the King was at Worcester the neighbouring dissenters of all denominations sent their addresses to him, which the Earl of Plymouth, being Lord Lieutenant, was to receive and deliver to the King. When he brought the first two, the King asked him what religion the men who brought them were of. "Indeed, sire" replied the Lord Lieutenant "I did not ask them; but I know by their looks they are neither of your religion nor mine".

William III brought no small peace to the troubled land by his Toleration Act, in consequence of which the representatives of 100 Baptist societies (including five from the Midland Association) assembled in London, organised their new associations, and agreed to a confession of faith in thirty-two articles. The societies in the Midland Association were then the following: Warwick, Moreton, Tewkesbury, Hook Norton, Alcester, Bromsgrove, Dymock (now Upton), Hereford (including Leominster) and Kilby in Leicestershire. Bromsgrove is the mother church of the association, having been established between 1650 and 1660, when Mr Eccles preached both there and at Bewdley.

It was not till three or four years after the Toleration Act, which gave liberty and freedom to all religious denominations except Catholics, that the Baptist congregation at Worcester was [p162] again constructed in "proper Gospel order", as their own record states; but as that event, together with a brief record of the history of the Worcester Baptists, is detailed in the "church book" belonging to that society, and probably written by Mr Belsher, their pastor, in 1796, I now proceed to quote therefrom as follows:

"the church book belonging to the Baptist society meeting in Silver Street, Worcester 1796; Mr William Belsher, pastor.

Dr Calamy in his Abridgment, vol. i p29, says that at Bewdley there was a church of Anabaptists. At Worcester the Independents gathered as a church. This seems to refer to the time between 1649 and 1660. By that account it appears that there was no Baptist church at Worcester about 1649, though some of that denomination might be in connection with the Independents there at that time or soon after, which was the case then in several parts of England and Wales. There is now before me (writes Mr Belsher) and old book [footnote says: not now to be found J.N. 1860] belonging to the Baptists at Worcester, bearing this title: A Book of the Records of the Church of Christ, in Worcester, made in the eleventh month of the year 1658. By Thomas Fecknam; consisting of Believers baptised with water in the name of the Lord Jesus. There it is observed that they were distinguished from the Independents and others. The motto in that title page is Acts xxiv, 14 ... 'But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call [p163] heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers' ... a motto generally adopted in Baptist publications and confessions of faith of that period... adapting it to a church, and not a single person.

The next leaf begins thus: 'The names of the members of the church, both brethren and sisters'. The first name is Thomas Fecknam, and with him seventeen men and twenty-one women; in all thirty-nine members. This was a considerable church at that time. But it does not appear that Mr Fecknam did write any more in the book than the title page and the names of the members as already noted, and some queries resolved at Alcester by the messengers of the associated churches met there the 12 and 13 day of the second month, 59; at which time the church of Christ at Worcester tendered with them by mutual consent. Two of those queries were from Worcester. The restoration of Charles II happened about thirteen calendar months after that meeting at Alcester. The Baptists and other nonconformists were then violently persecuted through the land, and probably those at Worcester felt the force and severity of the times. It's very probable that Mr Fecknam was the minister of this young church at the beginning, but whether he were a native of Worcester, or near it, I know not, nor is it easy to determine. The name of one of the women members is Sarah Fecknam. As he wrote no more in the book, probably the persecution drove him away and scattered his flock [footnote says; He was imprisoned in Worcester gaol for some years ... see p.156] In the general assembly at London, in September 1689, Thomas Fecknam [p164] is named pastor of the Baptist church at Sandwich, Kent; probably this was the same person, settled there in the course of the long persecution. In the narrative of the assembly in London, 1692, he is named as pastor of the same church. I have before me a printed elegy composed on his death, which happened in October 1695, in the sixty-eighth year of his age. There it is noted that he began to preach very young, so that he was called the preaching

Baptist boy, and that he was in the ministry upwards of fifty years, and six years in prison. There is a great character given him in the elegy. I suppose he was the person that gathered the first Baptist church at Worcester. The following article is sufficient to show the state of things about Worcester at that time. Dr Calamy, in his account, vol. ii, p776, after he had given an account of the hardships suffered by several nonconformist ministers in the county says ...'such things as these were common, it seems in these parts in those times, for one Mr Robert Humphrys, an Anabaptist preacher, an inhabitant of Claines, about two miles from Worcester, for preaching in his house, had by a warrant of Col. S--- of O--- [footnote says probably Sandys of Ombersley] three cows taken from him, worth about £12 and all the corn in his barn, worth about £15 and all the goods in his house that were of any value, and could never get anything restored'. In the same page he speaks of Mr Pardoe, as noted above. This shows what sufferers our denomination were then in and about Worcester. Mr Pardoe was imprisoned at [p 165] Worcester in 1664 and continued there near seven years.

"The next page in the Worcester records runs thus --- 'the restitution of the church of Christ at Worcester the 10th of the 12th month 1666, to her communion and fellowship with Him in His holy institutions and ordinances, according to her first love and willing obedience from a deep sense of her backsliding from Him. Resolving in His strength for the time to come to cleave unto Him with purpose of heart'. This was full eight years after the first formation in 1658, but it appears here they had backslidden and gone out of order within those troublesome times. On this restitution their names are put down, being but eleven men members and ten women ... in all twenty-one. Among the men are but three or four of the former names and about the some number of the former women. In those few years many of them were either dead or dispersed into different parts of the country; yet it appears that several of the twenty-one had been baptised by some ministers since the first formation. Mr Pardoe was now in prison in this city, and had by some means a society distinct from the newly restored church. Probably some of the former were now gone to him. The difference between Mr Pardoe was party, if not chiefly, about the extent of the death of Christ. He acknowledges that he held universal redemption, but in the preface to his Bethania, he says that he was charged with many other things. Of the church restored in 1666, it appears they had no minister at that period. The first name in the list of members is John Edwards [p166] who I suppose was a gentleman that lived afterwards near Leominster, and a worthy member there many years. There it is noted 'he was brought very early to Christ in his young and tender years, and was a great encourager of believers in the ways of God, when he lived in Worcester'. This inclines me to believe that he was the chief man in the church at the time we are now upon.

"by the records it looks as if Mr Elisha Hathaway was the second person that joined this church after the restitution near the close of 1666. There are no dates in the records from the year now mentioned to 1692, except on the death of a few members, nor any church transactions recorded during that period, except a legacy received of Mr Philip Bearcroft, given by his mother, to be disposed of at the discretion of Mr William Pardoe to the poor of this society. It will appear below that Mr Hathaway above-named began to preach in this church about 1674, or possibly sooner, as he was then about or near forty years of age. He was very useful in this society through many years of persecution and trouble.

"Though this church was of so long standing, it was not set in proper Gospel order, it seems, till the following date. This is in the record: 'At a meeting held the 27th day of the 5th month 1692, when the congregation enter'd covenant with the Lord and one another, then by the free choice of the whole our beloved brother Elisha Hathaway was by them nominated to be their pastor. At that time were elected William Randal and William Charles elders, [p167] Mathew Handy and Richard Hampton deacons'. By the records I conclude that all this was done by the church without any assistance from other ministers. It is recorded in the book that to that day the church had not been a regular society. There were set down twenty articles of belief, or confession of faith, and seven articles as a church covenant; then

the names of the members, men and women, as signing the whole. The newly chosen pastors, elders and deacons, signed first; all the men members, fourteen, and the women, twenty – in all thirty four. It is remarkable that of the twenty in 1666, there is but one of them in the list 1692, in the course of twenty-six years. This imperfect situation accounts for their not being in the general assembly in London, 1689.

"Before the above meeting, 1692, I conclude from Mr Holder's MS that Mr Hathaway was about to leave Worcester. He was in London about a year and a half, and Mr Holder supplied at Worcester. Very probably it was after Mr Hathaway's return that the above settlement was made in the church. Notwithstanding the above regulations in 1692 it seems that there were some not quite satisfied, for it is recorded in the book that upon the 7th day of the 2nd month 1702, according to an appointment of the church and by the hand of our brother, John Willis of Aulcester [sic], and brother Jos. Price of Tewkesbury, brother Hathaway was ordained the pastor of this church, and brother Horniblow and brother Thompson ordained elders, and brother Handy and brother Toort ordained deacons. Now they were brought into the common way, and very [p168] probably into the connection also, for I find that the Association was at Worcester the preceding year, 1701.

"As Mr Pardoe was so long in prison here and had a society in this place, died and was buried here, it may be right to say a little more of him. Mr Holder in his MS says, 'I will mention Mr Pardoe, from whose ministry I had most soul benefit, and may truly account him my spiritual father in the Lord. He lay in Worcester gaol seven years for conscience sake, and came out wonderfully improved in divine knowledge and ministerial abilities. He travelled on foot from place to place to preach the Gospel, and was put into Leicester prison, where he lay about nine months. After some years he was put into Hereford prison, where he lay about four ears, but neither his sufferings, his great labours, nor his various afflictions, did in the least abate his love to Christ and the souls of men. He was a special instance of the power of supernatural grace, and a great promoter in my faith of God, fidelity to His covenant, and the veracity of His promises. He died in Worcester, leaving a sweet favour of Christ, also his Bethania, and a divine paper called 'The Mariner's Compass', also many divine letters written to his friends when he was in prison, a collection of which I have in my possession; by all which being dead he speaks'. Thus far Mr Holder. Those good letters are perished, I suppose. His Bethania and Compass fell into my hand and I have them still. Mr Pardoe died in 1692 as noted already. Very probably his society at Worcester after his death joined the other church in that city.

In the [p169] 'History of Bridgenorth', in the double lectures appointed there, it appears that Mr Hathaway was to preach at four of those lectures appointed then. There was no minister but Mr Hathaway appointed so many times to preach, not even Mr Thomas of Pershore, who was then in the prime of life, about thirty years of age, and Hathaway about seventy-two, as that was in 1706, which shows how acceptable the latter was and how strong his constitution was at that age. Thus this great and heroic servant of Jesus Christ continued in his Master's work until he was called to rest in a good old age. Mr Holder in his MS says, 'Mr Hathaway was pastor of the Baptist congregation in the city of Worcester nearly forty years, and died in 1714, aged upwards of eighty years, under whose ministry I sat often with much comfort and edification. I have thought him sometimes, I confess, too warm and zealous against the rites and ceremonies and corrupt traditions in the establishment, we having our liberty as dissenters; but he was a plain evangelical minister of the Gospel and did much good. He had a great experience of a saving work of grace upon his soul, and so clear evidence of his interest in Christ and the covenant of grace as carried him through all his afflictions. On his death-bed he praised God that he had no cloud in his spirit or doubt in his soul about his future happiness! Hence the reader my suppose that Mr Holder mistook in saying that Mr Hathaway had been near forty years pastor of the church; but the former was well acquainted with what was done in 1692 and 1702 and with the labours of the latter for forty years. He meant, I suppose, that [p170] the latter did the work of a pastor all that time, whatever was

supposed to be done in 1692 and 1702. By another hand I am informed that Mr Hathaway had suffered do much from the establishment that after the Revolution he was very severe upon them at times. Preaching concerning God making a hedge round his people, he said, 'it was a thorn hedge, and many of the bishops have torn their lawn sleeves in attempting to break through it.' It seems the meeting house at Worcester was built in his time, for I am told that he was buried in it, and that now the table pew is upon the gravestone that it cannot be seen. The report is, that in his time the place was crowded, that persons were obliged to go before time in order to get a place. Since the above was written, the inscription on the grave was found to be thus – 'Here lieth the body of Mr Elisha Hathaway, Gospel minister, teacher, and pastor of the congregation forty years; having finished his work by the will of God he fell asleep in Jesus the 17th September, 1714, age eighty-one.'

"Mr Hathaway was succeeded by Mr Isaac Poynting, who came from near Froome, Somersetshire. The records name above seventy, who seem to have been added in Mr Hathaway's time, 1702, and a few after Mr Poynting came. The book after was mostly blank paper. Mr Isaac Poynting died 5th May 1740, aged sixty-eight, pastor of this church twenty-five years. I do not know of anything remarkable in the church during his time. It is uncertain whether the Association was at Worcester before 1701, but page 41 – 2 above shows that it was there in 1701, [p171] 1707, 1715, 1721, 1725, 1738, 1754, 1767 and 1780.

"Mr Isaac Poynting was succeeded by his son, Mr John Poynting – (see biographical account of him in 'Baptist Register', vol. i p.510).

"After the death of Mr John Poynting (who was minister here for half a century) the church was destitute of a pastor from October 6 1791 till the settlement of Mr William Belsher, December 7th 1796. in 1795 the circular letter mentions 'Brother Dawson' as then 'supplying at Worcester', and he was appointed to preach at the next association meeting at Dudley. That letter was addressed to 'the elders and messengers of the several Baptist churches meeting for Divine worship at Bewdley, Birmingham, Brettell Lane, Coseley, Dudley, Evesham, Leominster, Pershore, Ryeford, Shiffnall, Tewkesbury, Upton and Worcester'. The circular letter for 1796 mentions Worcester among several other churches having experience gracious revivals, and adds concerning Worcester that there had been no additions before for nine years, but this year both the congregation and the church have been favoured with pleasing additions."

Here we quit Mr Belsher's MS, and proceed with the history from other sources. The members who signed an address to Mr Belsher (who had come from Bristol) in July 1796, requesting his acceptance of the Worcester pastorate were – Wm. Fitzer, Jas. Harrison, Joshua Pitt, Saml. Barnard, Thos. Page, Mathew Griffiths, Saml. Nicholas [p172], N. Willoughby, Mary Butler, Ann Malpas, Eliz. Sanders, Mary Robinson, Eliz. Hinton, Ann Nicholas, Mary Day, Sarah Pitt, Eliz. Blackwell, Eliz. Matley, Mary Perm (or Penn), Ann Hunt, Eliz. Harper, Eliz. Brunsdon, Mary Laurence and Eliz. Watkins. It has already been stated that a chapel was built in Silver Street during Mr Hathaway's life: that the building remained until the year 1796 when Mr Belsher became pastor. It was then taken down and a new one erected. It is a proof of the good feeling which existed among the dissenting congregations in Worcester at that time, that the Independents lent Mr Belsher their chapel while the new Baptist chapel was being erected, and he accordingly preached to his congregation at 'Angel Row chapel' (it is called Angel Lane meeting house in another place) as it was called, till the opening of that in Silver Street on July 27th 1797. On this occasion sermons were preached by the Rev. S Pearce of Birmingham, the Rev. James Smith and the Rev. Mr Butterworth. It seems that the erection of this chapel got the society into trouble, for Willoughby the carpenter entered an action against them for a debt, which was the cause of a considerable misunderstanding between Mr Belsher and his congregation, so much so that the ordinance of the Lord's supper was suspended for half-a-year. Willoughby, however [p173] appears to have behaved

dishonestly, and was excommunicated, or expelled the society and the debt was at last compromised.

Mr Belsher resigned the pastorate, from illness, on the 25th October 1817. At that time the number of members was 112, and it is a singular fact that up to this period there had been but four ministers to the Baptist chapel for 143 years.

Henry Page, A.M., accepted the invitation of the society to become its pastor, November 21, 1817. He was a 'strong tempered man', and is said to have come to Worcester fortified with several hundred sermons which he had collected from a variety of sources to save himself the trouble of composition. It is probable that his hearers, who greatly disapproved of this plan of providing them with divinity, nevertheless derived an advantage from it, as such pillagers have generally the good taste to select far better productions than they themselves are capable of giving birth to. Mr Page, I fear, left behind a character far different from that prolific divine, Dr Litchfield, rector of All Saints, Thames Street, who, in 1447, bequeathed to posterity no fewer than 3,083 sermons written by his own hand. During Mr Page's ministry the first mention is made of the introduction of gas into the chapel, in February 1823. This minister [p174] resigned in June 1827, and died at Boulogne in 1833. The number of members was 150 at the time of his resignation.

Thomas Waters, MA, who came from Pershore, succeeded Mr Page on November 10, 1827, and resigned from illness August 31 1838. He died in two months afterwards. The number of members was then 199. During his ministry, namely in 1829, the chapel was considerably enlarged, a piece of ground adjoining having been purchased for the purpose at a cost of 275l. The Worcester Herald of August 28th in that year says " The Baptist chapel in Silver street, in this city, having undergone considerable enlargement, rendering it capable of seating a congregation of 700, was on Wednesday morning (August 26th) reopened for Divine worship, and a sermon preached by the rev Robert Hall of Bristol, and formerly of Leicester, from Timothy iii 5, 'the power of godliness'. The preacher delivered a discourse of great power and eloquence to a highly respectable though not large congregation; collection 45l 15s. In the evening the Rev. J. F. Leifchild of Bristol preached a no less admirable and appropriate sermon, from Psalm cxlix, 2, and further collections were made amounting to 17l 13s 6d.' The total receipts of the day, including donations, amounted to 84l 17s 2d, which, with the fund [p175] collected by the pastor and that previously raised by the friends in Worcester, through the personal efforts of the pastor, was nearly sufficient to meet the whole of the expenses, about 1000l.

The chapel has long since been free from debt. In the Baptist register I find that Mr Waters, at one period of his ministry, found it extremely difficult to preserve discipline in his congregation, a laxity of conduct among many members of the society being perceptible, and differences arising on the subject of admitting Pædobaptists (those who baptise infants) to take part of the communion with them. In the year 1834 a meeting was called, at which the minister requested the deacons to say whether they had confidence in him, and would support him in the temperate, firm, and scriptural administration of that discipline which alone could restore purity, peace and prosperity to the church. There were sixty-six hands held up for him and only five against. Some members were then excluded, others withdrew, and a resolution was passed:

"That any member residing within reasonable distance who shall not regularly attend upon the ministry of the pastor, or being absent on three successive Sabbaths from the Lord's Supper, should be visited by the deacons, and if not give satisfactory reasons should be separated from the communion.

[p176] In April 21 1834, an entry occurs in the register:

"At a church meeting it was resolved to permit Mrs Saunders, a pious Pædobaptist, to commune with us at the Lord's table, but not to be a member of the church".

This resolution seems to have given dissatisfaction to several members, and Mrs Sanders kindly resigned the privilege; but about five years afterwards, the society wisely adopted the following resolution, by fifty-nine to ten:

"That in future, pious Pædobaptists be admitted to partake with us the Lord's Supper, but not to be considered as members of the church or entitled to vote in church affairs".

On the 20th of May 1839, Enoch Williams became pastor, but resigned in January 1841; the number of members then being 195.

William Crowe of Hackney accepted the pastorate on the 31st of May 1841. He originally was an Independent, and became a missionary at Travancore, having been trained for missionary work at the Gosport College. He was a man of stern and unbending principle and irreproachable life; his preaching was chiefly doctrinal, but it had the great advantage of earnestness and consistency in the preacher, whose life agreed [p177] with the precepts he uttered. He was ever in the foremost rank of the promoters of social progress and reformation, and gave his aid to every movement having for its object the advancement of civil and religious liberty. The writer of these pages will have long impressed on his memory the association of good men belonging to various denominations whom he was in the constant habit of seeing on public platforms, uniting in their advocacy of every good cause and stimulating their fellow citizens also to lend their aid; among these the four most prominent were the Rev. John Davies (Church of England), Dr Redford (Independent), Mr Crowe (Baptist), and Samuel Darke (Quaker). Three of these have been but recently removed from us, but their works do follow them, and their memory will be blest to succeeding generations who may have profited by their labours or heard of their good example:

"How blest the righteous when he dies!
When sinks a weary soul to rest,
How mildly beam the closing eyes,
How gently heaves th' expiring breast!"

During Mr Crowe's pastorate of Silver Street chapel some considerable defections took place from the society, especially in 1844, when several members embraced the profession of Plymouth Brethren, and others in 1851 the [p178] frightful doctrines of Mormonism, to the great grief of the pastor and the rest of the congregation. The register during Mr Crowe's time contains nothing further worthy of note (beyond dismissals for drunkenness, inconsistent conduct &c.) than that in 1849 it was decided that the Lord's Supper should be administered after morning service instead of afternoon; and in 1855 the Rev. J J Waite's system of psalmody was adopted. This system of choral harmony produced an effect so striking, that in no congregation in Worcester is the solemn act of praise performed in a more chaste and appropriate manner, a correct knowledge of part singing having been obtained, and the tunes adopted being no longer a collection of street balladry, but fine old harmonies gleaned from the best of sources. It is to be regretted that our church choirs did not avail themselves more largely of Mr Waite's services. That gentleman, who resided at Hereford, paid occasional visits to this city, where, although completely blind, he instructed large classes in sacred psalmody, with a success which had hitherto been without precedent here. Mr Crowe remained at Worcester for sixteen years, resigning his ministry in 1857, and Mr Sturmer (the present minister) was appointed his successor in January 1858. He is the son of the Rev. F Sturmer, Rector of Heapham, Lincolnshire [p179], was brought up for the church, educated at Merchant Taylor's School, London, and Grammar School, Huntingdon, entered at St John's College, Cambridge, and was baptised by the Rev. Baptist Noel in 1856; he subsequently

entered the London University. The number of members in 1860 was 200, with 269 scholars and twenty-eight teachers.

No separate congregation has sprung from Silver Street, and the most prosperous periods of the denomination were during the pastorates of Mr Hathaway and Mr Belsher.

Baptists now subsist under two denominations, General Baptists and Particular Baptists. The latter designation is given to those who hold Calvinistic views, and who are in every respect but their distinctive doctrine the same as the Independents. General Baptists maintain the doctrine of universal redemption; but they are divided into the Old Connection (Unitarian) and the New Connection (Trinitarian), the latter being by far the most numerous. Among both the Particular and General Baptists there is another ground of separation, relating to the terms of communion at the Lord's Supper. Some churches (each society or congregation is a church) do not allow persons who have not received baptism according to their views of it to join with them in the celebration of this [p180] rite. Of this number are some of the Particular Baptists and all the New Connection of General Baptists. Others, however (and among them the Worcester society) do not scruple to meet, on that occasion, not only those of the Baptist persuasion, who hold other opinions widely different from their own, but even persons who do not embrace the Baptist tenets, provided their religious faith is in other respects, as they conceive, orthodox, and their lives conformable to their profession. This is called 'open communion'; and the tolerant spirit which it cultivates is making rapid progress through the denomination. The Worcester society belongs in practice to the General, although its constitution was that of the Particular Baptists. In Ireland and Scotland the Baptists have many congregations, but neither there nor in this country do their opinions spread so fast as in the United States of North America (see Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History).

Among the Baptist celebrities who have been connected with Worcester, both by intercourse with their brethren here and preaching at Silver Street and Angel Street chapels, where Robert Hall and John Foster. Hall's wonderful oratory is still remembered by many of the inhabitants. His most noticeable address here seems to have been at the reopening of the Baptist chapel [p181] in 1829, on the subject of "The power of Godliness". Hall's preaching has not inaptly been called "an illuminated style", attractive as much from the glittering raiment and glowing diction in which his thoughts were clothed as from the intensity of the thoughts themselves; but there was nothing of the tinsel about this: indeed, Hall denominated fancy preachers in general "she men" or "pulpit Bessies". The precocity of Hall when a boy was fully indicative of his gigantic attainments in after life – which, however, is by no means the rule with forward lads. His biographer tells us that he was wont to preach to his young companions when only seven years old; and it is also stated that he delivered a public discourse at Bristol when about fourteen, at which period it was clear he could not have abandoned his boyish love of fun, for about the same time he took the trouble to descend a chimney in North Street Academy Bristol, for the sole purpose of frightening a Welsh student almost out of his wits. Halls is known to have had his splendid faculties beclouded for a time under that malady which had been called "the infirmity of noble minds". This is said to have arisen mainly from unrequited love; an accomplished lady of his acquaintance (Miss Steel) having refused his offer. When ill in this state he was seen by a former deacon of his [p182]for whom he had never had a great affection; and in reply to his inquiry as to what had brought him into that condition, he answered quickly, "What will never bring you into the same state, sir – too much brain, sir". After his recovery his assiduous friends wished him to marry, and recommended a lady whose over eagerness offended him so much that one day she met with a sad rebuff, which induced her to say, with all the bitterness of a disappointed woman – "I am not polished steel in your eyes, sir". "No, Ma'am" said he, "not polished steel; but I perceive you are burnished brass, madam – burnished brass". Of course he never married the lady.

Hall's biographer tells us that he was a man of great courage; but it seems he was not at all insensible to the instinct of self-preservation, as the following anecdote will show. He was frequently invited to preach at the reopening of chapels, as at Worcester and other places, and on more than one occasion accepted invitations to preach at the Unitarians' chapel, Bristol (on which occasions he evinced great ingenuity to avoid giving offence). When Broadmead chapel, Bristol, was enlarged in 1799, Hall (then at Leicester) was invited to preach at the reopening, and as it was naturally conjectured that he would appear in all his power and brilliance, the building was crowded to excess. A writer in a local paper in describing the circumstance, says [p183] –

"He was equal to public expectation – great throughout; he was glorious in his conclusion; to use his own phrase, he 'took the breath' from his auditors, some of whom, wishing to leave with the last impression of his eloquence fresh upon their minds, endeavoured, by a demonstration which would only be tolerated in a place of nonconformist worship, to prevent the usual closing hymn and prayer – they suddenly let down the reading flaps of their pews, as they do at the end of the service, and these, being newly painted, made such an unusual crackling noise that an alarm was raised that the house was coming down. A cry that the galleries were falling, and another of 'fire!' arose, and a fearful rush was made to the doors. I do not know what the consequences would have been had not Dr Ryland, who sat under the pulpit, with great presence of mind, and in a voice heard above the rush and tumult, exclaimed that there was no danger and that the alarm was unfounded. Order was restored, and the Doctor took occasion to offer a few solemn remarks upon the terror which had just been allayed, asking them if they were so frightened and appalled at the alarm of a single house falling, with what feelings would they be able to meet the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds, or to held up their heads amid the ruin and bruit of the Last Day? The application was fine, striking, forcible; and Dr Ryland, seeing the congregation was then in a mood to be dismissed, turning round, but without looking at the pulpit, said, 'Mr Hall, please give the benediction'. But no benediction followed: Mr Hall, in the first alarm, on the principle of [p184] *sauve qui peut*, had cut, bolted, run; never, as the tradition goes, turning to look back at the imaginary conflagration until he reached Dr Ryland's house on the hill, when he told Mrs Ryland (as he no doubt firmly believed) the Broadmead was by that time a heap of ruins".

Mr Hall had a great dislike to formality and the "subject-proposing" style. The authority whom I have quoted above relates that a stranger had been introduced to him when he was not in the mood and did not like his man: after several unsuccessful attempts to "draw him out", the visitor gravely proposed the inquiry, "Whether, in a future state, the powers of the human mind would not expand and be enlarged to an indefinite degree". Hall called out, "What is that, sir? Which is that?" The question being deliberately repeated with due emphasis, he quickly replied, "Why so sir; why so? Why suppose the human mind indefinitely enlarged any more than the human body? And if the body is to undergo this frightful increase, then we should have a man whose nose would perforate the sun, his chin stretching across the Atlantic, and battles fought in the wrinkles of his face. He must be a fool, sir, that can believe in that". The poor querist was completely dumbfounded by this Johnsonian thrust.

Of Hall's personal habits the most prominent was his passion for smoking, for which indeed his peculiar bodily ailment was sufficient cause. He would not go into any company, however elevated, where he could not have his pipe, because he could never be at ease without it; but his temperance in spirituous liquors would have satisfied a teetotalter, though he was an inordinate drinker of tea: "Eighteen cups at a sitting, sir, and some in a basin, was no unusual allowance," said a friend who had often been in his company. When in the pulpit he was so wrapt and abstracted in his subject, that if he took up notes with him he invariably tore them into pieces, quite unconsciously to himself. In his table talk when his brains were at work, he was equally oblivious as to what he was doing with his fingers. Once, after he had gone from the house, a lady missed her teaspoons, and found them under

the sofa cushion, where hall had insensibly stowed them away while engaged in conversation. Of his smoking, and anecdote is told, that after his "cloud" in the vestry, on one occasion he perceived on going into the pulpit he had left his Bible behind him. He beckoned to the junior deacon and whispered "Bring my Bible", but in so low a tone that the man thought he said "my pipe". "What into the pulpit, sir?" asked the astonished deacon. "Yes, yes", replied Hall impatiently, "to be sure, into the pulpit". The deacon went and [p186] quickly returned, stealing up the pulpit stairs with something under his coat. The preacher stooped to take his Bible, and, to his horror, saw a yard of clay instead – fortunately, however, before any but a few in the immediate vicinity had notice the circumstance. Hall died in 1832, and his flock buried him in the building where thousands had often hung upon his accents. The copyright of his works sold for 4,000l.

Foster was a man scarcely less eminent among the Baptist community. It has been justly said that "he was great upon paper, and with as much mental power as would have furnished a dozen decent intellects, he yet was never attractive in the pulpit, and, by his own admission, preached away nearly every auditory over whom he presided." He was unintelligible or too profound for a mixed audience, and moreover his manners were misanthropic and his habits unsocial, contemplative and secluded; besides which it appeared he had no settled creed beyond the broad and general principles of religion, and might as well have been of any other denomination as a Baptist; for in his life and correspondence he admits that he had discarded the idea of eternal punishment, and was inclined to Arian doctrine. Indeed, it is not improbable that the Baptists would have disowned him had it not been for the éclat of his great abilities. A friend [p187] of mine heard him preach in Silver Street chapel on the subject of "We brought nothing into the world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out;" and describes it as "a Christless sermon, but full of amazing ability". He was a thin man, plainly dressed, and so regardless of externals as to wear a piece of packthread for a watch guard. Another friend who remembers him declares that Foster was "a strange-looking being in whatever aspect he was viewed – sideways, back or front". He was in the habit at one time of walking on Sundays from Bourton into Winchcomb, where he knew a Mr Fisher, and a shoemaker for whom he had a particular regard. At that time he usually inverted his outer man in a scratch wig, brown coat, red waistcoat, with black breeches, white stockings and shoes to match, owing to the dust.

He occasionally preached in Winchcomb, but no one in that enlightened village ever pretended to understand him. I have somewhere read of a preacher who once chose for his subject a text from which to prove the existence of any over ruling Providence. In the course of his sermon he started and answered objections which the rustic population had never before heard of. When he was leaving the church he found an old farmer waiting for him, who thus addressed him in great wrath: "Mr B---, you are a [p188] great scholar, they say – it may be zoa; but let me tell ye, that for all ye've said this day, and for all ye can say, for my part I do believe there is a Providence." Mr Foster was equally unintelligible; but in his cause was his style being too suggestive, leading other people to thing for themselves, and merely opening to their mental perceptions so many lengthened vistas of thought, adown which they were to penetrate by the force of their own efforts. But "the million" do not like this hard work; and hence, unless a preacher thinks for his hearers, he has but little chance of being popular. Yet one would think that Foster's style must sometimes have aroused those who had not entirely given way to dozing. In one of his sermons at Worcester he startled his hearers by observing that "if they all had the power of carrying into effect their own wishes, how many bodies would be laid out in the morning!" This was a pretty direct slap for those who wished their rich relations were "fallen asleep in Jesus", not on account of the eternal peace and happiness gained to the deceased, but for the pecuniary advantage of the survivors. The preacher was right: if we only loved our friends as well before they die as we do afterwards, what a beatific world this would be! For softening the heart, and hour's stroll in a graveyard is worth all the sermons [p189] that were ever preached. (anonymous author). Foster was an implacable Radical, and so much did he dislike the Established Church that the

mere sight of a steeple offended him. A friend of his relates that on one occasion, while walking with him between Worcester and Pershore, he paused to admire the splendid panoramic view stretched out before him. At length his attention being drawn to the distant time-worn tower of Worcester Cathedral, on which the sun was shining – "Aye, aye" said he, waving his hand impatiently, "there she is, sure enough, the only ugly thing in the whole scene". Foster professed a great dislike too, for religionists and preachers in dissenting ranks who made a merit of being ignorant – for their narrow views, their laziness of mind, and uncouth language; and his disgust at grimaces, postures, nasal intonation, cant slang, degrading travesties and similes, and the undue fulmination of the horrors of hell, was apparently unfeigned:

"You might often meet (says he) with a systematic writer, in whose hands the whole wealth, and variety, and magnificence of revelation shrink into a meagre list of doctrinal points, and who will let no verse in the Bible tell its meaning, or presume to have one, till it has taken its stand by one of those points. You may meet with a [p190] Christian polemic, who seems to value the arguments for evangelical truth as an assassin values his dagger, and for the same reason; with a descanter on the invisible world, who makes you think of a Popish cathedral, and from the vulgarity of whose illuminations you are glad to escape into the solemn twilight of faith; or with a grim zealot for such a theory of Divine attributes and government as seems to delight in representing the Deity as a dreadful king of furies, whose dominion is overshadowed with vengeance, whose music is the cries of victims, and whose glory requires to be illustrated by the ruin of his creation".

Foster' famous essays (which have gone through numerous editions) were written at From – which someone has compared to a cart-load of stones thrown into a pit. Strange to say, these same essays were but amplifications of epistles addressed to the lady whom he afterwards married, and a very odd kind of love letters they certainly were; instead of flames, and darts, and vows, we have profound speculations on popular ignorance, and the connection of cause and effect abstrusely traced. She is said to have been a frigid, stately sort of philosopher in petticoats, bearing the unromantic name of Maria Snook. Yet her misanthropic husband murmured mournfully at her death (see *Bristol Church-goer*). He died at Stapleton, near Bristol, October 15th 1843, at the age of seventy-three.