

# Society of Friends

*Extracts from Worcester Sects: John Noake 1861*

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"This world is a form; our bodies are forms; and no visible act of devotion can be without forms. But yet the less form in religion the better, since God is a spirit; for the more mental our worship, the more adequate to the nature of God; the more silent, the more suitable to the language of a spirit. Words are for others, not for ourselves; nor for God, who hears not as bodies do, but as spirits should. If we would know this dialect, we must learn of the divine principle in us. As we hear the dictates of that, so God hears us."

WILLIAM PENN

In the religious phenomena of the seventeenth century the establishment of Quakerism stands out as one of the most prominent features; and in the mighty ebullition of public opinion which then shook society to its foundation, among the landmarks around which men began to rally, none were more conspicuous than that set up by *George Fox*. (Be it understood that I use the term Quaker in the present chapter not in the contemptuous sense of its originator, Mr Justice *Bennett*, of *Derby*, but for the sake of convenience, and because it seems [p192] that both *Fox* and his followers adopted the designation without much demur). The original Quakers were a very different set of men from their passive, quiet, and respectable descendants of the present day, for while evincing the courage of primitive martyrs in long endurance of every kind of obloquy, suffering and wrong, they carried an aggressive warfare into the camp of the enemy, violently denounced and challenged the steeple-house priest in his own pulpit, bearded the judge in his chair, and shrank not from using the plainest language even to the Majesty of England. In such an age of extreme opinions no wonder that enthusiasm became developed into fanaticism, and that we read of a *William Sympson* running naked through the streets of *Evesham* and other towns "as a prophetic warning to the people", and a *James Nailor* at *Bristol* riding on a white horse and professing himself to be Christ. These extravagances, however, must not be charged against the whole sect, any more than the mummeries of the middle ages may be set down to the score of Christianity. Moreover, both *William Penn*, and *Fox* himself to some extent, discounted these vagaries, nor was *Nailor* again received into membership with the Quakers till he had recanted his follies. *Calamy* (who was a partisan opposed to them) says of the Quakers----

[p193] "Their principal zeal lieth in railing at ministers, as hireling deceivers and false prophets, and in refusing to swear before magistrates. At first they used to fall into trembling and sometimes vomiting in their meetings, and pretend to be violently actuated by the spirit; but now that has ceased; they only meet, and he that pretendeth to be moved by the Spirit speaketh, and sometimes they say nothing, but sit an hour or more in silence and then depart. One while several of them went naked through many chief towns and cities of the land, as a prophetic act. Some of them having famished and drowned themselves in melancholy, others have undertaken by the power of the spirit to raise them, as *Susan Pierson* did at *Claines*, near *Worcester*, when they took a man out of his grave who had so made himself away, and commanded him to arise and live; but to their shame. Their chief leader, *Jas. Nailor*, acted the part of Christ at *Bristol*, according to much of the history of the Gospel, and was long laid in Bridewell for it, and had his tongue bored as a blasphemer by the Parliament. Many Franciscan friars and other Papists have been proved to be disguised speakers in their assemblies; but *William Penn*, their modern leader, hath undertaken the reforming the sect, and set up a kind of ministry among them."

The origin of Quakers may be dated from about the year 1650. Their founder, *George Fox* was born in 1624; he was an unusually grave and thoughtful youth, and after a succession of religious experiences, some of which [p194] were of the most severe and trying character, he

arrived at those convictions which he believed he was sent by God to propagate. His articles of faith were few: morality, mutual charity, and the love of God, being the fundamental principles on which he mainly insisted. The religion and worship he recommended were simple and without ceremonies: to wait in profound silence for the influence of the Spirit was one of the chief points he inculcated; and it has been said of him and his followers that they accounted ordinances as things which had arisen out of the bottomless pit, and ceremonies the invention of fallen man and mere tradition. An utter exclusion of all statuary, all pictures, all architecture, all ritual, all spoken prayer, was their practice; they had no eye for the beautiful in form, no ear for the musical in sound, no soul for the eloquent and sublime in the offices of thanksgiving, meditation, instruction and prayer. In their violent onslaughts on the established clergy and other denominations (for they were peculiarly hostile to Baptists and Independents, and gathered numerous converts from their ranks) they made the great mistake of considering that whatsoever was useless or distasteful to themselves must be of necessity equally so in the estimation of Him who has obviously made his creatures to differ as to their tastes and preferences in circumstantial, [p195] that they may still more closely and delightedly agree in the essentials of filial love towards Him and fraternal affection for each other. The Quaker, wrapt in his spiritual exaltation, would have deprived his weaker brethren in the flesh of those adjuncts and incentives to piety which the tastes, the affections, and the senses of a highly cultivated nature can supply, and without which their Christianity might frequently remain torpid and cold and dim. Devotional appliances (if not confounded with essentials) have undoubtedly their true use in meeting the requirements of those to whose nature and constitution they are peculiarly applicable; and while it is admitted that the humblest brick building may contain many worshippers of God in spirit and in truth, let it never be believed that splendid architecture, music, and indeed the arts and sciences generally, may not be rendered subservient to and the handmaids of religion.

The founders of new sects must necessarily be extraordinary men, but *Fox* was peculiarly so. In his youth, when in distress of mind, he applied to ministers of various denominations, but found no relief from any. The priest of *Mancetter* prescribed tobacco and psalm singing, but *Fox* did not love the one, and was not in a state to do the other. At a very early period of his experience he came to the decision that an *Oxford* or [p196] *Cambridge* education was not sufficient to qualify a man to become a minister of Christ; and when at length he had arrived at those convictions by which he made his peace with God, it is marvellous to note with what a right good will he proceeded to work. Entering parish churches ("steeple-houses", as he called them) --- for whenever a bell sounded in his ear for service he was "moved against the black earthly spirit of the priest", alleging that it was "like a market bell to gather people together, that the priest might set forth his wares to sell" --- he would cry against "the great idol (the church) and against the worshippers therein". Arriving near *Lichfield* on one occasion, and seeing the spires of the city, "the word of the Lord came to me", says he, and over hedge and ditch he went in the straightest line possible till he came thither; and the Lord having commanded him to pull off his shoes, he did so, leaving them with some shepherds just out of the city; then he walked through the streets, crying "Woe to bloody *Lichfield*", having in his eye the early British Christians who were said to have been murdered there in the time of Diocletian. At *Hotham* church he was moved of the Lord to say to the priest, "Come down, thou deceiver; dost thou bid people to come freely and take of the water of life, and yet thou takest £300 a [p197] year of them for preaching the scriptures. Mayest thou not blush for shame?" When on a visit to *Warnsworth* church, the priest saw him and left off preaching, with the remark addressed to *Fox*, "What have you to say?". And the intruder was about to answer, when the people rushed upon him, thrust him out, and severely beat him. He fearlessly "laid open" all sects of Christians; taunted the Presbyterians, when they concealed their devotional meetings under a show of pipes and ale, that although they had persecuted others they flinched from it themselves; and when the Ranters of that day took tobacco and drank ale at their meetings, sung, whistled and danced, as a part of their religion, he so handled them that "at last it became a dreadful thing to them when it was told them 'the man in the leathern breeches is come'". *Fox* denounced idol temples, tithes, oaths, all kinds

of earthly honours and pleasures, sports, recreations and fine attire. He protested against "gaudy apparel and store of ribbons hanging about men's waists, knees and on their hats, of divers colours, red, with black or yellow, and their powdered hair -- women with their gold, their patches on their faces, noses, cheeks, foreheads -- their rings, their cuffs, double under and above, their ribbons tied about their hands, and three or four gold laces about their clothes."

[p198] He wrote epistles to priests, judges, jurymen, and even to the King himself and to foreign princes, attended fairs, wakes, and races, where, says he (believing himself to be inspired) "so dreadful was the power of God upon me that the people flew like chaff before me into their houses." At *Ulverston* church, where he "spoke like a hammer", the building "shook so that priest *Bennett* was afraid and trembled, and hastened out for fear it should fall on his head." There must have been something superhuman in *Fox's* countenance, for the effect of his glance was said to be irresistible. A Baptist deacon, who had the misfortune to be severely castigated by him, cried out, "Do not pierce me so with thy eyes; keep thy eyes off me." *Fox* confessed that "he felt disposed greatly to thrash the chaffy light minds of the Baptists," and once he tried his hand with *Tombes*, who maintained that the inner light of man was a natural light, while *Fox* insisted that it was divine; and a fore disputation they had, in which both parties claimed the victory. *Fox* would take in hand any notoriously bad man, and seldom leave him before he had made some impression, as was the case with one *Mansfield*, who at the close of their interview, is said "to have had scarcely any strength left in him." Again, he has been known to go boldly up to robbers and admonish them in the [p199] power of the Lord till they were glad to get away from him. He even ventured to counsel *Cromwell* himself on the subject of toleration and his proposed assumption of the Kingly office. The Protector had the good sense to take his remonstrances kindly and as the Quaker was leaving his presence, *Cromwell*, with tears in his eyes, said, "Come again to my house, for if thou and I were but an hour of the day together we should be nearer to one another." One of *Fox's* doctrines was that of pure perfectibility: he professed to feel himself pure, innocent, and righteous -- could "see into the invisible creation of God:" wonderful depths opened to him, so that he could discern all the creatures of God; he professed to know the occult influences of physic and to discern spirits, as also the characters of men; believed that he was commissioned by God and travelled in His power, having been assured by the Lord that his name was written in the Lamb's book of life; moreover he felt himself forbidden to put off his hat, to bid people "good morrow", or bow, or scrape with his leg. Great was the rage of priests, magistrates, professors, and people of all sorts, at this want of respect, and on one occasion *George Fox's* primitive language brought down the following rough rejoinder: "Thou me! Thou my dog! If thou thouest me I'll thou thy teeth down thy throat!"

[p200] *Fox's* love of the supernatural was quite equal to that of the ecclesiastics in the middle ages: he professed to see visions, discern spirits, and work miracles. *James Claypole*, of *London*, had a dreadful fit of the stone; the Quaker laid his hand upon him, and prayed the Lord to rebuke the infirmity, whereupon "the Lord's power went through him, he felt ease, quickly fell asleep, the stone came from him like dirt, and the next day he rode twenty five miles in a coach." *Fox* cured one *Richard Myer*, a lame man, by simply telling him in the name of the Lord to stand on his legs; and at *Mansfield* a distracted woman became quiet at his bidding. The gaoler at *Leicester* was in the habit of setting his mastiff upon such of the prisoners as he saw praying, but if any of them happened to be Quakers the dog refused, and took the staff out of his master's hand! *Fox* was once struck on the hand with a carpenter's rule, which so benumbed the limb as to render it useless, until "looking at it in the love of God, in a moment the arm recovered strength." The priests raised reports that neither water could drown him, nor could they draw blood from him, and therefore he must be a witch; and no wonder that in such an age the commonalty believed it. At some place in *Yorkshire* the people came professedly to kill him, but could not because they believed he had bewitched [p201] them. *Fox* had a vision of the Protector's death shortly before it happened, and seven years before the Great Fire of *London* he saw the city, in his mind's eye, reduced to ashes, as it

afterwards appeared! A fortnight before the Long Parliament was broken up he foresaw it, and also that the speaker would be plucked from his chair. He foretold the defeat of the Turks when it was feared they would overrun Christendom; and on one occasion in his chamber he saw the angel of the Lord with a drawn sword towards the south, and soon afterwards a war broke out with *Holland*. He discerned an unclean spirit in a woman at a village in *Yorkshire*, spoke sharply to her, and she left the room, the people wondering, for they knew her to be a notorious character; and one *Gritton*, a Baptist fortune teller, he sent flying out of a house at *Luton, Bedfordshire*, so that he came no more amongst them.

The sufferings of this extraordinary man were incredible, in hunger and thirst, buffetings, stocks, imprisonment, horsewhipping and cudgellings. He lay at times under haystacks, in woods, or furze bushes, during rain or snow, or in dirty alehouses, where he met with the roughest of human kind, and occasionally experienced much danger from them; he was hunted hither and thither like a felon or outcast, yet instead of hiding or absconding he always boldly confronted [p202] his enemies. The priests incited the people to introduce rotten eggs and wildfire and to beat drums at his meetings, and once he was so beaten as to be left for dead on a watery common. "Oh", says he, "the blows, punchings, beatings, and imprisonments, that we underwent for not putting off our hats to men. Some had their hats violently plucked off and thrown away, so that they lost them." *Fox* was imprisoned at *Worcester, Derby*, and in many other gaols. At *Launceston*, in 1656, he was put into a prison called "Doomsdale", where murderers were confined, and where their filth had not been cleaned out for years, so that he stood over his shoes in it, and neither bed nor straw was allowed him, so that he had to stand all night; at length he procured a little straw, and burnt it to take away the stench of his cell, but in doing so he nearly suffocated the gaoler sleeping in an upper story, who thereupon promptly revenged himself by pouring down upon the Quaker a large quantity of offensive liquid, so that he the King at *Worcester* fight. Justice *Bennett*, of *Derby*, sent constables to press him for a soldier on narrowly escaped drowning. *Fox* suffered much on account of his refusing to take up arms against that occasion, but having refused both money and threats, he was confined to a close confinement at *Derby*. A trooper whom he converted there [p203] was at the battle of *Worcester* in the following year (1651), and when the two armies lay near one another two soldiers came out from the King's army and challenged any two of the Parliamentary army to fight with them, whereupon this trooper's colonel made choice of him and another to answer the challenge; in the encounter the trooper's companion was slain, but he (*Fox's* convert) drove both his enemies within musket shot of the town without firing a pistol at them! This circumstance he narrated to *Fox* with his own mouth, "but when the fight was over he saw the deceit and hypocrisy of the officers, and being sensible how wonderfully the Lord had preserved him, and seeing also to the end of fighting, he laid down his arms."

The founder of the Quakers firmly believed in the doctrine of retribution in this life, and while recording the frightful treatment experienced by "Christ's lambs", and the heavy hand laid upon "the Lord's plants", he dwells with apparent satisfaction upon the instances which came to his knowledge of the righteous judgements of God upon the evil-doer. One who had falsely accused *Fox* of passing himself off as Christ, he retorted upon by calling him a Judas, and declaring that he should meet with Judas's end, which he did shortly after by hanging himself. Justice *Sawrey*, another persecutor, was [p204] drowned. At *Droitwich*, in 1670, *Fox* says in his journal, "*W. Cartwright* was at a friend's house, and being moved of the Lord to speak a few words before he sat to supper, there came an informer and stood hearkening under the window. He got a warrant to distrain the friend's goods, under the pretence that there was a meeting there; but as he came back with the warrant he fell off his horse and broke his neck." A rude butcher at *Halifax*, who had sworn to kill *Fox*, and was accustomed to thrust out his tongue in derision at Quakers, had that member so swollen that he could never draw it in again, and died so. And in *Somersetshire* a man who was lolling out his tongue at them in the street, attracted a bull which had just got away from a baiting, and the animal struck his horn under the man's chin and thrust his tongue out of his mouth, just as he

had been accustomed to put it in derision! A Captain *Drury*, who was in the habit of scoffing at the Quakers on account of their alleged trembling, was one night in bed seized with such a trembling that his joints knocked together, and he was so shaken that he had not strength to rise. Feeling the power of the Lord on him, he tumbled off the bed, and cried out that he would never more speak against the Quakers! Justice *Bennett* (before mentioned), who was an Independent, had committed *Fox* to [p205] prison, and had derisively given him and his followers the denomination of Quakers, because *Fox* had bade him tremble at the word of the Lord, afterwards declared that some plague was upon his house and the whole town of *Derby* on account of *Fox's* imprisonment, and accordingly, when the latter had been in gaol for nearly a year, they turned him out.

More of *Fox's* history will have to be glanced at in the following pages; but as what remains will be entirely in connection with the history of the Quakers of *Worcester* city and county, it must come on in chronological order. It may now, therefore, suffice to add that *Fox* died in the year 1690, in his sixty-seventh year -- a good old age, when we consider the cruel buffettings to which for many years he had been exposed, and his incessant labours, not only on the United Kingdom, but in *America, Germany, Holland, &c.*

It should be premised that although *Cromwell, General Monk, Charles II,* and *James II,* were all, more or less, in favour of toleration -- though for widely different reasons -- the unfortunate Quakers were almost as bitterly persecuted as the Catholics throughout the greatest portion of that period. The rival sects, when they obtained power in parliament, were headstrong and violent, against the expressed wish of the [p206] Protector; the Long Parliament was especially cruel to the Quakers; and after the restoration of the Kingly authority the frequent recurrence of plots and other causes prevented the extension of that toleration which otherwise they might have gradually obtained. With regard to *Cromwell*, he is known to have had a strong bias in favour of *Fox* and his followers, and never turned a deaf ear to them but at the instigation of some rival sect. A Quaker merchant once applied to him for redress, his vessel having been seized and confiscated on the coast of France. The Protector sent him with a letter to Cardinal *Mazarin*, demanding compensation within three days, or to return. Shortly afterwards the Quaker again presented himself before *Cromwell*, who said, "Well Friend, hast thou thy money?" "No", was the reply. "Then take no further trouble." The Protector seized the first two French ships within his reach, indemnified the Quaker, and paid the surplus to the French ambassador.

The first recorded visit of *George Fox* to *Worcestershire* was in 1655. He had heard that the magistrates of *Evesham* had cast several of his followers into prison, and that, hearing of his coming, they had made a pair of high stocks for the occasion. This, of course, only whetted *Fox's* appetite to go, and he sent for *Edward [p207] Pittaway*, a Quaker who lived near *Evesham*, who informed him that the rumour was quite true. At night the two went into the town, and in the evening (says he) "we had a large and precious meeting." Next morning he rode to one of the prisons, and encouraged the friends there, among whom was *Humphrey Smith*, who had been a priest, but was then a "free minister of Christ". When *Fox* had visited both prisons, and was going out of the town, he espied the magistrates coming to seize him, "but the Lord frustrated their intent, and the innocent escaped their snare, for God's power came over them all; but exceeding rude and envious were the priests and professors about this time in those parts." He went from *Evesham* to *Worcester*, "and had a precious meeting there, and quiet; after which, coming towards an inn, some professors fell to discourse with the friends, and were like to have made a tumult in the city. As we went into the inn, they all clattered into the yard, but I went among them and got them quieter. Next day I walked into the town, and had a great deal of discourse with some of the professors concerning Christ and the way of truth. One of them denied that Christ was of Abraham according to the flesh, and that he was declared to be the son of God according to the spirit. I proved from Romans i, that he was of the seed of Abraham, [p208] being made of the seed of David according to the

flesh, and that according to the spirit he was declared to be the Son of God. Afterwards I wrote a paper concerning it. From *Worcester* we went to *Tewkesbury*", where he had a stiff contest with the priest.

The above-named visit to *Worcester* was probably the occasion when a Society of Friends was regularly organised here, although the oldest document, and evidently the first minute book ever kept by them, does not commence till 1673.

In those days, the magistrates as a body, and especially those of *Evesham*, seem to have been men without law, justice, or humanity; and the persecutions which the unfortunate Quakers underwent at their hands in the neighbouring borough are a deep disgrace to the administration of the law. According to *Besse's Sufferings* (published 1753, and from which much of my material has been gathered) *Samuel Garner* and *Robert Martin* were most violent and oppressive as justices, and excited mobs to hoot, throw stones and dirt, so that the Quakers lives were endangered; then they were thrown into horrid dungeons, where no friends were permitted to visit them. At *Evesham* fair, on the 10th of September 1655, Justice *Martin* caused the people to pelt them with shovels of dirt, he also seized their books and burnt them at the Market [p209] Cross. A representation of these grievances was forwarded to *Cromwell*, but not with much effect, except that *Humphrey Smith* and *Thomas Cartwright* were examined before the mayor and magistrates for having published a paper in which they had represented their case to the Protector; and subsequently they, and *Joshua Frenshaw*, *John Knight*, and others, were tried before the recorder, *Robert Atkins*, at the sessions. One chief objection was their refusing to show any one respect by removing their hats, but *Wall* remarked to the objecting party, "Thou hast not yet made me any satisfaction for the last hat thou causest to be taken from me, neither is it restored to me." The offenders were ordered back to gaol from sessions to sessions, till they should appear without their hat, though they asserted there was no command in Scripture nor any national law for putting off the hat. When they were charged with being Quakers, *H. Smith* declared that the prophet Moses was one; and *R. Smith* was charged with calling *George Hopkins*, the priest, a liar, which he still said he was willing to prove; the priest made no answer. At length they were all heavily fined, but afterwards the fines were rescinded and the prisoners discharged by order of the protector, through Major-General *Berry*, who dates the order from *Worcester*, September 1 1656. The prisoners' [p210] goods also, which had been taken away by the sheriff, were restored on application to *Cromwell*. *Smith*, one of the sufferers, published a printed sheet, of what they had undergone, from which it appeared they had been kept a long time in a dark dungeon, on bread and water; no bedding nor straw to lie on, without paying the gaoler money; a pillow was even denied to one poor wretch suffering from the toothache. They were fourteen weeks in one dungeon, twelve feet square, which was not once cleaned out during that time, and the smell was so bad, even in the street, that the people could not endure to stand by it. In hot days some of the prisoners lay like dead men, their breath being almost stopped; and in cold nights there was neither room nor material to make a fire, nor space to walk in. Their wretched food was handed in through a four inch wide hole in the wall, and no friends were permitted to visit them. When two countrymen, passing by with their teams, requested to see them, the gaoler locked them in, nor did they regain their liberty without a considerable fee. At *Evesham* female Quakers were put in the stocks in a most brutal and indecent manner, sometimes a whole day and night together in a freezing atmosphere and then were ordered to quit the town. Any remonstrance with the mayor usually resulted in another application of [p211] the stocks. This redoubtable mayor was *Edward Young*.

I am informed that the old cell, or prison, at *Evesham*, where the poor Quakers were confined, is still in existence, under the end of an old dwelling house as you enter the churchyard from the market place, and close to the church gates. At present the shop over it is used by a coachmaker, and the cell or cellar is a receptacle for coals and lumber. It is about twenty two feet square and from six feet to seven feet high. There is a strong stone wall or buttress at

one end, about four feet thick, but whether intended as a support to the roof, or as a division of the place for two classes of inmates, is not now known. The ceiling has been removed. There are some recesses in the walls, and one narrow grating looking into the roadway. An old entrance from the market place down some stone steps has been blocked up. Altogether the cell is as comfortless a place as can be well imagined.

Nor was *Worcester* much behind in the work of persecution. In the year of *Fox's* visit to this city (1655), "*Thomas Goodere*, for speaking to *Richard Baxter* after he had ended his sermon at *Worcester*, was sent to prison; he was also imprisoned at another time for asking a priest (probably *Baxter*) a question in the steeple-house at Kidderminster. Also in 1655, "*Richard Farnsworth* [p212] was haled out of the steeple-house at *Worcester* for asking *Baxter* a sober question", for the priests of those times chose rather to stop the mouths than satisfy the doubts of religious inquirers. It will be seen in an earlier part of this work that *Baxter* (who was stationed at *Kidderminster*) occasionally preached at *Worcester* Cathedral, when the Independents or Presbyterians had possession of that edifice.

In the year 1656 *Fox* again visited *Evesham* but there is no account of his coming on to *Worcester*. *Henry Fowler*, for visiting his friends in prison in that year, was himself also put in confinement; many others were imprisoned for non-payment of tithes; and *Jane Hicks*, of *Chadwich*, was sent to prison at *Worcester* for some offence which the priest of *King's Norton* took at her speaking to him. Next year, *John Bissell*, for refusing to pay the priest 10s for tithe, had goods taken from him worth £1 5s; *Thomas Allington*, for going into one of the public places of worship, where he stood still and spoke not a word, was set in the stocks; and *Edward Bourne*, for exhorting the people in the College at *Worcester* to fear the Lord and repent, was committed to prison, where he remained thirteen weeks. The Cathedral was at that time occupied by Mr *Simon More*, a Presbyterian (Independent?) preacher, who had taken possession of [p213] the principal pulpit in the city on the ejection of the church clergy. (See page 92.). In 1658, *Jane Hicks* (who has been already mentioned) was brought to *Worcester* prison from *Bromsgrove*, where she had been several times "concerned to bear her testimony to the truth to the people assembled at their places of public worship". This poor woman, it seems, was placed four times in the stocks, once for a whole night and part of two days. This year, *Fox* addressed an epistle to his friends at *Worcester*, which was as follows:

"Friends, every one of you having a light from the Son of God, wait in it, that you may come to receive the Son of God, from whence it comes, and receive power from him to become the sons of God, and have faith in him; for who are of faith are of Abraham's seed, which faith gives the victory over the world. It is by faith our hearts are purified; so dwell in the light which casts out all jangling spirits, in which ye may have united one with another and with Christ, from whence the light comes, and with the Father, whom he is the way to, and that with the light ye may answer the light in every man (which comes from Christ), though they hate it. So the Lord God Almighty keep and preserve you, and all that keep your meetings in the power of God, that the Lord ye may see present among you---G.F."

One of *Fox's* addresses, dated from his residence [p214] at *Swarthmore* in 1676, is copied into the *Worcester* Quakers' minute book, but the epistle was not addressed to *Worcester*: it seems to have been intended for Quakers generally, or else for those of *Maryland* and *Virginia*.

Persecution was now more and more violent, and, as usual, in the same proportion the Quakers exhibited their firmness, which at times approached to fanaticism. *William Sympson*, in 1659, passed naked through the streets of *Evesham*, "in a prophetic manner, as a sign to the people there, but was whipped on the back and breast by an envious minded man of that place."

This *Sympson* imagined "that he was moved of the Lord to go at several times, for three years, naked and barefoot through cities, towns, market places, and into priests' houses as a sign that

they should be stripped as he was; sometimes he put on sackcloth and besmeared his face, saying that God would besmear all their religion as he was besmeared." Many a horsewhipping, stoning, and imprisonment, did *Sympson* endure in carrying out his grossly-indecent and self-imposed talk. The idea, which was probably derived remotely from the practice of some of the prophets in the old testament, was also acted upon by one *Robert Huntingdon*, who went into *Carlisle* steeple-house with a white sheet on, among Presbyterians and Independents, to show that the surplice was coming [p215] up again; and he put on a halter to indicate further what mode of exit from this world some of them might probably adopt. Others carried lanterns and candles into the churches, as indicative of the existing mental and spiritual darkness.

*Samuel Horton* (1659), "hearing the priest at *Evesham* assert in his sermon that Abraham's grace was imperfect, was concerned to oppose that anti-Scriptural doctrine, was set in the stocks for three hours, and then sent to prison." Same year, *Robert Widder*, "for speaking the words of truth to *Baxter*, in the steeple-house at *Kidderminster*, was imprisoned there as also was *William Pitt* of *Worcester*, who accompanied him; and *Nicholas Blackmore*, *William Pitt*, and *John Waite*, passing from *Worcester* to *Kidderminster*, were set in the stocks there, under pretence of their having broken the Sabbath by travelling on that day;" and *John Giles*. "for asking a priest at *Alchurch* to prove infant baptism, was set in the stocks for seven hours." Poor *Baxter*, with all his love of disputation and controversy, seems to have been fairly worn out by the attacks of the Quakers, and complained bitterly of the treatment he received at their hands. "They have oft (says he) come into the congregation when I had liberty to preach Christ's gospel, and carried it against me as a deceiver of the people. They have followed me home, crying out in the [p216] streets, 'the day of the Lord is coming, when thou shalt perish as a deceiver.' They have stood in my market place and under my window, year after year, crying out to the people, 'take heed of your priests; they deceive your souls;' and if they saw any one wear lace or neat clothing they cried out to me, these are the fruits of thy ministry!" And *Baxter* expresses his opinion pretty freely as to what they would have done had it been in their power. The Quakers were hostile to the *Worcester* county petition, got up by *Baxter* in 1652, in favour of a standing ministry and the preservation of the Universities. *Fox* attacked it in a pamphlet entitled, *The Threefold State of Anti-Christ*. This brought *Baxter* into the field with a defence, and there was not the shadow of a compromise on either side, as may well be supposed by those who are acquainted with the character of the combatants. The Quakers were never known to surrender. The governor of *Dover* Castle, when the King asked him if he had dispersed all the sectaries, said, "Yes, except for the Quakers, whom the devil could not disperse; for if he imprisoned them and broke up their meetings they would meet again; and if they knocked them down or killed them they would meet and revisit again." *George Whitehead*, a Quaker, who visited *Worcestershire* in 1657, had a fierce contention with the Baptists, [p217] but (says he) "The Lord stood by me and strengthened me to stand against and over all the opposition and contention which I met with or stood in my way. At *Worcester* city I had a large meeting, where I met with some opposition, and at one time from some professors, divers persons of note being present; but the dispute was soon over, for they could not maintain their opposition, and the truth prevailed over them to the convincing of many; and the Lord being present with me in my testimony for His name, gave me suitable answers by His immediate power and spirit, opening matters in vindication of the truth of the gospel, which He had given me a dispensation of, to bear witness to His love and grace, and to turn people thereunto in their own hearts and consciences." He also had a large meeting in an orchard at *Clifton-on-Teme*.

The year of the restoration of royalty (1660) witnessed no mitigation of the Quakers sufferings. *Fox*, in that year, passed from *Tewkesbury* to *Worcester*, "and never (says he) did I see such drunkenness as was then in the towns, for they had been choosing Parliament men at *Worcester*. The Lord's truth was set over all (his favourite expression); people were finely settled therein, and friends praised the Lord; nay, I saw the very earth rejoiced; yet great fears and troubles were on many, looking for the King's coming in [p218] (*Charles II*), and that all

things should be altered. They would ask me what I thought of times and things. I told them the Lord's power was over all -- His light shined over all, and that fear would take hold only on the hypocrite, such as had not been faithful to God, and on our persecutors."

On December 23, of the same year (1660), *Richard Fidoe, William Stevens, William Hall, Joshua Wannerton, and Richard Wall*, going to visit one of their friends, were imprisoned at *Worcester*, and afterwards carried before the magistrates, who tendered them the oath of allegiance, and upon their refusal to take it they were recommitted to prison. Next day, *Robert Smith, William Pitt, Nicholas Blakmore, John Townsend, John Waite, Thomas Ball, Edward Stanton, William Meakin, Gervas Pearson, Francis Clark, Abraham Roberts, Thomas Jukes, Abraham Annes, George Knight and Thomas Waite* were taken out of a peaceable meeting and carried before Major *Wild*, who tendered them the oath, and on their refusing to swear he sent them to prison, without expressing in their mittimus any cause for his so doing. At *Worcester* sessions, January 8, 1660-1, forty-seven of the Quakers were tendered the oath, refused it and were committed to prison. Their names were, *Robert Newcomb, Thomas Carter, Edward Gibbs, John Bennett, Thomas Cadick, William [p219] Smith, William Parr, John Jenkins, Richard Kirby, Thomas Dobbins, S.Mansell, Jane Hicks, John Newcomb, William Perkins, William Webb, John Gunn, Joseph Walker, Joseph Wall, N.Wilkinson, F. Harvey, R. Paton, E. Hall, Ann Heminge, Eliz. Bayleys, T. Dunton, T. Beale, R. English, William Pecks, T. Jenkins, J. Chandler, William Harris, William White, Richard Willer, J. Hopkins, Joane Burton, Mary Burton, Richard Russell, Richard Broadwell, D.Wilkinson, T. Horton, John Johnson, William Collins, William Harvey, John Bowter, T. Brotherton, Martin Willetts and Isabel Parker.*

On the thirteenth of the same month of January, "the meeting at *Worcester*, consisting only of women (nearly all the men being then in prison), the officers came and took them away, and put them in a place of confinement called Under Riders, where they were kept several hours; nevertheless on the 20th they met again, and were committed to Bridewell.\*

\*There was a prison in the old Guildhall, and the gaoler's residence in the same building, which he occupied as a public house, selling drink at exorbitant rates to the prisoners, and when their purses were not equal to the demand they were treated with brutal severity. It was ordered by the Corporation "that the prison next adjoining the Tolsey (Guildhall) should be for all parties, citizens or others, arrested by process of the court of record of this city (debtors &c.) and the felons to be committed to the prison of the Foregate" (then in Gaol Lane, now St Nicholas Street.

Two of them having been first set in the stocks [p220] for five hours. The names of these two were *Susan Pearson* and *Elizabeth Deane*, and of the others, *Elizabeth Careless, Ann Skiller, Ann Walker, Alice Deane, Ellen Price* (aged sixty-three) and *Elizabeth Read.*" At the assizes in the following March those who were imprisoned in our county gaol were set at liberty, except *William Smith* and two women. Mr *Townsend* in his MS., says -- "I and Mr *G. Symonds* as Justices, released out of the castle jail of *Worcester* this day (28th) forty-four Quakers and fourteen Anabaptists, upon their promising to appear at the next jail delivery, and in the mean time to keep the peace," &c. On the 4th day of July (1661), *Edward Walker*, who had been imprisoned several weeks for refusing the oaths, was again sent for by the mayor, and for the same cause committed to prison.

Venner's insurrection (Fifth Monarchy men) about this time had given occasion for an order in council forbidding all sectaries to meet in large numbers or at unusual times, though the Quakers, Independants and Baptists had published their detestation of that insurrection and their prayer for toleration.

On the 12th of January 1661-2 (says *Besse*) "the friends being peaceably met at the house of *Robert Smith* in *Worcester*, a marshal with a file of musketeers (being of those called 'the [p221] clergy band') came and in a hostile manner forced all the men there met, being eighteen, to go with them. They showed no order or warrant, but guarded them through

several streets to their captain's house, who ordered the soldiers to carry them to the marshal's. They were kept about three days and three nights, it being the time of a general session, at which, though they were never called to appear or answer for themselves, an indictment was found against them upon the evidence of but one man, and he an infamous person who had been formerly arraigned for murder and was afterwards distracted. From the marshals they were removed to the town gaol, and there remained; their names were --- *John Wright, Edward Lewis, F. Fincher, John Price, sen., Robert Tomkins, J. Clarke, Rd. Lewis, Robert Smith, John Price minor, Abm. Roberts, Ed. Stanton, Gervas Pearson, Rd. Fidoe, John Price minimus, Francis Harvey, George Knight, Nicholas Blackmore and John Townsend.* In the same month, "*Daniel Baker, Philip Bearcroft and Thos. Hacket* were taken from a meeting and imprisoned; and after eight weeks the said *Baker* was again committed on 35th Elizabeth which obliges nonconformists to abjure the realm on pain of being proceeded against as felons." In the May following "*Wm. Parr* was sent to *Worcester* gaol for refusing to pay tithes; and in [p222] July *Thos. Wells* was sent to gaol for refusing to take the oath of allegiance, and *Rd. Payton* for suffering a meeting at his house. The latter had afterwards the oath tendered to him and upon his refusal to take it was run to a premunire, and had his estate confiscated." At the assizes in the same month "*Robert Smith* was indicted for refusing to take the oath; he had been taken with many others by military force, and on being asked why he appeared before the court with his hat on, said it was his own and he came fairly by it, and that it was no more contempt of court than to wear a coat or cloak." He was fined £5 and thereupon a long dialogue ensued between him and the judge, but the Quaker declined on scriptural grounds to take the oath; he was brought up on several occasions, and then ordered to have his estate confiscated and be imprisoned during the King's pleasure -- a period which lasted nearly ten years!

In *William Sewel's History of the Quakers* is the following account of this trial:

"Now I could enter upon a large relation of the trial of many prisoners at *Worcester* before the judges *Hide* and *Terril*; but since that trial was much after the same manner as that of *John Crook*, herebefore mentioned at large, I'll but cursorily make some mention of it. When the prisoners, being brought to the bar, asked why [p223] they had been kept so long in prison, they were answered with the question, whether they would take the oath of allegiance, and endeavours were used to draw some to betray themselves, by asking them where they had been on such a day; for if they had said 'at meeting', then it would have appeared from their own mouth that they had acted contrary to the law. But they answered verily, that they were not bound to accuse themselves. Others by evidence were charged with having been at the meeting; and when they said that their meetings were not always for public worship, but that they had also meetings to take care of widows, fatherless, and others that were indigent; yet it was said to the jury that though there was no evidence that there had been any preaching in the meeting, yet if they did but believe the prisoners had kept a meeting for religious worship it was sufficient for them to approve the indictment. And yet such proceeding in other cases would have been thought unwarrantable. One *Edward Bourne*, being imprisoned --- (See another account further on.) \* \* \* Now since those who were fined thus did not use to pay the fines, judging that the thing which they were fined for was an indispensable duty they owed to God, and therefore they could not pay any such fine with a good conscience, the consequence therefore generally was imprisonment and distraining of their goods, whereby some lost twice and it may be thrice as much as the fine amounted to. Some of the prisoners made it appear that they had been somewhere else the night of the meeting at the house of one *Robert Smith*, at such time as the evidence declared [p224] by oath; yet because they gave no satisfactory answer to the question whether they had not been there on that day they were deemed guilty; the said *R. Smith* was premunired, for the oath of allegiance being tendered to him, and he menaced by the judge with a premunire, he asked for whom that law (for taking the said oath) was made, whether or not for Papists. And on suspicion that some of that persuasion sat on the bench, he asked also whether they, for the satisfaction of the people there present, ought not also to take the oath. But the judge waived this, telling him

he must take the oath, or else sentence should be pronounced against him. *Smith* asked them whether the example of Christ should decide the question; but the judge said I am not come here to dispute with you concerning the doctrine of Christ, but to inform you concerning the doctrine of the law. Then *Smith* was led away; and afterwards, when an indictment for his refusing the oath was drawn up, he was brought into court again, and asked whether he would answer to the indictment or no; and the reasons he gave not being accepted, the judge said, before *Smith* had done speaking, 'This is your sentence, and the judgment of the Court: You shall be shut out of the King's protection, and forfeit your real estate during life.' To this *Robert Smith* said, with a composed mind, 'the Lord hath given, and if He suffers it to be taken away His will be done. Thus *Smith* suffered with many more of his friends there and elsewhere; all which I believe my life-time would not be sufficient to describe circumstantially."

[p225] Three days after *Smith* was committed, the sheriff seized his personal estate for the King, and took an inventory even to the minutest thing, such as a ladle, fleshfork, &c, and a basket which cost but three farthings. *Smith* sent a letter to Judge *Hyde* after this sentence had been passed (it being not an unusual thing in those days for prisoners to memorialise judges and juries before as well as after their trial), in which, after some general admonitions on the shortness of life and the accountability of man, he proceeds ---

"And as for thy dealing with me and my poor family, and also with friends at the last assizes, I desire it may be blotted out if the Lord see it meet, and not laid to thy charge; and as for the sheriffe, with others, they have used more faithfulness, I am persuaded, in performing thy sentence against us then they would have used in a better work, and they have not been negligent concerning me, but exactly seized upon all in my house; they did not so much as let the skimmer escape their remembrance, neither were they forgetful of the ladle, which with the rest is priced and sold, and moneys received for it by him that seized. This is the pity and kindness I have met with even from my own neighbours and native countrymen, who take no care for my distressed family, who are ten in number, with whom I have not been above these six months, and both I and them might have perished had not the love of God exceeded the cruelty of man. Much might be [p226] declared in this wise, but I forbear, knowing that crueltie fitts not man for the Lord, but rather helps backward than forward to the rest that remains for evermore; and if the sense of these things hath at all pierced thy understanding, thou maist do well to moderate ye strictness of my imprisonment, that I may have a little liberty to help my helpless family. It would not, I believe, be displeasing to the Lord if I was restored both to my liberty and also to that which was taken from me; neither would it dishonour the King, so I desire the to ponder the weight of these things in thy mind, and to answer me according as the good Spirit of the Lord doth either witness for me or against me; and remain thy friend, though thou hast been my great enemy, and am a lover of liberty in things pertaining to conscience and honesty, *Robert Smith.*"

A copy of the above letter is preserved in the earliest minute book of the *Worcester* Friends.

At the same assizes whereat *Robert Smith* was so grievously treated, *Edward Bourne* --- a leading man among the Quakers, who were used frequently to assemble at his house --- and *George Knight* were also tried, the one for maintaining that all oaths were unlawful, and the other for meeting with others on the 11th of June at the house of the above-mentioned *Robert Smith*. There were great discrepancies and informalities in the proceedings against them, and *Bourne* took the opportunity of asking the judge a puzzling [p227] question --- "Suppose that Christ and His apostles were here at this time, and they should meet together, would not this law lay hold on them?" Judge: "Yes, that it would;" but then recollecting himself, he said, "I will not answer your question; you are no apostles." *Bourne*: "We are Christian followers of Christ, as they were." Being found guilty, they were fined £5 each, or three months' hard labour. In like manner were punished, *John Pike, John Townsend, Susanna Pearson, R. Tomkins, T. Jukes, J. Clarke, R. Fidoe, W. Pitt, Ed. Stanton, Ab. Roberts, Ab.*

*Arms, Gervas Pearson, F. Harvey, F. Fincher, Jeffery Rasmus, T. Ball and J. Waite.* Many of these prisoners, besides *Smith*, memorialised the judges (*Hyde and Tyrrell*) appealing to their consciences to do what was right in the sight of the Lord, and representing how they had been oppressed in the time of *Cromwell* and his son *Richard*. In the ensuing month of August, at the sessions, *H. Gibbs, E. Hall, G. Fort, J. Newcomb, T. Denton, S. Bailey, J. Johnson, W. Collins* and *E. Gibbs* were sentenced to pay £5 each or three months' imprisonment. On the last day of the same month, Major *Wilde* (who emulated the magistrates of *Evesham* in his ferocity against the poor Quakers) "with a party of soldiers, came to *Evesham*, and sent some of his soldiers to fetch [p228] several of the inhabitants of that town, and also *Robert Baylis, W. Webb* and *R. Walker* of *Broadway*, being brought before him, he took their words for their appearance at *Worcester* the next day, except *R. Walker*, whom they used very inhumanely, driving him (though a poor sick man, and above sixty years of age) before their horses on foot, and when he was not able to keep pace with them a soldier took him and dragged him along by force. The major himself beat him down with his horse and threatened to pistol him. At length they set him on horse back, whipping the horse both up-hill and down-hill, to the great pain of the infirm man, who, when he entreated them to be more merciful to his weak body, met with nothing from them except returns of scoffs and derision. He was thus brought by them to *Worcester* jail, but the hardships he had met with by the way had so weakened his body --- before afflicted with a long-continued ptisick --- that he died in a short time after his commitment. He was a man of meek, innocent and Christian spirit, inoffensive in life and conversation, and generally loved by those that knew him."

This year (1662) witnessed the passing of the Act of Uniformity, when the Puritan clergy were ejected from their livings and become the founders of numerous sectarian congregations, [p229] while others were gladly received into societies already existing, as of Quakers, Independents, and Baptists. On the 1st of January 1662-3, *H. Gibbs, W. Collins, S. Pitway* and *Jos. Walker* were taken from their own houses and committed to prison, and at the next sessions the two first were recommitted for six months, though no breach of any law was proved against them; and on the 26th of the same month *E. Edwards* was taken at a meeting and sent to prison.

In the *Worcester* county rolls for 1662 is "a calendar of the prisoners called Quakers: *Rd. Payton*, convicted *de premunire*; *Edward Hall*, convicted for words spoken in open court, fined £5 and committed till payed; *Henry Gibbs, Wm. Collins, Wm. Webb, Robert Baylis, Rd. Walker alias Weaver, Jos. Walker, Rd. Bennet, Wm. Eades, Stephen Pitway*, committed the 2nd of January 1662, for having lately assembled themselves under the pretence of joyning in a religious worship, to the great endangering of the publique peace and safetye, and to the terrour of the people in severall places of this county."

On the 10th of May 1663, thirty men and women were taken out of a meeting at *Worcester* and committed to prison next day; the women and some of the men were set at liberty, [p230] but ten of them continued in prison, viz., *Ab. Roberts, R. Fidoe, J. Clark, G. Pearson, J. Rasmus, T. Ball, E. Lewis, J. Price, N. Blackmore* and *J. Wright*. About the same time *Ezekiel Partridge* was a prisoner in *Worcester* gaol on a writ *de excom. cap.*, by the procurement of one *Trustram*, priest of *Belbroughton*. On the 8th of November, *N. Blackmore*, with *Wm. Pitt* and *J. Jenkins*, was again committed to prison; and in the following January "*J. Waite, A. Roberts, E. Stanton, Dudley Linton, E. Lewis* and another, were required by the Mayor of *Worcester* and Major *Wilde* to pay four shillings each for a month's absence from church, though several of them had been imprisoned three-quarters of a year before, and had not been discharged from thence three weeks. Upon this refusal to pay, the magistrates caused their wearing clothes to be taken off their backs in their preference by way of distress, and accordingly were taken from *J. Waite* two coats and his hat; from *Roberts*, a great coat worth thirty shillings; from *Stanton*, a riding coat; from *Linton*, a great coat and hat; from *Lewis*, a great coat; and from the others, a coat and hat. *John Jenkins*, being absent

from public worship, was excommunicated and committed to *Worcester* gaol by a writ *de ex. cap.*, where he continued several years. In this year also, *N. Blackmore*, [p231] *W. Pitt*, *R. Bennett* and *T. Jenkins* were fined and committed to prison for not taking off their hats in court."

In 1664, March 11th, "*E. Bourne* and two friends who were intending to lodge at his house, namely *Jas. Harrison* and *J. Cartwright* were taken by soldiers, one of whom being asked for their orders, held up his pistol, saying that was his order. They carried them before Major *Wilde*, who committed them to *Worcester* gaol; they also seized and took away *James Harrison's* horse from an inn where they had left it." And on June 11th "*J. Jenkins* of *Clifton*, eighty years of age, was committed to *Worcester* gaol, having been excommunicated in consequence of a prosecution in the Ecclesiastical Court at the suit of *John Parker*, the priest, for tithes."

The *Worcester* corporation records for the year 1665 contain the following entries: "Paid two soldiers for watching the Quackers 1s 6d.;" and "Paid *James Hill* for a bill against the Quackers, and other expenses by him laid out at the last assizes, 8s 6d."

*George Fox* writes in 1666 ---

"Coming into *Worcestershire*, after many meetings among friends in that county, we had a general men's meeting at *Henry Gib's* at *Pashur* (*Pershore*) where also the monthly meetings were settled in the Gospel order. The sessions [p232] being that day in the town, some friends were concerned lest they should send officers to break up our meeting, but the power of the Lord restrained them so that it was quiet; through which power we had dominion. I had several meetings amongst friends in that county till I came to *Worcester*, and it being fair time, we had a precious meeting. There was in *Worcester* one Major *Wilde*, a persecuting man, and after I was gone some of his soldiers enquired after me; but having left the friends there settled in good order, we passed to *Droitwich* and thence to *Shrewsbury*."

In the same year (1666) the following Quakers were "taken in a conventicle and committed by *Thomas Wilde, Esq.*: " *Wm. Pitt*, *Rd. Fydo*, *Abra Roberts*, *Rich. Lewis*, *Ed. Lewis*, *Rd. Stanton*, *John Wright*, *Alex. Berdslye*, *Thos. Fitrale* and *John Hoskins*. Next year (as I find from the county sessions rolls) the gaoler's list of prisoners then in gaol included the following ---

"*Thomas Payton*, late of *Dudley*, taylor, a p'fessed Quaker, taken at a conventicle of Quakers in the said town of *Dudley*, a place much infested with Quakers and disorderlie p'sons, and comitted to ye gaole 10th July xiii *Caroli*, and being a stubborn and incorigible p'son, was at ye next sessions following tendred the oathe of allegiance, which he refused to take, was indicted, and convicted of premunire. *Thomas Feckenham*, another leader of the same sect, [p233] was likewise apprehended about three years since, and tendred ye oathe of allegiance, and being still obstinate and p'verse, hath been continued a prisoner, but with some liberty now and then extended towards him, wh. kindness hath not as yet wrought any conformatie or submission in him. *John Jenkins* and *William Pardoe*, Quakers, excommunicated in ye consistory of Hereford, and taken by a writ *de excom. capiend.* about a year since. *John Roberts* of *Droitwich* p'fessed Quaker, for using his trade and calling on ye Sunday or Lord's Day was likewise presented and excommunicated a year ago. *John Tombs* of *Droitwich* for the like offence, and for refusing to permit the sacred ordinance of baptism to be administered to his children, likewise excommunicated, and taken up by the like writ. *Job Allibone* and *Wm. Hodges*, for the same offence and refusing to come to church. All wh. persons soe committed are, by the over-much indulgence of the late sheriff, under-sheriff, and gaoler, permitted to goe at liberty about their occassions, wh. we consider doth encourage them to persist in their contemptuous and incorrigible behaviour; and they are not to be found in prison, unless for aboute an houre or a night once in six or eight weeks' time"

It seems this report of the state of Quakerism was occasioned by a request from the government that the magistrates should inquire into the subject, and furnish the names of the Quakers then in prison, and whether they were ringleaders, [p234] or had been seduced into the commission of offence by others. The *William Pardoe* mentioned above was probably the individual who was said to have been the pastor of the Baptist congregation in this city. --- (See page 158) *Thomas Feckenham* also is named as the founder of the *Worcester* Baptists (see page 156) so that considerable confusion prevails in the records as to the classification of dissenters.

In the year 1670, May 10th, *Besse* observes --- "a new act coming into force against religious meetings under the name of conventicles, the magistrates of *Worcester* and others in the county were not wanting to put both it and other acts against Quakers into execution." On the 20th June a warrant was issued by *Richard Brinley, Rob. Sellers, Ed. Soley* and *J. Higgins*, magistrates, to the gaoler of the county of the city, thus:

"Whereas *R. Fidoe, J. Alford* and *R. Stevens* were, on the 19th inst., in a riotous and tumultuous manner, with many other persons, met together in *Cooking street*, contrary to the laws of this land, and refusing to disperse upon proclamation, they were apprehended and committed" &c.

This meeting in the street was not of the Quakers own choice, but their usual meeting place being locked up by the mayor's order, they [p235] met before the door, on their own hired ground, and when they were kept from that ground by force they met as near it in the street as they could. *Ed. Bourne, H. Smart* and *E. Reynolds* were also committed in a similar manner for refusing to give sureties for their appearance at sessions. On 4th July, four others were committed --- *W. Pardoe, W. Roberts, E. Lewis* and *A. Beardsley* --- for "meeting to hold a conventicle, and refusing to give good sureties for their good abearing." Mr *J. Bearcroft* was then the mayor, and *E. Soley, J. Higgins, R. Brinley* and *F. Frankes*, magistrates. Some months before this, *Ed. Bourne* had fixed a paper to the door of the steeple-house at *Worcester* (probably the cathedral) denouncing those who loved the chief places in the assemblies and salutations in the markets, as "Antichrist's ministers and prophets, who fought their gain from every quarter." *Bourne* was imprisoned three days for telling this piece of his mind. This leading Quaker (*Ed. Bourne*, the physician) was evidently a thorn in the side of the ecclesiastics. He was the author of *An Answer to Dr. Good (so called) his Dialogue against those called Quakers, wherein he hath forged the Quaker and confuted himself; Worcester, 21st of the 4th month 1675.*

It will be seen from the above memoranda that the first regular meetings of the Quakers were [p236] held in a house hired for the purpose in *Cooken* or *Cucken street* (now absurdly metamorphosed into *Copenhagen street*); though it has already been shown that the early meetings of the sect were held at the private houses of their leading members, *E. Bourne, Robert Smith* and others.

Many imprisonments and distresses were inflicted on this suffering sect in the year 1670-1. *John Payton* is said by *Besse* to have been "fined ten shillings for his wife being at a meeting at *Dudley*, though she was not there; but such mistakes were usual with the informers, who often swore at random or by guess. The officers came to *Payton's* house by night, when all his family were in bed; they sent a person to knock at the door, under pretence of buying something; when the man himself came down to let in his supposed customer, the officers also rushed in and were about to make distress; but his wife calling some neighbours to witness what they did, and asking whether they came like thieves in the night, they forbore, and came again next say, when they took away the kettle and other goods, to the value of £32, which goods they carried into the parish church, where they lay till they sold them." In the same year, Sir *John Pakington*, of *Westwood*, and *Samuel Sandys* of *Ombersley*, granted

warrants against *F. Fincher*, *G. Maris*, *W. Sale* and *John Tombs*. *Fincher* was taken on [p237] his knees at prayer, and having subsequently heard that he was fined £20, he went to Justice *Pakington* (who with *Sandys* was on the bowling green --- probably the ancient one still at *Hadley*) to expostulate with him, asking him whether he thought prayer to God was a breach of the law. Sir *John*, in reply, said that he might pray at home, and that he stood convicted on the oath of the informers. *Fincher* then, with Christian boldness, exhorted him to justice and equity, but *Sandys* threatened him that if he did not hold his tongue he would send him where he would be loth to go. A short time afterwards the officers brought three carts to *Fincher's* house and carried away the best of his goods, took possession of the rest, and sold all; and within a few weeks after, *Fincher* was taken from his family and committed to *Worcester* gaol by a writ *de excom. cap.*, where he lay several months; and *G. Maris*, at whose house the meeting was held, was imprisoned above eight months.

In the year 1672, *John Stanley* was committed to *Worcester* prison by Exchequer process for tithes; February 16th, *Ann Hemming* died in the same gaol, where she had been confined for above four years for tithes; and in the same year, *R. Payton* and *R. Smith* --- whose names are now familiar to my readers --- were discharged by the King's letters patent, the former from about [p238] ten years' confinement, under sentence of premunire, in the *Worcester* county gaol, and the latter from an imprisonment of equal length in the city prison.

The year 1673 is memorable for the imprisonment of *George Fox* at *Worcester* and for the commencement of the Quakers' regular records in this city, which records are still in existence; but before analysing these books let us turn our attention to poor *Fox's* account of his capture and imprisonment. Travelling through *Worcestershire* towards the north, he went to *John Halford's* at *Armscot*, in *Tredington* parish, "Where we had a very large and precious meeting in his barn. After the meeting, friends being most of them gone, as I was sitting in the parlour, discoursing with some friends, *Henry Parker*, a justice, came to the house, and with him *Rowland Hains*, priest of *Hunniton*. This justice came to know of the meeting by means of a woman friend, who, being nurse to a child of his, asked leave of her mistress to go to the meeting to see me." *Parker* then caused *Fox* and his son-in-law, *Thomas Lower*, to be apprehended, and sent them both to *Worcester* gaol, by a mittimus setting forth that there had been a meeting to the number of 200, or thereabouts, at *Armscot*, and that *Fox* and *Lower* were present, and giving no satisfactory account of their settlement [p239] or place of habitation, and refusing to give sureties to appear at next sessions, the constables of *Tredington* were authorised to take them to the county gaol of *Worcester*. *Fox* got some friends to accompany his wife and her daughter into the north while he and his son-in-law were led by the officers to *Worcester*. In a subsequent letter to his wife he declared that he had "had a sight of being taken a prisoner the night before" --- that is, he had received a supernatural forewarning of what was to happen. When they had been some time in gaol they laid their case before Lord *Windsor*, then lord lieutenant of *Worcestershire*, and before the deputy lieutenants, showing how inhumanly they had been dealt with; that *Lower* was going down with his mother-in-law (*Fox's* wife) and with his sister, to fetch up his own wife and child out of the north into his own country; that *Fox* was bringing his wife on her journey towards the north, having been at *London* to visit one of his daughters just lain in; and he had asked the priest whether this was his gospel and their way of "entertaining strangers", and desired the justice to consider whether this was doing as he would be done by; but he replied, "he had said it and would do it." No relief was obtained from Lord *Windsor*, although many of the *Worcestershire* justices disliked *Parker's* proceedings; some friends however [p240] spoke to Lord *Windsor*, "and on the last day of the sessions, 21st of 11th month 1673, when we came into court they were struck with paleness in their faces, and it was some time before anything was spoken, insomuch that a butcher in the hall said, 'What, are they afraid? Dare not the justices speak to them?' At length, before they spoke to us, Justice *Parker* made a long speech on the bench, much to the same effect as was contained in the *mittimus*, often mentioning the common laws, but not instancing any we had broken, adding that he thought it a milder course to send us two to gaol than to put his neighbours to the loss of £200, which

they must have suffered if he had put the law in execution against conventicles. But in this he was very deceitful or very ignorant, for there being no meeting when he came, nor any to inform, he had no evidence to convict us or his neighbours by. When *Parker* had ended his speech, the justices began with *Thomas Lower*, whom they examined of the cause of his coming into the country, of which he gave them a full and plain account;" then they turned to *Fox* for his account; after which the chairman, an old Presbyterian, said, "Your relation or account is very innocent." Then he and *Parker* whispered together, and the chairman requested *Fox* to take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy, [p241] and they tendered him the book, but he declined saying, "The book saith, Swear not at all;" and the magistrates told the gaoler to take him away. *Lower* stayed behind to reason with them, but Mr. *Simpson* threatened to imprison him also. Mr. *Simpson* asked *Lower* if there was not cause to send *Fox* to prison, when the parson of the parish had complained that he had lost the greatest part of his parishioners. *Lower* replied, "I have heard that the priest of that parish comes so seldom to visit his flock --- but once or twice a year to gather tithes --- that it was but a charity in *George Fox* to visit such a forlorn and forsaken flock". Upon this the justices laughed, and chaffed Dr. *Crowder*, the priest alluded to, who was sitting there unknown to *Lower*; and he threatened to sue *Lower* in the Bishop's Court, but *Lower* sent him word to begin it when he would, for the suit would be answered, and the whole parish brought in evidence against him. This cooled the doctor, and nothing further was done in it. *Crowder* was a prebendary of *Worcester*, and afterwards visited *Fox* in prison, entering into arguments with him on oaths, but got the worst of the discussion. Soon after the sessions, the term coming on, an habeas corpus was sent to *Worcester* for the sheriff to bring up *Fox* to the King's Bench bar, whereupon the under-sheriff [p242] having made *Lower* his deputy to convey *Fox* to *London* ( a pretty good proof of the confidence reposed in the honour of Quakers), they set out on the 29th of the eleventh month, 1673, the ways being very deep and the waters out. Proceedings went on, and then Justice *Parker* or some other of *Fox's* adversaries moved the court that he should be set back to *Worcester*, and the judge gave judgement that he should be returned to *Worcester* sessions. *Parker* had spread a rumour that *Fox* was associated with many substantial men in various parts of the country, and had a plot in hand, "insomuch (says the accused) that if I had not been brought up to *London* when I was, I had been stopped at *Worcester*, and *Thomas Lower* had been re-committed with me. But although these lies were easily disproved, and laid open to *Parker's* shame, yet would not the judges alter their last sentence, but remanded me to *Worcester* jail;" only this favour was granted --- that he might go down at his own leisure, so that he appeared at the assize. He arrived at *Worcester* on the last day of the first month, 1674, being the day before the judges came; and "on the second day of the second month I was brought from the jail to an inn near the hall, that I might be in readiness if I should be called; but not being called that day, the gaoler came at night [p243] and told me I might go home --- meaning to the jail. *Gerard Roberts*, of *London*, being with me, he and I walked down together to the jail without any keeper. Next day, being brought up again, they set a little boy about eleven years old, to be my keeper. I came to understand Justice *Parker* and the clerk of the peace had given order that I should not be put in the calendar. That I might not be brought before the judge;" but some one procured the judge's son to move that *Fox* should be called, and then he found the judge was *Turner*, an old adversary. The judge tendered the oath, which being refused, *Fox* was again referred to the sessions, bidding the justices to make an end of it there, and not to trouble the assizes again. "So (says he) I was continued prisoner chiefly through the means of Justice *Parker*, for the other justices were very loving, and promised that I should have the liberty of the town and to lodge at a friend's house till the sessions, which accordingly I did, and the people were very civil and respectful to me. Between this time and the sessions I had some service for the Lord with several that came to visit me, at one time three nonconformist priests and two lawyers discoursed with me, and one of the priests undertook to prove that the scriptures are the only rule of life, but I defeated him by contending that the grace of God was given to every [p244] man to be a sufficient rule. Then a common-prayer priest came to me and some people with him, and had a controversy with me on perfectibility, contending that if a man said he had no sin he deceived himself. I replied that all God's works were perfect, or

rather there is perfection in Christ above Adam," and he relates that the priest's mouth was thereupon stopped. At the next sessions, being the 29th of the second month, "I was called before the justices; the chairman's name *Street*, a judge on the Welch circuit, and he misrepresented me and my cause to the country, telling them that my meeting at *Tredington* was to terrify the King's subjects. This I denied, and stated the case, but the judge told me that I was canting. The judge having told the jury how to act, I was led out of the Court, and the people were generally tender as if they had been in a meeting. Soon after I was brought in again, and the jury found a bill against me, which I traversed. Then I was asked to put in bail, and the jailor's son offered to be bound for me, but I stopped him, and warned friends not to meddle, for I told them there was a snare in it; yet I told the justices I would promise to appear if the Lord gave me health and strength. Some of the justices were loving, and would have stopped the rest from indicting me or putting the oath to me, but Justice *Street* said he must go [p245] according to law. So I was sent to prison again. Yet within two hours after, through the moderation of some of the justices, I had liberty given me till the next quarter sessions. These moderate justices, as it was said, desired Justice *Parker* to write to the King for my liberty, or for a *noli prosequi*, because they were satisfied I was not such a dangerous person as I had been represented. This, it was said, he promised to do, but did not." *Fox* then went to *London*, but returned to *Worcester* before the following sessions, whereat Justice *Street* was again chairman, but some scruple arising among the jury concerning the indictment, the chairman wished to tender the oath again to *Fox*; at length "he browbeat the jury and made them go out and bring in a verdict of guilty, although there were many errors in the indictment. One of the jury would have taken me by the hand, but I reminded him of the treachery of Judas, and bid him and them repent." A sentence of premunire was passed, with loss of goods and imprisonment for life. Mr *Twitney* was then clerk of the peace, *John Ashley*, a lawyer, was very friendly to *Fox* on the trial, speaking on his behalf and pleading errors in the indictment, but chairman *Street* overruled all; however (adds *Fox*) "the Lord pleaded my cause, and met with both him and Justice *Simpson*, who first ensnared [p246] me with the oath at the first sessions, for *Simpson's* son was arraigned not long after at the same bar for murder; and *Street*, who, as he came down from *London*, after the judges had returned me back from the King's Bench to *Worcester*, said 'Now I was returned to them I should lie in prison and rot', had his daughter (whom he so doted on that she was called his idol) brought dead from *London* in an hearse to the same inn where he spoke these words, and brought to *Worcester* to be buried within a few days after. People took notice of the hand of God, how sudden it was upon him; but it rather hardened than tendered him, as his carriage afterwards showed. After I was returned to prison, several came to see me, and amongst others the Earl of *Salisbury's* son, who was very loving, and troubled that they had dealt so wickedly by me." The assizes coming on in the sixth month, a statement of *Fox's* case was drawn up in writing, his wife and *Lower* delivering it to Judge *Wild*; and *Fox* himself sent a long epistle to the King. About this time he was seized with a long fit of illness, so that doubts were entertained of his recovery; but one night, in bed, he assures us, the Lord said to him that He had a great deal more work for him to do before He took him to Himself.

*Fox's* wife now came to visit him in *Worcester* prison, and her report of him was as follows: [p247] "After some time he fell sick in a long lingering sickness, and many times was very ill; so they wrote to me from *London* that, if I would see him alive, I might go to him, which accordingly I did; and after I had tarried seventeen weeks with him at *Worcester*, and no discharge like to be obtained for him, I went up to *London*, and wrote to the King an account of his long imprisonment, and that he was taken on his travel homewards, and that he was sick and weak and not like to live if they kept him long there; and I went with it to Whitehall myself, and I met with the King and gave him the paper, and spoke to him that the King had left it wholly to him, and if he did not take pity and release him out of that prison, I feared he would end his days there. And the Lord Chancellor *Finch* was a very tender man, and spoke to the judge, who gave out a habeas corpus presently; and when we got it we sent it down to *Worcester*. They would not part with him at first, but said he was premunired, and was not to go out in that manner. And then we were forced to go to Judge *North* and to the Attorney-

General, and we got another order and sent down from them, and with much ado and great labour and industry of *William Mead* and other friends we got up to *London*."

The King, it seems, was willing to release *Fox* by special pardon, but the high-minded [p248] sufferer declined to accept of liberty on those terms, deeming himself innocent of any offence. *Edward Pitway* at last got Justice *Parker* to order the gaoler "to show him what lawful favour he could do for the benefit of the air for his health." This was on the 8th of October, 1674. After this, *Fox's* wife obtained an interview with the King and the judges as mentioned above, and the prisoner was once more brought to King's Bench, to try the errors in his indictment. The under-sheriff, clerk of the peace, and some others, went up to town with *Fox* in the stage coach from *Worcester*. [This is the first mention of a stage coach in this city, and those vehicles had not at that time assumed the name of mails, balloons, jupiters, flies &c. The first mail coach from *Worcester* to *London* was not established till the 28th of August 1785 --- still in living memory.] The journey from *Worcester* to *London* by stage then occupied four days, *Fox* and his companions setting out on the 4th day of the 12th month and arriving in *London* on the 8th. The clerk of the peace had been uniformly *Fox's* enemy, and a four days' close companionship on these terms, in a lumbering vehicle, proceeding at a rate of less than three miles an hour, could have been by no means a pleasant thing, just recovering, as he was too, from a long attack of sickness. [p249] Mr *Twitney*, it seems, still bore enmity to the unoffending Quaker, and sought to ensnare him in his talk, but *Fox* shunned him, and so remained on his guard. The result of this journey was that the judges unanimously thought there were so many errors in the indictment that it must be quashed, and accordingly *Fox* received his liberty.

During the time of his imprisonment in *Worcester* gaol --- a period of one year and nearly two months --- he had written a great number of epistles to his followers in many parts of the kingdom besides books or treatises, entitled, *A Warning to the English, To the Jews concerning the Messiah, Against all Vain Disputes, For Bishops and Ministers, to try them by the Scriptures, &c.*

It has been stated before that the year of *Fox's* imprisonment at *Worcester* (1673) was the period of the commencement of the Quakers records in this city. These book, which I have diligently examined, are highly creditable to that order, and arrangement, as well as of the care with which they have been preserved, there being only one minute book (extending from 1765 to 1776) missing from the year 1673 to the present time, their first minute book commences thus:

[p250] "The monthly meeting book of the people of God called Quakers, in the city of *Worcester*. After we had had many monthly meetings at *Edwd. Bourne's* house in *Worcester*, wee judged it necessary to notify or record some things agreed upon by us thereatt such meeting, for the easier and more thoroughly doing that good work which the Lord have called us unto, in respect of discharging of our dutyes unto one another, that soe all who are accounted of us may be admonished as in God's wisdom there shal be seene cause that they walk according to the truth."

The first entry in the book is headed ---

"At the monthly meeting at *Edwd. Bourne's* house in *Worcester* the 13th of the 8th month, 1673"

The minutes throughout this long series of nearly two centuries relate to matters of discipline, the excommunication or disowning of unruly members, such as were inconsistent enough to be married by a church priest, or were guilty of habitual drunkenness, scandal, or other immorality, or incurred debts recklessly, or who launched into undue trading speculations without chance of success, or who followed the customs of the world in dress or other

particulars; exhortations not to pay tithes or other priests' charges, accounts of the sufferings of Quakers from time to time (which were transmitted to *London* to [p251] be stored up for future history), entries of minutes and queries received for their guidance from the *London* yearly meeting, putting out apprentices and paying the passage of poor friends to *Pennsylvania* and other settlements, accounts of Quakers' marriages and the strict precaution taken that both the candidates for matrimony should be "clear of all others" before they were permitted to become man and wife, together with records of the appointment of members to inspect the conversation of friends, peacemaking interventions between members who quarrelled, and affectionate interviews in the hope of reclaiming those who seemed by their conduct inclined to stray out of the fold --- these heads form the staple of the *Worcester* Quakers' books.

Their first recorded marriage is in the year 1674, when *John Price* announced his intention of taking *Margaret Owen* to wife. This circumstance was duly mentioned at the meeting by *Robert Smith*, who declared that *Thos. Vizard*, who had formerly laid down some claim to the proposed bride, had "acquainted her before some of the world" --- that is, had abandoned his claim in the presence of witnesses not Quakers; and *John Price* was required to obtain a certificate of the fact from the said witnesses before whom "he had cleared her", that it might be recorded in the [p252] monthly meeting book. Next month occurs the following entry:

"Agreed upon at ye monthly meeting yt *John Price* and *Margaret Owen* do lay their intention of marriage before ye women friends at their next monthly meeting, for ye satisfaction of all friends, and also an answer to friends' order and practice therein, that ye women friends do send with them one woman friend to certify us at our monthly meeting of their allowance thereof."

The two affianced at length safely passed through the ordeal of the women's inquiries --- and strict and scrutinising no doubt they were --- the marriage was allowed, and the following is a list of the witnesses who attended that ceremony:

*Edw. Bourn*  
*Leonard Fell*  
*Rob. Smith*  
*Tho. Hacket*  
*Rob. Toomer*  
*Tho. Reeves*  
*Tho. Jukes*  
*Wm. Pitt*  
*John Knight*  
*Edw. Lewis*  
*Alex. Beardsley*

*Rich. Roberts*  
*Sam. Pitt*  
*Ann Evans*  
*Millisent Hodgkins*  
*Ellenor Harvey*  
*Margery Walker*  
*Mary Pardoe*  
*Margaret Bourn*  
*Elenor Stanton*  
*Eliz. Wright*  
*Susannah Adams*

Some years later there is entered on the minutes

"A coppie of *Robt.* and *Susan Knight's* (paper) condemning their running out and being married [p253] by a priest: Dear friends, to you who are of the tender seed of God are these following lines written, to let you understand that whereas wee who have professed the truth of God, and not only doe, but have often at times and seasons been made p'takers thereof to the comfort of our soules have for want of keeping thereunto, which would have p'served us from the temptation of the evil one, been ensnared by him and fallen in it by being joined together in marriage by a national priest, and now by the mercy of God, who have let us see the evil of it, and led us to repentance therein are truly sorry that we have grieved His Spirit in ourselves and in you who were burthen'd by it. And further, we doe acknowledge that we went contrarie to our understanding in soe doinge, and sow deny that spirit that led us to it and the way of accomplishing it to be out of the truth, and hope for the future our lives and

conversations may be such that you may have unitie with us, who are, with our true love to you, your friends, *Robert Knight, Susan Knight.*"

This recantation was deemed sufficient, and the two penitents were reinstated as members. Further on, "*James Stafford* confesses (in his paper of condemnation) that he had wronged his understanding by taking to wife one of the world, not convinced of the truth, and in being married by a priest, and at a time when my child was dead in my house, and in seeking for a wife sooner than a year after the decease of my former one." He also acknowledged his drunken habits [p254] and being too light minded, and altogether appeared extremely penitent.

Instances of "disowning" or excommunication, occurring in the year 1674, include the cases of *Rd. Fidoe* and *Rd. Payton*. *Fidoe* was a shoemaker who "walked disorderly" and not withstanding the utmost kindness and long-suffering exercised towards him he persisted in his evil ways, and was therefore publicly disowned, or "wrote against" as it was then termed (the modern expression of the same process is "a testimony of disownment is issued against" so-and-so). Shortly afterwards, *Rd. Payton*, a tailor, and his wife, were disowned with great sorrow on the part of the Quakers, he having once been a great sufferer in the cause. (See pp. 219 and 229)

The monthly meetings were this year held at the house of *Robert Smith*. Same year, *Sarah Reynolds* of *Stourbridge*, was committed to *Worcester* gaol; she was a poor widow with five small children, and was incarcerated for the sum of ninepence (!) demanded "towards the repair of the steeple-house". In 1675, *Ezekiel Partridge*, of *Stourbridge*, for refusing to pay a church rate, and in 1676, *Alice Booker*, of *Wichenford*, a widow, for a similar default, were imprisoned at *Worcester*, Dr. *Crowther* of *Tredington*, sent several Quakers [p255] to *Worcester* gaol in the years 1676-7-8; one of them, *William Parr* of *Shipston*, being imprisoned above a year, and a judgment being obtained against him for £8 tithes, he had taken from him four cows worth £14 and at another time four cows and two horses. The said Dr *Crowther* had the power of holding an Ecclesiastical Court there once in three years, to which the said *William Parr* was cited "for not coming to hear common prayer" and was again committed to prison, where he remained two years and a half. In 1678, *Jane Baylis*, the wife of *William Baylis*, of the parish of *Himbleton*, was, by virtue of an assize process, brought from her husband and small children to *Worcester* county gaol, "for not coming to ye church, as it's called, ye 8th of ye 6th month." In the minute book for the following year is an order entered ---

"That a general search and inspection be made by friends professing the truth with us, that they stand clear in their testimony concerning tythes, and to the priest, and repaire of steeple-houses, and be faithful in things relating to the truth that they profess."

The intolerance exercised towards this sect had probably had the effect of turning some aside from their religious profession, and instances of backsliding and timidity are frequently rebuked [p256] in the minutes of the monthly meetings at *Worcester*.

On the 12th of March 1681, "*Ed. Bourne* was again sent to prison, having been apprehended while preaching at an unlawful conventicle, contrary to the liturgy of the Church of England, in *Friars Street*, where were several persons, above the number of twenty, contrary to the late Act of Parliament, *G. Soley*, mayor". [this is the first mention of the place of meeting having been changed from *Cookin Street* to *Friar Street*. Their latter house adjoined *Wyatt's hospital*, and had subsequently a burying-ground attached. The chapel was used for Divine worship by the Quakers till 1701, when the present chapel near *Sansome Walk* was erected, on ground given by *Ed. Bourne*, physician. The old chapel, however, was used for many years afterwards for their week-day or occasional meetings, and was ultimately sold for the purpose of a school. It is now used as an infant school; and the old burying-ground, where

the bones of many friends lie peacefully side by side after the cruel buffetings of a life of persecution, is now the resort of happy babyhood during play-hours. The present chapel near *Sansome Walk* had originally a passage into *Foregate Street*, but it was thought advisable to stop it up to prevent the establishment of a thoroughfare.]

[p257] But to return to the year 1681. On the 19th of the same month that *Ed. Bourne* was imprisoned, *F. Fincher* was also committed, as appears by the postscript of a letter from *Ed. Bourne* (then in the city prison) to *George Fox*. *Bourne* in his letter expresses the utmost satisfaction at being called to martyrdom for the sake of his Saviour, observing that being in bonds he is "satisfied of being in his right place", and he says that *Fincher* was sent thither a prisoner, "having been taken praying in our meeting in the street, being kept out of our meeting by constables." In the same letter he states that many of the Quakers had recently been "concerned in the Chancellor's Court", of which there is the following account: *E. Bourne*, for a demand of 2s.; *J. Knight*, 3s.; and *J. Allibone* and *R. Hill* 1s. 6d. each, towards the repairing of the steeple-house called *St. Nicholas'* church in *Worcester*, were prosecuted in the Ecclesiastical Court. Being cited, they appeared before the bishop\*, who showed himself much offended at their keeping their hats on; whereupon they wrote a letter to the bishop and his surrogates, excusing their conduct on principle --- that they could not conscientiously contribute to the repair [p258] of the churches, which were formerly Popish mass-houses, with the Pope's badge, the cross, stuck on one of the ends; and that the bishop had no cause to be offended at their hats, when Christ Himself said, 'How can ye believe who seek honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?' moreover, the King, as the chief magistrate in the nation, had shown no anger at those who had appeared before him with their hats on."

\*Dr. *Jas. Fleetwood*, who in his younger days, while chaplain to one of the King's regiments, at the Battle of Edghill carried off the young Princes to a place of safety. When *Charles II* was restored, he presented Dr *Fleetwood* to the bishopric of *Worcester*.

On the 27th of June, 1681, *John Bowater* was committed to *Worcester* gaol at the suit of *Thos. Wilmot*, priest of *Bromsgrove*, for small tithes, and removed to the fleet prison, and while there, a heifer worth £1 10s. was taken from him. Christmas Day of the same year was signalled by a sheriff's bailiff, named *Horsnett*, and his followers coming to meeting at *Worcester*, where "he asked who was the preacher? A rude boy standing by pointed to a woman, and said she was, which was not true, the meeting being altogether silent. Nevertheless this fellow went and swore before the mayor, not only that there was a conventicle but that the woman preached at it. They also swore that *F. Fincher* was at the meeting, who was then twenty-two miles off, and that *John Wareing* was there, who was then out of town. They also swore that *H. Haydon* and his wife were [p259] there, who appeared to-day to have been at their parish church and received the sacrament there. The uncertainty of such men's evidence considered, the jury refused to find any bill of indictment, nevertheless the justices at the sessions fined several persons upon that evidence and made an order for distress, taking pewter, goods in houses and shops, malt, a mare, boards, &c., to the value of £68 11s., from eight prisoners, namely *J. Allibone*, *J. Hunt*, *W. Pardoe*, *S. Morley*, *T. Haskett*, *T. Jukes*, *G. Robert* and *J. Knight*.

About this time --- 12th month 1681 --- *Ed. Bourne* again writes to *Fox*, saying that "he and three there friends had been excommunicated; that a parish meeting had been called to pay for a writ to throw them into prison, to which the mayor showed his unwillingness. *Bourne* had spoken to a friend to go to the said meeting to persuade them against raising the money required till they had heard them in self-defence; but he omitted to go, and 'now it must be as it may. They be very fierce here at present in taking account of us and all dissenters, sorry informers having a mind to rob and spoil us of what we have; but their work goes on not so fast as they would have it, the magistrate little countenancing them in it.' " In the following year a writ *de. excom. cap.* was procured, by means of which *Ed. Bourne* [p260] was more

closely confined, and *Allibone, Knight*, and *R. Hill* were also committed to *Worcester* prison, about the end of May, from whence they published a statement of their case "for the consideration of their neighbours, many of whom had not consented to their imprisonment, but were overruled by the power of such among them as were under the influence of the bishop and his ecclesiastics." The case was "recommended to the inhabitants of *Worcester* to view and well consider of", the writers showing that they had been imprisoned for doing no evil, but for persuading people to dwell together in love and fear the Lord, and quoting Scripture copiously in their defence.

"The wardens of *Nicholas* parish had demanded 8s. of us towards the repairs of ye church, so called, which we could not pay because we should offend the Lord in doing it, and not because we loved our money so well that we could not part with it. These wardens caused us to be cited in the Chancellor's Court, where we after appeared, and wrote to them to satisfy them concerning ourselves, and to have satisfaction from them; which they have not yet answered, nor never will, we believe; through whose doings we are excommunicated --- that is, delivered up to the devil, as it is said, which is sad to consider of, for we have done them no wrong, and Christ says 'love your enemies'. Now if they were [p261] Christ's true followers, do you believe they would deal thus by us? We do not believe they would. And do not these cry down the Papists for their cruelty --- the inquisitors of Spain for their persecution --- and say they are anti-Christian therein? But satisfy us who can, whether a better spirit be the guide of these in their doings than such are guided by, and whether it be not one and the self-same spirit which guides the one that guides the other. But for what they have done against us, we say, the Lord forgive them!"

On the 1st. of July 1683, sixteen persons were taken at a meeting at *Worcester*, and detained by the officers till the time of public worship was over, when they were taken to the Town Hall, after which they were sent for to come before the mayor and aldermen, and were committed to prison; their names were, *T. Haskett, W. Pardoe, H. Weston, J. Knight, J. Hunt, Job Wareing, H. Smart, R. Roberts, W. Matthews, T. Mence, R. Walker, T. Reeves, E. Stanton, Walter Pardoe, Cornelius Harrison* and *Ed. Jones*.

The charge against them was "for riotously and unlawfully assembling in the dwelling-house of a person unknown in *Friar Street*." From this it would appear that their place of meeting was as yet a private dwelling-house. On the next court day, as the prisoners refused to take the oath or to give sureties for good behaviour, they were sent back to prison, and at the following sessions [p262] they were indicted for being at a conventicle and refusing to swear, but their trial was deferred till February 25th, when they were fined --- *T. Mence* £4 19s., *Pardoe* 40s., *Reeves* 30s., five others 10s. each, and the other two 5s. each; in all £16 19s. Many distrains were made this year, including one on *John Newcomb*, by warrant from the Lord *Ward* of *Dudley Castle*, and Justice *Foley* of *Stourbridge*, and one on *Wm. Little*, a very poor man, who had taken from him his wretched bed of chaff, a blanket, a table, grate, &c. worth altogether only 10s.! At the following assizes, the Quakers then in prison wrote a letter to the judges and another to the jurors, appealing to their merciful consideration of the petitioners, who were suffering for conscience sake; but an indictment was found against several of them, and they were fined £20 each --- a large sum in those days --- and all of them continued in prison. In the parish books of *St Helen's* in this city, under date of the same year (1683) is a list of the "names of pore persons who had coats, &c., sent by Mr *Fra. Haynes* when he was mayor, as were bought with ye Quakers' money;" --- no doubt from the fines levied upon this persecuted sect. Also in *St Nicholas* parish it was ordered to prosecute all defaulters in the Ecclesiastical Court, except Quakers, who were to be brought before the magistrates.

[p263] This was a period of great persecution, when I find in the Quakers' books frequent complaints of members "who are slack in coming to meeting in these troublesome and suffering times." Another curious entry occurs in the year 1683:

"Ordered, that *George Fox's* paper concerning marrying within a year be copied out of a book called *Ye Mirrour of Justices*, in which those who marry within a year after their wife or husband's death are declared fit to be punished by corporal punishment in divers manners."

This is a singular item, as apparently contradicting *Fox's* well-known opinions against coercion and corporal punishment, and there is probably some mistake here which I am unable to explain.

A petition to *Charles II* from the prisoners in *Worcester* gaol was drawn up in April 1684, begging for the royal mercy as they had been incarcerated nearly two years, and expressing the utmost loyalty to His Majesty and resignation under their hard lot. This was signed by "Thy peaceable subjects called Quakers" -- *Stanton, Bourne, Knight, Jones, Harrison, Reeves, Smart, Mence* and *Goulborne*; and it was dated "from the prison of the city of *Worcester*, where the Lord delivered out of the hand of thy enemies (alluding to His Majesty's escape after the Battle of *Worcester*), whose loving kindness to [p264] thy throne please to requite by showing mercy unto us, according to His will, that thou mayest be blessed therein." The result of this appeal is not recorded, but on the 29th of the 8th month --- just after the petition had been sent up, several of the petitioners were still in prison, as I find in an entry under the above date, which sets forth that

"An account by post letter was given to *Rich. Richardson*, in *London*, of friends' present sufferings in *Worcester*, to be laid before the supreme authority of the nation, as hee and friends of the meeting for sufferings desired; which was as followeth: In the city prison of *Worcester*, prisoners therein and belonging unto it, ten in number, viz., *Ed. Bourne* and *R. Hill*, who have been prisoners by the writ *de excom. cap.* about two years and a half; *Thos. Reeves, Henry Smart, Thos. Mince, Edw. Jones, John Wood, John Hunt, Joseph Allibon* and *Geo. Roberts*, who were taken from their peaceable meeting, where all were silent, being kept out of their meeting-place, the magistrates having caused the doore to bee lockt up, neere which they were waiting upon God in sylence, and imprisoned. It seems they would make their soe assembling together to be a riot; of which number two were forth on security given for them which they knew not of, it seems, till it was done. The meeting they were taken from was the last first-day, which was the 26th day of the 8th month, 1684. Also since, of three [p265] friends who died in prison, and whilst prisoners since the King came in. There were four dyed in prison, and prisoners, the last of which was *Rich. Roberts*, of which an account may be given when convenient." And on the 9th of the 1st month 1684-5, it was "agreed upon by this meeting that *Henry Smart* records friends of this place and county's sufferings, in the book for sufferings, and take the books from the printer which he shall send for the service of truth, and dispose of them as is usual for that service, and to record marriages, births and burials, amongst us."

In May 1685, the Quakers imprisoned at *Worcester* drew up a representation of their case, directed to "the knights and burgesses of the city and county of *Worcester* chosen to be members of parliament," desiring them to plead their case.

"Some of us (say they) are prisoners and have been so long in the city of *Worcester*, and one in the county prison by a writ *de excom. cap.*, for not contributing a small matter towards the repair of the parish place of worship where we lived, and others for meeting together peaceably to worship God, and otherwise by priests and informers. Many of us have suffered much by imprisonment and the spoiling of our goods for non-payment of tithes to the priests, which to pay is according to the Jewish priesthood, which Christ put an end to; and for not giving them what they would have us, and for peaceably [p266] meeting together to worship God; the which we are still liable to if not prevented; and some have been prosecuted by the act for £20 a month for not coming to church; and indeed we can say these sufferings are come upon us not for our obstinacy and wilfulness --- though some may say we are self-

willed --- but it is because we fear God and are willing to approve our hearts to Him; and we do believe you yourselves know we are peaceable, and injurious to no man. Wherein we differ from others in religion it is only about the matter of our God, in which case tenderness ought to be shown unto us, according to His holy will. And this is all that we desire therein, so please to consider of our case who hereby are exposed to ruin, with our families, and do for us as you would be done for yourselves were it your case as it is ours, that the Lord may delight in you, and not enter into controversy with you for your omission herein. So, hoping you will consider hereof, and do for us as herein we have desired, truly desiring your welfare, we remain --- *T. Reeves, H. Smart, J. Hunt, T. Mince, Ed. Bourne, W. Pardoe, Ed. Jones, J. Woodward," &c.*

Our next note is not till the year 1687, when *Wm. Sankey* was committed to prison in the castle of *Worcester*, at the suit of *John Vernon*, priest of *Martley*, for refusing to pay tithes, and subsequently an execution was levied in his goods, when nine cows, worth £27, were seized to pay £7 14s.

[p267] In the life of *William Lloyd*, bishop of *Worcester*, that prelate is said to have "discoursed with the Quakers", and moreover they appear to have experienced more kindness at his lordship's hands than from many others of the ecclesiastical body. It is also said that when the seven bishops (of whom *Lloyd* was one, being then the bishop of *St. Asaph*) were imprisoned in the tower by the infatuated *James II* in 1688, *Richard Davies*, a Quaker, was the only person who visited the bishop in that place --- a circumstance which perhaps accounts for his lordship's partiality.

Soon after this period the accession of *William III* brought with it toleration and comparative comfort to the distressed Quakers, whose annoyances after this time were considerably less in degree, and the minute books are more occupied with matters of internal discipline. For instance, in 1695, it was ordered that *Rebekah Roberts* should be "paid 15s a quarter for eight scholars, which is the full sum of the donor's will, and to give account to the monthly meeting how the scholars come on in their learning". About the same time there appears to have been much drowsiness at the meetings, as an entry occurs to this effect:

"The unwatchfulness of some that frequent our meeting having been a burden and grief to the faithful, it was ordered that effectual care may be [p268] taken to prevent this sleeping in our public meetings, by tenderly advising such as are apt to be overtaken therewith, and to let them know they must be openly dealt with if a more private admonition will not do."

Here is an interesting memorandum on the subject of dress, which occurs the same year (1695):

"Forasmuch as it hath been the good advice of our friends of the yearly meeting that friends shall in all plainness so habitt themselves as truth requires, and to lay aside those flowerd and strip'd stufes, with the changeable fashions of this world, it is thought meet by this meeting that what in us lyes it may be putt for the future into practice, and that none doe weare them or sell them when those by them are disposed of; that those conscientiously concerned may be eased, and truth kept cleare of those things; also that friends take care to train up their children in the fear of the Lord, and bring them up not only in plainness of habit but take care to bring them up in plain language also, that there may be no good Nehemiah grieved to hear half Hebrew and half Ashdod spoken."

On the 4th of the 8th month 1697, it was ordered "That *Sarah Barnett* do goe once a day or oftener to the prison at the castle in *Worcester*, to see what is wanting with our friend, *Dan. Tipper*, a prisoner there, that he may be supplied."

[p269] To show the animus at that time prevailing against the Quakers, in the chancel of *Areley Kings* church may still be seen a flat stone with this inscription:

"Here lieth the body of *Wm. Walsh*, gentleman, who died on the 3rd day of November, 1702, aged 88 years, son of *Michael Walsh* of *Great Shelsley*, who left him a fine estate in *Shelsley, Hartlebury* and *Areley*; who was ruined by three quakers, three lawyers and a fanatic to help them."

The witty *Wm. Walsh*, the poet, of *Abberley*, to whom Pope ascribed

"The clearest head and the sincerest heart"

is supposed to have been the author of the above epitaph, but the circumstances which evoked so angry a denunciation of his enemies are unknown to me.

The record of "Sufferings" was still continued from time to time on the score of church rates, tithes, recasting of bells, repair of "steeplehouses" &c., which the Quakers were as firm in resisting as before. Printed papers of these instances of persecution were procured by them and distributed among such of the gentry, magistracy, and members of Parliament, as were likely to exercise their influence in advancing the cause [p270] of toleration. An instance occurs in the year 1700, when there is an entry of:

"Delivered to *Ed. Bourne* papers of the excessive sufferings of friends, some of whom were sold to Justice *Cox*, Squire *Bromley*, Squire *Welch*, Sir *J. Pakington*, Ald. *Swift*, *Fra. Winnington*, *T. Foley*, &c."

And again in 1709:

"That *Jas. Pardoe* and *John Wood* do take care that the books are delivered to the Parliament men of this county, that they may answer the end for which they were printed."

At a later period (1720), *Jas. Pardoe*, *Ed. Harrison*, *T. Ford* and *J. Wood*, were appointed "to draw up an account as well as they can, in answer to the desire of the meeting for sufferings, in relation to the first public friends that came into this county." The term "public" friends, I am informed, probably means ministering (or what we should call preaching) members.

In 1731, *Julius Palmer*, *Wm. Roberts* and *Wm. Cowles*, were prosecuted in the Ecclesiastical Court "for not paying towards rebuilding the worship house of the parish called *St. Nicholas, Worcester*." The demands on them were respectively £1, £2 and 5s 4d.

It has already been stated that the yearly or general meeting in *London* sent annually a list of [p271] queries to each congregation throughout the country, with the view of preserving discipline and self-examination. A specimen of these queries for the year 1708 is now subjoined:

Questions thought needful to be asked by the monthly meetings.

1. Are your meetings kept up for worship both first and week-days, and do you keep up your collections?
2. Doth truth prosper in your meetings and what reception hath it amongst the people?
3. Are friends in love and unity one with another?

4. Doth any person of your meeting travail as a ministering friend yet is not in unity with you?
5. Is care taken to advise friends that they do not run so far in debt as to bring a reproach on truth and friends?
6. Are friends faithful in their testimony against the payment of tithes, steeple-house rates &c.?
7. Is there a record kept of marriages, births and burials?
8. Are friends advised to inspect their outward affairs, and to make their wills in time?
9. Do you keep to truth's language and plainness of habit, and endeavour to train up your children therein?
10. Do you endeavour to prevent idleness and sleepiness in your meetings?
11. Do you endeavour that your members (as much as may be) are of blameless conversation; [p272] and as such are not, are they dealt withall?
12. Are two faithful friends appointed to visit the families of friends?
13. Do friends sit retired with their families to wait upon the Lord, and do they frequently read the Holy Scriptures?
14. Are friends mindful at suitable times to read the abstract of the yearly meeting's epistles from London in their monthly meetings, or in such other meetings or places as may seem convenient?
15. Are friends clear of defrauding the King of his dutys, customs, &c.?

Similar queries, though somewhat modified, are still, I believe, received from the yearly meeting. Nor was the business of the monthly meetings confined to matters of discipline and external deportment in religion and morals, but extended to the politics of the day, for in 1721 a meeting was appointed to be held to consider, among other things, "how our friends ought to behave themselves in case of an election to Parliament." and at the said meeting it was determined "to keep clear from taking any bribes relating to choosing members of Parliament." Considerable attention was also paid to the education of their youth, and in 1725 a committee of Quakers were desired "to make enquiry after a young man qualified to teach Latin, as master or usher in the school."

There is very little [p273] else to notice in the minute books, except that in 1741 it was agreed not to erect grave-stones in the burying-ground, but no reason is assigned for this step; and various "disownments" subsequently took place, including *Mark Barrett*, for frequenting the play-house, *Eliz. Power*, for becoming an actress, and *Jesse Baylie*, for espousing the opinions of *Joanna Southcote*.

A large number of diaries and journals have been published by members of this society, especially during the eighteenth century, a few brief extracts from which will show what these "ministering friends" (*i.e.* itinerant ministers, both male and female) thought of the condition of Quakerism in *Worcester* at various periods.

*Samuel Bownas*, a native of *Westmoreland*, travelled into *Worcestershire* about the year 1700, being then so young a man that some of the "elders" at *Worcester* did not at first seem inclined to put faith in his credentials. He says:

"Was at *Worcester* on first-day, and after the meeting in the forenoon an ancient friend examined me very closely, after meeting was over, from whence I came and for a certificate; to all which I gave him answers. My certificate being at my quarters in my saddle-bag, he could not then see it, but I had a very good meeting as I thought; and my landlord, *Wm. Pardoe*, a brave sensible elder, advised me not to be uneasy at the [p274] old friend's examining me so, for, said he, he does so to every stranger. We went to meeting in the afternoon, which was very large, and was largely opened, and had, as I thought, very good service; but the old friend after the meeting was upon me in the same strain to see my certificate, but I had it not then about me neither, at which he seemed much displeased. I made no reply, but told him I was very willing he should see it; but my landlord took him up and told him he thought the young man had already shown us his best certificate in both the meetings; but nevertheless, said he, come to my house in the evening, and thou shalt see it; and so we parted. My landlord thought he had shown himself disagreeable in his conduct, and fearing it would be any uneasiness to me, spoke very tenderly, and like a nursing father encouraged me by saying I could not show him a better confirmation that I was anointed for the ministry than I had already done. So in the evening, after it was dark, he and many other friends came, but my landlord, the old friend, and I, went aside, and I let him see what he desired so much to see. He read it, being much pleased with it, and knowing sundry friends that had signed it, inquired after them. We went to our friends again, who were much increased in number, and we had a heavenly season, being thoroughly baptised together. We parted in great love and sweetness, and the old friend was exceeding kind." *Samuel Bownas* again visited the city in 1740 and 1746, and "had meetings to very good satisfaction."

[p275] In 1703, *Wm. Edmundson*, another itinerating friend, visited *Worcester*, where he attended several meetings, "which were large, and friends well comforted in the Lord, whose presence was with us in a plentiful manner. Next day we went to *Tewkesbury*."

*Thomas Story*, in his journal, records several visits to *Worcester*: the first was "On first of third month (1718) went forward to the city of *Worcester*, and lodged with *James Pardo*. The next day I was at their week-day meeting, which consisted mostly of friends, and the Lord gave us an open comfortable time together, affording to us His comfortable presence." In 1723, eighth month, 20th, "Went to *Worcester*, and on the 21st, being the first of the week, was at their meeting forenoon and afternoon; the latter was very large and open, and the gospel preached in the demonstration and authority of it to general satisfaction." Again, on the 26th of second month, 1731, "Went to *Worcester*, to the widow *Pardoe's*, and the next day had a large and open meeting there; many of those called gentry, with military officers and others, being present, and the authority of truth over all. That evening we visited several families in town."

On the first of the seventh month 1733 [p276] "We went to *Worcester*, where I lodged at *James Pardoe's* and found *John Fallowfield* and *John Baker* in town from *London*, having been at the week-day meeting here the sixth day before. There being several strangers in town, the friends appointed their meeting next day in the great meeting-house, and gave notice to many of the inhabitants of some strangers to be with them, and I supposed named some names; upon which we had a large open meeting, in the forenoon, many of the inhabitants being present; and the time of the afternoon meeting being put off till three o'clock, we had a very great crowd of the more respectable part of the inhabitants, and several of the aldermen and other magistrates, some of our friends telling us afterwards that they had never known so full a meeting there but once at a yearly meeting. That which fell to my share in this meeting was to open the nature that composure called the Apostles' Creed, upon which I was enlarged and drawn out to expatiate with good authority and perspicuity, taking

exception at that period therein 'He descended into hell,' observing to them that Christ said to the thief upon the cross, 'This day thou shalt be with me in paradise'; upon which I put this question - 'What was this *thou* in the thief, and this *me* in the Lord Jesus, to be today in paradise, when the body of the thief was broken on the cross, after the manner of criminals, and the body of Christ laid down in the sepulchre till the third day: what then remained of Christ to go down into hell, as he was stated with the dead in the foregoing period, viz., was crucified, dead, and buried?' But since the persons composing [p277] that creed, long since the days of the apostles, might bring it as near as they could to the tenor of the Scriptures, and finding an expression in the Psalms of David to this purpose – 'Thou shalt not leave my soul in hell, nor suffer Thy holy one to see corruption' – seems to have misapplied it to Christ after his crucifixion, whereas it is properly applicable to Him as stated in the time of prayer in the garden, when, having the weight of His approaching sufferings and of the sins of all mankind upon Him, being in an insupportable agony, grappling with death, hell, and the grave, in human nature, the drops of sweat that came from His body being, as it were, like great drops of blood, and having overcome all this, He the next day willingly laid down His life on the cross, in the will of the Father, and from thenceforth triumphed over them all."

Again, in 1735, *Thomas Story's* journal states –

"28th second month, I went to *Worcester*, to *James Pardoe's*, and the next day being their meeting day, it was put off till three in the afternoon, and notice given, which occasioned the meeting to be considerably large, and the Lord favoured us with his good presence, and opened to us the Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament, with brightness and authority, to general satisfaction both of Friends and others, for which we were thankful unto Him who hath all wisdom and power, and without whom we can do nothing. Yet this meeting was so hard to me, for some time in silence, and the people so very heavy, that it put me in mind of a saying [p278] of the apostle, 'If the dead rise not, why are we baptised for the dead?' But as soon as a little help from the Lord appeared, all weakness and all the power of death vanished as darkness before the day, and then in Him I arose and prevailed; and so let it be with all His ministers in all places from henceforth throughout all generations. Amen."

*James Gough*, of *Kendal*, in 1737, "from *Gloucester* rid to *Worcester*, and stayed there at my kind friend, *William Beesley's*, over third day. The week-day meeting there was to me a tendering season, both in silence and under the lively ministry of old *John Corbyn*."

It was customary with the Quakers, when any member of their society died who were distinguished for piety and worth, to "bear testimony" concerning them, and there testimonies have been collected at various times and published; among them is one in 1752, to the *John Corbyn*, of *Worcester*, mentioned above, as follows :

"A testimony from the monthly meeting of *Worcester* concerning *John Corbyn*. Our ancient and well-beloved friend was born in the aforesaid city, and was convinced of the blessed truth about the eighteenth year of his age, and by a diligent and fervent waiting thereon he grew strong in faith and zealous for the propagation of the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus [p279] Christ; and when about the thirty-fourth year of age he came forth in a public testimony in great tenderness and Gospel simplicity, and continued fresh and lively in the exercise of his gift until a few days before his death, to the general satisfaction and comfort of the sincere hearted. He travelled as a minister divers times into several parts of *England* and *Wales*, in the unity and with the approbation of the meeting to which he belonged, and we believe had good service in his labour of love, and that it had a tendency to strengthen the weak, comfort the afflicted, and stir up the indolent to diligence in religious concerns both at home and abroad. He was very exemplary in attending meetings, both for worship and discipline, and solicitous to maintain love and unity amongst friends; and when he apprehended anything of a contrary nature like to prevail it gave him great uneasiness and conflict of mind till he saw peace restored, and that pernicious weed, discord, extirpated. In

contributions of charity he was liberal, and in hospitality remarkably generous. He retained his integrity, understanding, and memory, to his end. Much might be said of this our worthy friend, but we shall only add, that we rest well assured that he finished in peace and a well grounded hope of an immortal crown of righteousness which is laid up for all those who love the appearing of our Lord and Saviour Christ. He departed this life the 30th of 1st month, and was interred the 1st of 2nd month, 1752, in the Friends' burial ground in Worcester, in the eighty-third year of his age."

[p280] *Candia*, wife of *John Corbyn*, survived her husband fifteen years, having died in 1767, at the age of ninety-six, after serving in the ministry for seventy-three years.

In the year 1749, *Daniel Stanton*, of *Philadelphia*, passed through this city, and says in his diary "At *Worcester* the meetings were large and solid, and though some professors appeared to be gone out from the way of the self-denying life, in much liberty and extravagance, yet I believe it was a time of visitation to their souls."

*Samuel Neale* a "ministering friend," visited *Worcester* in 1753, and in his journal says :

"At *Worcester* met my endeared friend, *Catherine Payton*. I stayed both meetings on first day, which were remarkably satisfactory to me. The pure life succoured, and I was helped to discharge myself beyond my expectation. In the evening we had the company of several friends in a religious sitting, which was very refreshing and comforting; and though the apprehension of being singly at that meeting had been trying, and fearfulness had covered my mind, yet my good Master made it easy and joyful to me, additionally so by calling His servant's lot there at the same time who had been so great an instrument in His gracious hand towards my conviction and conversion; for which continual mercies may I be favoured to hear with humility and attention the words that He condescends to speak to my soul, that so I may obey, and witness true [p281] peace to flow in my bosom; for at this time I can say, all that I crave is ability to worship the infinite all-wise Being aright in spirit and in truth."

*John Churchman*, of *Pennsylvania*, in 1754, in a journey through *England*, came from *Bromsgrove* to *Gloucester*, and; "On first-day was at two comfortable meetings, and another on the third day, and the next day attended the quarterly meeting, which was a precious time, wherein friends were comforted; and finding a concern on my mind, I went into the women's meeting, wherein the power of truth accompanied, which is the crown of our religious meetings. Here is a tender seed, especially amongst the female sex, who will thrive if this divine power is kept unto. Being now clear of this city, I departed with peace to the meeting at *Tewkesbury*."

In 1756, *Catharine Phillips*, daughter of *Henry Payton* of *Dudley* (whose wife was the daughter of *Henry* and *Elizabeth Fowler* of *Evesham*), travelled considerably in her ministrations, and on arriving at *Worcester*, her diary states;

"Here it appeared right for me to get an opportunity, with some of the most experienced friends of this city, that we might together consider about setting forward the good work of visiting the families of friends in this county, of which I had a view before I reached home from *Ireland*, and when I came there I found that a [p282] general visit to friends' families throughout the nation had been recommended by the last yearly meeting at *London*. I therefore found freedom to offer myself to assist in that service, provided the same could be accomplished so as not to interfere with my other prospects of duty. I also recommended to the friends present the establishment of a meeting for ministers and elders in the quarterly meeting of this county. We were eminently favoured in this opportunity, and I left the city in peace, and with a hope of some conclusion being come to at our next quarterly meeting. I stayed at home a few weeks, being closely engaged in writing. On the 22nd of 11th month I went to *Worcester* to attend our quarterly meeting, under a weighty exercise of spirit, having

an intention, if friends should accede to the aforesaid proportion of visiting families, to stay and join them therein. Our quarterly meeting was attended in a good degree with the divine presence, yet the service of it was hard and laborious. Friends were backward in regard to giving in their names to enter upon the visit to families, concluding themselves unfit for so weighty a work. However some were nominated with whom I united, and concluded to stay and see how Providence might favour the undertaking. I began in great self-diffidence, and went through the families of friends in the city; but the Lord was with me, and frequently clothed me with strength and wisdom suited to the occasion. I was considerably favoured whilst in the city in the exercise of any gift in the public meeting of friends, took leave of them in much love, and left it in peace and thankfulness."

[p283] She was accompanied by *Mary Oldbury*, a young woman of *Worcester*, "who had an acceptable gift in the ministry;" they visited *Pershore* (where there was a meeting-house but no resident members), *Evesham*, *Shipston*, &c.

*John Griffiths*, of *Pennsylvania*, in a journey through *Worcester* in 1758, "attended their first day meeting, and was mournfully affected therein with a sense of lukewarmness in many professors, finding it very hard for the life and power of truth to arise into dominion, so as to make them sensible of their states. My labour was for the most part in silence, though I had some close public services. Went from thence to *Evesham*."

*Ruth Follows*, in 1763, "visited *Worcester*; remained several days, visiting sick friends and attending meetings for worship, also the monthly meeting, where I could have been glad if more of the women friends had attended; however I think I may say we were favoured with the love of God, not only in the meeting for discipline, but in that for worship, and enabled to offer thanksgiving and praise to His most holy name, who is alone worthy thereof. From *Worcester* I departed in much peace, accompanied by several friends to *Tewkesbury*." Again, in 1785, she reached *Worcester*, "and lodged at our kind friend *Timothy Bevington's*, where at their meetings on first-day were also *Patience Brayton* and [p284] her companion. On second day my dear companion left me, she being very desirous to get home, but I was not easy to leave *Worcester* so soon, and I stayed more than a week longer, in which time I visited several of my acquaintance, had several satisfactory seasons, and was much favoured at some of their public meetings, so that I came away with sweet peace."

*Martha Routh* (daughter of *Henry* and *Jane Winter*, of *Stourbridge*), in her journal, about the year 1787, says:

"I had for some time had an opening prospect of religious duty, not only to visit the meetings but also the families of friends in *Worcestershire*, my native county, and with this impression was led to look towards *Martha Howarth*, a member of our quarterly meeting, as a companion. When the time came for moving, being furnished with certificates from our respective monthly meetings, we set forward by way of *Cheshire* and *Coalbrookdale*, and entered the county of *Worcester* at *Dudley*, where the ancient and honourable family of the *Paytons* used to live, but they were then all removed by death or otherwise. Thence we went to *Stourbridge*, where I first drew breath. In the city of *Worcester*, as in other places, in visiting the families of friends, we were favoured with the company of one in the situation of an elder, who could bear testimony to what we had to minister, which has always been my choice in such service. This friend, being baptised with [p285] the one baptism, could feelingly partake with us in the cup of suffering, and rejoice with us when truth was raised into dominion, that our spirits were tenderly united, and also to the seed of God in that place. Our labours there closed with a public meeting on the first-day evening, which was a large, open, and satisfactory opportunity. We then took the other side of the county, and were favoured in like manner with the company of helpers in the work, which closed at the monthly meeting at *Alcester*. I felt pressed in spirit to return to *Tredington*, about six miles distant, to our friends, *John* and *Sarah Lambley's*, though the evening was very stormy, the

snow falling very thick. We got there safely, and were taking some refreshment, when a young man, son of *Thomas Norton*, came into the house and seemed much affected: his father had been threatened with imprisonment for non-payment of tithes, and he said two constables were at their house, and talked of taking him part of the way to *Worcester* that night. I then believed that this was the cause of my being impressed to return there, so we sent the young man back to request the constables to stop awhile, as some friends wished to see his father. The distance was about a mile, and the snow falling so thick it was not safe to go any other way but on foot, which we willingly did, accompanied by *John Lambley* and his valuable wife. We found *Thomas Norton* in a quiet resigned state. The men very civilly offered to leave the room and withdraw into the kitchen. Our visit was very grateful to him, and seemed to strengthen his mind in resignation to the permitted trial. His [p286] children also seemed more settled. and the constables were willing to stay in the village till morning. On our return through *Worcester* we went to see him in his prison-house, found him very composed, and reading *Sewel's* history. The gaoler and his wife were very kind to him. Some skilful friends in the city, on looking over the indictment, believed it faulty, and took a counsel's opinion, who advised them to bring it to an assize trial, which they did, and the judge quashed the indictment and set the prisoner at liberty in open court."

*Sarah Lynes*, a travelling minister, in her diary says; "Was at the select quarterly meeting in *Worcester* (1798), and was detained visiting families for three weeks. We had often the company of those of other societies at meetings, and appointed one for the topping people of the city, which was not very large; and although we had satisfaction in being unprofitable servants - doing that which was our duty - my spirit hath never felt relief in *Worcester*."

In the journal of *Thomas Shillitoe*, on the 4th day of 8th month, 1812; "Reached *Worcester* this evening ; on fifth day sat with friends there, in which an evidence was mercifully granted that, stripped as friends here are from outward ministry, the Minister of ministers was near to help those who were devoutly depending upon Him. After meeting, walked to *Tewkesbury*."

[p287] *Mary Capper*, of *Rugeley*, on the 1st of the 1st month, 1821, began her visit among the *Worcester* families of friends. " On the 28th the afternoon meeting was largely attended, an invitation having been given more especially to servants and apprentices employed by friends. The intent was partly answered, but there was a mixed company, which was not quite so relieving to the minds of those on whom the weight of the concern rested as it might otherwise have been. However, when we have done what we can we must endeavour to be quiet." On the 30th she left *Worcester*, and passed through various towns in the county.

The well-known *Elizabeth Fry* paid a religious visit to the Midland Counties in 1824, in company with her brother, *Samuel Gurney*, attended various public meetings, and visited the inmates of *Worcester* gaol.

Having thus enumerated some of the leading Quakers who visited *Worcester* from time to time, and recorded their opinions of the state of the society here, we may now take a glance at those of the *Worcester* members who were distinguished for their piety or their usefulness as "ministering friends," and whose "testimonies," made by their surviving brethren, and entered on the pages of their books, still attest their worth. *John Corbyn* (1752) and his wife have [p288] been already mentioned. The next in order of date is *Jos. Bevington*, son of *Timothy* and *Hannah Bevington*, died 1771, in his twenty-first year. *Sarah Stephenson*, born at *Whitehaven*, afterwards resided at *Worcester*, with her aunt, who had married *Samuel Corbyn*, entered into the ministry here, and subsequently settled in *Wiltshire*, but visited the *Worcestershire* families in 1782. *Samuel Baker Pumphrey*, born in 1801, and died before he was twenty-five years of age; he took an active part in opposing the slave trade and in promoting the Scriptural education of the poor in this city. *Mary Beesley*, of *Worcester*, travelled as a minister about the year 1800. *Deborah Backhouse* and *Elizabeth Johnson*, daughters of *Rd.* and *Elizabeth Lowe* of *Worcester*, the former died in 1827, the latter in 1839.

*Rd. Burlingham*, son of *John* and *Hannah Burlingham*, of *Worcester*, travelled much as a minister, and died in 1840. *Lydia Newman*, daughter of *Robert* and *Ann Fry*, of *Bristol*, married *T. Newman*, of *Worcester*, and died in 1849, after being a minister for thirty-four years.

The last notable member of the society was *Samuel Darke*, who died July 20th, 1856, at the good old age of eighty-six. He was admitted into the society on the 29th of 2nd month, 1793, and remained an active, useful, and consistent member for the long period [p289] of sixty-three years, during which time he had frequent opportunities of proving that the faith which was in him was far beyond the power of persecution to uproot or weaken. Within his memory, and that of others still living, when occasions of public rejoicing occurred for victories by the British forces by sea or land, the Quakers objecting, on principle, to celebrate achievements attended with bloodshed, were made to suffer severely by excited mobs, as was the case in October, 1798, when *Nelson's* victory of the *Nile* led to a great demonstration in *Worcester*, in the course of which the windows of the Quakers' residences were smashed, their shutters nailed up, and they themselves treated with much roughness when they dared to venture out. Then, again, for nearly twenty years before *Samuel Darke* joined the *Worcester* society, there had been a constant commotion on the militia question: the Quakers uniformly refusing to serve, or to pay for substitutes, it became a question whether the deputy-lieutenants were not empowered to provide substitutes and to take legal steps for the recovery of the cost from the Quakers. In the year 1778, a case had been inserted in the minute book, giving the opinion of *E. Thurlow* (then Lord Chancellor), that Quakers could not be legally committed [p290] to gaol by virtue of the act recited; and that, if committed, they might be discharged by habeas corpus. When *Samuel Darke's* turn came to be "drawn" into that national force, he refused either to serve or to pay, and underwent imprisonment in our city gaol; but *Mr. Wigley*, a barrister, and sometime MP for the city, discovering a flaw in the indictment, obtained his discharge. But by this time philanthropy had interfered in our prison discipline, and gaols were no longer the filthy, abominable, life-destroying places they once were. *Samuel Darke* was kindly treated while in confinement, and ever after enjoyed much notoriety on account of his firmness of principle and the temporary martyrdom it had occasioned. Imprisonment for non-payment of tithes and church rates continued up till a comparatively late period, when the relief acts of *George IV* and *William IV* considerably ameliorated the condition of the society, and passive resistance in permitting the seizure of goods for sums claimed became the general practice. *Samuel Darke* was ever among the foremost of his brethren in demonstrating the folly and wickedness of coercion in matters of religion; and at the same time he was the active promoter of every philanthropic movement, such as temperance, the circulation of the Scriptures, home missions, and against the slave trade, the corn laws, and capital punishments. The following tribute to his memory is [p291] copied from the *Worcester Herald* of July 26, 1856:

" Our obituary of today records the departure from this life, at a good old age, of a man who, in his way, presented many claims to the title of extraordinary. *Samuel Darke* was a consistent member of the Society of Friends, and, indeed, so consistent that his opposition to the powers that be - carried as it was, in some respects, beyond the pale deemed reasonable, even by the advanced liberal section of the people - had always in it something respectable. *Mr. Darke* was an unwearied worker - not a man of the tongue, but a doer of deeds - in the great cause of Negro emancipation and the abolition of the slave trade. How ardently, too, and unweariedly he would labour to prevent the punishment of death following upon wretched criminals within his sphere of action. We well remember having had the privilege of co-operating with him in an earnest endeavour to avert judicial death from one whose execution we regarded as discreditable to the county, on the ground that the unhappy wretch was, and had been from childhood, of insane mind. We did not succeed, but we shall never forget the patient toil which the aged man underwent in travelling dozens of miles on foot to procure what proved at last unavailing testimony of the truth of the facts upon which we relied. His great exertions in the anti-slavery cause were acknowledged by some of his fellow citizens in 1839, when

they presented him with a neat time-piece bearing the following inscription : 'To *Samuel Darke* for thirteen years [p292] acting Secretary to the *Worcester* Anti-Slavery Society; presented by his coadjutors in the sacred cause of Negro emancipation, as a testimonial of their esteem for his long, unremitting, gratuitous, and unobtrusive services, by which, more than by the individual efforts of any other fellow citizen, they believe the glorious triumph of Negro freedom in the British colonies to have been accelerated.' His zeal and devotion to the temperance cause from the very first day on which the movement was commenced in *Worcester*, in 1829, are well known ; and the committee of, the *Worcester* Temperance Society, at a meeting last Tuesday evening, passed a resolution recording their deep sense of the loss they had sustained by his death. And now the old man rests; but it gladdened his feebly-beating heart to know, before its pulsations stopped for ever, that peace had been again restored to his country. Such men, even when their light shines not from high places, have not lived in vain, seeing that an example has been left by them which cannot altogether fall to the ground. It were ill for *England* if such examples of useful though humble Christians were fruitless; and it is ill for any country in which such a sad privation of tendency to good, as that would be, could occur. The funeral of *Mr. Darke* took place on Thursday, at the Friends' burying-ground attached to the chapel in Sansome Walk. The deceased's children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren were present, and the committee of the Temperance Society also attended as a mark of respect. *Mr. Burgess* and *Miss Westcombe* made a few comments on the deceased's life and character, and his remains were committed to the ground in the quiet and simple manner usually observed by the Friends."

[p293] It is pretty well known that the Quakers, as a body, are gradually diminishing in this part of the world. Into the causes of this diminution it is not my intention to enter, but simply to notice the fact. The sect seems to have flourished best under the antagonistic influences of persecution but when milder counsels prevailed, the stimulus to their bold and independent avowal of principle was withdrawn. In their minute books, about the middle of the last century, I find that some cause was in operation for the reduction of their numbers, and at a time too, when means seem to have been adopted for proselytising, which is not the case at present. Frequent complaints were then made of the thin attendances at meetings; and in the 10th month, 1776, an epistle was issued to the *Worcestershire* friends, from *Edmund Gurney*, *Jer. Waring*, *Thos. Wagstaff*, *Geo. Gibson*, *Tim. Bevington*, and *John Burgess*, who had been on " a gospel visit" to the various meetings in the county, stimulating them to increased vigilance and attention to the light within them. Emigration and a lack of proselytising energy seem to have been the chief causes of the diminished ranks of the Quakers. rather than secessions of members. Only one instance of [p294] the latter has come before my observation, and that occurs in the parish books of *St. Peter's*, where is the following entry:

"*Rebecka Nicholas*, aged twenty-three, born and bred a Quaker, was baptised Sep.3, 1759."

In the flourishing days of this society there were chapels and congregations at *Kidderminster*, *Redditch*, *Evesham*, *Pershore*, *Droitwich*, *Malvern*, *Bromsgrove*, *Stourbridge*, *Bewdley*, *Dudley*, *Shipston*, &c. Most of these are now shut up and sold; and where still in existence, as at *Dudley*, *Stourbridge*, *Bewdley*, *Evesham*, and *Malvern*, they are but seldom used, or only by very diminished numbers. *Shropshire* is now combined with this county for the purpose of the Quakers' quarterly meetings, but this seems to have been no great acquisition, in point of numbers at least, as there are no members left at *Shrewsbury*, and the only town in that county which furnishes any members to this quarterly meeting is *Coalbrookdale*, with twenty-five members only! At the same time it must be stated that the *Stourbridge* and *Dudley* meetings are now assigned to *Warwickshire North*, and *Shipston* to *Warwickshire South*. A venerable member of the society in *Worcester* informs me that, within her recollection (about seventy years ago [c.1791]), they numbered about two hundred members in this city, and had [p295] two good schools; the present number is not much above eighty. Some of this decrease she attributes to the fact that, when the glove trade was flourishing here, many of the masters and their men were Quakers, who, when the adoption of *Mr. Huskisson's* policy removed the

greatest portion of the trade from *Worcester*, were compelled to remove also and seek other fields for their enterprise.

Some modification of the Quakers' discipline has recently been introduced, whereby any plain, unadorned style of dress, without peculiarity or precision of cut, is permitted, and I believe that persons may now be married who are not members but only attendants at their meetings. Pictures and elegant though not showy furniture may also now be seen in their dwellings, and on the whole it is evident that the society is at present in a transitional state.

The system of intermarriage among Quakers having been denounced in some recent publications, as the fruitful source of disease, abridged life, &c., I think it right to state, in conclusion, that however true this may appear to be as an abstract proposition, the great age of many of the *Worcester* Quakers, both living and dead, and the general statistics of the body at large, give evidence loudly in favour of their temperance, cleanliness, moderate habits, discipline, and mental [\[p296\]](#) quietude. Of 300 deaths throughout the kingdom, in 1856-7, the average age was fifty-three years, two months, and a fraction; Of 322 deaths in 1857-8, the average was fifty-one years and three months ; Of 307, in 1858-9, fifty years and one month; while the average duration of a generation of the public at large is supposed to be about thirty years.