Letters, &c., of early Friends

by

Abram Rawlinson Barclay

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LETTERS, &c.,
OF
EARLY FRIENDS;
ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE
HISTORY OF THE SOCIETY,
FROM NEARLY ITS
ORIGIN, TO ABOUT THE PERIOD OF GEORGE FOX'S DECEASE;
WITH
DOCUMENTS RESPECTING
ITS EARLY DISCIPLINE,
ALSO
EPISTLES OF COUNSEL
AND
EXHORTATION, &c.

THE GREATER PORTION TAKEN FROM ORIGINAL OR ANCIENT
SOURCES, AND HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED.

"If it had not been the Lord, who was on our side, when men rose up
against us, then they had swallowed us up quick;—then the waters
had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul.—Our help
is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth."—Psalm
cxxiv. 2, &c.

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INTRODUCTION.

In presenting to the reader this volume of Letters and other Documents of our Early Friends, the greater part of which, it is believed, have never been in print, it may be proper for the Editor to state, that they are mostly taken from originals or ancient copies, contained in various collections, as well private, as those in the possession of the Society in London and in the country. The principal collection of manuscripts from which they have been selected, is that which is denominated by the Editor, the Swarthmore Collection: it formerly contained a very large number of original letters of the Early Friends, mostly addressed to Margaret Fell, before her marriage with George Fox in 1669, but some few subsequently, and others to George Fox himself. These manuscripts were probably kept together at Swarthmore Hall in Lancashire for many years, or at least till the decease of Margaret Fox in 1702; but in the course of the last century, the collection became divided,
and eventually a large portion of it was presented to the Society in London. The letters of this collection are mostly endorsed by George Fox (as any other mass of papers might be for convenience of reference,) with the name of the writer and the date; and occasionally a brief memorandum has been added by him, respecting the writer or the chief subject of the letter. They record the earliest Gospel services of Friends in various parts of this country and in foreign lands; and it is probable that they were referred to by George Fox, in the following passage of his will:—"All the passages, and travels, and sufferings of Friends, in the beginning of the spreading of the Truth, which I have kept together, will make a fine history; and they may be had at Swarthmore, with my other books: for it is a fine thing to know the beginning of the spreading of the Gospel, after so long a night of apostacy since the Apostles' days;—that now Christ reigns, as he did, in the hearts of his people;—glory to the Lord for ever! Amen."—(Will, dated 8th month, 1688.)

In the arrangement of this volume, the Editor has adopted the following divisions, under which it was found that the Letters and Documents might be suitably classed; viz.:

**Part I.—Historical,** or Letters which illustrate the History of the Society of Friends, as
regards events, services, or sufferings, in London, and in the Country,—with some few relating to Ireland.

Part II.—Documents illustrative of the Early Discipline and Testimonies of the Society.

Part III.—Epistles of Counsel and Exhortation to the Churches, &c.

The Letters under the First division of the work, and more especially those relating to London, the seat of government, will be often found to possess much interest, both as regards the history of our own Society, (in its earliest periods especially,) also the state of the religiously professing part of the community, and as regards the passing events of the day, so far as they concerned Friends. As these letters are of the character of private or intimate correspondence, due allowance should be made for the introduction of other matters, which may be deemed of trivial importance; yet with some readers, this description of familiar correspondence possesses attraction, from the vivid glimpses sometimes presented by a writer on the spot or at the time, of circumstances, and of character, not always noticed by the general historian. At the same time the remarks and peculiarities of style of writers in a distant period, will sometimes call for careful attention fully to appreciate them; as they may refer to events or circumstances deemed to be well known in their day, though at the first
not so obvious to us: also, expressions may be met with, peculiar to the times, which may seem somewhat strange to our modern ear.

The Editor has endeavoured to elucidate these Historical Letters by notes from other public sources;* also by occasional quotations from our own authors: but the reader will probably find much more in the early writers of the Society, to which he might refer with interest, in connexion with these letters, and vice versâ:—the order of dates in which they are placed, will facilitate such reference.

The reader, in passing through these Historical Letters, can scarcely regret more than the Editor has done, the want of similar correspondence, during some, and more especially the later periods embraced in this volume, and respecting remarkable events in our history of that time, which are not to be found alluded to in this collection. In setting on foot a search (however diligent and extensive) for ancient manuscripts in this day,—like casting a net into the sea of distant ages,—we must be content with what we may be able to bring up. Should, however, this publication remind Friends of any manuscripts of the kind, yet laying dormant in

* Those sources of information, viz., the public Histories, Memoirs, or Chronicles of that day, prove very scanty in notices respecting Friends:—as a body they seem in general to have been little understood or even regarded by the writers of those works; who, more frequently than otherwise perhaps, introduce erroneous statements, or remarks founded on prejudice or ignorance respecting the Society.
their possession, a communication with the Editor thereon would be very acceptable.*

The Documents introduced under the Second division of the volume, respecting the Early Discipline of the Society, are both curious and valuable;—curious, as being nearly all of them of dates antecedent to the existing records of the established meetings of the Society in London;—and valuable, as setting forth the care and concern of our Early Friends, under the direction and help of the great Head of the church, in the first institution of our discipline; the principles and objects of which, continue to a great degree remarkably preserved to this day, for our edification and the christian welfare of the body.†

* Fac-similes of some of the signatures to the Letters are introduced; they may assist in identifying originals,—which when accomplished, is always satisfactory.

† From the great rarity of our London records previous to the year 1666, there is little doubt but that they were all destroyed by the great fire of London;—for "the great meeting house" at the Bull and Mouth, was burnt down at that time. Alexander Parker, in a letter to George Fox, dated London, 27th of 9th mo. 1676, (inserted at page 248 of this volume,) states:—"At Robert Dring's, I inquired for Friends' letters and papers, which were written in the beginning of the spreading of Truth; but I could find none,—they being burnt in the firing of London, as Dorothy did say."

The accounts of Sufferings, commenced by Ellis Hoak's, appear to be the earliest records relating to the Society at large, now preserved in London;—they go back as far as 1654. The minutes of a meeting called the Six Weeks' Meeting, which is continued to this day,
INTRODUCTION.

The Epistles of Counsel, &c. in Part III., are not so numerous, perhaps, as might be desired; for such was the diligence and the zeal of our forefathers, that they were not disposed to allow what appeared to them to have a service in it for the cause of Truth, to lie dormant: thus a very large portion of writings of this description were in that day published abroad, for the encouragement and consolation of the churches and of individuals. Here, therefore, the limits of search were rather restricted; yet it is hoped, that some of these selected epistles (believed to be now for the first time printed,) will be truly acceptable to not a few readers in this day. The letters and epistles of Alexander Parker, have been more largely taken, as but few of the writings of that eminent Friend have come down to us in print.

The Editor, in conclusion, may observe, that he has abstained in general from giving his own reflections upon the remarkable events and circumstances affecting our Society, brought forward in these Letters; being desirous that the mind of the reader should be left at liberty, to draw his own conclusions and reflections upon what is contained therein. The and has the care of the London meeting-house property, &c., commence in 1671:—those of the Meeting for Sufferings in 1675, (5th month;)—those of the Morning Meeting of Ministers and Elders, in the 7th month, 1673:—those of the Yearly Meeting commence in 1672; and of the Yearly Meeting of Friends in Ireland, in 1671.
extraordinary patience of these our Early Friends, under the cruel sufferings to which they were subjected,—their exemplary faithfulness to the cause of Truth and righteousness,—and the earnestness they evinced by their repeated warnings to the rulers of this country, that the wrath of heaven might be averted from the nation, by their ceasing from such wicked acts of persecution and cruelty,—are remarkably displayed in the early history of our Society. "All the powers of the nation seemed banded together" to crush this people;—the legislature itself taking that object most resolutely in hand: but they were not permitted to prevail over them. How truly then might they reverently and gratefully adopt the language of Israel formerly;—"If it had not been the Lord, who was on our side, when men rose up against us; then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us: then the waters had overflowed us, the stream had gone over our soul:—Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth.—Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth." May it be the earnest concern of us, the too much degenerated successors (must it not be said) of these sons of the morning—these patient sufferers for the cause of Christ,—to walk also as good soldiers and faithful followers of the Captain of our salvation: then may we not humbly trust, that the Lord, in his abundant mercy, would show himself to be on our side
also;—would be our strength, help, refuge and glory, as He was theirs;—and there would be no lack to us of any good thing; neither would any thing be able to pluck us out of His preserving hand of power, or to separate us from His love in Christ Jesus our Lord.

A. R. BARCLAY.

Leytonstone, near London,
11th month, 1840.

EXPLANATIONS OF THE TEXT.

Words in the text, printed in Italics, (excepting in the case of titles of works, and of remarkable expressions, &c.) denote, that they are taken to be phrases, probably, then in common use, or peculiar to the times.

Large brackets, thus [ ], are used to denote introductory remarks or quotations by the Editor; smaller brackets, thus [ ], occurring in a letter or document, show the addition by him of words, in explanation of the text;—if followed by a (?), it implies uncertainty as to the correct deciphering of the original manuscript, or, as to the word or name added by the Editor, or, that there is presumptive evidence or probability for the same.

A long dash, implies an omission; a short one, (as now used,) a rest in punctuation, or to connect parts of long sentences, &c.

In using the phrase at the end of a letter, &c., [From the original,] it is of course intended that the manuscript letter is pronounced to be such, on the usual presumptive evidence of comparison, or repeated view, of other letters of the same writer, also from other obvious marks of originality, as post marks, seals, &c.
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OF

EARLY FRIENDS.

PART I.

HISTORICAL,

CONCERNING EVENTS, SERVICES, &c.,

IN LONDON.

No. I.

[Although our early Friends had sprung up and were known as a distinct religious profession in some parts of the North of England, previous to the year 1654, it does not appear from our historians, that they had made much, if any, appearance in the metropolis, prior to that year. William Crouch, who resided in London at this period, informs us in his Memoirs, that "about the beginning of the year 1654, some workings of the power of Truth came to be felt amongst some tender people in and about the city of London; and some few were convinced, and turned to the Lord."

The following letter, dated the 29th of 11th Month, 1653, is the earliest which the Editor has met with, dated from London. The writer, Gervase Benson, as appears from George Fox's Journal, was once a colonel in the army, he was also a
justice of the peace; but in 1652, he was convinced at Lancaster, on the occasion of G. Fox's attending the sessions there, and clearing himself of the false accusations laid to his charge. (See Journal under 1652.) Gervase Benson, with Anthony Pearson (who also was a justice,) interested themselves on behalf of George Fox, when suffering imprisonment in the filthy gaol of Carlisle, in 1653. G. B. is also mentioned in G. Fox's Journal, as a visitor at Judge Fell's at Swarthmore. He died in 1679, as appears by the Westmoreland burial register of Friends, in which he is described to be 'of Kendal'."

Gervase Benson to George Fox and James Nayler.

London, 29th of 9 bre [11th mo.] (53.)

To my dearly beloved in the Lord.

My love in the Lord salutes you, and all Friends with you. [I am] by the love of God brought to this great city; and by his power am kept here to wait upon him, and to do whatsoever he shall call me forth unto; that he alone may be glorified in me and by me. Pray to the Lord for me, that I may be kept in all faithfulness; with boldness to bear witness to the Truth, against all deceits as they are made manifest in me, to the praise of his free grace and love to me, which I find daily flowing into my soul, to the refreshing thereof.

Dear Friends, I find nothing here that I can have any fellowship with: only the Lord is raising up a light in many, (both priests and people,) that discovers the carnal actings both of magistrates and
ministers so called; and they are carried forth publicly to declare against them. I was lately at a meeting with some of them, at which were some Parliament men, ministers, and others: but I was made to declare against their practices at such meetings, and to show them their meetings were not for the better, but for the worse;—they spending their time in putting questions one to another, and jangling about things they could not witness. After we parted, I had no freedom to go to any such meetings; but was made to write a few proposals to some members of Parliament, which by the goodness of the Lord were finished this morning: a copy of the heads of them I have enclosed, not having time to write over the whole at present.

As for the Friends' enlargement at Kendal, George Taylor, I hope, hath or will give you an account.

Seeing nothing at present to the contrary, but that I shall shortly see you in the country, I conclude.

Gervase Benson.

[P. S.] There are many hereaways inquiring after Friends in the North and the Truth made manifest in you, and much writing for and against the priests.

Written from London, 29th of 9 bre (53.) [Date corresponds with the 29th of 11th Mo. 1653.*]

Addressed "for my dear Friends,

"George Fox and James Naylcr."

[From the original apparently.]

* The mode of reckoning the months according to the old style, is followed throughout all these Letters. On the alteration being made by Act of Parliament in 1752, the Society also adopted a change in the mode of reckoning the months, which is explained at large in the
No. II.

[William Crouch, after mentioning that about the beginning of the year 1654, some few tender people in and about the city of London were convinced, proceeds to inform us; "about this time, two women came out of the North to the city, viz. Isabel Buttery and her companion; who became acquainted with Amos Stodart, (sometime a captain in the Parliament army, but who, when convinced of Truth, left his command,) and Simon Dring of Moorfields. These women having an Epistle or Testimony given forth by George Fox, viz. the first inserted in the volume of his Doctrinal Books, directed 'To all that would know the Way to the Kingdom,' &c. and this Epistle or Testimony being printed, they delivered or dispersed [the same] abroad to such as would receive it.——These women had private meetings at Robert Dring's house in Watling-street, and at Simon Dring's in Moorfields; where they did now and then speak a few words."—W. Crouch's Works, p. 12, 13.]

This quotation may serve as an introduction to the letter following; which, although subscribed with two names, is expressed as coming from one person, probably from the first named, Alexander Book of Discipline, page 73. Every month, therefore, quoted in these Letters, is to be reckoned two months later, to make it correspond with our present mode of computation, as well as with the public style of naming the months. Thus, for example, in a subsequent letter, the 29th of 3rd Month 1660, is mentioned as the day of King Charles's return to London, which corresponds with the 29th of 6th month by our present reckoning and the 29th of May by the public style; and vice versa
1654.]  SERVICES, &c. in London. 5

Delamain, for the sheet is endorsed (in George Fox's handwriting) "A. delamane 1654." The letter is much tattered, and is thus addressed:

TO MY DEAR FRIEND THOMAS WILLAN, OF KENDAL, WESTMORELAND.


DEAR FRIEND,

I received thy letter. The expectations of our Friends here (who are faithful,) have been and are very great, to have seen some Friends out of the North to come to abide here; and they are daily looking for some one or other, though we bless the Lord we do not so much look upon any creature: but where there is but childishness, there can be nothing but stammerings. The Lord still continues with us two of his handmaids, who are moved to speak sometimes; who, aiming at their souls' good, are often evilly entreated by them [the people:] but they are supported by the Lord, which makes them courageous among ravenous wolves. Others, whose hearts are not so flinty, do embrace the Truth in the love of it; so that our number increases. The harvest is great, the labourers few: if it be the Lord's will to send labourers, we know they must come, and none can hinder.

Our present condition and temptations are exceeding strange and great, which require the more strict watching, and your continually praying to the Lord for us. Sometimes the Lord moves us to speak to those that are over us in the flesh; and though we have been as the aspen leaves, trembling at the wind before them, yet praises be to the Lord,
he gives us hearts as bold as a lion. As it hath pleased the Lord to draw us from the wicked delusions of the priests, so likewise from those heathenish forms, which were and are still used in the families where we live. And though to the grief of our souls, we cannot as yet live up in such a way as the Lord requires, yet we are endeavouring and struggling to get mastery over the deceit that hath so long reigned in us.

The 17th day of this Month, my master in the flesh would know of me the reason why I absented myself from his holy duties, as he calls them. I told him, that I had heard him in his prayers bless the Lord for his vocation, election, redemption, and sanctification; but that he did not live up to such a life, as those whom Christ hath redeemed; neither was the Truth, as it is in Jesus, in him; and that the prayers of the wicked are an abomination before the Lord; and he that regards iniquity in his heart, the Lord will not hear his prayers. When I had spoken these words to him, his face waxed pale, and he immediately burst forth in a passion, uttering these words to me:—'Thou wretch, thou makes me tremble—thou wicked wretch—thou rogue;' and so flying at me with his bended fists, he smites me on the face and eyes, very often as hard as he could strike. I not stirring hand or foot, immediately remembered the command, "If thou art smitten on the one cheek, turn the other,"—so I was made to do. When he had so done, I asked him whether what he had done, were of God; his answer was, No. So presently he commanded me to write down under my hand what I had spoken, which I did, being scarce able to see what I wrote for the blows he had given me. But I was made to write
that which to him seemed an aggravation to what I had spoken. As soon as I had so done, in comes a priest, whom my master took presently to hear this business, and to read my writing. As soon as he had read it, saith he, 'This assertion is very dubious, and I might draw from hence divers questions;' and thus he began, 'Do you hold perfection?' 'Yes;—dost thou deny it?' Priest, 'Yes.' 'Then,' said I, 'thou art no minister of God.' It would be too tedious and too large to declare to you the whole discourse between him and me; for the promise of the Lord was made good to me at that very instant of time; it was not I that spoke, but the Spirit of God, who was my teacher and my remembrancer. And I declared many things to his face, how that he was no minister of God, one who was conforming to the world in his fashions [ (?) word not clear] and customs: another was, that he was a hireling, and much more which I have not time to declare now. —— [torn.] came in another manner;—the 19th day, my master came alluring me, and crying with tears running from a broken cistern. On the 23rd day, he sent me to one, to whom he had spoken to confer with me, with whom I was most part of that day; and [my master] did tell him, that if he could not draw me from my delusions and errors, that he would have me before the Chamberlain of London, and there my indentures should be burnt or torn; and I, for the scandal cast upon him under my hand, to be sent to the House of Correction, and to lose the freedom of the City of London.—Lose my name and credit!—poor, empty, base, beggarly things, which are not worth my thought: if it were to lose ten thousand freedoms, I would lose them willingly
upon this account; and for witnessing the Truth—welcome House of Correction, or any punishment! —and for Christ—farewell name, credit and reputation!

He [his master] hath drawn up a charge of five particulars against me:—

1st. That I had slanderously accused him by word of mouth, [as stated above.]

2nd. That I frequented a meeting in Moorfields, where there is none but two women that are preachers.

3rd. That I will not join with him in family duties, viz. sometimes twice a-day prayer; and every Lord’s day two prayers, a chapter or a Psalm, and commonly one sung; and the like singing and prayer at night.

4th. That when customers come for goods, my not speaking to them, as to tell them of what they ask me, or bidding them welcome &c., I have driven away his customers.

5th. Being asked by him whether I would refer the controversy to be ended by the ministers of God, I told him that I would; but I thought I could not find any of them in [London, perhaps, —part torn.]

These are the five things, which he, poor soul, thinks to affright me withal.

The last First day, Isabel * (who hath been a long season with us, I know not whether she is known to you, but she is well known to James Nayler and Gervase Benson and other Friends who were lately in London,) was moved to go to Westminster, to some to whom her heart was drawn

* Isabel Buttery, doubtless.
forth; intending to make no stay, if the Lord would, but to come to our meeting at Simon Dring's house in Watling-street.* But as she came back by Paul's, the Mayor caused the marshal so called, to bring her before him; and her spirit was carried out valiantly: they went together into the vestry, there she (as we were informed) was [word not clear] in discourse with him, the Aldermen and Recorder so called. So they sent her to the House of Correction called Bridewell, and another maid that went with her, which was Robert Dring's maid of Moorfields. I went to see them, with more of our Friends, the last night; but there was no admittance, their Pharisaical spirit would not suffer such things on their Sabbath day. They were committed for letting people have their books, which our Friends have been moved to publish. Isabel bid me inform our Friends, that there are some books to be sent down: 'The way to the Kingdom,' with an addition to it, is come forth. Send by the next post where they shall be sent to, and by whom and to whom.

Now, dear Friend, I have in as brief a way as I could, [informed] thee and the rest of my Friends, as our dear Friends F. Howgill and J. Camm; desiring that —— your petitions may be spread before the Lord, that we might be kept faithful to the end; for [such, there is (?)] laid up a crown of

* Gilbert Latey states, that Simon Dring was one of those who first offered up their houses 'to have meetings therein for the service of the Lord,' and that he 'then lived in Watling-street; but some time after, he removed into Moor-fields, where he continued to have a meeting in his house.'
life. Salute us to all our dear brethren: farewell, the eternal God of power \(?)\]

Alexander Delamain.
John Bridges.

27th of the 4th Month, as the world accounts, 1654.

No. III.

[The writer of this next letter is thus spoken of by George Fox in his Journal: \(\text{early in 1653.}\) "About this time, Anthony Pearson was convinced, who had been an opposer of Friends. He came over to Swarthmore; and I being then at Colonel West's, they sent for me. Colonel West said, 'Go George, for it may be of great service to the man.' So I went, and the Lord's power reached him. He was a justice of the peace in three counties."*]

* The following highly interesting letter from Anthony Pearson, has been met with in the Swarthmore collection; it is headed 'A paper of Anthony Pearson,' [G. F.'s superscription apparently,] and it is dated from Rampshaw, near West Auckland, May 9th, 1653. It does not appear to whom it was addressed.

Dear Friend,

I have long professed to serve and worship the true God, and as I thought (above many sects) attained to a high pitch in religion; but now, alas! I find my work will not abide the fire. My notions were swelling vanities without power or life: what it was to love enemies, to bless them that curse, to render good for evil, to use the world as using it not, to lay down life for the
1654.] SERVICES, &c. in London. 11

ANTHONY PEARSON TO GEORGE FOX.

30th of 5th Month [7th mo.] 1654.

MOST DEARLY BELoved.

THE last night but one, I came to my dwelling at [name not clear.] I left Francis Howgill and

brethren, I never understood; what purity and perfection meant, I never tasted: all my religion was but the hearing of the ear, the believing and talking of a God and Christ in heaven or a place at a distance, I knew not where. Oh! how gracious was the Lord to me in carrying me to Judge Fell’s, to see the wonders of His power and wisdom,—a family walking in the fear of the Lord, conversing daily with Him, crucified to the world, and living only to God. I was so confounded, all my knowledge and wisdom became folly; my mouth was stopped, my conscience convinced, and the secrets of my heart were made manifest, and that Lord was discovered to be near, whom I ignorantly worshipped. I could have talked of Christ in the saints the hope of glory, but it was a riddle to me. And truly, dear Friend, I must tell thee I have now lost all my religion, and am in such distress I have no hope nor foundation left. My justification and assurance have forsaken me, and I am even like a poor shattered vessel, tossed to and fro, without a pilot or rudder; as blind, dead, and helpless, as thou canst imagine. I never felt corruption so strong, and temptation so prevailing, as now; I have a proud, hard, flinty heart, that cannot be sensible of my misery. When I deeply consider how much precious time I have wasted, and how unprofitably I have lived, my spirit feels a sudden fear; but then I am still flying to my old refuge, and there my thoughts are diverted. What it means to wait upon God, I cannot apprehend; and the confusions in my own spirit, together with the continual temptations from without, are so great, I cannot understand or perceive the small still voice of the Lord.

What thou told me of George Fox, I found true: when thou seest him or James Nayler, (they both know my condition better than myself,) move them (if neither
Edward Burrough, John Camm and Richard Hubberthorne in London, the second day of last week. At London, we found very many who have a true principle of honesty in them; but they are for the most part so high flown in wisdom and notions, that it is hard to reach them: nothing can enter till their wisdom be confounded; and if they be judged, then presently they rage, and their wrath is stirred up, and so the simplicity is trampled of them be drawn this way,) to help me with their counsel by letter; they are full of pity and compassion; and though I was their enemy, they are my friends: and so is Francis Howgill, from whom I received a letter full of tenderness and wholesome advice. Oh! how welcome would the faces of any of them be to me; truly I think I could scorn the world, to have fellowship with them. But I find my heart is full of deceit, and I exceedingly fear to be beguiled, (as I have been,) and to be seduced into a form without power, into a profession before I possess the Truth; which will multiply my misery, and deprive me both of God and the world.

Dear Friend, there is a carrier comes from Kendal within a mile of my house every fortnight, and he shall call at Peter Huggin’s to bring any letter that shall be there left for me; it will much refresh me to receive any lines from thee;—but be thou faithful. Thou mayst perceive, by my Ashdod language, what countryman I am—even of the low world that lives in darkness. I am afraid lest the orders we made at Appleby,* cause some to suffer, who speak from the mouth of the Lord; I heartily wish they were suppressed or recalled. I have seen at Judge Fell’s, and have been informed from that precious soul his consort, in some measure what those things mean, which before I counted the overflowings of giddy brains. Dear heart, pity and pray for me; and let all obligations of former friendship be discharged in well wishes to the soul of the old family friend, that he may partake with them of your heavenly possessions.

A. Pearsoon.

Ramsaw, near West Auckland, May 9th, 1656.

* Perhaps, as Magistrates.
1654.] SERVICES, &c. in London. 13

upon. Much wisdom is to be used amongst them, until the truth be clearly understood; and then to speak to that in their consciences, to the raising up of the witness, to let them see themselves; and then to pass judgment upon them, and so to keep them under from disputing and questioning. This we found the most profitable ministry; and few words must be used: for they have [held] the Truth in notions; and all cry out, 'What do these men say, more than others have said:' but to bring them to silence confounds their wisdom.

Oh! that none might come to London, but those who are raised up into the life of Truth, who dwell in the living power of God, whose words may have authority: for there are so many mighty in wisdom to oppose and gainsay, that weak ones will suffer the Truth to be trampled on; and there are so many rude savage apprentices and young people and Ranters, that nothing but the power of the Lord can chain them. Dear heart, let none go to London, but in the clear and pure movings of the Spirit of Life; that the blessing may rest upon them. And great is the harvest like to be in that city; hundreds are convinced, and thousands wait to see the issue, who have persuasions that it is the Truth. Very many societies we have visited, and are now able to stand: many honest hearts are among the Waiters, and some that are joined to the Ranters are pretty people.* The living power

* In a letter from E. Burrough to Margaret Fell, (date of 1654) he thus writes:—

'Ve were at a meeting of the people called Waiters [in London,] where R. Hubberthorne spoke about half an hour in much power and wisdom.——Francis [Howgill] was moved to go to an assembly of people called Seekers; and they were, as all this generation
of God was made manifest to the confounding of all, and we were carried above ourselves, to the astonishment both of ourselves and others: we were made to speak tremulously amongst them in dread and much fear.

When I can hear where thou art, I must come to thee. Dear heart, pray for me and all with me, that we may be kept in the fear of the Lord, to the praise of his great name.

The bearer hastens me, and I can now write no more, only my wife's and family's love to all Friends.

Anthony Pearson.

[From a copy.]

No. IV.

The next letter to be laid before the reader is from Edward Burrough and Francis Howgill; respecting whom William Crouch writes: 'In the 5th month of this year (1654) it pleased God to send two of his faithful messengers and able ministers to the city of London, viz.—Francis Howgill and Edward Burrough, who were the first that declared Truth publicly there; whom He made instruments in his hands for the gathering of many, who, like good old Simeon, were waiting practises, jangling and contending about the meaning of the Scriptures; and he stood silent among them a little, and then spoke the word of the Lord in power with boldness, an hour or more, and confounded their wisdom, and crushed their meaning of the Scripture: he said, there were some pretty people amongst them.'—(W. Caton's MS. Collection.)
for the consolation of Israel.' The letter is very descriptive of the state of things among professors at this period; and the account it gives of the services of those valiant labourers in the gospel of Christ in this great city, is very interesting.

Edward Burrough and Francis Howgill to Margaret Fell.


Dear Sister,

Great is our care and charge which is committed unto us; pray that we may be kept in faithfulness and boldness in the work of the Lord committed to us, and that wisdom may guide us to handle the sword; that we may clearly discern what to spare and what to destroy. Great is our travail, till Christ be brought forth in this people; and our suffering is even with and for the pure seed, which lies in bondage in this city.—We two are constrained to stay in this city; but we are not alone, for the power of our Father is with us, and it is daily made manifest through weakness, even to the stopping of the mouths of lions, and to the confounding of the serpent's wisdom;—eternal praises to Him for evermore!

In this city iniquity is grown to the height,—the serpent's wisdom is grown fully ripe;—here are the subtlest serpents to grapple with and war withal; but in the eternal light (which is our shield and buckler,) are they comprehended, and their deceits made manifest to us, and by the light are they judged and condemned.
We have three meetings or more every week, very large, more than any place will contain, and which we can conveniently meet in. Many of all sorts come to us, and many of all sects are convinced,—yee, hundreds do believe; and by the power of the gospel declared amongst them is the witness of God raised, which shall never die. There are some brought under the power exceedingly, which strikes terror in the hearts of many; and many lie under true judgment, and a true love is raised up in many, and the time of redemption to many is drawing nigh.—As yet we know little of our departing from hence: to all do we and shall we clear our consciences, and be free from the blood of all men, and finish our testimony. Many begin to consider of us, and think there is something more in it than a bare notion; at the first, they looked upon it to be no more: but it sinks deep inward in many; for to that we speak, which brings us in remembrance when they see us not. *

The last First day but one, I was at a steeple

* Gough, in his History, after alluding to the visit of E. Burrough and F. Howgill to London at this time, remarks:—‘Their ministerial labours were blessed with signal success; being attended with a convincing power, impressing awful considerations, and awakening the consciences of the audience to a sense of their conditions and earnest desires after salvation.’ It should be borne in mind at the same time, that this was a period remarkable for the zealous maintenance of religious profession in the community generally; and probably the language of Scripture was pretty familiar to professors at large. Gough continues,—(after stating that E. B. and F. H. proceeded to Bristol,)—‘Their preaching was like that of the apostles, in the demonstration of the Spirit and with power; multitudes flocked to hear them, and many embraced their doctrines.'—Gough's History, vol. i. p. 143.
house in the forenoon, and had liberty to speak what I was free, and passed away to the meeting in the afternoon. Last First day, R. Hubberthorne and I went twelve miles out of the city to a great meeting of Separatists, to a place called Tibbells, [Theobald's,*] where many great men were, and officers in the army, and such like; and we had pretty liberty to let forth ourselves; but at the end the heads of them put us violently forth, which many simple minds owned not in them. The Fourth day of last week, we had a meeting in Southerick, [Southwark,] in a large room, where some Ana-baptists meet on the First days; several of them were there, and many hundred people. ———

Our dear brethren John Audland and John Camm, went from us the last Sixth day out of this city towards Oxford, to be there the last First day; our hearts were broken in separating one from another, for our lives are bound up in one, and we partake of one another's sufferings, and of one another's joy. We receive letters every week from the prisoners at Chester: the work of the Lord goes on gloriously in that county, there is precious seed; and Anthony Pearson writes to us of the like in the county of Bishoprick, [Durham;] it is even our reward to hear that the Lord is raising that up in power, which was sown in weakness: to the Lord of glory, be glory for evermore!

Remember us dearly to all Friends, for we are re-

* G. Fox speaks of this place not far from Waltham Abbey, near which Colonel Packer lived. He set up a great meeting of the Baptists at Theobald's Park; for he and some other officers had purchased it. They were exceedingly high, and railed against Friends and Truth,
freshed in the remembrance of you. Our chiefest care is, that we may be preserved in obedience, in power, and in wisdom; that the Lord may be glorified by us. We rest from writing, but continue to be thy dearly beloved brethren in the Lord.

E. B. F. H.

[From W. Caton's MSS. Collection.*]

No. V.

Francis Howgill to Robert Widders.

London, 23rd of 7th Month. (9th Mo.) [1654.]

Dear Brother,

E. B. [Edward Burrough] and I stay still in this city:—large is the love of God to us, and the work of the Lord prospers in our hands:—eternal living praises [to Him] for evermore. We are here among this great people in much weak-

* This valuable collection of early Letters, written nearly throughout by W. Caton himself, appears to have been intended by him for publication; it has a title page, dated Swarthmore, 23rd of Sixth month, 1669; and a preface signed by himself, dated 7th of second month, 1660; a fac-simile of his signature to it is here subjoined.

William Caton,
ness; and when we see such multitudes, we are often put to a stand where one might get bread to satisfy so many. But the wisdom and power of God hath been with us, and there are hundreds convinced; but not many great or noble do receive our testimony: yet there are many put to a stand and brought into silence, and many are under deep judgment and a true power. We have had many great giants to encounter with; but by the power of the Lord the mouths of lions have been stopped, and our adversaries have been put to flight. We have been in great service continually, since we came into this filthy place: here is the trimmed harlot, the mystery of witchcraft: and the devil rules, and is head in all sorts.

We have been at the most eminent societies in the city, and we have had strong fightings with them over and over, and at some steeple-houses; and, but that they have our persons in contempt, they say none speak like us:—but the devil cannot stoop so low. We have two or three meetings in the week, but no place large enough; so that we are much put to it. And we have been guided in much wisdom, so that all them that hate us have nothing to accuse us of, as of tumults or disorder in the least: some wait to entrap us, but in wisdom we are guided; praised be the Lord!

Miles Hallhead, and James Lancaster were here, and came to visit us; they stayed one First-day, and so were moved towards Cambridge. We are much refreshed; we receive letters from all quarters;—the work goes on fast every where;—eternal living praises to Him for ever!—Richard Hubberthorne is yet in prison [— two small abbreviations, not intelligible,) and James Parnell is at
Cambridge. Our dear brethren John Audland and John Camm we hear [from,] and we write to one another twice in the week;—they are near us, —they are precious; and the work of the Lord is great about Bristol. I have sent enclosed this letter, that thou may know of the passages,† and rejoice with us. Truly our horn is exalted, and our weapons are mighty, to the bringing down of strong-holds,—praises for evermore!

Pray for us, dear brother, that we may be kept in wisdom and power; that the living God may be exalted for evermore. My dear yoke-fellow salutes thee: salute us to all Friends, to thy dear wife, and all that way who inquire of us.

Thy dear friend in the work of the Lord,

Francis Howgill.

[From the original: the year is endorsed by G. Fox—1664.]

No. VI.

[Respecting the writer of this next letter, John Whiting in his Memoirs informs us;—'Alexander

* In a letter from R. Hubberthorne to Francis Howgill, dated from Cambridge, 4th of Seventh month, 1654, he writes, 'James Parnell and I are in the dungeon as yet, where we were put the 28th of this last month; but we [feel] the mighty power of God, and are in joy and peace in the Lord: to Him be praise eternal for evermore.'

† The word ‘passages’ often occurs in these early Letters, and has been explained in the last volume, (Life of Caton, &c., p. 130,) as meaning gospel services, travels, &c.
Parker was an ancient and eminent servant of God, and minister of Jesus Christ; he was born in Yorkshire, near Bolton in Lancashire, and was well educated, and had a gentleman-like carriage and deportment as well as person, for I knew him well. He came up to London with George Fox, when he was brought up out of Leicestershire by Colonel Hacker to Oliver Cromwell, in 1654; he stayed with him in London and thereabouts for some time; and afterwards went with him to a general meeting at John Crook's in Bedfordshire, in 1655. He wrote many serviceable books and epistles to Friends, which are worthy of perusing; in which, though being dead, he yet speaketh.'—J. W.'s Memoirs, p. 390—393.]

ALEXANDER PARKER TO MARGARET FELL.

London, 22nd of 12th mo. 54.  
[2nd mo. 1655.]

DEAR SISTER,

Upon the 4th day of the 12th mo. George Fox was at a meeting at Swannington; and there came several soldiers from Leicester, but they were very civil and moderate, and heard with patience the word of the Lord, and went peaceably away. The same day Thomas Taylor and I were at Litchfield, and had a meeting there; when many people of all sorts came to the meeting.—On the Fourth day of the week we came to George at Swannington; and he was moved to appoint a meeting at Whetstone, and none being there to pass along with him, I went with him.—On the First day, many Friends were come together from several parts, and were waiting upon the Lord, when there came the marshal and
about eight soldiers into the meeting; and many of them sat down, and were very civil. And after a certain while, the marshal spoke, and showed an order from Colonel Hacker, that every one should go to their outward habitations, otherwise to pass along with him to the Colonel. And so he began and examined Friends where their outward abode was; and some he asked when they would return back. As for George his countryman,—let any two go along with him, and satisfy the Colonel for the rest. Then the marshal did entreat George to take his horse and go along with them.—Then said George, 'if thou dost command me to go, I shall not resist:'—So they [went,] and I had not freedom to leave George. [They were then introduced to Colonel Hacker.]—and the Colonel spoke to him of many things. [He was then searched, and finally was informed, he must go to London.]—One Captain Drury, one of the Protector's lifeguard passed up, and we went along with him.—

[After stating that they lodged at the Mermaid Inn, Charing Cross, the letter proceeds.] Then the Captain went to the Protector, and acquainted him of [their arrival:] so the Protector said, he should see him,—and would speak with George; but when, he could not tell. The Captain is very loving, and would not hinder George of any freedom; only desired, that one of us would stay at the Inn. On the Fourth day, George went up into the city with some of our Friends.—On First day afternoon, William Caton and I were at a meeting in Moorfields, where many Friends were: a mighty power there is amongst them, and many tender hearts there are among them. On the Fourth day in the evening, there was a meeting appointed at Gerard
Robert's, where there was a very large meeting of Friends; George was present amongst them: the powerful presence of the Lord was with us, and the tender plants were refreshed, and some were made to witness to the Truth.

Thy dear Brother, &c.

Alex. Parker.

[From W. Caton's MSS. Collection.]

No. VII.

[The next letter follows up the narrative of G. Fox's being taken before the Protector. In his journal, G. F. gives a full and interesting account of this interview with Oliver Cromwell at Whitehall: it was on this occasion that a paper was addressed by G. F. to the Protector, in which he denied 'the taking up a carnal weapon against him or any man,' &c. After this interview the Protector declared 'he was at liberty, and might go where he would.'*]

* This circumstance respecting G. Fox being brought up before the Protector, is spoken of in these terms in the News-books of the day:
  'We have information of divers Quakers, who have of late been roving about the country in Leicestershire, and have had many meetings there, but were dispersed by some of our horse, and some of them taken into custody; amongst the rest, one Foxe, a chief Quaker, who was this day brought to Whitehall, and had divers followers.—(The Perfect Diurnal, Feb. 19th, 1655.)
  'Munday, 26th February, 1655. This afternoon Foxe the great Quaker, who is said to be one of the chief