TWO LETTERS RELATIVE TO EARLY QUAKERISM IN LIMERICK.

By St. JOHN D. SEYMOUR, B.D., Vice-President.

Recently I had occasion to have research made among the letters to Henry Cromwell, Lord Deputy of Ireland, contained in three volumes of the Lansdowne MSS. in the British Museum. In the course of searching, some letters appeared which contained information relative to the earliest period of Quakerism in Ireland, viz. under the Commonwealth. None of these have ever been published before, to the best of my knowledge; two of them I reproduce here, as they are of local interest, as shewing who were the earliest members of the Society of Friends to make their appearance in our venerable city, and the treatment meted out to them by Colonel Ingoldsby and others. I have supplemented my information by allusions to Wight, History of the rise and progress of Quakers in Ireland (2nd ed. 1800), and to Fuller and Holms, View of Suffering of Quakers in Ireland (Dublin, 1731), two rare and helpful books, to be alluded to hereafter as "Wight" and "Sufferings."

It was in the year 1655 that Quakerism first rose into prominence in this country. It would appear that the earliest members of that Society to come to Limerick were two prominent English Quakers, Edward Burrough and Francis Howgil, who arrived in Ireland in the summer of 1655. They were accompanied in their visit to Limerick by Edward Cook and James Sicklemore. The first named was a Cornet of Horse and Receiver to Lord Cork: the latter who is mentioned in John Perrott's letter, was a captain in the army, and had been converted at Youghal a few months previously.
On this occasion the people set upon them, and they were subsequently banished from the city. Amongst the converts whom they made there as a result of their preaching were Thomas Phelps, and Richard Pearce, an apothecary, both of whom are alluded to by Col. Ingoldsby. Shortly after this came John Perrott (the author of the letter here printed) and others, amongst whom was a celebrated Quakeress, Barbara Blagdon. Many of the newly-formed body used to gather for worship at the house of Captain Robert Wilkinson (alluded to in Perrott’s letter) who on the authority of Wight, was a foolish, self-opinionated preacher, who subsequently became insane. Perrott was banished, as he tells us himself, but returned after ten days. \(^1\)

But the Government was commencing to feel nervous at the influx of Quakers into Ireland, and in consequence took severe measures to repress them. This attitude was partly due to Henry Cromwell, who believed that their peculiar manner and habits were a cloak for some sinister designs, while he also feared that their influence in army circles would prove detrimental to proper discipline. He certainly over-estimated their strength, and misunderstood their intentions, though it is clear from the two letters here given that members of all ranks in the army had been attracted by the preaching of the new-comers, and it must be admitted that their respect for their superior officers was not thereby increased. Accordingly in November, 1636, the Lord Deputy and Council wrote to Colonel Ingoldsby, directing him to exclude from the garrison of Limerick all strange Quakers, and to arrest any of the inhabitants who, professing these principles disturbed public worship, or in any way broke the peace. Armed with this authority, the existence of which he did not divulge, Ingoldsby, in his capacity of military governor, issued a proclamation to the effect that no inhabitant of Limerick should receive or entertain a Quaker in his house; it is clear, however, that prior to the receipt of the letter from the Council he had commenced to use very severe repressive measures against the Quakers. In this he must have been supported by Claudius Gilbert,

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\(^1\) Wight, pp. 84-7; Sufferings, pp. 51-5, 105, 114, 116.
the "minister of the Gospel" who had been appointed to preach in that city in 1652 by the government, and who was a bitter opponent of them as appears from two of his books; perhaps at some future date I may make him and his writings the subject of a paper for the Journal. Gilbert is therefore the "priest" referred to in Perrott’s letter; for this expression was frequently applied in contempt by the Quakers to preachers of all the Protestant denominations.  

But the Quakers in Limerick did not submit tamely to this treatment, and complaints of Ingoldsby’s harshness and severity were sent to the Council, one of which is here published. I have slightly altered the punctuation, and modernized the spelling, but otherwise have made no changes. It is contained in Lansdowne MSS., vol. 821, folio 127,

"I the prisoner of the Lord for the testimony and true witness of a good conscience, who some time hath been a labourer in the Gospel of Jesus Christ in some parts of this nation of Ireland for which and none other cause do I now suffer bonds such as I have those fifteen days past; being brought from the city of Limerick as an offender in like manner as I was three several days brought at the court which is called sessions in the same city of Limerick, where divers things were laid to my charge in two several indictments, but every matter criminal which was therein inserted being mere pretence than in the least measure truth my innocence appeared in the sight of hundreds before whom my cause was examined and largely opened; and lastly my enemies being not able to proceed any other way with me, this is the issue of the above work, my coming to Dublin, in which place in like manner I am bold in the name of the Lord to hold forth my guiltless cause, and to open and lay before you, Henry Cromwell, who are Commander-in-Chief of the affairs of Ireland, the ground of my sufferings; and how and in what manner I have been dealt with by Col. Henry Ingoldsby, governor of the said city of Limerick. Upon the first day of the second month called April, 

(2) "Sufferings," p. 115. The letter from the Council to Ingoldsby is quoted in full in Lenihan, p. 195.
one James Sicklemore and myself being moved of the Lord thereunto, we came unto the said city of Limerick, where within half an hour of our coming unto our lodging, Col. Ingoldsby sent an express order and command in the mouth of one of his soldiers to bring us before him, in obedience whereunto we went: by whom we were duly examined, in which examination we suddenly saw his end, and that the ground of his strictures and severity with us was neither for licentiousness, lewdness, swearing, lying, drunkenness, or any other sin or offence or breach of the law martial or civil, but being servants of the true and living God, and having the message of His word in our mouth; who by scorners are reproachfully called Quakers. We suffered what we underwent, both slanders, punchings, draggings, imprisonment, and banishment, although not at any time being convicted of the breach of any law of the nations. And as by a letter under the said Col. Ingoldsby's hand, unto us directed, shews that for nothing but because we were met with other the inhabitants of the town at one Captain Robert Wilkinson's house in the fear of the Lord, where the mysteries of the Kingdom of God were opened, were we separated from the people (as saith Col. Ingoldsby in his letter), which separation stood in a close prison, contrary to the civil government of the three nations, and were not any exceeding the number of three or four people at once was to come nigh us. And the next day following, with the licence of Col. Ingoldsby, our martial carried us to the public-meeting-place, where we heard all the priest had to say; and he having quite ended, I being moved by the Lord stood up and spake these few words, saying that it being not contrary to the wholesome laws of the nations and according to the Apostles' doctrine, "Let all prophecy one by one," I desired the liberty of speaking a few words to the people to the clearing of my conscience among them; whereupon violent hands were laid upon me, and by the rude multitude was thrust out of their synagogue, and forthwith carried away unto prison: and suddenly after a warrant was sent unto us with a guard of horse to convey and carry us out of the precinct of Limerick. All which violence we suffered, and bore the cruelty done unto us without seeking revenge; but our testimonies did
bear against our unjust sufferings, and about ten days after, I having occasion of outward business, and being also of the Lord moved thereunto, drew me back again unto the said city, as it came to pass, on the seventh day near evening: and the morrow following, being the first day of the week, I went to a meeting again at Capt. Wilkinson's house, where as I was speaking among the people met together I was interrupted by a guard of soldiers, forced from the worship of my God, and unto prison was carried, where in close manner I was ordered to be shut up; for not any, either friend or acquaintance, was tolerated by the governor to come near me but those who had licence either by ticket or tokens from him unto the martial, unto whose custody I was charged. And all this being not cruelty enough the same first day, at night, a council was held by sundry called Justices of the Peace, with chief ruler and priest, how to send me to Dublin, and having not ground enough I was sent for, and further examined to catch words from me; and the greatest matter which could be gained was my plainness of speech, saying Thee and Thou, for which cause they would willingly have bound me unto that which they call good behaviour. So I said I was a man of no ill behaviour at all, and desired that the law might try my language, which never chargeth any man save in the same long way of Thee and Thou: and seeing not any thing would stand they other ways determined that I should answer at the Sessions what they had to object against me; where I was indicted of high matters: and as it came to pass that they saw that not any clause therein would stand to make me guilty, they indicted me again, but my innocency appearing unto as many as heard my guiltless cause, as I have said, lastly here by a guard I was sent, and as yet know not the cause of my imprisonment. And all this cruelty do I suffer under the authority of thy power, whom I think hath been until this little acquainted with the truth of the matter, and hast only heard one man speak without the answer of the person who in deep manner is and hath been wronged by the unjust, false, and slanderous accusations and charges exhibited against me, which not any person in the Court where they tried me would stand before my face as an accuser: which manifestly shewed forth unto
all persons the ground of their act of persecuting me, which in the end carried no better face than of envy, malice, and cruelty, in which womb the beginning thereof was first conceived. And whereas the same hand is still stretched forth, even as Herod's was, to vex certain of the Church, and the same nature of pretences laid to my charge as was by the persecuting Jews, who slew Jesus the Anointed Saviour; not as He was the Christ, but a blasphemer, they put Him to death, as likewise Paul was called a ringleader of sedition, and the disciples and apostles movers of sedition, and the same is now as ever was and nothing different in the nature, ground, root, fruit, and practice; the seeds being but two, the one of the serpent, the other of the woman. And this is even the same generation which put Christ to death and persecuted His disciples, who cry "they are not fit to live" and cry "away with them! away with them," who beat, revile, backbite, scoff, scorn, and make Herod and Pilate friends in persecuting the righteous seed of God: to shut up and cast into prison, and so to exercise the lusts of their own wills upon them without any breach or transgression of any law, turning out of cities and towns the free-born in the nation, and these that have purchased liberty with them that have laboured in the same work of reducing the nation unto peace and under a civil government. Amen.

"And my share of suffering I have and do undergo, as well by beatings, threatenings, cruel mockings, and scoffings, as by imprisonments, and trials, and halings before rulers and magistrates, but all being for the Lord's sake, and for His everlasting truth's sake, I bear with content, it being the yoke of my Lord and Saviour, and the taking up of His crown of thorns: and seeing it is only truly and directly so, and all matters else but pretences, and false accusations and slanders heaped up together to continue their cruel hand of persecution against me, which both followed me from Limerick unto this city [Dublin], to thee, Henry Cromwell, and to thy Council I lay it, (who God hath set in high seats of justice and judgment to execute righteousness in your places without respect of persons, and this account in the dreadful day of the Lord: you shall give of good stewardship to Him that will take vengeance
upon the heads of all the unrighteous that have turned equity backward, as well upon the unrighteous prince who sits upon the throne as the veriest beggar that sits upon the dunghill) to examine and truly try this matter whereof I am accused, without delaying of justice or slackening your hand in judgment, for as I have declared even so am I moved by the Lord God of heaven and earth to lay it to your door, in whose dreadful name I am told unto you hereby to publish my wrong, and so as you love the everlasting peace and welfare of your souls take heed to yourselves in this matter, wherein I innocently suffer this day in this city, as I have in sundry towns else in this land by rude multitudes for the Lord's sake, and this unto you I declare: its not a matter of light concern- ment which bore me through the cruelties which I have undergone. Neither in my own name did I go forth, or principally about my own work, or in any case to raise sedition, but in the name of the Lord, and by command from His eternal Spirit, to turn from dark- ness to the light, and from the nature and ground of tumults and seditions, strife, envies, quarrellings, and all manner of lusts of the flesh and deceit of the heart: and this my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Ghost that for the witnessing of a good conscience this imprisonment do I suffer, and for seeking that which is lost in my persecutors: all their cruelty I have undergone, to the raising that which lies in the grave, even the pure image of God: that the dead might hear the voice of the Son of God and Him whose name is Jesus, and He is the light of the world, and hath lightened everyone that cometh into the world, a measure of which light you have all received. And as God's true witness I so shall stand in the day of the Lord as your justification unto life eterna] or condemnation unto death everlasting. So you the powers of the nation take heed what you judge, and how you judge, and spare not your hand in justice to execute true judgment upon the offender and transgressor, and to let the oppressed go free. So unto all my conscience is clear, unto whom my guiltless cause is offered and left unto that in your conscience to judge.

I am a lover of your souls, and of all just power, and am subject unto every just ordinance of man for conscience sake: but a witness
for God to stand against all deceit, envy, and hypocrisy, and all persecution and violence, and every unjust act, who in the flesh am.

named of men

"From the Marshalsea, of the 4 Courts, Dublin, 1st of 3rd month, 1656."

JOHN PERROTT."

In answer to this and other accusations Col. Ingoldsby was compelled in self-defence to give a detailed account to Henry Cromwell, here subjoined, of his methods of dealing with the Quakers. This letter is in Lansdowne MSS., vol. 822, folio 17.

"My Lord,

Hearing that Captain Holmes, a discontented Quaker, has petitioned your Lordship and the Council against me for my acts towards him and the rest of the Fraternity (that once gave so dangerous a disturbance to this place) I thought it my duty for your Lordship's satisfaction and my own vindication to give this ensuing account of my proceedings with those wild, yet subtil and designing generation of people.

1. For the Quakers that are the growth of the town, vipers bred in our bosoms, they had the liberty quietly to meet among themselves without disturbance: but if any strangers crowd in with them, and get crowds about them, then I think myself concerned in order to the security of the place, to turn the disturbers out of it, being to answer the safety of the place with the hazard of my life, which I will not undertake should I not have the liberty to secure the garrison from hulles (?) of discontented spirits.

2. For those that are strange Quakers that come from incognita terra (since I have been backed by the Council's authority, which I divulge not) as soon as they come in at one gate I send them out at another, never letting them rest a minute in the garrison after I know of them till they are conveyed out of the liberties of Limerick. Some have come late to prevent that course, but I have ventured them in the dark rather than fail: by which means we are very quiet, and are troubled with them very seldom.
3. A proclamation is put out by me that those inhabitants that entertain strange Quakers or Irish Papists a night in their houses, without first acquainting the present governor therewith, shall be turned, they and their families, out of the garrison.

4. Those soldiers that were Quakers, I cashiered them by a court-martial out of the army, not barely for being Quakers, but for their disobedience to their officers, and things of that nature: which has cured more than a hundred of that agueish distemper they were inclined to.

5. Those that abused the ministers, and disturbed the congregations (before I had notice of them from the Council) I imprisoned for a time, and then sent them from whence they came.

6. A sergeant that was cashiered the army about Waterford for abusing the country gave me such base language in a letter, being a Quaker, that I was forced to beat him into better manners: another fellow I served so that brought me base letters, which has given me freedom from that trouble ever since.

7. On a sabbath day when I was at sermon the officer of the guard acquainting me that at Capt. Holmes's house there was a great number of strangers, and discontented persons together I gave him an order under my hand to go unto the house and see what the matter was, and if that he found any strange Quakers there he should secure them on the guard till further orders from me, but when that officer of the guard came with my order to see the occasion of such a meeting in the garrison the door was kept against him till he broke it with his guard: Phelps an inhabitant of this town kept the door shut, I for this offence clasped him up in the Martials for 24 hours or less. Lieut. Waller was among the company that resisted the guard, and though he pleaded his excuse yet I thought convenient to suspend him from his employment for a while to make him sensible of his folly: this is a passage that fell out three months ago, but being assured that a complaint is made against me about it, I have given this account. As likewise of that of the sergeant Quaker that I banged for giving me base language. The
chief Quakers that we have inhabitants of this town are Captain Holmes, Mr. Phelps, Mr. Pierce, that are starke mad at me that I give not all Quakers, strangers as well as others, liberty to meet in this garrison, which shall never be suffered whilst I have to do with it, since I know them too well to trust them. Methinks if their devotion was so hot for that which I dare not call a religion the country at large should serve their turn to be in for the exercise of it; but no place would please them but this.

8. Perhaps 'tis charged as a crime against me for making Pierce's wife, a Quaker, (in the absence of her husband) pay 20s. for entertaining a strange Quaker in her house a night without giving notice, contrary to the proclamation: the money was given to the poor.

My Lord I know not anything that I have done that I have not here acquainted your Lordship with. If they are faults I have told them you all: but that your Lordship has a better judgment than to believe them to be so is the opinion of,

My Lord,
Your Excellency's most obliged,
most faithful, humble servant,

H. INGOLDESBY.

Limerick, 31st of March, 1656.