

Fox's Book of Martyrs

A History of the lives, sufferings and triumphant deaths of the early Christian martyrs

Edited by William Byron Forbush

CHAPTER XVIII

The Rise, Progress, Persecutions, and Sufferings of the Quakers

In treating of these people in a historical manner, we are obliged to have recourse to much tenderness. That they differ from the generality of Protestants in some of the capital points of religion cannot be denied, and yet, as Protestant dissenters they are included under the description of the toleration act. It is not our business to inquire whether people of similar sentiments had any existence in the primitive ages of Christianity: perhaps, in some respects, they had not, but we are to write of them not as what they were, but what they now are. That they have been treated by several writers in a very contemptuous manner is certain; that they did not deserve such treatment, is equally certain.

The appellation Quakers, was bestowed upon them as a term of reproach, in consequence of their apparent convulsions which they labored under when they delivered their discourses, because they imagined they were the effect of divine inspiration.

It is not our business, at present, to inquire whether the sentiments of these people are agreeable to the Gospel, but this much is certain, that the first leader of them, as a separate body, was a man of obscure birth, who had his first existence in Leicestershire, about the year 1624. In speaking of this man we shall deliver our own sentiments in a historical manner, and joining these to what have been said by the Friends themselves, we shall endeavor to furnish out a complete narrative.

George Fox was descended of honest and respected parents, who brought him up in the national religion: but from a child he appeared religious, still, solid, and observing, beyond his years, and uncommonly knowing in divine things. He was brought up to husbandry, and other country business, and was particularly inclined to the solitary occupation of a shepherd; an employment, that very well suited his mind in several respects, both for its innocency and solitude; and was a just emblem of his after ministry

and service. In the year 1646, he entirely forsook the national Church, in whose tenets he had been brought up, as before observed; and in 1647, he travelled into Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, without any set purpose of visiting particular places, but in a solitary manner he walked through several towns and villages, which way soever his mind turned. "He fasted much," said Swell, "and walked often in retired places, with no other companion than his Bible." "He visited the most retired and religious people in those parts," says Penn, "and some there were, short of few, if any, in this nation, who waited for the consolation of Israel night and day; as Zacharias, Anna, and Simeon, did of old time. To these he was sent, and these he sought out in the neighboring counties, and among them he sojourned until his more ample ministry came upon him. At this time he taught, and was an example of silence, endeavoring to bring them from self-performances; testifying of, and turning them to the light of Christ within them, and encouraging them to wait in patience, and to feel the power of it to stir in their hearts, that their knowledge and worship of God might stand in the power of an endless life, which was to be found in the light as it was obeyed in the manifestation of it in man: for in the Word was life, and that life is the light of men. Life in the Word, light in men; and life in men too, as the light is obeyed; the children of the light living by the life of the Word, by which the Word begets them again to God, which is the generation and new birth, without which there is no coming into the Kingdom of God, and to which whoever comes is greater than John: that is, than John's dispensation, which was not that of the Kingdom, but the consummation of the legal, and forerunning of the Gospel times, the time of the Kingdom. Accordingly several meetings were gathering in those parts; and thus his time was employed for some years."

In the year 1652, "he had a visitation of the great work of God in the earth, and of the way that he was to go forth, in a public ministry, to begin it." He directed his course northward, "and in every place where he came, if not before he came to it, he had his particular exercise and service shown to him, so that the Lord was his leader indeed." He made great numbers of converts to his opinions, and many pious and good men joined him in his ministry. These were drawn forth especially to visit the public assemblies to reprove, reform, and exhort them; sometimes in markets, fairs, streets, and by the highway-side, "calling people to repentance, and to return to the Lord, with their hearts as well as their mouths; directing them to the light of Christ within them, to see, examine, and to consider their ways by, and to eschew the evil, and to do the good and acceptable will of God."

They were not without opposition in the work they imagined themselves called to, being often set in the stocks, stoned, beaten, whipped and imprisoned, though honest men of good report, that had left wives, children, houses, and lands, to visit them with a living call to repentance. But these coercive methods rather forwarded than abated their zeal, and in those parts they brought over many proselytes, and amongst them several magistrates, and others of the better sort. They apprehended the Lord had forbidden them to pull off their hats to anyone, high or low, and required them to speak to the people, without distinction, the language of thou and thee. They scrupled bidding people good-morrow, or good-night, nor might they bend the knee to anyone, even in supreme authority. Both men and women went in a plain and simple dress, different from the

fashion of the times. They neither gave nor accepted any titles of respect or honor, nor would they call any man master on earth. Several texts of Scripture they quoted in defence of these singularities; such as, "Swear not at all." "How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?" etc., etc. They placed the basis of religion in an inward light, and an extraordinary impulse of the Holy Spirit.

In 1654, their first separate meeting in London was held in the house of Robert Dring, in Watling-street, for by that time they spread themselves into all parts of the kingdom, and had in many places set up meetings or assemblies, particularly in Lancashire, and the adjacent parts, but they were still exposed to great persecutions and trials of every kind. One of them in a letter to the protector, Oliver Cromwell, represents, though there are no penal laws in force obliging men to comply with the established religion, yet the Quakers are exposed upon other accounts; they are fined and imprisoned for refusing to take an oath; for not paying their tithes; for disturbing the public assemblies, and meeting in the streets, and places of public resort; some of them have been whipped for vagabonds, and for their plain speeches to the magistrate.

Under favor of the then toleration, they opened their meetings at the Bull and Mouth, in Aldersgate-street, where women, as well as men, were moved to speak. Their zeal transported them to some extravagancies, which laid them still more open to the lash of their enemies, who exercised various severities upon them throughout the next reign. Upon the suppression of Venner's mad insurrection, the government, having published a proclamation, forbidding the Anabaptists, Quakers, and Fifth Monarchy Men, to assemble or meet together under pretence of worshipping God, except it be in some parochial church, chapel, or in private houses, by consent of the persons there inhabiting, all meetings in other places being declared to be unlawful and riotous, etc., etc., the Quakers thought it expedient to address the king thereon, which they did in the following words:

"O King Charles!

"Our desire is, that thou mayest live forever in the fear of God, and thy council. We beseech thee and thy council to read these following lines in tender bowels, and compassion for our souls, and for your good.

"And this consider, we are about four hundred imprisoned, in and about this city, of men and women from their families, besides, in the county jails, about ten hundred; we desire that our meetings may not be broken up, but that all may come to a fair trial, that our innocency may be cleared up.

"London, 16th day, eleventh month, 1660."

On the twenty-eighth of the same month, they published the declaration referred to in their address, entitled, "A declaration from the harmless and innocent people of God, called Quakers, against all sedition, plotters, and fighters in the world, for removing the

ground of jealousy and suspicion, from both magistrates and people in the kingdom, concerning wars and fightings." It was presented to the king the twenty-first day of the eleventh month, 1660, and he promised them upon his royal word, that they should not suffer for their opinions as long as they lived peaceably; but his promises were very little regarded afterward.

In 1661 they assumed courage to petition the House of Lords for a toleration of their religion, and for a dispensation from taking the oaths, which they held unlawful, not from any disaffection to the government, or a belief that they were less obliged by an affirmation, but from a persuasion that all oaths were unlawful; and that swearing upon the most solemn occasions was forbidden in the New Testament. Their petition was rejected, and instead of granting them relief, an act was passed against them, the preamble to which set forth, "That whereas several persons have taken up an opinion that an oath, even before a magistrate, is unlawful, and contrary to the Word of God; and whereas, under pretence of religious worship, the said persons do assemble in great numbers in several parts of the kingdom, separating themselves from the rest of his majesty's subjects, and the public congregations and usual places of divine worship; be it therefore enacted, that if any such persons, after the twenty-fourth of March, 1661-2, shall refuse to take an oath when lawfully tendered, or persuade others to do it, or maintain in writing or otherwise, the unlawfulness of taking an oath; or if they shall assemble for religious worship, to the number of five or more, of the age of fifteen, they shall for the first offence forfeit five pounds; for the second, ten pounds; and for the third shall abjure the realm, or be transported to the plantations: and the justices of peace at their open sessions may hear and finally determine in the affair."

This act had a most dreadful effect upon the Quakers, though it was well known and notorious that these conscientious persons were far from sedition or disaffection to the government. George Fox, in his address to the king, acquaints him that three thousand and sixty-eight of their friends had been imprisoned since his majesty's restoration; that their meetings were daily broken up by men with clubs and arms, and their friends thrown into the water, and trampled under foot until the blood gushed out, which gave rise to their meeting in the open streets. A relation was printed, signed by twelve witnesses, which says that more than four thousand two hundred Quakers were imprisoned; and of them five hundred were in and about London, and, the suburbs; several of whom were dead in the jails.

Six hundred of them, says an account published at that time, were in prison, merely for religion's sake, of whom several were banished to the plantations. In short, the Quakers gave such full employment to the informers, that they had less leisure to attend the meetings of other dissenters.

Yet, under all these calamities, they behaved with patience and modesty towards the government, and upon occasion of the Ryehouse plot in 1682, thought proper to declare their innocence of that sham plot, in an address to the king, wherein "appealing to the Searcher of all hearts," they say, "their principles do not allow them to take up defensive arms, much less to avenge themselves for the injuries they received from others: that they

continually pray for the king's safety and preservation; and therefore take this occasion humbly to beseech his majesty to compassionate their suffering friends, with whom the jails are so filled, that they want air, to the apparent hazard of their lives, and to the endangering an infection in divers places. Besides, many houses, shops, barns, and fields are ransacked, and the goods, corn, and cattle swept away, to the discouraging trade and husbandry, and impoverishing great numbers of quiet and industrious people; and this, for no other cause, but for the exercise of a tender conscience in the worship of Almighty God, who is sovereign Lord and King of men's consciences."

On the accession of James II they addressed that monarch honestly and plainly, telling him: "We are come to testify our sorrow for the death of our good friend Charles, and our joy for thy being made our governor. We are told thou art not of the persuasion of the Church of England, no more than we; therefore we hope thou wilt grant us the same liberty which thou allowest thyself, which doing, we wish thee all manner of happiness."

When James, by his dispensing power, granted liberty to the dissenters, they began to enjoy some rest from their troubles; and indeed it was high time, for they were swelled to an enormous amount. They, the year before this, to them one of glad release, in a petition to James for a cessation of their sufferings, set forth, "that of late above one thousand five hundred of their friends, both men and women, and that now there remain one thousand three hundred and eighty-three; of which two hundred are women, many under sentence of praemunire; and more than three hundred near it, for refusing the oath of allegiance, because they could not swear. Three hundred and fifty have died in prison since the year 1680; in London, the jail of Newgate has been crowded, within these two years sometimes with near twenty in a room, whereby several have been suffocated, and others, who have been taken out sick, have died of malignant fevers within a few days. Great violences, outrageous distresses, and woful havoc and spoil, have been made upon people's goods and estates, by a company of idle, extravagant, and merciless informers, by persecutions on the conventicle-act, and others, also on qui tam writs, and on other processes, for twenty pounds a month, and two thirds of their estates seized for the king. Some had not a bed to rest on, others had no cattle to till the ground, nor corn for feed or bread, nor tools to work with; the said informers and bailiffs in some places breaking into houses, and making great waste and spoil, under pretence of serving the king and the Church. Our religious assemblies have been charged at common law with being rioters and disturbers of the public peace, whereby great numbers have been confined in prison without regard to age, and many confined to holes and dungeons. The seizing for 20 pounds a month has amounted to many thousands, and several who have employed some hundreds of poor people in manufactures, are disabled to do so any more, by reason of long imprisonment. They spare neither widow nor fatherless, nor have they so much as a bed to lie on. The informers are both witnesses and prosecutors, to the ruin of great numbers of sober families; and justices of the peace have been threatened with the forfeiture of one hundred pounds, if they do not issue out warrants upon their informations." With this petition they presented a list of their friends in prison, in the several counties, amounting to four hundred and sixty.

During the reign of King James II these people were, through the intercession of their friend Mr. Penn, treated with greater indulgence than ever they had been before. They were now become extremely numerous in many parts of the country, and the settlement of Pennsylvania taking place soon after, many of them went over to America. There they enjoyed the blessings of a peaceful government, and cultivated the arts of honest industry.

As the whole colony was the property of Mr. Penn, so he invited people of all denominations to come and settle with him. A universal liberty of conscience took place; and in this new colony the natural rights of mankind were, for the first time, established.

These Friends are, in the present age, a very harmless, inoffensive body of people; but of that we shall take more notice hereafter. By their wise regulations, they not only do honor to themselves, but they are of vast service to the community.

It may be necessary here to observe, that as the Friends, commonly called Quakers, will not take an oath in a court of justice, so their affirmation is permitted in all civil affairs; but they cannot prosecute a criminal, because, in the English courts of justice, all evidence must be upon oath.

An Account of the Persecutions of Friends, Commonly Called Quakers, in the United States

About the middle of the seventeenth century, much persecution and suffering were inflicted on a sect of Protestant dissenters, commonly called Quakers: a people which arose at that time in England some of whom sealed their testimony with their blood.

For an account of the above people, see Sewell's, or Gough's history of them.

The principal points upon which their conscientious

nonconformity rendered them obnoxious to the penalties of the

law, were,

- 1. The Christian resolution of assembling publicly for the worship of God, in a manner most agreeable to their consciences.
- 2. Their refusal to pay tithes, which they esteemed a Jewish ceremony, abrogated by the coming of Christ.
- 3. Their testimony against wars and fighting, the practice of which they judged inconsistent with the command of Christ:
- "Love your enemies," Matt. 5:44.

- 4. Their constant obedience to the command of Christ: "Swear not at all," Matt. 5:34.
- 5. Their refusal to pay rates or assessments for building and repairing houses for a worship which they did not approve.
- 6. Their use of the proper and Scriptural language, "thou," and "thee," to a single person: and their disuse of the custom of uncovering their heads, or pulling off their hats, by way of homage to man.
- 7. The necessity many found themselves under, of publishing what they believed to be the doctrine of truth; and sometimes even in the places appointed for the public national worship.

Their conscientious noncompliance in the preceding particulars, exposed them to much persecution and suffering, which consisted in prosecutions, fines, cruel beatings, whippings, and other corporal punishments; imprisonment, banishment, and even death.

To relate a particular account of their persecutions and sufferings, would extend beyond the limits of this work: we shall therefore refer, for that information, to the histories already mentioned, and more particularly to Besse's Collection of their sufferings; and shall confine our account here mostly to those who sacrificed their lives, and evinced, by their disposition of mind, constancy, patience, and faithful perseverance, that they were influenced by a sense of religious duty.

Numerous and repeated were the persecutions against them; and sometimes for transgressions or offences which the law did not contemplate or embrace.

Many of the fines and penalties exacted of them, were not only unreasonable and exorbitant, but as they could not consistently pay them, were sometimes distrained to several times the value of the demand; whereby many poor families were greatly distressed, and obliged to depend on the assistance of their friends.

Numbers were not only cruelly beaten and whipped in a public manner, like criminals, but some were branded and others had their ears cut off.

Great numbers were long confined in loathsome prisons; in which some ended their days in consequence thereof.

Many were sentenced to banishment; and a considerable number were transported. Some were banished on pain of death; and four were actually executed by the hands of the hangman, as we shall here relate, after inserting copies of some of the laws of the country where they suffered.

"At a General Court Held at Boston, the Fourteenth of October,

1656"

"Whereas, there is a cursed sect of heretics, lately risen up in the world, which are commonly called Quakers, who take upon them to be immediately sent from God, and infallibly assisted by the Spirit, to speak and write blasphemous opinions, despising government, and the order of God, in the Church and commonwealth, speaking evil of dignities, reproaching and reviling magistrates and ministers, seeking to turn the people from the faith, and gain proselytes to their pernicious ways: this court taking into consideration the premises, and to prevent the like mischief, as by their means is wrought in our land, doth hereby order, and by authority of this court, be it ordered and enacted, that what master or commander of any ship, bark, pink, or ketch, shall henceforth bring into any harbor, creek, or cove, within this jurisdiction, any Quaker or Quakers, or other blasphemous heretics, shall pay, or cause to be paid, the fine of one hundred pounds to the treasurer of the country, except it appear he want true knowledge or information of their being such; and, in that case, he hath liberty to clear himself by his oath, when sufficient proof to the contrary is wanting: and, for default of good payment, or good security for it, shall be cast into prison, and there to continue until the said sum be satisfied to the treasurer as foresaid.

"And the commander of any ketch, ship, or vessel, being legally convicted, shall give in sufficient security to the governor, or any one or more of the magistrates, who have power to determine the same, to carry them back to the place whence he brought them; and, on his refusal so to do, the governor, or one or more of the magistrates, are hereby empowered to issue out his or their warrants to commit such master or commander to prison, there to continue, until he give in sufficient security to the content of the governor, or any of the magistrates, as aforesaid.

"And it is hereby further ordered and enacted, that what Quaker soever shall arrive in this country from foreign parts, or shall come into this jurisdiction from any parts adjacent, shall be forthwith committed to the House of Correction; and, at their entrance, to be severely whipped, and by the master thereof be kept constantly to work, and none suffered to converse or speak with them, during the time of their imprisonment, which shall be no longer than necessity requires.

"And it is ordered, if any person shall knowingly import into any harbor of this jurisdiction, any Quakers' books or writings, concerning their devilish opinions, shall pay for such book or writing, being legally proved against him or them the sum of five pounds; and whosoever shall disperse or conceal any such book or writing, and it be found with him or her, or in his or her house and shall not immediately deliver the same to the next magistrate, shall forfeit or pay five pounds, for the dispersing or concealing of any such book or writing.

"And it is hereby further enacted, that if any persons within this colony shall take upon them to defend the heretical opinions of the Quakers, or any of their books or papers, shall be fined for the first time forty shillings; if they shall persist in the same, and shall again defend it the second time, four pounds; if notwithstanding they again defend and maintain the said Quakers' heretical opinions, they shall be committed to the House of

Correction until there be convenient passage to send them out of the land, being sentenced by the court of Assistants to banishment.

"Lastly, it is hereby ordered, that what person or persons soever, shall revile the persons of the magistrates or ministers, as is usual with the Quakers, such person or persons shall be severely whipped or pay the sum of five pounds.

"This is a true copy of the court's order, as attests "EDWARD RAWSON, SEC."

"At a General Court Held at Boston, the Fourteenth of October,

1657"

"As an addition to the late order, in reference to the coming or bringing of any of the cursed sect of the Quakers into this jurisdiction, it is ordered that whosoever shall from henceforth bring, or cause to be brought, directly, or indirectly, any known Quaker or Quakers, or other blasphemous heretics, into this jurisdiction, every such person shall forfeit the sum of one hundred pounds to the country, and shall by warrant from any magistrate be committed to prison, there to remain until the penalty be satisfied and paid; and if any person or persons within this jurisdiction, shall henceforth entertain and conceal any such Quaker or Quakers, or other blasphemous heretics, knowing them so to be, every such person shall forfeit to the country forty shillings for every hour's entertainment and concealment of any Quaker or Quaker, etc., as aforesaid, and shall be committed to prison as aforesaid, until the forfeiture be fully satisfied and paid.

"And it is further ordered, that if any Quaker or Quakers shall presume, after they have once suffered what the law requires, to come into this jurisdiction, every such male Quaker shall, for the first offence, have one of his ears cut off, and be kept at work in the House of Correction, until he can be sent away at his own charge; and for the second offence, shall have his other ear cut off; and every woman Quaker, that has suffered the law here, that shall presume to come into this jurisdiction, shall be severely whipped, and kept at the House of Correction at work, until she be sent away at her own charge, and so also for her coming again, she shall be alike used as aforesaid.

"And for every Quaker, he or she, that shall a third time herein again offend, they shall have their tongues bored through with a hot iron, and be kept at the House of Correction close to work, until they be sent away at their own charge.

"And it is further ordered, that all and every Quaker arising from among ourselves, shall be dealt with, and suffer the like punishment as the law provides against foreign Quakers.

"EDWARD RAWSON, Sec."

"An Act Made at a General Court, Held at Boston, the Twentieth of

October, 1658"

Whereas, there is a pernicious sect, commonly called Quakers, lately risen, who by word and writing have published and maintained many dangerous and horrid tenets, and do take upon them to change and alter the received laudable customs of our nation, in giving civil respects to equals, or reverence to superiors; whose actions tend to undermine the civil government, and also to destroy the order of the churches, by denying all established forms of worship, and by withdrawing from orderly Church fellowship, allowed and approved by all orthodox professors of truth, and instead thereof, and in opposition thereunto, frequently meeting by themselves, insinuating themselves into the minds of the simple, or such as are at least affected to the order and government of church and commonwealth, whereby divers of our inhabitants have been infected, notwithstanding all former laws, made upon the experience of their arrogant and bold obtrusions, to disseminate their principles amongst us, prohibiting their coming into this jurisdiction, they have not been deferred from their impious attempts to undermine our peace, and hazard our ruin.

"For prevention thereof, this court doth order and enact, that any person or persons, of the cursed sect of the Quakers, who is not an inhabitant of, but is found within this jurisdiction, shall be apprehended without warrant, where no magistrate is at hand, by any constable, commissioner, or selectman, and conveyed from constable to constable, to the next magistrate, who shall commit the said person to close prison, there to remain (without bail) until the next court of Assistants, where they shall have legal trial.

"And being convicted to be of the sect of the Quakers, shall be sentenced to banishment, on pain of death. And that every inhabitant of this jurisdiction, being convicted to be of the aforesaid sect, either by taking up, publishing, or defending the horrid opinions of the Quakers, or the stirring up mutiny, sedition, or rebellion against the government, or by taking up their abusive and destructive practices, viz. denying civil respect to equals and superiors, and withdrawing from the Church assemblies; and instead thereof, frequenting meetings of their own, in opposition to our Church order; adhering to, or approving of any known Quaker, and the tenets and practices of Quakers, that are opposite to the orthodox received opinions of the godly; and endeavoring to disaffect others to civil government and Church order, or condemning the practice and proceedings of this court against the Quakers, manifesting thereby their complying with those, whose design is to overthrow the order established in Church and state: every such person, upon conviction before the said court of Assistants, in manner aforesaid, shall be committed to close prison for one month, and then, unless they choose voluntarily to depart this jurisdiction, shall give bond for their good behavior and appear at the next court, continuing obstinate, and refusing to retract and reform the aforesaid opinions, they shall be sentenced to banishment, upon pain of death. And any one magistrate, upon information given him of any such person, shall cause him to be apprehended, and shall commit any such person to prison, according to his discretion, until he come to trial as aforesaid."

It appears there were also laws passed in both of the then colonies of New Plymouth and New Haven, and in the Dutch settlement at New Amsterdam, now New York, prohibiting the people called Quakers, from coming into those places, under severe penalties; in consequence of which, some underwent considerable suffering.

The two first who were executed were William Robinson, merchant, of London, and Marmaduke Stevenson, a countryman, of Yorkshire. These coming to Boston, in the beginning of September, were sent for by the court of Assistants, and there sentenced to banishment, on pain of death. This sentence was passed also on Mary Dyar, mentioned hereafter, and Nicholas Davis, who were both at Boston. But William Robinson, being looked upon as a teacher, was also condemned to be whipped severely; and the constable was commanded to get an able man to do it. Then Robinson was brought into the street, and there stripped; and having his hands put through the holes of the carriage of a great gun, where the jailer held him, the executioner gave him twenty stripes, with a threefold cord whip. Then he and the other prisoners were shortly after released, and banished, as appears from the following warrant:

"You are required by these, presently to set at liberty William Robinson, Marmaduke Stevenson, Mary Dyar, and Nicholas Davis, who, by an order of the court and council, had been imprisoned, because it appeared by their own confession, words, and actions, that they are Quakers: wherefore, a sentence was pronounced against them, to depart this jurisdiction, on pain of death; and that they must answer it at their peril, if they or any of them, after the fourteenth of this present month, September, are found within this jurisdiction, or any part thereof.

"EDWARD RAWSON"

"Boston, September 12, 1659."

Though Mary Dyar and Nicholas Davis left that jurisdiction for that time, yet Robinson and Stevenson, though they departed the town of Boston, could not yet resolve (not being free in mind) to depart that jurisdiction, though their lives were at stake. And so they went to Salem, and some places thereabouts, to visit and build up their friends in the faith. But it was not long before they were taken and put again into prison at Boston, and chains locked to their legs. In the next month, Mary Dyar returned also. And as she stood before the prison, speaking with one Christopher Holden, who was come thither to inquire for a ship bound for England, whither he intended to go, she was also taken into custody.

Thus, they had now three persons, who, according to their law, had forfeited their lives. And, on the twentieth of October, these three were brought into court, where John Endicot and others were assembled. And being called to the bar, Endicot commanded the keeper to pull off their hats; and then said, that they had made several laws to keep the Quakers from amongst them, and neither whipping, nor imprisoning, nor cutting off ears, nor banishment upon pain of death, would keep them from amongst them. And further, he said, that he or they desired not the death of any of them. Yet, notwithstanding, his following words, without more ado were, "Give ear, and hearken to your sentence of death." Sentence of death was also passed upon Marmaduke Stevenson, Mary Dyar, and William Edrid. Several others were imprisoned, whipped, and fined.

We have no disposition to justify the Pilgrims for these proceedings, but we think, considering the circumstances of the age in which they lived, their conduct admits of much palliation.

The fathers of New England, endured incredible hardships in providing for themselves a home in the wilderness; and to protect themselves in the undisturbed enjoyment of rights, which they had purchased at so dear a rate, they sometimes adopted measures, which, if tried by the more enlightened and liberal views of the present day, must at once be pronounced altogether unjustifiable. But shall they be condemned without mercy for not acting up to principles which were unacknowledged and unknown throughout the whole of Christendom? Shall they alone be held responsible for opinions and conduct which had become sacred by antiquity, and which were common to Christians of all other denominations? Every government then in existence assumed to itself the right to legislate in matters of religion; and to restrain heresy by penal statutes. This right was claimed by rulers, admitted by subjects, and is sanctioned by the names of Lord Bacon and Montesquieu, and many others equally famed for their talents and learning. It is unjust, then, to 'press upon one poor persecuted sect, the sins of all Christendom.' The fault of our fathers was the fault of the age; and though this cannot justify, it certainly furnishes an extenuation of their conduct. As well might you condemn them for not understanding and acting up to the principles of religious toleration. At the same time, it is but just to say, that imperfect as were their views of the rights of conscience, they were nevertheless far in advance of the age to which they belonged; and it is to them more than to any other class of men on earth, the world is indebted for the more rational views that now prevail on the subject of civil and religious liberty.