

An Early Recruit from the Clergy.

SAMUEL OATES, according to Thomas Seccombe in his "Twelve Bad Men," was son of the rector of Marsham, in Norfolk, born 18 November, 1610. Oates senior was a Puritan, and in the Second Parte of a Register, edited by Dr. Peel, we find that he was in a list of ministers who in 1584 hesitated to subscribe Whitgift's articles of discipline. He became chaplain to the father of Sir John Hobart, of Blickling, according to John Browne, in his *History of Congregationalism in Norfolk and Suffolk*, and latterly was parson of Sowthreps. He died before 1633, when his son published his exposition of Jude in forty-one sermons, which had been preached at North Walsham. These contain faithful warnings against Brownists and other Separatists. Oates senior had promoted a Supplication to the Lords of the Council which takes credit for similar opposition.

Oates junior entered at Corpus Christi College as sizar in 1627, and commenced M.A. in 1634. He was ordained 24th September, 1635, and apparently was as Puritan as his father. Ten years later he married. About the same time he adopted Baptist principles, and he evidently vacated his parish living. The circumstances are unknown, but we may infer that it was due to some General Baptist, or some publication of the General Baptists; for he entered into relations with the London church of 1612, then meeting in Bell Alley.

He gave offence to other clergy by his evangelistic work in Sussex and Surrey. No systematic attempt has been made to discover what resulted from his work; Horley and Turner's Hill may be one result. He must not be confounded with another Samuel Oates, M.A., who died vicar of Croydon in 1645, aged thirty. Our man went to evangelize Essex, and did work at Bocking and Braintree. He proved so successful that his enemies seized on the death of a convert, and indicted him at Chelmsford for murder, in baptizing her. He was acquitted, and resumed his work in the county. In 1647 the vicar of Terling published an account of a victory he esteemed himself to have won over Oates in a debate, showing that Universal Redemption was a particular error: he had had a debate on 11th January, 1643/4 with two "catabaptists denying infants' baptism."

In 1648 Oates seems to have published on A new baptism and ministry. Certainly, by April 1649 John Drew challenged him on these points, and lets us know that he was now ministering to a church in Lincolnshire. He was approached by George Fox at a conference in Barrow-on-Soar, in Leicestershire, but did not

join him. This place shows that he kept up his itinerancy; and Calamy has preserved an account how he dispersed public challenges on Leicestershire to dispute with any minister on the point of baptism, how he was gravelled in argument at Leicester castle, and was thereupon ordered by the justices to no further disturb the congregations in the county. Seccombe also informs us that in 1649 his wife was at Oakham, where his son Titus was born.

Seccombe states that Oates became chaplain to Pride's regiment in 1650. This may explain how he figures next as member of a Baptist church at the Chequer without Aldgate, which sent an address to Cromwell; for this church was chiefly of military men. And it may also explain why he, who had lately been the leader in Lincolnshire and Leicestershire, was not at the 1651 conference of thirty churches.

There presently appeared a rift in the General Baptists. A Kentish clergyman, who, like Oates, had joined them, urged that hands ought to be laid on every baptized believer: this practice, of course, fitted well with the Anglican custom of confirmation. Oates declared it unnecessary, and by June 1653 he was being attacked in print, even within army circles. He kept in touch with the Midlanders, for in September the church at "Norborow" in Lincolnshire sent a long letter to Fenstanton, detailing how he had come and helped them against a man insisting on this Laying on of Hands.

As, however, Pride's regiment went to Scotland, his energies were transferred there, and we find him drawn into army intrigues. He was accused of trying to supplant George Monk by Robert Overton, and presently of plotting against Cromwell, who, at the end of March, 1655, wrote to him on the matter. Cromwell found such opposition to his autocratic rule that he set to work to purge the army of all Baptists, and sent orders to Scotland that none were to hold any post at all.

For the next few years, then, Oates was out of public employment, and as the General Baptists were now making the Laying on of Hands a condition of communion, he felt more out of touch. According to Seccombe, he became usher at various schools; he certainly did not sign the General Baptist minutes in 1654, 1656, 1660.

It is, however, surprising that he drifted back to the Church of England. In June, 1665, he entered his son Titus, now sixteen years old, at Merchant Taylors' school. Next year he was presented by Sir Richard Barker to the living of All Saints in Hastings. He sent Titus to Cambridge in 1667, and that young man was presented to the living of Bobbing, in East Kent, on 7th March, 1672/3. But within the year Titus had disgraced

himself, and the shame so told on Samuel that he resigned his living.

This was exactly the period when he might have declared himself a nonconforming clergyman, and have taken a licence from Charles under the Declaration of Indulgence, but of this there is no sign. Secombe declares that he skulked about Bloomsbury. Crosby says that he re-united with his old church, of which Thomas Lamb was still pastor; and as Lamb was an Essex man, he may have been tender with a repentant man. But with such a record there was hardly room to take any prominent part in Baptist life again; and the career of Titus was by no means one to inspire confidence. Samuel died in obscurity, 6th February, 1683, leaving a widow, who survived till 1697.

The career is extraordinary. It shows the opportunities, and the temptations, of clergymen who became Baptists. Such men were able to do a work in itinerancy and in public debate, which was open to few others; with university training they could lead and organize. But they often had a hankering after the flesh-pots of Egypt, a desire for a public post.

Slavery in Jamaica and America.

ON the first of August, 1838, all slaves in Jamaica were declared free, and full emancipation in other parts of the British dominions was not long delayed. Therefore, in that year the Baptist Union addressed a letter to the Ministers and Messengers of the Baptist Churches in the United States on the subject of slavery. The letter opens with words of esteem, and appreciation of the good work done by the churches; but a blot is on their Christian character.

“ We have not been ignorant that slavery existed in the States; entailed, we are humbled and ashamed to acknowledge, by British influence, authority, and example. But we had, until of late, no conception of the extent to which multitudes of professing Christians in your land, by indifference, by connivance, by apology, or by actual participation, are implicated in it.” Then follows a picture of the physical and spiritual wrongs done to the slaves, and the writers say: “ Such a system, brethren, must be fruitful of oppression, injustice, and crime. And yet among yourselves, your churches, your deacons, your pastors, this system finds apologists, advocates, abettors; and unabashed by the symbols of incarnate and redeeming love, it obtrudes itself even at the table of our dying Lord.

“ Brethren, are these things so? Would to God we could doubt