

Hence I think that our materials justify us in supposing that the inflated numbers of the Israelites in the Mosaic Age are due partly to palæographical peculiarities, which lent themselves readily to error, partly to the natural decay of a manuscript text, partly to the views conscientiously and (in the light of their knowledge) reasonably entertained by the scholars of an unhistorical age.



### Early Quaker Burial-Grounds.

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ONE of the problems which confronted the early Quakers was the disposal of their dead. A large number of them died excommunicated for the offence of not attending their parish church, while the children born of Quaker parents were unbaptized. Hence the parish churchyard was closed to them; or, at any rate, the Office for the Burial of the Dead, according to the rites of the Established Church, could not be used. They were, therefore, led to bury their dead in private grounds, in gardens, orchards, or fields. And this "privilege of burial," as it was called, was often accorded by individual Quakers to the families of other "Friends," with the result that, during the Commonwealth and the reign of Charles II., a number of private graveyards came into use throughout the country. Entries with regard to these private interments are not, of course, to be found in the parish registers; but nowhere is the methodical habit of mind which distinguished the followers of George Fox more conspicuous than in the careful records which they kept of the burials of their friends. In after-years, when the laws against Nonconformity were altered, public cemeteries were opened, and the private burial-grounds fell

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favourable. Thus, in Num. xxxi. 37-40 the Syriac has the following numbers, 6,750, 720, 610, 320, where the Hebrew has in each case one-tenth. Of these, 20 and 10 (to take the most obvious difficulties) are not the plurals of 2 and 1 respectively, 20 being in Hebrew the plural of 10.

into disuse, while in many cases the ground was used for other purposes, and in some instances the very sites have been totally forgotten.

It not infrequently happened that a Friends' meeting-house came to be erected beside a private graveyard, and in these cases the site is still known and reverently cared for. A large number of such burial-grounds—some in use, others closed as regards interments—may be seen in those parts of the kingdom where the Society formerly flourished. In some instances the graveyard itself was used as a place of meeting. This was the case at Chapel Hill, in the Valley of Rossendale in Lancashire. The ground is surrounded by a rather high wall, and on the oaken door is the simple inscription, "Friends' Burial-Ground, 1663." It is a small oblong plot, some 14 yards by 10, and open to the winds of heaven. But formerly there ran round the walls a stone ledge, now unfortunately removed, to afford sitting accommodation for the worshippers. And there they were wont to meet for over thirty years, in spite of the most harassing persecutions.

Sometimes a Quaker burial-ground, enclosed by a stone wall or hedge, and marked by some simple inscription, may be met with far away from human habitation, situated, it may be, on some lonely moor or hill-side, or in the corner of a meadow or cornfield. At Leiston, in Suffolk, at some distance from the village, there is a little enclosure containing a large block of stone, which bears the following inscription: "In the year 1670 this piece of land was purchased by the Society of People called Quakers, and for many years used as a Burying-Ground for their dead. In 1786 it was planted with trees, and this stone placed." George Borrow's beautiful description of a graveyard in "Wild Wales" will occur to many: "The Quakers' burying-place is situated on a little peninsula or tongue of land, having a brook on its eastern and northern sides, and on its western the Taf. It is a little oblong yard, with low walls, partly overhung with ivy. The enclosure has a porch to the south. The Quakers are no friends to tombstones, and the

only visible evidence that this was a place of burial was a single flagstone with a half-obliterated inscription. The beams of the descending sun gilded the Quakers' burial-yard as I trod its precincts. A lovely resting-place looked that little oblong yard on the peninsula by the confluence of the waters, and quite in keeping with the character of the quiet Christian people who sleep within it." Another lonely burial-ground in a most picturesque situation may be seen not far from Barmouth, on the Welsh coast. Only the railway-line and a narrow strip of shingle part it from the sea. A stone wall runs all round the little plot, and on the west and north sides stand thickly planted fir-trees as a protection from the wind. Through the pine-stems glimpses will be seen of the broad blue estuary of the Mawddach River, and beyond the purple outlines of Cader Idris. Beneath the stunted trees the grass grows dark and long over the nameless graves, and only one or two red granite slabs reveal the sacredness of the little enclosure.

In a few instances the old burial-grounds have passed out of the hands of the Society of Friends, and have been utilized for other purposes. One, near Milford Junction, in Yorkshire, is now used as a garden. The site of the old graveyard at Gateshead, in which between the years 1676 and 1698 over a hundred Quakers were interred, is occupied by some almshouses. The College of Surgeons in Dublin stands on a piece of ground in Stephen's Green formerly in use as a Quaker graveyard. In a large number of cases, curious as it may seem, the very sites of the old burial-grounds have been utterly forgotten. That a Friends' graveyard formerly existed in such a parish may often be proved from documentary evidence, while no tradition as to its situation remains. This fact is partly to be explained by the antipathy of the early Quakers to headstones and monuments. At Boldon, in the county of Durham, thirteen Friends are recorded to have been buried during the days of persecution "in ye garden of Christopher Trewhill," but no tradition as to the site of it remains. At South Shields, between the years 1673 and 1697, nine burials took place in

“Robert Linton’s garden,” the situation of which is now unknown.

In the county of Hants there seems to have been a considerable number of Quakers in the seventeenth century. No less than twelve private burial-grounds are known to have existed. Of these, the ones at Alton and Southampton are still in use. Those at Andover, Basingstoke, and Fording-bridge—the two latter adjoining the meeting-houses—are now closed as places of interment. The one at Baughurst now forms part of a farmyard. With regard to those situated in the parishes of Bramshott, Portchester, Romsey, Ringwood, and Whitchurch, the sites appear to be entirely unknown. One other remains, that at Swanmore, formerly part of the parish of Droxford, lately rescued from secular uses, and now taken over by the Society of Friends.

The little burial-ground at Swanmore, situated away from the high-road at the farther end of a cottage garden, measures some 80 feet by 55. It is surrounded by a low quickset hedge, and two oak-trees stand sentinel over the spot, which until quite lately had been used as a fowl-run and rubbish corner. Not a single monumental stone exists, which doubtless accounts for the fact of its having been so long neglected, but a careful search beneath the tangle of rank grass and herbage will reveal two or three “bricken graves.” The sequestered spot, surrounded on three sides by waving corn, seemed, when the writer visited it last autumn, as quiet and peaceful as the one described by Borrow beside the waters of the Taf. One corner of the enclosure was bright with the blossoms of the yellow St. John’s wort and the purple mallow; heavy festoons of old-man’s-beard hung in profusion over the hedgerow, while from the branches of the largest oak a ringdove was uttering its mournful note. This Quaker burial-ground is one of the earliest in England, and was in use in the stern days of the Commonwealth. Much diligent searching among old deeds and documents, and among the early registers of Friends now preserved in Devonshire House in Bishopsgate Without,

London, has brought to light many facts of interest concerning the lives and sufferings of some of the good men who there lie beneath the clover sod.

Very early did the peculiar tenets of George Fox find a home in Hampshire. Within a few years of the beginning of his labours we find a colony of Quakers—perhaps through the instrumentality of one Ambrose Rigg, who “suffered much for the truth’s sake”—in the neighbourhood of Droxford. The community seems to have been a considerable one, and to have numbered among its members persons of substance. At any rate, in 1553, Robert Ryves, yeoman, of Swanmore, “had taken from him by warrant, for tithes pretended to be due to Robert Webb, Priest of Droxford, three cows worth £10 10s. and three good swine worth £5 5s., making £15 15s. in all.” This Robert Webb, here called “Priest of Droxford,” was the Presbyterian minister who had superseded Nicholas Preston, the rightful Rector of the parish. He is said to have been “a good scholar and an eminent preacher,” but the Quakers were opposed to Presbyterian and Episcopalian alike. Later on we find that the sturdy yeoman, Robert Ryves (or Reeves, as he sometimes spelt his name), whose descendants still live in the parish, had taken from him by the Churchwardens “one harrow worth 3s. 4d., demanded for mending the steeple-house at Droxford”; and, again, “twenty-two pounds of fat Bacon” for the same purpose. At this time, before the circular meeting-house, which they afterwards used, was built, it is probable that the Friends met for worship at the cottage, still standing, of one Richard Sewett, cordwainer, in whose orchard the earliest members of the Society were buried. The first interment, so far as can be ascertained, took place in 1657, and four years later Sewett’s little son Joseph was laid to rest beneath the apple-trees. He then made over the plot of ground, “14 rods or perches,” consecrated as it was by the tenderest associations, to three trustees, to be used henceforth as a Friends’ graveyard. The three trustees, so we learn from the deed itself, dated 1663, were our friend Robert Ryves the elder, of Swanmore, yeoman;

Thomas Walter, of Bishop's Waltham, maltster ; and Thomas Penford, of Bishop's Waltham, blacksmith. A child of Thomas Walter, John by name, had been buried in the plot of ground the year previously ; and in the year following the signing of the deed the maltster, so we learn from Besse's "Sufferings of the Quakers," for a "Demand of £3 for Tithes, had taken from him four cows, two horses, several Hogs, Boards, Wood and other Goods to the value of £50." He was also arrested, apparently for refusing to pay towards the repairs of Bishop's Waltham Church, and committed on the writ *de excommunicato capiendo* to Winchester Gaol, where he lay for several years. A sadder fate awaited the poor blacksmith, Thomas Penfold. Although he had a wife and three children dependent upon his labours, he too was arrested "for not paying the sum of three-pence towards the masse-house," and under the same Statute committed to Winchester. There, in a filthy dungeon, he languished for three years and a half, when he died. His body was removed by his friends, and carried, on the seventh day of the third month, 1668, some twelve miles to Swanmore, where it was interred in the Friends' burial-ground. Four years later his poor wife, Elizabeth, passed away, and was laid by his side. Of the third of the original trustees, Robert Ryves the yeoman, we have no further record ; but he too doubtless lies buried in the little graveyard, where his wife, Ann, was laid to rest in 1662, and John Ryves, their son, some years later. In 1672 Richard Sewett died, and was laid in the plot of ground originally, as we have seen, his orchard, which nine years previously he had made over to the Society of Friends.

Other Quakers, belonging to various villages in Hampshire, were also buried in Richard Sewett's graveyard. We find from the registers in Devonshire House that members of the Society from Portchester, Titchfield, Southwick, Winchester, Alresford, and King's Worthy were brought to Swanmore for burial. Two Friends from Portsmouth, Thomas Cousins and John Austin, who suffered grievously for their faith, were also interred there in the years 1664 and 1667 respectively. We learn from

a letter which they addressed to the Justices at Winchester in January, 1662, that "for the space of one year and an half few First-days therein but we were by the rudest Soldiers they could chuse for that Purpose, either haled out of our Meetings, or beat forth with much violence, or thrust or beat with Muskets along the streets, or punished or knocked with the great End of Muskets, besides many more cruel Beatings and bruising of our Bodies than is here written, and our Goods have been spoiled and our Windows battered down. At other times we have been kept in nasty Holes, so bad that most people esteem it a hard Thing for the worst Felons or Offenders to be kept there a few days where we were constrained to lie several Weeks, and Food itself and needful Things kept also from us : And in *Felton's* Hole the Waves of the Sea have so beat in on one of us in Winter Season that he has stood in Water up to the Ankles, for the which things the Lord God hath and will visit them that were the Actors thereof." In addition to these imprisonments at Portsmouth, the poor men were also incarcerated at Winchester, where one of their companions in tribulation, Humphrey Smith, died on "the 4th Day of the Month called May, 1663. He continued," we are told, "sweetly still and sensible unto the End, and died in perfect Peace."

It was chiefly during the period of the Stuart persecution that the Swanmore graveyard was in use, and during that time the Friends' registers record some twenty-seven burials. After the passing of the Act of Toleration in 1689, the ground seems to have been seldom used for purposes of interment. It may be that the little plot was already full. We find, however, that one Roger Gringo, from the neighbouring parish of Titchfield, was buried there in the year 1703; and a few years later John Ryves, already alluded to, who lived in the cottage adjoining the graveyard, and who was accustomed to keep the ground in order and the hedges cut; while tradition maintains that somewhere about the middle of the eighteenth century the yeoman who lived at the farm hard by, "old Jarvis" by name—"he

was very tall, and wore a long cloak with a girdle, and was a strange man"—together with his wife and a deformed child, were buried in "bricken graves" in the old Quaker graveyard. The tradition is doubtless true, although no written record of the burials remains; for the position of the "bricken graves" can still be traced, and, so far as local knowledge goes, the three "Jarvis" burials were the only ones supposed to have taken place in the little enclosure.

It is very curious how all tradition has vanished in the neighbourhood of the old Quaker burial-ground as used during the days of persecution in the seventeenth century. That "old Jarvis" of Jarvis Court lay buried in the "bricken grave," together with his wife and the child called "the dwarf," was, indeed, the belief of the older inhabitants, but beyond that not a vestige of tradition had come down. No one cared for the sacred enclosure except the labourers whose gardens adjoined it, and who quarrelled among themselves as to who should possess it. The coppice, which formerly adjoined the burial-ground on the farther side, has now been stubbed up and converted into a cornfield, and the long row of fir-trees which bordered the right-of-way from the meeting-house at Jarvis Court to the graveyard has been cut down; but the path across the field still leads to the "14 rod of ground" made over by the pious shoemaker, Richard Sewett, in 1663, for the sacred use of burial among members of the persecuted Society of Friends. Their successors have now taken the necessary steps to insure that henceforth the ground shall be preserved from desecration, and a tablet has been erected to commemorate the names of Ryves and Penfold, of Cousins and Austin, and of their saintly companions in tribulation who nobly suffered for conscience' sake.

