

Haddenham and Two Peter Tylers.

HADDENHAM is probably the oldest Baptist Church in the "historic county of Bucks.," dating from 1653, at least. There are two or three others who may possibly be as old—Aylesbury, and Stony Stratford, and Winslow, which appear by 1654 and 1656. But the affiliation of Haddenham has always been with the Calvinistic or Particular Baptists, while these others were of the General wing, which was strong in the Midlands.

It makes its first appearance in 1653, a time when Baptists everywhere were organising, not only into churches, but also into associations. Eight miles south-west is the village of Tetsworth, which, for a few years, was chosen as the meeting-place of messengers from several Particular Baptist Churches; though, as there is no sign of a church being there, some local squire may perhaps have entertained the gathering. It was on 17 March that the Haddenham representatives came as the only Baptists from Bucks.; from Berkshire, members of Abingdon, Wantage, and Reading; from Oxfordshire, members of Oxford, Pyrton, Watlington, and Henley; from Surrey, Kingston; from Hertfordshire, Kensworth and Hemel Hempstead; from Bedford, Eversholt. We know John Pendarves, of Abingdon, and Edward Harrison, of Kensworth, and may judge them to be the leaders in forming this far-flung association, whose early minutes are now printed in Mr. Salt's "Gleanings from Forgotten Fields."

The church was apparently weakened by the Friends, for Thomas Ellwood, who lived with his father at Crowell, ten miles away, refers, in his autobiography, to attending Quaker meetings at Haddenham. The church soon ceased to send messengers to the Association, and in 1669 the rector reported that the conventicles meeting in his parish were of Quakers and Anabaptists, of the middle and meaner sort. They assembled at the houses of Widow Rose, midwife, and Philip Wilmot, shoemaker, being ministered to by Wilmot himself, and by Edward and Robert Cox, glovers. Thus the forlorn little cause held on, until, in 1689, when the Assembly met in London, Haddenham was represented, Peter Tyler being the messenger.

Next year the churches were encouraged to revive the

Associations, and it is rather singular to see the grouping proposed. The Oxford and Berkshire churches linked with those up-river, except that Pyrton and Studley joined with Tring. Hempstead, Kensworth, Eversholt, and Harlow. Here we should have expected Haddenham, but on paper it seems to have held aloof, uniting with Steventon only. Happily, better counsels prevailed, and on Christmas Day there was a gathering near Kensworth, to which Haddenham sent Robert Cox and John Dagnall, with the following letter:

"To the Messengers of the respective Churches appointed to meet in Market Street, the 25th day of the 10th month, the Church at Haddenham sendeth greetings. Dear Brethren, We are very willing to accept of the invitation to join with you in the Association, to partake of the privileges of the same, for we are but small in number and weak in gifts; yet through grace we are kept together in the wayes of the Lord, and generally desire to grow in grace and in our knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and to this end we desire your prayer to God for us. Signed by Peter Tyler, Giles Wilmot, John and Richard Collett."

Tyler and Cox must have been ageing, and they had evidently not resigned themselves to be small and weak, as is to be seen from the following resolution of the General Baptist Church of Cuddington, on 10 September, 1690:

"In respect of brother Coker's case, it is looked upon to be irregular and disorderly in him without the authority of the Church to promise and engage himself to Haddenham people in manner as hath been by him lately practised. If Haddenham people please, and will appoint time, place, and persons for the same, we will come to a reasoning with them thereupon, as well as upon other matters relating thereunto, and supply of meetings. And it is ordered that brother Headach give them notice hereof."

There is nothing to show how the church fared in the lack of gifted brethren, but towards the end of 1701 Mrs. Joseph Delafield, who lived at Bishopstone, desired to join the church, and was dissuaded on the ground that there were "present errors and disorders" in it. Next year trouble of another sort overtook the church, when the place of worship was burned down, with several other parts of the village. Another place was erected through the aid of Mr. Joseph Collett, a Baptist minister of Coate, and Joseph came over again, to bury alongside it the body of Edward Hoare, pastor of the church at Prince's Risborough, who died 18 December, 1711, in the 36th year of his age.

It was not pleasant to depend on a friend at a distance, and probably Joseph pointed out a solution, for there was an Edward Hoare, junior, who, with his brother Thomas, and John Bejent, were not at ease in the General Baptist Church. In a year or two Hoare was established as pastor at Haddenham, and in 1717 Bejent joined him, so that there were now two good preachers. Under them things went so smoothly that nothing is recorded, but in time they passed away, and once more they invoked the aid of Joseph Collett. It is interesting to see the family successions, and the story is now told by a second Peter Tyler.

"The church at Haddenham being small and without a pastor, Mr. Collett used his influence with them to have their little place properly invested in the hands of trustees, which was done in 1734. The two principal and most active trustees were Mr. John Rose and my great grandfather, Mr. John Tyler, both of Haddenham. They used to entertain alternately the different ministers who were so kind as to visit them with the gospel of Christ."

The Record Office copy of this indenture gives a list of all the trustees. "A certain deed poll dated the 7th October, 1734. hereinafter recited of the one part; and George West of Haddenham aforesaid, grocer; Augustus Line of Aston Abbotts, in the said county of Bucks., grazier; William Duncombe the younger of Dinton, grazier; William Dover of Cuddington, farmer; Thomas Fowler of Kingsey, farmer; Richard Tyler of Haddenham, wheelwright (brother of the said Peter Tyler and John Tyler, parties hereto); Thomas Franklin of Haddenham, wheelwright; John Plaistow of Haddenham, farmer; John Howlett of Scotsgrove Hill, grazier; James Clarke of Haddenham, draper; and John Munday of Haddenham, mason." A further list of names in this indenture must have included a large proportion of the responsible Baptists in the locality: "Between John Dagnall of Haddenham, fellmonger, of the one part; and Joseph Collett of Coate in the county of Oxford, gentleman; Bobert Dorsett of Haddenham [shoemaker]; John Rose yeoman of Haddenham; the said Peter Tyler, the surviving trustee aforesaid; Thomas Milner of Haddenham, labourer; John Keen of Hadham, Oxford, farmer; John Cox of Thame, glover; and Peter Ludgate of Dinton, carpenter." To John Dagnall was duly paid five shillings by Joseph Collett and the others, and finally, "the said house when so erected shall be used as a meeting-house for religious worship by the Protestant Dissenters called Particular Baptists (that is to say, such as have been baptised upon a profession of faith in Christ Jesus, and holding the doctrines of particular and personal election

and final perseverance) that now are or shall hereafter be residing or inhabiting in or near Haddenham, according to and as long as the laws of this realm shall permit and suffer the same."

Of all the local people, only Dorsett and Keene are known as preachers, but they were acceptable in other places also, and are heard of at Leighton Buzzard and at Amersham. The worship was touched with the fire kindled by Isaac Watts, and Mr. Peter Tyler continues: "In 1756, Jubilee singing after the sermon was introduced, but my venerable relative and another or two of the old members used to withdraw, under the impression that the New Testament did not plainly require it."

As that generation died out, no others rose up to fill the place. When Josiah Thompson took a census of the dissenting causes in 1773, he heard that this meeting-house was in ruins. There is a local custom of using an unbaked earth for walls, and consequently, when attention ceases to be given, the Haddenham buildings readily crumble away. The interior of the meeting-house was plundered, and for a generation the whole was in decay.

In 1807 the only surviving granddaughter of John Tyler, above mentioned, committed a sum of money into the hands of one of her nephews, in hope that the day would come when the breaches should be repaired. Two years later, says Peter Tyler, "a new place, forty feet by twenty-seven, was opened by our much lamented fathers, A. Fuller and J. Sutcliff [of Olney], accompanied by Mr. F. A. Cox," of Mare Street, Hackney. A Particular Baptist Church was formed, consisting of more than eighty members, under the pastoral care of Mr. Tyler. Before the new chapel was ready, meetings were held in an old cottage,—the Croft. The rowdy element of the village often interrupted, a discarded sheep being once hung at the door while the worshippers were within. As some precaution, a large spike, whence to suspend a lantern, was added, to be seen till a few years ago. The Record Office document tells us that Peter and John Tyler on New Year's Day, 1809, and 3 March completed the new indenture, and the cause started on its second lease of life.

On 24 September, 1811, the second anniversary was held, when Mr. Tomlin of Chesham (Hinton), Mr. Clement of New Mill, Tring, and Mr. Seymour of Akeman Street, Tring, preached. Messrs. Paul, Hewlet, Bedford, and Collett engaged in the services of the day, the whole of which were highly interesting. These names show a friendship between different denominations unknown before, and another instance was given that year, when the enlarged meeting-house at Speen, Bucks., was re-opened, and Peter Tyler shared in the service with two Congregationalists.

In the neighbouring village of Aston Sandford, the rector; from 1800 till his death in 1821, was Thomas Scott, the commentator, an earnest evangelical preacher, to whose hamlet of seventy souls people came from miles around to hear the gospel. Tyler "never hesitated to avow that the ministry of Mr. Scott, whom he had heard nearly a thousand times, met with his warmest admiration and approval, and afforded him much advantage in the formation of his public character." Scott, at first, hardly recognised the promise in Tyler's work, and once remarked: "In a neighbouring village there are prayer-meetings, at which some of my congregation attend and assist; but I take no part in respect of them." A few years' experience gave him a deeper insight, and on his deathbed he said, "If my successor does not preach the gospel, go and hear Peter Tyler." The successor was a man of a different stamp, and a good part of the congregation left the church at Aston Sandford to attend the Baptist Chapel at Haddenham. They had a communion service of their own on the third Sunday in the month, and were known as the "Third Sunday People." Many of them were substantial farmers, driving from a distance, and they gave an air of respectability to the congregation, while Peter Tyler was able enough to turn this position to account. This is but one illustration of how, throughout his long ministry, he was a potent factor in the religious life of all the surrounding district.

He soon became secretary of the Bucks. Baptist Association, and on one occasion was energetic enough to bring to an annual missionary meeting two members of Parliament, Wilberforce and Butterworth, besides Sheppard of Frome, Ivimey, and Cox. The spirit of enterprise spread into many little churches; Aston Abbots sent four guineas, Haddenham £7 5s. 4d., Waddeston Hill £6 13s. 6d., Wingrave £4 19s. 5½d. At the beginning of his work there were twelve Particular Baptist Churches in the county, with 1,056 members; after a quarter of a century there were twenty, with 1,799 members, and Sunday schools well developed. More than that, his church reported "that a commodious British School Room has been erected in our populous village during the past year, and bids fair to be a lasting blessing."

The encomium of the little church on Peter Tyler, in 1851, may well sum up his life work: "Our pastor, we are happy to say, after forty-one years' standing, has not lost his energy nor his popularity. To God be all the praise for the good done by his agency!"

G. LOOSLEY.