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Transactions

of the

Baptist Historical Society.

Memorials of the Treacher Family.

AMONG the families which gave strength and support to the General Baptist cause in seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries, was that of the Treachers. Three generations at least of that family stoutly defended the faith, and two ministers of that communion, in the early half of the eighteenth century, came from this stock. By inter-marriage with other families professing the same liberal theology, and by their generous benefactions, the Treachers did much for the propagation of non-Calvinistic Protestantism in days when it was less popular than now.

The family of Treacher, or Tracher, or Trecoer, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was distributed along the contiguous borders of the counties of Herts. and Bucks., chiefly in the villages of Chesham, Amersham, Berkhamstead, and Bovington, a neighbourhood in which Wycliffe and the Lollards exerted an abiding influence. Another branch of the family flourished in Oxfordshire, from which came Sir John Treacher, Mayor of Oxford.

According to Fox's Acts and Monuments (vol. ii., p. 39) in the year 1521, Isabel Tracher, wife of John Tracher of Chesham, was "detected" and "admonished" because "she came not to the church oftener on the week dayes," but followed her business at home; for cursing the Priest, and because "she proposed to set her daughter to Alice Harding, saying that she would teach better than many other." In the same year John Tracher of Chesham was "denounced" for that he taught this saying of Jesus, "Blessed be they that heare the Word of God and keepe it," also

because he taught the eight beatitudes in English. Likewise William Trecoer of Amersham was "detected" for "keeping Thomas Erowe in his house on Easter and Christmas day because he would not come to church." Thus the Treachers were early associated with anti-clericalism and Nonconformity; but some members of the family adhered to the Church.

Thus in Urwick's "Memorials of Nonconformity in Herts.," we find (p. 386) that in the sixth year of James I., James Treacher was Church warden at Bovington when Cadwallader Morgan was minister in that Puritan stronghold. Here, in the later years of Elizabeth, Wilcocks, the fellow-sufferer with John Field and the learned Thomas Cartwright, had ministered under the protection of the Mayne family and of Lady Bacon (See Urwick, pp. 382-392). Another member of the family, Samuel Treacher, of Chesham, born about 1650, was a strict Churchman, but married a lady (Anne) who is¹ described as "a worthy member of the Baptist Congregation."

Of this Samuel Treacher and his wife, the Rev. Samuel Fry (*loc. cit.*) says: "They had several children, and, as it often happens, the children embraced different sentiments; but what might otherwise have been a disadvantage, was wisely improved" by their son John Treacher,² "as it led him to an early and impartial enquiry after truth, which terminated in his embracing the truth in the love of it." The further account vouchsafed by Mr. Fry of this John Treacher is that "it pleased God to dispose his mind in some measure to a suitable preparation, he, at about the age of twenty years, made a cheerful and public profession of the Christian religion, and on that profession was baptiz'd by Mr. John Russell, then pastor of that people (in Chesham); he had not long been planted in the house of the Lord, but his profiting appeared to many. And his constant delight in, and attendance on, public worship, prayer, and religious conferences, joined with his natural good genius, con-

¹ The Christians' Consolation and Hope, a sermon on the death of the Rev. Mr. John Treacher, by Samuel Fry, London. E. Gardner, 1756.

² The children of Samuel and Anne Treacher, of Chesham, according to a pedigree in my possession, were, besides John, b. 1680—Hannah, b. 1686, Wardell, Anne, b. 1701, and William. The latter married and had four sons, William, 1739-1807, Samuel, b. 1742, John, b. 1745, and Daniel, 1747-1794. From the last named are descended the Treachers of Wycombe and Brighton and the Moretons. The parish registers of the Church at Chesham contain numerous baptisms, marriages and burials of Treachers between 1560 and 1664.

tinued to his great improvement, and was so conspicuous that he was early asked to be more publicly useful; and at twenty-two years of age (1702) was prevailed upon to preach before a congregation of ministers and brethren, so highly satisfactory that he was soon after chosen by the Church to assist in the ministry of the gospel. This he did with considerable success, many acknowledging him the instrument of their conviction and conversion, and others of their encouragement and comfort in religion. It was always his aim to be an ornament to the religion he professed, and to inculcate it by an inoffensive and exemplary conduct. The more conspicuous features of his life were his unaffected humility and patience under the difficulties and afflictions of life, demeaning himself with cheerfulness and resignation. His quiet, peaceable, forbearing disposition shone in a most resplendent light throughout his whole conduct; which, as it in some measure qualified him for it, so it occasioned his being often called to the good office of arbitration, both in the Church and amongst his other friends and acquaintance; in which, however difficult task, he was generally successful. And as he was of a meek and quiet spirit, so he enjoyed quietness, composure, and serenity of mind even to his last moments. As a minister of the gospel, he flourished therein, bringing forth acceptable fruit to a good old age."

Wilson ("History of the Dissenting Churches, 1814," vol. iv., p. 182) says he had gathered from "an old memorandum" that this Mr. John Treacher was representative of the Church at Berkhamstead, at the General Assembly held in White's Alley (Moorfields) in 1703,³ that it is probable that he was at that time settled at Berkhamstead in the pastoral office, and that he continued there for a considerable number of years.

I have also obtained from the Minutes of the Meetings of the Bucks. Baptist Association 1726-1776, some extracts which show that Mr. Treacher attended, as representative, the meetings of the "Messengers, Elders, and Brethren, Representatives of the several congregations of General Baptists," held on April 7, 1724, at Aylesbury. He again attended there on March 30, 1725, and on April 30, 1738, he was asked to "supply" the congregation at Aylesbury once a month.

In 1738 he was still at Berkhamstead, and apparently badly off, for White's Alley Church took up a collection for him. In 1745 he left Berkhamstead to succeed Mr. Hands at the Park Meeting-house of the General Baptists in Southwark. This

³ Also in 1702. See Minutes of General Assembly of General Baptist Churches, Whitley, vol. 1, p. 76.

ancient Meeting-house in the Park, Southwark, dated from 1674, and was where John Bunyan (1628-1688) preached when he was in London. It was one of the five churches linked together by the Pierce Johns trust and united in observing "the six principles." According to Wilson, of all the ministers who held office here from its foundation down to 1800, Mr. John Treacher was "the most considerable." From 1745 to 1755, according to the Minutes of the General Assembly, Mr. John Treacher represented the Park Congregation each year at the Annual Meeting at Horsleydown, and signed the records. In this last year, 1755, he met Mr. Richard Dendy, who was sent up by the congregation of General Baptists at Horsham. The fact is interesting since the Mr. John Treacher's son Benjamin married Miss Sarah Dendy, the daughter of Mr. Richard Dendy, of Horsham, thus connecting up the Buckinghamshire and the Sussex groups of General Baptists. A son of this Mr. Richard Dendy, also named Richard (and brother to Mrs. Benjamin Treacher), married Anne, the daughter of John Caffyn, of Clayton, a member of the family of the great propagandist of Sussex, Matthew Caffyn (1628-1714). Richard Dendy (senior) and the Rev. John Treacher both died the next year, 1756, and in 1758, for the first time, the Rev. Benjamin Treacher (son of John) attended the Annual Assembly.

The last days of Mr. John Treacher are thus described in the Rev. Samuel Fry's *éloge*. "He was confined to his bed near four months, and was oftentimes attended with the most acute pains. His discourse of his supports and comforts was very entertaining to those about him; he was blessed with an humble, but firm and unshaken persuasion of the divine approbation, through the mercy of God, and the mediation of Jesus Christ, often urging the words of the text that he had good hope through grace; his affectionate regard for his children and their offspring, led him frequently to put up ejaculatory petitions for them, particularly that they might highly prize the means of grace, and fruitfully improve them. He was frequently delirious towards the close of his life; in these intervals the pleasing and transporting views presented to his imagination, without a mixture of melancholy and dreadful apprehension; he met the final stroke, and took an everlasting farewell of this transitory state, a state of continual disappointments and causes of pain and trouble, he rests from his labours and is fallen asleep in Jesus."

The title page to this funeral address runs thus: "The Christian's Consolation and Hope considered, in a sermon occa-

sioned by the Death of the Reverend Mr. John Treacher, late Minister of the Gospel in Duke Street, in the Park, Southwark; who departed this life, April 12, 1756, in the 76th year of his age. Preached at the above Place, April the 25th by Samuel Fry. Published at the request of the Relations. London, Printed for E. Gardner, near the Cross-Keys Inn, Grace-church Street, MDCCLVI."

John Treacher married Elizabeth ——, and had nine children, four sons and five daughters, several died in infancy. The sons were: John, born 1706, Daniel, born 1709, John, born 1712, and Benjamin, born 1722. The daughters were: Mary, born 1705, Elizabeth, born 1707, Martha, born 1715, and Hannah, born 1717. Mary married 1st Chapman, 2nd Groombridge, Daniel married and had two children, Daniel and Hannah.

Little is known of the elder sons, but an account of the Rev. Benjamin Treacher, who was born at Berkhamstead, is given by the Rev. Charles Bulkely in a sermon preached at Fair Street, Horseleydown, Southwark, on September 14, 1766 (Printed by J. Buckland, Paternoster Row), and entitled "The Rational Assurance of a Dying Pastor." Mr. Bulkely says: "We may, with the greatest propriety say of the late reverend Mr. Benjamin Treacher, that he '*knew* whom he believed.' He had in his earliest years a strong thirst after religious knowledge, in so much that on account of the daily attendance given to a secular engagement he was then under, the duties of which, notwithstanding all his ardour in the pursuit of mental acquisitions, were performed by him with the utmost fidelity. He used to devote a considerable part of the night to study, reading and contemplation; nay, not unfrequently the whole of it, content only with taking some transient rest by lying down in his clothes at the approach of day. By this means it was, together with the habitual cultivation of his understanding, and the application of his mind and thoughts to religious and moral subjects that he acquired any great degree of discernment in them, and a deep-felt, penetrating conviction of the reality and importance of things sacred and divine, and to this I think we may, in consequence of a blessing from on high accompanying his endeavours, principally ascribe that compassion, firmness, and alacrity in the ways of God, which formed the aspect and general tenor of his conversation. Such being his relish for things sacred and religious, we can little wonder that he should have, in those early years, as he said he always had, a strong inclination to the ministry. It was with great concern that he reflected upon a particular circumstance in his father's family which he thought might be likely to interfere with the prospects

and expectations of this kind he had indulged. Providence, however, was pleased to open a way for his appearance in the character of a preacher, when he was about twenty years of age; and it was with great acceptance he acquitted himself in it.⁴ His first stated employment in this character was at Chesham, in the county of Bucks., not far distant from Berkhamstead, in Hertfordshire, where he was born, and he was, after a while, by the very numerous congregation of antipædobaptists assembling at Chesham, invited to the exercise of the pastoral care amongst them, in conjunction with another, the Rev. Mr. Sexton, then standing in that relation to them; but for some particular reasons, this invitation he thought proper to decline. So far, however, he complied with the desires of that Society as to agree, notwithstanding his distant residence in town, to the stated service of the congregation twice in a month, which agreement he very punctually, and with the greatest fidelity, performed for the space of ten years, at which period, upon the death of the late Rev. Mr. Joseph Morris, he was invited by the Church, then meeting in Glasshouse Yard, Goswell Street, but now assembling in this place, to be their pastor, and this invitation he accepted. And in this situation he continued for the remaining ten years of his life; yet, according to mutual agreement, not wholly quitting his connection at Chesham, though less frequently officiating there. My own situation, as you will immediately apprehend, did not allow me many opportunities of attending his public services as a minister, yet judging by those which have occurred to me, by what I knew of his principles, and by what I have been witness to in the general tenor of his conversation, I believe I may safely venture to affirm concerning them, what that renowned martyr, John Huss, of Bohemia, who, when surrounded with the faggots that were just ready to be set on fire about him, declared concerning his own "sermons and outings" (see Goodwin's "Life of King Henry the Fifth," book III., p. 139) 'that they were all directed to the converting of men from sin to God, and to bring them to heaven.' But our worthy friend did not think it enough to acquire for his own part just principles in religion, or even to be employed in making a just representation of its truths to others. It is well known that he did by his life and practice 'adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things,' and that 'his conversation' was in every respect 'as becometh the gospel of Christ.' He was serious without affectation, zealous without

⁴ He preached the Sermon at the Representative Meeting of General Baptists at Amersham in 1755.

bigotrie, candid without indifference, cheerful without levitie, humble without servilitie, resolute and persevering without obstinacie, prudent without hypocrisie or guile, and attentive to the necessary concerns of his life without suffering his affections to be wholly engrossed by the objects and pursuits of it. He *knew* that 'one thing was indeed needful,' the grand concern of religion and another life. And to this, with the greatest sinceretie and inviolable attachment, he devoted his own affections, and endeavoured to excite in the minds of others the same attention to it" . . . "Our worthy friend had, at a very early stage of his distemper, some strong forebodings of what was indeed the issue and result of it, and of that event, which we on our own behalf, as all who knew him most so justly now lament; and accordingly he discoursed to those who were about him. Nay, it is remarkable that about six weeks before this attack, and when to all appearance he was in his usual health, he expressed himself in a very particular manner to a friend in the country as to some impressions of this sort, which he had thus upon his mind, and even repeated these apprehensions to the same friend afterwards by letter. And on the very day fortnight preceding his death, having been on a visit to the same place, he was observed to take leave of this and other friends in a manner particularly affectionate, after having at that time likewise expressed himself in conversation to the same effect. But it was on the Sunday before his death, when, alas, the violence of his disorder gave to all about him but too much reason to apprehend the same, that he desired his children to be called up, and when surrounding his bed, bid them a solemn farewell, telling them he believed that he himself should soon be taken from them, and in a manner best adapted to their tender years, recommending it to them to be serious and good, he particularly urged upon them a dutiful and loving conduct towards their mother. To you, the members of his church, I hope what we have been insisting upon may be of use towards composing your minds into a suitable resignation to the rule of heaven, under this very affecting loss you have sustained, for, as he himself expresses it in a little tract he published about twelve years ago, which I suppose to be his only publication, intituled '*A Dissertation upon the moral perfections of the Supreme Being*' having been before inculcating the same general principles, 'hence' (p. 26) 'we may conclude, that the Supreme Being justly commands our constant trust in His Providence, and our universal obedience to his will, not from the principle of *sovereignty and mere attractiveness*, but from the harmonie, beauty, and rectitude of his conduct towards all his

creations.' And there is no doubt but that from sentiments like these he derived that happy composure of mind, which, amidst the vicissitudes and various trials of human life, seemed always to attend him."

Three metrical elegies on the death of the Rev. Benjamin Treacher have been reprinted by Mr. Arthur Hall in his "Three Generations of a Godly House" (1896). One, at least, of these he traces to the pen of Miss Elizabeth Rolt, of Chesham, whose "Miscellaneous Poems" were published in 1768. The verses in each of these elegies which have a personal reference are as follows:

"Revolving years unfold the book of fate;
 Each day what armies leave this mortal state.
 TREACHER the debt has paid which all must pay;—
 Here lies his brittle tenement of clay,
 The soul set free, ascends to worlds sublime,
 Explores new realms beyond the bounds of time.

In youth my guide, in riper years my friend,
 Thy good example all my steps attend;
 Unnumber'd acts thy faithful friendship prove,
 A friendship firmer than a brother's love.
 In manners social, and in mind sincere,
 Affections warm, in understanding clear,
 Celestial truth explored with warm desire,
 The Christian's zeal without the bigot's fire;
 Not sour, though pious, no affected mien;
 Candid, yet steadfast; cheerful, but not vain;
 Willing his Master's business to perform,
 Nor fear'd the blustering wind, or driving storm;
 Dispensed around to souls the living bread,
 Informed the doubting and the hungry fed;
 The drooping cheer'd, alarmed the base and vain,
 And taught backsliders to return again;
 Constrained the sons of pleasure to give ear,
 And made e'en superstitious votaries fear.
 The faithful SERVANT all the Churches found
 His praises just the Churches all resound;
 The fatal loss fair virtue's sons deplore,
 And mourn the bright and shining light's no more."

Another elegy, in the style of Pope, "on the much lamented death of that faithful minister of the Gospel, Mr. Benjamin

Treacher, who departed this life September the 2nd, in the forty-fourth year of his age," contains the following:

"Alas! too soon I heard what most I dread—
The great, the good, the god-like TREACHER'S dead!
O dreadful scene! that fills my heart with woe,
'Tis friendship bids the pensive tears to flow.

In him how did the social virtues shine,
And beam'd their splendour with a ray divine;
His sense was so refin'd, he was—but what?
Say all that's great in man, and he was that.
Alas! his character's by far too grand
For my faint, languid muse to understand;
Benevolence adorned his noble breast
With every grace and god-like virtue blest;
The Eternal Mind he strove to imitate;
Generous, relieved the poor and desolate;
He bid their tears be void, their fears be mute;
Imparted comfort, heard the orphan's suit,
His breast with true philosophy inspired,
His friends they lov'd, his enemies admir'd.
So spoke his soft, his well-instructed tongue,
That on his words some sweet attraction hung.

Why must this gracious man by death depart?
And fall a victim to his piercing dart?
Then CHESHAM friends to sinking grief attend
For you have lost a great, a gracious friend.
Sure, 'twas some seraph took a human face,
And lowly stooped to bless our mortal race."

The third, entitled "An Epitaph," is dated, Chesham, September 20th, 1766, and is as follows:

"Stay, my gay friend, let tears of crystal hue
Descend thy cheeks—they're to his memory due.
Here rests a tenement, secure from strife,
But the fair Tenant's ripen'd unto life.
The fabric faints, and the great soul survey'd
The pleasing breaches sinking Nature made,—
Pleas'd with its freedom, swiftly soars on high,
Thro' ether, far beyond the ambient sky."

Another allusion to the Rev. Benjamin Treacher is found in Miss Rolt's poem, "A Dialogue between the Dead and the Living," dedicated to Endymion, who, speaking from the Shades, is made to say:

"I know your much lov'd TREACHER, and rejoice,
And hear, if proper, his delightful voice."

Mrs. Benjamin Treacher (née Dendy) survived her husband twenty-three years, and resided with her third son, Dendy Treacher, an apothecary, at Stamford, being buried in St. Michael's, Stamford, in 1789.

The other children were Benjamin, John, and Joseph. Benjamin, the eldest, married (December 1785) Miss Vinsor, of Islington; he died in 1799 at Sloane Street, Chelsea, and was buried in Clerkenwell Church. Joseph, the youngest, was born February 8, 1765. He was shot by Highwaymen on his twenty-first birthday, February 8, 1786, and was buried in Worship Street Chapel, in the family grave.

Dendy, the third son, to whom reference has been already made, was born in 1758, died unmarried in 1793, and was buried with his mother at St. Michael's, Stamford.

The remaining son, John Treacher, survived them all. He was born September 11, 1755, and died September 17, 1838. During his long life he played an important part in connection with the General Baptist community, of which his father and grandfather had been ministers, and he himself was, for half a century, the Deacon and chief supporter of Worship Street Chapel, the headquarters of the General Assembly of the General Baptists in London.

On page 151 of "Tracts, Sermons, and Funeral Orations," by John Evans, D.D. (September, 1825), is the following note. "September 22, 1717. Mention made (*i.e.*, in Church Books⁵ of Worship Street Chapel) of a General Baptist Church in the Park, Southwark. It still exists under the care of the Rev. Mr. Farrant, author of a discourse on Baptism,⁶ in which there is a happy union of talent and liberality. The old meeting house has been given up, and a neat place of worship erected in its vicinity. In the burying ground adjoining to the old meeting, and now

⁵ These Church Books, it appears from page 194, were, in 1825, in the possession of Mr. John Treacher, son of the Rev. Benjamin Treacher.

⁶ Query: John Farrent, Immersion of Believers the Baptism of the New Testament, 1822. [Ed.]

built on,⁷ lies interred a worthy minister of our persuasion, the Rev. Benjamin Treacher, who died in the year 1766, sincerely regretted by the church to which he belonged. He wrote an excellent little piece on the 'Moral Perfections of the Deity,' showing that they were all founded on the broad basis of universal benevolence, and had for their prime object the welfare and felicity of mankind. His funeral sermon, preached and published by the Rev. Charles Bulkley, pays a just token of respect to his benevolence and piety. It is to his son, John Treacher, Esquire, that the present volume is inscribed."

The ministrations of the Rev. John Treacher, senior, and the Rev. Benjamin Treacher, extending over a period of sixty-four years (1702-1766), recall the group of General Baptist Chapels which existed in London in the XVIII. century, viz., at the Park, Southwark, and at Fair Street, Horsleydown, on the south side of the Thames; and those at White's Alley, Moorfields, at Paul's Alley, Barbican, and at Glasshouse Yard, Goswell Road, on the north side of the Thames. With several of these chapels on both sides of the river the Treachers, father, son, and grandson were associated.

An interesting account of these General Baptist Chapels in London is to be found on pp. 133-207 of the work by the Rev. John Evans, already referred to. More recently, Dr. Whitley, in his introduction to volume I. of the "Minutes of the General Baptist Assembly" (1908), has endeavoured to unravel the tangled skein of the story of these meeting-places. On page lii, he states that the original building in Winchester Park was replaced about 1760 by another edifice in Duke Street. It appears from the Rev. Samuel Fry's funeral oration on Mr. John Treacher, that this was delivered on April 25, 1756, at the Duke Street Meeting-house; and the Rev. John Treacher is described on the first page as late Minister of the Gospel in Duke Street, in the Park, Southwark. The Minutes for 1761, however, set forth the necessity "of rebuilding the same," as if this were only just being undertaken.

The history of the rise of this little community of Arminian, or non-Calvinist Nonconformists, from their earliest days of surreptitious gatherings in private houses, through the time of the Marian persecutions, during the prosperous years of the Commonwealth, and the reaction of the Restoration, to an assured toleration under William III., is a theme of absorbing interest, and one that

⁷ On p. 202 of same work it appears that this burial ground known as Dead Man's Place was the oldest cemetery belonging to the Dissenters in London or its vicinity.

is attracting systematic investigation by several inquirers. Not less curious and instructive, though far less gratifying, is the story of the involution and declension of this remarkable community from the height of their prosperity in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Their chapels, which had been distributed widely in England and Wales, after several crises, merged into other connections, or, dwindling in numbers, gradually flickered out, so that at the present day, except in the south-east of England, notably Kent and Sussex, the lineal descendants of these General Baptist Chapels are few and far between. The lives of the Rev. John and the Rev. Benjamin Treacher, with that of John Treacher, the son of Benjamin, yet to be referred to, cover the years 1680 to 1838, the period of greatest activity of the little community with which the three generations of this family were so closely identified.

Dr. Whitley reminds us that "the first General Baptist Church in London, or in England, was that brought by Helwys and Morton from Amsterdam in 1611," and that the earliest Churches with a definite habitation were that of White's Alley, Moorfields, and another in Southwark. The earlier meetings of the "persecuted" and "privy" congregations of London took place in private houses, lofts, and ships. It was not until after the period of exile in Holland (1605-1611) that recognised meeting-houses for regular worship were inaugurated, and it was then, as Masson, in his "Life of Milton" truly asserts, that "this obscure Baptist congregation seems to have become the depository for all England of the absolute principle of Liberty of Conscience expressed in the Amsterdam Confession."

This "Confession" of the Anglo-Dutch Anabaptists claimed that "the magistrate is not to meddle with religion, or matters of conscience, nor compel men to this or that form of religion, because Christ is the King and Lawgiver of the Church and Conscience." Masson truly surmises that contact with the Dutch Arminians may have helped the Church of Smith and Helwys to this "first expression of the absolute principle of Liberty of Conscience in the public articles of any body of Christians."

These English Baptists found an *affinité de cœur* with the followers of Menno Simons, or Mennonites, who were settled at Amsterdam, and during the eighteenth century there was much community of interest between the Arminians of Holland and this liberal group of Nonconformists at home. The Collegiants of Rhijsberg, who, in 1660 welcomed the "rejected" Spinoza to their meetings, by their "remonstrance" against Calvinism, the breadth of their views and the simplicity of their faith owned a

natural kinship with the General Baptists of England who so heroically "maintained the strife" on behalf of the same liberal ideals at home. A relationship between the General Baptists and those holding Socinian or Unitarian views was thus early traceable, and while in organisation they had some affinity with Presbyterians and Friends, they departed further and further from the Brownists on the one hand and from the Calvinistic Baptists on the other. These questions of doctrine and Church government were, however, often the occasions of discussions among them, and of not a few secessions; some of the Churches, like that of the Park, Southwark, passed over eventually to the New Connexion, while several of the London Churches gradually merged into that Communion, which became the centre and focus of the General Baptists for the Kingdom, and provided the *locus* for their annual assemblies, viz., Worship Street Chapel, Shoreditch.

Of this Chapel Mr. John Treacher the second, the son of the Rev. Benjamin Treacher and Sarah Dendy, was, for more than half a century, Deacon;⁸ the Church books formerly in his possession⁹ are now preserved by the Rev. W. Harvey Smith, who has obligingly allowed me to peruse them and take some extracts from them.

These records open with the statement that "the General Baptist Church which, in the year 1698, met in Glasshouse Yard, Goswell Street, under the pastoral care of Thomas Kirby, removed from thence in 1764 to the meeting-house in Fair Street, Horsley Down, and continued there till 1768; it then removed to Paul's Alley, Barbican, and remained there till 1780, when it finally removed to the new-built meeting-house in Worship Street, near Finsbury Square."

John Treacher, the second of the four sons of the Rev. Benjamin Treacher, was born on September 11, 1755. He was articled to Mr. Aberdein Drysalter, of Bishopsgate. On April 15, 1779, he married Elizabeth, daughter of Samuel Sharpe, of the firm of Kirke and Sharpe, of Bishopsgate Street, who resided at Ware (Herts.). Her mother was a Hathaway, and associated by tradition with the family of Shakespeare's wife.

He became a member of the Wheelwrights' Company and of the Tallow Chandlers' Company,¹⁰ and in connection with the

⁸ Evans Tracts Sermons on p. v.

⁹ Ibid p. 194.

¹⁰ On enquiry at the Hall of the Company in Dowgate Hill, City, I learnt that the records show that at a Court held on 7th January, 1802, "Mr. John Treacher, of Paternoster Row, Tallow Chandler, was made free by redemption" and having paid his Livery and Steward's fine was elected on the Livery.

latter industry carried on a very successful business at 43, Paternoster Row, and in Bermondsey, from about 1780 to 1820. In 1797 he was elected to the Common Council of the city of London for the Castle Baynard Ward, and served on the Corporation till 1826. He was a member of the Bridge House Estates and other Committees, and one of the Commissioners of Sewers. He was one of the original Proprietors, or Founders, of University College when that institution was inaugurated in 1827 as the University of London. In 1829 Mr. Treacher obtained a grant of arms from the Heralds' College with the following charge:

"Per chevron gules and azure on a chevron between three boars' heads coupéd argent, a cross flory enclosed by two grasshoppers respecting each other vert. Crest a boar's head coupéd gules armed or, in the mouth a dragon's sinister wing argent. Motto: '*Æquam servare mentem.*'"

Mr. Arthur Hall, in his "Three Generations of a Godly House" (Wertheimer, Lea, & Co., 1896), has some minor biographical details of Mr. and Mrs. John Treacher.

From a miniature in my possession he appears a clean-shaven man of about 60 or 70, with bright blue eyes; white hair drawn back from a high forehead into a pigtail; a benevolent and kindly expression lights up his countenance, and his dress is Quaker-like, and of brown cloth.

He seems to have been highly esteemed by his fellow-citizens, and was Chairman for many years of a Committee of Merchants who met at the New England Coffee House.¹¹ A silver inkstand with the following inscription is also in my possession. "Presented to John Treacher, Esq., by the Society held at the New England Coffee House, as a small token of Respect and Esteem for his invaluable services as Chairman for near twenty years. 1820."

The following information concerning John Treacher and his relations I have gleaned from the records of Worship Street Church Book.

May 2, 1773. Among the persons who have, upon profession of faith, been baptized and admitted as members of the Church, is Mr. John Teacher (with nine others). He was then eighteen years of age.

¹¹ This Coffee House was situated in Threadneedle Street (59 and 60) adjoining the Cock Tavern, long celebrated for its soups. According to Timbs, the New England Coffee House was early last century the rendezvous of the Barings and Rothschilds and a focus of information of foreign trade from all quarters of the globe.

In 1778, John Treacher nominated, with Stephen Dendy and three others, trustees of three houses in White Horse Alley, Cow Cross Street, Smithfield.

January 2, 1780. "Mr. Dendy Treacher has likewise been baptized and received into Communion of this Church." (This was John Treacher's younger brother, then aged twenty-two.)

The same year John Treacher, of Paternoster Row, is appointed a Trustee in respect of the South Sea Annuities.

March 7, 1784. The signatures of Joseph (youngest son of the Rev. Benjamin) and Dendy Treacher are attached to the Records.

February 19, 1792. John Treacher appointed to invite the Rev. John Evans to the pastorate. This was in succession to the Rev. Elthanan Winchester, the Universalist, who left Worship Street for Parliament Court, where he was succeeded by Vidler of Battle, and W. J. Fox (South Place Chapel).

May 5, 1802. In the list of twenty-four members of the Church (in all) there appear the names of John Treacher and John Treacher junior (eldest son born 1781).

September 14, 1825. John Treacher being the only surviving deacon, two more were appointed.

May 14, 1826. John Treacher is one of the two representatives appointed to the Annual Baptist Assembly.

On May 20, 1827, John Treacher, J. Evans, and J. C. Mearns were authorised to sign a petition for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. There is also this note: "We have also, in conjunction with the afternoon congregation, a Fellowship Fund for the support of Unitarian and General Baptist Principles."

And on May 18, 1828, another note says: "Looking to our peculiar situation as the only Unitarian General Baptist Church in the Metropolis."

On March 25, 1838. Mr. Treacher is mentioned as the last surviving trustee of the Brentford estate.

On November 18, 1838 there is a reference to his death thus: "The decease of the aged and respected friend, Mr. Treacher, for so many years a member and deacon of this Church, having occasioned a vacancy in the Pierce Johns Trust."—He was also one of the managers of the General Baptist Ministers' Fund.

On February 17, 1839, at the Annual Congregational Meeting, it was resolved: "That the present meeting cannot omit to record its deep sense of the loss sustained by this congregation in the death of the late Mr. Treacher, and recognises in the

judicious testamentary bounties of the deceased for individuals and objects connected with the congregation, the zealous interest always taken by him in its welfare."

On May 21, 1839. In the Records of the General Assembly of the Churches of the Baptized Believers meeting at Worship Street, the following appears: "We have to pay a suitable mark of respect to the memory of an aged servant of God who has been usually present on this occasion, and who was present, at least during the service, at the last assembly. We mean Mr. Treacher; whose great age and growing infirmities had obliged him for some years to give up the offices which he held connected with this Church and with the Education Society, as well as other Baptist funds, but whose heart was interested in that form of Christianity generally adopted amongst us to the period of his last illness, and from a firm belief in which he derived comfort and composure during the acute suffering with which it pleased our Heavenly Father to visit him. We refer with confidence to the state of Mr. Treacher's mind and the strength of his convictions, for a test of the value of those religious principles which our Church has long, by Divine Providence, publicly avowed. Descended from two General Baptist ministers, who in succession laboured in the ministry in this Metropolis, he had partaken of the Christian knowledge and refinement and also of the composure which a settled mind and a matured belief in the Gospel is calculated to impart; and has left an example which will redound greatly to the honour of his numerous descendants who shall be wise enough to imitate it. A tribute to the memory of Mr. Treacher, as well as to that of his father, once minister at this Church, was paid by the Rev. B. Mardon, and by the liberality of the relatives of the deceased he has been enabled to print a sufficient number of copies of the same to supply the many families connected with Mr. Treacher and also any other friends who, from respect to his memory, may be anxious to possess a copy."

Mrs. Gripper,¹² of Whatlington (Sussex), has in her possession a Bible printed in 1718, on the fly leaf of which are the following entries: "Bought of the Rev. Samuel Fry's widow by Benjamin Treacher, in the year 1765, for the use of his wife, Sarah Treacher." Also, "John Treacher, son of Benjamin and Sarah Treacher, of Bermondsey Street, Southwark; born September 11, 1755; married April 15, 1779, at the Church of St. Gregory, City of London, to Elizabeth Sharpe, daughter of Samuel and

¹² Grand-daughter of John Treacher.

Sarah Sharpe of Bishopsgate Street. Issue of the above marriage: 1. Eliza, born February 10, 1780, died March, 1792; 2. John, born January 30, 1781, died October 21, 1812, married, no issue; 3. Samuel, born July 3, 1782, died January 29, 1814, unmarried; 4. Benjamin, born December 23, 1784; 5. Sarah, born May 29, 1787; 6. Joseph, born April 17, 1790; 7. Edward, born February 1792; 8. Rebecca, born March 9, 1794; 9. Maria, born July 2, 1796; 10. Eliza, born May 9, 1802; 11. Henry, born February 19, 1804. All registered at Dr. Williams' Library, Red Cross Street."¹³ Also, "My dear wife, Elizabeth, died on Sunday morning, May 18, 1834, at three o'clock, in her 75th year.—J.T."

On pages 196-207 of Dr. Evans' work, already quoted, are to be found descriptions of Worship Street Chapel and its cemetery. Here, says he, "are no attractions for the multitude. The General Baptists are a plain people; they make no pretence to superior sanctity. Universal redemption and adult baptism are the unfashionable badges of their religious profession. Their only ambition and highest gratification are to be attired in the garb of Primitive Christianity." The Chapel contained four tombs; those of the community dying before 1780 were buried in Dead Man's Place, Southwark, the oldest cemetery belonging to the Dissenters in London or its vicinity. According to Dr. Evans, the first tomb was that of the Lowdell¹⁴ family, the second that of the Treachers, and in regard to the latter, Dr. Evans says:

"*Second tomb.* Here lies the body of Joseph Treacher,¹⁵ of Bermondsey Street, Southwark, who died the eighth of February, 1786, aged twenty-one years. A youth of most unblemished character. He was the son of the late Rev. Benjamin Treacher, formerly pastor of the General Baptist Church at Glasshouse Yard, and which, in the year 1780 was removed to this place.

"Here also lies Sarah Treacher Mercer,¹⁶ daughter of Robert and Sarah Mercer (née Treacher), of Stamford Street, who died the thirty-first of March, 1812, aged four months.

¹³ Then the Registry Office for births of Nonconformists.

¹⁴ On p. 207 of Vol. II of Dr. Whitley's 'Minutes of the General Baptist Churches in England' (foot-note) referring to Worship Street it says "This church was one of the strongest, numbering at this time the Lowdells and Treachers in its fellowship. From 1783 to the present century it claimed the privilege of catering for assembly meetings."

¹⁵ He was shot by highwaymen near Coldbath Fields.

¹⁶ The Mercers were a General Baptist family of Sussex (Ditchling and Sedlescombe).

"Sacred to the memory of Mr. John Treacher, junior,¹⁷ of Paternoster Row, who departed this life on the 21st of October, 1812, in the 31st year of his age, to the deep regret of his afflicted parents.

"Also to the memory of Lieut. Samuel Sharpe Treacher, brother of the above, and Commander of H.M.S. Holly, who was wrecked on the rocks of St. Sebastian, upon the coast of Spain, the 29th of January, 1814, aged 30 years.¹⁸

"Henry Treacher Bowden, second son of John and Rebecca Bowden (née Treacher), of Aldermanbury, died 28th March, 1817, aged six days.

"A lovely boy, Henry Treacher Hall, son of Mr. and Mrs. Hall (née Treacher) of South Place, Finsbury, about five years old, was lately added to the inhabitants of this tomb.

"In the second tomb is also interred Garnault Bowles,¹⁹ the only son of Edward and Anne Sarah Treacher, of Burton Crescent, who died June 3rd, 1828, aged two years and six months. This lovely and promising boy was endeared to his relatives by the uncommon sweetness of his disposition; the recollection of his mild countenance, pleasant voice, and engaging manners, will ever be retained by his parents with fond affection, and with grateful delight will they think on the extraordinary ability, fortitude, and composure with which he terminated his distressing illness, which thus cut him down as a flower of the field, and blasted all the fond ambitious hopes of his parents from him in this life. Previous to the commencement of his illness, which lasted nearly three months, he had learnt to repeat, correctly, the Lord's Prayer, the Belief, and several of Dr. Watts' beautiful hymns, besides various pieces of poetry. Farewell, dear departed child! Thy sorrowing parents have shed

¹⁷ On p. 420 of Dr. Evans' book is a sermon by Rev. Joseph Fawcett read on the decease of Mr. John Treacher, junr., "taken in shorthand by the late Mr. Joseph Treacher and altered by the late Mr. John Treacher, junr." Some specimens of his shorthand are in my possession.

¹⁸ On pp. 471-490 of Dr. Evans' book is a memorial sermon on Lieut. Samuel Sharpe Treacher, with a brief biography and an account of the disaster by which he met his death. A portrait of him hangs at Myddelton House, Waltham Cross, the house of his nephew, H. C. B. Bowles, Esq., D.L., J.P.

¹⁹ Edward Treacher and Henry Treacher, sons of John Treacher, of Stamford Hill, each married a Miss Bowles, both daughters of Henry Carrington Bowles, who married a Miss Garnault, of Huguenot extraction, and related to Sir Samuel Romilly. See *Life of Sir Samuel Romilly* (reprinted from Huguenot Society's Transactions, 1908) by W. J. C., p. 5.

on thy tomb the tears of ardent affection. Christian resignation forbids them not, for Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus. Those who knew thy mild virtues and witnessed the serenity with which thy short day closed, will think of them with pleasure, and regret thy seemingly premature death; but, cheered by the hopes of the Gospel, they look forward to a state where that intellectual and moral process, which commenced so promisingly here, will, under better auspices, be carried on to perfection—when all that affection, love, and friendship prized will be restored to their embrace. The following verses were presented to his disconsolate parents by the Rev. W. F. Davis, M.A.:

“The sun which makes the violets bloom
Once cheered his eye now closed in death;
The hand which wanders o'er his tomb
Was once his vital breath.

“Though scenes terrestrial pass away,
Though sun and moon and stars shall wane—
I heard a voice from heaven say:
'Thy child shall live again.'”

The remains of these and other descendants of John Treacher, of Stamford Hill, and his wife Elizabeth (Sharpe), and of Mr. and Mrs. Treacher themselves, were removed in 1877 from Worship Street Chapel, when that church was demolished under an improvement scheme, effected by the Metropolitan Board of Works, to Woking Cemetery. Over them a Sarcophagus, with the Treacher coat of arms and the names of all those there buried, has been erected by Captain Henry Carver Treacher, a grandson of Mr. John Treacher.

I have avoided reference in detail to members of the family now living or who are within living memory as inappropriate to the pages of this review. Some account of them is to be found in the papers collected by the late Mr. Arthur Hall, to which reference has been made; should time and opportunity permit, I may, elsewhere, continue into contemporary periods the above fragmentary notes; suffice it to say that the descendants of the line dealt with in these pages are numerous and not wholly undistinguished.

WILLIAM J. COLLINS.