

Memoir of the Rev. George Marsh.

Although George Marsh never held any office or appointment in connection with the Church or parish of Deane, yet, as a native of the parish, his life & death supply one of the most remarkable chapters in the history of the place. The Marshes of Halliwell owned a considerable estate in the south-western part of the township at the beginning of the 16th century; wch estate at the middle of the century was occupied as three farms called respectively – the Higher Fold, the Lower Fold, & Shiptons. The assessment of the township of Halliwell to the Subsidy of 1541, contains three names only, viz: - “Andrewe Barton, Squyer, one of the Commissioners for Lx – in lands, - iii^{li}. – Roger Warde for xxi^{li}. In goods, - x^s. Vi^d. – Rychard Mershe for xx^{li}. In goods, - x^s.”

The last named gentleman was therefore one of the principal inhabitants of the township at that period. In the 34th Elizabeth, Richard Marsh & Thomas Marsh, owned the family estate between them, containing altogether 114 acres of land, wch was held by them in fee, as of the Earl of Derby, Lord of the manor of Halliwell, subject to a yearly rentcharge of £2-7-7½. In the 4th Edward VIth, John Marsh occupied a farm in Heton, concerning the rent of wch a lawsuit took place between Catherine Heyton, (one of the daughters of the late Rich^d Heton, of Heton Hall, Esqr, & Elizabeth Bold, widow of W^m Heyton, of Birchley Hall, Esq^{re}, Catherine's brother. Whether the father of George Marsh resided in Halliwell or in Heton we cannot say, but he appears to have had two sons, George & another; & three daughters, one of whom married Jeffrey Hurst of Shackerley. George Marsh was born about the year 1520, &lived with his parents until he was 24 years of age; & was (as he says) – “well brought up in learning & honest trade of living”; & about the 25th year of his age, he took to wife an honest maid of the country”. We are not informed whose daughter she was, but in the year 1554, his mother-in-law resided in Heton. After his marriage, Mr Marsh appears to have taken a farm himself, for he says that he &his wife – “earned their living upon a farm, having children between them lawfully begotten”, until the death of his wife; wch sad event seems to have occurred in the year 1548-9. Concerning this period of his life, he writes – “I thought myself now of late years, for the cares of this life well settled with my loving &faithfull wife & children, & also well quieted in the peaceable possession of that pleasant Euphrates, I do confess it, but the Lord who worketh all things for the best to them that love him, would not there leave me, but did take my dear &beloved wife from me, whence death was a painful cross to my flesh”.

It would appear that Marsh's father was then dead, & that he either sold his farming stock, &other effects, broke up his home, & left his children in the charge of his mother: - or that he resigned possession of his farm to his mother. At any rate, he informs us that – “being now desirous of godly studies”, - (i.e. having made up his mind to enter the ministry of the church), “leaving his household & children in good order”, - he went to the University of Cambridge; “where he studied, &much increased in learning & godly virtues”. We are not informed what college he entered; Cooper, in his ‘athenæ Cantabrigensis’ writes, - “George Marsh, born at Dean, in Lanc. had a good education in a grammar-school, &then followed the occupation of a farmer &married. His wife dying, he gave up his farm, & came to this university, & having followed his studies closely, took orders, commencing M.A. in 1542. The date here given is certainly wrong by 10 years, &there is some doubt as to the accuracy of the statement concerning the degree also. George Marsh was ordained deacon by Ridley, Bishop of London, & Taylor, Bishop of Lincoln, in the year 1552, & immediately afterwards

he was appointed Curate & Schoolmaster at Church Langton, in Leicestershire, by the Rev. Lawrence Saunders, vicar of that parish. Of his experience then, Marsh writes, - "I thought myself now of late well placed under my most loving & gentle master Lawrence Saunders in the cure of Langton. But the Lord of his great mercy would not suffer me to continue long there (although for the small time I was in his vineyard I was not an idle workman)." After remaining nearly twelve months Curate at Langton , Marsh's vicar there was appointed by Archbishop Cranmer, (not long before his deposition), to a better living at the Church of Allhallow, in Bread Street, London, continuing to hold both livings for a time. Then he resolved to give over his cure in the country; and, therefore, after he had taken possession of his Benefice in London, he departed from the city into the country, to discharge himself from it. And about that time began the broil [Page 141] about the claim that Queen Mary made to the crown, by reason of wch he could not accomplish his purpose. In this disturbance he preached at Nottingham, not meddling with the state, but boldly uttering his conscience against popish doctrine & antichrists damnable errors wch were likely to spring up again in England, as a just plague for the little love wch the English nation bore to the blessed word of God. The Queen's men who were there & heard him , were highly displeased with him for his sermon; &for it kept him among them as a prisoner. But partly for love of his brethren & friends, who were chief doers for the Queen among them, partly because there was no law broken by his preaching, they dismissed him. He, seeing the dreadful days at hand, inflamed with the fire of godly zeal, preached with diligence at both these benefices, as time could serve him, seeing he could resign neither of them now but into the hand of a papist".

It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the Rev. L. Saunders was arrested in London, on the 15th Oct. 1553; & immediately afterwards the Rev. George Marsh returned to Deane, intending, as he says – "to visit his mother, children & other friends, & to have departed out of the country before Easter then next, & to have gone out of the realm". These were his first thoughts on realising the critical state of affairs, but when he arrived at Deane, & found himself among his friends & relatives again, following the example of his late vicar – "he preached & openly published (according to the testimony of his enemies) within the parishes of Dean, Eccles, Bolton, Bury & elsewhere within the dioces of Chester, in the months of January & February, or some other time of the year preceeding, (i.e. 1553 or 4), directly against the Pope's authority & the Catholic Church of Rome, the blessed Mass, & the Sacrament of the Altar". There was probably no vicar of Deane at that time, &the protestant Bishop of Chester (Dr Bird) was not removed until March, 1554; &these circumstances also, may have emboldened Marsh to adopt the course he did; but by this – "preaching without licence", he was openly defying the Queen's commands, & rashly jeopardizing all hope of his being able to "depart out of the country before Easter". As the sequel proves, the fact of Marsh's preaching against the Pope's authority, &c. was duly reported to the Earl of Derby, Lord Lieutenant of the Country, who thereupon directed his precept or warrant (early in March, 1554) to Robert Barton, of Smithills, esqre, Justice of the Peace, commanding that gentleman to arrest George Marsh,who was then known to be residing in the neighbourhood. Accordingly, on Monday the 12 March, Roger Wrinstone & other servants of Mr Barton were on the look-out for Marsh in Bolton, "& when they perceived that he was not there, they gave strict charge to Roger Ward & Robert Marshe, the parish Constables for Halliwell, to find &bring him to Mr Barton the day next following, with others". The account of Marsh's arrest , & the proceedings before Mr Barton, at Smithills, have been so clouded & obscured by prejudice &romance, that it is very difficult to gain any satisfactory idea of what really did take place. Marsh's own relation on the matter is as follows: - "Knowing by this relation that divers of my friends were deeply affected, my mother & other of my friends advising me to flee & to avoid the peril, wch thing I had intended before after a week then next ensuing, if

this in the mean time had not happened, seeing that if I was taken, & would not recant in matters of religion, as they thought I would not, & God strengthening & assisting me with his holy spirit I never will, it would not only have put them to great sorrow, heaviness , & losses, with costs & charges, to their shame & rebuke in this world, but also mine own self after troubles &painful imprisonment, unto shameful death. This considered, they advised & counselled me to depart &flee the country as I had intended to have done, if this had not happened. To whose counsel my weak flesh would gladly have consented, but my spirit did not agree; thinking &saying thus to myself, that if I fled away, it would be thought, reported &said, that I did not only flee the country & my nearest & dearest friends; but much rather from Christ's holy word, according as these years past I had with my heart, or at least with my outward living professed, & with my mouth & word taught, according to the small talent given me of the Lord. I being thus with their advice & counsel, & the cogitations of my own mind, drawn, as it were, divers ways, went from my mother's house, saying, I would come again at evening. In the mean time I ceased not by earnest prayer to ask & seek counsel of God, who is the giver of all good gifts, & of other of my friends, whose godly judgements & knowledge I much trusted unto. After this I met one of my friends on Dean-Moor, about sunset: & after we had consulted together on my business, not without hearty prayer kneeling on our knees, we departed, I not fully determining what to do, but taking leave of my friend, said, I doubted not but God (according as our prayer & trust was) would give me such wisdom & counsel, as should be most to his honour & glory, the profit of my neighbours & brethren in the world, & obtaining of my eternal salvation by Christ in heaven.

“This done, I returned to my mother’s house again, where had been divers of Mr Barton’s servants seeking after me: who when they could not find me, strictly charged my brother & William Marshe, to seek me that night & bring me to Smithills the next day: who being so charged were gone to seek me in Adderton, (Atherton), or elsewhere I know not. Thus intending before to have staid all night with my mother, but considering that my tarrying there would disquiet her with her household, I departed from thence, & went beyond Dean Church, & there staid with an old friend of mine, taking ill rest, & consulting much with myself of my trouble. So at my first awaking, one came to me from a faithful friend of mine with letters, wch I never read, nor yet looked on, who said this: My friend’s advice was that I should in no wise flee, but abide & boldly confess the faith of Jesus Christ. At whose word I was so confirmed & established in my conscience, that from thenceforth I consulted no more, whether it were better to fly or to tarry, but was at a point with myself, that I would not flee, but go to Mr Barton, who did not seek for me, & there present myself, & patiently bear such cross, as it should please God to lay upon my shoulders. Whereupon my mind &conscience, wch before were uneasy & troubled, were now cheerful & in a quiet state. So betimes in the morning I arose, & after I had said the English Litany (as my custom was) with other prayers kneeling on my knees by my friend’s bedside, I prepared myself to go [Page 142] towards Smithills: & as I was going thitherward, I went into the houses of Harry Widdows, of my mother-in-law, of Ralph Yeton, & of the wife of Thomas Richardson, desiring them to pray for me, & to commend me to all my friends, to comfort my mother, & to be good to my little children, for (as I supposed) they should not see my face any more, before the last day; & so took my leave of them , not without tears on both sides, & arrived at Smithills about nine o’clock, & presented myself before Mr Barton.”

Marsh’s record of what took place before Mr Barton, at Smithills, on that 13th day of March, 1554, is of the very briefest character: He was met there by his brother, [?] William Marsh, & several other neighbours, including doubtless the parish constables, Roger Ward & Robert Marshe: & after Mr Barton had exhibited the letter he had received from the Earl of Derby

commanding him to arrest George Marsh, & send him to Lathom, as Marsh had voluntarily surrendered himself, he was simply bound over in his own recognizances, with his brother, & William Marsh, as sureties, to appear before the Earl at Lathom, next day, at ten o'clock in the morning. Being now dismissed from the presence of the Justice – “we went (as Marsh writes) to my Mother's, & there I dined & shifted part of my clothes, & so praying took leave of my Mother, the wife of Rich^d Marshe, & both their households, they & I both weeping, & so I departed from them, & went toward Lathom, & rested all that night about a mile & a half on this side Lathom. The next day, wch was Wednesday, we arose, prayed, & came to Lathom betimes, & tarried there till four o'clock in the afternoon”.

We may now pause to consider what kind of a man this Earl of Derby was, before whom George Marsh had to appear & answer for his life, on the subject of his faith & practice of religion. Edward, 3rd Earl of Derby, was a politician & a courtier, who, in matters of religion could easily accommodate himself to the changeful times in wch he lived. In 1533 he conveyed Ann Boleyn in his own barge from Greenwich to her coronation, at wch he was cup-bearer: In 1536 he assisted to put down the pilgrimage of Grace: In 1544 he zealously supported the Reformation, was a commissioner for the dissolution of Monasteries, & secured goodly spoil for himself: In 1553, he attended Edward VI^{ths} funeral with 80 men in coats of velvet, followed by 218 yeomen in his livery: & on 29th Sept. in the same year, he was constituted by Mary Lord High Steward of England, & President of the Ecclesiastical Council for the Diocese of Chester. Such a man could hardly be expected to shew any sympathy for a man like George Marsh, whose character & religious convictions were so very different from his own.

Continuing, Marsh writes, - “Then I was called by Roger Makinson, to come to my Lord & his Council, & so I was brought into the chamber of presence, where were present Sir William Nores, Sir Pierce Alee, Mr Sherburn, the parson of Grapenhall, Mr More, with others, where when I have tarried a little while, my Lord turned him toward me, & asked what was my name? I answered, Marshe. Then he asked whether I was one of those that sowed coiL seed amongst the people. Which things I denied, desiring to know mine accusers, & what could be laid against me: but this I could not know. He then said, he would with his council examine me themselves, & asked me whether I was a priest? I answered, No. Then he asked me what had been my living? I said I was a minister, served a cure, & taught a school. My Lord then said to his council, this is a wonderful thing; before he said he was no priest, & now he confesseth himself to be one. I answered, by the laws now used in this realm (as far as I do know) I am none. Then they asked me who gave me orders, or whether I had taken any at all? I answered, I received orders of the Bishops of London & Lincoln. On this they said one to another, those are of these new heretics, & asked me what acquaintance I had with them? I answered, I never saw them, but at the time when I received orders. They asked me how long I had been a curate, & whether I had ministered with a good conscience? To which I answered, I had been curate but one year, & had ministered with a good conscience, I thanked God, & if the laws of the realm would have suffered me, I would have ministered still: & if the laws at any time hereafter would suffer me to minister after that sort, I would minister again. Whereat the murmered; & the parson of Grapenhall said, this last communion was the most devilish thing that was ever devised. Then they asked me what my belief was? I answered, I believe in God the Father, the Son, & the Holy Ghost, according as the scriptures of the old & new Testament do teach, & according as the four creeds, that is to wit, the creed commonly called Apostolorum, the creed of Nice Council, of Athanasius & of Austin, and Ambrose do teach. But after a few words the parson of Grapenhall said, - but what is thy belief of the sacrament of the altar? I answered, I believe that whosoever, according to Christ's

institution, did receive the holy sacrament of Christ's body & blood, did eat & drink of Christ's body & blood with all the benefits of his death & resurrection to their eternal salvation, for Christ (said I), is ever present with his sacrament. They then asked me, whether the bread & wine by virtue of the words pronounced by the priest, were changed into the flesh & blood of Christ, & that the sacrament, whether it were received or reserved, was the very body of Christ? Whereunto I made answer, I knew no further, than I had shewed already. For my knowledge is imperfect, said I, desiring them not to ask me such hard & unprofitable questions, whereby to bring my body into danger of death, & to suck my blood. Whereat they were not a little offended, saying they were no blood-suckers, & intended nothing to me but to make me a good christian man. So after many other questions, wch I avoided as well as I could, remembering the saying of Paul, "Foolish & unlearned questions avoid, knowing they do but engender strife". My Lord commanded me to come to the board, & gave me pen & ink in my hand, & commanded me to come to writemine answers to the questions of the sacrament above named: & I wrote as I had answered before. Whereat he being much offended, commanded me to write a more direct answer, saying I should not chuse but do it. Then I took the pen & wrote, that further I know not. Whereat he being sore grieved, after many threatening, said I should be put to shameful death like a traitor, with such other like words, & sometimes giving me fair words, if I would turn & be conformable as others were, how glad he would be. In conclusion, after much ado, he commanded me to prison in a cold windy stone house, where there was very little room: & there I lay two nights without any bed, saving a few great canvas tent-clothes; but afterwards I had a pair of sheets, but no woollen clothes, & so continued till Palm Sunday, occupying myself as well as I could in meditation, prayer & study, for no man was suffered to come to me but my keeper twice a day, when he brought me meat & drink.

After enjoying three centuries of religious freedom, it is very difficult for us to understand the strange & inquisitorial [Page 143] method of procedure here recorded, though contemporary history furnishes similar instances of like inquisitions in other parts of the country at that period. The Lord President of the Ecclesiastical Council for the Diocese of Chester, arrested George Marsh, a curate of the lately established church, & brought him before his Council, when he refused to produce the information or accusation upon wch the arrest had been made; & although President, his Lordship at once assumed the position of accuser himself, & endeavoured to extort a confession of heretical belief from the prisoner's own lips! But he failed to accomplish his object; & yet, though the prisoner was unconvicted, he was savagely committed to a most miserable prison, there to be confined for many days. "On Palm Sunday in the afternoon, I was sent for to my Lord & his Council (saving Sir Nores, & Sir Pierce Alee were not then present in place) amongst whom was Sir John Beram, & the vicar of Prescot. So they examined me yet once again concerning the sacrament. And after I had communed apart with the vicar of Prescot a good while about the matter, he returned to my Lord & his Council with me, saying, That answer wch I had made before, & now did make (as it is above written) was sufficient for a beginner, & as one who did not profess a perfect knowledge in that matter, until such time as I had learned further. Wherewith the Earl was very pleased, saying he doubted not but by the means & help of the vicar of Prescot I should be conformable in other things. So after many fair words he commanded I should have a bed, with fire, & liberty to go amongst his servants, so that I would do no harm with my communication amongst them".

In this expectation that Marsh might be persuaded to confirm, his Lordship, however, was grievously disappointed; for he continues – "And so after much other communication, I departed, much more troubled in my spirit than before, because I had not with more boldness

confessed Christ, but in such sort as my adversaries thereby thought they should prevail against me; whereat I was much grieved: For hitherto I went about as much as in me lay, to rid myself out of their hands, if by any means, without denying Christ & his word it could be done”.

A day or two afterwards, another interview between Marsh & the two vicars took place, & again – “after much exhortation unto me that I should be conformable to the true Catholic Church, wch as they meant was the Roman Church, I departed not consenting unto them”. – “So within a day or two came to me Mr More bringing with him certain articles, whereunto Dr Grome had consented & subscribed in the day of King Henry viith & wished me to read them over, & asked me whether I should consent & subscribe unto those articles; & after communication had of one or two of the said articles, I confessed plainly I would in no wise consent & subscribe to them, for if I should, it would be against my conscience: & so he departed. Within a short time after, the said parson & vicar sent for me again, my Lord would be at a short point with me: for if I could not consent & subscribe unto four articles drawn out of the articles aforesaid, I must go to prison immediately. The articles were as follows: -

- i. Whether the mass now used in the Church of England was according to Christ's institution, & with faith, reverence, & devotion to be heard & seen?
- ii. Whether the Almighty by the words pronounced by the priest, did change the bread & wine after the words of consecration, into the body & blood of Christ, whether it were received or reserved?
- iii. Whether the lay people ought to receive but under the form of bread only, & that one kind was sufficient for them?
- iv. Whether confession to the priest now used in England was godly & necessary?

These four questions or articles they delivered me in writing, & bad me go to my chamber & subscribe my answers with my own hand, & come again. So within half an hour, I came to them again, & delivered the questions, with my answers. – The first I denied: - The second I answered as I did to my Lord before, & is above written. – To the third I answered that the lay people by Christ's institution ought to receive both kinds, & that it sufficeth not them to receive under the one kind only: - Fourthly, that though confession auricular was a convenient means to instruct the rude people, yet it was not necessary nor commanded of God.

They much exhorted me to leave my opinions, saying I was much deceaved, understanding the scriptures amiss, & much councelled me to follow the Catholic Church of Christ, & do as others did. I answered, my faith in Christ conceived by his holy word, I neither could nor would deny, alter, or change, for any living creature whatsoever he were, desiring them to speak to my lord that during my life & imprisonment, my poor friends might be suffered to relieve me with necessary things according to their ability; & so after much exhortation of them to do & believe as the Catholic Church did, we departed: I from thenceforth continuing in the porter's ward nor coming forth of my chamber saving at noon & night while I dined & supped.”

This appears to have been Marsh's last interview with the Clergymen, but he was now assailed by the lay members of the Lord's Council with a different class of arguments: - “Upon one of the Easter holidays, Messrs More & Sherbourne sent for me persuading me much to leave my opinions; saying all the bringers up & favourers of that religion had ill luck, & were either put to death or imprisoned, & in danger of death. Again the favourers of the religion now used had wondrous good luck, & prosperity in all things, with many other worldly reasons of man's wisdom, for as to the scriptures, Mr Sherburn confessed himself

ignorant. He said it was a pity such a well-favoured young man, & one that might have good living & do good, would foolishly cast myself away, sticking so hard to foolish opinions. I answered as I had done to my Lord before, & to his council, that my life, mother, children, brethren, sisters, & friends, with other delights of life, were as dear & sweet unto me as unto any other man, & that I would be as loth to lose them, as any other would, if I might hold them with good conscience, & without the ignominy of Christ; & seeing I could not do that, my trust was God would strengthen me with his holy spirit to lose them all for his sake. And so after I had desired them that if I were committed to prison my friends might be suffered to relieve me, they departed”.

George Marsh was not further examined by either the Earl of Derby or his Council at Lathom; who, having extorted from their prisoner a written confession of his belief concerning the doctrine of transubstantiation, & absolution, now committed him to take his trial at the next assizes, upon a charge of heresy against the re-established church of Rome.

[Page 143a] “I continued still in prison (he writes again) until Low Sunday, (1st April), & after dinner my keeper, Richard Scott, came to me unto my chamber, &told me that two young men were come to carry me to Lancaster, & so delivered me unto them , a great company of my Lord’s servants accompanying and bringing me on the way unto Rich^d Adderton’s & somewhat further, councelling me & persuading in the usual manner. The first night we staid at Broughton, &the second day we came to Lancaster about noon, they kept me all night with them out of good nature, & in the morning delivered me to the Gaoler, who took me into the highest prison where I do remain.

Marsh’s report of his trial at Lancaster is vague & unsatisfactory. After recounting that many persons came to see him in prison, trying to persuade him to recant; whilst others came who consented to him in all things, comforting him & giving him money: together with many priests, he proceeds, - “There came also into prison to me Mr Ashton of Hill; Mr Ashton, of Chatterton, & many more both gentlemen & others to my great comfort. Unto whom I had good occasion to utter a great part of my conscience: for God so strengthened me with his spirit of boldness, according to my humble request &prayer before (everlasting thanks be given therefore) that I was nothing afraid to speak to any that came to me, no not even to the Judges themselves, before whom I was thrice arraigned at the bar amongst the thieves with irons on my feet, & put up my hand as others did, but yet with boldness I spake unto them so long as they would suffer me. They also sent for me the fourth time into their chamber, where amongst other things they laid it straightly to my charge, that I knew of many good gentlemen in Lancashire of mine opinion, & straightly charged me upon pain of allegiance to the Queen’s grace, to shew who they were. But I denied that I had spoken any such thing; (as it was indeed a false forged lie of some wicked wretches). After that, they threatened & rebuked me, for my preaching to the people out of the prison, as they called it, & for my praying & reading so loud, that the people in the streets may hear”.

All that we can safely infer from this very brief relation of the trial before Her Majesty’s Judges of Assize is, - that the prosecution failed to obtain a verdict; & that an attempt was made to amend the indictment, by adding – “treasonable practices,” – Thereto - &that this failed also. Nevertheless, the prisoner was not released, or restored to his liberty! & the Earl of Derby’s interference at this particular juncture, was most unjustifiable &tyrannical. Marsh was again brought before the Earl &his Council, when – “I said unto my Lord, that I had not dwelled in the country these three or four years past, for I came home but lately to visit my mother, children, & other my friends, & to have departed out of the country before Easter

then next, & to have gone out of the realm; wherefore I trusted, seeing nothing could be laid against me, wherein I had offended against the laws of this realm, his Lordship would not with designing questions examine me to bring my body into danger of death, to the great discomfort of my mother, but suffer me to depart peaceably, seeing that I might have fled out of the country, & yet of mine own will came unto his Lordship. He said to his council, he had tell of me about London; & had intended to make search for me & take me either in Lancashire, or in the neighbourhood of London, & asked me into what land I would have gone? I answered, I would have gone either into Almain [Germany] or else into Denmark. He said to his Council, in Denmark they used such heresy as they have done in England; but as for Almain, he said, the Emperor had destroyed them. So after such like words I said unto him, my trust was that his Lordship, being of the honourable Council of the late King Edward, consenting & agreeing to Acts concerning faith towards God & religion, under great pain, would not so soon after consent to put poor men to shameful deaths, as he had threatened me, for embracing the same with a good conscience. He answered that he, with Lord Windsor, & Lord Dacres, & another, whose name I have forgot, did not consent to those Acts, & that the negative of them four would be to be seen as long as the Parliament-house stood. Then my Lord rehearsed the ill luck of the Dukes of Northumberland & Suffolk, with others, because they favoured not the true religion; & again, the good-hap[?] & prosperity of the Queen's highness, because she favoured the true religion, thereby gathering the one to be good & of God, & the other to be wicked & of the devil, & said that the Duke of Northumberland confessed so plainly".

The Earl's remark that – “he had heard tell of Marsh about London, & intended to make search for him & take him &c.” – gives reason to suppose that the Queen's Council, (i.e. Gardiner & his associates), had determined from the first to silence both the Rev. L. Saunders, & his curate, George Marsh; & that his Lordship in all his subsequent proceedings had been carrying out the instructions he had received from the Council. Marsh was now again confined a close prisoner in Lanc: Castle until Christmas. On the 30th August, 1554, he wrote a letter to certain beloved friends at Manchester, in wch the following noble sentiments occur: - “And seeing brethren, it hath pleased God to set me, & that most worthy Minister of Christ, John Bradford, your countryman, in the forefront of this battle, where (for the time), is most danger. I beseech you all in the bowels of Christ, to help us & all other our fellow-soldiers, standing in the like perilous place, with your prayers to God for us, that we may quit ourselves like men in the Lord, & give some example of boldness & constancy, mingled with patience in the fear of God, that ye & others our brethren through our example, may be so encouraged & strengthened to follow us, that ye also may leave example to your weak brethren in the world to follow you. Amen.

George Marsh, together with the numerous Bishops & other clergymen of the late established church who were now confined within the prisons of the Kingdom for their religious profession, were at this time kept waiting several months, whilst the Queen & her Council were effecting such alterations in the laws of the land as would enable the hierarchy of the lately re-established Roman Church, to deal with their prisoners according to the traditions of that church. “After the reconciliation with Rome, & submission to the Pope (writes Burnet), The next Act that was brought into Parliament, was for the reviving the statutes made by Richard 2nd, Henry IVth, Henry Vth against heretics. The act began in the House of Commons; who as was observed in the former parliament, were much set on severities. It was brought in on 12th Dec. 1554, & sent up to the Lords on the 15th, who passed it on the 18th of that month.”

Soon afterwards commissions were issued by the Cardinal Legate to Gardiner & his abettors, conferring authority to examine, try, & sentence, all such members of the late established church as were then in prison charged with [Page 144] heresy; & had refused to be reconciled to the church of Rome. John Bradford & Lawrence Saunders were now excommunicated, & George Marsh removed from the custody of the Sheriff of Lancaster into that of the Sheriff of Chester, who duly incarcerated his prisoner in Chester Castle. Dr Cotes, the newly appointed Romish Bishop of Chester, now took up the prosecution of Marsh; & after satisfying himself that it was useless to attempt to persuade the prisoner to conform to his teaching, his lordship proceeded to a public trial. The Court before which this trial was held, set in the Lady Chapel of the Cathedral; the Bishop himself being the Judge, assisted by Fulke Dutton, Esq^{re}, Mayor of the City, Dr Wall, & several other members of the Cathedral Clergy, as Assessors. Dr Weaslow, the Bishop's Chancellor, & John Chetham, Esq^{re}, Recorder of the City, were the prosecuting Council; whilst the prisoner was defended by Robert Leche, M.A. – “They caused the said George Marshe to take an oath upon a book, to answer truly unto such articles as should be objected against him. Upon wch oath taken, the Chancellor laid to his charge, that he had preached & openly published most blasphemously & heretically within the parishes of Dean, Eccles, Bolton, Bury, & many other parishes within the Bishop's diocese, in the months of January & February, or some other time of the year preceding, directly against the Pope's authority & Catholic church of Rome, the blessed Mass, the sacrament of the altar, & many other articles. Unto all wch in sum he answered, that he neither heretically nor blasphemously spoke or preached against any of the said articles, but simply & truly, as occasion served, and (as it were thereunto forced in conscience), maintained the truth touching the same articles, as, said he, all you now present did acknowledge the same in the time of the late King Edward the sixth.” ... “Then they examined him severally of every article, & bade him answer directly Yea or Nay, without circumstance; for they were come to examine & not to dispute at that present. Then he answered them unto every article very modestly, according to the doctrine by public authority received & taught in this realm at the death of the said King Edward; whose answers were every one noted by the Recorder, to the uttermost that could be made against him”.

The Court was then adjourned for something like three weeks, & upon its re-assembling in the same place – “The Chancellor, by way of an oration declared unto the people present, the Bishop's charge & burning charity, who even like as a good shepherd doth see to his flock that none of his sheep have the scab or other disorder for infecting other clean sheep, but will salve & cure the scabbed sheep, so his Lordship had sent of the said George Marshe there present as a scabbed sheep, & had weeded him out for corrupting others,, & done what he could in shewing his charitable disposition towards the said Marshe to reduce him from his naughty heresies; but all that he could do was in vain; so that he was now resolved, if the said Marshe would not abjure, to pronounce & give sentence against him. ... Wherefore he bade the said George Marshe now to be well advised what he would do; for it stood upon his life; if he would not at that present forsake his heretical opinions, it would be too late after sentence was given, though he would ever so gladly desire it. ... Then the said Chancellor first asked him whether he was one of the Bishop's diocese? – To wch he answered he knew not how large his diocese was, for his continuance was at Cambridge. – But then they replied & asked, whether he had not lately been in Dean parish in Lancashire, & there abode? – And he answered, Yea. – Then the Chancellor read all his former answers that he made in that place at his former examination, & at every one he asked him whether he would stick to the same or no? – To wch he answered again, Yea, Yes.

Afterwards, Marsh's answers were read over to him the second time, & the Bishop now asked him whether he would stand to the same, being as they were, he said, full of heresy, or else forsake them & come into the catholic church? – Marsh answered his Lordship, that he held no heretical opinion, but utterly abhorred all kind of heresy, although they most untruly so did slander him. And he desired all the people present to bear him witness (if hereafter any would slander him & say, that he held any grievous heresy), that in all the articles of religion, he held no other opinion, than was by law most godly established , & publicly taught in England at the death of King Edward the sixth, & in the same pure religion & doctrine he would – by God's grace – stand, live, & die.

The Bishop then read out (from a written paper) sentence of condemnation upon George Marsh, the terms of that sentence do not appear to have been preserved, but they may easily be inferred from what immediately followed. The prisoner was thereafter delivered into the custody of Messrs Amry & Cooper, Sheriffs of the City of Chester, who carried him to a prison at the Northgate, where he was very straightly kept until his execution, during wch interval he 'had small comfort or relief of any worldly creature. On the 24th April, 1555, the Sheriffs with their Officers &the trained bands of the City, went to the Northgate & took out the said George Marsh with a lock upon his feet, & conducted him to the place of execution without the City, near unto Spittle-broughton. Immediately on his arrival there, Mr Vaudrey, the vice-Chamberlain, exhibited to him a conditional pardon under the Great Seal, wch Marsh at once refused. It is said that he attempted to address the people, but was prevented by Sheriff Amry; when the people pressed forwards to attempt a rescue, being encouraged thereto by Sheriff Cowper. But this attempt was effectually frustrated by the interposition of Sheriff Amry &the trained Bands. "Having made his prayers, Marsh put off his clothes unto his shirt; then he was chained unto the post, having a number of faggots under him, & a thing made like a firkin filled with pitch &tar, over his head. But by reason of the fire being unskilfully made, & the wind driving the flame to & fro, he suffered great extremity at his death, wch [Page 144a] notwithstanding he abode very patiently. When he had been a long time tormented in the fire without moving, having his flesh so broiled & puffed up, that those who stood before him could scarcely see the chain wherewith he was bound, &therefore supposed no less but he had been dead, he suddenly spread forth his arms, saying – "Father of heaven have mercy upon me" - & so yielded up his spirit into the hands of the Lord. His ashes were afterwards carefully collected, & privately interred in the burial ground of the Chapel of Saint Giles at Spittal Broughton.

Such, briefly told, was the life & death of the Rev. George Marsh, the Martyr of Deane. The man who condemned his body to be burnt, died himself before the year's end; his body lies in an unknown grave , & his name is well nigh forgotten. But it is not so with his victim: the glorious faith, the simple honesty, truth, &fortitude of George Marsh live on through the centuries, enshrined in the hearts of his countrymen. "He being dead, yet speaketh".

A letter of George Marsh to Robert Langley

"The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, & the love of God, & the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with you good brother in Christ, Robert Langley, & with all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ unfeignedly. Amen.

After hearty commendations to you, with thanks for that ye did visit me a prisoner in Christ & unacquainted with you, to your costs, this shall be to let you know, that ye shall receive from me mine examination & handling at Latham, & the cause of mine imprisonment,

according as I did promise you: & this ye shall receive by my brother or some one of the Bradshaws of Bolton within this se'vnight desiring you to show the same to such faithful men about Manchester, or elsewhere, as you do take to be favourers of true religion, & Christ's word, & then deliver it again. And whereas you did put me in comfort, that if I did want any thing necessary unto this life, you with some others would be bearers with me in this my costly & painful affliction. I give you most hearty thanks & rejoice greatly in the Lord, who stirreth up the hearts of others to be careful for me in this my great necessity. I thank God, as yet I do want nothing, & intend to be as little chargeable to others (saving my Mother), as I can. If I do want, I will be bold with you & others, to send for your relief & help in my necessity; desiring you in the meantime to pray for me, & all others in the bonds of Christ; that God would perform the thing that he hath begun in us, that we may with boldness confess Jesus Christ, & fight the good fight of faith.

Yours, George Marsh.

A letter from James Bradshaw, sent to George Marshe in prison.

Grace & peace from God the Father, & the Lord Jesus Christ be with you always. Amen. We had a letter from you which is a great comfort unto us, to see you take the cross so thankfully. Trouble & affliction doth prove, try[?], instruct, confirm & strengthen the faith, provoke & stir up prayer, drive & force us to amendment of life, to the fear of God, to meekness, to patience, to constancy, to gentleness, to soberness, temperance, & all manner of virtues, & are the occasion of exceeding much good, as well transitory as eternal, in this world as in the world to come. There is neither good nor bad, godly nor ungodly, but he hath one cross or another. And although some there be that can shift for a while, & make provision for themselves for a time by craft or subtily & dissimulation, or some fashion in fellowship, as they call it, yet they bring themselves at length into the highest danger, confusion & shame, both in this world, & in the world to come. And seeing that all the troubles & adversities in the world, are a thousand times more light & easy, yea nothing in comparison of the eternal fire, wch is prepared & already kindled for the unfaithful & wicked enemies of God: all faithful & godly persons ought to bear & suffer their transitory affliction & adversity the more patiently, willingly & thankfully, considering & remembering all the dearly beloved friends of God, who are wonderfully vexed & plagued of their enemies, Abraham of the Chaldees, Lot of the Sodomites, Isaae of Johsuael, Jacob of Esau, Moses of the people, David of Saul, & of his own sons. As for Job, he had not a drop of blood in his body. John Baptist, the holiest that ever was born of a woman, was without any law, right or reason, beheaded in prison, as tho' God had known nothing at all of him. We have many thousands of fellow martyrs & companions of our misery & adversity in respect of whose imprisonment, racking, chains, fire & wild beasts, & other meanes, wherewith they were tormented, all that we suffer is but a blast of wind. Therefore now whosoever is ashamed of the cross of Christ, & grieved therewith, the same is ashamed to have Christ for his fellow & companion, & therefore shall the Lord Jesus Christ be ashamed of him again at the last day. – Thus I leave you for this time, beseeching you to let me have your advice, because I do not outwardly speak that with my tongue wch I do think with my heart. Pray for me as I for you. I beseech the Holy Ghost have you in his keeping always. Amen.

By your friend – James Bradshaw.

A letter to a certain godly Friend.

"Grace be with you & peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God & Jesus the Lord. – After hearty commendations & thanks to you, not only for your large token, but much more for your loving letters, full of consolation to me as touching my person to you unknown; these shall be to certify you, that I rejoice greatly in the Lord when I do perceive how my sweet Saviour Christ doth stir up the minds, not only of my familiar friends in times past, but also of sundry & divers heretofore to me unknown & unacquainted, to bear part with me in this my painful & costly imprisonment, sending me things not only necessary for this present life, but also comfortable letters encouraging & exhorting me to continue grounded & established in the faith, & not to be moved away again from the hope of the gospel, whereof, according to my small talent I have been a minister; & daily I call & cry unto the Lord, in whom is all my trust, & without whom I can do nothing, that he hath begun a good work in me, would vouchsafe to go forth with it until the day of Jesus Christ, being surely certified in my conscience of this, that he will do so, forasmuch as he [Page 145] hath given me that not only I should believe on him, but also suffer for his sake. The Lord strengthen me with his Holy Spirit, that I may be one of the number of those blessed, who enduring to the end, shall be saved. - - And whereas you say that my suffering persecution with Christ, is a thing to you most comfortable, I make answer that in all my adversity & necessity, nothing on your behalf is greater consolation unto me, than to hear of the faith & love of others, & how they have good remembrance of us always, even as the Apostle reporteth of the Thessalonians, saying, "Now ye are alive if ye stand stedfast in the Lord". For my trust in the Lord is, that this my business shall happen to the furtherance of the gospel, & that you will be none of those forgetful & hypocritical hearers, whereof some being but wayside hearers, the devil cometh & taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe & be saved, but let prayer be made without ceasing by the congregation unto God for them, and, no doubt, God will to your consolation, gloriously deliver by one means or another his oppressed. Only tarry ye the Lord's leisure; be strong, let your heart be of good comfort, & wait ye still for the Lord. He tarrieth not, that will come, look for him therefore, & faint not, & he will never fail you.
Yours – George Marshe.

To my well beloved in Christ, Jenkin Crompton, James Sever, Ellis Fogg, Ralph Bradshaw, the wife of Richard Bradshaw, Ellis Crompton, & to every of them be these delivered from Lancaster.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, & the love of God, & the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen. After salutations in Christ, & hearty thanks for your friendly tokens, & your other remembrances towards me, beseeching God that ye may increase in faith, fear, love, & all good gifts, & grow up into a perfect man in Christ; these be earnestly to exhort you, yea & to beseech you in the tender mercy of Christ, that with purpose of heart ye continually cleave unto the Lord, & that ye worship && serve him, in the gospel of his son. For God will not be worshipped after the commandments & traditions of men, neither yet by any other means appointed, prescribed, & taught us, but by his holy word. And though all men for the most part defile themselves with the wicked traditions of men, & ordinances after the world, & not after Christ; yet do ye after the example of Tobit, Daniel & his three companions, Matthias & his five sons, be at point with yourselves that ye will not be defiled with the unclean meats of the heathen, I mean the filthiness of idolatry, & the very heathenish ceremonies of the Papists; but as true worshippers, serve ye God in spirit & in truth, according to his sacred scriptures; which I could wish & will you above all things continually & reverently (both as St Paul & Christ commanded you) to search & read, with the wholesome monitions of the same; to teach, exhort, comfort & edify one another, & your

brethren & neighbours, now in time of this our miserable captivity, & great starvation of souls, for want of the food of God's word. And doubt not, but that the merciful Lord, who hath promised to be with us ever unto the world's end, & that whosoever two or three be gathered together in his name, he will be in the midst of them, will assist you & teach you the right meanings of the sacred scriptures, will keep you from all errors, & lead you into all truth, as he hath faithfully promised.

And though you think yourselves unable to teach, yet at the commandment of Christ now in time of famine, the hungry people being in the wilderness far from any towns , who if they be sent away fasting, are sure to faint & perish by the way, employ & bestow those five loaves & two fishes that ye have, upon that hungry multitude, although ye think them nothing amongst so many. And he that increased the five loaves & two fishes to feed five thousand men , besides women & children, shall also augment his gifts in you, not only to the edifying & winning of others in Christ, but also to an exceeding great increase of your knowledge in God & his holy word. And fear not your adversaries; for either according to his accustomed manner God shall so blind their eyes that they shall not espy you, or get your favour in their sight, or else graciously deliver you out of their hands by one means or another.

Obey with reverence all your superiors, unless they command idolatry or ungodliness. Make provision for your households, chiefly that they may be instructed & taught in the law of God. Love your wives even as you love your own selves, & as Christ loved the congregation. Love your children, but rate them not, lest they be off a desperate mind; & bring them up in the nurture & admonition of the Lord, & teach them even as the godly parents of Tobias, & Susannah did their children, even from their infancy to reverence God according to his law, & to abstain from sin, providing that in no wise they be brought up in idleness & wantonness, seeing that ye reckon yourselves to be the children of God, & look for the life wch God shall give to them that never turn their belief from him. See that ye ever fear God, & thank him & serve him in such holiness & righteousness as are acceptable before him all the days of your life. Comfort yourselves in all your adversities & stay yourselves in him who hath promised not to leave you as fatherless & motherless children without any comfort, but he will come to you like a most gentle & merciful Lord. He will continually stand by you in all your troubles, assisting, helping, & succouring you at all times, "I will be with you (saith he) unto the end of the world". And cleave you fast unto him who was incarnate, wrought, taught, & died for your sins; yea rose again from the dead, & ascended into heaven for your justification. Repent ye of the life that is past, & cease from sin, & from henceforward live as much time as remaineth in the flesh, not after the lusts of men, but after the will of God. To do good & distribute forget not. Fast & pray busily, & as every man that received the gift, minister the same one to another as good ministers of the manifold graces of God, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise & dominion for ever & while the world stayeth. Amen.

Yours – George Marshe.
