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The Bloody Assizes of 1685.

THERE were two rebellions against James II. The former was of the lower classes, largely Nonconformist, with a bad leader, the Duke of Monmouth. It failed, and when the military slaughter was over, there was a special commission of judges to try the rebels. The latter rebellion was of nearly all classes, of all shades of religion except Roman Catholic, with a good leader, the Prince of Orange. It succeeded, and shortly afterwards there appeared various pamphlets telling about the Bloody Assize of 1685, from the standpoint of the rebels. On these, Macaulay founded his rollicking narrative in his History. Whoever would compare his story with his authorities, could see him heightening the picture by quite gratuitous touches.

Within the last six years, the State Papers for the period have been calendared, and the official side of the story has been accessible. Two writers, a judge and an antiquary, have re-told the story as a whole. And as the latter is a bibliographer, he has examined the sources of the previous version. The startling fact emerges that the book on which Macaulay, and most other writers, relied, was published by a tricky man, was edited by a rebel who in other respects had a dubious character, and was inspired by that lover of truth, Titus Oates. Under these circumstances, fresh examinations are clearly needed.

The contemporary evidence is fairly plentiful, but long remained in manuscript. For instance, at All Souls, Oxford, are daily extracts from the newsletters, showing what was given out to the public: these were printed in 1857. There was an authorized writer of newsletters, Henry Muddiman, and the drafts of his letters are still in manuscript, in the library of the Marquess of Bath. They show what the government was willing for the people at large to know; between them and the lurid stories of Oates a few years later, all classes of readers could get fairly contemporary versions to suit them.

In 1888 F. A. Inderwick wrote an essay, appending statistics from the gaol-books. The Somersetshire Archaeological Society in 1892 published an article on the sources of history for both the rebellion and the assizes. Correspondence of the earls of Clarendon and Abingdon on the subject was printed four years later by the Oxford Historical Society. In 1904 the Historical Manuscript Commission printed several relevant letters from the Stopford-Sackville papers. Six years later the Royal

Historical Society printed a drummer's account of the militia's work for a month. Ephemeral books and pamphlets and ballads may be traced in the Bibliotheca Somersetiensis, the Bibliotheca Lindesiana, and the Index to the ballad-entries in the Stationers' Register. The trials in London were reported and published even in October 1685, and a Commentary next year.

The proceedings of the judges may be summarized. At Winchester the lady Lisle was convicted for sheltering a rebel, sentenced, and executed. At Dorchester they spent five days. On the first day sixty-eight men pleaded guilty by the advice of the prosecuting counsel; thirty pleaded not guilty, but only one was acquitted. The executioner, Ketch, said that with one assistant he could hang, quarter, and boil only thirteen a day. In the five days, 251 were sentenced to death, with the intention of sparing the lives of 190. The others were executed at Dorchester, Lyme, Bridport, Melcombe, Sherborne, Poole and Wareham.

At Exeter only one day was necessary; nineteen pleaded guilty, two were convicted and executed at once. The head-quarters of the rebellion was Taunton, yet two days sufficed, as out of 505 indicted, only six pleaded not guilty. The last gaol-delivery was at Wells, where 541 pleaded guilty, one was tried, condemned and executed, all in one day. Of all these, a warrant to execute 239 was signed in September. The hangman was kept busy till December, and by the end of the year heads and quarters, boiled in pitch, were hanging at the gates, bridges, cross-roads all over the west; nor were they buried till the autumn of 1686.

Many died from small-pox before they could be hanged, and it seems that the total number executed was only 251. Hundreds were transported to the Leeward islands, Barbados, Jamaica and Carolina; all of these who survived were pardoned after the second rebellion. About thirty escaped with a fine or a whipping. About eighty were pardoned. About 130 were bound over to good behaviour. The names of all of these are now published, and a modern editor has given a few notes on some of them. But much more work deserves to be done as to these pioneers.

These lists deserve close attention from the secretaries of the Somerset and Dorset Baptist churches, which contributed scores, if not hundreds, to the ranks of the insurgents. The Lyme Regis church was foremost, and it is not surprising to see the pastor, Sampson Lark, with John Holloway, the tobacconist, amongst the earliest who paid forfeit. Other Dorset names well known in Baptist circles are Bevis, Collier, Cox, Elliot, Sprake, Waldron. Colonel Abraham Holmes and Will

Hewling were Baptist, but had landed with Monmouth. Benjamin Hewling was convicted at Taunton; the story is well-known how his grandfather, Kiffin of London, interceded, but could only obtain that he should not be quartered, but buried whole. Robert Perrot, who had helped his relation, Colonel Blood, in a previous plot, stealing the crown and sceptre, was executed at Taunton this time.

Two cases deserve special mention. William Wiseman, a barber's apprentice at Weymouth, for publishing a seditious libel, was sentenced to be whipped at every market town in Dorset; of these there are ten. "Thomas Pitts" was, for spreading false news, sentenced to pay £3 6s. 8d., and be whipped: small-pox saved him from the whipping. His real name was John Tutchin, and he was responsible for fighting as well. Once freed, he began inventing dying speeches and publishing them as broadsides in 1686. When the wind changed in 1689, he collected them as "The Protestant Martyrs, or, the Bloody Assizes," which with the aid of Oates swelled up by 1705 into a fifth edition, a splendid mass of fiction, which has misled many a serious historian. Macaulay, for example, watered the little seed of William Wiseman, till it became a green baytree.

The grave losses sustained by our churches in Somerset and Dorset, still affected them four years later, and so when the churches of all England were represented at London in 1689, the West did not give its usual lead, which it only recovered after ten years. Some real harm was done, the effects of which persisted for nearly a century.

We commend to some Baptist antiquary in the Taunton district, that he take the official lists in the Calendar of State Papers, and try to trace his spiritual ancestors who fought against James as their fathers against his father.

TRANSACTIONS OF THE UNITARIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

The October issue has a study of Hackney College about 1795, as remembered a generation later by a student, William Hazlitt. In those days, universities were practically closed to Dissenters, and Hackney had thirty lay students, eleven fee-paying divinity students, and eight more on the foundation. The diary of a Leeds layman, 1733-1786, in forty-one quarto volumes, has yielded a useful study of a cloth-factor whose chief interest in life was religion.