

TWO TENTERDEN SUFFERERS.

The Old Meeting House, Tenterden, enjoys probably the unique distinction of having had, as its first two ministers, vicars who were ejected from their livings in 1652 as a result of the Act of Uniformity, and on Sunday last, on the occasion of the 250th anniversary, special services were held. At the morning service Mr. Rylett, the present minister, preached from the text, "The word of God is not bound." The preacher traced the history of the struggle between Catholicism and Protestantism, showing how first one and then the other got the upper hand and persecuted its opponents, and mentioned the fact that Tenterden had its Protestant martyrs, who were burnt at the stake—John Lomas, at Canterbury in January, 1556; John Philpot, at Wye, January, 1557; Mathew Bradbridge and Nicholas Final, at Ashford, January, 1557; Mrs. Bradbridge and Mistress Final, at Canterbury, June, 1557; and William Conder and Agnes Grefel in May, 1511. When Cromwell came into power he appointed a committee of "Triers" to see that "Good men" were appointed to the churches. This committee appointed "any that were able, serious preachers, and lived a godly life, of what opinion soever that was tolerable." The religious life of the country, as a result, became more quiet and earnest. Amongst the clergy so appointed were the Rev. George Hawe, to the Vicarage of Tenterden, and the Rev. Joseph Osborne, to the Vicarage of Benenden. On Cromwell's death there was much political confusion, and ultimately Monarchy was restored in the person of Charles II. He had made such promises of toleration that the Presbyterians joined in welcoming him to the throne. They soon had reason to repent, for Charles sided with Episcopacy, and the Episcopalians got the upper hand and persecution of those who differed from them quickly set in. An Act of Uniformity was passed and all the clergy were required to give their unfeigned assent and consent to its contents. Those who refused were ejected from their livings. Some two thousand suffered in this way, amongst them, George Hawe and Joseph Osborne. The former founded that congregation and was its first minister. Joseph Osborne succeeded him in that position some 20 odd years later. What became of the noble George Hawe they did not know, but of Joseph Osborne they knew that he ministered in various places, amongst others, at Ashford and Bearsted, near Maidstone. Joseph Osborne was much esteemed, and when he was leaving Benenden the Dean of Rochester undertook to get him a better living if he would conform, but he replied that "if he could have been conformed at all it should rather have been at Benenden than any other place whatever, because he should never meet with a more loving people or a place where he was likely to do more good." He spent the latter part of his life at his old home, at Staplehurst. The historian says, "A kind providence attended him in all his removes. He lived and died in friendship with the established clergy, and when he died left something to the poor in all the places in which he had resided." On the previous day he, the preacher, accompanied by his senior warden, made a pilgrimage to Staplehurst, and with the courteous assent of the Vicar of the parish, laid on Joseph Osborne's tomb, on behalf of the congregation, a wreath of bays in revered memory of him. Such were the founders of that congregation. Their message to them of today was that of the apostle, "The word of God is not bound—be loyal to conscience—for conscience is the voice of God." Let them remember that "God would not have His work made manifest by cowards." Even at the call of God brave souls stood forth as did George Hawe and Joseph Osborne. Let them of to-day emulate their piety, fidelity and courage that those who followed might revere their memory.

At the evening service Mr. Rylett expounded the faith the congregation now held as a result of the liberty of thought and speech which had been won for them by their spiritual ancestors. Their faith was that of the Master. The Kingdom of God was another item. The Divine Authority was the law of God after the inward man, whose commands were God, duty and immortality. There were good congregations at both services, many members of other communities being present.

9/9/1912

THE OLD MEETING HOUSE IN TENTERDEN.

To the Editor of the Kentish Express.  
Sir,—The account of the ministers who were ejected from their livings under the Act of Uniformity in 1662 is interesting; and especially the able sermons preached in the above place of worship commemorating the matter. As a small contribution to the History of Nonconformity in Tenterden may I be allowed to offer one or two items. The first is the presentation of George Hawe, by Oliver Cromwell, to the Vicarage of Tenterden. (Augmentation of Livings. Vol. 996, L.P.L.)

"Tenterden. George Hawe. Pres. 20 June, 1655. Know all men by these presents that the twentieth day of June in ye yeare one thousand six hundred fifty and five. There was exhibited to ye Commissioners for approbation of publique preachers a presentation of Mr. George Hawe ck to the Vicarage of Tenterden in the County of Kent. Made to him by his Highness, Oliver, Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, etc., the patron thereof under his seale manuall. Together with a testimony in the behalfe of the said George Hawe of his holy and good conversation. Upon perusal and due consideration of the p'mises and finding him to be a person qualified as in and by ye ordinance for such approbation is required; the Commissioners above men'ioned have adjudged and approved the said George Haw to be a fit person to preach the Gospell, and have graunted him admission and doe admitt the said George Hawe to ye Vicarage of Tenterden aforesaid to be full and perfect possessor and Incumbent thereof. And doe hereby signify to all persons concerned therein, that he is hereby instituted to ye profits and perquisites and all Rights and dues incident and belonging to ye said Vicarage as fully and effectually as if he had beene instituted and inducted according to any such Lawes and Customes as have in this case formerly beene made, had, or used in this Realme.

In witness thereof they have caused the Comon Seale to be hereunto affixed and ye same to be attested by the hand of the Register by his Hignesse in that behalfe appointed. Dated at Whitehall the 27th day of June, 1655.

- Geo. Haw certd. aforesd by Ri: Wilkin-son.  
And: Simpson of Bethersden.  
Wm. Goodrich of Cranbrook.  
Step: Man of Woodchurch.  
Jo: Crawford of Halden.  
Wm: Horner of Biddenden.  
Ffra: Drayton of Little Chart.  
Jo: Jackson of Harrietsham."

It may be noticed that two of the Commissioners above named (those of Cranbrook and Biddenden), were identical with the Ministers who were ejected from their respective parishes as recorded in Timpon's Church History, and quoted in your last issue. Soon after the Restoration, a survey was made of the County of Kent, and the results tabulated in Lambeth MSS 1126, under the following title:—

"A catalogue of all the Benefices and Pro-mocons within ye Diocese and Jurisdiction of Canterbury, with the state of every Particular Parish as it stood at October, 1663. Tenterden Vicarage.  
Value in Kings Books, £33 12s. 11d.  
Corn: Value, £100 00s. 00d.  
Patrons. Ch. of Cant: Imp. and Pat.  
Incumbent, Mr. Nath: Collington.

A very good man. Sir Ed: Hales tennt to ye Church of Cant: A Parish much corrupted. Geo Haw late Incumbt, Presbyt. A great seducer. A corporate towne and not one honest Justice in it. Mr. Hulse lives nere but hath no power there. The town is a member of Dover. The Court there can only protect ye minister who is dayly affronted but 2 of Dover Justices." On another page, under Bethersden, it says: "Rich: Hulse, Esq., a good friend to the Church." Unconsciously the author pays perhaps an unwilling compliment to Mr. Hawe in describing him as he does, for it shows that his personality was such as to cause many to meet and hear him, and the congregation thus formed continued to increase, for in 1758 the then Vicar of Tenterden (Rev. Theophilus De L'Angle) in answering the Visitation Articles of Archbishop Secker (Lambeth MSS 1134), reported as follows:—"There are about 300 Presbyterians, no independents, about six anabaptists, no methodists or moravians. There is a Presbyterian meeting-house, I have enquired of the Teacher and others, but cannot get any certain information whether it

be duly licensed or not. The Presbyterian Teacher's name is Hancock who tells me that he himself is properly qualified. The number of Dissenters has rather lessened than increased of late years. There are about six quakers in the parish, they have no meeting house, and pay their tithes regularly without compulsion. The parishioners in general go regularly either to church or meeting house every Lord's Day."

I regret having occupied so much of your space, but the subject is one of much interest and I should like to see a more competent writer take it up.—Yours faithfully,  
A. H. TAYLOR.

3rd September, 1912.

On Saturday morning a wreath of bays was laid on the tomb of the Rev. Joseph Osborne, in the parish churchyard at Staplehurst, "in revered memory" of Mr. Osborne, who was one of the two thousand ministers ejected from their livings on St. Bartholomew's Day, 1662, in consequence of the Act of Uniformity. Mr. Osborne was at the time vicar of Benenden. Twenty years or more later he became minister of the Presbyterian congregation at Tenterden, in succession to the Rev. George Hawe, who was likewise ejected from the vicarage of that town and founded the Presbyterian congregation there. The wreath was laid upon Mr. Osborne's tomb by Mr. Rylett, on behalf of the congregation now worshipping in the Old Meeting House, Tenterden.

Mr. Osborne belonged to a good Staplehurst family. He was much beloved in Benenden and great efforts were made to retain him. The patron of the living was particularly anxious for him to conform, but his conscience would not permit him to do so. The Dean of Rochester tried to persuade him to conform and even offered him assistance to a better living if he would do so, but Mr. Osborne replied that "if he could have conformed at all it should rather have been at Benenden than for any other place whatever, because he should never meet with a more loving people or a place where he was likely to do more good." Mr. Osborne preached subsequently in many places, and retiring in his old age to Staplehurst, died there on December 28th, 1714, at the age of eighty-five.

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THE OLD MEETING HOUSE.—On Sunday the celebration of the 251st anniversary of the foundation of the congregation, special services were held. The Rev. W. H. Drummond, B.A., minister of the Provincial Assembly of London, and the south-eastern counties, preached eloquent and thoughtful sermons appropriate to the occasion. The services were fully choral, the Te Deum being sung at the conclusion of the morning service. The anthem was a solo finely rendered by Miss Hooper. Mr. Hermitage presided at the organ. There was a large congregation at the evening service. The Old Meeting House was founded in 1662 by the Rev. Geo. Haw, vicar of Tenterden, on the coming into force of the Act of Uniformity. That Act resulted in the ejection of 2,000 clergymen from their livings, Mr. Haw being one of the number. Mr. Haw was succeeded in the ministry of the Old Meeting House by the Rev. Joseph Usborn, who was ejected from the parish church of Benenden.

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