

cry out and say;—'Oh, no, it is not the Scriptures'; but I told them what it was, namely, the Holy Spirit, by which the holy men of God gave forth the Scriptures, whereby opinions, religions and judgments were to be tried, for it led unto all truth, and so gave the knowledge of all truth. For the Jews had the Scriptures, and yet resisted the Holy Ghost, and rejected Christ, the bright morning star, and persecuted Christ and His apostles, and took upon them to try their doctrines by the Scriptures; but erred in judgment and did not try them aright, because they tried without the Holy Ghost. Now as I spake thus amongst them, the officers came and took me away and put me into a nasty, stinking prison, the smell whereof got so into my nose and throat that it very much annoyed me."

This lengthy extract from George Fox's journal is given because it contains the very secret and essence of early Quakerism. Here was an unknown young man of 24, tall, gaunt, with piercing eyes, long hair, a face pale as with frequent fasting, hurling back in the preacher's teeth the very foundation doctrine of the Protestant faith. "No. It is not the Scriptures. It is the spirit of God." During the next quarter of a century Protestantism was challenged in its stronghold, the reformed churches were denounced as unsparingly as they denounced the Papacy. Of those 25 years, at least six were spent by Fox in some prisons—his only vacations from mob violence. He and his followers frankly disobeyed the injunction of the Divine Master, "When they persecute you in one city, flee ye unto another." The Quakers preferred death to flight. Those who did not receive their doctrine raged against it. Imprisonment having no deterrent effect, "the people," says Fox, "fell upon me in great rage and struck me down, and almost stifled and smothered me, and I was cruelly beaten and bruised by them with their hands, bibles and sticks. * * *

And the rude people stoned me out of

the town for preaching the word of life to them. And I was scarce able to go, or well to stand, by reason of the ill usage I had received * * * And that day some people were convinced of the Lord's truth, at which I rejoiced." Death had no terrors for him. To a man who ran at him with a rapier Fox said, "Alack for thee, poor creature! What wilt thou do with thy carnal weapon? It is no more to me than a straw."

As for the preaching of Fox, it was as much concerned about right conduct as about true theology.

IT WAS PRE-EMINENTLY PRACTICAL.

It was not "a theological system which could be popularly construed as a method whereby the absence of morality can be condoned." To him there was no distinction between things secular and things religious. His religion, propagated by purely spiritual means, was, in point of numbers, a great success. Soon after the Restoration, by a careful enumeration of Quakers in prison throughout all England, it was found that the number exceeded four thousand two hundred. In 1700 the whole number in England and Wales is computed as at least sixty thousand. There were also at that time prosperous Quaker churches in Ireland and Scotland, on the Continent and in the plantations of America. They were known as a daring, aggressive, stubborn folk, followers of the light within, scornful of consequences, grotesquely honest, outlandishly just, irreproachable in every walk of life except as their doctrines made them the filth of the world and the scouring of all things in the eyes of the orthodox. The history of early Quakerism is the history of unquenchable zeal triumphant over unnumbered "beatings, bruising, shakings, halings," and the consternation and pious horror of clergy men and dissenting preachers, whose sympathy was too evidently with the fury of the mob. These "Children of the Light" as they were called were universal disturbers of the churches.