

At the date of the writing of this letter, which was the 14th of the Eleventh month, 1657, a Friends' Meeting was started at Severn, which is situated near the Chesapeake Bay. How long this Meeting continued I do not know. We find that many Meetings have been established and after a time discontinued, and the same Friends have been instrumental in establishing Meetings elsewhere. But this is but an example of the ever changefulness of life. For each tidal wave changes the sands on the shore; where we before saw a mound of sand we now see a hollow. So also many rivers change their channels, and more often is this true when the bed of the stream is wide and the water low, and as the field of the Society is large and the workers comparatively few, then the channel of labor has been ever changing.

It is likely that the two messengers referred to in the letter of Robert Clarkson, were Joshua Cole and Thomas Thurston. Their field of labor was for a time in Virginia, from there they proceeded to Maryland, and then to New England. The journey, made on foot, was very perilous, lying through a wilderness that had seldom seen the foot of the white man. Great kindness was shown them by the Indians, and when Thomas Thurston was taken ill he was kindly cared for by his dark skinned brethren. How great is the power of kindness. The Indians also went with them as guides through the wilderness.

Thomas Thurston again returned from Rhode Island, whither he had gone to Virginia. Here he was imprisoned for a short time, and on being released was given a promise by the Governor that he should henceforth have his liberty.

I think we shall find that the Friends in the South were not persecuted so severely as were those in the North, and that many persons were convinced of the truth as it was presented.

While the policy adopted by Lord Baltimore was very liberal, yet Friends in that colony were subjected to sufferings on account of their religious testimonies. No doubt a great deal of it was prejudice, arising from the fact that they were looked upon as a peculiar people. Doubtless they were, and I do not know that the Society has outgrown it yet, but, we live in a different age. Let us not think that they were all persecuted, for many were not; there are different ways you know of presenting the same truth.

At this time the Government of Maryland was very much unsettled. There were the adherents of Lord Baltimore, and the Puritans headed by Clayborne. In 1649 the Catholics came into power. They were quite liberal, for history says: "The disfranchised Friends of prelacy from Mass., and the Puritans from Virginia, were welcomed to equal liberty of conscience and political rights, in the Roman Catholic province of Maryland."

During the protectorate of Cromwell the Puritans came into power. They carried things in their usual way. While Charles I. reigned the established religion was the Anglican Church, and non-conformists were punished by disfranchisement and exile. During the times of the commonwealth the Episcopal Church ruled things. A law was then enacted for the banishment of Quakers, and declaring their return felony. But we do not find that they were so severely treated until after the restoration of Charles II.

There is reason to believe that in the West Indies good work was accomplished prior to the year 1660. In a letter from Mary Fisher to George Fox, written at Barbadoes in 1655, she says: "Here are many convinced and many desire to know the way." Among those that were convinced of the truth of the principles of Friends were John Rins and his father. The former afterwards married the daughter of Margaret Fell, of London, of whom we have heard before.