

VI.—BRASS TABLET AT BARNARD CASTLE AND  
THE REV. JOHN ROGERS.

BY MABERLY PHILLIPS.

[Read on the 25th July, 1888.]

SEEING that the members of this Society purpose visiting Barnard Castle in the course of a few days, I have hastily collated a few notes that I had by me regarding a brass tablet that may be found upon the wall in the tower of the ancient church at Barnard Castle, a rubbing of which now lies upon the table.

It records the death of Jonathan Rogers, the vicar's infant son, on November 8th, 1650, followed by a verse; another death is recorded, August 30th, 1652, followed by another verse.

BARNARD CASTLE.

IONATHAN ROGERS FILIVS PRIMOGENITVS IOHIS  
ROGERSII A.M. ET GRATIÆ VXORIS EIVS OBIIT  
ANº X<sup>TI</sup> 1650 NOV 8

Hee peep'd in to the World, where hee could see  
Nought but confusion, Sinne and misery,  
Thence scap'd into his Sau'ors armes thus hee  
Gott Heauen for fourteene dayes mortality

JOHN ROGERS FILIVS 2<sup>DVS</sup> I.R. ET G.R. OBIIT  
ANº X<sup>TI</sup> 1652 AVG 30

Bles'd Soule Thy name did mind of Gods grace  
Thou wast his gift whose loue shew'd vs thy fac<sup>o</sup>  
But hee that gaue did take in 7<sup>en</sup> moneths space  
Thou found'st in Fathers armes a resting place.

The quaint lines of the inscription tells all that can be told of the lives of the subjects of this tablet, but a few remarks regarding the author of these verses, who was the vicar of Barnard Castle from 1645 to 1660, may not prove without interest. But first let us see how it was that John Rogers came into these parts.

The spiritual state of the people of Barnard Castle appears to have caused much uneasiness in the early part of the seventeenth century to those interested in their well-being.

John Knox the great Scottish reformer married Margery, daughter of sir Robert Bowes of Streatlam, and in the Bowes family so well did he plead the Puritan cause that the lady Isabella, second wife of sir

William Bowes, took it up most warmly. Upon the death of her husband at their seat at Walton, not far from Chesterfield, in 1611, she sent her domestic chaplain Mr. Dike with the body to have it buried with his ancestors in the church at Barnard Castle. On his return she asked him, owing to the terrible state of the district, to take up his residence amongst them, but he replied that he dare not venture among so rude and surly a people, and recommended the bold Richard Rothwell, who from his zeal had gained the title of '*the Apostle of the North.*'

Bold was he indeed, for when the lady Bowes expressed some fear at his undertaking to go to so lawless a people, he said, 'If I thought not to meet the devil there, I would never come there, he and I have been at odds in other places and I hope we shall not agree there'; and another time when bishop Neile sent to arrest him, 'he bade his messenger go tell their lord if he had anything to say to him he would meet him on Barnard Castle Bridge (which parteth the shires), and if he could pull him over to him, let him take him.'

Such then was the state of affairs, when a few years afterwards, in 1645, we read that the Parliament sent four godly divines into the county: three went to Durham, and the fourth, the rev. John Rogers, settled at Barnard Castle.

John Rogers was born, April 25th, 1610. He was a student at Wadham College, Oxford; his first cure was at Leigh in Kent; he afterwards removed to Barnard Castle.

He was the son of the rev. John Rogers, who, in 1587, became vicar of Chalcombe, in Northamptonshire, and from the compilations of bishop Kennet, now in the British Museum, there is every reason to believe that he was the direct descendant of the rev. John Rogers, who, in 1555, suffered martyrdom, the anniversary of the day being always observed in a becoming manner by the members of the Rogers family. Calamy's report of Rogers is that he was a man most highly esteemed, and showed great energy in carrying on his Master's work. 'He at once got out a list of the number of souls in his parish, which were 2,000. He took an exact account who were educated and who ignorant, who fit or unfit for the Lord's table. The ignorant he conversed much with, gave them good books to read, and catechised and instructed them. He took great care of the poor children that they might be brought

up usefully. He was also a zealous observer of the Lord's day, and opposed the driving of cattle through the town to neighbouring fairs on that day. He was much given to hospitality. It was the custom in the north after a funeral to have an "arval" or dinner when he would speak suitably to those assembled, so much so that malignant people refused to go when they knew he would be present because they said they would be sure to find Rogers preaching.'

Raby Castle at that time belonged to sir Harry Vane, and Mr. Rogers was a welcome visitor there. Both father and son used to come to hear him preach, and when afterwards young sir Harry was in prison awaiting his execution Mr. Rogers attended him. It was no uncommon thing for Cromwell's soldiers to assert their right to preach in the church of any town they were at, and we find that on one occasion an officer of note sent to Mr. Rogers demanding the use of his pulpit, Rogers asked who gave the officer authority to preach and whether he had a commission from God, 'for he was well aware that the ministerial power and office was very distinct from the military, and therefore, though the soldiers kept the town, he resolved to guard the pulpit.'

Within bow shot of the church at Barnard Castle stood and still stands (though in a different county) the manor house of Startforth, where lived Mr. Thomas Barnes. A few years after Rogers came to the north he married Grace one of the daughters of the said Thomas Barnes, and it is by this marriage that Mr. Rogers would have intimate connections with Newcastle, for his wife's brother Ambrose,<sup>1</sup> became the celebrated puritan alderman of Newcastle, the manuscript of whose life and times, now in the possession of the Literary and Philosophical Society, gives us many particulars regarding Mr. Rogers.

Testimony is not wanting to show that Mr. Rogers wandered from home upon ministerial duties. The Darlington church books of April 18th, 1650, say: 'When Mr. Rogers and Mr. March preached, their charges and their company at dinner, 4s.' And in 1659 an entry of '1s. for a pint of sack when Mr. Rogers preached' shows us that he was there again. We have evidence, too, of his being at Giggleswick 'when a Quaker was seized with a spirit of revelation and came to the

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Ambrose Barnes*, by W. H. D. Longstaffe (50 Surtees Soc.).

church, doffed of his clothing, with a lighted candle in his hand, to mightily reprehend that conjuror, Mr. Lister the vicar. But when he found that Mr. Lister was not preaching but one Rogers, the Quaker began to think it was a lying spirit that had advised him to go.'

Upon the restoration of king Charles the Second, in 1660, those ministers who had been appointed by the Parliamentary party had to resign their livings, and amongst them was John Rogers. He was immediately presented by lord Wharton to the living of Croglin, in Cumberland, a quiet village lying under the shadow of the Alston hills.

I visited Croglin a few years ago but no trace of the old vicar could be found. The register was so decayed that although the present vicar kindly tried to decipher it nothing could be made out. The old church had been 'restored' by a modern edifice. I was then under the impression that Rogers finished his days at Croglin, so tried to find some stone to his memory.

The sojourn of John Rogers at Croglin was short, for two years after his appointment the Act of Uniformity was passed, and as he could not comply with its mandates he again had to vacate his living.

It would appear that he soon made his way back to the village of his wife's friends, Startforth, and running the risk of penal laws preached whenever occasion offered.

When, in 1672, king Charles granted his licences to tender consciences, Rogers took advantage of the concession. I have caused search to be made in the domestic entry book of Charles the Second's time, and find on May 13th, 1672, John Rogers, of Lartington, Yorkshire (about two miles from Barnard Castle), took out a licence to be a Congregational preacher or teacher, and that on August 12th of the same year he got a licence for preaching to be allowed in the houses of Robert Nicholson and John Middleton in Darlington. And that on September 5th a licence was granted for preaching in the house of John Rogers at Lartington. We may presume that at some other time his application must have been refused as we find another entry, 'Not approved—John Rogers, Presbyterian, Lartington, Yorkshire.'

We are also told that he sowed the seeds of Nonconformity at Stockton and Durham, and that when the licences were withdrawn 'he preached in his own house one Lord's day and the other in Teesdale or Weardale, among those who wrought in the mines.'

In 1677, after many years' suffering Mrs. Rogers died, and on November 28th, 1680, John Rogers closed his eventful life at Startforth, whither we presume he must have again moved.

The old church where he had formerly been minister received his mortal remains; his funeral sermon was preached by the rev. J. Brockell.

Mr. Brockell seems to have had his difficulties regarding the Act compelling burial in woollen, as an entry in the register just prior to that of the burial of Mr. Rogers testifies. 'Memorandum—That Ambrose Eastgate was buried in the churchyard of Barnard Castle, the first day of August, 1678, and that none of his relations brought or showed me within eight days that he was not put in wrapt or wound up in any shirt or sheet or anything whatsoever that is made of any material but sheeps' wool.—Witness my hand, J. Brockell, minister.'

Of the children of Mr. and Mrs. Rogers, beyond those named on the tablet, the register records Mary, born August 15th, 1653, died February 21st, 1656. Jane, born June 30th, 1660, and baptised July 8th, 1660; her death is not recorded, but I presume this is the daughter whose life was published under the name of the 'Virgin Saint.'

The books of the Merchant Adventurers of Newcastle reveal the existence of a son Joseph, who in May, 1670, when his father was living at Lartington, was apprenticed to Mr. Peter Sanderson. But in the margin of the enrolment is written 'Mortuus,' leaving us to infer that he died before his term was completed.

There is one son, of whom we have a fuller account, Timothy, born May 24th, 1658. His early education was under his father's care. In due time he entered one of the universities of North Britain where he took his degree of M.A. He became a Nonconformist minister of some note. It is believed that his first settlement was at Cross Street, London, but he is most widely known as colleague with the rev. John Showers, of London, and as a companion of the celebrated Thomas Bradbury, who for some time was a minister in Newcastle. He lived to about 70 years of age, and died in 1729.

His grandson was the rev. John Rogers of Poole, in Dorsetshire, and the granddaughter of the Dorsetshire clergyman was the wife of

Robert Long of Clapham Park, Surrey, at whose academy the early days of the writer of this paper were spent, and from whose life, written by her husband, many particulars given in this paper are gathered.

A very remarkable story regarding Mr. Rogers is given in many histories of the county, but it is too long to repeat here in full.

It is stated that during the time when the laws were in force against private preaching, Mr. Rogers was holding service near the residence of sir Richard Cradock, who sent spies to the meeting, had Mr. Rogers cited before him, found him guilty, and committed him to prison, but that upon the intervention of a little girl, sir Richard's granddaughter, his committal was subsequently cancelled.

Many years after Mr. Timothy Rogers was relating the story at the house of a Mrs. Tooley, in London, when much to the astonishment of those present, the lady exclaimed 'I was that little girl.'

The Cradocks were a powerful family in the district, one branch resided at Gainford hall and another at Richmond, in Yorkshire. Locally Gainford hall is reputed to be the place where the incident happened, but at the time we refer to sir Joseph Cradock, J.P., lived at Richmond; many amusing accounts of cases tried before him may be found in the records from York castle.<sup>2</sup>

Certainly Mr. Tobie Cradock who lived at Gainford hall, 1670, was a bitter royalist, as a letter dated April 11th of that year to bishop Cosens shows.

He entrusts the bishop to 'Faile not to gett John Harrison of Scarbro' put in the Act of Attainder,' adding 'there will come to your lordship by it about £3,000.' But the bishop replies that as to the wild letter of Mr. Tobie Cradock it would be a very difficult matter to get an Act of Parliament for any man's attainder that hath been pardoned, and especially if he have been dead seven years. The letters are printed in full in vol. iii. of our publications.

We often have to regret the destruction of these old tablets. In this instance let us be thankful that, through all the changes and restorations the ancient church of Barnard Castle has undergone, this mural tablet has yet been spared to speak to the memory of John Rogers.

<sup>2</sup> *Depositions from York Castle* (40 Surtees Soc.).