

EXTRACTS FROM THE SHORTHAND DIARY OF THE REV. JOHN WADE, M.A.,

Minister of Hammersmith

Transcribed by ALBERT FOYER, M.B.E.

THE Rev. John Wade succeeded Matthew Fowler, D.D., as Minister of Hammersmith in 1662 and remained in that position until 1707 in spite of references to his unhappy position in the district and his attempts to get another living, including a visit to the celebrated divine, Richard Baxter (who then lived at Acton), regarding the possibility of obtaining a living at Kidderminster.

The "Chapel in the hamlet of Hammersmith" was, in fact, a chapel of ease to Fulham, of which parish Hammersmith then formed part, and the minister was responsible to the Vicar of Fulham for what took place in the Hammersmith Chapel.

The earliest records of baptisms, marriages and burials which were solemnised in the chapel are really the minister's own notes, a copy of which was supplied to Fulham for inclusion in the official records. This may account for the fact that Wade used all available empty spaces to write his own private diary, household accounts, prayers, etc., in the 17th century system of shorthand or tachygraphy invented by Thomas Shelton and used by Pepys in the writing of the Diary.

The original books, running to 300 pages of close typing when transcribed, are in the possession of the Vicar and Churchwardens of Hammersmith Parish Church. They were bought by a former vicar (the Rev. Mr. Snowden) from descendants of a late Parish Clerk because they took the records of baptisms, deaths and marriages further back than the official records at Fulham concerning Hammersmith.

In March, 1666-7, Wade was in trouble with his bishop (Dr. Henchman) and, when Sir John Huxley went to the bishop to get the reader's licence, Wade says:

For the Bishop did show himself extremely incensed against me because of several things of which he said he was informed.

Amongst other counts against Wade he quotes the following:

1. He said I was Rabid in my principles and not hearty to the liturgy and government established.

2. He said I preached twice a day. They told him that was because of my dependency upon the people. He said No, that there was another reason for it. I did it to humour some people and to please the women and that there was no more in two of my sermons than in one of anothers.

After recording other complaints enumerated against him, Wade says :

What sticks in the Bishop's stomach is my examining the soldiers and refusing to give them the Communion.

Later he says of the bishop :

. . . And he had a strict eye upon me and would inquire further and if I continued so he would turn me out for all the apologies and defences of Sir John Huxley or any other and my loving dames should not save me.

A reference to his own vicar (the Rev. Mr. Stevenson of Fulham) discloses some feeling of jealousy on the part of Stevenson because richer people lived in Hammersmith than in Fulham and were more generous to Wade for his services.

Goodman Close told me that he had lately carried Stevenson twice or thrice and that all he talked in the boat was railing and clamouring against me. And that about 2 months ago he was so fuddled that he was fain to help him into the boat and lay him in the middle of the boat. He was so fuddled he could not sit upright in it. That he had sometime told him that he knew not by what authority I came in here nor who put me in . . . And that I was but his curate. . . . That when the gentry gave him a shilling they gave me forty. That my place was a great deal better than his and the like. And then he would fall asleep in the boat and when he waked he would be at the same story.

A sample of his own short temper appears in the following purely domestic item :

July 3, '67. After dinner sitting at table with my sister Martha and my wife and talking about Master Dale first and then about Dr. Owen and some Independents, I only said "Becky, I am afraid if I was gone thou wouldst be drawn away with some of these people." She presently told me that it was my pride that made God give me over into the Devil's hands. And that she would never be well till she

was separated from me. This she spoke before her sister Martha. I told her others would think hardly of her if they should know what expressions she used to me. She said if others knew what cause she had to speak it they would not.

Upon which I was so highly incensed that I told her I resolved I would never lie in bed with her all this summer and that if all the town should beg upon their knees of me to do it I would not do it. And I said I never spake with so great passion to her in all my life. She said that she was tempted to make away herself . . .

A sample of his forthright method of preaching is recorded in the following entry :

July 21, '67. I preached plainly and smartly against profanation of the Lord's day and desired them in the morning to come again in the afternoon when I spake more sharply. Master Dugdale and Noel's family were there. When Dugdale came home he swore that I was a damned presbyterian or a heretic or a devil. They all commended my sermon but said I was guilty of damned partiality in that I only spoke to them and told them on it and said nothing to the fanaticks and presbyterians who sat before me with their hats on and stayed in the Chapel yard when I came into the Chapel. They said I made all the presbyterians stand up and look on them and laugh at them. They said if the Bishop knew of it he would not be well pleased with me. . . .

An amusing sidelight on the social life of the hamlet is shown in the following entry.

Decr. 10, '67. I was over freely merry at Tim Robinsons with Master Noel and his wife and Sarah Whitwell. And Ellis was there part of the time. And they played at "Hot cockles" and hid their eyes with a mask and kissed that people might guess who kissed them. And I played the fool and kissed them too and was blinded myself and suffered Mistress Noel to put a hood on my face. And when Mistress Dugdale strove with me to make me lie down I wrung her hands and pulled her to and again.

And I eat their sturgeon at supper and took too much tobacco. And waiting on Mistress Noel home, Master Noel made me go in. And yielding to him because I would not seem strange to his house I drank a glass of sherry with him afterwards. And taking there another pipe of tobacco

after my sturgeon it turned it in my stomach and the smoke made me sick. And it may be that my paleness appeared to them there but when I came home I was forced to go up in my chamber and put my hand in my throat and bring up my sturgeon then I was well.

I fear that Tim and his wife and all of them will blame me for lightness in such compliance with them. There is no sound way for a Minister to maintain his credit as by severity and gravity and denying himself sometimes even lawful things and not going to the utmost of his bounds. . . . Watch and pray and trust in the Lord and do good.

Wade's great concern was the behaviour of his licenced Reader, Ellis, who was ambitious and wanted to preach from Wade's pulpit and baptise children. Wade persistently stood out against this and much of the diary concerns Ellis, for instance:

Ellis told me because I would not let him preach in the Chapel he would preach in neighbour towns. And he was to preach at Chiswick the next Lord's day. . . . And he said he would preach out once a month and yet he would not take any care to provide one to read for me but said he was bound to read only when he was in town. I told him he might go out of town every Saturday night and never read at all for me. . . .

and later:

He thinks if he preaches he shall get a wife in town with a great fortune. He told me that he believed if I did not let him preach he should throw up reading. I bid him do it if he durst. He bid me look to myself as I had bid him look to himself. He said if he had known what bondage he should have been brought into and held in here he would never have come to the place. I told him he could not be said to be kept in bondage who might vindicate himself into liberty when he pleased. And that if he did not like his standing he might remove for his better preferment or contentment at pleasure.

Surely nothing could be politer than that! But other comments on his Reader are not always so polite—for instance:

Yesterday my Lady Bonfoy told me that at the burial of a poor woman last week Ellis was so tipsied that he was

ready to tumble into the grave after the corpse. That the clerk was pretty well in drink but the reader far worse.

Finally Ellis got his way to preach at Chiswick and Wade says:

Ellis preached at Chiswick and most of the gentry of the town ran to hear him and Master Gouge and Master Carrant and the generality of the common people that were men. And they admire him and cry him up and he will be set up to nose you. And he will preach now and then to commend himself and pen his prayers exactly and commit his sermons to memory and get the admiration of the common people. And with his vaunting and others crying him up in opposition to you and crying you down in comparison with him and with the contempt that is cast upon you and your wife by the reports of your servants, your life is likely to be burdensome and uncomfortable to you here. And Ellis will be a thorn in the flesh to you. And therefore labour speedily to repent and believe. Walk very humbly and closely with God. Mind your own work. Live as retiredly as you can. Make up breaches with everybody as well as you can and with Mistress Millard particularly if you can do it handsomely for she is a pestilent enemy and hath done you much mischief already.

Wade was not free from local gossip, as the following entry shows:

Goody Pannett told my wife the evening before that at some meeting of neighbours—a christening or burial or some such thing—a woman (my wife guesses it was Corby's wife the glasier) said in the company considering us that my wife was a fiddling woman and that I was as peevish a person as could be. . . .

Lay out for your removal for your body will not serve for the work of this place and inconveniences you will be put to for want of a reader. Seek to Master Baxter, Dr. Horton, Master Nest, Master Bucknall and if it be possible remove for here you have no real friends. And in a new place be sure to lead a new life.

Later he went to see Master Baxter at Acton about another living, but nothing came of it and he remained for many years as Minister of Hammersmith, in fact, until he died.