

THE MOST LEARNED AND REVEREND DOCTOR PETER HEYLYN - PART II.

by

Peggy McKerracher.

By 1645 no longer able to support his family in Oxford, he sent his wife to London to get what money she could from her relations and he himself walked as a poor traveller disguised both in name and habit. Peter Heylyn took the name of Harding, known among his friends and not discovered by his enemies and dressed as a poor country man.

Parliament was resolved that if they could take him he should follow his good Lord of Canterbury to another world (Laud had been executed), other than that described in his *Cosmology*, but happily he outlived most of them, and died in honour, which they did not. He wandered like a Jew with a groat in his purse, and sometimes without, until he got to the house of some good friend.

At his first hiding place Heylyn was betrayed by a Mrs Mundy a Puritan whilst her husband a true-hearted Cavalier was absent from their Oxford home. He escaped by some garden stairs and got safely to another house. Eventually he acquired some money and settled himself, his wife and eldest daughter in the house of a Mr. Lizard in Winchester, where he rested and met loyalists, for Winchester was a garrison for the King and being near Alresford he could sometimes go in disguise to visit his old neighbours who he knew were true and faithful to him.

These halcyon days soon vanished when town and castle were treacherously delivered up to the enemy, and with every house quartering Parliamentary soldiers poor Dr. Heylyn was in more danger than ever. Mr. Lizard concealed him in a "priests" hole so cunningly contrived that there was no door to be seen for entry to the room, but it was behind a bad, and neatly made like the wainscote, so that it was impossible for a stranger to find it. It was made for a Papist but now hid a Protestant doctor. He could hear his pursuers in the next room, dicing and gaming, and speculating on his whereabouts. When they went out they explored the maze near the city in the vain hope that he might be concealed there.



On market day he took his opportunity to don travelling clothes, take his stair and to walk confidently out of the city with the crowd, leaving his wife and daughter in the care of Mr. Lizard. Not far from Winchester he met some straggling soldiers, and catching hold of his hand, one of them felt a ring under his glove, which in his haste to escape he had forgotten to pull off. They swore he was a runaway cavalier and he helped to remove the ring for them. Up came some Parliamentary scouts on horseback! who told his assailants to see to themselves, as the Cavaliers were coming. At these words they took what little money he had in his pocket and rode away without further search, and he, poor man, jogged on to the next friendly house, with some pieces of gold he had hidden in his high shoes, which if discovered might have cost him his life.

Joined by his wife and daughter Peter Heylyn went to Minster Lovell in Oxfordshire the seat of his elder brother. It was now 1648. He farmed there with his nephew, Colonel Heylyn for six years because being deprived of ecclesiastical preferments he had to think of an honest way to make a livelihood. He continued to

follow his studies, which were his absolute delight, for though usurped powers had silenced his tongue, they could not prevent his pen from writing and his style was still as sharp as ever. He enlarged his book or geography into a large folio from a little quarto, and entitled it "Cosmography". It contained a world of learning as well as a description of the world, chronology, genealogy and heralded, in the last or which he could blazon the arms and describe the descent and pedigree of the greatest families of Europe.

He studied and his wife, a discreet and good lady looked after her household and garden, freeing him from care and trouble. His temporal estate was freed from sequestration, and by farming this also he was able to keep a good house, and to help others who had suffered sequestration, some of whom stayed at his home for two or three months. Amongst these unfortunates was a Scots captain, who having a Scots journal in his pocket, read it with Dr. Heylyn fearing no harm, but one of his servants listened at the door and went straightaway to Oxford and informed the governor that his master had received letters from the King, whereupon the governor sent a party of horseman to fetch him away. The man confidently said he had heard the letters read and was sure he could remember the words. He was found out in his wrong-doing, and sentenced to a whipping.

In 1653 the Reverend doctor moved to Lacies Court in Abingdon five miles from Oxford, where he might be furnished with books for his pleasure, either from booksellers or the Bodleian Library, and in 1656 he printed some observations upon the History of the Reign of King Charles' by another author correcting his mistakes in a mild manner. In 1657 he published "The Church of England justified" and dedicated it to Mr. Edward Davies of Burford School.

About this time he appeared before Cromwell's Major General for the decimation of his estate, which he thought was over and done with. He argued in vain, for arguments cannot stand against the edge of the sword. One Captain Allan formerly a tinker and his wife a poor tripe-wife, reproved Dr. Heylyn for maintaining his wife so highly, like a lady, to which the Doctor replied that he had "married a gentlewoman, and maintained her according to her quality, and so might he his tripe-wife.

Heylyn was a strict observer of all rites and orders of the Church or England, and abhorred popery. He would not correspond with a papist and when a man who had befriended him called at his house and confessed to having turned papist doors were closed against him and he was told never to return.

In the year 1658 he wrote a book answering "The Judgment of the Late Primate of Ireland", a book written by Dr. Bernard once an Irish dean, but now chaplain to Cromwell, who attempted unsuccessfully to get the book suppressed and burnt. At the same time in answer to certain passages in another book about the Life and Reign of King Charles I where he was accused of being an agent for the See of Rome! The Doctor always asserted the King's Prerogative and the Rights or the Church for which he incurred the disapproval or Cromwell and his party.

After the restoration of King Charles 11 in 1660, Peter Heylyn was able to rest from his labours and reflect that now the sun shone more brightly in our hemisphere than ever the tyrannical powers being resolved, the King brought home to his people, the Kingdom settled in peace, the Church restored to its rights and the true religion established. All men who had been good subjects and suffered returned to their homes with joy, and the doctor returned to his habitation in Westminster from which he had been separated for seventeen years, as from his other preferments. According to his usual custom he set about building and erected a new room in his house for entertaining his friends. He was seldom without visitors as his advice was sought in Church matters. Many came for his company, and for the reverence they had for his learning. He still delighted in his studies and rarely left his home, except to attend church.

The Bishop of Durham, Dr. Cousins on a visit said to him, "I wonder Brother Heylyn thou art not a bishop, for we all know thou hast deserved it". To which he answered, much good it may do the

new bishops, I do not envy them, but wish they may do more than I have done". What the bishop readily acknowledged to be the doctor's due, Was no more than his true worth, for his knowledge was as extensive as the earth, and not an island or a province, not a rock or shelf could escape his survey and exact description. He was resolved to understand the history of all other countries, their past state as well as their present. Yet for all this his head was not filled with contemplations of this world so as to leave no room for the great concerns of the next. He had examined all the various religions and governments of the world, and compared them with those under which he lived, finding much to support his championship of them. It was his good fortune to live in such times as required his zealous defence of a tottering church and crown.

Dr. Heylyn was able to enjoy the fruits of his pains and prayers for three years, then having completed most of his wishes in this world, he had a dream or the next, where in a pleasant place he met his master King Charles I who said, "Peter, I will have you buried under your seat at church for you are rarely seen but there, or at your studys. He then made provision for his wife having told her of this dream, and went to bed well, but in the night he was taken With a fever which deprived him of understandings although he cried out that it was Ascension Day and he was ascending to his God and Saviour. He died on that day in 1663, aged 63 years, and was buried according to his dream.

Peter Heylyn was a man of the greatest integrity, incorruptible and true to his God and his King. He Was an extremely clever man, as is shown by the books he wrote, but sometimes clever men are misunderstood by their fellows.

Peggy McKerracher, November 1995.

Sources: "The Biography of Rev. Dr. Peter Heylyn" by his son-in law, and loaned by Laurence Oxley.

Private papers.

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