

**EXTRACTS FROM THE  
DIARY OF ROBERT  
SEARLES, DECEASED**

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Extracts from the Diary of Robert Searles, Deceased by Robert Searles

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**ROBERT SEARLES**

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Whiting to M Green  
No 553. Extracts

FROM THE DIARY

OF

ROBERT SEARLES,

RECORD.

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*"A highway shall be there—it shall be called, the way of  
holiness—the wayfaring man shall not err therein.*

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1823.

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February 3, 1942

**ADVERTISEMENT.**

THE following memorandums of one who in his life and conduct adorned the station of a servant, are printed in the hope that the attentive perusal of them will be beneficial and animating, not only to those who may have to tread the same path, but to others who may be less exposed to outward toil and labour.

The short notice of the Writer which is prefixed, is taken in part from the Testimony of the Friends of his own Monthly Meeting. The extracts from this memorial are marked by inverted commas, and are, with a few alterations, inserted in the words of the original. They will be easily distinguished from other passages in it, taken from his own papers, which are also marked as quotations.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.



“ROBERT SEARLES was born at Glatten, in Huntingdonshire, in the year 1764, of parents professing the religion of the Church of England. In his youth, he was a frequent associate with persons of irreligious characters, in the humblest sphere of life.—When about 23 years of age, he became seriously disposed, and soon after joined the society of Calvinistic Baptists, amongst whom he was esteemed a highly valuable member.”

The circumstances which gradually led to a change on his views on the most important subjects, are described by himself, nearly in the following words. After regretting that a difference in religious sentiments should produce so hostile a disposition in some serious minds, as at that period he had observed, he proceeds to remark :—“The great Leader and Pattern of Christianity said to his disciples, ‘He that is not against us is on our part;’ but some think, because another does not see as they do, and does not walk with them, he cannot be a disciple. Whereas it would be much better to endeavour to imitate our holy Pattern, who was meek and lowly, kind and compassionate, willing to endure the cross, and despise the shame.

“ I began to listen to what some of our neighbours said on this subject, that this was right, and the other wrong. I left off going to the meetings of the General Baptists, who held salvation possible to all men; and went amongst the Calvinistic Baptists, who profess that salvation is provided for only a part of mankind; and that this part are sure of it, without any possibility of their missing; it being unalterably fixed from all eternity, so that the creature has nothing to do in it: for means and ends are so unalterably fixed, as surely to be accomplished on the part of mankind, so predestinated. But although they thus profess, how often do their ministers invite *all* to the Gospel Feast, to partake of that bread, of which, *according to their own doctrine*, there may be none provided for them! But O! what a favour that no one is excluded thence, but those who exclude themselves. Welcome the ignorant and polite; the learned and the rude.

“ I constantly attended the meeting of these Calvinistic Baptists, was very earnest to be instructed, paid all the attention I possibly could, and was glad when meeting-day was near, that I might go and hear another sermon. I also wanted to feel more of that power within, which was so much talked of amongst them, but in that I knew I fell short, although I greatly longed for it. The reason of this want, I could not tell; it being so strongly held out by the Minister, that the desire after it was life begun, meaning spiritual life; and then if begun, sure to be carried on.



"I well remember his saying many times, "How do I know that I live naturally? Why, because I breathe: so I know I have spiritual life, because I feel breathing or desire to be saved." But although it would encourage me a little, I felt that something more was wanting to satisfy me. I read much; prayed earnestly and constantly; endeavoured to get with those who I thought were spiritual: but all would not make me quite satisfied.

"I thought the people with whom I walked in a religious way were right, but that I was wrong myself. I thought I did not enter in at the right door: thus I went on until I became a member of their community; took part of the bread and wine; and was immersed in the river Ouse at Holywell: but I did not find myself so fully satisfied, as I thought others were who practised these things.

"My conduct all this time was steady and regular.— I was respected as a servant or labourer; but felt a great deal of that about me, which wanted doing away; yet not applying rightly for the perfecting of the work, it went slowly on.

"In the course of time my wife also became a member with the same people, and remained so until her death. I think I went on in this way about eight or nine years, and did not gain much spiritual ground, as I thought. In process of time, an occurrence hap-

pened which led to another change with me. My master who employed me, died; and another came who professed Quakerism, as it is called. He being observable of his new set of men, and religiously inclined, left books in our counting-house, which, being desirous of knowing religious people and things, I used to get and read.

“ One of these books was, Robert Barclay’s Apology for the Christian Faith, as held by the people called Quakers. I thought myself a match for that, but was mistaken; for whenever I read in it, it used to reach my feelings. Then I began with my master to talk about religious subjects, but was always overpowered on that head.— His reasonings on religious matters reached my feelings, and I found my mind inclining that way, as also did my wife, and rather more so than myself.

“ I cannot very well remember how it happened, but I went to one of the Quarterly Meetings of Friends; and there being a pretty many ministering Friends that day, on an appointment from the Yearly Meeting, a great many living testimonies were borne in the power and authority of Truth, to the tendering of my spirit; and a refreshing meeting it was to me. On my returning home, I thought, surely these must be the people who hold the solemn meeting; and if I were clear of those other people, I should go to the meetings of Friends; but I did not know what I must do, nor how the matter would end. However, I was so far inclined to the

Friends, that I ventured the next first day to attend their meeting again, and some of the same Friends were there, and bore living testimony to the power of Truth, and again refreshed my spirit.

“ One of these Friends, in the afternoon, was concerned to have a public meeting. I went, and had again another good time. O! thought I, this is the way for me to go in, and the language of my heart was, “ This is the solemn assembly ;” and I felt an increasing desire to be united with Friends. My master, who well understood my exercise of mind, heard what I had to say with sympathy, and was always ready to assist when and where he could ; and ever since I have found him willing to lend a helping hand, as need required, for reproof or instruction. And I have found it best for me to take his advice, although, many times, very much in the cross to my natural inclinations. How much better is it to take advice, than to have our own wills gratified ! I have many times found it best for me.”

“ Our endeared Friend became an exemplary, and we believe, constant attender of our religious meetings ; and in the course of a few years, was, with the full unity of Friends, joined to us in membership. He was brought up to the trade of a miller, and for about the last thirty years of his life, resided at Houghton, in his native county, in the capacity of a servant.” He was a widower for several years after he was united in mem-