

**STEPHEN BACHILER,
AN UNFORGIVEN
PURITAN**

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Stephen Bachiler, an unforgiven Puritan by Victor C. Sanborn

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The story which I have to tell concerns the biography of one who lived through the years of the most wonderful century of English history, that period from 1560 to 1660. Those years marked the youth and splendor of British achievement in the realm of spiritual awakening, of literary and intellectual development, and of commercial activity, colonization, and world building.

In the hundred years I have mentioned Puritanism made its first successful stand against the English church, which still clung to Romish superstition. They saw, those golden years, the imperishable dramas of Shakespeare unfolded to the world, the lofty verse of Milton, the graceful muse of Jonson, and the brilliant philosophy of Bacon. For them the poetical soul, the chivalrous life and death of Sir Philip Sidney, were current fact, not history and tradition.

In that short century lived and died the great freebooters of the virgin seas, Raleigh and Drake, Frobisher and Hawkins. Less afraid of new worlds than of old creeds, the Pilgrims and the Puritans in that century left their homes in the "haunt of ancient peace," and sought fresh soil wherein to plant the colony which was to grow into our present vast-spreading republic. The feeble, pedantic, and pleasure loving Stuarts saw in that century the sceptre snatched from their hands, when Hampden, Cromwell, and Harry Vane turned England from a kingdom into a commonwealth.

In the same period Holland became a Protestant republic in spite of the bloody persecutions of Philip. France turned Huguenot after the massacre of St. Bartholomew, and the grasp of Spain began to weaken in the old world and the new.

But, while time has thrown on the stage a thousand full length and heroic figures, some there were of lesser note who yet played a part in the life of the age, but whose history has been obscured by time, or darkened by contemporary dislike and slander. From the mass of these smaller men I have selected as a type one who lived the century through not unworthily, as I hope to show.

Two or three years after Elizabeth came to the throne there was born somewhere in southern England one Stephen Bachiler. Just what was his birthplace I do not know, nor what his ancestry. The name was a common one, and whether his parents were of Hampshire or Berkshire does not specially matter. Perhaps, indeed, they came from Protestant France or the Netherlands. To Southampton about 1568 came a small colony of Walloons, driven from their shops and studies by the iron hand of Philip. Among them were a father and son named Bachelier from Tournai in France.¹ The teacher of this little band of Protestants was Adrien de Saravia, that stout champion of Calvin. Adrien was born in Artois, his father a Spaniard, his mother a Fleming, and he was a minister in Antwerp until driven to the Channel Islands in 1560. From there he came to Southampton for a few peaceful years, returned to Leyden in 1582 as professor of divinity, and was again driven back to Protestant England, where he ended his days. I like to imagine that Stephen Bachiler was a charge of this brave Adrien, and drank in from him that opposition to tyranny and abuse which marked and marred his life.

But, whatever his origin, we first find Bachiler at Oxford in 1581,² a student at St. John's College, then newly founded by the good citizen and London merchant, Sir Thomas White. The college of that time was vastly different from the St. John's of to-day, with its peaceful gardens, smooth lawns and ancient cedars. The good Sir Thomas, since its foundation, had lost much of his money, and his college was

¹ See Records of Walloon Church in Southampton, pub. by Huguenot Soc.

² Matriculations at Oxford, pub. by Oxford Hist. Soc.

very poor. Not for some years did it receive new foundations and added wealth. But, poor or rich, it was a part of that seat of learning, the great University of Oxford, at that time a very hive of Puritanism.

The Regius Professor of Divinity was Lawrence Humphrey, an ardent Lutheran, who was disciplined by Archbishop Grindal for refusing to wear the churchly vestments. John Harmer, the Earl of Leicester's favorite and one of Queen Elizabeth's scholars, was Regius Professor of Greek. The unfortunate Thomas Kingsmill, another Puritan, was head professor in Hebrew. Edward Cradocke was Margaret Professor of Divinity, and the most renowned scholar of the day, an Oxford man, John Rainoldes, was the head and front of the Puritan arm of the church, and the spokesman of the Puritan party. Rainoldes is called by quaint Anthony Wood "a living library and a third university." He declined a bishopric, preferring to remain the President of Corpus Christi College, and from his Oxford study sent forth a mass of treatises in favor of the advanced doctrines. It was he who mainly represented Puritanism at the Hampton Court conference of 1604, and it was at his suggestion and by his aid that the well-meaning but pedantic King James undertook that translation of the Bible which is to-day mainly used.

Indeed, in England generally at this time, 1581-7, the leanings of the wisest were toward Puritanism. Elizabeth was sometimes Puritan and sometimes Prelatic; but her best advisers were of the new religion. Cecil, the great Lord Burghley, who for half a century of troubled life was Prime Minister to the lively and changeable Queen, held firmly to the same persuasion, and so did Walsingham and the unfortunate Davison.

Thus we may safely assume that Bachiler's university training was mainly Puritan, and the atmosphere of St. John's was not in the least Prelatical until the time of its later Fellow and President, the ill-fated Laud.

Among the scholars at St. John's during Bachiler's sojourn there was Henry Cromwell, an uncle of the Protector, who

was father-in-law of Sir Oliver St. John, Cromwell's Lord Chief Justice, and of whose sisters one was the mother of the patriot, John Hampden, and another was the mother of Edward Whalley, the regicide, later a fugitive in New England.

At Oxford Bachiler continued until February, 1586, when he proceeded B.A.¹ Perhaps he then became a chaplain to Lord Delaware, who presented him in 1587² to the vicarage of Wherwell, Hampshire, a small retired parish on the River Test, whose "troutful stream," celebrated by Isaak Walton, is still a favorite resort of anglers.

Here Bachiler preached for twenty years, and here he doubtless hoped to end his days. No more peaceful and beautiful place is to be found in sunny Hampshire, lying as it does in the middle of verdant and fertile meadows. Wherwell was the seat of an ancient abbey, founded in 986 by Queen Aelfrida, the widow of King Edgar. At the Dissolution the abbey was granted to Thomas West, Lord La Warr or Delaware, and it soon became the principal seat of that great family. Here then let us leave Stephen Bachiler to marry and raise a family of his own, while we consider the events that began to crowd thick upon England.

In the very year when Bachiler was made vicar of Wherwell the preparations for the invasion of England by the Invincible Armada were being completed by the "spider of the Escorial." Her eyes blinded by the duplicity of Alexander Farnese, Elizabeth was still dreaming of an alliance with Spain, and was considering seriously the abandonment of that combination with Holland which finally kept Protestant powers the sovereigns of the world. Had it not been for the wisdom of Walsingham and the pugnacity of Drake and Hawkins, England's Protestants and Puritans might have been led in chains to the *autos-da-fe* of Spanish invaders, and the clock of the world's progress might have been set back another century.

¹ Degrees of Oxford Univ., pub. by Oxford Hist. Soc.

² Register of Thomas Cooper, Bishop of Winton, 10.

But the alarm had awakened Britain from her slumbers. Preparations were made on sea and shore to resist the Spanish invasion, and when the 130 ships of the Invincible Armada appeared off Dover in 1588 a squadron of as many tiny fighting craft was ready. By the seamanship of the discredited Drake the unwieldy galleons of Spain were put to flight, and the tempests of August 15th finished the work of that great freebooter, and forever dispelled the fear that Catholic Spain would conquer Protestant England.

Meanwhile in England the Puritan party was disputing the supremacy of the established church. The death of the great Puritan prelate Grindal in 1583 summoned to the primacy John Whitgift, whose "cold mediocrity," as the elder Disraeli called it, was no match for the fiery arguments of the Martin Mar Prelate controversy. In the century and a half which had succeeded the dissolution of the monasteries and the establishment of a Protestant church in England, the same material abuses which had prevailed in the older church showed themselves in the reformed episcopacy. The prelates waxed rich, while the people were overridden. The clergy was corrupt and the rites of the church were abused. Of a sudden a pamphlet ridiculing these abuses ran like wildfire over the land. Whether the first "Mar Prelate" monograph was written by John Penry, by Barrow, or by Job Throckmorton will perhaps never be known, and does not now especially matter. The attack was so sudden, the knife went so deep into the vitals of the establishment, that the surprised and angry bishops retaliated in similar rude and scurrilous pamphlets, and by fines, imprisonments, and persecutions attempted in vain to check the growing wrath of the people towards the prelates. The first categorical answer to the Mar Prelate pamphlets was written by Thomas Cooper, the same bishop of Winchester who had a year before ordained Bachiler vicar of Wherwell. But the established church was forced to attack both Romish priests and Puritan non-conformists, which weakened the force of attempts against either, and popular sympathy was far greater for the Puritan

revolt against the establishment. The last years of Elizabeth's reign were marked by persecutions of Recusants and Reformers, with numberless imprisonments and executions. The Puritan faction grew steadily, and when in 1603 James of Scotland came to the throne great was the rejoicing among them, for it seemed that a Scotch King of England augured well for the victory of Presbyter versus Prelate.

During all this time our vicar of Wherwell became, we may imagine, a man of influence. Perhaps the Lord Delaware who succeeded in 1595, and who married a daughter of the Puritan Sir Francis Knollys, favored him with his patronage, listened to his preaching, and agreed with his opinions. In 1596 Bachiler was named as an overseer in the will of William Spencer of Cheriton, a rich Hampshire squire, who had married one of his parishioners. Probably our vicar was one of the thousand English clergymen who sanctioned the millenary petition to King James, which greeted the Scotch monarch on his coming to the English throne,—a petition which urged the King to reform the crying abuses of the established church, and besought him to allow the Puritan pastors to continue their "prophesyings and preachings" undeterred by the persecutions of their bishops.

As a result of this petition King James called the Hampton Court conference in 1604. Four divines represented the Puritan party, John Rainoldes, John Knewstub, Lawrence Chaderton, and Henry Sparke. Against them were ranged eight English prelates, headed by the next Archbishop of Canterbury, Richard Bancroft, their bitter opponent. Lord Delaware was a member of this conference, which resulted badly for the popular party, for on Rainoldes's mentioning the word presbyter King James's wrath was aroused, and he dismissed the conference with bitter reproaches, telling the Puritans that he would "make them conform or harry them out of the land."

The following year was marked by the ejection of hundreds of Puritans, who declined to follow the hated ceremonies of the church. In May, 1605, Archbishop Bancroft