

Bridewell Hospital and James Nayler

BY the kindness of Rev. E. G. O'Donoghue, Chaplain of the Bethlem Royal Hospital, London, we are able to print the records of Bridewell Hospital relating to the retention within its walls of James Nayler (c. 1618-1660), who, after being a prominent and attractive preacher among Quakers, was led astray by infatuated followers into an imitation of the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem, and had received a series of severe punishments by order of Parliament. His repentance was deep and sincere and he was welcomed again among his former associates.

The minutes have been dictated and checked but the archaic spelling has not been reproduced.

COURT BOOK OF BRIDEWELL HOSPITAL, 14TH OCTOBER, 1642, TO 7TH JULY, 1658.

A COURT AND MEETING HOLDEN AT BRIDEWELL ON WEDNESDAY, THE 28TH OF JANUARY, 1656 [1657].

This day the warrant under the hand of the honourable Sir Thomas Widdrington, Knight, Speaker of the Parliament, bearing date the 16th day of December 1656, directed to the governors of this hospital for the receiving and keeping of James Naylor in Bridewell, London, at hard labour and restraining him from the society of all people, being here openly read in the presence and hearing of the said James Naylor, brought hither from Bristol for the observance of the same warrant, he was here searched whether he had any pen ink or paper about him, and it is ordered by the governors here present that the said James Naylor shall be kept at hard labour in the room on the west side of the common prison in this hospital, the same having been viewed and approved of for that purpose by most of the governors here present, and that he shall be lodged therein on the bedding, coverlet, two blankets and sheets there laid for him, to the end he may take no cold, and that he shall not have

any fire or candle and that the inner door of that room shall be kept locked by the porter of this hospital with the lock that is thereon, and that the outward door within the first great grated gate entering into that room shall be kept locked with two good locks and keys, one lock being thereon already and another good lock shall be forthwith provided and set on the same outward door; and that the steward of this hospital shall keep the key to the new lock to that door and the porter shall keep the key to the old lock of that door, and each of them shall keep the said keys respectively with great care and not suffer each other or either of them to have both the said keys at any time nor any person whatsoever, without the order of the governors here at a court, to have the same keys or either of them out of their custody, and that both the said steward and porter shall at all times go together with Thomas Carpenter, an arts master here, to deliver him the said James Naylor his work to labour at, who is to go to him twice every forenoon and twice every afternoon to direct him in his labour, and they the said steward and porter shall search the hemp delivered him to work both within and without at the delivery of the same unto him and at the receiving of the same from him, and that he shall have for his relief so much as he shall earn by his hard labour to wit for every quarter of a cwt of hemp which he shall beat and turn ready to be made up, not making up the same, 8d, and for every quarter of a cwt of hemp as he shall beat turn and make up, 9d, and that the same shall be allowed unto him as he shall earn the same in such diet as is usually allowed the other prisoners in this hospital in the time of their health and sickness respectively, and that the steward and porter shall still go both together when he hath any diet delivered to him, and that neither they nor the arts master shall have any conference with him but only concerning his diet and labour, and if he shall need any cure for any sore that then Mr. Higgs the chirurgeon of Bethlem Hospital, in the presence of the said steward and porter, may be admitted to him to dress his sore without any other discourse than concerning his cure; and it is ordered that the window in the same room be glazed, leaving the upper part thereof open a foot square, and a close wire grate be set on the outside of the glass and a close grate of wire on the inside of the upper part of the window where

is no glass, and a sloping board from the bottom of the window within a foot of the top of the window on the outside, and that two iron bars be set on the lower part of that window, and that the floor of the said room be boarded, and that the other wooden frames there be removed, excepting his bedstead, and the walls thereof near his bed belined with slit deals; and the committee for buildings and reparations, or any four of them together, are entreated from time to time to see that the same room be secured and that no person whatsoever other than the president or some other governor or governors of this hospital, in the presence and company of four of the said committee, and other than the said steward and porter and arts master as aforesaid, shall be permitted to go into the said room to the said James Naylor at any time, and that the said steward and porter and arts master do strictly observe all things mentioned in the said warrant and in this order, upon pain of losing their places respectively if they shall fail therein; and that copies of this order be delivered to the steward, porter and arts master as aforesaid, for their better observance thereof in all things, and that they or any of them shall not show or read the same or deliver any copy or copies thereof or any part thereof to any person or persons without order of the governors assembled here in court.

A MEETING AND COURT HOLDEN AT BRIDEWELL ON SATURDAY,
31ST JANUARY, 1656 [1657].

Upon reading the reference of Parliament made on Thursday the 29th of January 1656 [1657] to the governors of the hospital of Bridewell concerning James Naylor, it is ordered by the governors here present that James Naylor's wife may be permitted to come to him in the presence of four of the said committee for buildings and to abide with him in their company only and not longer, lest she should convey unto him any pen, ink and paper, or other things contrary to the judgement of the Parliament expressed in Mr. Speaker's warrant, and that his room be forthwith searched in the presence of the governors, and that when the boards of the floor of the said room and slit deals for the lining thereof, as in the former order, are fitted and made ready, that James Naylor be removed to the house of Mr. Lloyd, steward of this hospital, there to be by him securely

kept for one day in which time the carpenter is to finish the same boarding and lining thereof, and the same night the said James Naylor is to be safely returned to the said room provided for him and there to continue according to the former order.

COURT HELD ON SATURDAY, 21ST FEBRUARY, 1656 [1657].

This day the governors here present having sent for Doctor Nurse, the physician of Bethlem hospital, to visit James Naylor a prisoner here, and he being not at home, Mr. Higgs, the chirurgeon of Bethlem hospital, acquainted the governors here present that yesterday morning he being desired to go to the said James Naylor to cure his sore leg found him in bed and saw the calf of his left leg blaggy [?] and some white whelkes [pimples] thereon and somewhat like the scurvy, but no wound or hurt at all, and his pulse very low; and James Naylor telling him he was not well, he went with his water to the said Doctor Nurse, who said that sugar of roses and milk was good for him and that he would come and see him, and thereupon the governors desired Mr. Deputy James and Mr. Walsham, apothecaries, and governors Colonel Gower, Mr. Deputy Webb, Mr. Deputy Cox, Mr. Boteler, and Mr. Peade, and divers other governors, to go to the said James Naylor and see in what condition he was and what he wanted, who returning made report here that they found him the said James Naylor seemingly well and in good health for anything they could perceive, and in a good temper, and his legs well, only he complained that he could not digest his meat but feared he was like to fall into a consumption as formerly he had been, and then his wife, and Mr. Woodcocke accompanying her, came here and were asked whether the steward or porter or both of them were unwilling to bring him his diet, they could not allege anything against either of them, and the steward and porter being questioned, thereupon did here affirm that they have been ready to go to him to bring him necessaries at all such hours as he himself had appointed them to come unto him, and that he refused to eat anything at night or to have them come too often to him, and that he will take no flesh nor drink any beer or ale but hath milk boiled with bread and water gruel and barley broth, and will have water to drink; and it is now agreed and ordered by the governors

that he shall have at convenient times in the day-time such diet as he shall desire within the compass of his earnings in the time of his health, and in the time of his sickness he shall have the house sick-diet or such diet as Doctor Nurse shall direct and that Doctor Nurse be admitted to visit him in the presence of the steward and porter, if necessity require, or at any time in the presence of four of the said committee for buildings and reparations, but shall have no other discourse with him than concerning his health or sickness, and that he shall not have any fire or candle light for fear of firing this hospital where he is kept, unless Doctor Nurse shall advise to have him removed thence, and upon such advice it is left to the said committee to provide a fit place for him to be kept in during the time of his sickness only.

COURT HELD ON TUESDAY, 25TH FEBRUARY, 1656 [1657].

Also at this court the report made the 23rd day of February instant by the committee being here read, it appeared that upon complaint of James Naylor then made unto them that he was sick, upon their request Doctor Nurse came, and the steward and porter having let them into James Naylor's room, and in the presence of four of the said committee, namely Mr. Treasurer, Major General Browne¹, Mr. Deputy James, and Mr. Gace, the doctor felt his pulse, viewed his water, and discoursed with him concerning the temper of his body; and thereupon the said doctor acquainted the court that he could not find any distemper or sickness in the said James Naylor but believed him to be in health, and thereupon the said committee desired Mr. Deputy James to acquaint Sir Christopher Packe what has been done, and the doctor's opinion concerning him, and the desire of the said committee that the Parliament might be acquainted therewith if occasion require.

COURT HELD 2ND MARCH, 1656 [1657].

This day an order of Parliament signed by Mr. Scobell, dated the 28th of February 1656 [1657], was read, wherein it was ordered that James Naylor's wife shall have free access to him and remain with him if she think it necessary. It is therefore ordered that the steward and porter observe and obey the same, and the porter hath left the key of

¹ For Major-General Sir Richard Browne (d. 1669), see vol. vii.

James Naylor's room sealed up, he having business abroad, and thereupon it is ordered that Mr. Gwatkins shall keep the key, and he is desired to go with the steward to open the door upon all occasions necessary, till Mr. Wynne (the porter) come in, and then the key to be delivered again to Mr. Wynne. This court also desired Mr. Deputy James, Mr. Deputy Hickman, Mr. Gace, and Mr. Llewelin, four of the committee for buildings and reparations, with Doctor Nurse, to go and see James Naylor, most of the governors went down with them being also desired to see him. When they returned Doctor Nurse made the report concerning James Naylor under his hand in these words following to wit March the 2nd 1656 [1657]:

"I first find that James Naylor may without danger of life come up to the court to all their views, if they please. I find secondly that he is in a state of health rather than in a state of sickness; he is yet in a state of weakness and of late he complains of a pain of his stomach after eating pudding twice; he also complains of a cough increasing upon him, to which he hath been formerly subject to in the army."

Mr. Deputy James, apothecary, and one of the governors here, now also reported that he has now felt James Naylor's pulse, and upon his further enquiry of him, he is of opinion that he is in a state of health and that nothing of any disease is to be found and as for a pain in his stomach which James Naylor complains of, likewise of a cough which he formerly got in the army, Mr. James is of opinion that if they were so with him, [he] could not be in so good temper as he now is in, and that he finds him something weak, but he considers the occasion thereof to be by his refusing to eat meat and broth, and that if he would more endeavour to work he would have a better stomach to his meat.

Mr. Smith, apothecary and governor, also reports that he hath now likewise seen James Naylor, and he believes him to be in a state of health, and that if he would eat his meat he would be able to work, and his work would get him a better stomach to his meat. It being put to the question whether James Naylor shall be brought up to this court, resolved he shall be brought up. James Naylor was brought up before the governors who, perceiving him to be according to Doctor Nurse's report of him, he is ordered to be carried to

the place from whence he came. Also a note purporting a copy of an order of Parliament, without any hand to it, was here read in these words, Saturday the 28th of February, 1656 [1657], resolved by the Parliament that a committee be appointed to receive from the governors of Bridewell an account of the present condition and using of James Naylor and reported to the house, and are to meet in the Duchy Chamber on Monday at two of the clock afternoon. Thereupon Mr. Treasurer, Mr. Arnold, Mr. Walker, Mr. Little, Mr. Deputy James, Mr. Harrison, Mr. Smyth, Mr. Llewelin and Mr. Gace or any six of them are entreated to attend the said committee and to give them account of the present condition and using of the said James Naylor at such time and place as they shall be thereunto required, and it is ordered that the clerk attend the said governors with copies of the proceedings concerning the said James Naylor.

COURT HELD 4TH MARCH, 1656 [1657].

Upon reading the order of the committee of Parliament, Major General Browne, Mr. Arnold, late Alderman, Mr. Deputy James, Mr. Deputy Hickman, Mr. Deputy Jones, Mr. Deputy Tutchin, Mr. Gace, Mr. Wormelayton, Mr. Jurian, Mr. Harrison, Mr. Smythe, Mr. Llewelin, or any six or more of them, are entreated to attend the said committee at two of the clock this afternoon in the Duchy Chamber at Westminster, to give an account of the present condition and usage of the said James Naylor; also it is ordered by this court that in case of sickness or absence from this hospital of the steward or porter of this hospital upon extraordinary occasion, and so as they be not both absent at any one time, either of them so sick or absent may leave his key or keys and his copies of orders made concerning James Naylor with Thomas Carpenter the arts master to go with the other of them to the said James Naylor upon all necessary occasions, and to observe the said orders and at the recovery or return of such of them so sick or absent, the said Thomas Carpenter is to re-deliver unto him the said key or keys and copies of orders aforesaid, and so often as need shall require.

To be concluded