

Dr. George Harbin

BY MRS. S. W. RAWLINS, B.A. (née BATES HARBIN) AND
THE REV. P. B. G. BINNALL, F.S.A.

[Much of the research on which this article is based was done many years ago by the late Preb. Bates Harbin, and his MSS. notes together with his collection of George Harbin's MSS. is one of the main sources of this expanded version of the articles in the 'Dictionary of National Biography' and J. H. Overton's 'Nonjurors.' For the use of Preb. Bates Harbin's MSS. the present writers are indebted to the kindness of Mrs. Bates Harbin, of Newton Surmaville.]

THE Rev. George Harbin appears in the *Dictionary of National Biography* as a Nonjuror, librarian to the first Lord Weymouth and author of two works published in the reign of Queen Anne, 'The English Constitution fully stated' 1710, and 'The Hereditary Right of the Crown of England asserted' 1713. The article is a short one, and while Overton (J. H. Overton, D.D., *The Nonjurors, their lives, principles and writings*, 1902), discusses more fully the circumstances surrounding the publication of the 'Hereditary Right' no mention is made of his family, or of the fact that he lived into the reign of George II, dying in 1744 at the age of nearly 80, and that much of his correspondence during the later part of his life has survived. Though not a Somerset man by birth, he claimed to belong to a Somerset family; his sisters married and left descendants in the county, and he paid long visits to his Somerset relations, making many friends and copying many ancient documents and pedigrees relating to the county, so that a fuller account of his life is not out of place in the proceedings of a Somerset Society.

In his MS. copy of the Warre pedigree, compiled for his brother-in-law, Sir Francis Warre of Hestercombe, George Harbin states that Sir Francis had married as his second wife, Margaret, daughter of John Harbin, merchant, of the City of London, of a family long settled in Somerset. This is apparently the only reference to his own parentage to be found among Harbin's numerous genealogical MSS. The arms on his seal, and on a hatchment in Kingston St. Mary Church, where the Warres were buried, are those of the Harbins of

Newton Surmaville, Yeovil ; and the descendants of his sister Anne who married Baldwin Malet of St. Audries have preserved a tradition of relationship between the two families, but the late Preb. Bates Harbin and the present writers have sought in vain for the connecting link, which probably dates from the sixteenth century. It seems probable that John Harbin and his brothers James and Joseph are identical with John, James and Joseph, sons of Thomas Harbin, mercer, of Somerton, who died in 1662 (P.C.C. Laud 116), particularly as Joseph of Somerton went 'overseas' before his father's death, and Joseph of London certainly settled in Barbados, but the wills available do not provide actual proof of this. Thomas Harbin's will provides no clue as to his parentage, but it is quite possible that he was related to the Newton family. Robert Harbin, who purchased Newton Surmaville in 1608 and died in 1621 aged 95, had three sons : John his heir, George who was of Blandford in 1615, and Robert who was of London in 1638 and died at an advanced age at Yeovil in 1654. The wills of these two younger sons cannot be traced, but Thomas of Somerton could have been a son, and John of London a grand son of one of them. The name of Harbin is fairly common in Dorset at this date, but not in Somerset, and there does not seem to be any record of any other 'long settled' family of Harbin in the county in the seventeenth century.

The Somerton registers are missing before 1686 ; but John Harbin's baptism does not appear in any of the published London registers and he may well have been a native of Somerset. The earliest reference to him appears to be in two letters in the Malet MSS. (H.M.C. 5th Rep. 319), dated 26 October 1651, from the Duke of York and his secretary Edward Woolley, thanking John Harbin, 'English Merchant of Morlaix', for a gift of £500 ; this suggests that he was already a man of some substance, but he may have been acting as an agent for transferring royalist funds from England. These letters were doubtless carefully preserved by his daughter Anne Malet and her descendants. The registers of St. Helen's, Bishopsgate, show that John Harbin, merchant, and Mary his wife, had five children ; Anne, Margaret, Robert, Thomas and Jane, baptized there between 1662 and 1672, and although George himself was not baptized there, these are known to

have been the names of his brothers and sisters. Prior to 1662 John Harbin was probably living in the parish of St. Laurence Pountny, where four children of John Harbin, merchant, and Mary his wife, were buried between 1655 and 1661. No record of John Harbin's marriage has yet been found. In Overton's *History of the Nonjurors*, Dr. Charlett of University College, Oxford, is quoted as having described George Harbin as a nephew of Francis Turner, the Nonjuror Bishop of Ely, but the Bishop had no sisters, and his wife's name was Horton; she was eighteen years younger than Mary Harbin and is not likely to have been her sister. There may, however, have been some more distant relationship to account for Charlett's statement. The State Papers for the early years of the reign of Charles II contain numerous references to John Harbin, merchant, as an importer of hemp and timber from France, and to purchases of naval stores from him by the Admiralty. He also discounted bills of exchange and in 1670 the Treasury set up an office in his house, which overlooked the churchyard of St. Helen's, for dealing in foreign exchange (C.S.P.D. 1658-69; Reg. of St. Helen's, Bishopsgate, Harleian Soc. 31). John Harbin was buried in St. Helen's on 18 January 1673, in a grave adjoining that of his brother, presumably the James Harbin buried there on 23 November 1672. Administration of John's estate was given to his widow, Mary; James has neither will nor administration in the P.C.C. George Harbin, the Nonjuror, was probably a child of six or seven years old at the time of his father's death. In Venn's *Alumni Cantabrigienses* he is described as a native of Essex, and he may have been born in that county in the year of the Great Plague, which his parents may have escaped by leaving London. It is probable also that his father was the 'John, son of my brother Thomas', mentioned in 1667 in the will of Andrew Harbin of Great Parndon, Essex, a citizen and dyer of London, and a brother of Zanchy Harbin, linen draper of Milton Abbas, Dorset, a village with which the Harbins of Newton Surmaville were also connected.

George Harbin may have been born at Girons, Andrew Harbin's house at Great Parndon, but the registers of the parish are missing for this particular period. From the autobiography of the Rev. Richard Kidder, Rector of St.

Martin Outwich (a parish adjoining Bishopsgate), 1674–91, and later Bishop of Bath and Wells, we find that George Harbin was sent to St. Paul's School as a day boy and lodged with Mr. Kidder. 'Another that was left in my care', he writes, 'was Mr. George Harbin, whom I kept in my house till he was eminently fit for the University.' On 13 March 1683 George was admitted a pensioner of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and after obtaining, according to Kidder, a good reputation for learning and especially 'for skill in the Greek tongue', took his B.A. in 1687. On 30 March 1688 he removed to Jesus College, as a Fellow Commoner, taking this step, Kidder complains, in spite of his (Kidder's) protests, on the advice of 'an aunt', in order to attract the attention of Francis Turner, Bishop of Ely, and Visitor of the College.¹ In this he was successful, for about this time he was ordained, probably at Ely, and became Chaplain to Bishop Turner. In 1690 the Bishop refused to take the oath of Allegiance to King William and Queen Mary, but for how long his chaplain remained with him is uncertain, possibly only until 1691, when Bishop Turner was forced into hiding on account of his alleged share in the Preston plot. That Harbin was no longer living with Turner in 1695 is apparent from Anthony Wood's diary of 25 September in this year, in which he records having met 'at Dr. Charlett's, one Harbin, a clergyman, and a Cambridge man by education, sometime Chaplain to Dr. Turner, but a Non-juror and in a lay habit'. Earlier in this year Harbin had been staying at Boxwell near Wootton-under-Edge in Gloucestershire, possibly with Matthew Huntley of Boxwell Court. Two of his letters dated 10 January and 21 April 1695 addressed to Dr. Charlett from Boxwell are preserved in the Bodleian Library. In the first Harbin says he is enclosing copies of letters by Dr. Pocock, Archbishop Laud, and Dr. Langbairde, and goes on to suggest corrections which might usefully be made in the forthcoming edition of Camden's *Britannia*, which was, of course, Bishop Gibson's. This was probably already in the press and Harbin's suggestions were not adopted.

Harbin concludes with a suggestion that some memorial should be made at Oxford of the fact that Selden's books had

¹ *Som. Rec. Soc.*, xxxvii, 33.

been presented to the University by Sir Matthew Hale, and he asks that this should be done as a personal favour to himself and as an acknowledgement of the kindness received from the Chief Justice's descendant, a Mr. Hale, who owned the originals of the letters of which Harbin enclosed transcriptions.

All Sir Matthew Hale's sons were dead by 1694, so it is probable that the person alluded to was one of the five grandsons, all of whom at this time were under thirty years of age. The Chief Justice had been one of Selden's executors, and it may have been at his suggestion that the testator's original, but altered, intention of bequeathing his library to the University was carried into effect.

Harbin's second letter to Charlett is somewhat similar and concerns letters sent by Theodore Beza to Archbishop Whitgift, which, the writer doubts not, 'will be read with great satisfaction by those who have any respect for the memory of that great prelate'.

In a postscript he refers to the deprived Bishop of Gloucester, Robert Frampton: 'My Lord of Gloucester sends his service to you. I left him very much indisposed with an ague 3 weeks ago and have not had an opportunity of hearing since how he does.' It is possible that Harbin was the author of the anonymous *Life of Bishop Frampton*, which was edited by the owner of the MS., the Rev. T. S. Evans, but the present whereabouts of this MS. cannot be traced. Whether Harbin, like many of the Nonjurors, acted as Chaplain or tutor in some household sympathetic to the Stuart cause between 1690 and 1699 is not known, but in the latter year he became, on the recommendation of Bishop Ken, chaplain to the first Lord Weymouth at Longleat. In his letter of introduction Ken refers to the mental illness from which Richard King, the deprived Nonjuror rector of Marston Bigot, then chaplain at Longleat, was suffering, and continues: 'The Bp. of E. mentions to me one Mr. Harbin, who was his own chaplain heretofore, an excellent scholar and as far as I could observe of a brisk and cheerful temper; however, I was unwilling to engage your Lordship to take him without a previous trial and I have told the Bp. that your Lordship should make experiment of him, for a quarter of a year before he fixed in your family, and upon that intention I desired him to send him word that he should

meet me at Longleat the end of next week.' Throughout the years that he remained at Longleat, Ken and Harbin were on very friendly terms and corresponded frequently when they were not both living under Lord Weymouth's hospitable roof. (See Dean Plumptre, *Life of Ken*.) It was probably Ken who introduced Harbin to Dr. Thomas Smith, the learned ex-fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, and protégé of Sir John Cotton, grandson of the famous antiquary. Both Harbin and Smith were interested in the history of the Reformation, and Smith seems to have hoped that Harbin would do something towards correcting the many errors in Bishop Burnet's work on the subject. It certainly seems that he made some researches among original documents, probably with this object in view.

In 1703 George Harbin wrote to a friend, the Rev. Robert Jenkins, urging him to accept the post of chaplain at Longleat as he himself would not be able to continue to carry out his duties 'on account of being unable to make those compliances soon to be lawful for chaplains in private families'. Jenkins, however, also felt unable to comply with the new conditions, and Harbin continued to live in Lord Weymouth's household, sometimes at Longleat and sometimes in London, but as he is usually styled Lord Weymouth's librarian he probably ceased to officiate as chaplain.

George Harbin's mother had remarried in 1674 John Bluet, like John Harbin, a merchant of St. Helen's, and probably also like him a west-countryman by birth. They had a son, John, baptized 14 September 1675. Subsequently, the Bluets left London (this may be why George was 'boarded out' with Mr. Kidder) and settled at Wood in Knowle St. Giles, near Chard. John Bluet—who is probably the John Bluet of Wood House, mentioned as a kinsman in the will of John Bluet of Holcombe Rogus, 1700—died in 1704.² By his will, proved by his widow Mary, 24 July 1704, he left Wood Farm to his wife, and the lease of the parsonage of Cudworth and Knowle to her for life with remainder to her son George. Mrs. Mary Bluet, widow, was buried at Kingston St. Mary on 22 January 1706 [O.S.]. Her three daughters married into Somerset families. Margaret in 1692 to Sir Francis Warre, Anne in

² P.C.C. Ashe. 141. A letter from Sir William Portman to John Bluet of Woodhouse is in the Malet MSS.

1695, also to a widower, Baldwin Malet of St. Audries, and Jane to Richard Hawley, a grandson of the first Lord Hawley of Buckland (Burke, *Extinct Baronetage*). One of Bishop Ken's letters to Harbin, undated, but probably written in 1709, refers to the difficulty that Harbin had had in finding £300 to pay his mother's debts—presumably this was after her death. George Harbin makes no reference in his will to his brothers who probably died s.p., but Thomas was alive in 1697 when he is mentioned, with his sister Anne, in the will of their uncle, Joseph Harbin of Barbados.³

Throughout the reign of Queen Anne, the Nonjurors did their best to defend their position against the criticisms of the majority party in the Church of England.

One of the most vigorous opponents of the Nonjurors was indeed a renegade from their own ranks, Dr. Higden of Camberwell, and it was in answer to one of his treatises that George Harbin published anonymously in 1710, 'The English Constitution fully stated with some animadversions of Mr. Higden's mistakes about it, in a letter to a Friend.' Higden replied, and Harbin counter-attacked in 'The Hereditary Right of the Crown of England asserted, the History of the Succession since the Conquest clear'd : and the True English Constitution vindicated from the Misrepresentations of Dr. Higden's View and Defence' etc. This new interpretation of the constitution attracted great attention, for it was published in 1713, when the Queen was in failing health and the question of the succession was the burning one of the day. Copies of the 'Hereditary Right' were widely distributed by those who openly or secretly advocated a Stuart restoration; it was thought that the Queen herself had read with approval the thinly-veiled implications that the Act of Settlement was invalid, and that she might by exercising her undoubted hereditary rights leave the Crown by will to — : indeed, it was obvious to all members of the 'honest' party to whom she ought to leave it. The Hanoverian minister in London felt obliged to protest to the Government against the circulation of a volume which set out with so much learning views so detrimental to the Protestant succession. After some months the Rev. Hilkuiah Bedford, who had been chaplain to Bishop Ken and was known to be an

³ Will in Probate Court of Barbados.

uncompromising Nonjuror, was arrested, tried and found guilty (February 1714) of writing, printing and publishing the obnoxious treatise. Though a fine of 1,000 marks was remitted—it was thought through ‘his interest at court’—he was committed to prison for three years. He subsequently became a bishop of the Nonjurors and died in 1724.

Twenty-eight years afterwards the Gloucestershire antiquary, James West of Alscot, showed George Harbin his copy of the ‘Hereditary Right’ with MS. notes by the Whig Bishop Kennett. ‘He then told me’, wrote West, ‘that he was the author of this book and immediately produced the original copy of the same, together with 3 large volumes of original documents from which the same was compiled. He was chaplain to Dr. Ken, Bishop of Bath and Wells, and was the head of the clergy of the Non-Juror persuasion at that time, 1742. A man of infinite knowledge and reading, but of a weak, prejudiced and bigoted judgement.’ These notes West wrote in his own copy of the ‘Hereditary Right’, which was later bought by Gough who showed it to Nichols, who copied and printed them in his *Literary Anecdotes* (Vol. I, p. 168) in 1813. So exactly a hundred years after it had been printed was the authorship of the ‘Hereditary Right’ made public. There seems no evidence that George Harbin was ever head of the ‘Non-Juror Persuasion’ nor was he ever made a bishop. His interests were historical and political rather than theological, but as one of the survivors of the original Nonjurors, the friend of Turner, Frampton and Ken, he would doubtless have been looked up to with respect in the diminishing community of Stuart Royalists. That he was a man of strong prejudices is evident, and that the rising Whig politician should find the old Jacobite of weak judgment is perhaps not surprising.

To return to 1714, shortly after his imprisonment, Hilckiah Bedford was visited by George Harbin, bringing with him a gift of £100 from Lord Weymouth. It has usually been assumed that Bedford’s failure to deny the authorship of the ‘Hereditary Right’ arose either from his friendship with Harbin or from a desire to obtain the credit of having written a book which had obtained unexpected notoriety; but the second explanation seems somewhat improbable, considering

the penalties attached and the first if true would place Harbin in a highly discreditable light, while his visit to Hilckiah in prison would have added insult to injury. There is no evidence that Harbin's reputation suffered from his curious conduct and a third explanation may be suggested. Besides Harbin and Bedford there were involved in the publication of the 'Hereditary Right', Theophilus Downes, a Nonjuror and ex-fellow of Balliol, and Robert Nelson, a layman who had abandoned the Nonjuror position in church affairs but remained an ardent Jacobite. According to Overton's *History of the Nonjurors*, Downes had written the preface and Nelson had corrected the proofs. Another Nonjuror, Charles Leslie, who had been chaplain to the second Lord Clarendon, was also said to have had a share in it. In C. F. Secretan's *Life of Nelson* there is a long letter from Nelson to Bedford which makes it clear that the forthcoming publication was being carefully discussed among the Nonjurors. Is it not possible that some agreement may have been reached among the group of friends and collaborators that whoever among them was first arrested, if the Government considered the work seditious, should take the blame for the rest? It has also been assumed that Lord Weymouth knew nothing of his librarian's literary work. But this seems on the face of it improbable. Weymouth was a 'high Tory' and in 1711 had been reappointed Lord-Lieutenant of Wiltshire by the Tory cabinet; though not a Nonjuror himself, he certainly sympathized with them, and his brother-in-law Lord Winchelsea was one of the leading lay Nonjurors. Had it become known that Lord Weymouth's librarian had written the 'Hereditary Right', would contemporary Whig opinion have believed that his Lordship knew nothing of its composition, and might not the repercussions of such a discovery have proved embarrassing to the Tory Government?

Secretan and Overton say that Bedford took the MS. to the printers and that he 'carried the book through the press'. So that although not the author, Bedford may well have felt some responsibility for its publication. Nelson had written to him on 24 September 1713, 'According to your desire I am reading over once more that admirable treatise Mr. Smith has printed. I cannot think that Dr. Higden will ever

pretend to answer the author who is much his superior in reason and style as well as in law and history. I am very much mistaken if that book is not read with universal applause. I do not remember any passages which are obnoxious to the censure of the government, but if I find any which have a tendency that way, I will not fail to remark them. As to the title we may discourse farther upon that point when we meet.' And it was Nelson who was said to have presented a copy to Queen Anne. The publicity given to the 'Hereditary Right' was evidently well organized. On Sunday 13 November 1713, 'the title-pages in full half sheets of good paper appeared upon every conspicuous post and door to draw away the eyes of all that were going to church' (Kennett, *Wisdom of Looking Backwards*). It was said that this had been done by the contrivance of Bromley, one of the Secretaries of State.

In his folio volume of three hundred and thirty-seven pages Harbin argued from the acknowledged facts of history and from 'MSS. in the possession of Ld. Treasurer Harley' that the sovereigns of England had never relied on a plea of possession, but always on some hereditary or testamentary right. He was prepared to excuse the reigning Queen—'Cases may be supposed of princes who for want of power or opportunity of doing right to a lawful heir are forced to endure the burden of a crown of which they would readily and gladly ease themselves upon a proper occasion; as when the rightful heir is abroad . . . or at the disposal of a foreign prince'. This was fairly plain speaking. Mr. Higden's views, moreover, would be likely to lead to republicanism. 'The first time that the duty of paying allegiance to powers in possession began to be taught publicly in this Kingdom was during the usurpations that followed the death of King Charles I.' Overton mentions Harbin's correspondence with such learned contemporaries as Hearne and Smith, but some of the friends to whom he wrote were in a different category.

Unfortunately, far fewer of these letters seem to have been preserved, and most of those that have are brief and non-committal, but among the Levens MSS. are several letters from Lord Weymouth and one from Harbin to Col. James Graham,⁴

⁴ Graham was an active Jacobite until 1696, Tory M.P. for Appleby 1701-7, and Westmorland 1707-27, and often entertained Bishop Ken at Levens.

whose brother Lord Preston had named Bishop Turner as one of his confederates in planning the restoration of James II in 1690. There is, moreover, in the Malet MSS. (Add. MSS. 32094) a note saying, 'This letter (written by Louis XIV to James, Duke of York, in 1665) and a number of others were wrapped in brown paper on which was written "to Mr. G. Harbin at the Rt. Hon. Lord Viscount Weymouth's House in Wilts. These papers were all found in King James' Closet and given by the Hon. James Graham Esq., to one of his friends."' Sir Alexander Malet inherited George Harbin's MSS. from his ancestor the Rev. Alexander Malet, Harbin's nephew and executor. It is clear that one letter cannot have been the whole of Graham's and Harbin's intercourse. There are also a number of letters from Dean Atterbury, who was a Jacobite without being a Nonjuror. These too are non-political, but give further evidence that Harbin's interests were not entirely antiquarian and that his study of constitutional history was intended to have a practical application. It may also be noted that some of Atterbury's correspondence with the Jacobites in Paris reached him through a Mrs. Harbin who lived in the Strand. It is possible that this was George Harbin's wife (he married in 1719 and the letters date from 1720-1), but there was a Mary Harbin, school-mistress, of St. Martin's in the Fields, who refused the oaths in 1714 and would also have been a likely go-between.

It was probably through Lord Weymouth that Harbin was introduced to Harley, from whom he subsequently received an annuity. It may well be that in spite of the arrest of Hilkiah Bedford, Harley and St. John had welcomed, if not encouraged, the publication of the 'Hereditary Right' as an admirable piece of propaganda on behalf of the Stuart restoration for which they were secretly working. George Harbin may have been pressed to remain in the background, and the £100 sent to Bedford have been the latter's reward for accepting the rôle of scapegoat. Had the restoration taken place, it is not to be supposed that Hilkiah would have served the whole of his three years' sentence. But the Nonjurors' hopes were disappointed. Queen Anne died and the Elector of Hanover was proclaimed King, and in a year's time was firmly established on the throne. Lord Weymouth died within a few days of

the Queen. The autumn of 1714 must have been a gloomy one for George Harbin. His old patron had left him an annuity, but the heir, his great nephew, was a boy of four, and it is uncertain whether Harbin remained at Longleat, although his connection with the Thynnes continued throughout his life. Lord Weymouth's grand-daughter, Frances Thynne, married in 1713 the seventh Duke of Somerset, and there are various MSS., pedigrees and notes relating to the Percy family and an account of the pretensions to the Northumberland title of a Captain Percy among Harbin's papers. Some of the pedigrees are not in his own writing, and are accompanied by an unsigned note in a youthful copybook hand which may have been that of Lord Beauchamp, the seventh Duke's only son who died in 1744, aged 19. Harbin's answer to this, headed 'my lord', details such well-known parts of the Percy pedigree that it seems more likely to have been written to Lord Beauchamp than to his father.

The young Lord Weymouth's mother had remarried in 1711 George Granville, Lord Lansdowne,⁵ and it is not unlikely that Harbin became his librarian. A letter of 1723 is addressed to Harbin at Lord Lansdowne's house in Kensington, but Lord Lansdowne himself was at this time in Paris, and Harbin may only have been visiting his family who seem to have remained in England. In September 1715 Lord Lansdowne was arrested on suspicion of having planned a rising in Cornwall on behalf of the Pretender, but after his release in February 1717 he is said to have lived at Longleat until 1722. Very little of George Harbin's correspondence survives for this period, but it may have been after his marriage in 1719 that he acquired the house in King Street, Westminster, where he was living at the time of his death. His wife, to whom he was married on 10 June 1719, at St. Mary's, Somerset House, was Elizabeth, daughter of Edward Copley of Batley, near Leeds.⁶ She may be the daughter of the Mrs. Copley who is mentioned in a memorandum of 1703 (Add. MSS. 32094) as having a chamber in Lord Weymouth's house in St. James', or since Miss and Mrs. are often synonymous, this may have been Elizabeth

⁵ Grandson of Sir Bevil Grenville, b. 1667, d. 1735; his niece, Mrs. Delany, was also a friend of George Harbin.

⁶ Copley pedigree in Dugdale's *Visitation of Yorkshire*, ed. Clay.

Copley herself, in which case she and her husband would have been old acquaintances. In any case, his bride was probably not much younger than he was, for he wrote regretfully to his niece, Margaret Bamfylde, that there was little hope of his wife presenting him with an heir. They had, in fact, no children, and she probably predeceased him by many years, for there is no mention of her in his numerous letters to Mrs. Bamfylde between 1733 and 1743.

The correspondence of his later years shows Harbin paying long visits to his friends and relations in Somerset and elsewhere. In 1728 he stayed at Appuldurcombe in the Isle of Wight with Sir Richard Worsley, who had married the first Lord Weymouth's sister, and his MSS. included a number of copies of pedigrees of Isle of Wight families with notes on the history and topography of the Island.

Many of his letters were addressed to his niece Margaret, the only surviving child of his sister Margaret Warre, who died in 1719, and to her husband John Bamfylde, M.P. Others were written in London or when he was staying with the Bamfyldes at Hestercombe, to the second Lord Oxford (H.M.C. Portland VI). No correspondence has yet been traced between Harbin and Robert Harley, the first Lord Oxford, but at some date he must have spent many days in the library at Wimpole or in the Harleys' town house copying MSS., including apparently the whole of the Somerset visitation pedigrees. Lord Oxford died in May 1724, and the first letter from Harbin to his son is dated 30 October 1725. In it Harbin explains the difficulties he was in owing to the non-payment of an annuity from Lord Oxford which he had apparently been receiving up to the end of 1724. 'But for the assistance of friends he would have been forced to stand the clamours and reproaches of creditors, a state not consistent with that quiet and repose which have always been the object of the writer's wishes.' The letter is endorsed 'arrears paid immediately'.

In a letter of 1728 Harbin asks Lord Oxford for some tickets 'for my Lord Danby's play' in order to oblige some 'ladies of quality', though 'it may not seem very proper for me to be thus forward in promoting their going to the Playhouse, especially when there is so much danger of their falling in love with the Actors'. Other letters contain political gossip and

a reference to 'some curiosities from China' brought by an East Indian ship, which he had seen and admired. Two dated 8 August and 15 September 1733 are written from Hestercombe and describe the efforts made by Lord Hinton to obtain nomination as a prospective candidate for the next county election in place of one of the two sitting members, Mr. Horner and Sir William Wyndham. The second letter also refers to a Mr. Popham, a kinsman of Lord Oxford, whose mysterious absences from his home in 'an obscure place in this neighbourhood' (? West Bagborough) were evidently causing much local gossip. Among the many men of letters who corresponded with Lord Oxford and were given access to his library were John Anstis, Garter-King-at-Arms, and the French scholar Michel Maittaire, both of whom were Harbin's friends. Many copies of 'Mr. Anstis' MSS.' are among his collection and Maittaire, in a letter to Lord Oxford dated 30 January 1732 (Nichols, *Lit. Anec.*, I, 200), acknowledges the help Harbin, 'that great and good man', had given him in compiling his great work on the Oxford marbles—*Marmoreum Arundellianorum*, etc., published in 1732. Harbin's letters to his niece and her husband contain a certain amount of local gossip, but are chiefly occupied with reports of Parliamentary debates and other information on current events. These letters continue until shortly before his death, and in spite of increasing age and ill-health, which to his great regret made travelling to Somerset impossible, he continued to display that 'brisk and cheerful temper' which had recommended him to Bishop Ken forty-five years before.

He had many acquaintances and friends among the gentry of West Somerset, who visited him when they were in London. John Periam, M.P., for Minehead 1742-7, Thomas Palmer of Fairfield, M.P. for Bridgwater, 1731-5, Sir Charles Tynte and Thomas Carew of Crowcombe and his brother John, were among those who called at his house in King Street. He enquires after the health of Sir John and Lady Trevelyan of Nettlecombe, their daughter Mrs. Luttrell and Mrs. Francis of Combe Florey. Probably his most intimate friend was Thomas Carew, from whose library he had copied many pedigrees and ancient documents relating to Somerset. Some of his MSS. are endorsed 'papers drawn up by Thomas Carew and given me'.

In the 'usager' controversy which divided the Nonjuror fraternity in the 1720's Harbin does not appear to have taken any part. Overton notes that his name never occurs 'in connection with non-juring services, consecrations or internal disputes', but his papers contain a copy of a project for reconciliation among the 'dissenting non-jurors' dated 1731, and show that he was asked to attend a meeting to discuss these proposals and did not do so.

Harbin died on 20 September 1744 and was buried at St. James', Westminster. The executors of his will, dated 25 August 1744, and proved 13 November following (P.C.C., Anstis 256) were his nephew, the Rev. Alexander Malet, Rector of Combe Florey, and his great-nephew, Copleston Bamfylde, to whom he left his collection of French books. His pictures and a gold snuff-box given him by Lord Weymouth were left to his niece Margaret Bamfylde and the furniture in his house in King Street to his niece Anne Malet. He describes himself as an 'unworthy priest of the Church of England as now professed and by law established', while his obituary in the *London Evening Post* declares him to have been 'a person of uncommon learning, admirably versed in all parts of our English History and true ancient constitution'.

Alexander Malet's daughter Anne, born not long before her great-uncle's death, and described in his will as his god-daughter, lived to the age of 90, and handed down to her nephews and great-nephews, some of whom were equally noted for their longevity, traditions of the eighteenth century which have thus been preserved to the present day. She remembered how when her father, who had accepted the Hanoverian dynasty, said the prayers for the royal family, his sister Anne used to stand up in her pew in protest and in token that she at least would have nothing to do with such a petition.⁷ The number of Nonjurors, lay and clerical, diminished steadily as the century advanced, and the Tory party became the supporters of George III, but it may still be worth while to recall the lives of some of those whose loyalty bade them prefer poverty or at best a precarious livelihood dependent on the charity of their friends, to good livings and the hope of promotion.

⁷ The traditions in the Malet family have been kindly communicated to S.W.R. by Lt.-Colonel G. E. G. Malet.

George Harbin might well have ended his life as a bishop had he not steadily refused to abjure those exiled princes whom he believed would always be entitled to the allegiance he had once given them.

Note.—The principal collections of George Harbin's MSS. to have been traced so far are :

1. The collection of MSS. and notebooks purchased by the late Preb. Bates Harbin and now in the possession of Mrs. Bates Harbin at Newton Surmaville. These include copies of the Somerset Visitation pedigrees, copies of documents relating to Somerset families, particularly Beauchamp, Warre, Trevelyan, and Carew, papers 'drawn up by Thomas Carew'; Devonshire pedigrees, with extracts from Pole, Risdon, etc.; a copy of the Isle of Wight Domesday; extracts from Gervase Holles' history of the Holles family; notes on peerage cases; theological MSS., including some headed *De Jure Regum*, which may be the rough draft for the 'Hereditary Right'; a few personal letters and notes; a mysterious and presumably unused dedication to 'a high and mighty Prince', perhaps intended to have been prefixed to the 'Hereditary Right' in the case of a Stuart restoration; and a copy of the 'Project for a union between Dissenting non-jurors, 1731'.
2. The Warre MSS, including Harbin's letters to the Bamfylde, now in the possession of the Somerset Archæological Society.
3. The Malet MSS., many of which were calendared in the 5th Report of the Hist. MSS. Comm. Most of those so calendared are now in the British Museum; others are in the possession of Sir Edward Malet, Bart.
4. The collection formed by the Rev. P. B. G. Binnall, including extracts from the Patent Rolls, copies of peerage and other legal cases, and extracts from the MSS. of John Anstis, Garter-King-at-Arms, Harbin's friend and contemporary.

Harbin's letters to Lord Oxford are calendared in the Portland volumes of H.M.C.; it is possible that others exist at Longleat and in the Phillipps collection, from which a small volume of Harbin's extracts from charters relating to Bath was recently sold. There is an unsigned portrait of George Harbin at Newton Surmaville.