



Pages for All Ages: Love Eternal

Some words and phrases to know before you read

- eternal
- priests
- scoff
- king
- heart cleft to
- widow
- disappointed
- arrested
- nobleman
- property
- miserable
- imprisoned
- pray without ceasing
- organized religion
- laws
- plague
- parliament
- judge

Mary Penington said she fell in love with Isaac Penington because he was as “sick and weary” of “shows of religion,” the way she was. She wrote that her “heart cleft to” Isaac because of those feelings.

Isaac was born in 1617, and Mary was born in 1623. Isaac’s father, who was also named Isaac, was a rich nobleman and was important in the politics of London and England. Mary’s father was also a rich nobleman, Sir John Proude. Growing up, both Isaac and Mary wanted always to live close to God. From almost the earliest days that Isaac could remember, he “cried out to God” to find him. Mary began her search for God by trying to “pray without ceasing.”

When they finally met in 1654, Isaac and Mary were both busy adults. Isaac had already written several books, and he was spending a lot of his time arguing with priests. He thought that it was his duty to “break their false peace.” Mary was a young widow when

she met Isaac. Her husband had died of an illness when they had been married three years and had two children. Mary’s mother-in-law helped raise the children, and she taught Mary how to handle money and

property. (The two women practiced medicine, and Mary practiced architecture!)

Mary and Isaac got married in 1654, the same year they met. They became Seekers together. They did not trust organized religion. They didn’t trust Quakers either. When they first met them in 1656, Isaac thought Quakers were “poor, weak, silly” people. Mary wrote that she “scoffed” at them. The Quakers visited the Peningtons often, but the Peningtons wouldn’t join.

Then Isaac agreed to go hear George Fox speak in 1658. Isaac was prepared to be disappointed. Instead, when he heard George Fox, Isaac felt “words of truth from the Spirit of truth reaching to my heart.” He felt he had found the Seed he had searched for all his life. After that meeting, Isaac and Mary were life-long Quakers.

Becoming a Quaker was especially hard for Isaac. He always behaved kindly and gently, but he loved to argue. Quaker worship helped him see that he loved his own ideas more than he loved God. That idea made him miserable. Plus, his family and friends started treating him like a fool for joining the Quakers. And on top of that, England started passing laws against the Quakers.

Mary and Isaac were not scared by the new laws. They held Quaker meetings in their home. Isaac quickly became well-known as a Quaker writer. He also kept talking with priests about why their ideas were wrong. But even though he tried to be kind, the priests didn’t like what he said.



The true Portraiture of the Right Honourable ISAAC PENNINGTON Lord Mayor of the City of London





In 1660, the people of England fought a battle over who would rule the country – a parliament or a king. Isaac Penington's father, Sir Isaac Penington, fought for a parliament. But King Charles II won the battle. The king's men threw Sir Isaac into jail and sentenced him to death.

The next year, 1661, the younger Isaac Penington was also thrown into jail. He was arrested for holding Quaker worship in his home and was imprisoned for four months. The jail was so cold and filthy that it made him sick. When he got out of that jail, he was so sick and weak that he couldn't even turn himself over in bed. The older Isaac Penington got so sick in jail that year that he died.

While the two Penington men were imprisoned in 1661, the king's men stole their property. They stole the house of the younger Isaac Penington. Mary had learned how to manage money and property from her first mother-in-law. She found a way to keep some of the family's money and buy them a new house. Into that house, Mary and Isaac brought the five children they had together and the two children Mary had with her first husband. (Mary and Isaac had one other baby who died early.)

Three years after he got out of jail the first time, in 1664, Isaac was thrown back in jail for another four months. His crime was attending Quaker worship.

After that, Isaac spent most of the next two years in jail. He was imprisoned three times during 1665 and 1666. The first arrest happened during a funeral march, and during the arrest, the coffin got knocked to the ground. That time Isaac spent one month in jail. Then, just a month after he got home, Isaac refused to greet the Earl of Bridgewater as "My Lord" and he refused to call himself "Your humble servant." So he was thrown back into jail for another nine months. While Isaac was imprisoned this time, another man died of the plague in that same jail. Then, when Isaac was free again and had only been home three weeks, a group of soldiers grabbed him out of bed and threw him back into jail with no charge brought against him. He was imprisoned for a year and a half that time. Mary finally found someone

to get a judge to set him free. The Peningtons helped to start Upperside Monthly Meeting in 1668. They were active members in the meeting until Isaac died in 1679 and Mary died in 1680.

Isaac's sixth and last imprisonment was in 1670. He had gone to visit some other Quakers who were imprisoned. A local judge simply decided not to let Isaac leave the jail when the visit had ended. Isaac was imprisoned for nearly two years that time.

One of his fellow prisoners wrote that Isaac showed great patience and cheerfulness in jail. He helped other prisoners feel better, and he was kind and forgiving to his jailers. The Quakers held wonderful meetings for worship in that jail. "So that the prison was made by the Lord as a pleasant palace!"

While he was in jail, Isaac spent much of his time writing to people who felt miserable because they couldn't find God. He remembered how miserable he used to feel when he wanted to find God and didn't know how. He was good at helping people feel better. He also kept writing to priests, trying to get them to stop their "empty" ways. Isaac and Mary never gave up on anyone. ♣

- What are some ways that you and a good friend see things the same? What are some ways that you see things differently?
- What problems are people having today because they have different religions?
- When is it OK for the government to put people in jail or prison?

The portrait of Sir Isaac Penington is by an unknown artist. The portrait of Mary Penington (as Mary Springett) is by Nicolas Maes. Both images are in the public domain. No portrait of Isaac Penington the Quaker seems to exist.

