

## “Old Style” and “New Style.” (O.S. and N.S.)

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The object of the following notes is to help readers of eighteenth century documents to avoid the pitfalls caused by the change made in 1752 from “Old Style” to “New Style.” The change is puzzling enough when the months are called by their Julian names, but much more so, as will be seen, in studying the letters and records of Friends, for in their case the months changed not only their position in the year but their names.

Up to the year 1752 the Julian Calendar was in use in England although it had long gone out of use in the rest of Western Europe. According to this Calendar the year began in March, which was therefore the first month, and the Friends’ names of the months corresponded with the reckoning which made September, October, November and December the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth months of the year.<sup>1</sup>

But by the Gregorian Calendar which was introduced by an Act passed in 1751 (coming into force in 1752), the year, instead of beginning about the Spring Equinox was made to begin about the Winter Solstice or on the 1st of January. January had hitherto been the eleventh month of the year and now became the first month. The months of January and February and part of March, which had previously belonged to the old year now became part of the new year. This change is easily expressed in the ordinary notation by giving a double year to days between the 1st of January and 25th March in speaking of years before 1752, as for instance, “17th February 1745/6.” This is comparatively simple, but when we come to dates in Friends’ language the complication is serious, for the months changed their names as well as their places in the year. Thus 17th February, 1745/6 would be 17th of 12th Month, 1745 “Old Style,” and 17th of 2nd Month, 1746, “New Style.” It is evident therefore that great care is needed in identifying dates which belong to this portion of the year, and it is easy to get a year wrong.

<sup>1</sup> This must be borne in mind when it is stated that the Yearly Meeting was held in “Third Month” or “Fourth Month,” as though it had preceded the usual “time called Whitsuntide.” The later months of the year can be best reckoned when the Latin origin of their names is remembered. See THE JOURNAL, i. 66, 95; *First Publishers*, p. 1, etc. [EDS.]

The double date will be found sometimes before 1751. This is not surprising when we remember that in the other countries of Western Europe the Gregorian Calendar had been in use since 1582. Intelligent people in England began, at least as early as the seventeenth century, to appreciate the confusion between their dates and those of their neighbours. It would appear, however, that the question was not always understood clearly, for I am informed that occasionally a double date is found in the middle of a year.

Another part of the change from the Julian to the Gregorian Calendar was perhaps more surprising at the time, but it is not likely to cause much embarrassment to students. The Act enacted that the next day after the 3rd of September, 1752, should be reckoned as the 14th of September. The mob, who were ignorant of the reason and necessity for such a startling change, considered that they had been defrauded of eleven days of their lives, and used to shout to unpopular ministers in the street or at the hustings, “Who stole the eleven days?” and, “Give us back our eleven days!”

The reason for this change was that the astronomers of the time of Julius Cæsar reckoned the length of the solar year as 365 days six hours, and these odd six hours were provided for by adding an extra day to February every four years. But, as a matter of fact, the solar year is eleven minutes ten and three-tenths seconds shorter than was supposed, and this error accumulates in a century to nearly (but not quite) a whole day of twenty-four hours. In course of time the error had amounted to eleven days and these had to be got rid of in the summary manner already mentioned to bring the Calendar into line with astronomical facts. To prevent further errors it was arranged that the extra “Leap-year” day should be omitted at the even centuries which are not divisible by four. Thus 1600 was a leap-year, but 1700, 1800 and 1900 were not leap-years.

Russia and Greece alone of all Christian countries still adhere to the old Calendar, which has by this time become wrong by thirteen days, so that the 12th of June with them is the 25th of June with us.

It may not be without interest to mention that in Mohammedan countries they still adhere to a year of twelve lunar months, which is some eleven days shorter than the solar year: making a complete cycle in about thirty-three years or three years in a century. This accounts for the fact that the Mohammedan year which begins in A.D. 1904 is not A.H.

1282 as we should make it (dating from the year of the Hejira, 622), but A.H. 1322 as may be seen in Letts' Diary. It also accounts for the puzzling fact that the fast of Ramadan and other yearly events may come at any time of our year.

ELIOT HOWARD.

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### Thomas Hancock, author of "*The Peculium*."

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Thomas Hancock was born July 19th, 1832, and was educated at Merchant Taylors' School. His father, who was an artist and also a manufacturer of india-rubber, intended him to take a share in the business, but a mercantile life had no charm for him, so he tried his hand at journalistic and literary work. It was during this time that the Prize Competition, originated by Mr. Rowntree, came to his notice, and he wrote *The Peculium*. This brought him under the eye of Frederick Denison Maurice, one of the judges of the Essays, and he advised Thomas Hancock to seek orders in the Church, which he did, after some difficulties, as he had no University or College training. Eventually he was ordained by Bishop Samuel Wilberforce at Oxford, and served as curate till 1875. In 1884, the late Professor Shuttleworth offered him the lecturership of S. Nicholas Cole Abbey, in the City of London, which he held until his death on September 24th, 1903.

The whole of the period from 1875 until his death, Thomas Hancock did journalistic work for his living, and spent all his available time in historical research upon the middle period of the 17th century, on which he was a comparatively unknown, yet first-rate authority. He left behind him MSS. notes and references from all sorts of works of that period—books, newspapers, sermons, and pamphlets, which run into thousands and thousands of pages, those referring to the early days of the Society of Friends being amongst the fullest.

<sup>1</sup> Slightly abbreviated from a biographical sketch written at the request of the Librarian of D., by Thomas Hancock's son, Aidan Hancock, of S. Peter's Parsonage, Sutton Road, Colney Hatch Lane, London, N.