

An Account of the Ancient Documents belonging to the Society of Friends in Mansfield.

Concluded from page 16.

WOMEN'S QUARTERLY MEETING.

In the year 1666, George Fox recommended the setting up of Monthly Meetings. Some time prior to this, Quarterly Meetings appear to have been established in several districts, but these were found insufficient to deal with the growing business of the new society. The Minute Book of the Women's Quarterly Meeting for Nottinghamshire starts on the 20th day of 7th month, 1671; I have thought it would be of interest to note the names of these mothers in Israel here set down, and also the instructions issued to them for their guidance in the conduct of business.

A Quarterly Meeting settled of woemen friends belonging to Nottingham Meeting & the meeting about Mansfeild being appoynted & named for publicke Service as followeth. The names of such as belongs to Nottingham Meeting :—

Elizabeth Smith.	Anne Reckless.	Ellin Hart.
Sarah Watson.	Sarah Hyfeild.	Martha Marshall.
Joane Hyfeild.	Mary Richarson.	Hannah Reckless.
Anne Colling.	Hannah Reckless.	Elizabeth Goodman.
Sarah Watson, the younger.	Prudence Harding.	Elizabeth Newam.

The names of such as belongs to the meeting about Mansfeild :—

Judeth Garland.	Elizabeth Kitching.	Elizabeth Clay.
Elizabeth Brandreth.	Sarah Clay.	Alce Sinyard.
Frances Bingham.	Mary Leadbeater.	Anne Barke.
Martha Grace.	Elizabeth Cockram,	Ellin Cockram.
Mary Bing.	Skegby.	Ann Malson.
	Elizabeth More.	

Some heads drawn forth of the Generall order of George Fox, to be called over & examined everie meeting, & such to be taken notice of & exhorted that practise any such things :—

Jf any walke not in the truth, as in paying tythes, or speaking you to a single pson, or putting of the hat to respect psons, or drinking one to another in a common way, with any other things which are not in the truth.

Jf any have been convinced & gone from the truth.

Jf any follow pleasures, drunkenness, gammings, or is not faithfull in there callings & dealings, nor honest & just.

Jf any goe disorderly together in marriage.

Jf any goes to the preists to be married.

Jf any men or woemen hunt after one another & then leaves one another and goes to others.

Jf there be any evill Speakers, backebiters, slanderers, foolish Jesters & talkers.

Jf there be any tale carriers & Raylers that sowes dissention.

Jf any difference be between friends to be speedily ended.

All these things to be pticularly examined.

The intention of marriage to be first declared at the mens meeting, the man & the woman being both present, or else a Certificate from the woman & a Certificate from parents & relations, & then to be declared twice at the woemens meeting, & then at the men's meeting againe, that soe all things may be cleare, & the Woemens Meeting to certifie to everie Quarterly Meeting of men friends concerning what is done before them.

Such as are poore or weake or wants Jmployment to be looked after and releived.

All Exhortations and other Proceedings to be recorded in order.

We find in George Fox's *Journal* that in some Meetings great objection was made to the establishment of Women's Meetings, which step he so strongly recommended; in our old document there is a long epistle advocating the formation of such Meetings, and setting forth his reasons for the same; unfortunately, it is much too long to quote here; it is entitled, "To all the Woemen's Meetings in the Restoration," and dated from "Worcester Goale, this 2d of the 11th mo., 1673." The formation of Women's Meetings to a certain extent made a schism in the Society, and in this Meeting there are symptoms that to some individuals the exhortations of women Friends were not quite acceptable, for we find a minute to this effect:—

Mary Leadbeater & Eliz. Cockram exhorted Joshua Ely and his wife for absenting from meetings; he said he had satisfied men friends, and he thought that was sufficient, but after some words with him he spake something as signifying that he had not unity with all that spake amongst friends, and he was exhorted to faithfulness, his wife said she intended to come amongst us again.

MARRIAGES.

The legality of Friends' marriages was early established. An action was brought in one of the English Courts to dispossess the child of a deceased Friend of his

inheritance on the ground of illegitimacy, the father having been married according to the order of Friends, counsel for the plaintiff moreover using many unhandsome expressions respecting the Society. Judge Archer, in summing up the case, observed, "There was a marriage in Paradise when Adam took Eve, and Eve took Adam"; and that it was the consent of the parties that made a marriage. And "for the Quakers," he added, "he did not know their opinions, but he did not believe they went together, as brute beasts, as had been said of them, but as Christians, and therefore, he did believe the marriage was lawful and the child lawful heir."¹² To satisfy the jury more fully, he adduced a case in point, where a marriage performed by the simple declaration of the parties before witnesses that they took each other to be husband and wife had been questioned, but its validity and lawfulness were affirmed by the bishops as well as judges. This ruling settled the question once and for ever, for never since has the legality of a Friend's marriage been contested. This case was tried at the Assizes at Nottingham in 1661.

Young folks in those days who intended marriage had to please many people, for in the case of Joshua Ely we find certificates from Mahlon and Rebeka Stacy, his guardians, and Lionel and Ruth Revel, his brother-in-law and sister, besides one from his Grandmother, Elizabeth Heath. This was in the year 1673.

Here is a certificate from Robert Greaves, on behalf of his brother, George Greaves, who intended taking one Anne Stanley to wife (1679), which marks the said Robert wise in his generation:—

This is to certifie whom it may concerne yt J, Robert Greaves, brother to George Greaves of Blyth, doe freely give my consent yt my brother, George Greaves, should take a wife. J knowing him to be capable of his owne concerne, J leave his choyse to his owne discession.

Witnes my hand,

ROBERT GREAVES.

Amongst numbers of these declarations of intentions of marriage and certificates are some of interest, because we note names well known among early Friends. One from Aberdeen Meeting, relative to the marriage

¹² *Journal of George Fox*, 1694, pp. 249, 250.

of Patrick Livingstone with Sarah Hyfeild, of Nottingham, runs as follows:—

From the Mo. Meeting of Aberdene, this 5th day of the 8th month, 1675.

ffor friends of the Monthly or Quarterly Meeting at Nottingham.

Deare ffriends.

Whereas our deare friend, Patrick Liuingstone, hath signified vnto vs that he hath a purpose to marry Sarah Hyfeild, daughter of Thomas Hyfeild, in Nottingham, These are to testifie that we haue nothing Against it, he being to our knowledg cleare of any Engadgment to any other woman. Being such as haue behaued himselfe very faithfully amongst vs, we cannot but giue him our testimony that he has been very seruicable for the truth in this Nation, and is a friend that we haue good vnion with, and whom we finde our selues obleided to Loue & beare a great Respect vnto, & therefore we haue subscribed this with our hands, the day aboue mentioned:—¹³

ALEX: SKEEN

ROBERT BARKLEY

THOMAS MERCER

THOMAS MILNE

ANDREW GALLAWAY

GEORGE GRAY

JOHN COWIE

ALEX: HARPER

ANDREW JAFFRAY

ALEX: SOMERUELL

ROBERT BURNET

JOHN GLENY

WILLIAM GALLIE [GAILLIE, GELLIE]

ROBERT GARDEN [? GORDON]

WILLIAM STEUENS

OCHLTRE FARINDAILE

ALEX: GALLIE

DAUID BARKLEY

JEAN WILLIAMSONE

LILLIAS SKEEN

JSOBELL HARPER

ELLEN [HELEN] SKEEN

JEAN MOLESONE

ELIZABETH JOHNSON [JOHNSTON]

otherwise KEITH.

When Ellin Milner, of Blyth, and John Haydock, of Coppull in Lancashire, signify their intention of marriage, we find that Ellin's mother dates her letter, signifying her willingness to the proposed marriage, "ffrome Yorke, whear J am prisoner for bearing witnesse to ye truth, ye 29th 3rd mo., 1679"; and on behalf of John Haydock there is a very lengthy and weighty testimony "ffrom our Mo. Meeting at Hartshaw," signed by forty-one men, "& seuerall others," and by thirty-six women.

Here for those who can read between the lines of the old Minute Book is quite a romance in drab and grey. Under date 18th day of 10th mo., 1676, we read:—

Easter Kerke was Enquired of by friends how things was betwixt her & Francis Tomlinson, it being vnderstood that she had kept company with him for long, & then cast him of. Her answer was that he had

¹³The following names are *not* autographs.

often come to her & mentioned something that was in his mind towards her, but she had several times told him she felt little in it, yet he continued coming. Francis was also spoken to concerning the same matter, and he said that he had had such a thing in his mind towards her, and so continued going to her, not having a denial from her till of late, and since her denying him, he had had great trouble upon his mind concerning it, and said he felt he was helped, & hoped he should be preserved. And friends persevered that she had given too much way to him at the first, & did blame her & exhorted her to be more careful hereafter.

There being a report that Easter Kerke was to have John Hilton, who is not a friend, she was spoken to by friends, and she said he had said something to her of such a matter, but Friends persevered that she had gone very far with him, & would have been very much covered to friends concerning it. So friends did deal very plainly & faithfully with her in reproving her for going so far with one that was not a friend, & for the instability of her mind in so weighty a matter.

For some time we have no further notice of the doings of Easter Kerke, but under date 23rd of 6 mo., 1678, we find that :—

Francis Tomlinson & Easter Kirke Coming to declare their Intentions of marriage, they was put by at that time, & it was the desire of the Meeting that she should first, if she could, get a few lines under John Hilltons hand for the clearing of her selfe & the truth & for friends satisfaction, that hee did give her up & hereafter would not trouble her nor Francis concerning the matter or else to declare by word of mouth before one or two of the world.

A month later :—

Francis Tomlinson & Easter Kirke Came againe & a friend with them ; the friend signified to the meeting that John Hilton did say before one or two of the world & two or three friends that hee did give the said Easter up, & would never trouble her concerning the matter : so then the said Francis & Easter was suffered to declare their Intentions to Joyne in Marriage, this being the first time.

Later there is notice, that they declared their intentions the second time, so at last we may suppose true love was rewarded, and this sober love story ended like the old fairy tales, “and so they were married and lived happy ever after.”

FUNERAL CUSTOMS.

Many and strange, and perhaps trivial too, to modern ideas, are the reasons for exhortation, but here is one to which I should like to call attention, because it shows what an ancient custom it is to give gloves, wine, and

biscuits at funerals. Whether Friends had a testimony against it simply because it was the practice of so-called "people of the world," or whether because they saw evil arising from it, I do not know, but this is what we read:—

Elizabeth Smith & Sarah Watson the elder exhorted Dorothy Kerke for going to a buriall and receauing a pare of gloues, as allso wine & biscate. Her Answer was that the perty that died ordered a pare for her; & she said she receaued them as allso wine and biscates, the same day, but not at the same time the reste of the company did; neither did she weare the gloues at the buriall, although pressed therevnto. It was said to her, it was not vsiall with friends to receauie anything bought or giuen vpon that Account, but rather deny them, soe that all Accasions might be taken away from such as watches for Accasions against the truth, and she should haue kept her testimony cleare, & not haue receaued them at any time; & then she spake as if she felte some Jnformation, & said if it was to doe againe she should not do it, & said this was a good day to her, & was very tender, and at the last confessed that she did feele a little check in herself when she receaued them, so she was minded to be faithfull vnto that for time to come.

TESTIMONIES OF DENIAL.

A large part of the book is taken up with testimonies against those who have departed from the truth, and there is a long one from a friend called Isabell Mallum, in which she acknowledges her backsliding in having followed after the doctrine of Ludovick Muggleton. Poor Isabell, she soon fell into disrepute again for being married by a priest. There is also a very long testimony given forth by one who had grievously sinned, but so touching is the ending that when I read it, the words in which Whittier comments on Andrew Rhykman's prayer came into my mind:—

Are we wiser, better grown,
That we may not in our day
Make his prayer our own?

Here is the conclusion of the testimony in our old record:—

Hopeing through Gods helpe for ye time to come, yt through a holy & blamelesse life, to beare a liuing testimony for ye liuing god (which is more then words or writings) to ye glory of his power who hath pluckt mee out of ye fire as a brand almost consumed. Euen to him be prayse & dominion for euer.

CARE OF THE POOR.

Women Friends seem to have had the special care of the poor in their hands, and here are their accounts duly entered; such entries as this are very frequent, "By Sarah Watson & Mary Richardson to Obadiah Colyer in his weakness, 2s." Here is another showing the difference in the relative value of money—for making the grave of a certain Jane Farnsworth only 8d. was paid; and "to John Lockton, by order of men friends, he being poore & having lately lost his cow, 10s." I also noticed accounts paid to people for looking after those who were in prison. Such entries as this are very frequent, "To Samuel Barke for thirteen weeks table for his mother, £3 1s. 6d." At one of the Meetings, a sum of £17 is received, together with a very long epistle from the Women's Meeting, Devonshire House, London; to the Women's Meeting at Nottingham. I will quote from the Minute Book how this £17 was disbursed, because this shows some of the Meetings belonging to the Quarterly Meeting at that date:—

To John Cam ffor Kneesall Meeting	..	£3	8	0
To William Garton for ye Vaile Meeting		1	14	0
To John Truswell for Besthorpe Meeting		5	2	0
To Georg Hoppkinson for Mansfeild and Skegby Meeting			
To				for Blyth Meeting

no amounts are given. This bears date 24th 7th mo., 1677.

The 30th of 10th mo., 1689, is the last mention we have of Mansfield and Skegby Meetings, after that it is called Mansfield and Farnsfield Meeting.

The monthly meetings within Nottingham Quarterly Meeting after that date, as far as I can decipher them, appear to have been Nottingham; Mansfield and Farnsfield; Sand and Clay, which included the meetings of Blyth and Mooregate; and Trent Side, which comprised Sutton-on-Trent and Maplebecke.

The last Meeting recorded in the book was held 26th of 7th mo., 1698, so the record extends over twenty-seven years. As we draw near the close, the entries are much

shorter, and there are very few exhortations and testimonies. To all who love ancient history it is a most valuable document, giving as it does such a true insight into the manners and speech of the times; but to us latter day Quakers it possesses a deeper meaning, for, although some of the entries seem uncouth perhaps, and some trivial, it tells of early strivings after the light, and sufferings, imprisonments and poverty bravely borne for conscience' sake.

EMILY MANNERS.

“*Pennsylvanian Motions.*”

At our Quarterly Meetinge at Stafford, y^e 5th of y^e 11th mo: 1690 :—

It is desired that all such Friends that are disposed to make any purchase of W^m Penn in his province, pursuant to a lett^r received from severall of our ffriends at London, doe give in an Account of their intentions respecting the same to the next Quarterly Meeting.

This Minute from the Staffordshire Q.M. Minute Book is indexed under “*Pennsylvanian Motions.*”

At a Mens Monthly Meeting held att Horsham, the 10th of the 3^d Mon., 1699 :—

William Penn Laid before this Meeting his goeing ouer the Seas into his Prouince in America, desireing, as in vseuall of Loue and Vnity a Certificate, or that the former upon his goeing into Ireland may be Indosed, which is Left to the friends that shall be at the next meeting att Worminghurst to doe the same.

From the Minute Book of Horsham M.M., in D.