

An Eighteenth Century Friend.

The eighteenth century brought many changes to the Society of Friends. In its latter half, when the strong hand of the discipline had cleansed the Meetings from ethical lapses, a sort of quietism settled upon the little community. It was now well hedged in by peculiar customs, the Quaker dress and speech; it lived apart from the world—*mundus mundulus in mundo immundo*—in education, training and literature; it was shut off from outside activities, whether parochial, municipal, or national; and it had no outlet for its energies, no propaganda, save that of testifying in occasional meetings for the public to an inward religion. The revivals of Wesley and Whitefield scarcely touched the Friends; they were as suspicious of enthusiasm as a high Anglican of to-day. On the other hand, towards the end of the century, the movement of thought in cultured circles, the writings of Hume, and the onslaughts of Tom Paine on Christian faith—these had an influence on a good many Friends, now grown rich and comfortable. In some Meetings spiritual life depended more upon the women than the men. The era of philanthropic activity was hardly yet come. The meetings of Friends were often held in entire silence. Yet they still received a few members from without, persons of a contemplative turn of mind, who found peace in the hush of tongues.

In this epoch lived Dr. Thomas Pole, whose memoir by his descendant, Edmund Tolson Wedmore, has just appeared as the seventh Journal Supplement of the Friends' Historical Society.¹ The memoir is based upon copious diaries and other documents, and is illustrated by good portraits of Dr. Pole, and silhouettes of many of his friends, as well as by a series of Dr. Pole's drawings. It is curious to note how little his skilful pencil knew of the picturesque. The compiler has done his work in a faithful and loving spirit, and there is, as always under the auspices of this Society, an *index locupletissimus*.

Thomas Pole was of English extraction, but was born in Philadelphia in 1753. He came to this country

¹ This Supplement, with portrait and forty-eight drawings by Dr. Pole, can be obtained from the publishers of *The Journal*, at 4s. 6d. net.

at the age of twenty-one years, and soon began to engage in ministry amongst English Friends. He was trained as a surgeon under the first Joseph Fox, of Falmouth, received his diplomas in London in 1781, and settled in the metropolis as a practitioner and teacher of midwifery. Dr. Fothergill had lately died, whom he resembled in the rare combination of active professional labours with the devotion of unstinted time and thought to the affairs of the Society. Dr. Pole's medical course seems to have been moulded on that of the great Dr. William Hunter, then near the end of his career;—obstetric practice, with lectures on anatomy, and on a wide range of scientific subjects bearing on his art, delivered in a museum of specimens and objects collected by him for the purpose. Medical schools were then hardly known.

Dr. Pole lived first at Falcon Court, Lothbury, and after his marriage with Elizabeth Barrett, of Cheltenham, in 1784, at 102, Leadenhall Street, opposite Billiter Street. Twenty years' work in London broke his health, and he moved in 1802 to Bristol, having received the degree of M.D. at St. Andrews in the previous year. At Bristol the remaining twenty-seven years of his life were passed, in medical activities somewhat less arduous, in diligent service among the Meetings of the Society, and in the promotion of schools for adults and infants.

We see Dr. Pole in later years moving in a circle of cultured friends, some of them not of his own faith, and others who were by no means strict in their Friendly ways. Their style of speech and writing looks to us formal and artificial, but it was more correct than ours; it was often delicate and even subtle in conveying shades of feeling and the courtesies of life. Their religion was a solemn thing, without much of the joy of a Paul or Francis: they looked on earth as a vale of tears, an abode of sorrow and trial, and the felicity of heaven was their goal. Yet they lived a holy life, and if it was aloof from the world, it was centred in the knowledge of God.

Much will be found in the pages of this memoir to clothe the actors of eighteenth century Quakerism with living interest.

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