

## The Conversion of Joseph Phipps<sup>1</sup>

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JOSEPH PHIPPS in the time of his youth was very gay, and addicted to the dissipating pastimes of the age ; his abilities were strong and lively, and delighting himself much in the Theatre (to which when in London he had free access), he wrote a play which got into the Duke of Richmond's hands, and which, after his mind had taken a serious turn, cost him some pains to rescue from the press, being offered one hundred pounds for the copyright.

He was by trade a shoemaker, but so little of an economist that sometimes from hunger he was driven to the necessity of eating his paste till he could finish a pair of shoes.

He was so far gone in speculative reasoning as to admit the belief that all things came by nature, but yet he sometimes had some serious reflections, and the thought would sometimes present to his mind, if there existed a Superior Being, what state was he in ! While he resided in London, a young man of the name of Hall was his companion in work, and whose mind inclined to religion. He one day said to Joseph, " What religious profession do you think is the best ? " Joseph replied, " If there is anything in religion, it is among the quakers." " Why," said William, " how came you to know anything of them ? " He replied, " I was brought up amongst them." " Oh," said William, " I wish you would go with me to one of their Meetings." " Well, one day perhaps I may."

Some weeks after, Joseph appearing seriously thoughtful, William said to him, " Where will you go to-day ? " " I was thinking," said he, " of going to the quakers' meeting." " I am glad of that," said William. They went to that call'd the Savoy Meeting, it happening to be the first day after the Yearly Meeting ; they were there early, and on seeing Benjamin Kidd come in, William said, " Who is he ? Do you know him ? " " Yes," said

<sup>1</sup> The following relation was given by J. P. himself to Thomas Wagstaffe. It is printed in *Friends' Monthly Magazine*, vol. i., 1830.

Joseph. "I have seen him in Yorkshire, he is a clever fellow." In the course of the meeting Benjamin Kidd preached particularly to the state of those two young men, who sat weeping under his testimony. He said, "I feel that what I speak is received, and I rejoice in it." They attended several of the succeeding meetings, and were both effectually reached. Jos. Phipps's vain associates becoming a burden to him, he found it safest to quit them and return to York, where he was received by his friends with kindness. After a time, the wonted levity of his disposition began to unbend for want of being properly on his guard, and he was favoured to feel his hurt. About that time Benjamin Kidd coming into those parts was again opened into his state. The next morning he pack'd up his things and returned to London, and entered into the service of Joseph Walker, a valuable man.

Joseph Phipps was born in the city of York in 1708,<sup>2</sup> a son of Joseph and Elizabeth Phipps of that city, both Friends. In 1753 he accompanied, not without some sense of apprehension, Ann Mercy Bell (c. 1706-1775), of York, on a remarkable open-air preaching tour of the city of London, an account of which was printed soon after. Seven years later, he married, at Norwich, Sarah Kendall, of that city, being described at the time as a coal merchant. The removal of himself and family to Norwich took place about 1766. He was a religious writer rather than speaker, some of his writings being of a controversial character. About 1770 he prepared and circulated an address, *To the Youth of Norwich Meeting*, which was reprinted eight times down to the year 1818, and he made one incursion, at least, into the realm of verse. In 1765 Phipps edited a new edition of George Fox's *Journal*—"The Third Edition corrected." His decease occurred at Norwich in 1787. A daughter, Sarah, married Ollive Sims, of Stockport, in 1788.

Several letters written by or to him are extant in **D.**—*e.g.* to Ann Gurney, 1777, from Ann Mercy Bell, 1744 and 1757, from Mary Brook, 1774.

<sup>2</sup> *D.N.B.* states that he was born at Norwich, but the Yorkshire Registers confirm the above statement.