

## John Matern, Schoolmaster

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THE insertion on page 114 of a reference to the Matern family of Silesia has aroused interest in John Matern, early Quaker Schoolmaster under Christopher Taylor, of Waltham Abbey, and later of Edmonton.

John Matern (c. 1640-1680) was a German by birth and "a man of learning, having been educated in the colleges of his country and designed for the office of a priest" (*Annual Monitor*, 1844, p. 113; *The Friend* (Phila.), 1845, p. 228). But the views on religion preached on the Continent of Europe by English Quakers reached his home-land, and found an answer in the hearts of himself and his family, causing his father-in-law, Christopher Proham, who was "a priest" (*Piety Promoted*, s. v. John Matern), and his family to desire closer association with English Friends—a desire which, after correspondence with, and encouragement by some of the latter, resulted in a decision to quit their native land and settle in England. This immigration took place in 1674, and there can be little doubt that the following entry in *The Journal of George Fox* (Camb. ed. ii. 324) refers to this event:—

1672. About 1672 there was a priest convinct ; in Polland who came into England ; with his wife & his daughter & her husband ; & y<sup>e</sup> rest of his children ; & his son in law is a scoollmaster.

Matern soon found his place "amongst tender Children, to instruct them in Languages, and other necessary Sciences, appertaining to this outward Life" (*The Testimony of . . . John Matern*, 1680, p. 6), entering as assistant the school conducted by Christopher Taylor, first at Waltham Abbey in Essex and later at Edmonton in Middlesex.

In 1679, C. Taylor and J. Matern wrote *A Compendium or Abridgment of Three Languages the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew*. At the close of his Preface, Matern writes, "The most mercifull God grant that through his Grace and blessing, this natural knowledge of Tongues may tend

to his glory, and the profit and very great increase of many Christian Schools."

In this School, when situate at Waltham Abbey, there occurred a remarkable visitation of Divine favour, described in the following words :—

Upon the 4th day of the Moneth called June 1679, at a Meeting in the Town called Waltham-Abby in Essex of the People call'd Quakers, where was present about Forty or Fifty Young Boyes and Maidens ; God's heavenly Power brake forth in some Maids and Young Girls, it begun with Three or Four at first, broke them into Tears and Melting of Heart, continued so a small time, then it reached two or three of the Younger Boys, which melted them into Tears ; and in a very small time reached all the Boyes and Young Girls, many of them being but about Eight or Nine and Ten Years old . . . and at last it reached unto the Elder People, so that all in the Meeting was broken by the Power into Tears and Melting, which did continue for about one Hour, until the Meeting ended. . . . (*A Testimony to the Lord's Power . . . Amongst Children*, 1679, p. 7).

Of this event Matern writes :—

I my self was so overpowered and overcome with this Heavenly Life, Virtue and Power of God, that I did shake and tremble before him " (*ibid.* p. 17).

Shortly after this, the School was transferred to Edmonton, but John Matern's connection with it was soon to be closed by his early death. A week before this took place, he wrote a testimony and prayer, which he caused to be read amongst the scholars. About four hours before the end, "the Family Meeting" was held around the fever-stricken teacher, and "there Lovingly together we enjoyed one another in the Lord . . . so that he was exercised in Singing Praises to the Lord, and magnifying his great Power" (*Matern Testimony*, p. 12). He was seized with fever on the 24th of 6 mo., 1680, and expired on the 1st of 7 mo., at seven o'clock in the evening.

Testimonies to Matern's faithful services were written by his master and mistress, Christopher and Frances Taylor, by his fellow-teacher, Alexander Paterson, and by several of his youthful *protégés*. One child, John Woolley, aged ten, thus expresses himself :—

I can say, with many more of my School-fellows that we never desired a better Tutor then he was. When I heard he lay upon his sick bed, many times I have cried to the Lord, in my heart to raise him up

again ; but it hath been the will of the Lord to take him away, and now he is at peace to all eternity (Matern Testimony, p. 28).

In the same printed volume are similar quaint, old world utterances on the same subject by William and Edward Penington (aged 15 and 13), sons of Isaac and Mary Penington (see *Experiences of Mary Penington*, 1911, p. 53), Margaret Rous (aged 12), granddaughter of Margaret (Fell) Fox, and others. Of these youthful writers, Teacher Alexander Paterson says :—

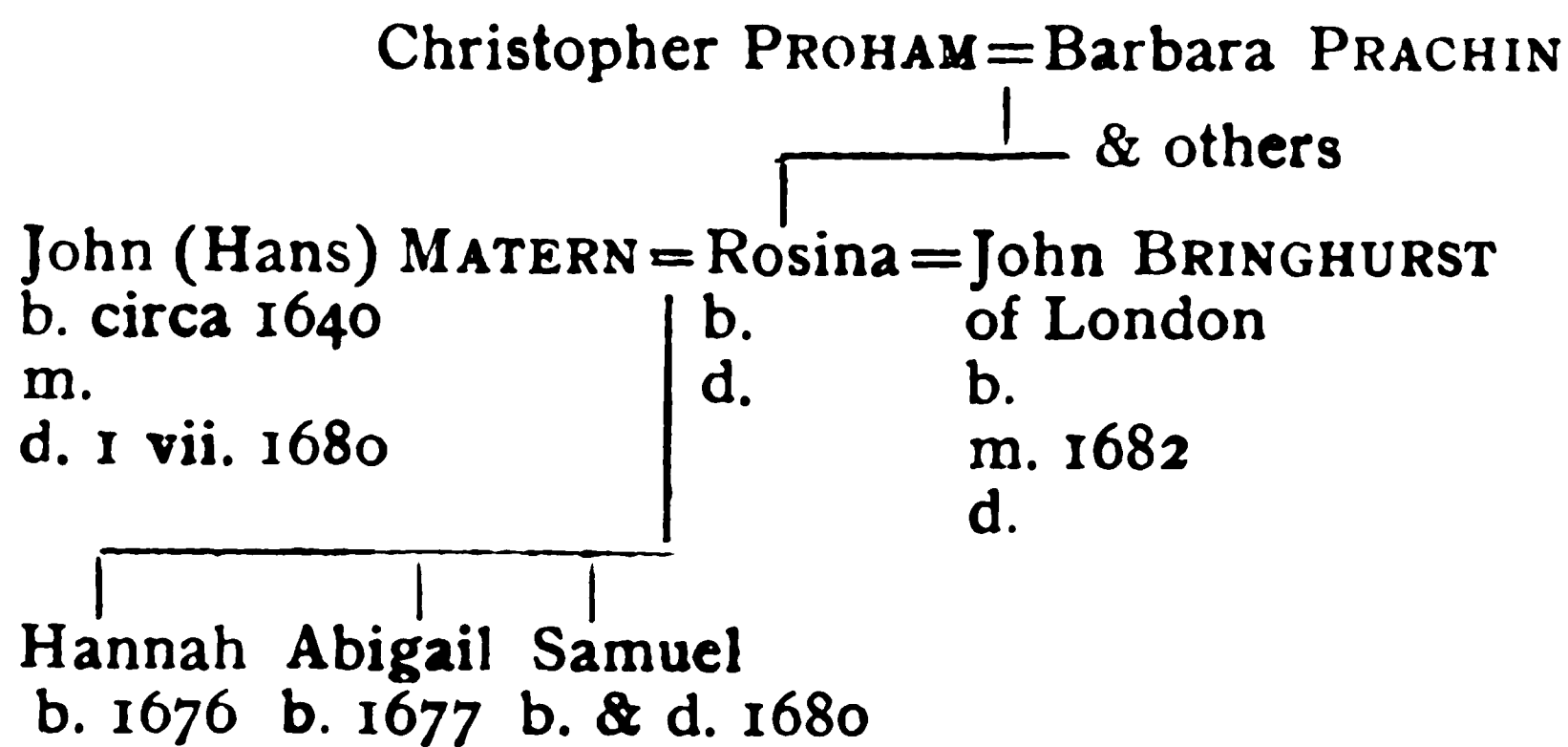
It cannot be in any probable manner supposed, that they could frame such things by their own acquired Abilities, but the reader must confess that it is the Lords work (Pref. to Matern Test.).

Of the family of John Matern little further is known. His wife, Rosina Matern, writes a Testimony, but gives no biographical details (such as the historian of Quakerism so frequently desires and so seldom obtains). The Friends' London Registers inform us that Abigail, daughter of John and Rosina (Rosannah) Matern, was born at Waltham in 1677, and Samuel, son of the same, at Edmonton in 1680, the latter living only three weeks. After two years of widowhood at Edmonton, Rosina Matern married John Bringhurst, the Quaker bookseller and stationer, of London, and emigrated with him to Pa.<sup>1</sup>

With respect to the notice of Hans Matern (page 114), we may hazard the suggestion that Hans and John are the same. (1) The Christian name *Hans* may have been anglicised to *John* on its bearer's settlement in England. (2) *Silesia* and *Poland* are contiguous. (3) The births follow one another—Hannah 1676, Abigail 1677, Samuel 1680. (4) The wife in each case is *Rosina*. (5) The name of the mother-in-law is *Prachin*, and of the father-in-law *Proham*, of which one may be a misreading of the other. The London Registers, however, give the parents of Hannah as Hans and Rosyna Matern, of *Holloway Court, Shoreditch*, at her birth in 1676, which does not appear as the *home* of John and Rosina.

If this identification be correct, the following will represent the family, but it must be accepted with reserve.

<sup>1</sup> Rosina Bringhurst was witness to a Phila. will in 1701 (*Pa. Gene. Soc.* iii. 246).



The above suggestion receives some confirmation from the discovery, made since the foregoing was written, of a reference in the minutes of the Two Weeks Meeting held 5 xii. 1693/4, as follows:—

A Certtificate signed in behalfe and concerning the Cleareness of Barbara Prachin Relict of Hillarius Prachin & Marjana Vanbuyart and Abigall Materon Daughter of John Mattered School Master Deceased, Directed to the friends of Phillidelphia where they intend to Transport themselves.

The Philadelphia minute recording receipt of the certificate makes it clear that Barbara Prachin was the grandmother of Abigail Matern (see Myers, *Quaker Arrivals in Philadelphia, 1682-1750*, p. 17).

9 mo. 1680. Backsliders living and dead, poor and rich to be taken an exact acc<sup>t</sup> of, and Recorded, and what hath befallen them . . .

3 mo. 1705. Its desired that for the time to come noe Bookes be exposed to Sale for friends use or spread abroad vntill first perused & approved by sensible friends.

9 mo. 1705. Noe friend is to binde or oblige his Apprentice not to sett up his trade in the same Towne or place where his Master dwells it being contrary to the liberty and freedom of Truth as well as a covetuous practice which this Meeting unanimously and Zealously gave their Testimony and Judgment against as a thing not agreeable to Truth.

9 mo. 1706. Monthly and province Meetings in all their Accounts to give a true state of matters in relation to the affairs of Truth &c and not by a fair gloss to make things appear better then they realy are which its feared is sometimes done by only telling y<sup>e</sup> best and being silent to the worst part of things. . . .

Minutes of the NATIONAL HALF-YEARS MEETING held in Dublin.