

Friends in Nova Scotia, 1785

ON page 41 there appears a question respecting Meetings of Friends in Nova Scotia. The following information, taken mainly from official sources, may prove of interest to the querist and others. The emigration northward was one result of the War of Independence, but it is not evident that it was prompted by any question of military service.

In 1785, Philadelphia Meeting for Sufferings, in an Epistle to London, mentions that the situation of members who had lately settled in Nova Scotia had received attention, "there being among them many Women and Children who are members of our Religious Society, and have been under the necessity of following their Husbands and Parents to that new settlement," and that a collection of books had been sent to them by a Friend travelling thither on a mercantile voyage.

London Friends, in their reply to Philadelphia, 2nd of 12 mo. 1785, write:—

"By your communication concerning your attention to the poor Emigrants to Nova Scotia, it appears that you have been similarly engaged with us. We had in the summer by private means intelligence of several Families being settled at Beavor Harbour, and about Parr Town, and accordingly sent them 50 of our last Yearly Meetings Epistles, 50 Brook on Silent Waiting, 50 Crooks truth's principles, and 20 Testaments, desiring the Friend who forwarded them to make further enquiry respecting their numbers and situation. Secluded thus from the advantage of better settled provinces and less inclement climates, and especially from those of religious Society and Example, they are certainly the objects of sympathy."¹

Philadelphia, 1786, 5 mo. 18, reports:—

"The Case of those People who have taken Refuge and settled in Nova Scotia continues to engage the attention and sympathy of Friends here, two of our Brethren having within these few days embarked on a religious Visit to those parts; our beloved Friend John Townsend of your city being under the like concern."

11 mo. 3, 1786. London Friends express satisfaction in the continued care of Philadelphia Meeting for Sufferings towards settlers in Nova Scotia and have heard that the books sent were well received.

In a letter dated 18th of 10 mo. 1787, Philadelphia Friends write:—

"In the Course of the Summer last year, a religious Visit was performed to divers Parts of the Country of Nova Scotia, by three of our beloved Friends, viz., John Townsend of your city, Abr^m Gibbons and Joseph Moore, Members of our Yearly Meeting, from whom we have received an Account of a considerable Number in different Places who

¹ The Friend who asked for books for Nova Scotia was Thomas Wagstaffe. Unfortunately there is very little known of Thomas Wagstaffe's correspondence, and the occasion of his interest in Nova Scotia is not apparent.

make Profession with us, and go under the Name of Quakers, with a more particular Description of their circumstances, than had before come to our knowledge ; especially with Regard to those who are combating the Hardships and difficulties of forming a new Settlement in a Wilderness at Beaver Harbour, where it appears are upwards of forty Persons Members of our religious Society, four or five of them Men, the rest Women and Children, with a larger Number who profess with us not having a regular Right of Membership. The Situation of these Emigrants, both wth respect to their spiritual and temporal Condition and exposure, as well as the reputation of our Christian profession, claiming the Sympathy and Attention of Friends, this Meeting in the 3^d mo. last, appointed a Committee of 15 Friends to exercise special immediate Care therein, by a more Minute enquiry into their Circumstances and how and by what means they might be best assisted and relieved, both as to their religious encouragement and outward support."

They give information from their Committee's report that a quantity of Indian meal and flour has been sent through Friends in New York, and that William Wilson and Joseph Moore have set out to visit Beaver Harbour with written instructions as to information needed and a sum of money to be applied at their discretion.

2 mo. 29, 1788. London to Philadelphia :—

" We have observed the Situation of those Friends and others who have gone to settle in Nova Scotia, and the kind and friendly care extended by you to them. We being also disposed to afford these poor Emigrants some assistance have out of the Money raised by subscription for Friends in America, allotted the sum of Five hundred pounds Sterling for their use and to be sent them in various Articles agreeable to your Intimation."

12 mo. 18. 1788. Philadelphia Friends send to London information from the latest visitors to the country of those most suited to receive assistance.

7 mo. 10, 1789. London Friends express surprise at having received no acknowledgment from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick of the receipt of articles sent 7 mo. 1788, which articles were paid for from the Fund raised for Relief of Friends in America. They also state that " Being since informed that a considerable number of free black People resident in those Provinces were in a distressed situation some Friends in and Near this City contributed upwards of £200 sterling to their Relief, which being invested in salt and a few articles of coarse clothing, was sent in the 7th mo. last year . . . consigned to Rich^d Townsend and Rich^d Townsend Jun. at Shelbourne in Nova Scotia. Of this Cargo also, although we have heard of its safe arrival, we have not yet a Particular Account of the Distribution, but when such Accounts arrive we hope to give you Information thereof."

Philadelphia, 11 mo. 19, 1789 :—

" Your benevolent assistance transmitted for the relief of the Emigrants at Nova Scotia we are informed by letters to a Member of this Meeting was gratefully accepted, and such care taken for a suitable

distribution of the Articles sent them that they proved extensively useful, of which we have reason to believe they will render you an Account."

No account of distribution was received by London Friends direct from Nova Scotia, and in 12 mo. 1790, Philadelphia Friends regret this, and as they have no regular information they send extracts from letters to a member of their Meeting giving some information on the subject, and ask him to remind the Nova Scotians of the expediency of sending a proper account to London.

Which was the Greater Hero?

JONCE sat beside a dying soldier at Nashville while he dictated to me his last words to the wife of his bosom and the mother of his children. He grieved over the forty acres in the backwoods of Wisconsin, over which hung the threatening mortgage. He regretted that the clearing he had left was so small, "But say to her," he said, "that I hope she will be able to hold the forty. It may help raise the children."

Twenty years after that, at a reunion of the "old boys," a poor, prematurely old, shabbily dressed woman sought me. Her hands were horny, her steps faltering and uncertain. She was very conscious of the old-fashioned bonnet she wore. With tearless eyes and unmusical voice she said: "I am Bradley Benson's wife. I have come to tell you that I have kept the forty, but I do not know as I have done well," and turning to the unkempt, physically robust, but mentally untrained youth by her side, she added: "This is Bradley's oldest son. He has helped me. He has been a good boy, but he has had no schooling and he feels it now." Bradley Benson's grave has a marble marker in the National Cemetery at Nashville, and on each return of Decoration Day his country's flag is renewed and flowers are laid upon his grave.

Another twenty years and more have fled since I met his widow. Her body in all probability has found rest in some obscure corner of a Wisconsin graveyard, and the forty acres in the woods have probably passed into other hands. It is not likely that even a flag marks her grave or that flowers decorate it. But I submit that the heroism of his wife makes pale the heroism of Bradley Benson, and the self-sacrifice and devotion of the boy who stood by his mother and grappled with the forest in the interest of his young brothers and sisters indicate as fine and high a spirit as was ever achieved by the father.

JENKIN LLOYD JONES, LL.D., *Peace, Not War, the School of Heroism*, Chicago, 1913.

Believe nothing against another, but upon good authority: nor report what may hurt another, unless it be a greater hurt to others to conceal it.

PENN, *Reflections and Maxims*, i. 145.