

# THE JOURNAL

OF THE

## FRIENDS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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### The Annual Meeting

was held on 24th May, when a considerable number of members and others listened with close attention to an address by the President (R. H. Marsh) on the history of the Michael Yoakley Charity. The address, with illustrations, will appear, it is hoped, in the next number of THE JOURNAL. For list of Officers and financial statements see closing pages of this number.

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### A Private View of London Yearly Meeting in Sessions of 1818 and 1825

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A VERY interesting manuscript has recently been presented to D., giving a full and informing account of the proceedings at two Yearly Meetings, seven years apart, in the early part of last century. The writer was Jonathan Hopkins Bowen (1798-1826), son of Simon Maw Bowen (c. 1772-1852), grocer, of Gainsborough. Simon Bowen was received into membership in 1793, and became an earnest Friend and an Elder (*Annual Monitor*, 1853). His son was also a grocer.

1818

Jonathan and his father left home on the 13th of Fifth Month, 1818, and reached 160, Bishopsgate, on the 16th. The next morning (Sunday) they attended meeting at Devonshire House, and listened to a discourse by John Shipley, then a young Minister, on the Divinity of Christ, and at night Joseph Allen, from Essex, " bore testimony to the nature and necessity of regeneration."

At the Adjourned General Meeting for Ackworth School held on Monday morning, a minute was read informing the Y.M. that " some children are sent to Ackworth in a state of great ignorance, even at an age when the period of childhood is so far elapsed as to leave little time for their improvement. . . . Some of them," it was added, " could not read words of one syllable." The minute was read in Y.M. later and " awakened a very lively interest, but no resolution was adopted." At a still later sitting the subject was re-introduced, and " many judicious remarks were made." The observations which came from John Wilkinson, of High Wycombe, then a prominent Friend, who later resigned his membership, " were peculiarly striking and appropriate; but so much expression of approbation followed, that a few elderly friends thought it necessary to check this adulatory strain " ! The discussion resulted in " An Epistle on the subject of religious care over Children," which was printed in 1818, and reprinted in Ireland and New England.

The Y.M. proper opened on the 20th. " Four Appeals were received, viz., two from John Crouch against the Q.M. of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire; one from the M.M. of Westminster against the Q.M. of Kent, in a case of settlement; and one from David Doeg, who had been disowned for insolvency, against the Q.M. of York. John Crouch also presented a complaint against the Q.M. of C. and H., which, after some discussion, was rejected as irregular." John Crouch withdrew his appeals. The Q.M. of Kent scored against Westminster M.M. But the Doeg appeal was not easily settled. The report of the Committee on this Appeal, stating that both sides had been fairly and fully heard,

and giving a decision in favour of York, was signed by only eighteen, whereas twenty-one signatures were requisite to constitute a final decision. It was therefore decided to hear the Appeal in the Y.M. itself. Over three hours was spent on this without a conclusion being reached, and another three on the following day. "A large body of valuable friends were of the judgment that the decision of the Q.M. should be confirmed; but great numbers being of an opposite sentiment, the former condescended, and the judgment of the Q.M. was finally annulled." [We may be thankful for the paucity of Appeals during recent years.]

William Dilworth Crewdson was appointed Clerk and William Allen and Thomas Maw his assistants.

On the 21st, our Friend attended the adjourned general meeting of the Tract Association. "The placing of this association directly under the notice of the Y.M. was deliberated upon, but declined for the present." [It is interesting to note that a similar subject is likely to come up again at next Y.M., one hundred years later.]

Much time was occupied with the answering of the Queries [the last of the answerable Queries have now been swept away] and numerous Testimonies were read [now rarely heard].

The intervisitation of the men's and women's meetings [now necessarily a thing of the past] was frequent.

On the 21st, Martha Smith, Hannah Field and Elizabeth (Joseph) Fry passed across the yard, with perhaps the same ceremonial which to some of us, when youthful attenders, served to relieve the tedium of the sittings. "E. Fry appeared in supplication and each of them afterwards addressed the meeting."

On the 28th, Robert Fowler and William Tuke joined "the troops of the shining ones," and the next morning five men Friends entered the women's meeting—Isaac Stephenson, Samuel Capper, Richard Phillips, with James Hack and William Grover as companions. How long they remained is not recorded.

The subject of Capital Punishment, referred to in the Epistle from Ireland, was under consideration more than once. "Friends appeared unanimous that this is a crying evil, which ought to be speedily and wholly done away." But after much exercise in ministry and prayer it was decided that the present was not the right time to address the legislature on the subject. "William Allen, in a beautiful strain of animated and impressive eloquence, alluded to the influence which the higher and middle classes of society possess over the lower; to the great responsibility which attaches to them for the depraved and vicious state of our population; to the magnitude of the subject now before us; and to the importance of our stepping rightly and seasonably forward in advocating the rights of humanity. . . . A committee was appointed to draw up a minute, which should record, for the first time, the Society's sentiments on this practise." When the minute was brought in, Friends were not so unanimous as before—"Samuel Loyd, John Wilkinson, and others, apprehending that the declaration, 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed,' is a sufficient warrant for punishing murder with death. Amongst others, W<sup>m</sup>. Allen and W<sup>m</sup>. Grover were of an opposite sentiment." But the minute was placed on record and the Meeting for Sufferings empowered to petition on behalf of the Y.M.

The amount of preaching which took place on all occasions is striking, and would appear to us in these days unduly to delay the business of the Y.M. Communications from Joseph John Gurney were very frequent and he often engaged in prayer. His sister, Elizabeth Fry (then usually known as Elizabeth (Joseph) Fry to distinguish her from her sister-in-law, Elizabeth Fry, "spinster"), often "appeared." Also between the sittings, in the houses of Friends resident in the vicinity, religious opportunities occurred and after-meal sermons were often preached. "After dinner at Joseph Fry's [Mildred Court], silence spread over the company: John Dymond, Mary Jeffrys, Olive Dymond and Eliz. (Josh.) Fry [the hostess] were each exercised in ministerial communications." "After dinner at John Sanderson's, Hannah Field [from the State

of New York, who is frequently mentioned], in addressing those present, expressed her belief that the eyes of others are much upon our Society," etc. On another occasion, at John Sanderson's at Old Jewry, "after dinner a solemn silent pause occurred. Hannah Field appeared in supplication and Mary Sanderson [hostess], Mary Dudley and Elizabeth Dudley [mother and daughter] were exercised in ministerial communications."

The introduction of selected minutes of the Meeting for Sufferings opened the way for a reference to the recent visit to the Continent of William Allen, Josiah Forster, Hannah Field, and Elizabeth Barker, the last-named from America, companion to H. Field. Reports from Sidcot, Islington and Wigton Schools were received and various epistles passed. On Saturday evening, the 30th, "under a very precious covering of great solemnity, the Y.M. closed."

"Luke Howard, in one of the sittings of the Y.M., related the following anecdote of Louis Majolier. Being left in trust for some property, he had, in consequence, to appear in a public court of justice; and when one of the inferior magistrates was about to tender him an oath, as is usual in such cases, the chief magistrate or mayor, interfering, said in substance, 'This man is one of the disciples of Penn, who do not swear; you may take his word without an oath.' The other hesitated to dispense with the legal form, but at length yielded; and when L. Majolier said, 'I promise it,' the mayor rejoined, 'And I guarantee it.'"

On J. H. Bowen's return journey he was informed that "William Tuke had now successively attended 50 yearly meetings;" and he heard of another who had attended fifty-three. He thought this latter was John Bludwick, of Warrington, but a note was added later to contradict this supposition.

### 1825

Again, in 1825, our young Friend, now aged twenty-seven, attended Y.M. accompanied by his father and cousins, Margaret and Phebe Maw. They left home on the 13th of Fifth Month and on the 15th (Sunday)

attended meetings at Devonshire House—"that in the morning my father thought uncommonly small." Ann Jones, of Stockport, Mary Proud, of Essex, and James Wetherald, were among the speakers.

Y.M. convened on the 18th. "Several communications from friends in the ministry, several of whom are young in years." Josiah Forster was re-appointed Clerk and his brother, Robert, and Young Sturge assistants. Our Diarist seems to have been in a rather low spot—"This was a day of poverty and leanness"—"My own lot is yet as in a desert land."

In the third sitting, before any business was entered upon, Martha Smith and Sarah [Lynes] Grubb appeared, the former, seated, addressing the men, being too feeble to stand. Breviates of both addresses are given. In the fourth sitting "Eliz. Josh. Fry" came in to ask leave for the holding of a meeting with the youth, and her brother, J. J. Gurney, "requested liberty to unite." In the sixth sitting "J. J. Gurney and W. Allen visited the women's meeting, the friend above alluded to ["a dear young friend (S.F. of Wellington)"] requested permission, which was withheld on account of his not being as yet acknowledged as a minister by his monthly meeting." This was probably Samuel Fox, then aged thirty, father of our late friend, Joseph Hoyland Fox. He was "recorded" in 1827. In the seventh sitting, "Edward Carrol and James Marriage visited the women friends." In the eighth sitting, "W<sup>m</sup>. Gundry and W<sup>m</sup>. Smith visited the women's meeting," and later in the same, "W<sup>m</sup>. Alexander requested permission to visit the women's meeting in the capacity of an Elder. Some friends expressed unity and sympathy, yet the meeting felt a difficulty in acquiescing for fear of constituting a wrong precedent; in the progress of the deliberation James Wetherald [a Minister] expressed a concern to go," which got the meeting out of a difficulty. In the eleventh sitting, "Richard Phillips and Silvanus Fox [brother of above Samuel] visited the women's meeting." In the twelfth and concluding sitting, Sarah Grubb came across to sit with the men.

More after-dinner sermons are recorded: "Dined at Mildred's Court. The party was gay and extremely

volatile, and but for a change of circumstance and scene which we could little anticipate, being there would not have afforded either to myself or my dear cousin J. H. who was with me any tolerable satisfaction. As there were more than the dining room could contain, the surplus (including a youth from Cornwall, myself, my cousin Joseph Hopkins and Thos. Pumphrey) sat down to table in the drawing room. J. J. Gurney came in after this arrangement and joined this little company, separated, as it might seem in the view of some, by accident, yet others of us chose rather to ascribe it to an over-ruling hand, and J. J. G., sending for Jon<sup>a</sup> Pim, he afterwards addressed these five individuals successively." This quotation throws vivid light upon the conditions obtaining within the Society or among those allied to it. One wonders if some of the sprightly relatives of the hostess from Earham were there, and whether the "volatile" party in the dining room had to listen to personal remarks as had the select company in the drawing room.

The consideration of the state of the Society was the business of the fourth sitting, but the Clerk deprecated "the renewing of the exercise of the meeting in the usual direction, . . . and weightily drew the attention of the meeting to consider whether the love of the world and a desire to accumulate wealth had not greatly enfeebled the progress of its members . . . Particular allusion was made to the practice of keeping shops open during the time of week-day meetings, whereby part of the family is detained at home."

Already mutterings are heard of the storm soon to burst in America, in the matter of Elias Hicks. New York had been addressed by letter from the Meeting for Sufferings, and this letter was read, "expressive of a deep concern that we might be preserved a people on the everlasting foundation on which our faithful predecessors built testifying to the Divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and exhorting to faithfulness and vigilance in maintaining the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith."

"There are no propositions this year, and no appeals."

On Sunday, 22nd, the morning meeting at Devonshire House "held 2 $\frac{3}{4}$  hours, Sarah Grubb being very largely engaged in extending a loud call to all to come and partake of the water of life freely. She was also very energetic on some doctrinal points, particularly the universality of Divine Grace."

Slavery and the Slave Trade occupied much time on the 23rd and later. In the evening of the 23rd the Fry-Gurney meeting for the youth, in the large meeting house, was "extremely crowded. . . . J. J. G. commented largely upon John iii. 36."

"Openings for civilization of Africa" received attention, and the proposed removal from North Carolina of 720 liberated Africans.

"In the twelfth and concluding sitting more unsettlement prevailed than I could have wished, occasioned partly by the forcible entry of some person not a member; and partly by a tedious criticism of the epistle."

Although keenly alive to the proceedings, our young Friend remained in low spirits throughout. "Pleasant bread has not been my portion, whilst attending this Y.M. . . . The privations I have had to bear have been wisely designed

To subject every wish of mine  
Completely to the will divine."

At the Large Committee, "my name was proposed on the Committee for drafting an epistle to Ohio. I saw no hope of any good in this, unless it could contribute to make me feel myself as nothing, and therefore dared not to refuse."

J. H. Bowen died in the autumn of 1826, at the early age of twenty-eight. We fear some inherited weakness, as all the members of the family save one died between the ages of seventeen and twenty-eight. For his brother, John Bowen, see page 135.

This thirty-four page 8vo. MS. is very neatly written in one hand; as the date of the paper is 1829, it could not have been written by the narrator. The MS. was presented to D. by the Gravely family, of Wellingborough, 1917.