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For Table of Contents see page two of cover

Our Quotation—5

“In relation to seventeenth century religious studies, quite outside the Quaker movement, no literature is more illuminating than the Quaker literature of that period, of which fortunately there is a considerable amount. In particular is it invaluable to those who may undertake the writing of local Parish Histories; it often supplies the names of parish clergymen, which otherwise would be entirely lost.”

NIGHTINGALE. *From the Great Awakening to the Evangelical Revival*, 1919. See page 39.

A Vision

The narrator of the following vision, Joseph Fry, of Bristol (1728-1787), was no dreamer in actual life. He was the founder of the great firm of J. S. Fry & Sons, and a man of affairs. “He was a man of versatile genius,

under whose hands almost any concern would have prospered" (account of the firm in *Grocery*, July, 1908). He practised medicine and was also a partner in a firm of type-founders. See *D.N.B.* He married Anna, daughter of Henry Portsmouth, M.D., of Basingstoke, in 1755. He was a prominent member of the Society of Friends.

The records of the Society contain numerous notices of incursions into dream-land. We have caused this vision to be printed as we think it reflects somewhat the narrow Quakerism of the time while also holding lessons for to-day—contrast the Gothic building frequently whitewashed and artificial flowers with the "large square building, very plain" where the (outward) guide was not needed and where appeared "a particular irradiation of Light and Glory," and note that, while some were content to remain here, other passed on to something better and higher in their pilgrimage to the "permanent Rest prepared for the people of God."

ON the 26th of the 12th month, 1776, about 5 o'clock in the afternoon, being alone and under an awful exercise of mind respecting futurity, I was imperceptibly led into a state of great stillness, and in that a train of objects and occurrences were presented before me, which left such an impression upon my mind, as I hope never to forget and was in substance nearly as follows :

It seemed to myself as if I was alone in an open place, when a person came to me, and obligingly asked me if I desired to go to the house of God ; I answered "yes." He said : "Follow me" ; which I did ; his person was very elegant, rather inclining to be thin, about thirty years of age ; he had no covering on his head, besides his own hair neatly combed and turning up with natural curls round his neck. He had on an under-garment and a robe that reached half-way down his legs, but it had no button, or other fastening, and was only secured by a narrow girdle round his waist, which appeared to be of leather, gilt with gold. His garments were of fine white linen, his legs and feet had no covering.

I may now observe that through the whole of this apparent journey, the effect of cold air was neither felt nor in general provided against.

I had followed my guide but a little way, before he entered a large gothic building, a little like a cathedral, very heavy, and almost darkened with abundance of carved ornaments, the shape and distinction of which were very much defaced by the repetition of white-wash upon them, to keep them clean ; as we passed through a large part of it, I looked to the right and left, and saw several vast extensive rooms as large as Westminster Hall, through iron gates ; in these rooms, and others of the same sort even beyond these, I understood there was a great number of persons employed either in worship or some ecclesiastical employments for which they had particular garments.

My guide went into none of these rooms on the ground floor, but up a pair of stairs which brought us into a room apparently as large as any we had passed by, and he stepped quickly through it long-ways near the wainscot on the right hand, leaving a staring multitude and all their various business on the left ; at the further end of the room were three windows, he went straight to the right-hand one, and throwing up a lofty sash, he walked out without stooping ; and immediately we entered upon a narrow path, which was a stone pavement or coping on a wall, which I observed to be very well built, and that there was no flaw in the masonry, nor leaning in the wall ; though divers old and large trees from the garden of this religious fabric had fallen and even now lay against it ; which in several places obstructed our passage, and had it not been for the kindness of my guide, who held away the branches, it seemed as though I should have been stopped or thrown down.

Here let me observe, that we came to this vast pile of building just mentioned, after having travelled but a little way, and I was surprised when I thought that we were so soon arrived at the house of God ; however, though I said nothing to my guide, I was soon well satisfied that it could not be so, by the slovenly way they had taken to clean the inside by such quantities of white-wash.

I observed as we travelled on, that on the left hand of this wall, on which we were walking, was a large pleasure garden belonging to the society of this spacious edifice, which had been made and decorated at a vast expense, with grottos and artificial flowers of an enormous size, but nothing either natural or beautiful among them ; we went on still upon the top of this solid wall for several miles through the estates belonging to this building ; the land of which appeared to be marshy, low, poor, and barren ; and had it not been for the wall we were on would have been quite impassable. At length, our wall, which was level, brought us to a rising ground out of this ecclesiastical jurisdiction, to a pair of large iron gates which appeared to be gilt with gold, on the inside of which a large eagle was climbing up by his talons and his beak, and fluttering with his wings, which being extended appeared extremely beautiful and as if they were full of eyes. As soon as my guide came to the gate, a man within opened it, and we entered into a most beautiful garden, in which were trees and flowers surprisingly magnificent, inexpressibly various, and altogether beyond what I could have had any conception of in nature. I was as much convinced that every production in this garden was the immediate work of Infinite Wisdom, as I had been before that the paltry pleasure-garden I had seen on the left hand of the wall, was planned and executed by mere human contrivance.

We passed on through an immense variety of plants, shrubs and flowers, till we came to a plantation of a different kind, where every thorny prickly offensive shrub was set in rows directly across the path in which we were going, the tracks between these rows were strewn with loose briars and the whole place infested with noxious reptiles, so that there appeared no clean safe place whereon to tread. Just before we entered this difficult track, and before I suspected any danger (for I also was barefooted) my guide turned round and putting forth his left hand, took fast hold of my right hand, and in a manner lifted me briskly along over this dangerous place, when we arrived at a fine plain grass plot where he stopped, and looking at me, he asked me if my legs and feet were not injured by the briars and thorns we had now passed

over, I answered: "No," he had so supported me that I had sustained no injury (having indeed so upheld me by his strength, that I had barely stepped upon the tops of the twigs). He then asked me if I knew him; I told him: "No," (for I durst not give him any title). He answered me with inexpressible sweetness that it was *He* who had trodden the thorny path alone. I then knew that He was the Lord Jesus, and desired that I might be permitted to kneel down before Him. I immediately did so, and was enabled to utter some expressions of deep worship, praise and adoration.

He continued to proceed straight forward, and I immediately perceived a large square building, very plain, without any ornament, to which my guide went; he entered and I followed him, expecting that I had now arrived at the place I had so much desired, and which I had so much reason to think he was conducting me unto. I at once lost sight of my guide and was at the same instant convinced that this scripture was fulfilled in me, *He that was with you shall be in you*. I now walked solitarily on, observing that the whole building was of white transparent marble, being only one ground floor covered with a very flat arch, and admitting light every way without any appearance of windows. On each side, as I walked down the middle, were many little separate offices, with one or more persons writing in them, and several of them empty, but I saw no person that I knew till I came to the bottom; where there was a particular irradiation of Light and Glory and several persons whose countenances were illuminated with the same brightness that filled this part of the house. Of this number I was joyfully made welcome by five, who are now my valued friends and acquaintances. The first who spoke to me was William Dilworth, who, calling me by my name, asked me if I knew *what* this place was. I told him: "No;" he replied, it was the State of the Yearly Meeting, by which I understood it was the State of the Discipline established in our Society, which evidently appeared to me to be the work of no human hand, but I found it was not to be rested in, though many seemed so taken up in their various offices, as to have had no view of proceeding any further. The next friend who told me he was glad to see me was John Townsend. Then came

Thomas Corbyn ; then Joseph Docwra, and, lastly, Isaac Wilson.¹ They said they had been in this service and were proceeding farther. I found my mind greatly enlarged, and I was engaged to go with them, but I saw no way whither we were to go ; this part of the house being built against a hill and the ground as high as the roof of the house. William Dilworth, with his stick in his hand, as he usually walks, stepped briskly and encouragingly up a narrow pair of stairs in the wall, just wide enough for himself to pass, straight with the path I had come down, and opposite to the door I had come in at ; the rest of us followed him singly, and after ascending a flight of stone steps we came upon a narrow cawsey [causeway] built and raised of stone, quite straight and so high that the very clouds seemed much beneath us on each side, as we passed along upon it ; upon which we had gone but a little way, before I was exceedingly rejoiced by a prospect I beheld at a great distance before us ; it seemed to be that of a very large and beautiful city, the walls whereof were very lofty and regular, and the termination of the cawsey we were on seemed to be at a magnificent gate therein.

As we gradually ascended towards it, I conceived it to be nothing less than the New Jerusalem ; for I could plainly see the extent of many miles in circumference, an inexpressible number of cupolas and domes over the wall, each of which I took to be the summit of some superb building ; which as we advanced nearer seemed to be confirmed. We at length came to the gate and were admitted thereat, which was instantly shut upon us. We all looked on each other with silent astonishment, on finding ourselves confined within four walls, which seemed to be above a hundred foot high, without any apparent door or passage out of it ; however, the man who had opened and immediately shut the great gate, went across the court and we followed him ; he opened a small gate or door in the opposite wall which had before been imperceptible to us, for the whole appeared to be masonry ; at

¹ William Dilworth, merchant, of Lancaster (1716-1789), John Townsend, pewterer, of London (1725-1801), Thomas Corbyn, hatter, of London (c. 1711-1791), Joseph Docwra, miller, of Essex (c. 1723-1790), Isaac Wilson, dyer, of Kendal, (1715-1785), all well-known Friends, Dilworth, Docwra, and Wilson having been clerks of London Y.M.

this door we entered another straight narrow flight of stone steps, nearly the height of the top of the wall, which brought us into a large garden. Here, though I don't remember that I felt myself fatigued, I was in much sorrow, on our not finding the buildings and streets as I had expected, but, behold, instead of a city, a garden ! with an infinite number of high trees, like pines or cedars, with spherical heads, which I found were what I had at a distance taken for domes and cupolas, as I had walked on the cawsey. Though much disappointed we patiently went forwards, still rather ascending through this beautiful garden, till at length I discovered at the farther end of it a grand gate, which, with some exquisite ornaments over it, appeared by its lustre to be of pure gold ; and three men standing by it. One of them had a sword in his hand with a blaze of living fire at its point ; I was told by one of the others, that this was the Angel who was formerly stationed with a flaming sword to guard the way of the Tree of Life ; whom we no sooner approached than he pointed the flame to our left sides, just under the breast, and respecting myself I found in an instant something that I can only compare to a few threads of fine flax, which seemed to be very thinly stuck, up and down in my garments, almost from head to foot, which hitherto had been undiscoverable, and that they were all consumed in the twinkling of an eye by the touch of this flame. I felt great thankfulness arise in my mind, that there was so little combustible matter about me, as that the destruction of it by fire should give me no pain, nor cause any smell ; but I could discover nothing of this kind, about either of my friends and fellow-travellers whom I saw tried in like manner.

The other two men who stood at the gate then speedily set about stripping us all of those garments we brought hither with us, and put on each of us only a white linen vest, and over it a white robe, and a golden girdle, leaving our heads and feet bare. I immediately felt myself very pleasant and nimble, and so did my friend William Dilworth, who, though bulky, walked up a pair of steep stone steps, on the gate being unlocked and opened, without leaning on his staff as usual, and he had no sooner ascended to the top of the steps, than he brandished it in the air, and

whirled it away over the wall, as being now no longer useful.

We now found ourselves on a more magnificent cawsey than before, like a grand turnpike road, with walls on each side about breast high. I here observed to my friend John Townsend that the hills and valleys were at an immense distance beneath us, on each side; he replied that what I took to be hills and valleys were only clouds and vapours, for that the earth was at a much greater distance still, and that *we* were out of the reach of the elements. This road seemed straight and many miles long without an object to interrupt an unbounded view; except a large hill at the end of it. We had not gone far before I discovered on the road at a great distance from us a glorious appearance, which came towards us with inexpressible rapidity. We instantly gave way on each side the road, when a chariot with two horses passed us, and he that sat therein seemed glorious as the Sun, but his form was concealed through the immense lustre that proceeded from him.

We continued to go on in this holy high way, and I asked some of my friends how it was that this road was so strong and yet so *very high*, one of them replied that it was built on the Rock of Ages, and added that as we proceeded further we should go over an immense arch, which joined this road to the heavenly country. As we walked along I observed it was about half-an-hour before sun-rise on a summer's morning, and that the beams of that luminary appeared about two points of the compass on our left hand, by which I concluded we were journeying nearly if not due eastward.

We continued to go on a level road and soon found we were upon this extensive arch, and by looking over the wall on each side, which we did as we passed along, we could discover the clouds rolling under it, at a *very very* great distance.

Here it may be proper to observe that all the way I had come was a perfect straight line, without the least turning either to the right hand or to the left; nor was there any descent or down-hill path, except that the floor of the house in which my good guide left me, was rather lower at the farther end where I saw my five friends, than at the

door I entered at, though very little ; but the cawsey after we got up the steps out of the house was a sensible ascent, and so was the garden for a great length ; now, although we six only set out in company there were many, both men and women, setting out from this house just after us, whom we had at this time the great satisfaction to see coming after us upon the long level road where we were.

I felt a concern upon my mind for my wife and children, and stepping a little back to look for them I saw them all safely coming on, not very far behind, with many others, some of whom I knew, particularly Jonah Thompson leading along my youngest son by the hand.² I presently joined my beloved friends again, with whom I walked on to the end of the road, and then came to another flight of stone steps much steeper and very different from any of the others, for those were like common stairs cut or made in the ground or rock, but these were like shelves projecting out of a steep hill, just far enough to set the feet on, and only wide enough for two persons to stand on at a time ; here was no rail or anything to lay hold of. We severally lent our hands to assist the women, who by this time were come up with us, and proceeded in this manner till within about six steps of the top, and then all at once they became so narrow, that only one person could go on at a time, and that with great care. At the top of these steps was a small gate, at which a person stood and stooping forward put forth his hand to help us in ascending the *last difficult* steps and led us within the gate. I asked one who was there and seemed to belong to the place how it was that the travellers could ascend those steps in case of windy or bad weather, as there were no rails to hold by, and I understood none had ever fallen off ; he replied : " They who are in this State are not subject to the changeable elements and besides that, have no gravitation to the earth." From this gate we walked on through a small grass field, at the end of which a door in a wall was opened that seemed to be of massy gold, through which we were admitted into a garden, where we all sat down in a bower, and saw many of our friends coming in at the gate. We were informed that this was the Mountain of

² Jonah Thompson, schoolmaster, of Dorset (1702-1780).

God, the Real Paradise, of which the garden of Eden, the terrestrial paradise, in which Adam was placed, was only a type. It was exceedingly beautiful and glorious, seemed extensive beyond bounds and appeared to be that ultimate, permanent Rest, that is prepared for the people of God.

The copy from which the above is printed was written by Joseph Fry's grandson, Richard Fry (1807-1878), and dated "19 of 5 mo. 1832." The little book came into the hands of the late John Frank, who added the following :

"In another copy of the preceding dream or vision, copied apparently by my late brother-in-law, Thomas Sanders Capper (*obit* 1852), the following addition is made. It was probably derived from information supplied by Joseph Fry's widow, Anna Fry (*née* Portsmouth), who survived him many years. 'He was at the time in his chamber under the influence of some indisposition, reclined on the bed, and about 5 o'clock in the afternoon. His wife had left him not more than twenty minutes, that on her return she found his mind greatly affected, when he desired her to write down the above account.'"

Another copy of this vision is in the possession of Claude B. Fry, of Bristol, who has kindly collated it with a proof of the above and made two or three corrections, omitting minor differences.

For other visions see *The Journal*, vii. 97, viii. 91, xi. 74, 108, xiii. 16; card-catalogue in D.

Preaching and Smoking

"Many are Convinced, but the baptized people w^{ch} were met together when we Came (I thinke I may say,) every man with his tobacco pipe in his mouth ' & the drinke at ther noses' made such a smoke in the rome that it stanke excedingly, & after friends was Com they soe Continued not with standinge, the rome was thrunged Untill Jo: Crooke stood up & spake & when we had ended, Like swine whose nose must still bee in the troffe, they with soe much eagernes folloed the tobacco pipe againe as if they had beene famished."

Thomas Curtis to George Fox, dated "Reading this 5th of 11th month 1658." The district referred to seems to have been in Bedfordshire.

' The words " & the drinke at ther noses " were erased soon after they were written. Perhaps the whole was a somewhat overdrawn picture.