

## Obituary

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PROFESSOR GEORGE LYON TURNER, M.A.

**W**E regret to record the death of our esteemed contributor, Professor Lyon Turner, who died at his residence on Hayling Island, 13 viii. 1920, in his seventy-sixth year. He was a professor at Hackney College, and later at the Lancashire Independent College. Our acquaintanceship with him began when he was living at Lewisham in 1903, at which time he was giving himself to research among the records of English Puritanism. His great work was "Original Records of Early Nonconformity under Persecution and Indulgence," in three volumes, 1911-1914, which has been found very useful in **D.** MSS. from his pen still await publication in **THE JOURNAL**.

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## Notes on the Life of Emma Marshall

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**E**MMMA MARSHALL (c.1830-1899), the famous writer of historical tales, was a daughter of Simon and Hannah (Ransome) Martin, of Norwich.<sup>1</sup> Simon Martin was a partner in the Gurney Bank, and resided at the Bank House. Hannah Ransome (1787-c.1870) was a Friend by birth. On her marriage in 1809, however, she was disowned, but before the birth of her first child she was reinstated and remained a Friend for many years. Emma's elder sisters, Hannah and Mary

went to a large boarding school at Stoke Newington for the daughters of plain Friends.<sup>2</sup> They and all their schoolfellows wore the regulation stiff cardboard Quaker bonnets. These were made by an expert Friends'

<sup>1</sup> Much of the following information has been taken from *Emma Marshall*, a Biographical Sketch, by her daughter, Beatrice Marshall, 1900 (J. J. Green Collection in **D**).

<sup>2</sup> This school was conducted by Susanna Corder (1787-1864) for many years from 1824.

milliner in Bishopsgate Street<sup>3</sup> and were the sport of the young ladies of a rival non-Quaker establishment next door.

Of this school, Mary Martin wrote :

We were not allowed to sing hymns, only to repeat them. On Sundays we went to Meeting twice and before starting had to repeat either a prophecy and its fulfilment, or portions from a catechism compiled by Joseph John Gurney to confirm us in Friends' principles. There was no lack of ministry—William Allen, Cornelius Hanbury and some others, frequently preaching and praying. I remember a certain Sarah Grubb who preached. She filled my young soul with fear and horror. She was like some weird prophetess, very forbidding and gaunt, who even eschewed a white lining to her Friends' bonnet. The great events of our school life . . . were a visit to the British Museum and the Friends' great festival of Yearly Meeting. . . . We drove up to London in coaches. . . . The sittings lasted about a week, and were held in the Fifth Month. During the week there was a kind of *table d'hôte* for Quakers at the Four Swans in Bishopsgate Street. It was just at the time when several Friends left the Society and at some of the meetings exciting scenes took place.<sup>4</sup>

Little Emma wore a bonnet, "but not one turned out by the artist of Bishopsgate Street," and attended Meeting at the Gildencroft and Goat's Lane. Her impressions of Amelia Opie,<sup>5</sup> contributed to a woman's magazine, are worth repeating here in extract :

One figure had always a peculiar fascination for me. This Friend did not glide noiselessly into Meeting [as other Friends] nor did she walk with bent head and a meek demeanour : instead, the train of her gown made a "swish" upon the matting as she passed. And as week after week I watched for her advent, which was generally soon after the wheels of the Earham and Keswick carriages had grated on the gravel drive before the Gilden-Croft Meeting-house, I never failed to recognise in this stately Friend something which distinguished her from the rest. Tall and now somewhat stout, with her head thrown back and her bearing

<sup>3</sup> Who was the "expert milliner" ? Two sisters named Pumphrey were in this line of business in Houndsditch at a somewhat later period and they were succeeded by Elizabeth Messer Dyne, afterwards Bray.

<sup>4</sup> Probably the time of the Beacon controversy, which was at its height in 1836.

<sup>5</sup> Amelia Opie (1769-1853), *née* Alderson, was a convert to Quakerism. For many years she was "the liveliest of the lively, the gayest of the gay ; admired for her talents . . . grown up in the laxest sect of semi-Christians" (quoted in the *Life of Amelia Opie*, by Brightwell, 1855). Her father was a doctor in Norwich. In 1798 she married John Opie, the celebrated painter, and mixed much in learned and high-class society in London and Norwich. On the death of her husband in 1807

that of one who knew she was a personage of importance in that sedate assembly, Amelia Opie would pass to a seat of honour below the minister's gallery, and compose herself to her devotions, not so quickly as those about her. I have caught her eye wandering many a time, and I can recall the abstracted, "upward gaze" which is related of her as characteristic when she rehearsed the experience of her past life to her friends. Sometimes I now think the meditations of Amelia Opie might be upon the brilliant scenes and gay company from which she had separated herself for ever. For it was a marvellous change, when one comes to think of it, from the "feathers and finery" of a fashionable lady in the early part of the century to the stiff Quaker bonnet (hers, by the way, was small, and perched somewhat coquettishly on her head), and the silk gowns of gray and fawn which were the only permissible colours for the garments of the "plain Friends."

Of Mrs. Opie, Mrs. Marshall further wrote :

From her earliest childhood Amelia loved to frequent the court during the assizes and when Baron Alderson was on the Bench his Quakeress cousin was often seen at his side. It was the one dissipation of her later life—a glimpse into the world she had forsaken. She always had a new gown for the occasion, and I remember hearing a dressmaker say to my mother that she must wait for the dress she was making for her as Mrs. Opie's "court dress" had to be finished by a certain day. . . . The High Sheriff's carriage, with Judge and Chaplain within, drove up once to Mrs. Opie's door in Lady's Lane, and to the surprise of the spectators who had followed the carriage, out stepped the fair Quakeress,

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she settled with her father in Norwich. Largely owing to close association with the Gurney family at Earlham and Cromer, especially with "my dearest and best friend, Joseph John Gurney," and partly owing to the ministry of William Forster, Mrs. Opie began to attend Friends' meetings, and in 1825 she was received into membership. The effect of the experiences of over fifty years was always noticeable in later life, causing her Quakerism to be of an unusual type for that period. She was fond of bright colours, hung the walls of her various homes with pictures and consorted mainly with prominent persons outside of the Society. She frequently visited Paris and "some of her most sincere and attached friends felt a degree of anxiety lest her lengthened residence in the gay capital of France . . . should be injurious to her best and highest interests."

On the other hand, Amelia Opie entered heartily into philanthropic work. She was a diligent attender at Yearly Meeting, of which attendance she wrote in 1843 :

"Yearly Meeting has engrossed me as much as usual ; for I never missed *one* sitting since I obtained the great privilege of belonging to it."

It does not appear that she spoke as a minister or paid any "religious visits," though closely allied to the evangelical religion of the day.

Her numerous books, written before and after she joined Friends, have had a wide circulation. They are set out in Joseph Smith's *Catalogue* and many are in D.

in her soft silk gown of pigeon grey, and Baron Alderson was heard to say affectionately: "Adieu, my dear cousin Amelia."<sup>6</sup>

In her description of Norwich in the early years of last century, Miss Marshall wrote of Amelia Opie as "still brilliant in old age, and in the sober garb of a Quakeress, which the world said she had donned instead of azure plumes and floating scarves, for love of a Gurney Adonis [J. J. Gurney]."

The daughter, Hannah, above mentioned, married Thomas Geldart, a widower, of an old Norwich Quaker family, highly esteemed and respected. Previous to their marriage they both left Friends and became Baptists. Mrs. Geldart is known to Quaker bibliographers as the author of *A Memoir of Samuel Gurney*, published in 1857.

Mrs. Martin, and her daughters Hannah and Mary, remained Friends<sup>7</sup> till after their removal to Clifton. They were baptised into the Church of England by the Rev. James Marshall, whose son, Hugh George, became the husband of Emma Martin.

Regarding the Quakerism of Mrs. Marshall, her daughter wrote:

Though it was so many years since my mother had renounced Quakerism—indeed strictly speaking, she can hardly have been said to be a Quakeress at all—the Quaker traditions of her bringing up lingered with her till late in life.

Mrs. Marshall was much interested in higher education, and when resident in Gloucester formed a committee to arrange series of lectures. Professor Silvanus P. Thompson was engaged to lecture on Modern Science, "when to my mother's amazement and discomfiture the use of the room where all the lectures had hitherto been held was at the last moment curtly refused, the reason being given that a local man had intended lecturing on the same subject."

<sup>6</sup> In 1850 Mrs. Opie paid her last visit to the court, at the Midsummer assizes. "It was her last visit to that scene which for so many years she had been wont to frequent. She did not neglect on this occasion, to make her usual offering of a bouquet to the Judge."

<sup>7</sup> No record has been found in the Friends' Registers for Norfolk and Norwich of the births of any children of Simon and Hannah Martin. The birth of their mother is recorded—20 xii. 1787, at Norwich, parents Thomas and Margaret Ransome.