

## The Theatre and Barclay's "Apology"

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**E**XTRACT from the manuscript Journal of Joseph Woods,<sup>1</sup> under date of 3 mo. 1805. Copied from a manuscript sent up in 1920, by Mary Hannah Foster, of Scarborough, grand-daughter of Richard F. Foster, mentioned in the MS.

“ The day after the Quarterly Meeting held at Leeds, breakfasted at a friend's house and on enquiry of a certain young man I had particularly noticed at meeting, that his name was Richard Foster<sup>2</sup>, that he came out of the South and settled at Scarborough, that he joined the Society by conviction, and had appeared acceptably in the ministry, and withal related the following occurrence which I have put down as near as I can remember :

“ Dr. Southam<sup>3</sup>, of Buckingham, a man eminent in his profession, by which he had acquired considerable property, took a journey of pleasure with his wife to London. During their stay there they attended the play, in which was acted *The Quaker*<sup>4</sup> with which the Doctor was very much affected. At the close thereof the principal manager observed to the company that if any one was desirous to know more of this singular body of people he would recommend them to read Barclay's *Apology*. Accordingly the doctor, before he left London, privately purchased it, and when he got home secreted it in his study where he employed his leisure time in diligently perusing it. His wife very soon perceiving a visible alteration in him and having taken notice he spent more time in his study, wondered what was the cause ; whereupon taking the opportunity when he was from home she carefully examined the room and found the *Apology* there, which she began to read, and continued to do so at such times when he was absent. The consequence of which was by turning their minds to that Divine principle of Light and Life, which comes by Jesus Christ and is placed in the secret of every heart, they were both convinced of the truth as professed by the people called Quakers and in

time they found strength to make public profession thereof.

"About the same time Richard Foster's brother Oswald<sup>5</sup>, who was an apprentice with them, was out of his time and was gone to London for further instruction. The doctor having a great deal of business had proposed at his return to take him as a partner; before he reached home he heard they were become Quakers at which he was very much surprised, but being determined to let them know that he was not one, he began to whistle and sing when he entered the house and passing through the lobby by the sitting-room door, went directly into the kitchen where he was very much struck with the visible alteration he observed in the countenance of the servant girl, and thus accosted her: 'What, Betty, are you all turned Quakers? but I will not be one, however.' But in a short time he was also favoured with a precious visitation and became clearly convinced of the Truth.

"The said Richard Foster, hearing that his brother was turned Quaker, lightly said: 'I shall quake also when cold weather comes,' but the same Divine power soon after reached unto him and caused him to bow thereunto, bringing him into a state of willingness to confess Christ before men; and about the same time another brother, John,<sup>6</sup> resident at some distance, was convinced of the Truth. Thus, without having any previous conversation one with another, were six persons in a remarkable manner convinced and brought to the acknowledgement of the Truth and became valuable members of our religious Society.

"N.B.—The above narrative was sent to R.F.F., of Scarborough, and confirmed by him as substantially correct."

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Woods (1738-1812) was a woollen-draper of White Hart Court, Gracechurch Street. He married Margaret Hoare (1748-1821) in 1769. (THE JOURNAL, xiv. 42; xvii. 40.)

<sup>2</sup> Richard Fiennes Foster (1778-1857) was born at Newton Purcell, Oxon. At the age of twelve he was apprenticed to the drapery business. In 1794, he removed to Leicester where "he appears to have been. . . effectually brought to the knowledge of Christ" (Testimony). He joined Friends in Leicester, and in 1798 he removed to Scarborough, where he resided for the remainder of his life. He began to preach about 1805; was recorded a Minister in 1827 (*ibid.*); and travelled frequently in the ministry. In 1802, R. F. Foster married Mary Procter (c. 1772-1851).

<sup>3</sup> Considerable investigation into minute books respecting John Southam, M.D. (1756-1845) and Ann ( -1847), his wife, in which we have been assisted by the clerk of Warwickshire North M.M., has revealed some information respecting these Friends and their family. Their reception into membership is thus officially presented in the books of Buckingham M.M. (in D.) :

30 i. 1793. " Friends appointed to pay John Southam and Ann his wife a visite have had an oppertunity with them, and their report gave good satisfaction to this Meeting of the Sincerity of their Convincement. Theirfore this Meeting Receives them with their children into membership."

In 1817, a daughter, Sarah, married Joseph Cash, of Coventry, and in 1818, another, Elizabeth, married Josiah Cash, and this connection probably decided the family to remove to Coventry.

Bucks M.M., 19 i. 1820. " John Southam, Ann, his wife, and four of their children (Mary, Eleanor, Henry and Ann), removed to Coventry (Middle M.M. for Warwickshire)."

Early in 1821, they were joined by John Southam, Junr., with certificate from America, who removed to Nottingham, 1 mo. 1831.

Of the children certified with their parents to Coventry—Mary resigned her membership in 1833, and Henry moved to Nottingham in 1825, to Banbury in 1826, and to Loughton M.M. in 1833.

Richard Southam removed to Coventry from Hitchin M.M. in 1823, and Hannah from Nottingham in 1826.

Ann Southam declined appointment as Elder in 1822.

John Southam and his wife, Ann, and their two daughters, Hannah and Ann, removed to Guernsey, 8 mo. 1834.

<sup>4</sup> This probably refers to *The Quaker : A Comic Opera*, by Charles Dibdin (1745-1814, see *D.N.B.*). From the various editions in D. of this play we find that it was produced at Drury Lane Theatre in 1777, the time taken being about one-and-a-half hours. In an edition of 1815 we read :

" There is no instance (except where furnished by the author of this opera) on the English stage of any musical piece, the music and words composed and written by one person, being honoured with so much well-merited success, as that which attended the first appearance of **THE QUAKER**, has continued to attend its every succeeding repetition, and while a taste for simplicity of fable and genuine melody prevails, will doubtless attend its frequent future performance."

The Play was running at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, in 1838.

Steady, the rich Quaker, is of philanthropic bent—" he does so much good all about and he gives a portion every May-day to a damsel as a reward for her sweetheart's ingenuity," and as a consequence of this annual gift he loses a girl whom he wishes to marry.

<sup>5</sup> Oswald Foster (c. 1773-1841) was the eldest son of John and Alice Foster, of Newton Purcell, in Oxfordshire (non-Friends). He was a surgeon and apothecary at Hitchin. He married, in 1800, Mary Benwell (c. 1774-1851).

<sup>6</sup> John Foster (1781-1864) was apprenticed to a chemist at Basingstoke. He joined Friends as the result of the ministry of Thomas Shillitoe, at the marriage of his brother Oswald, at Whitchurch in 1800. About 1805 he settled at Luton and in 1812 he married Hannah Wallis, of Basingstoke (1785-1815). He travelled in the ministry—at times with his brother, Richard F. (*Annual Monitor*, 1865)