

Public Friends in Business¹

LETTER FROM DAVID HALL² TO JAMES WILSON,³
OF KENDAL

J HERE send thee one of my Little Paper Messengers, the Convoy of true Love, to thy whole self Children & Friends, also to Inform thee that I am well, & that takeing my knapsack once abt 5 or 6 Weeks agoe, I set out from Home towards London, in the Way to which City, I Exposd my Wares abt 10 Times. I got as much as supported me to the City, when I came there, I found a Confluence of Brave Tradesmen both Inland & Outland Merchants, & great Plenty of Curious Cambrick, fine English Cloth, Holland Cloth, Irish Cloth, &c., so that Poor I Expos'd my Brown Linnen but twice in that Metropolis, for what signifies Lighting a small Candle in the sun shine, There was then at said City, one Samuel Bonas⁴ a Wealthy Mercht out of Dorsetshire, a very fair and Honourable Tradesman, both in the wholesale & retail Way, a Punctual Payer of the Kings Customs & detester of the Smugling Trade. He delivers Vast Quantities of Excellent Goods, gives large Measure & Good Pennyworths too, and was but a Blacksmith somewhere about Sedber in his Younger Years, not then worth Five Pounds p Annum, but really I think he has been at the University Since he Left the Anvill, for even whilst he is Exposing his Traffick, he talks like a Philosopher, & returns as much In a Week as some doe in 7 years. He is now very able & rides like a Parliment Man.

There was also then & there Present, one Iohn Willson⁵ of Kendall, Clerk to the Merchants Company, & to the Whole Body of Tradesmen, who also has a Considerable share in Trade himself, but in a Private Way, scarce ever keeping open Shop, or Stall in Publick Fairs or Marketts. Please to tell him from me, that I think if he would keep open shop & not Deal so like a smugler, he would get gain apace, & gain I knoe he likes Well,

but as saith the Proverb, The Catt Loves Fish but likes not to Whett her Feet. I observe that when Tradesmen & Merchants are met on the Royal Exchange to adjust affairs, to Confer ab^t Trade & the rules of it, he is of a singular service, being of sincerity good Parts & the Faculty, not inferior To W. Pool, & Poultry.⁶ Methinks I see in the Man a Peculiar Tallant of Cutting out Work for other Persons, Being one of the Directors for the Honourable Company of Merchants yet I think not too forward but rather too backward, I love him much. His Wife has also been in this Country, & her & Companions Wares & Conduct were Such as added reputation to the Bussiness, & they have left a Good report behind them. We hear one of I. Willson's Daughters is sett up lately, shall I not Conclude, Father, Mother & Daughter being all Merchants, the Family must in time be very rich, I wish them Good Success.

We find, Dear Friend, there's some stirrings & revivings of Trade amongst the Young People & Elders in London, in this Country there is a Brave appearance of y^e Young Generals, I hope many may be made willing in Time to take up the Cross Daily, & follow the Captain of our salvation.

Haveing Visited the Inland Parts of Hampshire, pretty thoroughly, I found freedom to Cross the Herring Pool into this Little Isle, & perhaps may either Personally or Litterally in due Time let thee know the state of affairs on this Isle, Touching the Trade I have been speaking of, Mean while my Honoured Friend, Farewell, & pray for thy Poor, but I hope thy True Friend,

D. HALL.

Newport in the Isle of Wight,
y^e 24th Day of y^e 4th Month, 1738.

NOTES

¹ This letter was printed in *The Irish Friend*, vol. iv. (1841) p.111. There are several manuscript copies in **D** with variations in wording. It is valuable as shewing the business side of the life of well known Ministers—a phase of their life little dealt with in their biographies. It also illustrates the Quaker principle with regard to the ministry—that it is not detached from business or professional life.

² David Hall (1683-1756) was a schoolmaster residing at Skipton, in Yorkshire, of which occupation he writes: "Though I have had a

Boarding School thirty-two years, I never buried any besides five, nor had any so much as a Bone broke in all that Time." In 1716, he married Mary, daughter of William Storrs, of Chesterfield; in 1725 he married Anne, daughter of Christopher Foster, of Rillston, by whom he had nine children, six of whom died before their mother; in 1740, he married Deborah, widow of Thomas Atkinson, of Ashes in Westmorland, and daughter of Daniel Story. He travelled extensively in the ministry. See his *Collected Works*, published in 1758.

³ There was a James Wilson, of Kendal (1677-1769). "James and John Wilson of Kendal" had charge of the printing of *The Journal of Thomas Story*, 1747.

⁴ Samuel Bownas (1676-1753) was the last of the "early Friends." He was a prominent Minister and was clerk of London Yearly Meeting in 1741. *The Account of his Life and Travels* appeared in 1756, and has been several times reprinted.

See THE JOURNAL, vols. i., iv., v., vi., vii., x., xi., xii., xv.

⁵ John Wilson (1692-1752), of Kendal, married, in 1715, Deborah Wilson (1687-1754), daughter of Thomas and Rachel Wilson, of Stramongate, Kendal. They had two sons and five daughters. John Wilson was clerk of London Y.M. in 1726, 1729, 1738, 1743.

In a testimony respecting Deborah Wilson, it is stated: "She was a constant attender of meetings, tho' much engaged in Business in which she acquired a good character and was instrumental in supporting a numerous pool." She travelled in the ministry, "gaining much respect where she came . . . being always content with the meanest Entertainment, she met with, though when at home had Plenty of the good Things of this Life, whereof she communicated to her Friends with openness of Heart."

It does not yet appear which daughter was the one referred to as engaged in business. Rachel (b. 1720) married Isaac Wilson in 1740 and became the noted Minister of that name. Deborah (b. 1722) would be sixteen at the time. She married William Birkbeck in 1744. It would be interesting to think that Rachel had had some commercial experience in her youth. Other daughters were either married or still too young.

⁶ That is (as in other copies), Horace Walpole and William Pulteney.

A "Conservative" View of London Y.M., 1846

"Everything had been cut and dried by the Table Friends prior to our coming together. . . . George Stacey was Clerk, and Robert Forster and John Hodgkin, assistants, with Josiah Forster at one side, backed by Samuel Tuke, James Backhouse and company; and William Forster and Edward Pease on the other, all of whom were much supported by the eloquence of John Pease."

JOHN HARRISON, of Manchester, to William Hodgson, Jr., of Philadelphia, 2 vi. 1846, printed in *Letters and Memoirs of William Hodgson*, 1886, p. 95.