

## The Father of the Founder of the "Manchester Guardian"

---

THE *Manchester Guardian* has always, during its one hundred years of life, been owned and edited by members of the families of Taylor and Scott, connected with one another by two marriages. They are old Unitarian families, and four of their members have been—or are—in the Unitarian Ministry.

How nearly, nevertheless, the *Manchester Guardian* missed belonging to a Quaker family is not generally known. My attention was first drawn to it by finding in an old minute book of the Education Committee of Manchester Meeting, that John Taylor was brought to Manchester to be the first Master of the Friends' Day School there. I also discovered that he was the father of the founder of the *Manchester Guardian*. My friend Dr. Maclachlan, whose wife is descended from John Taylor, has in his possession a number of his letters, and has written in the *Inquirer* for June 4th, an article on the family, from which, and from references in the centenary number of the *Guardian*, I have compiled the following, which may be of some historical interest to Friends.

John Taylor (1754-1817) was connected from birth with Stand Chapel, now in the northern suburbs of Manchester. It was one of the old Presbyterian chapels common in Lancashire, which have gradually become Unitarian, having open trust deeds. The boy was educated at the Stand Grammar School, always a well-known and successful school, whose present Head is married to a Friend, and attends Meeting. The young John Taylor stayed in the school as a junior teacher for awhile, and then—in the confident manner of those days—opened a school at Darwen, which did not last long, and which may perhaps be compared with John Dalton's boyish—even childish—pedagogy at Pardshaw Hall. At eighteen

Taylor became, much more suitably, a student at Daventry Academy, a Unitarian institution, at which place he became Classical Tutor. In 1783 he became the pastor of Walmsley Chapel, near Bolton, where he was very successful, and appeared to be entering on the career of an efficient Unitarian Minister. He erected two side galleries in the chapel for an increasing congregation, built a new Parsonage, and laid plans for a boarding school on a large scale. In 1788 however, he resigned, after a curious dispute with the choir, who had a favourite bridal hymn by Dr. Watts, which they always sang during the marriage service. John Taylor objected—I feel sure with much reason—to this hymn, and, failing to persuade the choir, he gave out another one, and the congregation joined him in singing it. But the choir calmly went on with their favourite hymn all the same. (Lancashire people, particularly Unitarians, are persons of great force of character.) So John Taylor migrated to the south, and became Minister of the chapel at Ilminster, in Somersetshire. The same year he married Mary Scott, the daughter of a linen merchant of Milborne Port, and sister of the Rev. Russell Scott, Unitarian Minister at Portsmouth from 1788 to 1833. They had a courtship of nearly fourteen years, because the lady would not marry during the life of her aged mother. They had first met when he was a student at Daventry. She was a poetess and a hymn writer.

We now come to John Taylor's conversion to Quakerism, which took place in 1790. His wife did not follow him into the Society. John Edward Taylor, the founder of the *Manchester Guardian*, was born in 1791.

It is rather sad to read the account of the artificial difficulties which conversion to Quakerism in those days implied. He felt a difficulty in addressing his parents and his brothers in the plain language, but could not feel easy in using the world's language, and, on one occasion, wrote a letter in the third person to get over the difficulty. He was much helped by meeting at Bristol a woman Friend travelling in the Ministry. He describes her as a woman of fortune and of good education, who had left her husband and child to spend much of her time in preaching ;

and she was to him "an extraordinary messenger." She travelled in her own chair, and a young man travelled with her as her guide. This was in July, 1791. It would be interesting to know who she was.<sup>1</sup> She led him to conform to the principles of truth in word and action, and had some effect also with his wife. We learn, however, that the Rev. Russell Scott was offended by the plain language and dress. John Taylor writes :

I hope that I consult not my own will, but the glory of God, and the good of my fellow creatures in this matter, and I believe that I shall have no more opposition from my wife about it.

His letters contain much searching of heart, tenderness of spirit, and scrupulous inquiry into motives. He had, of course, lost his post as Unitarian Minister on becoming a Friend, and he writes to his father in 1791 :

I very much feel the want of solitude and some constant employment, for want of these one is apt to have recourse to books or company, and the mind is put off its guard.

At the beginning of the next year, he had recourse to the natural refuge of a dispossessed clergyman, and opened a school at Ilminster.

I have at present two scholars. It is true they learn Latin and French as well as writing and accounts, which makes it a little more agreeable to me. I have two others also in the town, at the rate of two guineas a year also, so that my school already brings me in at the rate of eight guineas per annum—more than I could get by weaving.

His sensitive generosity appears in the following letter, written when in some difficulty about meeting a bill that was due :

I know no certain method by which I might get my own money, but by arresting—that is, ruining—a man on whose little estate I have a mortgage ; I must have obliged him to sell that estate at an inferior price, and sell his goods and implements in trade to make up the deficiency ; violence which I cannot bring myself to practise on any account. My scruples, however, are to myself, and I do not wish any of my family to suffer. I have therefore, made other provision, and that will be ready in the course of a fortnight.

He was apparently writing to his creditor, who would appear to have been a relative. Once he felt that he could not afford the journey from the south to Stand to see his aged mother.

<sup>1</sup> The editor echoes "Who?"

The truth is so many persons, miserably poor, want those things which can only be purchased with money, and on various accounts it is not plentiful with us, so that some consideration more than I have been used to give is necessary in the disposal of it.

He now began to enquire whether there was an opening for a school in Manchester, and he made enquiries from his Unitarian friends there. He had been disappointed in an application for Ilminster school.<sup>2</sup> He heard, however, that there were three well-established day schools and one new one, in the town, so there did not seem to be much opening. This was early in 1792. Times were hard, and John Taylor writes that he found it difficult "to sink down into the state of humility which is proper. I am still too willing to think that my learning—or rather my education—my speculations in religion, all the views which I have had of perfection and usefulness, should not be lost." It would appear that the poor man was contemplating following some mechanical occupation. Happily, at the beginning of the next year he obtained a post as schoolmaster in Bristol. He must have been a man of extreme tenderness of spirit. In connection with this appointment he writes :

I am afraid that I have not kept my mind low enough in humility, but have been too apt to plan either for my own reputation, consequence, or convenience, and that I have not been so retired and watchful as I ought to have been over the motions of my own mind and heart. . . . My house is close to the School and the Meetings, but it is a great rent, more than £30 a year, including the taxes. I hope we shall at Bristol endeavour to live, if we can, without the emolument of the school, that if in the course of Providence I am called to resign it, I may be able to do so.

The Meetings referred to were the Friends' Meeting House for himself, and the Unitarian Meeting House for his wife. His mother at Stand seems to have needed a calming influence. He writes to his brother :

Tell my mother to keep her mind, if possible, more and more from those things she is so soon going to leave ; let none of those things move her ; we have no continuing city ; if we can have a good passage and a comfortable hope of a good reception at home, that is all.

In 1793, Mary Taylor died, after a married life of only five years, leaving a little boy and girl.

<sup>2</sup> According to a printed broadside in *D. To the Feoffees of Ilminster School*, dated Ilminster, 1st of the 12th Month, 1791, he offered himself as a candidate "for the School which is under your patronage." [ED.]

We now reach the time—November 8th, 1795—when Manchester Friends resolved to begin a Friends' school for children over five years of age, mainly for their own offspring. The total number was limited to fifty, probably in order to maintain the Quaker atmosphere. There was, of course, no teaching profession in the Society at that time, no Flounders Trust, no University of London, and for Friends, no Oxford or Cambridge. Indeed, in those days, it is hard to see whence Nonconformists could obtain sound learning except in the brave little colleges which the Unitarians maintained. It was at Manchester College—still retaining its name though removed to Oxford—that John Dalton found a livelihood as teacher of Mathematics and Physics. The existence therefore, of a classical scholar, who had joined Friends from the Unitarian ministry, was something of a godsend to Manchester Friends, and John Taylor was brought from Ilminster to his old district as their first schoolmaster. It is from this school that the educational endowments of Manchester Meeting have developed. It was held on the site of the present Friends' Institute. John Taylor lived in Islington Street, Salford. John Edward Taylor was a pupil in his father's school and learnt Mathematics from John Dalton.

We know little about the new schoolmaster's life except that he sorely felt the loneliness of his widowed condition. He writes to his daughter when away from home :

I want the comfort of thy company, and so does Edward. We had last evening, B. Oakden<sup>3</sup> to drink tea with us, and his wife and niece, which last came near an hour before the others, and I could not but admire how comfortable it seemed to have a female about the house.

I fear the salary could not have been adequate, for in 1810 I find in the minute book that the Preparative Meeting granted John Taylor £20 to relieve him in his straitened circumstances.

A near neighbour to the school was John Clowes, the incumbent of S. John's Church, an ardent and leading Swedenborgian. He had a great influence over John Taylor, who seems to have become very sympathetic to

<sup>3</sup> His son's employer.

Swedenborg's teaching. Knowing nothing, it is perhaps better not to surmise that this may have been connected with a minute of 1812, which decides to secure a suitable person to succeed John Taylor as schoolmaster, and to give his Assistant notice. A successor, however, was not appointed till 1815, and two years later John Taylor died at the age of sixty-three.

John Edward Taylor never became a Friend. To a man of his free and liberal mind, the plain dress and language cannot have been attractive, and his interests were largely political. He was also surrounded by his Unitarian relatives, who were at that time members of the most active and influential chapel in the town. He writes to his sister an account of his visit to Leigh Hunt, who was then in prison for giving a correct description of the Prince Regent. He also encloses for his sister a copy of Lord Byron's latest book, *The Giaour*, proposes to stay in London another night to attend the Covent Garden theatre, and concludes with the hope that his father is in good health, "and—what is perhaps of more consequence—good humour." It is rather a pity that this reflection happens to be the only note we have on our old schoolmaster's temperament during the last years of his much-tried life. J. E. Taylor founded the *Manchester Guardian* at the age of thirty, in 1821, as an organ of Whig reform. It was an outcome of the political turmoil that followed Peterloo massacre, which took place under the walls of the Friends' School.<sup>4</sup>

J. W. GRAHAM.

NOTE BY THE EDITOR

There are in the Devonshire House Reference Library four letters from John Taylor to Thomas Thompson, schoolmaster, of Compton, Dorset, written in the years 1802, 1804 and 1809, while Taylor was Master of the Friends' School in Manchester.

The first letter refers to the death of the wife of Thomas Thompson,<sup>1</sup> and then mentions the need for some place where his daughter could learn housekeeping, enquiring whether T.T. could supply such a place and also take her father and brother to assist in his school. He looked upon William Rawes and T. Thompson as guardians to his children. "Since writing the above, I find with pleasure that thy eldest son Jonah

<sup>4</sup> See THE JOURNAL, vol. v. p. 17.

assists thee in the School . . . so that there would be no prospect of Employment for me with you."

T. Thompson had evidently, however, offered Taylor a position as teacher of French in his school, but the offer was declined, by letter dated 11 mo. 1802, partly because the daughter's prospects were brighter but more because of "Inconvenience which might arise from my children's being introduced among the Relatives & connections of their Mother, . . . which might have a Tendency to warp their Minds, & render them disaffected to the Principles & ways of Friends to which at present they seem quite reconciled & even attached."

In his letter dated 6th month, 1804, John Taylor makes considerable reference to his teaching, especially of grammar, and concludes :

"My daughter is at present at school with Sarah Spurr, a young woman of good family & Education, who, with her sister (the widow of the celebrated Alexander Kilham), has from the Methodists lately joined our Society and undertaken Friends' School at Liverpool. Edward is still with me, reading Virgil, Xenophon, the Hebrew Bible, & is lately begun French, & is a pretty good Accountant."

The last letter, dated 5 mo. 11, 1809, refers to the re-marriage of his correspondent<sup>1</sup> and also to "the melancholy pleasure" of the prospect of a visit to the West, mixed with fear of his children's association with their "natural Gentile, though worthy Relations."

<sup>1</sup> T. Thompson married Ann Gregory, Junr., of Claverham, in 1782, and Anna Rawes, widow of William Rawes, *née* Fox, of Falmouth, in 1808. School prospectus, book-plate and various letters are in **D**.

---

### A Token of Good Will

"**W**E whose names are hereunto subscribed, being the curate and others of the inhabitants of the Parish of St. Davids, do hereby certify whom it may concern, that the bearer hereof, Marmaduke Pardo, of the city of St. Davids and co. of Pembroke, has to the utmost of our knowledge and all appearances lived a very sober and pious life, demeaning himself according to the strictest rules of his profession, viz., what we call Quakerism, and that he has for these several years past took upon himself the keeping of a private school in this city, in which station he acquitted himself with the common applause, and to the general satisfaction of all of us who have committed our children to his care and tuition . . ."

Taken from *Early Quaker Education in Pennsylvania*, by Prof. Woody, 1920, p. 110. Nothing definite appears to be known of Pardo's colonial work.