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FRIENDS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Our Quotation—9

“Obsessions about superiority and inferiority sink away from a man who is engrossed in work.”

RUTH MURRAY UNDERHILL, *The White Moth* (a novel), 1920, p. 283.

Scenes in the Separation of 1828

A MANUSCRIPT has recently been presented to D by Mary Hannah Foster, of Scarborough, consisting of a copy of letters from William Procter, of Baltimore, to his relations in England, written in 1828, describing events connected with the Separations of that year in the Yearly Meetings of Philadelphia, New York, and Ohio.

The letters are written from the standpoint of an “Orthodox” Friend.

Baltimore, 5 month 1828

My Dear Brother & Sister

PHILADELPHIA YEARLY MEETING

Presuming it would be interesting to you to be furnished with a little Sketch of occurrences during the Late Yearly Meeting may say, I left home on the 17th of Last month in the Steam Boat at 5 P.M. & arrived safe

in Philadelphia the next morning between 8 & 9: This was the last day of Hicksite Y Meeting, the Women occupied their New Meeting House in Cherry Street & the men the Green St. Meeting house, the Size of which had been increased by the addition of a frame Building or Shed along one end & the Doors & windows taken out, but I believe it was not used as the house itself was found sufficiently Large for all the Men that attended. Elias & Willet Hicks were in attendance. I saw the former on the afternoon of 6th day on his way to attend the last Sitting. He rode in a Verry handsom Carriage being unusually high & occupied the Back Seat altogether himself, looked verry stately & bowed his head as he Passed possibly recollecting either me or the friend in Co. with me.

Willet Hicks attended the North Meeting last week in Style, drove up to the meeting house Door in his Barouch & Pair of Iron Greys, when he was handed out of the Carriage, & his servant immediately waited upon him with a Cloaths Brush & Brushed him down previous to his going to Meeting.

Philadelphia Y Meeting commenced on second Day in the Arch St. Meeting house as usual. Geo. & Ann Jones, Elizabeth Robson, Isaac & Anna Braithwaite & Thomas Shillitoe were all present, the floor of the house occupied by the Men was, I think, nearly if not quite as full as at former Years. Upstairs probably from 100 to 150 Persons, indeed I think the body of friends that might be Considered the Cream of the Society in refrance to that Yearly Meeting, divested of all the froth & scum including all who for years past have been the Cause of confusion & disorder, which has unhappily prevailed during the Sittings of the Y Meeting.

In the Womens Meeting some desturbance occurred by a friend named Lydia Mott, from Skenectaday, a Hicksite Minister who had attended the Y. Meeting of the Separatists the preceeding week refusing to withdraw & insisting on her right as a Member of N. York Y. Meeting to sit & declaring she had as good a right as that friend, pointing to & naming Elizabeth Coggeshall. For a time she seemed to set all entreaty at defiance, when Ann Jones observed there appeared to be an obstruction to

the Meetings proceeding with its business & that obstruction must be removed. She was astonished that an Individual not wanting in Common Sense should presume to force her presence on the Meeting &c. After this, finding if she did not withdraw, she would be taken out by force, she withdrew, spreading out her Arms, Casting her Eyes up to the Youths Galleries & inviting the Young women to follow her pronouncing her expulsion Opression, Persecution &c; said that Hundreds would leave them in Consequence & Calling upon the Young women who wished to follow Christ to Come with her. Considerable agitation & alarm was Manifested & one or two instances of fainting occurred, & notwithstanding her appeal to the feelings of the Young women but 4 or 5 went out with her, & they all returned except one. . . .

One Baltimorian, after attending the Separate YM went into the Country, returned to the City on 3rd day, attended the Sittings on 4th day & the Morning Sitting on 5th day, when he was Arrested by the Committee & advised Not to attempt another intrusion. Some attempts were made to elude the Vigilance of the Committee—getting through other Lotts & over fences & Grave Yards & entering the back part of the Meeting house Lott. One of the Separatists from New York took a great deal of pains to elude the Vigilance of the Committee by going thro a back Alley & passing over various Private Lotts & a grave yard & finally in Climing the Last fence; before he reached the ground he found himself in the Custody of the Committee & was Conducted into the Street instead of the Meetinghouse to his no little mortification. I dont say this was an Englishman, but I think his Name was Wright.

L. Mott I think did not again intrude amongst the Women but at the Public Meeting in the Middle of the Week at Arch Street, she attended & appeared in Public testimony, & her Communication was of that Nature that an Elder of that Meeting believed it his Duty to oppose her, inform the Meeting that she was not in unity with the Society and desire her to Set down. She Battled the watch with him, declaring herself to be in unity with the Y. Meeting of New York & her friends at home & that she had a right to speak and would exercise that right,

denying his right to order her to set down. Considerable Altercation took place before she could be prevailed on to take her seat. And soon after she made a second attempt, when the same Elder, a second time, interfered & ordered her to take her seat. She again denied his authority & he insisted on his Authority & Duty as an Elder of that Meeting, & unless she took her seat and refrained from interrupting & disturbing the Meeting, the officers in attendance should be called in. She now desisted from further interruption. Thomas Stewardson from Kendal in Westmorland was the Elder above mentioned & this same Lydia Mott was since appointed assistant Clerk to the Womens Separatist Yearly Meeting at New York. . . .

At the mens meeting it was reported as the Judgment of the Representatives that No Person who had so far Identified themselves with the Separatists as to attend their Meetings of Discipline should be permitted to attend any of the Settings of this Yearly Meeting, which was fully united with & Committees at the gates directed to Act accordingly. It was then desired that if there were any of the description now present, that they would withdraw. T. Shelleto I think said that he knew one Individual now present of this description. 'Tis said Thomas Wright of Hudson was then present & some few other Hicksites. One only I believe withdrew at this time, but the Committees kept a Sharp Look out after this sitting. T. Wright is an Englishman I think from Sheffield. . . .

In order to give you an idea of the upper seat may say the clerks, Samuel Bettle & William Evans, occupy the Centre of the Upper Gallery, which I think is six steps above the floor of the House, Seats on each step from one side to the other, descending to the floor. On the right of the clerks sit Thomas Shilletoe, Jonathan Taylor, William Jackson, an ancient and venerable Friend who has been in England, Hynchman Haynes, Stephen Grelett, Chrestopher Healy and many others I dont recollect filling up the seat to the right. And on the Left of the Clerks was William Flanner, Jonathan Evans, Isaac Bonsall, Joseph Whiteall, Othniel Allsop and many others filling up the Seat to the Left, and before them Thomas Stewardson, Thomas Wistar, Leonard Snowden,

John Parker, Isaac Braithwaite and a host of other valuable Ministers and Elders, &c., filling up the raised seats ; in short the Separatists can scarcely be said to be missed in Numbers and the Seats formerly occupied by them in producing confusion and disorder are now filled by the friends of order and propriety, concerned to support the order and Discipline of Society.

Thomas Shillette gave an account of his visit to two or three of the late Monthly Meetings, pointing out the peculiar difficulties in which some of them were placed—in one instance he stated the Number of Men, Women, and Children composing a Monthly Meeting to be upwards of 500, a separation has taken place and out of this number only 26 Men, Women, and Children were left, all the rest having joined the Separatists, including all the Overseers and active Members except four or five and these found themselves in a very weak state to put the Discipline in force against such a large number of disorderly members.

The Meeting of Ministers & Elders meeting at 8 o'clock, [I] was Invited this evening to Breakfast tomorrow morning at Samuel Bettles with Elizabeth Robson & Ruth Ely her Companion. In arriving there was invited to walk up Stairs into the front Parlour, where I found Wm. Jackson & his wife ; 2 or 3 women friends came in and went to their knitting, after which Samuel Bettle & John Chew Thomas, & soon after Elizabeth & Ruth who appeared much pleased to see me & made many enquiries after the friends in Balto. where they have a Number notwithstanding the Treatment they received when there. After chatting a while we were Called downstairs to Breakfast when E.R. requested me to set by her, which I accordingly did & we had a good deal of conversation whilst at Table. After breakfast she had to get ready to go to Select Meeting at 8 o'clock, & requested me to come & see her whenever I could, that they were generally at home by 8 or 9 in the evening.

Elizabeth Robson paid a Visit to the Men's Meeting and occupied one hour in Public communication and supplications.

Reports were made [at the Monthly Meeting for the Northern District, 4 mo. 29] of furnishing numerous

Copies of testimonies of disownments against Separatists and left at the dwelling of such as would not receive them. In some cases it appears Committees have been invited in, and then locked up by the Parties; in others when it was known Committees were expected, the front Door has been Locked and the parties would look out of second storie windows and laugh at the Committees, refusing to open the door, and such like shameful conduct.

NEW YORK YEARLY MEETING

5 mo. 29. Various rumors have reached Baltimore within a few days past, by letters from Aquilla Jones, Rebecca Turner [?], Ephraim Gardner, William Tyson, Ann Brown [?], Michael Lamb, &c. very Contradictory in many things but generally agreeing in one Point, viz., that a Separation of New York Yearly Meeting took place on Second-day morning at the first sitting immediately on the opening of the Meeting, when it was observed by Thomas Shillette that there were a number of Disowned persons present and it would not be proper for the Meeting to proceed with its business until it was more Select. This is said to have been denied by the Hicksites who insisted that all that were present had a right to sit the Meeting, and called out for the Clerk to go on, much clamour and confusion ensuing. When a person informed the Meeting that the Representatives had met that morning and agreed to propose two persons (naming them) both Hicksites, for Clerk & assistant, the Confusion and disorder now became so great that an Adjourning Minute was read by the Clerk, and the Orthodox part of the Meeting withdrew to the room in the Basement Storey of the building; but not being able to gain Admittance, they proceeded in a body to the Medical College where accommodation was procured and it is presumed the business of New York Yearly Meeting was resumed and carried on.

Tis understood that after the Orthodox withdrew, the Hicksites remained, & appointing Nicholas Brown, Clerk, proceeded to business as a Yearly Meeting, but were probably not in possession of books, papers, etc.

The account of the Meeting at which the Separation took place, as Published in *The Friend*, is truly a Lamentable Account of outrage, confusion and disorder, and that part of it relating to the installation of the new Hicksite Clerk exceedingly ludicrous, as he is represented as going over the Gallery Rail, Heels over Head, E. Hicks pulling him over with one hand and with the other pushing Richard Mott, the regular Assistant Clerk out of his seat. . . .

6 mo. 3. The Hicksite Yearly Meeting appointed a committee to wait on our English Friends A. & I. B. [Anna & Isaac Braithwaite], G. & A. Jones, E. Robson and T. Shilleto with a Minute declaring their disunity with their Doctrines and Services, and advising their return, had, I believe, not succeeded in getting an opportunity with any but T. Shilleto who told them he did not know them as Friends and was not Amenable to them. They are understood to have stated that they should write to his friends at home advising his recall, and he desired them to give his Love to them, having a great regard for his friends at home.

OHIO YEARLY MEETING

9 mo. 17. The last few days has brought various reports of Letters from Ohio. The first, a Letter from H. Judges son in law to Wm E. Bartlett, mentions the Hicksites have possession of Mount Pleasant Meeting-house, and the Orthodox occupy the House at Short Creek—that previous to the Adjournment by the Orthodox at the first sitting, when they were all together, the Hicksites having forced an entrance, great Confusion & disorder took place. The Hicksites named one of their own party for a Clerk and that he was one hour in advancing 10 steps towards the Table & before he reached it, a regular Adjourning Minute was read by the Clerk to 10 oclock next morning. The Clerk's Table was broken to pieces, divers Coat tails torn off, amongst them Jonathan Taylors, & he himself is said to have been seriously injured. Cries of "Fire! Fire!" and that the Partition was falling and "Hurrah for Jackson" are said to have been uttered in the Midst of the greatest Confusion and Noise.

After the Orthodox withdrew, the Hicksites proceeded with their business, and Adjourned to 9 o'clock next Morning, thereby getting possession of the House one hour before the Orthodox, who at 10 o'clock demanded possession of the House in the Name of and for the use of Ohio Yearly Meeting, and were replied to that the Yearly Meeting of Ohio was then in session. They therefore held a meeting in the yard & then withdrew to Short Creek Meetinghouse about $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile distant. Thus far goes the first account but not a word respecting the women.

The next account is brought by a Ohio Merchant not a Member who states that Hicks and three or four others of his Party are in Prison ; that Jonathan Taylor is severely injured & Apprehensions entertained for his recovery ; that the Outrage & riot was such as made it necessary for the Civil Authority to interfere, but still not a word respecting the women.

The next account, two days after, is a letter from H. Judges son-in-law to Wm E. Bartlett which is understood to admit that a number are bound over for their appearance at Court to take their Tryals on the 15th of next Month but that they are not and have not been in prison ; that the Clerk of the Hicksite Y Meeting and Halliday Jackson were taken into Custody by the Sherriff and escorted 22 miles to Steubenville the County town where they underwent an examination and entered into recognizances for their appearance on the 15th of next month to take their trials ; that the Hicksites Yearly Meeting concluded on the 12th Inst, but the Orthodox Y. Meeting was expected to continue untill the middle of the following week. H. Jackson is from Darby, a notorious Hicksite. He passt through Balto some time since on his way to Ohio Y.M. in company with Joseph Dodgson, an Englishman from Kendall, who now lives at Darby and I think is an overseer among the Hicksites. Marcus Tullius Cicero Gold, the stenographer, who also went to Ohio for the Purpose of taking down in Shorthand what should occur, is said to have hurried back to Philadelphia for the purpose of Printing and Publishing his notes, previous to the commencement of the Tryals. This is the substance of the 3rd Account as far as I have

understood, but still not a word respecting the women. All that has yet reached us is through Hicksites Channels. A few days more will probably put us in possession of more Authentic Accounts.

Tis said that E. Hicks himself was not present on the first opening of the Y. Meeting when the greatest Confusion and disorder occurred & therefore he cannot be blamed for what took place, but on the other hand it is understood that he and A. Peasley and E. Dawson have for some time previously been industriously engaged in encouraging the Hicksites in taking possession of the House & by no means to give it up, but to hold possession at all events, and if so I think he would in Law be considered Accessory before the fact, & on that ground liable for the Consequence that ensued, altho not present when the outrage or riot was committed.

I dont know whether I have before mentioned the names of friends from Philadelphia who went on to attend the Conference at Mount Pleasant. They are Jonathan Evans, Samuel Bettle, Thomas Stewardson, Isaac W. Morris, William Evans, B. Cooper and Josiah Tatem, and from New England Doctor L. Green, William Jenkins, and John Osborn. Similar committees would probably also attend from all the other Yearly Meetings except Baltimore who rejected the proposition. The Conference was to take place the week before Ohio Y. Meeting so that there would be a valuable body of friends from distant parts at that Yearly Meeting, which would be a great Strength to those disposed to adhere to the ancient order of Society & who would be living witnesses of the Conduct of those who departed therefrom. I am glad they were there for Thomas Shillitoe must have had a trying time. It seems to have been his lot to battle the watch with Elias Hicks ever since he went to the westward. Anna and Isaac Braithwaite are also there.

Gold, the Stenographer, past through or from Balto this morning on the way to Philadelphia. He states, I learn, that he never witnessed such a [?] murdering Scene among the Quakers ; that upwards of 60 went in a body from Mount Pleasant to Court then sitting at Steubenville; that a number were recognized to appear and take their trials on the 15th of next Month & the Court had

ordered the Depositions of distant Witnesses to be taken before a magistrate ; & that the day before he left Ohio Samuel Bettle was examined by Interrogatories & his Answers taken in writing ; that it commenced at 7 o'clock in the morning & was not got through with untill dark in the Evening, & this was the first Depositions taken ; that he, Gold, attended & took it in Shorthand, & has also taken the Public Communications delivered on First Day by Elias Hicks, Elisha Bates & others which he is going to publish with all possible Speed.

9 mo. 23. Last evening Benjamin Cooper, of Haddonfield & Josiah Tatem of Salem, New Jersey, two of the Committee of Conference appointed on behalf of Philadelphia Y. Meeting arrived in Baltimore from Mount Pleasant, Ohio. They staid here one day to rest, and my friend, James Gillingham, and myself were invited to take tea & spend the evening with them at G. T. Hopkins's which we accordingly did, & they having also attended all the Sittings of the Y.M. of Ohio, were enabled to furnish much very interesting information relative proceedings there. Benjamin Cooper, I believe, Purchased the late Residence of Richard Jordan, near Haddonfield Meeting, and now occupies it. They state that the Account Published in *The Friend* relative to Proceedings at Mount Pleasant Meetinghouse on Second and Third Day was drawn up & read in the presence of a large number of Friends who fully concurred in its correctness, previous to its being sent to *The Friend*, it being very desirable that nothing but a Correct Statement should appear in that Paper. It also appears that Benjamin Cooper was the Individual alluded to in *The Friend*, who, on Third day morning went into the Hicksites Y.M. & ascertained their Numbers, by counting the Benches occupied, to be about 300, including many that had been regularly Disowned by the Meetings they belonged to, & not a few who never had any pretensions to a right of membership. This was ascertained from the Individual who kept the Door, who himself acknowledged that he never was a member of the Society of Friends. . . .

It appears that considerable Alarm was manifested by the Hicksites when they found that Civil Process had Issued against many of them upon three distinct Charges—

—first for a Riot, secondly for a Trespass or Trespasses, and thirdly for Disturbing a Religious Meeting. 10 or 12 were arrested on the first Charge, 4 on the second, & 2 on the 3rd. Many others absconded, but it is expected they will be pursued & taken. Depositions of many Friends from Distant parts have already been taken, among them are Samuel Bettle, Isaac Braithwaite, Josiah Tatem & others. Those connected with the first and second Charges will undergo their Trials before a Court and Jury to sit on the 15th of next Month.

[The letter concludes with the mention of various family matters.]

I am, very affectionately
Your Brother,
WM. PROCTER.

Philip E. Thomas and the B. & O.

THE following is an extract from a letter from William Procter, of Baltimore, to his friends in England (copy in D) :

7 mo. 4. 1828. A great civic procession having for its object not only the Commemoration of that Day as usual, the Day on which Independence was declared, but also the laying of the First Stone of the contemplated Baltimore and Ohio Rail Road. The President of this Company, Philip E. Thomas, is the present Clerk of Baltimore Yearly Meeting, Clerk to the Committee on Indian Concerns, one of the Committee of Correspondence on behalf of Baltimore Y.M. with Friends in London.

In his first official Correspondence with a Committee of Blacksmiths, who proposed presenting the Company with a Spade, Pick and Hammer, he addressed them as "Gentlemen" and concluded with saying that he "has the honour to be," &c, "P. E. Thomas." This, I presume, would in England be considered very inconsistent conduct for a Clerk of the Y. Meeting, and so it is here by many. But in subsequent similar addresses, he calls them "Respected Friends" and concludes, "Respectfully thy friend," etc. He is a very popular & influential Character both in civil and religious Society, though quite a small man.