

The Beard a Bar to the Ministry

JOSHUA EVANS was a native of West Jersey, being born at Evesham in 1731. He was a man of decided religious views and held opinions in advance of his times. He took up the cause of temperance and decided that the use of spirituous liquors during time of harvest was pernicious. He is mentioned in Anthony Benezet's work, *The Mighty Destroyer Displayed*, printed in 1774 :

He offered sixpence per day more than other farmers, to such labourers as were willing to assist in bringing in his harvest, on condition that no spirituous liquors should be used in his fields.

Joshua Evans was also concerned to promote peace and goodwill among men and he conscientiously refrained from the use of articles the duty upon which was appropriated to promote warlike measures. He abstained also from the use of animal food and of leather made of the skins of beasts that had been killed. "His dress was of domestic fabrication, altogether in its natural colour, and clear of superfluous appendages."¹

As other Friends had been known to travel in a path almost as narrow, Joshua Evans' progress thus far does not appear to have excited doubts in the minds of his brethren generally. But when he permitted his beard to grow, many of his friends became uneasy, apprehending he was running beyond the motions of truth into unprofitable imaginations.

The matter of the beard was taken up by the Select Q.M. of which Evans was a member, and a committee was appointed to visit him, "on account of his wearing his beard and other singularities." The committee had a good time with him, but "they left him with his beard on, much as they found him, none having power, or a razor to cut it off."²

In the Y.M. the beard was such a cause of offence that the seats around near where he sat were avoided by all his friends save one, William Blakey, who, under a sense of duty, took a place beside him, "much to his mortification," as he stated when he related the circumstance many years afterwards.

¹ Quotations are from an account of Joshua Evans in Comly's *Friends' Miscellany*, Philadelphia, vol. I (1834).

² John Hunt's Journal in Comly, *Misc.*, x. 241.

Joshua Evans brought a concern to travel as a Minister before his M.M. on numerous occasions, but a certificate was as often refused³ until some of the younger members, usually silent, expressed their approval so strongly that "after thirteen or fourteen years struggle, he was liberated to visit New England. This was in 1794," and apparently he was well received, as he revisited this Northern Y.M. more than once, also other parts of the American States.

While the subject was before Haddonfield M.M. a Friend of Moorestown, N.J., John Hunt, wrote a long letter to a Haddonfield Friend, beginning: "I suppose our friend Joshua's beard is the chief obstruction. . . . To hinder him in his religious services on account of his beard, I cannot see to be right."

Then follow pages of pogonological lore to prove that many noted people wore beards—Bible characters, martyrs, "whom William Penn mentions with great respect," "From some accounts the Holy Pattern did wear his beard." George Fox "was a spectacle of wonder to the world."—When John Woolman landed in England many Friends were much straitened with his appearance.

Joshua Evans died in the autumn of 1798. A vast concourse of people attended his funeral, including many negroes and Indians. His death closed the prospect he had entertained of visiting Europe.

In the tenth volume of *Friends' Miscellany* appears "Joshua Evans's Journal," where it occupies rather over two hundred pages. It reminds us of the Journal of his fellow townsman, John Woolman, being less full than other Journals of names of persons and places, and more occupied with reflections on the condition and manner of life of Friends visited. Like John Woolman, Joshua Evans bore about with him a troubled mind and tender conscience and expressed disapproval of many things he saw, as for instance the system of slavery; the frequent use of spirituous liquor and tobacco; an unnecessary provision of food at times of Quarterly Meeting; "the practice of calling children and others by nick-names, such as Jack, Harry, &c. "; "among things superfluous and improper, that of giving children three names."

³ His father, Thomas Evans, was once refused a certificate to visit Old England, but we do not know the reason for this refusal.

Whilst many of his friends considered his beard as a hindrance to his religious service, he expresses quite different views :

The wearing of my beard, I believe, hath been of great use in the cause I am engaged to promote ; for I apprehend thousands have come to meetings where I have been, that otherwise I should not have seen ; many being induced, in great measure, to come on account of my singular appearance. And yet many of these have been among the most tendering seasons.

Books Wanted

(For previous lists, see xiv. 88, 121 ; xv. 119 ; xvi. 17 ; xvii. 120 xviii. 94.)

DEVONSHIRE HOUSE REFERENCE LIBRARY :

Ursprung, Fortgang, und Verfassung der Quakergeminden Zu Pyrmont, by Schmidt, Braunschweig, 1805.

Memoirs of John Dalton, by W. C. Henry, London, 1854.

A Summary History of Cottonwood Quarterly Meeting, Emporia, Kansas, 1897.

Daniel Ricketson, Autobiographic and Miscellaneous, New Bedford, Mass., 1910.

History of New Bedford, Mass., 1858, and *The Autumn Sheaf : a Collection of Miscellaneous Poems*, 1869, by Daniel Ricketson.

Memoirs of John Griscom, LL.D., New York, 1859.

Compendium of English Grammar, by James Hamton, Phila., c. 1780.

Memoirs of Joseph Parrish, by George B. Wood, Phila., 1840.

The Mighty Destroyer Displayed, by Anthony Benezet, Phila., 1774.

Books on Grammar, etc., by Stephen Monson Day, Phila., Pa., and Burlington, N.J., c. 1800.

Please send offers to the Librarian, Devonshire House, Bishopsgate, London, E.C.2.

Records of the borough of Northampton 1722 Dec. 12. Anne Hopkins, widow, being one of the people called "Quakers," who was exercising the trade of a maltster in the town, was ordered to be admitted a freewoman upon payment of £10 with the accustomed fees and in case she refused to take up her freedom on these terms she would be forthwith sued for an infringement of the charter. Due notice of this order was served upon Anne Hopkins who treated it with contempt and continued to exercise her trade. A case was submitted to the deputy recorder, Mr. Cuthbert, and he advised action should be taken under by-law 1704 which was duly witnessed in accordance with the charter by two of her Majesty's Judges.