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Editor: NORMAN PENNEY, F.S.A.
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Dr. John Fothergill to Lady Pennington

THIS letter, from Dr. John Fothergill (1712-1780) to Lady Pennington, is a response to an application by her for money in aid of a poor man. The courteous tone of the letter is noticeable, combined with some curious Quaker features—the habitual avoidance of the difficulty of naming the month by writing “inst.,” and repeating the applicant’s name in place of “thee” or “thy.”

Dr. Fothergill was at this time near the close of his life, about sixty-five years of age, and his constant generosity, and the frequent needs and claims of his near connections, had embarrassed him. He had made many loans, and no-one, he pathetically remarked, ever thought of paying him either principal or interest, for what he had lent. His income is believed to have been about £5,000, worth say from two to three times that amount to-day. He hoped to have saved enough to enable him to retire, but he found himself obliged to “labour at the oar” to the end. His botanical garden had become a burden. Hence such a refusal as the present was most necessary, and it is gently and sympathetically conveyed. When he died at sixty-eight, he did not leave much more than five years’ income behind him after all was sold.

R. HINGSTON FOX,
Author of *Dr. John Fothergill and His Friends*.

66 DR. JOHN FOTHERGILL TO LADY PENNINGTON

Harpur Street, 12th inst.

Respected Friend,

It gave me concern the other day, that time did not permit me to receive a visit from Lady Pennington, but my time is very seldom my own ; and it hurts me not a little, that I am prevented likewise from complying with the request contained in thy obliging letter. It is generally supposed that my income is considerable—that I do not employ my money in trade, and of consequence that it is always at my command. This opinion subjects me to perpetual calls ; and I am actually some thousands in debt to my Banker for money advanced to relieve the necessities of others.

I have no pretensions to more feelings than others, but from the time I have had any thing to call my own—this has been uniformly the case—called upon to the utmost extent of my ability—in every shape—to assist others—till I am grown to the verge of old age in labouring for others.

I pity the man, tho' I am much a stranger to him, but from character and for Lady Pennington's sake as well as his own, I should cheerfully have complied with her request, could I have done it with any tolerable ease to myself.

I thought this intimation immediately necessary, as it may be necessary for the object of Lady Pennington's concern to be looking out elsewhere for assistance. I wish I could do more than pity his oppressed condition.

I will embrace the first opportunity I can to accept of Lady Pennington's kind invitation, and am with much respect
her Friend,

J. FOTHERGILL.

Lady Pennington has not yet been definitely identified. She may have been Sarah, daughter of John Moore, of Somersetshire, who married Sir Joseph Pennington (1718-1793), fourth Baronet, a commissioner of customs. Sarah, Lady Pennington, died at Fulmer, Bucks, in September, 1783. (*Penningtoniana*, 1878, p. viii.)

The following are further references to Lady Pennington :

There is a letter from John Payne (-1787), dated July 12, 1774 (copy in D, original in possession of Mrs. O'Brien, of Ennis, Co. Clare, Ireland), introducing the works of William Law, doubtless addressed to Lady Pennington though without name of addressee.

Another (probably original, in D), written by Thomas Hartley (1709 ?-1784), and dated " Enfield, Apl. 28, 75," beginning " Good Lady "

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and subscribed "Your Ladyship's affectionate friend & h'ble Servt. in Christ, THOS. HARTLEY," the words being added: "By Mrs. Sarah Forster." It is taken up entirely with religious hortation.

And again, in a letter from William Forster, schoolmaster, of Tottenham, to his sister Elizabeth, dated "1 mo. 11, 1775" (copy in D) we read:

"Thou need not expect a Letter from sister Sally soon, she is so taken up with Lady P. that she can write to none else, their L^{rs} continue a secret but doubtless clever—she is still one of the most accomplished, most sentimental Letter writer and most religious woman. Sister has introduced her as a Correspondent to the truly worthy Jn^o Payne, the Translator of à Kempis, the corrector of the chief of Hawkesworth's pieces, and thought the best Scholar in this age."

It seems late to refer to the "Autumn, 1922" issue of the *Bulletin of Friends' Historical Society of Philadelphia* (vol. XI, no. 2, price 50 cents. from 142, North Sixteenth Street, Philadelphia, Pa.), but this is not a magazine to glance through and put aside and we should be glad for our readers to know something of this valuable medium for the dissemination of information relating to Friends and their interests. The principal item is a continued article on "The Criminal Codes and Penal Institutions of Colonial Pennsylvania," by Professor Harry E. Barnes, of Worcester, Mass., which occupies sixteen pages. This for the general reader—in addition we have useful pages containing "Items from Periodicals," "Book Notices and Reviews," "Notes and Queries," also an account of the CCL. Anniversary of Baltimore Y.M. and a historical sketch of Buckingham Meeting House, Bucks Co., Pa., with illustration.

Q.M. AT YORK, 1820.—The following is extracted from a letter from Richard Cockin (1753-1845), of Doncaster to his niece, Mary Sanderson, *aft.* Fox, 6, Old Jewry, London, dated 15 x. 1820:

"Our Qr. Meeting was regarded as one of the most memorable ones that Friends can remember. It seemed to me as if every disposition that would oppose the government of the Prince of Peace was *lived down* in the Divine Power.

"In addition to M. and E. DUDLEY, there was ANN JONES, who, with her husband, are moving with a certificat to our parts. HULDAH SEARS was also with us and frequently engaged publickly to advocate the cause of Truth, ISAAC STEPHENSON, and WILLET HICKS from New York, who is in England on business.

"WILLET HICKS is a very lively spirited Friend and frequently cloathed with dignifying authority, when in the exercise of his gift. His Ministerial communications are clear, impressive and accompanied with solemnizing influence on meetings.

"HULDAH SEARS, accompanied by ANN ECROYD, unmarried sister to HENRY ECROYD, is intending to go directly for Scotland. She is 55 years of age, looks rather wore down, is very simple in her deportment, and in conversation evinces a diffident sweetness of disposition."