

Joseph Woods to William Matthews

JN the letters of Joseph Woods to William Matthews, written towards the end of the eighteenth century, and now preserved in **D**, we find some quaint allusions to London Yearly Meeting.

Joseph Woods (1738-1812), "woollen-draper, of White Hart Court, Gracechurch Street, London, was a member of the Society of Friends, who took a prominent part in furthering the work of the Anti-slavery Society." He married, in 1769, Margaret Hoare (1748-1821), second daughter of Samuel Hoare and his wife, Grizell Gurnell. Margaret Woods was a gifted woman; extracts from her *Journal* were printed in 1829, and also published in America in 1850.¹ From their eldest son, Samuel (1772-1853), is descended the present Frank Theodore Woods, bishop of Winchester, who comes of Quaker stock from both parents, his mother, Alice Octavia Fry, being a grand daughter of Elizabeth Fry. Another son of Joseph and Margaret Woods, Joseph (1776-1864), was an architect; see Joseph Smith's *Catalogue of Friends' Books*, ii. 955. He was unmarried, his sister, Margaret (1778-1868), lived with him at Southover, Lewes. He died aged 87 and his sister, aged 90, their deaths being given in the *Annual Monitor*.

Joseph Woods has been described as "a man of small fortune and bad health"; his letters indicate his interest in poetry and literature generally, also the welcome he gave to new thought in his desire for wisdom and knowledge. But as regards the Society of Friends he was strongly conservative and treated any change with seeming impatience and intolerance.

Family Records and Pedigree, compiled by Edward H. Woods, 1918; copy presented to **D**, in 1919, by Elizabeth Woods, of Woburn Sands.

William Matthews was a resident of Bath. He appears to have left Friends. He died in 1816. For his writings see Smith, *Cata*.

¹ The seven volumes of the original diary, covering the years 1771 to 1821, are in **D**. *Practically all the personal references in the original have been omitted in the printing—a great loss* (xiv. 42).

In June, 1784 (Letter 33), Joseph Woods writes :

“ With respect to the Yearly Meeting we have had, as usual, line upon line and precept upon precept. A fresh cargo of half-a-dozen choice Friends arrived from America just in time for the feast of tongues. It was remarked, as a good omen, that a large supply of fresh Turbot arrived the same day. The saints cannot be fed now, as formerly, with *two* small fishes. Four or five Americans were here before. They assume, I think, somewhat of the dignity of confessors, as if they had suffered a degree of religious persecution. They speak like oracles, without doubt or hesitation, how much soever of both some of the hearers may have, in admitting their doctrines. Whenever our forms differ from theirs, they are continually reminding us of the practice in Philadelphia, as of the example of a superior Court.²

“ With the assistance of these wise men and women from the West, Esther Tuke has been enabled to establish her favourite point of a womens Yearly Meeting, since which two or three of them have opened the book of Lamentations and began to prophecy of woes to come.

“ Robert Valentine,³ like a shepherd’s dog, keeps up a continual barking at the poor sheep, to make them keep close together, and to terrify the straglers. He cares not for drawing, but is altogether for driving men into religion, and tells them plainly that if they will wear powder in their wigs, which is not of the Lord’s ordering but Satan’s, they must perish everlastingly. I am always glad when this week of bustle, of noise, and, I had almost said, of nonsense, is over.”

In 1786 (Letter 41) Joseph Woods writes :

“ The Yearly Meetings have been crowded, both male and female. I wish, from the congress may not be engendered a monstrous brood of innovations in practice and exacerbations

² The same might be said of English Friends visiting America. English Ministers in America, at the time of the Separation, through lack of knowledge, hindered rather than helped ; and there has been a danger, in recent years, of the undue urge of the adoption of old-world methods in new-world activities.

³ *c.* 1717-1786. He was a native of Ireland and emigrated to Pa. in early life. A somewhat similar estimate of his energetic defence of “ the precious Testimonies ” may be read in vol. xxi. p. 10.

of zeal. A proposal for altering the time of the Yearly Meeting is, however, the only one of consequence, I think, this year, which, being born of the Women, is committed to the Men to nurse for another year; but being a weakly, rickety child, it is much doubted whether it will live. Are there no traces of these things to be met with in Revelations?

“For my own part I walk on a slow and languishing pace, joining in experience with Sam Spavold⁴ that I am going down the hill of life, and that I do not regret it.”

In Letter, no. 45, we read :

“The Women Friends held long meetings and appeared very willing to be invested with greater power, but it was somewhat limited by the prudence of the Men.”

In 1792 (Letter 57) it is reported :

“Our Yearly Meeting has been conducted with much moderation and harmony. Luckily we had no Americans to tell us what the practise is in their Country, and our Irish Brethren seemed contented to eat of the Fat of the Land without murmuring. The women (I ask pardon, I mean our women friends) sent no proposals of innovation. They told us, however, as usual, that the Lord had owned them, an expression which, being so often repeated, seems to imply a fear that they should find no owner.”

In 1799 he writes (Letter 65) :

“The female part of the Yearly Meeting (now growing into great consideration, and which perhaps in a few years may be the upper house) were strongly impressed”

In this same letter he refers quite appreciatively to one woman Friend :

“An American woman friend of the name of Hannah Barnard⁵ is much admired here as an eloquent Preacher. I think she has been at Bristol, perhaps at Bath. On seventh day last I understand she was at Windsor and preached in the Town Hall to a numerous Auditory. I heard her but

⁴ *c.* 1708-1795. Lived in London and later at Folkestone and Hitchin. Travelled extensively in the British Isles as a Minister. See *x.* 129.

⁵ For Hannah Barnard, of the State of New York, see vols. *x,* *xv,* *xx,* *xxi*; *London Y.M. during 250 Years.*

once. She speaks with great propriety and even an elegant assortment of words. She appears to be a woman who has both read and thought."

Richard Scoryer and His School

Ratcliff Monthly Meeting 29 $\frac{11}{mo}$ 1695.

William Sanders is Desired to Speak to Rich^d Scorey to know how many Poor friends Children he is wiling to Teach in Consideration of his acomodation at y^e Meeting house or how much money he vallevs his Accomodation there at & make reporte next Meeting.

Ans^r, With Submission to the Meeting; J understood, that the meeting freely offered the Room's for the Accomodation of a School, upon the Last yearly-meetings advice; nothing being mentioned to me of paying any money under consideration of Rent or otherwise. But if now the meetings mind be, that a Yearly Rent ought to be paid, Then J judge the Meeting should propose how much, Because no particular member ought to take that to itself, w^{ch} belongs to a meeting, Now when this is done, Then can the first part of y^e Query be Answered; and consequently the Second part also;

But seeing my Time is short being less than a Quarter, and also have laid out some pounds in accomodations for a School, and have freely bequeathed the Same unto the Meeting, for Encouragment towards a present and future School; J believe the Meeting will find that J may be Excused from any further charge upon the account of Accomodation; leaving, leaving the Meeting to do therein As God shall direct them w^{ch} is the needfull at present, from your real friend.

RD. SCORYER

Wansworth y^e 8th 12th m^o 169 $\frac{5}{8}$

Meetinghouses Registered under the Toleration Act

"The People called Quakers [Brighouse M.M.] have the following places for worship and give notice to the Justices, Oct. 8, 1689:

"One at Robert Cowlings of Northowram, Daniel Sutcliffes of Stansfeld, John Eccles of Nether Woodhouse, Jonas Prestons of Rastrick, Richard Hansons of Brighouse, Thomas Greens of Longliver-
sedge, William Pearsons of Okenshaye, Edmond Horsfalls of Green-
house, John Marshlands of Quarmbye, Timothy Hoyles of Broadcarr,
Robert Walkers of Staincliffe, Martha Phillips house of Bowlinge, William
Cookes of the same, John Winns of Bradford, Jonas Bonds house of
Bolton, Thomas Bonds house, Eccleshall, John Kays house of Birkhouse
in Shelley."

Extracted from Oliver Heywood's *Nonconformist Register*, printed 1881, pp. 144, 145.