

Gleanings from Some Old Account Books¹

STATEMENTS of accounts are, not without reason, generally considered somewhat dry reading ; but in looking through the various records of money transactions preserved in the old minute books of Friends in the South of Scotland, it seemed to me that some of the items were worth noting.

Until 1729 the great majority of the money transactions recorded in the minutes of Edinburgh Monthly and Quarterly Meeting are in *Scots* money, though now and then, even in very early times, the sums entered are stated to be "Sterling" or "in English money." In the West of Scotland as late as 1750, the reckoning was still "in Scots money." The difference between the two denominations was serious, for though in each, twenty shillings nominally made a pound, the shilling Scots was only worth *one penny* sterling.

One of the minutes of the very first General Meeting of Friends in the South of Scotland, Fourth Month, 1669, recommends to the Monthly and Quarterly Meetings "to fall upon some way of collections y^t y^r may be astock for swplyeing the poore among freinds." We first hear of "the box" towards the end of 1674. It was perhaps the same receptacle as "the chist that keeps the wrytes," of which three Friends, representing respectively the Monthly and Quarterly Meetings of Edinburgh and the General Meeting, each had a key. Authority was given to the said Friends to "take up" any Meeting money or collections and "pwt it into the box." They are to have "a book qⁱⁿ to jnsert in good order" all monies received and disbursed. At a later date it was minuted that in case more money be required than they have in hand, the three Friends are to advance it from their private funds "q^{ch} is againe to be rebursed wnto them" at the next monthly meeting. "At present," adds the minute, "there is nothing in the box."

¹ Previous articles on Scottish Quakerism, written by our late friend and fellow-worker, William Frederick Miller (1834-1918), appeared in vols. i. ii. iv.-viii. x.-xiv.

In the Eleventh Month, 1674, we find the following entry :

The which day the box was opened by Jeames Browne Richard Rae and dauid falconar in which there was found threttie seven pound six pence taiken out for the use of the buriall ground. Whereof eight pound was to compleat Jeames Naismith his monie for the prise of the buriall ground ; tuentie nine pound was giuen to dauid falconar to clear charges about s^d buriall ground.

Some months later, £32. Scots was paid out " for bulding ane door to the buriall ground," etc. And about the same time a spade, a shovel and a mattock were provided. " The spad cost 15/-, the shouell 13/4, The Mattock 27/- in [all] 55/4."

We hear of the box as late as Ninth Month, 1719, when it is recorded that " The Collection of y^e Box was 26^{lb} 8^{sb} Scotts which W^m Miller has got into his Custody becaus y^e Box would not Lock."

In 1689 mention is made for the first time of " a women's box." The notice occurs in some fragmentary minutes of " y^e Weemen's qvrterly Meeting at Edinburgh " [1688-1694], and in Tenth Month, 1702, it is alluded to in the minutes of the Men's Quarterly Meeting, nine pounds Scots having been given out of it to Widow Hopkirk " and Elizabeth Gibson has given further to W^m Miller out of the women's box £4. 9. Scots which was put into the men's box," and the reason that " the weadow got nin pounds [was] she wanting cloaths and other nesisars."

In 1676 there was a special collection " Gathered for the wse of the freinds jmprisoned at Aberdeen for the testimonie of the treweth." The money, amounting to " ane hwndereth and fiftie pownds Scots," was transmitted to Aberdeen Friends

by ane bill drawn wpon Alex^r patton collector of the pwblick dwes of the shire of Ab^d the money being payed in be David falconer to Ro jnnes clerk to the Lyones office² qo is the s^d Alex^r pattones correspondent here. The bill was not only for the above writ^d money collected by this Meeting, but was Likewayes for six pownds sent from freinds of the west, being in all eighteen pownd ten shill sterling.

There was, besides, a special collection for the purchase of a meetinghouse at Edinburgh, and the house having

² The Lyon Court, the Scottish equivalent to the English Herald's Court ; a very ancient institution presided over by " the Lord Lyon King-at-Arms," with his six Heralds and six pursuivants.

been bought, James Brown, tanner, a leading Friend of the Meeting, who seems to have occupied part of the premises, was, v. 1680,

called upon for the rent of that howse wpon q^{ch} the bwblick money was Laid out and he is ordered to bring in the Accownt thereof to the nixt monthly meeting from the terme called whytswnday 1678 to the terme called whytswnday 1680.

Two months later we learn that the Meeting

doeth Appoynt James brown tanner to receive not only the howses rents bwt also to receive what other money shall be collected amongst owrselves or sent in from other meetings of freinds in this natione for the service of trweth, and to be Accowntable for the same wnto this monthly meeting . . . freinds have ordered that a Litle paper book be bow^t qⁱⁿ both the yeirly rents of the howse & all other Acco^s of money, qⁱⁿ the monthly meeting is conscerned may be recorded.

In Seventh Month, 1682, Edinburgh Monthly Meeting sent two dollars for the relief of Thomas Dunlop, a poor weaver of Musselburgh, who, with his family, had been banished from the town by the magistrates on account of his adherence to the Quaker heresy. William Chambers, the historian, in commenting on the case, says: "This poor man, with his wife and family, was cast out and obliged to live in the fields, as no one would give him houseroom³." He was afterwards imprisoned by the implacable bailies.

By 1693 the care of "the box" at Edinburgh and its contents seems to have been confided to one Friend only, and in the Fourth Month of that year occurs the following minute:

Whereas friends taking into Consideration that it is too burdensome for on friend to continue longer than a year in the managment or oversight of the publick affairs belonging to this meeting therefor for the future it is thought Convenient that friends take that Charge by turns as shal be seen meet for a year only and W^m Sculler is apointed for this year and accordingly hes received the Key from John Hopkirke.

The "Litle paper book" has unfortunately not survived, but there are many notices of expenditure in the Monthly Meeting minutes. Thus, in First Month, 1694, "There was payed to John hopkirk for the reparation of the grave yard and garden the soume of eight lb. nin sh 10^d Scots." In Fifth Month, 1699, three pounds was sent to

³ See *The British Friend*, 1861. T. D. afterwards removed to near Edinburgh where he died 1699.

the meeting at Linlithgow to pay the rent of the meeting house there. Two months later ten pounds Scots was taken "out of the box for the payment of the kings stent," no doubt the tax on the meetinghouse at Edinburgh. In Seventh Month, 1700, two women Friends report that they have given Widow More £12 Scots and to Widow Hopkirk £4 and they are furer to be inguired after as they shall see need to suplee them as in the wisdom of God is thought fitt and are desired to inguire concerning the case of weadow fisher that no extremity of want may be seen.

To be Continued

Joseph Pease and the House of Commons

Extracted from *The Larchfield Diary*, written by Francis Mewburn.

" Feb. 1833

" I accompanied Mr. Pease, the Quaker member for South Durham, to London. I had previously studied the subject of his eligibility to sit in Parliament. To me personally it was a matter of great importance that he should be declared eligible by the House, because I had given a most positive opinion on the question.

" I was extremely struck with the ignorance which prevailed among members on the subject. Everybody seemed to wish that he might get in, but few knew the law. Lord Althorpe admitted his ignorance, but he patiently waded through the acts with Mr Pease, and at last his lordship became convinced that the law was in his favour. A question then arose, what course was he to adopt? After much discussion it was at length determined that a Select Committee should be appointed to investigate and report the law of the case. A very interesting report was presented by the Committee, and on the 14th February (Valentines Day) the House unanimously decided that Mr Pease was entitled to be admitted on his affirmation. This was a glorious triumph, for it was the last conquest of civil and religious liberty.

" The next day, Mr Hodgkin, a Quaker barrister, and myself, waited on the Speaker to settle the terms of Mr Pease's affirmation. I was much struck with the Speaker's ignorance of the law on the question; he seemed utterly surprised that Quakers should be indulged with a Law for themselves, and was ignorant of the benefits conferred upon that body from time to time by the Legislature. However, after a great deal of discussion Mr Speaker assented to the form of the affirmation to be made by Mr Pease, and the next day he was admitted a member."