



NORMAN PENNEY AT WORK IN THE LIBRARY AT DEVONSHIRE HOUSE

THE JOURNAL

OF THE

FRIENDS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Our Quotation—24

Lord Crawford emphasised two main points, the advantages bestowed on the student of to-day by ever-improving facilities for study and the importance of associating research-work with the tasks of communicating and assimilating what is already known.

Opening of the Selly Oak Colleges Library,

The Friend, 1932, April 29th, p. 357.

AT their meeting on 1. xi. mo. the Committee recorded their sense of loss at the death of Norman Penney, the Editor of this *Journal* from its foundation, and their appreciation for his long and devoted service to the Historical Society. John Nickalls, the present librarian, was asked to complete the preparation of this volume of the *Journal* for publication and to act as editor for the ensuing year.

The Consultative Committee on the *Journal* consists of A. Neave Brayshaw, Samuel Graveson and T. Edmund Harvey.

M. Ethel Morland (*née* Crawshaw), who contributes the account of Norman Penney which follows, was for eighteen years his assistant in the Library at Devonshire House.

Norman Penney

Born at Darlington 26 v. 1858. Died at Bournemouth
7 x. 1933.

Members of the Friends Historical Society on both sides of the Atlantic will have heard with deep regret of the passing of Norman Penney, F.S.A., F.R.Hist.S., Hon. LL.D. Haverford. To most of us the Friends Historical Society and Norman Penney have been almost synonymous. It is no mean record that he should have edited a magazine such as *The Journal* for thirty years, always maintaining its high standard of accuracy and style.

Norman Penney was the son of Harrison and Maria Penney of Darlington. Harrison Penney, who was a Recorded Minister, had the principal bookselling and stationery business in the town with a printing office attached.

Norman Penney, with his massive head, black hair and eyes, has always been a striking figure among his fellows. One of his contemporaries at Ackworth School writes: "I remember him as the only boy in the school who had a quite noticeable beard and as the only scholar who spoke in Meeting." From Ackworth he went in 1875 to Minden, living in the home of a family of German Friends. Later he studied in France at Nismes. (Although he avoided conversing with foreign students he was never at a loss with our foreign books.)

On returning to England he entered his father's business where he acquired a very thorough knowledge of everything connected with printing, which proved so valuable when he became Librarian. The long hours which he worked at this period made him impatient of the shorter hours of a London office, with free Saturday afternoons.

He was twice married, first to Mary Elizabeth Bean who died within a year and secondly to Mary Alice Collinson; two sons of this marriage survive him. When recovering from the shock of his first wife's death in 1888, he visited Palestine as travelling companion to George Satterthwaite. Dressed in native costume Norman Penney was more than

once taken for an Arab. On his return he lectured in costume in many parts of England.

Always serious minded he felt a definite call to religious work and for sixteen years under the Home Mission Committee lived in various places—at Hawes, a little village in Wensleydale, Yorks, at Gloucester, Melksham and finally at Tottenham in North London. Mary Alice Penney with her happy, loving nature and charm as hostess drew young people especially to their home. One such writes, "We felt that Norman Penney and his wife understood us, took a real interest in our welfare. It was natural to respond to this by uniting with them in the activities of Adult School and Meeting." Family and Quaker history had been his hobby all through these years. He had worked out his family pedigree and noted all information regarding his connections in what he called his "Family Record", this formed the basis of *My Ancestors*, published in 1920.

While working at Tottenham he had done valuable work for the Friends Tract Association, notably by providing bibliographies and indexes to the Bi-centenary edition of *The Journal of George Fox* (1891), and the New Century edition of *John Woolman's Journal* (1900). This necessitated the collation of editions in the Library at Devonshire House and gave him an insight into the value of the records there.

Up to this time the Recording Clerk had the charge of the historical documents. Isaac Sharp with his literary taste and intense interest in all matters relating to Quaker history, was the first to realize the value of the books and MSS. which had been accumulating for over 200 years—*always safely stored*, but an undiscovered mine of treasure. Owing to his enthusiasm and insistence the Meeting for Sufferings decided to appoint a Librarian in 1900. The right man was not far to seek, and, from his appointment, to within a few days of his death, the absorbing interest in Norman Penney's life has been his work for Quaker history.

Very closely connected with the appointment of a Librarian was the formation of the Friends Historical Society. Both Isaac Sharp and Norman Penney had envisaged such a society and at the time of its inauguration in 1903 over 200 Friends had promised their support. A provisional Council was formed with Dr. Thomas Hodgkin

as President and Isaac Sharp and Norman Penney as Secretaries. The original circular is worth quoting :

The want of a Friends Historical Society has long been felt. Probably no section of the community, relatively to its numerical strength, is in possession of more material available for historical research than the Society of Friends, both in the British Isles and in America. Nor is antiquarian interest lacking among Friends, but an association appears to be needed which shall bring to a focus the disjointed efforts of scattered students, and supply a medium of communication between individual workers.

The recognition by the Meeting for Sufferings of the value of the Reference Library under its care by the appointing of a Librarian, has given a stimulus to examination of Friends' records, and it is felt that the present time is favourable to the establishment of a Society which shall keep historical students in touch with one another.

American Friends were enthusiastic supporters, George Vaux, Allen C. Thomas, Albert Cook Myers and Rufus M. Jones being on the original committee in a consultative capacity. It is not necessary for me to stress the importance of the material made available through the thirty volumes of the *Journal* completed with this issue.

It is surprising how much Norman Penney initiated and accomplished. His editorial and bibliographical work, are lasting monuments to his knowledge and industry, but above all is the Library which he built up, so that, as *The Manchester Guardian* of October 10th, 1933, says, "Today as a result of the system of cataloguing and indexing he started, there is hardly a question regarding Quakers, their history, experiences, or beliefs, that cannot be turned up with a minimum of delay at the fine new Library . . . at Friends House."

His work received due recognition from learned societies. In 1911, shortly after the publication of the Cambridge edition of the *Journal of George Fox*, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and he was for many years a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London. He had always been a little sarcastic about the importance placed on degrees, but I remember how very elated he was when elected F.S.A. In 1924 Haverford College conferred upon him the honorary degree of LL.D.

We had always had considerable correspondence with American Friends. In 1911 Norman Penney was invited to visit the United States and give lectures. He was really excited over this prospect and took much trouble in the

preparation of his addresses. Very warm personal attachments were established during this visit, especially was this true in the case of Allen C. Thomas, then editor of the *Bulletin of the Friends Historical Society, Philadelphia*. Later when both men were going through a time of ill-health and grave family anxiety, the bond of sympathy and friendship was a great strength and comfort to Norman Penney. He paid another short visit to America in 1913 and gave lectures in Ireland in the same year. All of these journeys helped to make the Library better known and established and strengthened links with those who had historical and antiquarian interests.

No one knows better than the writer the infinite pains and unstinted help which Norman Penney gave to writers on Quakerism. Accuracy of fact and text were almost an obsession with him. To make him really scornful and angry, publish a book with incorrect facts, shoddy quotations and above all *no index*. I can see him now throwing such a book the length of the Library table in his exasperation. But the writer and student who approached his subject seriously could depend on the Librarian as his adviser and staunch ally.

In the early days of his librarianship students were very dependent on our guidance. All books had to be produced by the staff and to a large extent suggested by them as the card catalogue was in its infancy. As we worried out the material, entries were made on the cards for future enquirers. Norman Penney always held that students were our first charge. We construed this in no limited sense and in the case of foreigners gave much of the personal help now rendered by the Service Council. The kindly interest and attention given by the present staff, so often warmly acknowledged by students, is in loyal succession to the standard set by the first librarian.

I have been turning over the pages of the old visitors book and what memories it revives! I recount but one and that to exemplify the unexpected reward obtained by a trained searcher saturated in his subject. In 1908 Professor Wm. I. Hull was on the Continent investigating Dutch Quakerism. He wrote that he was coming to London for a week and would like to see if there was any material at Devonshire House. We soon came under his spell and produced

everything we could think of in a likely language—amongst other things four minute books, dated 1677-1698. Picture the thrill of excitement when our learned visitor pronounced them as the very books for which he had been searching Europe. During that short visit we thought and dreamt of little else but Holland and the Library was never closed before 9 p.m.

The following quotation from a letter from Mabel Brailsford expresses what many another will be feeling :

I owe more than I can say to his interest and encouragement, as well as his unstinted practical help. I would never have dared to undertake a life of Penn if he had not told me it was the work I ought to do. He read it in typescript and I remember particularly what trouble he took to see that my facts were correct. He made the index for Penn, as well as for Nayler, a most troublesome job, involving endless patience and care . . . I look back on those four or five weeks when I was studying for *Quaker Women* as some of the happiest I ever knew—there was such a feeling of helpfulness and comradeship—and both you and he were always leading me on to new discoveries and opening new vistas. I shall always think of N.P. as we used to see him of late years, in his sunny corner of the new library, and the affectionate welcome he always gave when one turned up unexpectedly. He has left a gap in my life out of all proportion with the number of times I saw him.

In some matters Norman Penney was very conservative, but in anything affecting the well being of the Library and the practical care of the records he was extraordinarily alert. Neither was his interest limited to the documents under his care. He had a great concern for local minute books which were known in some cases to be kept in unsafe places. He drew up a questionnaire which was sent to all Monthly and Quarterly Meeting Clerks, with the result that many very valuable books were sent up for safe custody and catalogues supplied of the contents of local safes.

The working hours of the Library were not enough for Norman Penney, he generally came early, often stayed late and then departed with his case full of proofs. It was surprising how he contrived to read all the important new books connected with our subject, always noting on slips references which were to be added to the Catalogue. Another of his favourite amusements was to make indexes to books lacking them. A valuable set of these MS. indexes is available in the Library.

He was essentially a worker rather than an organizer and while he was engaged on important editorial work it was often necessary to stand between him and constant callers. He usually sat with his back to the door and a somewhat unapproachable back it was to many people. His sight without glasses was very poor, but in spite of constant strain his eyes did not appear to give him real trouble. His skill in comparing minute differences in type and his exactitude in proof correcting showed how little escaped him. His industry was such that he found it hard to spare more than half an hour at mid-day for lunch. At times he seemed almost too engrossed to speak or notice what was going on around him, and then a word of praise or a humorous twinkle in his fine kindly eyes showed that he was very human after all.

M. ETHEL MORLAND.

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER TO M. ETHEL MORLAND FROM
RAYNER W. KELSEY, DATED 15TH NOVEMBER, 1933.

Haverford College, which has been very sparing of its honorary degrees, bestowed one on Norman Penney, because we felt that his work for Quaker history was so fundamental. His editorial work was so painstaking in its details and was so great in bulk that scholars will be in his debt for generations to come. Just back of my desk in our Quakeriana vault, I have more than forty typed indexes of un-indexed Quaker books. These indexes have been made by Norman Penney from time to time in recent years and sent over to us in holograph. We have made copies of them for our library, and sent carbon copies to Friends' Library, London. Such work does not get into current headlines, but it counts heavily for all future time.

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER OF AMELIA MOTT GUMMERE TO
M. ETHEL MORLAND. 18.XI.1933.

Dr. Norman Penney represented the conscientious Quaker historian of the past. On this side the ocean, his friend, Prof. Allen C. Thomas of Haverford College was a similar type and the work of the two men was unique. The historian of to-day has a wider view of the field, and covers his subject with a more philosophic grasp, but the meticulous research of Norman Penney and the wonderful results he obtained furnish a wealth of material for the future historian for which we cannot be too grateful.

PUBLICATIONS OF WHICH NORMAN PENNEY WAS THE AUTHOR
OR EDITOR :

1883. A SHORT SKETCH OF THE FRIENDS MISSION AT HAWES, YORKSHIRE.
1886. HOME RELIGION. ADDRESSED TO PARENTS IN PARTS OF WENSLEY-DALE.
1888. A GENEALOGICAL CHART OF THE PENNEY FAMILY OF DARLINGTON.
n.d. THE PSALMS OF DAVID—HISTORICAL CONNECTION ASSIGNED THEM BY VARIOUS AUTHORITIES.
n.d. PRIEST LARKHAM AND THE EARLY FRIENDS.
1903-1933. JOURNAL OF THE FRIENDS HISTORICAL SOCIETY. 30 vols.
1907. THE FIRST PUBLISHERS OF TRUTH, BEING EARLY RECORDS OF THE INTRODUCTION OF QUAKERISM INTO THE COUNTIES OF ENGLAND AND WALES. *F.H.S. Journal Supplements*, 1-5.
1911. THE JOURNAL OF GEORGE FOX. Cambridge Univ. Press. 2 vols. EXPERIENCES IN THE LIFE OF MARY PENINGTON, written by herself.
1913. EXTRACTS FROM STATE PAPERS RELATING TO FRIENDS, 1654-1672. *F.H.S. Journal Supplements*, 8-11.
1919. LONDON YEARLY MEETING DURING 250 YEARS (Editor and Contributor).
1920. MY ANCESTORS. Printed for private circulation. THE HOUSEHOLD ACCOUNT BOOK OF SARAH FELL OF SWARTHMOOR HALL. Cambridge Univ. Press.
1924. THE JOURNAL OF GEORGE FOX. Abridged Tercentenary edition for Everyman's Library.
1925. THE SHORT JOURNAL AND ITINERARY JOURNALS OF GEORGE FOX. Cambridge Univ. Press. For the Friends Historical Association, Phila.
1927. THE CORRESPONDENCE OF JAMES LOGAN AND THOMAS STORY. Friends Historical Association, Phila.
1928. RECORD OF THE SUFFERINGS OF QUAKERS IN CORNWALL, 1655-1686. *F.H.S. Journal Supplement*, 14.
1929. PEN PICTURES OF LONDON YEARLY MEETING, 1789-1833. *F.H.S. Journal Supplements*, 16 and 17.

He contributed also to *The Bulletin of the Friends Historical Association*, *The Friends Quarterly Examiner*, *Notes and Queries*, *Wiltshire Notes and Queries*, and other periodicals and compiled the indexes and bibliographies for a large number of books on Quaker historical subjects. In addition there are in the Library his MS. indexes to some scores of books that were printed without them.
