

The Story of Quakerism in the Lancaster District

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[My sincere thanks are due to Robert Muschamp, who helped me with facts about the Lancaster and Wyresdale districts ; to Dilworth Abbatt, whose book, *Quaker Annals of Preston and the Fylde, 1653-1900* (London : Headley Brothers, 1931), gives an excellent picture of Quaker life in the Fylde ; and to Isabel Ross, who shared with me her researches on the Fell family.—E.B.]

THERE is a story of G. K. Chesterton's about a mild, retired army man called Major Brown, fond of weak tea and the culture of prize pansies. One afternoon, during his usual walk, he was accosted by a man wheeling a barrow full of bedding plants, who suggested he should climb up on the wall by the path to look at a fine collection of pansies. To his utter astonishment the pansies over the wall were bedded out to form the astounding words : " Death to Major Brown ! " From that minute he was involved in the wildest adventures.

A change equally sudden and amazing came to John Lawson, a homely Lancaster shop-keeper, when one Sunday afternoon the quiet of Leonard-gate was broken by a yelling crowd, his door burst open, and in plunged a man, stones flying round his head, angry faces behind.

George Fox had spent the day in Lancaster, first preaching in open street to " a great meeting " of soldiers and people ; then up to the steeple-house, the fine Parish Church set on the hill behind the Castle. The congregation listened at first, then grew angry, haled him out and stoned him along the streets till John Lawson's door received him.

From this moment John Lawson was caught up into a rich life of adventure.

Almost at once, Lawson left the shop, the humdrum round of weights and measures and parcels, and set out to

tell others. The meeting at Fylde names him as the first to bring the glad tidings ; so does Knowsley. At Bickersteth he was the first, with William Danson and Alexander Parker. At Sawley he came with William Adamson, Thomas Holmes, Elizabeth Leavens, and three others. And all the time he was building up the Lancaster group and laying the foundations so surely that it lives to this day.

* * *

Leaders were now beginning to emerge in every district, and Fox moved about, learning his men, planning for their development, and helping them in the small campaigns they planned. But each group had a first duty ; to build up the local meeting. Meetings were settled at Yealand and Kellet (this was held in farms in Yealand, Kellet and Capernwray and served a wide district, as it does to this day), and in Lancaster. Those at Wray, Wyresdale, and the Fylde villages followed one by one.

Perhaps it sounds a dull job, building up one's own meeting, but it had its thrills in those days. Here is an instance from Fox's Journal, under the date 1652 :

“ And from Lancaster I returned to Rob : Withers and from thence to Thomas Leaper's (at Capernwray) to a meeting . . . which was a very blessed time ; in the evening I walked out afoot to Rob : Withers ; and I was no sooner gone but there came a company of disguised men to Thos. Leaper's with swords and pistols, cutting and hacking among the people of the house : and put out all the candles : and the people held up the chairs before them to save themselves ; and after a while they drove all the people out of the house and searched and looked for me : who was the person only they looked for : and laid in wait in the highways which I should have come in if I had ridden to Rob : Wither's.”

Soon teams of eager young pioneers travelled farther afield. Fox took Richard Hubberthorne from Yealand up into Wensleydale : James Nayler and Francis Howgill travelled North, and presently found themselves prisoners in Appleby Gaol. Burrough did good work in Durham, a few months later Richard Hubberthorne and John Lawson travelled to Liverpool, where the magistrates drove them out of town, but where they planted the seeds that later

sprang up, and formed Liverpool Meeting. Then they went on to Wrexham, and found Seeker groups who formed the nucleus of meetings gathered at Malpas, Morley and Congleton.

This was a thrilling journey for the excitable John Lawson, who celebrates it in three breathless letters to Margaret Fell. They are written in a delightful local dialect very like that still spoken, the spelling is amazing, and they are innocent of stops and punctuation. All Lawson thought of was to tell his tale of high adventure, especially all the riots and fights! One can imagine Margaret Fell smiling a little over these epistles, yet touched by the zeal of the warm-hearted fellow.

Two of these letters are written from Chester gaol, where his Malpas visit landed him.

Richard Hubberthorne and Richard Weaver came to Chester to visit Lawson. Hubberthorne, through the intrigues of a malevolent Lawyer Golborne, was arrested, the Mayor sending him to gaol and detaining him upon a bare information of his visiting John Lawson in prison. After two months' imprisonment, Hubberthorne was released under the Vagrancy Act, and ordered to be passed from constable to constable till he reached his native village of Yealand.

The first night he knocked at the door of Richard Sale, constable of Hoole in Cheshire, and presented his paper. Sale, a great, corpulent man, a tailor by trade, looked down at the delicate young farmer, undersized and now pale with prison rigours, and offered him a bed for the night. As they sat by the fire, they got into serious talk, and the vagrant spoke with such fire and earnestness that he convinced the constable of the truth of his views.

Next morning, when Richard prepared himself to be conducted to the boundary of the next township, the big man arose and tore the warrant into pieces, and threw them on the fire.

Such a tale shows the quality of Richard Hubberthorne. He came from a farm in Yealand Redmaine, and was an ex-soldier of Cromwell's army. "He was but little in stature," says his friend Edward Burrough, "and of weak constitution of body, and was slow of speech, often more ready to hear than to speak. Yet he was very wise, and knew his season when to speak and when to be silent."

“ He was a man of peace and loved it, and walked peaceably among his brethren in honest, kind familiarity.” He had a sense of quiet humour that endeared him to many. He was large-minded and tolerant. We find him defending the “ Papists ” when all parties were joined in condemning them. He took much more interest in politics than most Friends, and had a special concern toward his fellow-soldiers of the Cromwell days. He had a deep love of his native village and the mountains set about it, and lovely phrases here and there in his writings awaken a sudden picture of the rocks and fells and forests of his own land.

On October 18th, 1652, a warrant was put out against Fox for blasphemy. This occurred at Ulverston, during a visit in which much opposition was shown, and Fox had rough treatment in several places. The warrant was not served because Judge Fell returned to Swarthmoor. Fox, however, rode over with the Judge to the Lancaster Sessions to answer to it. At the Assizes the charge fell to the ground, but this is an interesting episode, because it is the first appearance of Fox at a trial at Lancaster Castle.

The Castle stands nobly on its hill, with the Parish Church behind it, dominating a wide landscape, the river Lune below flowing out to Morecambe Bay, and at that time full of shipping and life.

Wordsworth, looking on the beauty of the Castle from a hill on the South, could only feel it to be sinister and dark, and called the hill on which he stood Weeping Hill.

From this time on, Lancaster Friends were linked inevitably with the Castle. Fox was to come here again. As time went on and persecution became more bitter, almost every Friend in the district spent at least weeks, if not months or years, in its dark and filthy gaols. Often the constables would raid a meeting and drag everyone present to Lancaster, men, women and even children. The unspeakable conditions made relief a necessity, and Lancaster Friends must often have been busy and burdened, toiling up the steep, cobbled ways with food, blankets, candles and fuel for the prisoners. The Quarterly Meeting paid regularly for candles and fuel. During long imprisonments there were even two occasions when marriages were celebrated in the Castle.

Yet all this trouble drew Friends closer. Nothing

quenched their joy in the lovely fellowship they knew, and in the blessedness of the message brought them. Margaret Fell, looking back in old age spoke of "the beginning, when the morning stars sang together"; and as Howgill said, they would ask each other in great joy of heart: "What? is the Kingdom of God come among men?"

Gradually the whole of the upper parts of England were covered, and in the spring of 1654 Fox could say he was "leaving the North fresh and green under Christ their teacher."

The area which knitted itself together to form Lancaster Monthly Meeting comprised Lancaster, Yealand, Wyresdale, Chipping, the Fylde, and later (about 1668) Wray.

Wyresdale

Wyresdale, high up on the open moors above Lancaster, is the least accessible of the group. In 1661 William Hanes and Henry Townson from Wyresdale were imprisoned, and in 1668 the meeting is mentioned in a list of Lancashire meetings. Under the Toleration Act in 1689 John Proctor's house at Dunishaw (Dukinshaw) was registered as a meeting place. The first meeting house was built before the end of the 17th century, but the present building was added in 1887. The oldest records are a set of minutes, 1722 and 1745, bound in with minutes of Lancaster Particular Meeting 1698-1740. At Wyresdale they have minute books 1801-14, and 1886-1916. The minutes are devoid of much interest. "No birth or burial notes" recurs. Or: "Query so and so has been read. Defishences, remain under the care of Friends." In 1888: "The lithographed minutes of Yearly meeting have been read, also a letter from the Yearly Meeting to the boys and girls." About this time an adult school was started. Joseph John Gurney visited the meeting in 1832.

The day school at Wyresdale started in 1800. Joshua Kelsall taught children in his own farm, two or three days a week. The infants wrote on sand trays. The master was said to be a "very patient man, because he would say to an erring child: 'I'll cane thee at three o'clock tomorrow.' He would then deal with him by improving talk but he never forgot the caning!"

The school continues to-day. The numbers now are round about 20, all standards being taught by its able Head, Lilian Troup. The school and meeting house are far from

anywhere, not even on a road, and some of the little scholars walk two, three or four miles over the moor to school. But seventy years ago, about a hundred boys and girls, including thirty boarders, came to school. Wyresdale was then well populated. It is said that at least eighty houses have disappeared, and of the three mills then working in the valley for cotton, silk and hats, none remain.

The boarders were crammed into the school and school-house, and the whole family lived and ate in the kitchen. Some children were boarded out at the farm near, and at Chapel House.

Wray

Bentham meeting was settled in about 1653. A minute of Settle Monthly Meeting of 1668 says: "Moreover; from the aforesaid meeting of Bentham . . . there is a part gone off and a meeting settled known as Wray meeting in Lancashire." This now came under Lancaster. A parcel of ground in Wray was conveyed to trustees in 1676, and before 1704 the meeting house and stable were built. A Preparative meeting minute book for Wray is in existence from 1775 to 7.vii.1793, when it stops without explanation. The minutes are brief and dull, and the accounts are kept in the same book.

Wray Friends also suffered distraint and were persecuted. In 1660 sixteen Friends were dragged from their houses to Lancaster Castle.

Wray produced a notable woman in Elizabeth Rawlinson. She and Lydia Lancaster, a much admired woman preacher from Lancaster, went with Thomas Chalkley and others to America in 1718. In 1735 Chalkley visited England again and came to see his old friend at Wray.

Yealand

The meeting of Yealand and Kellet had the largest membership of the Particular Meetings. It covered a wide area, touching the corners of three counties. Friends came from Arnside and Silverdale on the coast, Beetham and Holme in Westmorland, Claughton and Kellet (then in Yorkshire for tithing purposes), and Bolton-le-Sands on the South.

The three Yealand villages were much larger than at the present day.

The meeting house was built in 1692 but there is an earlier burial ground at Hilderstone on the land of the Backhouse farm.

A school was begun very early and held in this farm, and in 1709 Edmund Garnet is appointed teacher, at £8 a year. He was followed by Ann Hadwen. In 1764 the cottage belonging to the Pearson family, next the meeting house, was acquired and the school was housed there and had an honourable career until the retirement of Samuel K. Baillie, its last master, in 1920, when it ceased to exist. At its best it had some sixty or seventy scholars including occasional boarders from so far as London. The establishment of board schools killed it.

Up to the last, scholars paid 4d. a week, stayed to sixteen if they wished, and were taught French and Latin if they desired these extras.

The Yealand Meeting minute books date from 1678 and are of great interest.

Robert Withers

Of all the Friends of the Monthly Meeting the dearest and most enjoyed by young and old was Robert Withers (or Widders). He was about 34 when Fox came, was married and had a substantial farm at Over Kellet. He soon became the frequent companion of Fox, many times up and down England and into Scotland and (greatest experience of all) in 1671 he accompanied Fox and ten other Friends to the Barbadoes and Jamaica. They had amazing adventures by sea and land.

“He was not much in declaration” (i.e. nothing of a preacher), but burly, fearless, imperturbable and humorous, he was a much-sought companion. “His very countenance and eye was refreshment and comfort.”

“I have known him 34 years,” writes Margaret Fell at his death, “He was a dear and faithful brother to me and my children in all our tryalls and sufferings. He would not have failed to come and see us, night or day, over two dangerous sands, if it had been in the deep of winter; many a time hath he done so of his own accord; and for the most part I have been sensible of his coming before he came, so near and dear was he unto me.”

Fox called him "the Thundering man", for his staunch, downright spirit made him a pillar of strength when facing evil-doers. "His was a large nobility mixed with a lamb-like innocency which was as a garment of praise upon him and made him right lovely in the eyes of the upright," writes Thomas Camm.

After Withers' death his own meeting, together with George Fox and his wife, published a short testimony¹ to him. Sixteen men and women of Yealand meeting wrote simple tributes. I only wish there were space to quote these artless memorials to "Dear Robert." "I can truly say he was dear and precious to me," writes Ann Camm, "and was a great encourager of all." They even liked to go to prison with him! "I have been prisoner with him several times at Lancaster," writes Thomas Beakbayne, "and his cheerful countenance and good example and advice to Friends always administered strength and comfort." "Dear Robert!" says Robert Hubbersty, "the remembrance of thee refreshed my soul, for thou ever preferred the Lord's business before thine own and never lost an inch of ground!"

Withers' sufferings from distraint and spoilings exceeded those of any other Friend, yet Thomas Camm says: "I never saw him in the least concerned and dejected when his cattle, corn and household goods were, as it were, by wholesale swept away."

His wife and family were useful members of Yealand Meeting and his name is kept green by the money he left in trust to educate the children of the meeting.

His great four-poster bed is preserved in Yealand, and the elbow chair he gave to George Fox is in Swarthmore Meeting House.

Fylde, Chipping, Claughton and Freckleton

Fylde meeting formed the southerly bulwark of Lancaster Monthly Meeting for twenty-three years. The Fylde is a district, including five villages where there were Friends, and with these went Chipping, Claughton (pronounced Clighton) and Freckleton. Everyone of these meetings is extinct to-day, and instead have arisen Preston, Blackpool, Blackburn, Accrington and Fleetwood meetings.

¹ *The Life, Death, Travels and Sufferings of Robert Widders*, 1688.

In 1698 Fylde Friends asked leave to form a separate monthly meeting, and for nearly a 100 years it was held the day after the Lancaster meeting. In 1792 it became Preston Monthly Meeting.

The chief Friends in early times were Alexander Parker, one of Fox's Valiant Sixty, from near Chipping, and the Moore family of Woodplumpton, Edward and his sons John and Thomas. The family were heavily persecuted, five of them being imprisoned, and John travelled in the ministry.

In 1828 Richard Jackson of Calderhouse near Garstang, grew tired of attending the distant Wyresdale and built a charming meeting house behind his own house. His brothers helped him, and a live meeting grew up, joined to Lancaster Monthly Meeting, and still exists.

There is a short series of minutes extant of Garstang Particular Meeting. There are three almost unvarying minutes, e.g. :

3.4.1722. At our P.M. held at Wm Dawson's at Claughton as followeth :—

- (1) Wm. Dawson is appointed to represent our meeting at the Monthly Meeting.
- (2) Joseph Jackson is to continue his service to travelling Friends.
- (3) If sleepers, whisperers and backbiters be dealt with where found.
- (4) If Friends observe to keep weekly meetings, and at the hour.

Any collections are mentioned and an occasional intention of marriage.

Quernmore

In the early 1860's a Friend named Kelsall living at Rowten Brook gave land to the Society for the erection of a meeting house and for a graveyard.

Lancaster Friends still attend a meeting held on Sunday afternoons once a month.

Morecambe

Last of all, quite in recent times comes a new meeting at Morecambe. There is an ancient graveyard at Middleton, now in private hands.

Lancaster

And now we come to the central meeting, Lancaster, the only urban meeting. It has its separate life, from 1652, it built the first meeting house in Lancashire in 1677, it held faithfully to its testimony through all. When the Mayor locked the meeting house and set a guard, Friends met in the lane before it at their usual time, and held their meeting undisturbed. They were constant in succouring prisoners. Yet their life is so bound up with the lives of the surrounding meetings that, certainly for one who lives in a branch meeting it shares its life with all the monthly meeting. The beginnings of organization both in the particular and monthly meeting can fortunately be followed in a wonderful way. We have to remember that Quakerism produced a spiritual army, strong for warfare, before it developed a church organization, but organization in the Lancaster district soon began in rudimentary forms.

Lancaster Meeting is rich in old records and MSS., and would be still richer but for a fire in 1851, when some wild lads getting into the meeting house one evening burst open an old iron chest and set alight to the contents. When discovered, the damage was done, and no one knows what treasures were destroyed.

But what remains is sufficient to trace the growth of the various types of meetings.

The earliest record of all is the list of *Sufferings of Friends*, by imprisonments, distraints, etc. This is a large folio, the dates on its cover being 1654-1700, but some of the entries are earlier, and show it to have started in 1653, though two instances as early as 1650 are written down.

One of the earliest is October 1653, "John Lawson of Lancaster for preaching in a steeplehouse yard in Malpas, Cheshire, was put in the stocks 4 hours and then imprisoned in the County Gaol at Westhoughton 23 weeks."

In the same year Christopher Bissbrown of Arnside (one of the Yealand Friends) has a long list of distraints for tithes. In 1654 John Lawson is in trouble at the steeplehouse at Lancaster, and is thrown into the common gaol. At the Lent Assizes he was fined £20, or to remain prisoner till it was paid. He continued in prison over a year.

In 1663 Robert Withers for going to a meeting at Yealand is sent to prison for nine weeks by Sir George Middleton of

Leighton Hall and Sir Robert Bindloss of Borwick Hall. He was then fined £3 6s. 8d. for which the bailiff took two sows worth £6 10s. Nine other Friends were charged at the same time, including Thomas Camm (son of John Camm of Preston Patrick but now living in Yealand), and all were imprisoned for 9 weeks.

And so it goes on, long lists of distrains and punishments.

The Monthly Meeting Minute books, dull for the most part, contain a few bright spots :—

“ Lancaster Meeting informs this that divers Friends of their meeting are concerned in arm'd vessel furnish'd with Letters of Marque, under which some of them have took the property of others contrary to the righteous precept of our Blessed Redeemer and to our ancient Christian testimony.”

In 1727 Yearly Meeting sends down that “ the importation of negroes is not commendable or allowed ”.

In 1709 they had a refugee problem—“ there was now collected in our Particular Meeting nine shillings eleven pence for the relief of the pore people of the Lower Palitinate of Germany which are lately come into this nation to settle according to a Briefe from the Government in order, so it is now read here.”

In 1691 there is a strong minute that guns are not to be carried on ships.

There are one or two queries out of the common :—
e.g. How are sleepers dealt with ?

If none among us encourage the running of goods or otherwise defraud the King of his duties by buying or vending the same ?

The poor are assisted :—

“ 1707, William Tomlinson has 6/- out of the meeting stock to buy leather to work upon for his subsistence.”

“ Robert Walling and Deborah Stephenson complaining that their allowance of 12d. a week each is not sufficient for their subsistence, William Stout is to make such addition to the same as he finds occasion for.

This meeting orders Israel Fell to take Deborah Stephenson's stocking as usual, and being informed that she is determined for the future not to apply for relief, the cashier is therefore ordered to pay no more till she do.”

“ A generous subscription ” for Friends in Liverpool is called for in 1752.

Marriage by a priest is steadily condemned. It is varied in 1764 by the condemnation of a runaway match to Scotland, the young woman's brother accompanying the pair. A similar elopement occurs in 1765.

In 1786 "some defence against the rays of the sun" being needed, "venetian blinds are recommended as most eligible, to be painted a pale green!"

The early part of the eighteenth century is brought to life by the artless and entertaining journal of a Lancaster draper, William Stout. William Stout was born at Bolton-le-Sands, and became apprentice to Henry Coward, "an active and affable man" he calls him, a Lancaster Quaker. William joined Friends, and very soon his business abilities were brought into constant use for the Society. The number of times he acted as trustee, or guardian for minors is amazing, and until old age and weakness compelled him to seek release, he acted as treasurer for the meeting.

His diary is full of interesting gossip about friends and neighbours, for he was one who took intense interest in his fellow men.

He gives the reason for enlarging the meeting house. "In the spring 1708 our meeting-house not being capable to entertain the General Meeting for the 4 northern counties, we resolved to pull it quite down and build it nigh double to what it was." He says the cost was £180, "which was thought moderate." He died at Hatlex, Hest Bank, in 1752.

Lancaster Friends' School

In 1695 William Gunson left £20, the interest to be applied yearly to a schoolmaster to teach Friends' children in or near Lancaster.

In 1691 the Women's Quarterly Meeting had urged the appointment of a master or mistress, and next year it repeats the advice. The school probably started about this year. In 1700 we find John Yeats teaching the Lancaster boys and girls, but in 1705 a minute runs: "some Friends' children are in danger to come to loss for want of a master or mistress to teach them, and it is desired that Friends do endeavour to learn their children themselves till a master or mistress can be found."

In 1718 Sarah Weaver is appointed, her wage to be "£4 certain from Friends". In 1731 Friends decide to have a master, whom they appear to have got, as there is a deficiency in his salary of £2 11s., to be made up out of the meeting's stock. He was followed by John Ashburn, Joseph Gandy from Colthouse (appointed after a gap of over a year), Richard Hall from Thirsk, and so on down to modern times. In 1736-7 the master's salary was augmented by £1 1s. yearly from the town "to clean the lane which ran from Market Square down to the river".

About 1830 Richard Batt, the schoolmaster, advertised that there was "complete separation of boys and girls, as well in the playground as the schoolroom".

The school is now in a strong condition under J. D. Drummond, with 138 boys, 14 of whom are boarders.

Of the *Quarterly Meeting book*, I must speak briefly. The Quarterly Meeting embraced all Lancashire from Hawkshead and Swarthmoor in the North to Rossendale, Manchester and Liverpool in the South. In 1756, twenty-one meeting houses, usually with graveyard and stable, are listed in Lancashire.

The Quarterly Meeting was held in turn in the large meetings, and the business was the settlement of legal and other differences; the offering of apprentices; appointments to the Northern Yearly Meeting and the National Meeting (London) and business relating to trusts and property. Public interests rarely find a place. Once they contribute to Edinburgh Royal Infirmary but "this must not be a precedent".

A strong warning sent down from Yearly Meeting is given in 1745, recommending in the strongest terms to Friends the obligation they are under to loyalty and a steady adherence to the interests of the present government. Later in the year they are assisting Friends who have suffered losses by the late rebellion. One poor Friend of Fylde had losses by depredations of the Scots amounting to £7 9s. which was lent to him out of the county stock till otherwise relieved. In 1757 a strong protest is made against the impending militia bill.

Sometimes they had visiting Friends. In 1735 William Backhouse came home from America and told of his travels. Samuel Fothergill did the same in 1756. In 1772 John

Woolman attended the weekday meeting in Lancaster, going on towards York the same afternoon. He died at York.

The minutes continue till 1854 when the Lancaster Quarterly Meeting became Lancashire and Cheshire Q.M., and the Hawkshead and Swarthmoor districts were, alas! ceded to Westmorland.

Of all the treasures of Lancaster meeting perhaps the most valuable is the book "*For the Women's Quarterly Meeting in Lancashire, to record, and register those things in,—that doth belong to their service for the Lord and his truth, in the aforesaid meeting for this country.*"¹

The first sixteen pages are in the beautiful and neat handwriting of Sarah Fell, from 1675 to 1680. She married William Meade in 1681 and left the district with her husband. Sarah was by far the ablest of the sisters in literary matters. Her spelling is accurate, her punctuation perfect, and her skill in composing the minutes noticeable. It was she who kept the Swarthmoor accounts, and she was also clerk of Swarthmoor Monthly Meeting. The Women's Q.M. consisted of four Monthly Meetings, one being "behind the Sands, that is to say Swarthmoor Meeting. A second, to which belongs Lancaster, Yealand, Chipping, Wyresdale, Wray and Fylde. A third to which belongs: Bickerstaff, Penketh, Knowsley, Coppull, and Manchester. The fourth, to which belongs: Rossendale, Marsden, Sawley, and Oldham, there being in all seventeen Particular Meetings in this County."

The first meeting was held at Widow Haydock's at Coppull near Wigan, on 23.7.1675. Two meetings appear to be held annually, in 4th and 7th months (June and October), or 5th and 8th months. The chief business is bringing in testimonies against tithes, where women are distrained on, cases of marriage by a priest, disciplinary action against any not doing right, and reports of "how things are in every meeting".

But the chief aim of the meetings was spiritual refreshment and upbuilding of one another in a dear and close knit fellowship. Finance is never mentioned and must have been the duty of the men.

¹ I must acknowledge my debt to Isabel Ross who was studying the old MSS. with me, and whose special knowledge of the Fell family elicited several points that I should almost certainly have missed. Her study of this book will form a section of new and interesting matter in the life of Margaret Fell on which she is at work.

Young women who had “run out and caused the truth to be evil spoken of by going to the priests to be married” were appealed to by weighty women Friends of their meeting. If they expressed sorrow, they usually wrote a paper of condemnation, which was sent to those acquainted with the transgressors, and especially to the Priest who had married them. If the young offender was unrepentant, she was disowned.

This, of course, in 1677, simply meant that she was not counted as a Friend by her fellows. There was at this time no listed membership in the Society of Friends. If a man attended Meetings and conformed to the testimonies, he was a Friend. If he lapsed, or ceased to attend meetings, the rest felt, and doubtless showed, that he had forfeited his place in the Quaker family. A listed membership was not made until long after Fox's death. The ignoble cause of it was the trusts formed for distribution of money left to the Society.

The last minute in the handwriting of Sarah Fell is a happy one.

30.7.1680. An account is given, that things are pretty well in most meetings, as upon Truth's account, which is a refreshment to us, that Friends are so unanimous in their care, in coming up to the work and service of the Lord, which is our duty, to serve him with all diligence and fervency of mind, as he pleases to require of everyone, in their day and generation,—and this brings Peace, and a good reward into every bosom.

A new hand now writes the minutes, in neat, copybook style, very legible, but the spelling, punctuation and ink are not so good. Like the previous ones, the minutes are unsigned.

At the meeting held in Lancaster 7.viii.1686 there is an innovation: the following sign on behalf of the meeting:—

Margrett Fox
Ellinor Hadocke
Mary Fell
Rebecca Paneatt
Ellen Coward
Mary Lower
Rachell Abraham.

Did Rachel Abraham (the last to sign) now act as clerk instead of her sister Sarah ?

In 1695 Friends give tender council and advice of this meeting in the love of God to all young people of our Sect to walk so as becomes the truth in their conversations and behaviours, not fashioning themselves according to the customs and ways of the world

This is curious, and also sad, as the first suggestion of Friends viewing themselves as a "Sect". The Act of Toleration had been won, by the suffering and martyrdom of Friends and other free-thinking Christians. Alas, the exhausted remnant of the Society are already settling down into mediocrity—their high dreams of bringing the Kingdom of God on earth, fading out, and a picture of themselves as an unworldly sect among other sects taking its place. The very next year they are warning young women against worldly fashions, and in 1697 the word "superfluities" begins to slip into the minutes—"superfluities" at marriages, births and burials, in the furnishing of houses.

Margaret Fell continued to attend regularly till 1698 ; she died in 1702 at the age of 87, but there is no mention of her death, nor indeed the decease of any Friend.

She was one who saw the danger of outward narrowness, denouncing the sad colours Friends affected, and said that the "colours as the hills are" were suitable for womenfolk to wear. After her moderate influence was gone, we find the women's meeting troubling themselves over trivialities :—

. . . against superfluity in tying and broadening of their handkerchiefs upon their breast, and let a decent tying be come into, and that friends of every Monthly Meeting take care that friends keep clear of having their hoods made with superfluity and long tabs and so that all the youth dress their heads decently and as becomes Truth. . . .

In 1718 "short-tailed manteaux and cutting and powdering of the hair" are deplored, and also "wearing something in their petticoats in imitation of a hoop".

Each year now, the minutes grow more formal and stereotyped. There are frequent changes of clerk, and the writing is often poor. But down to 1777 women Friends are bravely keeping their stand against tithes, they visit one another's meetings, their spirits are refreshed by coming together, and exhorting one another in the truth. The

testimonies against tithes are a monument of quiet endurance. In the Swarthmoor Meeting alone this book records sixty-four testimonies, in Yealand sixty-eight, forty-two in Lancaster and twenty in Manchester.

Bound into the middle of this book are epistles from George Fox from 1671 on.

Bound into the Lancaster Quarterly Meeting Minute Book from 1669 are copies of answers of all the particular meetings as to who first brought the good tidings, who received it, etc.¹ These queries were circulated in 1676.

There is one of notable interest—that of Swarthmoor, for it gives an independent account of how: “George Fox was the first that brought the message of glad tidings unto us and first preached the Everlasting Gospel again at Swarthmoor being Judge Fell’s house, and upon 5th day of the weeke in the 5th mo. 1652 he went to Ulverston Steeplehouse, it being their lecture-day, and there he preached the Gospel . . .”, etc. This is the only account to give the precise date of his arrival. The account continues with details of his movements during the following days, and is most interesting to compare with Fox’s *Journal* and Margaret Fell’s reminiscences.

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Epilogue

Through the eighteenth century meetings dwindled till the evangelical revival brought new life and plenty of work to be done in temperance, in adult school and Sunday school work, and in open-air campaigns. Lancaster had a Sunday school which by 1856 had eighty-three scholars and six teachers, morning and afternoon.

The nineteenth century saw the decline of the mahogany trade that had enriched Lancaster. The harbour and river silted up, the mills became derelict, and trade declined.

About the middle of the century a new and most interesting departure in education came about, inspired from an unexpected source. James Brunton, a homely, unpretending Lancaster Friend of modest means, chanced to come across several pitiful cases of idiots hidden away in back rooms, a drag on their families, untaught and neglected.

¹ Printed in *Jnl. F.H.S.*, xxxi (1934), pp. 3-19.

He made some small attempts to alleviate their distress, but that was not enough. In 1846 the first English school for imbeciles had been established at Bath, and since then Earlswood Asylum had been opened by the Prince Consort, and a few similar places were being founded up and down the midlands. In 1864 this quiet Quaker, James Brunton, called Dr. de Vitré and eight other gentlemen together and offered £2,000 for the establishment of an institution for the feeble minded. This most generous offer was accepted. Queen Victoria agreed to be Patroness and sent 100 guineas, and the name chosen was the Royal Albert Asylum. It was erected at the cost of £80,000. The Asylum had as first superintendent the noted Dr. Shuttleworth. His set of models for training hand and eye from which Dr. Montessori copied her ideas are still to be seen in use. There are now about 800 patients being trained for trades and occupations of all sorts, many highly skilled, or working on the model farm. The annual income on maintenance account is over £60,000. Thus the dream of a plain Friend, of modest means, who did what he could in his day, has been realized.

During the past fifteen years the monthly meeting shows life and increase in most of its meetings. Many of the newly-convinced are of the same type as the first Friends, coming from the land or from trade, intelligent and willing to learn. The quickening power of their enthusiasm brings fresh life into local Quakerism. Lancaster Friends are again travelling. Three have recently been to America. A new duty has opened for the meetings. Many are the groups of young folks who come, either lodging in the cottages, or bringing tents, to breathe the sweet air of Wyresdale or Yealand, and relax in the quiet and beauty of the mountains and the woods. Yealand Meeting turned a barn into a simple Guest cottage for such as these, and this being outgrown, Yealand Manor was acquired by the Society of Friends through the kindness of the nephews of the late owner, J. Rawlinson Ford, and now is a social and educational centre for all the north, carrying on the tradition of our Monthly Meeting's concern for giving opportunity of education to all.