

The Making of Thomas Ellwood

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THOMAS ELLWOOD was a typical man of his times—perhaps more typical than any of the other famous Quaker names of the seventeenth century. For while George Fox and James Nayler are essentially of the first half, and William Penn of the second half of the century, Ellwood combines traits from both.¹

Note on Abbreviations.

- A. *An Antidote against William Rogers's Book*, 1682.
- D. *Davideis*, published by J. Sowle, 1712.
- E. *Elizabeth Richardson's Testimony*, printed in the first edition of *The History of the Life of Thomas Ellwood*, q.v.
- F. *The Foundation of Tythes Shaken*, 1678.
- H. *The History of the Life of Thomas Ellwood, Written by his own hand. To which is added A Supplement by J.W.* Published by J. Sowle, 1714.
- K. *The Answer to George Keith*, 1696.
- M. *Testimony from the Men's Meeting*, printed in the first edition of *The History of the Life of Thomas Ellwood*.
- N. *Forgery No Christianity*, 1674.
- R. *A Sober Reply*, 1699.
- P. *A Fresh Pursuit*, 1674.
- S. *Sacred History of the Old Testament*. Sowle, 1720. 2 vols.
- T. *Truth Prevailing*, 1676.
- WP. *Wyeth's Preface to The History of the Life of Thomas Ellwood*, q.v.
- WS. *Wyeth's Supplement to the same*.
- WT. *Testimony from the Women's Meeting*, printed in the first edition of *The History of the Life of Thomas Ellwood*, q.v.

All these works are by Ellwood himself, except E., M., WP. and WT. which are printed on unnumbered pages in the first edition of H.

¹ For studies of James Nayler and William Penn in relation to their period see Emilia Fogelklou, *James Nayler, the Rebel Saint*, Ernest Benn, 1931, and *William Penn*, Albert Bonniers Förlag, Stockholm, 1935.

Mary Coate, in her *Social Life in Stuart England*, tells us that "Two tendencies were struggling for predominance in the mind of the average Englishman—an historical spirit, which led him to cite precedent for all his actions, and at the same time an inquisitive temper, which drove him to recast his beliefs and lay the foundation of a new order."¹ She considers that of the two influences, the antiquarian and conservative was the more potent. Godfrey Davies, on the other hand, in his *Early Stuarts*, declares that "the keynote of the seventeenth century was revolt against authority".² Whatever the true balance between these tendencies may be, Ellwood displays both of them, sometimes curiously combined. He could not resist being interested in the new sect of Quakers, but when drawn to attend a Meeting, he tells us "that I might be rather thought to go out a Coursing, than to a Meeting, I let my Gray-Hound run by my Horse-side"—this, be it noted, *before* his father had displayed any hostility to Friends. When Walter Ellwood reproached the Quakers for going naked, Thomas was glad that the instance of Isaiah doing so too occurred to him; and the production of a precedent, he says, "put my Father to a stand".³ Dr. Fischer has noted how, in his *Davideis*, he makes use of "time-honoured stylistic devices as alliteration, antithesis, parallelism and chiasmus, anaphora, invocations, rhetorical exclamations and questions", but the poem itself "gives expression to those contemporary Cartesian and stoic doctrines which champion the cause of reason against passion. . . . He shows himself well-versed . . . in the popular literature of the tales of chivalry—but occasionally also handles (somewhat timidly, one must admit), the fashionable vocabulary of traditional gallantry and sentimental love-making. David sheds, as the case may be, tears of rage or repentance with a pathos equal to any of Dryden's heroes."⁴ His controversial writings abound in references to ancient authors and history, but he picks up political catchwords, such as

¹ Mary Coate, *Social Life in Stuart England*. Methuen, 1924, pp. ix, x.

² Godfrey Davies, *The Early Stuarts, 1605-1660*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1937, p. xix.

³ H., pp. 21, 40.

⁴ *Davideis*. Walther Fischer, Heidelberg, 1936, pp. xvi, xix, xv.

“ Mob ” and “ Cabal ” shortly after they become current. As early as 1662 he wrote a scathing poetical denunciation of contemporary fashions, including a diatribe on waistcoats which contrasts rather comically with the following lines in a later poem,

The meadows in their grass-green vest
Methought were very neatly drest,
Not only neat, but richly fraught
With Checkquer'd flowers, finely wrought,
Cowslips and Violets intermixt
And tufted Daisies cast betwixt.

One is irresistibly reminded of a passage from Michael Fairless's *Grey Brethren*.

Once as I watched Benjamin, the old gardener—a most “ stiff-backed Friend ” despite his stoop and his seventy years—putting scarlet geraniums and yellow fever-few in the centre bed, I asked, awe-struck, whether such glowing colours were approved ; and Rebecca smiled and said—“ Child, dost thee not think the Lord may have His glories ? ” and I looked from the living robe of scarlet and gold to the dove-coloured gown, and said : “ Would it be pride in thee to wear His glories ? ” and Mary answered for her—“ The change is not yet ; better beseems us the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.”

He even makes allusions to such un-Quakerly matters as contemporary drama and the laws of duelling.

When a New Play is to be acted, printed Papers to give Notice of it, are spread abroad some time before.— Even in Duelling, he that gives the Challenge, doth withal give notice what Weapon he intends to use, and of what length . . . It is no sign of want of Courage, in a Man that uses the outward Sword, to refuse Scuffling with his Antagonist in a Chamber, while he boldly offers to meet him in the open Field.¹

Socially Ellwood ranks nearer Penn than Fox. Because of this he is not as typical of the Quaker movement, as

¹ N., p. 5. MS. Poems, *A Prospect*. K., pp. 20, 22.

of his period, for, as W. C. Braithwaite says, "Friends were drawn principally from the trading and yeoman classes."¹

At the beginning of his autobiography he refers to his station with characteristic modesty as "not being so Eminent either in the Church of Christ or in the World, as others who have moved in higher Orbs", but to his own Buckinghamshire community he was a very considerable person, "This eminent Servant of Christ."² The discrepancy depends on the point of view, and the point of view on differences of education between Ellwood and the Friends of the Meeting. As the son and later the heir of a country gentleman he would look forward to certain opportunities in life denied to most of his fellow-Quakers, and would feel, if deprived of them, a far greater loss.

Mary Coate tells us the usual routine for the eldest son of a country squire. "To prepare him for those innumerable duties which the Tudors had flung upon the shoulders of the local Justice, the country squire received a preliminary training in the local grammar-school, the university, and the Inns of Court, while to complete his education he had a year of travel on the Continent."³ This very nearly corresponds to what Ellwood tells us of his elder brother's education. Young Walter was "sent to the Free-School at *Thame* in *Oxfordshire*", and later removed "to *Merton-College* in *Oxford*". Later still, after quarrelling with his father, he asked "that he might have Leave to Travel", which was granted, though he went to Ireland instead of the Continent and there "was quickly preferred to a Place of Trust and Profit". A little later he died, leaving Thomas, at the age of eighteen or nineteen, his father's only son; but Walter Ellwood, who had been spending above his means, did not think of continuing his boy's education, which had been cut short in order to send the elder lad to the University. Thomas tells how he regretted the loss of an opportunity to which he must have felt himself entitled if he were to succeed to his father's position and estate, and for which Walter Ellwood should have been able to make ample provision.

¹ William C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*. Macmillan, 1924, p. 512.

² H., p. 1. WT.

³ Mary Coate, *Social Life in Stuart England*. Methuen, 1912.

At this School (i.e. Lord Williams' school at Thame) . . . I profited apace; having then a natural Propensity to Learning; so that at the first reading over of my Lesson, I commonly made myself Master of it . . . Had I been continued at this School, and in due time preferred to an higher; I might in Likelihood have been a Scholar: for I was observed to have a Genius apt to learn. But my Father having . . . accepted the Office of a *Justice of the Peace*, (which was no way Beneficial, but merely Honorary, and every way Expensive) and put himself into a Port and Course of Living agreeable thereunto . . . found it needful to retrench his Expences elsewhere; the Hurt of which fell upon me. For he . . . took me from School, to save the Charge of Maintaining me there; which was somewhat like plucking green Fruit from the Tree, and laying it by, before it was come to its due Ripeness; which will thenceforth shrink and wither, and lose that little Juice and Relish which it began to have. Even so it fared with me. For . . . in a little time, I began to lose that little Learning I had acquired at School; so . . . that I could not have read, far less have understood a Sentence in *Latin*. Which I was so sensible of, that I warily avoided reading to others, even in an *English* book, lest, if I should meet with a *Latin* Word, I should shame my self, by mispronouncing it. . . . (Nevertheless I was not) rightly sensible of my Loss therein, until I came amongst the *Quakers*. But then I both saw my Loss, and lamented it, and applyed myself with utmost Diligence, at all leasure times to recover it.¹

It is quite clear from the will of Walter Gray, Thomas's great-grandfather, that the old man intended to provide for all his great-grandchildren as well as their father, that he wished the portion of any who died to be divided among the rest, and that he would have been specially interested in Thomas's love of learning. But Thomas, alas, was born the year after Walter Gray's will was made.² When he was

¹ H., pp. 5, 7, 131.

² Will of Walter Gray, *Journal of Friends' Historical Society*, Vol. xxxv, pp. 66-7.

able to resume his studies with John Milton we find a significant passage in which he tells how the poet insisted that he should learn the Continental pronunciation of Latin "to Converse with Foreigners, either abroad or at home". Although at this time he had been virtually disowned by his father and had no settled prospects, the social tradition by which a gentleman's son looked forward to at least a year of travel made him give willing consent to Milton's proposition.¹

Ellwood was connected through his mother with the great Puritan and Parliamentary family of Hampden. She was nearly related, he tells us, to Lord Wenman's lady, whose maiden name was Margaret, daughter of Edmund Hampden of Hartwell.² His father, though not on good terms with Lord Wenman, "favoured the Parliament-Side" and both parents, on temporarily settling in London at the beginning of the Civil War, "contracted an Acquaintance and intimate Friendship with the Lady *Springett* . . . being then the Widow of Sir *William Springett*, (who died in the Parliament Service)". At this time Walter Ellwood was "a constant Hearer of those who are called *Puritan Preachers*"; and had "been from his Youth a Professor (though not join'd in that which is call'd *Close Communion* with any one Sort)".³

Thomas, therefore, grew up with a certain Puritan bias, which predisposed him, in spite of a genial temperament and a strong sense of humour, to admire such things as "staidness" and "weightiness"; he praises Isaac Penington's discourse as being "tempered with a serious gravity" and challenges William Rogers to deny that among sixty-six signatories to a certain testimony "there were as many Ancient, Grave Solid Weighty Friends as ever you saw". Upon meeting Gulielma Springett for the first time since childhood, he was so overawed by "the Gravity of her Look and Behaviour", that he found himself "not so much Master of my self, as to pursue any further Converse with her". As for jolly old Squire Clark, and that "airy piece" his daughter—but let him tell the story himself in the unexpurgated frankness of his *History's* first edition.

¹ H., p. 134.

² G.E.C. *Complete Baronetage*, 1649-64.

³ H., pp. 3, 8, 18, 58.

At length he (i.e. Squire Clark) came out to me, leading in his Hand a beloved Daughter of his ; a young Woman of about Eighteen Years of Age ; who wanted nothing to have made her Comely, but Gravity. An airy Piece she was ; and very Merry she made herself at me. When she had throughly viewed me, He, putting her a little forward toward me, said, *Here, Tom, will you Kiss her ?* I was grieved and ashamed at this frothy Lightness ; and I suppose he perceived it ; whereupon he drew nearer, as if he would have whispered, and then said, *Will you lie with her ?* At which I, with a disdainful Look, turning away ; he said, *I think it would be better for you, than to be a Quaker ;* and so little consideration, and regard to Modesty had she, that she added, *I think so too.* This was all by Candle light.¹

Thomas was also profoundly shocked by the first maypole to be set up after the Restoration, and traced its origin to the worship in ancient Rome of a certain Flora, who in country parlance was no better than she should be.² From his Hampden connections he also imbibed staunch Parliamentary principles, trouncing the royalist theory of the divine right of kings in the stanzas in *Davideis* beginning

How miserable is the State of those
Whose Frame of Government doth them expose
To Arbitrary Pow'r

and contrasting the Government

Where no Dispensing Pow'r can make a breach
Upon your Freedoms or your Persons reach.³

But his character and outlook were far more influenced by the fact that both parents were country gentlefolk, "well descended ; but of declining Families". It effectively prevented him from being a fanatic, or even a Quaker of the strictest sort. His vocabulary is full of metaphors drawn from the sports and interests of his class, though he had to give up most of them on his conversion ; " Advantage, like

¹ H., pp. 14, 15, 103.

² MS. poems, *Speculum Seculi & Floralia*. A., p. 102.

³ D., pp. 80, 81.

the Byas on a Bowl, is apt to sway the judgment ” ; “ Clip the wing and turn him off ” (hawking) ; “ He begins to Cogg with the Quakers ” (dice) ; “ This Check made Samuel wary ” (chess) ; “ You shoot your bolts at random ” (archery) ; “ A catch . . . tending only to a Jangle ” (part-singing) ; “ Those many *Clinching* quotations I had therein *hampered* him with ” (wrestling) ; “ That is the Meridian, William, for which thy Book is Calculated ” (astrology). Less weight can be given to the list of games and sports in his poem *All is Vanity*, which is a mere catalogue and shows no technical knowledge of the pastimes named ; but one point of interest in this poem is that bell-ringing is not listed in clownish sports, but among the diversions of a gentleman. One is reminded of Dorothy Sayers’ Lord Peter Wimsey, who could pull “ quite a pretty rope ”.¹

Before his conversion Thomas wore lace, ribbons, buttons as ornaments, rings, a velvet montero-cap, and that sure token of prosperity and gentility, a black suit. At his death he left six chairs embroidered by his wife, and his MS. poems are bound in a charming green vellum, tooled with gold. A contemporary description of his distant connection, John Hampden, is equally applicable to himself.

He indulged to himself all the licence in sports and exercises and company, which was used by men of the most jolly conversation. Afterwards, he retired to a more reserved and melancholy society, yet preserving his own natural cheerfulness and vivacity, and above all, a flowing courtesy to all men.²

What did he gain more directly from his father ?

Walter Ellwood seems to have been the typical country squire of his day. Mary Coate says, “ As Justice of the Peace, the country squire represented law and order in his parish ; with a fellow-Justice he held Petty Sessions, confiscated flesh killed in Lent, suppressed vagrants and disorderly ale-houses, hunted out witches and recusants, and generally endeavoured to maintain the peace. Once a quarter he rode to Quarter Sessions, receiving four shillings a day for expenses,

¹ F., Preface, and pp. 45, 347. D., p. 4. A., pp. 42, 46, 99. Dorothy Sayers, *The Nine Tailors*, p. 20. T., p. 16.

² Quoted by J. Howard Brown, *A Short History of Thame School*. Hazell, Watson & Viney, 1927, p. 93.

and there heard more serious cases of felony and sedition, assessed the rate of local wages, administered Acts of Parliament and Royal Ordinances, and supervised the activities of the Sheriff, the High Constable, and the Surveyors of the Highways. To all these multifarious duties he brought a practical knowledge of the law, a genuine administrative capacity and a decidedly conservative temper On the whole his rule was just, and not often biased by political or religious prejudice."¹

The last sentence is well illustrated by Walter Ellwood's behaviour in the case of a Quaker who was arrested at Chinnor for speaking to the minister after service.

My father, having examined the Officers, who brought him, what the Words that he spake were? (which they did not well agree in) and at what time he spake them? (which they all agreed to be after the Minister had done) and then, whether he gave the Minister any reviling Language, or endeavoured to raise a Tumult among the People? (which they could not charge him with); not finding that he had broken the Law, he counselled the young Man to be careful that he did not make or occasion any publick Disturbances; and so dismissed him.

We may remember also, that in spite of his violent temper, Walter, when complained to by a husbandman "in none of the best Language, for driving over the Corn", answered him mildly, and promised compensation for any damage that might have been done. When attacked, while returning home that evening, by the same man and "another lusty Fellow" he "endeavoured, by gentle Reasoning, to perswade them to forbear, and not run themselves farther into the Danger of the Law, which they were run too far into already." When they threatened him with their Clubs, he merely turned his head to his son, saying, "Tom, Disarm them," and when they had been chased off by a Thomas whose fingers had been itching to deal with them, dismissed the affair with amused contempt; "since they came off no better in their Attempt, my Father thought it better not to know them, than to obliged himself to a Prosecution of them."²

¹ Mary Coate, *Social Life in Stuart England*. Methuen, 1924, pp. 20-1.

² H., pp. 8-17.

They were, in fact, his own country folk in a temper, a little the worse for drink, perhaps ; people towards whom one had a sort of fatherly responsibility. As Arthur Bryant has said, respecting the English country gentleman of a slightly later period, " he was seldom out of touch with the people he was called to lead ; from birth to death he was constantly with them ". He had every opportunity of getting to know them, for the average country parish probably did not contain more than three hundred souls.¹

We must not be misled by Thomas's later exasperation with Walter's deplorable extravagance, violent temper, and determined efforts to bring his son to heel. In the formative years Ellwood loved and respected his father ; and when he is looking back on them in old age filial pride still asserts itself, both openly, as in the passage last quoted, and by implication in the scorn he pours on the wretched upstart magistrate John Ovy.

He wanted indeed most of the Qualifications, requisite for a *Justice of the Peace* ; an Estate to defray the Charge of the Office, and to bear him up, in a Course of living above Contempt ; A competent Knowledge in the Laws ; and a Presence of Mind or Body, or both, to keep Offenders in some Awe.²

There can be no doubt that Thomas acquired from his father not only a sound practical training in legal matters, but a flair for the judgment and management of his fellow-men, excellent manners—it is interesting to note that Locke considered that boys brought up at home had always the best manners—and a sense of *noblesse oblige* towards those of lesser gifts and lower station than himself. We can trace Walter's abiding influence in the following testimonies to his son.

A Gentleman Born and Bred.—He could discern the Spirits of others and was very much the Master of his own.—The Monthly-Meeting was held at his House about Forty Years, and he always look'd very kind and Courteous on Friends, when they came there, and took Care and Notice of the Meanest, who

¹ Arthur Bryant, *The England of Charles II.* Longmans, 1934.

² H., p. III.

came in *Sincerity*. . . . How kind and Con-
 descending he was to the *Weakest Capacity*, and would
 help out when they wanted a Word.¹

Already at the age of twenty-three, in Bridewell and Newgate, Thomas unconsciously made himself the leader and spokesman of the Quakers imprisoned there; even the felons "all carried themselves respectfully towards me . . . they would dispose themselves to one Side of the Room, that they might make way for me to walk on the other".²

"The country gentlemen of the time", says Godfrey Davies, "stood firm upon the rights of their rank and insisted upon the respect due to their position."³ This is very contrary to the teachings of Quakerism, but it escapes in odd little ways in Ellwood's writings. He is the very image of his father "keeping Offenders in some awe" when he has to deal with the wretched informer Lacy. Knowing that a warrant was out for his arrest, Lacy

went directly to . . . Thomas Zachary . . .
 and . . . did so earnestly beg for Forgiveness,
 that he wrought upon the tender Nature of that very
 good Man, not only to put him in hopes of Mercy,
 but to be his Advocate by Letter to me, to mitigate,
 at least, if not wholly to remit the Prosecution. To
 which I so far only consented, as to let him know,
 I would suspend the Execution of the *Warrant* upon
 him, according as he behaved himself, or until he gave
 fresh Provocation. At which Message the Fellow
 was so overjoyed, that, relying with Confidence thereon,
 he returned openly to his Family and Labour, and
 applied himself to Business (as his Neighbours observed
 and reported) with greater Diligence and Industry
 than he had ever done before.

It is the exact tone of the country magistrate dismissing an offender with a caution. There is another good example in Ellwood's well-known description of that ride to Tunbridge Wells with Gulielma Springett, when a drunken rascal in the Duke of York's livery tried to pull her off her horse

¹ WP. WT.

² H., pp. 167-70.

³ Godfrey Davies, *The Early Stuarts, 1605-1660*, p. 266.

on to his. The man's companions followed jeering, but directly Thomas raised his voice in protest, they pressed forward and drove the fellow off ; seeing his plain dress and the absence of a sword they had thought probably that Guli was a lady imprudent enough to ride with a couple of men-servants only ; but the voice told them that one was a gentleman and an angry one at that. One of them was so perturbed that at the next inn he came up to make excuses for the drunken man, when, says Thomas

I let him know that one Vice would not excuse another ; . . . that I was not ignorant whose Livery they wore, and was well assured, their Lord would not maintain them in committing such Outrages upon Travellers on the Road, to our Injury, and his Dishonour ; That I understood the Duke was coming down ; and that they might expect to be called to an Account for this rude Action.

It is to be noted also that Ellwood is anxious to explain that he went to study with Milton, "not as a Servant", and that on adopting the plain speech he could not say "Your Servant, to any one to whom I did not stand in the real Relation of a Servant, which I had never done to any." There is, indeed, a slight touch of patronage in such phrases as the following, "A brisk, genteel young Man, a Shopkeeper in the Town", "My Business lying among the Tenants, who were a Rustick Sort of People", "Great, surely, was the *Simplicity*, and Humility of those early ages, when persons of the *upper Rank*, and of the *Female Sex*, too, did not disdain to be employed in such *low*, but *necessary*, Offices." But, as the testimonies prove, this was not resented as it would be in this more democratic age.¹

We may place all this to the credit side of Walter Ellwood's influence. On the debit side we may note that Thomas was occasionally, in controversy, carried away by a temper not unlike his father's. As the Men's Meeting put it, he was "Sharp to that which he apprehended to be Insincere and Deceitful." It is interesting to note that while he was still under his father's roof, he deprecated this asperity, for he says of his first publication, *An Alarm to the Priests*, published in 1662, that "the Sharpness of the Message

¹ H., pp. 26, 68, 132, 251-7, 260, 289. S., Vol. i, p. 34.

therein delivered, was hard to my Nature to be the Publisher of". We should like to forget the epitaph on "bawling Ives", written a few years later, just as we should like to forget that ugly scene where Walter attacks his son before the servants. But these lapses were comparatively rare; Ellwood's normal temper is bantering rather than savage; one is reminded of the small boy who was birched three times in one morning for "waggish pranks". He hates pomposity; and there is an excellent example of his banter in the unsigned pamphlet called *A Sober Reply*, published in 1696. The Town Council of Bury St. Edmunds had sent an anti-Quaker petition to the Government, from which he quotes the following sentence, "We have too just a Cause of dreading the Subversion of our Government by them, if not carefully prevented and suppressed", and comments

Our Government! What do they mean, The Government of the Burrough of *Bury St. Edmonds* by the *Aldermen*, Assistant *Justice*, chief *Burgess* and *Burgesses* of the *Common Council* there? We never understood that any Quaker hath attempted to meddle with *their* Government, or intrude into it; but rather, that some have declin'd it, when invited thereunto. If they mean the *Government of England*, we hope they will not so *appropriate* it to themselves, as to exclude their *Fellow-Subjects* from a Share in the *Care, Support* and *Preservation* thereof; which we (and all other Protestant Dissenters) have as much reason as they (with respect to our Estates, Liberties and Lives) to wish and see the Welfare and safety of.¹

Yet even this teasing was reserved for "enemies of the Truth"; for under a very bitter personal attack by John Raunce, Thomas acquitted himself, as Wyeth says "as an ingenuous Man, a Christian, and a fair Opponent".²

Negatively, Walter Ellwood's prodigality and unfair financial dealing with his son begot in Thomas an independence which at times degenerated into false pride. When he refuses to join the free meals in Bridewell because he still has the magnificent sum of tenpence in his pockets, and removes himself as far as possible from the table because

¹ R., p. 9. H., p. 78.

² H., p. 401.

“ the Sight and Smell of hot Food, was sufficiently enticing to my empty stomach ”, one smiles at this boyish piece of heroism ; but one feels something more like irritation at his unbusinesslike arrangement with the Peningtons when engaged as their tutor—“ a Premium without Compact ” ; his refusal to make any terms whatever with Walter about the selling of the Crowell estate, and his lordly determination not to enquire into the amount of his future wife’s income. All these things are not only contrary to the spirit of his age, but to Quaker plain-dealing ; and one must assume that they were the result of unfilial resentment, which Thomas, who prided himself on obedience to his father in all things lawful, was neither willing to face nor to conquer.¹

Great as was Walter Ellwood’s influence upon his son, he had no deeply religious nature. It was probably from his “ dear and honoured Mother . . . a Woman of singular Worth and Vertue ”, that Thomas inherited that truly pious spirit that was typical of the best men of the seventeenth century.²

Arthur Bryant tells us that

Faith was a part of the air the men of that day breathed. We live in an age when the needs of the body are placed before those of the soul ; our gods are the material gods of luxury for the rich and comfort for the poor. . . . The God of the 17th century was the living God of the Spirit—ever present, ever-seeing, wonderful beyond all belief to love and terrible to offend. . . . The men of that age . . . were afraid, but they were afraid only of a divine mystery. They did not fear as we do, poverty, discomfort, pain and death. They disliked these evils, but when they came they accepted them as marks of God’s intention to be borne with courage and good cheer.³

Ellwood is in no way more characteristically of his own times than in those things which he regards as “ exercises ”, and for which he invites his readers’ sympathies. As far as was possible for a sober young Quaker he took his imprisonments in Bridewell and Newgate with gaiety and gusto ;

¹ H., pp. 146, 210, 221, 258.

² H., p. 13.

³ Arthur Bryant, *The England of Charles II*, pp. 76-7.

but on being aroused by Edward Burrough to a consciousness of sin, he tells us that "I was greatly bowed down under the Sense thereof". He is at first terrified of betraying his newfound principles at Oxford, "I went in Fear (not of what they could, or would have done to me, if they should have taken notice of me), but lest I should be surprised, and drawn unwarily into that, which I was to keep out of." When Guli has smallpox, he tells the Peningtons that he is not in the least afraid of infection; but he is so worried about disobeying his father, because disobedience to parents arouses God's displeasure, that he has to ask for a sign that he is doing right in visiting meetings against his father's wishes.¹

We know that Walter only indulged in family prayers by fits and starts; but when Thomas was reached by Edward Burrough, his first thought was the performance of regular religious duties. This is the last idea he could have acquired from Burrough or the Peningtons. Burrough had declared in two pamphlets written shortly before he met young Ellwood, that "True worship . . . is not by the tradition of men in outward observances, or set dayes or places", and that "The True Worship of God . . . is without respect of times or of things", while Penington wrote emphatically in 1658

The Lord preserve me from reading one line of (the Scriptures) in my own will, or interpreting any part of them according to my own understanding, but only as I am guided, led, and enlightened by him, in the will and understanding which comes from him. If a man speak ever so much from his own spirit, with ever so much earnestness and affection; yet it is no prayer, no true prayer, but only so far as the Spirit moves to it, and so far as the Spirit leads and guides in it.²

But Thomas's great-grandfather had been Rector of Crowell, and his "dear and honoured Mother" may well have been of the type of Mary Woodforde, who noted in her diary, "I cannot call to mind that I was in my closet to perform

¹ H., pp. 24, 35.

² Burrough, *Works*, pp. 439, 474. Penington, *Works*, Vol. i, pp. 13, 14.

my own private prayers. O Lord, I beseech thee, impute it not to me as a wilful sin." Perhaps also the lad recollected his days at the Thame Grammar-school, where daily "a quarter of a hour was spent before dinner in reciting some chapter of the Old or New Testament in the English language".¹

It was probably also from his mother, either directly or via his sisters, that Thomas obtained the knowledge of first-aid and simple medicines which served him so well in Bridewell, and also, as the Women's Testimony rather breathlessly declares, in aiding "the *Poor*, both *Sick* and *Lame*, who wanted *Help*, and had it freely, taking Care to provide things useful for such Occasions, (blest also with good Success)". We know that when his face was swollen from going out without a hat in very cold January, his sister treated it "with frequent Applications of Figs, and stoned Raisins, toasted, and laid to the Boils as hot as I could bear them". It was at this period that Lord Herbert of Cherbury declared "it will become a gentleman to have some knowledge in medicine, especially the diagnostic part, whereby he may take more timely notice of a disease, and by that means timely prevent it". Thomas considered that he saved his own life by returning at once to the country when the foul air of London affected his chest. Though the recommendation of Sir Isaac Newton's favourite medicine, the Lucatellu's Balsam, may have come from John Raunce, who treated him for this lung trouble, it was probably at home that he learnt its outward application for wounds, "with a Feather" and a dressing of soft linen; not to mention the placing of the patient before the fire, and wrapping him in a blanket while the dressing was being prepared.²

Before we turn to the other personalities who shared in the making of Thomas Ellwood, we might as well take stock of his Grammar-school education. It was, of course, severely classical; as Mary Coate says, "the aim of the master was to teach his boys first to speak Latin, then to write it". J. Howard Brown, in his *History of Thame School*, tells us the

¹ *Woodforde Papers and Diaries*. Dorothy Heighes Woodforde. Pub. Peter Davies, 1932. J. Howard Brown, *A Short History of Thame School*, p. 65.

² WT. Mary Coate, *Social Life in Stuart England*, p. 159. H., pp. 136, 154-6.

boys read Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Plautus, Lucan, Cicero, Livy, Sallust, Justin, Herodian, Terence, and Lucian, and used Lily's Latin Grammar. This was "an introduction to the study of what was then the world's best literature", and "the result of such instruction in the case of a wise schoolmaster and a diligent pupil, was a classicist in touch with all the knowledge of his age, for topics in art and science, history and literature, were commonly chosen as subjects for theses, while the Fathers and modern Latin authors were read as well as the ancients".¹ The result in Ellwood's case was two-fold. It imbued him with a genuine, if rather pedantic, love of learning; and it made him a logical thinker. Arthur Bryant has said that "Classical education had one advantage, that it gave youth the hard mental discipline by mastery of intellectual difficulty which tends more than anything else to make the human mind 'categorical and not wiggle-waggle.'" ² Before ever Thomas had a chance to learn much about Quaker plain-speaking and plain-dealing he had learnt to face facts, to estimate consequences, to consider both sides of a case, and instead of dismissing anything that caused him mental pain, to probe it to the roots. His first action on arriving home after being reached by Burrough's ministry, was to visit the minister of Chinnor, to see what he had to say about the Quakers. Then he went to another Meeting, confirmed his first impressions, and sat down immediately to work out the logical implications of his new-found principles of life.³ This mental discipline was by far the most valuable thing that he could have acquired even if he had stayed his full time at Lord Williams' famous school. Although the matter of his controversial writings has lost interest for us, they do give evidence of a well-trained, orderly mind, versed in logic, hating evasions, inaccuracies, exaggerations or mis-statements, and a notable capacity for sticking to the point. He seems to have made some study of logic and rhetoric; he tells one opponent that "Thy Conclusion is Inconclusive; thy consequence, a non sequitur", and says of another that "As this Notion of his will not hold: So neither will that which next follows, which, by *Apposition*, he pins upon it"; but judging by his

¹ J. Howard Brown, *A Short History of Thame School*, p. 65.

² Arthur Bryant, *The England of Charles II*, p. 62.

³ H., pp. 21-3.

early works the education he received at school was not sufficient to lay the foundations of the admirable prose style he displays in his autobiography ; that we owe to later influences which will be discussed in their proper place.¹

Having left school so early, Thomas was late in going through the psychological stage of hero-worship, which affects most of us at one time or another. He fell into it head over heels on meeting Edward Burrough. By his own account it was not till about eighteen months after his conversion that he was on terms of friendship with the young missionary from the North, but it was Burrough's ministry that set his feet on the path, and his first pamphlet, *An Alarm to the Priests*, written in 1662, reflects Burrough both in title and matter.² Yet his own spirit was essentially pastoral ; he could not understand why Burrough, the missionary, did not take a personal interest in fostering the spark he had kindled ; he shows, indeed, a rather comic ignorance of the fact that he was one among a thousand converts, attributing Burrough's reserve to a desire " that I might not have any Dependence on Man ". He evidently had no conception of what Francis Howgill has described as " the exceeding weight of service from Weeks end to Weeks end ", which rested on Burrough's shoulders. Hero-worship seldom gives a clear view of the object of adoration. Burrough's untimely death was a great shock to Ellwood, and we cannot doubt the sincerity of his grief, but the elegy he wrote is conventional in tone and says less in nearly eighty lines than George Fox said in what is surely one of the shortest and most beautiful of Quaker epitaphs—I quote the second paragraph :

In his Ministry in his Life-time he went through
Sufferings by bad spirits : who never turned his Back
on the Truth, nor his Back from any out of the Truth ;
A Valiant Warrior, more than a Conqueror ; who hath
got the Crown through Death and Sufferings : who is
dead, but yet liveth amongst us, and amongst us is alive.³

¹ F., p. 59. R., p. 3.

² e.g. Burrough's pamphlet *An Alarum sounded to the Pope's borders*, pub. 1655, and his verses prefixed to George Fox's book, *The Great Mystery*, 1659.

³ Francis Howgill's and George Fox's Testimonies prefixed to Burrough's Works. H., p. 45.

The influence of both Mary and Isaac Penington, to whom Burrough bequeathed his convert in that gentle hint, "The young man is reach't and will do well, if he don't lose it," was exactly of the kind best calculated to develop Ellwood's natural gifts. They provided first and foremost the affection which he had long been missing at home, and his gratitude for it is touchingly expressed in his testimony to Isaac.

Love him I did, and that intirely, and sure I am very deservedly ; for he was worthy indeed of love from all men, but more especially from me, to whom he had been abundantly kind . . . How affectionately did he receive me ! how regardfully did he take care of me ! how tenderly and like a father did he watch over me, that I might not be drawn back or in any way be betrayed from the simplicity of Truth, as I had received it ! And can I ever forget his love, or let his manifold kindness slip out of my mind ! Oh no ; the remembrance of him is pleasant to me, and I think not of him without delight : for as a friend I truly loved him ; as a father (for such his care of me rendered him to me) I revered him ; as an elder, I honoured him, and that (as he right well deserved) with double honour.

His statement of the progress of his conversion reflects his adopted father's teaching almost word for word, and he constantly makes use of Peningtonian phrases such as "the Seed", "the Immortal holy Birth", "the pure living Word", "a Day of Quickening", "the arisings of the Heavenly Life". But Penington, spiritually the best of guides, was too much of a contemplative to have satisfied that natural aptitude for the practical business of life which had been fostered in Thomas by Walter Ellwood's social position and training ; indeed he notes in his testimony that Isaac was "to the world and the affairs of it very much a stranger".¹

Mary Penington, an essentially practical woman, and anxious to spare her husband any business not suited to his temperament, must have found young Ellwood a godsend. She certainly made good use of him in the management of

¹ Testimony to Isaac Penington, Penington's *Works*, pp. xxxi-xxxii.

both her own and Guli's estates. Whether it were a question of engaging lodgings, drawing up an agreement, selling property, seeing over a prospective dwelling-house and giving an opinion on the proper price to pay for it, or reassuring Mary when she had qualms about running into debt, Thomas was always to the fore. Thus he gained the experience which made him such an invaluable Clerk to a meeting continually harassed by legal and illegal persecution, and often at a loss to know how to protect their rights and property.¹

Moreover, Mary and Guli provided the feminine society which Thomas needed; he was always, in the best sense of the term, a "Ladies' man". He became "an early and particular Playfellow" to Guli; his sisters "carried themselves very kindly to me, and did what they could to mitigate my Father's displeasure against me"; Frances Rance received him with "more than ordinary kindness", and "had a good Regard" for him; when any of the Women-Friends came to visit the prisoners in Newgate he was "forward to go down with them to the Grate, and see them safe out". He wrote three quite gallant poems to Ann Owen, "Phillis" and a beautiful Dame who "for want of Red Cherries which she longed for grew pale", and in another poem, *Love's Caveat*, he owns to "an Eye which hath been too apt to stray"—the context makes it quite clear after what! He was not, however, any the less of a "man's man" as a consequence. No one effeminate could have won the friendship of the redoubtable John Milton, and the records of his behaviour to the ruffians who set on his father's coach, to the major who arrested him at Bull-and-Mouth Meeting, and to the drunken rascal who tried to molest Guli should be sufficient to clear him from any suspicion of being a simpering tutor.² Nor need we doubt the depth of his unrequited passion for Guli Springett because of the apparent complacency with which he mentions it. The highest compliment ever paid to that remarkable young woman

¹ H., pp. 241, 251. *Journal of the Friends' Historical Society*, Vol. ii, p. 20. *Friends' Quarterly Examiner*, Vol. xix (1885), pp. 531, 532, 533. *Uppeside Minute Book* (Bucks Arch. Soc., 1937), pp. 126, 165. H., p. 285.

² H., pp. 3, 51, 75, 136, 169. MS. poems, Friends House Library. H., pp. 11, 139, 253.

was the fact that Thomas at thirty married a Friend sixteen years older than himself. He needed the wise understanding companionship which Mary Ellis could give, and she gave it in full measure ; to me one of the loveliest passages in his autobiography is that in which he tells us how he came home shortly after his marriage full of depression at his father's refusal to give him his promised marriage portion ; he had secured all his property to his wife, with some ceremony ; and now that property amounted to nothing, and he feared his father's true reason might be that he had run through his money, and would presently become a charge on himself and Mary. It was a humiliating situation ; yet, he says, " to my great Comfort, I found my Wife well, and my self very welcome to her : both of which I esteemed as great favours ". So much said in so little—dear Mary Ellis ! Yet if Thomas could have no son by Gulielma Springett, he was content for his name to die out.¹

Those seven years wherein he acted as watch-dog to Guli cannot have been easy ones, although, in old age, he referred to them as " a quiet and contented life ". But they enlarged his sympathies towards the young people of his Meeting. We may trace his hand in that letter sent by the Upperside Monthly Meeting to the pair of first-cousins who found it so hard to give up their intention of marriage.

It is yet our belief, yt if ye would harken to God's counsel, & part immediately one from another, when your hearts are tender & melted by ye power of ye Lord . . . ye Lord would yet shew you mercy, in . . . making youre separation easier & sweeter than ye are aware.

When Rowland Foster complained to the Monthly Meeting that Joyce Olliffe had jilted him, it was Thomas who was appointed to " speak with the said Joyce at London ", and who on his own initiative took Rowland up to confront her ; the result of which was that

Rowland Foster & she discoursing together, did wholly end ye Controversy yt had been between them, each of them solemnly releasing ye other by a writing under their hands.²

¹ H., p. 266.

² *Upperside Minute Book* (Bucks Arch. Soc., 1937), pp. 27, 83.

At his conversion, Thomas tells us, there "began to be a Way cast up, before me, for me to walk in : A direct and plain Way ; so plain, *that a wayfaring Man*, how weak and simple soever . . . *could not Err*, while he continued to walk in it." But it is a far cry from this to that question he "pleasantly" put to Milton in 1665, whose piercing simplicity struck the poet dumb : "What hast thou to say of *Paradise Found* ?" and to his last recorded words, "I am full of Joy and Peace." His love for Guli developed in him what has been called "the royalty of inward happiness"—that peace which comes to a man who has learnt to forgo with cheerfulness. He had, as Elizabeth Richardson testifies, "Dominion over Passion, over Pride and over Covetousness."¹

Ellwood's relations with John Milton are of great interest, and in no way more so than in the things he carefully omits to say. He experienced and noted at once one of the poet's best traits ; that fondness for and kindness to young men, which I believe to have been developed in Milton by the premature death of one of the few human beings he ever really loved—Charles Diodati, the doctor friend of his young manhood. Thomas recognized, in that elegy on John Milton which was too ambitious a flight for his modest muse, the magnitude of the poet's gifts and his immense learning ; and the Puritan and democratic bias he inherited from his forbears and environment could not fail to arouse his admiration for Milton's *Eikonoklastes*, and for his great controversial work against Salmasius, *In Defence of the People of England*. It may well be that Milton's polemical work encouraged him in his own. He notes the poet's "curious ear", which enabled him to judge whether his pupil understood what he had read by the mere tone of his voice, and here and there we find in his writings a Miltonic word or phrase—"the Warden was a budge old man" is one example, and another is his use of "Hobson's choice". The original Hobson had been a carrier at Cambridge in Milton's university days, and the poet wrote two epitaphs on the surly old man which no doubt Thomas saw. *Paradise Lost* he considered an "Excellent Poem", and he was proud of having suggested to Milton the subject of *Paradise Regained*. But upon the poet's family life, which he must have witnessed, he preserves

¹ H., pp. 25, 234. E.

the discreetest silence, and one cannot but smile at the realization that Milton's pamphlets on divorce are included in that chilliest of phrases, "the accurate Pieces he had written on various Subjects and Occasions". It was not his business to criticize more directly a man from whom he personally had received nothing but kindness, and he is very careful to tell us that his question regarding *Paradise Lost* was asked "pleasantly" in such a manner as could not have caused offence. But to a student of Milton's life, how far-reaching that simple question is! It seems almost incredible that Henry Morley should so have misunderstood Milton as well as Ellwood as to suggest that he was struck dumb by the stupidity of the question. Milton never in his life suffered a fool gladly, and received notice from one of his servants for making game of the unfortunate fellow. He had nothing to answer because his earthly Paradise had failed him and he had never found the heavenly; he was less of a Christian at heart than a peculiar mixture of the rebel and the stoic. William Blake put the matter brutally but truthfully a hundred years later, when he said, "The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels and God, and at liberty when of Devils & Hell, is because he was a true poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it." *Paradise Regained* was the pleasant answer to Ellwood's pleasant question; but *Samson Agonistes* the answer to its deeper implications. With the release of all his hidden anguish into that great and touching poem there came to Milton enough of psychological healing to make him, albeit grudgingly, send out his daughters to live their own lives; but who knows that it was not that question, put by one "affable and courteous", yet with "great Strength and Depth of *Judgment*", which, working like leaven from that first moment of self-revelation, made the release possible?¹

Last but not least of the influences which made Ellwood both as a man and an author, must be reckoned the country environment in which he lived. He was no scholarly recluse—six weeks' study in London were enough to send him off

¹ MS. poems, An Elegy on the death of John Milton. H., pp. 65, 134, 135, 200, 233-4. R., p. 13. Preface to the Morley's Universal Library edition of the History of Thomas Ellwood. Masson's Life of Milton, Vol. vi, pp. 683-4. Blake's Poems, Dent's Everyman edition, p. 44.

post-haste to fill his labouring lungs with the country air. He was "a very nimble" runner, liked walking—a taste which he shared with Mary Penington—and was out in all weathers; once he walked down from London to Chalfont in a day, "the weather being Frosty, and the Ways, by that Means, clean and good". He was a horseman, like everyone else in the seventeenth century, but also passionately fond of riding, "I took so much delight in riding," he says "that I seldom went on foot"; and he must have been a pretty good rider to judge by his management of his horse on that journey to Tunbridge Wells with Guli.

I was then riding a breast with *Guli*, and discoursing with her; when . . . I saw an Horseman coming up on the further side of her Horse, having his left Arm stretched out, just ready to take her about the Waste, and pluck her off backwards from her own Horse, to lay her before him upon his. I had but just time to thrust forth my Stick, between him and her, and bid him Stand off; and at the same time reigning my Horse to let hers go before me, thrust in between her and him, and being better mounted than he, my Horse run him off. But his Horse being (tho' weaker than mine, yet) nimble, he slipt by me, and got up to her one the near Side, endeavouring to offer Abuse to her: To prevent which, I thrust in upon him again . . . He had in his Hand a short thick Truncheon, which he held up at me; on which laying hold with a strong Gripe, I suddenly wrenched it out of his Hand, and threw it as far a Distance behind me as I could . . . So soon as our Brute had recovered his Truncheon, he came up . . . and had thrust in again, had not I, by a nimble Turn, chopt in upon him and kept him at a Bay.¹

He was certainly a critic of horse-flesh; here are some lines which he wrote on a lazy old screw lent him by his friend John Peacock.

Bravely mounted on old Roger
More like a Creeple, than a Soger,
I to the Gravel-Pits did shamble
Between a hobling Trot & Amble.

¹ H., p. 136.

My Spurless heels the good old Jade
 To mend his pace could not persuade.
 It matter'd not how oft I kickt
 While he felt nothing there yt prickt.
 But had I had a Spur or Whip,
 I wou'd have made old Roger skip.

He was sufficiently interested in the doings of farmers and country craftsmen to sprinkle his writings with allusions to their work. "You *plane* your *piece*", he complains to William Rogers,

as smooth as you can: but yet the *knots* appear.
 You *varnish* your matter as fair as you can; but yet
 in one part or other, the *Colour cracks*, and discovers
 the *ground* not to be good.

and tells how Boaz

came into the Field to look after his Workmen.
 And . . . saluted them, not with some *airy* Jest,
frothy Flout, or *sharp* Taunt, as too many now-a-days
 are apt to do.

He also adds a note of explanation to the word "lentils"—they were evidently an unfamiliar crop in his part of the world. If his verses entitled *A Prospect* and describing an evening walk, are conventional in tone, so was most of the other nature poetry of his time; and at least he had an ear to notice that it is the pebbles in the brook which make its music, and an eye to remark that bees fly home when a shower of rain approaches. He visited Thame Market, and later Beaconsfield Fair, and noted with contempt the quack doctor with his Merry-Andrew and the strolling players; and he was friendly with at least one inn-keeper, and knew that the best inns have not always the fairest signs. He watched the village children at play, blowing bubbles and throwing scraps to the greedy jackdaws; and once he rocked a poor woman's baby to sleep, though, as he says with a humour that reminds us of Dr. Johnson a century later, he did it "In my own Defence; that I might not be annoyed with a noise, to me not more unpleasant, than unusual."¹

¹ MS. poems, Friends House Library. *The Colchester Changeling*. A., p. 107. S., Vol. i, p. 224. MS. poems, *A Prospect*. A., p. 182. H., p. 126.

But most of all, as he rubbed shoulders with the country folk, they infused into him their own homely vigour of speech ; and it is to them that we owe the fact that his autobiography lives to-day. It may have been from Milton that he learnt the cut-and-thrust of such phrases as " industriously shunning a Publick Meeting ", " the coachman had sufficiently the outside of a Man ", " that's a question which may be sooner beg'd than proved "; but it was surely humbler folk who supplied him with such delightful expressions as " thick and threefold ", " he clapt himself down ", " Balaam basted the ass again ", " if his wits had not been gone a wool-gathering ", " a sturdy Lout ", " a Whirret on the Ear ", and " a Handle to take hold of him by ".¹

And so there came to maturity a shepherding soul. We have a great gallery of early Quaker portraits—human beings displayed in all their nobility and weakness ; Fox, the great organizing genius, " stiff as a tree and pure as a bell ", who could forgive anything but a threat to his beloved " Truth "; Edward Burrough, the missionary, martyred at twenty-four, who could refer to a troublesome woman convert as " a goat, rough and hairy ", but " who never turn'd his Back on the Truth nor his Back from any out of the Truth "; James Nayler, quartermaster and saint, who shouldered a burden that nearly broke himself and the Society, and died having " seen to the end of all temptation "; Isaac Penington, the gentle mystic who kept an island of sweetness in a sea of controversy, but never thought to pay his tutor a regular salary ; William Penn the statesman, who could found a colony and yet fail tragically to understand the needs of his own children. Among these there are greater men, but surely none more lovable than Thomas Ellwood, " a Man which served the Lord in Faithfulness, and his People with Chearfulness, and his Neighbours with Uprightness and Integrity ". His wishes for himself are the best-known, and incidentally the best-written verses that he ever penned ; less well known are his wishes for the Society of Friends. They were recorded by his friend Richard Vivers and may fittingly close this study.

He was one of a steady and sound Judgment, as to the things of God ; often desiring, that those who came

¹ H., pp. 11, 54, 63. A., p. 6. K., p. 17. S., Vol. i, pp. 171, 303, 331. MS. poems, *The Colchester Changeling*.

amongst us, especially Children of Believing Parents, might not settle down only in a Form of Godliness, without the Power . . . but that they might be raised up to walk in that wherein the Saints Fellowship doth stand, which is the Light of our Lord Jesus Christ, enlightening every Man that cometh into the World.¹

¹ WP. and Testimony of Richard Vivers.