

## The London Six Weeks Meeting

### Some of its Work and Records over 200 Years<sup>1</sup>

**I**N January of the year 1661 the City of London was in the grip of a series of riots which had broken out from the headquarters of The Fifth Monarchy Men in Coleman Street. These so alarmed the authorities that, during the following decade, they enacted a series of repressive laws against Dissenters, with special legislation against Quakers. The most vindictive was the Second Conventicle Act 1670 which has been described as the quintessence of arbitrary malice. King Charles II showed no enthusiasm for the Act but was powerless to prevent its passing, he knew that it was the "price of money," of which he was in dire need at all times. "An Act to Prevent and suppress Seditious Conventicles" aimed at providing "further and more speedy remedies against the growing dangerous practices of seditious sectaries who used the plea of tender consciences as a screen behind which to plot revolution." Informers were encouraged, and, probably no other single Act caused so much suffering among the Nonconformists. While Parliament was sitting the Act was enforced, but when it stood prorogued pressure was relaxed, and in March 1672 the King issued a Declaration of Indulgence which went far to mitigate the worst effects of the Act.

To counter the activities of the informers and the Authorities and to collect evidence to rebut false charges, Friends began to keep careful records.

The year 1667 had seen the establishment of district meetings, known as Monthly Meetings; these regular gatherings of Friends from a definite area were intended to give each Friend a channel through which to exercise his or her particular gift for the benefit of the whole group, to regulate conduct, and to watch over one another in love. The City of London and its environs had been divided into six Monthly Meetings. Any matters that the local group were not able to solve were referred to George Fox, as leader of the Quaker

<sup>1</sup> The substance of a paper read before the Friends' Historical Society, 5 March, 1964.

movement. He journeyed up and down the country strengthening these groups.

#### ORIGINS

In August 1671 George Fox left for a prolonged visit to America. Before sailing he had chosen 84 "grave and ancient" Friends<sup>1</sup>—that is they were all well established in the Quaker faith—to advise Friends.

By this time London had become the most important centre of Quakerism. It was the seat of government and the residence of the King, to whose attention cases of persecution could be brought. London Friends often acted for and represented all English Quakers in these matters. Up to 1671 it had been possible to consult George Fox and obtain his advice when necessary, now he was going to undertake a long and hazardous journey overseas, so he had felt it incumbent to appoint a group of tested Friends who would act as a court of appeal and advice.<sup>2</sup>

The first meeting of this body took place on 28th October 1671 at 8 o'clock in the morning. The second meeting was held at the Bull and Mouth Meeting House, Aldersgate on the 13th May 1672, when they agreed to meet every six weeks, and this arrangement has continued ever since. When visiting London, leading Friends often attend Six Weeks Meeting. George Fox and William Penn were present at various times. A difficult marriage question was adjourned until "dear G.F." could be present.

For the first twelve years when some of the original members moved to the country or "laid down the body" Six Weeks Meeting filled the vacancies by its own choice, but in 1683 it invited each of the Six Monthly Meetings of London to send representatives and that practice has continued. Financial matters were entrusted to twelve Friends known as the Committee of Twelve, and for a short time they were called "the Committee that has charge of the Poor's money." The period of service was limited, but difficulties arose when some useful member had to retire by rotation and this rule was altered. Ellis Hooks was its first clerk at £20 per annum plus the marriage fees, and successive Recording Clerks continued

<sup>1</sup> 49 men, 35 women, average age 45 years.

<sup>2</sup> There is an extended account of the Six Weeks Meeting in W. Beck & T. F. Ball, *The London Friends' meetings* (1869), pp. 91-112.

to serve Six Weeks Meeting until 1862 when a secretary was engaged to take his place.

George Fox was evidently well satisfied with the way that the Meeting had fulfilled its function during his two years' absence. Some eighteen years later he wrote an account of its setting up and of the kind of Friend who should be appointed to serve; they were, he said, to be men and women that knew the affairs of the Church and had stood sufferings,

such as are impartall that will not respect persons nor relations in Judgment. Approved men and women that will not by any means be drawn away by affections into sects or parties but have a general care of the peace of the Church and the prosperity of Truth: none but sensible men and women in the fear of God & that are of good lives & conversation, *for it is the chief meeting of the city which all Monthly Meetings appeal to.*

Six Weeks Meeting has always been concerned with the maintenance of Friends' witness for Truth. At its first meeting it was decided to return John Pennyman's contribution, which he had made towards Gracechurch Street Meeting, he having become a backslider. If it became known after his death that a Friend had not been faithful in his life, his donations were returned to his relatives.

Having established themselves, and having received a measure of toleration in 1689, Friends had more freedom to show that their faith was a way of life, and to this end more and more advice was issued as to conduct in daily living and conversation. Some of the more obvious misdemeanours were early dealt with, in 1690 the Six Weeks Meeting advised:

Dear Friends,

We hear that there are some that come among us and make profession of the Truth that do not answer it in their conversation but are loose in their words and take a liberty, neglect their Watch, keep not to the daily Cross but run into the Spirit and Friendships of the Evil world in keeping ill houses, ill company, sitting idely and excessivly drinking and Tipling, haunting Alehouses and Taverns, Gameing and neglecting of their own affairs ruining their Families, which is contrary to our holy profession and brings a reproach upon us and it greatly obstructs the prosperity of Truth by their loose and disorderly conversation.

## PROPERTY

The Six Weeks Meeting early took over the care of all matters which affected the whole of London Friends. Its area consisted of the City of London, Southwark, Ratcliff

and Westminster; to which very soon were added the country Meetings of Hammersmith and Staines.

The maintenance of meeting house property and the renewing of leases were soon in its care. All the early meeting houses were leasehold, the term often being for the duration of the lives of certain Friends, and when only one life remained the term was vested in a new group of lives; at the same time a fine was paid for the renewal. The head landlord of the Bull and Mouth meeting house was Christ's Hospital (Blue Coat School), of Devonshire House, Bishopsgate (eventually made a freehold) the Earl of Devonshire, and of Westminster meeting house the Dean and Chapter of Westminster Abbey. The Park, Southwark was owned by the Bishop of Winchester, and Savoy by the King—whether he held it as King of England or as Duke of Lancaster was a point which the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury were not able to say and the caretaker of the Meeting House was served a notice at one time from both the Duchy and the Crown in order that a case could come before the courts and decide the point, but Friends had given up their tenancy before it was settled.

Gracechurch Street was leased from the Fishmongers Guild; Horslydown was on land belonging to the Vestry of St. Olaves, Southwark; Peel was bequeathed to Friends. Deptford was the first freehold meeting house site to be purchased, though the burying ground at Bunhill had been its first freehold property. From time to time tenements adjoining Bunhill Burial Ground were purchased, and when required the houses were pulled down and the ground used for interments. This also happened at Whitechapel and Long Lane, Bermondsey, two burial grounds situated away from meeting houses. There was another burial ground about 100 yards from the first Park meeting house in Southwark, and the second Park meeting house was built adjoining this ground.

Sometimes Six Weeks Meeting would have to remove the tenants of their properties which adjoined burial grounds because they were aiding in the business of body stealing. At Whitechapel the son of the gravemaker was found to have assisted in the removal of a body after burial. All the family were promptly expelled from the caretaker's cottage, new locks were put on the gate and orders were given to fill up graves the same day as the funeral. Six Weeks Meeting advised

the monthly meetings to comply with the law as to burial in woollen. Graves were to be at least six feet deep and interments were not to be promiscuous but to follow each other in rows. No individual markers were permitted; when one was placed in Long Lane it was ordered to be removed. Grave-makers were not to sell the herbage, cattle were not to be allowed, but sheep could be grazed. Washerwomen were not to hang out washing to dry in the burial grounds. Neighbours were not allowed to dump stones or rubbish on the ground. Trees were planted and all was to be kept neat and tidy. Meetings were instructed to provide sufficient of their men Friends to carry the corpse to burial.

In 1691 these instructions were issued:

Dear Friends,

Our love in the Truth salute you and these are tenderly to recommend unto you the need these many times is of more men Friends being at Burials than sometimes there are, to help to perform the last office of love unto our deceased Friends, and in order that that service made be made more easie, we intereat you to stir up such young men in your respective Monthly Meetings that they be serviceable herein to attend the same. Also procure (as much as may be possible) light coffins made of Wainscott or Deal so that Friends may not be oppressed with the weight of them and when corps' are large and coffins heavy that they get padds for the coffins & to take particular care to get those who are able to bare the same. That so we may in no wise oppress one another but with ease and readyness of mind discharge that office of Love one for another, therefore we doe request & hope that None for the future may be backward herein.

12  $\frac{11}{Mo}$  1691 S.W.M. held at the Bull.

The Burial Act of 1853 closed all metropolitan churchyards and burial grounds and the Six Weeks Meeting purchased land adjoining Isleworth meeting house for the use of the whole Quarterly Meeting. In 1864 the Six Weeks Meeting allowed the erection of a marquee on its Whitechapel Burial Ground for the purpose of conducting a mission among "the class of persons who are not in the habit of attending any place of worship." The missioner was a young Methodist minister named William Booth and that Mission was the beginning of the Salvation Army.

For many years the keeping of disused burial grounds in a state of tidiness was a problem, eventually solved by allowing the local municipal authorities to use them as Children's playing places.

When Long Lane, Bermondsey, was opened as a Children's playground (1894) the following appeared in a journal called *Fun*:

The decorous Quakers, demure and staid,  
 Are said to have taken their pleasures sadly.  
 But ever the Quakers with joy surveyed  
 The Faces of little ones, smiling gladly.  
 And none the less pleasant, or sweet, or sound,  
 The repose will be of the bygone Quaker  
 Who rests in the Bermondsey burial ground  
 When over his head in the hushed Gods Acre  
 He knew of, he hears the delightful noise  
 Of the mirth of the Bermondsey girls and boys.

If I may be forgiven a personal note. We lived near Long Lane, Bermondsey; one day when I was very young I remember playing with a hoop in the Anglican churchyard. The Keeper stopped me saying: "You must not bowl hoops here, go and play in the Quaker Burial Ground!"

#### CHARITIES

Jailers and officials who had been considerate to Friends were suitably rewarded. In 1680 John Dew and John West received five pounds to give to the warden of the Fleet Prison and to the keeper of the King's Bench for their kindness to Friend prisoners. A gift was made to the City Marshal on account of his protecting from disturbance the public meetings for worship in the City.

Six Weeks Meeting had the care of the casual poor, they were Friends not members of any of the London meetings. Under this heading French, Danes, Germans and Spaniards who claimed to be Friends received help.

Later the charges for care of all poor Friends came to the Six Weeks Meeting. The heavy charge of this service often proved a great source of anxiety as to where the necessary money was to be found. Various schemes were tried. As early as 1676 William Meade was asked to purchase flax and provide work of spinning and weaving for the poor; as spinning was essentially a female occupation, it became the care of the Women members, and they appointed Margery Brown to distribute the flax and collect the cloth. John Bellers was early engaged with William Meade in this service and it may be that the experience he gained in 25 years service on Six Weeks Meeting inspired him to advocate the setting up of a

permanent establishment where work could be provided to employ the poor both young and old. This was done in 1702 at Clerkenwell. After the setting up of the Clerkenwell Workhouse the Six Weeks Meeting did not directly concern itself with providing work for poor Friends but it kept a watchful eye on the Clerkenwell experiment and later helped financially.

### THE YOUNG

Education has always been a concern of Friends. As early as 1674 the Six Weeks Meeting engaged Richard Richardson as school master (later he became the second Recording Clerk) and they laid down Rules for teaching Latin, Writing, Arithmetic and languages, also the nature of flowers, roots and trees. This school was held at Devonshire House, another was at Shacklewell. Each monthly meeting was regularly asked as to the schools in its area. These were private ventures encouraged by Friends and sometimes the schoolmaster was employed to copy out the minutes of monthly meetings in a fair hand.

The treatment of apprentices and servants received attention. One Friend was reprimanded "for correcting his apprentice immeasurably," and the judgment of his monthly meeting, against which he had appealed, was "to stand over his head until he submits and repents."

Monthly meetings were advised to see that maidservants did not leave their service and go and live "at their own hand" without previously obtaining the consent of the monthly meeting. Having advised the monthly meetings about the young women, they added as an end piece "the like as to Young Men."

### MARRIAGES

Six Weeks Meeting settled the form of words to be used at marriages and the procedure to be followed for the ceremony. They laid it down that the women's meeting was to be the liberating Meeting, and that all proposals of marriage were to come before the Two Weeks Meeting and receive its approval. The wedding services were to be arranged so as not to clash with the time of Meeting for Sufferings. Monthly meetings were to appoint Friends, not only to see that the

marriage ceremony was performed correctly but that the subsequent festivities were also decorous and seemly. Elaborate wedding breakfasts were to be discouraged and excessive wine drinking at these times was to be prevented.

In the case of a second marriage, Six Weeks Meeting saw to it that any children of the first marriage were provided for properly. Difficult cases were reported to Six Weeks Meeting for its advice, such as when a woman asked to be allowed to assume that her husband had been drowned at sea, when his ship was lost three years previously, but they advised further waiting before proceeding with a second marriage.

A couple who, without prior notice or liberation, repeated the marriage promises at the close of a Meeting for Worship, were reprimanded and told it was "no marriage."

In 1683 Dutch Quakers consulted Six Weeks Meeting with regard to their marriage procedure. In Holland they were required to give notice to the local Magistrate before the ceremony and also to notify the same authority after the wedding. As these regulations were civil and not concerned in any way with the Priest the Dutch Friends were advised to comply, it not being inconsistent with Truth. All wills which brought legacies to the Society were read at the Six Weeks Meeting and copied into a special book. Executors who were dilatory in proving wills were dealt with; one such was the Deputy Governor of the Tower of London, who tried to evade payment of a gift which his mother had bequeathed to Quakers.

London being a port, Friends who lived near the river were often engaged in shipping, some were mariners. One of the hazards of seafaring in the seventeenth century was the risk of being captured by pirates and forced to work on the Algerian galleys. Sometimes the Quaker captives appealed to the Six Weeks Meeting to redeem them; as much as £70 to £100 was needed and special collections, known as "the Captives' money," were authorized to meet these heavy demands.

• Friends were advised to give employment to Friends rather than to non-Friends. In 1680 Six Weeks Meeting wrote:

There is a complaint that Friends do employ some of the world's people in printing and binding of Friends' books. Upon consideration it is this Meeting's desire and advice that henceforth such as print Friends' books do for the future employ only Friends



in printing & binding, provided that Friends do it as well and as reasonable as the world's people will do it.<sup>1</sup>

Minute books, ink and stationery were supplied by Samuel West, a Southwark Friend living on London Bridge.

From time to time Six Weeks Meeting received legacies for distribution to poor Friends. In 1695 "as the Chief Meeting of the City" they were made trustees for Thomas Pollard's bequest of £400, with instructions that it was to be invested and only the interest distributed annually. Among the Friends appointed to find an investment for this capital was Daniel Quare, the clockmaker, and John Freame, the goldsmith banker.<sup>2</sup> A few years later Elizabeth Dickson bequeathed £500 for a similar purpose and these two legacies were invested in property in Crutched Friars. The Committee in charge being known as "The Committee of 4/9 & 5/9," being the proportions of the original bequests. These trusts are still administered by the Six Weeks Meeting.

In 1677 the women Friends of Gracechurch Street Meeting sent this letter to the Six Weeks Meeting:

Friends and Brethren,

Several of us having suffered oft in our Spirits through something that appears to us unseemly, and a disorder in our meeting place in Gracechurch Street, we thought it meet to lay the matter before you that if you see it convenient in the wisdom of Truth to endeavour the rectifying of it. The Womans' Gallery which was intended for our Convenience we could not enjoy, it being taken up with most unseasoned persons and forward lasses. Under that same gallery were many of us sitt, many forward young lads and apprentices thrust themselves although it be much to our oppression, without respect to women with child and the like, they set themselves as if it were their only proper place among some young maids, which commonly sits on that side, which is unseemly in our view, and if it might be so ordered that from Gerard Roberts' yard doore, that side might be ordered for women only, we think it would appear more comely and orderly in our assembly. This we offer for our conveniency and savoury order with subjection to your understanding in this affaire that are your Sisters in the fellowship and service of all wholesome manners & order that becomes Truth in the Service of it.

<sup>1</sup> Tace Raylton continued to print for Friends after the death of her father Andrew Sowle; her premises adjoined Gracechurch Street meeting house. As she sometimes printed more copies than were ordered, the Six Weeks Meeting had to direct her to print no more than ordered till Friends gave a further instruction.

<sup>2</sup> His bank subsequently became Barclays Bank.

To this the Six Weeks Meeting replied:

At this Meeting it was represented that some inconveniency attends in the women and men sitting together as usually hath been in public Meetings in this city, whereby the women are sometimes much prest & straitened for room: it was therefore agreed upon by this Meeting that a paper should be drawn up & sent to each Monthly Meeting to advise and exhort Friends in general that the men Friends may have publick notice to give way to the women & lett them have the libertie of one side of the meeting place to themselves to sitt apart from the men. The side that is thought most convenient for the woman to sitt in Gracious Street Meetinghouse is the side next the women's gallery & for the other meetings where the men see the women sitt they may take the other side, & this is advised only for decency and conveniency's sake & it is desired that Friends will take care to see it performed.

John Elson, a carpenter Friend, was instructed to provide a crossform with a back toward the meeting to prevent the young men from crowding out the women.

Friends were also advised to look after disorderly children, those who got into trouble with officers of the parish; young men were advised not to marry before 21; and Friends were not to allow servants and children to walk in the fields during time of Meeting.

There were several districts in London to which persons who wished to escape their creditors could remove themselves. Whitefriars near the river Fleet, and The Mint in Southwark were among these. In 1693 it was proposed "that all persons going to live in The Mint and other Priviledged places to shift themselves from payment of their just debts be declared to act contrary to Truth and not to be of our Society." The Six Weeks Meeting advertised publicly for a runaway debtor:

Matthew Scoryer a young man that sold Cider near the ditch at Fleet Bridge of a middle stature, Fair hair cut short, having lately wore a Perewig, about 25 years of age, being a prisoner for debt for about 60 pounds in the Fleet & having libertie with a keeper to go abroad he ran away from his keeper. It is desired that Friends may have notice in Citty and Countrie to the end he may be discovered & apprehended if possible, he going under the name of Friend, he escaped 24-4Mo-1678.

Friends were advised not to wear elaborate clothes or to permit their children to do so. In 1691

Those that have immitated the world wheather it be men in their extravagant Periwigs, Modes and fashions in their apparell, or whether it be women in their High Towering dresses, Gold

chains or gaudy attire whether it be Parents like old Ely not sufficiently restraining their children therefrom or whether it be in volumptuous feasting without fear or in costly furniture and too rich adorning of houses.

All that profess the Truth as it is in Christ Jesus are advised to be careful not to use those reflecting disgustfull Termes of distinction of Wigg and Tory or any other Nicknames or words tending to provoke one neighbour against another.

Appeals from monthly meetings against Friends living in one area and being members of another were heard by the Six Weeks Meeting. A gift from Jamaica was claimed by both the Bull and Mouth Meeting and the Meeting of the Women Friends of London. The bequest being loosely worded and the Women having helped the donor in the past, they sent a deputation to Six Weeks Meeting with their minute book showing how they had helped the testator. A conference was arranged but the Bull and Mouth representatives, though appointed by that meeting, failed to appear, such discourtesy to a superior meeting received a sharp rebuke. Eventually, the gift was equally, and very equally, divided, each receiving £37 4s. 1½d.

#### DISOWNMENTS

All disownments by monthly meetings were forwarded to Six Weeks Meeting and read there. Copies were then sent to the other five monthly meetings. Sometimes notice of reinstatements were received, and details of any appeals against disownment addressed to Quarterly Meeting were also read at Six Weeks Meeting. A typical example of disownment is that received from Westminster on 23.iii.1756 and which was read at a later meeting. It reads:

Whereas Hannah Lightfoot a person educated under our profession and who for several years past resided within the compass of this Meeting, did then enter into a state of marriage by the Priest with one not of our Society, which is directly repugnant to the good rule and orders well known to be established amongst us. On which this meeting appointed Friends to visit her, who several times endeavoured to find where she was, in order to speak with her, but to no purpose, nor could they obtain any intelligence where she is. We therefore being desirous (as much as in us lies) to clear the Truth which we profess, and ourselves, from any aspersions which through the misconduct of the said Hannah may be cast upon Friends, do hereby testify against her proceeding as aforesaid, and Disown her for the same, as one with whom we can have no fellowship until from a penitent mind,

and true contrition of heart she shall be induced to signify her unfeigned sorrow for her offence, and that this may be her case is what we truly desire.

From our Monthly Meeting for Westminster held at the Savoy.<sup>1</sup>

Legend has it that "the one not of our Society" with whom Hannah had entered into a state of marriage by the priest was the Prince of Wales who later became George III.

#### TRAVELLING FRIENDS

The provision of facilities for Friends travelling in the Ministry was always one of the heaviest items of expenditure. For nearly 200 years it consisted in providing horses to convey these Friends on their journey; Truth's Horse it was sometimes called. Occasionally provision was made for a companion to accompany the visitor part way on his departure.

For 25 years the stable used for Friends' horses was at the Castle and Falcon, Aldersgate, the ostler being a Friend. After his decease, varying opinions were expressed from time to time as to whether it would be cheaper to hire a horse when needed, or to purchase one and stable it at an hostelry. Two years after the establishing of the Clerkenwell school and workhouse, the committee of that house asked that public Friends' horses might be stabled there on the same terms as other places charged. Four years later, the Six Weeks Meeting investigated the cost of horse "meat" and received the following report (1708):

One of the greatest charges is that on account of Friends' horses—and it is our thought that 8d. per night at grass and 14d. for Hay and Corn a night is 2d. too much for each, by reason of which the said Bill is about 1/5d. more charge than otherwise it would be. Considering there is no trouble for their lodging that brings horses at ye workhouse as it is at Publick Inns they stand cheaper. Besides there are nameless persons in the Horse Bills and several under this head—A.B. and his nameless companion.

Our opinion is that for ye future bills for Friends' Horses may be examined and signed either by the Six Weeks Meeting or the Meeting of 12, rather than by some of the (Workhouse) Committee.

We also find by examining over the accounts for Friends horses for four years before this account, amounted to one year with another to £86 or £87 a year, and that by this last account for 16 or 17 months is charged £166 17s. 6d. besides several horse bills for grass at Richd. Kirtons and others have not yet come in.

<sup>1</sup> For documents in this case see Beck & Ball, *The London Friends' meetings*, 1869, p. 255-256, and *Jnl. F.H.S.*, v (1908), pp. 93-4.

Paid for keeping Horses at Workhouse 2½ years £176 17s. 11d.

The following are to enquire of Friends of Workhouse about their charging 2 pence per night too much, and also to enquire after ye names of those Friends that are paid for and not named, whether they are publick and approved Friends . . .

Friends of the Workhouse Committee lost no time in answering the charges and replied

as for the two pence a night extraordinary for hay, it was in respect to the dearness thereof and if we had not charged the said two pence the House would have been losers. We always take care to buy the best Hay and Corn of which they had plenty, and we have reason to believe that many country Friends are sensible of it by the improvement of their horses while here, and we are informed that almost all Inns advanced from said 8d. to 10d. when we advanced. As for the grass, considering the charge of Hay when they come in and out of the stable, and our trouble in sending them out, although we pay but sixpence per night for grass, all being computed there is but little gained, and we hope that Friends will not be dissatisfied with the account and we shall take care for time to come to charge none without the names of the owners.

The stir up about the charges at the Workhouse also called forth a request from Southwark to be allowed to keep a horse at the Ship Inn, Southwark. The journey across London Bridge and through the City to Clerkenwell and back was long and unnecessary, so Southwark Friends sent a minute "desiring that they may have the Brown Horse which now stands at the Workhouse removed to Southwark it being more convenient for them on that side of the water." The Six Weeks Meeting agreed to a "tryall for 3 months," but added "not that the use of the said horse is limited only for the use of Friends in Southwark."

Two months later Southwark Friends report "The Brown Horse not proving fitt for business, by the advice of Friends was sold for 50/-," and Six Weeks Meeting gave consent for Southwark to buy another horse for the service intended and that they are willing to add £3 to £3 10s. 0d. to the said 50s. plus 20s. for a saddle and bridle. Not only did the brown horse prove inadequate but a mare kept at the Workhouse proving insufficient was sold and was replaced by the gift of another mare from a Friend of New England, who after a visit of several months was returning home to America. But the cost of keeping a horse continued to rise. Nine years later the Workhouse charge had increased to 16d. per day and night, and the Six Weeks Meeting decided that they would

only pay 8d. per night for hay and three quarters of a peck of corn for each horse, if it only stayed a few nights, but if it stayed a week or more then Six Weeks Meeting would allow but half a peck of oats a day after the first week. The whole question was raised, whether it was not more economical to give up keeping a horse and only hiring one when required. Southwark reported that they had found this method the more satisfactory and the Six Weeks Meeting also adopted it. If the journey was only a short way visiting ministers were advised to walk.

In view of the complaint against the Workhouse committee for allowing nameless accounts to appear in their bills for horses it is interesting to note that public Friends protested at having their names appear in the Horse hire account when the audit was made up, so the two Friends in charge of this were told not to disclose the names of public Friends who shall have horses hired for them.

The coming of the railway age proved a mixed blessing. It solved the problem of travelling for Public Friends but the many railway companies which sprang up began casting covetous eyes on Friends' properties. In 1842 the Blackwall Railway acquired for the sum of £2,600 the Pollard and Dickson property in Crutched Friars to erect Fenchurch Street station. In 1846 the Southwark meeting house was threatened by a proposed railway but this did not materialize and it was the construction of Southwark Street which eventually compelled Friends to sell that meeting house. In 1864 Friends learnt that there was a proposal by the East London Railway to construct a line which would pass right through Devonshire House, and at the same time the Metropolitan Railway sought powers to bring an Underground line immediately below Devonshire House. The Chairman of the House of Commons Committee before whom the bills came was Lord Stanley<sup>1</sup> and he paid a visit to Devonshire House. The East London Railway's scheme was dropped and the Metropolitan line was sited so that it did not pass immediately under the meeting house.

In 1869 the Islington Railway tried to obtain powers to build a railway which would have passed through Bunhill Fields burial ground but this too failed. Isleworth was also threatened at one time.

<sup>1</sup> Edward Henry Stanley, later 15th Earl of Derby.

### WORKHOUSE AND SCHOOL

The provision of employment for poor Friends was early a concern of Six Weeks Meeting. In 1676 they were buying flax for spinning and weaving, and Friends were urged to encourage this effort by purchasing the cloth and other articles produced. Schools were established, and the possibility of a home for "discomposed and distempered persons" was seriously considered.

In 1702 the Quarterly Meeting supported a scheme for establishing an institution for the accommodation of aged, as well as young necessitous Friends. It became known as the Workhouse, work being provided for all, to employ them in earning their livelihood. Schooling was soon added for the children, but the elderly folk seem to have regarded the children as their personal attendants and this had to be corrected. John Bellers who was the prime mover in the venture had been an active member of the Six Weeks Meeting especially in their scheme for providing flax for spinning. The Committee of the Workhouse sought the help and advice of the Six Weeks Meeting on difficult questions, and in time the Workhouse came to submit its annual accounts to Six Weeks Meeting who often gave it financial assistance. For the erection of the second premises when the Institution was moved to Islington in 1786 the Six Weeks Meeting promoted an annuity scheme, whereby Friends advanced sums from £50 to £200 receiving in return an annuity. Children who ran away were not readmitted more than once, while a woman who sold her bedding and "disguised herself in liquor" was referred to her monthly meeting overseers for disciplinary action. A casual, for whom they felt sorry, though it was very doubtful whether he had any claim on Friends, gave much trouble.

Difficulties with Stewards were a cause of trouble. In 1742 George Reynolds and his wife were dismissed from the position of Steward and Stewardess, but before departing asked for a copy in writing of the reasons of their dismissal and received the following:

Not only for their repeated disregard to the Committee's orders, but also for the haughty and imperious temper of the Stewardess, which neither private entreaty nor long forbearance were able to soften, much less subdue.

Very different were the Steward and his wife who, "in order

to save the Committee expense, dressed and prepared the food for the children in their own private room and used their own fire."

During the Napoleonic Wars, when expenditure had been particularly heavy, detailed lists of costs were submitted and the number of inmates with the amount and cost of each article was analysed—soap, candles, flour, bread and beer. The increase in the consumption of milk from 34 to 60 quarts was accounted for "owing to Rice puddings being substituted for flour puddings and the children having milk porridge more frequently than formerly." The amount of soap used increased from 18 to 20 lb. weight "owing to girls clothes being washed more frequently." Grocery costs increased from 9s. to 22s. because

this article has been more used in consequence of sugar being used with the puddings and in beer instead of malt by which there has been a saving of flour to much greater amount.

Malt and hops went up from 7/2d. per bushel to 11/8d. To sum up, the Committee pointed out that the Six Weeks Meeting had not noticed articles on which there had been considerable saving and added:

It cannot be conceived but that children if they do not have Bread, Meat and Beer in the usual quantity, must have other articles in their place, which appears to account for all the increased Expense and consumption when a due allowance is also made for this—that a smaller family cannot be maintained at the same rate per head as a larger.

In 1698, Six Weeks Meeting, in conjunction with Two Weeks Meeting, prepared a detailed list of harmful practices which tended to bring discredit on our profession and recommend avoidance of the following practices: "Great diners at Marriages. Costly Treats and giving of gloves after the Birth of Children. Too pompous displays and wearing of black at funerals . . ." A minute of 22nd September 1698 reads:

Sleeping in Meeting is a great fault, a dishonour to our holy profession, a grief and an exercise to all the faithful amongst us which such that are concerned are desired to watch against and to be very sparing both in eating and drinking before they goe to Meeting for the contrary ('tis believed) is one great occasion thereof.

In 1861 an opportunity occurred to obtain an extension



in Bishopsgate to Devonshire House premises. It was suggested that this should be acquired

that by a judicious adaptation of the property it may be rendered eminently useful not only to Friends of this Quarterly Meeting but to the Society of Friends at large by the formation of rooms adapted for an Institute to supersede the Reading Rooms at Gracechurch Street and afford ample accommodation for Lectures, Class Rooms, Reading Rooms & Refreshment Rooms as well as Dormitories adapted for Young Men engaged in commercial and other pursuits in London, also rooms for a Book Depository for the Society, an extensive covered yard for the use in wet weather of Friends attending Yearly Meeting and other meetings. A part may be used for a commodious Boarding House intended principally for the use of Friends, which could be let to a tenant for a considerable rent, and the portion facing Bishopsgate Street could be let as a shop for which a good rent might be obtained.

Not all this was practical, too many objects were mixed together, however, the sale of the lease of Gracechurch Street meeting house back to the Fishmongers Guild for £6,000 enabled part to be carried out. Bookshop, Institute, covered and open courtyard have been reproduced at Friends House. The Boarding House was let to an outside firm but the accommodation for Young Men proved impractical.

By the middle of the eighteenth century the Quaker discipline had become established, and modifications in the activities of the Six Weeks Meeting were taking place. Monthly meetings were more independent. The Quarterly Meeting had taken over many of the disciplinary duties. Meeting for Sufferings was changing from being a body of London Friends who dealt only with Sufferings, to being the Executive of the Society of Friends and consisted of Elders and representatives from a much wider area. The main work of the Six Weeks Meeting today is as managing trustees for the meeting houses and other properties of the six monthly meetings which make up London and Middlesex Quarterly Meeting, and to act as the finance committee of the Quarterly Meeting.

For long periods the Six Weeks Meeting was handicapped by not having a regular source of income. Monthly meetings expected Six Weeks to pay, but they were slack in contributing the necessary funds. It was not until 1745 that a system of Quota contributions from each monthly meeting was instituted. Some forty years later a great effort was made to form a Capital Fund in order to obtain an income which

would make it possible to dispense with annual contributions, but expenditure has always been ahead of income.

The expenditure and income of the six monthly meetings and of the Quarterly Meeting are pooled; thus the more affluent meetings help the less affluent. The Six Weeks Meeting's income from investments is wholly set off against the expenditure of the pooled funds. The amount by which expenditure exceeds income has to be found by contributions from the members of the Quarterly Meeting through their respective monthly meetings to the "Six Weeks Meeting Quota."

GEORGE W. EDWARDS