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*J. N. Burns Esq*

THE  
EARLY FRIENDS

(OR QUAKERS)

IN MARYLAND,

READ AT THE MEETING

OF THE

Maryland Historical Society,

6th March, 1862,

BY J. SAURIN NORRIS.

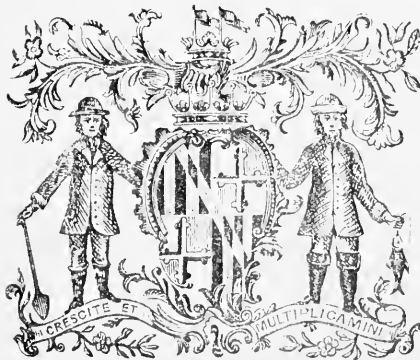


PRINTED FOR THE MARYLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY,

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## THE EARLY FRIENDS, (OR QUAKERS) IN MARYLAND.



THE rise and progress of the Society of Friends, or Quakers, in the province of Maryland, constitutes an episode rather than a prominent integral part of its history: a thread in the woof distinct and separate from the whole fabric. By the inculcation of their peculiar tenets, differing so widely from those around them, they immediately isolated themselves in a great degree from the world. Even their speech and apparel, so peculiar to themselves, seemed as a barrier between them and the rest of mankind. Abstaining, almost totally, from participation in political matters, they were content to be governed, not to govern: to yield obedience to the recognised laws, where their doctrines did not come in opposition to them; yet when so clashing, presenting a front of quiet, but downright and sturdy resistance; not by force of arms, but by the exhibition of an endurance that constitutes one of the most remarkable characteristics of the sect, and which, however open to animadversion, yet commands respect from its consistency with their principles, and the unyielding persistence with which it has been maintained.

Suddenly springing into existence in England, under the lead of their founder George Fox, enunciating their

“*testimonies*” with boldness and distinctness, which testimonies or doctrines, in many respects attacked the very foundations of men’s prejudices and principles, striking at the root of the established church polity and government, and in not a few points coming into direct collision with the laws of the kingdom, it is not wonderful that the opposition to them there, should have been bitter and powerful, and when their earliest travellers or emigrants came into the British Colonies of America, they brought the same tenets into lands where the fundamental laws, habits and feelings, were at least measurably in consonance with those of the mother country.

The rise of the Society in England dates between the years 1644 and 1648, during which period their earliest meetings for worship were held, and immediately thereafter the accession to their numbers was rapid and remarkable. In 1653 their first meetings for “*discipline,*” or ordering the affairs of the Church, were held in the north of England, and from this date may fairly be reckoned their establishment as a distinct religious body.\*

“In 1655 many ministers went beyond sea, and in 1656 some proselytes were made in the American provinces and other places,” † writes George Fox; and in July 1656 Mary Fisher and Ann Austin, arrived at Boston, being the first Quakers known to have visited America. Sewell gives a graphic account of their reception and ill usage, and states that after being five weeks prisoners, they were sent back. ‡ This Mary Fisher subsequently accomplished an extraordinary journey to Turkey, and actually visited the Sultan in his camp near Adrianople: where she was kindly treated by him, and offered a guard to escort her to Constantinople, which she declined, and went thither in safety and unattended.

\* Janney’s Fox, 482. † Fox’s Journal, 1, 222. ‡ Sewell’s Hist. 1, 203.

The Colony of Virginia was visited about the same time as Massachusetts, and in this case a woman was also the first missionary of the then new sect. One Elizabeth Harris certainly returned from Virginia in the fifth month (July) 1657, O. S.; and it is believed she went to that province in 1656. A letter to her from Robert Clarkson, quoted by Bowden, is dated thus, "*From Severn the 14th of the eleventh month 1657,*" and underneath is written "*This is in Virginia.*"\* It appears to have been generally conceded that the "*Severn*" named was at a small river of that name, an affluent, or arm of Mobjack Bay, lying on the Virginia shore, between the Rappahannock and York Rivers; and Janney states that a meeting was settled there. Whatever may have been the locality of this Severn, it is certain there are places named in the letter, which give some ground for the supposition that it might be the Maryland Severn. The writer states that "we have disposed of the most part of the books which were sent,"—"at Herring Creek, Roade River, South River, all about Severn, the Brand Neck and thereabout, the Seven Mountains and Kent." Most of these places are familiar as Maryland localities. He also mentions a certain Henry Woolchurch, whose name appears in 1677, among the manuscript records of Friends in Maryland. The question as to where this Severn was, is interesting only in its bearing on the fact of the earliest date at which any Quaker was in Maryland.

Towards the close of 1657, Josiah Cole and Thomas Thurston reached Virginia; from whence they started on foot to Maryland, where being joined by Thomas Chapman, they remained until the 2d of the sixth month, 1658, O. S. (which corresponds to the present eighth month, or August,) when they proceeded on their pedes-

\* Bowden's Hist. 1, 340.

trian travels to Rhode Island and New England.\* This remarkable journey was made through vast wildernesses on foot,—and among strange tribes of savages, and is an exemplification of the stout hearts of the men who encountered its perils for the sake of disseminating their religious tenets. These three men, Cole, Thurston and Chapman, were undoubtedly among the earliest Quakers who visited Maryland. Thurston had previously been in Boston and was banished therefrom, and as in the mean time laws had been made to prevent all vessels from bringing Quakers into Massachusetts, he adopted this plan of again entering that Colony by a “back door,” as it is quaintly termed in some proceedings of the General Court of Boston relating to his second visit. †

In the early part of 1659, three other Friends visited Maryland—these were William Robinson, Christopher Holder and Robert Hodgson, and through their labors some proselytes were made, or in the words of the Quaker historians, “considerable convincement took place.” ‡

On the 23d July of this year, the Governor and Council of Maryland issued orders directing Justices of the Peace to seize any Quakers that might come into their districts, and to whip them from Constable to Constable until they should reach the bounds of the province. §

Thomas Thurston, who has been formerly mentioned, having returned from New England, it is related of him, in a manuscript letter of W. Robinson, dated 1659, and quoted by Bowden, that “he was arrested and sentenced to an imprisonment of a year and day:” and Besse asserts that four individuals were fined, £3 15s. for evincing their hospitality to him, while another was cruelly whipped “for not assisting the sheriff to apprehend him.”

\* Bowden 1, 122, and Janney's Hist. 1, 432. † Bowden, 1, 367.

‡ Sewell's Hist. 1, 334 to 336.

§ Council Rec. Lib. H. H. p. 29.

From the accounts of the charges against Thurston, as contained in the Records of the Council of Maryland, and from his subsequent history, the inference is warranted that his conduct might have been of such aggressive character as to invite the interference of the civil authorities,—and it is not improbable that he was both the cause and the victim of the harsh order of the Governor and Council before referred to.\* Seven years after

\* The following extracts from the Records of the Governor and Council of Maryland, among the MSS. collections of the Maryland Historical Society, (Liber H. H. from 1656 to 1668) give an interesting view of the suspicion with which the Quakers were received, and of the proceedings relative to Thomas Thurston and Josiah Cole. These proceedings contain no reference to Thomas Chapman, who was the companion of Thurston and Cole; and hence it is inferred that he was more circumspect in his deportment towards the authorities.

July 8, 1658.—“Upon information that Thomas Thurston and Josiah Cole had refused to subscribe the engagement by the Articles of 24 March last,” a warrant was issued to the Sheriffs to bring them before the Council. The “engagement” referred to is contained in the articles surrendering the government of the Province to Cecilius, Lord Baltimore, on 24 March, 1657; O. S. and was a promise to submit to his authority, instead of the oath of fidelity, and applied to the people then resident in the Province.

July 16, 1658.—“Upon information that Thomas Thurston was prisoner, and Josiah Cole at Anne Arundel seducing the people, and dissuading the people from taking the engagement of 24th March last,—Ordered to the Sheriff of Anne Arundel to take the body of Josiah Cole, and him in safe custody keep without bail or mainprize.”

July 22d, 1658.—Among other proceedings the oath of Commissioners and Justices of the Peace was tendered and taken upon the Holy Evangelists by all but Wm. Burges and Thomas Meares, “who pretended it was in no case lawful to swear, whose plea was by the Board disallowed,”—and the said Burges and Meares were supplanted by Capt. Thos. Howell and Thos. Taylor.

July 23d, 1658.—The Council “take into consideration the insolent behaviour of some people called Quakers, who at the Court in contempt of an order then made and proclaimed, would presumptuously stand covered, and not only so, but also refused to subscribe the engagement, notwithstanding the Act of Assembly in that case provided, alledging that they were to be governed by God’s law and not by man’s law: and upon full debate finding that this refusal of the engagement was a breach of the Articles of the 24th

this period he gave great trouble to the Quakers themselves by his extravagances, and the celebrated John Burnyeat writes of him that "he was lost as to truth,

March last, and that their principles tended to the destruction of Government;—Ordered, that all persons whatsoever that were residing within this Province, on the 24th March, 1657, should take and subscribe the said engagement by the 20th August next, or else depart the Province by the 25th of March following, upon paine due to rebels and traitors, if found within this Province after the said 25th March, and that a proclamation be forthwith drawn to this effect."

July 25, 1658.—"According to the warrant bearing date 22d instant, Thomas Thurston was brought before the Governor, and the said Thurston being desirous to depart the Province, the Governor ordered the following warrant to be drawn:—Whereas, Thomas Thurston by himself and friends hath desired of me that he may passe on to Annarundel, from whence he hath engaged himself to depart this Province by Monday next, being the second day of August, until whose departing out of the Province, Josias Cole is to remaine as by order of Court provided. These are therefore in the Lord Proprietary's name to will and require you not to molest the said Thomas Thurston during the time limited for his stay, and so soone as he shall signify to you his intention presently to depart, that you sett at liberty the said Josias Cole; Provided, that if they or either of them, shall be found within this Province after the aforesaid second day of August, unless made unable to depart by sickness, they or either of them be apprehended and proceeded against according to lawe in theyr case provided."

For twelve months from this period the Council does not appear to have been troubled with the Quakers,—but Thurston having returned from New England, again attracted attention, and accordingly on the 23d July, 1659, the following proceedings were had:

"Whereas it is *to (too)* well knowne in this province that there have bin (been) several vagabonds and idle persons known by the name of Quakers that have presumed to come into this Province as well dissuading the people from complying with the military discipline in this time of danger, as also from giving testimony, or being Jurors in causes depending between party and party, or bearing any office in the province," the Justices of the Peace are directed to apprehend and cause them to be whipped from constable to constable until they should reach the bounds of the province.

August 3, 1659.—Thomas Thurston was brought before the Governor and Council by Warrant from Col. Nathaniel Utie,—and pleaded that the order of 23d July, related to the "time then to come," and was not applicable to him, he being at that time in the Province. This plea was allowed, but "the Board

and became a vagabond and fugitive as to his spiritual condition, and little otherwise as to the outward.”\*

In 1660 or 1661, Josiah Cole was banished from Maryland, but on what charge is not related.†

About this time Geo. Rofe, another minister visited the American Colonies, including Maryland, and on the 15th of 9th month, 1661, he writes to Geo. Fox, from Barbadoes, that “many settled meetings there are in Maryland and Virginia and New England.”‡ In 1663, he paid a second visit to this Province, and was drowned during a storm in the Chesapeake Bay.||

Thus far the history of the early Quakers in Maryland is confined to the aspect they presented as travelling members of a new and strange religious sect. It is not improbable that many of the settlers became converts,—in fact it is so asserted by their journalists,—while the emigration of their members from England, added to the number here, as it did in other provinces. As citizens of the colony, and of their position in it, we know but little,—owing, in some degree, doubtless, to their voluntary abstinence from participation in political affairs, as well as to the doubtful position they were placed in by their doctrines in regard to oaths, tithes or church rates, bearing arms, &c.

doth judge, that the said Thos. Thurston be forever banished this Province,” on pain of being whipped with thirty-eight lashes, and sent out of the Province,—and any person presuming to receive, harbor or conceal him after the tenth day of the present month, should be fined 500 lbs. of tobacco.

November 28, 1661.—“Then was called John Everitt to answer his contempt in running from his colors when prest to goe to the Susquehanna Fort—pleaded that he could not beare arms for conscience sake:—Ordered that the said Everitt be tryed at the next Provincial Court, and in the interim be committed into the Sheriff’s hands, and that the Sheriff impanel a Jury against that tyme, and in the meane tyme the said Everitt to be kept in chaynes and bake his own bread.”

\* Bowden, 1. 372. † Bowden, 1. 370. ‡ Bowden, 1. 347. § Bowden, 1. 362.

As pioneers in the work of establishing in the wilderness a new religious sect, they gave to that object their earnest and persistent labors; and amid the trials incident to the settlement of a new country,—common to all who encountered its difficulties,—they laid broad and deep the foundations of their Society,—the effects of which remain indelibly impressed on the history of our State, many of whose most respectable and prominent families find their American origin among the plain Friends, who on both shores of the Chesapeake, set up their meetings, and in their lives consistently practiced the doctrines which their ministers so fervently preached.

Kilty, in his “Landholder’s Assistant,” instances an obligation from Francis Armstrong relative to the taking up of some land for the use of Peter Sharpe, which is dated the “*nineteenth day of the third month called May,*” with said Sharpe’s acknowledgment at the foot thereof, and which bears date the “*twentieth of the fifth month 1665.*” In a note he says, “the singularity observed in this contract of naming the months by their numbers, cannot well be accounted for, as no other instances of it have been perceived, and the people who now have that practice were scarcely tolerated in Maryland. Strangers (at least) of that description being treated, when found in the province, with indignities which I do not *chuse* to mention.”\*

It is evident that Kilty was ignorant of the earlier existence of the Quakers in Maryland. The use of numbers for naming the months being a peculiar custom of Friends, might be taken as conclusive proof that Armstrong and Sharpe were of that sect,—but there are other evidences of the fact,—one of peculiar interest is given by Mr. Davis in his “Day Star,” where he quotes the

\* Kilty’s Landholder’s Assistant, 88.



will of Peter Sharpe (who was a physician) dated in 1672, giving “to Friends in the ministry, viz: Alice Gary, William Cole and Sarah Mash, if then in being,—Wenlock Christerson and his wife; John Burnett and Daniel Gould, in money or goods,—forty shillings worth a piece; also for a perpetual standing, a horse, for the use of Friends in the ministry.”\*

The instance given by Kilty refers to the earliest period which I have met with, in which the Quakers appear as land owners.

Wenlock Christerson, mentioned as one of the devisees in Dr. Sharpe’s will, was one of those who figured prominently in Boston during the trials of the Quakers there. While the trial of William Leddra was progressing in that city, in March, 1661, this Christerson, who had himself been previously banished thence on pain of death, suddenly appeared in Court, as the friend and sympathizer of the prisoner,—braving all consequences to himself, that he might possibly aid his friend, and serve the cause he had so fearlessly and earnestly embraced. He was again arrested, tried and sentenced to be hung, but after a few days he was, with twenty-seven others, released.† In 1664 he was whipped with ten lashes, in each of three towns in Massachusetts, and driven into the wilderness.‡ In 1674 he was a petitioner to the Assembly of Maryland, in regard to oaths and affirmations,—|| and his name frequently occurs among those of the Friends in Maryland. The Half Year’s Men’s Meeting, held at John Pitts’ on the Eastern Shore, in the 8th month, 1679, took some order relative to securing Elizabeth Christerson for what legacies were given to

\* Davis’ Day Star, 78.

† Sewell’s Hist. 1. 338.

‡ Bowden’s Hist. 274.

|| Ridgley’s Annapolis. 60.

John Stacy by Wenlock Christerson, “*he now being set free,*” (i. e. *dead.*)\*

In April, 1672, George Fox arrived in Maryland, landing at the Patuxent, and just in time to reach a “General Meeting for all the Friends in the Province of Maryland,” which had been appointed by John Burnyeat to be held at West River. He describes it as “a very large meeting,” “and held four days, to which, besides Friends came many other people, divers of whom were of considerable quality in the world’s account.”†

After the meeting for public worship, they held a meeting for Church discipline,—the first that appears to have been held for that purpose in Maryland.‡

This meeting at West River is celebrated in the history of the Quakers in Maryland, as being the first general meeting of their members, and which has been succeeded by others known as “Half Year’s Meetings,” “Yearly Meetings,” “Quarterly Meetings,” &c.

Immediately after this meeting Fox appears to have continued his labors by preaching his doctrines, and establishing meetings for discipline, at various places in the province. He has left a very complete, interesting and curious record of his travels in Maryland, and other American colonies,—written with great plainness of diction, and bearing evidences of his earnest devotedness to the cause he had espoused.

In October, 1672, he attended the “General Meeting for all Maryland Friends,” at “Treadhaven Creek,”|| at or near where now stands the town of Easton, Talbot County. This meeting held five days,—the first three for public worship; and the other two for discipline, at which the men and women held separate meetings, as is

\* MSS. Records of Md. Friends.

† Fox’s Journal, 123.

‡ Janney’s Life of Fox, 328.

|| Fox’s Journal, 131.

now their custom. Being held just six months after the first General Meeting at West River,—and being thence for many years afterwards, semi-annually, held alternately at these two places, those meetings were sometimes called “Half Year’s Meetings.”

Fox remained in America until after the “General Meeting for the Province of Maryland,” at West River, which commenced on the 17th of 3d month 1673, and lasted four days.

The next day being the 21st, he set sail for England, so that the first and last meetings attended by this celebrated man, in America, were held at the same place, at West River in Maryland. In describing this meeting he says, “divers of considerable account in the government, and many others were present, who were generally satisfied, and many of them *reached*, for it was a wonderful glorious meeting.”\*

A curious description of one of these General or Yearly Meetings is given by Samuel Bownas, an English Quaker, who travelled for the second time in Maryland, in 1727. “The Yearly Meeting now came on, which held four days, viz: three for worship, and one for business. Many people resort to it, and transact a deal of trade one with another, so that it is a kind of market or change where the captains of ships and the planters meet and settle their affairs; and this draws abundance of people of the best rank to it.”†

This promiscuous gathering of people no doubt led to some abuses, and probably to the annoyance of the Friends, for in 1711 they advised an address to the Government “for ye prevention and suppressing the practice of bringing drink near our Meeting House in the time of our Yearly Meetings,” and in 1725, an Act was passed to pre-

\* Fox’s Journal, 142. † Life and Travels of Samuel Bownas, London, 1756.

vent the sale of liquors in booths within one mile of the Quaker Yearly Meeting house in Talbot County, or two miles of the Yearly Meeting house near West River in Anne Arundel County.\*

George Fox having established the meetings for discipline in Maryland, they appear to have been regularly kept subsequently.† The earliest manuscript records of the General or Yearly Meetings, which are now extant, commence in 1677, and are regularly continued from that period. These Records are now in the possession of the Meeting which is held in Lombard Street, between Howard and Eutaw Streets, and are kept in the meeting house there. They are in a remarkably good state of preservation,—are comprised in several volumes of irregular size and binding; and are written mostly in fair and legible characters,—but as the minutes are evidently the production of many different persons, the style is correspondingly diverse; and in many of them but little attention is paid to orthography, while punctuation is utterly ignored.

The first Record is thus dated, ‘*Att our General Man’s Meeting at West River in the year 1677,*’—the month is obliterated;—and the first Minute refers to a debt due to the estate of William Lewis, deceased, by one of the members ‘‘according to a judgment of a former Man’s Meeting,’’—which debt not being satisfied, a Committee, consisting of Wm. Southbee and Thos. Taylor, was deputed to see to the matter, and give an answer at the next Man’s Meeting.

This early instance of the care of the Quakers to keep their membership clear of injustice, may be taken as a

\* Bacon’s Laws, 1725, chap. 6.

† Bowden gives a copy of an Epistle ‘‘from the Men’s General Meeting at West River, in Maryland, the 6 ‘day of the fourth month, 1674;’ to the Men’s Meeting of Friends in Bristol, England.’’

specimen of their subsequent action in such cases, and numerous Minutes are found of similar proceedings by their meetings.

The second Record is dated “*Att our half-yeares Man’s Meeting (some words obliterated) Treadhaven Creek the 3d day of ye 8th Month 1677.*”

The first Minute is thus, “It was agreed upon by the Meeting that John Edmondson, Bryon O’Mealy and Ralph Fishbourn doe goe to Vincent Lowe and shew him Robert Ridgley’s letter and treat with him about the report he spread abroad of *ffriends that were chosen Assembly Men,*”—shewing that thus early in the history of our State, the Quakers held some offices of consequence under the proprietary government.

That the Society had an appreciation of the importance of keeping records of their Meetings, is shown by another minute at this Meeting, ordering “that John Hilling should be paid 400lbs. of tobacco for writing the concerns of *ffriends on this side,*”—probably meaning on this side of the Bay.

At the same Meeting it was “thought fitt and meete that a Stock should be gathered for the service of the truth,” “and the supply of the poore amongst us,” “every *ffriend* being left to his freedom what to give,” and the subscription list is given in full. The amount subscribed was 8650lbs. of tobacco. Among the subscribers was Thomas Taylor, whose name appears among others, in a manuscript of the Monthly Meeting of Bristol, England, quoted by Bowden, and is styled “one of the Council and Speaker of the Assembly.”

The Records for the “*General Man’s Meeting at West River the 18th of 3d Month 1678*” contain a Minute that a Committee of nine persons,—one from each local or “particular” Meeting,—should be appointed to “make

enquiry into the estate, condition and usage of orphans and their estates, and to give an account to every respective half-year's Man's Meeting," "so that they be in no wise abused nor their estates wasted, and that poor orphans may be provided for."

These early Records show their solicitude for the poor and helpless; and so marked has been this characteristic of the Quakers, that it has passed into an adage, that "no Quaker is found begging, or in the Alms House."

Subsequently there was a standing committee appointed, which was termed a "*Meeting for widows and orphans*," and held its sessions at least as often as the General Meetings, to which it reported. Some of these Minutes are curious in the circumstances and cases reported as claiming attention.

As a specimen, a minute of 1679 may be quoted, which is as follows: "The widow Ford hath referred herself to our Man's Meeting for advice and assistance in the matter relating to her outward estate,"—and a special Committee was appointed "to examine how matters are with her."

The custom of these primitive people was very marked in regard to their care of the temporal affairs of their members. Many instances occur where matters of a purely private and personal nature, relating to the estate, condition and character of individuals, are made the subject of their meetings' consideration and action. In the records of their subordinate meetings, particularly, do these occur; which circumstances would render a general or unrestricted exhibition of their manuscripts, manifestly improper,—and hence the specimens of their Minutes which are here selected, are such as can by no possibility injure or wound any, who may, by descent or otherwise, be connected with those persons named therein.

The subject of marriages, involving the delicate and important questions of the legitimacy of children and descent of estates, at a very early period engaged the most serious attention of the Quakers; as according to the law of England, marriages “might be adjudged void when solemnized without license or publication of banns in the church of the parish.”

The opposition of the sect to all alliance or affinity with the established church, induced it in this matter to take a stand that was bold and difficult to be maintained; and in no particular have they manifested a more distinct and determined position.

In 1652, George Fox issued a paper advising Friends about to be married “that they might lay it before the faithful in time, before any thing was concluded, and afterwards publish it in the end of a meeting, or in a market, as they were moved thereto. And when all things were found clear, being free from all others, and their relations satisfied, they might appoint a meeting on purpose for the taking of each other in the presence of at least twelve faithful witnesses.” \*

In 1661, a Quaker marriage was brought to the test of a legal tribunal in England, and the Judge, (Archer, of Nottingham Assize,) instructed the jury favorably to its validity, saying, that “there was a marriage in Paradise when Adam took Eve and Eve took Adam, and that it was the consent of the parties that made a marriage.” The verdict of the jury established the validity of the marriage in question. †

In no particular does the society appear to have exercised greater caution and care, than in that of their marriages: requiring two or three applications to as many meetings, so as to ensure publicity of intentions, and to

\* Janney's Hist. 2. 49.

† Ibid. 2. 51.

guard against all things that might, in their quaint style, "be contrary to the order of truth," or bring discredit on their membership.

In the old manuscript records of the Maryland Friends, numerous instances are found of their proposals of marriage,—one of which, in 1678, may be given as a curious specimen, viz:

"Obadiah Judkins and Obedience Jenner, acquainted this meeting, and also the women's meeting, with their intentions of coming together as husband and wife, according to the order of truth; now inasmuch as the young woman is but lately come forth of England, and Friends noe certaine knowledge of her, the advice of the men and women's meeting is that they forbear, and proceed noe further till certificate be procured out of England from the meeting where she last belonged unto, of her being *cleere* from others, and as to the manner of her life and conversation, that so the truth may be kept *cleere* in all things; both the partys being willing to submit to the same, and also to live apart in the mean time."

Among the earliest "testimonies" of the Quakers, their objection to oaths is prominent; and as a consequence they encountered great difficulties in many particulars. Their efforts were continuous to be relieved from the disabilities they encountered as witnesses, administrators of estates, guardians of orphans, &c.

In 1673, Wm. Penn addressed a letter to Friends in Maryland in which he says, "it fell to my lot to manage your concerns with the Attorney General of the Colony and the Lord Baltimore, about oaths,"—and gave some advice in relation to the matter.\*

In May, 1674, a petition was presented from certain Quakers to the upper house of Assembly of Maryland,

\* Janney's Life of Penn, 106



asking to be relieved from the necessity of taking oaths, and that they be allowed to make their "yea, yea, and nay, nay;" if they break which that they suffer the same punishment as they do who break their oaths or swear falsely.\*

The petition was not acted on at this time.

In 1688, Lord Baltimore was pleased to issue a proclamation to dispense with oaths in testamentary cases; which was gratefully acknowledged in an address from the Friends' Quarterly Meeting at Herring Creek, on the 7th of the 9th month, 1688.†

In 1702, (chap. 1, sec. 21,) an act was passed which fully relieved the Quakers of this difficulty.

Subsequent to this period, the favor of both the Home and Provincial Governments was manifested towards Friends, which they repaid with a grateful loyalty.

Tradition relates that for many years it was customary to reserve seats for the Provincial Governor and his suite on the raised benches or forms, called the "Preacher's Gallery," which they occupied at times during the sessions of the Yearly Meetings.

The General or Yearly Meetings had from their commencement been in the habit of enquiring into the state of the society at large, and requiring reports from the subordinate meetings, touching various matters, both spiritual and temporal. These reports, as may be supposed, were of an irregular character; each meeting reporting on such subjects as happened to attract its attention. A remedy for this was found by instituting a set of questions, which the lower meetings were required to answer, thus ensuring uniformity of subject, if not similarity of reply. These questions have been altered from

\* Ridgley's Annapolis. 62.

† Besse quoted in Janney's Hist. 2, 364.

time to time, but the Friends of the present day may recognize in the following set of queries, the original and rude foundation on which has been reared the more polished structure of modern phrase. This list was adopted by the Yearly Meeting in 1725, and is copied from the Manuscript Records.

“1. Are all careful to keep meetings, both weekly, first days and monthly, coming in due time, and bringing forth their families?

“2. Are all careful to keep out of sleep and drowsiness in time of meeting?

“3. Doe those that have children train them up in the nurture and fear of the Lord, restraining them from vice, wantonness, and keeping company with such as would teach them vain *fations* and corrupt ways of this world to the misspending of their precious time and substance?

“4. Are all careful to keep their word and pay their just debts and contracts in due time?

“5. Whether any differences among friends, are they speedily ended, otherwise refer themselves to two or more honest friends, and if they cannot end the same, then refer them to the Men’s Meeting?

“6. Doe none commence or defend any suit of law except such have the advice of the Men’s Meeting; but those that defend may give their appearance or sue for a Bond on a just debt?

“7. Are all careful to keep up their *antient* and christian testimony against tithes, Priest’s wages, repairing of their houses, called churches, or any other ceremony of that nature?

“8. Have all Friends been advised to make their wills and testaments, and have them well attested?

“9. Is there no tattlers, tale-bearers, busy bodys meddling themselves with other men’s matters which they are

not concerned with, which tends to strife and discord among brethren?

“10. Doe all keep to plainness of speech?”

“11. Doe all keep out of superfluity of *meat*, drink, and apparel, at all times?”

“12. Doe all keep out of y<sup>e</sup> abuse of smoaking and chewing tobacco att all times ; and doe none use it but such as can render a reason the good they receive by it and loss they sustain for want of it, and that such observe convenient time and place for it?”

“13. Doe non practice any clandestine way of trade which is to the dishonour of truth, which the testimony of truth is already given forth against?”

“14. Is care taken and Friends advised that none too nearly (related) proceed in collateral marriages, and that none marry within the third degree of affinity and the fourth degree of consanguinity according to former advice?”

“15. Whether there is any masters of trade that want apprentices or children of Friends to be put forth, that they apply themselves to the Monthly Meetings before they take those that are not Friends, or put forth their children to such?”

“16. Whether have the children of the poor due education so as to fitt them for necessary employment?”

“17. Whether there is any fatherless or widows that want necessarys, yea or nay, and if any want are they supplied?”

“18. Doe Friends every where behave themselves orderly both in their converse and commeree, so as to answer the witness of God with them with whom they are concerned?”

The subject of using tobacco had been acted on in 1705, when an advice was issued against its immoderate use, and Friends were admonished in relation thereto.

Negro slavery existed in Maryland and other British colonies, at the time when the Quakers first settled in them;—and it does not appear that slave-holding was then considered by them, as inconsistent with their principles. Numerous instances may be adduced of the fact that they were slave-holders.

Janney in his History of the Quakers quotes the will of one Alice Kennersly, of Maryland, who bequeathed “her negro woman Betty and her child to Dan. Cox in consideration that he should pay twenty shillings annually for thirty years to the Meeting, for the paying of travelling Friends’ ferriage in Dorchester County, or whatsoever other occasions Friends may see meet,” and the Meeting recognized the bequest by advising Dan. Cox to be present at the next Monthly Meeting to answer such questions as may be asked him concerning the premises.

In 1671, George Fox issued an advice to Friends in Barbadoes “respecting their negroes” “to endeavour to train them up in the fear of God,” “and after certain years of servitude they should make them free.”\*

Whilst in Barbadoes he was assailed with a calumny that he “taught the negroes to rebel,” which he declared was “an abominable untruth,” and “it is a thing we utterly abhor.”

The earliest movement on the part of the Quakers in America, in a Meeting capacity, relating to slaves, was by some German Friends at Kreisheim, near Germantown, Penn., in 1688, when they addressed a paper to their Yearly Meeting “concerning the lawfulness and unlawfulness of *buying* or *keeping* negroes.” No action was then taken on it by the Yearly Meeting. †

In 1700, Wm. Penn having made provision for the liberation of the few slaves he held, brought the subject

\* Fox’s Journal, 2, 134.

† Janney’s Fox, 468.

before a Monthly Meeting in Philadelphia, but the extent of its action was merely to direct that the negroes and Indians should be encouraged to attend Friends Meetings.\*

From this time forward it is said that the subject of slavery continued to attract the notice of the Quakers in various parts of America;—but no Minute upon the question appears in the Manuscript Records of Friends in Maryland until the 6th month, 1759, when upon a revision of their queries, a new one was adopted as follows: “*Are Friends careful of importing or buying of negroes, and doe they use them well they are possessed of by inheritance or otherwise, endeavoring to trane them up in the principles of Christian religion?*”

In the 5th month 1760, the Records of the Yearly Meeting at West River, relates to “some *oneasiness*” with some Friends respecting the words, “*buying of negroes,*” “agreed to last year,” and the Meeting thinks, “Friends at present are not fully ripe in their judgments to carry the minute farther than against being concerned in the *importing of negroes.*”

At the Meeting in the 10th month of the same year, at Treadhaven, the minute relative to this subject is that “this Meeting concludes that Friends should not in any wise encourage the importation of negroes, by buying or selling them, or other slaves.”

In the 5th month 1762, the Meeting at West River declares: “It is their solid judgment that no member of our society shall be concerned in *importing* or *buying* of negroes, nor selling any without the consent and approbation of the Monthly Meeting they belong to.”

The Manuscript Records teem with the subject of slavery;—nearly every year was it brought before the Meet-

\*Janney’s Fox, 468.

ings, and it gradually grew from a concern relating only to the *importation* of negroes, to the retention of them as slaves. Great caution is apparent in their Minutes upon the subject, and as it encountered serious opposition by many of their members, it was not until 1777 that slave-holding was made a disownable offence.\* In 1770 the Yearly Meeting of New England had arrived at the same point, and in 1776 the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting had also come to the same conclusion. In 1777 the North Carolina Yearly Meeting, (which embraced the Friends of South Carolina and Georgia) contemporaneously acted in concert with their brethren in Maryland,† but it was not until 1784 that the Virginia Friends adopted the extreme measure of disownment for holding slaves.‡

It thus appears that nearly a century elapsed between the first introduction of the subject in the Society in 1688, to its final settlement in 1784:—while the Maryland Friends consumed eighteen years in the discussion of the question, before arriving at the position they have since maintained in relation thereto.

We have no means of ascertaining the pecuniary sacrifices made by the Maryland Quakers, to their conscientious convictions on this momentous subject, but tradition relates that one family alone liberated 200 slaves.

From the fact that a large number of Friends lived in the slave-holding counties of Anne Arundel, Prince George's and Montgomery, and others on the Eastern Shore, where the great mass of labor was performed by slaves, it is easy to believe that in the aggregate the sacrifice was very great; and perhaps has no parallel instance where such pecuniary loss was voluntarily incurred for conscience' sake.

\* MSS. Records of Md. Friends.

† Pamphlet Report of N. Carolina Yearly Meeting on the subject of Slavery.

‡ Janney's Fox, 469.

The General Meetings of the Society in Maryland continued to be held at West River and Treadhaven, until the 4th of the 6th month, 1785, when, in accordance with a Minute of adjournment of the previous Yearly Meeting at Thirldhaven, as it was now called, it was for the first time held at Baltimore Town. It had now become strictly an Annual or Yearly Meeting, and was held the next year, 1786, at Thirldhaven; in 1787 again at Baltimore Town;—in 1788 at Thirldhaven; and in the 6th month, 1789, for the third time at Baltimore Town; and from that period has continued to be held in this city; the autumn being chosen for the time, instead of early summer as heretofore. The present Meeting House at the corner of Aisquith and Fayette Streets, was built in 1780, and the particular Meeting moved thereto in January 1781, from an older house which stood on the site of the Quaker burying ground on the Harford turnpike, a short distance beyond the present city limits. The older Meeting was called “Patapseo,” and the lot of ground it occupied was given by Joseph Taylor. This Meeting is first mentioned in the old manuscripts in 1703; but it was then probably held at a private house. Mr. John Giles, the first of the family of that name who have since occupied a prominent position in this state, settled near the present site of Baltimore, about 1700, and at his house the Quakers held their Meetings.\* His son Jacob Giles erected a large brick dwelling about three miles from Havre de Grace, which is still standing, and in its octagon hall the Friends of Harford County held their Meetings for many years. No vestige of the building known as Patapseo Meeting now remains, but the ground is still used as a cemetery by both of the sections into which the Society is now divided. Aged persons recollect the

\* Griffith's Annals of Baltimore.

earliest Yearly Meetings, in this city, when the throngs attending were so great that a large tent was erected for their accommodation, on the then green lots south of the present site of the Second Presbyterian Church at the corner of East Baltimore and Lloyd Streets.

The location of many of the oldest meeting houses is still known, the house at West River has long since disappeared, but the ground is still used as a public cemetery, and is now called the "Quaker Meeting lot." It is on the road leading from Galesville to Owensville, one mile from the river; and the venerable trees that stand within its precincts keep faithful watch over the resting places of many of the first Friends of Maryland, whose rigid simplicity permitted no monumental stone to tell who sleeps beneath their shadows.

The original meeting house at Easton, or Treadhaven as it was formerly called, has been replaced by a more modern structure, which however occupies the same spot, once called Edmondson's Point. From the frequent reference in the Records relative to repairs to the old house, it is probable that it was a very poorly built structure, though doubtless it taxed the finances of the Society at that early period to erect it.\*

\*The Rev. Ethan Allen has kindly furnished the following abstract of the proceedings of the Governor and Council of Maryland on the 24th May, 1698. (See "Council Proceedings," Liber H. D. No. 2.)

"In obedience to an order of his Excellency, the Governor and Council, dated the 10th of August, 1697, commanding the several Sheriffs of this Province to return a list of what Romish Priests and Lay Brothers are resident in their respective Counties, and what Churches, Chapels or places of worship they have,—what manner of buildings they are, and in what places situate,—and return also a like account about the Quakers and other dissenters from the Church of England, and of their places of worship, &c."

The Sheriff of Anne Arundel County returns, "the Quakers have one timber-work meeting house built at West River upon land formerly owned by Mr. Francis Hooker, by them purchased to the quantity of two acres, where they



Thomas Chalkly an eminent minister of the Society, in his curious and interesting journal, under date of 1706, says “Aquila Paca, High Sheriff of the County (mean-

keep their Yearly Meetings,—which is at Whitsuntide:—Also a Quarterly Meeting at the house of Samuel Chew:—Also a Monthly Meeting in Herring Creek meeting house, standing on land purchased of Samuel Chew:—Also a Weekly Meeting at the same house:—Also Monthly and Weekly Meetings at the house of Wm. Richardson, Senior, West River:—Also a Weekly Meeting at the house of Ann Lumbolt, near the head of South River:—Also a Monthly Meeting at the house of John Belt. So far as I have the account from Mr. Richardson, I can understand of no preachers they have in this County but Mr. Wm. Richardson and Samuel Galloway’s wife.”

The Sheriff of Baltimore County returns, “that there is neither teacher or place of worship of Roman Catholics or Quakers.”

The Sheriff of Calvert County returns that “the Quakers have one very old meeting house near Leonard’s Creek, and one place of meeting in the dwelling house of George Royston, at the Cliffs.”

The Sheriff of Prince George County returns that there is “no Quaker meeting house.”

The Sheriff of Charles County returns that there “are two Quakers, but none of their meeting houses.”

The Sheriff of St. Mary’s County returns, “as to Quakers and Dissenters none in the County.”

The Sheriff of Somerset County returns “no Quakers.”

The Sheriff of Dorchester County makes a similar return.

The Sheriff of Talbot County returns, “as to the Quaker’s places of worship, they have a small meeting house at Ralph Fishbourne’s and another at Howell Powell; another at between King’s Creek and Tuekahoe. These are *clap-board* houses about twenty feet long. Another framed house at the head of Treadhaven Creek, about fifty feet long.”

The Sheriff of Kent County returns that “the Quaker place of worship is upon a branch of a Creek running out of Chester River, called Island Creek. The house is about thirty feet long and twenty feet wide, with a partition after the manner of a tobacco house, near which is a piece of ground paled in, where they bury their dead, about fifty feet square.”

From Cecil County no return appears to have been made.

At the Yearly Meeting at Treadhaven Creek, the 5th day of the 8th month, 1697, (see MSS. Records of Maryland Friends,) enquiry was made “into the estate and welfare of every *Weekly Meeting* belonging to this Yearly Meeting, viz: *South River, West River, Herring Creek, Cliffs, Patuxent, Cecill, Chester,*

ing Baltimore County,) living at the head of Bush River, near the main road, built a meeting house at his own charge, and had it licensed, at which we had many good Meetings.”

There is now standing a venerable stone building, until recently known as the “old Quaker meeting house,” about two miles from the head of Bush River, and on the line of an old road that passes just above the heads of the many estuaries that make up from the bay. Whether this is the house built by Sheriff Paca is not known, but its location nearly agrees with that mentioned by Chalkly. Another meeting house, built of brick, until recently stood on the line of the present road from Abingdon to Bush, in Harford County, but was of more recent date than the stone house, and had not been used by the Friends for several years previous to its destruction by fire.

The earliest history of Friends shows them to have been at first a society of Propagandists;—each convert seems to have become a missionary to extend the principles of the new sect;—and every accessible part of the world appears to have been visited by them within a few years after they appeared in England. The continent of Europe was visited as early as 1655; and in Germany and Holland considerable success was met with. Some went to the Holy Land, some to the Grand Turk, some to Poland, others to Algiers; and as we have seen, many sought the wilds of America where to plant the standard of their faith; and here appears to have flourished most the new

*Bayside, Tuccahoe, Tredhaven, Choptank, Transquaking, Monnye, Annamesscx, Muddy Creek, Pocatynorton and Nossiwaddox.*

The apparent discrepancies between the returns of the Sheriffs and this list of Weekly Meetings, may possibly be explained by the fact that some of these Meetings were held at *private houses*, which some of the Sheriffs may not have considered as embraced within the order of Council, while others included them in their returns.

doctrines they promulgated. It is estimated by some of their best authors that four-fifths of all the Quakers now in the world are in America.

Not only by travelling and preaching did the zealous founders of their faith seek to establish it. Books of various kinds, tracts, and pamphlets, appeared in great numbers. So early as 1708, a catalogue of Friends' writings was published by John Whiting, himself an author, which contained the names of five hundred and twenty-eight writers, and the titles and dates of about twenty-eight hundred books and tracts. Since that date, a vast mass of their writings has accumulated, and no one who has not had occasion to look into the Quaker libraries, can have an idea of the number of books, by their authors, that now are to be found in them.

They have, from the time of their establishment, been in the habit of keeping with care the minutes of their meetings for discipline,—memorials of their most eminent members, and general records of their proceedings; these added to other means, render the materials for the history of the society both abundant and reliable; and as such have been well used by some of their modern authors,—among whom Bowden and Janney, (the former of England and the latter now living in Virginia,) have contributed largely to their general history, and from whose pages many of the circumstances here related have been gleaned; while still more has been derived from those old manuscripts herein before mentioned, which in their quaint simplicity, and unaffected directness of style and diction, give the best delineation of those, who in the earliest days of our State, found here a home, where, at that period, they enjoyed greater ease and liberty than either in the Mother Country, or in the more advanced provinces of New England.

The Maryland Yearly Meeting at one period embraced the State of Ohio within its church jurisdiction,—but in 1812, their members had so increased that a new Yearly Meeting was established, to include all west of the Alleghanies. At a later period, the Yearly Meeting of Indiana was set up; and still more recently, still pushing westward, other meetings have extended across the Mississippi River; and as civilization marches towards the great West, the Quakers accompanying its footsteps, appear to be belting the continent with their meetings; each new one in succession springing out from the next older; and finding their common mother in “*the General Meeting for all the Friends in the Province of Maryland,*” established by George Fox in 1672, as an original and independent organization.



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