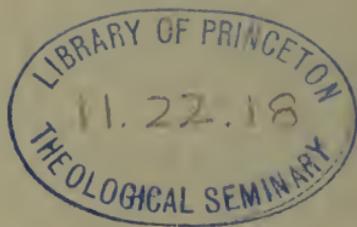


Friends, Society of.

Narrative of Facts and
and Circumstances that have
tended to produce a
secession from the Society
of Friends, in New-England
Yearly Meeting.

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NARRATIVE

OF

FACTS AND CIRCUMSTANCES

THAT HAVE TENDED TO PRODUCE A SECESSION FROM

THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS,

IN

Friends Society of

NEW-ENGLAND YEARLY MEETING,



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NARRATIVE.

IT is for the cause of truth, and for the information of those who from the want of a true understanding of the case, are liable to be deceived by unfounded and improper representations, that we feel called upon to set forth the following account of the secession from Friends, that has taken place within this Yearly Meeting.

In order to give a faithful history, it seems necessary to go back several years, and advert to some circumstances that then transpired; and unpleasant as is the duty, we are subjected to the painful necessity of exposing the course of an individual, formerly a minister in unity with us, who has been prominent as a leader in this schism, and, for the same reason, we are induced to state various other causes and circumstances that have tended to produce the secession which we are about to describe.

In the year 1832, John Wilbur was liberated to make a religious visit to Friends in Great Britain and Ireland. While absent on this visit, he wrote a series of Letters relating to the doctrines and practices of the Society of Friends, which were published, having evidently been

written for that purpose, without being submitted to the inspection of any body of the Society authorized to examine such publications; a procedure which he well knew was viewed by our Yearly Meeting as always improper, and contrary to the express provisions of our Discipline. As this publication was made but a short time before his return home, no action was taken in the case until he arrived; when the Meeting for Sufferings, feeling that a dangerous precedent had been set by a Minister, and former member of their body, thought some explanation was called for from him; and they named a committee of three Friends to have an interview with him on the subject; but that there might be no unnecessary exposure, no minute was made in the case. This committee sought an interview with him, and labored in tenderness and love to convince him of the impropriety of departing from the Discipline of his own Yearly Meeting, while traveling as a Minister with the requisite certificates of that Meeting, as well as of the hurtful tendency in an abstract point of view, of encouraging publications on doctrinal subjects, without the previous investigation and approbation of some authorized body of the Society. But so far from giving any satisfaction to this committee, he manifested a disposition to justify himself, and to call in question the correctness of the procedure of the Meeting for Sufferings in the case. After considerable delay and much ineffectual labour, as the publication had received but little circulation in this country, and as a desire was felt to exercise all tenderness and forbearance towards him, the subject was suffered to rest, so far as any official action was concerned. But we have reason to believe that this honest concern, and faithful labour in the case by his brethren, was not received by him in the spirit in which they were offered. A want of that charity, unity and love, which so become brethren, was painfully observable in his conduct towards many

Friends, so as to cause uneasiness on his account, and to induce individual labor to be extended to him.

It was under the profession of supporting sound doctrines, that he pursued a course, and indulged in a spirit of detraction, tending to injure the religious character of divers Friends in our own and other Yearly Meetings, representing them as unsound in doctrine, and holding views inconsistent with those always held by the Society of Friends. Letters were written and circulated by him having this end in view, and intended to lessen the standing of individuals, and to obstruct their religious labours.

In the autumn of 1837, John Wilbur made a religious visit within the limits of New-York Yearly Meeting ; and during the course of this journey he continued to indulge in this detracting spirit, both in speaking and writing, until he produced much exercise with well-concerned Friends,—Ministers, Elders, and others,—among whom he was traveling, and some of them treated with him on this account. In one of the conferences held with him upon this subject, he used the following language : “I consider the course I am taking in respect to the Friend from England and his writings, to be in the line of my religious duty, and this I hold to be more binding upon me than any rules of Discipline.”

After his return home from this visit, he continued to manifest the same unwarrantable course, producing much uneasiness in the minds of those friends to whom knowledge of it came, and who felt the importance both of supporting our own Discipline, and of treating other Yearly Meetings with that christian confidence and regard to which as bodies in unity with us they were justly entitled, and tender labor was bestowed on him by different individuals, to induce him to desist from his improper proceedings.

In the 7th month, 1839, a minister and aged elder

sought an interview with him, the progress and result of which are thus described by the latter :

“The manner in which John Wilbur had spoken of a Friend, when about to visit this country as a minister, having the approbation of his friends at home, and by them liberated in the usual way, gave some of his friends concern on his account ; and after the friend arrived in this country, John Wilbur being then out on a religious visit to Friends in some parts of the State of New-York, continued to manifest his aversion to the friend and to his writings, as I understood. In the course of the following summer, I believe in the 7th month, a friend from New-Hampshire called on me to accompany him on a religious visit to the meetings of Friends in South Kingstown Monthly Meeting. I bore him company ; and after having dined at John Wilbur’s, we asked for a personal and select interview with him ; this was readily granted, and the subject of the good order of the Society in reference to the manner in which ministers traveling abroad on religious concerns, in the authority of the Church, ought to treat each other, was brought into view, and contrasted with the course he had pursued while out on a religious visit to Friends in the State of New-York. We endeavored to convince him that his manner of treating the friend above referred to, both in speaking and writing respecting him, was not only contrary to the express scriptural injunction of doing to others as we would that others should do to us, but was likewise contrary to the injunction of our own Discipline. He appeared disposed, and repeatedly attempted to shield himself by alleging that the writings of the friend were unsound. We as often unhesitatingly assured him, that our concern to have an interview with him had no reference to writings, but that our object was to persuade him to refrain from pursuing such a course. The friend was here, recommended to us by a meeting with which we were in unity ; should he advance any thing unsound in public or in private, or otherwise conduct himself disorderly, he would become a subject, like all other ministers traveling among us, over whom the care of the Society ought to be extended.

The conversation was open and free, and he was repeatedly enjoined not to blend our concern for him as

having any connection with, or reference to the writings of the friend. And we again assured him that it was a concern growing out of, as we believed, a clear conviction in our own minds that his past course in reference to that individual, would ultimately, if persisted in, be productive of serious loss to himself and injury to the Society.

It may not be improper here to remark, that I did not converse with an individual member of South Kingstown Monthly Meeting on the subject, that did not manifest regret at the manner J. W. was conducting towards the minister referred to."

In the following winter, 1839-40, John Wilbur having obtained a certificate from South-Kingstown Monthly Meeting, to enable him to visit some of the meetings in this Yearly Meeting, a committee then under appointment from the Yearly Meeting of Ministers and Elders, were tenderly concerned on his account, and a few of their number were deputed to have an interview with him previous to his leaving home to enter on this engagement; but failing to effect their object, they addressed to him the following communication, through one of their number. The letter is dated 1 mo. 6, 1840.

"Having written thee a few days ago, and forwarded it by mail, at the request of some of the Select Yearly Meeting's committee, proposing an interview with thee at our house on the fifth inst., the few friends referred to came at the time appointed, but as thou wast not present,—which we readily admitted may have been occasioned by reasonable causes—it was proposed that I should again address a few lines to thee, pointing out in some measure the subjects of concern that induced the committee of the Select Yearly Meeting, assembled from various parts of the Yearly Meeting—twelve in number—to seek an interview with thyself as proposed, and named a few friends for this purpose. Such an interview was more desirable than correspondence, and would probably have been further attempted, but from uncertainty of thy being at home, and from the expectation of those friends that were here, of leaving their several homes to-day or to-morrow, to go in a different direction,

“I feel it to be a very delicate situation to be placed in, that of being the instrument to convey the religious impressions and views of the Committee; and probably I should have at once excused myself, had not the committee named me as one of those who were requested to have such interview. If I should be found incorrect, my apology to them and thyself must be, that I was not present with the committee in their deliberations, and have not rightly comprehended their concern; but as I understand the subject, the committee in taking into consideration the state of the Ministers and Elders in this Yearly Meeting, and the duties that devolve upon them as members of the Select Yearly Meeting’s Committee, became tenderly regardful of thyself, knowing that thou hadst been liberated by thy Monthly Meeting for the purpose of visiting the Quarterly Meetings, and that thou hadst commenced the fulfilment of thy prospect. And trusting that thou wilt kindly receive the manifestations of their tender regard for thy welfare and that of the church, in bringing into view in this way, a portion of ancient Discipline to which we doubt not thy own judgment and religious experience will readily assent—‘That ministers be very tender of one another’s reputation, neither giving ear to, nor spreading reports, tending to raise in the minds of others a lessening or disesteem of any of the brotherhood. That by circumspect walking in all holiness of life and conversation, they may become living examples of the purity and excellence of the advices they recommend.’ This advice was intended, no doubt, for all practically to regard, and it appears to have specially in view those traveling in the ministry; and I understand the committee felt themselves constrained in Christian love to bring this subject before thy view at the present time, from a persuasion that in time past there had not been that circumspection and care on thy part, which are the fruits of that charity that is the Christian’s ornament, and the bond of our religious communion; in that as they believe thou hast indulged thyself, and countenanced in others, both in conversation and writing, the saying of many things tending to close up the way in Friends’ minds to the reception of the labors of one who like thyself apprehends that he has a religious duty to discharge, and in the order of Society is endeavoring to accomplish

this object. And I am requested to add as the united concern of the committee, and as their advice, that if thou shouldst pursue thy prospect of visiting the Quarterly Meetings, that, for thy own preservation and the harmony and good order of Society, thou wilt be careful to refrain from introducing the subject to any with whom thou mayst associate, and will not open the way for others to introduce it. The committee likewise recommend thy omitting to take with thee any of thy correspondence, either written or printed, relating to the individual alluded to. And the Committee were also united in prospect that thou wouldst not be traveling in that unity of the body, so essential to the preservation of Christian fellowship, until thou mayst give evidence of thy intention to regard this advice. I was likewise requested to bring into thy view in a tender and affectionate manner, the suspension for the present of thy visit, if it may be done consistently with thy own apprehensions of religious duty.

I have thus endeavored to discharge the duties assigned me according to my understanding, although I am aware of its being far short of producing that mutual interest which a personal interview would have produced, yet I trust thou wilt give the subject referred to, due place in thy mind, and justly appreciate the interest manifested by the Committee for thy welfare and that of the Church."

Notwithstanding the counsel thus offered him, he proceeded on his journey; and from testimonies which we have received, it appears that the advice thus feelingly given and intended for his own preservation, and the good of the Church, was disregarded by him.

In the 5th month, 1840, in consequence of deficiencies in the answers from subordinate meetings, and "under a concern for the cause of Truth," Rhode-Island Quarterly Meeting of Ministers and Elders appointed a committee "to visit subordinate meetings and individuals as way may open for, and occasion may require, and to labor for the restoration and preservation of harmony amongst us."

The Committee thus appointed, obtained an early interview with John Wilbur, and stated to him the vari-

ous causes of uneasiness on his account. He was reminded of his improper course in relation to divers friends of our own and other Yearly Meetings, whom he had represented as unsound in religious faith; and that ministers, elders, and other friends were departing from the ancient views of our Society in relation to Baptism, the Supper, &c., producing in many instances a totally unfounded prejudice against those friends: that he had spoken of a division of the Yearly Meeting as being a probable result, soon to take place. He did not deny these charges, but plead in justification the alledged unsoundness of certain writings of a Friend traveling as a Minister amongst us, and offered a paper purporting to contain extracts from these writings, to prove his position. To this the committee entirely objected, as not being the matter at issue; doctrines not being at all in question; but the support of Christian order and the Discipline of the Yearly Meeting. When inquired of if he knew of an individual amongst us who had imbibed unsound principles, he objected to the question; and when pressed for an answer, in consequence of his having circulated such statements, he absolutely declined to give it. His improper course, and the injurious effects resulting therefrom to various friends, and above all to the precious cause of Truth, were fully unfolded to him; but after a full conference, in which much brotherly admonition and advice were bestowed upon him, the opportunity terminated without the Committee's receiving any satisfaction from him.

In the 4th month of this year, (1840,) a Minister from a distant Yearly Meeting traveling amongst us on a religious visit, with his companion, put up at John Wilbur's house in the course of their journey, soon after their arrival within our limits. To these friends John Wilbur spoke very freely of many members of Society among whom they would probably pass in pursuance of their

prospect of religious service, and did not hesitate to name various individuals, ministers and others, designating them as unsound, and warning these friends not to go to their houses or to use freedom with them. Before leaving this part of the country, and soon after the occurrence of the Quarterly Meeting, these friends believed it to be their religious duty to call together the Select Quarterly Meeting's Committee and to inform them of the communications made to them by John Wilbur, in order that proper care might be extended to him, as his observations about individuals had been very burdensome to them and had much tended to embarrass them in their religious service. A letter from the companion of the friend above alluded to, written after his return home, to a member of the committee, will serve to show something of the nature of these communications. We make from it the following extracts :

“When we first arrived within the limits of your Yearly Meeting, we fell in with John Wilbur, who kindly entertained us at his house, excepting that we found him, as both of us thought, much soured against many friends. He spoke freely of the unsoundness of a minister from England, who was at that time engaged in a religious visit to Friends in America, exhibiting a long list of written charges against him. He also told us he was, and would be supported by your Yearly Meeting, on account of a like unsoundness in many of its members.

“It had been our prospect, on entering the limits of your Yearly Meeting, to proceed early to Providence, though nothing definite had been settled upon ; but John Wilbur proposed a different route, in which he said we could attend more Quarterly Meetings, and that he would accompany us as far as Newport. Wishing to attend as many Quarterly Meetings as we could, and being dependent upon our friends for conveyance, we accepted his proposal, and were thus thrown into his company and the company of such friends as he introduced us to, for a considerable time ; and hence arose as thou knowest, (and not without some grounds,) a fear on our account in the

minds of many of our dear friends in your Yearly Meeting, which led *me*, and I think I may say *us*, on thy kindly letting us know that such was the case, to believe it necessary for the opening of our way, if for no other cause, to let Friends know that we did not believe with John Wilbur, on many points, and that we were not insensible of the spirit which he indulged towards Friends. This, together with the fact of our knowledge of the danger to which he was exposing both himself and others, may account for our divulging to thee and to other friends of a committee of your Quarterly Meeting of Ministers and Elders, sentiments expressed by him.

“In addition to what has been already related, he spoke of a controlling influence in your Yearly Meeting that was not a religious, but a moneyed one, and that if we were not on our guard, they would buy us—that they had already got T. and E. R., from England. On our inquiring about two ministers, who we said were accounted sound friends, and were much beloved when in our country, he said, as nearly as I now remember, that they were once such, low, humble-minded friends, but that they had now got to Providence, and were bought over to the same influence. He also said something about their aged parent being distressed about them. He told us too of a friend of New-Hampshire being bought over, telling the particulars, but I cannot now remember them. He spoke freely and unreservedly of a division in your Yearly Meeting, which he believed must and would take place. I remember that on my saying that I did not think it would, he remarked I was as one of Job’s comforters, for you could not live as you were. He appeared to me to be looking to no other alternative than a division, for an improvement in your condition. I have but little doubt that to nearly all the foregoing facts, there are many friends in your parts that could, if they would, bear ample testimony.”

About three weeks after the interview of the Select Quarterly Meeting’s Committee with John Wilbur, a member of the committee received a long and in some points very objectionable letter from him, in which he implies that the committee were treating with him for supporting sound doctrines, and that they themselves

were upholding doctrines which were unsound. The premises taken in this letter, and the conclusions deduced therefrom, were objected to by every member of the committee present at the interview, as uncandid and unjust; and in divers respects untrue in points of fact. This letter now became an additional cause of concern to the committee, and during the time of our Yearly Meeting in the 6th mo. following, several long opportunities of conference were had with him, without his rendering Friends any satisfaction. In the 8th mo. 1840, another interview took place, which was extended to great length, most members of the committee being present, and all united in sentiment, who imparted much affectionate advice, without inducing any favorable result, there being a determination manifested by him to defend himself in his course, and to condemn all those who questioned its correctness; and the interview closed, leaving an impression of regret and sorrow on the minds of the committee. In the 11th mo. he was again unavailingly labored with by the committee at large, and at the conclusion of the interview, a few friends were requested again to see him, who accordingly visited him in the 12th mo., and had an opportunity with him in presence of the select members of his particular meeting; but he continued to justify himself and to condemn Friends.

In the 2d mo. following, the committee again attempted unavailingly to produce a change in his mind, and to induce him to give Friends satisfaction.

The labors of the committee appointed by the Quarterly Meeting of Ministers and Elders failing to produce the desired result, they believed it right to submit the case to a committee then under appointment by the Yearly Meeting, for purposes specified in the following minute of their appointment:

“At our Yearly Meeting of Friends for New England, held on Rhode-Island in the 6th mo., 1840, the joint

committee of men and women Friends appointed to visit subordinate meetings and individuals as way might open for, and circumstances in their judgment require, made report of their attention to that service during the past year, and proposed the appointment of a similar committee at the present time, which being deliberately considered, was united with; and at a subsequent sitting, the following friends being named for that service, were appointed to extend a general care on its behalf, for the maintenance of our Christian principles and testimonies, and the preservation of love and unity among our members; and in that ability which may be afforded them, to assist and advise such meetings and members as circumstances may require and way open for, under the direction of best wisdom: and they were requested to report to this meeting next year."

Accordingly a number of this committee had an interview with John Wilbur, at East Greenwich, the 4th of 5th mo., 1841. They were fully united in sentiment as to the impropriety of the course pursued by him in the several particulars brought to their notice by the committee of the Select Quarterly Meeting, and they laboured faithfully and affectionately to convince him of his errors, and to endeavor to induce him to give Friends satisfaction. The interview was long continued, and was again renewed next morning, without producing any sensible change in his feelings, or at all reconciling him to Friends.

He contended for the propriety of his course on account of alleged unsoundness in some of the writings of the Minister from England; while the Committee wholly denied this to be the point at issue; these printed writings not being at all involved in the case, but the simple question being whether John Wilbur could with impunity violate our Discipline and the Christian order of our religious Society. They stated, among other things, that the friend alluded to, would, while among us, as any one of our own members, be held answerable to, and be judged by our Discipline, for whatever he should ad-

vance. That any action attempted by us, for acts committed, or sentiments advanced, prior to the date of his certificates, would be a virtual transgression of that safe rule of our society at large, which considers members every where, for their conduct while at home, amenable to the meetings to which they belong. This rule appears by the general consent of all the Yearly Meetings to have been heretofore carefully respected. It necessarily supposes but one and the same qualification throughout the Society for the exercise of Christian care over its members ; and consequently any act which should reach within the limits of another Yearly Meeting, intended to arraign one or more of its members for any alleged error of earlier date than that of the certificates they may bring, must be viewed as a breach of the established order amongst us. Such a course would be to judge not of the individual only, but of the meetings that granted the certificates. If this order should be departed from, no one, in a case of real or imputed error, could know the extent of his liability, or the conclusion of the Society, till judged, severally, by every branch of our church.

During this interview, he stated that in his letter to a member of the Select Quarterly Meeting's Committee, he did not intend to charge the Committee with holding unsound doctrines ; and being inquired of whether he was willing to say further that he did not intend to make any reflections upon them injurious to their standing in society, he requested them to commit to paper what they wished him to state.

The Committee adjourned to meet again the following morning, and in the recess the subjoined paper was prepared, with a hope that John Wilbur might be convinced of the propriety of signing it, so as to remove so far as he could now do it, the unjust charges and insinuations brought by him against the Select Quarterly Meeting's Committee.

“Feelings of uneasiness having rested on the minds of the Select Quarterly Meeting’s Committee, in consequence of some expressions contained in a letter written by me to one of their number under date of 5th month, 30th, 1840, from an apprehension that I meant therein to charge the members of that Committee with holding unsound doctrines, I feel willing to relieve their minds from such apprehension by now saying that it was not my intention to be so understood. And further I am willing to say that I regret that any thing was so unguardedly expressed in said letter as to bear the construction that I meant to reflect upon said Committee to the prejudice of their standing in society. And having in said letter attributed to that committee expressions that they do not own as having been made by them, I am willing to believe that I misunderstood the sentiments they meant to convey; and consequently to withdraw such charges.”

On presenting this essay to him, although as the committee thought it was so worded that he could hardly fail to receive it, especially as he proposed at the previous interview that a paper of this purport should be prepared, he declined to sign it, and the interview ended. On the 13th of 6th month, the committee again met at Newport, agreeably to their adjournment, twenty-seven members being present. A long conference was again held with him, resulting as heretofore. A few friends were separated, affectionately and earnestly to labour with him, and the committee adjourned to the 15th inst. At this adjourned meeting, John Wilbur was not present, and the friends who had by request had an interview with him in the recess of the meetings, now reported that they had not been able to induce him to give Friends satisfaction, but that they thought the case nearly hopeless.

The Yearly Meeting at this time being apprehensive that the existing state of things in the Society still demanded an extension of care from them, continued their committee, with a similar minute to that made in their appointment last year. The committee thus appointed,

met on the 17th, and named four friends to have an interview with John Wilbur, and adjourned to the next morning. On the 18th, they met according to adjournment, 25 members being present.

The original cause of concern on the part of Friends with him was again stated ; his letter to a member of the Select Quarterly Meeting's Committee was read, and also part of a letter from him dated 3d mo. 11th, 1841, to a young friend in Dover Quarterly Meeting, calling upon certain friends to give him the state of things in that quarter. John Wilbur being present, was called upon to reply to the case, if he saw fit ; upon which he made some remarks, but not to much extent, saying he wanted the charges in writing, &c. During this meeting, much tender brotherly counsel and advice, by several of the committee, was bestowed, in order for his restoration to the unity and harmony of friends. On leaving the committee, he said he was willing they should proceed in the case in the manner they thought best, and remarked as he departed from the room, " Friends, do as you please, I have no concessions to make."

Subsequent to this time, the Yearly Meeting's Committee frequently met and solidly considered this sorrowful case, that had produced so much uneasiness, and in relation to which so much patient but ineffectual labor had been bestowed ; and two of the committee were encouraged to visit him again at his own house, and make another effort to convince him of his departures from right order and discipline, and to persuade him to return and be reconciled to Friends. They accordingly waited upon him and spent the night under his roof, and with great tenderness and brotherly regard, entreated him to turn from his course and make those concessions which the cause of truth required. But to this he turned a deaf ear and refused to give any satisfaction.

At the close of South-Kingstown Monthly Meeting, in

11th mo., 1841, John Wilbur called together the select members, and after stating some instances of what he considered encroachments on the privileges of Monthly Meetings, and individuals, all of which had reference to his own case, he desired that the select members might take a firm stand against the measures of the Quarterly Meeting. The proposition being disapproved, was abandoned.

It now appearing fully evident that any attempt at further labor would be unavailing, on the 23d of the 4th mo., 1842, the following statement of the case was prepared and signed by the Yearly Meeting's Committee, and presented to South-Kingstown Monthly Meeting, viz :

“ We the Committee appointed by the Yearly Meeting to extend a general care on its behalf ‘for the maintenance of our Christian principles and testimonies, and the preservation of love and unity among our members, and in that ability that may be afforded us, to assist and advise such meetings and members as circumstances may require and way open for, under the direction of best Wisdom,’ having had our minds introduced into deep concern and exercise on account of the course pursued for some time past by John Wilbur, a member of South-Kingstown Monthly Meeting, in the station of a Minister, believe that the time has now come for us to state some of the particulars wherein he has departed from the good order of our religious Society, in the disregard of our Christian Discipline.

“ He has circulated an anonymous pamphlet which impeached the character of our Society, and in which some of its important doctrines, as exemplified in the religious engagements of some of its faithful ministers, are reproachfully held up to view ; and which purports to contain the proceedings of London Yearly Meeting of Ministers and Elders, with the sentiments of divers friends therein named, when the subject of liberating a minister to visit this country was before that meeting ; the object of which, together with sundry letters which he has circulated, appears to be, to induce the belief that the con-

cern did not receive the unity of the meeting, and that the clerk did not act in conformity with the true sense and judgment of the meeting, in signing the certificate; thus endeavoring to invalidate both the proceedings and conclusions of a meeting in unity with this Yearly Meeting, and whose certificate on behalf of the same friend was received and united with as entered on our records. And while the friend was in this country and engaged in the discharge of his apprehended religious duty, with full certificates of unity from the Monthly and Quarterly Meetings of which he is a member, and the Yearly Meeting of Ministers and Elders of London, and which were duly presented, received and accredited in all the Yearly Meetings in this country, except one which he did not attend;—and thus was he at liberty for religious service within their limits, in the full and acknowledged character of an approved and authenticated minister of the Society of Friends,—John Wilbur, for want as we believe of an humble abiding in the Truth, has circulated divers letters, one or more of which appears to have been written in England, and others originating with himself, addressed to different friends in this country, which were intended to shew that the minister thus liberated for religious service, was not in unity with his friends at home, contrary to the long established order of our religious Society, and designed to close his way in the minds of Friends. And we also believe, for want of maintaining his integrity in that dependence upon the Holy Spirit, which would have preserved him in unity with Friends, he has indulged in a spirit of detraction, in speaking and writing, by which the religious character of divers friends in our own and other Yearly Meetings has been much misrepresented. Many friends were introduced into deep concern on his account, and several of them treated with him in tenderness and love in relation to it; but without producing any apparent change in his mind; and there having been a committee appointed by Rhode-Island Quarterly Meeting of Ministers and Elders, in the 5th mo., 1840, of which body he was a member, on account of existing deficiencies, as manifested by the answers to the queries, and under a concern for the cause of Truth; and they having been made acquainted with John Wilbur's course as last above stated, and he having made di-

vers assertions tending to induce dissatisfaction among Friends, and with the proceedings of our Yearly Meeting in various particulars, and calculated to produce divisions therein; and also to disturb the unity of different Yearly Meetings, and to alienate the feelings of their members from each other; sought an opportunity with him, in which they endeavored to show him the effects of his proceedings, both upon himself and others; but he, so far from receiving these labors of love in the spirit in which they were administered, soon after wrote a letter to one of the committee, in which he made unjust insinuations, and preferred charges against them which they deny in points of fact. They nevertheless continued their care and labor, but his mind appearing closed against their advice, in the 5th mo., 1841, we at their request believed it to be our duty to extend care in his case. And it is with deep regret and sorrow, we have observed the effect his course of conduct has produced in lessening that regard for the wholesome restraints of the Discipline, and for the labor of faithful friends for the preservation of that good order, love and unity which are essential to the peace and welfare of the body.

“We have had repeated opportunities with him in which we have labored to convince him of his errors; but this desirable object not having been accomplished, and after having waited several months to afford him opportunity to make satisfaction for his deviations, and two of the committee having unavailingly visited him at his own house, and there not appearing that change in his mind, which is necessary to his being restored to the unity of Friends, we now believe it incumbent upon us in discharge of the service confided to us by the Yearly Meeting, to recommend his case to the immediate notice and care of South-Kingstown Monthly Meeting.”*

* The Discipline of our Yearly Meeting provides no specific mode of bringing the case of offenders before our Monthly Meetings. The more general practice of Friends with us, is that complaints come to the Monthly Meetings from the overseers, either through the Preparative Meetings or otherwise. But the support of good order and discipline, from the existing state of things in different meetings, has rendered a departure from this course necessary in divers instances, both in early and later time, as fully appears from the Records of various meetings.

The Yearly Meeting's Committee having in full unity adopted the foregoing document, appointed several of their number to attend South-Kingstown Monthly Meeting, to be held on the 25th of the 4th mo., and lay the same before that meeting; to which service they attended and presented the communication to said meeting, which was read and directed to be recorded; and a committee of four friends was appointed to visit John Wilbur on the occasion. When the above communication was read in the meeting, it appeared he did not expect it would be entered upon the records, and he manifested much objection to it, notwithstanding he remarked, "I am glad it has come here, it has long been a suffering case, and now I shall be tried by *my friends*." The friend who was now clerk of the meeting, a worthy elder in Society, it was believed would act impartially in the case. At the next Monthly Meeting, it being their usual time for the appointment of clerk, and the usage of that meeting being, for the representatives from the Preparative Meetings to propose the name of a clerk to the meeting, they met, but could not agree upon a name; a part of them being in favor of the re-appointment of the old Clerk, and the others for substituting a person in his place who, in divers respects, was considered unsuitable for the station. The meeting was informed that the representatives could not agree upon a clerk, and it was proposed by those in favor of sustaining the order of Society, that the subject should be deferred one month; while on the other hand violent opposition was made to this course, and another person proposed as clerk, whose name had not been under consideration by the representatives, when together for that service. Much tumult and disorder ensued; many taking an active part in producing it, who were not in the practise of regularly attending meetings for discipline, nor careful in the support of our Christian testimonies. After a scene of great disorder, which was continued for

a long time, the clerk, after bearing his testimony against their proceedings, withdrew from the table without making any minute in the case; and the individual who had thus been proposed out of the established practice of that meeting, assumed the place, and made a minute appointing himself as clerk for the ensuing year. Thus was a person placed at the table in an irregular manner, and contrary to the judgment of many well concerned and consistent friends. The next irregular step was to make an addition to the committee appointed the previous month in the case of John Wilbur. Five persons were added to the committee; four of whom were his family connexions, and all of them it was believed, very much under his influence. As an evidence of the arrangement made out of meeting, in relation to the appointment of this addition to the Committee, it may be mentioned, that when a friend was named, who it was believed would act with impartiality, a son-in-law of John Wilbur objected to his name, alleging as a reason, that he was requested by John Wilbur to do so, should he be nominated; and the acting clerk accordingly refused to take his name.

In the 6th mo. 1842, the Yearly Meeting again appointed a Committee to act on its behalf, with the same concern in view as heretofore. At a meeting of this Committee at Newport the 17th of 6th mo. 1842, twenty-three members being present, they were united in advising Timothy C. Collins, the former Clerk, not to give up the books and papers of South-Kingstown Monthly Meeting, but to keep them safely, as the proceedings of that meeting in the appointment of Clerk had not been regular.

On the 27th of 6th mo. a number of the Yearly Meeting's Committee again attended South-Kingstown Monthly Meeting. The following is an extract from the minutes made on the occasion :

“Most of the proceedings of the Monthly Meeting were

conducted in a very exceptionable manner; and on the part of some of its members disorderly in no small degree, and the Committee became apprehensive that the members who constitute this meeting in their present disjointed and unsettled state, are not in a situation to hold a Monthly Meeting to the honor and reputation of society. And finding as we did that they had at their previous Monthly Meeting displaced the Clerk in an unusual and abrupt manner, and appointed another to that office as before stated, all of which was against the judgment and wishes of the solid portion of the members; we, therefore, with a view to the promotion of unity and harmony among them, believed it right to advise the meeting to reinstate the former Clerk, and the present one to withdraw from the table. This advice and proposal a considerable portion of the members objected to, and refused to comply with, and manifested great disrespect towards the Committee, by many unkind expressions and insinuations. We were likewise informed that at their last meeting they made an addition of five to the committee appointed in the 4th mo. last, in the case of John Wilbur; which addition or appointment, with its attendant unjustifiable circumstances, was cause of regret to the rightly exercised members of the meeting, and we think is evidently calculated to embarrass, if not entirely defeat any just decision in that case. In taking a view of the state and condition of that meeting, and the transactions here detailed, we are induced to believe that what has already transpired, is only the precursor of a still greater departure from good order and the truth, even to open revolt.

“It seems proper further to note that the becoming moderation and christian meekness evinced by the rightly exercised part of the meeting, afforded us the comfortable assurance that the true seed, although oppressed and borne down, is far from being extinct.

On the 11th of the 7th mo. following, six of the Yearly Meeting's Committee met those appointed by South-Kingstown Monthly Meeting in the case of John Wilbur and proceeded to lay before them full documentary evidence to establish each point contained in the communication addressed to the Monthly Meeting against him. After going through with which, he in his defence

brought before the committee what purported to be extracts from the writings of the friend from England, towards whom he had manifested his opposition. To this they objected as being wholly irrelevant to the case; the complaint against him being for a violation of the order and discipline of the Society; and upon its being finally decided by most of the Monthly Meeting's Committee, to allow him to take what course he chose in justification of himself, the Yearly Meeting's Committee presented them with the following written memorandum, and withdrew, viz.: "As you have decided not to confine the investigation to the charges submitted in the document presented to the Monthly Meeting; but allow the subject of doctrines to be introduced in justification of the charges; we must decline remaining any longer present with the Committee."

On the 25th of 7th mo., several of the Yearly Meeting's Committee attended South-Kingstown Monthly Meeting. It was very apparent that those who attempted to control the proceedings of the meeting, through the assistance of their clerk, who was irregularly and improperly appointed, were not qualified to conduct the affairs of the Church; being apparently deficient in a religious sense of the weight and importance of the work.

After this meeting, the Yearly Meeting's Committee presented the following communication to Rhode-Island Quarterly Meeting, held the 4th of 8th month, 1842.

"To Rhode-Island Quarterly Meeting:

"A number of the Yearly Meeting's Committee, having several times recently attended South-Kingstown Monthly Meeting, have become satisfied, that from the want of love and unity, and from the spirit of insubordination manifest amongst them, in the management of the concerns of Society, they are not in a suitable state to conduct the affairs of the Church to the honour of

Truth : and we are united in judgment that the immediate care of the Quarterly Meeting needs to be extended in the case. 7th mo. 25th, 1842.”

The subject being thus brought before the Quarterly Meeting, and the answers to the queries from South-Kingstown, and also from Swanzey Monthly Meeting, manifesting great deficiencies, a committee was appointed and the following minute made in the case, viz :

“ At Rhode-Island Quarterly Meeting, held at Portsmouth, the 4th of 8th mo., 1842, the following communication from the Yearly Meeting’s Committee was received at this time. And it appearing by the answers to the queries that there is a want of that love and unity which are essential to the best interests of the body, both in South-Kingstown and Swanzey Monthly Meetings; the whole subject received our deliberate and solid consideration, and we appoint the following friends to visit those meetings and labor in conjunction with the Yearly Meeting’s Committee, for the preservation of right order and the promotion of love and unity; and they are requested to act in our behalf in rendering such advice and assistance to said meetings and individuals as best Wisdom may direct, and report to our next meeting.”

On the 22d of the 8th mo., 1842, a number of the Yearly Meeting’s Committee, in conjunction with the Committee of the Quarterly Meeting, again attended South-Kingstown Monthly Meeting. The following extract from the minutes of the first named committee, gives an account of their proceedings, viz :

“ When the opening minute, and the minute of the Quarterly Meeting, making the appointment of a committee, were read, a report from the committee in John Wilbur’s case was called for by a member; which was immediately presented and read. It was signed by seven members, and stated in substance, that they had heard the Yearly Meeting’s Committee and John Wilbur, and that they were of the judgment that the evidence adduced did not support the charges; and it ended in recommending the dismissal of the complaint against him.

“ A report was also presented signed by two of the

committee, stating, substantially, that they considered all the charges fully verified, and that they differed entirely in judgment from the other members of the committee, &c. This report they refused for a considerable time to read. In favor of the reading, it was stated, that they being a part of the committee, had a right to be heard as to their judgment in the case, as that would give the meeting an understanding of the whole matter as viewed by all the Committee. They at length yielded, and after it was read, they urged the reception of the report signed by the seven; and it appeared that those who were in favor of receiving it, were nearly all of them John Wilbur's near relatives:—among them were one son, four sons-in-law, and a number of his connexions more remote; there being only one or two who were unconnected either by consanguinity or affinity. It therefore appeared, as far as the preparing of the report and advocating its reception were concerned, to be almost entirely a family matter.

“ The committee held up to their view the serious consequences of the course they were pursuing, in attempting thus to restore him, as it would be done without his making any concession, and he thereby would be left a member while he was out of unity with the great body of Friends. To obviate which, it was proposed that the case be deferred one month, to give the committee an opportunity of further labor with him to produce, if it might be, a reconciliation with friends, that his restoration might be in the harmony and unity of Society. This was also the united advice of the Quarterly Meeting's Committee to the Monthly Meeting. This course was earnestly opposed; some saying they were aware of the authority of the Quarterly Meeting to give them advice, but as the Monthly Meeting had a right to act independently according to their own judgment, they might receive or reject it, as they thought proper: if they had no independence of action, it was not advice, but a mere mandate. Thus they continued to set at nought and entirely reject the counsel and advice administered to them, by both Committees then present; and finally a minute was made accepting the report of the Committee of seven, restoring John Wilbur to membership, contrary to

the expressed sense and judgment of divers well concerned and consistent members of that meeting.”*

The Quarterly Meeting’s Committee again attended South-Kingstown Monthly Meeting, the 24th of 10th mo., 1842, and presented to it the following communication, viz :

“ The Committee appointed by the Quarterly Meeting to visit South-Kingstown Monthly Meeting, and for other services, now believe it right to state to South-Kingstown Monthly Meeting, that having taken into our deliberate consideration the proceedings of that meeting in the eighth month last, and other proceedings connected with it, which have had the effect to produce the present unhappy differences existing in that meeting, and the state of insubordination in which it now is, have come to the conclusion, that the placing of Samuel Sheffield at the table, to act as Clerk, in the fifth month last, in the irregular and disorderly manner in which it was effected ; and by which procedure the feelings and views of many of the members were wholly disregarded ; and being satisfied that he took his seat at the table and made the minute appointing himself, out of the usual and long established order of South-Kingstown Monthly Meeting in appointing their Clerk: We do therefore unite with the advice previously given to Timothy C. Collins, by the Yearly Meeting’s Committee, that he should continue for the present to retain the records of that meeting. And as this committee were also fully united in the advice given in the eighth month last to South-Kingstown Monthly Meeting, not to accept the report in the case of John Wilbur, presented by that portion of the committee, five of whom were added contrary to the general usage of our Society, to the committee appointed in the fourth month to have charge of the case, after Samuel Sheffield took his seat at the table in the fifth month ; and as we have cause to apprehend, from the manner in which they

* Two of the Yearly Meeting’s Committee, present at this time, have been charged with attempting to break up the meeting, while the report in the case of John Wilbur was under consideration in the Women’s Meeting, which charge they utterly deny.

were selected, and from their relationship to the individual under care, it was with a view to prevent the impartial exercise of our Christian Discipline : We, therefore, now on behalf of the Quarterly Meeting, advise South-Kingstown Monthly Meeting at this time to remove Samuel Sheffield from acting as Clerk, and to re-appoint Timothy C. Collins to the service ;—to dismiss the case of Timothy C. Collins from their records, and discharge the Committee appointed last month to visit him as an offender for retaining the records of said meeting as advised to do by this Committee ;—and likewise that the decision in the eighth month last, as entered on their minutes in relation to John Wilbur, against the judgment of many concerned friends of that meeting, and regardless of the united advice of this Committee, be now set aside, and be made void and of no effect.”

The meeting not being willing to receive this advice, as it was bound to do by the provisions of Discipline, and then, if not satisfied therewith to appeal therefrom ; and the advice being offered in the name and on behalf of the Quarterly Meeting, the Committee deemed it proper to make the following report of the case to the Quarterly Meeting in the 11th month, proposing that South-Kingstown Monthly Meeting should be dissolved, viz :

“ To Rhode-Island Quarterly Meeting to be held at Somerset :

The Committee appointed to visit Swanzey and South Kingstown Monthly Meetings, and for other services, report :—that several of their number attended two sittings of Swanzey Monthly Meeting, and communicated such advice as appeared to them suitable at the time and as way opened for : that they attended the Monthly Meeting of South-Kingstown in the eighth month, and in conjunction with a number of the Yearly Meeting’s Committee then present, endeavored to labor, we trust in a spirit of love, for the preservation of right order in the exercise of the Discipline, and to encourage a proper submission to the advice of superior meetings, so essential to the best interests of our Society. We regret to inform that our counsel did not meet on the part of many with a kind re-

ception, and the disposition was manifest and prevailed, to act as an independent body.

The following communication was prepared and presented at their last meeting, viz.: [cited above.] This communication was read in the meeting and directed to be recorded, and its further consideration referred to their next meeting. Several friends expressed their desire that its recommendations should be conformed to by the meeting. From what has been witnessed by the Committee, and from authentic information derived from others, they have come to the conclusion after a careful consideration of the subject, that South-Kingstown Monthly Meeting is not in a suitable state to conduct the affairs of the church in accordance with our Christian Discipline, nor consistently with our religious profession. We therefore submit it to the Quarterly Meeting as our judgment, that South-Kingstown Monthly Meeting be dissolved, and that the members constituting it be joined to those constituting Greenwich Monthly Meeting."

This report was weightily considered and fully united with, and the meeting accordingly dissolved; and the following minute made in the case, viz :

"The Committee appointed at our last meeting to visit Swanzey and South Kingstown Monthly Meetings, and for other services, made the following report, viz: [see said report above] which is accepted; and after a solid consideration of the subject, this meeting concluded, with the unity of the Women's Meeting, to discontinue and dissolve South Kingstown Monthly Meeting, and to join its members to those composing Greenwich Monthly Meeting, and to join the Select Preparative Meeting to those of Greenwich Monthly Meeting: the books of record and papers of the former are to be delivered to such person as the latter may appoint to receive them. The proceedings of South-Kingstown Monthly Meeting against Timothy C. Collins, after being informed by the Committee acting on our behalf of the advice given to him, are hereby annulled and declared to have no effect whatever. And the minute made in the 5th month, adding to the Committee appointed in the 4th month, upon the complaint made against John Wilbur, of five members, and the minute made in the 8th month, accept-

ing the report of a part of the Committee in his case, being at the time made against the direct advice of the Quarterly Meeting's Committee, are also hereby annulled and declared void. All other unfinished business now before that meeting, is directed to be transferred to Greenwich Monthly Meeting, and Committees and others under appointment by South-Kingstown Monthly Meeting, are requested to report to Greenwich Monthly Meeting. The Committee now under appointment are requested to have a copy of this minute, signed by the Clerk, read at the opening of their next Monthly Meeting at Hopkinton, and to request those assembled quietly to separate and consider themselves of Greenwich Monthly Meeting, and under its care. At Rhode-Island Quarterly Meeting held at Somerset 11th mo. 3d, 1842."

The Committee of the Quarterly Meeting attended the next Monthly Meeting of South-Kingstown held at Hopkinton, the 21st of the 11th month, and read the minute of the Quarterly Meeting; when all those who were in unity with said meeting quietly withdrew from the house; while the others remained together and came to the conclusion to appeal to our next Yearly Meeting from the judgment of the Quarterly Meeting.

At Greenwich Monthly Meeting of Friends held at Cranston 11th mo. 28th, 1842, the foregoing communication from the Quarterly Meeting was read, and the following minute made in relation thereto, viz :

"After deliberate consideration on the contents of said extracts from the minutes of the Quarterly Meeting, and in due submission as a subordinate branch of said meeting, we acquiesce therein, and acknowledge and receive the members heretofore constituting South Kingstown Monthly Meeting, as members of this meeting, subject alike with our other members to its future disciplinary action and decision; and in this we have the concurrence of our Women's Meeting: and the members heretofore constituting South Kingstown Select Meeting are in like manner joined to Greenwich Select meeting. And it is the conclusion of this meeting, that Preparative meetings be held as heretofore until otherwise directed, viz : at

South Kingstown, Western, and Hopkinton ; and the said meetings are requested to report to this meeting, and the Clerk is requested to furnish each of the said Preparative meetings with a copy of this minute.

The Clerk of this meeting is appointed to call for and receive the books of record and papers of the late Monthly Meeting of South-Kingstown."

At Greenwich Monthly Meeting of Friends, held at East Greenwich 1st mo. 2d, 1843, the following minute was made, viz :

"It appearing by the records of the late Monthly Meeting of South Kingstown, that a Committee was appointed in the 4th month last, in the case of John Wilbur, to labor with him, and report their sense to a future meeting : agreeably to the directions of the Quarterly Meeting, as by minute of said meeting sent down and received by us at our last Monthly Meeting will appear—said Committee are now requested to report to this meeting."

The following action was taken in the case at the next Monthly Meeting, viz :

"At Greenwich Monthly Meeting of Friends held at Coventry 1st mo. 30th, 1843. The Committee in the case of John Wilbur as referred to by minute of our last Monthly Meeting, and who were thereby requested to report to this meeting, made the following, viz :

We of the Committee appointed by South-Kingstown Monthly Meeting in the 4th mo. last, in the case of John Wilbur, report : that we have attended to the duties assigned us by meeting John Wilbur and the Yearly Meeting's Committee, and hearing the evidence in the case ; and which was in our judgment sufficient to substantiate the charges preferred against him ; which charges having relation altogether to his departure from Discipline and good order, it was evident to us that his defence ought to be predicated on that ground alone ; and whereas the other part of the Committee were willing to allow him to make his defence, by leaving this, the only legitimate ground, and go into a justification of his conduct by allusions to doctrines, which in our view was entirely foreign to the subject matter under consideration : we therefore felt ourselves bound to dissent from such a course al-

together ; and it is our united sense and judgment that he is not in a situation and state of mind to be continued a member of our religious society ; which we submit to Greenwich Monthly Meeting of Friends next to be held at Coventry.

HEZEKIAH BABCOCK,
WILLIAM S. PERRY.

South-Kingstown, 1st mo. 21, 1843.

Which report, after a time of solid and deliberate consideration of the subject was united with : and he, the said John Wilbur, is accordingly disowned the right of membership in our religious Society ; having the unity of the Women's Meeting herein."

At Greenwich Monthly Meeting of Friends, held at Cranston, 2d mo. 27th, 1843, the following minute was made :

"The Committee to prepare an essay of a minute to be placed on our records in relation to the disownment of John Wilbur as a member of our religious Society, propose the following,—to be preceded by the communication made to South-Kingstown, viz : The Committee appointed by South-Kingstown Monthly Meeting, in the 4th mo. last, in the case of John Wilbur, on account of the preceding communication, and in accordance with the decision of the Quarterly Meeting, requested to report to this meeting ; having at our last meeting, besides their written report, verbally reported that two of their number sought an interview with him on the subject of their appointment, which he declined ; and that the other two members of the Committee, declining to act in the case, we were induced to unite with them in the conclusion that further attempts to labor with him would not be productive of benefit, and that it was incumbent on us for the clearing of Truth, to disown him as a member of our religious Society.

"In coming to this painful conclusion, the meeting has been deeply and solemnly impressed with the conviction, that his departures from our Christian order have been the result of a want of a humble dependence on the teachings of the Holy Spirit, which would have preserved him in the path of propriety and safety. We feel an earnest desire that through mercy, he may yet be brought to a living sense of his situation, and be favored to at-

tain that place of true humility, in which he will be concerned to seek reconciliation with Friends.”

From the decision of Greenwich Monthly Meeting, John Wilbur appealed to Rhode-Island Quarterly Meeting, which confirmed the judgment of the Monthly Meeting, in disowning him from our religious Society. From this decision of the Quarterly Meeting, he appealed to the Yearly Meeting, in the 6th month, 1844, and that meeting, by a very united voice, confirmed the judgment of the Quarterly Meeting. The following is the minute of the Yearly Meeting made in his case, viz :

“The Committee appointed on third day forenoon, the 18th, to take into consideration the case of John Wilbur’s appeal from the judgment of Rhode-Island Quarterly Meeting, in confirming the judgment of Greenwich Monthly Meeting, in disowning him, made a report signed by all the Committee, [twenty-one in number,] except one : that having all attended to their appointment, they had heard the appellant and the Committee of the said Quarterly Meeting, fully in the case, as acknowledged by the parties, and that after a time of solemn deliberation, they had come to the conclusion that the judgment of Rhode-Island Quarterly Meeting ought to be confirmed ; which, after a time of deliberate consideration thereon, was united with and accepted by this meeting ; and the judgment of said meeting confirmed accordingly.

“And John Wilbur being called in, agreeably to his request, the conclusion of the meeting in his case, as embraced in the above minute, was read in his presence.”

While present in the Meeting, he acknowledged that he had been kindly and fully heard by the Committee.

Agreeably to notice given, a portion of the members of the late South-Kingstown Monthly Meeting, appealed to the Yearly Meeting in 1843, from the decision of Rhode-Island Quarterly Meeting in dissolving said Monthly Meeting, and attaching its members to Greenwich Monthly Meeting, and the judgment of the Quarterly Meeting was confirmed by the Yearly Meeting. The following is the minute in the case :

“ The Committee appointed on third day morning last to take into consideration the case of appeal from the judgment of Rhode-Island Quarterly Meeting, in dissolving South-Kingstown Monthly Meeting, and annexing the members constituting it to Greenwich Monthly Meeting, now produced a report signed by thirteen of their number, informing the meeting, that having given a full hearing to the parties respectively, they had, upon deliberation, come to the conclusion that the judgment of Rhode-Island Quarterly Meeting ought to be confirmed ; which after a time of deliberate consideration thereon, was united with and accepted by this meeting, and the judgment of said meeting confirmed accordingly.”*

As further evidence of the insubordination existing in this Yearly Meeting we proceed to state, that in Swanzey Monthly Meeting, for a long time past, there has been a want of that love and unity which are essential to the right conducting of the affairs of Truth. More than two years since, Committees were appointed in that meeting to propose the names of Clerk and Overseers of Society, but they were unable to agree upon friends for those stations. The state of this meeting had claimed the attention of the Yearly Meeting’s Committee, and also of a Committee of Rhode-Island Quarterly Meeting previous to our last Yearly Meeting ; and much labor had been bestowed by them to remedy the existing difficulties, and to produce that organization of the meeting that would enable it to carry into effect the Discipline, the administration of which had been seriously interrupted.

At our Yearly Meeting in 1844, the Committee to visit subordinate meetings reported, that in one or more of our Monthly Meetings, our Christian Discipline was not main-

* This committee consisted of twenty-one Friends—six of whom presented a counter report, in which they dissented from the above report, on account of what they apprehended irregularity in some of the proceedings : and two declined to sign either report ; but when the case was under consideration in the meeting, one expressed his unity with the report of the majority.

tained to the honor of Truth, and a Committee was again appointed to extend a general care on our behalf for the preservation of love and unity among our members ; the maintenance of our Christian principles and testimonies, and in the support of the Discipline of the Church, and in the ability that may be afforded them, to assist and advise such meetings and members as circumstances may require and way open for under the direction of best Wisdom."

The Yearly Meeting's Committee with a number of the Quarterly Meeting's Committee then under appointment, met with those two committees in the 7th month, and united with a part of them in their proposing to the meeting the names of certain persons for Clerks and Overseers.

With the exception of two or three individuals, all the members of those committees of the Monthly Meeting, either united with the names proposed or expressed their acquiescence therein, when in the presence of the committee ; but those who had thus acquiesced, subsequently did not sign the reports to the Monthly Meeting. The names of the individuals thus agreed upon, were accordingly reported to the Monthly Meeting, and the reports were fully united with by the large body of the members of that meeting, although a few individuals opposed it.

The Yearly Meeting's Committee then presented to the meeting the following written advice, viz :

"To Swanzey Monthly Meeting :

" Dear Friends,—The Committee appointed by the Yearly Meeting to extend a general care on its behalf for the preservation of love and unity among our members, the maintenance of our Christian principles and testimonies, and the support of the Discipline of the Church, and in the ability that may be afforded them, to assist and advise such meetings and members as circumstances may require and way open for, under the direction of best Wisdom ; having, from a belief that our duty under

our appointment required it, met with the committees of your meeting, appointed about two years since, to propose the names of Overseers and Clerks ; and apprehending that the cause of Truth and the right exercise of our Christian Discipline, urgently demand that there should be no further delay in the cases, were united in giving the following advice :—It appearing by the voluntary declaration of those members of a committee, who were present, appointed as we apprehend without the authority of discipline, and out of the usual order of Society, to assist the overseers when they presented a complaint against an individual, that they believed Edmund Chase to be innocent of the charges preferred against him by said individual ; and that they did not intend in their report to the Monthly Meeting, to implicate him ; we were united in judgment that this document ought not to be retained by the Monthly Meeting among its papers, but destroyed.

“ The Committee on Overseers informed us that they had agreed upon five friends for this station, and there being but one of them from within the limits of Fall River Preparative Meeting, (it being usual to appoint two from that meeting,) in view of the circumstances, we were united in advising the committee to propose to the meeting to appoint Edmund Chase, in addition to those named, there not appearing any ground for the objection originally urged against his appointment. The Committee in relation to Clerks, informed us that they could not agree upon names, and after a full consideration of the case, we thought it right to advise the committee to propose to the Monthly Meeting to appoint David Shove for Clerk, and Jonathan Freeborn for Assistant Clerk ; and we are now united in advising the Monthly Meeting to make these appointments, and carry into effect these recommendations, believing that thereby the best interests of the Monthly Meeting and its preservation in unity with the Quarterly and Yearly Meetings will be promoted.

On behalf of the Committee,

ROWLAND GREENE.”

Swansey, 7th mo. 29, 1844.

The same individuals who opposed making the appointments, now opposed the acceptance of this advice,

and Thomas Wilbur, the Clerk, who was one of the number, and who is a son of John Wilbur, refused to record the clearly expressed sense of the meeting, although earnestly advised to do so, by the Yearly Meeting's Committee in attendance.

The condition of this meeting as it then stood was presented to the Quarterly Meeting in the 8th month, which released its committee previously under appointment, and appointed another to visit Swanzey Monthly Meeting and assist in its due organization, that our Christian Discipline might be supported as in former days to the honor of Truth.

At the following Monthly Meeting the individual who had previously acted as Clerk, still persisting to hold that station, contrary to the fully expressed sense of the meeting, and to the earnest entreaty and advice of the Yearly Meeting's Committee, and the Monthly Meeting having again at this time, (with the exception of those persons who had manifested their opposition at the last meeting,) united in the appointment as Clerk, of the friend who had been selected at the previous meeting, the individual thus selected proceeded to open the meeting, and the representatives from all the Preparative Meetings presented to him the reports from those meetings, and all answered to the calling of their names. During the time that he was preparing his opening minute, one of those who had opposed his appointment, walked to the Clerk's table, which Thomas Wilbur continued to occupy and refused to leave, and placed upon it a paper, which he immediately arose and read, without the liberty of the meeting, which was believed to be an extract from the revised statutes of Massachusetts, showing what was the penalty for disturbing meetings for Divine Worship, and other religious assemblies.

Notwithstanding the meeting had thus appointed David Shove as Clerk, and he was acting in that capacity,

Thomas Wilbur continued to sit at the table, and to form and read minutes ; and to prevent confusion, Friends, after having read the minute of the Quarterly Meeting appointing its Committee, adjourned to a later hour in the afternoon ; by far the larger part of the Men's Meeting and all the Women, withdrawing from the house, and mostly assembling again at the hour of adjournment, to transact the business of the meeting. The persons who sustained the former Clerk in his decision against the judgment of the meeting, with several women who were also disaffected towards Society, continued to hold what they call Monthly Meetings ; and at Rhode-Island Quarterly Meeting, in the eleventh month, they presented an account purporting to come from Swanzey Monthly Meeting, which was not received or in any way acknowledged. After the business of the Quarterly Meeting was concluded, these individuals, with a few from the other Monthly Meetings, both men and women, most of whom had for a length of time openly manifested a want of unity with Friends, remained in the house, and called themselves Rhode-Island Quarterly Meeting, appointing Clerks, and a committee to visit subordinate meetings. This Committee, thus appointed, has since visited the Monthly Meetings, and attempted to sit in them, and to be recognized as a Committee from the Quarterly Meeting, organized as we have described, in a wholly unprecedented and irregular manner. Most of them being already under dealing as offenders in their respective Monthly Meetings, and refusing to leave Friends select—for the support of our Discipline, adjournment has been resorted to, in order to be freed from this intrusion. A few individuals have been found in each of the Monthly Meetings in Rhode-Island Quarter, who being disaffected towards the body of Friends, have, under the advisement of this committee, united in forming what they denomi-

nate Monthly Meetings, assuming to themselves the names of those meetings respectively.

At the opening of the Yearly Meeting, on second day morning, the 16th of 6th mo., the Clerk proceeded to call over the names of the Representatives from the several Quarterly Meetings, [eight in number,] which had been previously entered, as customary, from the accounts that had been handed him from those meetings; when it appeared that all the Friends named in those accounts were present, except three, for whose absence satisfactory reasons were given.

After commencing to read the minute in which the names of the Representatives had been thus entered, another paper addressed to "New-England Yearly Meeting of Friends," was laid upon the table, also purporting to be an account from Rhode-Island Quarterly Meeting; and by direction of the Yearly Meeting, the names of the persons therein given as Representatives to this meeting were also entered upon the minutes and called, when it appeared that they were all present. The last named account was signed by Charles Perry, Assistant Clerk, it being stated that the Clerk was prevented from acting by sickness.

A proposition was then made, and united with by the meeting, that the Representatives from the other seven Quarterly Meetings, those named in the two accounts from Rhode-Island being excluded, should constitute a Committee, before whom the persons claiming to be Representatives from that Quarterly Meeting should be fully heard on the subject of their claims respectively; and that the Committee, after deliberating thereon, should report to the Yearly Meeting which of the two bodies thus claiming, was, in their judgment, the true Rhode-Island Quarterly Meeting, in unity with and subordinate to this meeting, and entitled to send Representatives thereto—

no objection being made to the case being opened in the meeting in its collective capacity, should this be subsequently judged best. The persons who claimed to be aggrieved, denied the jurisdiction of this committee, and declined entering into any investigation of their case before them, notwithstanding they had previously submitted it to the meeting, preferring charges of unfairness in the appointment of the Representatives in the Quarterly Meetings. They stated that the Representatives were appointed with reference to this business, and that prescriptive measures were employed in one Quarterly Meeting at least, to obtain such as were desired. It was distinctly denied by Friends that any such intention existed—that no friend from any part of the Yearly Meeting could have had any expectation of such a reference when the Representatives were appointed; and in a subsequent sitting, this denial was confirmed by the statements of Friends from each of the Quarterly Meetings so accused.

It may be proper here to remark, that as the meeting had previously expressed its sense, that all those claiming to be members of Rhode-Island Quarterly Meeting ought to leave the discussion and decision of the question to members from the other Quarters; and as the Representatives from the other Quarters would, under the proposed reference, be judges in the case, these two classes being excluded, the number of those who opposed the reference of the subject to the Representatives, was very small.

This subject having been thus far disposed of, the Meeting came to the conclusion that no other business could with propriety be entered upon by the Yearly Meeting till it was fully determined. And instead of proceeding to the appointment of Clerks on 2d day afternoon, as usual, decided that the Clerks then under appointment should continue to serve the Meeting until the question was settled.

Two accounts purporting to be from Rhode-Island Quarter, were also presented to the Women's Yearly Meeting, and the whole subject was similarly disposed of by that meeting, by referring it to all the representatives, except those from Rhode-Island, to report thereon.

Soon after the opening of the afternoon sitting, a person under appointment as one of the Representatives from Sandwich Quarter, rose and said, that a portion of the Representatives had been together, and concluded to propose the name of Thomas B. Gould for Clerk, and Charles Perry for Assistant Clerk. Upon this, several individuals rose in quick succession, and expressed unity with the nomination. The large body of the Representatives informed the meeting, that they had no knowledge that any such proposition was about to be made, and by a very general expression of the members of the Meeting, as well as of the Representatives, the course proposed was wholly disapproved. On calling the names of *all* the Representatives in attendance from the several Quarterly Meetings, except Rhode-Island, it appeared by their express declaration, that *forty-one* of their number were not consulted in relation to the appointment of Clerks, and that they now entirely dissent from the appointment of Thomas B. Gould and Charles Perry, while *four* made no response when their names were called, *forty-five* being the whole number in attendance, with the exception of those named in the accounts from Rhode-Island. But the persons thus nominated to act as Clerks, with others, their adherents, proceeded in reading and speaking, to the disturbance of the meeting. The Clerk of the Yearly Meeting, by its fully expressed direction, solemnly protested against their proceedings, and desired them to desist. To this, however, they paid but little attention, and continued to carry on their own business till the adjournment of the meeting. Similar disorderly proceedings took place in

the Women's Meeting, with the exception that the Seceders left the house before the meeting adjourned.

During these disorders, Friends were preserved in much quietness, patiently waiting for an opportunity to commence the business of the Yearly Meeting.

On third day morning, the 17th, the committee in the case of Rhode-Island Quarterly Meeting, made a report, in which, after giving a statement of the various circumstances connected with the subject referred to their consideration, they express their "united sense and judgment, that the accounts from Rhode-Island Quarterly Meeting, signed by David Buffum and Sarah F. Tobey, as Clerks, should be received as the true accounts from said Quarterly Meeting, and that the representatives" therein named "should be considered and acknowledged as the representatives from that Quarterly Meeting to this Yearly Meeting." This report was signed by forty-one men, and thirty-eight women, being all the representatives in attendance in the Men's Meeting, except four, and all in the Women's Meeting, except two, apart from the representatives named in the two accounts from Rhode-Island. After the Report was read, two friends were appointed to inform the representatives named in the account signed by Charles Perry, Assistant Clerk, that the Committee to whom their claims were referred, had made a report, which was about to be considered, and that they might be heard thereon. After a short absence, one of the friends reported that he had delivered the message intrusted to them, to a number of those persons named in the report, whom they found assembled in the yard, in company with others. Having waited a sufficient time, the meeting, after hearing the report a second time, by a very general expression confirmed its conclusions, and thus acknowledged the meeting, of which the accounts were signed by David Buffum and Sarah F. Tobey, as Clerks, to be the true Quarterly Meeting of Rhode-Island,

and the Representatives named therein, to be the Representatives from Rhode-Island Quarterly Meeting to this Yearly Meeting.

While this subject was under consideration, three persons came into the meeting and demanded the use of the Clerk's table, and the transfer to them of the books and papers belonging to the Yearly Meeting, stating that they were deputed by what they called "New-England Yearly Meeting," to make this demand. The Clerk, in reply, stated that New-England Yearly Meeting was then sitting in this house, and could not deliver the books and papers, nor the occupancy of the Clerk's table or of the house to any other persons.

Since this time, the persons who disturbed us have not attended with us, and we have been favored to transact the various concerns of society claiming our attention, with great harmony and brotherly love.

We believe the number of those disaffected towards Friends, within our limits, to be comparatively small, and are comforted in the view, that the body of Friends among us are united in harmonious labor for the promotion of the cause of Truth.

At New-England Yearly Meeting, 6th mo. 1845.

"The Committee appointed to consider various subjects connected with the welfare of Society, laid before this meeting the foregoing Document, being a Narrative of facts and circumstances that have tended to produce a secession from Friends in this Yearly Meeting, which was read, and being considered, it was united with by a full expression of this Meeting, as being proper information for our own members, and those of otherly Yearly Meetings, and the Clerk was directed to sign it on our behalf."

From the Minutes of said Meeting,

ABRAHAM SHEARMAN, Jun., Clerk.

HANNAH GOULD, Jun., Clerk.

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