

RECOLLECTIONS OF SPITALFIELDS  
AN HONEST MAN AND  
HIS EMPLOYERS

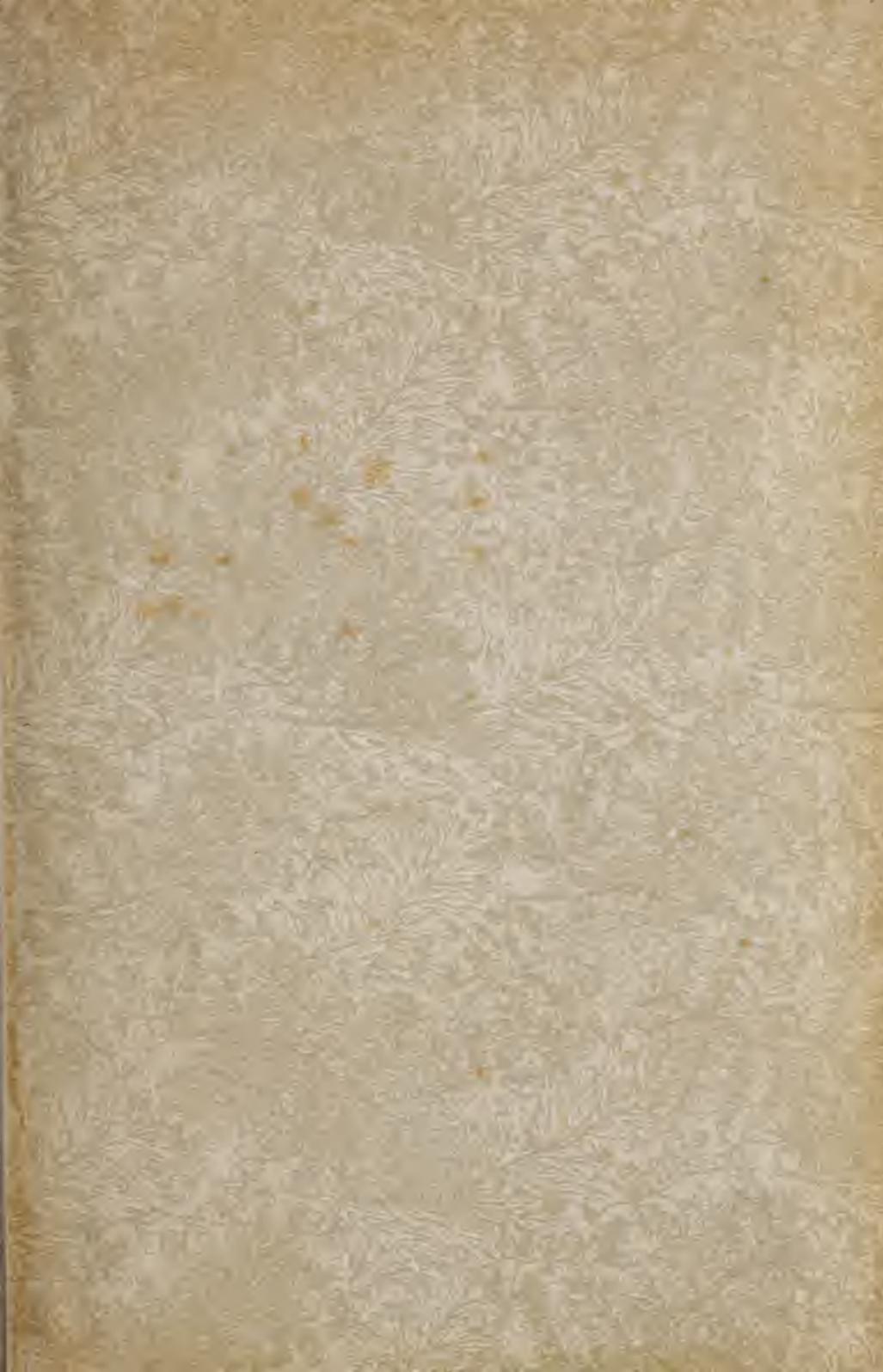
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Recollections of  
Spitalfields: an honest man



R. H. Rogers to Fox

From the 1st Feb. 07

Recollections of Spitalfields :

AN HONEST MAN  
AND HIS EMPLOYERS.





# Recollections of Spitalfields:

## AN HONEST MAN AND HIS EMPLOYERS,

BEING AN EXTENSION OF THE MEMOIR OF

JOHN GRAY,

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN 1839,

WITH BRIEF MEMOIRS OF HIS EMPLOYERS,  
JOHN TOWNSEND AND THOMAS COMPTON,

BY THEIR DESCENDANT,

THEODORE COMPTON.

“Godliness with contentment is great gain.”—

I TIM. vi. 6.

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## Preface.

THE little Memoir of John Gray, published soon after his death in 1838, was written at the request of my valued friend John Hodgkin, to whom I had given a verbal account, after the funeral, and who was much impressd with the value of such a simple and homely example of Christian life.

The Tract, for it was nothing more, passed through several editions, and was abridged and modified in one of the Friends' Tracts at York.\* It is now rewritten, with some account of John Gray's surroundings, and with short memoirs of his original masters, John Townsend, and his son-in-law, Thomas Compton; both, in their day, well-known members of the Society of Friends.

Though such a Friend as John Gray may no longer be found, and yet is hardly ancient enough to be of historical interest, there may be readers who can appreciate such a life of integrity, self-denial and benevolence, though passed in obscurity, and altogether uneventful.

His virtues walked their narrow round ;  
Nor made a pause, nor left a void,  
And sure the Eternal Master found  
The single talent well employed.

\* No. 32, *The Pious Workman*, 1851.

Who is the honest man ?  
He that doth still and strongly good pursue,  
To God, his neighbour, and himself most true.

\* \* \* \* \*

Whom none can work or wooe  
To use in anything a trick or sleight,  
For above all things he abhorres deceit.

GEORGE HERBERT.

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THE Quaker of the olden time !  
How calm and firm and true,  
Unspotted by its wrongs and crime,  
He walked the dark earth through.

He walked by faith, and not by sight,  
By love and not by law ;  
The presence of the wrong or right,  
He rather felt than saw.

And, pausing not for doubtful choice  
Of evils great or small,  
He listened to that inward voice  
Which called away from all.

O Spirit of that early day,  
So pure, and strong, and true,  
Be with us in the narrow way  
Our faithful fathers knew.

Give strength the evil to forsake,  
The cross of Truth to bear,  
And love and reverent fear to make  
Our daily lives a prayer.

J. G. WHITTIER.



THE  
HONEST MAN.

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“ What though on hamely fare we dine,  
Wear hoddin' grey and a' that ;  
Gi'e fools their silks, and knaves their wine,  
A man's a man for a' that ;  
For a' that, and a' that,  
Their tinsel show, and a' that ;  
The honest man, though e'er sae poor,  
Is king o' men for a' that.”

THE Scottish poet's ideal of a king of men is sometimes regarded as a mean one. If his honest man were merely one who is not a rogue, the ideal would indeed be mean enough. But the truly honest man, who in all things bears witness to the Truth, is truly a King; for he must rule the kingdom of his own mind, and bring into subjection all his selfish, worldly and carnal propensities, and rule them as his subjects. He must be just and true in all his words and dealings, whether as master or as servant; giving good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over; doing as he would be done by. Such a standard

of honesty, the world, whether commercial or fashionable, is loth to acknowledge as practicable;\* though it professes to be honest in trade, and generous and sincere in private life. We may hope there are kings of men to be found amongst the crowds whose chief object is to get gain for themselves, whether they get it by useful services to others, or win it at others' expense; but it is to be feared they are few and far between.

George Fox wrote in his Journal that his father was "an honest man, and there was a seed of God in him, and the neighbours called him Righteous Christer." George Fox was himself an honest man, who stuck to what he believed to be the Truth, in spite of cruel persecution. He was indeed a king of men. Another honest man and viceroy in his own little kingdom—a humble disciple of George Fox and John Woolman—was JOHN GRAY, the subject of the following memoir.

\* It is a common belief that business cannot be conducted on religious principles. See *Economic Review* and *British Friend*, 3rd Mo., 1894.



## JOHN GRAY.

At the beginning of the long reign of George the Third there dwelt at Brentford an honest and industrious Brazier and Tin-Plate Worker, named William Gray, "one of the people called Quakers." With an increasing family, numbering in all eleven children, he was often at his wit's end to provide things honest in the sight of all men, including food and raiment for the minds as well as the bodies of his numerous offspring.

The Society of Friends, afterwards foremost in the promotion of education, as well as in other branches of philanthropy, had not yet realized the importance of good schools for the children of working men. They had, indeed, opened an elementary school at their work-house in Clerkenwell, and had superior

schools at Tottenham and elsewhere; but none of these were suited to the condition of such families as William Gray's. He found no school available for his children nearer than Yealand in the north of Lancashire—a long and tedious journey at that time, even for experienced travellers. There were then neither railway trains, nor their fore-runners, the fast coaches, which ran two hundred miles in twenty hours.\* The only means of conveyance were costly post-chaises, and the waggon, which made their weary way along roads described by Arthur Young as “full of ruts four feet deep, and floating with mud.” Such, he says, was the condition of the road between Wigan and Preston, along which William Gray's two little boys travelled, towards the end of their long journey, in the year 1780; the elder boy being seven years old, the younger, John, only five!

\* In 1706 a coach was advertised to accomplish the journey between London and York in four days. In 1772 John Woolman complains of the hard driving of coaches going one hundred miles in twenty-four hours.

In these days of luxurious ease and indulgence it seems strange that parents should send their children so far from home at such tender ages ; but it is not so surprising, when we consider the difficulties of the journey, that the children, when once sent away, were a long time before they came back. Many never came back at all. Some were taken to a better Home, others went from school to apprenticeship—the “technical school” of that period, and probably the best. William Gray, the elder brother, after seven years at Yealand, was “bound apprentice” at the usual age of fourteen, to serve for seven years ; at the end of which service he was “of age,” and free to set up in business. John, the younger brother, remained at Yealand a year or two longer, and was then removed to a superior school at Gildersome, near Leeds, where his future master’s sons afterwards began their schooling.

At Yealand, John Gray’s amiable disposition, placid temper and gentle manners, won for him the love of the master and

mistress. Always trustworthy and willing to be of service, he would prefer working in the garden and farm to spending out-of-school times and holidays in bird-nesting or other rural sports. He became thus more and more attached to country life, and it was a sad disappointment to him, when, soon after his removal to Gildersome school, he was sent up to London to be bound apprentice to Townsend and Compton, Pewterers and Tin-foil Beaters, in Spitalfields. Thither, in his fifteenth year, in the year 1790, came the poor country lad, sorely against his will, leaving the healthy and varied country life for the confinement of a London workshop.





## SPITALFIELDS.

Though for several generations a notoriously “low neighbourhood,” resembling in some respects that of St. Giles’s at the other end of London, Spitalfields is not without its points of interest. The name is derived from a Spital or monastery founded in the thirteenth century by Walter le Brun, whose name is perpetuated in *Brown’s Lane*. Spital Square is said to have been part of the burial-ground of the priory. At the north-east corner of the Square stood the pulpit where, in the seventeenth century, “the Spital Sermons” were preached in the open air. Lamb Street, White-lion Street and Red-lion Street, remind us of the age of chivalry and the crusades, while Fort Street, Gun Street and Artillery Lane, recall the old Artillery Ground, since

removed to Finsbury. Quaker Street\* and Wheeler Street are intimately connected with Friends, and with Wilderspin's Infant School, which was in this neighbourhood. Friends have been attached to Spitalfields ever since the days of Fox and Penn. Many lived and died here during the Plague, as the records of the Society show. From the Friends' Meeting here arose that of Devonshire House, now and for many years the central quarters of the Society. Pelham, Wentworth, Dorset and Heneage Streets are relics of more aristocratic connections, while Montague Street and Halifax Street mark the estate of Charles Montague, Earl of Halifax in the reigns of William III. and Queen Anne.

Spitalfields Market is as important at the East End as Covent Garden Market in the West: though you will not often find at the former fruits out of season or costly luxuries for the table. Common window-plants may be bought at both markets; for the Spitalfields

\* See *London Friends' Meetings*, pp. 163-4, and *Life of Gilbert Lathey*.

weavers have always had a turn for window-gardening, as well as for pigeons: a taste inherited from their French ancestors.

The Spitalfields silk manufacture has been celebrated from the time of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, when religious intolerance drove from France many of her best workmen, and established the silk weavers in Spitalfields. The district was then, and for many years afterwards, comparatively open and suburban, affording space for other manufactures as well as the silk weaving. The weavers had their looms at their own lodgings, in the upper storeys of the houses, lighted by numerous windows with the small panes of glass usual until recent times. They received the silk from the master manufacturers, and brought back the correct weight of the woven fabric. In course of time disputes arose about rates of wages, to settle which Parliament was persuaded to interfere, and in 1773 and 1792 "the Spitalfields Acts" were passed, giving the Aldermen and Magistrates in quarter-sessions power to fix the rates of payment and

to enforce penalties upon all who received or paid more or less than the legal rates. This benevolent protective legislation was found to do more harm than good. It encouraged mediocrity, and checked improvement, by preventing the employers from rewarding superior skill and ingenuity; so that in 1823 a petition was presented to Parliament for a repeal of the Acts, which, the petitioners alleged, had "kept the London silk-loom in the same state as when first used by the French Refugees." The Spitalfields Acts were therefore repealed, and superior skill was allowed to gain its due reward. But hand-loom cannot compete, in point of *cheapness*, with those worked by steam power, and as cheapness is unhappily the one thing needful in competitive trade, "distress among the Spitalfields weavers" too frequently occurred; one of the worst times being in 1816, after the close of the long war, and while the Acts were in force. In that year a meeting was held at the Mansion House by the Spitalfields Benevolent Society, when the large sum of £43,369 was raised, to

which the Prince Regent added £5,000, to relieve the urgent needs of the weavers and their families. Efforts have been made from time to time to revive the trade, by means of state balls and drawing-rooms, where only Spitalfields silks were to be worn. The coronation robes of three successive sovereigns, and many other royal costumes, have been woven in the attics of Spitalfields; the latest effort to revive the trade being that of the good Duchess of Teck and her amiable daughter; but the hand-loom has never been able to compete with the silk-mills for the general trade in cheap goods.

One of the early French weavers settled in Spitalfields was the father of John Dollond the optician; who was born here in 1706. His early years were spent at the loom, but he devoted his leisure hours and thoughts to mathematical and optical studies, in which he was afterwards joined by his son. He continued, however, in the silk trade till 1752, when he went into partnership with his son, as opticians in St. Paul's Churchyard.

Another eminent man of science connected with Spitalfields was Thomas Simpson, the famous mathematician. He worked, like Dollond, as a weaver, and in the evenings studied and taught mathematics; being, I suppose, the founder of the Spitalfields Mathematical Society, of which Gompertz, the actuary, was afterwards a member.

Among the Quaker silk manufacturers were Joseph Green,\* of Spital Square, who settled there in 1715, and died in 1742, leaving a widow aged 17; John Row, an elder of Devonshire House Meeting; Job Allen and his sons, Joseph, a minister, and his more distinguished brother, William Allen, F.R.S., who left the silk trade, and was taken into partnership with Joseph Gurney Bevan in the famous chemical business in Plough Court. Joseph, the younger brother, remained with his father, succeeding him, and being in turn succeeded by Peter Bedford—a name well known and respected in Spitalfields.

\* Ancestor of J. J. Green, the genealogist.

Another of Job Allen's sons was Samuel, the father of the late Stafford Allen, a well-known and earnest philanthropist and "advanced" politician, a particular friend of Charles Gilpin, M.P., and Henry Vincent the Chartist orator.

William Allen left Spitalfields in 1793; but did not forget the place of his nativity. "His first special labour for the poor and destitute was undertaken, as was fitting, at Spitalfields," where, in conjunction with William Phillips, in the winter of 1797, he established a *soup-kitchen*, a model, as well as one of the earliest of its kind.\*

Another Spitalfields silk manufacturer was John Sholl, a "convinced Friend," an ingenious man, who aimed at bringing out new designs in figured-silks. One of these was for parasols, with a border representing Penn's Treaty with the Indians. Some of his silk was worn by the Royal family, and some covered an umbrella made for King William IV. In later years John Sholl gave much of his

\* *Friends of a Half Century.*

attention to bees and improved bee-hives, for taking the honey without injuring the workers. He had the honour of supplying the Queen and Prince Albert with some of his hives, and of personally explaining to them his humane system. Friend Sholl wore a looped-up, three-cornered hat, long locks, buckle shoes and knee-breeches, and the interview would have made an attractive picture for a photographer, or *Daily Graphic* artist. A son of this ingenious man, the late James Sholl of Lamb Street, Spitalfields, continued his father's bee-hive business; but he was better known as a manufacturer of writing ink, with which he supplied the Bank of England, as well as with burnt linseed oil for the ink used in printing the Bank notes. James Sholl retired to Congresbury in Somersetshire, where he died. I am indebted to his surviving brother, Nathaniel Sholl of Yatton, for these and other particulars.

During the great distress among the weavers in 1816, one of the best speeches made at the Mansion House Meeting was that of Mr. Thomas Fowell Buxton, then a resident at

the brewery, in which he had been a partner since 1811. The speech was warmly commended by Wilberforce, and may be considered the beginning of Buxton's public career.\*

Beside the silk trade and the great brewery of Truman, Hanbury, Buxton & Co., Spitalfields had several other industries: a large timber-yard; the building concern of Joseph Messer (a well-known Friend, with a large family); Cooks' Dye Works (also Friends); Milner's Calendering Mill; and Townsend and Compton's Pewter and Tin-foil Factory. The three last were in Booth Street, in adjoining premises, on what had been an estate of the Earl of Halifax. The premises of Townsend and Compton extended from Booth Street to Heneage Street, and included a large garden at the back, surrounded by lime trees. The dwelling-house had been a country lodge of Lord Halifax, and seemed strangely out of keeping with the squalor of its modern surroundings. The rooms were large and wainscoted, with handsome mantel-pieces, and

\* Memoir of Sir T. F. Buxton.

larger windows than usual in the time of the window tax. The front entrance had a flight of steps surmounted by a porch, and the big front door had a brass knocker, which was carefully polished up, but not by a future ruler of the Queen's Navy.\* A wide staircase rose from the hall to the spacious rooms above, and the offices below were on a corresponding scale. There was a large laundry, with a mangle, and utensils for washing and brewing, where excellent ale was brewed from pure malt and hops. The kitchen was provided with a bread-oven and boiler, as well as a wide range, and a smoke-jack turning the spit which had formerly been turned by a turn-spit dog. From the upper windows of the house could still be seen the skirts of the Forest, from which Lord Halifax perhaps furnished the spit with venison. Close by arose the

\* It was the handle, not the knocker, that led the diligent boy to wealth and fame ; but the moral is the same :

He polished up the handle *so carefuller*,  
That now he is the ruler of the Queen's navee.

*Vide H. M. S. Pinafore.*

lofty height of Christchurch steeple, a massive stone pyramid more conspicuous for size than elegance, contrasting unfavourably in that respect with the neighbouring steeple of St. Leonard's, Shoreditch. Spitalfields, however, could boast of the finest chimes and one of the finest peals of bells in all London. It also kept up the old usage of the Curfew-bell. Every evening, as the clock struck eight, the curfew began to toll—a dismal sound to children unwilling to leave their play and go to bed; but pleasanter, no doubt, to the tired workmen who then closed their twelve hours' work. The chimes were always welcome, though the Sunday tune, like the Curfew, was less pleasing to children than to workmen and men in business. A different tune was played each day of the week: *The Easter Hymn* on Sunday, *The Highland Laddie* on Saturday, *The Lass of Patie's Mill* on Friday. *O believe me if all those endearing young charms* was another of the tunes, and I think others were *John Anderson, Home, sweet Home*, *The Lass of Richmond Hill*, or *Auld Lang Syne*;

but these I am not so sure about as those on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

These beautiful chimes, and the whole peal of twelve bells, which had rung through the whole of the Georgian Era, were silenced for ever by a tremendous thunder storm which in the dead of night struck the steeple and cast the bells to the ground. A blinding flash of lightning was followed instantaneously by a deafening thunder clap, in the midst of which was heard the crash of the bells as they fell. It was a night not to be forgotten. The twelve bells were replaced by eight or ten new ones, but the chimes were not renewed; the rector, William Stone, afterwards Canon of St. Paul's, did not approve of the Church bells being used for merely secular purposes; though the Curfew was tolerated, as it set men free from labour.

As might be expected from the French origin of the Spitalfields silk manufacture, French family-names, and even some remains of the French language, still lingered in the district. Among the French names were

Villebois, commonly pronounced Villa-boys or Willow-boys, Leschallas, a plumber, who had an annuity out of the rates, for parish work done, and whose birthday for many years was not hailed by the rate-payers with wishes for "many happy returns." A third name was Desanges, honoured by knighthood, and familiarly known as Sir Francis De Sanjez.

There was a French-protestant chapel or Meeting-house in Church Street, occupied of late years by the Wesleyans,\* who seventy years ago, dressed very much like Friends. Nearly opposite was a row of houses with iron-railings in front, and dividing the street from the churchyard. In one of these dwelt two old bachelor brothers, who kept up the primitive Quaker costume, as depicted in Benjamin West's picture of Penn's Treaty with the Indians. Their house was distinguished by its superior freshness of paint and clean windows, and by the new railings

\* Built in 1743, occupied by Wesley's people early in the next century, and now used by the Bedford Institute, and for other Missions.

in front of it. For in a riot in opposition to Sir Robert Peel's New Police, when the Police Station in Church Street was attacked, the rioters tore the railings from the Quakers' house, in the belief that they would neither resist nor prosecute.\* The mob, no doubt, included, if it did not largely consist of, the class most likely to claim police attention; but there were many respectable people who opposed the introduction of a new force, believing its real object was to put down the increasing agitation in favour of political and social reform. Many of the demands then condemned as revolutionary have since been granted, and others are considered "within the range of practical politics."

Before the "new police" were set up, the public safety was protected by night watchmen, familiarly called "Charlies," who perambulated the streets, and "called the hour," generally adding the state of the weather, as

\* At an earlier date, 1800, a lawless mob threatened the house of Job Allen, crying out, "Here's a Quaker's house;" but they spared it, perhaps hearing that the Quaker was then dying. See *Life of Marjorie Allen*.

“Past 3 o’clock and a frosty morning.” Each watchman had a watch-box for shelter, and it was a common “spree” of gentlemen (?) of the Tom and Jerry style to upset the box when they found Charley asleep in it.\* There was a watch-box at the corner of Booth Street, and hard-by a stall where oysters and roast chestnuts when in season, were sold. That was before the introduction of the comforting winter institution of “taters all ’ot.” Gas lamps were introduced in 1823. In those days droves of ducks were driven through the streets for sale. The driver had a long stick with a hook at the end, with which he caught any particular duck by the neck. My father used to buy ducks in that way and fatten them for the table.

\* See *Life in London*, by Pierce Egan.

The last half century has certainly seen a considerable reformation in the manners of Society, though there is still ample room for further improvement.

*Spitalfields Literature.*—Joseph Smith's *Descriptive Catalogue of Friends' Books* contains the following names of printers and book-sellers in Spitalfields:—

R. HAWES, Corner of Dorset Street, Crispin Street, 1776.

COAKMAN, Church Street, printed a Tract by Claude Gay, against Profane Swearing, 1780.

E. SIBLY, 29, Brick Lane, printed and sold Sermons of George Dillwyn and W. Savery, 1796.

*The Mechanics' Institute*, was one of Dr. Birkbeck's Institutions. A Lecture on the means of promoting and preserving health, was delivered here in 1835, by Thomas Hodgkin, M.D.

*The Bedford Institute* is of later date, and more varied uses. It needs no description or commendation here, and forms no part of my *Recollections of Spitalfields*.



## JOHN TOWNSEND.

The head of the firm to whom John Gray was bound apprentice in 1790, had long been one of the most zealous ministers in the Society of Friends. He came from Faringdon in Berkshire, where he was born in 1725, to be apprenticed to a Pewterer and Brazier in Middle-row, Holborn. His master was a Friend, but was so slack in his duty to his apprentices that John Townsend had to own in after life that "he was allowed to run riot with gay company," after the manner of London 'prentices in the last century. Yet was he "mercifully preserved from destruction and led to break off his evil courses, until by yielding to the visitations of heavenly love, he became wholly given up to the service of God." A contemporary manuscript, from which these particulars are taken, attributes

to his bitter experience of the misery of sin and his deliverance by repentance and faith in the Divine Saviour, "the origin of that ardent sympathy which he felt towards young people who had missed their way, and engaged him to labour for their restoration." \* But even during his apprenticeship, John Townsend seems to have been a truer man than his master. In the latter's absence one day, there came a message from the Bishop of London requesting that some one might be sent to take an order. John Townsend at once waited on the bishop, and behaved to him in the manner of "a consistent Friend," which, instead of giving any offence, seemed to please—perhaps amuse, the bishop. He treated the young quaker with great kindness; made many enquiries and said he would send word, when he had considered the matter. In due time the message came, and the master was eager to wait on so important a customer, and to remove any ill-effects the apprentice's

\* In the *Eliot Papers*, John Townsend is mentioned as an adviser in a case of difficulty in 1762.

manners might have left. Accordingly he addressed the bishop as "my lord," and affected the manners of the world; but he had mistaken his man. The bishop treated him coolly, and asked who the young man was who came before. "O," said the master, "he is only an apprentice." "Well then," said the bishop, "send him to me; I will give my order to no one else."

On the completion of his apprenticeship John Townsend set up for himself as a pewterer, at No. 47 Prescott Street, Goodman's Fields, and being free from the bondage of pride and covetousness, he was able, at the age of 26, to take an help-mate unto him, with whose aid he became, in due time, a prosperous man. Having a benevolent and generous mind he often lost money in his endeavours to help others less fortunate—probably less thrifty and industrious—than himself; but these losses he retrieved by persevering industry and self denial. He soon became an acknowledged minister in the Society of Friends, and in 1757, at the age of

32, he was engaged in religious service in the Midland and Western Counties. He had there, in some places, "an exercising time, Friends being set down in the form of godliness, and not engaged to seek after the power." Among the Mendip Hills in Somersetshire there seems to have been more of the primitive simplicity. He mentions in his diary a visit to Joseph Clark at Hollotrow, and Joseph Metford at Glastonbury, where he held a large meeting, and "the Lord's power was felt." In Cornwall he went to George Fox's at Fowey, where he says, "I found my friend William Cookworthy, in a poor low state of health, and stayed with him several hours." But in Devonshire he reports that Friends had "got very much into the spirit of the world." At one place he had "to admonish ministers not to preach one thing, and set a contrary example in their own conduct."

These religious services or missions were continued at frequent intervals, and extended to all parts of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland, and in 1785-7 to North America.

The *British Friend* of 11th March 1874, contains a brief memoir of John Townsend, including some account of his travels in America, and an extract from the Testimony of Devonshire House Meeting after his decease in 1801. He is there mentioned as "a kind and tender patron of young people," and "a zealous advocate of the cause of Truth, labouring earnestly for the support of the Testimonies we have from the beginning believed it our duty to bear to the world." His zeal for the Testimonies was conspicuous in America, as will be seen from a letter he received at Philadelphia, and his energy of character and zeal in preaching were displayed on his voyage thither, and commented on by the sailors in their nautical phraseology. He had as companions on this voyage Nicholas Waln, John Storer and Thomas Colley; the last joining with him in his religious service. He was a tall man, while John Townsend was, like Zacchæus, little of stature. The two ministers used to hold forth on First days and address the crew on all suitable occasions,

each according to his gift, and in his own peculiar style of preaching. At the close of one of these meetings, the sailors were heard to say to each other, "The little'n would thrash the big'n with his hands tied behind him."

It would lengthen this memoir unduly to relate all John Townsend's travels, extending from Canada, where his brother was settled, to the Southern States. Travelling in America was very different in those days, when there were no railways or steamboats, few roads of any kind, and fords instead of bridges. Several times he had to swim his horse across a river to get to a meeting, and then sit in his wet clothes, but nothing damped the ardour of his mind, or prevented his going wherever Truth called him.

In the midst of his service in America he received the following communication :—

“From JOHN HUNT, of Evesham, New Jersey,  
25th 3rd mo. 1786,

“ To JOHN TOWNSEND, Philadelphia.

“ BELOVED FRIEND,

“Feeling myself somewhat indisposed, I left the city this afternoon, and could not pay thee a visit at

thy lodging, as was proposed at the close of our Select Meeting.

“The subject that I wanted to have an opportunity with thee about is respecting thy wearing a Red-spotted Handkerchief. It has been remarked that thee has a peculiar Testimony on behalf of plainness and against superfluity and gaiety, and on the educating of children, &c., and I may say thy service has been very acceptable, and there are many well-concerned weighty Friends in our parts, up and down on our continent that do think that wearing of such a Red-spotted Handkerchief will take off the edge and lessen the weight of thy testimony and peculiar service respecting the libertine appearance of our youth, and the injurious liberties allowed them. It is not long since one of the most powerful, eminent, able ministers that have been raised up in our days, passed through amongst us, and bore his testimony against those scarlet coloured spotted handkerchiefs from place to place, mentioning them in particular, and for my part I have long been pained to see these spotted handkerchiefs so much tolerated amongst ministers and elders, and I think it is clear to me that it will, and does weaken Friends' hands and lay waste their labours amongst our youth. Yea, I have thought that in vain, may we show them our Rules of discipline, and advices against their libertine appearance and conformity to the customs and fashions of the world, whilst our galleries are spread out with those spotted handkerchiefs.

“I have observed that a Red-spotted Handkerchief is one of the first things that our children begin to crave and tease their parents for, and it is what one of

our sons hath been pleading with us to let him<sup>s</sup> have, and he seems now quite strong, and says he thinks he may safely get one, seeing such Friends as thee wear one. Notwithstanding we have this several years laboured with him and kept him from it, and I think I should be as much against admitting them kind of handkerchiefs into my family as ever thee was against the new-fashioned bonnets in thy family.

“If Friends in the foremost rank cannot condescend to lay by things that burden one another, how can we expect our youth will condescend to us? I am fully clear that if thee could in condescension to thy friends lay by thy Red-spotted Handkerchief, and get one all of one moderate grave colour, it would be matter of great gladness to very many honest-hearted well-concerned Friends, and the more especially because thy service is like to be so extensive on our continent, and as I said before, thy Testimony so peculiar respecting the well-ordering and governing of families, educating of children, and bringing them up in plainness.

“Thus concludes thy Friend, who heartily wishes for thy preservation and perseverance in the unchangeable Truth.

“(Signed) JOHN HUNT.”

We may be sure that John Townsend readily eased the minds of his Friends by exchanging the red-spotted handkerchief for one of a moderate and grave colour. Perhaps he might be colour-blind, and, like Dr. Dalton,

see no difference between red and drab. His friend William Cookworthy once appeared in the ministers' gallery in a physician's red cloak, having put it on by mistake without noticing the colour. It is regrettable that the red-spotted handkerchief has not been preserved with the letter of the Elders. Though it seems to have been an offensively fashionable article, I have not been able to meet with any other reference to it.

Modern Friends would probably agree, whilst appreciating the faithfulness and the care of elders and overseers in days gone by, that their attentions might often have been better bestowed.

John Townsend mentions the long sittings of American Meetings, one at New York holding till 10 o'clock at night, and "another wearisome meeting of seven hours." With all their care about external peculiarities, Friends seem to have had but little of the inward and spiritual Quakerism of George Fox and John Woolman. John Townsend speaks of visiting "the widow Woolman," whose worthy husband had departed in 1772.

He returned to England in 1787, embarking at New York for Falmouth, but "the Captain missing that port" he was landed at Fowey, after a voyage of forty-six days. The very next year he resumed his religious travels in Great Britain, and continued in active service till his death in 1801: "a bright example of an earnest and diligent labourer in the Lord's vineyard." \*

Maria Webb, in her *Penns & Penningtons*, says that the well-known engraving of Gulielma Maria Penn, which forms the frontispiece of her book, is from the original painting on glass in the possession of the descendants of Henry Swan, of Holmwood, Dorking, who died in 1796. "It was given to him by John Townsend of London, with one of William Penn."

The Townsends were a Berkshire family of some importance. The old church at Newbury contains tablets to "John Townsend, Esquire, Senior Alderman, died 1789."

\* Memoir by James Jenkins, written soon after John Townsend's decease, but not published.

Another John Townsend, Esq., died in 1795, and another monument is to "Elizabeth Compton, wife of Richard Compton, and daughter of John Townsend's sister, died 1806, aged 27."





## THOMAS COMPTON.

Thomas Compton, the son-in-law and partner in trade of John Townsend, was born at Redbridge, in Hampshire, on the 29th May, 1749. He was the eldest son of William Compton and Sarah Moxham his wife, and came to London as an apprentice to John Townsend in 1763. After twelve years of diligent service he married his master's only child, and was taken into partnership in the business then carried on in Prescot Street, Goodman's Fields. He was an able man of business, and the business prospered under his management, enabling him to bring up a family of twelve children in comfort, if not affluence, and to set his father-in-law and senior partner at liberty to follow his ministerial calls.

There was little or no competition in those days. *Underselling* was considered dishonourable. It was not then admitted that "the part of the buyer is to cheapen, and that of the seller to cheat," as Ruskin puts it.

As the family increased as well as the business, a larger house and premises were taken in Booth Street, Spitalfields, where, in the mansion already described, Thomas and Mary Compton kept open house and a hospitable table for Friends attending Quarterly and Yearly Meetings, and on other occasions. Among their visitors were the gifted and eccentric Mary Knowles, Lindley Murray the grammarian, David and Moses Ricardo, Claud Gay,\* Thomas Horner, the the designer of the great panorama of London at the Coliseum in the Regent's Park, John and Oade Roberts, descendants of the famous John Roberts of Siddington—whose Memoir some young Friends used to consider the only

\* Claud Gay, born 1706, died 1786, was a French refugee, expelled from France as a heretic. He was a convinced Friend, and teacher of the French language. See *Piety Promoted*, 9th part, 1796.

entertaining Friend's Book. "Cousin Betty Moxham," and her niece Elizabeth Metford, of whom Thomas Compton was guardian, were inmates at Booth Street. Elizabeth Metford married her guardian's son, Samuel Compton, and their second daughter Elizabeth Metford Compton married Charles Warner, and her younger sister, Mark Capper; from whom have descended a numerous progeny. Another visitor was Thomas Hoyle of Manchester, whose daughter, Elizabeth, married Joseph Compton, who thus became one of the partners in the famous firm of Thomas Hoyle and Sons. Among the American Friends entertained at Booth Street, were Nicholas and Jacob Waln, of Philadelphia, John Large, Samuel Sansom, and Elliott Cresson, all well-known names in the Quaker city. Nicholas Waln was not only one of the richest and most influential citizens of Philadelphia, but a man of remarkable originality, as well as sincere piety. Many amusing tales are told of his wit and humour, but what is more important, a Friend could

say of him, "As a great man, as a wise man, as a learned man, and as a rich man, I know none possessed of as much child-like humility as Nicholas Waln." Another Philadelphian was Captain Robinson, of the *Electra*; afterwards Captain and owner of the *Thames*, London and New York liner, before steamers had crossed the Atlantic, or were supposed to be capable of doing so. The sailing ships, with their lofty masts, were truly "things of beauty." Captain Robinson often brought letters and presents from Philadelphian friends, and for twelve successive years never missed dining at Booth Street on Christmas day: a remarkable fact for a sea-faring man. He was a man whose words were few and savory, and "an honour to his calling," as my father says in a letter to a Philadelphia friend. Captain Robinson was a great favourite with us boys. He told us that he had sailed as mate under a very particular captain; who once ordered him to call all hands, and when all were assembled on deck, the captain said, "Each take a handspike apiece." Every man

being again ready, the captain commanded, "Heave that *chaw tobacco* overboard !"

Another American visitor was the occasion of more serious consequences to Thomas Compton and his family, who lost thereby the position they had held among the principal members of Devonshire House Meeting. The visitor was no other than Hannah Barnard, who was hospitably entertained at Booth Street during her "trial," as she called her Appeal to the London Yearly Meeting. In a letter to my father, dated 22nd October 1816, she thus wrote :—"Thy father came in the most friendly manner, and took me from my lodgings to his hospitable mansion, where I received incalculable kindness and attention, never to be forgotten while memory holds her empire, and never to be remembered without inexpressible gratitude. I was a stranger and they took me in, and were everything to me that the kindest brother and sister could be. And I once had the pleasure of sitting at their dining-table with eleven of their children. It was, indeed, a gratifying sight."

Thomas Compton's eldest daughter, Hannah, who in her childhood had been a pet of Mary Knowles, and had been taken by her to see King George the Third, was married to Thomas Foster of Bromley Hall; who was afterwards disowned by Friends, for holding and advocating the unitarian views of Hannah Barnard and Elias Hicks. In Foster's Appeal, Thomas Compton accompanied his son-in-law, and spoke as follows:—"I cannot bear to sit in this Meeting and hear my son-in-law condemned and disowned, without protesting against such proceedings. I can never approve of the practice which the visiting Friends adopted in this case of questioning the party visited. The Society has never thought fit to compile a Creed, nor have its members ever been called upon to subscribe any Confession of Faith. On such subjects I am decidedly of opinion that the principles of the Society are not fully and correctly known by its members generally. For my own part I acknowledge that my sentiments are similar to those of the Appellant, and they are such as I have held from my youth."

Thomas Compton's views of the Trinity were probably as indefinite as those of other Friends at that period. "*Christ within*" was the chief doctrine of the Society, and the identity of the WORD *which was* GOD, and *made flesh*, with the Man JESUS was a mystery few attempted to solve, and fewer succeeded in solving. Even in the present day, when Friends are anxious to prove that they are and always have been what is called evangelical; while they disown or shun those supposed to be tainted with *Hicksism*, they are neither agreed nor clear in their own views of the Deity of Christ. They own Him as the Son of God, as well as the Son of Man; but not as the One only Deity—"The Mighty God, the Father of Eternity." They think of Him as "our Advocate with the Father," by whose intercession, and for whose sake,\* sins are forgiven to those who believe; but they do not go with Him up the high mountain, and see Him transfigured, with His face shining as the Sun and His very garments as the light.

\* A phrase not to be found in Holy Scripture.

Those whose own views are thus partial and inadequate should bear with others whose minds may be but little darker than their own, and who, though, at present, as short-sighted as Philip or as Thomas, may hereafter be enabled to see the Father in the Lord Jesus Christ, who said to Philip, "He that hath *seen* ME hath seen the Father" (John xiv. 9). He could not mean the physical sight of the body born of a mortal mother; they had all seen that, and nothing more. The *seeing* He meant must be that of the Spirit, or inner man, and the ME must be the Divine WORD, which "in the beginning was with God and was God"; by whom "all things were made; in whom is life, and the life is the light of men."—(John i., 1-4). He is the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End (Rev. xxi., v. 6). "Look unto ME and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth for I am God, and *there is none else*" (Isaiah xlv., 22.) "I am Jehovah, and beside ME *there is no Saviour?*" (xlv., ii.) A Society or Church worshipping the glorified

Redeemer as the One God and Saviour, would stand upon an immovable Rock, and might be the means of bringing about the much desired union of Christendom, if in addition to the worship of the One God, it acknowledged as the one badge and bond of membership, the New Commandment to love one another. "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John xiii., 34, 35.) "Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three, and the greatest of these is love?" (1 Corinthians xiii, 13.)

Thomas Compton died in January 1817, and was followed soon after by his eldest son. His second son, Townsend, who in 1801 had been sent to America on business of the firm, and in 1811 had married Eliza, daughter of Pim Nevins of Leeds, and been taken into partnership with his father, now came to live at the business premises in Spitalfields. The old family house was divided, the widow and a bachelor son, a partner in the concern, dwelling in one part, and Townsend, with his wife and three little boys, in the other.

On the death of her husband and eldest son, Mary Compton received the following letter from Lindley Murray and his wife, written by the grammarian:—

“HOLDGATE, YORK,

*4 mo., 2nd, 1817.*

“We embrace the present melancholy occasion to express to our dear and long respected friend, Mary Compton, our unfeigned sympathy and continued regard. Thou hast, indeed, sustained a great and deeply affecting loss, and it must and will be very heavily felt by thee. But the affliction is not without its consolation. The good providence of God preserved you together many years and until your children were grown up, and you have received from each other innumerable instances and proofs of the most tender regard. And although Infinite Wisdom has thought fit to put an end to this affectionate intercourse, yet the remembrance of it is a source of gratitude, and calls for humble submission and resignation. The recollection of his love, his integrity and benevolence, will always afford a pleasing retrospect, and a comfortable hope that, through Infinite Mercy, you will be hereafter happily re-united, never to part again.

“Please to remember us kindly to thy dear children whose great loss we hope will be improved by them to the best purposes. In their affectionate and dutiful attention to thee thou wilt, we trust, in thy present bereaved condition, receive great consolation. We have not heard any particulars of thy dear husband’s closing scene. When it may be suitable and thy

health and spirits will admit of it, please to give us such information as thou mayst think proper.

“ We remain, dear Mary,  
“ Thy affectionate Friends,  
“ LINDLEY & HANNAH MURRAY.”

The house in Booth Street was visited in 1818 by some Americans of very different character from Hannah Barnard and Lindley Murray. They were a party of Indians of the Seneca tribe, then inhabiting the country about Niagara, who were brought to England and exhibited, as the Ojibbeways were by Catlin in 1843. They were much noticed by Friends, and came several times to Booth Street, Spitalfields. In a letter dated 26th June, 1818, my father writes: “The poor untutored Indians, grateful for past favours, came this morning without their interpreter and shook hands with me. The Chief and Little Bear can make themselves understood pretty well. They were all ushered into the house and plentifully regaled with bread and cheese and table beer. On retiring into the garden they recognized a few plants of Indian corn, and began to hoe them, telling me in

pantomime that such was the practice in their country. We then went over the manufactory. The lathes and blow-pipes seemed to attract most of their attention; they could not understand how tin-foil could be made so thin and of such large dimensions, though the whole process was before them. I tried to make them understand that our pewter was used amongst several of their tribes in Canada, and showed them the articles, yet it was clear they themselves were strangers to their use.\* In the warehouse I weighed each of the men, and was surprised to find three of the six weighed exactly alike, 12 stone 11 lb. About noon the poor fellows shook hands and departed."

\* The year after this, 1819, my uncle, John Jowitt Nevins, travelling through the forest from New York to Ontario, picked up a pewter spoon, which had apparently been dropped by some Indian tribe.



## JOHN GRAY AS JOURNEYMAN.

During his term of apprenticeship John Gray's tender conscience was sorely tried by a well-founded suspicion that one of the workmen was in the habit of stealing metal. Always abounding in kindness and charity, and fearful of injuring the reputation of another, he hesitated to expose the man, till he could not honestly longer delay. The theft was discovered, but the agitation, combined with confinement to an uncongenial employment, so disturbed the sensitive mind of John Gray that he had to be placed in St. Luke's Hospital. A year's rest and proper care restored him sufficiently to complete his recovery at his uncle's farm near Waltham Abbey. He returned to fulfil his term of apprenticeship, and never had any relapse; but he longed to be again in the country, with fresh air and

rural life, instead of the confinement of a factory in Spitalfields. His fellow apprentice, William Manley, afterwards Recording Clerk to the Society of Friends, had formed a strong and life-long friendship for John Gray, and he advised him to remain where his lot had been cast, and to follow the path of present duty, trusting that the Divine Providence would lead him in the way of true happiness and peace. John took his friend's advice, and received his reward: not in outward show—for he remained through life a journeymen pewterer—but in that inestimable income with which neither stranger nor tax-gatherer intermeddled. In that position he won the respect and love of his employers and fellow-workmen, and gained an influence for good which all felt and acknowledged.

There were two classes of workmen, the skilled workmen, called journeymen, who had "served their time," and the unskilled "labourers." The wages of the latter were 18s. a week, those of the former ranged from 30s. to 60s. or more, according to the skill

required. John Gray never earned more than 30s. a week.

The hours of labour in those days were the old full measure of twelve. "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" Punctually as the clock struck six the resident man,\* who acted as porter, opened the gates, and the men came in and set to work. At nine they had half-an-hour for breakfast, at one an hour for dinner, and at half-past five half-an-hour for tea; continuing then till the curfew tolled at eight. They therefore actually worked twelve hours, or half their time, except on Saturday, when they left off and were paid at six o'clock. There was never any discontent, the time passed quickly and pleasantly as the work went on, and the men could talk as they worked. John Gray seldom joined in the talk; but when the clock struck twelve he habitually

\*The same man came to the house and rang up the servants. Six o'clock was then the hour of rising, and then might be heard the flint and steel striking sparks upon the tinder in the tin tinder-box, from which were lighted the broad brimstone matches, then sold in bunches spread out like a fan.

said "Mid-day." If any profane or idle words were uttered, he would sigh audibly, and silence followed. Not a man would willingly hurt his feelings. There were religious and political discussions about the time of the Catholic Bill in 1828-9. Some of the old men dreaded a revival of the fires in Smithfield, if Roman Catholics were admitted to parliament and offices of state. Another was shocked at the idea of the earth's revolution, as contrary to Scripture, which said that God made the round world so fast that it could not be moved. But there was much common-sense and sometimes wit in the talk, while for morality the workshop might perhaps have compared favourably with many an office of more educated men, or convivial meeting of gentlemen in the days of George the Fourth.

Mindful of his own duty, and careful to avoid tale-bearing and detraction, John Gray would check any harsh judgment of others. His knowledge of the wretched in his own neighbourhood taught him to pity rather than condemn the victims of hereditary vice and

bad training. He would say, "We must make allowance for those who have been brought up in the midst of bad examples and without religious restraint, and not judge them hardly, lest we be found at last to have been no better stewards than they."

The life of an obscure journeyman, passed day after day and year after year, in the same unvaried round, offers little to enliven the pages of biography. His excursions never extended beyond Brentford and Staines, where his relations lived, and whither he always went on foot, to avoid witnessing the ill usage of horses, common in those days.\* Spitalfields had a noted Mathematical Society; but our friend had neither time nor talents for scientific pursuits, nor had he any leisure for the Spitalfields amusements of window-gardening, and breeding pigeons, birds and rabbits. All the time he had to spare was given to charity and piety. He kept no journal of his outward or inward experiences, for he certainly never dreamed of their being of any interest to others.

\* John Woolman had a like scruple.

Yet as a Christian pilgrim journeying through the wilderness of life from Egypt to the heavenly Canaan, he doubtless knew what it was to be "under the cloud," and to be "baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea," and to "eat the same spiritual meat and drink the same spiritual drink" as the typical Israel; for he "drank of the spiritual Rock which followed them, and that Rock was Christ."\* The beginning of regeneration may often be dated from some particular time; but no date can be given to John Gray's departure from Egypt, unless it were when, at the end of his apprenticeship, he took his friend Manley's advice, and sacrificed his desire to return to the country. As he silently worked at his lathe other work would, consciously or unconsciously, go on in his soul, until, as he advanced in years, the perpetual serenity of his countenance, happy and innocent as a little child's, showed how harmonious was his spirit with that of the Psalm, which sings of the manifold works of

\* 1 Corinthians, x., 3.

the Lord, and of man's going forth unto his work until the evening. "My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will rejoice in the Lord."\* In this spirit he lived and worked, and shed a sphere of peace around him, which was felt by all. Anger was quelled by his gentleness and love, who was never angry, nor gave any offence, but was the sympathizing friend and helper of everyone in time of need.

John Gray never married. It was said that he was once engaged, but the woman died, and he never thought of another. Single life might be best for him. His good friend and neighbour, Peter Bedford, was also a bachelor; but he recommended me and other young men not to follow what he called his bad example, but to marry as soon as circumstances allowed. John Gray dwelt in a humble lodging near his work, and lived in the simplest way. Bread and weak coffee, chiefly milk, served for his breakfast and evening meal. At dinner he had meat and a mug of

\* Psalm civ., 34.

table beer. In spirits and tobacco he never indulged. Had he found his mug of beer a stumbling-block to a weak brother his self-denying kindness would have given it up; but Teetotalism only began near the close of John Gray's life.

Neither niggardly nor lavish, scrupulously clean and neat in his person, he had always the appearance of comfort and prosperity; his clothing good and ample after the fashion long kept up by the people called Quakers. Until late in life he wore the orthodox drab and broad-brim; but changes of fashion in time affected even consistent Friends, and John Gray's coat, as well as many others, assumed the hue of invisible green, while the breadth of brim lessened as breadth of view extended. To the new fashion of trousers, though encouraged by Joseph John Gurney, he never gave way, contented with the old and cleanly fashion of washable leg-gear. But if John was "consistent," according to the views of his day, in bearing testimony against the vain fashions of the world, he was also consistent

in the weightier matter of upholding the laws of charity in little things as well as great. The golden rule of doing as we would be done by—too often forgotten in all stations of life—led our friend to a peculiarity of costume entirely his own. As he worked at his lathe the chips and shavings of the metal fell upon his stockings, and cut the hands of the poor old woman who washed them. To avoid this John wore *paper gaiters*. The woman thus kindly cared for was the widow of a blind workman with whom Gray had formerly lodged. She had washed for him many years, and during her widowhood to the end of her life he took care she did not suffer from want.

He might often be seen, in his dinner-hour, in some back slum of Spitalfields, hurrying\* along with a basin of warm food for some poor object of his compassion. Few knew whence he came, and fewer whither he went. He seldom mentioned the cases he relieved, or asked help from others; but in

\* His rapid gait resembled that of Josiah Forster in his younger days, when in France, where he was nicknamed *Toujours Courant*.

times of general distress he would invite his shop-mates to contribute what they could justly spare, and he never asked in vain. They knew their help was really needed, and would be wisely used. They knew, too, that John Gray would never ask or accept anything for himself. When an accident had deprived him for some weeks of the use of his hand he refused the customary contribution from his fellows, thanking them and assuring them that he did not need it, and would not take it from their own wives and children. The accident was the loss of a thumb, cut off by a slip of his chisel. The man who turned the wheel of his lathe, saw him suddenly stop and leave the shop, and discovering what had happened, went to the doctor's in a neighbouring street and there found the wounded man, with his hand wrapped in his apron, patiently waiting till some one else was served. This man preserved the severed member, and labelled the bottle: *The thumb of an honest man.*

There was at that time a poor half-witted lad, nick-named Billy Barlow, whose rags and

tatters and grotesque singing and dancing, brought him a few half-pence from the sympathising poor, and more kicks than ha'pence from the idle children then suffered to play in the streets. This poor creature was a frequent subject of compassion with our tender-hearted friend. One day hearing more outcry than usual, and recognising the voice of Billy Barlow, he ran to the rescue and found a crowd of boys pelting the poor creature. Reprimanding the boys for their cruelty, he turned to the parents, who were standing by in stupid indifference, or in brutal enjoyment of the "lark," and remonstrated with them for allowing such wickedness. Returning from his mission of mercy, he said with his usual placid smile, "They only laughed at me."

A diligent attender of the meeting for worship held at Devonshire House on Third-day morning, and of the Monthly, Quarterly and Yearly Meetings, John Gray sacrificed no small part of his wages, which were thus reduced to

about 25s. per week.\* Yet out of this he for many years allowed 7s. a week to a widowed sister, besides being a liberal contributor to the various collections in the Society of Friends for the poor and for schools and general purposes. Having given about two weeks' earnings to Ackworth School, the collector objected to receiving so much more from him than was given by many in affluence; but he replied that he could afford it and was most easy to give the whole sum. Having no wife and family he had no need to accumulate beyond guarding against becoming burdensome in case of sickness or infirmity. His own wants were so few that, notwithstanding his generous gifts and sacrifices, his savings amounted at his death to nearly £200. With the exception of a legacy of £30 left him by John Row as a mark of esteem, the whole sum was the fruit of his own labour and

\* I have heard the inconsiderate remark, that this deduction from the wages was illiberal. I believe it was the only course John Gray would have consented to. He would neither take money he had not earned, nor offer to the Lord what cost him nothing.

thrift. He wasted nothing in drink<sup>s</sup> and tobacco, and never attempted to get money without earning it. Thus he lost nothing by speculative investments, but put his savings in the Savings Bank, always keeping a supply in a drawer for present wants and the relief of poor neighbours.

John Gray was not only a Friend by birth and education ; he was “a consistent Friend” in all sincerity, accepting the *Testimonies* and adopting the *Peculiarities* in child-like faith. They were as binding on his conscience as the Ten Commandments. He regarded them as revealed truth. To use the heathen names of the days and months, to say Sir or Madam, or *you* to a single person, to take off or touch his hat as a sign of respect, or to wear a collar to his coat—these would have burdened his conscience as acts of “conformity to the vain customs of the world.” Yet he did not take in its literal sense the injunction to call no man Master ; on the contrary, he always called his employers Masters, and recognized the just positions of masters and men. The last half

century has seen great changes in the Society of Friends. Some of them may be signs of a decline from the inward and spiritual religion of our forefathers to a more outward and visible one ; but few would now wish to revive the external peculiarities of speech and dress. If some of us regret the change in the appearance of the Yearly and Quarterly Meetings, and would like to see again the unique appearance of the "women's side," clad in light silk bonnets and scarves, and with faces suggesting companionship with "the shining ones," few would desire to return to the strictness of a hundred years ago, when a Minister sixty years old was dealt with by the Elders for wearing a red-spotted handkerchief.

Simple as a child, John Gray seldom expressed any opinions of his own: perhaps he seldom had any. The Testimonies of Friends and the convictions of the Spirit were his rules of life ; one, as he believed them to be, with the teaching of the Scriptures of Truth. In this child-like spirit he took his silent part in Meetings for discipline, where the Queries

concerning the state of the Society were answered, and other business was done. At one of these Meetings, when asked to take some appointment, he meekly answered, "I feel as a little child." With the innocence of a child he went about the business entrusted to him. If he knew of "an exception to the Queries," such as a Friend indulging in "vain sports" or going to places of diversion, he would faithfully do his duty without fear or favour. According to Quaker as well as Gospel rules, he would first go to the delinquent and tell him his fault between themselves alone, and then, when the Queries were answered, he would say, as in duty bound, "I am aware of an exception;" rather than allow an answer to go forth which he knew would be untrue. The difficulty of framing true answers, without reporting or reviving cases of exception, privately known, but not formally before the Meeting, led to the discontinuance of the practice of answering the Queries; but that was long after the time of John Gray. When the third generation of

his employer's family fell away from the Testimonies and from the practice of their "consistent" father and grandfather, so far as to go to the Races, to the Epping Hunt, Greenwich and Fairlop Fairs, and even to the Play, then in the palmy days of the Kembles, O'Neil, Kean, Liston, Catalani, Grimaldi, and other celebrities, poor John Gray's spirit was sorely tried. True to his sense of duty, he went boldly but respectfully to his masters and remonstrated with them, with the appeal "I don't know how we can answer the Queries if we know of exceptions." His visits were always kindly received and his character and truth sincerely respected. His masters would cordially grasp his hand, and regret that his mind should be troubled about them ; but the march of intellect had begun, and young men no longer felt bound by the traditions of the elders, or the rules of the overseers, derived from Puritan times. There is nothing necessarily immoral or debasing in dramatic representations, any more than in the works of fiction, which were as rigidly debarred by

Friends sixty years ago. All depends upon the nature of the plays performed, and the novels written and read. The theatres probably do more harm than good, and the same may be said of sensational novels ; but there are plays, and many more novels, where the good outweighs the evil, and it may be a moral duty as well as a pleasure to encourage the good ; instead of leaving those who “hold the mirror up to nature” to seek support only from the frivolous and depraved. The late pious Bishop Fraser desired to raise the stage to a higher level, and to make it what it ought to be, a means of instruction and moral elevation of the people. And it is hoped that the morality of the Stage has improved of late years, though it cannot boast of a Garrick, a Siddons, or a Jenny Lind.

The voice of conscience is often silenced by louder calls from the appetite and pocket. John Gray never listened to the voice of Mammon in any plea against Truth and Justice ; nor would he knowingly profit, directly or indirectly, by wrong doing. He

might sometimes be over scrupulous, but in keeping within what he believed to be "the limitations of Truth" he enjoyed "a peace above all earthly dignities, a still and quiet conscience?"

Pewter goods, under the honest old name, are not much in use now, except in public-houses, where, I suppose, beer is still relished "out of the native pewter;" but in the time of John Gray, the business was extensive and varied. Pewter pots and jugs for beer were a considerable item, but much more was done in plates and dishes, chiefly exported to America, and in hot-water dishes and plates which were much used at home, and are so still to some extent. In the *Eliot Papers* lately published, we find at p. 55 an extract from a letter written in 1759, saying "y<sup>e</sup> collectors of y<sup>e</sup> Tyths yesterday took all your Pewter plates and dishes away so that you'll become a Customer to John Townsend for a new sett." Again at page 118, John Eliot is said to have used "a large water plate under that upon which his meat was served."

These plates were hardened by a process of beating with polished steel hammers, requiring great practice and skill, and as the "hammer men" would "larn no prentices," their places were not easily supplied. Plates so worked at high wages were necessarily costly, but they were practically everlasting. One of these hammer-men had served under Nelson, and had many yarns to spin about him and Collingwood, who, he said, was preferred by the men to Nelson, who was very severe. The same, however, was said of Jervis, Earl St. Vincent, who was really a humane, as well as a just and pious man. The most profitable branch of the business of Townsend and Compton was the tin-foil manufacture; the foil being then chiefly used for "silvering" mirrors. Sheets of large size were sometimes required; some for the mirrors in the Royal Pavilion at Brighton. The gaudy George IV. had his mirrors as well as his robes from humble Spitalfields! The foil was of pure tin cast into plates about a quarter of an inch thick, then rolled between heavy steel rollers,

to the thickness of stout card-board, and finally beaten out into foil by polished steel sledge hammers, requiring even more practice and skill than the plates above-mentioned. Tin-foil is now chiefly used for packing various articles sold by chemists, grocers, tobacconists and others. Pewter vessels of different kinds were much used in the Army and Navy, and some called Guinea-basins were so named, not from their price, but their destination to the Guinea coast, where they were most likely used in the African slave trade.

John Gray would put his hand to none of these things. He would not work on any Army or Navy contract, still less would he consent to share in the gains of oppression and cruelty.\* Beer in his time was universally regarded as a wholesome, almost necessary refreshment, and he could turn a pewter pot with a clear conscience ; but Guinea basins were made chiefly for the slave trade, and he

\* William Allen refused to supply drugs to the Russian Army, or to replenish a medicine chest suspected to be destined for the slave trade.

would have nothing to do with that. Beyond washing his own hands of the matter he did not think it his duty to judge others. His masters might feel at liberty to supply the Army and Navy, and even African merchants, with useful articles, not in themselves injurious to either enemies or slaves; for soldiers, sailors and negroes must be fed, and to supply them with the means of feeding decently is not taking part in war or slavery. That was for them to judge.\*

The same charitable spirit influenced him on all occasions. When most of his employers' family had left the Society of Friends, he kept up his kindly and respectful intercourse with them, as opportunities offered, and retained to the end of his life their hearty esteem. Missing one of the younger sons from Meeting for several weeks, he came to see him, fearing he might be giving up divine worship altogether. On learning that he went to church, his mind seemed relieved, and he said

\* Friends did not scruple to give flannel waistcoats to the soldiers sent to put down the "Rebellion" in 1745.—W. Beck's *Friends*, p. 215.

in his usual kind and pleasant tone, "Well, we are told to *try all things* : let us mind we *hold fast that which is good.*"

Be it remembered that this was a man who had been brought up as at the feet of Gamaliel, according to the strictest sect of the puritans, a very Quaker of Quakers ; yet could he embrace as a fellow-disciple every one who had the true mark of discipleship : " By *this* shall all men know that ye are my disciples, *if ye have LOVE one to another.*"

Always a man of few words, and of very humble intellectual powers, his short sayings were often the feeble expression of deeper feeling and thought than strangers might suppose. There was an indescribable influence in his presence, which, combined with his gentle manners, and the kindly tone of his voice, won the hearts of all. Mechanic as he was, a scholar only in the school of Christ, he was a true gentleman in the proper sense of the word, a man of refinement, eschewing all that was base and coarse, with a constant regard for the feelings and reputation of others ;

a Christian gentleman, who practised charity in little things and in great, and had the crowning virtue of humility. His honour and wealth were his desire to be least of all and servant of all, in the service of the King of kings—the meek and lowly Saviour of the world—in whose service he shared the work and the joy of those heavenly ministers of His that do his pleasure, hearkening unto the voice of His word. In that service, unobserved of the world, and undisturbed by the praise of men, he enjoyed the blessing of the Lord, which alone maketh truly rich; a blessing above all earthly price, beyond all worldly honour, safe from the tongues of envy, and free from the snares of praise.

Nearly seven times seven years had passed from the date of his apprenticeship; Gray's year of jubilee was at hand. His benevolent crown was bald, and his locks were silvery, though his years numbered but sixty and three. He was still contentedly at work at his old lathe, with his paper gaiters and his shortened thumb; when a voice whispered to

him, "Friend, come up higher." On Saturday evening, the first of December, 1838, he left work at the accustomed hour, to all appearance in his usual good health. He had received his week's wages, and distributed his weekly alms, including an additional gift to a sick workman, and had gone home to his lodging. He was sitting by the fireside in silent meditation—perhaps reflecting on the close of another week's labour and the coming of the day of rest; perhaps he might remember that the last month of another year had begun, and that he was already in the forty-ninth year of his service, and he might think, too, of the three masters, of three following generations, whose remains he had followed to the grave\*—however that might be, we may be sure that his heart was filled with love to the Divine Master he had so faithfully served, and whose goodness and mercy had followed him all the days of his life. Sitting thus in

\* John Townsend in 1801, Thomas Compton in 1817, and Townsend Compton in 1834—the funeral of the last being the day of the burning of the Houses of Parliament in October, 1834.

his humble abode, in one of the poor streets of Spitalfields, he was suddenly called to quit his earthly tenement and enter the place prepared for him in the mansions of the Father's house. Who can doubt his welcome there?

“Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

To rule over many things cannot be the rest of idleness. The joy of the Lord is to bless His creatures. His joy and His glory cannot be augmented by human praises. To worship Him is to do His will, by helping to spread His blessings and the coming of His kingdom, that His will may be done on earth as it is done in heaven. His angels are His ministers that do His pleasure, hearkening unto the voice of His word. His servants are they who join with the angels in that angelic work, and are prepared thereby to become angels when their work of probation here is done.

RESTORE, O Father! to our times restore  
The peace which filled Thine infant church of yore ;  
Ere lust of power had sown the seeds of strife,  
And quenched the new-born charities of life.

O never more may differing judgments part  
From kindly sympathy a brother's heart ;  
But linked in one, believing thousands kneel,  
And share with each the sacred joy they feel.

From soul to soul, quick as the sunbeam's ray,  
Let concord spread one universal day ;  
And faith by love lead all mankind to Thee,  
Parent of Peace and Fount of Harmony !

## Notes.

*Gilbert Latey* (p. 8).—The interesting volume on the London Friends' Meetings, contains an account of the rescue of the Wheeler Street Conventicle from destruction in 1670. Intolerance had already gone to the extreme of pulling down the Friends' Meeting-house at Ratcliff, and Sir John Robinson declared he would do the same with the Quakers in Spitalfields. In this distress Friends turned to Gilbert Latey, the owner of the property, who was absent in the West of England. A respite of three weeks being granted, Gilbert had time to instruct an attorney to prepare a lease of the premises, which he granted to a poor Friend, and put him in as resident, thus making the building a dwelling-house, and exempt from the law

against conventicles. Robinson, finding himself outwitted, said, "If your Friends had all been as wise as this fellow, you might have had your other meeting-houses, as well as this."

George Fox, William Penn, George Whitehead and many others preached in Wheeler Street. The house was damaged by the great storm in 1703, which swept away the Eddystone Lighthouse, and in 1749, "report is made that Wheeler Street Meeting-house has tumbled down."—See *London Friends' Meetings*, chapter x.

*The bachelor brothers* mentioned at page 19, were Charles and William Bratt, dealers in marine stores. William was a collector of old books and had an extraordinary collection of Bibles; his brother was a man of superior abilities, but they lived in much seclusion, though diligent attenders of Devonshire-house meeting. Charles Bratt built a range of tenements in Spitalfields, and objecting to the charges of the E. L. Waterworks Co., for a

supply of water, he set to work, with the help of a labourer, and dug a well in the courtyard of his premises, erecting pumping machinery to feed a large tank for supplying his tenements with water. In a recess in the wall next the street he put a pump, open to the public, and which was much used, for the water was fresh and good ; though the pump was hard to work. A neighbour said to him, " Mr. Bratt, your pump-water is very good—when we get it ; but it is very hard to get." The fact was, the astute Friend had so arranged his apparatus, that the public well-earned the benefits received. For every gallon of water pumped into the public cans, two were raised into the owner's tank. The Water Company, however, finding they had been outwitted, came to terms ; which was the end intended. The public pump was accordingly suppressed, and the reduced water-rate agreed to.

Thomas Compton was an original proprietor of the East London Waterworks Company, and remained so all his life, leaving his shares to his widow, who held them till her death in 1843.

*William Manley* (p. 47) in recommending me to read "Sewel's History,"—told me that when he was an apprentice to my grandfather, he used to get up at four o'clock in the morning, to read Sewel, so interesting did he find it. With the working-hours from 6 a.m. till 8 p.m., there were not many in the week for reading. Whether shorter hours of work yield more hours of reading to any good purpose may be questionable, and it remains to be proved whether the present facilities for acquiring knowledge will produce such striking examples of "the pursuit of knowledge under difficulties," and such manly characters as we have in the lives of Franklin, Hutton, Brindley, Stephenson, Gifford, Livingstone, and many more.

*Friends and Thieves.*—Peter Bedford's influence with his thievish neighbours is well known. Some of them professed to respect his Friends, but others took advantage of their well-known objection to prosecute, where the law inflicted the penalty of death. In an account of the Yearly Meeting, 1816, in my father's

handwriting, I find the following—“An evening or two since, as my quondam governor, John Candler of Ipswich, was returning from Meeting to the house of his son-in-law, Benjamin Reed, three men attacked him in Wood Street, Spitalfields, throwing him down with violence, as they had done John Bell, John Coleby and John Batger. Death is the penalty of such crimes; but the villains know Quakers will not prosecute, and so they rob them with impunity. Friends are now on the alert, and my old schoolmaster, at the approach of dusk, starts up, no matter what is before the Meeting, and goes home by daylight.”

At the same Meeting, William Allen called attention to the sorrowful fact, “that crimes of the greatest magnitude are committed by children of 9 and 10 years of age, many of whom are condemned to death, for want of a fostering care, and the rights of humanity.”

Such atrocious laws defeat their object.

*By the same Author.*

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