

THE JOURNAL

OF THE

FRIENDS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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For Table of Contents see page two of cover

Our Quotation—8

“When the Christian is convinced that the principle upon which he acts is correct, I believe it does not become him to examine too closely his probability of success, but rather to act in the assurance that, if he faithfully does his part, as much success will attend his efforts as is consistent with the will of that Divine Leader under whose banner he is enlisted.”

JOSEPH STURGE (1793-1859), quoted in the forthcoming volume, *The Later Periods of Quakerism*, by Rufus M. Jones.

Reminiscences of Lisburn School

THE following reminiscences were dictated at various times by Mary Tolerton, *née* Creeth (1792-1884), to her daughter, Jane Tolerton (1833-1917)¹.

My mother took me herself to Lisburn School.² Though it was perhaps twenty miles from Richhill, we set out to walk, for there were no railways in those days, and no stage-coach had ever been seen in our neighbourhood. We hoped, I suppose, for a friendly lift, but whether we got it or not I do not know, but I remember that my feet were so sadly blistered that Mother had to carry me, and that we spent one night on the way, at Sarah English's at Trumra, near Moira.

When mother left me I cried very much, but I soon found kind friends at the school. Thomas and Hannah Barrington³ from Ballitore were superintendent and house-keeper, and the latter took a motherly care of poor little me. She was kind to all, and made pets of the little ones.

I was put to sleep with Mary Wood, one of the elder girls, who was very kind to me, and as I was rather puny she always managed that I should find a piece of bread under my pillow in the morning. There were about eighteen girls at the school and the teacher was Sarah Dickinson.⁴ The boys were more numerous. Sarah Dickinson was a very superior young woman. When she entered on her post at Lisburn she had many difficulties to encounter. The girls, some of them almost grown up, had united to oppose her, for the school was in a disorganised state, owing [to the] effect of the "New Light"⁵ opinions, which had penetrated even there. The preceding mistress, Elizabeth Doyle,⁶ had imbibed these opinions, which she displayed more especially in the crowning act of her extraordinary marriage with John Rogers,⁶ a Lisburn Friend, which took place in 1801. Except that they published their intentions in the market at Lisburn, the only ceremony on the occasion was a simple promise made in the presence of witnesses in the girls' schoolroom. Two of the girls, Alice and Mary Sedgewick, had been very much influenced by Elizabeth Doyle, and afterwards I think they were dealt with by the Monthly Meeting and narrowly escaped disownment. So it may be supposed that Sarah Dickinson found little respect for established rules prevailing. She was kind, but firm, and as some of the elder girls left the school shortly before I was placed there, good order had been restored.

In the course of time Samuel Douglas⁴ came to be schoolmaster, and after a while he and Sarah Dickinson were married. I remember well seeing them ride off on horseback (the bride on a pillion behind the bridegroom) to Ballinderry Meeting to be married. We were at breakfast, and we all rose to have a peep at them as they rode up the hill. We had no lessons that day, but Hannah Barrington employed the older girls in the granary in filling mattresses with fresh straw. This we thought great fun. When the work was done we were treated to bread

and cheese and probably a drink of beer. Those times were different from the present, for we had beer regularly twice a week at dinner. Vacations were not in vogue then, but we often had a "play-day" or an evening allowed us for recreation. On Seventh Day afternoons we had no lessons, but we had then to see that our clothes were in order, and to tack our tuckers in our dresses for First Day. In the fruit season we were frequently allowed into the garden to gather fruit for ourselves, which was a great treat. At that time the fruit was never sold, but kept for the children. When the blackberries were ripe we had many a grand ramble, often taking home cans full of them to be made into dumplings. On these occasions the mistress always had a bell to collect the ramblers. Once a girl was missing, causing great consternation. After a long search she was found caught so fast in a thicket of brambles that she could not get free. Colin Glen, still famous for its blackberries, was a favourite resort.

A very important event was the birth of our mistress's eldest child. We girls were taken to see the baby, whose grandmamma, Mary Douglas,⁴ as we passed from the room, handed each of us a large slice of bread and butter with home-made cheese. Whenever such occasions occurred afterwards the grandmamma always brought us a cheese. She was noted for good cheese-making.

Winter and summer we wore the same dress of dark coloured stuff with short sleeves and low neck. Our tuckers of muslin were very neat and ornamental, being drawn in with a string run in the upper edge. Over this when we went to meeting we wore in summer white "vandykes"⁷ of thick muslin, or a white muslin handkerchief crossed over in front. In winter we wore little cloaks. We had gloves of slate-coloured glazed muslin which reached above our elbows; these we made ourselves in sewing class, also our little bonnets of the same material. Our pinafores were of checked linen made high round the neck, but we were not allowed to wear these during lessons; we had to take them off, fold neatly, and sit on them till lessons were over.

Great care was taken as to our carriage and deportment, lest we should contract any bad habit of stooping or shuffling in walking, etc. Those were the days of back-

boards and seats without backs. Sometimes we had to stand up straight with our backs against a wall, sometimes to lie flat on the floor, or our shoulders were held back with bandages in order to expand our chests. Once I remember being tied up in this way, which so distressed me that I began to cry, and as I could not raise my hands another girl was told to take my handkerchief and dry my tears for me. This was a cruel mortification, and I wept more bitterly than ever. I never forgot this, and never again was I bandaged for stooping.

We were taught to sew with great neatness, for Sarah Dickinson was an adept in the art. The Friends who were on the School Committee often sent work to be done by the schoolgirls, for which the school was paid. When Lucia Richardson⁸ sent anything she liked me to do it, as I suppose I was one of her favourites. I remember darning a tablecloth for her in the pattern of the damask. She was very much pleased, and made a pretext of wishing for a drink of milk, for which I was sent to the dairy, whither she followed me, and slipped half-a-crown into my hand. At other times she gave me a pair of long gloves, which being of kid were very much admired, also a white "hair-bine"⁷ handkerchief for the shoulders for summer wear, also considered very pretty. I remember Lucia Richardson as a very elegant, lady-like person, of such an erect carriage that, as she told us, she had not for sixteen years leaned against the back of her seat in meeting. When she entered the schoolroom the force of her example made us all involuntarily straighten our shoulders.

The work that I liked best of all was to darn John Conran's⁹ stockings. I thought him the best of men, and that if I could only live with him always I should certainly be a very good child. He did not often come to the school except when he accompanied Ministers from a distance. Of these I remember one from America, William Jackson,¹⁰ who visited us in 1802 or 1803, and gave us a sketch of his school days, comparing our more favoured lot with his. He said that the schoolhouse where he had studied had only one room, without any windows, but it had an aperture instead which was stuffed with straw when light from outside was not needed. He gave a penny to each girl and each boy. I think I kept mine at

least twenty years. I seem still to see that Friend as he sat on the steps leading to the master's desk (called by us "the throne") in the boy's schoolroom, where we were all assembled to hear him talk and preach to us.

We were very proficient at marking linen and working samplers; these last, however, were done in our play hours. We also worked lines of poetry on "bolton" as presents for our friends. We also for the same purpose knit pincushions in sampler patterns, and some of these which I still have in my possession attest the endurance of the colours of the worsted of those days. I very much enjoyed knitting them, and for one girl—Jane Bell—I made nineteen! I was favoured too by Sarah Douglas with permission to knit one, oval in shape, for her to present to Sarah Grubb (mother of the late Jonathan Grubb). These pincushions were always washed after being knit, then when still a little damp were stretched on a ball before being stitched into shape. So devoted were some of us for a while to this work that we often sat up in our beds to knit while the other girls were asleep.

We were taught reading, writing, arithmetic, etc., by the master in the same room with the boys, but not in class with them, and we sat at opposite sides of the room. The taws, a piece of leather cut into narrow lashes to within an inch of the end, was used in a peculiar fashion. The first boy or girl found idling was obliged to stand between the two sets of benches holding the taws till another idler was found, who then went through the same punishment, regarded as a great disgrace. The "black hole," a narrow cellar under the house and entered from the garden, was used as a place of confinement for very naughty children, and for no other purpose as far as I can remember. I think our dread of being shut up here was not caused by its darkness and solitude, but because confinement there was looked upon as the very greatest disgrace.

We were well fed in my time at Lisburn; we had meat three times a week and soup one day with the meat, eggs and butter or potatoes and butter with milk or beer, our food being varied according to season. Our breakfast was always stirabout and milk, and sometimes we had bread at noon according to the dinner for the day. If milk

was plentiful we had boiled milk for supper. This was milk boiled and thickened with flour or oatmeal. Sometimes we had strawberries and milk. Tea we never had unless it were given us as a treat by some kind friend, and such occasions were times of great festivity. The bread was all home-made and was of the best quality.

Some of the girls were in the habit of going to sleep in meeting. Dorothy Lamb¹¹ sat on a side seat from which she had a view of us all. One day when we were leaving the meeting-house, she was standing in the hall waiting for us, and she called out: "Girls, if you please to halt." We felt rather alarmed as to what might be coming next. She then gave us a lecture on the impropriety of giving way to drowsiness in meeting, adding an anecdote of how when a girl she had been cured of the habit. She attended Ballintore meeting, where her uncle Thomas Wright¹² sat in the gallery. Like other worthies in the country he carried a heavy staff, and one day he saw her nodding, whereupon he raised his staff, and with it struck a violent blow on the gallery rail in front of him. She was roused up with a sudden start, thus betraying herself to the whole congregation. Her short-comings probably remained in our memories more than our own. It was then fashionable to wear very narrow skirts. Dorothy Lamb was very strict in reproving any approach to vanity in dress, and Samuel Douglas's sister Mary fell under her censure. When Friends were coming out of meeting one day, Dorothy Lamb stopped this young woman, saying: "It's a shame to see thee, Mary: one would think thee hadn't on any petticoat." Whereupon Mary displayed first one—then another—and then a knitted petticoat, this last by the way, fitted her very closely. On another occasion I remember Dorothy Lamb put her fingers inside the bonnet of a young Friend, and taking hold of her cap border at each side stretched it tightly so as to spoil all the crimping, which was then an innovation and considered rather smart. But with all her strictness Dorothy, or as she was generally called Dolly, Lamb, was a kind-hearted woman; both she and her husband, Thomas Lamb, were good friends to me, and I often experienced their kind hospitality at Peartree Hill.

I remember the great comet of 1812.¹³ I was then

assistant teacher, and I remember standing on the lawn with the girls and gazing in wonder at its long tail.

The winter of 1814 is clearly in my mind. A path was made on the frozen snow from the front door all down the hill to the gate. I remember walking down this path to meeting with some of the older girls, all of us wearing boys' shoes to protect our feet. Some of the drifts were said to be twelve feet in depth.

The caretakers of the meeting-house were Jimmy and Matty Bohannan. Jimmy, who was also employed at the school farm, had come from Ballinderry; from his acquaintance with Friends there he considered himself a sort of Friend. He always attended meeting and said "thee" to every one, but his wife made no profession of the kind.

A deep impression was made on us all by the death of little Anna Douglas in the year 1815. She was the fourth or fifth child of our mistress, and she died at the age of five years and three months. She was a beautiful and most engaging child, with wisdom beyond her years, always watchful over her own actions and words. At the time of her death I drew up a little account of her last days, which brings the dear lamb so vividly before me whenever I read it that I cannot realise that sixty-two years have passed since she entered her heavenly home.

I served an apprenticeship of seven years to the school, teaching and occasionally assisting in the work of the house. When this period had expired I remained in full charge of the school for a year or two after Sarah Douglas had left; the Committee meanwhile being on the look-out for a more fully qualified and experienced teacher than myself. At last believing they had secured such a person they summarily dismissed me. I considered this very hard usage, for I had in no way given cause for displeasure or dissatisfaction. I wept bitterly not knowing where to turn or what to do for the best. Then without taking counsel of any one I wrote a letter to the Committee showing what I considered the unfairness of their action. Then I left the school and my never failing friend, Sarah Douglas, invited me to stay with her till the Committee should meet and I should have their reply to my letter. Mary McDonnell, from Cork, the new teacher, had no sooner arrived than she was taken ill, and was

unable to enter on her duties. The Committee met, considered their difficulty, and I suppose, my letter, and requested Lucia Richardson, one of their number, to ask me to return and resume my post. Deeply mortified as I had been, I thought I could never do this, but Thomas Lamb, my kind old friend (also on the Committee), prevailed on me to yield. Fearing I should change my resolution he would not leave me until he saw me received again within the school walls. I was only to stay till another teacher could be found. Shortly after my return Anna Richardson, the member of the Committee who had been the chief mover in this affair, interested herself for me, and procured for me the post of housekeeper at Waterford School. Thither I went in 1817.

NOTES

Prepared by Ida Pim and Thomas Henry Webb.

¹ The typescript here printed was sent to the editor by the curators of the Dublin Yearly Meeting Historical Collection. The original ms. is in the possession of Emily Creeth, of Rome.

² A school for Friends' children was opened in Eighth Month, 1794, by John Gough (1721-1791), who was the headmaster till his death. In 1794 the school was taken over by Ulster Quarterly Meeting. The house stands on Prospect Hill, overlooking the town of Lisburn, co. Antrim, North of Ireland. A centenary celebration was held in August, 1894, when Joseph Radley, the principal, read a paper on the history of the school; the celebration was reported in *The Lisburn Standard* for September 1st.

The editor of THE JOURNAL would be glad to secure a list of the headmasters.

³ Thomas Barrington (1738-1826) was a son of Nicholas Barrington, of Lambstown, co. Wexford, and Mary Bancroft, his wife. He was a silk-mercator of Meath Street, Dublin, and afterwards of Ballitore. In 1769 he married Hannah, daughter of Joseph and Mary (Roper) Haughton. See *The Barringtons. A Family History*, Dublin, 1917.

⁴ Sarah Dickenson (1773-1855) was a daughter of James and Susanna (Alexander) Dickenson. At Belfast, in 1803, she married Samuel Douglas (1775-1856), son of William Douglas, of Greystone Lodge, co. Antrim, and Mary Bell, his wife.

⁵ *New Lights* was a nickname given to those Friends who, at the end of the eighteenth century, protested against the increasing formalism of the Society as evidenced by the superstitious reverence accorded to the Bible, and also the numerous and unnecessary formalities to be gone through by those intending to be married. (In some cases application had to be made on twenty different occasions before the Friends were considered free to marry.) This led to John Rogers and Elizabeth Doyle taking the law into their own hands. They, having published their

intention of marriage in the town of Lisburn one month previously, took each other in marriage (4 iii. 1801) at the School House at Lisburn, where Elizabeth Doyle was a teacher, in the presence of sixteen well-concerned Friends. For this rebellion against authority the two Rogers and most of the witnesses were disowned. The spread of the New Light opinions resulted in many resignations and disownments. All those holding the office of Elder in Ulster resigned their office, and many elsewhere. These Friends did not form any separate organisation, but the result to the Society was deplorable, leading as it did to the permanent estrangement of many able and thoughtful minds from Friends, among them, Hancocks, Christys, Phelps, Nicholsons (to whom General Nicholson, of Indian Mutiny fame, was related) and many others.

See *A Narrative of Events in Ireland*, by William Rathbone, 1804, pp. 123-129.

⁶ Elizabeth Doyle was daughter of John Doyle, of Ballinamona in the co. of Wexford, and Mary, his wife, *née* Wright. On the 4th of Third Month, 1801, she married John Rogers, of Lisburn, son of William and Abigail Rogers.

⁷ A "vandyke" was probably a pointed cape and collar. What kind of materials were "hair-bine" and "bolton"?

⁸ Lucia (Louisa) Richardson (1747-1825) was a daughter of Archibald and Mary (Fletcher) Shaw. Her first marriage was with James Christy, in 1768, *s.p.*, her second, with Jonathan Richardson (1756-1815) as his second wife. J.R. was a son of John Richardson, of Lisburn.

⁹ For John Conran (1739-1827), a minister, of Moyallon, co. Down, see vol. xv. pp. 5, 11.

¹⁰ William Jackson (1746-1834) was a son of William and Katherine Jackson, born in London Grove Township, Chester Co., Pa. He first appeared in the ministry about 1775. In 1788 he married Hannah, daughter of Thomas and Hannah Seaman, of Westbury, Long Island, where for two years he resided before returning to Pa. He travelled in the ministry in America; during the Revolutionary War he paid extensive visits to Friends in the Middle and Eastern States "in which he sometimes appeared to have his life in his hands" (*Rebecca Jones*, p. 298n). He arrived in England in 8 mo., 1802, and spent three years in Europe, visiting nearly all the meetings in England, Ireland and Scotland, and some parts of Wales (*Testimony; Biographical Sketches; etc.*).

Was he the same Friend as William Jackson, of New Garden, Pa., who "deeded to Joseph Preston and others a piece of ground for a school house" in 1794 (*WOODY: Early Quaker Education in Pennsylvania*, 1920, pp. 130, 177)?

¹¹ Dorothy Lamb (1759-1843) was a daughter of Joseph and Anne (King) Wright, of Coolbawn, co. Wexford. In 1794 she married Thomas Lamb (1752-1825), son of John and Sarah (Haddock) Lamb, of Pear Tree Hill, co. Antrim.

¹² Thomas Wright (1711-1776) was a son of Thomas and Mary (Jones) Wright, of Ballyinabogue.

¹³ The appearance of the Great Comet was in September, 1811, not 1812.