

UNBROKEN COMMUNITY—DAVID W. BOLAM

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The Story of the
FRIENDS' SCHOOL

Saffron Walden

1702—1952

by

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CLERKENWELL	- - - -	1702—1786
ISLINGTON	- - - -	1786—1825
CROYDON	- - - -	1825—1879
SAFFRON WALDEN	- - -	1879—

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1952



1951—BEFORE WORK BEGINS
Boys and Girls enjoy the Avenue

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INTRODUCTION

In the pages which follow, David Bolam has written the story of the growth and development of a community through a period of no less than 250 years, one-eighth of the whole time which has passed since the birth of Christ.

No wonder that, in so long a period of time, the "Workhouse" which was established by London Friends in 1702 stands in such marked contrast to the School on the hill at Saffron Walden which we know so well in 1952. For so the England of Queen Anne and Hogarth and Defoe, who lived when the "Workhouse" was founded, stands in similar contrast to the welfare State of 1952.

This community has survived all the vicissitudes of two and a half centuries because it has always been adaptable. In each generation there have been men and women who have seen the next step forward, and who have, by their foresight, enabled the School to meet new demands and serve its constituency in new ways.

Our "Fathers and Founders" have endowed this School with extensive grounds and fine buildings. But they have done much more than that. They have endowed it also with a spirit of sturdy independence and with the idealism of Christian faith and service.

David Bolam's story will help this generation to understand the mistakes as well as the achievements of the past, and thus prepare the community of to-day to continue to grow and develop into something even better to-morrow.

HOWARD DIAMOND,
Chairman of the School Committee.

Cambridge, May 1952.

A FOREWORD ON THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (Quakers)

The Society of Friends had its rise in the disturbed years following the English Civil War. Its founder, George Fox, became convinced of a divine quality in man, enabling him to experience God for himself. A form of worship developed, based on silent waiting; there were no outward forms and no minister. By 1660, the movement numbered about 35,000 people, drawn from all social classes, in an England whose population was about five and a half million.

Their beliefs brought Quakers into conflict with the State. Many were imprisoned, mainly for refusal to pay tithes and for holding their own meetings. By the Act of Toleration, non-conformists gained freedom of worship; freedom to teach was still disputed when the story opens in 1702.

During the time of persecution, the "Meeting for Sufferings" evolved—a name still given to the main executive body of the Society of Friends. In Quaker organisation, the local groups ("Preparative Meetings") are linked with those of wider areas ("Monthly Meetings"), several of which together form "Quarterly Meetings." Finally, all Friends are free to attend the "Yearly Meeting." The "Six Weeks Meeting" is the financial committee of London and Middlesex Quarterly Meeting.

Friends in the eighteenth century were very conscious of the ways in which their beliefs differed from those of their

FOREWORD ON THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

contemporaries, and tended to become a rigid and self-contained minority group with a number of peculiarities. These peculiarities inevitably appear in the course of the story. It is hoped that their historical significance will be appreciated by the reader.

PART I

AN EXPERIMENT IN COMPASSION
1702—1811

A Plan is Shared

John Bellers had a plan. He lived in an age of plans : an Englishman had planned a London destroyed by fire; a German was working to bring all knowledge into one system; a Frenchman was to dream of a united Europe. Schemes grew apace in this quick-witted age of the new Royal Society. Everywhere men were exploring, experimenting with light and gases, with the growth of trees and the speed of ships. Travellers' tales brought excitement to a London that had listened to the great Mr. Newton explaining the movements of the universe. At such a time John Bellers worked away at his own busy ideas—schemes to give prisoners work, to improve government, to abolish poverty. One plan was especially dear.

This plan was for a community—"Proposals for raising a Colledge of Industry of all useful Trades and Husbandry"—and was published in 1695. Colonies were to be founded all over England, of about five hundred poor people each—men, women and children. Every kind of work would be carried on in the colony; everybody, young and old, would have a part to play. By work, those who lived there would supply all their own needs : "As it may be an Epitomy of the World, by a Collection

of all the useful Trades in it; so it may afford all the Conveniences and Comforts a man can want, and a Christian use."

In addition to supplying basic needs, the community would also care for its old people and sick, train its children, and make a profit for the public-minded men who had supported the scheme with capital. Above all, the life of the community would be harmonious. No man would need to be a rival of his fellows, "everybody is working for him." "This Colledge," Bellers claimed, "will be a Community something like the Example of Primitive Christianity that lived in common, and the Power that did attend it bespeaks its Excellency."

Bellers was more than a dreamer. He had successfully administered a relief scheme for the unemployed, which set the men to cloth-making. He had much of the practical idealism of his fellow-Quaker, William Penn, who was busily at work in his colony of Pennsylvania. Bellers was convinced that his plan held the answer to some of the key problems of his age.

In a London where parishes were being increasingly burdened by the demands of poor relief, he set out a way of answering the problem of poverty; the poor would contribute to society by their work. In the same way, his plan would meet the dangers of lawless youth—the "Black Guard"—by which the city was troubled. Bellers also gave special thought to the care of the sick—one of his friends was Sir Hans Sloane, the physician. The London of his day had known plagues and was still poorly supplied with hospitals; sickness and death were real fears.

Bellers was not alone in thinking about these problems, and often his ideas ran side by side with those of other men. This is especially true of his concern to educate and

train children—a whole section of his plan is devoted to it. Three years later the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge was founded. This body did valuable work throughout the eighteenth century in organising Charity Schools for boys and girls. Behind them was the same concern to train the poor.

Bellers appealed to the practical benevolence of his age. Along with a sincere caring for the poor, his plan offered a means for them to work out their own salvation. His colonies would enable the resources of the country to be developed. Bellers' enthusiasm was unbounded. He envisaged that the colonies would become an integral part of English life. Once given a chance, he was sure his planning would remove the ills of society.

A Parliament, burdened with the difficulties of foreign wars, never looked at his scheme, although they had been on the point of doing so. Would Bellers find other supporters close at hand?

(ii)

Bellers belonged to the community of men and women who, dissatisfied with the Church of their day, and kindled by the flame of Fox's personality and message, had formed themselves into the Society of Friends. Yet his fellow members were not always sympathetic to Bellers. Perhaps they mistrusted a man who mixed with some of the leading personalities of his day, was a Fellow of the Royal Society, and pressed his schemes upon Lord and Commoner, on the Mayor and Aldermen of London, on the "Physicians of Great Britain," and on "Men of Wit and Pleasure." Or did the quiet elegance of his country estate in Gloucestershire seem to deny the required simplicity? Slowly, however, the idea and the occasion came together.

In 1695 the Yearly Meeting sent out an Epistle, which expressed a widely felt need for more schools—not least for the training of the children of poor Friends. The Epistle was read and discussed in Quaker meetings all over England; 25 years of active interest in education had begun. During the same year, Bellers' proposals were published. For a time there was little response, despite the active persuasions of the author. In 1697, however, a group of leading Friends, including William Penn, Robert Barclay and Thomas Ellwood, strongly recommended Bellers' proposals, while Meeting for Sufferings sent out a letter to Quarterly Meetings urging them to give serious thought to the scheme.

Only London and Middlesex Quarterly Meeting, however, attempted to put the scheme into practice. Perhaps Friends in this area were faced more acutely than in other districts with the burden of poor children and old people, or perhaps the presence of Bellers himself stimulated their efforts. At all events, by 27th July 1702, the new adventure had begun. A fund of £1,923 had been raised, in the face of the severe financial difficulties of London Friends of that day. A workhouse had been leased at Clerkenwell. A committee had been formed, with representatives from each of the London Monthly Meetings, to administer the scheme. Old people and boys were ready to enter. A new community had come to life. Yet time was to show how far London Friends could fulfil Bellers' plan of a self-supporting "Colledge of Industry."

(iii)

Who were the men who met together at those early Committee meetings? Among them was John Freame, the kind father of a family, a goldsmith of Lombard

Street, a partner in the London Lead Company and a founder of Barclays Bank. Throughout the century several men like him would serve the Committee with their counsels: merchants, bankers, underwriters growing rich by their energy and integrity in an expanding England. Besides John Freame was Daniel Quare, who made clocks and watches for three kings of England. He had his goods distrained several times through his refusal to pay tithes, and had refused the office of King's Watchmaker, because of his testimony against the oath. Quare was but the first of a long line of skilled men who were to take an active interest in the Clerkenwell experiment: chemists, doctors, scientists, men with a public reputation, and sometimes Fellows of the Royal Society. Between Freame and Quare was Robert Fairman. Fairman was a brewer of Southwark, remembered at the Workhouse for his gift of brewing utensils. The majority of the Committee members were to be like him: tradesmen, sometimes prosperous, nearly always unknown beyond their own district—men whose service was often at the cost of precious time from their work. What did these merchants, craftsmen and traders share in common with Bellers' ideas? They all had a strong sense of stewardship for the poor. At that time they were especially concerned to look after the old, the sick and the children among their own poorer members. The practical step seemed to be a workhouse community. Friend Bellers had inspired the idea; but once the Workhouse began, these men busied themselves with running it efficiently, not in asking how far it fulfilled Bellers' theories.

For all the compassion behind the Workhouse adventure, there was also a hard business-like approach. Had not Bellers himself pointed to the success of such schemes in

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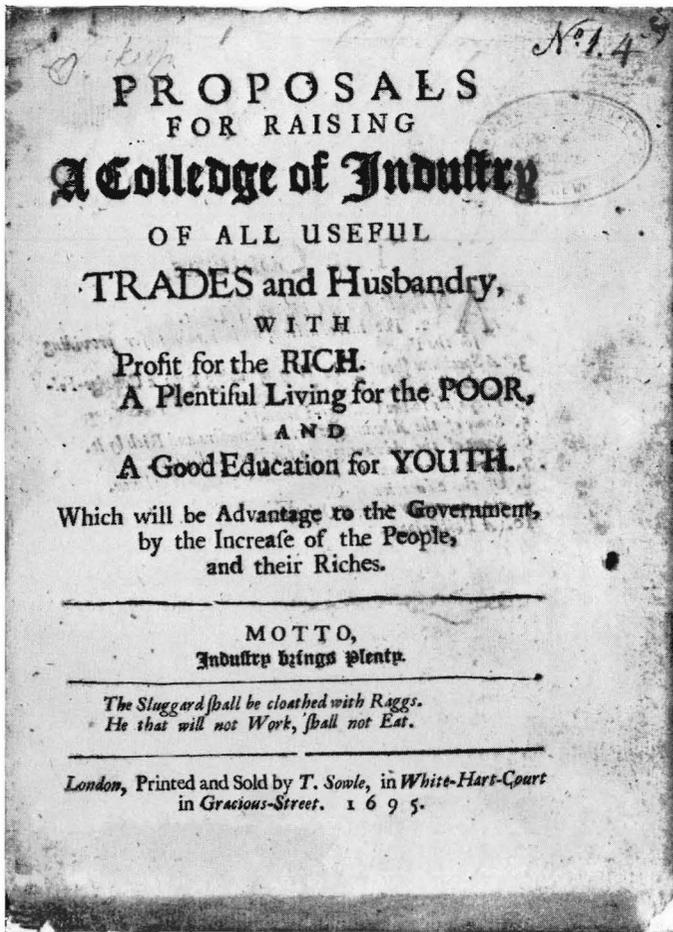
Amsterdam, and at Franke's great orphanage in Halle, which housed hundreds of children very cheaply through the work they produced? And had not Mr. Locke, the King's friend and philosopher, just advocated "working schools" in each parish? In 1702 there seemed every hope of combining caring with economy.

Yet nearly all who belonged to or helped with the Workhouse in those early days were linked by a deeper bond—the fellowship of suffering for their religion at the hands of a hostile society. John Heywood, one of the old men who lived at the Workhouse, had been arrested 30 years before at an unlawful assembly near Spitalfields. Together with him were George Barr, the first Steward of the Workhouse, and Thomas Minks, an active member of the first committee. "They were conveyed to New Prison, and received by the Keeper, a man of rugged disposition, from whom they met with very hard usage." On another occasion, John Heywood with other Friends including John Bellers himself, had appeared before the Lord Mayor. Bellers' fine was paid in court, but John Heywood stayed in prison "longer than any of them." Many families had suffered seriously through the imprisonment of the father or mother, or through the distraint of goods, reducing them to poverty. Although the severest period of such suffering was well over, in 1702 Friends still felt they were aliens in society. There was need for a workhouse for children from homes brought to poverty, and to serve as a haven for old folk like John Heywood. Behind the Clerkenwell experiment was an experience of suffering, which had drawn Friends together into a closely-knit fellowship, and moved them to take care of every member in difficulty.

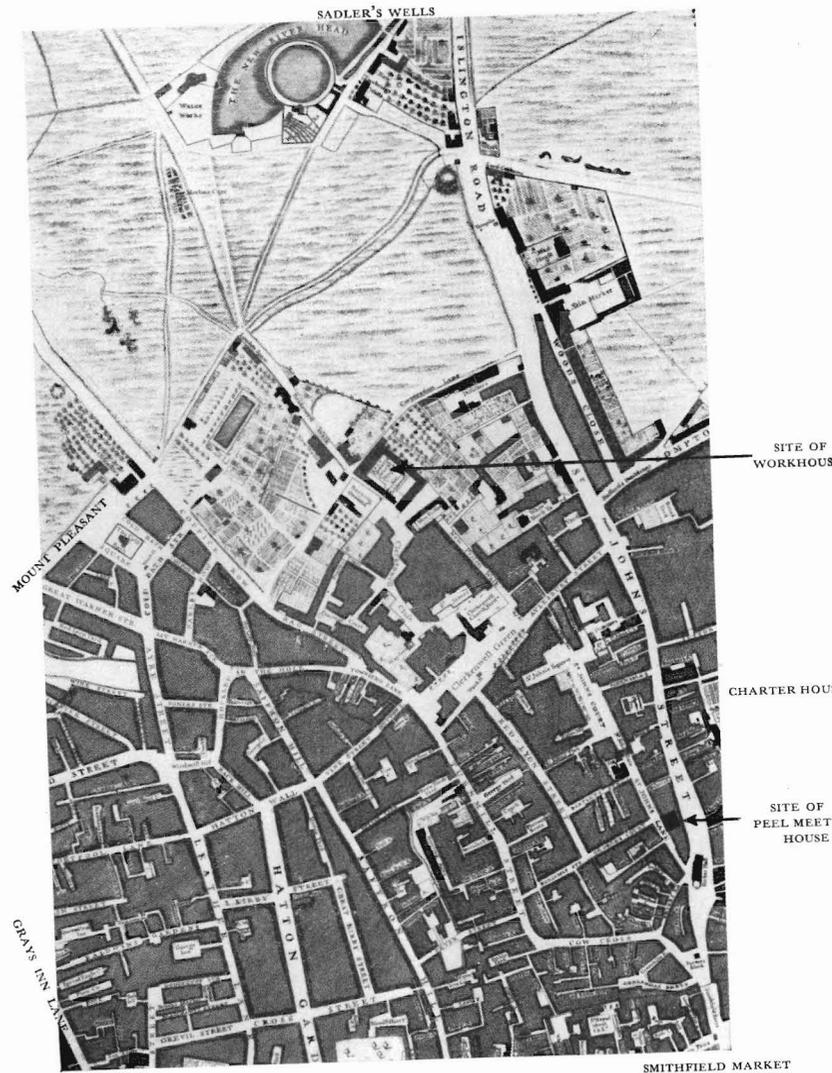
Yet Bellers must have been sad at heart. Instead of

A PLAN IS SHARED

colonies all over England, here was one solitary result: a scheme, moreover, limited to Friends, whereas Bellers was willing to "Go into the Streets and Lanes of the City, and the Highways and Hedges that the House may be filled." A comprehensive, self-supporting colony had been replaced by a small workhouse, from which children left to work in the world, and to which old people came with their working-life behind them. If "a Virtuous Education" was aimed at, along with a "charitable subsistence of the Disabled," yet the heart of the thing—"a sufficient employment of the Able Poor"—was left out. Bellers may have recognised the valuable qualities of the men who had shared his plan—a common religious faith, a concern to make charity efficient, and a caring fellowship forged in suffering, and for a time he remained close at hand to watch and guide. Was it possible for the Workhouse to be an adventure in compassion, and remain sensitive to new needs?



TITLE PAGE OF JOHN BELLERS' PROPOSALS, 1695



FROM JOHN ROCQUE'S MAP 1747
 [Site of Islington Road School was to be just off Map to the North]

The Experience of the Workhouse

1702—1774

THE PATTERN OF LIFE

The buildings had a regular pattern: three sides of a quadrangle, tied together by a high wall. They had been built 40 years before as a workhouse for the parish of Clerkenwell. Rough soldiers—"Kirke's Lambs"—had once been billeted there; for a time the premises were used for a school of industry—a "Colledge of Infants." By 1702, the experiment had failed, and a new experiment began.

The Committee considered the buildings "extraordinarily convenient" for a healthy pattern of life. They were airy and near to the fields—in the courtyard an elder tree bloomed. Hard work could keep the rooms sweet and clean. "Scouring sand," "Rubben Brushes and Birch Brooms" are bought; the local scavenger is paid out quarterly; pots of ale are given to "2 women yt scowered Pewter" and to "the feeble old folks washing the Rooms." A regular order was placed with a Christopher Fox "to Destroy . . . the Vermin," and the work was so "Effectually performed" that "now the Weather grows warm have not found above three Live Buggs." When the swill of local pig-sties caused the "great Ilconvenience of an offensive smell" the Stewards bought "sweet Bryer and Poseys for the Committee Rooms" as though the Friends were judges at the Old Bailey.

THE PATTERN OF LIFE

The array of windows, opening out on to the quadrangle, meant well-lit rooms. Rising at five in summer and six o'clock in winter, the children made every use of the morning sunlight, but in the evening, when candles were brought in, four had to serve for nearly 50 children at work. An objection to worsted-spinning was its requiring a candle a wheel. The rooms were not always very warm, and fires, being expensive, were rare—even though the children suffered from the cold. In a plea for another serving girl, the conscientious Steward, Richard Hutton, notes that the present girl "dresses (the children's) soare hands and feet in the winter Season, having many of them sore, which business alone generally takes several hours every day."

To most of the children, coming from the cramped housing quarters of Spitalfields, Ratcliff, Southwark or Clerkenwell itself, the rooms of the Workhouse must have seemed pleasantly spacious. There were 46 rooms, of which the largest, 20 feet by 85, was finally used as the boys' dormitory. Within ten years, the new community numbered more than 50; throughout the century numbers were rarely less and not often more than 90; always there were more children than old people, more boys than girls.

The meals were good, even if they had a routine pattern, without motherly extras. The Steward's Cash Books, of which a complete set has survived, show large purchases of meat—beef, mutton, "cow heeles and ox heeles"—together with many kinds of vegetables, and of seasoning—sage, herbs, rosemary, garlick, mustard, pimento, "Jamaco pepper," cloves, "Minte and Marygolds for winter," and "Bay and Peter's Salte to Pickle the Porke."

For all its austerity, life at the Workhouse was very

healthy in comparison with the living conditions of the age. During the hundred and nine years the Workhouse existed, 1,159 boys and girls lived there, of whom 44 died from smallpox and other illnesses. Yet just over half a mile away from the Workhouse, Captain Coram established his Foundling Hospital. During the first 15 years of its life, 1,348 children entered, and the kindly philanthropist, Jonas Hanway, found it very remarkable "that only 724 died in all this time."

At first sight the pattern of life seems formal, all children being treated alike, but a closer look shows the care with which each child was provided for. In 1728, the Workhouse welcomed Scipio Africanus—"a black Boy"; he was looked after as conscientiously as the other boys. Lengths of material were bought to make his coat, waistcoat and breeches, as well as yarn to knit into stockings for him. The girls would help to make these clothes, while Scipio's hat, gloves, buckles, and "a black Perriwig" would be bought from outside, along with knife, fork, spoon and "an Ivory Comb." Each of these latter articles would be marked with Scipio's name, for there was trouble from boys stealing each other's. Perhaps that is how Scipio lost his knife and fork, for he is later bought new ones, as well as a new leather apron. Now and again, the Steward charges Scipio's Monthly Meeting for having "To shav head."

When Elizabeth Gerrard came to the Workhouse in 1713 from her poor home in Ratcliff, lengths of cloth were also bought for her to be made up into bodices, gowns, and petticoats—doubtless with the help of the other girls. She was frequently unwell, and the Steward charged her Monthly Meeting "To cutting an issue," "letting blood 6d.," and "To a perpetual blister." Her father

must have been glad when he received this letter from her:—

Honoured Parents

My duty to you. Hoping you are in good health which Blessing (through mercy) I enjoy at this time more perfectly than I have done in the three or four years last past, for which I desire to be thankful: I present these few lines unto you hoping you will be pleased with my endeavours, who am your dutiful daughter

Elizabeth Gerrard

Fr^{de} Workhouse 18th of 3^{mo}. 1718

Throughout the Workhouse story, small acts of kindness to individuals break the regularity of the pattern. Soon after little William Seale came to the Workhouse in 1702, he went sick. For six weeks after, little extras are sent to him: "Ale for Will and she that sat up with him," "a Cake, Metheradate Treacle and ale for Will," and "Calfes foot for William"—as well as ointment for his head, eggs and French Barley. On another occasion, George Barr, the first Steward, "Gave the Boys (Being Pretty good) to incorage them a peny a peece." Again, two guardians once wrote to old John Heywood, who had known the harshness of persecution: "to take some care and notice of little Charles Toovey . . . that he may not do such work as spin mop yarn . . . I have a great

respect for the child." And the fines of Committee members, for non-attendance, were divided out as small gifts to the old people and children.

(ii)

Each day had its own pattern of work and activity. The children helped with all the jobs of the house and kitchen, from the making of beer to the dipping of candles for winter light. The girls were far busier about the house than the boys: it was looked on as a training for their future life as servants. "Two or three or more of ye biggest and most handy of ye girls," declared the rules (1721), "be ready as occasion requires to assist in ye Family, especially at washing times, and ye School Mistress to assist them in getting up hers and their Linnen." They were also to help to clean the rooms. Some of the old people also gave domestic help, perhaps sitting up through the night to nurse their fellows when ill and helping to lay out their bodies at death. In the early days Hutton wrote, "the looking after the Boys linnen, Woolen Cloaths, washing their Rooms, making the Beds and Combing their heads had been . . . done by two of the Antient Women."

The children spent an hour before breakfast, and at least the whole of the mornings, in the workrooms. Work, in all its diversity had been the heart of Bellers' plan, "For at Four or Five Years old," Bellers wrote, "besides Reading, Boys and Girls might be taught to Knit, Spin etc., and bigger Boys Turning etc., and beginning young, they would make the best Artists." William Penn had also stressed the value of children's activities: "Children

had rather be making of tools and instruments of play, shaping, drawing, framing and building than getting some rules of propriety of speech by heart." And the enlightened contemporary, Mr. Locke, had said the same.

At first, local trades were experimented with: weaving, winding Bengal silk, and making thread; but an effort to dispose of a glut of shoe-maker's thread on "the going out of the Next Virginia fleet" was one of several signs that such work did not pay. The work at Clerkenwell quickly narrowed down to the spinning of mop-yarn and a certain amount of oakum picking; such work brought in money for several years, and was a job which even a small boy of seven could do, with "one Bigg Boy and two Little ones Working together."

The girls soon stopped spinning mop-yarn, as it was thought undesirable to have them working in the same room as the boys. Although sewing work might bring in a little more money, Hutton admitted that it was "very difficult to manage ye Girls relating to their Health since they have left ye Stirring Exercise of ye Wheele." They spent a great deal of time in repairing clothes for the family. For a while a sewing mistress was employed to teach them fancy needlework, but this came to an end in 1728. Such needlework did not pay. Besides rich Friends wanted the girls as servants in their homes, their attitude being generally wrapped in moral phrases. "We think," wrote women Friends at the time, "that the educating them in Seamstry of a Nicer sort tends rather to destroy the end proposed, by begetting Apprehensions in them (and probably in their Parents, etc.) that they are qualified for Seamstresses, Gloveresses, Mantua Makers, Quilters, etc. or some business by which they may live at their own

Hands (as they call it) and from whence we apprehend very ill Consequences to arise." In the end, it was economy, and their being poor, which determined the children's work, rather than any ideal of training.

(iii)

"The Body," Bellers had written, "requires more Hands and Legs to provide and support it, than Heads to direct it"; a community needed more farmers, tailors and shoemakers than scholars. The children spent only about two hours every day at school work, learning the rudiments of reading and writing; the boys also learnt cyphering. These were the things "civil and useful in creation" which would help the children to be honest traders and servants. The girls had less book-learning than the boys, and were more liable to be called off to household jobs. The Rules of 1753 show that half the boys spent the mornings in school, and their afternoons in the workroom, and vice versa. The girls still had regular school work only on three afternoons a week, although by then they too, were learning cyphering. None the less, the girls were luckier than most of their contemporaries. This concern to educate girls, even the poorest, helps to explain why Friends had an almost wholly literate membership.

Reading and writing were learnt through Biblical Catechism; the fundamental aim of all learning was religious. Both the technique and the aim were the same as those of the contemporary Charity Schools, except that the catechisms used at the Workhouse set forth a distinctive Quaker interpretation of life. For the most part Barclay's

learned catechism was used, but there were also copies of Freame's, composed for his own children. These works not only set out Quaker beliefs, but suggest recent Quaker experience :—

Q.—"What saith the Apostle of the Righteous undergoing Tribulation?"

A.—"We must through much Tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God.

Yea, and that all that will live Godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer Persecution."

In making learning subordinate to a religious aim, the Workhouse was a distant reflection of the old monastic school.

(iv)

Like a monastery, the community had its moral pattern of life set out in a body of rules. The rules were somewhat piece-meal, added to as occasion arose, but they dominated everybody, from Committee members to the children, and they touched every aspect of life. Nor was anybody allowed to forget them; rules were posted up for all to see and were read out monthly.

Every old person applying for admission had to be of "sober life," "clear of debts," "not under dealing for disorderly conduct," "not in a state of insanity," and "not requiring personal assistance." The rules were read to every entrant, and he or she had to promise to obey them. From the beginning of the day rules also directed the children's lives: "That about the 5th Hour in ye Morning in the Sumer, and ye 6th in ye Winter, or when ye Bell is rung, all the Boys and Girls shall then rise and prepare to work, one hour after which on the second

UNBROKEN COMMUNITY

ringing of the Bell, they shall appear in the Work-Room—Dress'd with their Faces and hands wash'd, ye Heads Coomb'd, their Cloathes brushed" (1709).

In the workroom, at meals, at play, the rules—embodied in their teachers—watched over the children. They were rarely allowed to go out, except in a group under the supervision of a teacher. After 1729 the children might visit their homes for a week at Christmas, Easter and Whitsun, and on three days in between, although many of them lived very near. Needless to say, they were kept from "Reading of Idle, Romanticle and Prophan Books and Pamphlets, that often infect the minds of Youth." They had to be plain in their speech. When the boys went to bed, two "Antient men" slept in the room to keep them in order.

On rising the children must keep silence "to wait upon and Worship God." "It is ordered for the Benefit of ye Family . . . that after the Boys (and girls) are dress'd . . . they read as many Chapters in ye Bible as (the Steward) shall see meet." Sometimes a child was asked to read a passage aloud to his, or her, fellows. The same was to be done on going to bed "which shall be at the 8th hour in the Winter and ye 9th in ye Summer."

Both the kindness and the strictness which the children experienced, drew their strength from this religious concern. This in turn was strengthened by the feeling that as Quakers had suffered for their beliefs, Quaker ways must be preserved in a hostile world.

(v)

If the world was hostile, it was also ready to admire. "Some persons of note," writes Richard Hutton, "did come to visit us, and see the ordering of our family and

"HEDGED FROM EVIL"

were well satisfied." In 1739, a Mr. Maitland had published a great guide-book, describing all the important places and buildings of London. In it he wrote:—

This House which stands in Bridewell Walk, Clerkenwell, being both an Hospital and Workhouse, it contains Eighteen old Men and Women, who are provided with all the Necessaries of Life in a very clean and decent manner; as are also Forty Boys and Twenty Girls, who besides, are not only taught Reading, Writing and Arithmetic, but likewise, to inure their young Fingers early to Labour, are taught to spin, sew and knit; and the Boys, when put out Apprentices, have Five Pounds given with each. These Children, who are clothed in very good Cloth and Callimanco's, are not, like other Charity Children, permitted to stroll and ramble about out of School Hours; but when 'tis judged convenient to divert, or air them in the Fields, they are attended by their Masters and Mistresses, therefore have not the least Opportunity of committing any Irregularity.

"Mr. Wesley," wrote one of his friends in 1744, "intended to have gone to see ye Quakers' Workhouse and I with him, but time would not admit. That is said to be ye best to take a Plan from of any in London." Outsiders found much to praise in this pursuit of a fugitive and cloistered virtue.

"HEDGED FROM EVIL"

Children "must be hedged from Evil more by wise management than Discourse; as we see Colts are tamed more by it than words."

(BELLERS.)

This private way of life was not secure from the world. The children played in the winds of their times in spite of all the care of their elders to raise thick hedges to protect them. Against the eastern wall of the Workhouse was a

pleasure-ground called "The Mulberry Gardens." The Committee protested in vain against "the practice of firing Gunns and letting off Fireworks," for the local "swells" enjoyed these things and came to listen to the band.

Some of these people of fashion may still have lived in Clerkenwell Close, where stood the town mansion of the Duke of Devonshire. Only a hundred yards' walk would bring them past the Workhouse and out into the country of Spa Fields. From there they could stroll to the fashionable Sadler's or Bagnigge Wells. The trades-folk of Clerkenwell enjoyed bowls on the green close by the Workhouse, or sitting out at drinks in "The Cherry Tree Tavern."

Many of the inns of Clerkenwell were more wild, and many of the sports more cruel. Cock-fighting was still popular, as well as prize-fighting in Spa Fields. Less than a quarter of a mile away was the notorious Hockley-in-the-Hole Bear Garden, with its duels with scimitars. It was a time, moreover, when violence was common. "Cut-throat Lane" ran along the north wall of the Workhouse; travellers wishing to cross over to Sadler's Wells at night took a link for fear of attack. Not far south lived the "Black Boy Alley Gang," a group of reckless young murderers, who defied the authorities of London for many years during the reign of George II. Hogarth is said to have depicted them in the night-cellar of his series on the Idle and Industrious Apprentice.

The violence of the age was matched by the severity of its punishments. At the end of Bowling Green Lane was a whipping post. Clerkenwell still kept its pillory and people were still tied to a cart-tail and lashed through the streets. Some of the horror of this age of Hogarth was

even nearer: the south wall of the Workhouse was also the wall of a prison, an overflow from the City Bridewell. The place was "full of debauchery and wickedness." Seriously overcrowded, half-starved and condemned to beat hemp, the prisoners were often violent and only restrained by brutal punishments. Friends had been imprisoned there during the days of persecution, and, perhaps that is why "those good people, the Quakers, used to send in to the poor prisoners from their workhouse . . . both meat and broken victuals."

Not all the life of Clerkenwell was this mixture of pleasure and horror. By day the narrow streets and courtyards were busy with trade. The carts bringing in goods from the country districts trundled along the main street, a street which led past Smithfield Market to St. Paul's and Newgate, less than a mile away. So too, the nearby River Fleet flowed down to the Thames, active with trading vessels and small pleasure boats. For the Workhouse was near the heart of a busy city, a London, which was not only the centre of English government, but the home of a vigorous community of merchants, then gaining interests over the whole world.

(ii)

When Richard Hutton sat down in the evenings to write his accounts or draw up some new memorandum for the Committee, he can hardly have been unaware that the Workhouse was part of that society. There were taxes to be paid, as well as the Quarterly Bill for the Watchman, or for the water from the New River Company. The Bills

of Mortality he purchased would tell him of the deaths in surrounding parishes. If a person was very ill in the Workhouse he was sent out to St. Thomas's. Good stewardship exacted a close watch on local trade to see what vegetables were cheap or dear, at what price yarn could be bought or mops sold. Somehow or other the books must be balanced favourably; the strain of some new economic crisis needed to be answered with anxious care.

Nor did the walls keep out the life of the times from the children. They remembered the early experience of their homes: their fathers, being poor tradesmen, would have known times of distress and riot. A visit home or an errand for the Steward, let alone an escape, was a chance to share excitedly with one's fellows what one had seen. From the windows it was possible to pry and glimpse at what was happening in the Mulberry Gardens, or Bridewell Walk, or Cut-throat Lane. As the boys or girls came back from a "guarded" walk, they could see some of London's important buildings: very clear and close was the dome of the new St. Paul's, still unfinished. The old people were good talkers; they could gossip about the colourful and varied lives behind them, and, having a freer access to the streets, could enlarge on the news. The Workhouse had a flavour of the wider world. For a time a Frenchman lived there, and a German from Danzig, while Scipio must have been an especial source of interest. Thus, there were many chances for the children to know something of the hardness of the life outside, and to have absorbed something of its standards through the things they saw and heard. Perhaps they watched with the greater curiosity, because they were so aware of being peculiar and different.

(iii)

Yet, in a sense, the world entered the Workhouse in the most immediate way of all, through the human nature of the children themselves. Even the most concise and formal Minutes let out hints of trouble. The children fought each other with sticks or their fists, cheated at their cyphering, and complained fiercely about their food. Sometimes there seems to have been trouble with boys forming unruly gangs. Once a complaint is made of "some irregular practices committed by some of ye Boys especially some written reflections on ye horstler and mayd." The stewards sometimes had trouble with boys running away and "telling divers notorious lies." Another time the boys broke a hole through the wall into a part of the house that was let out as a tenement, and "layd out money." The old people, moreover, were even more difficult to control, some going out when they wished and without permission, or returning at times "disguised with liquor." Their tongues were the biggest source of unrest—querulous amongst themselves, or giving "hard and reflecting language" to the Steward, they helped create an atmosphere of suspicion and malice. The difficulties this created may be sensed from Hutton's account of Elizabeth Rand.

Elizabeth Rand was one of the old people. She had refused at times to do the work asked of her, and publicly aired her rebellious views. . . . "She talking or rather scolding: both loud and fast in a passionate way of expression, ye Girls being in ye same room at ye same time at Breakfast. . . . And in a very unhandsome manner saith to me holding up her hands in the Publick Workroom: 'My heart pitties these poor Creatures that

are under thy Care for thou will pinch them. . . . When the maids dont please Elizabeth Rand she calls them proud Saucy Sluts and saith theyre upheld in it . . . if (the children) do not Speak just as She would have them, She fiercely calls them wicked Lying Children and Saith they are Countenanced in it. . . ." Elizabeth Rand was not the only nuisance among the old folk, which is perhaps why the Committee forced her to give a written promise of good behaviour.

In comparison with the wild gin-drinking workhouses of Hogarth's London, the bad behaviour was extraordinarily mild. Many of the children's escapades can hardly have been more than a natural remedy for relieving the boredom of mop-spinning or Biblical catechism. An enclosed community, with so wide a range of ages and temperaments, inevitably had its conflicts and disputes. Sometimes individuals found themselves defying a pattern of life which failed to answer their need.

Such a cry of need comes from John Gordon's story. John's father was a cordwainer in Ratcliff, one of the districts of London most troubled by economic depression. There were at least five children in the family, three of whom went to the Workhouse. John was the fourth child, and went to the Workhouse in 1712, when he was 12 years old. He found the life there unsympathetic and that there would be little he could look forward to after leaving. The Steward at the time was Richard Hutton. For all his conscientiousness, Hutton shows little sign of understanding or even humour. Carefully writing this account for the Committee, he states:—

Besides several faults too tedious to mention here he (i.e. John Gordon) latly pick one boys pocket of sixpence and another of threepence, and run away and spent it. And at

another time he went to a neighbours and told em he had not victuals enough and desired trust for buns etc. He had then stole a knife and fork from a boy, and one of the House knives and sold em for three halfpence, which when I knew I sent for again. Since, we found a knife in his pocket belonging to the House. At another time he gott a candle over night, and gott up about twelve a clock at night, and took a pain of glass out of the store room window and gott in; from when he took about four pounds of plumb puding; although he, as well as the rest of the big boys, had a full pound for dinner, besides their suppers. And he eat so much in the store room he could not come thence without leaving behind him what is not fitt here to mention. And about a week ago he privatly stole the key of the street door; towards night, we suspected him, and tasked him with it but he confidently denied, with such a countenance, as if he had really been inocent: so that we searched diligently for it a great while, but in vain, which made us very uneasy. However about 5 next morning we went up where he lay and asked him about it again but he denied it; then we made him come out of the bed, and found the key under him. He intended as he confessed to have taken the knives out of the draws and to have sold them with the key. We have since kept him as close as we can, but he has been up dressed in the middle of the night for what intent we do not certainly know, for there is no believing him: so that every day we are in danger of having things stole, and every night of some misfortune or other; for he said openly to the horsler, if any body should fire the (hey) in the stable, he believed it would burn the House, or something to that purpose—and no body knows but he may at one time put such bad thoughts in practice. And if at any time he is corrected for his faults, he cutts his truss and lets down his rupture, so that we find him not only to be a very bad example to the rest of the children, but indeed very unsafe to live in such a house as this.

Had the gates been left open by accident and a young delinquent of Hogarth's London walked in?

(iv)

How did authority answer the situation when any of their rules were defied? One can gain some idea from the rules themselves, from Committee decisions, and from the writings of two men, who, in the early days, were active councillors of the Workhouse—John Freame, and Bellers himself.

The first line of appeal was to the inner conscience of the child. "The Boy," declared the Rules, "which enticeth another into a fault shall receive double punishment; but if he that is drawn into the fault shall confess it, before it be found out, He shall in that case find Favour." A master was to bring a child to this self awareness of his wrong-doing, rather than punish him: the master was to offer a few words, "Kind, Grave and Sober, representing the Unbecomingness of the Fault." "Fear," continues Freame, "which is settled upon a Bottom of Love and Duty is far more durable than that which proceeds from the Fear of Rod and Punishment." This accorded closely with Bellers' own view—"Stripes weakening that Presence of Mind which is needful to a ready Learning."

If these appeals failed corporal punishment was certainly used. The first Steward, George Barr, buys in "a Ratoon for the Boyes id."! While a mother who learns that her boy has been "whipt and beat with a cane" is more bothered to learn what he has done than to complain at the punishment. Severity was necessary for moral reasons; it "being easie," wrote Freame, "to bend a Twig while 'tis Young . . . therefore we should endeavour to break their Wills whilst they are Little, and

as soon as ever they are capable, to make them sensible that Their Wills ought to be entirely subject to ours. . . ." The rod was to be used "when they are obstinate, and wilfully Disobey their Parents or tell a known Lie, or the like." As Bellers had said: "a Rebellious temper must be subdued by Correction (far better be Unlearned than Ill-bred)."

There is little comparison between corporal punishment used in this way and the barbaric punishments inflicted in the Bridewell next door, or on many young people in the homes and schools of the day. Throughout, there were safeguards. "The rod must only be used rarely," wrote Freame, "and for a Great Offence; it ought to be performed with a great deal of Discretion, and that without Anger or Passion." The same idea lay behind the rule that the Steward must be present "if the boys (or girls) stand in need of particular correction."

As well as this sense of restraint, there is a genuine kindness. "Understanding," wrote Bellers, "must rather be distilled, as Children can take it, than drove into them; Grief hurting the memory and disordering the Thoughts of most; Raise a child's Love to what he should learn, by Rewards and Emulation." A teacher, Freame suggests, must guide "in a Gentle, Winning and Persuasive Way, not in the Rough, Rigorous and Severe Method of Blows and Stripes . . . for a school should not be a meer House of Correction, but rather a Place of Delight and Recreation." Here was the kindness which broke the pattern of life, an individual relationship which the framework of an institution could not supply.

The most extreme punishment was expulsion, which also cut a child off from any gratuities. Throughout the whole period 1702-1811, no girls and only three boys were

expelled. One of the three was John Gordon. The Committee minute ran :

John Gordon, a Boy in this House . . . being charged with notorious Ill practices which by his own confession before ye Committee he is guilty of, and he having Long continued in hardness and Wickedness notwithstanding the repeated Endeavours of the Steward for his amendment, but ye same being grown out of hopes the Horstler is now ordered to go forthwith and take said boy home to his father and mother.

This extreme remedy Bellers himself advocated for adults in his original plan, otherwise "it will relish too much of a Bridewell" and "Their ill Company and Example will tend to corrupt the Youth." Bellers was insistent that children should be "hedged from evil." He urged this more strongly because he knew the catastrophies of young people engulfed in the harsh life of the times, outside the Workhouse walls. His desire to protect children is only the outward side of his desire to redeem those who were already victims. No plea of his is more deeply felt :

One considerable Branch of these Poor, are the distress'd Children call'd the *Black Guard*, who are some of the most helpless Part of humane Nature, whose Ignorance and Necessities expose them the most early to all Manner of Immorality and Profaneness, whilst such of them as escape being starv'd with Hunger and Cold, or some rotten or malignant Distemper doth not prevent; after having done many irreparable Mischiefs, frequently supply your Jayls and Gibbets with miserable Malefactors. The longer it is before they are taken care of, they will grow the more numerous, and difficult to be reclaim'd; it not being easy for such who have been accustom'd to do Evil to do good; and as Necessity hath no Law, Hunger will break Stone-Walls; private Persons being afraid to take them out of the Streets. Whilst every day they are neglected, they not only infest the Streets of this City, but it may be the Loss of Souls in another World, and of a useful Posterity in this. . . .

A SOCIETY IN MOTION

The Workhouse was a busy little society—active, quarrelsome and in movement. As the children looked up from work, or played on the paths of the quadrangle, they would know the excitement of visitors.

Tradesmen came in with the flour, malt, butter and cheese, meat and coals. Sometimes a master may have sent a boy who had been at the Workhouse himself. Perhaps Will Butcher came with the shoes he had helped repair, or Samuel Barnes helped his master bring the coals. Sometimes a new bulk of yarn would arrive, to be carried into the workroom; or boys would be sent out with completed mops to a purchaser.

The girls were in a better position to get to know their customers more closely, when they came with fine clothes to be repaired, or the material from which garments were to be made. Richard Collet came to have eight shirts made; Zachariah Newberry had to pay for "mending six shirts; wrist banding a pair of sleeves." Several Committee members came with orders. Perhaps these Friends watched the girls at their work—making shirts of "Irish" or "fine Holland linen" with or "without tucker"; sewing sheets, table-cloths, or napkins—with an eye to future usefulness. For the Workhouse had many visitors, and the children were part of the movement of life they watched.

(ii)

Out of this parade of important people probably none loomed larger in the interest of the children than the Committee men. In the early days meetings were held as often as once a fortnight, and between times

members of each Monthly Meeting in turn came to inspect. But beyond this close watching of every detail of the House, these men undertook a large share of organisation. During the first decade, for instance, Robert Freame helped with the work of the boys. He enquired of the Bristol workhouse (another Quaker experiment) how their boys achieved "great Earnings," and followed up the suggestion of employing a weaving master; he negotiated with a dealer in mop-yarn, and arranged for Will Seale (the boy who had been kindly treated when ill) to be apprenticed to a local cooper. Legal affairs too, were very much the field of this active man. He helped to examine the lease to see if sheds could be built against the Bridewell wall; he abstracted all the legal decisions into a book for references; he procured "ye Clauses of Such wills as have Left any Thing for ye use of This House." To which activity he added many jobs to help the Steward: obtaining oats and malt at the best price, letting the tenements, or arranging for a Meeting for Worship to be held at the Workhouse. Many other Committee men were to help in equally varied ways.

Yet these busy men had intimate links with the children. Every person in the Workhouse was cared for by a different group of London Friends. Each Committee man would thus have a special interest in the children and old folk who belonged to his own Monthly Meeting. The numbers, moreover, were small enough for this link to be a personal one. For the first few decades there were 30 men on the Committee to 60 people in the Workhouse, though in later years it was 18 men to a community rising towards a hundred. So Elizabeth Gerrard, who needed special treatment; John Gordon, who was expelled; and John Heywood, in prison "longer than any of them,"

would all have had a special interest in the men who came from Ratcliff Monthly Meeting, and they in them. The children probably knew the men by name, and may have seen them at Meeting, when they hoped to have news of their parents.

Committee members must have come into the children's lives with all the stimulus of rich and varied personalities, rousing curiosity by some individual mannerism, charming a child by some small kindness. Unfortunately, little is known of these men, almost 300 strong, who served the Workhouse during the first 70 years or so. One can get glimpses of this diversity through three members from the 'sixties and 'seventies. The most austere of the three was Jacob Hagen (1715-1795). By trade a stave merchant of Bermondsey, he gained the name "Vinegar Hagen," because of his "impatience of contradiction." "He was a tall, well-made man, dressed neatly, and uniformly wore light drab-coloured clothes, with a bushy wig and a large, orthodox, triangular hat."

A more eccentric figure was Thomas Wagstaff . . . "a bulky man, rather above the middle height . . . he wore his own hair, at a time when the heads of other plain Friends, were decorated." By craft he was a maker of long-case clocks (a fine example of his work being still in use in the Dining Hall at Walden). He was also an enthusiastic recorder of the lives of early Friends. And lastly, there was the lovable personality of William Allen, a brewer in Ratcliff Highway: "a venerable old man, whose countenance I loved to contemplate, as the seat of benignity, and innocent cheerfulness." As a Minister, he did not speak frequently, ". . . but I have heard him preach with peculiar pleasure, mild and unassuming, and affectionate." Once again, a merchant,

a craftsman and a tradesman, but each was as different from Freame, Quare and Fairman, as all the members of the goodly company were from one another.

Not all the people who visited the Workhouse were Committee men. From almost the beginning, a few women Friends had been appointed to visit and make suggestions for the bodily health and well being of the children and old people. London Friends also came on their own to spend a warm-hearted hour with some of the family. If book-learning was scanty by modern standards, the children had every chance of the learning which lies in meeting all kinds of people.

(iii)

These visitors helped to build up the sense of belonging to a large and active Society of Friends. Perhaps the best agent here was the stables. This short-lived scheme for providing a hostelry for the horses of Friends on a religious visit to town meant a lot in the children's lives. They could watch the hostler at work; perhaps sometimes they helped him, though many of his jobs were too skilled for them. Not only did he shoe horses there, but he repaired their harness—providing a new curb or bridle, stuffing a saddle or mending a stirrup leather. Some horses needed closer care: “for medicienss,” “Roweling and attending him,” “for curing a deep wound in her shoulder,” for “corn and beans everyday by his order.” An alert child must have found something closely interesting in all this work, just as he would in Daniel Rosier at his shoe-making, or in the old man who kept on his trade of mending watches. The hostlers seem to have been men who loved

to gossip, enjoying the confidences of both the children and the old people, and in their turn being able to share the latest news—who had brought in a horse and what they were doing in town.

Several of the riders had come long distances, from Cumberland or East Anglia, having behind them several days of hard riding. Certainly it was the business of Yearly Meeting which brought Thomas Story to town in May 1715. Only the December before, he had returned after 16 years in the American Colonies, very active years of travelling to Friends' groups as far apart as Boston or Barbados, as well as holding high office in Pennsylvania. He had come a week early to Yearly Meeting to do quiet negotiations among Friends over an issue which divided them—whether they should avail themselves of the right to affirm instead of taking the oath. Story also busied himself in approaching several members of the House of Lords, to press for a legal settlement of this issue.

When his business was finished, he paid his bill at the Workhouse: “To 17 nights 31. 3mo: 17. 4mo. that is 8 at house, 9s. 4d. and 9 at grass 6s. Stuffin a Sadd. 6d. 4 shoes 2s.—17s. 10d.” And off he rode to Norwich, sailing within a month from Lowestoft for his travels in Holland, Friesland and Germany.

Much of all this would have been appreciated only by the old folk, but the children could hardly have failed to sense the excitement of events. Even in a stables in a corner of a Workhouse in Clerkenwell one could feel the moving of a keenly alive society struggling for public recognition. The Society of Friends was still a society in motion with a message to deliver, and to the children at the Workhouse it must have seemed that they lived at the centre of it all.

(iv)

The only alternative centre of their Quaker world would have been Peel Meeting House—the scene of much that was exciting, tedious, and entertaining in the children's lives. On their visits there on Sundays and Thursdays, they probably quickly heard of the days of persecution: how informers had sat among Friends, how "ruffian soldiers would rush in and lay about them cruelly with their muskets," dragging many away to prison. Seven hundred and nineteen men and women had been arrested in those days when the children's parents were young. There were, however, more immediate sources of interest—especially the overcrowding. "Some women Friends were much straitened for a conveniency in standing when they have something to declare"; moreover "their backs being towards the men, so that a man and woman sometimes stand up together to speak"! And there were always some troublesome folk to keep things going: there had to be a standing committee "to speak with disorderly preachers," and two Friends were appointed "to keep James Jackson out of the gallery"!

At first the formality may have oppressed: the long uniform rows, the men with their broad-brimmed hats, the women with their bonnets, and all dressed in quiet-coloured clothes. Children would quickly learn to pick out the people who came into their lives at the Workhouse: Richard Claridge, who had been the central figure in the trial which helped to vindicate Friends' right to teach; John Skelton, who the year after Story's visit had himself travelled 1,660 miles on a journey of Ministry; Mary Elson, who had been a "mother in Israel" in the days of persecution, caring for the "prisoners for truth's sake."

These, and many of their fellows were the men and women whose lives made Quaker history—people whose convictions had been put to the test. If such conviction carries with it a compelling power of its own, then their Ministry is likely to have had a power which children would feel, even if they did not understand. The people who gave Ministry, would often have come from distant corners of England, or even from abroad, bringing news of many Quaker groups, of their difficulties and achievements. The Peel Meeting may have helped to develop in the children a sense of belonging to something which linked them all together: boys and girls, the Stewards, the Committee members, the old people, the men who bought the mops, the tradesmen who came to the Workhouse, the riders on horse-back, of belonging to something which linked them with men across the Channel or in the distant lands of New England, as well as with their parents and those for whom they would go to work.

(v)

Friends remained a minority within English society—itsself a society in motion, busy and growing. Committee members had always been active in trade. By the middle of the century they were prominent in a variety of ways: Benjamin Bartlett was a Treasurer of the Society of Antiquaries; John Fothergill and Gilbert Thompson—both doctors to the House—took a leading part in founding the London Medical Society.

No Friend could enter Parliament, but Committee men were not without influence on public affairs. David Barclay was examined at the bar of the House of Commons on the affairs of the American Colonies. "We derived

more knowledge from him," declared Lord North, "than from all others on the east of Temple Bar." The early months of 1775 found Barclay and Fothergill in earnest negotiations with Benjamin Franklin, attempting to avert the catastrophe of war. Out of the deputations which in the following years pleaded with George III for peace, there was hardly a man without close contacts with the Workhouse. To the older children events in English society had the closest relevance to their lives, for they were soon to go into the thick of its movement to live and work.

SERVICEABLE IN THEIR GENERATION

" . . . the advantage of such a careful nurture and Education as would tend to make them Serviceable in their generation, there being doubtless divers poor Children who have excellent Capacities and want a proper Education and Learning, which as far as it is necessary to most common traders is carefully bestowed on them here. . . ."

(Committee Report to London Friends, 1718.)

When 14 years old, the boys and girls stepped out into the life of London. The City, the busy banks of the Thames, the crowded suburbs, all became the new scene of their lives.

Bellers had pleaded for a community that was to be "an Epitomy of the World, by a Collection of all the useful Trades in it." At least, the children went out to a wide range of jobs, which served the basic needs of man—clothing, housing, and a variety of handwork and shops.

The only main exception to Bellers' wish is that no children worked on the land—except for two boys who went to gardeners. Most of the girls became servants; most of the boys in the years before 1774 went to tailors, shoemakers and weavers. Hogarth's picture is neither of Workhouse boys nor of a Quaker master, but it shows the trade which 45 of them entered.

The Women Friends, as has been said, did not want the girls to become "seamstresses, governesses, mantua-makers, quilters, etc."; they had stopped them from learning fancy needlework. The boys in turn were shut out from entering the world of trade and science for which the Grammar School education of the time might have fitted them. Few of the trades which the boys entered need a difficult training.

Even when the boys entered a skilled trade, it is unlikely that they learnt the more intricate processes. The watch-making trade, for instance, was highly sub-divided: a simple and distinct process could be carried out by an isolated worker in his garret—most of the 7,000 workers in Clerkenwell would be of this kind. The Workhouse boys are likely to have carried out these more elementary tasks. Sometimes the records state—"watch plate enameller," "watch movement maker," or even "Hour Glass Maker." It is significant that no boy was apprenticed to any of the leading Quaker watchmakers, even though Wagstaffe and Quare were on the Committee. The masters and mistresses of the girls were also not among the richest households; hardly one went to the home of a wealthy Committee member.

The children, however, were saved from the "mean occupations." A few boys went to tallow-chandlers, one to a slop-seller, one to a japanner, but no one became a

chimney sweep or a link boy. The girls never undertook the rough work of some eighteenth-century women—street sellers or scavenging. The recipe throughout for boy or girl was useful, hard work; trades which were respectable, using one's hands, and without a trace of social ambition.

George Fox—the founder of the Society of Friends—had himself been a shoemaker; among his early followers were many artisans and humble tradesmen. By the middle of the eighteenth century, John Woolman found himself upholding the ideal of the handworker, against Friends who had become rich and important in the life of their times. The trades which the Workhouse children entered suggest how large a group of humble workers the Society still embraced. If many of the Committee members were rich and upheld class differences, they also kept alive Fox's spirit of caring for young people, when they began their work in the world.

(ii)

Care the Workhouse boys and girls certainly needed; London was a cruel and difficult place.

Something of the toll of sickness and death can be seen from the Gordon family. John, the lad who was expelled, died at the age of 20 from dropsy, his father having died from a fever a month before, aged 58. A few years later, his brother George died from consumption in his early 'thirties. During the ten years that followed, his sister Elizabeth seems to have lost two of her children in infancy, while his brother William certainly lost his two daughters before they were three years old.

This story of sickness partly reflects the dangerous and uncertain conditions of work. Many trades were more

affected by seasons and weather than they are to-day, and there was little control of disease. London life was also disturbed during the eighteenth-century by the "dislocating transitions from peace to war."* No boys could have been more aware of this than the weavers in Spitalfields. Few London trades suffered more from periods of distress and the ills of irregular work. No wonder that riots broke out there. No wonder, too, that Hogarth (as the name on the jug shows) chose it as the scene of his picture.

This picture, and the series of which it is a part, "were calculated," said Hogarth, "for the instruction of young people." Friends were equally aware of the moral dangers of London. The London of Hogarth's idle apprentices knew a hooliganism and a delinquency far greater than today: the "Black Guard," who raised Bellers' compassion; the "Black Boy Alley Gang" in Clerkenwell; the lawless youth, who fought against those of other parishes. Even under a Quaker master, the life of an apprentice was peculiarly open to frustration. During his agreed term, a child might be driven hard on uninteresting work, and with very little of the responsibility his rising years deserved. And there was no security that he would be able to establish himself in the world.

The difficulties were real both for girls and boys. Within the life of the Society, they would continue to know both its material care and its moral discipline, equally with all other young people; but in some ways the Workhouse boys and girls seemed to receive especial care.

* *London Life in the Eighteenth Century*, by Mrs. D. M. George, gives an excellent picture of the life of poor apprentices. She quotes at one point from the reports "Disease in London," by Dr. Robert Willan, who gave his services as physician to the Workhouse from 1785 to 1810.

(iii)

The first step was to find a good master or mistress: they must be honest and sober Friends, ready to be conscientious in their care of young people. At the same time, the child must like his work and master. From the first, children went out "upon liking," "and if he does not settle to receive him in again." Twenty-three boys were helped in this way; one boy came back twice; a few changed trades at a later stage. In some cases a child seems to have been adopted by a Friend. The little deaf and dumb lad was kept in the Workhouse as a servant.

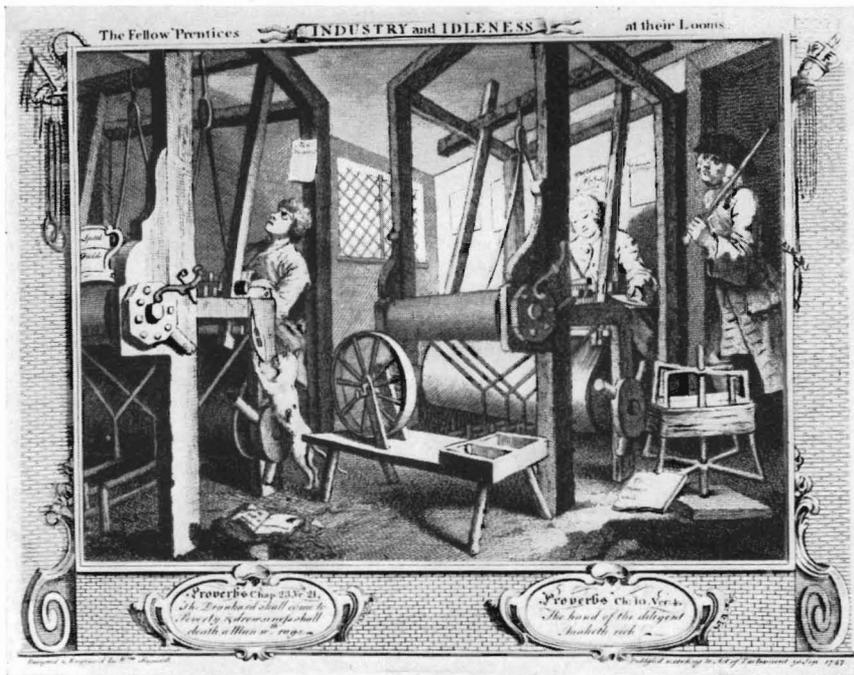
When the boys, and the few girls, were set to a trade, legal indentures were drawn up. The fee given was £5; the agreed term was seven years. The treatment of apprentices in the eighteenth century was often cruel; Quaker children were lucky in having a vigilant society behind them. William Gordon, for instance—the brother of John who was expelled—worked for a master who also kept a victualling house. Instead of teaching the boy his trade, the master often employed him in drawing and serving the beer. Friends from Ratcliff Meeting were appointed to go and enquire. The master made promises. Still the boy was taken from his work to draw beer. The Friends came back three months later, and changed him over to a new master. Sometimes a personal disagreement arose between a master and a boy; again Friends would be appointed by the Monthly Meeting to visit. When for instance, young Thomas Gains had an argument with his master, John Oxden, and left him, Ratcliff Friends sent William Sanders to make the peace. He did this successfully and Thomas returned. Every year the local Monthly Meetings were told which boys and girls had come to

work within their area. They were expected not only to look after the behaviour of the children, but also to see that their master or mistress kept them well fed and supplied with clothes.

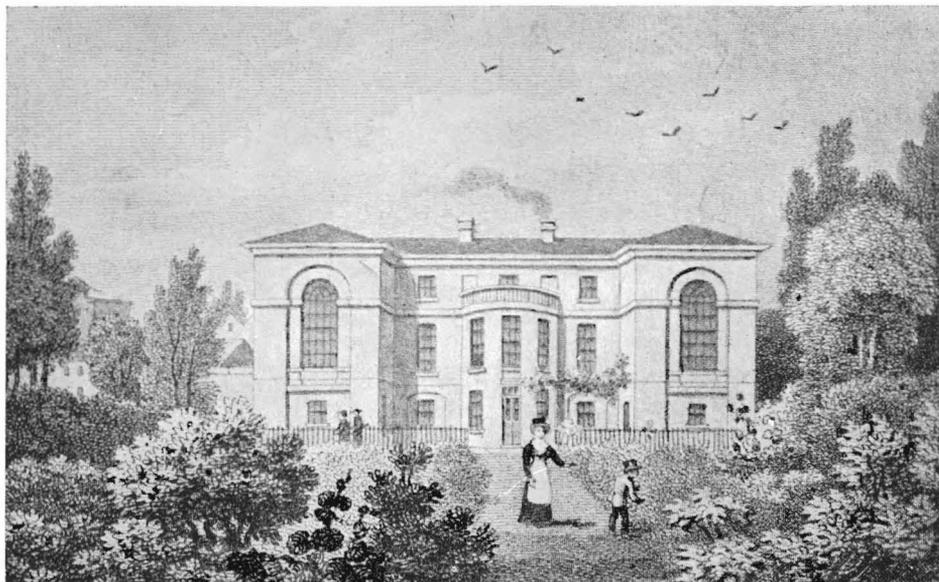
At every point this provision is superior to that given to the parish-workhouse children. This was still true even after the efforts of Hanway and others had achieved the Act of 1767, which laid down that no child should be apprenticed beyond the age of 21, and that the minimum fee should be £4 2s. Many parish overseers, in fact, were glad to get children off their hands to any unscrupulous master, but the essence of the Workhouse Committee's attitude was watchfulness. In many ways the name "workhouse" is misleading; the truer comparison is with the efficient Charity Schools organised by the S.P.C.K. Many of these also offered a £5 fee with a child, and the range of work undertaken is similar. One suspects that the Workhouse children may have had a more individual watch taken over them; the small numbers and the close-knit nature of London Friends gave every opportunity for this. It is as though the communal caring, which the children had experienced in the Workhouse, continued unbroken for another seven years of their lives.

(iv)

The hope was that by then they would be established in their work, and become active Friends themselves. One cannot find any of the children becoming prominent in the Society of Friends, though closer search might find them giving quiet service in the life of Monthly Meetings. The only boy who became a well-known and loved figure at Yearly Meeting was William Rickman, who was at the



WEAVING APPRENTICES IN SPITALFIELDS
 [Plate I of Hogarth's series: "Industry and Idleness," 1747]



"A rural villa surrounded by pleasure-grounds" (Malcolm)
 THE SCHOOL IN ISLINGTON ROAD

Workhouse from 1752-1759. After leaving, he was in America for 16 years and, on returning, he kept a school at Rochester. If a boy ran away, he gave him an hour or two's start for the sheer pleasure of the pursuit in a post-chaise. He also travelled widely in the Quaker ministry in Europe, England and America. Nor did he forget the Workhouse: for a time he taught there, and occasionally he let a boy come on afterwards to his school.

It was not to be expected that the children would grow wealthy. Instead, one finds several boys establishing themselves in a little business, as clog-maker, patten-maker, or hatband maker, and then taking in Workhouse boys and girls as apprentices. Links were made between boys and girls by marriage. James Lammin, for instance, was at the Workhouse from 1722 to 1728. He came from St. James, Clerkenwell, but gained work as an ironmonger in Queenhithe. In 1737 he married Lydia Davis at the "Bull and Mouth" Meeting House. Lydia had been at the Workhouse from 1721 to 1724, but had stayed on to work as a seamstress. Two years later, in 1739, they took on a Workhouse girl, Mary Hall, as a servant. Then in 1742, it seems that James was the "James Lammin" who became schoolmaster at the Workhouse for 17 years, for little more was asked of a schoolmaster than literacy.

The way young men themselves took in Workhouse boys as apprentices is one of several signs of gratitude for their own life there. One boy, James Hill, paid back to his Monthly Meeting £7 10s., being the money they had spent on him when a boy at the Workhouse. More than that, "he hath commendably and voluntarily added the lawful interest to this sum (making the total £10.14.0) which this meeting kindly accepts." And young Thomas

Sands sent this charming letter of thanks to Richard Hutton in October, 1718:—

Kind Steward,

These are to acquaint thee that I am safe arrived at my Uncles House where I was kindly received my love to thee and thy wiffe also to all the friends of the Committee and to my Master that taught me to write my love to all the antient friends and all the children of the workhouse which were my school fellows and I should be very glad to heare of any of their welfare as well as for my own I thank thee and the Committee for all I have Received My Uncle is about placing me at Exeter to Auther Purchas a Tucker I am in all due respects thy Friend.

Friends With Ideas

In 1774—a year of great unrest in the American Colonies—the Workhouse could look back on over 70 vivid years of life. As the years passed by, there had been many small improvements—better clothing for the children, shorter and more regular hours of work, a new row of windows along the east side of the house. Something of the early sense of urgency had gone; the days of persecution were far distant. Often the community had had to struggle against severe difficulties of money. The interest of the story, however, lies in there always being men who kept alive the sense of experiment: men of ideas, who wanted to mend and change. From the best friends of the Workhouse, we learn about its faults.

Schooling for children had not been the first aim of the Workhouse, but it soon became one of its main features. In 1707, there had been a proposal to add a boarding-school. The idea was dropped, but several of the suggestions made at the time were repeated with greater cogency by Bellers to London Friends in 1718.

The Workhouse, he argued, should be enlarged in numbers and should become a boarding-school for less wealthy Friends; not for the poor only, but also for those who would gladly contribute a little towards the costs. The activity should be enriched by “all Sorts of Learning and Languages,” “A Library” and “all Sorts of Handicraft Trades.” Further, the name ought to be altered to “Colledge” which “bespeaks a more Liberal Education.” This change of name would both encourage more Friends to send their children there, and stress the importance of educated Friends to English society . . . “since we are

become a considerable Body in the Nation, there is a Duty incumbent on this Body, to exert itself in all Christian offices to propagate Vertue, Charity and Piety among men; Good examples being more convincing than Precepts.”

Unfortunately his proposals are now more interesting as prophecy than achievement. A broadening of the membership of the “Colledge” would have helped to remove the idea that the poorest children needed very little book-learning. Greater emphasis on “useful learning” would have added interest to the humdrum lives of the school-teachers. As things stood, their frequent coming and going was a weakness of the community.

Other men had also taken a personal interest in the children’s school work. Of especial significance was the interest of John Fothergill, who was doctor to the Workhouse from 1747 to 1765, and knew its life intimately. On one occasion in 1757 he gave some copies of John Jeffery’s “Addresses” and “Piety Promoted,” desiring the steward to “encourage ye reading of (the books) amongst ye children and order them at times to transcribe some passages out of them” and bring to the Committee for inspection. In 1760 Fothergill brought an important report on education before Yearly Meeting, and in 1779 he helped to found Ackworth School. It was against this background of a renewed concern for education throughout the whole Society of Friends that the most sustained attempt to improve the Workhouse was to take place.

(ii)

Handwork had always been part of the educational ideal, just as it was in the contemporary “Schools of Industry.” In Bellers’ original plan, boys and girls

would have learnt the whole art of service or a trade, by working alongside the adults in the busy life of the community. Instead, as the Workhouse boys fingered out more yarn and girls threaded yet another needle, they were not learning a skill and could have had only a vague feeling that they were helping the profits of some impersonal thing called "the House."

An attempt to improve this was the proposal of 1712 to turn the Workhouse into "a manufactory for the regular employment of the poor," for children and adults—one of the several proposals before Bellers' death in 1725 which reflect his active personality. The idea was not taken up, nor were several other suggestions to introduce new kinds of work—especially cotton, worsted and linen spinning. Hutton has careful memoranda to explain why these would not pay.

John Fothergill saw farther. He wanted to see the children's work related to their jobs in the world. In 1758, he was allowed to undertake a scheme whereby "ye Labours of the Children might be rendered much more conducive to their future benefit and to the advantage of the House than ye business they have hitherto been engaged in." He offered to pay for any losses—a promise which he generously kept in 1761, by paying £30, although he was convinced that the accounts were wrongly drawn. It is not clear what the scheme consisted of, though a training in the local industry of weaving seems to have been part of it. In 1765, just before Fothergill resigned, a project was undertaken of knitting nets—a Thomas Bradshaw of "Fish Street Hill" promising to teach the children the craft and supply the twine.

Problems remained unsolved. How could young children perform work which was both intricate, suitable

to their ability, and profitable? How could the time needed for work and training be reconciled to the demands of book-learning? These were the rocks on which many eighteenth-century experiments in "Schools of Industry" had foundered. In 1774, the Workhouse was on the eve of vigorous years of reform. The conflict of work and learning was never really solved; for in attempting to reform the Workhouse the community was to become a school.

(iii)

"Too few of the youth educated therein," said Fothergill, "have turned out useful and respectable members of society." This is less a reflection on the Workhouse, than on the oversight of the children afterwards. For all the care taken in setting up children in careers, there were certain serious weaknesses. Nobody saw this more clearly than Timothy Bevan, the apothecary of Plough Court Pharmacy (now Allen & Hanbury's). In 1746 Timothy Bevan drew up "An Account of the Rise and Progress of the Friends' School and Workhouse"—a short pamphlet which had the full support of the Committee. He centred his criticisms on the £5 apprentice fee: "It is with great difficulty that Persons of suitable Trades and Characters can be procured to take (the children) for so inconsiderable a sum. . . . They are either put out to Such whose Trades are less suitable; or they are placed in Families merely as Servants, without a Possibility of acquiring a Trade, whereby to provide a comfortable Subsistence for themselves as a Family: Or lastly, They are placed with such whose Characters are less agreeable, and by this means they are in danger of losing the Fruits of a sober and virtuous Education." He

advocated the raising of a fund so that the apprentice fees could be raised from £5 "to a sum not exceeding £20." He also recommended that every boy should be given £10 at the end of his apprenticeship "to purchase him Tools, etc." and that each girl "at the Age of Twenty One Years, be entitled to a Sum more or less, as their Characters appear to deserve it."

Bellers and Fothergill had often found little support for their criticisms, but Bevan's at once gained the support of the Committee, and his proposals were ultimately achieved. His fund grew, and by 1774 the money available included three main bequests: £500 from Samuel Brewster, £100 from Cornelius Taylor and the legacy of Devereaux Bowley. Bowley was well enough known to have the details of his will published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* :—

. . . £6000 to the London Hospital; £6000 to the Quakers' charity school, Clerkenwell; £300 to St. Luke's Hospital; £1800 to St. Thomas's; and £500 to each of the Quakers' Meetings in London.

There were, of course, smaller amounts given by the many friends of the Workhouse. When in 1774 the years of vigorous reform began, Friends were lucky to have such resources at hand.

(iv)

Several far-sighted proposals for reform had failed, because of the attitude of Committee Friends to economy—the Workhouse, they insisted, must pay its way.

Here the Clerkenwell Workhouse had a more fortunate experience than most of its contemporaries. The early years of the eighteenth century had seen an enthusiasm to introduce manufactures into the old poor-houses—the very reason why the name "workhouse" grew up. This

way of making benevolence self-supporting had been eagerly taken up by many large towns. The workhouse idea seemed a modern answer to the problem of poverty. By at least the middle of the century, hopes had been blighted. The long aftermath was to be seen in the hated workhouses which Crabbe and Dickens condemned.

"The Friends' School and Workhouse" developed in a very different way, but for many years Committee members had exactly the same attitude to poverty. Bellers himself was very much a child of his age in this. London Friends, moreover, had very good reasons for economy. When the Workhouse began they were in a critical financial position: the period of persecution had seriously taxed their resources. For the next 60 years or more, Friends' attempts to care for their own members were achieved only in the face of severe difficulty. No period of years was more difficult for the Workhouse than the 'fifties, which was just the time when London Friends themselves were most seriously in debt.*

Friends' attitude to money was understandable, but it has been seen how many of the weaknesses of the Workhouse were the result of this economy, especially the humdrum nature of the children's work. Another symptom of trouble was the Committee's jealousy of other schemes of philanthropy. From 1727 a cautionary minute was read to every new member of the Committee, warning him against divulging "any part or branch of the trade of this House," to any outside person.

It is difficult to date improvement. The 'sixties and 'seventies certainly see the Workhouse once more making a profit on its sales. Mrs. George—the historian of

* A full discussion of the financial problems of the Workhouse and of London Friends can be found in *London Friends' Meetings*, by Beck and Ball.

London—considers this period to be one of improvement in social conditions throughout London: the Workhouse would benefit from this, just as it had been the victim of periods of distress, when no market could be obtained for the mop-yarn. One suspects also that the attitude of Friends to poverty was slowly changing: the feeling that the life and training of children was of first importance, not the profits from their work. In the reforms of the 'seventies, the children came first.

This hopeful attitude had been built up over many years by far-sighted friends of the Workhouse: Bellers, Bevan and Fothergill all pleaded for a fuller life for the children. It is unfair to forget the many people who made such an attitude possible: the individuals who made generous gifts, the Committee men who struggled over long years with the hard problems of the Workhouse finances.

(v)

From the beginning the Committee had always had an answer to difficulties—stricter discipline. Nothing had been more ceremoniously carried out, since the first decade, than the reading aloud of the rules, and the exacting of a promise to keep them, from every entrant, man or woman, boy or girl. In the difficult years of the 'fifties when the Workhouse was running at a loss, several Committee members feared that the life of the community was too lax, that not enough work was being done. So in 1753 a new set of rules was drawn up.

One of the men who helped with this was Thomas Corbyn. Corbyn was an apothecary, active in the business affairs of London Friends; he had once served on a deputation to George III. A contemporary said he was

“a stern disciplinarian and noted in being clad in drab from top to toe,” refusing to listen to any reason in opposition to a rule of the Society. Corbyn represented an attitude that was becoming widely shared in the Society of Friends—the feeling that Quakerism could only survive by a strict orthodoxy. Such a viewpoint was austere, but was compatible with a genuine social interest; it was the Quaker counterpart of the Evangelical movement. Throughout the reforms of the 'seventies not a little of their vigour sprang from this moral concern.

(vi)

Criticisms of ill-discipline always hinted at the laxity of the steward and his wife. Actually bad stewards were rare. Samuel Trafford (1709-1711) left the cash-books in chaos, and had sailed from the Downs for America before the Committee members could contact him and get satisfaction. But he was probably more happy-go-lucky than a rogue in any way. The “Idle and disorderly Behaviour of many of the Boys” was especially complained of, when George Reynolds (1737-42) was Steward. He had several disputes with the school master; a few old people were guilty of pawning sheets and returning “disguised in liquor.” In the end, Reynolds and his wife were dismissed for re-engaging a servant in defiance of the Committee. Even then Reynolds wanted to know in writing, why he and his wife had been asked to go. The Committee “unanimously” agreed “That it was not only for this repeated disregard of the Committee’s orders, but, also, for the haughty and imperious Temper of the Stewardess, which neither private entreaty, nor long forbearance were able to soften, much less subdue.”

There was much to be said for an "imperious Temper." The stewards were carefully directed by the Committee; at every point there were standing minutes to be obeyed. When the Committee made a decision—and its decisions touched every detail of workhouse life—Friends watched carefully that it was carried out. The representatives from each Monthly Meeting in rotation were appointed as visitors for the month: it was their duty to scrutinise everything, from the petty cash-book to the kitchen.

Some of the remedies put forward by the stewards (especially the conscientious Richard Hutton) suggest the hasty answers of men who were struggling against a very difficult situation. Anxious rules against gossip and whispering are side by side with suggestions for keeping the old people strictly separated from the children, the boys from the girls. One can find such rules being noted down by Hutton in his "Complaints Book," before they are adopted almost in the same form by the Committee at a future meeting. Sometimes Hutton shows anxiety lest he should be losing control, and appeals to the Committee. He writes: "We desire the Committee, would please to use their authority in discouraging such disorderly Spirits so resolutely bent; if their wasteful humours are not answered . . . (will) run down and make void all manner of Government in the family." Even Hutton's formal style cannot hide the underlying human fears: he jots down for his personal use some advice against losing one's temper; he is clearly hurt at the complaints that he and his wife are not giving the old folk enough to eat, and that he is over-working the children. He was so pleased with a boy's letter of thanks that he copied it down in his book.

No one can read Hutton's "Complaints Book" or the

long lines of large account books, without feeling that the stewards were very faithful in their trust. Each detail was noted down with exact care; the expenses of every child and old person were drawn up in a detailed list to be given to his or her Monthly Meeting. The stewards had a most unusual family to look after. "Our Family have Consisted generally speaking of a sort of dissatisfied Persons very unfitt for a Community." That the family ran as smoothly as it did was largely due to their conscientious service.

The stewards had always found that the most troublesome members of their family were the old folk—especially those who paid for such extra privileges as a room to themselves, or of having meals with the Steward. The old people, Committee members said, were a bad influence. In 1702 the first concern of London Friends had been to care for their weaker members—old people and poor children. By 1774 Friends had come to see that the needs of the two groups were incompatible. What mattered, moreover, was not the poverty of the children, but that they were children who demanded in their own right to be trained for their lives ahead.

So often the faithful Steward, Treasurers and Committee members felt that their efforts were unavailing. Through these men and women the Workhouse had carried on its service during 70 strenuous years. The ideas of Bellers, Fothergill and other Friends seemed to have been passed by unheeded. In 1774 there was a concern, shared by London Friends, that a new purpose and vigour should be given to the Workhouse. Above all, everyone agreed that the children should come first.

First the Children

1774—1811

NEW LIFE IN A NEW HOME

In 1774, 12 years of vigorous reform began. Sometimes the Quarterly Meeting took the initiative, sometimes the Committee. Never before had changes crowded so closely together.

In 1774 the Quarterly Meeting asked Monthly Meetings "to visit from time to time" the children put out from the Workhouse as apprentices and servants, "to advise as they see occasion and to make report." In 1775 the Quarterly Meeting set up a committee to make a complete revision of the Workhouse rules, and to enquire into the state of apprentice fees, making new recommendations as to their amount. In 1776 the Workhouse Committee were requested to draw up "some suitable instructions to leavers." In 1777, a new Bill of Fare was drawn up. The advice of the women visitors was seen also in a fixed scale of prices for the girls' needlework: marking was to be done at "a halfpenny a letter, a farthing a figure," the money to be kept by the girls, "who were to leave the Workhouse, with the gift of a deal box, equipped with lock and key." In the same year the salary of the stewards was increased from £40 to £50, of the schoolmaster from £25 to £30, of the schoolmistress from £15 to £20. There was more enthusiasm than system about these reforms. Another decision of 1777 was that any certificate for a gratuity must have the approbation of the local Monthly Meeting in which the child was working.

NEW LIFE IN A NEW HOME

Moreover, by 1778, the children were getting the benefit of the newly-suggested scale of apprentice fees. An apprentice fee of £15 was to be given with the boys, and to it £5 was to be added after three years. The girls placed out as servants were to receive a gratuity of £1 at the end of each of the first three years. Girls "who through bodily infirmity or other reasonable causes, are improper to be placed out as servants, may be bound apprentices" to suitable work. At the end of their time, boys were to receive a gratuity of £15 to set themselves up in business, and the girls were to be given a marriage portion of £20. Timothy Bevan's efforts had borne good fruit.

The years 1778 and 1779 saw special scrutiny given to the proposed advice to leavers and the drafting of the new rules. The correction of the rules alone took the time of one Quarterly Meeting and of three adjourned meetings. This publication in the early months of 1780 was the key-stone of reform for those who emphasised the value of a guarded education for youth. Never before had the Workhouse printed rules.

In April of the same year, a gift of £200 from the Quaker merchant, John Eliot, was spent in buying books for leavers: 12 copies were bought of Barclay's *Catechism*, Penn's *Advice to his Children*, and Penn's *No Cross, No Crown*, John Woolman's tract *God's Protecting Providence*, and Field's *The Fear of God*. The value of good books was also stressed four months later in Fothergill's gift of 14 copies of an abstract of Dean Percy's *Key to the New Testament*, which Fothergill had drawn up for the use of Ackworth pupils.

In August 1780, two Friends reported to the Committee that they "have called on John Dutch, Silk Throwster in Spitalfields, who expressed his readiness to lend all

Assistance in his power both in providing Engines and sending a suitable person to instruct the Boys in Winding Silk." From the viewpoint of later history, however, the most significant event of 1780 was the examination of the children, "relative to their progress in learning," by the Committee, with the help of John Fothergill, Gilbert Thompson, and Robert Howard. This Day of Judgment became an annual event, growing in importance with every new emphasis on school-work—a check on teachers as well as pupils.

The early 'eighties saw no pause in the good work; the masters of the apprentices were not let off. The Committee refused to pay the apprentice fees of two boys to Joseph Talwin, "citizen and dyer of Bromley Hall," because he "hath omitted to cause the said apprentices to be enrolled, for want of which the binding is understood not to be legal, which puts it into their power to leave him at pleasure, and in consequence of which one actually did leave him . . .," in short, "an omission . . . injurious to the safety of youth."

In 1782 the Committee also decided to go farther afield to find good masters for the boys and girls, ". . . considering that suitable masters and mistresses are not always found readily amongst Friends in this City for all the Children," consequently, "there is a Danger sometimes that Friends may be induced to take up with such, whose Conduct is not enough exemplary for them to have Youth placed under their Care, and likewise that it may be of advantage to the children, some of whose parents may not be good Exemplars, to be situated at a Distance from them." The schoolmaster also experienced the new broom. In 1782, being "charged with reproachful conduct, seven Friends . . . deputed . . . to come to

the House and direct the Steward to discharge him." Thus the scrutiny of the Committee was brought to bear on every aspect of the life and on every member of the Community.

The crowning achievement, however, remained—a new home for the children. In 1786 this great move took place, and the boys and girls went to the attractive house which had been prepared for them, half a mile away along the Islington Road. The old people remained at Clerkenwell, until they too gained a new home at Plaistow. Although (for reasons of the expense of two establishments) the old people came over to Islington in 1792, they were kept strictly apart from the children, in a separate new wing. They grew fewer in numbers and finally left in 1811. The children had gained a life of their own, and the ground had been cleared for the future development of a school.

(ii)

The ground had been cleared through this busy work; the following years were to see results. The spectacular gain was the new home on the Islington Road. The learned topographer, Malcolm, described it as a "very commodious building . . . the whole occupying a very large space of ground. . . . The outside has the appearance of a rural villa, surrounded by pleasure-grounds, gardens and trees. It is not only a House of Industry, but also a Meeting House . . . also a Charity School for boys and girls. It is sufficient to have mentioned that this belongs to and is occupied by Quakers, to convey to the mind of the reader an idea of the most perfect cleanliness, order and decorum. . . . The ceilings are remark-

ably high, the windows large, and the rooms airy; it may truly be said of these people, who appear like a distinct race of mortals, when compared with the rest of mankind, that whatsoever their hands find to do, they literally do it with all their might."

One wonders how far this admirable good order was helped by the revived attentions of women visitors. One remarkable woman, Hannah Plumsted, served in this way for 18 years (1784-1802): "an excellent woman," wrote Jenkins, "of great piety and benevolence—being blessed with ample means, her charitable ideas were many. She was an Elder of London." Elizabeth Fry undertook this service for five years (1805-1810). Epidemics of scarlet fever and "Scald Head" (ring-worm) made this a somewhat anxious period for the health of the children and led to new health measures—a new Bill of Fare, the creation of the office of housekeeper, and a decision that each child was to be inoculated. Elizabeth Fry would almost certainly have shared in such discussions, and those concerning the system of prizes for needlework. Nor did she break her links in 1810, but came back later on examination days and subscribed £10 for Croydon School. More and more women were to play an active part in the affairs of the household and of the girls.

The reforms also gave the chance for boys and girls to lead a more interesting life in the world outside. The children now went to work in many counties of England, not least to Yorkshire: five boys in the 'eighties and 'nineties went to Sheffield cutlers, and one to a Huddersfield clothier—a sign perhaps that the vigorous policy was enabling boys to enter usefully into the new stream of industrial life, instead of providing cheap mass labour, as the children from the parish workhouse were beginning

to do. And lastly, it was no accident that the list of masters and mistresses now included members of well-known and wealthy Quaker homes and firms: Townsend and Compton, the fashionable pewterers and tin-foil beaters; Sampson Lloyd of Birmingham; and not least, the home and shoe-shop of Thomas Shillitoe. Shillitoe tested every step of his life by deep inner searchings. In this way he felt led to become a simple shoemaker, later to travel in Europe—pleading with drunks, visiting prisons, and preaching before kings, "like a cork on the ocean," he said, "wafted hither and thither as the Spirit of God should blow."

A person of the same intense piety as Shillitoe was Sarah Lynes Grubb. She came as a girl to the Workhouse the year after the printed rules came into force, when strictness was the rule. She was born in Wapping. Her father died when she was six, leaving a large family in difficulty. Sarah's years at Clerkenwell and Islington were not happy ones; they show in her a precocious piety. She occupied herself by reading the Bible and the Quaker books in the library. When 13 years old, it is said, she felt drawn towards the Ministry: "She was often contrited in a sense of the Lord's power and love, and when alone, would exclaim 'Lord make me a chosen vessel unto thee!' She at times addressed her companions in a religious way and once saw several of them in tears whilst she spoke to them." Soon after she was 14, she left the Workhouse, going into service with Sarah Grubb in Ireland, to look after her four children. So began the life of this determined woman: a powerful preacher, in market places as much as Meeting Houses, highly intuitive, distrusting "the will and wisdom of the creature," relentless to herself and others in a life-work of evangelistic piety. Thomas

Corbyn and his plain Friends would have admired the good fruit of their clearing.

(iii)

The spirit of those years—the moral concern, the care of young people—found its fullest expression in the “Advice to on his quitting Friends’ School and Workhouse at Clerkenwell, London,” given to every boy after 1778. In addition to advice on learning a trade “speedily,” avoiding gaming, speaking the truth, care of money “for the account of thy master” and avoiding marriage during apprenticeship, these precepts are given :

- i. “Live in the fear of Almighty God, that thou mayst be preserved from evil. An awful care will then cover thy mind, lest thou shouldst at any time be found doing that which is displeasing to him.”
- ii. “. . . desire leave of thy master for an opportunity (to go to a meeting for worship) on a week day.” In Meetings for Discipline “wait to feel thy heart humbled before the Lord, that he may shew thee thy duty, and assist thee in the performance of it at all times.”
- v. “Be careful never to enter an alehouse, unless sent there by the master or mistress on business, nor drink to excess on any occasion: drunkenness is a most dangerous vice, unfits a man for business, is reproachful to society and has led many to commit the most atrocious crimes.”
- vii. “When sent from home to business, be careful not to loiter: many youths by associating with wicked in the streets and highways, have been enticed to many evil practices, which have involved them in ruin.”
- ix. “Keep always to that plainness of dress and language in which thou hast been educated: it will prove a defence to thee: and in case thy lot should be cast at any time amongst those who are not of our Society, they will in general respect thee the more for adhering to thy principles.”

“THE USEFUL VARNISH” (1799)

- x. “A daily looking back on thy conduct. . . .” “The Divine Principles of Light and Truth, which are come by Jesus Christ, and placed in thy mind, being regarded and obeyed, will certainly lead thee through peace and safety in this life to happiness hereafter.”

This card of advice signed by a member of the Committee, a Bible and some Quaker books, were “the whole armour of God” with which the boys were to defend Quaker peculiarity in a non-Quaker world.

“THE USEFUL VARNISH”

1799

“It’s Labour sustains, maintains, and upholds, tho’ Learning gives a Useful Varnish.”

—BELLERS.

In 1799 four men met together. One was tall and stout, yet with authority, “He possessed a strong mind, and that kind of comprehensive understanding which takes much at a grasp; he was pretty free of access and ready to perform an act of kindness.” One of his companions was austere in his features, a rising disciplinarian among Friends, but of a quiet and attractive manner. If he had tried to restrain his youthful enjoyment, he still retained at 46 the good taste and learning which a broad education had given him. Unfortunately, the personalities of the other two men are not known. The four of them—Robert Howard, J. Gurney Bevan, Frederick Smith and Edward Janson—met together to draw up a plan for the “Friends’ School and Workhouse.”

They had more in common than their broad-brimmed hats, their drab clothes, and their wigs “representing the

natural hair." Such things were symbols of the Quaker belief which was one of the most significant forces in their lives. Frederick Smith had come to Friends from outside, after a painful period of introspection. J. G. Bevan's attitude also had the semblance of a conversion: he looked back on the times when he was led from his gay youth "under serious impressions of mind." Howard was a busy man in Quaker affairs—responsibilities of Clerk and Elder came naturally to him. Janson was one of the many branches of a family tree in the wood of Quaker genealogy. Their Quaker ways drew these men together, but divided them from the world: Frederick Smith had lost his job in the postal service for refusing to take an oath, and by joining Friends he had roused bitter misunderstandings in his family. J. G. Bevan, son of Timothy Bevan, was troubled about his goods lest they might have been smuggled, produced by slaves, or needed a Custom House Bond—for "The Bond being given to the King contains titles, which I not thinking true, do not chuse to subscribe, such as 'King of France,' 'Defender of the Faith.' . . ." This division between Friends and their fellow-citizens was to be dramatically expressed during the period of acute shortage in the following year. In 1800, an angry mob stormed Howard's works, believing he hoarded grain there. They were beaten off by the loyal but unquakerly workmen with any weapons to hand!

Yet this disquieted conscience sometimes helped them to form links with other men of their times, who also felt deeply about social abuses. Their daily work also brought these four men into the life and activity of their time: J. G. Bevan at the Plough Court Pharmacy, building up new trade in America and the West Indies; Frederick

Smith with his humble chemist's business in the Haymarket; Robert Howard at his brass foundry and tinsplate works. As Quakers and philanthropists, it seemed natural to find these busy men meeting together on a sub-committee of a Quaker workhouse-school. In what ways would their beliefs and experience help to guide their plans?

(ii)

When these men met in 1799, England was at bitter war with the "armed opinions" of France. The philanthropist was suspect as a man of Jacobin sympathies, and many a sincere philanthropist was himself apprehensive of giving too much education to the mob among the poor. With the backing of Wilberforce, Hannah More's Sunday Schools were in full swing. By her "Cheap Repository" tracts she was providing, through safe reading, guidance to virtue: extolling simple piety against the atheistical dangers of France. And in 1799 the "Religious Tract Society" was formed.

The four Friends would have agreed to give a limited book-learning to the poor, but although the Workhouse had offered writing and arithmetic (deemed undesirable by Hannah More) from the early years, they had done no more than Charity Schools of the day. Whatever these men were going to plan, it was unlikely to result in a class-room drill distinguishable from that of other schools for the poor in England. Yet at bottom the approach of Friends was different. How far would this be revealed in significant differences of emphasis?

Friends upheld George Fox's teaching that Truth was

a vital relationship between man and God; not something believed in so much as "walked in." For Truth expressed itself in a way of life. In teaching, this placed the emphasis on doing the right thing. First of all, children must be guarded from the world and taught to live truly in distinctive Quaker ways. One Quaker witness was the accuracy of the spoken and written word. This involved the rejection of literary enjoyment with its different layers of aesthetic and imaginative truth. What was wanted was the exactness of the account-book—a thing both useful to a man and serviceable to his fellows. Not that scholarship was undesirable, but even at its best it was a "useful varnish" which but few would need.

Such views fitted happily with the minds of men trained in business. They accepted a class pattern of society and were familiar with the needs of trade: there was a clear value in giving poor boys the rudiments of reading and writing to enable them to be useful artisans. Yet in 1799, these men may have been wondering whether the changing nature of manufacture and the expansion of merchant connections were pointing to the need of a rather more thorough training in the rudiments. Otherwise the children would suffer the fate of the parish paupers and be drawn into hack work of a most demoralising kind. Certainly, a few children were beginning to go on afterwards to Ackworth and other schools—an indication that the provisions at the "Friends' School and Workhouse" were not meeting present needs.

Efficiency did not mean any new venture. For one thing, there was no need of any new equipment. The move in 1786 to Islington Road had left the school well provided. The boys' schoolroom had three forms and three desks, each 15 feet long, made of deal and edged

with copper. Round the fire was the iron fence, given by J. G. Bevan himself. Whatever need be added, apart from the annual whitewash to the walls! Of books, too, a plentiful stock had been purchased at the time. Apart from Quaker classics, the list included *Selections of Dying Sayings for Young Persons*, Hugh Turford's *Grounds of a Holy Life*, and John Gurney's *Address to the Youth of Norwich*. Three years before, in 1796, *Lessons for Youth*, Penn's *Reflections and Maxims*, and Lindley Murray's *Powers of Religion on the Mind*, had been introduced as other books from which to learn reading besides the Bible. At the same time, some books had been bought "for the children's instruction and entertainment": a list which ranged freely beyond Quaker authors and included Burnett's *History of the Reformation* (abridged in eight volumes), Goldsmith's *History of England*, two copies of Mrs. Trimmer's *Introduction to the Knowledge of Nature*, and Johnson's *Dictionary* (abridged). What else was needed could be left to gifts. Had not Wilson Birkbeck recently given Guthrie's *Grammar* and Aikins' *England Delineated*? Friend Southall had added six maps on paste-board in a portfolio, and Thomas Coar had given 12 copies of his *English Grammar*.

It was clear that new elements in the curriculum were not even in question. Not radical changes, but care over detail had brought success in business. These men wanted to see their Workhouse-school for poor boys as orderly as the ingredients on the shelves of the Plough Court Pharmacy, or rather, they were to be like the flasks and glasses—useful, unspectacular, polished only for a humble purpose.

(iii)

For the promotion of learning, the report of the sub-committee declared, we are "persuaded that the practice of undeviating regularity in business is much conducive to that end." This was the key to their plan, which had three significant features. First the plan offered a systematic time-table, which placed school-work in the centre. Work for profit was left entirely behind: a share in the work of the house would be the only thing to detract from the boys' time in the classroom. The boys over 13 were to be full-time "except that they are to attend the washing-machine in turn, they are nevertheless out of school hours to take their turn in doing the business of the doorkeeper." Apart from this, the only routine exceptions to a day of seven and a half hours schooling, beginning at 6.30 a.m. and ending at 5 p.m, were to be a break on Wednesday afternoon when they went to Meeting at Peel, a break on Thursday afternoons when the boys "mended stockings," and on Saturday afternoons, when one imagines they went for a guarded walk. Sunday was not discussed in the plan.

The pattern of the day's school-work brought out a second feature of the plan: the division of the work of the schoolroom into five activities—Spelling, Grammar, Reading, Arithmetic and Writing. Spelling and Grammar were but additional refinements of the old Reading and Writing, and the emphasis on them was not new. Since an examination had become an annual event from 1780, these were the things for which important Friends looked. The report of the second examination said of each child:—"A Small portion of Scripture was given to him to Read, Sundry words to Spell . . . with their writing and

cyphering Books for inspection." A year later the report comments on "an improvement . . . Particularly in their Reading, an improper Tone of Voice heretofore prevailing." The year afterwards in 1783, "bad habits . . . improper tones, and wrong pronunciation of Letters, also a confused hurrying way of speech." No, it was not these activities which were new in 1799, but the business-like way of planning them, giving each its due proportion.

The last feature of the plan was novel: a system of rewards and for school-work only. A competition was to be staged every quarter: the Committee would adjudicate writing specimens (impersonally numbered according to a secret list), ask questions and inspect the neatness and accuracy of cyphering books. A more ingenious competition was devised for Spelling:—"The boys to stand in a semi-circle. The eldest to propose a word to be spelled, and the next in age to attempt to spell it. If he succeed he is to take the place of the first proposer, and give forth another word. If he fail, the third in age is to try, and in like manner, if he spell the word, succeed to the proposer's place. If no one in the semi-circle can spell the word proposed, the proposer of it is to spell it audibly, and obtain the prize, after which he is to retire and the next in line is to propose a word. This exercise is to continue one hour, or until three tickets of a penny each are obtained. At the next time of such spelling the second in age to take the lead and so on until each have had his turn." Twice a year "a present shall be made to each boy equal to the value of the tickets which he hath obtained (in all subjects) . . . as a reward for his attention to learning." The four men presumably felt this device would stimulate good work, as well as being a check on progress: there is even a trace of the counter

about it—payment by results. Such schemes of encouragement were to pass away when a richer curriculum supplied a greater stimulus of its own.

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What a trivial end to such weighty deliberations! Four serious Friends had deliberated on the educational life of the Workhouse, and the only result was another notice to be fixed up in "a prominent place." Even then the notice applied only to the boys, and not the girls, and mostly to the older boys at that—to the ten, perhaps, whose names appear on the specimen rota. Yet this rota, or rather the time-table of which it was a part, was a momentous step. Previously, for all the love of regular pattern, a steward had been given a fair length of rope to hold tight or slack. For instance, he decided when the children were to help in the kitchen, who was to go on an errand, when the children should go for a walk, or finish work. Now life was to be regulated by the clock, and the central activity was to be school work. The time-table must have seemed to offer to the Workhouse a straight and narrow path, dear to its creators. Yet it was a conformity to rules which concealed a revolution: it was along this single track of classroom routine, that the community finally turned its back on the Workhouse and began a long journey to the School of to-day.

For the time being their schooling offered the boys little more than Joseph Lancaster, a year before, had started to offer to the poor children of Southwark, and which, in a few decades, the two rival societies (National, and British and Foreign Schools Society) would be offering to the poor in most parts of England. This limited classroom

drill was to prove the ground-work on which a leisure-time interest, in a wide range of knowledge, could grow, and which in turn was to be the starting point for the growth of a wider curriculum. The enthronement of grammar is also significant for the future. Here was the discipline which Friends were to regard as taking the place of the Classics as a means of mental training, in their school for poorer members. The days of Coar and Lindley Murray were already at hand.

At this time there were other "Friends' Schools," where sons of richer Quakers enjoyed a fuller curriculum. Such schools were not the concern of a Quarterly Meeting, but of enterprising individuals: Joseph Benwell's school at Sidcot taught "Merchants' Accompts and some of the useful Parts of the Mathematics; also the Latin and Greek languages"; David Dent at Cirencester employed an émigré to teach French. John Revoult at Wandsworth apparently taught the delights of Eastern Culture, and organised a literary miscellany: "and thus," a commentator remarks, "Friends became a learned body filled with men of rare intellect and polished manners." For young men who would enter the world of business, and entertain freely in their comfortable homes, such things may well have been a "useful varnish."

A SCHOOL FOR THE SOUTH 1811

Working to a time-table soon became an unnoticed habit. Step by step the little community steadfastly moved away from the Workhouse.

A year later the sub-committee was worried about the dirtiness of the boys' "common clothes." The solution was for the boys to use flannel jackets and a "number of frocks of some washing material . . . to button close about the wrist and neck and to come below the knees; above all, to be washed regularly." Further, since "the fetching of coals from the cellar is unnecessarily conducive to dirtiness, from the awkward manner in which the want of strength and adroitness in the children occasions it to be done," the coal henceforth was to be kept on ground level. Boys who now spent so much time at their books needed to have clean hands!

Better school work also demanded better teachers, and in 1802 the Committee went to the unprecedented length of having 200 copies printed of an advertisement for a schoolmaster. In 1806, the system of prizes was modified; the boys being divided into three classes, with rewards for each class—clearly the little boys were being drawn into the pattern. The next year, the girls (whose school-work had also been re-organised), were provided with a similar competition, with special prizes for needle-work. In 1808, the office of "Steward" was replaced by that of "Master." The advertisement required a man "who writes a good hand, is competent to keep accounts, and has a good idea of the business of education . . . availing himself of improved methods of teaching and the

assistance of the elder boys." This was a sign of the times, although Lancaster's supporter, William Allen, had not yet joined the Committee.

These small improvements over a decade prepared the School for the great change of 1811; but money and the "competition" of Ackworth had first to force a decision. It became clear that the School would never pay with only 40 to 50 children. There was a vicious circle—charges were too high to attract more children; charges could not be lowered unless more children came. Again, there was an evident need for a school for Quaker children in the London district and surrounding counties, but parents found it cheaper to send to Ackworth; the local Monthly Meetings paid 5s. per week for each child at the "Friends' School and Workhouse," while Ackworth charged about 4s. In early 1811, 58 children from among London Friends were on a list of admissions for Ackworth, as well as some from Essex and nearby counties. And all the time, the premises at Islington were not being fully used.

(ii)

The need was clear, and in 1811 the changes were rapidly made. The four country Meetings of London and Middlesex Quarterly Meeting (Tottenham, Barking, Longford and Kingston) and nine other Quarterly Meetings (Essex, Kent, Sussex and Surrey, Dorset and Hants., Berks. and Oxon., Bucks., Beds. and Herts., Northants. and Suffolk) all accepted an invitation to send children to the School, through a system of Agents, and each group promised to subscribe so that fees could be kept down to ten guineas a year. Management was largely left in the hands of the original Committee, though

Agents could attend and express opinions. The old people finally left from next door, and the word "Workhouse" disappeared for ever. The new name was to be "Friends' School, under the care of the Quarterly Meeting of London and Middlesex." The community had been broken no more than when it moved from Clerkenwell. Instead it had gained a new significance and new members.

(iii)

A spectacular change had taken place. Numbers certainly increased; by 1815 there were 111 children in the School. The Quarterly Meetings of Southern England supported the School, not only with their children, but also with a friendly watchfulness, although there were disputes. Altogether, the buildings were fuller and busier than they had ever been before. Yet such things are changes in the life of an institution, not of the class-room. The pattern of school-work had been firmly established 12 years before. The School remained a boarding-community, and its aim was still to give "a good and guarded education" to the children of needy Friends.

Now, however, instead of a small community, drawn from London only, there was one doubled in size by an invasion of children from Southern England. "The Friends' School and Workhouse" had been replaced by a "Friends' School" which in size, support and aim could join company with Ackworth, Wigton and Sidcot. The "Master" was soon to become a "Superintendent," though Edmund Gower, busy with his larger family, may hardly have had time to be aware of the new dignity and importance of his office.

So the children began journeys from distant counties to a school on the edge of London. The coaches trundled across an area of England still uncertain whether it would suffer an invasion from France. These, too, were the shires across which Cobbett would ride. Already, Cobbett was not alone in protesting against the ills of a changing England. In a troubled land, our community began a new course of life.