

**FROM THE LUNE TO THE NEVA  
SIXTY YEARS AGO: WITH  
ACKWORTH AND QUAKER  
LIFE BY THE WAY; PP. 7-115**

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From the Lune to the Neva Sixty Years Ago: With Ackworth and Quaker Life by the Way; pp. 7-115 by J. B.

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ACKWORTH AND "QUAKER" LIFE

BY THE WAY.

*"The doctrine of continuity is not solely applicable to physical inquiries."*—W. R. GROVE.

BY  
J. B.



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shall write a tale in the style you recommend, and we will judge which is the most tempting and agreeable to read."

We all declared we could not do any such thing; "it was easy to find fault, but difficult to improve on the faulty performance;" "one thing to suggest and quite another to carry out the suggestion," with many other sage and novel excuses which "Auntie" said had nothing to do with the matter. We had not been finding fault with any particular performance, and as to a suggestion, it was just that "quite another thing" she wanted from us. But we shook our heads, and felt hopelessly incapable. After a while, however, though remaining hopelessly incapable of producing a novel or even a tale, I remembered a life that had often interested me, and thought I would try to give a little of its simple history, especially as I had more than once heard the subject of it say the turning point with him was a speech made in boyhood, and it would therefore illustrate my theory well.

The speech my friend alluded to was a very simple one, only "Mother let me go too," but John, as we will call him—John Skelton—used to say it was what gave the direction to his future life. If he had not been a "Friend" I dare say he would have called it the "key-note" of his life, but being a member of that Society the expression did not occur to him. He was a curly-headed boy of twelve, and was at the moment finishing a basin of soup that his mother had prepared for him on his return from school.

Literally she had prepared it, for they were in humble circumstances, and Mary Skelton's own hands ministered lovingly to the wants of her household. She was an energetic, sensible, conscientious woman, a true helpmeet

to her husband, and a wise mother to his children, tending them and working for them with a deep love and solicitude, which, though they did not lead her to much demonstration of affection, were felt by her family, from babyhood to man and womanhood, as an influence pervading the home. They knew she was their good friend and one to be relied on, not only in childish dilemmas, but throughout their lives whenever help and counsel were felt to be needed. She was fertile in resources too, and had already solved the problem of what to do with a boy's surplus energy long before the days of Kindergartens and School Workshops. Her second son, Harry, was a "regular pickle," always getting into scrapes, but always getting well out of them by the help of his twinkling eye and the good-humoured simplicity with which he acknowledged his fault and expressed himself ready to take the consequences. "I've had my fun and I'll go through my punishment like a brick, as a fellow ought," was the feeling of the culprit, though he would, no doubt, have translated it into language more befitting a young Quaker at the beginning of this century. But he felt also that the fun was worth what he had to pay for it, and he was willing to purchase enjoyment again at a similar price.

His mother, however, did not see the matter in the same light. His practical jokes were often inconvenient, and she was well aware of the disadvantage of this frequent punishment. She often said to her faithful friend and neighbour, Elizabeth Dunning, commonly called Betsy, "I'm not on the right plan with Henry, some how or other; I don't like punishments that seem set in a spirit of revenge; I think they should follow a fault as if you could not help it, and as

if you had nothing to do with choosing what the child must suffer or do; it ought to be so clearly a consequence of his misdeed that he could almost decide upon it himself."

"Thou would be hard set to find a natural consequence to some of Harry's pranks that would touch him," replied Betsy, "and I don't say it from unkindness either, for I'm really fond of the lad, only I'd rather thou had him to bring up than me."

"Well, if I cannot find the right way to punish, I must try and set him to something that will prevent its being needed. He can't help his love of fun, poor child! It was born with him, and often enough he only wants something to do, *but he hits upon the wrong thing*. I'll get some worsted and teach him to knit stockings. Men folk knit in Dent, where I come from, and I don't know why boys shouldn't learn here."

"Thou'lt be a clever woman," said Betsy, as she turned to go, "if thou managos him with four needles and a ball of yarn, but we shall see. And here he comes racing down Kilvert Street as hard as he can run, I wonder what he has been up to."

"I'm glad my Willie has taken up with John instead of Harry, and yet they are all fine lads," thought she as she nodded to him in passing and caught sight of her own boy and his "chum" with arms across each other's shoulders at the top of the steep narrow street up which the Skelton's house faced.

Harry was not up to mischief this time, however, he was only meaning to rush up the yard to a three-foot square garden they had begged soil for, and had edged with bits of flag picked up in the stone quarries.



"Henry!" called his mother, as he dashed into the passage that separated the shop from the house-place or parlour; "Henry!"

"Yes, Mother; does thou want me? I'm in such a hurry, I sowed some mustard and cress this morning, and I want to see if it has come up."

"Go thy way then, but don't scratch the seed up to look, and come back to me, I want to ask thee something."

"Whatever does Mother want me for," wondered the boy, accustomed to be 'wanted' only for misdemeanours; but mother's word was law, so he merely glanced at the precious bed as yet unpierced by shoots, and was back again by her side before the other two were at the bottom of the hill.

She greeted him this time with "Harry," and the name at once reassured him. "I have been wishing thou could help me about father's stockings; he wants some new ones badly, and I think thou could learn to knit and make him a pair. Both my brothers used to knit."

"And so will I, Mother, I should like to."

"So thou shall then; I will buy some worsted this afternoon, and thou can begin to learn the stitch to-night."

The point was gained thus far. One day, some months later, he was sitting on a stool demurely handling his 'pins,' and humming to himself the Dale knitting ditty,

"Rinnin on a silver edge nine mile lang,  
Gin a let a loup down back mun a gang,"

when one of the well-to-do members of their community entered the shop, and, crossing the lobby, knocked at the parlour door. After a kindly greeting to Mary, her attention was drawn to the little fellow on the "cricket" by the hearth.

"He is knitting father a pair of stockings," was the reply to her enquiring look.

"I am well pleased to see it," said the Friend. "When they are finished, Henry, thou mayst bring them to show to me."

The correct inflection of the verb seemed appropriate from the lips of the stately lady. "You" had been objected to by the earliest Friends as wanting in simplicity and honesty. "We," they said, was originally the royal assumption of plurality of powers, while "you" was the courtier's acknowledgement of the verbal fiction, and though the flattery had gradually descended in the scale of society until its primitive meaning was lost, those true iconoclasts felt they could draw "the line of safety" only "at the bottom of the whole system."

The next generation used the manner of speech without thinking much of the reason for it, and slipped into a style as ungrammatical as the condemned one, though still keeping the singular number. "Thou mayst," however, which was practically abandoned in familiar conversation, did not sound too stiff from the Friend in dove-coloured silk, who was inviting Henry to pay her a visit.

In due time the visit was paid. Half pleased, half afraid, Henry took the completed work to the house on Castle Hill, and received, beside kind words and a piece of cake, a whole shilling as an encouragement in the ways of wisdom. The sensible director of affairs at home saw her opportunity:

"I will give thee another sixpence to that if thou will spend it on a hammer and nails, Harry, and we will clear out that little garret for a workshop for thee. Thou will perhaps get a joiner's bench, and be properly set up some day."

I wonder if the Scientists would think it right to call this an example of "Conservation of Energy." It was, at any rate, the "key-note" of Harry's life, which in the fulness of time left its influence on the world, but which we cannot pursue further now. Everyone was three years older when we first looked into the sitting-room than at the time of this little episode, and Henry was apprenticed to their neighbour Gilbert Dunning, who was a cabinet-maker, an arrangement which, as might be expected, suited him exactly, while John and his companion, Willie Dunning, had increased in stature and in learning, and were still, as Willie's mother had called them, three years before, "fine lads," and still fast friends.

The two mothers were companions also, sympathizing in each other's troubles and sharing each other's joys. That must be indeed a busy day on which they did not contrive to meet and compare notes or report progress. Another ball was pieced towards the "rag" carpet that was going to be woven at Whitehaven; or baby—there was always a baby at one house or the other—had cut a second tooth; homely matters that interested housewifely and motherly hearts. But not only such matters, the hearts of these two women were large and capable of taking in the difficulties and sorrows of their neighbours, not for the pleasure of talking about them, as too many of their fellow-townspeople did, but to see what they could do to help distress or mitigate suffering. The consequence was, people in need came for assistance, those in trouble came for advice, and both were sure of obtaining what they asked from these unprofessional Sisters of Charity, to the full extent of their power. In worldly goods their power was not great, but they knew how to make the best of what they had to bestow by a skilful use of needle