

Quaker Meeting

Esther Littler

We left the roar and swish of the main highway and entered another world. As we crossed the bridge over White Lick and came to the hill where stood the brick meetinghouse, the sunny silence of the September Sabbath closed in about us. The long, low building surrounded by a grove of maples had two doors, one leading to the men's side, the other to the womens' side of the meeting. A facing gallery consisting of three rows of raised benches ran the full length of the room. There sat the ministers and elders and any visiting ministers who might be present.

Meeting had "set" when we arrived. Both the men's and women's sides showed a goodly number gathered. The small children, distributed between parents according to convenience, scarcely squirmed on the plain, hard benches. Although the majority of the worshipers appeared to be past middle age, there was a hopeful minority of younger faces. There were, among both men and women, a few who still adhered to "plain dress"—black or gray dresses with bonnets and white neckerchiefs for the women and plain collars and wide-brimmed hats for the men. In the womens' gallery were several sweet faces beneath plain bonnets, and there were half a dozen men in the opposite gallery.

As the meeting settled into silence the twentieth century faded into the mists of unreality and the days of Woolman and Whittier came alive again. A breathing, vibrant silence hovered over the group. After a time, saintly-faced Sarah Mendenhall—one of the few in "plain dress"—rose and turning slightly towards the men's side, said in a clear voice that carried easily over the large room: "I say unto you, young men, be strong!" A short, earnest exhortation followed, after which the meeting resumed its silence. The fragrance of early autumn stole in through open windows; a lone cricket raised his voice above the rhythmic undertone of his fellow-insects. Aside from this, only the bird-songs in the maple grove intruded upon the atmosphere. Peace emanated from the "gathered" minds and spirits, enfolding all in its integrating power.

At length, in the men's gallery, aged Josiah Penington arose. Until now he had sat with closed eyes, yet with head up-raised as though seeing things hidden to us. His white hair softened the ruddiness of his cheeks and heightened the shining of his face. "Beloved," his quavering voice intoned, "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of

man what the Lord hath prepared for them that love him.'” His words bathed the group in benediction. The ensuing silence was unbroken until the “heads of the meeting” shook hands, thus signifying the end of the service.

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Society to the Majority and the Minority

Robert Malsberry

No one can deny that man has obligations to society, but how does man define his obligations?

There is a large group made up of individuals who interpret man's obligation to society as an obligation in trivial affairs. Certainly, they think it is their neighborly duty to keep their lawn the same height as the lawn next door. They would never burn trash when someone's wash was drying. They paint their house when the others do. To try to keep up with but not “out-do” their neighbors is their goal. They say they want to be accepted by society, but they have narrowed the meaning of society considerably. To them society is their own secure community. It is to a smaller group who have a vague sense of real duty to whom I appeal.

To them society is not their neighbors, nor is it solely the majority—it is mankind. This group needs re-vitalization and encouragement, for the hope of the world rests with them. They realize that trivial daily duties must be performed, but they also know that time must remain for more important accomplishments.

I felt horrified when I first began to realize that the larger group or majority are irresponsible. I became aware of this fact during the last war when, in a day coach, I chanced to start a conversation with a successful, seemingly intelligent businessman. As our talk began to include recent war news, I was shocked to hear him advocate the death of every German and Japanese as the goal of the war. When I asked him to elaborate, he grew quite boisterous and emphatically stated that every German and Japanese citizen, children and old people included, should be killed before the war ended. A few citizens around us agreed, but a greater number did not care to comment.