A NARRATIVE OF SOME OF THE OCCURRENCES IN THE LIFE OF EDMUND HOWARD, OF THE PARISH OF CHELSEA, WROTE BY HIMSELF IN THE YEAR 1785
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I was born in the year 1709–10, on the 27th day of
February, of honest and good parents, members of the
Monthly Meeting at Windsor of the People called Quaker,
and they were as exemplary in their dealings and religious
conduct as any of that Society or any other. My father was
a blacksmith and in small dealing in ironmongery, good
pitch, tar, rosin, oils, and turpentine, &c. My mother was
the daughter of a tradesman in Windsor; they lived in love
and concord together about twenty years, and their good
example and godly care for training up their children in
moral and religious duties might, I hope, be equalled by
many but outdone by very few. My mother kept a shop and
sold grocer’s, haberdasher’s goods, candles, soap, salt &c.,
kept two cows, made butter for the market, and made bread
for the family. I had two brothers and one sister; we all
learned to read by a country dame at the next house; as we
grew bigger my brothers and I went as day scholars to a very
worthy man of the said Society near a mile distance from
my father. Our schoolmaster had some boarders, and also
need to make leases, indentures &c; that business increasing
causethis being often from home, and the school would
not well answer to keep an usher. His boarders dropped
away, few scholars left but my brothers and self, and we
not well attended. At length my father took us from that
school to a poor man who had none but day scholars, and
none of them, nor our master, of the said Society. What he
was as to religion I never knew, but he taught all the boys
except us according to the form of the Church of England;
he spared no pains with his scholars, was a very honest man,
but I think a little disordered in his mind, and I have some
room to think he was then called a Nonjuror; he
lived three miles from my father; we used to go and come
every day, the country strong clay and paths very dirty in
the winter. We went to him about two years; then he moved
about a mile father, so we went no longer to school, which
was much to the disappointment of my father, who wished to
give us more learning, but there was no school nearer except
the Parson of the parish. This was not the man who put my
father in prison.
And though my father was as far as any man from the odious spirit of bigotry, he did not send us to school, I suppose chiefly because he would not offend his weak brothers; for when we were all very young, perhaps the oldest not above seven years, he suffered himself to be taken to Reading Jail for the non-payment of tithes, and left his wife and children to the care of Divine Goodness, for at that time he laboured for a mere subsistence, and was taken away from a great heat on the anvil, as I very well remember; and that my mother made pies, and several times went herself to Reading to carry them for my father, but can’t remember how long he was a prisoner. I have heard of some, and the Yearly Meeting Epistles mention frequently great sums of money in their account of Friend Sufferings, but I never knew anyone who could with propriety be said to suffer but my own father. Having now finished this digression, I return to give some farther account of myself. The bucket-rod of a pump was sent to be mended; it was the first one I had ever seen, and I was a perfect stranger to the component parts of a pump, as we had but two or three in those parts. From this view of the bucket I made a small pump complete; I also made an overshot wheel about sixteen inches diameter, which I learned by going to a mill with grist. To this wheel I added two or more whose axes were horizontal, and one whose axis was vertical, all of which were moved by band from the overshot wheel, for I had not learned to do it by cogs; this I did between twelve and fourteen years of age, and could have been pleased had I been put to some kind of trade similar to such movements. All those apparatus, with much regret, left behind when I was destined to be a gardener, to which employment I had great liking and some little practice in my father’s garden, for I had then raised some melons little inferior to any I have raised since; and knowing my parents could not give a large premium with me to learn a more gainful and respectable occupation, I was desirous to be a gardener, though, by the bye, I think there is no occupation more truly respectable and healthful than that of a gardener. My father, finding my inclination was for that business, sought for a master; at length one was found at Chelsea, to whom I was bound as apprentice in the year 1724. My father was a perfect stranger to the art of gardening, and my parents had a tender and godly care for me as to my religious
and moral conduct, and more thoughts and care for me on that head than to place me with the most complete master of the art if he was not a good liver; and, indeed, if he had desired to have put me under the care of the most skilful, he had no knowledge of the most curious parts thereof, nor any acquaintance with those that had. He therefore put me on lodging to one George Burr at Chelsea, a man of good report among his neighbours and all who knew him, which he justly merited for his laudable industry and faithful upright dealings with all men. He kept a good house and his servants were well fed and kindly used, but was a man of no great natural parts nor great skill in his profession, therefore not likely to give much encouragement to any who aspired to anything beyond his own capacity; however, as I was like to be well used, and could not at that time discern how little I was like to learn, I consented to be bound for him for the term of seven years, my indentures bearing date the 25th of March 1724. The day after I was bound, the former apprentice told me the most material thing I had to learn was to use the small hoe, viz. to hoe out onions, carrots, and parsnips, &c. this was a great damp to my spirits and sad mortification to think I must serve seven years to learn what I then thought might be done in one season, which I afterwards found too true, for sprightliness of genius and desire of knowledge in natural things was of no account with my master, but he that could dig or hoe the most ground in a day was qualification the most desirable to him. Had I known this, and how little he was able to teach me that art, which of all others I am yet acquainted, required as natural talents, more time, and closer application than any other to be master of, I should not have consented to be bound to learn what I could have acquired in less time to a much greater extent by working in the gentlemen’s gardens of our own neighbourhood. However, as I was bound, I thought it my duty to obey my master’s lawful command. My fellow workfolks, men and women, were generally of the lower class, and some of them at distant times profligate and wicked; none of them of the Society I was born and instructed in, except one man, who in the sequel proved a greater adversary to me than any of the rest.
I was employed in filling dung-barrows, weeding, drawing goods for market. About two years of my time passed off before, as I remember, I got one penny as vails [i.e. pocket money], nor had I any means of gaining the least money but what I had from my parents, whom I seldom asked. Then the former apprentice’s time expired. He used to catch mice in Sir Hans Sloane’s garden, for which our master paid him for every three mice one penny. This pleasing employment then came to me, and as I had no other means of furnishing my pocket I thought it a great acquisition and applied to it with much diligence, making the traps in evenings and going in the morning before the workfolks came, to see what I had caught and brought them in to show my master. I caught so many, my master, instead of giving me some encouragement, lowered the price, and would give no more than a penny for four. I still continued to catch at that rate; at length he would not pay me at all, which I thought was the reverse of what he should have done, especially as he was paid in his bill to Sir H. Sloane for forty pence. The former apprentice told me he used to cut the mice in two and throw them on the floor to be eaten by the cat, which she eagerly devoured in the presence of our master, and thus I was accused of having done the same to me, which he did not see. This, though it may seem a mere trifle to those boys whose parents foolishly furnish them with so much money as to lay a foundation for their ruin, yet it was to me at the time a matter of great importance and what I thought very ungenerous in my master, but he was not well practised in reading books, and less skilled in what is called reading of men. After some time (about three years) Samuel Smith, one of the people called Quakers, left my master and took a garden close to my master and Sir H. Sloane’s garden, those three grounds laying together and no fence between them. Then the care of my master’s book came to my lot. A gardener’s wife in the neighbourhood came to pay a bill for dung my master had sold her. I was called to settle the account; a dispute arose between them about thruppence which she required to be abated and he refused; at length he said, “Give the boy the sixpence; I have seen him often save your baskets from being drove away by the tide.” She replied, “Here, Edmund, take the sixpence, but then you must do another job for me.”
I answered, “If that be the case I shall never be out of debt, please to take the sixpence again,” laid it down, and went out to my work in the garden.

As I now kept my master’s book I had a few shillings, for Sir Hans Sloane used to settle with him once in the year, and then gave a guinea to the workfolks; half of it was allowed to the book-keeper. I was kept to hard labour, and no companion to instruct me in the art, nor my master could not, his garden being cropped with nothing but what may be found in the open field round London, except a few cucumber, melons, and some common annual flowers for Sir Hans Sloane’s garden, in which was no plants nor flowers of any value, and in the garden the most awkward and foolishly laid out of any I ever saw, being about forty rod long and six wide. It had six yew trees, four holly hedges parallel to each other and stretched very near the whole length of the garden, a straight gravel walk, and wide borders on each side ornamented with some common perennial plants and shrubs, together with two or three rows of very bad tulips, some common hyacinths, and other common bulbous roots. Such were some of them which a country dame would scarce have allowed a place in her garden, and often the weeds knee-high, for my master had but thirty pounds per year for the care of the whole garden which was called two acres, and my master’s garden was seven acres, cropped and cultivated as before mentioned, so that little could be learned to inoculate trees, and was acquainted with some skilful gardeners in noble or gentlemen’s service, which gave me great insight in various parts of the art of gardening, to which my master and all my fellow workfolks were strangers; and I took liberty, in a corner of my master’s garden, to plant some things and imitate what I had seen in other gardens and I, by means of a relation, got from Sir Matthew Dican’s garden, Richmond, some fruit of the arbutus or strawberry-tree, from which I raised as many plants as I sold to Mr. Gray and Mr. Furber for twenty-two shillings and was never so rich before, nor in my mind, since. I also raised from seed, orange trees, and had saved a few shillings with which I bought an orange-tree,
the purchase of which left my purse almost empty. By this tree I at one time inarched several young stocks (as I best remember, seven or eight), all of which took well except one, which was broke by the wind, although I had never seen one done, and no one in our garden knew how to do it, but were almost strangers to the name. In doing these works of my own I was not suffered to neglect my master’s business, nor spend any time there when the men came to their work. What I did was at mornings, evenings, and at meal-times, and this was a very happy part of my life for I was kindly used by my master and mistress and had now a few shillings at command about this time my father asked me how I went on and how my master’s Mn said me I replied very kindly that I shall scarce ever be more happy in my life which answer I dare say was matter of comfort to my tenderly affectionate parents. Among the acquaintance I had selected I must not forget one John le Bain, a Frenchman, whom I knew when he lived at Chelsea and worked in the nursery where I went to learn the bud trees. He went to be undergardener at Putney, and there introduced me to Mr. le Serf, head-gardener to Mr. Dutillo. At that time Mr. Le Serf was reputed one of the best gardeners of those times and justly merited that character. From those two men I had such instructions and made so many observations on the treatment and pruning of grape-vine and other trees that I suppose few have a better method of doing it than I at this time practice. In this manner was I employed till within twenty months or two years of the expiration of my bondage. Then a widow gentlewoman took me for her gardener on terms she made with my master and I lodged at her house till my time expired then I was hired as a yearly servant to the same
I should here have inserted what was required of me, and how I proceeded in respect of my new station. Among the first works I was employed about was a large court before the house which was to be new made; it had an oval grass plat in the middle, and a gravel way round it for the coach to draw up to the door. This was far from a proper level, and not so large as to render it pleasing to the eye. This I was to make longer and wider, neither the congruent nor transverse diameter to be in the same line as before, and the level of the ground altered to make it appear better from the road; and as the whole time I had hitherto served to learn the art of gardening was employed chiefly in digging, hoeing, and driving the dung- and water- barrow, I had no opportunity to learn anything of that part called ground-work, nor had I ever seen a stake drove or a level line made, which strained my mental faculties much to find out how to do this work; none of my fellow workmen could assist me, and my master was not skilled in such matters, and I, young and bashful (about nineteen), was unwilling to show my ignorance; but being acquainted with the use of numbers and had some knowledge of the rudiments of geometry, I set out the work, measured the new oval, drove the takes for altering the level of the ground, computed the quantity of turf required to cover the oval and the angular plats of grass in the corners of the court, made the gravel-road for the coach round the oval, and completed the whole in such sort that I do not remember any person ever said it ought to have been done otherwise. After this I had all the gravel-walks in the garden to new-make and box edgings to plant of a considerable length, which, according to the fashion then in use, must be planted so straight and level that no eye could discover any defect, which I did to the satisfaction of all who saw my works I performed.
But before I proceed in this I shall make a little digression to give some account of Samuel Smith before mentioned. He was born in the parish of Fulham, less than a mile from my master’s garden, in which he was employed by my master from a boy till he went into business for himself a few years before the death of my master. He was the son of parents who were of the people called Quakers, both dead before I knew him; he was very zealous in observing the particulars that distinguish us from other people, but possessed less of the Christian spirit than people in general, for he would often rejoice in others’ distresses, and deride and scoff others who advanced anything he did not believe himself. Of the latter I shall give only one instance: a fellow-workman, near double his age, once said that grapes when in blossom had a very fine smell; he derided the old man, though what he said is true and recorded in Scripture. Of the former I could recite a many, but shall content myself with one: his wife’s niece had a child before marriage, which instead of trying to conceal he blurted it abroad, and when the child grew up drove her from place to place and would not let her rest anywhere; at length the child died, and he boastingly said he was the death of that child; yet this man was highly esteemed by the brotherhood, and notwithstanding he was so precise in his speech and apparel he contrived such an evasive way to pay the tithe, too odious and too tedious here to mention.

Mrs. Edwards gave me twenty pounds a year, which at that time was good wages for a gardener who had more ground to work than I had, and it was thought so by me, for my master gave his servants but seven or eight pounds a year. About the time I became Mrs. Edwards’s yearly servant I got acquainted with one James Gordon, who at that time worked for Mr. Miller in the Physic Garden at Chelsea, of whom more hereafter. As I was now come to man’s estate I thought the Friends would take some notice of me and receive me into their meetings of discipline, but they took not the least notice.
of me, nor by any means whatever gave the least hint that I might attend such meetings, which disregard raised in my mind many serious thoughts, and as I now lived in the limits of the Savoy Monthly Meeting. I thought if I was a member of the Society it must be that meeting, though there was at that time some members of said meeting who knew me from my birth, but none of them informed me that I might attend those meetings; nor did I by any other means know it, but thought all meetings of the said meeting were conducted and executed by a chosen few, or else that they did not think me worthy to make one of that number, the latter of which they afterwards demonstrated by not giving an answer and taking no notice of some queries I sent in writing to them. Now to return to James Gordon: he was a man about my own age, very sober, honest, and religious; had some knowledge of the Latin tongue and some skill in geometry and algebra. By his advice I bought Ward’s Introduction to the Mathematics, and by his assistance acquired some knowledge in geometry and algebra, for we met often to compare our works and to help each other. I also bought Miller’s Gardeners’ Dictionary, Gregory’s Optics, Desaguilier’s Experimental Philosophy, and several books of land-surveying, mensuration, and geometry; I also bought a theodolite, and laboured hard to fit myself for surveying land and measuring artificer’s work, applying closely to the study of those arts, and being then a gardener, the long evenings in the winter much favoured my studies, and in this way did I employ near the whole of my leisure hours during my servitude to Mrs. Edwards. I also read with attention Gregory’s Optics, and made for myself a microscope and several telescopes, but did not neglect to improve my knowledge in the art of gardening. I had at that time two first-cousins: one was gardener to the Duke of Chandos, the other was gardener to the Earl of Thomand. I visited those two kinsmen as often as I could, saw their methods, and received instructions in whatever I asked respecting the art of a gardener. I also was known to many eminent gardeners on the west side of London, and nurserymen,
and in this manner did spend my leisure time by visiting most gardens that were curious within a day’s walk, and not often missed attending the morning meeting in or near the City in the afternoon because some of my schoolfellows and playfellows were settled there. In this manner did I proceed during the whole time I lived with Mrs. Edwards, but her garden being small, and not such things required of me as I observed in other gardens, I began to wish for a place that might give larger scope to the exercising of my talents in the art of gardening. I then gave my mistress warning, and was not long out of place before I was recommended by my worthy Friend Peter Collison to be gardener to Thomas Revel, Esq., who had just then purchased a fine seat at Fetcham, in Surrey, late Sir Arthur More’s, which had been unoccupied above seven years, gone much to ruin, and the garden overgrown with weeds, &c. To this place I went in March, 1736, in which place I stayed one whole year; but my master went that summer to the German Spas, which was much to my disadvantage, for he gave too much heed to the false and flattering tales of an old woman he hired as his housekeeper for that house. She used perpetually to send him letters of the most trifling occurrences, many of which were stuffed with complaints of the tradesmen, some true and some false, and did the same by most or all of the servants; and I have reason to think she was a principal cause of my discharge from that service. Had my master been more frequently there to observe my conduct and to see how worthless a person she was, it is probable I might have stayed with him to the time of his death; but it was her interest to put out all the candles she feared would shine brighter than her own, and, indeed, she was very unfit to superintend the affairs of a family. Often when our master was not there she would sit up after the other servants were gone to rest and get so drunk as scarce able to go to bed, which was on the top of the house, lift the warming-pan with fire in it from step to step, and drag it along the floor through a long passage at the top of the house. She worked out some of the servants, and was very near driving out the butler, a faithful and good servant of many years’ standing, but at length received the just reward of her doings, was discharged in displeasure, and, I believe, died in
a parish workhouse. During my residence in this part of Surrey, I became acquainted with several Friends, members of Dorking Monthly Meeting, who all took notice of me and my brother, who then lived in Dorking, and they treated us more respectfully than did those of the Savoy Meeting, who little regarded me, although I had long frequented that meeting, and ought to have been numbered as member among them, many years before I went into Surrey. Among those was a young woman, whose comely person and amiable countenance engaged my attention; had I then been inclined to enter the married state should have addressed her on that point, but not long after I learned there was a young man in the town likely to obtain her, and at that time I had not resolved to change my condition. I continued in this service one year, and could I have given satisfaction to my master it would have afforded me as much pleasure as any one year in my whole life, and this I presume I should have done had my master been constantly at that place. From hence with regret I returned to Chelsea, my Mrs. Burr, who was then a widow, gave me room in her house. Sir Hans Sloane came every Saturday to his house to dine there. * My mistress had the care of his garden on the same terms as my Master Burr had in his time. I was then seen by Sir Hans Sloane, he enquired and found I was out of employment and informed me he was about buying Beaufort House and said he should have employment for me. I waited about two months. He bought the house and put me there to take care of it. This house was near 200 feet in front, the main house exclusive; the kitchen, bakehouse, and abundance of other large offices, together with coach-house and stables, which had been near if not more than twenty years in Chancery, uninhabited all that time, and therefore must be in a very ruinous condition. He furnished me, like the Prophet Elijah, with a table, stool, and candlestick, also a bed; besides which I had very little, and sent me (only) into this old and desolate place to live and lodge alone in such a frightful place, surrounded with high trees and overgrown with briars and thorns, and high brick walls, where had I been ever so much distressed and called aloud no chance of being heard, for the house was situated about half way between the Thames and the King’s Road, about [blank] rod from each place, nearer than which no one could lawfully come when the gates were shut.
Besides this it was pretty currently reported that a murder had been committed in the Duke of Beaufort’s time, many years before Sir Hans Sloane possessed the premises, and that the ghost of the murdered man haunted the house, the truth of which I cannot avow, but the bones of a man or woman was found in the premises by some labouring men employed by Sir Hans Sloane to dig gravel for the highways. This was my situation at entering into Sir Hans Sloane’s service, which proved the most disagreeable and noways profitable nor elegant employment, although my master was the philosopher’s king, for he was at that time President of the Royal Society, and I think also of the College of Physicians; but if I have any judgment in mankind, I think I have been acquainted with many men superior to him both in natural talents and acquired accomplishments.

He was, however, easy of access, very affable, and free in conversing with all who had any concerns with him, and a good master to his servants, for they lived many years with him; he was also a very good landlord, and never that I know or heard of did but one harsh thing by any of his tenants, which was effected by the instigation of his steward, who, as was supposed, received a bribe from the new tenant to dispossess the old one, who, though he was in arrears to his landlord, Sir Hans Sloane, yet bore the character of a very honest and diligent man, and he told me himself, with tears in his eyes, he never spent ten pounds wastefully in all his life, and that he could not be a better husband in his farm was he to live his time over again. Now to resume my account of what relates to myself: the first thing required of me by Sir Hans Sloane was to draw a plan of the whole estate, late the Duke of Beaufort’s, at Chelsea, which he purchased in the Court of Chancery, which I did, apparently to his satisfaction. Before I proceed farther, shall give some account of the great change in the manner of my living. I had always been used to feed at other folk’s tables in company with sometimes six or seven and sometimes ten, twelve, or fourteen other persons, and to lodge in a house with many fellow-servants; and so little was I acquainted with providing for myself, that I bought two
pounds of beef-steak and sent them to a public-house to be dressed for my own dinner, which was accordingly done; but when I came to table, behold there were two plates, with a knife and fork to each. This soon convinced me that half the quantity or less would be sufficient, which for some time I practised, but it was so different from the manner in which I used to live, was soon weary of that mode of providing for myself, and cook shops we had none. This way of getting my dinner subjected me to many inconveniences, viz. staying while it was dressed; drinking strong beer at my meals, which I was not used to, and sometimes more than I wanted; and loss of time from my business. I therefore got a tin kettle, and when I could boil a bit of mutton, bacon, &c., or send a scrap to the oven, and used to take in a pint of small beer; thus I lived for some time, making my own bed and dressing my own victuals. This manner of living was not pleasant to me, but it was the best I could do, for going to the beer-house was dangerous of drawing into an ill habit, as I could not expect them to broil a steak for one pint of beer, and I found two was sometimes too much, and sometimes before I had drunk up the second pint, in comes somebody who urged for a third. I had also a very good aunt, a poor woman in London, who used to come every week to set the plates, dishes &c., to rights; to this very kind and affectionate aunt I am indebted for many favours and acts of kindness, some of which I was refused by those who were much better able to do it than she was. It may be here asked why I did not board at some housekeeper’s table, but if I had done so I should have little of my wages for other uses, for my pay was small and I had little to expect from my parents or anybody else was in hopes of saving something to put me in some way to live while the hour in which was most fit for the harbour of owls and bats, or the habitation of a hermit, than for a man in the full vigour of youth. In this forlorn place I lodged many months, and had the care of gravel-pits, to pay the men and keep an account of the gravel delivered out. The men were paid every week one shilling per day for their subsistence, and as they could not be paid the remains of their dues till the gravel was drawn off, it required some care and skill to keep a regular account to whom it was sold and also from what stock.
it was drawn off as they worked in Company and were paid a certain price per load and to keep this account clear and just with respect to my master, the labourers, and customer who had the ballast, required no small care and circumspection. There was also some part of Beaufort Garden occupied by a gardener at the time when my master purchased the Duke’s house that soon came into his hands; this I was ordered to plant and cultivate, which I did to the best advantage I could, and every day took account of every halfpennyworth of spinach, lettuce, and cabbage, &c., for I sold the produce of garden by retail to the neighbours, and every week brought the money received to his account. As the days shortened it was sometimes dark before I retired to my lonely repose, and the neighbours would at times say, “Are you not afraid of the ghost?” I replied, “No;” but I was twice a little surprised in the night: once by a noise over my head when I was broad awake, which I feared was thieves stealing lead, for there was a great deal on the top of the house. As I had no one to speak to, I could consult none but my own mind; sometimes I thought of going out by the most private way and raise the neighbours; it being the dead of the night, I was doubtful if I should get any assistance. Then I thought of going to the College for some of the pensioners; but being doubtful if I could get out unperceived by them, and if I did not my life might be in danger, at length concluded to lay me down again to sleep, and if I found it so in the morning would go to my master in London, tell him what had happened, and request a stronger guard. In the morning I got up, went all over the top of the house, and as I thought into every room, but could not find the cause of the noise I was sure I heard. A few days after I walked over most part of the house to show it to some strangers, and in the room just over my head I discovered some large pieces of the ceiling had fallen on the floor, which made the noise I heard. Another time I was much surprised (but this was a dream): a young woman stood in the middle of the room, which was very large, clothed elegantly all in white and very comely to behold, and as I sat up in my bed (or thought so) I was much astonished how she came there, being sure I made all the doors fast before I went to rest. Reasoning much with myself, at length I became
perfectly awake, and lo the room was all dark. My master asked me what was best to do with this house. I replied, "Board up the windows, mend the sills to keep out the weather, and prevent it growing worse." He then consulted one Mr. Sampson, who was surveyor at the Bank of England, as to the cost of repairs, who said it would cost five hundred pounds; my advice was only to prevent it growing worse that he might wait to see what might offer. About this time one Dr. Small proposed taking a good part of the garden, and they thought a bargain was struck. There was an old tree hewed out, the wind had blown down, lay on the part Dr. Small was treating for; my master ordered me to remove it to the part he had not taken, which I did and this broke the bargain for Mr. Small would not then look at it. Some gentlemen then looked at it with intent to build a large still-house, and the folks who afterwards built Ranelagh viewed it for a place of public resort, but none of those came to anything. Some others made proposals of a different kind, but none took till Mr. Sampson, who knew right well that the receiving of money was to Sir Hans Sloane more pleasing than parting with it, persuaded him to sell the house and all appurtenances as it stood, to be pulled down by the purchaser, and all the materials carried off the spot. This I conceive he did in favour of two of his acquaintances, the one a master bricklayer, the other a master carpenter. For this reason, it may be presumed he made so high a price for repairs, which was only temporary, but he knew how to gain his point; he therefore proposed to Sir Hans Sloane to sell it, I do not well remember whether for one or two thousand pounds, and recommended the two men before mentioned as proper persons to purchase it; a bargain was soon struck. But it is now time to say how I was employed; he offered to make me his gardener at his house at Chelsea, which, as it had been done by a yearly contract many years by my master Burr, and was then in the hands of his widow, my former mistress, I thought it would be hardly honest that he proposed it, and very ungrateful, therefore I would not engage in it, and I have some grounds to think if I had offered marriage to my master’s widow she would have accepted it, to which I
had no dislike but the difference of age, an objection many would have dispensed with who coveted wealth, for by this means I might have acquired the greatest part of what my master possessed, she having few relations. But now to return. As I did not accept the offer of being his gardener, I was employed in directing others to cut up the briars and thorns, &c., that had overgrown Beaufort Garden, directing and keeping account of his gravel diggers and cultivating some parts of Beaufort Garden, sometimes to call on the tenants who were in arrears of rent, and sometimes to the tradesmen with messages about repairs, &c., for he had a good estate at Chelsea. As I have said before, a bargain was struck between him and one of the two men before mentioned—viz., the carpenter—but I believe they were both concerned in it. He was allowed two years to clear it off, the money to be paid at stated times by four equal payments—the first payment before he meddled with it, which was done; but before the second payment became due he retired within the verge of the Court and sent to his creditors in order to compound with them. When my master had sold the whole of the house and offices, my lodging was moved to an empty house just close to the street by the waterside, in which a gardener lived. At the time Sir Hans Sloane purchased the premises this was a far more agreeable residence than the great house before described, and was near the grand entrance to the mansion; this was a narrow gate between large brick piers, as was the usual mode in the days when that house was built. This was the way the materials of what had composed the house were carried off when sold. A great deal of iron, lead, and marble was sold by Mr. Taylor, the man who purchased them before he fled to the covert of royalty. As soon as my master knew he had taken shelter there, he ordered me to lock the gates and not suffer materials of any kind to be carried off. This I refused to do, thinking he could not legally do it, as the time of making the second payment was not yet come; he then gave me his order in writing and a promise to indemnify me for so doing.
I then secured and nailed up the front gate, and locked or otherwise secured all doors and avenues to prevent their carrying off lead, iron, or anything else, for, though they had torn the house to pieces, pulled the iron bars out of the windows and the greater part of the lead from the top of the house, sold and carried off a great deal, and so wounded and crippled the house that it appeared more hideous than before and would now be madness to attempt to repair it, still there was abundance of lead and iron stored up in a strong room, which they had collected together, and no small quantity still remaining where it was originally fixed.

Very soon after I had nailed up the great gate they came with a cart and by violence broke open the gate, loaded the cart with that they liked, and drove away. They were so many I could not resist them, but, while they were gone, caused a deep ditch to be dug in the gate-way to prevent any carts passing that way, and by every means in my power endeavoured to hinder their taking anything from the ground. This raised such malice and hatred in Mr. Taylor and his folks that I thought my life in some danger; however, I did the best in my power for my master's interest. My life at this time was far enough from happiness, being continually insulted by day and in much fear of being abused or destroyed by night. My master was obliged to consult the lawyers how to deal with Mr. Taylor, and at length got rid of him and the house, in its mutilated condition, once more came into his hands, and for some time nothing was done about it. At length he resolved to proceed in pulling it down and dispose of the materials by retail. This he proposed to me to do for him, which I declined till he urged it so far that I must do it or leave his service. In vain did I plead I was a gardener, and as such it was not likely I should have sufficient skill in such matters to be fit for so great an undertaking; for there is more danger in pulling down than in building so large a structure; but he still insisted on my doing it, to which I at last I complied, and took to perform that work a carpenter and nine or ten labouring men. I must here observe that what they
had taken down and not carried off was left in the most confusing manner. My first business was to sort and place those things in better order, which I did, and then proceeded, with much caution and circumspection, on this hazardous business, for there were many oak girders of about twenty inches square in the garret floor, about thirty feet long, and many stacks of chimneys of large size and great height, very thick brick walls, and wide piers between window and window. This business was done in the year 1739-40, and carried on with good success. No accidents happened worth notice except one, and no bones broke—only hurt two or three men so as to keep them two or three days each from their work. This was owing to my trusting to the carpenter’s judgment in preference to my own, for he shored up a floor so slightly that it fell, with most of the men on it, to the next floor, which, I suppose, was about fourteen feet. After this, when anything dangerous was to be done, I would not trust him wholly, but examined everything myself, and safely got the whole structure to the ground—I mean the dwelling-house. When we had nearly got the house down I asked my master how it was to be disposed of. He said, “You must.” I answered I knew nothing of the value of such things and was, therefore, unfit for the business. He replied, “Mr. Sampson shall instruct you.” Sir Hans Sloane then bid him give me in writing such directions as should enable me to sell the old materials, which he did on one side a quarter-of-a-sheet of paper—Oak at 1s. per foot, fir at 6d. per foot—and what he said as to the many other things was as incomplete and wrong as this. And at that time new oak and new fir might be bought for the same price in the timber-yards in London, and my master owned he sold oak off from his own estate at the same price and yet insisted I should sell it according to the value Mr. Sampson had set to it, full of nails, mortice-holes, and perishing with age as it was; indeed, little else could be expected from him, for my engaging to pull down the house much disconcerted their designs and raised their malice against me, and on this account he who had Sir Hans Sloane’s ear at pleasure, and knew how to bias him, failed not to give such advice as he knew would render my service
mean, troublesome, and unprofitable, for he often contrived some means to make me uneasy, and the instructions he gave me no ways adequate. Nor was it just; for no man would give for old timber, far more than one hundred years in use, full of nails and mortice-holes, as great a price as for new: and all he informed about the timber was the price of a solid foot at more than double any man could sell it for. And in like manner did he over-value almost everything else, and Sir Hans Sloane willing to hope it would fetch in a large sum by being sold at so high a rate and fain would persuade himself it would because Mr. Sampson, Surveyor to the Bank of England (for some building then or lately done) told him so. Before I engaged to pull down the house, I solemnly protested to Sir Hans Sloane that I would not be concerned with it if Mr. Sampson had anything to do with it, and the first time I could speak to him there in his chariot contrary to my declaration when I consented to undertake so unpleasing a business, and there, in the presence of my master, rebuked him for leading my master into an error by which the sale of his goods would be frustrated. Sir Hans Sloane was silent, but the next time he came there said to me in displeasure, “Edmund, I was sorry to hear you talk so to Mr. Sampson.” I replied, “Indeed I think the same now of Mr. Sampson as I did then, and much wonder you should bring him here after I had so positively said I would not undertake it if he had anything to do with it.” My master insisted I should offer it at that price. I replied, “Then it will never be sold.” However, I then calculated a table to show me the values of any scantling of timber at many different values of the foot solid, so as readily to fix a price or value on any piece of timber. I endeavored to settle what cost it might and could readily measure any wainscot and cast up the value of any quantity of wainscot, doors, shutters, or flat paving-stone; but it should have been said before that I refused to enter on this business without his letter of attorney, which he unwillingly granted me.

And now my head and hands were fully charged with business—having the care of digging gravel and keeping accounts thereof, as before mentioned, some of the pits a mile distance from others, measuring and delivering out the materials sold, cultivating Beaufort Gardens.
inspecting his small tenements and delivering out from Beaufort House such materials as they might want and keeping account of what I delivered to whom, and where used—I now began to think my wages ought to be raised for I hitherto had but fourteen shillings per week and no lawful perquisite, but more of this hereafter. From this small pay I had to find myself in all the necessaries of life, lodging and firewood (of which the old house furnished abundance) excepted. My business was from one end of Town to the other, and, though I have been all my life careful and, I think, frugal, yet could not always avoid some expenses I should not have been liable to was I wholly employed in the garden. When my master sold the house, my lodging was moved, as before said. At that time I had a younger brother who had learned the trade of clock-maker. He came to Chelsea with a view of improving himself in that art, and lodged with me in the said empty house—he and I alone. Then were my days and nights happy and comfortable; we went constantly to Meetings together, and the intimates of the one were soon acquainted with the other, and sometimes walked out on first-day (called Sunday) ten, twelve, or fourteen miles to visit our kinsfolks, friends, &c., and he worked at his trade in the same house. I began to be unsatisfied with my employment, having nothing to do that could advance my knowledge in the art of gardening nor improve my understanding in anything else that was likely to be of any service to me in future. I therefore sought for other employment, and had the offer of being clerk to Benjamin Horn, a considerable dealer in coals, who asked me if I could write a tolerable hand and understand merchants’ accounts. I answered I knew something of it, but the best way for him to judge was to see my books. I then kept my accounts for Sir Hans Sloane. I carried them to him at the Coal Exchange. He looked them over, asked me who instructed me in that art. I answered, Jacob Post. He seemed satisfied, but we came not to a final agreement. I informed Sir Hans Sloane I had now an opportunity of better pay and employment more to my satisfaction; he seemed unwilling to part with me, and added some more to my pay, but took care to lay on more business.
The particulars of this agreement I don’t well remember, but he now required every tradesman’s bill should be inspected, and, if for work done by measure, to see that the measurement was just, and that I should sign them before he paid them. This and the before-mentioned employment afforded me very little leisure, also the preparing for sale the materials of Beaufort House required some care and forethought to parcel out the lead, iron, marble pavement, Purbeck ditto, and stone of different kinds, also floor-boards, doors, shutters, wainscot, and many other articles, several of which were to be sold by measure, and the timber of different kinds to be sorted according to its kind and size of scantling, and all this to be done by a gardener, I believe I will be allowed to be a work of much care and circumspection. This I did with cheerfulness and pleasure. The paving stone and iron, &c., was not set by Mr. Sampson at so high a price as the board and timber; therefore, when notice of the sale was published, I had some buyers for those articles, but when any came for timber and asked the price, some looked amazed, others affronted, and many sneered when they answered, for I offered it at the price Mr. Sampson put on it. Some few, in a more serious manner, asked me why I put so high a value on it. I answered it was the price my master had been told it would fetch, and I was not to sell it for less. They answered to this effect: “He must be ignorant or worse that could advise Sir Hans Sloane thus, and he would never get rid of it at such a rate.” This proved very true, for I sold very little, and what I did sold very little that was of any sort of scantling, free from nails and mortice-holes. I also sometimes went a little below the stated price that I might receive some money to deliver to my master, which I knew would be very pleasing to him and if I had taken coming in I think he would have been better better into done so my adversary would have delineated
it in the worst of colours and placed it in such a light as
might have ruined my character.
The labouring men who were employed in pulling down the
house, after that was done, were kept some time to attend
the sale and load in carts or boats what was sold, some to
cleaning bricks when no other ways employed, and some
to the gravel pits; but the most part of the goods stuck on
hand, as I told Sir Hans Sloane they would when I undertook
the business and desire him, if it so happened, not to blame
me for it. Before I had done with Beaufort House, Mrs.
Edwards, the lady to whom I had formerly been gardener,
left the Great House adjoining to the Bishop of Winchester’s,
called the Manor House, where she had lived many years.
This house, being very large and capable to contain his
library and all his collection of gimcracks, he left his house
in Little Russell Street, near Bloomsbury Square, declined
his practice of physic, and returned to the said house with all
his vast collection, all which, except a few which he used to
bring himself in his chariot, passed through my hands.
Those he brought himself were chiefly gold and silver
medals, diamond, jewels, and other precious stones; and
among these, I doubt not but he had many gods of gold and
gods of silver, for I one day unpacked a large case full of
gods of the ancient Egyptians, Greeks and Romans, &c. But
to give in detail only the sorts or kinds of things would far
exceed my intention. Suffice it, then, to say, he had forty
volumes in folio—catalogues of his collection—and forty-
two thousand other books in his library, among which was
one room full of specimens of dried plants, all which passed
through my hands. He used to appoint the rooms in which
the books were to be stored up, and I to receive them; they
were sent loose in carts, and tossed from the cart to a man
on a ladder, who tossed them in at a window, up one pair of
stairs, to a man who caught them there as men do bricks, and
I was employed, as before mentioned, doing nearly all things
for him belonging to his estate at Chelsea except collecting
the rent. I continued with him till he, his family, and all his
collection were
duly settled and fixed. He had many times given strong hints that he disliked his steward, who collected his rent in part, but several of his tenants used to pay him themselves. Those hints passed by me as if I did not hear them, till at last he told me he would employ Mr. Holmes no longer, and offered the whole of his employment to me. I answered I should be willing to serve him in anything I could. He then sent me to Wanstead, in Essex, to forbid a gentleman who lived there paying any more rent to Mr. Holmes, which errand I did, and went on with my business as before. After some time he mentioned his stewardship to me again, and talked of making out a deputation. I then thought it time to know on what terms I was to serve him in that capacity, and found he was inclined to advance me very little, if anything. I told him in very plain terms if he would give but labourer’s wages I would be a labourer, and if I was a steward I would have something like steward’s pay, and there it rested a long time.

At length he urged me to say on what terms I would serve him. I said, “For one shilling in the pound from all your rents.” At this, in some warmth, he replied, “There are such and such tenants who come and pay me as soon as ever it is due, and would you have me send you there to ask for it?” I did not at all like this reply, because I was sure he would require me to do all the before-mentioned business I used to do for him without any other pay than the said shilling in the pound. However he marked on the rental those tenants who were to pay him, and left me but a small number and those of the poorer sort where it would be difficult to get their rent—perhaps not get it at all. After a long pause it was agreed I should have a certain yearly pay and one shilling in the pound for all the rent I should receive from those tenants as marked for me in the rental. This proposal I did not like, but one Mr. Jackson, who had Sir Hans Sloane’s ear at pleasure, and could do more with him than any man, endeavoured to persuade me to a compliance. Among other arguments, he said, “You may make it out either in meal or in malt.” This, I thought
was a bad hint to a young man going to engage in an employment that much money, not his own, must pass through his hands; and though I have said Sir Hans Sloane was a good master to his servants—as in truth he was—yet he was too strict with those who were concerned in money matters, which, perhaps, urged his steward to make it out in meal or malt till by such means he lost his place. However that may be, he was discharged, the deputation made out and delivered to me, by which I was empowered to receive all his rents, quit rents, &c., and in all respects to act as a steward. About this time he granted me a lease of the house, &c., where I now live, and where it was my intent to have managed my little garden the best way I could, measure artificers’ work, surveyed land, or made new gardens—in all which I had as much knowledge as, with a little practice, I might have been soon able to have performed any of those works with reputation.

I shall now let Sir Hans Sloane rest awhile and relate some other matters. I came from Surrey and returned to Chelsea. I left in Mr. Revel’s service a young woman to whom I had a greater liking than to any of my other or former fellow-servants. Soon after I was gone the house-keeper before mentioned worked her out of his service. She was, soon after, hired to a family in town and sent to their country seat, near a hundred miles north-east of London, so that I could hold no correspondence with her but by letter, which I seldom did, though for some time she was constantly in my mind, and I have gone several times to a particular meeting to view a face there a strong resemblance of her who had so fixed a seat in my thoughts. But the distance being great and little hopes of ever meeting again, time in some measure erased those thoughts. Not was I at that time much in earnest to enter into the marriage state. If I had, and could have subdued the prejudice inculcated by our Society in the minds of the younger branches of it, I presume I might have matched with a very agreeable young woman, niece to a gentlewoman, that knew me from the first year of my coming to Chelsea. She had some hundreds to her fortune. Her aunt proposed that she and
her niece would dine with me at my lonely castle (Beaufort House), which they accordingly did. She sent a pretty dinner, and we sat down together at the table; this, surely, was a good hint and opportunity, which, for the prejudice against mixed marriages I forbore to embrace. Some time after this I began to think of changing my condition and that I ought to marry. I then had in view a young woman of our Society whose father lived at a town in Buckinghamshire, about thirty miles from London, whither I went on purpose to see her, but said nothing of my errand. Unwilling to go, in a matter of such importance, without advice, I consulted a Friend to make enquiry, and his report deterred my proceedings. I then thought of another, who was a very amiable young woman at a town in Surrey, about twenty miles from London. On this occasion, I consulted Thomas Corbyn. He persuaded me not to proceed, and, on his advice, desisted. Within a few years of this time I was, by three different men (who knew not each other’s mind on this matter) prompted to address a young woman whose father was gardener to a nobleman, and had hinted to one or more of them he should like to marry his daughter to a gardener, a young man of his religious Society, and, if he was sober and like to prove a good husband, he should not regard money; and, by their advice, I went to try if I could get a sight of her person, for the bagg [i.e. purse] was not my principal object. I took my brother with me; we walked to the place, about or more than ten miles, gained admittance with the Father of the Damned but do not remember that we were asked into the house, but as we desired to see the garden he ordered one of his men (who was of the people called Quakers) to show us the garden. We walked with him some time and found it expected he would have sent somebody to ask us in, but enquiring of the man for his master he answered, “He is gone to Meeting.” Thither we also went, which was about three miles, and there we found
Christopher, and I put myself in his way as he came out of Meeting, expecting he would ask us home to dinner, or, at least, to take a glass with him where he put up his horse. But he did neither, and spoke to me in so cold a manner as if he was afraid we should follow him home. He had not—that I know of—seen me before, but make no doubt had been informed he might expect me; be that as it may, it was not friendly for a man of the Society who call themselves “Friends” to act so repugnant to their principles to two strangers whose appearance need not cause anybody to be shy of them. And thus my brother accompanied me in a walk of more than thirty miles to no purpose. Some time after this first visit I was prompted by some of my friends to make a second visit to the same place. I took with me an intimate friend of our Society. We were not shown the way out of the garden by a private door, as my brother and I were. No! we were asked into the house—bread, cheese, and beer set before us. I don’t remember to have seen both the father and mother; one of them was present, but which I have forgot. However, the damsel set the table for us, her person not disgusting nor very elegant, but such as did not draw my affections towards her, and I thought they look cold on me as, by the event, they thought so themselves, and, when I considered the matter, declined all thoughts of paying another visit. But a while after, Sir Hans Sloane sent me to that neighbourhood to forbid a tenant paying rent to the man who used to receive it, as I have before mentioned. When I had done my business with the gentleman, I returned homewards, just by the gate that leads to the nobleman’s house. I thought perhaps they would receive me more respectfully when I came as a man of some importance, which I designed to let them know. I rode to the gate, opened it, and as my legs were between the gate and gate-post I withdrew, saying to myself,
"you and your daughter may go and be hanged! —you did not use me well when I was with you." So I returned home determined never to go near them again. Some time after this—I can’t say how long—the mother came to town, and, by diligent search, found out some of my haunts, on which I received a letter from an ancient woman Friend at London Wall—her name, I think, was Mary More—who desired to see me. I went; she told me the Friend S—k would be in town such a day, and if I came then I might speak with her; also that she was sorry I was not more kindly entertained; she knew not how it happened, but believed, if I made another visit and the young folks could agree, there would be no obstacle in the way of their union. I did not go. Some time now about my former fellow-servant returned to London, where I found her out, and in time she became my wife; and the greatest cause for repentance is that I did not enter into that state with her much sooner. But more of that when I come to relate what occurred after marriage.

I shall now return to Sir Hans Sloane, who, as before said, gave me a deputation to be his steward; but I should have related before that when the lead, the iron, most part of the stone, and a little of the most saleable of the timber was gone, the far greater part of the timber lay unsold, together with almost the whole quantity of bricks —lay as an encumbrance on the ground, and there did not come buyers enough to defray the expense of labourers to attend the sale. My master became weary of it, let the cultivated part of the garden (all except what was granted to me by lease), and my lodging
was removed to a house in the street of which my brother had obtained a lease from Sir Hans Sloane and opened a shop to carry on the trade of a clock-maker. Also I should have given some account of the garden—how I managed it. I planted and sowed it with such things as would grow in the natural ground and was most likely to be retailed to the neighbours. This caused many servants to come for salads, beans, peas, &c. mostly young women. It must be observed this was before my brother came to Chelsea, while I lived alone in the house near the street. At that time a former acquaintance, an ingenious man, composer to a printing-house, would come sometimes and stay with me from seventh-day eve till second-day morning—from Saturday night till Monday morning—as a relax from business, and amuse himself by walking in the grove on first-days while I was gone on a journey or to Meeting, and in one of those days of retirement wrote the following lines:—

1.

“When our first sire, by Heaven’s command,
Surveyed sweet Eden’s blissful land,
Of all its goods possessed,
Each tree gave but a faint delight,
Each flower but half regales the sight,
And half relieved his breast.

2.

“For something more his longing soul
Deep sighed, in spite of all control—
He knew not what it meant;
His great Creator, ever kind,
To cheer his thought and soothe his mind,
A beauteous consort sent.

3.

“Transported with such bliss bestowed,
His grateful heart with thanks o’erflowed
To taste such joys unknown;
Till, weakly listening to her tongue,
On which his ears too fondly hung,
His state was overthrown!

4.

“O! Howard! if, in Eden’s shade,
Our general father was betrayed
By one fair nymph—no more;
What care need you your fate to shun?
For if by one he was undone,
Can you withstand a score?”

Now from this digression I again return to Sir Hans Sloane. I had not long held his deputation before he did something so mean and repugnant to our last
agreement, which offended me very much, our last agreement, which offended me very much, that I abruptly gave him back his deputation. This for a time struck him dumb. After this pause, he then, in great amazement, said, “You! ——you!! to return on my hands what thousands would have leaped at! You shall repent it the longest day you have to live. You shall never have it—you shall never have it any more!” (but in this hitherto he was mistaken, for I have not yet repented of it). I replied, “Sir Hans, I believe I shall never ask you for it.” It was some time before he settled accounts with me, perhaps delayed the time that he might fix on one to succeed me, which at length he did—on a Master Kitching, gardener at the Neat House, a man whose education was far inferior to what my dear parents bestowed on me. Nor did it appear that he had made any improvement after he left the school, but he had acquired some wealth, and was, therefore, better qualified, and, I suppose, better paid, or else he would hardly have meddled with it. He was, however, very kind and forbearing to me when in arrears, greatly my friend in regard to making the church clock, and, in the time of my low estate, made my children a handsome present of some money he had the disposal of.

A little while before I left Sir Hans Sloane, my brother died, in whom I lost an able adviser, a cheerful companion, a discreet friend, an affectionate brother, and a sober, diligent man. The loss of him was to me matter of great grief. I advertised the shop to let, and the stock and tools to be sold. Few came to look at it, and I was obliged to keep the shop open in hope of disposing of it, which I did by still employing an old man who used to work for my brother in the whitesmith’s branch, for he took in that kind of work as well as clock and watchmaker’s business, and was at the time of his death in prosperous increasing trade and trade before hinted, I kept his books in the Italian method by double entry. The garden account turned out but small profit. I had not sufficient money to establish me in a large way of gardening. I was less inclined to fix in that employment, which I once thought I could never forsake; and then a true friend of my brother’s offered to assist me to carry on the clock and watch business.
This kind offer, the promising state of my late brother’s affairs, and the small profits of Beaufort Garden induced me to attempt it, as, also, the disadvantage of parting with such a good set of engines and tools. These considerations induced me to attempt, but had I known what a hard task it would prove, I surely should not have ventured; but when I had engaged, although I began to see how laborious and difficult it would prove, I was unwilling to give it up, and applied to it with the greater diligence, and took a journeyman, a stranger, who once came to treat about my brother’s shop. I built a shop on the spot where I now live, and added to it a forge which I built with my own hands; a boy about eleven years old was my labourer, and the said man my journeyman. I had, also, a book-binder and his wife lodged in my house, very honest and good sort of folks; my aunt, also before mentioned, came frequently to set my apartments to rights. Thus I lived about two years; the boy and I cooked for ourselves the days my aunt was not with us, and my man lodged and valetudined with his wife near at hand. He was a fit hand for my business, having been used to country shops, and could do other things besides clock-work. I sometimes worked in the garden and sometimes in the shop, for (being with my brother) I had learned a little to handle the tools, and while this stranger was with me he made four or five clocks and I made an eight-day time-piece. But my chief point was then to learn how to deal with a watch. Some old ordinary ones were brought to the shop by those who respected my brother and some by those who knew not how little skill I had in that art, and, by help of the kind friend before mentioned, I was soon able to clean a watch and repair some small faults in them, and what I could not manage he did for me on such terms that I had a small profit from them. But this stranger, who came to me by the name of William Smith, was far from being an honest man. My business obliged me to be frequently from home; my way from London to the shop was such that, if he was at work at the vise, he could not see me till I was close to the window. Thus have I caught him at work at what I could not see when I entered the
shop. I suppose he put it into his pocket. I have also, when
he was at work at the forge, found buried in the ashes at one
time several small tools, such as small punches and chisels,
just made; and thus, with my iron, steel, and coals, while
I paid him wages, he was furnishing himself with tools at
my expense to fight me with my own weapons. I have also
detected him carrying coals from my small stock, and such
tricks he might with ease do, as I had no eyes at home to be
a check on his actions while I was from home; and though I
saw this I knew not how to prevent it, for I thought was I to
put him away another might plunder the house and make off
with his booty, so I bore with it as well as I could and so it passed on till I was married, soon after which I parted with
him. He took a house where all that came from the town to
me must pass by his door; there he opened a shop with few
tools but what he had made at my expense or pilfered from me, insinuated himself into the favour of the tradesmen of
the town by frequenting their clubs, drawed off some of my
customers and stopped others who were passing by his door
in their way to me, picturing me as not only an unskilful but
as an ignorant fellow, and was encouraged by some of my
neighbours to my detriment and loss; and this was not all
for when he met me where none could be witness he would
abuse me in the vilest manner, and, with oaths and curses,
say he should some time lay hold of me, and if he did he
would squeeze me, which he confirmed by an oath. He has
lifted up a stick and threatened to strike me in the public
road, and has spit in my face—all which abuse I received
patiently. But by this time what little money I had and what
I borrowed—for I borrowed twenty pounds—was all gone,
and I began to run in debt. After he was gone, a young man,
a smith, came to ask for work, which I refused. He said he
had been out of business so long he had spent all his money
and pawned some of his things for want, and had no victuals
for a whole day, which affected me much. I then said I would endeavour to employ him a week or two. He stayed with me
about two years—a good hand he was in the smith’s work, but
when he did so, if my work was in haste he would call me
up by four in the morning to get it forward, and

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I would not have parted with him could I have kept on, for he was a very good workman, and, could I have been able to pay him, doubt not but in time I should have got into good bread: but, alas! I was forced to part with him for want of money to pay him. This was a sore trial to me, as there was some prospect of my business improving, and I had no hope of supporting my increasing family but by what I could earn by repairs of clocks and watches, for by this time I could do something that way, and at intervals worked in the garden—sometimes by moonlight—in both which my wife often assisted me. But my money being now all gone, and that man who lent me twenty pounds pressed hard for its return, I was now in great straits. I could not pay it; where to find a friend I knew not, but try I must. I went to one of the people called Friends, who kept a coach and all things adequate thereto, who gave me two guineas, but refused to lend me any. I wrote to an eminent dealer in coals who knew me from my first coming to Chelsea. He refused to grant the favour I asked by a line at the bottom of my letter, which I think he sent back by the bearer unsealed. I tried another of the people called Friends, who flatly refused, although I did not put any disguise on my request, but offered to give the best security I could, and had at that time a lease which would have made anybody safe for a larger sum. This last person had a near relation not of the said people, and I had a friend intimate in the family that was not of the people called Quakers, who applied in my favour to the young man, and he advanced me the money on my own bond, with which I paid off the other bond. Some time after the young man died, the person who refused to lend me the money became his heir, and then I was unkindly used, although by a nominal Friend.

But now to relate some unpleasing circumstances of another kind. A little while before I parted with the pretended William Smith (for that was not his name), to enter into the married state became absolutely necessary, and, indeed, what I ought to do; and not succeeding in my former essays towards it, partly by adhering to advice of my real friends—which its like might as well have been omitted—I now ventured on that most important concern without applying to anyone for counsel, and took to be my wife the young woman who had been my fellow-servant, as before mentioned.
She being nominally of different religion, there could be no hope of our being married in the Society and by the established rules among the people called Quakers; and had she been of the same church, I think, circumstanced as I was, I should have been married by the priest, as they term it, for I could not well afford to be married otherwise. My whole charges, including wedding dinner, was not forty shillings, and as safely bound I was as if it had cost me twenty or thirty pounds, which some of our Friends foolishly squander away at the practice is quite repugnant to their principles: and, as we came together with a small stock, it was needful to use our utmost diligence in our temporal affairs, in which my wife was not in the least degree wanting, for she has many times sat up all night to do the work of the house, mend and make for the children, and in the day assist me in the shop at cleaning clocks, &c., or in the garden hoeing, &c. Nor had we ever the least jar or discord on religious subjects. Some, perhaps, may say that we did not trouble our heads about it; be that as it may, few in the Society have surpassed my children in a sober, regular, and religious conduct of life, and I am certain some children of parents who have been so tenacious of what they call plainness of apparel and speech have fallen far short of them; neither am I convinced that what they call mixed marriages is so frightful as they would make it, for Christ says, “By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye love one another.” I think this love relates towards all those who profess faith in Christ, and is not restricted to a handful. Nor can I find any part of Scripture that forbids one Christian marrying to another. What Moses West has advanced on this head is not solid argument; but there is a book entitled Religious Courtship, if it had come in my way, would have had some weight with me.

But to return. Our struggles for a living and to pay every one his due and the hardships we met were not small. While we had but one or two children my wife could and did help me in whatever I found to do, but children came so fast we had need of two cradles at once in the same room; then suckling, nursing, and the business of the
house was full employment for her, and as I had parted with my young man, James Cawsway, I left off that part of my business in which he was chiefly employed, and applied myself wholly to the clock and watch business, and at intervals did some work in the garden.

Family increasing very fast and I not expert in my new undertaking, money came very slowly in and expenses grew larger, as at this time I had none but a little boy and myself. With our utmost diligence and frugality, we could not bring our expenses within our receipts, and, of course, must run in debt. This, indeed, was a time of great trial. Deserted by the tradesmen, who, when I was in Sir Hans Sloane’s service, would, had I required it, come cap in hand; forsaken by my old acquaintances and totally disregarded by the Society of which I was reputed a member; every day going further in debt; dunned by some who could stay; asked payment by some who wanted their money (perhaps as much as myself); and threatened with an arrest by two creditors the one called a Quaker, the other was not; my former journeyman abusing me often, and always circumventing me in my business to the most of his power, and he encouraged by some principal tradesmen when they became parish officers. They would call two or three times in fourteen or sixteen days for the rates, and have summoned me to appear before the Bench of Justices for non-payment of poor rates. This act was, perhaps, not unjust in law, but, as I was often entrusted with other property, had it spread abroad it might have ruined the little business I had. The Society to which I thought I belonged might have assisted me as an honest man, if they could not do it as a sound member, for they were not ignorant of my distress; but they gave me no relief except one half-guinea, and what could that do in my circumstances but expose my necessitous condition? I also wrote to the Monthly Meeting some queries concerning registering of children,
and concluded my letter in these words: “If you think me or my queries worthy of your notice, I hope you will not delay to give an answer to your Friend—Edmund Howard.” To which I received a reply by the same man that delivered my letter to them, which was: “I gave thy letter to Friends. They appointed a committee, who said it did not come under their notice, or under the notice of Friends” (which I have forgot which, to use the plain language, is: Neither me nor my queries were worthy of their notice), and their subsequent deportment towards me was a plain demonstration of it, for they, as a body, never showed the last regard of me till the year 1761, nor did they ever invite me to their Monthly Meetings, nor give me the least thing, either directly or indirectly, that I might come there. I was so inclined and I always thought Monthly and other meetings of business were always transacted by a chosen few till very many years after I was married. Then Thomas Finch informed me otherwise. Nor did they at all regard my children to register them in their records, nor inform me what steps I should take in order to get them registered among Friends, nor did they visit me concerning my being married by the priest; in short, they took little or no more notice of me than if I had not so much as known the name Quaker, and during a space of several years, part of the time they neglected to register my children, if one life had dropped off, I should have been heir-at-law to three or four hundred pounds a year. I suppose there is many of our rigid profession would not have risked such an advantage to their children for want of using a little cold water. Soon after, I was informed by Thomas Finch that I might go to those meetings if I liked so to do. I went several times, in hopes of learning their discipline and becoming an active member of the Society, but was told to be seen up the stairs that I had no rights to sit among them, although the Friends did indulge me from that time, nor did they, for a time peremptorily, oppose this, or time peremptorily answer one of them.
It is true that one of my letters did obtain a public reading in a Monthly Meeting, but the most part of them, if not all the rest, were stifled in their birth by the committees who were to inspect them, and this letter was productive of a meeting of some of the Friends at James Marshman’s house, to which I was called. Something then was said concerning registering my children, but such objections stated that prevented it being done. Nor was it done till my eldest child was near if not more than thirty years old, and was then done without requiring anything of me but the time and particulars of their birth, which, if they had done in due time its like I might at this time have been a respectable member of the Society in which I was born and instructed in the principles of truth by my worthy, dear, and never-to-be-forgotten parents, who, both by example and precept, constantly endeavoured to train up their children in the practice of their religious and moral duty; and I am persuaded, if there were not more such parents, there would not be such rapid declension in our Society, which, if a reformation does not shortly take place, will soon become like the Temple of Jerusalem.

Having now related my situation with respect to the Society in which I was born and educated, and by which it appears clearly I have been little more than a cypher—nay, hardly that—I shall now give some account of the manner of our living. As my wife was anxious to get clear of and keep out of debt, we did not wish for dainties, but thought ourselves happy when we could raise two or three shillings to purchase a hock of bacon, which was sometimes hard for us to do, and often, when we were eating part of it, view the other part with tears in our eyes lest when that was gone we should not get more, and when I had two or three children my wife used sometimes to have a woman to help wash. I have gone out with some work expecting a few shillings, and they obliged to wait till I came home for their breakfast or dinner, having no victuals in the house nor money to buy any, and many
many times could not raise higher than a few sprats, potatoes, or a chine of beef, and scarce enough of that. Once, when my wife was gone to town on business, the children and I at home without anything to eat and no money to buy, luckily came by a person buying old clothes. I sold him a pair of old boots, which furnished us with a dinner. And as to clothes, my wife cut to pieces so many of her own clothes to cover her children that she had not sufficient left to put dry ones on when she came home wet, but must sit in them wet as they were or go to bed; as to myself, I had some good shirts—too good for such work as I had then to do—which were most of them destroyed before I could buy others more fit for me. My woollen clothes were old and I could not buy new, but went to the shops in town to seek for old, seldom or never able to go to such a price as would furnish me with a coat fit to be seen in where my business sometimes called me, and in fashion unlike our flock, which might give offence to some weak brother, but I could not do otherwise, and sometimes at great straits to do that. I also was oft at great straits to raise money to pay my rent, &c., and, though I never pawned anything of my own nor other folks', yet have I sold my goods thirty per cent. under their value when distressed for want of money. Those circumstances brought my mind very low—not into but to the brink of despair. The greatest comfort I had in this my distress was, as the Almighty had given me a heart to do honestly, He would be graciously pleased in His time to enable me to pay all my debts, and it was this confidence that supported me under such circumstances that I presume Paul himself would have been content. At this time a lady at Turnham Green used to employ me to repair her clocks and watches. I had a clock to carry there in winter, when the ground was covered with snow and in the foot-ways trod to slush that it worked through large holes at the bottom of my shoes and quite through the upper leather that it appeared on the outside on the top of my feet, and I was much afraid the maid would offer me slippers, which, if she had done, I should have been strangely confused. I was also more than three years in arrears of rent and twenty pounds in the baker's debt. I had notice sent that if I did not pay I should be ejected from my house. The time allowed me was very short, the money I had not, and where to get it I knew
not. To seek it among the people called Friends I thought was in vain. A gentleman (a Counsellor) with whom I was well acquainted I thought would give me his advice gratis. I went to his house: he was not at home. I made my distress known to his wife, and begged it as a favour that Mr.—— would inform me how I should postpone the ejectment and gain time to try my friends. She promised to do, and told me he would be at home. According to the time I went, and was introduced to him. To whom I opened my business, and desired him to inform me how I might put off the evil day till I could try my friends. He replied, “There is ways, to be sure; there is ways you might do it; but the best way is to pay the money.” I thought that’s true, but if I could do that I need not come here for advice. I had no time to reply, for he instantly said, “And I will lend you the money,” a favour I as little expected as I did to be refused by those called Friends before mentioned. He lent me the money, and did not ask any security. I hesitated and said, “I don’t care to take it without giving you some security.” He replied, “Then you may give me your note, if you please.” He wrote the note and I signed it, saying, “How or when shall I pay it?” He replied, “How you can and when you can.” This satisfied my landlord and prevented my being turned out of a habitation where I have, by the blessing of my Creator, brought up a family of children who are respected by most that know them; and although the people called Friends have disregarded me, and treated me with some degree of contempt—which, to some spirits, is worse than abuse—yet among them I found one Friend who, when he knew the straits I was in, came six or seven miles on purpose to relieve me with a purse of ten guineas, which he put into my hand never to return it till I was very well able to spare it. With this money I paid off a note that I feared might be demanded when I could not pay it. My aunt, before mentioned, though she was a poor woman and laboured hard for a livelihood, lent me three or four guineas, which put us in a way to add something to our income, and my business mended in all its branches. In process of time I paid my worthy Friend the Counsellor, and, after some time, my good Friend
and brother professor in religion, thinking it my duty to return it, as the Lord had blessed me with means so to do, which confirmed me in what I, in my distress, thought, viz., that He would not forsake those who put their trust and confidence in Him. And after a long time I paid off the bond of twenty pounds which I borrowed of a young man, as before mentioned; this bond, on the death of him, came into the hands of one of the people called Quakers, who used me very unkindly, but removed by death, into the hands of a man in the City. This man was not of the people called Quakers, a perfect stranger to me, who used me very friendly, and did not with ill nature urge for the punctual payment of the interest; in his hands it was several years, which, after paying nearly, if not all, the principal by way of interest, I paid the principal also.

In all this long time no members of the Meeting at the Savoy came in a Friendly manner to see me, and when anything occasioned sending notice to the several members of that Meeting, I was always omitted; and I don’t remember that any one of them, in the course of more than fifteen years, ever made me a visit purely on the score of friendship or on any religious account whatever, though most of the families of Friends in and round London had in that time been favoured with the company of many eminent persons at sundry times. This leads me to make some observations on their manner of dealing with those who have been married by the priest. If they think it an offence towards God, it should be the duty of any member to admonish him to make his peace with God for his transgression, and if it be only a breach of the rules of the Society, then the member should know what reason he has for doing so, before they proceed to cut him off from the body and that would be well to make frequent visits to any couple and by their godly conversation endeavor to bring the offending person to a sense of his own wrong and to win the love of the other to a Union with our Society than by sending persons with a deputed power from the Meeting to inform them that if they do such certain terms they must be cut off from the body for an act which he, perhaps, is not convinced is evil—since the Scripture says marriage is honourable in all, and has not given us any form by which it is to be confirmed.

But now I shall return to give some account how we laboured to get forward and to pay every man his due.
And, first, as to the garden. For some years at first I cropped it with kitchen herbs, such as beans, peas, cabbages, cauliflowers, &c. My neighbours would come and ask, “Have you any cabbages or cauliflowers?” &c. if I answered “No” they returned home unsatisfied. By the time mine was fit for use, carts and barrows furnished them with that they happened to want at their own doors, and when the barrows ceased to come my goods were past their best, and if they came then I could not serve them, so the garden then turned to small account. After some years, a seedsman desired leave of me to plant some bulbous roots in my garden for him, which I granted. He gave me twelve of them for my trouble. Those I increased as fast as I could, and bought also some hyacinth roots. So as soon as my stock allowed me to part with any I planted some in pots and brought them into the house. The warmth of the fire brought them for warder than those abroad, the polyanthuses being then in few hands; and our getting them forward, many folks called for them, and by that means we were sometimes furnished with a dinner when we had no other hope of getting one. I also planted in pots rosemary, southernwood, laurustinus, and sundry common plants, and used to set them in rows out at the door, in hopes of taking a penny sometimes. At the next door lived a gardener, whose mother would walk around the pots with his children, and, in a scoffing tone, say, “Now we will walk in Covent Garden,” deriding us for exposing our plants in that manner for sale, though all I brought to the door was the produce of our own garden, some of which were such as he had not, nor did he know them; but as soon as he found I sold them, he would learn the names, go to the nursery and buy four or five handsomer plants than I could match, so hinder my sale and hurt himself; for by this means increased his stock of plants that required shelter in the winter, and, not having proper places for that purpose, lost more in the winter sometimes than he gained in the summer. He and his wife, by many ways not justifiable, endeavoured to draw off our trade, but could not effect it, and at length came to nothing. And our business in the garden way helped to bring up our family, to the improving and extending of which my wife toiled, and her labour was incessant, for we became noted for good flowers and fine nosegay and often wanted more flowers than our garden could supply, which caused my wife many
long and wearisome walks to get them where she could—often three miles distance, frequently before breakfast—and never was wanting of diligence in that or any other lawful business to support our young family. Our business in the flower trade increased, and the producing flowers early by artificial means became a general practice with gardeners and also with gentlemen. It was now needful for me to provide conveniences for that purpose. I then built a small stove or hot-house, being chief carpenter and bricklayer myself, for I had no help but my journeyman and garden folks. This stove I occupied in raising pineapples and producing rose-blossoms before their natural season, together with bulbous-rooted flowers such as hyacinths, narcissuses, &c., and for some time this did pretty well; but our neighbour boasted much, and, instead of handing them forth as rarities, stocked his shop so full that his roses drop about the floor which, a few years back, would not be had for 2s. a blossom, and, by his folly, set gentlemen mad after hot-houses. A great many were built in most parts of England, of such large dimensions that, where they were well-managed, the produce was three or four—nay, in some places six—times more than was wanted. The overplus in most places found its way to London markets. This lessened the demand on those folks near London who occupied hot-houses for their gain, and I, among many others, feel the effect, for the returns from my garden very sensibly diminished.

Here I shall leave the garden and give some account of my proceeding in the business of the shop in which I succeeded my brother. I have given some account of what my intentions were as to the manner of my settling in business had my brother lived, which it is most likely, had I persevered in that track, might have been more profitable and much less perplexing than what I did. But, of the fifteen master kitchen gardeners in Chelsea, very few except my master did anything more than get a livelihood. The very small gains arising from that part of Beaufort Garden which I cultivated for Sir Hans Sloane, the prosperous beginning of my brother’s business, and the loss that would be sustained by the sale of his tools.
and implements, together with the very kind offer of his 
and my friend to assist me in prosecuting the works he 
had begun, induced me to make trial of it. It proved such a 
laborious and difficult task that I sometimes wished I had 
not undertaken it. But the hardship I was to suffer did not 
appear till it was too late to look back, for to put myself out 
of all employ and begin afresh must have been a great loss 
of time, labour, and expense. Therefore I strove with all my 
power to go forward, and after some years I have found a 
friend to advance me a little money, but, as I had not found 
it among those who assume the name of Friends, I had no 
spirit to seek it elsewhere, and was content to drudge on 
and, by the toil and labour of my own hand, to support 
my family several years. When my brother died, I had an 
old man who had worked for him sometimes; he was very 
honest and willing, but was taken to prison in another man’s 
cause. Then the pretended William Smith came to work 
for me, whose character I have before given; he was with 
me about two years, and by him I believe I suffered great 
loss. After him came James Cawsway, as before mentioned, 
who, I believe, never wronged me of anything, and was in 
general diligent in his business; but I was often at a loss to 
keep him employed, and when business was slack I used to 
employ him in making jacks. He made me several, which 
lay on my hands—added stock—till the little money I had 
was all exhausted, and I could not raise money to pay his 
wages; and though my prospect at this time began to mend, 
I was obliged to part with him much against my will, and 
depend wholly on what I could do with my own hands and 
a lad to help in the garden. In the daylight I work at repairs 
and cleaning watches and the better sort of clocks, and 
by candle-light coarse thirty-hour clocks, mend a poker, 
clean a gun, mend a lock or a key, or anything of that kind 
that could be done by a single hand. I also had about this 
time a journeyman clock-maker, who had some skill in the 
founders’ business, by whom I learned
something of that art, and I was able to cast an odd wheel, pillar or some small thing that might be wanted in repairs of old clocks, but I had not business to keep him long. I then bought old brass nails, two or three pounds at a time, that a grave-digger picked from the earth of the graves, and other small parcels of old brass as offered at my shop, and when I had enough to make a wheel, &c., I used to melt them. After making several articles, or small parts of eight-day works, I made wooden patterns and from them cast a set of wheels for a small turret clock which I designed to fix on the top of my house, with a view to remove the prejudice to[o] often entertained that none can learn a trade or employment without being bound apprentice for seven years. And to make a clock that did nothing but what other clocks did, would be no sufficient proof that I made it with my own hands; therefore I made it to show the day of the month the whole year by an index on the centre of the dial, which index required no altering but once in a year. I also made it to strike in a manner that no other clock in the realm doth that ever I heard of, for it will of itself strike every quarter—both the last hour and the quarters, as doth a repeating watch, or every half-hour, or strike the quarters only as a common quarter clock. All this it performs without one wheel or pinion more than a common day clock. As I had none to help me, I was long about it, for I was not to neglect the work I had of my neighbours, which was the only support of my family, therefore did this in the evening after the shop was shut, frequently working till nine at night when others were wasting their time and money at the alehouse. By this means some people took notice of me. Sir Henry Bellandine bespoke a clock of me, which I made and put it up at his house at Petersham, and he recommended me to the Duchess of Argyll; but for want of money to make the appearance of a man of importance, I lost my footing in that family, soon being obliged to work with my own hands and to
embrace every half-crown or five shilling job—which was the only means I had to supply the present necessities of my family—very few being able to get forward and acquire wealth till they can make a grand outside appearance. And this thirst for grandeur and wealth has been the ruin of many of our Society, to the great injury of others and reproach of our profession; but if many among us have met with the same disregard as I have for my undisguised application for help, I don’t wonder so many make a gay show at other folks’ expense, if but few I have the greater cause to say I have been not friendly used among them.

The knowledge I had acquired of the founder’s art was serviceable to me in my low state, for I could buy small parcels of old brass, two or three shillings’ worth at a time, when I could not raise money enough to pay for a suit of work at the founders, and at my leisure cast it into such form as I wanted. By this means I made with my own hands some clocks from old candlesticks, kettles, and old nails, &c., when I could not pay the founder, and I also forged the iron and steel work I used in the same clocks. I have hinted that I laid down a branch of my business when I parted with a journeyman, and so I did, but at first I had not full employment in the clock and watch way, and then did sometimes clean a jack, gun, pistol, or mend a poker, &c., all which I declined as soon as I could, and stuck close to clocks and watches, and occasionally did something in the garden, the fruit trees of which I have always pruned myself, and do to this day, many times (formerly) at it by four or five o’clock in the morning. My wife also was not a whit behind in diligence and close attention to business, both in her household affairs, distilling simple waters, and often helping me both in the shop and the garden, and my children, as soon as able, helped in any works their strength could manage; one of my daughters, when very young, learned to clean an eight-day clock, and in a little time could do it as well as myself, and could put it together when cleaned. Thus the Almighty, in the course of His Providence, so ordered it that I could now buy a piece of new cloth, and pay the tailor for making my coat, when formerly was hard set to buy
an old one. But still there remained many old debts unpaid.
About this time the man who had the care of Chelsea Church
clock died; a neighbour gave me the hint that if I would apply
to the churchwarden I might succeed him. I did so, and had
the grant; and the keys delivered to me—this I held some
years. Other churchwardens succeeded, and they moved for a
new clock, had a clockmaker from London to view it, never
sent to me for the keys, but broke open the doors to show him
the clock. A neighbour who was at the Vestry informed me
what passed there, and that they were to meet on the business
again on a certain day, and wished me to be there. I went, but
nothing final was then done. Some few years after the matter
was agitated again; a Vestry was called to determine whether
there should or not be a new clock; a friend informed me of it
and advised me to attend, which I did. It was resolved to have
a new one, and I was allowed to give in a proposal, which I
prepared, and met them at the time appointed. There was Smith,
of Moorfields, and two other clockmaker candidates for the job
besides myself. I was chosen by a great majority to make it.
The Vestry was held on a Thursday, and the Sunday follow-
ing two or three head of the Parish came to my house to forbid me
to proceed, saying I must not go on with the work, the parish
was against my doing it. I replied that could not be, a Vestry
had appointed me, and confirmed it by signing their order, and
no Vestry had been called since, therefore I would go on.
I must not omit to mention the kindness of a neighbour who
seeing them pass by followed to assist me, lest they should be
too hard for me, for he thought what they were coming about.
He also very kindly offered to lend me money to carry it on.
They also spread reports that if I did make it I should not be
paid without going to law, and said many foolish things if
possible to hinder my proceeding. Mr. Barwick,
61, Strand, W.C.

23rd February, 1905.

J. Henry Quinn, Esq.,

Dear Sir,

Clock at Chelsea Old Church.

We beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter of 18th inst., and to inform you that the Clock bears the name of Edmund Howard, and the date of 1761.

It is a fine old Clock, in excellent condition—having been well taken care of. So long as it receives the same attention as heretofore there is no reason why it should not run another hundred years.

Yours faithfully,

E. Dent & Co., Ltd.,

W.A Pyall, Secretary.
Sir Hans Sloane’s steward, also took an active part respecting the Vestry in my favour, and though it was the first of its kind, I was not in the least puzzled how to go about it; being well skilled in figures I could proportion every part, both as to the strength required in each part, and the number of turns each wheel ought to make, and could work at the lathe in turning the wheels and pinions. The worst was to get a proper hand to help me, for no man can do such work alone. At length a ragged fellow offered, who had but one shirt, and a ragged one it was. I employed him: he was a good workman, an honest fellow, and good natural parts, but had contracted bad habits by working with sots, who, if possible, will leaven all sober men into the same lump, and, if they cannot do that, endeavour to drive him from them. This is the ruin of many sober men whose lot is to work in great shops. By his help and my close attention the work was completed, so as to be well approved by both the men who were to inspect it—one on my behalf, the other for the parish—and I was paid the money. This was in the year 1761; with this money I paid off the greatest part, but not all the debts I had contracted in the time of my distress. While I was making this clock several Friends in my company, by appointment of the Meeting, visited me for the first time, concerning my being married by the Priest (as they term it), which marriage was consummated in the year 1744, and in dark hints would have me understand I might return to the flock, but did not speak out plain what they required from me; and as my whole life had been spent, from the day I left my parents to that day, among people who were not called Quakers, I was very ignorant of their discipline. I made no apology for what I had done, nor did they ask me to give a reason for so doing; indeed, it did not appear to me to be a breach of the laws either of God or man, and if not, it needed no apology; and although they could not
be strangers to my former poverty, none of them offered to assist me to forward the work I was then about, which some of my neighbours who made little pretensions to religion very kindly did, and to take no notice of my transgressing their rules till after so many years had elapsed is an omission they are better able to give a reason for than I am; but the shepherd who suffers any of his flock to stray, and doth not endeavour to collect them to his fold, risks the loss of them by wild beasts or the danger of their herding with the goats (wicked men).

Having now completed the clock to general satisfaction, and to my own content, and paid off several debts that for many years lay as a heavy burden on my mind, I had now courage to go on with every part of my business with better spirits, and endeavoured to improve every part thereof,—in which my wife also laboured rather beyond her strength, omitting nothing that she could do to get the rest of our debts paid, and the prejudice of my being a gardener, and unable to do anything in the clock business, began to wear off. The man who helped in making the Church clock, being a rambler, left me, —not for any disgust to me, but to indulge his rambling spirit. I got another man who made several small clocks for me, and nearly (with my help) completed a large turret clock, which, after he was gone, I finished and put up for Mr. Wollaston, near Stowmarket, in Suffolk; and thus my affairs began to improve, my mind much easier, and my debts lessened, for in the year 1762 I paid John Cater for goods I had from him in the year 1745; and in the year 1770 I paid Edward Bailey, watch-case maker, five pounds four shillings, which completed the sum of sixteen pounds eleven shillings, due to him by my note of hand, date 29th of November, 1752; I also paid, on the 15th of July, 1762, Dr. John Fothergill, two pounds and two shillings which he lent me on my note dated the 23rd of January, 1747. About the time, as Friends became possessed of Ackworth School, Dr. Fothergill had thoughts of presenting them with a turret clock, and
sent me to look at one he had seen. I viewed it, and went to his house to give him my opinion of it; he ordered me a breakfast, and went out, and I, after being well refreshed, went home, and a little while before he died he gave me two guineas for my trouble.

The money I paid to Edward Bailey was, as I best remember, the last payment of the debts I had contracted in the time of my distress, and (as I suppose) was what he had given over for lost. I must not forget Joseph Clark, clock-case maker, to whom I had been long indebted. I went to him for a clock-case, and said if he would please to send it I hoped to pay for it on the delivery, but could not say when I should be able to pay him what I owed. He replied, “O! God bless you, master, I will never rest your widow for it.”

How different was this from the treatment I met with from one called a Friend, to whom, on Sir Hans Sloane’s account, I had paid several sums of money, and his demand was not so large as Mr. Clark’s, yet he could threaten to arrest me for it; and I do say I have been unkindly used by individuals, as also by the Society, but don’t know that I ever did anything to offend any of them, nor in any part of my conduct have I been guilty of anything that may draw reproach or scandal on our profession, for I have to the most of my power laboured to pay every man his due, and to live in peace with all men, and think I may venture to say few have exceeded me in those points; but lay no claim to extraordinary holiness, well knowing I have done those things I ought not to have done, and left undone those things I ought to have done; but am not convinced that my being married by the Priest is of the former, nor my not using the plain language, so-called, is of the latter, because there is no mode or form given us in Scripture how marriage is to be solemnised; and as to language, I think that is the true plain language that gives a clear and perfect idea of the speaker’s
sentiments on whatever he may be talking about. As to the singular and plural number, many of our plain Friends of the younger branches use it in a way and manner neither scriptural nor grammatical. This leads me to make some remarks on the word “Friend,” which more than sixty years ago was introduced into the Society as an expression of respect to supply the place of Mr. or Mrs., for before the meanest servant or child, in speaking of their superiors, used both their proper names, as George Fox, William Penn, Joseph Hale, &c.; but the word Friend, as now used among us, is sometimes false, as when applied to, perhaps, the greatest foe the speaker has in the world, and is always unintelligible, because the word Friend is both masculine and feminine. The word “sheep” is both singular and plural; and as in the English tongue the word “you,” though not truly grammatical, is by long practice made both singular and plural, I know no reason why it should not be used as such. If any person can truly say they have been fully convinced in their own conscience they ought not, let them follow that conviction but not censure others who never felt such restraint.

And as to outward mode and forms of public worship, people are generally inclined to practise that in which from their youth they have been educated; and how knoweth any man which is most acceptable to the Divine Being? Therefore we should give the same indulgence to every one as we would wish to receive, in that respect, from others; for I think it will be granted that every one who thinks at all seriously about religion believes the mode he is in the practice of is the best; but surely no external performance can give a man acceptance with his Maker if his heart is not right in His sight; for if
outward forms would do anything for us, our gracious Creator would have given us one, but we find He has not; on the contrary, when Christ conversed with the woman of Samaria He appointed neither time, mode, nor place, but said: “He that will worship the Father must worship Him in spirit and in truth,” thereby indicating that all outward forms and places appointed for public worship avail little or nothing. (He also, in another place, says: “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there will I be in the midst of them”): nor indeed, how should it, for it is in the power of the vilest of mankind to perform and to comply with any rites and ceremonies, be they ever so pompous or ever so plain and simple. The Jews, who received their ceremonious worship from the inspired Moses, so far perverted their ways that their sacrifices, new moons, their oblations, and their solemn assemblies, became hateful and an abomination to the Lord.

This proves the non-efficiency of outward performances when the heart is departed from the living God, nor is there anything that can render as well-pleasing in His sight and conformable to His will but a close adherence to the dictates of that inward and Spiritual Grace, a measure or manifestation whereof is given to every man to profit withal (and it is our fault if we do not profit by it); but this is the condemnation of the world, that light is come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil, and whoever has subdued any of his vicious and evil inclinations, it must be from something more efficacious than human laws. They may encourage the well-doer and punish the evil-doer, but cannot make the unrighteous man forsake his ways, not convert a sinner to God. It is that Grace of God which has appeared to all men; it is this that teaches to deny all ungodliness and worldly lust, and by this we learn to live soberly, righteously, and godly. In vain do men talk of and profess religion if they do not endeavour to do what’s righteous, just, and good, and humbly and earnestly desire that He would be graciously pleased to direct their steps into and in that path which leads to eternal bliss and happiness. There is then no doubt but
He will assist them by that inward and Spiritual Grace which, the Church of England say, they use the baptizing of infants as a means whereby they receive it; but we say (as the Scriptures declare) a measure or manifestation thereof hath appeared to every man, and as there is no command nor form of infant baptism recorded in Scripture, we do not use it; but we believe, and some of us (and I trust that many thousands of the different sects under the Christian name) have experiences, a preservation from the commission of some great evil into which they were like to have fallen by the enticement of sinners. I say I doubt not but many have felt themselves delivered from the commission of evil by an inward impulse on their souls, and what can this be but the spirit of truth, which, if duly regarded, would lead and guide us into all truth; and surely there is none, except those who are given over to work wickedness with greediness and draw iniquity as with cord of vanity, and sin as with cart rope, but doth at times feel a sharp reproof in their own souls for what they have done; and this is the Lord's doing; it is His chastisement; it is the rod of His displeasure. Then is the time to seek the Lord, for if at such times He is diligently sought He will surely be found, for then He is near, and therefore thou oughtest to call upon Him lest He withdraw His visitations from thee, and thou be given over to a reprobat mind: but if thou humble thyself before Him and His the Rod of His Chastisement He is merciful, and will pardon all thy transgressions, and heal all thy backslidings; then shalt thou be enabled to praise, magnify, and adore His most Holy Name. This is (I humbly conceive) true Spiritual Worship.
But as to external modes and forms of public worship, I hope very few or none will be so uncharitable as to deny salvation to any of the professors of Christianity, be their external performances what they may, for every man who fears God and works righteousness shall find acceptance with Him. But there is such a strange propensity in man for novelty: they will have new fashions in their clothes, their houses, and furniture, and religion, also, sometimes forsaking the better and introducing the worse, rejecting what might be retained, and obtrude on us as doctrine the precepts of men; and to such extremes have they run in the observance of externals, that when in power have cruelly put to death multitudes who could not comply with their ceremonies, they being wholly alienated from the true spiritual worship, and quite forsaking the precepts and the essence of the Christian religion (for that is peace on earth and good will towards men), have become volunteers in the Devil’s works, and by such doings have brought much reproach and scandal on the Christian religion among those nations who believe not in Christ.

I have made a much longer digression from my story than I intended, but now resume my narrative. When I had discharged all my debts, and was more easy both in mind and circumstances, I gave my thoughts a turn to serve the public; and as many have lost their lives in the flames when their dwellings have been on fire, I contrived a means whereby they might escape from any window on the upper part of the house when the bottom was on fire; and also a means for an immediate supply of water to serve the engines to extinguish the fire, and was at the expense of printing a number of handbills, hired two young men to give them into the hands of gentlemen and merchants at the gates of the Exchange; and I bought the Directory, and went myself to most of the aldermen’s houses and gave in at each of them a bill, and to many
other persons and gentlemen of note, but found very few
who paid any regard to it, except my worthy friend, Thomas
Corbyn, who did all in his power to recommend it to the
public; and he applied to the Sun Fire Office, and the Hand-
in-Hand, to both which offices I went, and learned my
device for the escape from fire, but did not obtain a hearing
at either, although the means to escape from fire, and also
the supply for water, are such that they will not soon be
outdone by any other contrivance. I also devised a means
to bake bread in an oven to be built in such a manner that it
might be heated with any kind of fuel and be used perpetual,
for as soon as one batch of bread was drawn that very instant
another might be put in. This, I thought, might be very
useful when a large fleet or army wanted immediate supply
of bread. Drawings of this, and a description of the same, I
sent to the Society in the Strand for the Encouragement of
Arts, &c.—who rejected it.

If the said Society had thought fit to enquire into the
merits of it and given me a bounty, I should not have been
above accepting it; but I could not find any propriety in their
expecting me to be at twenty or thirty pounds expense to
make trial of a scheme from which I could have no profit.
Several other things I devised, some of which I am very
confident, had I money to purchase the King's free gift, and
a little more to carry on the work, I might before this time
have acquired a considerable share of wealth.

The handbills I gave out, as mentioned above,
contained the following words:
TO THE PUBLICK IN GENERAL, BUT MORE
ESPECIALLY TO THE INHABITANTS OF LONDON,
FOR THE PRESERVATION OF MANKIND AND THEIR
DWELLINGS, &C., FROM DESTRUCTION BY FIRE.
(July 18th, 1774.)

Edmund Howard, in the King’s private Road,
Chelsea, by this means endeavours to inform them that he
has contrived a cheap, easy, and safe method for any Person
to escape from the top or upper part of any house when
the bottom is on fire; also an instantaneous and perpetual
supply of water for engines to extinguish fire in all parts of
London, and many other towns in England. If any of the
Insurance Offices or any other Companies think this worthy
their notice, I am ready to attend them as they shall please
to appoint; if an individual, I may be found at Chelsea.

The Inventor thinks he can prove to satisfaction what
he has here advanced, and his good will to the Publick urges
him thus to address them.

N.B.—The devise for escape from fire may in two
or three minutes be fixed to any window; it may be carried
anywhere by a lad of twelve years old.

Thus have I given a faithful account of several
circumstances and various vicissitudes that have attended
me through my progress in life, all of which I have wrote
from memory, now in the seventy-sixth year of my age,
except money matters, which for the dates of notes and the
time of paying them I referred to the notes themselves; and
as my business would not suffer me to write long at a time
nor to search
over scattered papers, there may not be so regular
succession of occurrences as I could have given had I
time to examine such papers and help as I might have found in
my stores; but this I can say, that was has passed between
me and the others vocally is, for the most part, verbatim;
and where I could not do so I have given as near as possible
the true sense and meaning of what passed between me and
them.

I shall now make some remarks and observations
on some parts of this narrative, and then conclude this
account of my journey through life. And first the pump
and wheel work which I made in my infancy, as mentioned
in the forepart of this narrative, caused some talk in the
neighbourhood, so much that, after I was placed out to be
a gardener, some folks of distinction came several miles in
their coach to see it, and was balked when informed I was
gone. Perhaps, had I pursued that track, some of them might
have promoted my interest in that way. My Master Burr,
and his neighbour, if they had been generous, would have
been more liberal when I settled their account, as has been
mentioned; nor did he give me anything by his will, though
he gained more by me than any apprentice he ever had.

My Mrs. Edwards, although remarkably generous,
did not pay the surgeon at Chelsea who attended me for a
hurt I got by a kick from a horse when on a journey in her
business not relating to gardening. It is true she paid the
surgeon in the country who attended me almost every day
for a whole week, but took no notice of him at Chelsea who
had me under his care a month.
I was at that time a yearly servant, so the loss of time, which was five or six weeks, did not affect me, and I had a good table to go to; but the surgeon who attended me after I came home was paid by myself, and she never asked anything about it, which omission could hardly be expected from so generous a lady.

I was gardener to Mr. Revel one year complete, but he was so little there that we scarce knew each other’s disposition. Had I stayed with him till we were better acquainted, it is probable I might not have left him as long as he lived. He was a good master, and did well by several of his servants.

I was a servant to Sir Hans Sloane about six or seven years, and did so many things for him as could hardly be expected from a gardener and a man in my rank of life, that had I done the same for some gentlemen they would have endeavoured to advance me by their recommendations to other gentlemen, the which he never did.

But of all the occurrences of my life none is more strange and harder to account for than the conduct of the Society of which I am reputed a member, who have been known to bestow their favours, and to assist strangers, some of whom have been no credit to them, and many have they assisted who have, perhaps, not merited it more than myself, who never had in my life from them, as a Society, more than one half-guinea. Those who knew me well will believe this, but few others, as the Quakers, so-called, have the reputation of being very liberal to their brethren, although I am certain they could not be strangers to my distress, and as they have large donations to enable them to help the needy, they might have spared me a little; and surely to help the industrious and honest, who are lately entered into business and have hard struggles to support their families, and pay their creditors their full demands, is as laudable an act as it is to assist those who by their ill conduct have obliged their creditors to comply with a composition, and to take a part
instead of the whole, which to the great reproach and
scandal of our Society we have had but too many instances
of in our day, the which, in George Fox’s time, would have
been ranked among crimes of the first magnitude, and from
which the Almighty Lord has hitherto preserved me, and I
trust He will be with me to the end of my days, and I hope
I shall, when He is pleased to call me hence, lay down my
head in peace, and although I have had hard struggles to get
a livelihood, and never in my power to gain wealth, yet hath
my gracious Creator bestowed on me many of His choicest
blessings, as health of body, peace of mind, a good wife,
dutiful children, and a pleasant habitation; in which I have been
employed above forty years in such occupations as have afforded
me much pleasure tho’ small gains. I shall now conclude, in the
words of Scripture: Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, just and true are Thy ways; glory to God on high, on earth peace and
goodwill towards men.

October, 1785. EDMUND HOWARD.