Friends in Danby Dale, Yorkshire.

The following extract is taken from *Forty Years in a Moorland Parish*, 1907, by Canon J. C. Atkinson [1814-1900], pp. 223-225 :—

"It is a well-known circumstance that—to use the formal term employed in the old county records—the 'people called Friends' were once both numerous and influential in these dales, and nowhere more so than in Danby. I should be more than justified if I extended the remark to a very much wider North Riding area than this parish only, as a list of North Riding places licensed for the Quakers' worship about the time of the Toleration Act, which I compiled for publication in the North Riding Records volume for the year 1889, abundantly demonstrates. Indeed, they were so numerous here that no less than three of their burial-places exist on the west side of Danby-dale only.

"There were still five or six Quaker families in the Dale when I first came to it [1847]. Of course I knew them all, and had a great respect for more than one of them, as well as simple regard. Indeed, one of them—he died, turned of eighty years old, many years ago—was a man much looked up to beyond the limits of the Dale ; and was often called upon to act as arbiter and peacemaker in cases which might otherwise have led on to litigation. He was a man of shrewd, sound sense and judgment ; and it was with the feeling of having lost a personal friend and a helper in all efforts for the good of the parish and the district, that I heard of the death of old William Hartas.[1]

"The days of his lifetime were the days in which Church rates were collected. Dear old William and his co-religionists never paid a penny of the 'cess' they were liable for. But somehow or other, when the churchwardens went their collecting rounds, a sheaf or two of corn, of an approximate value to the sum set down against their names, stood handy to the said churchwarden's hands, and no inquiry was ever made as to the person who had 'conveyed' the Quaker's corn.

"There is a story told of old William which I have every reason to believe is a true one. It is, I suppose, well known that there is no grave-service in use among the Friends. The ceremony of depositing the body in the grave is a silent one, unless some one or more among the attendants on the funeral feels called on to address the bystanders. My friend William was often in the habit of speaking on more or less public occasions, both in the parish and out of it ; and when he attended a funeral of a Friend it was by no means unusual for him to 'speak a few words.'

"On one such occasion no one spoke after the coffin was lowered to its resting-place, but there seemed to be a sort of expectation that William would 'say a few words' before the party separated. And so he did. After looking long and fixedly into the grave in still silence, he gave utterance at length to the following speech : 'Our fri'nd seems

[1] William Hartas died at Castleton in 1864, aged eighty, see *Unhistoric Acts*, by George Baker.

vara comfortable. Thou mun hap him oop,'—these last words being addressed to the sexton.[2]

"Many a time have I seen this worthy old man, and others of the sect, in attendance at the funeral of some old and respected parishioner. Sometimes I have seen them, as I went out in advance of the coffin into the graveyard, the first part of the burial service over, sitting in the church porch. But not once or twice only I have seen them come inside the church and sit the service through—hatted, as a matter of course; and I had more reasons than one for not being intolerant enough to insist on the removal of themselves, if so be their hats were unremovable. I was glad to see them among the throng of other parishioners who came to pay their last tribute of regard to the person who had long lived among them, a neighbour among neighbours and a friend among friends. And I was not going to take any step which might have the tendency to lessen good feeling, either general or particular."

Of the above-mentioned William Hartas we also read on p. 112:—

"On occasion of the first show of live stock held under the auspices of the Danby Agricultural Association, two among the elders of the people, each much respected both in the parish and out of it, were among the after-dinner speakers. Both delivered themselves sensibly and well, and both with more than a mere touch of native humour. One of them, by name William Hartas, was an old Quaker, whose judgment, experience and probity were equally well known, and caused him frequently to be appealed to as arbiter in cases of dispute or valuation. Among other things pithily and tersely—albeit a little quaintly—said, he addressed some remarks to the subject of, as he conceived, the apparent declension of habits of thriftiness and careful, not to say rigid, economy. He said, and I wish I could give it in his own inimitable Yorkshire, 'I aim [think, assume, believe] folks are not so saving and careful as they used to be. You must look to it. Farmers' daughters are not content with good calico, but want something smarter for their dresses; and dressing and dairying won't go together, no ways you can frame it. And the young chaps, why, they're almost as bad as the lasses; they want cloth trousers and smart waistcoats. Why, when I was a lad there was a vast still sitting in their fathers' leather breeches, and more than one I kenned had breeks their grandfathers had had for their best, and there was a vast o' good wear in 'em yet. Mak' things last what they will, is my advice to this meeting; and old-fashioned homespun and good leather breeks is baith very lasty.'"

[2] "I should like to record one other characteristic saying of this good old man's, communicated by Sir Joseph Pease, which I had likewise heard from another member of the same family, but in the graphic dialect of the country: 'If,' said the old man, 'if my horse falls with me *once*, I forgive him; it may have been more my fault than his. If it happens a *second* time, I part with him; as, if any accident occurred through his doing it a *third* time, I should blame myself.'"