

Meetinghouses at Norwich

There are two books on the home of the Gurney family of Earlham, near Norwich, one the well-known "Gurneys of Earlham," by Augustus J. C. Hare, published in 1895, and the other much more recent (1922) a delightful prose poem on a later period in the history of the same home. It is strange that the writers of both these volumes have fallen into confusion between the two Friends' Meetinghouses at Norwich.

Augustus Hare, in vol. i., p. 47, says :

"These Meetings took place in Norwich at the quaint Dutch-looking Meeting-house, with high roofs, and a many-windowed front, approached by Goat's Lane."

The above is a description of the Meetinghouse known as the Gildencroft, built 1699, and, as a description, is correct, except that it is not approached by Goat's Lane, which is in a different part of the city. Further, it was not the Gildencroft Meeting that was attended by the Gurney family, and one can only suppose that the author had never visited either of the two meetinghouses in Norwich. The illustration on p. 48 is of the Gildencroft, but underneath are the words, "The Meeting House in Goat's Lane, Norwich."

The author of the book entitled "Earlham" (Jonathan Cape, 1922), Percy Lubbock, falls into another error. He says (p. 236) :

"If they [the Gurneys] died at Earlham, they were buried at 'Goat's'—a hard price—I should call it, to pay for the privilege of enrolment as a Friend. How could one submit to burial at Goat's with all the poetry of Earlham Church so near at hand."

"Burial at Goat's"—you might as well talk of burial at Devonshire House! It may safely be said that no Friend was ever buried within the precincts of Goat's Lane Meetinghouse, which is in a crowded part of the city. The original house dated from 1679, but was rebuilt about 1826, and the Gurney family worshipped there, but all interments took place in the Friends' burial ground at the Gildencroft, and there one may see the stones that mark the graves of Joseph John Gurney and others of the family.

It is to be hoped that if Mr. Lubbock's book reaches a second edition this curious confusion will be corrected.

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NOTE.—The Earlham estate has recently been purchased by the Corporation of Norwich.