

tion, until, within a few years before the birth of Elias, his father was received into the Society of Friends. He seems to have been quite the ordinary boy in his tastes and tendencies—fond of horses and horse-racing, somewhat given even to the frivolous pursuit of dancing, and also of “singing vain songs;” quite fond of hunting and fishing. When, later, he came to realize the injustice of depriving defenceless creatures of life, he was apt to ascribe to the quiet and solitary hours spent in these sports, the habit of introspection which led to the revelation of truth in his mind.

He began to learn the trade of a carpenter in his seventeenth year, though a few years later this was relinquished for the occupation of farming. Soon after his apprenticeship began, while attending a dance, he became suddenly aware that the time had come for him to make a definite choice between a life of pleasure and one of service. He sat down and declared his intention of never dancing again. The Lord, he tells us in his Journal, had often opened the door of reconciliation to his soul before this, and now he seemed to have realized that if he did not accept the light that was offered, it would become permanently obscured. His companions reasoned with him, declaring that dancing was an innocent amusement, but he remained firm, for, “what,” he asks, “are all these carnal reasonings worth when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary against one single conviction of the divine light in the secret of the heart?”

Elias Hicks has left very little record of his life beyond a Journal which is now out of print. It is written in quaint stilted style, and though glowing with light, that light is forced to shine as best it may through the somewhat blurring influence of dogmatic devotion to his own conception of truth, and his too conscientious adherence to modes of expression handed down from less liberal religious societies.

Listening to the “heavenly call,” which he tells us he always found ready to speak when he would “quiet his mind,”* he learned to depend more and more upon it, and he expressed great disapprobation of any one who would be so mechanical and conceited as to commit to paper what he wished to say, instead of allowing the Lord to show him the truth, and to speak it freely through him.

He began giving “testimony” when a very young man, and it is said there was a wonderful force in his presence and words. In 1779 he began to travel to neighbouring meetings, and his testimony and exhortation were everywhere favourably received. His journeys grew longer, sometimes lasting several months, and

* “The golden vase which hides the secret sun is periodically drawn away for him who watches.”—*Old Tibetan Verse*.