

His interest in personal religion was awakened by hearing an address delivered in the street by John Hersey, a consecrated Methodist. When Joseph John Gurney paid a religious visit to this country in 1838-39, he was the guest of his father, Joseph King, and soon became greatly interested in Francis, and asked the young man to be his companion in a visit to the Meetings in Virginia. The intercourse between the gifted and spiritual Englishman and his young friend was the turning point in the life of Francis T. King. He then realized his pardon and acceptance with God the Father, through Jesus Christ the Son, and accepted intelligently and heartily the views of the Society of Friends in regard to worship, the priesthood of all believers, the so-called Ordinances, peace and other points, and especially the doctrine of the individual guidance of the Holy Spirit. He found in his own Meeting true Gospel fellowship and ministry, and rapidly advanced in Christian character and usefulness. He felt called of God, but, after mature deliberation, not to the public ministry of the Word, but to a life dedicated to the service of Christ in other lines of work.

His capacity for mercantile business was great, but in the midst of a successful career, like Matthew at the receipt of custom, he heard the command, "Follow me," and he arose and followed Him. Having become possessed of the specific sum that he had covenanted with the Lord to be satisfied with, the income of which was sufficient for the comfortable support of his family, he withdrew from active business, and although always interested in financial concerns, he afterwards engaged in no business which he believed could interfere with his devotion to the main purpose of his life, the affairs of the Church, and the welfare of men. To a Friend the guidance of the Holy Spirit is no intangible doctrine, held in common with other doctrines, but a daily experience. Upon this golden thread hung all his after work. Recognizing himself as a simple instrument in the Lord's hand, he was humble and teachable, and desirous of daily guidance in what he did and in what he declined to undertake. He was a man of prayer, and daily laid before the Lord his concern for the Church and the objects which claimed his attention.

His deepening Christian life was soon acknowledged by the Church, and when quite young he was made an Overseer and an Elder of Baltimore Monthly Meeting. He was Clerk for years of this Meeting, and of Baltimore Quarterly Meeting, and afterwards served the Yearly Meeting as Clerk from 1856 to 1885. All these offices he filled ably and faithfully, readily yielding them to others, in order to bring them into the work of the Church at the right time. At the beginning of Francis T. King's service, the Society of Friends in Baltimore was still feeling the separation which occurred in 1828, but with a few young men of like purpose, a nucleus of Christian effort was soon formed. Besides their activity within the Society, they had a First day School for colored people, then under the laws of slavery.

Francis T. King soon became a representative citizen in Baltimore, as well as a representative Friend. Believing himself called to work for men, as well as for Friends, he accepted positions of trust, which enabled him to extend his usefulness. In this way he was instrumental in planning and carrying out the present system of water supply in Baltimore, as one of the City Water Commissioners; and at the time of the Civil War was able by his wise counsel to influence the city authorities to maintain their position of loyalty to the United States. His life was one of unceasing activity, both within the Church and in important philanthropic enterprises of various kinds. He was the originator and President of the Central Savings Bank, the executor of several large estates, President of the Maryland State Bible Society, President of the Thomas Wilson Sanitarium for Children, President of the Board of Trustees of the Johns

Hopkins Hospital, one of the Trustees of the Johns Hopkins University, a Trustee of the Young Men's Christian Association Building, and of many other institutions. He was consulted by many persons on public and private affairs, and was ready, both with advice and money, to assist individuals and enterprises which appealed to his judgment. But his greatest concern was always for the Society of Friends, and he maintained his position as a Friend faithfully.

The condition of Friends during the war was the subject of a Conference of the Yearly Meetings in the United States, which was held in Baltimore in 1863, in which Francis T. King took a leading part. On account of the proximity of Baltimore to Washington, frequent visits were made to the Capital in behalf of Friends who had been drafted, and the law relating to Friends was the result of interviews with President Lincoln and Secretary Stanton. These visits were often occasions of the deepest interest, and sometimes of religious exercise. The Government manifested great willingness to meet the views of Friends as far as it was possible. At the conclusion of the war, the condition of the Freedmen at the South was the occasion of a second Conference, also held in Baltimore, in 1866. Francis T. King and others were deeply interested in this work, both in Baltimore and elsewhere. The work in Baltimore took shape in the formation of a Normal School for colored people, which afterwards occupied the Friends' Meeting House premises at the corner of Saratoga and Courtland streets, vacated by Friends.

When in 1869 President Grant devolved the duty of the selection of Indian agents upon Friends, a third general Conference of delegates from all the Yearly Meetings was held in Baltimore. An Executive Committee of Friends having charge of this extensive concern was appointed. Francis T. King took an important part as one of the Committee of Baltimore Yearly Meeting, frequently visiting Washington in its behalf, and sharing the deliberations and responsibilities of the Associated Committee in the succeeding years of its more active work.

The interest taken by Francis T. King in Friends of North Carolina dates back to about 1860. One of the numerous objects that called for sympathy and aid was presented in a circular issued by the North Carolina Representative Meeting, stating that the New Garden Boarding School was in great financial difficulty, and would have to be closed unless it should receive additional support. Francis T. King was appointed to examine into its affairs, and by his financial skill and practical ability, showed how the school could be set on a sound basis. How well the trustees profited by his suggestions, is shown by the fact that they successfully conducted the school through the Civil War on a gold basis, and it alone, of all the Southern institutions of learning, so far as is known, came through that dreadful period without financial disaster. This striking instance of the ability of North Carolina Friends, together with their heroism in maintaining their testimony against war, made a deep impression on Francis T. King, and convinced him that with proper encouragement and aid, a strong Yearly Meeting might again be built up. Emigration to the West had begun as soon as the way was open through the lines of the hostile armies. Hundreds of Friends reached Baltimore in a destitute condition, and it was to provide for them that the "Baltimore Association of Friends, to advise and assist Friends of the Southern States," was organized in 1865, under the leadership of Francis T. King. At first its efforts were turned to relieving physical distress, and to stop the unwise emigration; then to establish schools, to introduce improved methods of agriculture, to encourage First-day schools and meetings, and finally, to aid in raising New Garden Boarding School to the collegiate standard which it afterwards reached as Guilford College. This work, covering a period of more than twenty years, was pre-eminently due to Francis T. King, under the blessing