

Our Bibliographers.

I.—JOHN WHITING, 1656-1722.

For a record of its literature the Society of Friends is indebted mainly to three bibliographers, John Whiting, Morris Birkbeck, and Joseph Smith. Morris Birkbeck built upon the foundation laid by John Whiting, and Joseph Smith, profiting by the labours of both, produced with extraordinary pains and perseverance the famous *Catalogue* which has thrown the work of his predecessors into the background.

The Editors of THE JOURNAL propose to issue articles upon each of these bibliographers and their work, in due succession.

For information respecting the life of John Whiting we turn chiefly to *Persecution Expos'd in some Memoirs relating to the Sufferings of John Whiting, And many others of the People called Quakers, For Conscience sake, in the West of England, etc.*, 1715.

He was born, in 1656, at Nailsea, a village some seven miles from Bristol as one follows the Great Western Railway towards Bridgwater and Exeter, and four miles from Wrington, the birthplace of John Locke and the home of Hannah More.

His father, John Whiting, and his grandfather were "reputable Yeomen," and "of good Report in the Country," who succeeded to a "Competent Estate" on which their "Ancestors had lived for many Generations." His mother was Mary, daughter of John Evans, "a Man of good Repute also in the same Parish" of Nailsea. The parents "were both Convinced of the blessed Truth" as preached by John Audland and John Camm in their campaign in Somersetshire, and were amongst the first to open their house for religious meetings in 1654. So, in a homestead, under the shadow of the Mendip Hills, the tops of which overlook the estuary of the Severn, John Whiting was born, in the stirring days of Oliver's Protectorate, and was doubtless literally cradled and rocked to sleep in conventicles, the like of which, a few

years later, cost the pious men and women that frequented them fines and imprisonment. From his earliest years the names of "the first Publishers of Truth," to quote his own words, were familiar to him, even if he could not recall their individuality. His father died in 1658, "an honest, upright Man," who "left a good Savour behind him." His mother continued the meetings in the house, until with some 200 others, she was committed to Ivelchester (Ilchester), leaving her four year old son, during the winter, to the care of his grandfather. On regaining her liberty in the Spring she returned, and subsequently married a Nailsea Friend named Moses Bryant. In 1666, at the age of ten years, John was left to the care of his stepfather, by the death of "a Tender Mother and an Honest, Charitable Woman, much beloved and lamented." Though heir to his father's estate, he was content to let his step-father, whom, by the way, he calls his father-in-law, continue to live upon it and bring up his step-brothers.

The religious fervour by which John Whiting was surrounded made an early impression upon him, but not without withdrawing him from the sports and pastimes which, in our time at least, appear a necessary part of a boy's education.

At the age of twelve years, after play with other boys, when he came home at night he underwent much self condemnation for his vanity, and made "a Covenant with the Lord" to give up his vain pastimes, and, as he grew in years, the witness of God within prevailed more and more. Thus early he learnt to practise that self-control and watchfulness that made heroes of many of the pioneers of Quakerism. What he learned of book lore at school we cannot now ascertain, but not being with a Friend, he was taught to take off his hat to men, which he soon felt to be wrong. He was consequently sent to another, who allowed him more liberty and under whom, he says, he "profited most every way." The "plain language" seems to have cost him still more, but he took up his cross in this respect also and "had Peace therein."

Whatever he learned or did not learn he acquired the habit of setting out his facts in an orderly manner

and expressing himself in a clear, simple, and correct style.¹ A kindly, charitable man, too, he became, who, though enduring much persecution, was able to say that he never rejoiced in the fall of his persecutors, or desired that the evil day should come upon them.

After the decease of his stepfather, in 1672, he lived with an eminent Friend, at Portishead, and whilst there, came under the influence of George Coale,² and Charles Marshall,³ who were as "Fathers in the Truth" to him. In 1675 he returned to his ancestral home, living for a time with his sister, Mary, who had already commenced her ministry. When he was twenty years of age, both were engaged in preaching jorneys, during which she finished her course in the county of Durham, he being with her a short time before her death. Amongst his contributions to Quaker literature was the memoir of his sister, entitled *Early Piety exemplified in the Life and Death of Mary Whiting*.

Returning to Nailsea in the twentieth year of his age, he commenced farming his estate. This in the following year brought him into conflict with the Parish Priest, owing to his conscientious objections to pay tithe. In his *Memoirs* he quotes the Latin indictment or "Libel" in extenso, and proceeds to give side by side with a translation of it, a series of pithy comments that afford some amusing reading. After two years, during which he engaged in further itinerant preaching, and also discharged the duties of parish overseer, he was arrested in his home, which he never again inhabited, and was, with thirty-two other Friends, imprisoned in Ivelchester gaol, as his mother had been before him. Here, taking fever, his life was for a time in danger, and he suffered much hardship.

In 1680 he was removed to the Friery, a great house in another part of the town, where were many Friends. This was an agreeable change, for, he says, "a very fine comfortable time we had together." They were allowed

¹ This power of orderly arrangement is evident in many of J.W.'s works and in his carefully prepared indexes. See *F.P.T.* 200n, 202, etc.

² George Coale was a brother of Josiah Coale, of Gloucestershire, (for whom, see *F.P.T.* 218n).

³ Charles Marshall was also a West Country Friend until late in life when he removed to London.

to hold their meetings in the great hall, and "brave meetings" they were, attended often by "publick Friends" [travelling Ministers] who happened to pass that way. Though a prisoner, John Whiting "had the Liberty of the Town," with time for reading and meditation. Like many another imprisoned for conscience sake, he, too, had his times of uplifting, and records how, once, as he walked in the fields, the "divine Presence so over-shadowed" him, that he was able to say, "I was as if I had been almost taken out of my self." The four acres of walled orchard attached to the Friery, too, afforded him many a "comfortable Season of Retirement." Even at this distance of time it is pleasant to think of such alleviations of the miseries of the seventeenth century prison life, as were, at times, accorded at Ivelchester. From the Friery-Gate the prisoners, with their hats on, watched the Duke of Monmouth pass through the town, attended by thousands on horseback. The Duke stopped, and took off his hat to the hatted Friends, and seems to have impressed them with his affability.

From Ivelchester, John Whiting wrote a long, argumentative letter on the subject of tithes to the "Priest of Wraxall and Naylsey," and others "of his Fraternity." It was delivered to the priest's son for the hands of his father at Naylsey "Steeple-House," where it was read by "an eminent man of the Parish, who was soon after Convinced of the Truth." The priest did not take up the challenge, but called the writer a rogue, and as an excuse for not replying said that his letter was not worth answering.

The confidence often placed by their gaolers in Quaker prisoners is evidenced by the liberty John Whiting had to spend a night out at a Friend's house, and also to attend "the burial of an honest young man at Street," which is several miles distant from Ilchester; apparently, too, he and some others usually lodged in the town. Under a new gaoler, Giles Bale, however, came a new *régime* and he had once more a taste of life in the common gaol, which was a great trial after his experience of the "pleasant prison," to which happily he was soon allowed to return, through the kind intercession of a relation of the gaoler. He now occupied himself with his account of

his pious sister, Mary, and then commenced his own *Memoirs*. His house becoming vacant, he gave it up, with all that it contained, for the use of Friends, in case threatened spoliation should fall upon them.

Later on, we find John Whiting straying further afield, "having a little liberty (at least by connivance)," whatever that may mean. He ventured as far as his house at Nailsea, to see how things were going on, and then, after attending an open air meeting at Portishead, he rode on to Bristol, notwithstanding the warning of his former guardian, who was apprehensive for his safety. At Bristol, whom should he see but his gaoler standing in a shop door! Both were equally surprised, but the gaoler spoke pleasantly, asked him whither he was going, how long he intended to stay, and when he would return. Being satisfied with his answer, he bid him "make haste Home," and turned away. As already indicated, however, he was not always so civil to his prisoners. In the latter end of G. Bale's time, John Whiting had liberty to take a room at a Friend's house, to which a "fine garden" was attached, but soon after, a new keeper put him once more in close confinement, as also his friend, Sarah Hurd, daughter of Thomas Hurd, of Somerton, a fellow prisoner, whose affections he had gained earlier on in his imprisonment. She was dangerously ill at the time, but she was thrust into an insanitary place at the other end of the town, the gaoler swearing that they should never see one another again in his time. Happily he did not carry out his threat, but relaxed when his wrath was over.

In 1684 John Whiting was again allowed some liberty, and rode with Sarah Hurd and her brother and sister to Bristol, apparently to buy goods at the fair—to his house at Nailsea, and back again to Ilchester. Whilst away later on in the same year, he was summoned to Taunton Assizes and took the journey on foot, as he had then no horse at command. Fourteen Friends were discharged, but he was sent back to gaol.

As time went on, and it appeared likely that a further discharge of prisoners was at hand, still more liberty was accorded, and he was about a good deal during the exciting days of Monmouth's rebellion. He was exposed, at times, to no little danger, so much so, that he deemed

Ilchester the safest place, as things were, and voluntarily went back to prison, where, however, he was put in irons with some of Monmouth's men, and kept in irons for more than five weeks. About this time, in doggerel verse, which ill compares with his picturesque prose, he wrote *Some Prison Meditations*, which it is not necessary to secure from oblivion. His *Memoirs* give vivid accounts of the stirring times and terrible scenes enacted under Judge Jeffreys, as well as biographical sketches of Friends of note in different parts of the country. Several pages have to be passed over at a time in the search for the autobiographical touches required to put together a connected account of his own life.

On the proclamation of a General Pardon by James II. John Whiting and his fellow prisoners presented a statement of their case to the Justices holding Assizes at Wells, and received their discharge, the term of John Whiting's imprisonment having been extended to six years and nine months.

Soon after his release in 1686, John Whiting married Sarah Hurd, and they lived at Long Sutton, where, he says, "she kept on her Trade some time." In 1687, going with his wife to Bristol Fair again, they fell in with William Penn, who, with others, held many mighty meetings there. The following year they moved from Long Sutton to Wrington, when "considerable trade" fell into John Whiting's hands, though he does not tell us what sort of trade he was engaged in beyond mentioning that he had a shop.

In 1691 he and his wife attended the Yearly Meeting in London, "and a brave time we had together," he quaintly remarks. It was his first visit to the metropolis since he was there with his sister in 1675.

In 1694-5 John Whiting was brought again into close contact with William Penn, who, in the course of a visit to Somersetshire, lodged at his house at Wrington, on more than one occasion. They held a great meeting at Wells, William Penn addressing some 2,000 or 3,000 persons in the Market Place, from the balcony of an inn. Officers were sent to break up the meeting, and eventually William Penn was haled before the Mayor. John Whiting, on this occasion, appears to have got the best of the Mayor

and his colleagues, and William Penn was dismissed. Eventually a house was hired for a meeting at Wells, the Bishop being on very friendly terms with John Whiting, and many came to it, in spite of the opposition that had been previously raised.

John Whiting's *Memoirs* close with Wells where, he says, he began and ended with a prosecution, and with a Bishop too, in each case. He decided to conclude his recital for the present, "and drop Anchor at Wrington, in Somersetshire, 1696."

There appears very scant material wherewith to bridge over the period from 1696 until John Whiting's death in 1722. It is uncertain in what year he came to London to reside.⁴ In 1700 he was present at the Morning Meeting when one of his manuscripts was read, and during the same year was nominated by the Meeting for Sufferings with others to peruse George Bishop's book of sufferings of Friends in New England, for a reprint, which actually appeared in two Parts, in 1703, as *New England Judged by the Spirit of the Lord*, and with addenda by John Whiting himself.⁵

In 1706 he was active in looking after Friends in the Fleet prison.

The Yearly Meeting of 1707 appointed him, with others, to get an account and catalogue of ancient Friends' books then in the possession of Thomas Raylton, the bookseller, and to inspect and treat for them, reporting to the Meeting for Sufferings, which had power to purchase and distribute the books if thought fit. The precise connection between this appointment and his subsequent work is not at present ascertainable, but in the following year he brought in to the Morning Meeting a catalogue, and that Meeting proposed that the Meeting for Sufferings should print 500 copies, "or what number they judged it convenient to order." The proposal was adopted, and report made to the Yearly Meeting of 1708. The printing and distribution was to be carried out by Raylton⁶

⁴ I find by reference to the minutes of North Division of Somerset M.M. recently deposited in D., that John Whiting removed to London in 1699.

⁵ The two parts had been first separately published in 1661 and 1667 respectively.

⁶ The name of J. Sowle, presumably Jane Sowle, his mother-in-law, appears as that of the printer.

who was instructed to send two copies to each Monthly Meeting in England and Wales, bound in sheep's leather, the remainder of the editions being delivered in sheets to the Recording Clerk, Benjamin Bealing. The Yearly Meeting of 1709 instructed the Meeting for Sufferings to send it "to all other nations and provinces as they see meet." Copies in calves' leather were accordingly sent to New York, Long Island, East Jersey, Pennsylvania, West Jersey, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Frederickstat and elsewhere. The full title was *A Catalogue of Friends' Books; Written by many of the People, Called Quakers, From the Beginning or First Appearance of the said People, Collected for a General Service,*⁷ By J. W. On the title page he added the significant passage, "Go, write it before them in a Table, and note it in a Book, that it may be for the time to Come." *Isa.* xxx. 8.

The *Catalogue* occupies, with Supplement, 238 pages, and the books are catalogued with abbreviated titles under the author's names, alphabetically, with date of issue, size, whether broadside, folio, octavo, etc., and number of sheets. Interspersed are a few biographical notes, such as place of birth or residence, date and place of death. This arrangement has, in the main, been followed by Joseph Smith, but with considerable amplification. In the entry respecting his own works John Whiting describes himself as "of Naylsey, after of Wrington in Somersetshire, now of London." He mentions eight books or pamphlets of his own writing—Joseph Smith gives twenty-one items under his name.⁸

At the conclusion of the English catalogue is a list of books in High and Low Dutch, covering twelve pages. This is followed by a list of upwards of one hundred "books wanting" to be purchased by Thomas Raylton towards "Compleating of this Collection." The inference is that

⁷ How far the words, "Collected for a General Service," imply the entire approval of the Society of the books mentioned in the *Catalogue* is not known. This approval is assumed by the writer of an adverse pamphlet, issued during the Gibson controversy. See *Saul's Errand to Damascus*, etc., 1728, p. 33.

⁸ Among these is *A Memorial concerning Sarah Scott*, who was his niece; and *Testimonies* concerning Charles Marshall, Elizabeth Stirredge, John Banks, and John Gratton.

the "Collection" is that which we now call the Reference Library (D.), on which London Meeting for Sufferings had already bestowed much care. The Supplement contains a list of "some Books omitted and some added."

Amongst the copies of the *Catalogue* in D. is one that belonged to Francis Bugg, containing notes and memoranda in his own handwriting. He gave it to his grandson, John Phillips, of St. John's College, Cambridge, in 1723, and it was presented to Morris Birkbeck by Thomas Bland, of Norwich, in 1794. Another copy that belonged to Morris Birkbeck will be noticed in the article upon him and his work.

Oldys, speaking of catalogue making, writes as follows: "Honest John Whiting has surely in this work quite borne away the garland, and left it a choice legacy to painful librarians, and as a looking-glass even to learned academies."

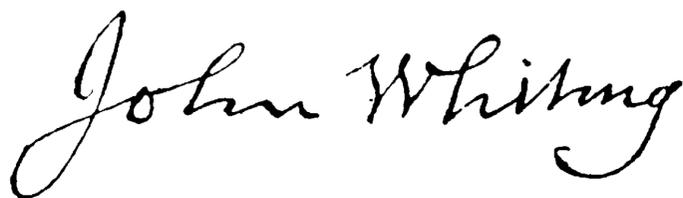
In later times similar praise from a high authority was accorded Joseph Smith's work.

John Whiting died in the parish of St. Andrew's, Holborn, of a fever and inward wasting, 12th of Ninth Month, 1722, aged sixty-seven years. On the 16th the body was taken to the Bull and Mouth Meeting House, and from thence to Long Acre Burial Ground. In the Minute Book of the Meeting for Sufferings under the latter date, occurs the following entry: "No Meeting for Sufferings on account of the burial of our much-valued and truly serviceable ancient friend, John Whiting."

Long Acre Burial Ground was held on lease from 1675 to 1757, when on the expiry of the second lease, the land passed into other hands, and in 1869 William Beck described it as covered with "a dense mass of buildings," so that the dwellers in the neighbourhood were ignorant of its existence. The *Weekly Times and Echo* of 5th of Sixth Month, 1892, contained an account of "an extraordinary discovery of human remains," owing to some excavations made for construction of new premises in Long Acre; various conjectures were made respecting the deposition of these bones, but no evidence respecting them was forthcoming, whilst the date of the erection of the buildings on the spot showed that no interment could have taken place for nearly 150 years.

The mystery was soon solved. Joseph Smith came into the Friends' Central Offices, 12, Bishopsgate Without, with a copy of the newspaper, and with some excitement exclaimed, "That is our old burial ground at Long Acre—John Whiting was buried there." The Surveyor for the district was communicated with, and very kindly gave his assistance and sanction for the removal of the bones. By subsequent order of the Six Weeks Meeting (the finance committee of London and Middlesex Quarterly Meeting) some 510 skulls and portions of other bones were removed and re-interred in the Friends' Burial Ground, Isleworth, and over them was placed a stone, with a suitable inscription, giving the history of the re-interment.⁹

ISAAC SHARP.



FACSIMILE OF SIGNATURE.

A New Book on George Fox.

Selected events on the life of George Fox are presented with much freshness by Ernest E. Taylor in his *Cameos from the Life of George Fox* (Headley, small 8vo, pp. 119). The book is a reprint of the articles which appeared last year in *The Friend* (Lond.), with considerable additions. The illustrations represent George Fox, Oliver Cromwell, James Nayler, Preston Patrick Meeting-house, Scarborough Castle, Swarthmore Hall, and a page of the MSS. Journal of George Fox. The index was prepared in D.

⁹ See *The Friend* (Lond.), vol. 32 (1892), p. 590.