

Friends in Barbadoes.

Some particulars of the history of Friends in the island of Barbadoes appeared in *The Friends' Quarterly Examiner*, Tenth Month, 1892. At that time nothing definite was known as to the ultimate fate of the Society's property in that island, and the traditional account was generally accepted as authentic. This was to the effect that the number of members was at last reduced to two, and then the one, having possession of the Minute Book, disowned the other and took the property. Since then, mainly through the exertions of George Vaux, a fairly complete account of the ultimate disposal of the Meeting Houses and graveyards in this island has been collected from the records of the Meeting for Sufferings.

It will be remembered that in the early days of Quakerism Friends in Barbadoes were a numerous and wealthy body. This is proved by the fact that the "sufferings" in the seven years from 1658 to 1695 amounted to no less a sum than £11,805, that in the year 1689 £100 was sent over for the relief of Friends in Ireland, and in 1738 £50 was subscribed towards the cost of building Arch Street Meeting House, Philadelphia.

There were five Meeting Houses in the island:—

Bridgetown Meeting House in Tudor Street, with about half an acre of land ;

Plantation Meeting House, Heathcoat Bay, near Speightstown, in St. Peter's parish, with $14\frac{3}{4}$ acres ;

Thickets Meeting House, in St. Philip's parish, with 5 acres ;

Pumpkin Hill or Champaign Ground Meeting House, in St. Lucy's parish, with 4 or 5 acres ;

Spring Meeting House, in St. Thomas' parish, with 25 acres ;

Also graveyards at Pilgrim's, near Bridgetown, Hackleton's Cliff, near St. Philip's Church, and one on Francis Ford's plantation.

In the great hurricane of 1780, the Meeting Houses at Bridgetown, Speightstown, Spring, and Thickets were all destroyed. It seems doubtful whether any attempt

was made to rebuild any of them, though the funds belonging to Barbadoes Meeting were said to amount to £2,597 (whether sterling or currency is not stated).

Two Friends from Philadelphia, John Parrish and James Cresson, who visited the island in 1785, with considerable difficulty induced the surviving trustees, John Luke, Merchant, and Joseph Collyngs, Doctor of Medicine, to convey the property to new trustees. These were themselves; with Rowland Gibson, Planter, John Gibson, Doctor of Medicine, Joshua Luke, son of John Luke, and Joshua Gamble Jackman, all of Barbadoes; David Barclay, John Townsend, John Eliot, and Sylvanus Bevan, of London; John Pemberton, John Drinker, and James Smith, of Philadelphia; James Parrish and Henry Drinker, then of Barbadoes, but later of Philadelphia, and George Bourne and Joseph Brighthurst, of the latter place. The deed provided that the trustees should hold the property "for the use of the people called Quakers, and that the Meeting Houses and graveyards being totally destroyed, the persons resident in England and America were added that they by their joint endeavours might restore things to the ancient footing."

On 2 mo. 20, 1787, Daniel Offley wrote to the Meeting for Sufferings :—

Friends are likely to be considerable losers in Barbadoes, owing to several sums of money having been lost through want of care. Out of £2,597 only £500 is accounted for as received by John Luke. His son is expending this sum in rebuilding the meeting house & walling in the graveyard at Bridgetown. He is also commencing suits against persons claiming the property of the Society.

The later correspondence shows that the proposed suits never reached the law-courts, and it is more than probable that the contemplated rebuilding of the Meeting House did not advance beyond the stage of pious intention.

On 11 mo. 24, 1789, John Parrish and James Cresson wrote the Meeting for Sufferings that the Meeting Houses at Speightstown and Pumpkin Hill were in the hands of descendants of the caretakers, who were holding them with a view to acquire a possessory title.

On 11 mo. 16, 1792, the Barbadoes committee of the Meeting for Sufferings reported the receipt of another

letter from John Parrish, and also one from Benjamin Collyngs, of Barbadoes. They recommended that a power of attorney be given to Benjamin Collyngs.

On 3 mo. 18, 1796, it was resolved that a power of attorney should be given by the London trustees to William Holden (who was then about to proceed to Barbadoes), jointly with Benjamin Collyngs, with the object of making an effort to recover possession of these Meeting Houses. On 8 mo. 28, of the same year, William Holden wrote to the Philadelphia trustees that he had got possession of the deeds and had taken the opinion of eminent counsel, who intimated that "the result of legal proceedings would depend much upon unascertained facts."

On 2 mo. 17, William Holden's charges, amounting to £35 1s. 3d., were directed to be paid, and as the legal opinion was so dubious he was authorised to make a compromise with Thomas Gibson. On 3 mo. 3, £20 further was directed to be paid to William Holden. On 2 mo. 7, 1800, a letter was received from William Holden, who reported that he had had an interview with two ladies named Gibson, who held Spring Meeting House; one of them claimed to be "an indigent Quaker requiring relief," and considered her title to be as good as that of the trustees. Thomas Gibson was in possession of the burying ground at Bridgetown, but pretended to keep it in trust for such Quakers as might come to the island. W. Holden further reported that "the determined opposition of the persons in possession, the great uncertainty of success, and the certainty of heavy expenses deterred him from making any further attempts by resort to law."

The Meeting for Sufferings finally dismissed the subject from its books with the following minute:—

Wilson Birkbeck produced a letter from Wil^m. Holden, whereby it appears that there is no probability of recovering any part of the property in Barbadoes. The Clerk is directed to lay up the letter with the papers respecting West India property.

George Vaux has collected the following particulars with respect to the after history of two of the former Meeting Houses:—

The burial ground and Meeting House at Bridgetown were sold by the Gibson family to the Wesleyans. A person recently living in the island recollected when grave-stones were to be seen there. It is now surrounded by a stone wall and iron railing. Sixty years ago the graveyard near Speightstown was still known as the Quakers' Meeting. It contained many gravestones which were large in size, and some had lengthy inscriptions, one as early as 1673. It has since been acquired by the authorities of the parish of St. Peter's, who have removed the wall that separated it from the churchyard, and there is nothing to show which, if any, of the stones mark Quaker graves.

The old graveyard at Hackleton's Cliff, near St. Philip's Church, is still kept in fair condition. It is surrounded by a stone wall with an iron gate. Passing through this, five or six steps lead to a yard, several feet below the level of the ground outside. Around this yard are nine tombs cut out of the rock, the openings to which are closed with stone slabs. One of these has on it the letters, R. W. and another, G.; these, no doubt, denote the burying places of the Weeks and Gibson families. Two of the slabs are partly broken so that the leaden coffins within are visible.

Respecting the present condition of the three country Meeting Houses, those at Thickets, Pumpkin Hill, and Spring, nothing appears to be now known.

C. DICKINSON STURGE.

NOTE.

Further information respecting Friends in Barbadoes may be obtained from the following articles, published in *The Friend* (Phila.):—"Friends in Barbadoes, and Extracts from the Journal of James Cresson," vol. 60 (1887), pp. 178, 187, 195, 203; "The Decline of Friends in Barbadoes," vol. 71 (1898), pp. 265, 275, 284, 292, 299; Addendum to the same, vol. 72 (1898), p. 11; "Decline of Friends in Barbadoes, Supplement," vol. 75 (1902), p. 245; "Barbadoes, Some Additional Facts relative to Friends in that Island," vol. 79 (1906), p. 205. See also *Friends' Quarterly Examiner*, 1892. G. V.