

Richard Cubham, of Bickerstaffe, Neoman.

The following facts relating to this Friend have been taken, principally, from the privately printed *Memorials of the Families of Cropper, Cubham and Wolsey, of Bickerstaffe, and of Winstanley, of Winstanley*, collected by Nicholas Waterhouse, and printed in 1864.¹

“Richard Cubham² was a man of weight and consequence in his neighbourhood, seeking to do that which was just and equal. A very substantial personage he was, though at the close of his life only holding his farm of sixty-one acres under Sir Thomas Stanley³ on a lease of three lives—a man of a very strong will, and very intent on having his own way, though all the Friends, and all the world besides, were opposed to him. Who his ancestors⁴ were we do not know, and as he left no son, his name has disappeared with him.”

Two long accounts of the persecutions which early befell this worthy Friend are to be found in Friends' local records, and Joseph Besse, in his *Sufferings*, gives others. The second of the local records is dated 1658, and refers to an encounter with “Priest Bell,” who was Presbyterian minister at Huyton, Lancashire. An ancient document, also recording this event, is preserved in **D.**⁵; from this we give the following extracts:—

Upon the 3th day of the 12th month: called February:

Theire was att one Peeter Lafords of Hyton a meetinge of frends to waite vpon the lord, they beinge their meet in the feare of the lord to

¹ A copy of this book was presented to **D.**, in 1907, by the late Thomas Cropper Ryley, of Liverpool. For other particulars respecting Richard Cubham, see **THE JOURNAL**, ii. 99; *The Journal of George Fox*, i. 381; ii. 26, 35.

² “The name is spelt Cobham in two or three legal documents, Cubban in the Friends' books, and Cubham in Besse's *Sufferings*.”

³ “Ancestor of the present Earl of Derby.”

⁴ “Dr. Kenrick, of Warrington, thinks it probable that Richard Cobham was descended from the family of Cobhams of Kent.”

⁵ Swarthmore MSS., iv. 42.

waite vpon his name. J, the said Rich : Cubham beinge moved of the lord, and in obedience therevnto, went into the sinogoge of Hyton, and one more of our frindes came after mee, where wee stood in the assembly before Priest Bell verie peacably and quietlie, and nether lifted vp tongue nor hand against anie their present, w^{ch} all their present can wittnesse; and the said Priest Bell ceased and called Jmediatlie for officers to take away those misordered or vnreverent men, vpon which wordes they fourtwith came and violentlie haled vs out their sinogoge and fourthwth to the stockes, where wee sate as evell doers to the sight of all the people. where vpon the weeke ffollowing, for the truth sake, J was constrayned to write a paper to cleare the truth from evell espertions that might arise theirby soe that the people might see the ground of our psecution, w^{ch} paper vpon the 10th day of the said mounth, wee haveinge another Meetinge at the aforesaide place, J went fourth and one Benjamin Boulth followed mee, and wee went into the grave yard about the ferist houre of that day to give the said priest the paper w^{ch} J had written concerning the cleareing of the truth; w^{ch} priest beinge in his house and not cominge fourth, J the said Rich : Cubham did read the said paper amongst the people in the greave yard and the said Benjamin Boulth stood by, the officers coming before we had ended reading of the paper and tooke us both away out of the yard and wee stood in the lane a litle space and imediatly the officers came againe and caried vs to an alehouse & keepe a gaurd vpon vs till after their worship was ended. Then wee were taken fourth and put in amongst the rest of our frends where they were mett together, and soe set a strong gaurd vpon the whole meetinge till the 10 houre of the next day, & then fourthwth violentlie constrained the whole meetinge to goe before the Justices; and Jnformation beinge given in to the Justices that wee the said Rich Cubham & Benjamin Boulth called Priest Bell a murderer & a seducer, w^{ch} wordes were false for they were not soe spoken by vs: but what was read in the paper, w^{ch} is hearevnto anexed w^{ch} words herein plainelie appeareth, being these:—Actinge in his murderouse nature contrary to the apostles doctrin: & contrarie to the law of the nation, w^{ch} words by his prictise plainlie appeareth, w^{ch} wee shall refer to anie resonable vndarstandinge; hee who caused vs to be haled out of the sinogoge & fourthwth to the stockes & soe suffered as evell doers who were Jnocent & harmeles & free from the least offence ether against him, or anie their present, is this a sperit of loue or a sperit of envie, let all honest harted iudge; & wether this sperit doth not take p^t with Cain who slew his brother Abell, for, as saith the scripture, he that hateth his brother is a murderer & yee know that noe murderer hath eternall life abideinge in him.—Joh. 1: 3: 15.

And soe because of the testimony that came against vs the iustices soe far acted as to require surties & bond of vs. And we knowing our selves free from transgression for Conscience sake could not doe it: And soe are heare sent to prison:

And one Peeter Leford is here sent alonge with vs he denyinge surtyes for his good behavior knowing noe reson, haueinge committed noe transgression att all but because he entertayned frends att his house.

With the above document is a copy of Cubham's letter to Bell, which commences :—

“ Priest Bell, who p̄fesseth thy selfe to be a minister of Christ, but by the doctrin of Christ and his apostles J shall p̄ve thee to be noe minister of Christ, but a worshiper of the beast & his Jmage.”

The paper is signed, apparently in autograph,

*By one whom the power formerly calls Quaker &
Rich: Cubham:*

The document is endorsed, in the handwriting of George Fox, “ Abovght 1655.”

We now return to the *Memorials*:—

“ About the year 1660, Richard Cubham and Thomas Chadock, both of Bickersteth, husbandmen, as they were travelling towards London to answer to a suit commenced against them by the Countess of Derby for tithes, were apprehended in Coventry, and were brought before the magistrates of that place, who tendered them the oath, which they refusing were committed to prison, where they remained about eight or nine weeks.⁶ The Countess of Derby, the noble daughter of the Tremouilles, was engaged about this time in several miserable disputes with the Quaker husbandmen of Ormskirk about the payment of tithes. In the one which ended in the death of Oliver Atherton, our ancestor bore a part.⁷ According to the records at Warrington :—

‘in 1661, Richard Cubham and Thomas Chadwick of Bickersteth, husbandmen, and Isaack Ashton, of Skelmersdale, were apprehended at the suit of the Countess of Derby for tythes, because they could not answer upon oath, and carryed to Lancaster gaol, where they remained prisoners two years and eight months, which was until the said Countess dyed, who, not long before her death, said, they should rott in the gaol if they would not pay her. The sum for which Isaack Ashton was imprisoned, on her behalf, was about ten shillings. She declared it was for small tyth, as pigs, goos, hens, ducks, eggs, parsnepps, carrotts, onions, turnips, honey, and wax, and such like things, some of which the said Isaack Ashton never had.’

⁶ “ Friends’ Records, Warrington. ”

⁷ See G. Fox’s *Journal*, ii. 25, 26.

“ Besse adds some more particulars :—

‘ At the same time [*i.e.* after Oliver Atherton’s death], three others of this people were confined in the same prison at the suit of the said Countess, one of whom writ a letter on behalf of himself and his fellow-prisoners, shewing “ that it was not of Wilfulness, Stubbornness or Covetousness that they refused to pay her tithes, but purely in good conscience towards God and Christ ” ; and letting her know, “ that if she should be suffered to keep them there also till death, they could not yeild to pay her,” and therefore desired her to consider their case in a Christian spirit, and not bring their blood on her also. The Countess angrily refused. Her anger made the people more observant of what followed ; the day three weeks after Oliver Atherton’s body was carried through Ormskirk to be buried, the Countess died, and her body was carried that day seven weeks through the same town to her burying place.’

“ Richard Cubham’s name appears very frequently in the early minutes of the meetings for discipline, but the wording is generally very vague, and does not at the present day give us much information. In 1698 he is on the minutes as resisting the advice of the meeting. We have a family tradition, which probably refers to this minute, that on one occasion he held the whole Quarterly Meeting at bay a long afternoon, outraging all propriety ; and when the weight of the meeting rose unmistakeably to put him down, he insisted that it should appear on the books that the course pursued did not meet the approval of Richard Cubham. In the records of the Monthly Meeting there appear several entries of the following kind :— ‘ 19th of 8th Month, 1697, Alexander Chorley, Gilbert Thompson, William Barnes, John Haydock, Robert Haydock, Heskin Fell, John Bispham, John Mollineux, James Laithwaite, and George Shaw, are appointed to speak to Richard Cubham on some advice given by this meeting.’

“ Richard Cubham’s character was one which appeared to the greatest advantage in times of trial and adversity. In the weak piping times of peace, when persecution diminished, when there was little for him to strive against, his failings became apparent. In 1703 he acknowledges to the meeting that he had been guilty of ‘ unwise walking ’ ; that he had not been ‘ as careful of the leadings and washings of the spirit of truth as he should have been,’ and that ‘ he had given occasion, by his foolish doings, to cause the truth to be evil spoken of,’ for which he

desires 'to take the shame to himself.' And he concludes by saying, 'For going from the fear of God, which should have been my preserver, I fell into these weaknesses, and now, for the time to come, if the Lord will have mercy upon me, and pardon these my offences, desiring the prayers of all faithful friends for me, I am resolvedly given up, by the Lords assistance, to stand in his fear in which all our preservation lyeth.' "

The entries of the birth and marriage of Richard Cubham's children are as follows :—

Elizabeth, b. 1656, m. William^s Barnes, of Great Sankey, 1681.

Mary, b. 1659, m. John^s Johnson, of Ormskirk, 1683.

Hannah, b. 1662, m. Henry Ashton, of Ormskirk, 1685.

Martha, b. 1665, m. Peter Davies, of Rainford, 1688.

Sarah, b. 1668.

"Of his wife, whose name was Ann, we have no records; she died before him, in the year 1703. His daughter Sarah's alliance, in 1696, with Peter Cropper, who was then a servant of her father's, was not satisfactory to her friends, and she was for a time disowned.

"Richard Cubham possessed a set of apostles' spoons, which he divided among his daughters. Those belonging to Sarah Cropper's descendants (who also inherited the spoons of Elizabeth Barnes) have unfortunately disappeared. One of the set is still in the possession of Dr. Kenrick, of Warrington, who is descended from Mary Johnson. He states that it bears the figure of St. Jude, and the assay mark of 1573. It very likely may have been an heirloom in the Cubham family from that date.

"Amongst the Cropper papers there is the memorandum of a lease dated 8th October, 1695, between Sir Thomas Stanley and Daniel Sephton, gentleman, of 'a messuage and ffarm of 61 acres in Bicarstaffe,' for the lives of Thomas Sephton, Peter Livesay, and William Smalshaw, and of another deed dated 22nd March, 1698, by which the said estate is granted to Richard Cubham

* The *Memorials* give *Thomas Barnes* and *William Johnson*, which, according to the *Friends' Registers*, is incorrect; see next page.—Eds.

for ninety years, if the lease granted hold so long. There is no record whether he always lived in this tenement, or whether he retired to it in his old age. Peter Cropper and his family occupied one part of the house, and Richard Cubham the other ; and here we may see him, as the evening of life closed in, assembling his sons-in-law and his grandchildren around him, for he was a man of a kindly heart, and striving, as far as he could, without injustice to his other children, to assist our unfortunate ancestor. Amongst the Cropper papers there are two or three connected with him. The first is an unsigned memorandum about his will, to this effect :—

‘Whereas I, and A. C.,⁹ at myne & my son-in-law’s request, and on my account, are now met and present with me to advise and assist me in settling my estate, and to prevent differences among my children after my decease ; and upon discourse with them, and consideration of the matter, I declare it to be my mind and full intention, that whereas I gave to William Barnes, as a portion with my daughter Elizabeth 200*l.*, all the rest of my daughters, and their proper representatives or children, shall have with what they have already received a like sum of 200*l.* to the judgment of A. C. Therefore I request that you will, for thorough information, and for my assistance, inquire what every of my said daughters’ husbands acknowledge to have received, and also to consider and advise me how and after what manner I may, by deed or otherwise, so settle all my estate so as that my aforesaid intention may be answered, my daughters, their representatives and proper representatives, may have everyone of them 200*l.*, and I may have the rest or residue of my estate to dispose of *as I choose*. Dated at Ormskirke, the 24th of the 12th mo., 1705-6.’

“Richard Cubham died in 1709, but his name long remained among the pleasant memories of his descendants, and letters written by them one hundred and twenty years after his decease testify that they rejoiced in being sprung from Richard Cubham.”

17th of 3 mo. 1682. Giuen Robert Robinson, of Hexam, Glouer, who Jntends, if God pmit, to goe wth Mary, his wife, to Pensilvania, and wanted to pay for his fright [[?] freight], &c. . . . w^{ch} Robert Hopper, of Scarbrough, maister of the Ship called . . .

From a fragment in D. (Swale MSS. vol. 1.)

⁹“Probably Alexander Chorley on the deed of settlement following.”