

Early Collumpton Friends.

To a Devonian, and one whose maternal kindred includes some Exeter Friends, all that pertains to their early history in his native county has especial interest. In "*The First Publishers of Truth*," p. 76, we read how there was brought to the Quarterly Meeting at Collumpton "y^e 30th of 1st mo. 1721" "the best acct^t that y^e Monthly Meeting of Exon can give in relation to y^e first Public Friends that travelled in these parts," and that the same was "ordered to be sent by our Representatives to London." That this "best acct^t" was forwarded to London there can be no reasonable doubt; that such a document is not at Devonshire House is certain. Pending the coming of that day when it may possibly be forthcoming from an unsuspected quarter, let me put on record a few items concerning some of our early Collumpton Friends. These I was so fortunate as to find when looking for something else which I could not find. They are entered in a cultured hand in the "Collumpton Register" (no. 410), which, in 1837, was deposited with the Registration Commissioners; one of the certifying Commissioners to receive it being, very appropriately, none other than John Bowring, Exeter—Sir John Bowring, known to many as the author of the hymn, beginning "In the Cross of Christ I glory." The book contains entries of marriages 1664-1790; burials 1659-1806; and births 1652-1783.

Exactly where the Friends first met in the town is not known, but we get mention of the meeting in the obituary of Robert Ellicott, thus carefully recorded:—

Robert Ellicott was convinct of truth about y^e year 1654, suffered Imprisonment for not taking y^e Oath of Allegiance till he was discharged by the King's Proclamation. After that gave up his house for ffriends to meet in several years in y^e hottest time of Persecution of y^e Conventicle Act, and suffered loss of his Goods for y^e same; he was also imprison'd upon y^e Act of one shilling per month. He died in the ffaith y^e 29th day, 7mo., 1712, aged about 97 years, and was buried in y^e new Burying place of ffriends at Cullumpton.

The "new Burying place" here alluded to was probably opened shortly after the middle of the seventeenth century; before that time we read of interments

of Collumpton Friends being made in “y^e parish Burying place with out their Ceremony,” and likewise at “ffriends’ Burying place at Grindell.”

Here are two of the earliest entries :—

1659. John s. Richard Old of Cullumpton and Mary his wife, died about 4th of y^e fourth mo. 1659: bur. in Cullumpton (aged about five years) in y^e parish Burying place with out their Ceremony.

William Crompton, M.A., was then Vicar of the town. After having been ejected from the living in 1662, he preached for some years “in a dwelling house” in the town; he died in 1696. He was the first minister of the congregation, still vigorous and active, which worships in the old meeting-house on Pound Square.

1659. Richard, y^e s. of above Richard & Mary Old, died 14th day, 7 mo. 1659, aged about 7, and was buried in ffriends’ Burying place, at Grindell, in y^e parish of Woodbery.

Next we come to the obituary of a young man, which one cannot read without thanking God for the testimony he gave to his faith :—

1661. Thomas Rhoades, of Bradninch Coop, who was one of y^e first who received truth in y^t place, and had been convinct of it about four or five years. He was an honest, faithfull young man, in his day, of an upright, Innocent conversation, who stood in y^e cross, and bore a good Testimony for Truth therein; and his life was a good savour unto y^e world in his generation. Who for his obedience to y^e commands of Christ, in refusing to take y^e Oath of Allegiance suffered Imprisonment wth other ffriends; and was much abused, otherwise att a certaine time by a Rude ffellow, y^t met him in y^e highway, (because he could not—in obedience to Truth—be conformable unto y^e vaine custom of these times, refusing to give unto him salutations on y^e way, as is common amongst people); who fell upon him with a way, and beat, and bruised him very much, saying y^t if he would not speak, he would make him speak, which great abuse he received at y^e time was adjudg’d to be somewhat y^e occaçon of his Death. But he bore y^e same abuse wth meekness, and Patience, and continued in a declining condiçon of Body, untill y^e time of y^e third month, 1661, aged about two and twenty years; and was bury’d in ffriends Burying place at Grindell in y^e ph. of Woodbury.

Then we have the entry of the death of old Giles Brice, one of the first to be buried in the new ground :—

1674. Giles Brice, of y^e parish of Halberton, serge weaver, aged about 76 years, who had been convinct of truth, and made a profession of it about twenty years, and suffered imprisonment for y^e same about three moneths, for refusing to take y^e Oath of Alleagience, who laid down y^e body, and dyed a faithfull ffriend y^e 14th d. twelf mo. 1674; buried in ffriends’ burying place at Cullumpton y^e 28th of y^e same mo.

Many such as this entry might also be given, but it will suffice to quote the records of the lives of Thomas Fry, and Margery, his wife, as entered by some painstaking and competent scribe, who took delight in his clear penmanship :—

Margery, y^e wife of Thomas Fry, y^e elder of Collumpton was convinced of y^e truth when a young woman, and walked a sober life, and Exemplary conversation therein till the time of her Death, manifesting her Love thereto, by her Readiness to Receive & Entertain y^e Friends thereof, her Husband's House being (for many years together) the place where Publick Travelling Friends used to Lodge during their stay in that town. She died y^e ninth day of y^e Eighth mo. Anno 1710, after about a week's sickness, & was buried y^e 19th day of y^e same in y^e new Burying place in Collumpton, aged about 68 years.

The husband did not long survive his loss :—

Thomas Fry of Collumpton, y^e eldest of five of y^e same name living in that place, was one that in the times of persecution suffered as well y^e Imprisonment of his body, & the spoil of his goods for y^e testimony of truth; died y^e 23rd 1 mo. 1711/12, and was buried in y^e new burying place in Collumpton, by his wife, whose death is recorded on y^e last page, y^e 28th of y^e same, in y^e 75th year of his age.

These extracts are evidence of the interesting matter there must have been in the missing account from this west country town.

Aberystwyth.

GEORGE EYRE EVANS.

Obituary.

The death took place at Clifton, Bristol, on the 10th of Fifth Month last, of Anna Laetitia Waring, the well-known hymn-writer. A. L. Waring was born in 1823, daughter of Elijah and Deborah Waring, of South Wales. She left Friends for the Established Church in 1840. Six years later, she wrote her best-known hymn, "Father, I know that all my life is portioned out for me," a hymn which many a Quaker child has committed to memory. Her *Hymns and Meditations*, first published in 1850, has passed through sixteen editions.

Elijah Waring also wrote poetry. He became a Wesleyan Minister.