

Early Friends on the Eastern Shore of Virginia

THE history of the little peninsula, about seventy miles long and eight miles wide, extending southward from Maryland and forming the eastern side of the great bay of Chesapeake¹ has recently been written by Jennings Cropper Wise, of Richmond, Va., and published by the Bell Company of Richmond (9 by 6, pp. 406, \$2.00, but without map—a great loss), under the title, *Ye Kingdome of Accawmacke or the Eastern Shore of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century*. This study commences with the discovery of the Eastern Shore by the Spaniards in 1524, and then describes the coming of the English under Bartholomew Gilbert in 1603, and John Smith in 1607.

The advent of Quakerism was on this wise (page 155) :—

Toward the latter part of 1657, a ship arrived at Jamestown with Thomas Thurston² and Josiah Co[a]le, the first preachers of the Society of Friends to come to Virginia. They were promptly arrested as disturbers of the peace, and imprisoned, but being soon released they repaired to Maryland. Soon after the arrival of Thurston and Cole, Quakers began in great numbers to make their appearance on the Eastern Shore of Maryland and in the northern part of Northampton [Accomack], where population was comparatively scarce, and where they could establish themselves without much interference. . . .

William Robinson [Boston martyr] was perhaps the most conspicuous Quaker Missionary in Northampton, and held conventicles in many of the planters' homes. His influence must have been very great, for it extended to all parts of the Colony. . . . Six of the fourteen months he spent in Virginia were passed in jail. Robinson continued his activity in importing his brethren whenever he was at liberty, and under the pretense of transporting them to Paxtuxent, he would land them at Nassawaddox, where they were received by Levin Denwood³ who provided a ten-foot log cabin for a house of worship. This was probably the first Quaker meeting-house in Virginia, and continued to be used as such until converted into a wheat barn. A much better structure was erected later at Nassawaddox, for after the Act of Toleration,

¹ Chesapeake=" a superior or greater salt bay."

² For Thomas Thurston, see *Camb. Jnl.*

³ For Levin Denwood, see *THE JOURNAL*, vi. 135, n.

passed in 1688, George Brickhouse, of Northampton, left to the Quaker sect an acre of land surrounding the meeting-house, and Mrs. Judith Patrick bequeathed thirty shillings for the repair of the building. (*Northampton County Records*, vol. 1683-89, p. 400 ; vol. 1689-98, p. 435.)

In 1660, the Virginia Assembly passed stringent laws against "these strange people who were accused by the Accomackians of slandering the clergy, of defying the laws, and of uttering blasphemy." This persecution resulted in the removal of many Friends across the border into Maryland, but those who weathered the persecution rose into favour with the inhabitants of Accomack. Thomas Brown and his wife, of Brownville, on the seashore of Northampton, "were visited by many distinguished Friends from Philadelphia" (Wise, quoting Meade's *Old Churches*), "and were of such known integrity that their affirmation was received instead of their oath" (page 158 ; see *THE JOURNAL*, vi. 135, where, in the account of the visit of Esther Palmer to Accomack, 1705, there is a reference to Susanna, widow of Thomas Brown).

The author does not quote in his book any direct Quaker authority, nor does he note such in his Bibliography. He might have made mention of the visit of George Fox, who travelled down as far as Hungar River, and of two of his companions who also visited Accomack (see page 25 of this issue of *THE JOURNAL*).

The following supposed narrative of a Pocomoke Chief will be read with interest :—

In the moon of Roasting-Ears (August) palefaces from the land of the Accomacks wanted war. The black wampum-belt, the red hatchet painted on it, was sent from chief to chief along the sea-side and over beyond to Pocomoke. The King of the bad whites was angry, and came with horse and guns. After awhile the cloud went down. The Quackels [Quakers] came into our land. The bad white chief⁴ and his friends had driven them there. They loved peace. But at one time he put on his war paint and swam the Pocomoke and followed them to Pocomoke. He hated Quackels. Once we thought of killing all the whites when in a quarrel and divided. But the Quackels were kind to Indians. Then the great father across the bay said the bad white chief must stay beyond the marked trees (page 63).

⁴ Probably Col. Edmund Scarborough (Conjuror Scarborough), who died in 1670/71. He bore great hatred towards Quakers. See Jones, *Quakers in American Colonies*, 1911.