

Treffry, of Devon and Cornwall

THE gift to the Reference Library of a pamphlet bearing the following title *A Dissertation on Smut-Balls amongst Wheat and other Grain*, by Roger Treffry, of Beer Barton, near Plymouth, Devon, 1793 (Haydon, Clarence Press, Plymouth), has drawn our attention to this family and we think it well to place on record the result of our enquiries.

The registers of Cornwall Q.M. do not appear to give the date of the birth of Roger Treffry, though at an earlier date the name "Trefry"¹ appears among the births and burials of "Austle Monthly Meeting," but, in 1770, Roger Treffry (c. 1746-1818) married Mary Veale (c. 1750-1830), of "Austle" and had a numerous family. Roger and Mary resided at Penryn until about 1780, when they moved northward to Beer Ferris in Devonshire. Roger was a farmer and his *Dissertation* shows his knowledge of wheat-growing in widely separated parts of the country.

It is curious that for years before the pamphlet on Smut-balls was received in **D**, the Library was in possession, among John Thompson MSS., of a copy of a letter on the subject written by Roger Treffry to William Morton Pitt, from Beer Barton, 28th 11 mo., 1795. The letter opens: "To Wm. Morton Pitt, Esq., Esteemed Friend," and proceeds:

I think it was about a year since I took the Liberty of addressing thee on the subject of Smut amongst Wheat, &c. If not too presuming I shall be thankful for a few lines to inform me whether the Board of Agriculture thinks my Discovery of Importance enough to the Nation to recommend it to the Public, or to merit a Reward. . . .

If the Board should be inclined to make what I have written on the subject public they may fully depend on what I have advanced being strictly true—and whether they be disposed to grant me any reward or not, I shall have the satisfaction of having communicated both the Cause and the Remedy for Smut-balls amongst wheat and Smut of both kinds amongst Barley and Oats; which, on conversing with several Thousands

¹ The name is pronounced Tref-fry'.

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of Farmers on the subject (many in almost every County in England), I never found one who *fully* knew the Cause (and but one near it) or a certain Remedy, which without knowing the Cause could not be obtained. . . .

I beg leave to subscribe my self with respect,

Thy obliged Friend,

RGR. TREFFRY.

The copy occupies five folio pages of paper. The result of this appeal does not appear.

The oldest son of Roger and Mary Treffry was Joseph Treffry (I.) (1771-1851), and another son was Samuel (1773-1850). A son, Robert (1772-1832), married Sarah Bawden of Looe, in 1822, and a daughter, Sarah (1780-1856), married Benjamin Fox (c. 1776-1853),² of Stoke, near Plymouth, in 1800.

Joseph Treffry (I.), was born at Penryn, and, at the time of his marriage in 1800 with Susanna Browne (c. 1766-1843), was described as corn-factor, of Plymouth. They had, apparently, two sons—Joseph (II.) (1801-), and Joshua (1802-1873). Joseph Treffry (I.) was an Elder among Friends, as was also Susanna.

Joseph Treffry (I.) was a man after the F.H.S. Editor's own heart, as the following original letter (in **D**) will make evident:

Plymouth.

18 of 11 mo., 1843.

GEORGE CROSFIELD.

DEAR FRIEND.

I think I shall not be quite satisfied if I refrain from telling thee, how much I have been gratified in perusing thy late work—"Memoir of Samuel Fothergill." It is indeed a valuable addition to our biographical reading, uniting useful information with pleasing instruction—or, to use the language of this valued Friend with a slight variation, it is calculated to "strengthen the Aged—to animate the Middle aged, and encourage the youth," to walk and to persevere in the same course which brought our Friend to such a triumphant close.

The letters of other Friends as well as S.F.'s inserted in the work, appear to me to contain much solid instruction. The sentiments of individuals differently circumstanced, concurring as they do in their faith and belief of those Christian doctrines, which from the first rise of the Society distinguished it from all others, is truly confirming—clearly showing, that *Truth* in every age is unchangeably the same, and I believe

² *Fox of St. Germain's*, p. 7, gives "1856, aged 80," which is incorrect.

will remain so, when the names of those who have opposed it, shall cease to be remembered.

The short biographical notices of individuals introduced into the work, appear to me, to add much to its value.

I take leave to hint to my Friend, that should a second Edition be called for—which I think is very likely to be the case—that an index to at least, its prominent parts would add to its usefulness. And if it could be printed in a less expensive form, so as to bring it within the reach of almost every family, it would be very desirable.

And whilst on the subject of Biography, I will just say, that for many years I have been desirous of seeing a good “Biographical Dictionary” of members of our Society, compiled somewhat on the plan, but containing more copious information as “Watkins Biographical, Historical and Chronological Dictionary”—I think such a work is much wanted. The Articles might be written somewhat in the manner of those introduced in S.F.’s Memoirs. There is a large store of materials, from which such a work might be compiled, such as Sewels, Goughs and Rutty’s Histories, The Journals and Memoirs of Friends, Memorials of deceased Ministers, both here and in America (some that have been printed and some that I suppose lie buried in the accumulated Records of the Yearly Meeting), “Piety Promoted,” &c., &c.

I have mentioned the subject to many Friends during the last 10 years, but I have not found one willing to undertake it, and indeed few are qualified for such a work. I should be sorry to see it undertaken by any, but an *orthodox* friend. I think from the specimen my friend George Crosfield has just given, he may be safely and properly intrusted with it, and I shall be pleased if the subject engages thy attention. I have no doubt but it would be remunerative in a pecuniary point of view, but at any rate, if published by subscription, there would be no loss.

I do hope thou wilt excuse these observations as I can assure thee they are made with a sincere goodwill to the cause. I shall be pleased to be kindly remembered to thy wife—and if convenient to my valued friends, Thomas and Elizabeth Robson—With love also to thyself I remain

thy affectionate Friend,

JOSEPH TREFFRY.

The second edition of *Samuel Fothergill* (1857) is smaller in size and has an “Index to Correspondence.”

It is curious that a few days ago we added to MSS. in **D** a letter from Thomas Hodgkin to J. J. Green, dated 3rd August, 1895, on the subject of a Biographical Dictionary, in which he wrote :

I should think the best plan would be to obtain a certain number (say at least 1000) of promises to subscribe and then to issue the work in quarterly parts like the Dictionary of National Biography.

The material for such, vastly increased since 1848 and yet more since 1895, still awaits the skilful workers and the patronage of the Quaker and general public.

Joseph Treffry (I.) appeared in print in *Strictures on a late Publication, entitled "A Remonstrance to the Society of Friends,"* a forty-four page pamphlet, printed in 1836, at the time of the Beacon Controversy, in the writing of which he was helped by William Collier. Both pamphlets were issued anonymously, but J. T. soon revealed the author of *A Remonstrance* to be Benjamin Wills Newton,³ a strong evangelical, who charged Friends with Socinianism, which charge Treffry refuted. Regarding his *Strictures*, J. Treffry wrote a letter to Thomas Thompson, of Liverpool, dated from Plymouth, 15 v. 1849, and enclosed several pamphlets knowing that his friend was a collector of Quaker literature (original letter in **D**). Newton replied in his *Vindication of "A Remonstrance,"* 1836.

Of Joshua Treffry (1802-1873), second son of Joseph (I.), we have glimpses in a Testimony issued by his friends and printed with the Y.M. Proceedings of 1874. He was a Recorded Minister and visited most of the Meetings of Friends between the years 1845 and 1847. On retiring from business as a tea-merchant he resided with his father till the latter's death in 1851. He often visited his brother Joseph (II.), a corn-merchant in Liverpool. He suffered much from "great sensitiveness and a constitutional tendency to depression." He died unmarried, and his remains were interred at St. Austell.

By kindness of Elizabeth Fardon, of St. Austell,

³ Benjamin Wills Newton (1807-c. 1899) came of Quaker stock. He was noted as a leader among a section of the Plymouth Brethren in opposition to John Nelson Darby (1800-1882). Both men constantly appear in W. Blair Neatby's *History of the Plymouth Brethren*, 1901, and later edition. There is a reference to Newton in the privately printed memoirs of Frederick Prideaux (1817-1891):

" . . . More fruitful intellectually was the time spent with Mr. Benjamin Wills Newton, at Exeter College, Oxford, as a private pupil. Mr. Newton was a man of high Christian character as well as a ripe scholar, and as a tutor did his utmost to draw out and inform the minds of the few young men who read with him."

Save for his time at Oxford, he lived at Plymouth and engaged in religious work.

we are able to give a fuller sketch of the life of Joshua Treffry.

He was a tea-merchant in Plymouth. He had a gift in the ministry early in life and visited, with Minute, almost every Meeting in the Kingdom, but he did not continue to travel in the ministry though he was a powerful Minister to the end of his life. He never married, and when he retired from business, he came to live with Richard Veale, his cousin. He was a very lively energetic man, a strong character and interesting personality. He used to walk out every morning to the British School at Mount Charles, a mile away, just as though he was a paid teacher, and help from 9 to 12 to teach the children. In the afternoons he went to the Union Workhouse to see the children there and the old men; he took sweets for the children and tobacco to the men. He himself did not smoke, but he thought they needed a little comfort in their confinement. The men from the Workhouse, and other townspeople, came to Meeting to hear him preach. He sometimes spoke very decidedly to states of mind; once a man was so impressed with what was said about his condition that he told his neighbours, who came to try what would be said of *them*, but they were disappointed.

Samuel Treffry (1773-1850), second son of Roger and Mary Treffry, was born at Penryn in Cornwall, and removed, c. 1780, with his parents to Beer Ferris, Co. Devon. He was educated at the school of John Benwell (c. 1749-1824), at Sidcot. In 1799, when he was of Parr, Cornwall, he married Ann Dunsford, of St. Austell, and had several children. He was a recorded Minister. East Devon M.M. issued a Testimony to his life and service.

He wrote in 1838 *Publicans and Sinners' Friend* and in 1847 *Expostulatory Remarks on the Use of Water Baptism*.

There do not appear to be any of the name Treffry among English Friends of to-day but the name still survives in the far West of England. A Quaker family of Treffry emigrated to U.S.A. and Canada. "John Treffry, Junior," of Canada, was one of the signatories to a returning certificate for John Pease in 1844.

Mr. Ralph Marsden, minister of Coley—had one son bred up a scholar; I hear he is now turned Quaker.

OLIVER HEYWOOD, *Diaries*, iv. 10.