

## Daniel Ricketson (1813;1898)

JN xix. 47 there appears a short account of this Friend, of New Bedford, Mass. By the kindness of his son, Walton Ricketson, of New Bedford, who has sent over on loan his private copy of *Daniel Ricketson, Autobiographic and Miscellaneous*, edited by Anna and Walton Ricketson (New Bedford, Mass.: Anthony, 233 pages, 1910), we have been able to learn more of this Quaker family.

Daniel Ricketson's ancestors were Friends for several generations. His grandfather, Daniel (1745-1824), "always wore the dress of the Society of Friends, which was usually a light drab coat of good English broadcloth, long dark velvet waistcoat and silver buttons, and velvet or cloth breeches, silver knee-buckles, and silver shoe-buckles, or top boots in cold weather; a broad-brimmed black beaver hat, and a handsome silver mounted cane with ivory head completed his dress, except in cold weather an overcoat of drab" (p. 7).

His wife, Daniel's grandmother, was Rebecca Russell (c. 1747-1837), daughter of Joseph Russell and Judith Howland.

Her father was in his time the most wealthy person in the place and the first who engaged in the whale fishery in New Bedford, or Bedford as it was first called. The place received its name from a suggestion of Joseph Rotch, who early removed from Nantucket to Bedford, the family name of the Duke of Bedford being Russell, and the old man was sometimes called 'the Duke.' He gave the lot of land, about  $\frac{1}{2}$  an acre, on which the large brick meetinghouse of the Society of Friends stands, the present [1858] worth of which must be nearly \$8000. Joseph Russell was probably descended from John Russell, who came from Pontipool, Monmouthshire, England, and established an iron forge at Russells Mills, Dartmouth (pp. 8, 9).

Joseph Ricketson (1771-1841), father of Daniel, married Anna Thornton (1786-1827), of Smithfield, R.I.<sup>1</sup> and the son, Daniel, married, in 1834, by non-Quaker ceremony, Louisa Sampson, of Plymouth, Mass., and secondly, at the Friends'

<sup>1</sup> She was a daughter of Elisha Thornton (c. 1745—1815), "a tall, venerable-looking man, in the old dress of Friends, whose memory has ever been held sacred by his family and a large circle of friends" (p. 11).

Meeting House, Apponagansett, Angeline, daughter of Philip and Eunice Kelly Gidley, of Dartmouth, Mass.

D. Ricketson lived on Elm Street, New Bedford, till 1845; later he lived at Brooklawn, three miles from New Bedford, in the grounds of which stands the Shanty, where he meditated and wrote, and received many of his friends.

Much of the book is occupied with correspondence between D. Ricketson and many noted people—among them J. G. Whittier, L. Maria Child, William and Mary Howitt and their daughter, Anna Mary Watts.

There are numerous illustrations, including portraits from busts by Walton Ricketson.

Whittier wrote to D. Ricketson, under date 10 mo. 13, 1887:

My dear Friend.

I am glad to get a letter from thee. I always think of thee as a true lover of nature and retirement from the noise and push and greed of the world.

I find it difficult to avoid strangers who seek me out and occupy my time, and sometimes greatly weary me, as my health is very delicate. They prevent me from seeing and writing to my real friends with whom I have much in common. . . .

With love and sympathy,

Thy old friend,

JOHN G. WHITTIER.

The letters to and from William and Mary Howitt and their daughter, Anna Mary Watts, are interesting. In July, 1869, D. Ricketson wrote also to William Howitt's brother, Richard, but he had died (5 ii. 1869) before the letter arrived. William Howitt replied:

Probably, you may have wondered that he had not yet replied to it, but some months before your very friendly communication, he had passed the narrow gate which leads to life eternal. He departed this life in February last at Edingly, near Southwell in Nottinghamshire. You wish him in your letter ("a kind heaven's best blessing")—he has received it in the invitation to heaven itself. My dear brother's life and principles had prepared him for the advancement to a higher life. He was, like me a spiritualist, and the knowledge therein desired had taken away all the terrors of death, and made easy that transposition which to the mere lover of this material existence is commonly so hard. . . .

He loved poetry. His life was a poem, the poetry of peace, nature and independence. He made one adventurous step, a visit to the Antipodes, but this was through the attraction of the company of our youngest brother who settled there.

Mrs. Watts wrote from London in August :

Richard Howitt breathed his last painlessly in a fainting fit shortly before attaining his 70th birthday. My sister [Margaret Howitt] attended him in his last illness and placed around his beautiful, venerable head as it lay in its coffin, bunches of his favorite flowers, purple violets, and at his feet a bunch of for-get-me-nots as a symbol that his footsteps on earth shall not be forgotten. His mortal remains were laid to rest in the burial ground of the Friends at Mansfield, where his grave is amidst those of his early friends and kindred, shaded by a group of trees which he loved.

He printed a little volume<sup>2</sup> about two years since, containing a few poems from his earlier volumes, together with later poems, some of which we think very charming. He never married. He divided his time between agriculture and poetry. Wandering about his fields his poems were matured and hummed over to himself.

In 1869 D. Ricketson issued a volume of poems entitled *The Autumn Sheaf* (a copy of which has been on loan in D), and later he wrote a History of New Bedford.

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## Friends Keepe the Ancient Principles of Truth

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1. Att a word, in all yo<sup>r</sup> callings & dealings, without oppression
2. to y<sup>e</sup> sound Language, thou, to everie one.
3. yo<sup>r</sup> testimony ag<sup>st</sup> y<sup>e</sup> worlds fashions
4. Ag<sup>st</sup> y<sup>e</sup> old Mashouses & their repaireinge.
5. yo<sup>r</sup> testimony ag<sup>st</sup> y<sup>e</sup> priests, their tythes & maintenance
6. against y<sup>e</sup> world joyninge in marriage, & y<sup>e</sup> priests & stand upp for gods joyning.
7. ag<sup>st</sup> swearing & y<sup>e</sup> worlds mañers & ffashons
8. & ag<sup>st</sup> all lousenes, pleasures & profanenes whatsoever
9. & ag<sup>st</sup> all y<sup>e</sup> worlds wayes, wor<sup>PPS</sup> & religions, & to stand up for gods
10. And see y<sup>t</sup> everie one y<sup>t</sup> hath done wrong to any one y<sup>t</sup> they doe restore
11. And y<sup>t</sup> all differences bee made upp spedily,
12. And y<sup>t</sup> all bad things bee judged spedily, y<sup>t</sup> they doe not flie abroade, to Currupte peoples mindes
13. And that all Reports bee stopped to y<sup>e</sup> defameing of any one.

G. ff.

From the Minute Book of Swarthmore M.M. 1674, in D.

<sup>2</sup> Copy in D ; also his *Impressions of Australia*.