

A Quaker Newswriter

SOME letters written by Richard Cockin (1753-1845), of Doncaster, to his niece, Mary (Sanderson) Fox, of Wellington, have been through our hands and we have copied some extracts which seem worthy of preservation in print.

R. Cockin became a Friend about 1778, largely influenced by the ministry of Isaac Sharples and Thomas Rutter, while resident in London. His companions there were Thomas Shillitoe, and John Sanderson of Old Jewry. In 1781 he married Deborah Frinston (1754-1795), of Whitechapel and began business in Doncaster. In 1799 he married Ellen Abraham (1758-1841) of Whitehaven, descendant of Judge and Margaret Fell. He was an Elder and she a Minister. Their daughter Ellen (1803-1841) married into the Miller family, of Edinburgh.

In 1829 R. Cockin took Robert Whitaker's place for a short time as Superintendent of Ackworth School.

He was an excellent letter writer and his accounts of the Yearly Meetings he attended, thirty in number, written out fair by himself, are in **D**. His letters usually begin with a page of spiritual encouragement, and then follows: "I apprehend it will be acceptable to thee to have a little information . . ."

Richard Cockin was a draper, glover, and breeches-maker. He was the son of Joseph and Ann Cockin of Armthorp, near Doncaster.

I

"7th of 10th mo. 1818. Its probable thou hast been informed with the arduous service that WILLIAM & REBECCA BYRD¹ and ELIZth ROBSON² have been engaged in this summer. THO^s CHRISTY joined them at Inverness and accompanied them to fifteen Islelands that lays to the North of Scotland. They had to suffer very great inconveinance for want of comfortable accommodations perticularly as to lodgings on some of the Islands, several of them frequently having to sit up all nights. And in passing from one Isleland to

another in small, open Boats, they frequently were in apparent danger. However they were all favoured to return, with sustaining only temporary inconveniency and are now all of them, I believe, got to their comfortable homes and I trust with the reward of peace.

“ No doubt but thou hast heard of the movements of our mutually dear Friends, JOSEPH J. GURNEY and ELIZth J. FRY. Elizth commenced her religious labours at Doncaster, on her way to the Half Years Meeting at Aberdeen. A few of our principal Inhabitants accompanied her to our prison ; they were also with her in a Religious opportunity at a Friend’s house. The impressions of esteem which are made on their minds towards her are very great.

“ J. Gurney, with his Wife and a female servant, had passed through Doncaster two days before on their way to Ackworth, where they had an attraction to visit that institution. Elizabeth Fry & her second daughter [Rachel] joined them there and they all proceeded together [northward]. They visited a great number of Prisons and where also at many Houses of Persons of account. I heard J. Gurney give a relation of their visit to the Lord Derby’s, which he said was one of the most memorable seasons he thought he had ever been a witness of. In a religious opportunity there where estimated to be one hundred present. The power of Truth rose so into domince, as to tender into brokenness all present, many being melted, even to weeping, and they separated from the Family under endearing impressions. When Lord Derby came to bid them farewell, he burst into tears, so as not to be able to speak to them . . . Many persons of account esteemed it quite a gratification to have it in their power to say they had seen Elizth Fry.”

II

“ 4th of 8th mo. 1819. Its probable you have heard of the arrival of WILLIAM FLANNER³, one of the men Friends from America. He was at our last Quarterly Meeting, having then been landed about two weeks. He appeared in rather a feeble state of health, and evidently under discouraged impressions. He proceeded by way of Hull, Ackworth, Sheffield, and then towards Liverpool, where, we are informed he had actually taken Shiping in the same vessel for

America that he came in. . . . I wrote a letter to him but I believe he was sailed before it got to hand."

III

" 19th of 2nd mo. 1824. We have had this week our Friend ELIZth WALKER,⁴ from America. She has had the company of MARY WRIGHT (late WITCHELL). She is in a very feeble state of health. She has been through Scotland, the Isalands also adjoining thereto with the northern part of England."

IV

" 9th month 8th, 1829. A few days ago William Manley⁵ gave me a gratifying account of JOHN ROE'S⁶ disposal of his large Property. He sais he has left about 12000 Pounds for Charitable purposes and not more than one thousand Pound to any one."

V

" 11 mo. 10. 1830. I will first notice how highly we have been gratified with a few days visit from your beloved Uncle THOMAS SHILLITOE. I was informed one morning before leaving my Lodging Room that he was sitting in our Parlour. He had traveled all night on the outside of the Coach, and was as lively and cheerful as if he had had a comfortable night's sleep. He said his health was better then it was fifty years ago, that he would walk more then twenty miles a day. He indeed looked to be in vigerous good health and as cheerful as I have ever seen him.

" During the time that we had the pleasure of his company, it was the usual season of our annual Bible Society meeting being held, to which he went and sat towards the lower end of the large Room in the Mansion House. About the middle of the meeting a Friend came to me and inquired if Tho^s Shillitoe could be admited to address the Meeting. I accordingly arranged matters so, as far as to get a resolution for him to move, and when he was called upon to move it, I went and fetched him from his seat, and showd him the way to the Plat-form, from whence he addressed the large assembly with impressive effect. The chairman who is a gentleman of considerable account in our Neighbourhood, adverted to his address, in terms of cordial approbation,

and after meeting much enquiry was made who this extraordinary Friend was. One Clergyman came to our house to have some of his company, and we had a large company to dine, who were delighted with him.

“ And in the evening there was a large meeting held in the Towns Hall for to afford the Working Classes of the Town an opportunity of obtaining information respecting the good effects of reading and circulating the Scripture, to which meeting he also went, where it appeared as if he was attending a Publick Meeting. He was largely engaged herein. Some persons of account wished I would give some information respecting this extraordinary Friend as to who he was and from whence he came, to be put in the Nuse Paper when the account of the Bible Meeting was published which was done.”

To be continued

NOTES

¹ William Byrd (c. 1757-1835) lived at Marnhull, Co. Dorset.

Rebecca Byrd (1758-1834) his wife, was a daughter of John and Jane Young, of Shrewsbury. She travelled in the ministry with that noted Friend, Deborah Darby (1754-1810), both before and after her marriage with William Byrd in 1800 and travelled also with her husband.

x. xiii. xv. xx. ; Smith, *Cata.*

² Elizabeth Robson (1771-1843), née Stephenson, of Yorkshire, was the wife of Thomas Robson, of Liverpool, and a Gospel messenger for many years in both hemispheres.

xiv. xv. xvi. xix. xx.

³ William Flanner (1766-1837) was a member of Short Creek M.M., Ohio. On his arrival home in 1819 he stated his reasons for his early return and produced a paper signed by a select Council of Liverpool Friends. He was in Europe again in 1828-9.

iv. xiii.-xv. xvii. xix.

⁴ Elizabeth Walker (1761-1821), née Hoyland, was from the State of New York. A pamphlet, printed at Leith, Scotland, in 1823, describes her as “ the short, soft, sentimental Trans-Atlantic Mrs. Isabell Walker ” !

xiii. xvi.

⁵ William Manley (c. 1772-1851) was the Recording Clerk of the Society from 1811 to 1844.

⁶ John Row (c. 1766-1829) was a London Friend. He accompanied Isaac Hammer, of Tennessee, on a portion of his religious visit to Europe in 1828. He was an Elder of Devonshire House M.M., and a silk-manufacturer in Spitalfields—a man of great force of character and active benevolence. His successor in business was Peter Bedford. He made a bequest of £1,200 for the benefit of the poor of his Meeting, and also left money for the education and clothing of girls, the children of poor Friends, and providing each with £30 at the age of twenty-one years.

xvii.