

Dorothy Ripley

Unaccredited Missionary

Concluded from p. 21

THE space of time between the date of the last entry in *The Bank of Faith*, iii.1806 and the date of the death of Dorothy Ripley, xii.1831, about a quarter of a century, has little to occupy it, in the present state of our knowledge of her life-history. She returned from her second American visit in the beginning of 1807, and, writing from Chester, 7 x. 1807, a Preface to a series of *Letters from Africans and Indians*, she states: "I have travelled thirty thousand miles." The third American visit began in 1809—her subscription to *Religious Experience* runs: "On board the ship Herald, coming from Hull in England, to Philadelphia in America, 6th 9th month, 1809." We have not been able to obtain a single glimpse of her movements in this third visit. She was in London in Seventh Month, 1817, and presumably during her fourth visit she arranged for the first printing of her *Bank of Faith and Works United*, by Cunningham, of Philadelphia, in 1819. She had returned to England when she wrote *An Address to all in Difficulties*, from "Mythe, nr. Tewkesbury," 20 xi. 1821, and stated, in the Preface to the English edition of her *Bank of Faith*, written at Whitby, ix. 1822, that she had crossed the Atlantic eight times and was expecting shortly to re-visit the Southern States. In 1827, presumably during the fifth visit, D. Ripley caused to be published in Philadelphia her *Memoirs of William Ripley*.

Finally we read in the *Whitby Repository* for May, 1832: "On Friday, Dec. 23rd, 1831, at Mecklenburgh, Virginia, America, Miss Dorothy Ripley, of Whitby, who, after an arduous life spent not only in endeavouring but actually in doing good, died in great peace after an illness of five days, aged 64 years." In the *Elfreth Necrology*, a record of

deaths kept by Jacob R. Elfreth, of Pa. (1789-1870), published in the *Proceedings of the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania*, vol. 2 (1900), p. 205, we find : " Dorothy Ripley, in Virginia, 12.23.1831. 64."

We regret that we cannot, at present, shed more than a few brief sidelights upon the life and character of Dorothy Ripley from other sources than her own writings. We had hoped to gather information from the published diaries of Friends mentioned by her, but in this we have failed.

In a paper written by the late Joseph T. Sewell, of Whitby, we read :

D. R. was a singular mixture of pride and humility, of self-denial and self-assertion. She puts up with any discomfort, but complains if a perfect stranger, on whom she intrudes, does not give her a royal reception. The late Mr. J. Buchanan tells how she constantly invited herself out to tea on Sundays to a farmhouse in the neighbourhood. At first, pleased to see her, they treated her in the most hospitable Yorkshire fashion. She approved, and came regularly. The farmer and his wife at length decided to treat her as one of the family, but she was disappointed and did not fail to show it. The farmer reminded her that she had the same as they did. " Oh, but," said she, " it may be my Heavenly Father desires to feed me with the finest of the wheat." " Whether that be so or no," the farmer said, " this I know very well, that if your Heavenly Father desires to feed you upon the finest of the wheat, He never means to do it at my expense."

A somewhat similar exhibition of character appears in her first volume :

Unice Painter requested me to make her a short gown and muslin skirt for a shroud, as a preparation for her approaching dissolution, being aged. It was a solemn time with me all the day while occupied with my needle, feeling this friend to be unchanged or unadorned with the meek and lowly mind of Jesus Christ, which occasioned me to endure great travail of spirit ; and perhaps it was for this purpose that she was suffered to make this request; for I have enough to do in spirit, without making garments for the dead.

Reading between the lines of her self-written narrative, we can realise something of the hesitation Friends had to admit her into membership. The nature of her "concern"—her "travail in spirit for the African race and mourning for the recovery of the Jews and the restoration of the ten tribes who were led away captives of Shalmaneser, King of Assyria," would not appeal to Friends generally—Friends living at a period prior to that when world needs began to make an appeal.

The public disclaimer issued by Friends of Philadelphia (p. 15) seemed to be necessary, seeing that D. R. dressed as a Friend—indeed Mary Pancoast, of Philadelphia, asked Dorothy for a pattern of her bonnet!—, used the plain language and Quaker expressions, preached extempore, "did not choose or use singing in worship." On one occasion she said :

Could I, consistent with my duty to God, put off the appearance of a Quaker, I would do it, and not reproach you as a people : but the language, dress, and principles I adopted for conscience sake, and for conscience sake I must continue them.

Yet, with all allowance, we cannot obscure from sight the un-Christian and un-Quakerly attitude towards this well-meaning woman, taken by many Friends in England and America.

NOTE

There is a portrait of our late friend, Joseph Taylor Sewell, J.P., of Whitby (1857-1925), in the 102nd and 103rd Reports of the *Whitby Literary and Philosophical Society*, printed 1926, and also a paper on "The Quakers of Whitby," by T. H. Woodwark, J.P. The paper is compiled mainly from original records—Monthly Meeting minutes, etc.—and contains the names of many Friends resident in the district in the early days of Quakerism. The Linskill family receive notice—they "lived in Baxtergate, the present Linskill Square being the garden of their family house." Also of the Sanders family—"The first Jonathan Sanders, who came from Guisbrough, was a linen and sailcloth manufacturer, whose son, Jonathan, in 1750 married Mary Ward, a daughter of the well-known Linskill family and the widow of a linen and sailcloth manufacturer and grocer, which business he carried on. His son [George], who succeeded him, added to them the business of a banker, in the year 1779. Their place of business was in Church Street, opposite the Town Hall."