

An Account of the Birth, Education and Sufferings for the Truth's Sake of that faithful Friend Elizabeth Andrews

ELIZABETH ANDREWS (c. 1628-1718), the writer of the following striking autobiographical life-sketch, a daughter of John Farmer, married John Yardley, of Holt, in Malpas Meeting, at Shrewsbury, in 1659 ; and, prior to her removal to Broseley, near Shrewsbury, she married Roger Andrews. R. and E. Andrews were poor Friends and frequently received financial assistance—the following is interesting in this connection :

“ Two Weeks Meeting, London,

“ 30th of 11 mo. 1708.

“ Abraham Darby reports to this meeting that the friends of the Monthly Meeting in Shropshire being very few in number and mean in Estate—and Roger Andrews and his wife there being very Aged neare 80 yeares each of them and very poore and in distress, and their necessity being more than those few friends in that county is well able to suply—Requests this meeting to afood them som Releife. This Meeting orders Samll. Cox to pay to Abraham Darby ffive pounds out of our publick Stock to be employed by him towards their Releife.”

Negotiations were set on foot in 1708 for “ the sale of the still ” of E. Andrews. In 1711 “ E. Andrews desires a Certificate to travel in the ministry.” Roger Andrews died in 1709.

The following narration is copied from a copy in Norris MSS. in D (vol. ix. p. 171), in the handwriting of William Gregory Norris (1829-1911). There is another copy in Portfolio 36, in D, from which additions have been made.

The crisp manner in which the writer records her successful intervention on behalf of prisoners will be noted by readers.

Seven volumes of Norris MSS. were presented to D by the Norris exors in 1912, and six more by Sarah A. Squire, of Coalbrookdale, Salop, in 1929. These manuscripts record events in Shropshire and in Wales, and must be distinguished from the Norris MSS. preserved by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia.

I WAS born in the County of Salop at a place called Cound Lane End, within five miles of Shrewsbury. My parents were honest people and of good report. My father's name was John Farmer. He was a man come of a substantial family near where we lived. He was

called by many "honest John Farmer." He was a man of strict life and was called a Puritan, and after that a Round-head. He brought us up very strictly, not suffering us to speak vain words nor go among other children to play, but would say: "Go to your Books, and learn to fear the Lord." I, from my childhood, had a desire after the Lord; when I was sent to School, I have gone under a hedge and prayed to the Lord to keep me from sinning against Him. But being grown up to twelve or thirteen years of age and our nearest neighbour was called the Lord Newport since Earl of Bradford,¹ he and his Lady and children came often to our House, and loving me more than all my Father's Children, and I waiting on them when they came to our House, I was lifted up into pride, so that it troubled my Father, who did much restrain me from it, I fearing to offend my Father.

But in the year 1653 I had a book of the trial of George Fox and James Naylor at Lancaster,² and when I had read it, did believe it was the Truth, and that they were holy Men, and I desired much to see them which afterwards I did. I went twice to Lancaster to visit George Fox when he was prisoner there, and twice to Worcester when he was prisoner there; tho' I had been at Meetings many times with him before and after. The first Meeting I was at, hearing Alexander Parker, then did I stand boldly for the Truth, and took up my cross and did bear my testimony for the Truth, first before those great People, and they lov'd me so well and proffer'd me great gifts if I would be as before. The Lady, so called, came with her attendance to my Father and say'd to him: "John, if you will give me Betty she shall never trouble you for a groat, but I will maintain her, she shall wait on Miss (that was her Daughter), and I will deck her with Jewels, and she shall go like one of us." I standing by answered and said: "Moses, the Servant of the Lord, refused to be called the son of Pharoahs Daughter, but rather chose to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a Season, and so had I." She was smitten at that time and said she would bring him that was their Priest to me, and so she did, but the power of God was over all, and did preserve me.

Another time the Lord Newport caused a great feast to be made at my Father's house of his own cost, and Invited

most of the Great men of the County to the feast, and spake to my Father that I might wait on him at the Table, which I did, doing all things which I ought, but not bowing (or Curchying). He observed me a while, and then said to me : " Why do not you make me a Curchy when you give me the Glass ? " My answer was : " Before I knew how to do better, I did, which is well known to all that are here." Then said he to me : " Betty, if you will make me a Curchy, as I am a Gentleman, and before all these Gentlemen I will give you Twenty Pounds." I answered : " If I might have all Eyton Hall to do it, yet I durst not do it, for all Honour belongeth to God : and the angel which revealed the Revelations to John (when John would have bowed to him) said : ' See thou do it not, for I am thy fellow servant and of thy Brethren the Prophets. Worship God ! ' " Then says he : " Why do you not speak to People when you meet them as you were wont to do ? " I answered : " It is written in the Scriptures : ' Go thy way ; if thou meet any man salute him not ; and if any man salute thee answer him not again ' ; and in John's Epistle to the Elect Lady and her children he said to them that ' Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the Doctrine of Christ hath not God ; he that abideth in the Doctrine of Christ he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine receive him not into your house neither bid him God speed.' " After this manner he discoursed with me all that afternoon. How many great gifts did he proffer me to submit to his will, but the Lord preserved me by his mighty power and made me stand boldly for the Truth in that publick house.

I was afterwards married to a very honest Man, a Friend of Truth, a Mercer by trade, living at Holt in Denbighshire. There, for opening our shop windows on the day called Christmas day, we had Stuff taken from us worth £1.6.9., and for not paying the Sunday Shillings, so called, Cloth worth £3.16.5. Many were the exercises I had in that Country, I being a widow at that time and excommunicated for not paying the Sunday Shillings, also I was brought before the Justices with all the Dissenters thereabouts ; and they being called made many excuses ; but when I was called the Justices asked me whether I was at Church the last 3 Sundays. I asked them whether it was lawful for excom^d persons to come into their assemblies. They said : " No."

Then said I: "By your own law I am clear. They have excom^d me and taken away my Goods, and now they have brought me before you." They said it was very hard, but it was the King's law and they durst not disobey the King's Law.

I said: "If the three children had not stood faithful when Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, made a decree, God had not been glorified; but the Lord hath had many faithful Witnesses in all ages and hath raised up many faithful Witnesses in our day which, rather than we should offend God, would give up our lives unto the death." Many more words we had, and those Justices were ever after very loving to me for great was my exercise in that Country among great men.

I went to the Judges at the Assizes at Ruthin (in Denbighshire). There were many prisoners at that time. There was James Fletcher³; and my then Husband; and my Father-in-law, and many more Friends, which were set at liberty by the Judge yet kept in prison by the Goaler for fees. Then I went to the Judges' Chamber and by much entreaty and discoursing with them I had the Judges' note to the Goaler that their Fees were remitted to them, and so they were set at liberty. This was after King Charles came in (1660). After this I was sent for to Shrewsbury by Friends to go to Lord Newport to get W^m Gibson and John Moone out of prison. They had been prisoners about half a year. He sent a letter to the Magistrates, and the Friends were released. Another time my Brother-in-law, Constantine Overton,⁴ and his Brother, and Timothy Greaves, and some other Friends, were taken prisoners at Wrexham Assizes—when they were about their lawful Business. Then I went to Judge Lloyd⁵ and he set them at liberty; but as they were coming home they were taken by Sir John Salisbury and sent Prisoners again. Then I had to go to Sir John Salisbury, 40 miles from my own House, to a place called Llanwrst, but he would not release them. Then I went to Lord Newport. He wrote to Sir Job Charlton,⁶ a judge of that Circuit, and by his letter I got Friends liberty: and much more that is too tedious to mention. For great was my service in that Country in getting Friends' liberty.

But the Lord had a further service for me. I not having my health my Relations advised me to come and live in the

Country where I was born, and about the year 1670 my Brother took a House and Shop in Broseley (within 6 miles of the place where I was born), where no Friends had lived before we came. It was a place of great trade. We had Mercers Goods and many other things to sell. People coming to buy of us and discoursing with us, many were convinced of the Truth and some stand faithful to this day : but many seeing our great persecution, turned back. We kept a meeting at our House with those that stood faithful, but the Priest began to rage and excommunicated us. We sowed half a strike of Hemp seed and for refusing to pay him Tithes out of it he said he would ruin us if it cost him £500, and indeed he did ruin us. We had bought £50 worth of Mercery Goods at London the summer before, and had our Shop full of goods, but being excom^d did not sell so much as would buy us bread. The Priest did say he would excommunicate all of his Parish that did buy or sell with us. So great was his rage against us that we had little or no trade at all. We were forced to go to a Town 5 miles off to sell some of the mercery, and took a standing in the Street great part of the winter, which was in 1674. We did go to the Monthly Meeting at Shrewsbury and acquainted friends of the dealings of the Priest with us. Thomas Taylor, a faithful friend, being there, wrote a letter to him and appointed a Meeting at our House : and for that Meeting the Priest got an order to seize all our Goods, £20 for the Preacher, £20 for Friends that were at the Meeting, and £10 for my husband and me for being in our own House. They came upon us so suddenly and in a great rage and took all our Cloath and Stuff and Shop goods : and would give us no time to take an account of them so great was their rage against us ; but after some time through much intreaty the Churchwardens told us they were not prized to the one fourth of their value, tho' they were prized to £56. The heavy hand of God fell upon our persecutors, the Priest who did this—His name was Tobiah Ogden, who afterwards was grievously troubled with the Stone and lived not long afterwards. Another Priest [probably George Evans, rector of Broseley] came after him, in the year 1688, who for not paying him 1s/6 demanded for tithe, took from us 2 Kine and the very bed we lay on and Sheets and all our household Stuff and did not leave us so much as a Chair to sit on.

As for entertaining friends that travelled in the service of truth, we entertained all that came to Malpas Meeting, which we belonged to before we came to Broseley. I cannot remember the names of all, but these I do: George Fox, Francis Howgill, Thomas Holmes, Elizabeth Holmes, Thomas Salthouse, Thos Briggs, John Moone, Richard Hubberthorne, James Sparks, James Harris, Jas. Adamson,⁷ James Fletcher.
E. ANDREWS.

NOTES

¹ FRANCIS NEWPORT (1619-1708), M.P. for Shrewsbury, created Earl of Bradford in 1694.

D.N.B.

Eyton Hall is in N. Shropshire, near Wellington.

² *Several Petitions Answered that were put up . . . against James Nayler and George Fox*, 1653.

Several copies in D.

³ FOR JAMES FLETCHER (d. 1696/7), thatcher, of Prescott and Knowsley, see *F.P.T.* 148.

⁴ CONSTANTINE OVERTON married Jane Farmer and had a daughter, Jane, born 1656. He was a grocer in Shrewsbury. W. G. Norris states that he "went to America about 1700." There was a Constantine Overton recorded in *D.N.B.*—married Mary Turner and died in 1687. (W. G. Norris states that *Thomas Overton*, of Shrewsbury, married Mary Turner in 1667, both dying in 1687, and with this the Friends Registers are in agreement.)

There was a Humphrey Overton.

Jnl. F.H.S. iv. xxi.

⁵ Probably, Sir Richard Lloyd (1634-1686), Judge.

D.N.B.

⁶ JOB CHARLETON, Judge, appears among persecutors in Cornwall, 1683. *Record of Sufferings in Cornwall*, 1655 to 1686. Supplement 14 to *Jnl. F.H.S.* 1928.

⁷ FOR JAMES ADAMSON, of Cumberland, see *F.P.T.*

1703. 4 mo. 29.

Remembering that Tho: Hayfeild use to come to Meetings and is Antient & poore, friends do order that a Shirt be given him as a token of love.

1704. 9 mo. 28.

Something is mentioned of giveinge old Tho: Hayfeild two Shirts being Aged about 80 yeasers & very poore. Andrew Binfeild is to provide 2 Shifts and it shall be repaid next meeting.

MS. Min. Reading Mo. Mtg. (1668-1716), at Reading.

1683. 6 mo. 31.

Thomas Courtis said y^t Singing (or Speaking Singingly) in Prayer or in Preaching, or with a vocall voice was abomination, & he Reflected upon Samuell Burgis at Oare, & said he had Sang them many a merry Jigg, but now he would seem to Excuse it & said he would as leif heare one Sing a ballad, w^{ch} is noe better.

MS. Min. Reading Mo. Mtg. (1681-1730), at Reading.