

Irish Quaker Records

Some items of interest in the Dublin Collection

MOST of the official records of the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland are in strong rooms under the care of local meetings. In addition, Dublin Yearly Meeting Historical Committee has responsibility for a collection of books, manuscripts, etc. at 6 Eustace St., Dublin. This was begun in 1908 and includes much of interest to Friends, particularly in relation to Irish Quakerism. Visitors are always welcomed and the number of enquiries for information from it increases year by year. One of the most used parts of the collection is a cabinet containing pedigrees of about two hundred Irish Quaker families abstracted from the official registers by the late Thomas Henry Webb.

The following are notes on a few of the items in the collection, which have been chosen almost at random.

There is a volume of Richard Farnworth's writings, privately bound, which includes a copy of his tract *A Discovery of Faith*, 1653. This small pamphlet was ascribed to James Naylor by John Whiting in his catalogue of Friends books published in 1708 and Joseph Smith (*Cata.* II, 217) also attributes it to him. The reason for this probably is that printed at the end of Farnworth's tract is *A letter of James Naylor to severall Friends about Wakefield*, and in the copy at Friends House the last two lines of the preface are cut off. The conclusion of this preface is of interest apart from the fact that it shows the tract to have been Farnworth's and not Naylor's. It runs as follows ;—

Wait wholly within, and sink down into the eternal love, and thou wilt see me and the rest, that we are in the unity of that one Spirit, where love is head, the daily bread, where the soul's refreshment is for to be had, which makes the heart exceedingly glad, Thine in the Vine, Rich : Farnworth.

It would be interesting to know whether there are extant any other complete copies of this tract.

Among a very large number of Irish-printed editions of well-known Friends' books one may select for mention a French translation of John Woolman's *Word of Remembrance and Caution to the Rich*, under the title, *Avis Rememoratif, ou Un mot de caution, adressé Aux Riches. Par Jean Woolman . . . Traduit par Jacques Desmanoirs. Youghall 1800. Dublin: 1800, 16mo., 102 pp.* Probably the translator was a teacher for he says in his Preface that he is issuing the book for the benefit of young people who are studying French.

Possibly the earliest examples of Quaker Irish-printed literature are letters from the Half-years Meetings in Dublin in 1688 and 1691.

Recently there was added to the collection a letter dictated by George Fox and sent to Friends in Ireland in 1685. It tells them that George Whitehead had been to see the new Lord Lieutenant on their behalf and that he would be willing to let them have access to him should occasion arise. It adds "I have sent him a many of your names yt some may goe one time and some another as they have occasion or any other that is not set downe may visit him with you."

An autograph letter from William Penn to Ambrose Galloway of Lewes offers him a present of "An American skin for a pair of breeches." He goes on to say "I have wore one three or four years colourd, & much likt by some great ones, & 3 or 4 have been beging of me for some of them."

A more recent autograph letter is from the poet Whittier to the girls of Mountmellick School on the occasion of the centenary of the school in 1886. In it the poet says "Friends should be the last people to fear knowledge. Their great distinctive doctrine of the Light Within is safe from any danger from free inquiry, science and criticism, if it is its own unmistakeable evidence."

There is a very large collection of letters in the library to and from members of the Shackleton family of Ballitore and their descendants. They give a detailed picture of Irish Quaker life for nearly a century (the latter part of the eighteenth and the earlier nineteenth). There is also on the premises (though not in charge of the Historical Committee) the many volumed diary of Mary Shackleton, afterwards Leadbeater, which is an almost daily record of social life as she saw it among Friends and others from 1774 to 1826. Contemporary with the Shackleton letters are hundreds of

letters of the Lecky family of Cork and the Newsoms of Limerick and Edenderry.

Earlier than these are letters from Limerick Friends in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. One gives a graphic account of the divided state of the London Yearly Meeting gathering of 1719, the chief matter in dispute being the wording of the Affirmation which was permitted to Friends. The letter concludes "A.P. and Danl Quare gave 2 Stroaks at us In Ireland, . . . I own I was not sorry for the occasion it gave of wipeing off the aspersion our discipline has lyen under in this nation—'twas done in the face of a full meeting : . . . there were Severall Occurances wch would be too Tedious to Relate and Must Serve for an entertainment when wee meet. . . ."

A number of diaries illustrate various periods of Quaker history in Ireland, and give side lights on the literary and scientific as well as the commercial pursuits of Friends. One, that of James Hill of Limerick, tells also of life in Philadelphia in 1850 when he was considered fortunate to get a situation in a tea and coffee store at five dollars a week. As he had to work from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m. he did not stay there long ; he also found the American boy too independent for his ideas.

Many minute books and files of correspondence deal with the educational and philanthropic interests of Friends in this country, such as Anti-Slavery, Sunday school work, relief work both in Ireland and abroad, and definite ventures as the model farm started in the west of Ireland by a Quaker committee after the great famine of 1847.

Numerous photographs further illustrate nineteenth century Quaker life.

The curios include a chair on which William Penn is reputed to have sat when visiting in Ireland in 1698, the Cross of the Legion of Honour given to Richard Allen for the War Victims work of Irish Friends in Metz in 1870, an engraving of Penn's Treaty with the Indians framed in wood which was part of the roots of the tree under which the Treaty was made, and some Anti-Slavery china presented to a Friend in Youghal in the early nineteenth century, which has since journeyed safely to California and lately back again to Ireland.

ISABEL GRUBB