

## William Singleton of Sheffield<sup>1</sup>

IN *Journal F.H.S.*, Vol. 48, p. 230, there is a brief reference to William Singleton's visit to Sierra Leone in 1821. His visit to Gambia and Sierra Leone took place between December, 1820, and July, 1821, under the auspices of a "committee managing a fund raised by some Friends for the purpose of promoting African instruction".<sup>2</sup> The fund had been raised by appeal to members of the Society of Friends, and the committee of eight included William Allen, Peter Bedford, Luke Howard and John Sanderson (treasurer).

Hannah Kilham of Sheffield had already been concerned to teach West Africans, and for this purpose to learn, and then to reduce to grammatical principles, one or more of the unwritten languages of Africa, so that parts of the Bible could be translated.

The committee helped her to care for two West African youths from whom she learnt the Waloof language. During this period (1820) William Singleton, who had formerly been reading master at Ackworth,<sup>3</sup> was responsible for their education in English, Arithmetic, etc., their principal textbook being the Bible.

The committee next wished to make direct contact on the field to see how their project could best be furthered, and an unexpected offer was received from William Singleton, whose service, after enquiry, was accepted.

William Singleton resigned from the Society in 1823, having been a cause of anxiety to the elders in Sheffield for six or seven years. It appears that his ministry in Meeting was long and frequent, and advice given by elders was not sufficiently acceptable. Gradually the rift widened until his resignation, after which he published a long and detailed account of his relationships with the elders of the Monthly Meeting under the title, *The Result of a Seven Years' Mission*

<sup>1</sup> Smith's *Catalogue*, as mentioned in *J.F.H.S.*, 48, p. 230, says of Owlerton, nr. Sheffield, referring to 1824. The report here quoted says of Loxley, nr. Sheffield.

<sup>2</sup> Report of the committee managing a fund, etc., published in London, 1822. I have used a copy in the Bevan-Naish collection.

<sup>3</sup> Henry Thompson, *History of Ackworth School*, 1879, p. 116. William Singleton published a delightful picture of Ackworth in verse, pleading for mild punishments, under the title, *Mentor & Amander, &c.*, 1814.

*among Friends of Balby Monthly Meeting in Yorkshire with a serious address to professors in general, especially to those who pray for the conversion of the heathen* (1823). At the bottom of the title page is the note, "The profits (if any) will be devoted to the cause of Africa."

This document, intended as a vindication of himself and an attack on the "nominal elders", is written with prophetic fervour and denunciatory vocabulary reminiscent of the seventeenth century. He claims, "I was warned of the Holy Spirit to resign my membership, and woe was denounced against me if I did it not." He accuses the elders of having latterly spread a rumour that he was deranged, and the tone of this paper explains, though does not support, the rumour.

Prior to his visit to Africa he had from time to time been "elderred", but the rift was not yet acute. It is evident that Hannah Kilham, a member of his Meeting, could not have been seriously in doubt as to his suitability to go. Reading between the lines of the published report of the committee one senses special caution in sending him: enquiries were made first, the length of his visit was agreed before he left, his service was accepted specifically "for the present occasion". William Allen, writing at the time of his sailing for West Africa, says he was "much occupied by W. Singleton's case",<sup>1</sup> which may indicate anxiety. In March, 1821, William Allen writes<sup>2</sup> to Daniel Wheeler that "Friends in London, without giving any opinion as to the rectitude of the concern, which rests entirely with himself, have thought it right to assist him; we have given him a list of queries and a written paper of instructions." But William Singleton's report on his return in July is admirable: factual, objective and economical of words in a way uncommon in his time. The report was published with a preamble by the committee, together with the subscription list, in 1822, before the trouble at Sheffield had reached its climax, and it contains no hint of dissatisfaction at the way in which his mission had been discharged.

The committee were so far encouraged in their concern that they approached Meeting for Sufferings in December, 1821, through the Committee on the Total Abolition of the Slave Trade, asking them to promote a mission of instruction

<sup>1</sup> *Life of William Allen*, 1846-7, II, 185.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 195.

to the negroes of the Gambia. After consideration in two sessions, that meeting did "not see its way clear at present to proceed",<sup>1</sup> and the later and better known mission of Hannah Kilham, Richard Smith, Ann and John Thompson, was privately sponsored by the indefatigable committee, just as, nearly fifty years later, Joseph Sewell's mission in Madagascar was sponsored by the F.F.M.A. But William Singleton had paved their way. L. HUGH DONCASTER

<sup>1</sup> H. T. Hodgkin, *Friends Beyond Seas*, 1916, prints the minutes of Meeting for Sufferings on pp. 24-5.

## Notes and Queries

**BRIGG MARRIAGE CERTIFICATES**  
The National Register of Archives (Yorkshire, West Riding) list of the Brigg MSS. in the custody of the Librarian, Public Library, Keighley, enumerates four marriage certificates. They are as follows:

514. 28 Dec. 1690 Certificate of marriage of Jeremy Brigg of Calversykehill and Elizabeth Davy, daughter of William Davy of Whitleyhead, Quakers, held in the house of Richard Shackleton in Harding, parish of Bingley. 28 witnesses. Paper. (Jj.22)
515. 9 Jun. 1706 Certificate of marriage of John Ramsden, son of John Ramsden of Braithwaite and Agnes Hird, daughter of John Hird of Braithwaite, Quakers, held in the house of John Hird. 36 witnesses. Parchment. (Jj.23)
516. 4 Jun. 1732 Certificate of marriage of Thomas Brigg, son of Jeremiah Brigg of Laycock and Judith Hardcastle, daughter of Thomas Hardcastle of Hardcastle Garth, Hartwith in Kirkby Malzeard, Quakers, held at Daker Pasture in Daker cum

Burley, Ripon. 27 witnesses. Parchment. (Jj.24)

517. Certificate of marriage of Josua Brigg, son of Thomas Brigg of Calversykehill, with Isabel Dryver, daughter of John Dryver of Wheatley within the Monastery of Sawley, yeoman, Quakers, held at Newby in Gisburn. 28 witnesses. Parchment. (Jj.25)

Among the other family papers are:

522. Abstracts of Keighley parish registers and Quaker registry for the name Brigg. (40)
533. Collections . . . lists of baptisms and burials, extracts from the Quaker Parish Register [!]. (66)
535. Collections relating to Keighley Quakers:  
Copy register, 1654-1845:  
Notes on the Stanbury Quaker Burial ground:  
List of burials at the Bradley Quaker Burial ground. (40)
536. Collections as above:  
Copy accounts of collections taken at Quaker Meetings at Keighley, 1717-1726:  
Copy Orders 1689, 1717-1726;  
Copy Minutes 1697-1718. (40)