

ROGER WILLIAMS, FREEMAN OF MASSACHUSETTS.BY REUBEN A. GUILD.

KNOWLES in his "Memoir of Roger Williams the Founder of the State of Rhode Island," states that he took the usual oath on his admission as a Freeman of the "Massachusetts Bay," May 18, 1631, referring for authority to Prince's Annals of New England. This author, under date of October 19, 1630, when the "General Court of the Massachusetts Colony met at Boston," gives a list of persons who desired to be made Freemen, including "Roger Williams, a minister, who went 1. to Plymouth. 2. to Salem. 3. to Providence." This however was nearly four months before his arrival in America. The difficulty is explained by adding that the October list comprehended "all those who entered their desires between that time and May 18." Whereupon Prof. Knowles remarks, "that Mr. Williams, with characteristic decision, entered his name on the list very soon after his arrival." This assertion has been repeated by the biographers of Williams, from Knowles down to the present day. The simple fact is, as Dr. Dexter and the lamented Prof. Diman have clearly shown, the Founder of Rhode Island was never admitted as a Freeman of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay, although he owned a house and lands in Salem. Who then was the Roger Williams whom Prince records in his "Annals"? The Rev. William Urwick, pastor of the Congregational Church in St. Albans, England, and author of a valuable work recently published, entitled, "Nonconformity in Herts, being Lectures upon the Nonconforming Worthies of St. Albans, and Memorials of Puritanism and Nonconformity in all the Parishes of the

County of Hertford," in a letter to me dated "Belsize Park Gardens, Hampstead, December 1, 1886," states that he finds in the old St. Albans Parish Register, the following entry under the head of Baptisms:—"Roger, son of Mr. Lewis Williams. 3 die, August, 1607." "It now remains," the writer adds, "to hunt up the will of Mr. Lewis Williams. . . . The fact of his being styled *Mr.* in the Register, shows that he was a man of respectability and mark, because, in the run of names in the Register *Mr.* does not occur. . . . His name does not appear, nor does that of his son Roger, either among marriages or deaths." If this Roger eventually came to America, as it now seems probable, his name would not be likely to appear in any parish registry.

Mr. Harry Wright, in behalf of the Rev. Canon Elwyn, Master of the Charterhouse, formerly called "Sutton's Hospital," in a letter to my friend W. H. Overall, Librarian of Guildhall, dated "Charterhouse, E. C., 15 April, 1886," thus writes: "The only information contained in our books respecting Roger Williams is, that he was elected a scholar 25th June, 1621, and ordered to be sent to the University, being a good scholar, on the 9th of July, 1624."

This could not apply to the Roger Williams of Rhode Island, although Elton so claims, and Arnold and other writers, including myself, repeat the story. The Rev. Dr. Dexter, in his interesting monograph "As to Roger Williams," singularly enough begins by saying: "All that can be positively *proved* concerning his early life is that, when a youth, he attracted the attention of Sir Edward Coke, and, on his influence, was elected a scholar of Sutton's Hospital, now the Charterhouse, 25 June, 1621; that he obtained an exhibition there 9 July, 1624; and that he was matriculated a Pensioner of Pembroke College, Cambridge, 7 July, 1625." The first and last of these statements are indeed true. He did attract when a youth the favorable notice of Sir Edward Coke, and he was

eventually matriculated a Pensioner of Pembroke College; but the records of Charterhouse as here given, refer to quite a different person.

The Charterhouse, it is well known, comprises a "Hospital" for the support of eighty "Pensioners," so called, all upwards of fifty years of age when admitted; a "Chapel"; and a "School," the main feature of which originally was forty "Foundation Scholars," none of whom were admitted under the age of ten years nor above the age of fourteen. They were generally the sons of gentlemen with large families and moderate fortunes, to whom an academic education was an object. They were received after examination, and upon the nomination of the governors, of whom there were sixteen. Mr. Sutton, the founder, died on the 12th of December, 1611. Shortly after his death his nephew and heir-at-law, instigated by Sir Francis Bacon, Coke's life-long rival and enemy, instituted proceedings to set aside his uncle's grant, and to divert his immense estates to uses never contemplated by the donor. These attempts were strenuously resisted by the sixteen governors, who were all prelates, noblemen and gentlemen of distinction, at the head of whom was Chief Justice Coke. The result was that Coke was enabled to certify that the founder's incorporation was sufficient, good and effectual in law. The governors held their first meeting on the 30th June, 1613, and proceeded to make various regulations, and to assign apartments within the institution for the different officers. The following year Nicholas Grey, a man "eminent for his learning in the Greek and Latin languages," was appointed "Master of the School," and the work of instruction began. It was about this time, so the tradition reads, "that Sir Edward, one day observing a youth at Church taking notes of the Sermon, and the people crowding, beckoned to him to come to his pew; and seeing how judiciously he minuted down the striking sentiments of the preacher, was so pleased that he entreated the

parents to let him have the lad," with the intent, without doubt, of placing him at the school in which he was so deeply interested. He certainly did not need to adopt the lad, for he already had twelve children of his own; nor did he need to bestow pecuniary assistance, for the parents of the lad were in affluent circumstances, and moreover the Chief Justice was noted at this time for being penurious and extravagantly fond of riches. So at least his biographer, Lord Campbell, states. Mrs. Sadler, in her correspondence now preserved in the Library of Trinity College, thus writes: "This Roger Williams when he was a youth, would in a short-hand take sermons and speeches in the Star Chamber, and present them to my dear father. He, seeing so hopeful a youth, took such a liking to him that he sent him to Sutton's Hospital, and he was the second that was placed there." If he was born at "Roseworthy Manor," Cornwall, England, on the 21 December, 1602, as there is abundant evidence to prove, he was now in his twelfth year. He was placed at the school in 1614 as an ordinary pupil, without doubt. Had he been received as a "Foundation Scholar," the Charterhouse records would indicate it. The only name of Roger Williams entered upon the records is the one to whom reference has already been made, who was elected a Foundation Scholar on the 25th June, 1621. If this refers to the Roger Williams of St. Albans, who was baptized August 3, 1607, he would be at the time of his election thirteen years, eleven months and eighteen days old, dating from his baptism. The record adds that he was ordered to be sent to the University being a good scholar on the 9th July, 1624, when the founder of Rhode Island had just completed his first year at Pembroke College. He probably entered either the University at Oxford or Cambridge, in the month of October following, at the beginning of the first or Michaelmas term; and if he was graduated Bachelor of Arts, it must have been four years later, that is in 1628. The founder of Rhode Island,

on the contrary, entered Pembroke College, Cambridge, as the records show, at the beginning of the second, or Lent term, in January, 1624; and he was graduated Bachelor of Arts in 1627.

A note from Mr. Wright, dated "Charterhouse, E. C., June 26, 1886," reads as follows:

"REUBEN A. GUILD, Esq.

DEAR SIR:

Re Roger Williams.

The following is an extract of what I have accidentally discovered on our books under date 1629. (New style 1630.)

'Roger Williams, who hath Exhibition, and so for about five years past, hath forsaken the University and is become a discontinuer of his studies there. His Exhibition was therefore suspended.'

Yours faithfully,

HARRY WRIGHT.

For the Master."

It thus clearly appears, from the Charterhouse records, that the only Roger Williams of this early period whose name appears upon the books as a Foundation Scholar was sent to the University in July, 1624, having what is termed an Exhibition, equivalent to eighty pounds or four hundred dollars a year, and that after five years, or in the summer of 1629, this Exhibition was suspended, the recipient having become, in the quaint language of the records, "a discontinuer of his studies." The founder of Rhode Island, on the contrary, had no Exhibition. He entered college as a Pensioner, or gentleman's son, and he paid his own bills, so the Registrar, the Rev. Dr. H. R. Luard, writes me under date of September 25, 1886.

But there was a Roger Williams who came over from England in the *Mary and John*, May 30, 1630, who settled in Dorchester, Massachusetts, who requested admission as a Freeman on the 19th October, 1630, and who took the oath

as such on the 18th May following. He was a prominent and useful man, and he filled many offices of trust. He served on a jury September 28, 1630, to inquire into the cause of the death of Austin Bratcher; he had charge with another person of the goods of Christopher Ollyver, having been appointed to this trust November 7, 1634; he was one of the arbitrators about the ship *Thunder* in the summer of 1635; and he was one of the Selectmen of Dorchester the same year. In 1636 or 7 he removed to Windsor, Connecticut, and he was there in good repute. Savage states in brief, that he served on a jury in 1642, 3, and 4, and that his wife died on the 10th of December, 1645. In 1647, or the year following, he sold his house and land to Capt. Benj. Newberry and returned to Dorchester. In 1649, or before, he married for his second wife, Lydia, daughter of James Bates. In 1650 he calls himself of Boston, when he sold land in Dorchester to Thomas Thaxter. But little more is told of him. In 1647 he joined the "Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company."

From all that has now been stated it may I think fairly be inferred, that the Roger Williams of Massachusetts, whose admission as a Freeman has been strangely ascribed to the Founder of Rhode Island, was the son of Mr. Lewis Williams of St. Albans, was a "Foundation Scholar" at the Charterhouse, and a graduate of a college either at Cambridge or at Oxford.

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