

Looking Back Over the Trail

By
Eliza Armstrong Cox

DEDICATION

To the memory of the dear companions in service, long since promoted; and to the faithful, earnest laborers of the Woman's Missionary Union, their successors, this little book is lovingly dedicated by the author.

August, 1927.

Obituary: Eliza Armstrong Cox

"The twilight hour—Dawn for her."

Thus read the message that carried the news of the release of Eliza Armstrong Cox from the frail little body that had served her for 85 years.

It was on Sunday evening, June 30, 1935, that her own prophecy was fulfilled which she had voiced two years ago, before a large audience that had gathered to pay honor to her. She said, "It is common to speak of people beyond 70 as going down. But I will say at this time that I am not going down. I am going up; and I shall continue going up until one of these days I will vanish amid the mists that gather at the top of the hill, and be seen here no more."

When Eliza Clark was born February 6, 1850, in Alamance County, North Carolina, the South was in the grip of slavery. Her grandfather, Dougan Clark, an itinerant Methodist minister, became convinced of the evil of this traffic, and counselled his children to take their families into the free states. Accordingly Alexander and Anna Johnson Clark took their five children: William, Albert, Sarah, Harriet and the youngest, Eliza (six years of age) across the mountains a four weeks' trek to Monrovia, Indiana, where they settled on a partially cleared farm and began carving out a new life in the frontier.

They were members and regular attenders of the Friends Meeting at West Union. Here Eliza learned to worship and revere God.

Her schooling was gained through subscription schools and district schools which were fostered by Friends, and finally she enjoyed almost a year at Earlham College. Her opportunities were limited,



ELIZA ARMSTRONG COX

but from that time to the end of her life she was a tireless student and profound thinker. She began teaching at the age of 16—alternately teaching and going to school.

Her religious life was so normal that she could not remember a time when she was not subject to deep religious impressions. By the time she was grown she found herself definitely a believer in, and a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ without being able to name a date when she entered the Kingdom. From her girlhood she felt that she must do some special work for her Lord.

At the age of 27 she was married to Joshua Armstrong and they established their home in Butlerville, Indiana, and became members of Hopewell Monthly Meeting. Here she began more active effort in the church and being deeply interested in foreign missionary work, she, through correspondence with other Friends communities, awakened interest and began the organization of Women's Foreign Missionary Societies.

After eight years they moved to Monrovia and attended the meeting of her girlhood at West Union. Here Eliza C. Armstrong threw her joyful enthusiasm into the launching of the Friends' Missionary Advocate as an aid to the development of Missionary interest. Esther Tuttle Pritchard was the first editor of this periodical, resigning after six years on account of ill health. Eliza C. Armstrong was appointed to the place and took charge in 1891. Shortly after this she was acknowledged a minister. Her preaching has been mostly in the meetings where she has resided. She did pastoral work at West Union, Hazelwood,

Plainfield, East Newton, Fairfield, Sand Creek, and Azalia, in Indiana, and later in the limits of North Carolina Yearly Meeting.

On account of her husband's failing health they left the farm and moved to Plainfield in 1903. Within a year death claimed four of her loved ones: a niece, her husband, her mother and her father, leaving only an invalid sister to be her companion, and within three years the sister was gone. It is said that during this period of sorrow, her hair turned white within six months.

After eight years of widowhood she was married to Joseph R. Cox of Columbus, Indiana, and went there for residence. They moved to Whittier in August, 1918, and settled for their sunset of life. The following March Joseph Cox was taken by death, leaving Eliza Armstrong Cox alone again, but among friends. Two nieces are her nearest living kin.

The story of her life in Whittier is one of unremitting activity, centered in the interests of the Kingdom, giving her best efforts to her Women's Bible Class of the First Friends Church whose loyalty and love she held to the end. For years she has led mission study groups in her own society and in the wider field of Interdenominational gatherings. She was an active worker in the Whittier Council of Churches.

She enjoyed contacts with new ideas, new peoples, new surroundings. She followed with great interest political, economic and social changes as she saw them unfolding year after year through her long life. To her an idea was not right because it was old, nor wrong because it was new. She was one who

dared to let herself "down into the depths" of an idea and put it to the test. Having done this she emerged with new kernels of truth and new breath of inspiration. She was prophetic, gripping in her utterance. She was frequently called to give addresses before audiences of children as well as adults and her counsel was valued in most important decisions of the Church.

Small wonder that when the Women's Missionary Union of Friends in America was celebrating its 50th anniversary, they craved her presence as their honored guest. She, the "mother" of the movement was there with her message.

Three years later when the same organization invited her to give the Bible lessons at their conference, she had been following out a line of study for her own spiritual and mental development. Her notes were in hand. She was ready.

When the call of the inevitable came and loved ones did their utmost for her comfort and restoration, she waved it all aside, and placed at the feet of Him she loved, her 85 years of victorious living. She was ready.

The end came from an attack of pneumonia while she was visiting at the home of her devoted stepson, J. Freeman Cox, whom she loved as her own, and wife, at Grand Junction, Colorado. From there she sent her final message to California Yearly Meeting which was in session. The telegram read:

"Your messages very precious. Your fellowship in love and prayers comforts me. God bless and keep you. Let us recognize the supremacy of God. Let us work together with Him, that His Kingdom may come, His will may be done in us as it is in Heaven."

The twilight hour—Dawn for her.

Alone With God

ELIZA ARMSTRONG COX

There is a sure and quiet place
Where I may meet my Lord;
Where heart can touch the heart divine,
And feed upon His word.

That place is with my Saviour, Lord,
Inside the closet fold;
Where none may know, and none may hear
What to Him there is told.

Within this sweet and sacred place
He sups with me alone;
Then, precious truth, I sup with Him,
And know I am His own.

Dear trysting place for God and me,
There will I oft be found;
Where heavenly joys I share with Him
And feel His love abound.

Whittier, Calif.