

Fry of Yarty.

BY EDWARD ALEX. FRY.

ON a former visit of this Society in 1882 to Membury, the late Rev. Frederick Browne, whom many of you will no doubt remember, gave a brief outline of the family of Fry of Yarty in this parish, and I intend only to supplement his remarks and to make one or two corrections which further investigations have suggested.

The earliest member of the family that I have at present located with certainty is a William Fry, patron of the living of Feniton in the county of Devon and of St. Mellior in Cornwall, from 1404 to 1418. He is probably identical with a William Fry who held the Manors of Bromley and Farleye in Stoke Abbas near Beaminster, co. Dorset, and if so, died 24th June, 1427. He was great uncle of the John Fry who married Agnes, daughter and heiress of Richard Yerty, or Yarty, and who apparently was the first of the name who actually lived in this parish. From this marriage onwards the family's pedigree appears in the "Visitations of Devonshire," and although I have made very extensive investigations among wills, administrations, and other records, I will not inflict the details on you as it is a Devon and not a Somerset family.

The man who actually acquired the property in this and other neighbouring parishes for the family at the time of the dissolution of the monasteries in 1546 and onwards, was John Fry, who lived at Wycroft a mile or so from here, four views of which place appeared in the *Transactions* for 1898, accompanied by a description by my friend, Mr. Hamilton Rogers.

He was great uncle of the Nicholas Fry, whose memory is commemorated in the sculpture now before you. Exactly twenty years ago I spent a week down here, and in the early morning, when the sun was shining through the Eastern window of this south aisle, I passed many hours deciphering the inscription beneath the two kneeling figures, and as it is now next to impossible to read it owing to repeated coats of white-wash, I wish to record the exact rendering :

“Here lieth the bodies of Nicholas Fry of Yeartie Esq who died 25th October 1632 in the 79 year of his age and of Elynor his wife the daughter of John Brett of Whitstanton in the County of Somset Esq. She died the 28 March 1619 in the — year of her age. They lived in wedlocke 37 yeares They had issue 4 sonnes and 6 daughters Willyam the eldest sone who married Mary the youngest daughter of John Yonge Esqre Henry the second son who married Elizabeth ye youngest daughter of Richard Parrett of Buckerell gent, Nicholas their 3rd sonne who died an infant, John 4 sonne who yett liveth unmarried. Margaret their firste daughter who married Robert Ashford of Kingston Newell Esq Elizabeth their second daughter who married Henry Worth of Worth Esq. Bridgett their third daughter who married Edward Pine of Eastdowne Esq Anne 4 daughter who died an infant Alice their 5 daughter who married Henry Luscombe of Luscombe Esq Agnes who married Gideon Sherman of Knightstone.”

The morning light also was the best I found by which to read the inscription on the black marble tablet in the corner, and as that too is growing fainter by age I will venture to give it full also, because it contains a myth.

“In memory of Robert Fry of Yearty Esq who married Frances ye daughter of Joseph Langton of Newton Park in ye county of Somersett Esqre by whom he had issue a sone and 3 daughters who died young and Elizabeth who was married to John Lord King E——n of Ockham she died 23 Jan 1733 Ae 23 who lieth also here interred without issue. Ye said Robert Fry descended from John Fry of Yearty Esq and Agnes his wife ye only daughter and heiress of Yearty of Yearty Esq and which said John was son of John Fry of Feniton Esq and Jane daughter of Edmond Duke of Somersett



MURAL EFFIGIES OF THE FRY FAMILY,
IN MEMBURY CHURCH.

ye grandson of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster
who was ye son of King Edward the Third.

Robert Fry obiit-January 1725 aetatis suoe-

Frances Fry obiit 24 Dec 1730 aetatis suoe 50

From John Fry afore mentioned

descended

Henry Fry now of Deer Park Esq Gilbert Fry late of

Wood in this county Esq. Bernard Fry yett afore of Dulcis

Esq whose only daughter and heiress was married to George

Southcott second son of Thomas Southcott of Calverley

Esq and great grandfather to George Southcott now

of Dulcis Esq.

This monument was erected

persuant to ye directions of ye last will and testament

of the said Frances Fry by Raymundo Putt Richard

Hallett and George Southcott Esq executors in trust there

in named for Margrett Joane Elizabeth daughters

of John Fry ūnl to ye aforesaid Henry Fry Esq

1742."

Now the myth lies in the eleventh and twelfth lines in the words "which said John was son of John Fry of Feniton Esq. and Jane daughter of Edmond Duke of Somersett ye grandson of John of Gaunt Duke of Lancaster who was ye son of King Edward the Third."

How it came to be stated in such a bold fashion that a John Fry married Joan or Jane Beaufort I cannot well make out. It is beyond dispute that it was a Richard Fry who married her, as can be proved by his will and certain Privy Seals of which I have copies; and there is nothing I have yet come across to prove that the said Richard Fry was connected in any way with this Devon family.

Further information supplied by myself respecting Richard Fry will be found in a recent number of the "Genealogist," April, 1903.

This monument was put up in 1742, after the death and by the directions of Frances Fry, widow of Robert Fry, the last male representative of the family, at a time when no one was particularly interested in observing the literal correctness of the wording. To link oneself on to royalty, even at the expense of a little truth, is the ambition of many families, and

when there is no question of the surname the alteration of a christian name is of little importance.

As already stated by Mr. Browne, William Fry, the eldest son of Nicholas and Ellenor Fry, took an active part in the civil wars, being a colonel on the Parliamentary side, but Mr. Browne, probably relying on what Noble in his "Lives of the Regicides" says, fell into an error when he stated that he was a Member for Shaftesbury. It was a John Fry of the Dorset family who was M.P. for Shaftesbury, and one of the Regicides (though he did not actually sign the warrant). This John Fry, if not a collateral ancestor of myself, was certainly allied by marriage to one of my ancestors, and more about him will be found in "Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries," vol. I, pp. 53 and 73.

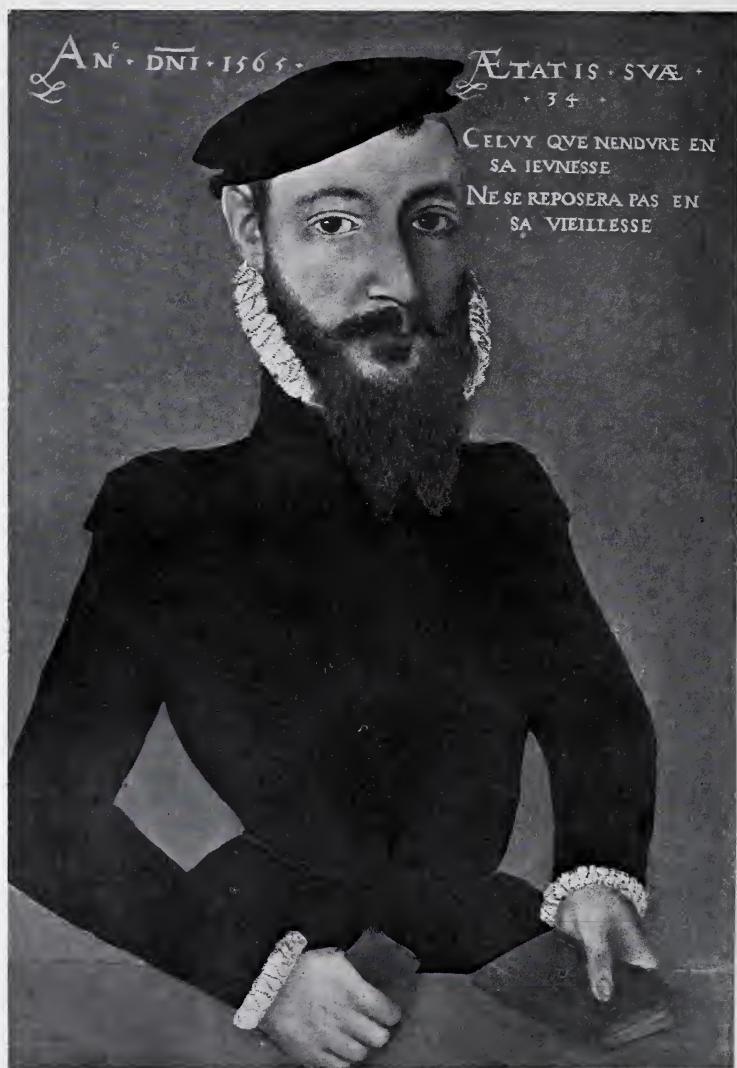
With regard to the armorial bearings depicted on the top of the monument with the kneeling figures, they represent, *Quarterly* (1) *Gules, three horses currant in pale* (Fry). (2) *Argent, a fess engrailed between three mullets sable* (Bratton). (3) *Sable, a lion rampant argent* (Brett). (4) *Argent, three mallards gules* (Yarty).

On the wooden screen dividing the Yarty aisle from the rest of the church are the arms of Fry impaling Langton, *Quarterly sable and or over all a bend argent*.

Yarty, the ancient seat of the Frys, is situate about a mile west of this church. They resided there until the beginning of the XVIII Century. In 1726, Elizabeth the only surviving child of Robert Fry married John, Lord King, ancestor of the present Earl of Lovelace, and brought the property to him.

The old mansion was of considerable size, with good gardens and fishponds. Part of it was some years ago destroyed by fire, but what remains is still occupied as a farmhouse.

There was at one time, we are told in "The Mirror," of 11th November, 1843, a stone in the chancel floor, bearing the arms of Fry in a lozenge and the following inscription, "In memory



COUNSELLOR FRY, OF YARTY.

of Mrs. Elinour Fry, youngest daughter of William Fry of Yarty, Esq., who dyed August 27, A.D. 1705, aged 83," and two lines of epitaph.

Also from the same source we are informed there were four hatchments, two of which in 1843 were defaced; another of the arms of Fry impaling Langton with a Greek inscription; and another representing the arms of Napper or Napier of Punknowle with a chronogram. This was given in the Society's *Proceedings* for 1882 and was in existence when I first visited the place in 1883.

Before closing my remarks I should like to say that Mr. Hamilton Rogers very generously presented me with a portrait on oak panel, supposed to be one of this family of Fry. He bought it at a sale in the neighbourhood, and it was seen by the late Mr. J. B. Davidson, of Secktor House, near Axminster. It represents a not too prepossessing face of a middle-aged man with moustache and double-pointed beard, a straight nose and almond-shaped eyes. It shows the body down to a little below the waist. He wears a tight-fitting jacket, perhaps of velvet or some other plain dark material. He has a white ruffle round his neck and also round each wrist, and wears a little velvet (?) cap similar in shape to, though smaller than, a "Tam o'shanter." In his left hand he has a book, and in his right either a small book or something suspiciously like a pack of cards (see illustration).

An inscription over his head reads :

*"An Dni 1565 Aetatis suae 34
Celuy qui nendure en sa jeunesse
Ne se reposera pas en sa vieillesse."*

Which may be translated: "He who is not patient under tribulation in his youth, will not have peace in his old age."

On the back has been painted in modern times "Counsellor Fry." There is of course the usual speculation as to which member of the family he represents. If the age given, 34,

represents his age in 1565, he would be born 1531, and the only one of the Yarty tribe who would fit in with this date is William Fry, father of Nicholas of the kneeling effigy. But I have no information that William Fry was a lawyer; he died in 1607. Apparently the only member bred to the law was John Fry, of Wycroft, uncle to William. John certainly was a lawyer, and was admitted to Gray's Inn in 1536, just five years after the subject of this portrait was born, so that it can hardly be a portrait of John Fry.