

Elizabeth Cartwright (1736-1811)

Compiled by Raewyn Hooper March 2016

Elizabeth Cartwright was born in 1737 in the “retired and pleasant village” of Duffield in Derbyshire. She was an only child with a keen mind and a talent for drawing. She was known as the “Lily of Duffield” because of her great beauty and gracefulness.

She was also a talented artist, known for her ability to creating minute landscapes and flowers, exquisitely crafted by cutting paper.

As a young adult she befriended many prominent writers including Robert Dodsley, an eminent publisher to whom she was related. At his house she “acquired an impressive circle of literary acquaintances”. In “Other British Voices: Women, Poetry, and Religion, 1766-1840” she is described as a “literary dilettante”. She was also a close friend of Joseph Spence, a historian and literary scholar. He bequeathed her a set of valuable engravings.

She was an enthusiastic correspondent and many of the letters she wrote to friends, family and literary acquaintances have been preserved in the book “Catherine Hutton and her friends” by Catherine Beale.

Catherine Hutton wrote in 1802: “Mrs. Coltman, when Miss Cartwright, was held up to me by my mother as the model of all earthly perfection, and I believe she deserved it better than most such models do.”

She met John Coltman while he was on a northern business trip, and began a regular correspondence with him in 1763. However after not hearing from him for several months, she received a marriage proposal from a Mr Saddler, which she accepted because of the strong wishes of her family, who didn't want her to move away from the neighbourhood.

On this subject Catherine Hutton Beale wrote:

“The mystery of Mr. Coltman's long and frequent silences, and the fact of Mr. and Mrs. Cartwright's extreme aversion to the idea of their daughter's settling at such a distance from them as London, at last induced her, at their express desire, to listen to the overtures of a gentleman, who appeared to them singularly eligible as the future husband of their only child, whatever her heart might dictate to the contrary. She had had many admirers, to none of whom had she lent a willing ear saving to Mr. Coltman, but having now become aware of some peculiar circumstances connected with his situation, to which she attributed the uncertain receipt of his letters, she perceived that, by accepting the importunate offers of Mr. Saddler, she could at once relieve Mr. Coltman and satisfy her parents on the much desired point of detaining her in their near neighbourhood, after she had been separated from them by marriage.”

However it is conjectured that before they married Mr Saddler died from illness. Four months later her correspondence with John Coltman resumed. They were married on the 10th of October 1766 in Duffield Church and they moved into a house in St. Nicholas Street, Leicester. Their son samuel Coltman wrote in his memoirs: “I have reason to believe my

parents were peculiarly happy in their marriage, happy in each other, complying with each other's tastes and opinions;"

Their first son, John, was born in August 1768, and then a daughter Elizabeth in December 1769. After her mother's death in 1772 Elizabeth Coltman's father Samuel Cartwright moved in with them, at the same time as their third son (who named after his grandfather) was born. Another son Rowland was born in 1774, then a daughter Mary Ann in 1778. Rowland became sick and died at age 14. Elizabeth Coltman became Elizabeth Heyrick, a renowned anti-slavery campaigner. Neither Mary Ann or Elizabeth had children.

After her husband's death in 1808 Elizabeth Coltman moved in with her daughter Elizabeth at Bow Bridge House, where she died in 1811. She was buried in the Friar Lane Chapelyard with her husband and son.

The following was written by Catherine Hutton and appeared in the "Monthly Magazine":

"Died Jan 21st, aged 74, Elizabeth, relict of the late Mr. John Coltman, of St. Nicholas St., Leicester, a woman of uncommon genius and taste, though they have been buried in private life. At a very early age her talents procured her the personal acquaintance of Shenstone, Dodsley, and Spence. Dodsley thought a landscape of hers, cut with a pair of scissors out of writing paper, so extraordinary that he caused it to be presented to Her Majesty. Spence bequeathed her all his prints; some of them, which he had himself collected in Italy, very valuable. Born with endowments that might have distinguished her from the rest of her sex, and qualified her to shine either in a literary circle, or an exhibition of painters, Mrs. Coltman devoted her whole time, after her marriage, to the service of her Maker, the duties of her family and the mitigation of distress in those around her. It is believed by the writer of this article, who had known her intimately from twenty-six years of age, that she never undertook anything in which she did not excel. In the several relations of daughter, wife and mother, her conduct was exemplary. Two sons and two daughters, who inherit a great portion of their mother's virtues and talents, together with their father's, will bear witness in their hearts to this testimony of a friend."

Sources:

"Catherine Hutton and Friends" by Catherine Hutton Beale. Retrieved from

<https://archive.org/stream/catherinehuttonh00beal>

"The reluctant businessman: John Coltman of St Nicholas Street, Leicester (1727-1808)" by David L. Wykes. Retrieved from

<https://www.le.ac.uk/lahs/downloads/WykesvolumeLXIX-6sm.pdf>

"The Abolition Project, Elizabeth Heyric": http://abolition.e2bn.org/people_31.html

"The Courage of Necessity: Radical Dissent, Quakerism and Reform in the Life of Elizabeth Heyrick" by Samantha Crassweller.

My descendency from Elizabeth Cartwright:

Elizabeth Cartwright > John Coltman > Sarah Coltman > Charles Septimus Clarke > Minnie Clarke > Alma Torkington > Vern Smith > Raewyn Smith