

SHORT SKETCH OF EARLY FAMILY HISTORY

by

Richard Le Mare (1814-1893).
with footnotes by Peter H. Le Mare.

On the day that Queen Anne was crowned a little girl about nine years old residing in London was sent out on an errand and entrusted with a coin of the value of 22/-. Her attention was attracted by a procession in connection with the Coronation, and getting mixed up in the crowd, she lost the 22/- piece.

This incident furnishes a date from which to begin my family history, for this child had been brought from France to England when an infant, concealed among some packages of fish by a party of French Protestants, who had left their native land in consequence of the persecution which followed upon the 'Revocation of the Edict of Nantes'.

This child was the link which connected my family with the Huguenots of France, as she became my paternal great grandmother. She lived to be ninety-two years old, had three or four husbands, and a large family of children. Which of her husbands was the father¹ of my grandfather I cannot say, but as the name implies he was a Frenchman². The name was originally spelt as now in France 'Le Maire', but on some occasion the 'i' was dropped and never replaced by our branch of the family. Le Mare, who was probably a French immigrant.

My grandfather³ married a French woman and I have heard my Father⁴ say that he had two Aunts who were French women, who worshipped at the French Protestant Church in Artillery Lane, near Bishopsgate. This church was standing in the early part of the present century, for I can remember having seen it and noticed the poor box at the entrance.

Those of my ancestors who were refugees were for the most part Silk Weavers, and settled about Spitalfields. As was the custom at the time, my Grandfather employed apprentices at Silk Weaving, he also held an office – I believe 'Beadle'⁵ in the Weavers' Company. In order that he might be near to Weavers' Hall he resided in the city, somewhere in the neighbourhood of Bridewell.

My Father was born on 13th March 1772, but whether in Bridewell or some other part of London, I cannot say. The family, I think, consisted of four sons and two daughters.

My Grandfather's connection with the Weavers' Company enabled him to obtain a presentation to the 'Blue Coat School' (Christ's Hospital) for his eldest son⁶ who received a good education and became a schoolmaster. The other three sons were put to Weaving of Silk, and my Father went to work very early, so that he lost the opportunity of any education. I have heard him say his education cost one shilling, for he went to school only three weeks at fourpence a week. He was, however, a persevering lad and taught himself to read and write. When a lad he was taken from the loom and put to a Haberdashers in the West end of London, about St James'. I believe he continued at this place for a few years, but as a young man he was at Silk Weaving again under the following circumstances.

A relative had mentioned my Mother to him, as a bright active young woman who would make him a good wife. An interview was sought and obtained, and my Father determined to make her his wife. He now set to work for this one object, working from four o'clock in the morning till late at night. He was a good workman and could always secure a good class of work, so that he made fair wages and in due course was married.

My Mother's⁷ family were, I believe, of Yorkshire extraction, her Father was a devout and holy man. A sketch of my Grandfather's life (Richd Easto) will be found among my papers and relics of the family, in a

1 Samuel (unknown - 1759)

2 Samuel's Indenture shows he was the son of Peter.

3 Robert (1734-94).

4 Joshua (1772-1847).

5 The Weavers' Company Quarterage Reports show him as Upper Beadle.

6 Robert (1767 - unknown).

7 Sarah Easto (unknown-1832).

quarto memo. book.

My Father soon had a family around him for whose maintenance he continued to work at Silk Weaving, early and late. As already remarked, he was a good workman and could always obtain a superior class of work.

For a considerable time he wove 'White Velvet' which required very careful and delicate manipulation.

Hand loom velvets are woven by throwing a fine wire with a groove in it, across the warp, the wire is woven in to hold it fast and then a sharp instrument is run along the groove, which cuts the Silk and this forms the pile. The wire is then liberated and the operation is repeated 40 to 50 times in an inch. This requires great skill, for if the knife should slip out of the groove the warp would be cut, which would involve serious damage and loss.

The wages paid for this article were good, but the times were difficult, provisions were dear in consequence of deficient harvests which were felt severely on account of the heavy duty on the importation of foreign corn.

The war with France caused increased taxation so that it became a great struggle to provide for an increasing family, and my Father turned his thoughts to some other occupation than Silk Weaving. He had a relation who was receiving a comfortable income as a servant of the East India Company, and my Father thought he would like to obtain a similar situation and spoke to a friend who had influence to help him in this direction. This application to his friend was met with a blank refusal, in these terms – "No, you are young, healthy and energetic, with a rising family and you ought to make your way in the World. I would sooner give you a small sum of money to set you up with an Oyster Stall at the Exchange, than see you fixed in the service of the East India Company where you can make little or no progress". This, of course, was a disappointment to my Father, but he still felt that he had a true friend who would not forget him.

Some little time after, my Father received an intimation from an unknown hand (my Father always imagined that it was from the same friend), that there was a vacancy as foreman in the Warehouse of an established Silk Manufacturer, recommending my Father to apply for the situation. At first my Father was a little diffident on account of his defective education, but encouraged by my Mother, who was of a very persevering spirit, he waited upon Mr Crelland who was the head of the concern.

In the course of the interview my Father modestly referred to his imperfect writing, when Mr Crelland replied – "Your writing is plain, and your figures are correct". The little difficulty which my Father had apprehended being removed, and a favourable opinion in other respects being entertained for him, the engagement was made and my Father entered the service of Mr Crelland. He remained until after Mr Crelland's death, having the entire management of the Manufactory, at a salary which advanced until it reached £300 a year.

After Mr Crelland's death, the concern was carried on for a time by his son-in-law, but he was unacquainted with the business and of rather extravagant habits, and soon affairs were brought to a close.

There now appeared to be an opening for my Father to commence the business of Silk Manufacture for himself, and he found a friend in a Silk Merchant, who very generously supported him, and by whose help, he was enabled to establish a business, which continued in London for over forty years.

It was about this time that I was born, on 14th January 1814 in Blossom Street, Norton Folgate. The house was taken down a few years afterwards and my Father built a small Factory for Silk Winding on the site.

The family then consisted of three sons and two daughters. My eldest brother, Joshua Richard⁸, was early put to the business but his education was attended to, for both my Parents were desirous that their children should have a good English Education. Having received some elementary instruction, my Brother was sent to an Evening School, and being a quick lad he made good progress. He was a beautiful writer. A specimen of Ornamental Penmanship executed entirely by my Brother when he was 15 years old was framed, and is in the possession of his daughter, Mrs Shallis⁹, of Earls Court, London. He was also fond of music which he

⁸ (1796-1864).

⁹ Née Elizabeth Burrough Le Mare

cultivated, and this was a source of enjoyment to him all through his life. He was a great help to my Father in his business.

My second Brother, Ebenezer Robert¹⁰, was sent to a School in Devonshire Street, Bishopsgate, kept by a Mr Cutler. This was a well conducted, well disciplined School and here my Brother excelled, and was in favour with the Masters. I have heard his conduct referred to by the Principal when I attended the School years afterwards, as being most exemplary. He remained there until he was 15 years of age, and was then placed in the Bank of Messrs W. Haydon and Company at Guildford, Surrey, where he remained several years.

Mr Haydon was an Evangelical Churchman, and my Brother lived with the family, there imbibing those strong views of Church and State which he held, and by which he was characterized all his life.

At the time our family lived in Steward Street, Spitalfields, at the house of business, as was customary with most of the London Silk Manufacturers of those days. We attended Chapel in Cumberland Street, Shoreditch, under the Ministry of the Revd R. Freer who had been Minister in connection with the Countess of Huntingdon.

My Father was a Deacon, and, I believe, the Treasurer of the Church. My Brother, Joshua, as an amateur, played the organ.

About this time my younger Sister, Sarah, fell into a decline in which she lingered for three years, and after much suffering from abscesses, died at the age of 15 on 1st May 1821. She was a sincere and devout young Christian, and her death was a great grief to my Mother, who was very fond of her.

In the same year my Brother, Joshua, married Miss Burrough, the daughter of a Haberdasher in Shoreditch, who had retired and left his business to his son. He died young, leaving a Widow who married a Mr Rotherham, and the business ultimately grew into the extensive concern of Rotherham and Company.

The year following my eldest Brother's marriage, my Brother, Ebenezer, signified his desire of being married. Arrangements were accordingly made for his leaving the Bank at Guildford and being taken into my Father's business when he married Miss Vigers, the daughter of a Builder in White Friars, an excellent young lady to whom my Mother was particularly attached.

It was agreed that when my Brother married, he should live at the house of business, which he did, and my Father took a house at Kingsland.

Within two years of our removal, my Sister, Ruth, was married to Mr Henry Wilson, a Woollen Draper whose Father had retired and left him the business in Sun Street, Bishopsgate, where my Sister went to live.

My Mother was now very much alone each day with unoccupied time on hand. This did not agree with her former active habits, and her nervous system suffered, which manifested itself by a neuralgic affection which centred in her hand causing intense pain day and night, for a considerable length of time.

Thinking that some change might be beneficial my Father took a nice house at Dalston, but with her complaint continuing my Mother had no pleasure in what might otherwise have been a source of enjoyment to her. It was now determined to remove nearer London so that my Father could go home to a mid-day dinner and my Mother be less alone than before. We accordingly removed to Tyssen Place at the entrance to Kingsland Road.

It is somewhat remarkable that about this time some severe measures had been decided upon in the way of a surgical operation to give my Mother relief, when the pain suddenly left her and never returned, but she did not recover her former health and vigour.

Living now near London I went to the School before referred to, kept by Mr Cutler in Devonshire Street, where I remained until I left for business.

¹⁰ (1797-1891).

My Father and Mother now fixed upon the Tabernacle in Moorfields where the Revd Geo. Whitefield used to preach, as their place of worship. This was a large square building capable of holding 3,000 persons. There were no pews, about two-thirds of the bottom part was free, the remaining portion around the Pulpit was partitioned off and called 'Green Pews' – the seats being covered with green baize. The seats in this part and also the galleries were paid for.

The congregation was always large for there was a great variety of Ministers. The system adopted was that there should be a constant change of Preachers. A Resident Minister was appointed who, at that time, was Revd Matthew Wilks, and eminent Protestant Nonconformist Ministers from various parts of the Country came as visitors for six weeks, preached once each Sunday at the Tabernacle, and once at the Sister Chapel in Tottenham Court Road, the Resident Minister taking services at the other times of the day. The visiting Minister preached also once at each place in the evening, during the week.

A good Minister's house adjoining the Tabernacle with housekeeper was provided, and all necessary for the comfort of the Visiting Minister.

It was at the Tabernacle that I used to hear that earnest and thrilling Preacher, the Revd James Parsons of York, then a young unmarried man. When he preached that vast building was crowded, every foot of standing room was occupied and it was necessary to be there half an hour before the time of service to secure a seat. I was often deeply impressed by his preaching and those impressions have not been lost.

We attended the Tabernacle for several years.

In March 1827 I left School and went to business at my Father's Warehouse in Spital Square – there were then three sons in the business and it was thought that the concern might become too heavily weighted, and that it would be better that I should be put to some other occupation.

During the previous four or five years some changes had passed over the Silk Trade. Prior to 1823 the importation of foreign manufactured Silk goods had been prohibited, but the principles of Free Trade were now asserting themselves, and Mr Huskisson who was President of the Board of Trade, began to put them into practice by dealing with the Silk Trade.

The prohibitory laws were abolished and French manufactured silks were admitted at a duty of 30%. After a few years, this rate of duty was reduced as it was found that a large proportion of foreign silk goods brought into England were smuggled.

About the same time, the manufacture of silk goods was introduced into Lancashire where the Power Loom was rapidly superseding the hand loom in the Cotton Trade. The Hand Loom Weavers were therefore glad to turn to the weaving of silks. The wages were low and a class of goods of lower quality than was generally made in London, but which suited the 'Million' and obtained favour – a large trade in Manchester was the result.

The leading Warehousemen now had three distinct Silk Departments – the Spitalfields, the Foreign, and the Manchester, with their respective buyers.

My Brother, Ebenezer, had had a strong inclination for a Country Manufactory, with this desire not being equally shared by my Father or eldest Brother, he turned his attention to Manchester, and in 1829, he left the London concern and entered upon business as a Silk Manufacturer in Manchester. He established a business, which having had many changes, is still carried on by Mr George Griffin of St Paul's Church Yard, London, and Leigh, Lancashire.

While in London my Brother had resided at the house of business in Spital Square, and when he left, my Father and Mother went to live there. My Mother's health was now declining, the nervous affection which seemed before to have been concentrated in her hand now took another form – depression and sleeplessness were its chief features. It was now considered desirable that my Mother should be relieved from household cares, and have a companion who could be always with her. Such an one was found in Miss Burden who took the whole management of the household and was her constant companion and attendant until her death in November 1832. After my Mother's death, Miss Burden continued to live with us and superintend the affairs of the house, acting

as my Father's housekeeper.

In 1835, on attaining the age of 21 my Father presented me with the Freedom of the City of London. He was a Freeman, and therefore, I was free born. However, to enjoy all the privileges of a citizen it was necessary to 'take up' the freedom, which was to pass through the usual ceremonies at a small cost for fees, while to purchase freedom would be very expensive. The certificates of both my Father's and my Freedom will be found among 'the family relics'¹¹.

It was not unnatural that young persons of the same age as Miss Burden and myself, constantly in each other's society should become mutually attached, and such was the case. We were married in October 1836. Some months before my marriage I had attended the Ministry of the Revd John Clayton Junior, at the Poultry Chapel, London, and had joined the Church there. After our marriage my Wife also became a Member of the same Church and we continued to attend there until we left London. Mr Clayton was, in all respects, a superior man of refined manners and we greatly valued him as a Minister, a Pastor, and a Christian friend – he baptized our three eldest children.

We continued to reside at the house of business in Spital Square, and my Father lived with us until there was a prospect of a family, when he took a house in Hoxton Square.

In 1840 my Brother, Joshua, went to Manchester on a visit to my Brother there, and was so impressed with the activity and extent of the Silk Trade in Manchester that on his return he advised that we should open a Warehouse there and manufacture silk goods for the London and Manchester counters. This was agreed to and it was arranged that I should go to Manchester and manage this part of the concern.

Accordingly, a Warehouse was taken, and in November 1840, I left London with my Wife and three children and two servants, to take up our abode in Manchester. My Father then left Hoxton Square and returned to the house in Spital Square, where he remained until his death in 1847.

Here my narrative closes, were I to continue, it would in great measure be an Autobiography which it is not my intention to write.

My purpose has been to record such facts as mark the chief points in our early family history, and especially to show our connection with that noble ancestry of French Protestants who for their steadfastness to the faith, suffered persecution, and leaving their native land, took refuge in England facing poverty for the sake of truth, liberty, and a good conscience.

Richd Le Mare.

Marple,
February 1889.

I have said that I should not write an autobiography but I would record the mercy and faithfulness of God to us, since we left London nearly fifty years ago. We have had trials and sorrow, but many seasons of joy, and much domestic happiness, extending over a married life of more than fifty-two years. We have been blessed with thirteen dear children, three of whom died young; but ten affectionate, dutiful and helpful still remain to us.

We have not possessed worldly riches but we have been mercifully provided for.

The CXVIII Psalm, which I consider contains all that can be desired of the sum of human happiness has, to a large extent, been my experience. To both of us the evening of life is calm and restful. We review the past with gratitude and anticipate with humble faith and confidence the eternal rest which awaits us, "knowing in whom we have believed, and being persuaded that He is able to keep that which we have committed unto Him against that day".

Richard Le Mare

Marple, March 1889.

¹¹ Richard's Certificate of Freedom is with Peter H. Le Mare at Allithwaite.

On December 2nd 1889, after fifty-three years of happy married life, my dear wife passed away from earth, and entered into rest.

For eight months she had been laid aside from failing strength and, as the cold weather came on, an attack of bronchitis set in and in her weak condition she sank under it. Throughout the whole of her illness her mind was calm and peaceful, sustained by Christian faith and hope, and in her intellect was clear and bright to the last.

Isaiah Ch. XXVI verse 3.

Her body lies in the family grave at Ardwick, near Manchester.

Richard Le Mare.

Marple, December 25 1889.

Richard Le Mare died on June 1st 1893.