

Sydney Parkinson and His Drawings.

Sydney Parkinson was the younger of the two sons of Joel and Elizabeth Parkinson, Friends of Edinburgh,¹ and was probably born about 1745.² The father was by trade a brewer, but was unsuccessful in business, though, as his son testifies, eminently distinguished for probity of mind and purity of manners, and well known and esteemed by men of all ranks. His widow was still living in 1771, when she relinquished her right to administer Sydney Parkinson's will in favour of her elder son, Stanfield, who, with her daughter, Britannia, seem to have been the only members of the family then alive.

Sydney was apprenticed to a woollen-draper, but before long, developing a great love for natural history, together with considerable skill in drawing, he attracted the notice of men of science. Proceeding to London, soon after his arrival he was introduced to Joseph Banks, Esq.—apparently by James Lee, the well-known nurseryman of Hammersmith. Banks employed him extensively during 1767 and the following year in making drawings, many on vellum, of rare animals and plants from India, Ceylon, Kew, “Mr. Lee's Nursery,” and elsewhere. His work was so satisfactory that in 1768 he was engaged by Banks as botanical draughtsman, to accompany Captain Cook and himself in H.M.S. *Endeavour* on its celebrated voyage of exploration round the world. His salary was to be £80 per annum. He joined the ship in the Thames in July, 1768, and after spending some time at Plymouth, where, we are told, the members of the expedition were hospitably entertained by William Cookworthy, the

¹ There are but scanty records of these Friends in Edinburgh Meeting books. In 1734, we find Joel Parkinson witnessing a marriage at Edinburgh—his name is next to that of John Fothergill, Jun., who was a student at the University there from 1734 to 1736. Elizabeth Parkinson's name appears on the same certificate, and also on one recording a marriage at Newbattle, Midlothian, in 1736. Joel Parkinson was certainly deceased by the end of 1749, as appears from an entry in the accounts of Edinburgh Monthly Meeting:—“1749, Dec. 22 By Cash to — Aikenhead for druggs to Wid: Parkinson, £2 . 2 . 0.”

² *Dictionary of National Biography.*

Friend of China-clay fame,³ the vessel finally left England on the 23rd of August. The expedition, which was absent for three years, was successful in one of its principal objects, the observation of the transit of Venus, and secured besides an immense amount of valuable scientific information.

Parkinson was very closely engaged in making drawings of the many new plants which were discovered. Mr. James Britten, in an interesting article on "The Collections of Banks and Solander,"⁴ states :—

The total number of drawings made by Parkinson during the voyage was 955, of which 675 were sketches and 280 finished drawings. All the Australian and most of the New Zealand ones are sketches ; those from Brazil, Madeira, Tierra del Fuego, and the Friendly Islands are nearly all finished drawings ; of the Java plants there are forty-four finished drawings, and seventy-two sketches ; in a few cases there are both sketch and finished drawings of the same plant. On the back of each finished drawing are pencil notes by Parkinson, indicating the colour of the leaves, flowers, etc., and the locality is added in Banks's hand.

Banks speaks in unqualified terms of Parkinson's unbounded industry in making for him a much larger collection of drawings than he expected, and other contemporary botanists allude to "these excellent delineations." In recent times the drawings were consulted by Sir Joseph Hooker when preparing his *Flora Antarctica*. "Váluable as the dried plants are," he says, "their utility is doubly increased by the excellent descriptions, and by the beautiful coloured drawings, executed on the spot, which accompany them."

In his leisure time Parkinson also made numerous sketches of the natives and of places of interest in those almost unknown regions, besides diligently collecting shells and curios of all sorts, together with notes on the natives and vocabularies of native words.

Several members of the expedition died during the voyage, and on 26th January, 1771, between Prince's Island and the Cape of Good Hope, Sydney Parkinson succumbed to fever and dysentery, and was buried at sea.

Arthur J. Naish, writing in *The Friend*, 1873, p. 339, says :—

³ *William Cookworthy*, by Theodore Compton, p. 64.

⁴ *Journal of Botany*, xliii. 287.

It is affecting to think of the Quaker youth keeping, as his brother assures us, an unsullied character in the midst of all the temptations of those new regions which spread their wonders around him on every hand ; drawing the people, their fruits, their flowers, their dwellings and their weapons, and obtaining their confidence and affection, preparing, as he doubtless thought, the materials for a well-earned European fame, and then dying, soon after he left Batavia, of a fever caught in that fatal island, and adding one more to the " treasures of the deep."

On the return of the expedition to England in July, 1771, Mr. Banks sent particulars of Sydney Parkinson's death to his brother, then in business as an upholsterer in Pulteney Street, Golden Square, London. Before starting on the voyage, Sydney had executed a will by which he left all his possessions to his brother and sister, appointing the former his executor. Under this will Stanfield Parkinson claimed all the drawings made by his brother during his spare hours, as well as his journals and collections. Much correspondence with Banks, and more than one interview followed. Stanfield regarded himself as having been treated very badly, indeed dishonourably ; but his complaints, embodied in the preface to his brother's *Journal*, must be taken with considerable reservation. Dr. John Fothergill's intervention being obtained, Banks agreed to pay £500 for Parkinson's private collections and papers and for the balance of salary owing. The papers were, at his pressing request, lent to Stanfield Parkinson, who had them transcribed, and with the assistance of Dr. Kenrick, prepared them for publication. Law proceedings followed, and the publication of the book was delayed by an injunction until after the issue of the official account in 1773. Before this poor Stanfield Parkinson had died, insane,⁵ but his book, entitled *A Journal of a Voyage to the South Seas, in his Majesty's Ship, " The Endeavour," Faithfully transcribed from the papers of the late Sydney Parkinson, draughtsman to Joseph Banks, Esq.* . . . London, printed for Stanfield Parkinson, the Editor, MDCCLXXIII., was issued some time that year. In size a thin royal 4to, it contains Sydney Parkinson's journal, with twenty-five copper-plate illustra-

⁵ Stanfield Parkinson was a member of Westminster Monthly Meeting at the time of his death, and Sydney had been brought up as a Friend, his brother remarking of him that " his religious profession prohibited him the study " of music.

tions from his non-botanical sketches, together with three other plates, one of them a poorly engraved portrait of the artist. There is a long preface by Stanfield Parkinson, in which he gives some very meagre particulars of his brother's life, and a detailed account of the quarrel with Banks.

A second edition of the *Journal* with additional plates and letterpress, including "Remarks by the late John Fothergill, M.D., F.R.S., &c., on the preface to the first edition," was issued in 1784, under the editorship of Dr. J. C. Lettsom.

Engravings of not a few of Sydney Parkinson's non-botanical drawings appeared in the official account of Captain Cook's voyage, but, in consequence of the unfortunate dispute between Joseph Banks and Parkinson's executor, the artist's name was very ungenerously omitted.

From Parkinson's botanical drawings and sketches more than 700 copper plates were engraved, under Banks's supervision, and much of the accompanying letterpress was prepared, but in spite of all the time and money expended over the work, the book was never published, and it was not until 1900 that a portion of the plates made their appearance in book form. In that year the first part of *Illustrations of the Botany of Captain Cook's Voyage Round the World in H.M.S. "Endeavour"* was issued by the trustees of the British Museum, under the editorship of James Britten, Esq., K.S.G., F.L.S. It contains 101 illustrations founded on Parkinson's sketches. A second part was issued in the following year, and a third in 1905. The illustrations are lithographed from the original copper plates.⁶

The following letter from Sydney Parkinson to Dr. Fothergill is preserved in the Devonshire House Reference Library :—

Batavia, 16th of Octob^r 1770.

Honoured Friend

As I thought it would be no disagreeable thing for you to hear of our proceedings in this long voyage I made no doubt but that you would excuse this & indeed I look upon it as my duty to let you know that we

⁶ See *Journal of Botany*, xxxviii. 320; xxxix. i. 348; xlii. 3; xliii. 284-290. See also *Dictionary of National Biography*; Joseph Smith's *Catalogue*; *The Biographical Catalogue of London Friends' Institute*.

arriv'd here the 12th of this month after a long & tedious passage from Riode Janeiro we went to Good Success Bay in the Straits of Le Maire & from thence to Otaheite or Georges Island, where we observ'd the Transit, staid 4 months at it & some other Islands living in great harmony with the natives all the time from thence we went to New Zealand which we sail'd around & found it to be 2 large Islands this took us up 6 months, we then stretch'd over to the West Coast of N. Holland which we run down from Lat. 37 South to 10 South where we happily discover'd the Straits between it & New Guinea at which place we touch'd but did not think it convenient for to stay but made the best of our way to this place where we shall be oblig'd to heave down to repair an Injury we receivd by running ashore upon a Rock on the Coast of New Holland on which coast we were several times in the most imminent danger of being dash'd to pieces, had not the kind Providence of Almighty God interpos'd in our favour, in so remarkable a manner that I hope I shall never forget it, time wont allow me to enter into any particulars besides that I am so confus'd & flutterd about at present that my mind is not settled enough for such a task, so that I hope it will suffise to inform you that we have done great things this Voyage, having been very successfull in discoveries of Land, in Astronomy, & Natural History having got an amazing number of new subjects in that way; our Crew has been very healthy & we have hardly lost any of them yet, but I am sorry to inform you that your faithfull Servant Richmond is no more, he & another black Servant of Mr. Bank's died at Terra dell Fuego. I felt the Loss of him very much & Mr Banks much more I dont doubt but it will also give you a tender concern

Present my humble respects to your Sister.

I remain,

Your much obliged Friend

SYDNEY PARKINSON.

P.S. Please be so good as deliver the inclosed Letter.

[Endorsement] To Dr. John Fothergill.

[In another hand] Sidney Parkinson 1770.

Can any reader of THE JOURNAL give any further information as to Parkinson's family? Was he possibly a descendant of the John Parkinson, London Apothecary "and King's Herbalist," in 1620, author of the charming *Garden of all sorts of Pleasant Flowers which our English ayre will permitt to be noursed up*? Stanfield Parkinson had a cousin, a Friend, of the name of Gomeldon, resident at Newcastle-on-Tyne, in 1773. Possibly the records of London or Newcastle Meetings might throw some light on the subject. The names of Joel, Stanfield, Britannia are fairly distinctive.

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