

## Richard Shackleton to Abiah Darby, 1784<sup>1</sup>

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Ballitore 22<sup>d</sup> of 8<sup>th</sup> mo 1784.

Abiah Darby,  
Dear friend,

I look upon it as a duty incumbent on those who have left an hospitable house & gone a long journey to let the Master or Mistress know what is become of them. Suky I believe would tell you of our getting well to Shrewsbury. We lodged there at Friend Young's,<sup>2</sup> and his daughters *would* make us breake our fast with them, & *would* see us in the coach next morning. 'Twas too much—but being females, they over-ruled. We set off from thence I believe between 3 & 4 o'clock, but through a delay in waiting for another coach on the road, did not reach Conway till about One o'clock the succeeding morning. It would have been dismal travelling in the night, a rough and hilly road, had not Something (I humbly hope) of Good, tendered the spirit & prepared an offering. Indeed I know nothing which so composes, exhilarates comforts & strengthens the mind as a little of that which is divine. We were indulged with a reasonable share of bed at Conway, and with time to view some of the Antiquities of the place before we left it,—we ascended old Penman-maur with pretty good spirits, & Molly<sup>3</sup> was highly entertained with the stupendous objects which presented themselves on each side. We reached Holyhead in good time in the evening, & the next evening (12<sup>th</sup> inst) we embarked in the packet boat with a pretty brisk gale of wind. The captain (Shaw) being an acquaintance of mine through special favour, we got beds, though several of the passengers wanted—We had a crowded & a very

<sup>1</sup> From the original in the possession of John T. Dickinson, of Bloxham, Banbury. Other letters, the same to the same, are printed in *Memoirs of R. and E. Shackleton*.

<sup>2</sup> John Young (c. 1721-1795) was the father of Rebecca Young, *aft.* Byrd, the travelling companion of Deborah Darby.

<sup>3</sup> Mary, *aft.* Leadbeater (1758-1826), daughter of R. S.'s second marriage.

sick ship—my females were exceedingly so—I was pretty well. We were about 15 hours on board the vessel, then several of us took to the boat, & landed a few miles from Dublin, where we arrived in the evening of 13<sup>th</sup>, & the next day reached my home safe & well. My wife<sup>4</sup> and daughter Sarah, my son & his wife<sup>5</sup> were all at a distant Meeting held for this province. On 16<sup>th</sup> I rode a few miles & met them on their return. They were all well, & I have Abundant cause of thankfulness to the Author of all our mercies for his gracious preservation & protection extended in many instances to me & mine.—At Moat, where my wife, &c., attended our province-Meeting were our friends Hannah Bevington,<sup>6</sup> Sarah Stephenson,<sup>7</sup> Mary Ridgway,<sup>8</sup> Jane Watson,<sup>8</sup> Edward Hatton<sup>9</sup> & Joseph Garratt.<sup>10</sup> I understand that Ministring friends had good service, & that it was a favoured season. John Pemberton<sup>11</sup> & Thomas Cash<sup>12</sup> have turned to the Gentiles—they have been very closely employ'd in visiting many places where no Friends are settled—I believe their labour is generally well received. I do not hear of any Strangers being at present in this nation in the work of the ministry, except those above-mentioned. Mary Ridgway was here two nights lately on a visit to her sister Anstis Sparkes, who is our guest:

<sup>4</sup> Formerly Elizabeth Carleton (1726-1804). Her grandfather was Thomas Carleton, of Cumberland and Co. Wicklow (1636-1684), and her maternal grandfather was George Rooke (1652-1742), also from Cumberland, but finally of Dublin (*Memoirs of R. and E. Shackleton*, 1849).

<sup>5</sup> Abraham (1752-1818) and Lydia, *née* Mellor, of Manchester, of the family of Fell of Swarthmoor Hall.

<sup>6</sup> Hannah Bevington (1727-1791), of Worcester, was the daughter of Joseph and Ann Freeth, of Coventry; she married Timothy Bevington in 1750.

<sup>7</sup> Sarah Stephenson (1738-1802) was the elder daughter of Daniel and Sarah (Storrs) Stephenson, of Whitehaven. In 1767, she removed with her mother to Melksham in Wiltshire, near Sutton Benger, the residence of her uncle, John Fry. An account of this visit to Ireland with H. Bevington is given in her *Life*.

<sup>8</sup> For Mary Ridgeway and Jane Watson, see p. 132.

<sup>9, 10</sup> Not identified.

<sup>11</sup> John Pemberton (1727-1795) was the youngest son of Israel and Rachel Pemberton, of Philadelphia. Of their ten children, only three survived them—Israel, James, and John—and each of them became prominent in his special line. John travelled far and wide as a Minister. He died at Pymont, in Germany, while on a religious visit to the land.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Cash (1738-1809) lived at Morley in Cheshire.

Mary was finely—she reported Jane not to be in a very good state of health—Notwithstanding the rumours of commotion in this land, we seem to enjoy present tranquillity, through the favour of a merciful Providence—I wish we may all rightly improve this present tranquillity; for though no publick disturbance should be permitted in our time (which is uncertain :) yet a day of close trial we know awaits each of us individually a day in which if the best will have nothing to spare, astonishment will surely overtake the careless the lukewarm & the unprepared.

I request thou wilt present my kind greetings to all thy family, to cousin Sam & his Deborah and thy daughter Sally, to thy sister Thompson, Cousin John Barnard & wife, & Suky—to thy Son Rathbone & his wife, Anne Summerland & D. Rose.<sup>13</sup> My wife, Anstis Sparkes & daughter Molly heartily join in this salutation to thee & them. Please also to present the same to my friend Rich<sup>d</sup> Reynolds & his family. Mary Ridgway desired her dear love to be remembered to you.

With a grateful sense & acknowledgment of all your kindness & civilities, & with much esteem & respect, I remain,

thy affectionate friend,

RICH<sup>d</sup> SHACKLETON

P.S. While I was loitering at Holyhead I amused myself writing the annexed lines—  
My time might indeed have been better employed; but I thought it pity that so good a sentiment should have been badly handled  
If they please thee, I shall not deem my leisure hour quite lost.

On travelling to COALBROOK-DALE in the night-time.

To Coalbrook-dale, alone; by night,  
I journey'd pensive, slow,  
And tired from Lincoln-hill's proud height  
I view'd the vale below.

<sup>13</sup> For most of the Friends here mentioned see Extracts from the Diary of Abiah Darby, pp. 79-92.

Dreadful the view—in dusky spires  
 The smoky columns rise,  
 And fiend-like forms stir up the fires  
 Which redden all the skies.

Like Phlegethon a river pours  
 Beneath an iron-bridge it's flood ;  
 A lake like Styx tremendous roars,  
 Black, baleful, & defil'd with mud.

Dire sounds I heard—I saw with dread  
 The fiery surges swell,  
 Aghast I stopp'd my course & said,  
 " Oh, sure this place is Hell."

At length recover'd from my fears  
 I sought the stately dome  
 Where Courtesy with kindness cheers  
 And strangers find a home.

Receiv'd, refresh'd & edify'd  
 With social, Christian grace  
 Beneath Abiah's roof—I cry'd,  
 " Sure Heaven is in this place."

[Addressed]

Abiah Darby  
 Coalbrook-dale  
 England.

[Endorsed in another hand]

Richard Shackleton 4<sup>mo</sup> 1784.

[in another hand]

J[ames] P[hillips] intends printing a neat small  
 Edition of AD's Catechism—if she has any remarks  
 to make.

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1717. Sarah, daughter of John Cox, a Quaker of Chipping Wycombe,  
 baptised Dec<sup>r</sup> 9.

Transcript of Register of Wooburn, co. Bucks.