

William Miller of Edinburgh

(d. circa 1799)

From *The London Chronicle*, Sept. 3-5, 1778. p. 229.

To the Printer of the London Chronicle.

Sir,

Edinburgh, Aug. 24.

As your paper is frequently a very consolatory relief to me when the mind requires entertainment, I wish much to contribute a little to so useful a miscellany, pleasing myself with the idea that others of your readers may have the same satisfaction over a dish of Coffee or Tea in perusing what I send, as I have in perusing other passages of the London Chronicle.

I am myself not rigidly attached to any sect of Christians, and therefore I can relish what is good in all of them, whether in solemnity of ceremony or simplicity of soul.

I always read with pleasure in your Chronicle the Yearly Epistle of the people called Quakers, for there is in that sect of Christians a gentleness of disposition, and at least a belief of an immediate communication with the Divinity, which all Christians would wish to have when they have a near view of death, and which composes the mind to the most agreeable complacency.

In this city the number of people called Quakers is very small, but there is amongst them a most respectable man, Mr. Miller, who is possessed of considerable property, and who lives upon a beautiful piece of ground at the back of the Cannongate near to the Abbey of Holyroodhouse. There is a quaker meetinghouse about the middle of the old town of Edinburgh, but Mr. Miller has lately built a handsome plain small one opposite to his own dwelling house, and within a few yards of it.

Into this place of worship I went a few Sundays ago with intention to have been present at the meeting, but

there was none there that forenoon. So I employed a few minutes of solitude in calm and pious meditation, and had full leisure to observe every part of the room.

I found the panes of glass in the window to the south very prettily ornamented with pots of flowers cut upon them with a diamond, and upon one of the middle panes I found the following inscription.¹

I took a copy of these lines in my pocket-book and send them to you with a kindly wish that they, may have the same agreeable effect upon others of your readers as they have had upon

AN OLD FRIEND.

The above has been sent by J. J. Green. William F. Miller adds the following note :

The " Mr. Miller " above alluded to was William Miller of Craigentenny (1722-1799?), the third Friend of that name in succession at Edinburgh. For many years he was Minister, ruling Elder, Overseer and Treasurer of the little remnant of Friends in that city, and was popularly known as " The King of the Quakers." The " plain small house " was no doubt built for business purposes—he had an extensive connection as nurseryman and seedsman—though one of the rooms was employed as a meeting-place.

It seems to have been W. M.'s custom to depute his clerk, David Notman, who was not even a member of the Society, to sit at the head of the First-day Morning Meeting, at the regular Meeting House in the city, which he himself never attended, whilst in the afternoon he ministered *in propria persona* to the meeting held in the " plain small house " at the foot of the Horse Wynd, Canongate. From refreshments being bountifully provided for the worshippers, the gatherings came to be called in scorn by those who did not participate in them—" bread and cheese meetings." William Miller stuck very obstinately to the arrangement, in spite of much labour bestowed upon him after the revival which took place amongst Friends in Scotland (1780-1785), and he was

¹ For this inscription see this volume of THE JOURNAL, p. 22n.

finally disowned because he would not give up "separate meetings."

The last years of his life were spent at Eagle House, Tottenham. Our friend Josiah Forster described him as having a "hard, red face," shaded by a well-curled brown wig and cocked hat, his person being clothed in a claret-coloured suit. He attended Tottenham Meeting regularly, walking up "panting and bahing," probably from asthma, to his seat on the top form facing the gallery.

The Friend and the Robber

In 1863, Joseph Elkinton and Joseph Scattergood, of Philadelphia, called on the Provost Marshal respecting the drafting of Friends for the Army. The officer said, among other things, "I am opposed to war myself, but if a man were to go into your house and cut your throat, would you resist him? Be sure you would." J. E. replied, "Sometime since, the house of a wealthy Friend was entered in the night; the robber aroused the Friend and told him if he did not get up and show him where his money was, he would kill him. The Friend sat up, and after a little thought said, 'I shall do no such thing; I will not be accessory to thy wickedness, and if it be permitted for thee to take my life, I shall die happy.' The robber concluded he would not kill such a man, and left him."

Joseph S. Elkinton, 1913, p. 41.

You that are poor, murmur not, but be patient, and trust in the Lord and submit to his Providence, and he will provide for you that which is convenient for you, the days of your appointed time.

And you that are rich, keep in moderation and strive not to multiply earthly treasure nor to heap up uncertain riches to your selves; but what God hath given you more than what is convenient for your own use, wait for his wisdom to employ it for his glory; that you may be faithful stewards of this worlds Mammon and the Lord God shall reward you into your bosoms, of the riches of that Kingdom that shall never have an end.

WILLIAM PENN, *To the Churches of Jesus throughout the World*, 1677, p. 8.

Christ will not have one coward in his spiritual army.

WILLIAM PENN, *Saul smitten to the Ground* . . . *Matthew Hide*, 1675, p. 15.