

Richard Smith and his Journal, 1817-1824

Concluded from page 121

RICHARD SMITH'S family at first felt much resentment at the circumstances of his death, and blamed Friends for leaving him alone at Birkow—not unreasonably, though we may be sure that he fully consented to the arrangement. The Committee in London were greatly concerned when they heard the news; Robert Forster writes, 10th mo. 11th, 1824: "We had not been otherwise than fully alive to the peculiar precariousness of human life (as relates to Europeans) on the coast of Africa, but we had indulged a hope that Richard Smith's constitution and habits would render him less susceptible." Later, T. Chorley comforts them thus, 6th mo. 10th, 1825: "I have reason to believe that he returned to Europe under a concern to be instrumental in instructing the negroes, and that no persuasion or fear of the consequences would have induced him to forego the opportunity afforded him by the Committee."

The transcript of the Journal gives little information regarding R.S.'s relations; he spent the last sixteen days of his father's life in close attendance upon him; three brothers are mentioned—Charles, who was perhaps his father's assistant, seems to have afterwards worked in the office at Endon; this was the brother with whom R.S. kept up a correspondence when in America and Africa; John, the maltster at Alton, whose cash book was never written up and would never balance; and Thomas, the farmer at Butterton, some miles to the west, beyond Trentham Park; R.S. attended to his accounts also. There was one sister, Mary, the wife of Charles Heaton; but though R.S. lived for so many months in this house, she is named on one occasion only, when she was unwell, and asked his prayers as he sat by her bedside. He was fond, no doubt, of the young Heatons, his nephews and nieces, in his quiet way: he cut their hair, made gardens for them, and helped them to draw: and on two occasions, at their request and by their father's leave, one of the boys accompanied him to meeting.

No one who reads the Journal can doubt that R.S. lived under an ever-present sense of Divine guidance; whatever were the trials and disappointments that he met with, and they were many and sharp and led often to depression of spirit lasting for days at a time, he was able to win through—to bear with equal mind the misunderstandings which were frequently his lot. Had compromise in non-essentials been possible to him, who will deny that his life would have been easier? A change of religious allegiance sometimes broadens, but often narrows tolerance of other views; the Journal is full of instances to show that R.S. was more zealous than the average Friend, and very unwilling to join in worship with any of other forms of religious belief. The effect on Hannah

Kilham, who was born an Anglican and married a Wesleyan minister before she joined Friends, was the reverse; and, under her influence perhaps, R.S. was more ready to associate with the missionaries stationed in the Gambia than he had previously shown himself to be with men of other sections of the Christian Church. Remarks in the Journal indicate that his depression of spirit sometimes arose from hunger and exhaustion; he feels his spirit, as well as his body, refreshed by food. The sense of the Power under which he lived was so strong that the expression of Its guidance became almost too habitual; it seems incongruous to use the words "previous exercise" when he had been undecided for a month whether he wanted new clothes; or to say, as he does constantly, "I felt peace" in a sense which only means the pleasant feeling of satisfaction natural at the end of a day's work well done. "If a conscientious man does not keep hold of his good common-sense, his mind may become so dominated with scruples that he comes to see wrong in everything or in the way of doing it," says a letter in *The Friend* of 25th February, 1916; a wise remark which, if R.S. had observed it, would have spared him some mistakes, as in the matter of his white hat; that he, devoted to Truth, should create a false impression, was clearly wrong. He was unflinchingly faithful to apprehended duty, shown week after week in Staffordshire in the determination to attend meetings for worship, whatever the distance; and perhaps most striking of all was his return to Zanesville on the 1st of Ninth Month, 1820, when wretchedly ill, to remonstrate with the mill-owners on their oppressive charges (see xiv. 19). He refers to himself sometimes as "set as a sign"; and it was so in fact, whether among Friends whose practice did not reach the standard of his own principles, or among his relatives and neighbours, many of whom failed egregiously to understand him.

There is, in the autobiography of Mary Howitt, the following paragraph referring to R.S. :—

"Before he embarked for Africa he came over to our house, [i.e., to the house of Samuel Botham of Uttoxeter] to take leave of my parents and sisters. Silence being the rule of his life, he walked into the parlour, sat in stillness with the members of the family for twenty minutes, rose up, shook hands with each, and so departed without uttering a word,"

which is characteristic and probable even if not absolutely true to fact.

In his enthusiasm and conscious honesty of purpose, he did not always make allowance for the other side of the question: he was profoundly discouraged at the lukewarm reception he met with at the hands of the Indian Committee of Ohio Yearly Meeting; by the questions asked in good faith by the Committee who visited him on his application for membership in the Society of Friends; and, when he came in contact with the robust common-sense of the Committee for African Instruction—a body of Friends whose sincerity he could not possibly doubt, he was disturbed because they asked some very natural questions.

There is ground for thinking that R.S. proved a difficult co-adjutor in the work on the Gambia; ill-health may well have made him often-

times irritable and peevish ; we have already seen that Hannah Kilham in a meeting for worship, expressed a wish for more " knitting together " ; the letters of 1825 of L. Howard and T. Chorley, already quoted, refer to " much that must be omitted from any publication of the Journal "— matters on which H.K. had been able to satisfy the Committee. T. Chorley was plainly concerned to defend him, for he says : " Our dear Friend was without doubt in some instances a little deceived, but not very subject to err in his judgment of those who were about him ; and as he cannot now be heard in his own defence, let us leave what we cannot explain, and give him everything that is due to the most upright intention." To understand all is to pardon all ; H.K.'s verdict before the start from London is given, 9th mo. 16th, 1823 : " A sincere, solid, active, persevering, and disinterested man. He goes at his own expense, having a small independent property."

Reading R.S.'s Journal and the *Memoir* of H.K. together, we cannot but conclude that the former hardly does justice to the work of John Thompson ; it rarely mentions him, and certainly gives no adequate conception of the part played by J. T. in the development of Birkow.

Friends never attempted further work in the Gambia. : " the removal of this pious and devoted individual . . . was a severe blow to the undertaking, and with it closed the attempt to prosecute this work of Christian love on the coast of Africa, which he was so successfully promoting " (*Memoir of Hannah Kilham*). The Committee for African Instruction continued in existence for some years ; but the mortality among the missionaries at Sierra Leone was so great that they might well feel unable to take the responsibility for further effort in such a " praise-worthy, but highly perilous enterprise " (L.H.). Under very strong concern on the part of H.K. she went under their auspices to Sierra Leone in 1827 and again in 1830 ; and she died at sea between Liberia and Sierra Leone on the 31st of Third Month. 1832.

There are no reports of the Committee in the Reference Library later than the circular of Ninth Month, 1824.

The Yorkshireman, a magazine issued periodically under the editorship of Luke Howard, contains, in the volume for 1832-3, the full report as presented to the Yearly Meeting of 1825, followed by a paper of General Observations on the enterprise, from the pen of the Editor.

THE ORIGINAL DIARIES

IT has already been stated (see xiv. 25), that Richard Smith's own Journals, from which Toft Chorley made his transcript, have been lent by their present owner. The volumes for the three interesting years—1817, which covered the departure for America and the walk to Pittsburgh ; 1820, with the expeditions to the Negro and Indian Settlements, and the return to England ; and 1823, which contained the preparations for, and the voyage to the Gambia—are now missing ; but against this loss, we have the diary of 1816, which elucidates an earlier period.

The volume of 1816 is a pocket-book, covered in red leather, with a flap; the pages—a week on a page and cash columns opposite—measure 6½ ins. by 3¾ ins. Those for succeeding years are home-made (1818 and 1819 octavo, 1821, 1822, and 1824 quarto) covered in stout brown paper; 1818 worn and shiny, as if much carried in the pocket; 1821 was kept on loose sheets and sewn at the end of the year, for the writing is stitched in. 1816, 1818, and 1819 have cash accounts in them, giving helpful additional information; the two latter have also some debtor and creditor accounts in the nature of a ledger, but there are references throughout to other books of account, and nothing appears to indicate a balance sheet.

T. Chorley's transcript is fairly complete for 1818 and 1819, though he was not quite careful to follow exactly either spelling or form of sentence: the accidental omission of words has, in a few cases, conveyed an erroneous impression, and some necessary corrections are added below. Much is omitted from 1821 and 1822 which was not pertinent to T.C.'s purpose, or of a private or business nature, improper to disclose to the eyes of that generation. The diary for 1824 is a witness to R.S.'s failing health; the notes are scrappy, and the handwriting indicates that he had not energy to mend his quills, for the neat, and in some places hairlike penmanship of the earlier years has become thick, sprawling and irregular—the deterioration gradual but progressive. The record of 1824 contains nothing to justify the supposition that there had been any serious disputes between R.S. and J. Thompson (see xiv. 115), or, except details of health and medicine, anything to conceal (see xiii. 50). The journals of 1821 and 1822 give a most minute account, often in quite absurd detail, of his occupation in his brother-in-law's office; perhaps the object was to enable him to calculate the time spent, so as to compute his remuneration.

It has been noted (see xiv. 65) that the transcript makes little or no mention of T. Chorley; it is therefore interesting to find that R.S. dined very regularly at T.C.'s house on First-days, and often after the mid-week meeting.

In the parcel containing the diaries are three other MS. books; one with notes on Hebrew words, another a folio containing drafts of letters, and a book of forty-one recipes and hints—agricultural, veterinary, culinary and medical; these were collected in Ohio, and include six substitutes for tea, though most of these seem rather to be medicinal. The bases of them are: Sassafras root and raspings of *lignum vitæ*; sweet marjoram and mint; dry sage and green balm leaves; rosemary and lavender; fennel seed and inner bark of magnolia (spicewood); small twigs of white oak, well dried in the sun, with two leaves of sweet myrtle. The last "is so good a counterfeit of true tea that good judges might mistake them."

CORRECTIONS AND NOTES

- xiii. 51. R.S. spelt "Omniscient" correctly.
- xiii. 51. Note 1. The parenthesis was R.S.'s.
- xiii. 51. "J.N." James Nixon, a Friend from Stafford in the employ of F. and S. Eveleigh, Southwark.

- xiii. 54. Extract 2 mo. 2. This is quite misleading; it has been repeated in full at xiv. 60.
- xiii. 54. Extract 2 mo. 23. The word "him" in the third line should be "E.B."
- xiii. 98. Note 7. The name was John Ward.
- xiii. 129. For the credit of William Wood's good sense it is satisfactory to find that it was at meeting and not at the school that this text was used.
- xiii. 132. It was the *new* discipline against which the young Freemasons protested; the previous day has the record:—"The alteration of the Discipline was proceeded in in a loving manner." Two names are omitted from the list of Friends present at Ohio Yearly Meeting with certificates:

John Letchworth ⁸⁴	}	Chester Co.
Caleb Pennock ⁸⁵	}	Penna.

During the Yearly Meeting R.S. stayed with Jonathan and Ann Taylor, and made himself useful each morning helping with the horses—a heavy and necessary duty at Y.M. in those days.

The fresh light thrown by the original MS. on the subject of "E.B." (see xiii. 54), shows that there was no matrimonial project connected with it. E.B. was a married lady, the wife of James Beech, of the Shaw, near Cheadle, who, as has already been seen in the course of the narrative, esteemed R.S. and valued his qualities; and he, on his part, held her in great respect; to judge from the only specimen in the draft letter-book, his correspondence with her was of a religious character.

The "E.B." theory being quite untenable, there remains the question of the reason for Matthew Smith's injunction of 7 mo. 13, 1816 against marriage, and of R.S.'s satisfaction when the letter withdrawing it reached him on 12 mo. 28, 1818 (see xiii. 53). There is, in each case, just a hint:

1816.

1 mo. 21. 1st Thoughts on M^ge with H.B. or rather Betros.

and at the end of 1817 a statement that he saw two people at Pittsburgh home in the evening, with a pencil reference in the transcript to 12 mo. 28, 1818; but these clues are too slight to offer a solution. The original of 1817, now lost, must have been more explicit, otherwise the pencil reference is meaningless.

1816.

With some account of Richard Smith in 1816, we complete all that can be ascertained of his life. At the opening of the year he was in Manchester, closely engaged in settling the accounts of his partnership with Thomas Welch; unfortunately the firm cannot be traced in the directories of the period. The dissolution of partnership was signed on 1st mo., 6th, and R.S. returned to Endon, where he received a salary for work in his brother-in-law's office. T. Welch gave him bills for £800 for the machinery, and R.S. seems to have undertaken to collect the debts due to the firm, though it is not clear whether the proceeds were

part of his share. He had had a house, or unfurnished rooms, for the arrival of furniture from Manchester, and its storage in C. Heaton's garret is mentioned.

He was back in Manchester for the period from 5th mo. 1st to 6th mo. 15th, and again for a time in 10th month. During the latter visit he made a debt-collecting journey into Wales, attending a Monthly Meeting at Chester, going to Flint and back in an open boat on the river Dee; then by coach to Eastham and steam-packet to Liverpool, where he was at meeting on the First-day.

The year 1816 was one of great commercial difficulty at the end of the Napoleonic wars; the failure of private individuals and the stoppage of banks is recorded here and there. Poor R.S. was, we may be sure, amply justified in the relief to which he gave expression in the entries of 5th mo. 1817 (see xiii. 55).

1816.

12 mo. 1. Dined with Toft Chorley who recommended a personal application for the settling Colonial accounts of long standing.

R.S. was already firmly attached to the Society of Friends at the beginning of 1816. Leek and Manchester Meetings (including, with some exception, the mid-week one) were attended regularly. At Manchester he knew Martha Routh's name as that of the leading Minister; at his first attendance there in 5th month he "signed the Marriage Covenant of William Nield and Mary Hoyle." Bearing in mind the references in the autumn of 1820 to between "5 and 6 years ago," and "5½ Years" (see xiv. 19) we shall probably not err if we conclude that he came under Friends' influence in Manchester in the spring of 1815.

It would be about the same time when he began to study Hebrew, which he took up again on reaching Manchester in 5th month at the "4th of 2nd quar or 30th lesson" and completed six weeks later with the "54th and last." The lessons cost 1s. 3d. and latterly 1s. each; but his teacher, T. Newton, also sold him Hebrew books, grammars, etc. to the value of over £10. In Tenth Month, one or two lessons in Chaldee, at 1s. 3d., were taken from the same tutor, and a Hebrew and Chaldee grammar bought for 5s.

1816.

5 mo. 11. Visited the Jews' synagogue for the first time and their forms of outward worship.

Memoranda of interest are an account which T. Chorley related on Second Month 25th, of an extraordinary tide in the river Humber, which did damage to the extent of many thousands of pounds; on Third Month 17th a long extract from a newspaper recounts an earthquake which was widely felt in South Yorkshire and Derbyshire.

7 mo. 23. C.H. says I have *disappointed* him in not having the above copied in time; a lesson to me to use no *rejoinders*.

11 mo. 17. C. and M. Heaton's 2 child Cath. and Chas. taken to Endon Steeple-House to be what is called christened.

12 mo. 5. Jos. Lay invited me to come higher up in the meeting.

The following—the last interesting entry in 1816, though written some years before his death, forms a fitting conclusion to the account of this pious and unusual man :

12 mo. 20. I have abundant cause for thankfulness to the Almighty for having been preserved through so many difficulties and dangers when exposed so much to the world in my simplicity. I feel gratitude to my earthly Father for his behaviour to me throughout and his seasonable Letters.

JOHN DYMOND CROSFIELD.

⁸⁴ John Letchworth's name and fame are recorded in a poem by Nathan Kite, of Philadelphia, entitled "The Arm Chair," printed in *Select Miscellanies*, collected by Wilson Armistead, London, 1851, vol. v., p. 104, of which the origin was on this wise: An arm chair, made many years ago by John Letchworth, for Leonard and Jane Snowdon, was presented to the author, with some information of the worthies who were wont to visit the estimable owners; accompanied with an intimation that it would be a suitable theme for some verses:

"He who with artist's skill scooped out the seat,
Trim made thy elbows, uprights, and thy feet,
Now fourscore years and four are measured o'er,
And waits his summons to the heavenly shore."

⁸⁵ Caleb Pennock (1752-1841) is also celebrated in "The Arm Chair" (see previous note).

In Praise of Silence

"From the tearing clatter of speech, where so much is said and so little is meant, where so many words go to so little a measure of sense, it is a treat indeed to get away into silence. . . . In silence we can at least think for ourselves and go our own way."

COURTENAY, *The Empire of Silence*, 1916, p. 5.

"A bird's song is made up of a warble and a silence," one has well said, "and the silence is part of the song."

COURTENAY, *The Empire of Silence*, 1916, p. 6.

Aldo, the great Venetian printer, set up over his door this notice: "No leisure for gossiping. Those only are admitted who come on business, which they are specially requested to despatch in as few words as possible."—COURTENAY, *The Empire of Silence*, 1916, p. 54.