

THE JOURNAL

OF THE

FRIENDS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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The Goff Letters

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LET us now consider those of Elizabeth's children who outlived her. Elizabeth's first child, the Elizabeth whom we have mentioned previously, was born in 1760. On the back of one of her mother's letters Elizabeth Goff once made a shopping list :

6 pr. of fingerd gloves
1 baby
1 oz. of boss 14d.
1 yard of 9 shiling muslin
Some black and some white
Silk a wax baby 6 Towels

ELIZ. GOFF.

Baby and wax baby are, of course, an ordinary and a wax doll, and they may have been for little Elizabeth,² who was then about eight years of age.

In June, 1780, Elizabeth married John Lecky and went to live at Ballykealy, co. Carlow, a place that had belonged to the Lecky family from their earliest days in Ireland. Here she was surrounded by Friends. There were Watsons at Ballydarton, and Kilconnor, and other Leckys at Kilnock. All were beautiful places, three of

² All the Elizabeths are apt to be confusing. I find that there were, at one time, fifteen Elizabeths among Elizabeth Goff's children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

them situated on the little river Burren. Certainly the Friends of those days knew where and how to build their houses, and there does not seem to have been any lack of means amongst them. Horetown, Mount Wilson, Cahir Abbey, and many another mentioned in these letters are still to be seen and admired, though, alas! they are, for the most part, no longer the habitations of Friends. William Savery, an American Friend who travelled through Ireland in 1798, says: "Friends in Ireland seem to live like princes of the earth, more than in any other country I have seen—their gardens, horses, carriages and various conveniences, with the abundance of their tables, appeared to me to call for much more gratitude and humility, than in some instances, it is to be feared, is the case."

At Ballykealy, Elizabeth Lecky lived in quiet happiness for many years. Her letters show calm contentment, until in 1796 John Lecky died, leaving her with nine children. Elizabeth was greatly devoted to her "goodman" as she calls him, and in a letter to her mother on her father's death two years afterwards she speaks of the "awful period and wrending separation" she herself had passed through. Elizabeth's eldest daughter, Elizabeth, was a delicate child. Her mother says of her when she was about five: "I have been uneasy about Eliza she is extremely delicate and has a loss of appetite & rest & often weeps screeching. . . . I perhaps immadgines her worse than she is." There are several other allusions in the letters to Elizabeth's fragile appearance, but as, in after years, she married John Watson of Kilconnor, and had twelve children, she was perhaps not so delicate as she looked.

Elizabeth Lecky's eldest son, Robert, was fourteen at the time of the Rebellion. He was then at school at Richard Row's at Ross, and Elizabeth Lecky writes: "I have got Rob^t. home through Perils and dangers he & my flock are well as am I except a severe Cold from loss of rest & sitting up at nights occasioned by feare and apprehension." After the Rebellion Richard Row moved his school to Waterford, and here in the following March Robert died "of a fever," "a fine promising boy" according to his grandmother.

Elizabeth outlived all but three of her sisters, though she was the eldest of so large a family, and died at the age of eighty-one. All but one of her own children predeceased her, so her old age must have been a lonely one.

Elizabeth Goff's eldest son, William, was born in 1762. In 1784, he married Rebecca Deaves of Cork. Rebecca was of rather a complaining disposition and does not seem to have been a great favourite with her people-in-law. They had one son and six daughters. Jacob William, the son, married twice but left no children. Their daughters were all educated at Sally Hoare's famous school in Dublin, as were also a great many of Elizabeth's other grand-daughters. Rebecca, the eldest, married Francis Davis, of Waterford, and her son, Strangman, succeeded his uncle in 1845, and assumed the surname and arms of Goff by royal licence. From him the present Goffs are descended. Of their other daughters, two married Pims, one a Harvey, and two remained unmarried. William died in 1840. We do not know the date of Rebecca's death.

The letters about Jane, Elizabeth's sixth daughter, start in 1794, with one from "Cousin James Clibborn" of Waringstown, co. Down, asking permission for Thomas Christy Wakefield to pay his addresses to her. Cousin James writes a warm recommendation of the young man. He says he is "of most unaccentionable Character, & possessed of all those Qualifications which are necessary to Insure those solid and substantice Comforts which result from a Union of hands & Hearts." Jane Wakefield and Lucy Pike had a double wedding in January, 1795. A few weeks afterwards Jane's Aunt Sandwith and Sister Charlotte go to stay with her, and Jane Sandwith writes to Elizabeth of her niece's new home at Moyallon. She says :

Jane seems as much settled at home and amongst her Friends as if here for years—she has I am certain got into a kind Neighbourhood.
. . . All the families live within a pleasant walk of each other—& the meeting House is directly

opposit this hall door as nigh to us as the Bottom of your Lawn so thou may judg what an acomiditation that is—after meeting each day the Friends call kindly on us—and we have dined at each of their houses—they entertain quite in a plain Hospitable way no superfluaty of any kind—they are Exemplary *indeed*. We have not been visseted by any out of the Sociaty—accept 2 or 3 men that called on Thom^s—I dont appehend that Jane will be likely to make any acquaintence in that way—which is very desiarable. . . . I shoud think Warringstown & all this Country about verry hansom—but the snow being so on the ground ever sence we came there is no judging.

The picture this gives of Moyallon at that time is a very pleasant one, and the desirability of Jane not being likely to make any acquaintence outside the Society was the real old Friendly view.

Jane Wakefield's married life was very happy, though troubles came to her as they do to everyone. She lost a daughter, the first Elizabeth, in infancy and another, Mary, at two-and-a-half, while she herself was away from home. Little Mary seems to have had an abscess in the ear which attacked the brain. Her elder daughter, Hannah, had also an abscess in her ear at the same time, and we have two letters from Thomas Christy Wakefield written when under great anxiety about her. They were applying carrot poultices and giving her bark every four hours. Happily Hannah recovered, though, as her mother says in a subsequent letter, "her frame is so extremely delicate that I can scearsay look at her with expectation that she will be spared to us." Hannah married William Bell, of Belfast, and went to America where some descendants still live.

Jane had a good deal of illness in her life, and the doctoring she received makes us thankful for the advance in knowledge, since then, of the medical profession. We may also be thankful for the better distribution of medical supplies, when we find that, when Jane was in need of savin ointment, Thomas had to write to his mother-in-law to get it in Dublin, and have it sent by coach to Loughbrickland (six miles from Moyallon, but the nearest

point on the direct coach road)—and yet savin was a common herb frequently made up with rue.

The Wakefields had nine children, of whom seven grew up. Elizabeth had a great affection for her son-in-law, Thomas Christy Wakefield, and there are many letters from and to him in the collection. Once she says: “My dear love and best desires every way awate thee and thine hoping that the great and good giver of every increse may be pleased to bless you in Basket and in Store.” These last words are a very characteristic phrase of Elizabeth’s, and can be noticed as early as 1790, at the time of Anne’s wedding.

Jane Wakefield died in 1836. In a letter from Sally Hoare, written at the time of her death, we find: “I knew thy sister in the bloom of youth before her marriage—cheerful, happy and beloved, also admired for she was handsome.”

Six Generations of Friends in Ireland, which was written by Jane Marion Richardson, a grand-daughter of Jane Wakefield, gives us much further information about her. Her husband says of their marriage (p. 132):

It was the Lord’s doing, and we were permitted to live in love and harmony for more than forty years. A better wife no man ever had, her heart overflowed with love to me, to her children, and to all around.

The love and reverence her children had for her was most remarkable. She was enshrined,—we are told,—in their memory as a loving, wise and Christian parent, and they loved to speak of her beautiful face and noble presence, and of little incidents which marked her character in its benevolence, hospitality and kindness to the poor.

There are only five letters written during the time of the Rebellion in the Collection. This can be accounted for by the fact that Horetown was in the very thick of the fighting, and it was probably almost impossible either to send or receive news. Ballykealy is within driving distance of Horetown, yet Elizabeth Lecky was not able to get any word of the Goffs. *Divine Protection*, written in after years, by Dinah Goff, gives a very vivid account of what the family came through at this time, and from this

we learn that Jacob Goff was three times dragged out on to his lawn by the rebels, in order to be shot, but was each time wonderfully preserved. All was quiet in the north, but Jane Wakefield, and Charlotte who was staying with her, write in great anxiety about the fate of their relatives at Horetown.

On June 25th, Richard Sparrow writes :

My Dear Father Goff,

Truly I have sympathised with thee and Dr Mother & Sisters in your tried Situation. . . . Having learned this day that the Kings Troops had got as far as Wexford I presumed the Road was clear to Horetown & we are all anxious to learn your Situation that under Divine protection Joseph might be permitted to go forth as the Dove from the Ark, to bring us glad tidings respecting you. . . . I have a milch Cow a fat Cow some sheep and other Necessaries ready to go . . . having heard thou wert deprived of nearly all thy Cattle. . . . I send by Joseph Ten Guineas, would add more, but thought it unsafe to venture more money till we know more abt the State of your Country—Joseph's pass is only for three days therefore hope he will be able to accomplish the end in view within that time.

Joseph was Elizabeth's younger son. He seems to have been living with the Sparrows at this time, perhaps to learn his business. It is not clear whether his pass was from the Military or the Rebels.

When the news got through to Dublin that the Horetown family were safe, Jane Sandwith writes in great thankfulness for their preservation. She mentions the terrible state of the country :

Many, many are the affecting reports that are daly and houarly handed in . . . many of our relations and Friends are flying to England . . . Elizabeth Bland has been here above a week waiting a passage . . . a striping malencholy time it is—may that hand that has permitted it be our support in the day of trial.

Thomas Christy Wakefield writes :

Moyallon, 1st of 7th Month, 1798.

My dear Father

The pleasing acct of your happy deliverance from the late dangerous & tried situation you were placed in came to hand by a letter from Aunt Sandwith. . . . We as yet remain ignorant of the particulars respecting the ingagemant that took place about the House ; except from what Sam^l Elly mentioned, he was kind in letting us know twice how you were, his information believe was obtained from one of thy own men that had made escape to Ross from the Rebels. . . . Being sensible that all commerce must be at a stand I beg leave to enclose a draft for £40—with desires for your welfare in which I am joined by Jane and Charlotte—hoping thou wilt not consider me too presumptuous I bid thee farewell and remain thy affecte. son

THOS. CHRISTY WAKEFIELD.

The Rebellion was over, but Jacob Goff never recovered from the fatigues and anxieties of that terrible summer, and at the end of the year he passed quietly away, his family gathered round him.

Solitude, Lurgan

S. HILDA BELL

To be concluded

May Drummond.

(Vols. ii., iii., iv., v., vi., x., xiii., xiv.)

“ 4th day, 5 mo. 21, 1766.

At Westminster Meeting was M. Drummond who had appeared in publick several times of late, on whom I looked with concern & was sorry to have reason to think that she has turned her back to what I believe she once was willing to forfeit all.”

Diary of John Grubb (1737-1784), of Anner Mills, Ireland, when travelling in England. MS. in possession of J. E. Grubb.