

Records of James Jenkins

OUR readers will meet from time to time quotations from and references to a manuscript to which we have given above short title. The full title page is

THE
RECORDS AND RECOLLECTIONS
OF
JAMES JENKINS

Respecting himself and others, from 1761 to 1821, being a period of sixty years, with additions tending to illustrate the whole.

“ I still had hopes
Around my fire, an evening group to draw,
And tell of all I felt, and all I saw.”

“ Blame where we *must*, be candid where we *can*.”

“ The *dead* cannot be scandalized—what is said of *them* is history.”
JOHNSON.

In harmony with the sentiments expressed in above quotations, James Jenkins wrote over one thousand quarto pages and his work is of great value to the historian and student of Quakerism. In his opening remarks, J. J. wrote: “ Having in this work said so much of many who were members of our religious Society, I ought to explain *why* I have so widely departed from the usual mode of Friends, by stating *both* sides of the characters which I have attempted to display. Long founded, and I believe almost general is the complaint that we have scarcely any such thing as biography amongst us. Friends who have written their own Journals have prudently avoided a delineation of their own characters, and when it has been done by others it is rarely any other than eulogy, and often of the warmest kind.”

Hence we may expect to find, and are not disappointed, candid and free remarks about many Friends, giving decidedly fresh views of their characters. Some statements are too intimate to reproduce, and others may be coloured by personal feelings of the writer, but many give us valuable sidelights on persons who passed across the stage of life in view of the writer and others of whom he had received information. The index contains over one thousand names.

Here is a description of Sarah Crawley (1717-1799), as a specimen of a personal reference to an English Friend :

“ Sarah Crawley I well knew. She lived to the age of 81 and died in apartments at that despicable part of the town, called Cow Cross, West Smithfield, after living many years in the decent and salubrious town

of Hitchin in Hertfordshire. For a migration so unaccountable she pleaded the feelings of duty and that surely was sufficient reason.

“ She was a minister, I believe generally esteemed amongst us, but her *manner* of delivery was extremely unpleasant. Her voice was harsh and grating, and her cadence the music of dissonance. The feelings which this excited I often strove to suppress, but I strove ineffectually. I could not possibly overlook the *manner* in the *matter*, as I thought it my duty and much wished to do ; but it was like administering good wine in a wooden spoon—the former grateful to the palate, but the latter, to the lips and the tongue, unpleasant even to aversion.”

Again :

“ In the years 1771 and 1772 our Meetings [J. J. was then resident in Ireland] were visited by William Hunt and Robert Willis, both ministering Friends from America :—the former was a cheerful, indeed very agreeable fellow-traveller to Robert Dudley and myself for many miles. Robert Willis was a man of extremely wild and rustic appearance. I remember that in his address to Friends at our week-day meeting, he told them bluntly that they were “ an idle company, and an indolent company,” probably without being conscious of the glaring tautology. With great truth he might have added you are a *snuffy* company, and some of you take it nastily. They were also a *wigged* company, there being scarcely a man friend without. In this respect they were as superfluously dressy as their English brethren. I believe that I might say truly many hundred *plain Friends* abandoned the finest heads of hair to take to wigs, of *course*, to a *superfluity*. But they differed from the plain Friends of England by some wearing dark blue coat and waistcoat, black breeches, gay, speckled stockings, large silver buckles, great projection and display of wig above the shoulders ; and all this with a plain triangular hat, such as Thomas Corbyn [hatter of London] himself might have worn. In winter, instead of greatcoat, long cloaks were generally worn by men, that cover'd arms and all.”

Here is a criticism of American Friends who came over to Europe in 1784 :

“ The war with America being ended, and (as I saw it expressed in a letter written by Will^m Rathbone of Liverpool) ‘ the word of God no longer bound,’ in the course of this year we received the religious visits of many American Friends. . . . The gifts of some of these were so small, as to be a matter of surprise to not a few Friends that they should have felt a concern (and their American Friends concurred therewith) to ‘ put their small sickles into so large and distant harvest field.’ It may be said what perhaps could not be asserted of the same number of preachers of any other Society in the world—not any two were alike with respect to their *mode* of address, for each had their own exclusive tone, and in point of melody, one was as a flute, another a clarionet, a violin, french-horn. &c.”

James Jenkins (c. 1753-1831) was born, amid scenes of drunkenness and violence, at Kingswood, near Bristol, and was sent up to London at about nine years of age. Here he was under the care of John and Frances Fry. Later he went to the boarding school of Joseph Shaw at Highflatts, “ one hundred and ninety miles from London,” most of which he traversed on

foot. In 1768 he was resident at Woodbridge with Hannah Jesup, a grocer, and when his mistress became Mrs. Robert Dudley and removed to Ireland, he accompanied. He settled in London in 1779. "He had a succession of commercial disappointments and failures over many years" (*F.Q.E.* January, 1902). His wife was Eliza Lamb of London.

Anecdotes respecting James Gibbons

The following serves as an illustration of the fact of the superior education of the Quaker to that of others in a similar position in life :

James Gibbons was well known among the people as a man of great learning. While the British army was yet in the county [Chester County, Pa.], after the Battle of Brandywine, some officers were one day making merry at a wayside inn, and criticising the "ignorant country boors in rebellion against their King," when the innkeeper happened to see Mr. Gibbons driving up the road. Turning to his guests, he exclaimed :

"I'll wager twenty pounds that the first farmer who drives past this inn can speak more languages than the whole set of you put together !"

"A bet !" they cried, and the money was staked.

Soon after, Mr. Gibbons stopped to water his horse, and one of the party, saluting him in French, was civilly answered in the same tongue. Another, in bad Spanish, asked him if he were a Frenchman, and was told, in excellent Spanish, that he was born in Chester County. After putting their heads together, one of the party aimed at him a quotation from Horace, when they found, to their amazement, that the plain-looking farmer was a good Latin scholar. By this time Mr. Gibbons found that he was on trial, and put the whole party to rout by a volley of Greek, which none of them could understand. The happy inn-keeper won his bet, and the farmer went on his way.

Meeting three officers on the road one day, they accosted him thus :

"Well, Abraham !" said one.

"Well, Isaac !" said another.

"Well, Jacob !" said a third.

He checked his horse and replied : "I am neither Abraham, Isaac nor Jacob,—but Saul, the son of Kish, sent out to seek my father's asses, and lo ! I have found three !"

From *Life of Abby Hopper Gibbons*, by Sarah Hopper Emerson, New York, 1897, vol. i. p. 45.

James Gibbons (1734-1810) was the third of that name and a descendant of John Gibbons, a Friend who emigrated from Wiltshire and settled in Chester County, Pa., about 1681. John and Margery, his wife, were disowned for espousing the cause of George Keith. James Gibbons had twelve children. Three sons survived him, one being Dr. William Gibbons (c. 1781-1845), who settled at Wilmington, Del., where he soon rose to the head of his profession. Of his family of thirteen, James Sloan Gibbons (1810-1892), author of the well-known verses, "We are coming, Father Abraham," was the second son (see vol. xiv. pp. 45, 79).