

Early Nineteenth Century Evangelism

STEPHEN GRELLET¹

AN account of some of the labours of our dear friend Stephen Grellet, during his visit to the Metropolis in the early part of the year 1813 :

His engagements were of a peculiar kind, in the form of detach'd visits ; the first of which were select, towards members of our own Society.—1st, Ministers & Elders.—2nd, Those above 35 years of age. 3rd, those under 35 years of age. 4th, Servants & Apprentices. 5th, Those who came into the Society by conviction. 6th, Those who had been disowned.

He had a meeting with the very poor of Spitalfields, supposed to be about 1600, in Devonshire-house meeting. This meeting was a little disturbed at first, but it ended well. At Ratcliffe he had a very satisfactory meeting with the Sailors & low class of Women. At Westminster he had the most vicious & abandoned, and the most wretched & depraved characters, which could be obtained from St. Giles's, so called ;—It was a meeting of uncommon interest. There were many fears lest so rude a rabble should become formidable, & a riot be the consequence of such a meeting. But to the admiration of everyone, it was as quiet as if it had been a meeting of Friends. S.G. spoke at some length—afterwards Eliz^h Fry, which much surprised & affected many of them : At the close, S.G. told them the meeting was over ; but he had a few words to say to them before they parted, which was (I believe) in substance, “ That he had been much gratified in observing their quiet & orderly behaviour, & that he had felt a great interest in their future welfare ;

¹ Stephen Grellet (1773-1855) was a noted preacher, of French origin, whose home was in New York State. At this time he was visiting Europe for the second time. It was at his instigation that Elizabeth Fry undertook the work of prison-visitation. His *Memoirs* were published in 1860. A useful *Life* was written by Rev. William Guest and published in 1880, and reprinted later.

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That he doubted not but that there were many there, who had never before been so favoured to sit so comfortably & so truly happy for so long a time together ; That could reflect from the feelings they had experienced, the great advantage & satisfaction in following virtuous pursuits ; how different it must be from the mind's being in a continual round of vicious habits : he wished them at all times to seek after virtue ; if they did, it would make up for many privations they naturally might expect."

He also added : " He had a serious request to make them, which was, that when they departed they would do it as quietly as they could, & avoid entering into discourse with each other, & endeavour for half an hour at least, to try to remember what had been said, & it might prove the most profitable time they had ever known in all their lives."

They attended to his advice, & they left the Meeting as quietly or more so, than Friends do in a general way.

He had a meeting at Devonshire-house with the Jews, supposed to be above 1000. He was much pleased with this meeting. While on his feet, he observed many Jewesses in tears ; He observed many of the men go out, which at first discouraged him, but he discovered they all returned with several others with them ; I believe it was hardly ever known that a Christian people ever collected so large a number of Jews together before.

He then, in company with Will^m Forster, visited the prisons. Many hundreds were visited in their abodes of wretchedness and misery. The tender minds of S.G. & W.F. were moved with the deplorable state of the females particularly. The prison allowance at this time being only 3 oz. of bread per day, was insufficient for the calls of humanity, compelled the sale of every, & more than every suitable garment. Eliz^h Fry interested herself in deeds of kindness for them, visiting them & providing cloathing for the destitute.

In Newgate they had ten sittings, in one of which among the State prisoners, they were so affected, that several of them could not contain themselves within any bounds, they flung themselves on their beds, & bewailed themselves in a most distressing manner. These prisoners were well satisfied with this visit, as indeed they all were except three men who were executed for stealing Silk from on board a

Ship, they appeared hardened to a degree, it seemed as if no impression could be made on them. A Convict for forgery was much affected, as was his Wife, after his execution he went to see her, & the man's Father, Mother, two Brothers & a Sister, & two children ; he was favoured to leave them under a sweet feeling of resignation to the Divine will.

At Giltspur Street and Ludgate (Debtors) he was well satisfied. At the new Prison Clerkenwell, there were 150 men & as many Women, he had them each separate, and satisfactorily. The State prisoners stood aloof at first, but a great change in their dispositions was evident before the work was got through, a remarkable solemnity and tenderness prevailed, which evinced that mercy and goodness was near.

The Poultry Compter was not so satisfactory.

In Tothill-fields Bridewell he saw the men & women separately greatly to his satisfaction : The men at first appeared hardened, & at first appeared light in their behaviour, but at last they were wonderfully changed, & brought to a sense of their awful situation. The jailer acknowledged the satisfaction he had experienced in being present at the Meeting with the prisoners, & with much earnestness pressed S.G. & the Friends with him to take Tea, which they were obliged to decline on account of a previous engagement. He visited Clerkenwell Bridewell, but could not get admission at the Fleet, or at the King's-Bench, or Marshalsea prisons. The day after he got through his laborious undertakings, he left London.

INCIDENTS IN THE MINISTRY OF MARY DUDLEY

Mary Dudley² about this time, had some meetings among those of the upper classes of Society. She had one in the Meeting-house, Westminster, which was not very relieving to her. At the Town-hall at Windsor, She met a large assembly of Nobility & Gentry ; She appeared in an extraordinary manner in supplication for the King, which greatly affected the audience. The solemnity was said to be marvellous, & She has at times since acknowledged, she had

² Mary Dudley (1750-1823) was a celebrated Minister, wife of Robert Dudley, of London, and mother of the Minister, Elizabeth Dudley, who edited the *Life* of her mother.

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never experienced the like descending of divinely empowering influence ; A person present penned her prayer down from memory, & it was presented to the Queen, who was greatly affected at the perusal, to the shedding of many tears : It is said she dispatched a Lord in waiting, with a message of kindness to M. D. directing that every attention, comfort, & accommodation, should be rendered her.

The Earl & Countess of Harcourt invited her to their home, to spend a few days with them, which she declined, having other Religious engagements in prospect.

A Clergyman who resided in the neighbourhood being present, invited her to have a meeting in his place of worship, to which she consented, & he took the pains of inviting the great people near him, & a very satisfactory meeting was held both at Windsor & at his own place, he expressed his full unity with her ministry : He very kindly provided some refreshment in the Vestry for herself & Friends, after the meeting was over.

This Clergyman again met her at Staines, where there was a very crowded meeting, mostly of the upper class of Society ; but M. D. having been much exhausted at the close of the Meeting, fainted ; when she recovered, the first person she saw, was the Clergyman assisting, to whom she said : “ What ! art thou here ? ” “ Yes, Madam,” said he, “ & what is of greater importance, God has been here.”

Thus, we see how all ranks of Society have been watered, the rich & the poor, whom the World seemed to care little about, have been favoured to taste of the heavenly bread.

From a manuscript in **D**.

Sleeping in Meeting

Bickersteth (near Wigan).

“ Preparatory Meeting,” 14 ix. 1697.

Minute 2 :

“ Upon the reading of the minuite in y^e sevⁿth mo: relating to Friends clearness of sleeping in meetinge, an Acc^t in general was given y^t dominion & victory, in a good degree, is witnessed ov^r y^t weakness by those who, formerly, have thereto been adicted.”

13. i. 169⁷/₈. “ Friends who have been adicted to sleep in meetinge keeps the ground they got some time agoe ov^r that weakness.”