

Joseph de Grellet

SEW of those who have read the *Memoirs of Stephen Grellet*, or heard of him and his wonderful Gospel journeys, know anything of his brother Joseph, who was closely associated with him in his early attachment to the Society of Friends. It is the aim of this article to piece together the fragments of the history of the life of Joseph Grellet which have come to light from various sources.

Gabriel Marc Antoine de Grellet du Mabillier was an owner of extensive porcelain manufactories in the neighbourhood of Limoges in the Department of Haute Vienne, France. For some years he was comptroller of the Mint, and at one time he was a member of the household of Louis XVI. About the year 1766, M. de Grellet married Susanne de Senamaud (c. 1744-1837), of a family long seated at Limoges and of high standing.

According to the official records given in an article by Gustav Lanson, of Paris, in volume v, there were four sons and three daughters. The list given in a note in the *Memoirs of Stephen Grellet*, prepared by Benjamin Seebohm in 1860, names but two daughters, and is as follows :

Marie Josephine, married the Baron le Clerc, and died in 1854, aged 87.

Mariette F., married De Boise, and died in 1839.

Pierre, married Grace, daughter of Judge Ingersoll, of New Haven, U.S.A., and died in 1841.

Joseph, married a Minon and died in 1845.

Etienne, married Rebecca Collins, of New York, and died in 1855.

Charles, married Caroline Wamey, and died in 1857.

The family were of the Roman Catholic faith and Joseph and his brothers and sisters were educated under the care of resident tutors until the brothers went to college.

Then burst the hurricane of the Revolution, the Grellet estates were confiscated and Joseph's father and mother thrown into prison. According to Stephen in his *Memoirs*, the three elder brothers left their country to join the refugees in Germany forming the army of the Princes. On the defeat and retreat of the army from France and a narrow escape from being shot, they made their way through Brussels to Holland. From the National Archives in Paris, however, it appears that

every effort of Grellet, the father, tends to prove that his sons went away for purposes of business. He denies that any one of them was with the army of the Princes. After spending five years at Lyons, his three sons "worked for about a year in the establishment of their brother-in-law at Brive." Then they went to Frankfort, and whilst the oldest, Pierre, went off to Amsterdam, Joseph and Etienne, after gaining sufficient knowledge of German, betook themselves *incognito*, as workmen, to the forges of Styria, in order "to discover the secret of the manufacture of scythes, a secret known only in this distant part of Germany."

Of much of this there is no mention in Stephen's *Memoirs*.

M. Lanson adds :

The letters upon which the father relies to obtain the removal of his sons' names from the schedule of refugees must have been forged by his sons in agreement with him.

The father also states that on the 13th December, 1792, Etienne and Joseph were in Hamburg, and shortly after they embarked at Amsterdam for South America, reaching Demerara, Guiana, then an outpost of Holland, in January, 1793.

Being provided with letters of introduction, the brothers were well received and for two years they were engaged in business. Etienne wrote to his father, 6 August, 1793 :

We are poor in this country in which we only have our hands to depend upon ; we are filling a place usually only occupied by sailors or soldiers . . . (letter in National Archives in Paris, translated by M. Lanson, see vol. v, pp. 74, 75).

Sickened by the horrors of slavery, and hearing a report that a French fleet was coming to take possession of the

colony, and finding a vessel sailing for New York, they decided to leave, and, after encountering various adventures, they arrived in that city in the spring of 1795. After a short stay they crossed to Long Island and settled down at Newtown, where they made the acquaintance of Colonel Corsa, who had been in the English army, whose wife was a Franklin, and whose daughter spoke French.

One day information reached the family that there was to be a special "meeting for worship" at the Friends' Meeting House, at the request of two English ladies, Deborah Darby and Rebecca Young. Receiving an invitation to attend, the brothers decided to go to the meeting. As many another, Joseph found the early silence irksome. He whispered to his brother: "Let us go away"; but Etienne was so much impressed by the spiritual atmosphere of the meeting that he was "as one nailed to the seat." At the close they followed the visitors to the Colonel's house and in a family sitting they were addressed, but, owing to their scant knowledge of English, much of what was said was unintelligible.¹ Stephen (as we may now call him) soon began to attend Friends' meetings, but Joseph held back and tried to turn his brother away from his strange new interest. However, one Sunday Joseph announced his intention of accompanying his brother, to the latter's great delight. "My prayers were heard. It was a memorable meeting, held in silence as usual," writes Stephen, but Joseph was not greatly impressed.

Financial resources running low it was thought best to go back to New York, and there Joseph soon found a situation. The brothers separated regretfully when Stephen went on to Philadelphia, where, in the Fall of 1796, he was received into membership among Friends. In the Spring of 1799 Joseph again had his brother as a partner in business, but commercial concerns were now of secondary importance to Stephen, and he was drawn away on religious service, while Joseph "abode by the stuff" and presumably provided the means of living for both.

In 1802 Joseph de Grellet felt it right to return to his parents in France, a step which Stephen feared would "expose him to adverse influences that might closely prove

¹ More respecting this striking episode in the life of Stephen Grellet will appear in a memoir of Deborah Darby now in course of preparation.

his Christian foundation." Towards the close of the next year Gabriel de Grellet passed away. He had been much broken by his two years' incarceration and had decided to retire into Holland. Arrangements were made to quit Limoges, but death caused a still further remove. His widow remained in the old home. A silhouette of M. de Grellet is reproduced in A. M. Gummere's book of Quaker Costume.

It does not appear at what time Joseph became a member of the Society of Friends. It is stated in a letter from the noted philanthropist, La Rochefoucauld Liancourt, dated "The 22nd Nivose, year 8," that is 12 January, 1800, that he had seen the brothers in America, "who have joined the Society of Quakers. . . . I have seen them in union and association with the most benevolent and philanthropic Quakers" (letter in National Archives in Paris, translated by M. Lanson and printed in vol. v. On the other hand, we have found among Reed MSS. (see xxiii. 85), a letter from Stephen Grellet, dated New York, 15 i. 1823, to his brother Joseph, who was then in England, in which he writes :

Thy request to the Monthly Meeting has been laid before it and is in forwardness, thy ancient friends seeing with gladness thy new step towards the holy city.

This might be taken to infer a request for close association with Friends or for a renewal of such.

In January, 1808, we find Joseph resident in the city of Bordeaux, where he was visited by his brother Stephen, on the visit of the latter to Europe after about fourteen years' absence. The brothers would be glad to meet again, but the time together was short, as Stephen, prevented from visiting Paris, embarked on the 14th of the next month for New York.

Shortly after this date must have occurred Joseph's marriage, but details are lacking, save that the lady's name was Minon.

The next gleam of light thrown upon the life of Joseph de Grellet comes from a book entitled *Le Livre Noir*, consisting of extracts from the records of the Prefecture of Police in Paris (see v. 69 ; a copy of this book is in D). His American brother, arrived in France in 1813, received permission to enter Paris, "sous le caution [surety] de ses deux frères." The brothers were Pierre and Joseph, the latter being

described as a merchant in the Rue Michel-Lecomte no. 31, and the former, temporarily in Paris, was designated receiver-general of the Department of the Aveyron. A few weeks later it was reported that the brother who had resided in the Rue Michel-Lecomte in July, 1813, went to lodge in the Chaussée d'Antin and that his partnership with another merchant resulted in a business-failure, upon which "il se retira chez l'étranger," and that Pierre had returned to his position in the Aveyron.

In September we find Stephen at Rodez in the Aveyron where he met Pierre and Joseph, and his mother and other relatives and where he had a religious opportunity with his "brothers and their families." He exclaims: "My dear connections have never been more precious to me, and I believe the Truth has never been more endeared to them." The family must have returned to their home at Brive, as Stephen visited them in that place in 1820.

There is at present a hiatus here in the history for we next come to several letters from Stephen Grellet found among the Reed MSS., indicating that Joseph Grellet was in England when they were written. There is no indication of the presence of his family in this country.

S. Grellet writes to Mary Allen, 14 ii. 1821: "I have no letter from my dear brother Joseph." A few days later, however, news has arrived. He writes to Rachel Reed, of London, from New York, 18 ii. 1821:

I am pleased my brother Joseph has found his way to thee. I know how encouraging it must have been to him under his peculiar trials. It is very kind of my dear friends thus to notice him and to try to strengthen the right in him.

The same to the same, 24 xii. 1821:

I am obliged to thee for thy kind notice of my brother Joseph. My spirit has at times been contrited under the sense of the mercy vouchsafed to him—the hearts and tender feelings of friends have been opened to him in a peculiar manner.

The same to his brother, 15 i. 1823:

Thy request to the Monthly Meeting . . . [as before quoted]. With much concern, I find thy new plan of teaching was not likely to succeed.

We have concluded to hire a house at Burlington, the one we had in view. It is small, but comfortable, lately occupied by Peter Barker. We may possibly remove there in the 4th month. [The removal certificate is dated 3 mo. 5, 1823—information from John Cox, Junr., of New York.]

To Rachel Reed again, 8 ix. 1823 :

I am obliged to John Kitching for keeping my brother Joseph under his kind notice ; that dear brother under his many trials is often brought very low. I hope his outward prospects at Nottingham are brighter.

To Rachel Reed, 19 vi. 1825 :

My brother Joseph gives me some intelligence of thee most every time he writes, but some months have now elapsed since his last letter. His life continues attended with many cares.

It would appear that before the date of the last letter Joseph had returned to France. In 1829 he was again in England, as noted in Rachel Reed's pocketbook. In 1831 R. R. wrote : "Took my last farewell of dear J. Grellet," followed by a memorandum : "Feb. 9. J. Grellet left for Dover on his way to Paris."

The next letter was written to John Kitching on the 1st of Eighth Month, 1835 :

I had lately a long letter from my brother Joseph Grellet. He appeared a little cheered up by a visit he had paid to our beloved aged mother and to our dear sisters. . . . He mentions the prospect of the marriage of his son Alphonse, which was to take place last month to a young woman of solid worth, as he describes her, well calculated as a daughter to supply the loss they have sustained by the removal of their Almania. His paternal sollicitude was afresh awakened on account of his son, Ernest, his regiment being on the frontier of Spain. He is very anxious that this poor son should retire from this kind of life, and intended strongly to plead with him, if he came, as he hopes, to attend his brother's marriage. Joseph hears very seldom from his English friends, which is a great privation to him, especially that he now is so much out of the way to see some of them as when he resided at

Paris. I feel much for him in this his sequestered and solitary situation.

The last glimpse of Joseph de Grellet reveals him at the bedside of his mother, who died on the 20th February, 1837, at the age of ninety-three, of which event he wrote a long account to his brother in America. He died in 1845.

This fragmentary record leaves much to supposition, but it is evident that the life of Joseph de Grellet was a very checkered one. Probably his Quaker up-bringing in America and England did not well fit into the surroundings of his native country.

Mary Jefferys

Although mentioned from time to time as a travelling companion of ministering Friends, little has appeared of the personal history of Mary Jefferys. She was the daughter of Robert and Mary Jefferys, of Melksham, Wiltshire, where she was born 14 iv. 1767. She began her companionship with Sarah Stephenson, of the same town, early in 1794 when about twenty-seven years of age, the latter being about fifty-six. They travelled in the British Isles and went to America in 1801, where Sarah Stephenson ended her days, dying in Philadelphia, 26 iv. 1802. M. Jefferys spoke of the event at Y.M. 1803, and "acknowledged the gracious support which had been granted her under the trial" (*Mary Capper*, p. 131). It was probably she who was "the dear and intimate friend of the deceased," who assisted in the preparation of the *Memoirs of Sarah Stephenson*, which appeared in 1807. M. Jefferys was also with Deborah Darby on some of her journeys. She was a Minister.

It appears evident from the Registers of Wiltshire Friends that Mary Jefferys, dau. of Robert and Mary Jefferys, of Melksham, married, 18 viii. 1819, William Powell, of Nursted, Wilts. From this time we do not find her moving about in the ministry as before her marriage. She died in 1847.

xiii.-xv.

It is said of Amos Griffith [xvii.132] that when at Isaac Hadwen's, at breakfast, he produced a red herring out of his pocket, which he had gone out early to buy, saying: "Edith likes something tasty."