

The Gurney Manuscripts

Continued from vol. xxix, p. 40

The Gurneys of Keswick (1771-1775)

In *The Gurneys of Earlham*¹, Augustus J. C. Hare gives interesting details of John and Elizabeth Gurney of Keswick, but it may be well to preface the following selection of extracts by a brief sketch of the family in 1771, the date of the earliest letter printed below. John Gurney, who had built up a large and prosperous woolstapling business in Norwich, died in that year at the early age of fifty-four, and the care and management of this important concern devolved upon his two eldest sons, Richard and John, aged twenty-nine and twenty-two respectively. In this they were greatly helped by Thomas Bland, who, in 1775, became their uncle by his marriage with Sarah Gurney (more familiarly known as "Aunt Sally"), the widow of Samuel Gurney of Norwich. The youngest of the family was Joseph, born in 1757, who was living at home at this time; in later years he married Jane Chapman, and became known as "Joseph Gurney of The Grove", whilst Richard remained at Keswick, and John founded the Earlham branch of the family.² There was one daughter, Rachel, two years older than Joseph; in 1775 she married Robert Barclay of Bury Hill, and became the mother of a numerous family, but at the time of these letters she was living quietly at home. The mother of this gifted family was Elizabeth, the daughter of Richard Kett, who had married John Gurney in 1741; in her widowhood she retained the deep love and affection of her children, and her letters breathe a maternal care and anxiety for their welfare, which more than compensates for her epistolary shortcomings.

ARTHUR J. EDDINGTON.

2 Christ Church Road,
Norwich.

RACHEL GURNEY TO JOHN GURNEY. (Gurney MSS. ii. 318.)

The writer was only sixteen at the time of this letter; the writing is good for a girl of her age, and also the spelling, apart from the "rare word", amanuensis, and other difficulties, although she is very economical with her commas and full stops. It is interesting to note the reference to Earlham ("Arlam"), long before there was any idea that her brother would take up his abode there. The letter is addressed, "To John Gurney Jun, at Jan vander Werf Jun, in Amsterdam."

Keswick Sept^r 5th: 1771

By Mama's request I now take up my pen to Answer my Dear Brother Johns Letter which she had the satisfaction to recieve this morning and tho I am not posses'd of sufficient

talents to be her Amenuences yet an engagement preventing her I must endeavour to manage as well as I can ; be assur'd it is always a peculiar pleasure to be engag'd in this employment to one for whom I have so sincere an affection which the many Miles nor even the great Ocean that now separates us can't possibly Eradicate.

While we was sitting at Dinner to Day we was surpris'd by the sudden appearance of Friend Bales of Wymondham and his wife which prevented Mama's writing as she intended we are likewise Dress'd & otherways prepared for the reception of Friend Martinues Family this afternoon to Morrow we are to have the Company of our Frd Scots & their Daughter Abigail and her Husband she being lately Married I doubt not but my Description of our intended Visitors will cause thee to smile but I thought it best to give thee a thorough Detail of our engagements and as this was the readiest way I was willing to pursue it & since it will be very agreable to me if I can cause thee the least degree of Amusement I went on Third Day with Frd Bates to pay a visit at Browick to our Cousin Day we spent a very agreable afternoon I was much pleas'd with the house & Gardens. My Aunt Sally Cousin Evans & Frd Stewart set out this Morning for Woodbridge my Cousins went yesterday and was to wait for thier Mama at Dickleborough. My horse have not stood in the Stable much unemploy'd since thou hast been gone I have taken many very pleasant rides among the rest one particularly so this Morning with E. Wagstaffe (having changed my Companion since thy Departure) we went round by Arlam and was exceedingly entertain'd with the fine Prospects all around us as we came a different way home to what I ever went before leaving the Arlam Turnpike on the left hand we came through fields which compos'd* a very high hill from the top we had a remarkable fine View of Woods & Vallys entermix'd with hills which form'd an agreable variety and put me very much in mind of the Country about Lord Buckingham's Seat I dare say thou have been this way many times and therefore no doubt but thee remember it.

I have not yet seen thy Letter but understand by Mama I am to have one soon with a Description of the Dutch Woman's dress I shall wait impatiently for the receipt of it

* i.e. "compassed".

but more for the satisfaction of a personal interview as it seems a long while since I see thee be assured we all wish it exceedingly but none more sincerely than thy affectionate Sister

RA GURNEY.

P.S. Mama & Brother Desires their Love. on perusing my Letter I find I have put in a very rare word at the beginning which I doubt I have not spelt wright but thee must consider tis what I never wrote before haste have occasion'd this to be very unintelligible.

JOHN GURNEY TO RICHARD GURNEY. (Gurney MSS. ii. 144.)

This letter deals mainly with business questions, but it contains passages of more general interest at the close, and reference is made to a "Club", with which the two brothers appear to have been associated.

Norwich 14 2/mo 1772

Dear Brother

. . . When thou sees Peggy Bland may give my Mother's kind love & thank her for a very nice Quarter of Lamb which came at quite the right time, my Aunt Aggs³ being in Town, that it was very acceptable.

I suppose there cannot be opportunity of procuring & sending time enough for next 4th Day or the Members of our Club wou'd esteem it a clever present if thou wast to send us one, or bring one down with thee, as they have had none this Season. . . . T. B's⁴ Head is not perfectly clear, but that not unusual with him. We are all very well

& with dear Love I am

Thy very affectionate

JOHN GURNEY JUNR.

DRAFT LETTER OF JOHN GURNEY. (Gurney MSS. ii. 143.)

One or more Friends had evidently written a letter with regard to the "Club" mentioned in the last, and the following draft contains John Gurney's defence of this activity; we may presume that the letter was satisfactory, as no notice was taken by the Monthly Meeting regarding it. There are many alterations in the draft, which probably dates from about the year 1772, but its final form is as under.

Every affectionate admonition of my Fr^{ds} I hope always to receive as tokens of their regard & respect, but when it

comes from those so nearly united it strongly enforces these sentiments & claim particular attention.

The subject of thy Letter I have a good deal consider'd ; my attendance at such a Friendly Meeting (I dont like the name of Club it sounds so like a drinking Party) may not appear to me so entirely inconsistent as the Light it strikes thee in ; yet I think in general thy reasons have great weight ; yet there are very extenuating reasons to be alledged in favour of this Society particularly the members being all Friends whose Company is laudibly pleasing & whose conduct & conversation are agreeably guarded against anything of a disagreeable or hurtful tendency, which it is obvious was the intent of the Quere^s alluded to to guard against & suppress.

JOSEPH GURNEY TO JOHN GURNEY. (Gurney MSS. ii. 265.)

The following letter is interesting, not only on account of its contents, but also from the fact that it is possibly the earliest extant letter of Joseph Gurney, who was only fourteen years old at the time of writing. The orthography is excellent, whilst the composition and style pay a remarkable tribute to the exceptional talents of one who was later recognized as a Friend of deep spirituality and wide influence, and the leader of the Society in the city of Norwich.

Dear Brother

I now take an opportunity of writing to thee that thou may'st not think that I have forgot thee. The Yearly Meeting⁶ was concluded this morn^s which has been very satisfactory, & Fr^d Hunt from America had a very extraordinary time at the Meeting for Business today concerning the Discipline of Fr^{ds}, & urged very pressingly for the Country Meetings in Norfolk to be in the Morn^s instead of the afternoon, remarking that the People's Understandings were clearer, & not so confus'd as in the afternoon. My Mother had besides her usual Lodgers Fr^d Fry of Bristol, & Fr^d Griffiths & his Wife & two American Men Fr^{ds}

. . . I have heard, tho' I do not know how true it is that Coz. John Gurney⁷ has orderd a dinner at the Maid's head for one hundred and fifty people, so by that I suppose our family will be invited amongst others. There are two Young Irish Men in Town who lodge at my Aunt Sally's there not being room at our House, one of them whose name is

Joseph Garret⁸ is very much like Sally Wagstaff he has fine curling Locks w^{ch} he takes some pain with going generally into one corner of the Room to comb them, & my Uncle Bevan calls him the sleek Young Man, however he is very sensible & appear'd at the Meeting for Business today I believe for the first time.

. . . My Mother, Brother & Sister join me in Love
to thee &c, I remain

Norwich 8/7 mo : Thy very affectionate Brother
1772 JO GURNEY.

ELIZABETH GURNEY TO JOHN GURNEY. (Gurney MSS.
ii. 81.)

The following letter from Elizabeth Gurney to her son John Gurney, who with his brother Joseph was in London, is undated, but it evidently belongs to the period 1772-1774. Reference is made therein to an occasion when her son upheld the Quaker Testimony against Hat-honour in somewhat difficult circumstances.

My Dear J. G.

The receipt of thyn this morning was very sattysfactory to hear you where rideing out tho no mention of your health as heard by Cousin H. Kett Joseph has been indisposed so much as to have been confinde within dores but I hope the ride was not purposed to recruit his Health but to imply His perfect recovry ; and thy own health I hope remains good Think you had an agreable sight of the King and His Sons am fit to wish it had not been Cousin J. E[llington] and thy scituation to have been mixt with the rebelious as your hats was only kept on with propriety but hope evry other mark of respect you where not defecient in,—the enclosed pleas to deliver ; and as its evening meeting must conclude with very dear Love to all conections

thy affectionate Mother

E. GURNEY.

NOTES

¹ *Op. cit.*, vol. i, pp. 13, 14, 19.

² See *Journal*, vol. xx, p. 71 (note).

³ SARAH AGGS, mother of Thomas Aggs, who married Lucy, daughter of Henry Gurney, in 1775.

⁴ THOMAS BLAND (c. 1740-1818), son of Michael and Patience Bland, of London ; he married, in 1775, Sarah, the widow of Samuel Gurney, of Norwich, thereby becoming an uncle of the writer.

⁵ Probably referring to the 6th Query, which (in the first printed edition, 1791) read, "Are friends careful to avoid all vain sports and places of diversion, gaming, all unnecessary frequenting of taverns and other public-houses, excess in drinking, and other intemperance?"

⁶ The Circular Yearly Meeting at Norwich. Friends from a distance included William Hunt and Thomas Thornbury from North Carolina, Sarah and Deborah Morris from Pennsylvania, John Griffith from Essex, William Fry from Bristol, and Elizabeth Robson from Yorkshire. (Minute Book of Norwich Yearly Meeting.)

⁷ JOHN GURNEY (John's) of Brooke, near Norwich (1718-1779). His daughter, Elizabeth, was married to Samuel Alexander, of Needham Market on the 14th of 7th mo. 1772. The "Maid's Head" was, and remains, one of the principal hostelries in the City, and the dinner would be provided on the occasion of the marriage abovesaid.

⁸ JOSEPH GARRET (1748-1793), was a Minister, of Cork. His second marriage was with Mary Pike, of Dungannon, by whom he had nine children. See *Journal*, vols. x, xx.

[Referring to the letter of Joseph Gurney in which he mentions William Hunt, it was not unusual for American visitors to advise and persist in matters of internal concern. See *Pen Pictures*, F.H.S. Supp. xvi., 1930. EDITOR.]

George Fox and a Negro

Is it correct, as has been asserted, that George Fox died possessed of a negro?

Absolutely incorrect. It is in an otherwise trustworthy monograph that the statement occurs. Mary S. Locke, *Anti-Slavery in America* (1619-1808), Radcliffe College Monographs, No. 11, Boston, 1901, page 21, note 1, writes:

"Among Fox's bequests are mentioned 1 negro man, 1 warming pan, 1 old looking glass, and 1 gun."

She gives as her authority S. M. Janney, *History of Friends*, ii. 249-250, 365, where the quotation may be found, but concerning the division of an estate between Walter and Rachel Dickenson in 1683 in Maryland, Fox had nothing to do with it.

THOMAS E. DRAKE.

Yale Station, New Haven, Conn.

In his *Gospel Family Order concerning the ordering of Families both of Whites, Blacks, and Indians*, 1676, p. 22, Fox wrote:

"London 18 xii. 1673.

"Send me over a Black Boy of your instructing that I may see some of your fruits, and as I shall see, I shall make him a free man or send him to you again."