

American Visitors in Ireland

Some Reminiscences, 1784-1852

The following quotations are from two sources. Those in the first series are from the diary of Mary Leadbeater, of Ballitore (1758-1826), and are incidental contemporary impressions. The second group come from a manuscript written in 1907 by Deborah Martin (1824-1908), daughter of Edward Alexander of Limerick (1788-1836), and are personal recollections. Mary Leadbeater also gives many interesting summaries of the addresses of these Friends. I only include two quotations from these, and they must not be considered in any way typical.

I

From Mary Leadbeater's Diary

27TH 3rd mo: 1784. *Patience Brayton*¹ and *Rebecca Wright*² came to dinner. Their looks inspire awe & veneration & seem to bear the stamp of their high commission. Patience is the elder—is a lusty woman of a fair complexion—Rebecca is several years younger, slender, & though very dark complexioned, has a pleasing countenance. Before Patience left home, 2 or 3 months before, she lost her second eldest son in his 21st year—seven months married—& her second daughter in her 19th year of violent fever. She has herself not had the small-pox. Thus these devoted ones come so far as with their lives in their hands—O shall their labours be in vain. Before dinner Patience appeared beautifully in supplication.—After dinner they both bore their testimony against the frequent use of wine, & shew of bottles & glasses.

3rd 5th mo: 1791 [In Dublin]. Most of our family dined at John Dawson's in company with *William Roche*,³ a venerable figure and a highly respectable character. The chief person I suppose of the Island of Nantuckett, he solicited from the court of England encouragement for some families from that island to settle in that kingdom, but their foolish policy was so long in determining that he applied to the court of France & from the excellent Neckar presently obtained all that he desired & accordingly some families have

settled at Dunkirk. William Roche is taking home his daughter from Clonmel school, a fine girl, sweetly adorned with the graces of humility and modesty, & an apparent unconsciousness that her father is yet rich, though having lost 'tis said £100,000 by the American war—has we hear when called on to relieve the distressed given a handful of uncounted gold from his chest.

16th 4th Mo: 1797 [At Ballitore]. We supped at Brother's with *Benjamin Rotch* a very agreeable friend, son to William Rotch, he was at Dunkirk during the siege, having there established the whale fishery, he suffered for the cause, & seemed more than once in danger of his life. He is quite the gentleman as well as the friend. His visit to Ireland he professes only to be to see the country, its inhabitants, & curiosities.

1784 [At London Yearly Meeting]. *Samuel Emlen*⁴ is a little man, his sight bad but very bright otherwise.

1st 1st mo: 1793 [At Carlow Quarterly Meeting]. Samuel Emlen's text today on which he beautifully enlarged was, "Now therefore ye are no more strangers & foreigners". . . . When he stood up in the gallery he pulled off his coat, saying, "I must take off this coat, it is borrowed, & don't fit me," or to that effect, which rather surprised us, yet as the dear creature acts so according to right direction, it might have its use, perhaps some mind present might wonder why he took off the coat, & think that he wanted to use bodily exercise.

[*Job Scott*⁵ died in 1793 at Elizabeth Shackleton's house in Ballitore where Mary Leadbeater was residing. She devotes many pages of her diary to him and to the details of his last illness. He was often impelled to testify against the Clergy, even in their presence. A favourite phrase that "The Clergy were the Grand Eclipse between God and the souls of men". At a meeting at Athy, he] revived this text in Zephaniah, when, personating the Lord, the prophet said, "I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, & the name of the Chemarims with the priests." The word chemarims, he said, signified Black coats, but as the priests had the translating of the Bible they did not care to expose themselves so left the word untranslated.

This dear & precious friend was cheerful & pleasant in conversation, when not opprest, as he often was, with the weights of his burden ; his understanding naturally I believe remarkably bright, & what his example was let his peace upon his death bed testify, as also how faithful a servant he had been. . . . His countenance was lively & pleasant, his eyes bright, his stature of the middle size. . . . His manners were engaging, & had a natural courtesy, very becoming a meek follower of the Lamb.

9th 9th mo: 1795. *Thos. Scattergood*⁶ struck me with a resemblance to dear Job Scott, not so much in his features as in the air of his countenance.

25th 10th mo: [In Dublin]. *Thos. Scattergood* . . . was led mostly to those not in profession with us, in much love, particularly to those young in years, & of bright capacities ; he seemed to think there were seeking minds present ; he touched with great delicacy on the subject of dress, which in itself he accounted little of, but remarked that among all denominations those who were concerned for the welfare of their souls, were less solicitous about outward adorning. He mentioned the distresses of the poor, especially in a neighbouring land, where he has eaten brown bread, as he went from place to place, & understood that some of the great men of the earth did so from principle, he lamented that the precious grain, the weighty wheat, should be used to adorn the person, tho' many did it without thought, having been educated so, but a powder-headed Quaker was abominable.

10th 10th mo: 1795. In the evening *David Bacon*⁷ & *Nicholas Walne*⁸ arrived from Athy. 11th. *Nicholas Walne* . . . addrest the children, recommending the perusal of the scriptures, especially of the New Testament. . . . *David* is not in the ministry, he is a fine old man about 67, father to *Thos. Scattergood*'s first wife ; *Thos.* called him his venerable father. He is cheerful & pleasant. *Nicholas* very agreeable also in conversation. *Nicholas* is a lawyer, a scholar & a gentleman ; is rather delicate in health.

25th 12th mo: 1811. *John Haughton* brought the dear interesting friend [*Stephen Grellett*⁹] here to tea. He is a native of France, 'tis said he was a page to the Queen ; he

fled at the time of the Revolution to America where he was convinced of Friends' principles through the ministry of Deborah Darby. He has a very pleasing french countenance, & speaks with the French accent, though he speaks English fluently.

23rd 10th mo: 1820. [*Nathan Hunt*¹⁰]. The friends came from Carlow, notice having previously been given the meetinghouse was very full. . . . I dined at the Mill. . . . Those strangers were exceedingly pleasant. Nathan told us that he was 12 years old when his father¹¹ left home, that they had a letter informing of his welfare & hope of returning—the next was of his death, the widow survived him 6 years. She had 8 children, his present number. No one he thinks could be more desirous of learning than he was, he has sate up till near morning, after the business of the day, reading, but circumstances of the family prevented their getting school education. After dinner Nathan spoke encouragingly to the widows (4 present). . . . He addressed the young men. . . . After supper . . . Nathan that overflowing vessel, poured forth again of his excellent oil, strongly recommending to watchfulness.

28th 12th mo: 1820. *Huldah Seers*¹² & Anne Ecroyd arrived at E. Barrington's. . . . Huldah is a sweet looking woman, advanced in years & her mouth sunk in. She is in delicate health, having lately recovered from illness. No one she knew was with her on shipboard, 3 women were there, who were civil, but the men passengers were kind, used to assist her to go on deck, & walk with her there for she was ill all the passage. One of these she understood to be a Roman Catholic Irish priest who had never seen one of our society before, & who asked her several questions about our faith, seeming satisfied with her answers.

II

From Deborah Martin's manuscript

*Jonathan Taylor*¹³ is the first American Friend whom I remember. He did not lodge at my father's, but took a meal with us. I recollect he placed me on his knee & told me he had a little grandchild like me in America. I remember too

about his death, & the pretty & pathetic story connected with it. His death occurred at Kilnock, Co. Carlow, the home of Mary James Lecky, the story is this:—As his peaceful remains lay extended in death, a Robin redbreast flew into the room, perched on the foot-rail of the bedstead, sung a sweet little song, & flew out again; this is perfectly true.

Neither *Christopher Healy*¹⁴ nor *Charles Osborne*¹⁵ came to Limerick, but I have never forgotten hearing the latter spoken of as very tall & thin, “a bag of bones.”

Stephen Grellet attended Waterford Q.M. in 1833 & I remember him very well; as he stood in the gallery preaching, I thought he was like an eagle! with his hooked nose, deeply set, penetrating eyes. . . . At the conclusion of the Q.M. it was the practice to hold a meeting at the school, which we used to call the “opportunity”; on this occasion Stephen Grellett attended it; he was seated close in front of us little girls & he preached to us calling us “petites moutons” (tho’ I think he managed to say “muttons”) but he did speak most kindly & tenderly to us, of the inward monitor in “our breasts.”

I recollect *Anna M. Thorne*¹⁶ very well—foolish child that I was, I was admiring her lovely, snug cape, instead of attending to what she was saying as she stood preaching in the gallery; she was the first “plain” friend I had seen wearing fur, & we thought it very grand; doubtless she needed it very much in our damp chilly climate.

*Lindley Murray Hoag*¹⁷ was a very fine speaker & was followed about and made a sort of idol by some persons; he was a young man then, and though hardly good looking was well enough in a way; he wore his hair long, almost on his shoulders.

*George and Susan Howland*¹⁸ had a look of wealth about them. She was a dainty little lady, & possessed herself of a lot of beautiful kid gloves; we concluded that they were not common in America.

*Thomas Arnett*¹⁹ from Indiana . . . was very little acquainted with the refinements of our daily life, but a kind thoughtful lady kindly initiated him in their use, & by the time he arrived in Cork he was much improved. He was a good and powerful minister; his mission closed with the publication of an address to Friends, & the acquisition of a wife; at least he became engaged to Hannah Hudson, who

subsequently went to America & married him, & was not only a good wife, but useful in improving the standard of domestic life about her, & also in her meeting.

*Eli and Sybil Jones*²⁰ paid their first visit to Europe in 1852. They were remarkable both as individuals & ministers. Sybil Jones was almost beautiful; lovely dark eyes, eyes which easily suffused with emotion; just more than middle-aged, with long neck & shoulders, & she always wore a black silk "stock" closely round her throat. I was in Dublin at Yearly Meeting that year & remember the beauty & solemnity of Sybil Jones's opening prayer, it was thus—"Oh Thou before Whom angels bow, & archangels veil their faces while they adore." Some weeks after they were guests in the home in which I was then residing, & we had a lively time of it & very interesting.

ISABEL GRUBB

Notes

- ¹ 1733-1794, of Rhode Island.
- ² c. 1737-1811, of New Jersey.
- ³ William Rotch, 1734-1828, master whaler.
- ⁴ 1730-1799, of Philadelphia.
- ⁵ 1751-1793, of Rhode Island.
- ⁶ 1748-1814, of Philadelphia.
- ⁷ of Philadelphia.
- ⁸ 1742-1813, of Philadelphia.
- ⁹ 1773-1855, then of New York.
- ¹⁰ 1758-1853, of North Carolina.
- ¹¹ William Hunt, who had been in Ireland in 1772. Shortly before his death in England.
- ¹² Huldah Sears of Virginia.
- ¹³ 1768-1831, of Mount Pleasant, Ohio.
- ¹⁴ 1733-1851, of Rhode Island.
- ¹⁵ of North Carolina.
- ¹⁶ 1766-1838, of Nine Partners, N.Y.
- ¹⁷ c. 1808-1880, of Iowa.
- ¹⁸ 1781-1852 and 1794- , of New Bedford, Mass.
- ¹⁹ 1791-1877, of Indiana.
- ²⁰ 1807-1891 and 1808-1873, of Maine.