

James Grahame's Diary, 1815-1824

Some extracts about Friends

THE following passages are from a typescript copy of the diary of James Grahame, which recently came into the possession of Mr. P. A. Spalding, of Churt; information about the typescript's antecedents was not forthcoming at the bookshop where it was acquired, and the diary does not appear to have been published. Mr. Spalding, by whose kindness these extracts relating to Friends are printed here, obligingly sends the following note: "The whole diary is packed with Quaker references. Neither Grahame nor his father were Quakers, though both, especially the father, were on intimate terms with a vast number of Quakers, and very much in sympathy with their spirit. Grahame himself was a pretty eminent counsel in Edinburgh, and a friend of most of the important men of his day, *e.g.* Cockburn, Jeffrey, Scott—also the younger Herschel, *s.q.v.* he just slips into the *D.N.B.* He was twice married, the second time to a Frenchwoman, and in middle age retired from the law, and gave himself up to literary work, particularly his *History of America*. Clarkson is mentioned perhaps as often as any single person in the diary; Grahame *père* was evidently one of his closest friends." For the diarist's father, also James Grahame, see the *D.N.B.*

GEOFFREY F. NUTTALL

JAN. 1815. The Duke of Montrose said lately to Kirkman Finlay, "I can't understand how Grahame (my Father) has such influence with the Quakers of England. He commands all their vast Parliamentary interest, and seems to make them do whatever he pleases." My Father, though anti-Quakerish enough in many of his feelings and expressions entertains a high reverence for the sect, and, through his friend Mr. Clarkson,¹ enjoys an extensive acquaintance with them. They seem to like my Father fully as well as he likes them.

1822. Visited William Allen,² the distinguished Quaker philanthropist at his house at Stoke Newington. Mr. Clarkson, in speaking of him to me lately, said, "William

¹ Thomas Clarkson: *D.N.B.*

² William Allen: Scientist, "his chief interest in later years seems to have been in an 'agricultural colony' with industrial schools, which he helped to found at Lindfield in Sussex" (*D.N.B.*). The plan referred to is elaborated in *Colonies at Home; or the Means for Rendering the Industrious Labourer Independent of Parish Relief* . . . [1827]. Reprinted several times.

Allen is the greatest man in Europe. He does more good than any man living." He received me with calm kindness, and leaving some Quaker guests whom he was entertaining, retired with me to his study. . . . He communicated to me his plan for subdividing a large extent of ground into small lots of an acre each, to be cultivated by spade husbandry by men collected together in small communities, possessing Infant Schools and holding part of their property in common.

Sept. 1822. Breakfasted with my new friend, Prior the Quaker, and his wife. Prior told me that some time ago he accompanied an old rigid Quaker to the Mail coach for Brighton. . . . As they approached the coach, Prior (tempted, he said, by some evil spirit) asked his friend if it were *lawful* to travel under the protection of an armed *guard*. The old man instantly uplifting his voice, to the great shame of Prior, and the great delectation of the mob, thus addressed the guard, "Mark me, thou man of war, I renounce thee and thy weapons. And verily, Friend, I assure thee that at the end of our journey I will not give thee a single copper." The honest Guard could hardly attend to his business for laughing.

Aug. 1823. Visited Newgate, and heard Mrs. Fry¹ address the female prisoners. She has a very sweet voice. . . . I thought the criminal portion of the audience seemed little impressed, and indeed the discourse was far from impressive. . . . After the discourse, I was introduced to Mrs. Fry, who talked to me with a mild loftiness of what *she* had done, and of what she had induced many ladies of quality to do in various parts of the kingdom. She talked of that having been done at Edinburgh which I know has not been done at all. She told me that the prisoners whom I had seen never begged from visitors. Yet I was detained at the door, within her hearing, by the importunate begging of a number of the women. . . . Many respectable Quakers have declared to me that Mrs. Fry appeared to them to bring herself on all occasions too prominently forward² . . . as the agent of all the good that is done in Newgate. . . . I have learned too

¹ Elizabeth Fry: "the pathos of her voice was almost miraculous" (D.N.B.).

² "Her self-complacency was evidently gratified and fed by the notice and applause which her labours attracted" (Philadelphia *Friend*, 1848, p. 414, quoted by A. N. Brayshaw, *The Quakers: their Story and their Message*, 1938, p. 178, n. 2.)

that her children are not well educated, and of this I received some proof when I met in William Allen's house one of her daughters. I mentioned a portrait of Mrs. Fry, "Oh, that's a very bad one," said the young Quakeress, "Mamma says it makes her look like a tipsy Methodist!" I was shocked at this: some others of the company appeared hurt and displeased, and one old Quaker lady said to me in a low voice: "Be assured, Friend Grahame, that Elizabeth Fry never said so." . . . Yesterday evening I met the same young lady at the door of Mrs. Barbauld¹ . . . I asked if her vivacity were quite accordant with the canons of Quaker manners. She seemed highly diverted, and answered, "Why you must know that there are bad as well as good people among the Quakers, and I happen to be one of the bad." In various companies I have found that irreligious and dissipated persons dwelt with high gratification on the neglected morals of Mrs. Fry's domestic circle.

Aug. 1823. Mrs. Barbauld . . . seemed to entertain but little respect for the Quakers, remarking of them that they liked to have Quakerism confined to the upper and middle ranks of society, and had no desire to make converts to their principles among the poor, which would present them with occasions for almsgiving attended with no *éclat*.

April 1824. You will find less warmth of manner in Quaker friends than in friends of other religious persuasions. . . . Yet from their sectarian plainness and simplicity of speech, you seem to be admitted to a surprising degree of intimate familiarity. Young men, not Quakers, are apt to be misled by this. They are surprised to hear themselves addressed by their Christian names by young Quaker ladies, and at other marks of intimacy more apparent than real. Many young Quakeresses are quite aware of this and eagerly practice the coquetry which it aids. They encourage and even provoke the attentions of gentlemen who are not Quakers, and then retreat from responsibility behind the plain freedom of Quaker manners, and the implied bar created by difference of religious persuasion.

1825. He (Prior) related with high satisfaction the conduct of his own mother, a Quakeress, who once stopped George III on Windsor Terrace and enjoined him to promote peace and abolish the Slave trade, whereby, she declared,

¹ Anna Letitia Barbauld: *D.N.B.*

he might perchance lengthen his tranquility and bring a blessing on his person and his reign. "He disregarded her admonition," added Prior, "and you see, he died insane."

1826. Mr. Prior admits only two portraits in his house—one of Mr. Clarkson,¹ whom he greatly reveres; the other of Bonaparte, whom he admires as the greatest genius that ever appeared in the world, and respects as a useful instrument in the hands of God for humbling the Pope, and other great and excellent ends.

1826. Mr. Clarkson was once the intimate and attached friend of Southey and Wordsworth. He now speaks of Southey² with much regret and disapprobation, but of Wordsworth³ with strong aversion and contempt.

¹ For Clarkson's portrait as one of the three pictures admitted to Quaker homes, together with a different trio, *cf.* A. N. Brayshaw, *op. cit.*, p. 187 with n. 1.

² "The change in Southey's political and religious opinions . . . inevitably exposed Southey to attack from the advocates of the opinions he had forsaken" (*D.N.B.*).

³ Wordsworth "had become respectable and conservative. To the liberals he appeared to be a renegade" (*D.N.B.*).