

## A Spanish Officer among the Quakers

### The Diary of Francisco de Miranda's Tour of the United States, 1783-1784

Francisco de Miranda (1750-1816) was a Spanish American who rose to the rank of colonel in the Spanish service, and spent most of his life working for the liberation of his native Venezuela. He travelled widely in Europe and America, fought in the American War of Independence, and finally returned to Caracas. He took a prominent part in the declaration of Venezuelan independence in 1811, and was for a year Dictator of the young country. A revolution resulted in Miranda falling into the hands of the Spanish royalists, and he died in prison in Cadiz.

A collection of Miranda's manuscripts was secured by the British Secretary for War and the Colonies, the third Earl Bathurst, and the diary from which these notes are taken records Miranda's tour of the eastern seaboard of the United States, from Charleston in Carolina to New Hampshire. The manuscript was found in 1922 among the other volumes of the collection in Lord Bathurst's estate office at Cirencester.

The Spanish text of the diary, with introduction and notes by William Spence Robertson, was published by the Hispanic Society of America (New York, 1928) in an edition of 1500 copies. It is from the printed edition that these items of Quaker interest are noted.

**I**N the course of his travels, Miranda was at Beaufort, N.C. and (18th July, 1783) he went on an excursion about twelve miles up the little Newport river into the country, to the abodes of two brother-Quakers (*dos hermanos-Quakeros*); the one, rich and ignorant Mr. —, the other (Mr. Williams) poor, learned and humane. Mr. Williams later wrote him a long letter, and sent him "R. Barkley's *Apology*."

In Philadelphia, in December, 1783, Miranda met, among others, John Penn, ex-Governor of the province and lineal descendant of the founder, and "James" Benezet the author of a well-written little work on the doctrine and religion of the Quakers. Among the ladies of the place, Miranda mentions two Quaker girls, relatives of General Mifflin, Miss Susan and Miss Rebecca Morris, whose learning, attractive appearance and dress gave him a more favourable opinion of the Quaker way of life (*Sistema*) than all the writings of Fox, Barclay, Whitehead, etc. Miss Isabella Marshall, another Quakeress, spoke French middling well.

Going round Philadelphia, Miranda observed that neither theatres nor assembly rooms had been built there, since such entertainment was inconsistent with the way of life of the Quakers, who had been predominant in the colony. All types of religion were represented in the city and had full freedom. There were Quakers, Anabaptists, Church of England men, Methodists (their method of singing the Psalms was most agreeable), Presbyterians, Moravians, Lutherans, Catholics, Reformists (a new sect formed by those Quakers who had taken part in the War, and who in consequence had been expelled from their old church), and others.

Miranda described the plain architecture of the principal Quaker meeting house in Market Street, near the City Hall. He attended a two-hour meeting there. The benches were filled with people seated in deep silence, their hats on and heads bent. A man on his left hand rose and broke the silence, declaring in a loud voice, "My Spirit says that God shall not always tread upon earth! because he is in heaven." Miranda's neighbour was but a novice (*principiante*), and a little afterwards one of the principal preachers, taking for text a proverb which says "Think twice, and lead once,"<sup>1</sup> gave a sermon of over an hour and a half, in the style of the itinerant friars (*frayles edomadarios*). Another mournful voice (*voz lugubre y enfatica*), apparently a woman's, recited the Lord's Prayer. Then all rose and shook hands, greeting each other as *Friend*, and went out of the building in any order (*promiscuamente*), men and women together. Some of the women were to be seen shaking hands with the men and calling them *Friend*. Miranda saw no sign (but, of course, there was a large crowd there) of those convulsions or tremblings which were supposed to affect these people in their meetings when they were moved by the divine spirit; nor was there any occurrence which he found deserved his ridicule.

In September, 1784, Francisco de Miranda was at Newport, in Rhode Island. On the 4th, a Saturday, he had a pleasant evening of conversation on literary and political topics with two Quaker doctors, Dr. Senter and Dr. Easton, at the house of Dr. Senter. The following day, he went to the Friends' meeting which lasted from three o'clock until five. No word was spoken and Miranda spent the time examining

<sup>1</sup> In English in the original manuscript. Perhaps the proverb was "Look before you leap."

the women's dress and appearance. He came away convinced that neither the colours of a Rubens nor the tints of a Titian could portray the lovely complexions of these simple Quakeresses.

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## Recent Publications

*Quakers and Education, as seen in their Schools in England.*  
By W. A. Campbell Stewart. London: Epworth Press, 1953. 30s.

Friends "were, and are, as a body on the right wing of progressive education." They have not been radical educational thinkers, but have responded with a "careful enthusiasm" to "the leads given by others." Such are the conclusions reached by Professor Stewart. His book is based on the work done for his Ph.D. degree in the University of London. It is a critical estimate of Quaker education through the years, supported by evidence from a wide range of material, published and unpublished, on Quaker thought and practice about education. There is an extensive bibliography of sources on pp. 283-290.

The book opens with an analysis of the distinctive tenets of Quaker belief. Quaker educational principles, from 1660 to 1779, are then discussed in the light of these; followed by a summary of the history of Quaker schools until the founding of Leighton Park. The next ten chapters give detailed consideration to "aspects of the educational provision in Quaker schools during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries":—cost; staffing; curriculum (including civic studies and labour in schools); school government; punishment; "guarded" education; and co-education. A final chapter studies the same themes as they have developed in the "meeting" schools since 1918. Professor Stewart ends by asking some questions which he regards as "crucial to the further existence of Friends' schools."

Throughout the book every attempt is made to relate Quaker education to the contemporary social, economic and intellectual developments.

As a Professor of Education, not a member of the Society of Friends, Campbell Stewart has many fresh and illuminating things to say. He brings out particularly clearly the continuing conflict between the liberating idealism of Quaker belief and actual life in Quaker schools, which for much of their history have been graded on social divisions, kept a repressive discipline, withheld co-education, allowed no women on their governing committees, and obstructed man's God-given imagination from expressing itself in art and music. But this essentially fair-minded book also shows the strength and receptiveness of outlook which enabled Friends to face these conflicts and slowly to resolve them.

The book suffers from being unnecessarily repetitive in details and comment. A lengthy quotation from Penn, for instance, on