

The Shackletons of Ballitore : some aspects of eighteenth-century Irish Quaker life

FEW eighteenth and early nineteenth-century families can have written more letters than the Shackletons. What is to be known about the Shackletons of Ballitore is to be known mostly, though not entirely, from their correspondence, totalling about 6,500 extant letters. Of this large number I have read only about 750 letters.

Their contents were, at first sight, in many ways rather disappointing. With the exception of those in the Huntington Library, I have not read the whole body of any one of the collections¹ but many of the letters contain what Olive C. Goodbody in her invaluable *Guide to Irish Quaker Records 1654-1860* (1967) called "gossip and minor anecdotes" in describing the letters from Anstis Sparkes to Deborah Chandlee. Endlessly the writers record details of the state of health of members of the family, that they have been to Monthly Meeting or that a horse cast a shoe; details that have little importance for any branch of eighteenth-century history. These were letters written out of a sense of duty when as the writer frequently admits he or she has nothing to say. However, the letters remaining in Ireland, particularly those in Eustace Street, appear to me to contain more valuable information than those which I read in America. The second half of the eighteenth century was a period of striking events: the American War of Independence, the French Revolution, the '98 Rebellion affected the wider world, whilst during the years at the turn of the century the Society in Ireland was torn by controversy in the New Light Movement, yet these letters reflect amazingly little of the great political, international and religious upheavals through which the writers were living.

Abraham Shackleton, the first of the family to settle in Ireland, was born at Harden near Bingley in the West Riding of Yorkshire in 1696, the youngest son of Richard and his wife Sarah, daughter of Thomas Brigg of Keighley. He was a

¹ A list of the MS. collections appears at the end of this paper.

schoolmaster and was induced by some Irish Friends, principally by the Duckett and Cooper families of Ballitore, to cross the Irish Sea and act as tutor to their children.² He had taught at Skipton and there he married Margaret Wilkinson in 1725.³ In 1726 he established a school at Ballitore, a village largely settled by Quakers.

Ballitore is in the county of Kildare, some 40 miles from Dublin, just to the west of the main road from the capital to Waterford where it runs between Kilcullen, itself south of Naas, and Carlow. It is gently undulating country about 300 feet above sea level with Ballitore hill to the east of the main road rising to about 400 feet. Through the village flows the little river Greese, a good trout stream about 20 feet wide, which drove two mills at the opposite ends of the settlement. The population today numbers about 350 and in the eighteenth century it was probably the same or a little higher. The land is well drained and fertile and although mostly pasture there is some arable devoted to the growing of barley. Several writers, principally Mary Leadbeater, expatiated in prose and verse on the beauties of Ballitore—praise which sprang from native loyalty rather than being apparent to the eye of the present-day visitor. By the early eighteenth century many Quaker families were resident in and around the village and during that century and in the first decades of the nineteenth they built for themselves substantial houses. They were obviously fairly prosperous for, in addition to a meeting house (1707), they felt the need of a school.

The school that was opened in 1726 was not an official Friends school like the later establishments at Mountmellick and Lisburn. What financial help Abraham had is not known to me but it was opened by him alone without any committee and it gradually expanded. It was a proprietary school; the

² Kenneth W Jones, "Soundings" (Collections of the University Library, U. of Calif., Santa Barbara), Sept. 1975, p. 33.

³ Knaresborough Monthly Meeting records from July to November 1725 show that Abraham was already settled in Ireland before marriage, for his membership was transferred to Yorkshire from Carlow M.M. to enable his intentions to be forwarded in England without correspondence to and fro across the Irish Sea. In November, after the marriage, a removal certificate was directed to follow the newly-married couple who had already left [Carlton Hill Archives deposited at the Brotherton Library, University of Leeds: A 1, pp. 59-64; A 22, pp. 13-14. Editor].

headmasters earned their living from the fees (in 1757, £16 *per annum* and one guinea entrance fee)⁴ paid by the boys' parents; a living supplemented by the profits from farming and horticulture, from letting property, from running a flour mill and, on occasion, from acting as the village postmaster.

Abraham I (as we may call him) remained headmaster from 1726 until 1756 and was succeeded by his son Richard who held the headmastership of Ballitore school from 1756 until he handed it over to his son, Abraham II, in 1779. Like his father before him, Richard enjoyed some years of retirement: dying in 1792 he had some thirteen years away from the school compared with his father's sixteen years. Abraham II's tenure of the headship was the shortest since the school closed, as a consequence of the events of 1798, about 1801 but it was re-opened by his son-in-law,⁵ Abraham who died in 1818 had, therefore, nearly twenty years of retirement. The scattering of various members of the family and their travels produced the thousands of letters through which some aspects of Irish Quaker life may be discerned.

The school's reputation was established among non-Quaker parents as soon as the young Edmund Burke began to make a name for himself in literary and political circles. Burke born in 1729, entered the school in 1741 and left it to go to Trinity College Dublin in 1743. Cardinal Cullen and Napper Tandy were also pupils, but most students were from Friend families and some of these pupils came from a considerable distance. One older pupil, Svend Peter Stuberg, came from Trondheim in Norway and a young boy came from France. Some non-Friends, like Eyre and Sinclair, after leaving, fought in the American War of Independence.⁶ Although various sources say that the Shackleton girls were educated at the school, there is no evidence that any other females were admitted and to what extent the daughters participated in classes is not known.

The correspondence throws some light on the organisation of a small eighteenth-century boarding school apparently run by the schoolmaster and one usher, who was an episcopalian. It is clear that the Shackleton daughters, if they did not have

⁴ Huntington Library MSS., SHA 394.

⁵ Michael Quane, "Ballitore School" in *Kildare Arch. Soc. J.*, vol. 14, no. 2, (1966-67), p. 201.

⁶ Hunt. Lib. MSS., SHA 363.

a formal place in that organisation, showed great interest in the pupils' welfare. Numbers in the school varied between forty and sixty.⁷ The boys, like the population in general, were plagued by ill-health and many of the letters chronicle the illnesses and even the deaths of pupils. In a letter of 27th 6mo. 1776 we read, "we have a lad in the house who reckons he strained his ankle about a week ago but I believe it has been worse than a strain for he has been very bad like a fever and his leg so bad that we were obliged to send for a surgeon, who found it necessary to launce it. When he will be well we know not, but the poor child seems weak, has bled much at the nose, was bled in the arm and hope he may recover." Throughout the period the therapeutic value of bleeding is still affirmed. However, six days later the child, named Dalton, had not recovered and his father, though summoned, had not come to see him: we are not told what the outcome was.

In the same year Elizabeth Shackleton writing to a friend records "one of our boarders in the smallpox in our house, (he) seems in a safe way, is treated by our new tenant Surgeon Johnson in the new way of giving him air and having him taken up". She continues "we do not apprehend that we have a great many that have not had it, but we suppose Billy Rainer and prentice Albe have not, but with the good help that we have often experienced in time of need, I hope we may get through it tolerably". In May 1782 an epidemic struck the school: one "McMellor was so bad as to have the doctor sent for at night". Whatever it was, his breathing was affected but the boy improved after the application of a blister (plaster). In 1787 John White's whooping cough was relieved by blistering, bleeding and bathing. Abraham, the headmaster, lay with him in the room lest he should need anything and the previous night the headmaster's wife and the doctor had stayed with him.

In recording the death of a pupil in June 1783, Elizabeth throws light on the age of entry of some pupils and on the organisation of the boarding side of the school. She writes "... the death was a shock to us . . . for little seemed to ail him till the day before he died. As his mother brought him when about six years old, he was put to lie in the nursery

⁷ See Quane, *loc. cit.* pp. 174-209, for an account of the school.

with the housekeeper, and continued to lie there until the last night of his life, which last he was in another room for more quiet and two tender people with him". A boy of 7 years came from Kilkenny insisting that he wanted to be at Ballitore school because Burke had been there (35 years previously). In 1774 a French boy in school died from measles, Elizabeth thought because he would not take things like the others.⁸ The boarding establishment was like an extended family with pupils having to help with the family chores and in 1784 two lads were sent to sleep in the house and so to help protect Elizabeth while Richard, the former headmaster, was away at London Yearly Meeting.⁹

The letters reveal little in detail about the curriculum. Richard Shackleton writing to William Alcock in 1761 wrote "(I) am sorry thou dost not . . . mention . . . the care and pains taken . . . respecting him (Alcock's son) but some hints of thy disapprobation. I had examined him both before his departure and since his return and I think his progress in Arithmetik (as well as his improvement in Writing and Orthography) is as much as could be expected from his Genius". He admits that his usher might have been deficient in not getting young Alcock to memorise the prayer which his father had sent but he declares the usher to be diligent "in the frequent instruction of the lads in their Catechism and we see them going to bed (i.e. at bedtime) generally on the knees, as if engaged in the great duty of prayer". The headmaster informed Mr. A. that the usher had not been able to get his son to memorise the prayer because it was too long. It was perhaps not usual for parents to make such specific demands but another parent made requests about Bible reading. She requested that her son should be allowed to read the Bible and when R.S. said it was read every day, she replied that she thought George Fox's Journal was substituted for the Bible by Friends. Apart from the three Rs and religious knowledge, it appears that Latin, Greek and Book-keeping were taught at the school and, doubtless, because of Abraham II's interest in the subject, the boys were instructed in elementary astronomy.¹⁰

⁸ Hunt. Lib. MSS., SHA 223.

⁹ *Ibid.* SHA 292.

¹⁰ Quane, *loc. cit.* for fuller details of the school curriculum. His account is based mostly on Mary Leadbeater, *Annals of Ballitore*, being part of *The Leadbeater papers*, 2 vol., London, 1862.

It was the custom for boys to stay at the school all year unless parents desired them to have holidays. Mary Curtin gave instructions that if her sons were sent for by their grandmother they could leave, but not for more than two weeks in the summer season. Her "two little fellows" had 2d. a week pocket money. Writing in late December Elizabeth stated that many boarders were away because of the season: the only indirect reference I have come across to Christmas, which word is never used. As to discipline we have no details but if we are to believe the humorous letter of a non-Quaker neighbour the headmaster administered corporal punishment from time to time. In June 1774 we hear of a boy who ran away and it was not thought that he would return.

Because most of the letters are written by Friends, much light is thrown on Quaker life in the eighteenth century. Monthly, province, quarterly and half-yearly meetings were occasions to be missed only for the most serious reasons. In Ireland Friends gathered in Dublin in May and November, both assemblies being called the National Half-Yearly Meeting until, in 1797, it was decided to call the May meeting the Yearly Meeting of Friends in Ireland and to set up a Committee to deal with matters arising between yearly meetings. The relationship with London Yearly Meeting was close since Irish Friends sent representatives to it and answered its queries, which I take it to mean accepted the discipline of London Y.M.

Both Abraham I and Richard were frequent attenders in London and from time to time other members of the family were present. The custom was, as it still is in Ireland Y.M., to accept hospitality from Friends. The Shackletons usually stayed with relatives at Tottenham. After his retirement Richard appears to have gone every year to London for the meeting in late May and often he did not return until July or August taking the opportunity of travelling among English Friends. He usually crossed to Holyhead and visited both in the north and in the Midlands particularly at Coalbrookdale.

Abraham said of his father's (last) attendance in 1792 "he loves attending that solemnity" while of himself he remarked in the same letter "I would rather attend the service of our own National Meeting; our business is not so various nor hurried over . . . as the business of Yearly Meeting—it [i.e. London Y.M.] seems like a boisterous sea which requires

stouter vessels". Earlier, in 1784, Richard had been so busy that he was up writing at 4 or 5 in the morning since there was a demand for Friends who would "do something beside talk". "A fleet (as it were) of Americans lately landed and came up there, the Yearly Meeting business goes on—some sittings have been favoured" wrote Elizabeth to a Friend.¹¹

Richard was requested to intervene in London Y.M. in 1781. On 16th April writing from Norwich, John Roper complained of the Friends who had furnished the English Prime Minister with money for the prosecution of the war in America. The names of the contributors had been published in the newspapers "in which catalogue there appeared some who, in a religious sense, call us brethren". J.R. goes on "if there were a number of wealthy Friends in France and they were voluntarily to lend large sums of money . . . to that government by which it was more fully enabled to prosecute a war against England could we have unity with and esteem them as our brethren and fellow-believers in Christ the prince of peace?—surely nay. Can they be otherwise considered though they dwell in England, at least until they condemn their own contradictory conduct?". The letter continues, "I have lately been informed that some remarks were made last Yearly Meeting in the Ackworth Committee but no further notice was taken of it, hence that which is wrong undoubtedly gained strength, as sufficiently appears by the list of subscribers to the loan for this year, where the names of sundry members of Meeting for Sufferings and one or more of a yet higher station in the church, openly stand forth in that cause. Is it not then high time for the living to exert themselves and if they cannot prevent, at least that they hold up the mirror and enter their protest against conduct so manifestly repugnant to our holy Christian profession". Because of the timing of quarterly meetings none of them could take up the matter and so Richard was asked to raise it before the Half-Yearly Meeting. Whether he did so I do not know, nor have I consulted Y.M. records to ascertain what happened in the Y.M. There is, however, no reference to the incident in the Gurney papers. It is interesting to note the depth of John Roper's opposition and his feeling of frustration that he

¹¹ Hunt. Lib. MSS., SHA 294.

would get nowhere in Norwich "because of the open subscribers in our meeting to this bloody loan and yet more who are secretly concerned in it". One Friend had admitted, after saying that he was grateful to the government for its indulgence to Friends, that the terms of the loan were very advantageous; so destroying his specious pretensions to gratitude.

John Roper was concerned that silence would give consent and undermine the position of the Society vis-à-vis the government as a people conscientiously principled against war and he foresaw other difficulties over paying for substitutes for the militia. It is a significant episode which illustrates how outspoken some members of the Society were and the degree of intervention in their lives that Friends accepted.

The Shackletons were not plain Friends but they and some of the Friends were scandalised by the dress of Quakers in London. Hannah Pim writing to Deborah Shackleton in 1771 said that she had not met any Friends who kept to the plain language or members who could be distinguished by their dress as belonging to the Society except Sam Hoare's family who were plain in their dress but not in their speech.¹²

Many letters record at length the depth of worship in a meeting—or the lack of it. Frequently meetings are described as "dry". The Society was going through a period when it was excessively attached to outward forms, and ministry, it appears, was rare. But at the same time national wealth was increasing and Quakers were prospering. Many correspondents, especially Elizabeth Shackleton, were fearful that members of the Society were, to quote her, "hindered from seeing things in the right light because of their interest in the world". When ministering Friends travelled abroad, as they frequently did, complaints are heard that "this city and nation are much stripped of ministers". Visiting ministers, often from America, found meetings "in a poor low way as to religion" and James Gough noted a deterioration in the spiritual life as Friends kept to forms and rushed after wealth.

This excessive formalism generated a reaction at the end of the century. Abraham II played a leading part in the New Light Movement which started as a protest against the

¹² Friends' Historical Library, Eustace St., Dublin, Fennell Coll. Box 1e, 2/9/1771.

Society's forms regarding marriage but which was really about the place of the Scriptures in the Society of Friends. In 1797 in reply to the appropriate query, Carlow M.M., (the clerk of its meeting for Ministry and Oversight was Abraham Shackleton) omitted the word "Holy" before Scriptures. When asked why it had done so, the answer came "that the Spirit of Truth inwardly revealed in the heart of every man is that alone which can, and will, lead its followers into all truth; that a disposition has appeared among many of our members in the present day to lose sight of this fundamental tenet of the Society, and in place thereof, to set up the Scriptures and affix an undue value to them". After several years of growing dissension Abraham II was disowned in 1801. Such letters as I have been able to read add nothing to the history of the New Light Movement to supplement the account given by William Rathbone in his *Narrative of events that have lately taken place in Ireland among the Society called Quakers*, published in 1804; but some such may exist.

Turning from the Quaker side of the Shackletons' life to their social life, the letters have much to tell us. The Shackletons did other things beside attending perhaps 130 Quaker meetings in a year. These other pursuits, like the Quaker meetings, involved them in journeys and so considerable information is to be gleaned about travel and travelling conditions. Many journeys were undertaken to visit members of the family especially to Margaret (Peggy) and Sam Grubb at Clonmel and to Deborah (Debby) and Tommy Chandlee in Athy. The latter was only nine miles away and on occasion brother Abraham walked it, but Clonmel, being 70 miles distant, required a greater effort. Three methods were open to the travellers, to ride on horseback, to take their own vehicle, usually a chaise, or to take the stage-coach on routes where such vehicles plied. On journeys to Dublin which were frequently undertaken for religious duties, for business or for pleasure, a fourth method of transport was available. They rode or drove to Sallins, just beyond Naas, a distance of some 19 miles and there took a boat on the Grand Canal into Dublin. The trip was roughly the same distance as the road journey. This arrangement enabled them to reach the capital between midday and the evening without too much fatigue. On one occasion we read that some Friends on a visitation

travelled on horseback more than 40 miles in a day but sometimes, usually because of heavy rain, travellers could not continue and the times they returned home with a cold brought on by inclement weather are too numerous to recount. Accidents could occur as when, in November 1783, the rear wheel of the chaise went down into the ditch and another two inches, Richard thought, would have caused the death of his wife, two daughters and a servant.

Travel was undertaken outside Ireland, to Great Britain and by some of the correspondents to Europe and America. From the letters much is to be learnt of the discomfort and uncertainty of travelling in a sailing ship. It is apparent that in addition to the route to Holyhead, boats sailed regularly to Chester and to Whitehaven in Cumberland and Friends visiting in the north used the latter port frequently as did the schoolboy returning to Norway. Sometimes the passage across the Irish Sea was rapid but at other times it could take 24 hours to get from Dublin to Holyhead. The duration of the passage to and from America can be ascertained not only by passengers' accounts but also by the time it took letters to reach Ireland from Philadelphia or New York. One letter in 1754 took 3½ months, while the following year John Peters informed Elizabeth that he had a safe passage of ten weeks although his company at sea was not very agreeable and they had almost been taken by a French man-of-war that chased them for seven or eight hours. A year later a letter got through in the winter in 2 months one week. Friends were intrepid travellers and we hear of American Friends going to the West Indies and British Friends visiting in France and Germany. As well as being uncomfortable, travel could be dangerous. Late in 1781 Edith and Jo Sparrow sailed for Bristol in the packet *Elizabeth* which went on shore near Bridgwater and Richard wrote that his daughter Molly (Mary Leadbeater) was much aggrieved by the loss—"whether the effusions of her sorrow will appear on paper, or not," he could not say as "we hardly ever know what is forming in the womb of her imagination till she produces it to light".

The Shackletons and especially Elizabeth, Richard's second wife, were enthusiastic gardeners and bee-keepers. Perhaps the letters extend our knowledge of eighteenth-century social and economic history more in this sphere than in any other. Elizabeth herself worked in the garden, as is

seen when on 11 March 1778 she was putting the grafts in or when her husband remarked that she preferred "the weeding knife to the pen", but a full-time gardener was employed. When Owen the gardener died in 1781 Richard wrote that it was to their great loss and regret as he had been an honest, industrious and skilful man in his place.¹³ Then Martin Whelan, Elizabeth's right-hand man was taken ill. Labour on occasion could be short as when it was said "they could not get their gardens done up for want of hands".

In March 1790, 40 pecks of potatoes were planted, some English Whites, and Elizabeth was making enquiries as to whether to grow Windsor beans and Marrowfat peas. Cabbages were being sown in March and spinach, cauliflowers, celery and cucumbers were also grown. In December 1782 it was reported that the season for getting onions in was late that year but that three dozen hanks had been purchased for Elizabeth Pike of Dublin at the fair at Castledermot. There was much purchasing of fruit and vegetables for friends and relatives in Dublin and in reverse of seeds in Dublin to be sent to Ballitore. A letter states "the onion seed we generally sow about the middle of eighth month (August) is called the silver skinned. We would sow them in light, rich ground, and there leave them all winter, keeping them clean from weeds. If they do not fail in the winter, they are nice scallions in the Spring, but do not arrive to the size of onions gathered in the common season: they might do in sauce, or for other kitchen use: we never take them up to dry." As well as the common vegetables, asparagus and artichokes were grown. Of the latter, Elizabeth wrote "we are in no way particular about the planting of artichokes (globe) but put them in common good mould, no dung under them, I suppose each set of them should be about 16"-18" asunder and rows about the same, about 5" or 6" deep". The folk at Ballitore sent asparagus seed to Dublin and especially the Green Dutch seed.

In 1776 on October 3rd they were gathering the apples and sending some to Dublin while Elizabeth notes that the weather was now fine enough to get the harvest in which was backward. The Shackletons looked to the Pikes to bring things that were new and the latter would have been asked to bring down a 5 or 6-year old apricot tree in 1780 if it had

¹³ Hunt. Lib. MSS., SHA 323.

not been too soon in the year to plant it and if Elizabeth had not thought it too big to transport at the back of the chaise. Among other fruits William Forster sent over from Tottenham some snake melon seeds, which fruit, he said, resembled a snake in size and shape and was to be raised on a bed of horse dung. Raspberries were also grown and the Pikes were given detailed instructions as to pruning.

Elizabeth had a great love of flowers. She grew sweet peas, carnations, columbines, auriculas, tulips, polyanthus, roses, aconites and hyacinths. In August 1771 she was asking the Pikes how to manage the Pride of India (Azedarac tree) seed they had given her and when to sow it. From Clonmel Peggy sent her a Passion tree, mountain ranunculus, double violets and double blossoming sweet brier: she also had a moss rose which was said to be rare. The tulip bulbs were lifted and dried on 7th July 1790; this and several other passages show how interested in gardens and in horticultural practice Elizabeth was. This interest in gardens and in bee-keeping, it should be added, has continued in the Shackleton family through six or seven generations from the mid-eighteenth to the late twentieth century.

The historian might argue that this evidence tells us nothing that is new since we know that interest in horticulture was growing rapidly in the eighteenth century. Indeed a letter to Richard from William Forster in Tottenham, dated 29 August 1781, records the sale of the late Dr Fothergill's plants.¹⁴ It amounted to several thousand pounds with one plant selling for 50 gns., several aloes fetching from £12 to £18 each and oranges and lemons between £4 and £5. Dr. Lettsom was the largest purchaser. But the significance of the letters' evidence surely is that a somewhat isolated family in co. Kildare took such an interest in a general trend as they did in the increased interest in scientific observation.

The letters remind us forcibly of the wretched state of health which the population endured at this time and that even a middle to upper middle class family suffered complaints almost constantly. Some of the writers were not stoical about their illnesses and tended to "moan on" about trivial disorders such as colds, to cure which they often took to their beds. However, we should remember that remedies

¹⁴ *Ibid.* SHA 54.

were not always very effective and that more pain had to be borne than would be endured today. This did make them grateful for good health which they did not automatically expect. It was always "through mercy" that they were in good health, or, to quote two frequently employed phrases, "of her best fashion" or "recruiting bravely". Most commonly mentioned ailments, apart from colds, were fevers, the chink cough (whooping cough), smallpox, measles, tooth-ache and swellings that had to be lanced. But we hear of stomach upsets, sore throats, influenza, tuberculosis, fits, colic, gout, rheumatism, paralysis, erysipelas (St. Anthony's fire), worms, pleurisy, apoplexy, palsy, asthma, gravel, hives and boils. For nearly eighteen months regular reports are given of a neighbour who died of breast cancer.

Much home medication was used. Brandy was rubbed in Richard's side when he had wrenched it. Purgative pills of brimstone, syrup of buckthorn, syrup of rhubarb, cream of tartar, aloes and saffron were made but when a doctor was shown the prescription he said that air and exercise were the best remedy. Camomile tea was much in favour for stomach upsets and pukes (emetics) were often administered. The letters mention among other homely remedies, Peruvian bark, sarsaparilla for rheumatism, tincture of asafoetida, white lead plasters, musk, hartshorn drops, hemlock pills, syrup of snails and that great stand-by, a Burgundy pitch plaster. For the gripe, boiled carraway seeds, in a rag were put into the baby's milk.

But professional help was called. Dr. Johnson lived locally and doctors were also called from Carlow, a distance of 15 miles and Dublin (38 miles). They relied much on bleeding and the application of leeches. Whether to have children vaccinated or not was a question that exercised many parents. Writing to Elizabeth Pike on 18 June 1782 Richard expressed the dilemma. Abraham II's third child, Abraham, had been vaccinated on 21 May and died on 12 June, aged six months, and the infant's grandfather wrote "Peggy (Margaret Grubb) has been much agitated about her own little ones—she had intended to have got them innoculated; but I believe this disaster will discourage her—I formerly stood neuter as to the practice but my feelings have been so painful and acute about the little infant which we have lost that I lean more to the negative side and am growing more

one with my better half".¹⁵ However, the infant's older brother and sister aged $2\frac{1}{2}$ and $1\frac{3}{4}$ years respectively came through it successfully. In addition to medical treatment there was much taking of the waters. Debby had some kind of rash on her face. The complaint is never clearly diagnosed but she went sea bathing and drinking mineral waters at Ashford near Wicklow. Whatever it was, she suffered from this skin disorder for many years. There must have been bottled waters available as German Spa water was recommended for a bowel complaint. Mary (later Leadbeater) had a stutter for which she had some remedial treatment in Dublin from a Dr. Angier who travelled from London to see patients.

Leaving aside information which the letters provide on business practice, on prices and on the curriculum at Trinity College, Dublin and Christ Church, Oxford, we must turn, before attempting a summary, to what they tell us of the life of the Shackletons in society. No Friends before the 1840s were, as far as I know, teetotallers. References are made to brewing and indeed to the re-building of a brew-house in the summer of 1772. Molly drank part of a bottle of porter with the weighty Samuel Neale who spent much time visiting among Friends. Hock and malt liquor are mentioned, the latter being taken by one of the daughters with her dinner. But the family had an insatiable demand for tea: they were frequently recording where and with whom they had taken tea. But one recorded incident shows their disapproval of over-indulgence in alcohol. Peggy Grubb writing to her sister Debby Chandlee in 1782 states this clearly. While staying with Clayton Bayly, a Friend, at Gowran, she writes "after supper Beauchamp Bagnell the knight of renowned prowess, would come in, notwithstanding the repeated messages sent by Clayton that he was not at home. He entered on crutches, is very like his sister Keatinge (Dean K.'s wife) and was followed by a brother of young Sir Nicholas Butler's who seemed to be his pupil, indeed he seemed to have made rapid progress for he was as drunk as his preceptor and not being able to take another upon, fell under the table and both retired to the great joy of the family who feared they would sit there all night. The women left the room before they did, with some difficulty for Bagnell wanted my mother especially to stay."

¹⁵ *Ibid.* SHA 344.

This incident also clearly demonstrates that Quakers of the social status of the Shackletons mixed with the local gentry. We know that the Shackletons visited Dean Keatinge and his wife. Cadogan Keatinge, Dean of Clogher, was invited by Richard in 1785 to a Quaker meeting but he declined on the grounds that his duty called him and his family to their own place of worship. Richard Beauchamp of nearby Narraghmore frequently visited Greesebank or The Retreat and, in turn, the family dined with Beauchamp. He was something of a joker who liked to pull Richard's leg and, at least once, made ironical remarks about the latter's connection with Burke. His letters were peppered with Latin tags and French phrases and Richard apparently, at times, responded in Latin hexameters and pentameters. The old boy importunes them to go to dinner, he writes "Dinner on ye Table precisely at Four Mr Shackleton in ye Chair". After the meal lively conversation ensued with classical references thrown in but it was not, I think, of a deeply scholarly nature. "Our wit shall flow and sparkle like our wine and though we wont be as mad as Alexander at Persepolis yet we may and will be merry"—this on a February evening in 1775. There was, of course, no music in this Quaker household, but a deep interest in science as the company was entertained by Abraham II's telescope. Richard Beauchamp said that the ladies at the dinner party returned their thanks to Mr. S. for the astronomical entertainment.

The letters make it quite clear that the Shackleton females were not dressed in plain fashion; that is in the Quaker grey. However shocked they might profess to be by the dress of Friends in Dublin and even more shocked by what London Friends were wearing, they were ordering cloth in different shades of blue and even buying silks and ribbons. In 1773 Elizabeth bought 2½ yards of camlet because she had not purchased enough when in Dublin to make a riding skirt. Nevertheless they still wore Quaker bonnets since we know of stiff paper being ordered from Dublin with which to line them. Men Friends appear to have retained the plain dress. Even in Tottenham meeting where the women wore gay dresses the men were said to be plain particularly in the manner of wearing their hats.

From time to time the Shackletons went on holiday. In 1783 some of them went to Rostrevor and a letter from Molly

says "each of us going to and from and sometimes in the sea huddled men and women so together that we grew very bold. I do not know what Sally would say if she saw us drying our hair before the men . . . or walking through the town with our shifts under our arm but remember we had our bathing dresses on and our clothes over." It all appeared very daring to Molly. During the summer months the children bathed in the river Greese. Molly wrote a vivid account of learning to ride single when she was 16, and also described her half brother's electrifying machine. She records "He has electrified us very often, I never felt it past my shoulder, it is not what I thought it would be at all but he will not give one much of it, for my part I think it a fine sport, he makes it show a great many curious tricks." She was just a month under 17 and her half brother six years older. A little later we hear of Abraham II's *camera obscura* and his "solar microscope" and that the school was entertained with his telescope—a young man in line with the Quaker interest in the natural sciences was brother Abraham. The family sat up till nearly midnight hoping that the clouds would clear to get a better look at the stars and on a visit to Dublin, Peggy Grubb complained that because of the social life she was hardly ever settled until 1 a.m. In London we are told of an interesting visit to Buckingham House which in 1775 was the Queen's Palace.¹⁶ It was not easy to gain admittance but they succeeded. We can from these reports draw the conclusion that the family led quite an active social life—perhaps one which some Quakers would have regarded as giddy.

The Shackletons and their correspondents rarely mentioned events of national importance, but occasionally their concern for other than domestic affairs comes through. In particular, during the American War of Independence some of the writers were anxious about American Friends and what they were suffering. John Pemberton warned of the build up to war when, in a letter of May 5 1775, he mentioned the trouble in Boston and he went on "all mankind are but one family, yet the people of the same manners and customs, are naturally nearer to each other and therefore (it is) more affecting that they should prepare instruments to sheath in each others bowels".¹⁷ The Shackletons were also tender

¹⁶ Hist. Lib. Eustace St., Dublin, Fennell Coll. Box 1e.

¹⁷ Hunt. Lib. MSS., SHA 133.

towards old scholars who found themselves in the armed forces.

Abraham II in letters to Elizabeth Pike in 1790 and '91 recounts some of the activities of a French Quaker, John de Marsillac. He quotes a letter from John to Robert Grubb as follows: "thou hast probably heard in thy country that the National Assembly have made several decrees respecting military service which import that all French citizens without exception shall be obliged to take arms and do military service from 18 to 60 years of age, according to our principles of loving our enemies and not returning evil nor avenging ourselves we cannot consent to take arms and still less to use them to shed the blood of our fellows". He petitioned the National Assembly that Friends should be excepted and reported that he had sent the petition to Louis Majolier in the south and also to Friends at Dunkirk to be signed by them. So the group at Ballitore was not out of touch with events in England, in the continent of Europe and in America.

Professional historians and scholars of English literature will probably wish to know whether any further Burke material is available in these letters. In such letters as I have read I have not come across direct correspondence although some letters make references to the distinguished man. A former pupil Lawrence Dowdall Curtin had apparently been given an introduction by Richard and Lawrence reported back in a letter of June 1st 1760 that he had dined about three weeks previously with Burke who was living in Wimpole Street, Cavendish Square and later in the same month he saw him again.¹⁸ He mentioned that Burke had two sons, the elder about 3 years old "a very pretty child" and that Burke was greatly esteemed for two books a *Treatise on the Sublime & Beautiful* and a *Vindication of National Philosophy*. He also said that Burke had been dissatisfied not to have seen his old headmaster (Abraham I) when he had been in London.

The letters therefore, to come to a tentative conclusion, which may well be overturned by a researcher who in the future may read the thousands of letters which I have not seen, do not appear to me to contain much of importance to

¹⁸ *Ibid.* SHA 39.

political history but they shed some light on the Irish Quaker scene in the quietist period. In this article I have attempted to impart only a portion of that light.

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Kenneth W. Jones in "Soundings" (see note 2 above) says some Shackleton documents are in the hands of the executors of the late Dr. O. O. Fisher of Detroit, but he is incorrect in stating that the library of the University of Pennsylvania has part of the Ballitore papers *ex inf.* Lyman W. Riley (Assistant Director for Special Collections of the Van Pelt Library) in a letter of 22/9/1980.

Ireland

National Library of Ireland, Dublin, some Shackleton papers. Religious Society of Friends, Eustace Street, Dublin, Historical Library, Fennell Coll., Box I a-f, II c-k, III a, e-g, IV a-j, Vc, VII; Leadbeater-Shackleton Coll., Box III b-d, IV. (See Olive C. Goodbody, *Guide to Irish Quaker Records 1654-1860*, Dublin, 1967.)

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England

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Mrs. Greenhow, Otterton, Devon, some letters and a portrait of Richard Shackleton.