

**VINDICATION OF FRIENDS; (BY ONE
NOT A MEMBER,) FROM SLANDERS
CONTAINED IN A BOOK JUST
PUBLISHED, ENTITLED QUAKERISM,
OR, THE STORY OF MY LIFE**

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MRS. SARAH D. GREER

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ENTITLED

QUAKERISM,

OR,

THE STORY OF MY LIFE.

BY AN IRISH LADY.

(MRS. GREER.)

"Avoid discontented persons, unless to inform or reprove them. Abhor detraction, the Sin of Fallen Angels, and the worst Sin of Fallen Men."

WILLIAM PERKINS.



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P R E F A C E .

A CERTAIN Irish Baronet, Sir Jonah Barrington by name, who in his palmy days, and during the wild age in which he lived, must have been a conspicuous personage, took it into his head not many years ago to give to the world the story of his life, which he, or some one else for him, dashed off in a most amusing manner. Either his own credulity was large, or he counted largely upon the existence of that element in others; and being quite unscrupulous in regard to the truth of his statements, so that his stories told well, his book exhibits a succession of bounces of the first order. One of these recounts an accident which, upon any other occasion, might be thought of rather a serious nature. Two light-hearted Irish boys, he tells us, were going out one fine morning to mow, carrying their scythes over their shoulders with the handles hanging down. In passing a clear stream, one of them, named Mike, espied a fine trout resting itself in a still place under a jutting bank close to him, and in a merry humor called out to his companion that he intended to give the fish a podge with his scythe handle. In carrying out this freak, the scythe, which had been entirely forgotten, came down across Mike's neck, severing from the body his precious head, which, according to the well-voiced for story, went rolling down the brook.

This specimen from Sir Jonah's rich stock will perhaps be sufficient to show that the air of his country is favorable to the production of bounces of the first order; other proofs of which, in abundance, may be found in the pages of the Irish lady's story of her life. This lady, by-the-by, puts in *her* claim to honorary distinction as a descendant of a sprig of nobility. The proud aristocracy of Britain will not have much reason to feel flattered by their connection with such a pair of mendacious associates.

QUAKERISM,
OR,
THE STORY OF MY LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

Broad Style of the Authoress.—Her Book calculated to injure Friends with those Unacquainted with them.—Professions of Truth and Freedom from Exaggeration, nullified by the Story of Friend M'annal and other Fictions.—Disgusting Picture of the Rudeness of this American Minister.—His worse than Savage Performances and Despicable Texts.—Decline of Religious Fanaticism and Acerbity in all Christian Sects.—Progressive Improvements in Friends' Schools in the United States.—Commendation of their high Moral Code.—Denial of their Claims to be considered a Religious Body.—Invidious Opinions of other Religious Persuasions.—Catholics, and Queer Story of the Immigration of Souls from Purgatory.

"QUAKERISM," professing to have been written by a lady who, during forty years, was a member of the Society of Friends in Ireland, presents a broad caricature of this religious persuasion, the sketches being drawn less in the lively and graceful manner of the French, than in the gross style which has generally characterized the English school of humorous art. Every page shows malice; and the calumnies and misrepresentations are so numerous and flagrant, as to render the work unworthy the notice of the Society it is designed to injure, were it not for the prejudice it is well calculated to excite in the minds of those who have not had opportunities of making themselves acquainted with Friends, in their religious or civil relations. Not satisfied with such a display of misrepresentation as flip-pant writers frequently indulge in, the authoress has resorted to perversions of truth of the worst kind, namely, such as are put forth with the most serious asseverations of their verity: "Every scene I have witnessed," she asserts, in her Preface, "is drawn from nature; every circumstance I have related is substantially true. I have carefully abstained from exaggeration, and repeatedly thrown the veil of obscurity over the record of scenes which too strongly developed the subject I was treating."

No one who has the least knowledge of the proprieties of life

so generally observed in the social relations of Friends, can read the disgusting portraiture of Friend Flannel, without blushing for the authoress of the hideous description given of this worse than savage American, who, in travelling through England and Ireland, is charged with rudely closing the blinds of the carriage, because, as he is made to say, angrily, "he did not come from America to see the country. He did not look at the country, nor would he look at it; it was not worth looking at, for the trees were no bigger than American bushes; and he did not like to see so many houses and no woods." And with such expressions of his distastes and designs, he shuts himself up in total darkness, and not only himself, but his two travelling companions, who were anxious to see as much rural scenery as they possibly could. And then the very extravagant story of his drawing off, before the parlor fire, and much company present, his mocassin boots, and coarse worn-out stockings, gartered up with the bark of a tree and twine, baring two of "the biggest and dirtiest feet ever beheld," and holding first one to the fire and then the other, grumbling that the fire was not good because it was made of coal, instead of wood, as it ought to have been. To say nothing of his sermon upon the text of "There was an old horse and he had a sore leg,"—his habit of eating roast beef with his fingers—the tray-load of bread, cheese, and porter ordered by him, so that he might have something to eat on waking up in the night—and the story of the night disturbance, in which he is made to lose his way in the dark, and get into the room of the female servants, show not only a want of delicacy, but the most reckless disregard of truth and common decency. And yet the authoress asserts, that this disgusting creature of her fertile imagination was "sent from America, with an epistle setting forth the approval of their Yearly Meetings, and their sanction to preach as an inspired minister of the Christian religion, and, subsequently, indorsed by the full approbation of English Yearly Meetings, conducted over to Dublin, and thence to the South, as something far more holy than common!"

Our knowledge of Friends has been gained from most intimate intercourse with the Society as it exists in America, and more especially within the Diocesan limits constituting the Yearly Meetings of Philadelphia and Baltimore. We are certainly forced to acknowledge that we have met with many specimens of rather uncouth and unsophisticated characters, who seemed to be, for the most part, unacquainted with the conventional usages of highly refined society. But most of these belonged to a by-gone age, their manners having been formed in accordance with the fanatical, austere, intolerant, and exclusive spirit, which seemed to sway at one time every

other religious persuasion. The Society of Friends in the United States have lost much of the original acerbity with which they, in common with other sects, were tinctured, and learned to view the world through a less sombre medium, and thus make themselves more accurately acquainted with its affairs, and their own proper position in it. They have improved their schools, and introduced into many of them instruction in the classics. Always well informed upon general and special subjects, they are far from requiring, in America at least, the aid of the rough-handed female disciplinarian, who has so kindly proffered her assistance, to scatter the ashes of the smouldering fire, and "re-ignite the spark of life-giving heat."

After so much said to deprive Friends of all claims to intelligence and decency, we are somewhat surprised that the authoress should have sufficient candor or conscience left to compel her to declare, that "Respectable, active, *intelligent*, benevolent, useful, wealthy, and influential, they undoubtedly are." To destroy any favorable impression which might be created by such high terms of commendation, she, however, immediately goes on to say—"but a man may be all this, and yet be devoid of that religion without which he can never hope for eternal life. To consider the Society of Friends as a religious body, is a monstrous stretch of the imagination."

Such a "monstrous" exhibition of bigotry and intolerance may well justify the application of the text, "Judge not lest ye be judged." What might be her definition of "a religious body," we of course know not, but feel warranted in supposing that it would embrace many whose claims to sanctity rest more upon outward religious observances and worldly professions, than of those who quietly and unobtrusively practice the essentials of vital Christianity. In venturing upon the very delicate matter of judging of the extent of religion in others, we have come to the conclusion, which we regard a safe one, not to consider those who deal out dogmas, make the highest professions, and show most devotion in church, as the most religious, but such as take most of the spirit of the Gospel home with them, and display it in their daily intercourse with their fellow men.

Although her malice exhibits itself with greatest severity towards Friends, she does not hesitate to level her shafts against other denominations, whenever they come in her way. Being so situated during one portion of her stay in England that she could not attend the meetings of her own Society, she thought it incumbent upon her to go to some other places of worship.

"First," she says, "I visited the Independent Meeting-house, and did not like it. The preacher there enforced on his auditors the duty of signing petitions to Parliament for Reform, with more energy than suited my idea of a Christian minister. Then I went to the Methodist preaching-house, and my

Quaker feelings were shocked with seeing a fiddler stand up to raise the tunes. Besides this, they had the water for baptism brought into the Church in a common, small, blue earthenware bowl; and I thought that did not look nice for a place of worship; but the preaching was very good, and I went there regularly, until they changed the preacher. His successor was a politician; so I left. Then I went to the meeting of the Plymouth Brethren; but I could feel no unity with them, in what seemed to me an insult to the Almighty. They would not ask a person of rank to meet them in such a den, as they had thought good enough to consecrate to the service of the King of kings. It was a loft over a stable. You had to pass through a coal-yard to the half-ladder, half-stairs, by which it was gained. A dark, dirty, small, mean room, with an uncelled roof; and, in the evening service, two shabby chamber candlesticks were placed on the top of two men's hats, on a little, rickety deal table. The brethren were a wealthy body, and built up good houses for themselves."

She tells a queer story about her visit, when a child, in charge of her Irish nurse, to the Chapel attached to the Presentation Convent, where she was delighted with the beautifully ornamented altar, with its exquisitely dressed wax doll to represent the Virgin Mary, with the prettiest lace cap on its little head; the quilt was white satin, embroidered with gold, to represent a lamb with a cross, as if held in its fore feet; and the flowers, which were strewn so profusely around, she never before had seen such elegant artificial flowers, all highly perfumed.

"It was a very pretty show altogether; there were about a dozen priests, and they went in and out, always returning in a different dress; and two pretty little boys dressed in white, tossed the silver censers of incense about; and the nuns peeped out now and then from behind their screen. I thought it the prettiest piece of rare show I had ever seen, and well worth the reprimand I expected to receive on returning home. However, it was poor Jenny got all the blame; and I was so emboldened by my escape, that I resolved to watch for an opportunity to go see the Protestant Cathedral also. It was a long time before I attained my wish; and when I did, it was a great disappointment to me; for I had fancied there would be pretty things to see; and instead of that, it was only prayers that I could understand, and a sermon as long as one of those of our own Women Friends; besides, reading the Bible—which any one could do."

But the richest part of her Philippic against the Catholics, is the description of the immigration of souls from purgatory. The scene, demonstrative of the efficacy of prayers for the dead, was described to her by her mother, who had witnessed it in her youth, at Cork, on All Soul's Day, in the Roman Catholic Cathedral.

"She told me that on going in, the Chapel was dazzlingly light. Wax candles three feet high, blazed upon the altar; and every one of the numerous priests in attendance carried in his hand a lighted taper. One of them gave an oration, or sermon, on the inestimable value of masses for the souls in purgatory; and assured his hearers, that that very evening, they should behold the souls of their own dead ancestors; who, having spent years in torment, were now, thanks to the masses offered up in that Chapel, emancipated from their misery, and going to enter into the regions of glory. When he ceased speaking, the prayers for the dead were chanted. The lights gradually went out, until the whole chapel and its vast congregation were in total darkness; then, a sickly glare was visible around the altar; and in that dim light, was distinctly seen a number of small, bright-red, queer looking objects, passing over it. One of the priests, as if in an ecstasy, then gave thanks for the

answer to his prayers; and called on the people to be no longer faithless, but believe, as they now saw with their own eyes, that souls were indeed released from purgatory by the prayers of the Church.

"This curious exhibition interested me greatly; and we were all guessing and puzzling ourselves to understand it, but in vain. However, before leaving Cork, my mother went to pay a visit to her old nurse, and took me with her. The old woman was delighted to see her foster child; and called her as of old, 'my own dear Miss Mary.' They chatted together for a long time, giving each other intelligence of their different families. At last my mother asked for James, her own foster brother. Nurse said, he was well, and had now got a fine situation. He was clerk to the priest. Whilst speaking of him, James came in. A nice looking man, with an eye beaming with fun and good humor. He was most cordial in his welcome; and my mother, with her usual tact, set him at his ease. In a few moments he joined in the conversation, but I forget all they said, except one part, that no one could ever forget that heard it. My mother told them of her visit to the chapel, and of the queer things she had seen crawling over the altar; and she asked James what they were? 'The souls, to be sure, ma'am,' said James. But my mother laughed, and said, surely he knew she was only a heretic; and he might gratify her, by telling what they really were. 'Indeed, then,' said James, 'when you were a child, like myself, I never could refuse you any thing; and I am sure I wont begin to deny you now; and besides, as you say, you are a heretic; and I wish I had half as good a chance of heaven, for all that, as you have; but at any rate, there is no chance of the priest ever knowing that I told you; so you may as well hear it. It was I, myself, that got them for him; I got all the crabs I could lay my hands on, for love or money; and Pather Kelly and I put the little red cloth jackets on them; and we had a thread fastened to every one of them; if they did not chose to walk right, to make them. And, you know, it was so dark, you could not see much about it; and now, ma'am dear, was it not a capital clever delusion for the poor ignorant creatures that believe every thing?'"

Of Catholics she unblushingly says—"Roman Catholics openly profess to keep no faith with heretics, and with them all are heretics who are not Roman Catholics." She charges Quakers with being equally unscrupulous in their dealings with those out of the pale of their Society.

CHAPTER II.

Women Friends, the most sensible and religious.—Striking disproportion between the preachers of the two sexes.—Mistaken views put forth of Friends usages.—Useless threats.—Motives assigned for writing her book evidently not true.—Charges against Friends rebounding to their credit.—Sacred names used most irreverently in some Countries.—Reluctance of Friends to mention them, even in their sermons.—Comparison of Friends with Catholics.—Accusation against Friends of intolerance.—Unrelenting persecution.—Glorious example of toleration of William Penn.—Forbearing spirit.—False and most wicked charges.

MANY of the statements in this libellous volume, would lead one not well acquainted with the usages of Friends, to suspect that the authoress, so far from having been forty years a Friend, was but a wolf in sheep's clothing. One who, having picked up from some acquaintances, much idle twaddle, had thrown it into