

Selections.

(From the London Guardian.)

The Life of Esler de Berdt, afterwards Esler Reed, of Pennsylvania. Privately printed. Philadelphia: Sherman.

This is a book we would fain induce its accomplished compiler to render generally accessible. Mr. W. B. Reed, a very distinguished Pennsylvanian lawyer, has taken the trouble to compile this record of his grandmother, an English lady married to his grandfather, who was a very prominent and excellent companion of Washington, mainly from that family feeling which the world, at least, is the better for as long as it produces books like the one before us, and many others which will occur to the mind. Mr. Reed thus pleasantly expresses himself:—

"The pride of ancestry, in its practical and American sense, no one need disclaim—I certainly do not, and as my mind dwells on these memorials of patriotism, and self-sacrifice, and heroic endurance, I feel, not that I or mine are better for having such ancestors, but that the consciousness of having had them ought to make me and mine far better than we are. In studying, as I have faithfully, these records of the past, I am humbled in my own estimation, at the prevailing inferiority in real, practical, American spirit, of the times we live in, to those so recently gone by. This sort of pride of ancestry, I repeat, I do not disclaim. It is at least an inoffensive and humanising sentiment. A late anonymous writer has analysed the feeling in words better than any I can find. 'Anything,' says an unknown contributor to the *Westminster Review*, 'in the way of beauty should be welcome in matters of opinion. To have lineage—to love and record the names and actions of those without whom we could never have been, who moulded us, and made us what we are, and whom every one must know to have propagated influence into his being, which subtly but certainly act upon his whole conduct in the world—all this is implied in ancestry, and the love of it, and is natural and good.' This motive has tempted me to make permanent this little memorial of those who are gone before me."

Miss De Berdt was the daughter of a London merchant, of a refugee Belgian family, who was in the American trade, and was one of the American political agents just before the American Revolution. Mr. Reed was a young American lawyer, as far as we understand, eating his way to the English bar at the Middle Temple, and naturally much in the society of persons connected with America, and amongst them with the family of Mr. De Berdt. The young couple fell in love, and half with their parents' consent, half not they became engaged. Mr. Reed went to America to wind up certain business matters with which he was involved, intending apparently to return and settle in England. Five years elapsed during which the lovers corresponded, and many of the lady's letters are given in the book. It is not to be expected that they should be full of politics; yet political matter is to be found in them not uninteresting nor unimportant. Miss De Berdt's position as a daughter to an American agent of course necessarily brought to her knowledge many of the details of American political conflicts and negotiations. At the end of the five years Mr. De Berdt died in considerable embarrassment; Mr. Reed and Miss De Berdt hastily married, and went to America with Mrs. Reed's mother. Soon after this marriage the war broke out. Mr. Reed, who had become an important and influential man, gave up the legal profession, in which he had attained a large and lucrative practice, and took the field with Washington, who seems to have honoured and trusted him. Mrs. Reed lent herself heart and soul to the support of the cause with which her husband had identified himself. She was in difficulties, sometimes in dangers, and her frame appears never to have been fit to cope with hardship and anxiety. But she never gave way, she animated and cheered her husband; made herself extremely useful where female influence was wanted; bore privations and anxieties with a sunny cheerfulness delightful to read about. She bore her husband several children, and died young in 1780, when Mr. Reed was President of Pennsylvania, but before the war was brought to an end by the acknowledgement of American Independence.

Our extracts shall be from the portion of the correspondence which is dated after Miss De Berdt's marriage, and has reference to the state of America just after the struggle had commenced. The commissions in the two following letters are really curious illustrations of the primitive and dependent state of the colonies at that time, yet Philadelphia, the city where

Mrs. Reed was residing, was even then a place of many thousand inhabitants. The letters are from Mrs. Reed to her brother, Mr. De Berdt. The first is of the date 1780:—

"I will just repeat the things I mentioned for you to buy for me: a fine damask table cloth, 12' x 12' size, price £1 1s., and one of the next size; a very neat tan (leather mount, if it is to be had), handsome for the price, if not, paper—the sticks not very broad, the fan middling size, a guinea or 25s.; set of dressing boxes, the largest box in the shape of a fan, not too many in a set. Perhaps I have forgot some things here which I mentioned in my former letter, but if that comes to hand, you will buy all I have sent for, and I add, needles from No. 5. to No. 11, a paper of each, a hundred in a paper, a packet of short—and a packet of middling pins—a packet, I believe, has four papers in each—I think the best may be bought of Price. I would give something to be in Price's or Mr. Anybody's shop in London even in Thames-street. To my great consolation here is a street in Philadelphia very like Thames-street, and I rejoice when I can go that way. Capt More is arrived in Maryland, and has sailed for our port, but not yet arrived. Once more adieu! Pray buy the post-chariot neat, and painted in taste, and it's very necessary the harness should be neat, as we shall want something to set off the horses."

The following is two years later, and the illustrations might be greatly multiplied. Scarcely any of Mrs. Reed's letters to England but contain such commissions:—

"I enclose you a lock of hair and size of the finger to have a ring made; the hair to be worked in as neat and elegant as you can, and set with garnets or rubies, or anything that will look genteel and pretty, not to exceed in price two guineas and a half; if you can get it done for less, to be handsome, but don't exceed that; it is the hair of a young lady, a very intimate friend of Mr. Reed's sister, who died last summer. I have wrote on the ring 'Eleanor Montgomery, died July 23, 1772, aged 18.' Send me 4 pr. of Bk. Calam shoes, and desire Mr. Chamberlain to stitch them, and not bind them, as he did the last. A dozen of 8 bowel cap wires; a cap for Patty, such as a child two years should wear. If they are what they call quilted caps, send two, as I cannot get any such here, a quartered cap for my boy, a half dressed handkerchief or tippet, or whatever is the fashion, for myself, made of thread lace. Also a handsome spring silk, fit for summer, or new fashion. I leave it to your taste to choose it for me. I would not have rich silk. You know I do not like anything very gay, but neat and genteel. Send it to Long's warehouse to be made up, as the present taste requires. If you call there, they will tell you how much it will take. Buy the quantity, but cut off half a yard and send it to me with the gown—if you give them all, I shall never see an inch of it. By Osborne, I will send you a gown to be dyed any color it will take best."

The following letter shows the feeling of a quiet and originally loyal man when the struggle had been some time on foot, and after the employment of the Hessian mercenaries by the English Government:—

"Mr. Reed to Mr. De Berdt

"Philadelphia, Feb. 23d, 1777.

"It is not one of the least misfortunes of these unhappy times in which our lot is cast, that the intercourse of the nearest relations and dearest friends is almost wholly interrupted. Except your last letter by Lord Howe, and your packet by Israel Morris, we have heard nothing from you for almost twelve months. However, it is no small consolation for us to know that your prospects of business are exceeding good, whilst ours are changed from the most prosperous to the most adverse. The war being brought to our own doors, and carried on with the most inhuman rage, in which age and sex have indiscriminately suffered, has banished every thought of law, so that the profession for which it has been my earliest study to qualify myself is become entirely useless. The family, as well for safety as economy, have been obliged to leave Philadelphia; but, unluckily, directing its course into the Jersey, which soon after the British and Hessian troops penetrated, your mother, and sister, and children were again obliged to fly, and are now secluded from all society but among themselves, surrounded with woods and inhabitants of the common class of country people. I thank God they have as yet experienced but little distress, but what arises from fatigue and apprehension. A party of the Hessian troops came into the town of Burlington the next day after they left, and afterwards were within three miles of their retreat. I have been plundered of every thing they could carry away, and the destruction of

what they could not would have been the least in such a case to have been expected; but happily, the American arms at this crisis proved successful. The enemy was obliged to evacuate this country, and peace and quiet have been restored; but how long it will last none can tell but He who knows all things.

"Your letter by Lord Howe arrived before there had been any effusion of blood. It was written with a spirit and sentiment that would do you honor among the sensible and dispassionate. I was then with the army, and, after showing it to the General, I transmitted it to the congress, but no notice was taken of it. I then waited impatiently for a disclosure of some terms or propositions from Lord Howe and his brother. If they had such as would give my country any security against the unlimited powers of your Parliament to deprive us of our property at any time, and in what proportion they pleased, I should have applied myself most earnestly to have brought about an accommodation; and if those in power had wantonly or wickedly rejected the proposition, I should have retired from the army to a private and obscure station. But no such proposition being ever made, the general professions of kindness and justice were profusely given, and being well satisfied in my mind from a conversation I had with the Adjutant General of the British army, whom I conducted to and from an interview with Gen. Washington, that the commissioners had no power to give liberty, safety, and peace to this country, I no longer hesitated about my duty, and continued with the army the whole campaign, and have been in every action except two which has happened during summer. I thank God I have enjoyed uninterrupted health, and met with no accident. But the office I held not being agreeable to me, and my duty,—what I deemed my duty,—having made me many enemies among the intractable and undisciplined part of our army, I resolved to decline it when the campaign was over. In what line I shall hereafter move is very uncertain; but the dispute is now advanced to such a height, and the inhumanity with which it has been conducted by the British Generals has created such an inveteracy between the two countries, as no reconciliation can ever efface. The British nation must receive its impression from its officers and friends.—They have injured us so highly by their savages, cruelty, and insult, that it is impossible they can ever give us, and there is no hatred so deadly as that of him who has injured another, and is conscious he can neither palliate nor redress it. The scenes of cruelty and desolation which my own eyes have beheld are beyond description. The havoc which avarice, and lust, and wantonness have made in this fine growing country will be remembered for ages, if its progress should cease to-morrow. The illiberal abuse of the King and his Ministers I detest. A false ambition and a mistaken idea of the true interest of the nation have led them astray, but history shows that this is no novelty. I fear national pride must also be taken into the account—that pride which, being transplanted to this country, shows our descent, and perhaps is not unjustly termed obstinacy. In this state of things, where can a man of honor and lover of his country set his foot—on the one hand unlimited submission, which scarcely leaves a shadow of liberty; on the other, a dreadful opposition, subversion of every species of social and commercial happiness, and of which no end is yet to be seen. Those who prefer temporary ease and safety to essential liberty would find no difficulty in the choice; but how can a man of honor, and who thinks himself bound to transmit to his posterity the blessings of liberty unimpaired, make the ignominious sacrifice?"

(Conclusion next week.)

The convict Robson's delinquencies have been followed by the discovery of another and remarkably similar series of frauds, perpetrated upon the Great Northern Railway Company by Mr. Lionel Redpath, registrar of shares and transfer of stock to the company. It is said that his deficiencies amount to £150,000 or £200,000. Redpath left his office suddenly yesterday, and proceeded to Paris, putting up at the Hotel Windsor, in the Rue Rivoli, the proprietor of which, M. Fleury, he knew; the police, however, traced him thither, a fact of which he was informed by telegraphic message, by Mr. J. C. Ken, a clerk in the same office, who is implicated in the frauds. Redpath, therefore, returned to London, to and his pursuers crossing each other in the channel, and was arrested on Friday morning at the house of a friend in Ulster place, Newroad. Kent, the clerk, had been arrested previously at his residence in Castle-terrace, Newroad. About twelve years ago Redpath followed the