

Introduction to Samuel Medley's diary

A Journal Begun this 16th day of October 1733 – Tuesday – Being the Day that Compleats 4 years Since I Came on Board M^r Addames Sloope at Wapping New Stairs and Entered Into the Retinue of his Excellencie the Earl of Kinnoull as his Stoor keeper & Cheife Buttler But at this time Groome of the Chambers..

So begins the journal of Mr Samuel Medley, Butler to Lord Kinnoull, the British Ambassador to Constantinople.

He seems not to have been at all a typical butler. Butlers did not normally write diaries and Medley's intellect, as indicated by his notes of things he has read, seems beyond the normal expectations for such a post, although it was not uncommon for a servant to imitate the master's reading habits to some extent (and in some houses to borrow his books). Further, he actually joined Lord Kinnoull, at the age of 62, as 'Groome of the Chambers', lowest among the male upper servants, in a role more likely to be fulfilled by a young man in his twenties.

However, one feels that Lord Kinnoull cannot have regretted his decision to employ Medley, for whatever reason, because Medley comes across, through the pages of the diary, as having all those qualities of loyalty, humility, reliability, discretion and integrity which Kinnoull would have expected of a good butler whereas, already by July 1730, Kinnoull was writing: '...in six months time, I don't believe that I shall have two (men servants) left out of twenty, which I brought with me'. Medley remained with him throughout his period as ambassador and presumably returned with him to England.

Nothing definite is known of Medley before this period but he had a grown up son who was married in England during his father's absence and it is tempting to suspect that he was at this time a widower. It also seems highly likely that he came from the Pontefract area, whither he returned after this trip abroad.

It is a consequence of the Medley family's pride in Samuel Medley, butler, that the diary has survived and been passed down through nine generations to the authors of the book *The Earl and his butler in Constantinople*, published by Legini Press, who felt that it deserved research and publication in some form. The authors' problem was that many of the entries of greatest interest require extensive explanation of the historical or cultural background to permit the reader to make sense of them – much more than could sensibly be accommodated in footnotes.

Hence they took the decision to consign the full text of the diary to this website, www.leginipress.co.uk, (together with biographical notes, a glossary, and an index), whilst quoting, in their book, its most interesting passages, as appropriate, to complement the story of Lord Kinnoull and his embassy staff in Constantinople. They believe that this will help the general reader better to comprehend the picture as a whole, whilst still making the source material available for further research.

The first half of the book is therefore mainly concerned with placing in context the story of the embassy of George Hay, 8th Earl of Kinnoull, to Constantinople, 1729-36,

of which period Medley's diary covers the second half. In Chapter 1, the authors introduce the Earl, giving a biographical sketch of the years leading up to his improbable appointment as ambassador, and the reader then accompanies him (and Medley) on the journey to Constantinople. Chapter 2 looks at life in Constantinople at the time of their arrival there, whilst Chapters 3 and 4 cover the extraordinary story of Lord Kinnoull's embassy and the misjudgements and intrigues leading to his recall. Here the authors have included quotations from the butler's diary where relevant, and have introduced the political and historical background where they hope it will be found most helpful in enabling the reader to understand the attitudes and actions of those involved.

With this background, the reader is then in a good position, should he or she so wish, to dip into the diary itself, using this website. This is likely to raise various questions, particularly about the roles of those people mentioned who are not central to the embassy story. In Chapter 5 of the book, therefore, the authors take Medley's viewpoint and focus on the diary itself under various headings, attempting some deductions about Medley himself.

Medley's diary contains many observations on the writer's health and the weather; many brief accounts of short excursions, for pleasure or for house business, with friends and colleagues; plenty of factual observations on who comes to the house or who 'My Lord' goes to visit; a few brief accounts of news of major happenings at Constantinople or elsewhere (the reliability of which news he rightly often questions).

It also includes a few observations – one could wish for more - on those around him whose habits or customs or beliefs he finds to be so different from his own as to demand comment. It is only in this sort of context that he permits himself the addition of a note of criticism to his normally dispassionate observations. 'Popery', in particular, arouses him, as on 28th November 1734:

(28.11.34) I went in the State Liveray – to St demetree Chappel – the funerall of M^r Temoneys aunt a young woman where I Se more Superstition than I have Seen Before – w^{ch} is to teadious and vexatious to Express – a 100 £ more Popeish priests – some 100^d of wax Candles all the way Beside flamb'g Incence holly watter &c - £^d Enable me to keep my heart wth Dilligence to y^e truth as it is in Jesus – wthout Supertition

In this case, however, he has confused Greek Orthodox ceremony with 'popery' !

What is conspicuously missing is any significant opinion on or description of those who move in Lord Kinnoull's circle, or of Lord Kinnoull himself. That is perhaps not surprising in that 'The servant was ... expected to know his place and under all circumstances to maintain a deferential manner, whatever his private thoughts' and, doubtless, Medley will have made this attitude a habit of mind from which, even in his private diary, he will have thought it unwise (if not actually immoral) to stray.

As a bonus, though, we find, on the pages opposite the daily entries, quotations from a range of contemporary religious and other writers, in prose and verse, with occasional critical comment from Medley. The books he was reading could have belonged to Lord Kinnoull or could have been obtained from the Levant Company

Library to which it is likely that Medley would have had access (although he never mentions it). Medley's prose and poetry quotations are also published in full, with notes, an index and a bibliography, on this website, but are also summarised, with comment, in Chapter 5 of the book. They are of interest as an additional source to illuminate Medley's character but they are also of special importance to those with an interest in the literature of the period and its readership.

Medley continued the journal until 9th November 1736 when he evidently ran out of steam. He had, in fact, lost enthusiasm for writing more than one line per day, normally, about a year earlier and the reader will much regret that he did not think to start the diary four years earlier, when the ship left England to carry him and his master, then the new ambassador, to Constantinople.

On the flyleaf of the Diary is the following inscription:

This diary was kept in Turkey at Constantinople by my great Grandfather M^r Sam^l Medley

Signed by me Sam^l Medley Chatham 2 July 1851

This Samuel Medley (1769-1857), author, artist, member of the Stock Exchange and active Baptist who was associated with the foundation of University College London, wrote a biography of his father the Reverend Samuel Medley (1738-99) within which he actually devoted thirty-seven pages to his great grandfather, the butler. He describes him as 'a man of lively wit, sound understanding, great penetration, and unaffected piety' and says that he wrote not only the Constantinople diary but also 'his Miscellaneous Observations' (which were, in fact, apparently based on his notes on the pages opposite the daily entries) and 'his more private experience as a Christian (which) was begun when he must have been seventy years of age' (i.e. probably on his return from Constantinople).

In further description of his great grandfather, he writes: 'He was particularly noted for his cheerfulness, and was a pleasing example of remarkable confidence in God, as it respected his providential dispensations, frequently saying, he never could fret five minutes in his life, let things look ever so dark. This even disposition, it appears, arose from a settled persuasion of the wisdom, power and goodness that God, who governs, sustains, and provides for all; especially for those who could claim so dear a relation, as it was his high honour and peculiar privilege to do, in calling this God his Father, which, with the simplicity of an affectionate child, he a hundred times repeats.' Certainly, whenever there is an improvement from his periodical brushes with the gout, Samuel the butler is quick to give God the credit::

(17.6.36) *Better in my foot Bbmgg* (i.e. Blessed be my Good God)

Perhaps Samuel Medley, author, artist, etc., views his great grandfather through spectacles tinted with the flush of his own success in life, for he describes the butler not as a butler but as having 'held a respectable situation in the suite of the Earl of Kinnoull, in his embassy from the British court to Constantinople'. His sister's version, in a rival biography of her father, even promotes the butler to 'Secretary to the Earl of Kinnoull' !

He says that, after returning from Constantinople, his great grandfather 'ended his days at Pomfret (= Pontefract), in Yorkshire, in a good old age, *coming in like a shock of corn in its season*'

Acknowledgements (in relation to both the book and this website)

We feel especially indebted to Philip Mansel whose book *Constantinople - City of the World's Desire 1453-1924*, with its excellent twenty-two page bibliography, was the starting point for our background reading.

We should also like to thank, particularly, the following people for their help, advice and encouragement: Dr David Allen (University of St. Andrew's); Matthew Bailey (National Portrait Gallery); John Bowden; the late John Buchanan; Duncan Bull (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam); Peter and Reyhan Bull; Professor John Cairns (Edinburgh University); Professor Richard Dale; Dr Philip Carter (Publication editor, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography); Anthony Earl; Professor William Forster; Michael Frewin; Robert Frost (Yorkshire Archaeological Society); Dr Seth Gopin; Pamela Horn; Dr Simon Hyde; Scilla Landale; Professor Giandemetrio Marangoni (University of Padua); Sheila Mackenzie (National Library of Scotland); Doug McCarthy (National Maritime Museum); Christopher Medley, George Medley and Robin Medley; Emeritus Professor David Pailin; Dr Ruth Paley (History of Parliament); Andrew Peppitt (The Devonshire Collection); Leidy Powell; Katja Robinson (National Galleries of Scotland); Alan Samson; Dr Richard Sharp; Murray Simpson; Eveline Sint Nicolaas (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam); Professor Harry Solomon; Lucie Stericker; Michael Stevens; Liesbeth Strasser (Nationaal Archief, The Hague); Dr Stephen Thompson; Nigel Wilkins (English Heritage); Philip Winterbottom (Royal Bank of Scotland Group Archives); the staff of the Bodleian Library, Oxford; the staff of the British Library; the staff and Syndics of Cambridge University Library; the staff of the Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies, the staff of The National Archives (formerly the Public Record Office) at Kew and of the National Archives of Scotland in Edinburgh; the staff and Trustees of the National Library of Scotland and the staff of Yorkshire Archaeological Society.

Crown copyright material in the custody of The National Archives (formerly the Public Record Office) is reproduced by kind permission of the Keeper of Public Records.

A note on dates

In the 1730s, the Italian, German, Spanish and Portuguese states were following the Gregorian calendar (introduced in 1582 by Pope Gregory XIII) whilst England, Russia, Sweden and Greece still followed the Julian calendar. Thus, where a letter is dated 3rd March 1731 OS (Old Style), this indicates the Julian date in use in England and sometimes this date may be shown as 3rd March 1731/32. The equivalent continental date is 14th March 1732.

Lord Chesterfield's Act 1751-2 was designed to change from the Julian to the

Gregorian calendar. Under the Julian calendar the year ran from 25th March to the following 24th March; under the Gregorian, from 1st Jan to 31st Dec. There was also 11 days difference.

To achieve the change, 1752 began on 1st Jan and, that year, 2nd Sept was followed by 14th Sept, thus losing 11 days (which cause some rioting !).

We have done our best to follow the convention used by many other authors writing about this period and have used, normally, the contemporary English calendar, 'OS', as regards the date and month, whilst giving the year as if beginning on 1st January, and not using the contemporary English year beginning on 25th March. Any exceptions to this, where we have mentioned continental dates, are designated 'NS'.

Abbreviations used in footnotes

BL	The British Library
CUL	Cambridge University Library
CUP	Cambridge University Press
DNB	Dictionary of National Biography
HALS	Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies
HMC	Historical Manuscripts Commission
HMSO	His/Her Majesty's Stationery Office
NAS	The National Archives of Scotland
NLS	The National Library of Scotland
OUP	Oxford University Press
TNA	The National Archives (TNA) formerly the Public Record Office (PRO)
YAS	The Yorkshire Archaeological Society