

MOORE, Rosemary (ed.), *The History of the Life of Thomas Ellwood Written by Himself* (Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 2004), pp. xii + 227. ISBN 0-7591-0644-4, Hardback, \$69.00. ISBN 0-7591-0645-2, Paper, \$24.95, £16.95.

This autobiography by Thomas Ellwood (1639–1713) has long languished in the shadows of those by better-known contemporaries, such as the *Journal* of George Fox, which Ellwood faithfully edited for publication in 1694. But Rosemary Moore has brought this excellent work to light again after a long time out of print, and for good reason. Few Friends have written as intimately and vividly about varied aspects of their lives as did Ellwood, in the seventeenth century or since. Ellwood, while he may not have been among the first rank of Friends, was well connected with those who were. Isaac and Mary Pennington were family friends and also his employers for seven years, as he tutored their sons in Latin. He was a childhood friend of Mary's eldest child (and Isaac's stepdaughter), Gulielma Springett, who became William Penn's first wife. Ellwood has much to say about Gulielma in this narrative, protesting against those who suspected him for having romantic designs upon her, and making clear that their friendship was a lifelong one.

As for non-Friends, Ellwood sometimes read books to the elderly and blind John Milton, and he took credit for suggesting to Milton the need for a poem on 'Paradise Found', as a sequel to *Paradise Lost*. He recalled that Milton later showed him *Paradise Regained*, attributing the genesis of that work to Ellwood's suggestion. Ellwood's own literary aspirations are on ample display here. He included several of his own poems, as well as capsule accounts of several of his prose works. Rosemary Moore judges Ellwood to have been a mediocre poet, and I see no reason to disagree.

While Ellwood's connections with the Penningtons, as well as Penn and Fox, form a part of this narrative, there is much more in his *History* about the various forms of strife that Quakers were subject to in their earliest decades. Ellwood's ties with his father and other family members were close, but Ellwood gives excruciating details of the alienation that developed between himself and his father upon his decision to become a Quaker. Eventually his father 'left me at my liberty', he recalled, but English magistrates and informers did not. His account of seventeenth-century English prisons is clear and informative, and one can gain much insight from his scathing account of Quaker 'sufferings' at the behest of the English legal system. Whether one is reading about a coroner's inquest that resulted in better living conditions for imprisoned Quakers, or Ellwood's relentless

prosecution of lying informers, or the disposition of severed heads of those convicts who suffered execution, or much more, Ellwood provided full and often surprising details. Among gaolers and judges, Ellwood colourfully portrayed the kind, the mean, and all shades of human character in between. Early Quakers' considerable integrity is a moving and oft-recurring theme of his book. For example, Ellwood and his fellow prisoners were trusted to move from one gaol to another without a guard, and that trust was not misplaced.

Moore's editing is concise and non-obtrusive. Her footnotes helpfully elucidate most of Ellwood's numerous historical allusions (although occasionally I would have liked more—American readers may need to be informed about the Rye House Plot of 1683, for instance). Her eight-page epilogue covering the last three decades of Ellwood's life is far more illuminating and concise than the 136-page supplement by John Wyeth in the original 1714 edition. Most of all, she does not get in the way of Ellwood's numerous charms. She has set out to remind us how 'likeable' Ellwood was, and she succeeds. This fine work deserves wide reading among Quakers and those concerned with seventeenth-century English history alike.

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