

“William Miller at the King’s Gardens.”

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In Eleventh Month, 1702, William Miller signed

a manifesto given out against three Friends, tobacco merchants, because of the taking of other mens goods and not paying it, and of ther taking [to] the Abbay to frustrat men out of ther mony, contrary to the principels of truth.³ . . . they having been delt with according to the order of truth both by ane epistell and by Bartholomew Gibson and Patrick Robison in spiking with them face to face.

Perhaps this sad case induced W. M. to write a paper, which is thus alluded to in Aberdeen Quarterly Meeting minutes of Twelfth Month, 1702, “ther was a peaper of advice given to this meetting by William Miller, and frinds having unity with it, its left to the Yearly Meeting to consider.” The Yearly Meeting minutes (Second Month, 1703) describe it as “a savoury paper,” which was read at the first sitting, and was to be read again “to-morrow in a more full meeting.” It seems to have treated of the propositions, “That the precious Truth neither allous stealing from customers on any pretence, nor dealing in goods prohibited by Act of parliament, or in any goods unsutable to our Blessed Testimony.”

At the Quarterly Meeting of Eleventh Month, 1703, the treasurer “represented the truble [Edinburgh Friends] lay under by Barbry Hodges pursutt for ther meetting house, this meetting ordereth Charles Ormiston to goe along with William Miller and discourse Walter Pringell, advocat, thereanent.” The Friends reported to next Quarterly Meeting that it seemed “lickly upon the account of our not swearing” that B.H. “is lick to obtaine hire end,” although Friends were able to produce “the rights of the said half teniment of land . . . for upwards of threescore of years . . . transacted from on to another without any wants.” As treasurer, William Miller managed the money part of the business, and at the adjourned Quarterly Meeting of Ninth Month, 1704, he was directed to produce his account of disbursements for the lawsuit. “The meetting accordingly meett, and concerted things as to the persutt

³ The precincts of the Abbey of Holyrood, including Arthurs Seat and the King’s Park, until very recently, retained the privilege of “sanctuary.” Once across the border line, an honest debtor was safe from his creditors; unless indeed the money was owing to the Crown.

of that Law business relating to Barbry Hodge as much as could be." Six months later, W. M. reports that

Barbry Hodge, or hir doers, have offered to accept of four scor of pounds scots [£6 13s. 4d. sterling] by way of Chirity in leue of and to discharg all her pretencions. . . [The Meeting] decline any compounding with hir either by way of chirity or otherwise, but lett the law take its course, and the testimony of truth [be] kept clear.

The suit lingered on for some years, and in Ninth Month, 1707, the representatives from Edinburgh "give ane account that they are not yett called abut there meetting house, but knowes not how soon the action will be called, and therefor ordineth the fornamed person, William Miller, to answer when called." However, at next Quarterly Meeting, "the fornamed person," as the Clerk rather quaintly styles himself, was able to give the satisfactory news at last, "that ther is lickwise ane decritt of absolviter as to Barbray Hodg plea against the meetting house which he is to gett extracted as sone as posabell."⁴

At Edinburgh Yearly Meeting, 1708, W. M. reports that Friends "had a design of repairing ther meetting hous. William Miller is to make tryall to sell the hous, if possabell, and . . . that he be looking after another more comedies." Apparently he was not successful, as, some years later, "1079 li. 5s. 2d. Scots, Jn English money 89 li. 18s. 9½d.," was expended on a thorough repair of the house, "both mason work, sclating, dales, and trees, and Carpenter work, and plaistering" (including no doubt the needed protection against "ye Wyld Boys").

He was appointed with other Friends, in 1709, to visit Garshore Meeting, regarding "a sham mariadg" between two Friends there. The Committee were, it seems, "blissedly assisted in ther messadg not only by the presence of the Lord but by William Armstrang and Joseph Atkinson," two public Friends from England.

At the Edinburgh Yearly Meeting in Third Month, 1711, W. M. "gave ane account of his uneasiness of having a full disposition [*i.e.*, probably, being sole Trustee] of the meetting house and burial place," so he is directed to make a disposition of them to two other Friends, to be placed "in the hands of the keepers of the books of the Quarterly Meet-

⁴ An abstract of the plea of "poor Barbara Hodge [it seems she was in receipt of parish relief] against Bartholomew Gibson, the King's farrier, and William Miller," is given by Lord Fountainhall in his *Collection of Decisions in the Court of Session*, 1678 to 1712; vol ii., pp. 394, 395.

ing.” His quaintly worded minutes end at this date, as his son, William, assumed the Clerk’s pen at the next Quarterly Meeting, but his name continues to be of very frequent occurrence in the Meeting records.

When nearly eighty years of age his name occurs amongst those of five Friends of Edinburgh, who agree “to take our turns or to find one in our steads to accompany Travelling Friends in their journey.”

The notices of William Miller outside the Meeting records are not very numerous. That worthy minister, Thomas Story, whose *Journal* is a mine of interesting notes for the genealogist, refers to him, under dates 1692 and 1728.⁵

A very different author, Daniel Defoe, has also something to say about him. Writing on 30th August, 1718, to *Mist’s Journal*, he tells the following amusing but perhaps apocryphal story :—⁶

“They write from Edinburgh, dated August 17th, that, some days since, one William Miller, a Quaker and Gardener, who lives near Holyrood House, is reckoned worth £5,000 sterling, and has his house well stored with Westphalia Hams [was visited recently by] three or four Sharpers, [who] came to his house, and seeing those Hams, had an earnest desire to have some of them, and for that end to accomplish their design, contrived (when William and his family were in bed) to get on to the top of the house, tie a rope about one of them, and let him down the chimney. He accordingly ties five or six hams about his girdle, and, fixing some upon his shoulders, gave the signal to hoist him, but, in pulling up, the rope broke, and he fell down with a vengeance, as black as an Ethiopian negro, and sate down in the two-armed chair at the corner of the chimney.

“The Quaker, hearing the noise, judged (as well he might) that there were thieves in the house, and called on his maid, Sarah, to light a candle, which she did; and, observing the fellow loaded with hams of bacon and as black as Hell, sitting in the two-armed chair, she ran away, crying, ‘*The Devil! the Devil! the Devil!*’

“William the Quaker, rising up and seeing the hellish figure in the chair, making mouths and grimaces at him, dropt the candle out of his hand; but, at last, mustering up his courage, said, ‘Friend, what art thou? for, in all human appearance thou art come from the shades below.’

⁵ *Journal*, pp. 54; 665.

⁶ See *Daniel Defoe*, by William Lee; 1869; vol. ii. pp. 66, 67.

"The thieving rogue answered, 'My name is Molack, and I am come from the Infernal Regions, Ambassador Extraordinary from my Master, the High and Mighty Prince Beelzebub, with a present of these hams of bacon for thee, William Miller, knowing very well that thou lovest swine's flesh.'

"The Quaker, all trembling, said, 'I charge thee in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to be gone, for I will have nothing to do with thee in my house,' and [then] he opened the door, when the rogue marched away with the booty; but, in the morning, William looked strangely when he missed his hams of bacon!"

In addition to his care of the royal gardens, William Miller founded a successful business as nurseryman and seedsman, which developed, under his son and grandson, into a very lucrative and extensive concern. Even in 1718, when it seems to have been in the Patriarch's own hands, it must have been pretty extensive, to judge from one of his bills for "Garden Seeds, Garden Tools, etc.," furnished to Sir Robert Gordon, which has been preserved amongst many other interesting documents in the strong room at Gordons-toun. The following are a few of the items:—

	STERLING.		
2 ounces Silver-Firr seed	£	00	04 00
4 ounces Cypruss	00	04	00
8 pound Lym-Tree seed, wherof 4 pound and 10 ounces but yet furnished	01	12	00
14 pound French-Furzz	01	15	00
1 bushell of Walnutts	03	00	00
8 pecks Holly-Berries	01	04	00
½ pound Apple seed, not yet sent	00	04	00
4 bushels of Ackorns	02	00	00
1 parcell of Ellem seed, cost me	00	06	00
Three dozen of largest Garden-Spades	08	02	00
Three Syths	00	07	00
One longest Garden Line	00	02	00

The account altogether amounts to £30 9s.⁷

According to a curious obituary notice in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, he is said to have added the selling of Ale, "call'd the Quaker's Ale," to his other occupations. It

⁷ See a copy of the whole document in *Social Life in Former Days*, by E. D. Dunbar, second series, pp. 148, 149. In the same volume there is a quaint letter from William Miller, Jun., written about twenty years after the date of this account, asking for payment of another account of upwards of £75, which had been due for four years. *Social Life*, p. 152.

may be so, as both a son and grandson were brewers of some note in Edinburgh.

He died in the Abbey, where he had lived for so many years, on the 26th of Eighth Month, 1743, at the age of 88, and was buried in The Pleasants two days later.

His will is dated in January, 1741. It commences with a statement of debts owing to the testator to the amount of £6,027 16s. 6d. Scots. Then follow many bequests to children and grandchildren; in some cases, the sums are given as pounds sterling, in others, pounds or merks Scots.

Item. I hereby Legate, and bequeath, and bind, and oblige me my heirs, Executors, and Successors to pay for upholding and maintaining of the Meeting House and Burriall place of our ffreinds or Society of Quakers at Edr the sum of ffour hundered merks within a year and day next of my decease, with c' rent thereof under the administration of my said sons, George, William, and Isaac, or others to be delegate by them.

William Miller was the great-grandfather of William Henry Miller, of Craigentiny, the bibliophile, and great-great-grandfather of William Miller, of Edinburgh, the artist line engraver, father of the present writer. The estate of Craigentiny is now in the hands of descendants of a granddaughter of the Patriarch.

WILLIAM F. MILLER.

An Appeal to George Fox.

25 of y^e 1st mo. [16]68. George Coulstocke was hear this day at y^e Meeting & it was laine on him to write a paper or goe him selfe whear he plaid at nine pins in Sussex, for to clear truth & Condemne himselfe & his acctions.

17 of 4 mo., 68. George Coulstok was at this Meetinge & did bringe Apaper dated this day, but is crosse & did vse Many cauelling expressions ag^t ffreines. He was spooke to to writte Apaper into Sussex to the peope whear he playid at 9 pins.

4 day of y^e 9 mo. 68. George Coulstooke has been hear & has bene spooke to giue forth Apaper, & hee desires to speake to George ffox first, soe ffreinds has giuen him liberty to speake George, & in as short time as may bee.

2^d of y^e 10 mo. 68. George Coulstoke was at this meetinge and did bring some paper but was not soe clear as to giue ffreinds satisfaction, soe ffreinds has admonished him to waite forther & for greater clearnes.

HORSLYDOWN M.M., *Surrey.*