

A Glimpse of Ancient Friends in Dorset.

Concluded from page 92.

THOMAS BAGG.

Thomas Bagg, whose name I have previously mentioned, was also one of those at the first Quarterly Meeting. His father, Richard Bagg, was a mercer in a good business in Bridport, and was one of the first to embrace Quakerism in that town.⁷ His mother, Love Bagg, who was then sixty years of age, and his three sisters, Mary, Sarah, and Abigail, all shared with him in the newly discovered Truth. At this time Thomas Bagg must have been a comparatively young man. From the very beginning, their house was open to Friends, and they were in the forefront in time of persecution. The year following their reception of Quakerism we find that Love Bagg, with her son, Thomas, and her three daughters, were fined 2s. 6d. for attending a Friends' meeting in Bridport. As they refused to pay, they were all sent to prison, where the mother and her four children were detained several months, the husband and father being meanwhile left alone. Subsequently the father also joined Friends, his name being mentioned as having goods seized. Eight years later, in 1665, Thomas Bagg, and his mother, who would then be sixty-nine years of age, were "taken up at a meeting at Bridport at the house of Francis Williams where they were peaceably assembled for the worship of God, & sent to prison for eleven weeks." Goods were continually seized from them, but they all were most valiant in simply going on in the course they felt right.

At the Quarterly Meeting held 28 x. 1668, Thomas Bagg "published his Intention of takeing Thomasen Newberry, widow, of Membury, in the County of Devon, to wife." The marriage was allowed by Friends, and took place 4 v. 1669. After this there seems to have come to him a breathing space, and for seven years there is an absence of serious trouble.

⁷ The family of Bagg, of Bridport, is mentioned in *F.P.T.*, also in *A Declaration of Present Sufferings*, 1659, and in Besse's volumes. D. possesses a letter written by Benjamin Holme from America in 1716/17, and addressed to Thomas and Benjamin Bagg.

On the 10th of Second Month, 1670, his sister, Mary, married William Ferris, of Hawkchurch, and the following year, Abigail married Humphrey Sprague, "of Gettsom." Both of these men were earnest Friends, and Abigail often saw the interior of a prison with her husband, whilst Mary's husband was continually having his goods seized. In 1676, Richard Bagg, the father, died, and the business went to his son, Thomas. The following year, 1677, his wife, Thomasen, was taken from him. In First Month, 1679, permission was given by the Quarterly Meeting for "Thomas Bagg & Abigail Swaisye to take each other In marriage according to ye good order of truth, when in Gods wisdom they see meete." They did not wait long after this permission, and the marriage was solemnised 27 ii. 1679. This seems to have been the commencement of a very united married life, husband and wife being of the same mind in their religious beliefs, as appears from the way in which together they shared the perils and hardships of the times. And yet, as we unravel the incidents that went to the making up of their lives, we find that it was very chequered, and full of trial and sorrow. Doubtless some of the sorrow through which they had to pass was owing directly to the cruelty with which they were treated by their persecutors. In the Second Month, 1680, a little daughter was sent to gladden their hearts, and we can imagine the joy of the young couple over their firstborn. In that joy the loss of the goods which were taken from them in the Eighth Month, for attendance at a meeting in Bridport, must have seemed light, although the fine levied was a heavy one. T. Bagg was fined £9 10s., and entering the shop the constable took from him "8 peices of white linnen, some of it ossinbrigs,⁸ some broad Dutch Dowles⁸ & Broad Hamborough Cloth,

⁸ *Doulas*. "The one article of underclothing was a shirt of doulas, a material so stiff that a garment made of it would stand upright unsupported. Doulas was originally a coarse linen, but at a later period the name was applied to a strong cotton imitation."—*History of Sidcot School*, p. 64.

Ossingbrigs, term not known.

Barratine (p. 153), a very tightly woven and coarse cloth.

Romall Neckcloth (p. 154), probably one of the many names for the cotton handkerchiefs usually worn round the neck at that period.

Information supplied per Allan Rowntree, of Scarborough.

& two peices & halfe of Woollen cloth, worth sixteene pounds ten shillings."

This must have troubled them much less (although it was a large sum to pay for attending one single meeting), than the trouble that befell them only one month earlier, when their little daughter, Susannah, was taken from them. Shortly after, the father attended a meeting at Bridport, and was again fined £7 10s. His shop was again invaded, and the constable took "one peice of Good Browne Ossinbrigs, 15 yds of Broad White Callicow, one halfe peice of black wosted Barratine,⁸ & part of 4 peices more of sad Coull^r wosted Barratine, being in all about 66 yds of Barratine, worth in all eight Pounds ten shillings." That must have been a very sad time, as, on the 30th of Ninth Month, Love Bagg, between whom and her children there must have been a very close bond of sympathy, was called home, at the ripe age of eighty-three. Six months later the eldest boy was born, and called after his father, Thomas. It must have been terrible times for the poor little babies,⁹ and when little Thomas was just beginning to recognise his mother, and laugh and crow, a thick cloud came over the home. The constables this time invaded the home itself, and carried away from it the father and mother, on the charge of having been away from church for three months. They refused to give bail and appear at the next sessions, so they were thrown into prison, where they remained for twenty-two weeks. Humphrey Sprague, and Abigail his wife, and Daniel and Hannah Taylor—besides six others—were their fellow prisoners. At last, on the 8th day of the Fourth Month, 1682, they were had forth to the Sessions and then released. Their gaoler was William Bond, and on being set at liberty, they sent to him for the bedding and

⁹ The high rate of infant mortality in the days of persecution is here strikingly exemplified. See also THE JOURNAL, iv. 149. We give below the births and deaths of the infant children of Thomas and Abigail Bagg:—

Susannah	Thomas	Elizabeth	Mary	Richard
b. 23 ii. 1680	b. 29 iii. 1681	b. 14 iv. 1682	b. 26 vi. 1683	b. 11 viii. 1684
d. 9 vii. 1680		d. 7 vii. 1682	d. 14 ix. 1683	d. 10 ix. 1684
Richard	Richard	Richard	Richard	Sarah
b. 31 xi. 1686	b. 7 xii. 1688	b. 23 ii. 1690	b. 12 viii. 1691	b. 21 vi 1693
d. 3 iv. 1687	d. 4 ii. 1689	d. 12 iii. 1691		

other necessaries which they had in the prison, to the value of six pounds or more, but he would not let them have them.

In less than a week later, another little daughter was sent to them, whom they named Elizabeth. There was not much peace for them, and the day after her birth one of the wardens entered the shop, demanding twopence for non-attendance at church. "Goods was taken worth 8s. 8d. Robert Derby, one of ye wardens, was hee that laid hands on itt & tooke itt Jn his shopp & being told it was worth about 8s. 8d. & being asked if lesse would not serue for twopence, hee answered, 'Its never ye farther from thee, Thomas.' But it was too apparent hee coveted to haue ye Goods himself, for he paid ye twopence himselfe, & kept the Goods."

Little Elizabeth only lived for three months, dying 7 vii. 1682; and in the Eighth Month, for being absent from church for one week, Thomas Bagg was fined again, and this time a "Cotten Romall Neckcloth,⁸ worth 14d.," was seized. Five months later, 7 i. 1683, for the same reason, goods worth 18d. were taken. On the 31st of the same month, he was fined £7 10s. for attending a meeting at Bridport, and William Colfox and two other constables came and seized goods to the value of £9 10s.

On the 13th of Sixth Month, Thomas Bagg was arrested and imprisoned for meeting to worship God, the account of which was given in the story of Daniel Taylor. In less than a fortnight afterwards, whilst her husband was in prison, their third daughter, Mary, was born. As so many Friends were in prison, it is evident that those who were left felt it the more incumbent upon them to keep up the meeting for attending which the others were suffering, and it was evidently just about this time, although we are not given the exact date, that the following incident took place:—"Abigail, ye wife of Thomas Bagg, one tyme by William Derbey, one of ye then Constables, was Jnhumanly Dragged out of ye Meeting house on her back, & throwne Jnto ye dirt & myre by him, without ye Meeting house dore, In a very wicked manner."

Mary only lived three months, and died on the 14th of Ninth Month. Two months later, on the 3rd of Eleventh Month, 1683, twelve Friends from Bridport, amongst

whom were Thomas Bagg, Humphrey and Abigail Sprague, and Daniel and Hannah Taylor, were "taken from their Meeting where they were silently sitting together to wait upon God & sent to the Towne prison," and next day committed to gaol. Five weeks later eight more Friends, including Abigail Bagg, were

Taken up at their meeting In Bridport, where they were peaceably met to wait upon God, & committed to the same prison. At the Towne Sessions the 2d of the 2d Mo. 1684, In Bridport, the aforesaid 20 friends were had forth & there Indicted for being Ryatously & Routously assembled, & for refusing to depart when by the baileiffes required. . . . And whereas there was a Jurye of moderate men that had gone upon severall other tryalls that Day, they were put by, & another Jury Empaneled to try the friends, Some of them knowne to be very bad men; But some amongst them were better, who, after neare two hours Debate, brought in the friends not guilty, wch was such a disappointment to the Bench, that the Recorder, Hugh Hodges, of Sherborne, appeared very angry with the Jury, blameing them very much, & telling them that hereby they had established all the Quakers silent meetings In this kingdome. Soe they made proclamation to discharge all the friends, payeing Clarkes fees, the Recorder telling them Jf hee could not hold them one way hee would another. Soe because friends could not pay the Clarke fees, who is a very wicked envious man against them, & a great persecutor of them, they were Committed to prison againe, & a straight charge the keeper had from the Recorder to keepe them close prisoners, threatning him Jf hee did not. But friends were not longe prisoners, for when the Recorder was gone, the Baileiffes that Committed them were favourable to them, for what they did In committing them to prison, was not out of envye, But for fear of Bond, the old Informer, hee continually following them to prosecute Frds; & to keepe them out of his way, that hee might not trouble the Baileiffs about them; they had soe much respect for friends, that they removed the Goale from Bonds, the Informer's house, that hee might not be cruell to them, & chose another Keeper, who was a moderate man, for the year they were baileiffs, on purpose that they might have libertye, Giveing order to the Keeper to be kind to them.

In the Fifth Month, 1684, three Constables came to arrest both husband and wife for non-attendance at church. As Thomas Bagg was in the garden, one constable went to arrest him, while the other two went into the house to take Abigail, "violently broke open a Dore & thrust her betwixt that & a Boarden Brasse that was behind itt, shee being bigge with childe, bruised & hurt her very much." They saw that they could not take her away then, so decided to return the next day to carry out their orders, when it was found that she was too ill to be moved. The neighbours were very kind to the poor suffering woman, the bailiff's wife especially, doing all she could for her.

As her husband, the bailiff, was an apothecary, she was able to give her various things which were of assistance to her. In the Eighth Month, whilst her husband was still in prison, a little boy was born, who was named Richard, after his grandfather; but the baby eyes only peeped out a very short time upon the troublous world, and in less than two months they were closed in death. Meanwhile, in the Seventh Month, Thomas Bagg was brought up for trial at the Sessions, but as he would not give a bond beyond his word to appear when called for, he was sent back again to prison, and remained there till the First Month of the next year, 1685, when he was taken to Dorchester Assizes, and discharged.

This is the last time that we read of any imprisonment of these Friends, but this did not end the long tale of sorrow in the family whose lives we have been following. One after another, four more little Richards were born to them. The second and third only lived three or four months each, the fourth lived more than a year.

The last one, Richard the fifth, lived to grow up. When he was two years old, one more little daughter was born, who was named after her aunt, Sarah. But this little one never knew a mother's love and care, for Abigail Bagg only lived a week after her birth, and died 1 vii. 1693.

In 1699, Thomas Bagg married a third wife, Mary Paul, of Axminster. His death took place in 1700. The following testimony was recorded in the Bridport M.M. book :—

21st of the Second Month, 1700 :—

Since our last meeting, it hath pleased ye Lord to remove from us by death our Deare & Ancient friend, Thomas Bagg, who was convinced of ye blessed Truth In ye early breaking forth thereof in these parts, about ye year 1656 (when but a young man). And grew up therein very serviceable amongst Friends In many Respects, hee being ye scribe of both our Quarterly and Monthly Meetings from ye first settlement of them, & continued ye same for ye most part of his tyme, yea of our Monthly Meeting untill ye last. Hee was a diligent attender not only of our Meetings for ye worship of God, but alsoe for Dicipline, a hearty Entertainer for many years of friends yt travelled in ye work of ye Ministry, & also a frequent accompanyor of them abroad to other meetings, And was often a sufferer for his testimony to ye Truth both by imprisonment & spoyle of goods, wch hee took cheerfully to the End. Who being Removed from us, is & will bee, greatly missed amongst us.

Thomas Bagg, Jun., married Mellior Seymor, of Marnhull, in 1705, and he seems to have carried on his father's work in connection with the Quarterly Meeting until 1718. His death occurred in 1727.

I have endeavoured to trace whether he has any descendants amongst us to-day. We read of two daughters, Sarah, who married Arthur Gundry, of Bradford, and Ann, who married Thomas Moore, of Bristol. It would be interesting to know if any of the families of Gundry or Moore amongst us to-day are really his lineal descendants.

The little incidents which I have gathered together here give us some insight, not only into the unflinching, uncompromising uprightness of these early Friends, but also into the times of 200 years ago. Let us be thankful that our lot is cast in days of greater freedom, but let us also remember that this freedom has been won for us by men and women like these, at the cost of a great amount of suffering, and let us prize this heritage which has come down to us. In these days of freedom and liberty there is now a tendency in the opposite direction, and instead of being rigid and particular over the smallest details of life, there is a feeling that these little things do not matter—that it is merely the principle that we must hold fast. True, but that principle must be applied, and for it to be of any value it must be *lived out*. We need principle to-day; we need men and women who have realised the power of God in their own hearts, and are willing to consecrate themselves soul and body, even as the early Friends did, to the cause of Truth. And although that consecration may, and probably will be evinced in different ways from theirs, yet to follow Christ must inevitably mean a conflict with the evil around us. Who of us are willing to follow with the same simple, earnest-hearted loyalty?

ELIZABETH B. RUTTER.

DEVIZES, WILTS.—A record of the early history and persecutions of Friends in this town is to be found in *A History . . . of the Ancient Borough of the Devizes*, 1859.