

The Quaker Haigs of Bemersyde

IT was a curious little Quaker episode in the long history of the Lairds of Bemersyde, descending from I. Petrus de Haga (c. 1150-1200) to XXVIII. Arthur Balfour Haig (born 1840). It affected two persons—Anthony Haig, the XXIst Laird, born 1639, died 1712, and his brother, William Haig, born 1646, died 1688.

Anthony Haig was born in Holland, where his father was living.¹ In 1654 he succeeded his father as laird of Bemersyde. The fortunes of the house were at a low ebb at this time and Anthony “set himself manfully to cope with the difficulties of his position. From his earliest years he appears to have been under the influence of strong religious instincts.”² Hence when George Fox crossed the border into Scotland in 1657, it was to be expected that Anthony Haig would be among the prominent persons who came under the influence of Fox’s preaching. “John Swinton of Swinton; Sir Gideon Scott of Highchester; Walter Scott of Raeburn, Sir Gideon’s brother; Charles Ormston, merchant, of Kelso; Anthony Haig of Bemersyde and William his brother,” is the list given.

Anthony Haig had married, in October, 1656, Jean Home, daughter of James Home, of Harieheugh, and owner of the estate of that name. It is not known that his wife was ever attracted to Quakerism.

Shortly after, the Restoration proceedings against Friends were begun and Judge (John) Swinton was arrested in London and sent down to Scotland for imprisonment. In June, 1663, Swinton, Haig and Andrew Robeson were examined before the Privy Council in Edinburgh and were immured in the old Tolbooth. Haig remained in prison about four years and four months. At this time there were three surviving children—Jacob or James, Hannah, and Zerubabel. David Falconer, a well-known person in early Scottish Quakerism, took care of the two estates of Bemersyde and Harieheugh.

¹ His mother was Hibernia Scholes and her mother was Elizabeth, daughter of Maximilian, Earl of Hohenzollern.

² *The Haigs of Bemersyde*, by Russell, 1881, recently added to D.

In December, 1667, Anthony Haig was released. The biographer of the family concludes, perhaps rather hastily, that "with his exit from prison his public 'testimony for Truth' came to an end, and his name nowhere again occurs in connection with the civil and religious troubles of the period," adding: "It may be assumed, that if the Laird of Bemersyde had not by this time abandoned altogether the particular sectarian propensities of his earlier years he had at least ceased to render himself thereby obnoxious to the powers that were." The laird from this time again gave himself to the care of his estate and as a consequence was able to remove from the tower built at one extremity of his property, named the Thrid, to the family house of Bemersyde. There we leave him (save references connected with his brother), only stating that he died in 1712 and was buried in the Abbey of Dryburgh, being succeeded by his son, Zerubabel.

In William Haig the seeds of Quakerism seem to have taken deeper root. Born in 1646, when fourteen years old he decided to become a merchant rather than idle about at home, hence, in February, 1662 (n.s.) he went to Edinburgh, and in April to London. His brother Anthony kept careful record of his payments to William in his Memorandum Book, setting down "at large as it is given up to me by Ann Keith [said to be a Friend], in every particulare thing, as it was debursed by her for William Haig his use, from the tyme he cam to Isabell Sterling house in Edinburgh for to stay, which was on the 1st day of the 12th month 1661." There are various interesting items given in the accounts—"4d. for a night cap; 4d. for making of stockings"; 3d. to Ann Keith "for letting out his coat." He paid ten shillings "freight" for himself by sea to London from Edinburgh.

Desirous of becoming a member of the Merchant Taylors' Company, he had to begin at the bottom of the ladder to fame, and he paid three pounds to a person prepared "to learn him the tylor trad." He soon came into association with Friends and especially with Gawen Lawrie,³ a well-known London Quaker merchant.

³ He writes his name "Gauen Laurie." See note 5.

Among the family papers still preserved, there are several letters from William to Anthony. Towards the close of 1664 he wrote :⁴

This is to let thee know, that since I parted from thee that I have tried several ways for the improvement of moneys ; but some friends and myself both thinks a foreign venture will be best and is the thing I most incline to . . . because I know thou cannot answer money at present. I have a friend here [Gawen Lawrie] that will do it upon reasonable terms. . . Gerard Roberts did desire me to go to Santa Luce, but I have a greater mind for Holland.

Shortly afterwards William wrote to his brother who was in the Tolbooth of Edinburgh :

. . . Receive a box with three of Sam. Fisher's [books] and two others about the bigness of Sam. Fisher's—they are Friends' writings collected ; with a broad book of half sheets collected papers also. Sam. Fisher's are four shillings a-piece ; they cannot be got under, for there is a cart-load of them taken away, so that there is not above six (as they say) to be sold in the City. The other two books are likewise four shillings a-piece ; but if thou wilt not have them because thou didst not write for them, dispose of them as thou sees good, and if they do service I shall think my money well bestowed. And the broad book is eighteen-pence ; the box sixpence. . . Thou may let Alex. Chiesley have one if he desire it and thou be willing. . . Direct thy letters to John Marr's house at the Ship Brewhouse, High Putener. . . Ann [Keith, who followed her protégé to London] remembers her love to you all. . . Mind my love to thy wife, my sister [Elizabeth (1641-1701)] and Andrew [Robeson] and all friends.

WM. HAIG.

William Haig went down to Scotland in 1665, the plague year in London. He preceded himself by a letter to his brother regarding the dispute between Anthony and Ann Keith relating to the money the latter disbursed to William :

In the love of the Lord I desire to be known by thee, that unity may still abound, seeing it's the true attendant of amity ; for where true amity is, there's true unity ; and when both are witnessed there is peace.

On the return to town *ante* August, 1667, William Haig wrote another letter to his brother "at the Thrid near Bemersyde," full of loving desires for his welfare, and two years later he wrote (" 12th 6th mo. 1669 ") :

Since I came to this city, I have been in the country with Obed. Lowry, and am now returned ; and am in order to my Virginian voyage, buying goods. Gavin Lowry's son goes partner with me. Gavin is very loving, and says still that if any man will lend me one hundred pounds, he will lend me so much more. However, he does double my stock, and is at the trouble to buy all my goods for me. His love is far more than I can desire, or expect. . . Direct thy letter to Gavin Lowry's in Houndsditch at the Helmet.

⁴ The letters are given as printed by Russell ; probably the spelling is modernised.

In 1672 William Haig married Mary, daughter of his warm friend, Gawen Lawrie; on the 1st September 1674, their first son, Obadiah, was born. In this latter year William Haig had a visit from his brother, during which Jeane Home, Anthony's wife, wrote to him the letter of a very uneducated character, strikingly different from the letters of Margaret Fox and her daughters at Swarthmoor on the southern side of the border:

Your sons is at Kelso Schoell and Margrat Lowri with them. Your childring ar all weill at the presand and minds ther lowf to the. . . . I reseived tuo letrs from your dawter [Hannah] sinc shoe went to Lowndane, your brother Wielame writs mikell to her comdasion. I am glad that I am the mother of shwch a child as so weill be lowfd with all hir frinds.

Among subscribers to "The Concessions and Agreements of the Proprietors, Freeholders and Inhabitants of the Province of West New Jersey in America" signed in London, 3rd March, 1676, appears the well-written signature "William Haig." It is sixth in order of the many names, the first being "Gauen Laurie," and the second William Penn.⁵

The next letter from William to Anthony contains strong condemnation of Anthony's share in "the abduction of Jane Home, heiress of Ayton." It is dated

London, May 31, 1678.

Dear Anthony.

This opportunity, p Jno. Chatto, I take to acquaint thee we are all well, and hope the like of thy family. My little Obadiah grows a man—a fine child. I long to see thy family, but this city is so big I cannot get through it.

I am extremely sorry to hear of thy foolish and rash engagement for that abominable villain Home. . . . When I heard it, I thought it did not bespeak Anthony Haig—a man so much for the standing of his family, ambitious of leaving his children without encumbrances. Well, Anthony, if it be so, God forgive thee for it. Thy children will have cause to remember the folly of their father when thou art gone. I am deeply troubled for it.

My love to all friends. Farewell

Thy brother,

WILLIAM HAIG.

Gawen Lawrie, chosen the deputy governor of East New Jersey, by the governor, Robert Barclay, having gone to take up his duties in the new country, was soon followed by William and Mary Haig. The last extant

⁵ The first and last pages of signatures are reproduced in facsimile in Howard B. French's *Genealogy of the French Family*, i. 72, Philadelphia, 1909.

letter from William to his brother is dated from Philadelphia, "August 1, 1683," and sent per John Barclay, younger brother of the absent governor. It is full of praise of the country and its government. It concludes :

I hope by this time thou art grown sober and serious—a condition my soul most desires I am grown very grey. It was time for us both to mend our ways seven years ago, and therefore now high time to be serious, and instead of considering other men's condition, seriously reflect upon our own.

Despite his grey hairs William Haig was but thirty-seven ; when forty-two he departed this life, at Burlington, in the Jerseys, 1688.

Ten years or so after his father's death, Obadiah Haig visited the old country with his mother and sister Rebekah, bringing with him considerable sums of money. He was a Quaker and when in Scotland visited among the Barclays of Ury and the Skenes of Aberdeen. In 1701 he married a daughter of John Skene, son of Bailie Skene, laird of Newtyle. The young man was well educated, and, like his uncle, much interested in the history of his family. He prepared a family-tree, which, though stated to be "extremely inaccurate," has preserved much which would have otherwise been lost. The tree is dedicated "to all the posterity of the family to come, as a foundation laid for them to continue a building upon." One name has, however, not been preserved—the Christian name of his own wife ! In the spring of 1701 Obadiah and his bride, with his mother and sister, sailed for West Jersey, but Obadiah never reached his adopted home, his earthly journey having been cut short after a brief illness on the last day of June, on the island of Barbados. Apparently the family of William Haig died out—there not being any descendants of Obadiah or of his brother Lawrie or sister Rebekah. Thus, presumably, the Quakerism of the Haig family came to an end.⁶

⁶ In the Friends' Registers for Scotland we find among births :
Haig, David, 1669, xii. 19, son of Andrew of Bimerside in Kelso, M.M.
Haig, Hannah, 1678, xii. 20, ditto.

And among deaths :

Haig, Andrew, 1694, ii. 25, of Mellerstanes, in Kelso M.M.
Haig, Margaret (Dods), 1699, ix. * of Millerstanes, widow of Andrew.
Buried at Kelso.
Haig, Gavin, 1700, ii. 3, of Bemerside, son of Andrew. Kelso M.M.

All the above information has been taken from *The Haigs of Bemersyde*, by John Russell, of Edinburgh, published in 1881 and now a scarce book.

It is worthy of notice how, so soon as the writer reaches the Quaker period, the sources from which he draws his history largely increase. David, the XXth laird is dealt with in a chapter of twenty-five pages; his son, Anthony, requires two chapters of nearly one hundred pages to portray his life and that of his brother, William—the *cacoethes scribendi* of the Quaker appearing strongly in the lives of these Quaker brothers—while the lairdship of Zerubabel, son of Anthony, is recorded in six pages.

Again, prominent among the Haig family papers is the work of the two Quakers, Anthony and Obadiah. The former entered many family details into his Memorandum Book and the latter, as aforesaid, prepared a family tree. No body of people has done more genealogical work and written more family history than have members of the Society of Friends.

There are other Friends mentioned in *The Haigs of Bemersyde*. Alexander Chiesley, "marchant-burgess in Edinburgh," is said to have been a Quaker, though the style of his letter-writing does not convey this idea; David Falconer, as has already been seen, was an active Quaker and man of affairs, and he entered into the private as well as business life of the XXIst laird of Bemersyde, addressing him thus, in June, 1666:

I am satisfied in thy wyf's returne. . . . My desire to thee is, to keep in the trew dominion ower her, not suffering the affectionat part to betray thee ower to the will of the wrong part in her in nothing, adding in another letter:

Thy daughter Hannah is sadly neglected in her education, which one day will be thy grief.

We are told of Charles Ormston, of Kelso, that "the transactions of this merchant with the Borderlords and lairds appear to have been very extensive, he having large bonds over many properties, at a rate of interest which almost swallowed up the whole money rental."

Ormston, as Falconer, had to write some strongly-worded communications to the laird respecting money matters. The laird passed the blame on to his son, under date 1691—“whatever misfortune fall out betwixt Charles and me, ye are the cause.”

Andrew Robeson appears at intervals, but the author was unable to identify him. For Robeson see THE JOURNAL, ix. 161, xv. 152; Camb. *Jnl.*

“Quaker Quiddities”

A LITTLE volume, now quite rare, entitled *Quaker Quiddities : or, Friends in Council : a Colloquy*, has been presented to D. by Allen C. Thomas, of Haverford, Pa., after having formed part of his private library for many years. The anonymous writer, an undergraduate of Providence Friends' School, R.I., dates his Preface “Providence, R.I., 5 mo. 21. 1860” and the book was published at Boston the same year. It was probably written by James Banks Congdon. The Friends in council are “Samuel Bonus” and “Jeremiah Austen” and the colloquy consists of thirty-six pages of blank verse, followed by twelve pages of notes. Samuel pleads for more liberty in matters Quakerly, while Jeremiah holds fast by the Discipline. A rumour of the revision of the Discipline of London Y.M.¹ has reached them :

“SAMUEL

“ ’Twas supposed,
That by the favor of our weightiest Friends,
Who late in London held convening sage,
Some modes less rigid in our marriage rules
Might at the Annual Gathering be approved.
’Twas further rumored that the same high source
Some trifling relaxation might ordain
In those requirings which restrain, so close,
Friends in the matters of attire and speech.”

The quiddities are dress and speech, tones in preaching, restrictions in literature, undue dependence upon silent worship, banning of music, etc.

¹ London Y.M. Discipline was revised in 1861 and issued as *Doctrine, Practice and Discipline*.