

A Quaker Bible and some of its Associations

THROUGH the recent disposal of the valuable library of Quaker books and early printed pamphlets and broadsides, formed many years ago by Thomas James Backhouse, of Sunderland, an interesting family Bible has come into the possession of the present writer.

The volume is a quarto, printed at Oxford by John Baskett, in 1727, bound in leather, now much perished. On the back of the first title-page and on the succeeding two pages are entries of births, deaths, etc., relating to the families of Hedley and Robson, of Darlington.

1. The first entry informs us that this is "Nathan Hedley Book, Bought at York, 1st. mo. 1728." Nathan Hedley (1696-1770) was a son of Thomas Hedley, of Hedley-on-the-Hill, Ovingham, Co. Northumberland, by his second wife, Margaret Ward. He was a "stay-maker," of Darlington. There are seven Hedley entries, one referring to the wife of the owner—"Sarah Hedley, departed this life the 21 of the 10 mo., 1764, in the 63rd year of her age."¹

2. The next owner of the Bible was Thomas Robson (secundus) (1736-1812), of Darlington, linen manufacturer, son of Thomas Robson (primus) of Darlington, by his third wife, Mary Hedley; Mary Hedley was sister of Nathan Hedley. At the decease of Nathan Hedley, his nephew, Thomas Robson, became possessed of the Bible.

Thomas Robson was, for some years, secretary, treasurer, etc., of the Darlington Insurance Company, and was so much appreciated that he was appointed by the Society "bookkeeper to the end of the world"! There are fourteen register-entries made by Thomas Robson, the first recording that

"Thomas Robson, son of Thomas and Mary Robson, born the 19th of the 12th month, 1736, and Margaret Pease [1739-1803], daughter of Edward and Elizabeth Pease, born the 4th² of the 4th month, 1739, were married the 20th of the 1st month, 1763."

The remaining entries record the births of their eleven children, seven sons and four daughters of whom four sons and three daughters lived to maturity and left descendants.³

3. Upon Thomas Robson's death his youngest daughter, Margaret (1775-1858), became the next owner. She entered her name under that of her father, adding the year 1812. Margaret Robson married in 1817, William Richardson, of Shields (1771-1842). She was a prominent Quaker minister. After her husband's decease, she removed to Sunderland to reside among her many near relatives. Owing to lameness she was accustomed to preach from her bath-chair. She added dates of death and ages to the birth entries made by her father, from 1776 to 1852.

4. From Margaret (Robson) Richardson the Bible passed into the possession of the family of her only daughter, Margaret (1818-1854), first wife of Thomas James Backhouse (1810-1857), of West Hendon House, Sunderland. Thomas J. Backhouse collaborated with his cousin, Thomas Mounsey, and great-uncle, Thomas Robson, and others in compiling Quaker biographies. One volume was printed in 1854, and the remainder are in MS. at Devonshire House.

5. Thomas William Backhouse (1842-1920), eldest son of Thomas J. Backhouse, was the next possessor. He lived at West Hendon House and was a public benefactor. He was also a notable astronomer.

6. Upon the recent decease of T. W. Backhouse, the Bible became the property of his niece and the writer's by marriage, viz., Mabel Backhouse, wife of Wilfred Arthur Mounsey, of Sunderland, who disposed of this family heirloom, with much other Quaker literature, to a Quaker bookseller, at Darlington.

7. The present writer secured the return of the volume to the family and values it highly. Thomas Robson, the second owner of the book, was his great-grandfather.

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NOTES.

¹ For further particulars of the Hedley family, see James Backhouse's *Select Family Memoirs*, 1831; H. E. Smith's *Annals of Smith, of Cantley*, 1878; George Baker's *Unhistoric Acts*, 1906; Norman Penney's *My Ancestors*, 1920; Richard Lindley's MS. Diaries in D.; and the extensive history of the family, by J. J. Green, in MS. at Devonshire House.

² Some authorities give "15th."

³ For further particulars of the Robson family, see *Select Family Memoirs* and *Annals of Smith, of Cantley*, as above; also Joseph Foster's *Pease, of Darlington*, 1891; Richard Lindley's MS. Diaries in D., and J. J. Green's voluminous *History of the Robson Family*, MS. in D.

The Household Account Book of Sarah Fell, of Swarthmoor Hall

The great work of reproducing and editing this manuscript has now reached its final stage. The Index is in type and passed for press. The volume runs to over 600 pages, including thirty-two pages of Introduction and thirteen pages (twenty-six columns) of Index to persons, places and things. The Index indicates seventy-four persons of the name of Fell. This important work will be published in the autumn, by the Cambridge University Press.