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AN ATTEMPT
TO
Establish the Descent
OF THE
SCRIPPS FAMILY
FROM
ANTHONY PEARSON.

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—
BY JAMES E. SCRIPPS
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THE DESCENT FROM ANTHONY PEARSON.

I.

William A. Scripps, newspaper publisher of London, England, died in 1851. In his family bible, written in his own hand and presumably some years before his death, is this memorandum relating to his father and mother, preceding the record of the births, marriages and deaths of his own family:

"William Scripps, born March 1749 in the city of Ely. He married Grace Locke of St. Luke's parish, London, (Sept. 10 1771) daughter of Mary Topcliffe, of the Topcliffe's of Westmoreland, and a descendant of Anthony Pierson,¹ magistrate in that county and the first Quaker who preached in London; and niece to Lady Major, wife of Sir John Major,² whose daughter was married to the Duke of Chandos and another daughter to Lord Henniker."

II.

In another family bible containing the records of births, deaths and marriages in the family of the same William A. Scripps, is inserted the following memoran-

(1) The name is indifferently spelled Pierson and Pearson. In the Friends' registers at Devonshire House, London, he is written "Anthony Pierson." A letter from him in the British Museum written in 1659 is signed "Ant. Pearson."

(2) Mary Topcliffe could not have been niece to *Lady Major* as the latter was the only daughter and heiress of her father Daniel Dale, as will be seen further on, and so could have had neither nephews nor nieces. On page 5 it will be seen that it was Sir John Major himself who was her cousin, not uncle.

dum prepared by his brother Rev. John Scripps of Rushville, Ill., U. S., in September 1843:

"Grace Chambers, daughter of Anthony Pierson,³ was aunt to our grandmother Mary Locke. Her father was author of a book called 'The Great Case of Tithes.' Some Quakers, who were brought before him for committal on account of their religious profession, converted him to their doctrine. Grace became a preacher of the sect and in that capacity traveled extensively through England, Ireland and Scotland. She died at nearly 90 years of age,⁴ shortly after our mother passed her 10th year (1760). I yet possess the head of her traveling staff. Some of her letters, written in a clear and legible hand, were recently in the family, though now supposed to be lost."

III.

In 1856 the same Rev. John Scripps wrote out at the request of the compiler of this monograph what he knew of the history of the Scripps family. In this document he says of his father and mother:

"William Scripps was born 20th of March (old style) 1749. He worked at his father's trade until he married Grace Locke. Joseph Locke, the father of Grace, previous to his marriage led a seafaring life and had traveled extensively. I believe he commanded a vessel. Mary Locke his wife was grand-daughter to an English baronet⁵ who turned Quaker in the days of George Fox and wrote a work called 'The Great Case of Tithes.' His daughter Grace Chambers was a preacher of that

(3) As shown hereafter Grace was not the daughter of Anthony Pearson but of Mrs. Pearson by a second marriage.

(4) As Grace Chambers is now known to have been born in 1676 she must have been 84 years of age in 1760.

(5) Anthony Pearson was not a baronet, and Mary Locke, *nee* Topcliffe, must have been his *great* grand-daughter, if a descendant.

sect and traveled almost her whole life preaching wherever she went. She was a frequent visitor at her niece's, Mary Locke's, who was rather aristocratic and a high church woman. Her maiden name was Topcliffe. Joseph and Mary Locke had but two children, Grace and Joseph. The latter was all his life applying to Lord Henniker and Sir John Major^a in the capacity of a poor relation, much to the chagrin of his sister. William Scripps and Grace Locke were married in 1770 or 1771.

IV.

A letter addressed by Joseph Locke, brother of Grace, to Lady Henniker in September 1816, and still in existence, caused Lord Henniker to call upon William A. Scripps who duly apologized for the act of his uncle and begged that no notice should be taken of the letter. In this letter the writer inquires if there are still living any of the family of Sir John Major, who, he states, died in Savage Gardens, Tower Hill, in the year 1781, and who was first cousin to his late mother.

V.

In a pamphlet entitled "Some Account of the Families of Major and Henniker. By John Henniker Major. London: 1803," a copy of which can be seen in the British Museum, the following pedigree of Sir John Major is given:

(6) Rev. John Scripps's knowledge of the existence of such persons as Lord Henniker and Sir John Major, and of any family relationship, could only have been derived from his mother, for he never visited England but spent his whole life from his sixth year in the then wild west, which was at that period almost entirely cut off from intercourse with the world at large. Certainly little could have been known to him from other sources of the English nobility and gentry. What he records of his uncle's character is fully corroborated by what follows in the next paragraph of the text.

1. William Major was a merchant of Bridlington in Yorkshire.

2. John Major, his son, married Joanna daughter of — Peirson, by whom he had two sons, Samuel, who died at Nevis in the West Indies, and John. John Major died about 1690.

3. John Major, second son of the foregoing, married Elizabeth, daughter of Richard Tennant, Rector of Carnaby and Boynton in the county of York, by whom he had one son. He died in 1709.

4. Sir John Major, son of the last mentioned, born at Bridlington Yorkshire 1698 and in 1723 married Elizabeth, only daughter and heiress of Daniel Dale of Bridlington, merchant. By her he had two daughters, 1st, Anne, wife of John Henniker, of Newton Hall in the county of Essex, and 2d, Elizabeth, wife (1767) of Henry Brydges, Duke of Chandos, who died in 1771 without issue. Sir John Major was chosen an elder brother of the Trinity House of Deptford-Stroud in 1741, and for 40 years was exemplary in his attention to the duties of that office, in promoting the safety of navigators on the English coasts. In 1755 he was High Sheriff for the County of Sussex. In 1761 he was elected representative in Parliament for the borough of Scarborough in his native county, and received the honor of the freedom of that corporation in a gold box. In 1765 he was created Baronet. He was one of the directors of the South Sea House, and a Governor of Greenwich Hospital. He died February 16, 1781. Lady Major died in 1780, and both are buried in the chancel of Worlingworth church Suffolk.

VI.

The registers of the Priory Church, Bridlington, Yorkshire, disclose births, marriages and deaths in the

families of Major and Topcliffe, and among them the marriage on September 15, 1674, of William Topcliffe to Joanna Major,⁷ with the baptisms of two of their children, Joanna on Nov. 21, 1678, and William on Oct. 15, 1683.

VII.

The Friends' registers at Devonshire House, Bishopsgate street, London, contain no records of any children of Anthony Pearson⁸ but do contain these:

Grace Pierson, late of Ramshaw, daughter of Thomas and Grace Lamplough and widow of Anthony Pierson, married at Shotton, Durham, July 1673 to James Hall.

Grace, daughter of James and Grace Hall, born Feb. 13, 1676.

Grace Hall married to Robert Chamber, of Shotton, Nov. 13, 1703.

VIII.

According to the article on Anthony Pearson by Mrs. Charlotte Fell-Smith in the Dictionary of National Biography, Vol. XLIV, London, 1895, he was born in

(7) What more natural than that this Joanna Major should be the daughter of Joanna Pearson who, as shown above, married John Major? Still there is a chronological difficulty. Pearson is stated by his biographer to have been born in 1628, though no authority is given for the date. As he died in 1665, if born in 1628 he would be but 37 at the time of his death, an unreasonable youthfulness for the large part he took in the public affairs of his time; and he could not of course have been the grandfather of a person married in 1674, only 46 years after the date of his own birth. May there not be an error in the year of his birth?

(8) Pearson having, as we shall see, renounced Quakerism at the Restoration, the rules of the society exclude his name from the Friends' records. His wife however appears to have remained true to her profession. His children, as we shall see elsewhere, followed their father back into the church of England; hence the fact of there being no records of them, either, at Devonshire House.

the county of Durham in 1628, and trained to the law. He was clerk and registrar to the committee for compounding from its appointment in 1649, and in February 1651-2 was appointed sequestration commissioner for Durham. On the sale of bishops' lands he was a purchaser of estates in Cumberland and Northumberland. Appointed a justice of the peace in three counties, he sat at the trial of James Naylor at Appleby in Westmoreland in 1652, and was soon after converted to Quakerism by George Fox. In October 1653 he memorialized parliament in behalf of the Quakers who were being unjustly persecuted. In May 1655 he delivered to Oliver Cromwell in a personal interview a memorial setting forth the condition of the Quakers confined in the principal prisons of England, which in connection with Thomas Aldam he had personally collected. In 1657 he published his famous work entitled *The Great Case of Tithes*, of which editions were reprinted in 1658, 1659, 1730, 1754, 1762, and 1862. At the Restoration he was arrested and narrowly escaped prosecution for treason. After this he renounced Quakerism, surrendered the delinquent estates which he bought, and became a protégé of John Cosin, Bishop of Durham. In 1663-4 he was employed in Scotland by the government, and in 1665 was under-sheriff for Durham. He was married some time prior to 1652.

IX.

Mrs. Fell-Smith's account makes no mention of any children, nor are there any records of any in the Friends' archives. But that Pearson had children appears from a paragraph in the *London Gazette* No. 24 (from Thursday, Feb. 1 to Monday, Feb. 5, 1665), which reads thus:

"Durham, Jan. 27. Wednesday last was buried here

Mr. Anthony Pearson, a man particularly noted in these parts for having passed heretofore through all the degrees of separation and fanaticism, in all of which he was ever observed as a principal leader; but having lived to see his error, some time before his death he himself with his *children* and family had received episcopal confirmation, and did now at last upon his death bēd very solemnly confess his former errors and the party that first seduced him into them, declaring that he now died a true son of the Church of England."

X.

We have thus in corroboration of the memoranda in the family bibles and of Rev. John Scripps's recollections of the family traditions, the following:

1. That there was an Anthony Pearson, prominent in the Quaker sect and the author of a work on tithes. Though a landed proprietor, a magistrate and prominent in public affairs, he was not a baronet.

2. That there was a Grace Chamber, a Quakeress, but she was not the daughter of Anthony Pearson, but only of his wife by a second marriage.

3. That Pearson had children of his own.

4. That there was a matrimonial connection between the Major and Pearson families.*

5. That Topcliffes were numerous in Bridlington, Yorkshire, the home of the Majors, and there is one case on the parish records of an intermarriage between the families.

(*) The thought suggests itself that Pearson's erratic religious and political career may have tempted Sir John Henniker Major, in writing his pamphlet on the Major family, to disguise his identity by omitting his Christian name. Relationship of an aspiring family to one who so narrowly escaped indictment for treason may well have been intentionally rendered obscure.

6. That the female member of the Major family who married the Topcliffe bore the same Christian name as the daughter of Pearson who married John Major, and may therefore very reasonably be concluded to have been her daughter.

7. That Bridlington being a seaport with considerable foreign trade, the marriage of Mary Topcliffe to a sea captain was not an unnatural alliance.

8. That Sir John Major and this Mary Topcliffe were first cousins.¹⁰

9. Mary Topcliffe, being first cousin to Sir John Major, her mother must have been sister to John Major, Sir John's father, and consequently daughter to Joanna Pearson.

XI.

The difficulties to be reconciled are these:

1. If Anthony Pearson were born in 1628 he could not reasonably have had a grand-daughter married in 1674.¹¹

2. It would be almost equally as unreasonable that Joanna Major, married in 1674, should be grandmother to Grace Locke born in 1750.¹²

(10) Under the English method of reckoning, the child of either one of first cousins would be regarded as "first cousin, one remove" to the other, and they would be spoken of as first cousins. Mary Topcliffe may have borne this relation.

(11) May it not be possible that Anthony Pearson was born at an earlier date and twice married, Joanna being the offspring of the first marriage? In support of this hypothesis is the improbability of so young a man (only 37 at the time of his death if born in 1628) assuming so prominent a part in public affairs as he did. The probability of a prior marriage lies in the fact of his widow marrying again and becoming a mother eleven years after Pearson's death, as well as in the children returning to the Church of England while Mrs. Pearson remained a Quaker.

(12) May it not be possible that another generation should be interjected and that William and Joanna Topcliffe were the grand-parents, instead of parents, of Mary Locke?

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