

was Agnes, born 24th September, 1760—died 27th April, 1861. A son, Matthew, afterwards the celebrated Dr. Baillie, was born 27th October, 1761, and died 23rd September, 1823. Both born at Shotts manse. Another daughter, the celebrated Joanna Baillie was born at Bothwell, the 11th September, 1762, only nine days after her father left Shotts. She died 23rd Feb., 1851. Mr. Baillie's stipend was £73 5s. 6d.

LAURENCE WELLS, 1768-86.

Laurence Wells, licensed by the Presbytery of Kirkcaldy in 1752, was presented to Shotts by the tutors of James George, Duke of Hamilton, in October, 1762. The opposition to his settlement "was universal by all ranks and orders of men in the parish, with the exception of one heritor," and continued for one year.

As the history of this case is rather singular, it would have been interesting to furnish all particulars, but the Records of Presbytery at this period have been lost, and the blank has been partially supplied from the Records of the General Assembly and other sources.

At a meeting of the General Assembly on the 2nd June, 1764, the presentation and call were sustained, and the Presbytery appointed to the trials of the presentee, who found—2nd April, 1765, "upon mature deliberation, though the Presbytery will not take upon them to say that Mr. Wells is wholly deficient in point of knowledge, yet they are of opinion that his knowledge, particularly of divinity, is very low and mean, and far short of that degree of understanding which is necessary in one who takes upon him to be a teacher of others, and in such a situation too, where the greatest abilities are required to overcome the universal rooted prejudices which the parish of Shotts has against him. They judge him also to be very much unacquainted with the rules of composition, and greatly wanting in the talents necessary for communicating

knowledge, and making a suitable impression upon the minds of common and ordinary hearers to excite them to a sense of their duty and persuade them to practise it; and, that he does not come up to the character which the apostle gives of a minister of the gospel that he is apt to teach. And, therefore, they hereby do find him not qualified to be a minister of that numerous and extensive parish of Shotts." This not being satisfactory to the Assembly, they, 30th May, remitted "to the Presbytery to set aside the former trials, and to proceed of new, and appointed them to take down their questions and answers in writing, and in case they shall proceed to a sentence from which an appeal can be taken, that the said questions and answers, together with all the discourses he shall have delivered as parts of his trials, with the Presbytery's remarks, which shall also be taken down in writing, shall be transmitted to the superior courts."

After trial in obedience to this order, the Presbytery reported, 29th April, 1766—"Found no sufficient reason for changing their former opinion of his qualifications; yet, as the Assembly, by remitting it to them to take the whole of his trials *de novo*, had in effect declared that the sentence of Presbyteries with regard to intrants are not final, and as they had ground to believe that this affair would, in some shape or other, be carried before their superiors, therefore they referred the whole case to the Assembly."

The case came before the Commission, 3rd June, when they heard the discourses and exercise, and then caused read the questions put to him on his temporary trials and his answers, and having heard the Presbytery's remarks on them, and being approved of on the whole, the Commission unanimously found him qualified. The sentence of the Commission was laid before the Presbytery, who delayed giving judgment, "in respect the Commission did not appoint them to proceed to the settlement."

On a petition from the patron and presentee, the Presbytery, 12th August, "After reasoning on the subject, agreed, considering the peculiar circumstances of the case, to delay the affair till the next Assembly, unless some favourable alteration should happen in the state of the parish." This sentence came before the Synod, 12th October, but they declined judging in the case. It next came, by appeal, before the Assembly, 25th May, 1767, when they ordered the edict to be served, "That if any person or persons have anything to object against the life or doctrine of the said Mr. Wells, they would attend the Presbytery of Hamilton to give in such objections, at a meeting to be held by them at the church of Shotts, upon the first Thursday of July next, at eleven o'clock, certifying, that in case of no objections against his life or doctrine, found relevant and instantly verified, the Presbytery are then, by the appointment of the General Assembly, to proceed to his ordination and admission. And it is hereby required, that all the members of that Presbytery do attend the said meeting, and if any be absent, that they send their excuses to the Presbytery. And the said Presbytery are hereby ordered to report concerning their obedience to this appointment, to the Commission to be named by this Assembly at their meeting in August next, or in case there be not a quorum at that diet, to the Commission in November; which failing, to the next General Assembly."

Mr. Park, minister of Old Monkland, was appointed to preach at Shotts, and serve the edict, and Mr. McCulloch of Bothwell to preach and preside at the ordination and admission of Mr. Wells as minister at Shotts.

On the 2nd July, the day appointed, the Presbytery met at Shotts, the ministers of Avondale, Dalziel, Cambusnethan, Stonehouse, Dalsersf, and Glassford being present, the others being absent without sending an excuse, and on enquiry at the beadle, he reported

that the minister of Old Monkland had neither preached nor served the edict on the day appointed, "Therefore the Presbytery find, that they cannot proceed to the ordination."

The agent for the patron and presentee requested that the Presbytery should *de novo* appoint the edict to be served, and appoint a day for the ordination, but they found, "that it was incompetent for them to do this, as the Assembly had taken those appointments entirely out of their hands."

The General Assembly met on the 21st May, 1768, and renewed the appointments of the former year, appointing the edict to be served next day (Sunday), and the ordination on the Wednesday following. It is stated that the Assembly despatched a minister from Edinburgh to serve the edict in the kirk of Shotts, but finding no congregation at Shotts, affixed a copy of the edict to the church door, which the Assembly considered sufficient. The Assembly next ordered all the members of Hamilton Presbytery to be summoned at their own houses, to attend at Shotts on the 25th, "and further, that they attend the General Assembly on the 27th, to give an account of their conduct."

When the Presbytery met for the ordination, no admittance could be got either to the church or churchyard, as the following attestation by the agent of the Duke of Hamilton bears:—

"I, Archibald Hamilton, do certify and attest, &c.,—that I went to the house of the bellman or keeper of the keys of the kirk of Shotts, and enquired for him to get the keys thereof, but was told by his wife, she neither knew where Andrew Hamilton her husband was, or the keys of the church."

On Friday, 27th May, the Presbytery reported, "That on the 25th, the ministers mentioned 2nd July last year, with the addition of the minister of Old Monkland, met for the ordination, but were hindered from carrying the sentence of the Assembly into execution by a

tumultuous concourse of people, who, armed with clubs and staves, told them in a threatening manner that, if they proceeded to the Ordination, the most fatal consequences would follow. That the Presbytery, notwithstanding, attempted to get into the church, but were refused access to the churchyard, and every house about the place, the doors being locked, and the keys removed; that thereupon the Presbytery ordered their officer to call upon the heritors three several times; which being done, they demanded of them, and particularly the patron's agent, the keys of the church, which were not produced; and that thereupon they took instruments in the hands of a notary public, and retired, finding it impracticable without the greatest danger to proceed to business, and were obliged to return *re infracta*.

"The Assembly did, without a vote, renew the appointment on the Presbytery, in the same terms as before, for the Ordination on Thursday following; the Lord-Advocate undertaking, at the Assembly's desire, that they should have the aid of the civil power to protect them, but in case the Presbytery should meet with such resistance as should make it impracticable for them to proceed to the Ordination that day, the Assembly appointed them to meet for that purpose on that day se'night, and then to fulfil this appointment. All the Presbytery were required to attend at the Ordination, and the Presbytery to report concerning their obedience to the Commission in August; or failing a quorum then, to any of the subsequent diets of the Commission, which Court is impowered to provide for the full execution of the sentence."

Some members of Presbytery on their way on 2nd June, were opposed and insulted by a numerous mob, and the presentee had his coat torn off, and otherwise ill-treated. On the 9th June the members of Presbytery were waylaid and carried out of the way, so that they did not reach the church. On the last of these

days, the Sheriff with a troop of dragoons from Hamilton and a company of foot from Glasgow, were present to preserve the peace, but as the members of Presbytery came not, they, after waiting several hours, retired.

The Presbytery, 26th July, "Being apprehensive that any future attempt would be rendered unsuccessful or dangerous by the same tumultuous and riotous means formerly used, and at the same time convinced of the many bad consequences which must ensue, both to society in general and individuals, should the sentence of Supreme Courts be carried into execution, and as it is their duty, as far as it is in their power, to prevent such bad consequences, did resolve, in submission to the authority of the General Assembly, to execute their sentence as far as it is now practicable, by ordaining Mr. Wells minister at Shotts, at the Presbytery table at Hamilton, upon Tuesday the 16th August."

Mr. Wells was therefore ordained within the Presbytery-house at Hamilton, the 16th August, 1768, the minister of Avondale being moderator; the ministers of Hamilton, Dalziel, Stonehouse, Dalserf, and Glassford being present. The ordination of Mr. Wells is recorded in the Special Register of the Presbytery; but has no signatures attached, shewing that the Presbytery were still adverse to his settlement.

From the unpopularity of Mr. Wells, the majority of the congregation seceded from the Established Church. These, with other Seceders in the parish, formed themselves into a society, and joined the Burgher Seceders, building a meeting-house at Shottsburn for their accommodation.

Mr. Wells was very much annoyed by the Shotts folks for several years after his admission; and that he felt keenly his false position is shown by the following letter addressed to Mr. Boyce, factor to his Grace:—

"SIR,—There is one Andrew Hamilton, grave-digger at Shotts—a very base and worthless fellow—of whom I formerly acquainted you. Though he is neither precentor nor bellman, or has any orders or authority from me, yet he proclaims the people, and even proclaimed himself in the time that I was reading the psalm. He keeps the keys of the kirk-door, and will not open the doors to let in either the people or me till he pleases, and fixes trees in the entry of the churchyard to hinder our getting in or out; he carried off the chain of the bell, and when I caused a new rop to be put to the bell, he either cut the rop himself, or let in some other to do it, so that the bell cannot be rung. James White, smith in Hamilton, John Wilson, and some others saw him take the rop from the bell on a Sunday morning. He wanders about the outside of the kirk in time of worship, with boys and idle people, whom he encourages to throw stones and make noise, and to let in dogs, and call them out to break the windows, and tells the people that there is no sermon, and the like. He likewise keeps up the plate and cloth that are to be used at baptism, that they cannot be got when needed. And as the Seceding schoolmaster, and his Seceding deput are absent, there is no access to the school, which is the place for the minister to go in the morning, to speak to anyone. Andrew Hamilton says that he has authority from the heritors to behave as he does, but I have a better opinion of the heritors than to believe any such thing. I hope a speedy stop will be put to such conduct, and you will greatly oblige,

"SIR, Your very humble Servant,

"LA. WELLS."

"SHOTTS MANSE.
December 26th, 1770."

Mr. Wells died 27th January, 1786.