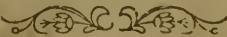


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CHRISTOPHER KILBY:

A

MEMOIR

PREPARED FOR THE

NEW-ENGLAND HISTORICAL AND GENEALOGICAL REGISTER

FOR

JANUARY, 1872.





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NEW-ENGLAND HISTORICAL AND GENEALOGICAL REGISTER

FOR

JANUARY, 1872,

BY

CHARLES W. TUTTLE.

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CHRISTOPHER KILBY, OF BOSTON.

THE capacity, public services, wealth and liberality of Christopher Kilby, place him among the worthies of Boston of the last century. While he lived abroad most of his days and died there, and while most of his living posterity are now in England and Scotland, he was, nevertheless, a son of Boston, began his public life here, remembered his native town in its affliction, bequeathed his name to one of its most public streets, and a few of his posterity still live here. Although his name appears frequently in the records of his time, is mentioned by Hutchinson, Drake, and other historians, and is memorably associated with Boston, but little is publicly known of his career and his connections. His personal history derives fresh interest from the fact that his great-granddaughter was the first wife of the seventh Duke of Argyll, the grandfather of the Marquess of Lorne, who recently married Her Royal Highness, the Princess Louise, of England.

Christopher Kilby was the son of John and Rebecca (Simpkins) Kilby, of Boston. He was born May 25, 1705, and bred to commercial pursuits. In 1726, he became a partner in business with the Hon. William Clark,¹ a

¹ The Hon. William Clark was brother of the Hon. John Clark, of Boston, for many years speaker of the house of representatives, and grandson of Dr. John Clark, an eminent physician, whose portrait is in the *Massachusetts Hist. Society Collections*. Dr. Clark married Martha, sister to Sir Richard Saltonstall, one of the Massachusetts Bay Company. Mr. Clark was a member of the house and provincial council. He was a merchant, and had a large estate. He died in 1742, leaving widow, Sarah, two sons, and two married daughters, Mr. Kilby's wife being dead some years before.—See *Descendants of Hugh Clark*, and *Suffolk Probate Records*.

“Last Saturday died here the Honorable William Clark, Esq., who has been one of the most considerable Merchants in this Town, and has formerly served as a Representative for the Town in the General Court, and was for some years one of the Members of his Majesty's Council.”—*The Boston Weekly News Letter*, July, 1742.

distinguished merchant of Boston, whose eldest daughter he married the same year. Mr. Clark carried on an extensive commercial trade with England and the West Indies; and Kilby was several times in those countries, on business of the firm, during the continuance of the partnership, which terminated on his return from England in 1735. In this period of nine years he passed three abroad in commercial undertakings. He now formed a partnership with his brother-in-law, Mr. Clark's youngest son, Benjamin, and continued in the same business¹ until he went to England in 1739.

In May, 1739, he was chosen representative to the general court from Boston, his colleagues being Thomas Cushing, Jr., Edward Bromfield, and James Allen. The session of the court began near the end of May, and continued, with several intermediate adjournments, to the end of the year, the domestic affairs of the province being in a troubled state. Mr. Kilby served on all the important committees of the house, and took an active part in the business of the session. Important questions relative to the issue of paper money and to the boundaries of the province were discussed and acted upon. Gov. Belcher had received instructions from the king to limit the issue of bills of credit to a period not exceeding in duration those current at the time of a new issue, and the consequence was that all became payable in 1741. The governor declined to recede from his instructions, although the public distress was great. The last of September the house resolved to send a special "agent to appear at the court of Great Britain, to represent to his majesty the great difficulties and distress the people of this province labor under by reason of thus being prevented from raising the necessary supply to support the government and the protection and defence of his majesty's subjects here." Thomas Cushing, a distinguished member of the house, and formerly its speaker, was chosen agent; and a committee of eight, Mr. Kilby being one, was appointed to draw up his instructions. On account of continued ill health, Mr. Cushing declined the office, and Mr. Kilby was, on the second of October, chosen in his place.²

The province had always selected its ablest men to act as agents, the functions of the office being of a diplomatic character, requiring ability,

¹ Kilby's *Letters*.

² Drake's *History of Boston*. Hutchison's *History of Massachusetts*. Journal of House of Representatives, 1739.

sagacity, prudence and a knowledge of public affairs. Mr. Kilby, then only thirty-four years of age, accepted the appointment, and Capt. Nathaniel Cunningham, an eminent merchant of Boston, was chosen to succeed him in the house.¹ Early in December Kilby received his instructions, and immediately sailed for England. He presented to the king in council the petition of the house, praying for a modification of the royal instructions to Belcher concerning the issue of bills of credit; but the king could not be persuaded to make the change prayed for.²

In October, 1741, Francis Wilks, long a standing agent of the province in England, was dismissed, and soon after died, and Kilby was chosen in his place. About this time the province took an appeal from a decision of the commissioners respecting the boundary line between it and Rhode Island. In January, 1742, Robert Auchmuty, an eminent lawyer of Boston, and Christopher Kilby, were chosen joint agents to prosecute the appeal before the king in council. Auchmuty continued in this service till April, 1743, and Kilby did not cease his exertions in the matter of the appeal till 1746.³

The removal of Gov. Belcher was one of the questions which agitated the people here, and in New-Hampshire, when Kilby went to England. He was one of the strong party opposed to Belcher, and he used his influence to displace him, and to secure the office for Shirley, who was appointed governor in 1741.⁴

Mr. Kilby continued to act as standing agent of the province till the middle of November, 1748, performing many important services, among which may be mentioned the procuring from the British government reim-

¹ Capt. Nathaniel Cunningham was one of the richest merchants in Boston in his day. He died in London, Sept. 7, 1748, leaving wife Susanna and children, viz.: Nathaniel, who married Sarah Kilby; Ruth, who married James Otis, the orator and statesman; and Sarah. His estate was valued at nearly £50,000. To each daughter he gave £10,000, and annuities for their support while minors: to Dr. Sewall's church sixty ounces of silver, to be made into a proper vessel for the service of the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the expenses of making to be paid out of his estate: to the poor of the church £500. The rest of his large estate to his only son Nathaniel. He mentions Charles Paxton, Esq., as his brother-in-law. Mr. Cunningham was one of the proprietors of the lands in the west parish of Leicester, where he built several fine houses. He gave the town, now Spencer, land for a meeting-house and training field.—See *Hist. of Spencer* and *Suffolk Probate Records*.

² Journal House of Representatives. Hutchinson's *Hist. of Mass.* *Mass. Archives*.

³ Journal House of Representatives. Arnold's *History of Rhode Island.* *Mass. Archives*.

⁴ Hutchinson's *History.* Kilby's *Letters*.

bursement to the province for expenses in the famous Pepperell expedition to Louisburg in 1745. William Bollan, a lawyer of Boston, son-in-law of Gov. Shirley, was chosen joint agent with Kilby to prosecute this claim for expenses in "taking and securing the island of Cape Breton and its dependencies." In the prosecution of this claim Kilby labored with untiring industry and energy. His official and private letters show this; and nothing but ignorance or jealousy has kept this fact from being more publicly known. In a letter to Secretary Willard, dated March 10, 1747, he says: "No other affair I am concerned in but what is made subservient to this important and most necessary point of reimbursing the province and relieving it from distress which is not possible to be endured long, for I have an unshaken and immovable zeal for the welfare of my country." He writes to the speaker of the house from Portsmouth, England, where he then was in conference with Admiral Sir Peter Warren, under date of April 6, 1748, that the house of commons passed a bill on the 4th inst., "granting to Massachusetts £183,649 02 7½, the time and manner of payment being left entirely with the treasury."¹

The Duke of Newcastle promised the governorship of New-Jersey to Kilby, on the death of Morris; but the friends of Belcher persuaded the duke to change his purpose at the last moment, and Belcher got the appointment. While agent of Massachusetts he was member of the firm of Sedgwick, Kilby and Barnard, of London. On the death of Sedgwick, the name was Kilby, Barnard and Parker. The business of the firm was extensive, especially with the American colonies.²

In 1755, Boston having some grievances of its own, appointed Kilby its standing agent at the court of Great Britain. He accepted the appointment, and performed the duties required of him to the entire satisfaction of his native town.³

In May, 1756, England formally declared war with France. John Campbell, fourth Earl of Loudoun, was appointed commander-in-chief of the king's forces in North America, and governor of Virginia. Kilby was appointed "agent-victualler of the army" under the earl, and sailed

¹ *Mass. Archives. Kilby's Letters.*

² *Kilby's Correspondence.*

³ *Drake's History of Boston. Boston Gazette.*

from Portsmouth, May 20, for New-York, arriving there about the middle of July. The *Nightingale* man-of-war, having the earl and his staff, and also Thomas Pownall, soon after appointed governor of Massachusetts, on board, sailed from the same port and arrived at New-York a few days later than Kilby. The organization of the army went forward, and great preparations were made for subduing the French in Canada and elsewhere on this continent. Kilby addressed himself to the furnishing of supplies for the army.¹

In January, 1757, the Earl of Loudoun and many of his officers came to Boston to meet the commissioners of the several provinces, to consult about raising an army, and other matters, for the campaign of that year. The *Boston Gazette* of January 24, 1757, after speaking of the arrival of the earl in Boston, adds, "At the same time, and in company with the Earl of Loudon, arrived Christopher Kilby, Esq., who went from hence about 17 years past as Agent for this Province at the Court of Great Britain: the warm affection he has discovered for his countrymen, and the signal services he has rendered this Province during that space, has greatly endeared him to us. The Selectmen of the Town waited upon him as Standing Agent of the Town with their congratulations and Thanks for the Favors he has from Time to Time shown us. A Committee of the General Court has invited him to Dine at Concert Hall this Day—and his townsmen rejoice at the opportunity they now have of testifying the deserved esteem they have for him. With Pleasure we can acquaint the Publick that he is in a good measure recovered from the illness which attended him this Fall while at Albany."

Kilby probably remained in this country till the peace of 1763. He was in New-York when the terrible fire occurred in Boston, in March, 1760, destroying many dwelling-houses and causing much distress. Upon hearing of this calamity Kilby sent two hundred pounds sterling to the sufferers, a sum that was regarded as enormous at the time. The district burnt over embraced both sides of "Mackerill Lane," so called. When this part of the town was rebuilt, and the lane widened and extended, it was called "Kilby Street," by common consent, in compliment to Mr. Kilby for his generous donation, and for his zeal for the interests of his native town.²

¹ *Boston Gazette*, July and August, 1756. *Doc. History of New-York*.

² *Boston Post Boy*, April 7, 1760. *Drake's History of Boston*. Family tradition.

On his return to England he purchased a large estate in the parish of Dorking, county Surrey, where he "built a curious edifice called the priory, and several ornamental seats." Here he lived many years prior to his death, which took place in October, 1771. He left an immense estate, which he distributed among his seven grandchildren, after providing for his wife.¹

Mr. Kilby was twice married. His first wife was Sarah, eldest daughter of the Hon. William Clark, whom he married Aug. 18, 1726. Mrs. Kilby died April 12, 1739, about six months before her husband was sent, as agent, to England, leaving two young daughters, Sarah and Catherine.² A son William died young. In 1742, his father-in-law Clark died, intestate, leaving a large estate. Kilby being in England, his warm personal friend, Thomas Hancock, an eminent merchant, and uncle to Governor John Hancock, was appointed guardian of Sarah and Catherine Kilby, and secured for them their share of their grandfather Clark's estate. Five years later they were sent to England, their father receiving them at Portsmouth. Catherine appears to have died soon after her arrival.

Mr. Kilby was now married again, but had no other children. His second wife's name was Martha, and she survived him. Her family name is not known here. On Sarah Kilby, his surviving daughter, he bestowed every advantage that wealth could command. She received the best education England could afford; and in 1753, was betrothed to Nathaniel, only son of Capt. Nathaniel Cunningham, a merchant of the greatest wealth of any in Boston. His daughter Ruth married the celebrated James Otis, patriot and orator. Sarah Kilby returned to this country just before her marriage, which took place June 20, 1754. Mr. Cunningham settled in the fine mansion-house of his father, now deceased, situated on an eminence in Cambridge, now Brighton. In Price's view of Boston, taken in 1743, dedicated to Peter Faneuil, this house is a conspicuous object, and designated by name, being the finest mansion-house in the vicinity of Boston. Nathaniel Cunningham died near the end of the year 1756, leaving two infant children, Susanna and Sarah.

¹ Allen's *History of Surrey and Sussex*, vol. ii. Whitmore's *Heraldic Journal*.

² "Last week dy'd suddenly Mrs. Kilby, Wife of Mr. Christopher Kilby of this Town, Merchant, and Daughter to the Hon. William Clark, Esq."—*Boston Weekly News Letter*, April 17, 1739.

When the Earl of Loudoun visited Boston, a few months after this event, there came with him his aide-de-camp, Capt. Gilbert McAdam, as well as Kilby, who introduced his widowed daughter to Capt. McAdam. He was of an ancient Ayrshire family, and uncle to John Loudoun McAdam, the inventor of Macadamized roads. In September, 1757, Capt. McAdam married the widow Sarah Cunningham, and took her, and her two children, to New-York, the principal head quarters of the army. At the close of the war, possibly before, Capt. McAdam returned to Ayrshire with his family.¹

Susanna and Sarah Cunningham were the special objects of Kilby's bounty and solicitude. They were sent to France, and there educated with care. Their domestic lives, and the lives of their descendants, are invested with an air of romance. Susanna was thrice married. Her first husband was James Dalrymple² of Orangefield, Ayrshire, the friend and patron of Robert Burns. By this marriage she had one son, Charles Dalrymple, an officer of the British army. Through subsequent marriages, first with John Henry Mills and afterwards with William Cunningham, both of Scotland, she is now represented, in this country, by her grandchildren, Mrs. Frances Maria Spofford, wife of the venerable Dr. Richard S. Spofford, of Newburyport, Mrs. Susanna Varnum Mears, of Boston, and Capt. Thomas Cunningham, of Somerville. Her sister, Sarah Cunningham, married William Campbell, of Ayrshire, and had two daughters, the eldest of whom, Elizabeth, married the seventh Duke of Argyll, grandfather of the present Marquess of Lorne.³

The following is a copy of an original letter from Christopher Kilby to Thomas Hancock, before referred to.

DEAR HANCOCK,

Spring Garden, 18 July, 1746.

I am greatly oblig'd for the dispatch in Lumber and Bricks to Newfoundland, and for your advice of the vessels arrival there. The Louisburg affair

¹ Kilby's *Letters*. Family papers.

² In one of Burns's letters, he writes thus, of Dalrymple: "I have met in Mr. Dalrymple, of Orangefield, what Solomon emphatically calls, 'a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.'"

³ Burke's *Peerage and Landed Gentry*.

is not in the deplorable case you have imagined. Capt. Bastide¹ is Engineer, and the thing lays with him and his officers; and I think you cannot fail of a seasonable part if any advantage is to be had; but these officers arriving and a great sum of Sterling money to be spent amongst you I should think Exchange must be constantly lowering till this service is over, and however that may be you'll certainly not want as much of their money as I should think you would be willing to take. I have mentioned you to most of the Staff Officers on this Expedition.² Mr. Abererombie,³ who is Muster Master General, having directions to you in his Pocket-book, and if it should be necessary will introduce you to the General,⁴ to whom indeed you'll not need it, but apply to him as easy as possible with the use of my name, and I hope he will receive you as my best Friend. We have been often together since his return to Town, and I believe he has a good opinion of my services in recovering the Expedition after it was laid aside.

Pray do him all the service you can, and if you find it not inconvenient offer him a lodging in your house for a night or two, till he can be otherwise accommodated. His Power is great and may be useful to you, he is honest open and undissembling; you'll like him very well on increasing your acquaintance.

Belcher⁵ has got the Government of the Jerseys; it was done by Duke of Newcastle yesterday which neither Dr. Avery⁶ nor I expected two days before. I have not seen the Dr. since the appointment, nor shall till his return to Town on Tuesday next. The vessel that brought the News from Boston, was several days below before her bag of Letters came up, and its said the Advice was sent in the mean time to Belcher's Friends. It's a shocking affair, and must destroy any favorable opinion entertained of the Duke of Newcastle by the People of the Colonies; and I am of opinion it will lessen Gov'r Shirley's Influence in his own and in the Neighboring Governments. There is a very worthy set of people in the Jerseys that it will most fatally prejudice. I fear they have been almost ruined by Law without a possibility of getting so far thro' it as to have an appeal home, and I am mistaken if some of

¹ John Henry Bastide, royal engineer for Nova-Scotia. In April, 1745, Massachusetts granted him £140 for his services in the repairs of the forts in this province. He was made director of engineers in 1748, and afterward raised to the rank of major-general.

² This expedition was designed to proceed against Canada. A squadron under Admiral Warren was to go to Quebec by way of the St. Lawrence, and a land force to Montreal by way of Albany under the command of Gen. St. Clair. The English troops collected at Portsmouth, Eng., and sailed several times, but returned. They finally sailed for France, and the Canada expedition was abandoned. Kilby's letter indicates that they were to come to Boston; at least the principal officers.

³ Gen. James Abererombie; he was next in command to the Earl of Loudoun in 1756; he commanded the English forces sent against Ticonderoga in 1758.

⁴ Lieut. Gen. James St. Clair.

⁵ Jonathan Belcher, provincial governor of Massachusetts from 1730 to 1741.

⁶ Dr. Benjamin Avery, a man of the greatest influence at court about this time.

them have not defended their possessions by fire and sword; they will be in fine hands under Belcher, who is to be the Tool of the Quakers, as they are one would imagine of Satan. Some time past this seemed to be allotted for me¹ by the desire of the Gentlemen who came from thence who had engaged Dr. Avery's Interest to perfect it, and it was mentioned to, and approved of [by] the Duke of Newcastle. The vacancy has at last happened when it was impossible for me to accept it, and after consulting the Doctor we had laid a Plan for keeping the appointment off till we could hear from our Friends, which neither he nor I have done by the ships that bring the News of Morris's² death, nor had many months before. But the Duke³ differing in this Instance from every other circumstance of this sort during his Administration, has fix't the thing in the greatest hurry (on some other motive certainly, than the Interest of the Quakers). As the thing concerns myself I am in no pain not having been defeated; but as it may be hurtful to the honest people who are to fall under his Government and will stagger and discountenance the very best people in our own and the neighboring Colonies, it gives me much concern. This Letter must be broke off here to go to Portsmouth where the Ships tarry, and [if] anything occurs I shall back it by another, being

Dear Sir,

Your most sincere Friend and obliged humble Servant,

To

Mr. Thomas Hancock,
Merchant in Boston.

CHRIS. KILBY.

[To the grandchildren of Susanna Cunningham, above named, I am indebted for permission to examine letters and family papers in their possession relating to the subject of this memoir. I am also indebted to Charles L. Hancock, Esq., for information contained in letters of Kilby and others, in his possession.]

¹ Provincial governor of New-Jersey. Kilby's aspirations were not behind those of other Massachusetts agents, who always aspired for royal appointments as soon as they got fairly Anglicized.

² Lewis Morris, ancestor of a very distinguished family, was chief-justice of New York, and afterward governor of New-Jersey. He died May 21, 1746.

³ Duke of Newcastle, minister of British America, from 1724 to 1748. "Newcastle was of so fickle a head, and so treacherous a heart that Walpole called his name 'Perfidy.'" — Bancroft's *History*.

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