

The Adventures of Quintin Campbell

Quintin, the son of Rev John Campbell, went on to achieve much in life and left a memoir at the end of his life which is held in the public library in Philadelphia, USA. From a summary of this document, published in Winslow, S.N. (1864) 'Biographies of Successful Philadelphia Merchants', we gain a bit of a picture of what happened to the family after the death of his father, and a fuller description of the adventures of Quintin as he made his way in life. After the death of John, his widow moved back to Dalry and took a house next door to that of her mother, Mrs Hair. Here she lived economically, her principal means of support being £21 per annum, which she received from "the fund for the widows of ministers," at Edinburgh. She managed to survive on this and bring up her small family, with a little assistance from her mother. Quintin was sent to the Free School of Dalry parish. At the age of 16 he and a friend of his, James Douglas, decided that local prospects of employment were less than inspiring, and they would venture out to seek their fortunes. They decided to seek a life at sea, and in April 1790 set off to walk to Kirkcudbright, where they stayed a night with a relative of Quintin's. Quintin had forty-two shillings in his pocket.

They had with them letters of introduction to persons of standing in Liverpool, given to them by Miss Dick, a kind-hearted lady who had lived in Dalry for many years. She was almost certainly Janet, the daughter of Rev Alexander Dick, the former minister of Dalry. On 15th April 1790, the boys sailed from Kirkcudbright in a small sloop, bound for Liverpool. They experienced a severe storm during the passage, and the vessel was forced to put into Whitehaven. They reached Liverpool a few days later, and having been consigned to Sandy Reed, a canny Scotsman, took lodgings with him until the gentlemen to whom Miss Dick had recommended them could do something for them. These men succeeded in getting a position for Douglas on board a ship involved in the Guinea trade (that is, involved in the slave trade), and for Campbell an apprenticeship to Captain Andrew English, master of a small ship called the "Hope", which was bound for Baltimore.

Thus, these two boys who had sought adventure together were separated and Quintin never heard what happened to James Douglas. On 25th April the ship "Hope" sailed from Liverpool and, after a narrow escape from stranding on the Irish coast, reached Baltimore after a passage of forty-nine days. The voyage dispelled any romantic ideas Quintin had of a life at sea. As the youngest apprentice and cabin boy he not only had to perform many repulsive duties, but his religious training and principles were shocked by the rough and brutal character of his fellow sailors. His young mind was pained by the profanity and blasphemy which prevailed on board the ship, and the idea of continuing in such a situation was so unappealing that he resolved to find a way of abandoning ship.

To escape from the ship was not an easy matter - but fate favoured him. He was instrumental in saving the life of the ship's carpenter, who nearly drowned whilst bathing in the basin at Baltimore. This secured the gratitude and friendship of the man and he agreed to assist Quintin in running away. He arranged for him a refuge on shore to which the boy succeeded in escaping. From this place he finally emerged to take passage in the packet-boat for Philadelphia, sailing directly by the dreaded ship "Hope," upon the deck of which Captain English seemed to be in command, preparing to sail from the port. He landed at Market Street wharf, Philadelphia about the middle of September 1790. His forlorn appearance was no recommendation to the landlords of different inns to whom he applied for lodgings. After some rebuffs he was taken in at a tavern, where he got to bed and slept soundly.

The next morning, he inquired for Ivie Porteus, his cousin, a flour dealer, who had lived in Philadelphia, and in whom he expected to find a friend and protector. The people at the tavern did not know Porteus, but they sent the boy to Levi Hollingsworth as one likely to know him, being in the flour trade. Hollingsworth did not remember Porteus, but upon

reference to his chief clerk, the latter said that he had dealt with Hollingsworth, but that he understood that he had died some months before at Norfolk, Virginia. [He had in fact died there in Dec 1787.] This was devastating news to Quintin, but he was directed to friends of Porteus, the Mackie brothers, who lived nearby. The runaway sailor boy told his simple story to them and showed them the only supporting evidence in his possession, a certificate of good character from Rev Alex McGowan of Dalry. The Mackies offered to help him and told him to call the next day. He was astounded when he called back to hear that he had the offer of a job. Apparently, Mr Hollingsworth was in need of an apprentice and he had warmed to the lad in his brief encounter with him. He had called on the Mackies to find out what more they knew of him, and they had told him all they knew. He was offered a clerkship in Mr Hollingsworth's grocery and clothes shop, which he gladly accepted. So only two days after arriving in Philadelphia he had settled employment and a home to live in, for Mr Hollingsworth invited him to come and live with his family.

He worked faithfully and diligently as an apprentice clerk for five and a half years. During that time, he met again Captain English, who fortunately was gracious to him and didn't seek to hold him to account for running away from his ship. At the end of his apprenticeship Mr Hollingsworth used his influence to secure a good job for him, as a clerk in the bank of Pennsylvania at a salary of \$600 a year, which seemed an independent fortune to the young man.

He worked there for five or six years, at the end of which he was induced to resign in order to undertake a commission for Gurney & Smith, to act for them as supercargo at Havana for several ship loads of flour, sent there from Virginia. Having by these means obtained some knowledge of the West India trade, the enterprising young man determined to establish a commission house at Havana. Unfortunately, this project had to be abandoned following the peace of Amiens in 1802 and the closing of the ports of Cuba to foreigners. So he returned to Philadelphia, where he was out of work for some months, but was finally engaged by the Pennsylvania Insurance Company to go to the Island of Guadalupe, to inquire into the circumstances attending a supposed wreck there, which was thought to be a fraudulent attempt to cheat the underwriters.

Upon his return to Philadelphia in 1804, the Philadelphia Bank was in the process of being reorganised. He applied to the directors for a post in the institution and was appointed first teller. In 1805 he married Sarah Lapsley, the daughter of Philadelphia textile merchant David Lapsley Sr. In 1806 the cashier, James Todd, died, and Quintin Campbell was chosen as his successor. For thirty-one years the name of Quintin Campbell as cashier of the Philadelphia Bank was known and honoured throughout the community.

At the age of 60 he had resolved to withdraw from the active and responsible duties of cashier and retire to private life, but he was persuaded to continue for a few more years. However, his fellow citizens, who had great trust and confidence in his abilities, were not willing that he should resign all interest in business affairs. In 1840 he was elected President of the Pennsylvania Fire Insurance Company, a position which he held until 1853 when at the age of nearly 80 he had to retire through ill health. After that he continued to be an active and valued citizen until his death aged 89 on 2nd March 1863. His wife died a few years before him in 1858. They had at least one child - Elizabeth Lapsley Campbell, who married Henry Shackelford. She died on 31st Dec 1889 aged 75. All three are buried in South Laurel Hill Cemetery, Philadelphia. We also read that Quintin's mother Margaret (nee Hair) died at Philadelphia on 15th May 1824, so she must have gone out to join him towards the end of her life.