

ART. XXII.—*Myles Cooper, President of King's College,
New York.* By TIMOTHY COCKERILL.

Read at Penrith, September 6th, 1963.

THE Coopers of Wha House in the Duddon Valley were an old yeoman family who were there in the reign of Elizabeth I, and probably long before, but the registers of Millom only begin in the late 1590's, and the Lay Subsidies for Cumberland of the time of Henry VIII and Edward VI are very poor, and those that exist are almost unreadable.¹ It has not, therefore, been possible to trace the Cowpers before 1597. In that year, on 30 April, was baptized at Millom, "John Cowp. son of John de Whowes". From this family descended the Rev. Dr Myles Cooper, who was second President of King's College, now Columbia University, New York City.

His great-grandfather, William Cooper of "Whoase", who died in 1677, is described as yeoman, as is his grandfather, John Cooper, who was likewise of "Whose" and died in 1704. John's son William, who was buried at Thwaites in 1759, married Elizabeth, who was buried there in 1778. William was succeeded by his eldest son John Cooper, Major in the Cumberland militia. The next son was Myles, whose career forms the subject of this paper, and the other children who survived were William (1740-1770) and Esther (1730-1779), who married the Rev. Miles Wennington.

In 1928 Mr Charles Hayden Vance visited England to collect biographical material for a life of Myles Cooper, and his researches were published in September 1930 in the *Columbia University Quarterly* xxii 261-286. Mr Vance's paper has been freely drawn upon in this account of Myles Cooper.

The Wha House estate is within the Cumbrian part of

¹ Information from Mrs V. Heddon.



PLATE I.—Duddon Hall.

facing p. 336.

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the Duddon valley and is two miles north-west of Broughton-in-Furness. The house was re-built by Myles Cooper's brother John, and is now known as Duddon Hall.

Myles Cooper was baptized at St Anne's, Thwaites, on 19 February 1736/7,² and it is likely that he went to the school at Silecroft, of which his father was a trustee, before being sent in 1751 to Carlisle Grammar School.³

At this time and until 1771 the school had as its headmaster the Rev. Miles Wennington,⁴ who married in 1753 Myles Cooper's only sister Esther. On 27 February 1753, at the age of 16, Cooper entered The Queen's College, Oxford, as a battler. He graduated 6 November 1756 and proceeded to M.A. on 16 April 1760. On 25 February 1767 he became a Doctor of Civil Law by diploma.

Mr Vance says that Cooper became second master at Tonbridge School, Kent, about 1 January 1760, under the headmastership of the Rev. James Cawthorn. He was there for little more than a year, resigning his post about 1 March 1761, and receiving ten guineas from the trustees for his good behaviour. In the meantime, on 2 March 1760, the Bishop of Lincoln had ordained him. He was elected Chaplain of The Queen's College, Oxford, on 9 March 1761. On 17 May following the Bishop of Oxford ordained him priest. In October of this year he published by subscription at Oxford *Poems on Several Occasions*.

His stay at The Queen's College appears to have been brief. According to Mr Vance, Cooper was in 1762 curate of a country church near Oxford, and it was while he was serving there that he was called to service in America.

² Millom parish register.

³ Carlisle Grammar School Memorial Register, ed. G. B. Routledge (1924), 68.

⁴ The Rev. Miles Wennington (1726-1771) was born at Greystone House, Thwaites, and became headmaster of Carlisle Grammar School in June 1750. On 20 June 1753 he married Myles Cooper's only sister, Esther (1730-1779). He was ordained in 1758, became a Minor Canon of Carlisle Cathedral, and, like his brother, the Rev. John Wennington, was rector of Bootle, Cumberland.

During the years 1760-1762 the Governors of King's College, New York, had been applying to Dr Secker, Archbishop of Canterbury, to find a man suitable as vice-president of the college, with the prospect of succeeding the Rev. Dr Samuel Johnson as president, and also as lecturer or assistant rector of Trinity Church. The Archbishop communicated with the Rev. Dr Edward Bentham, of Christ Church, Oxford, and he selected Cooper for the appointment.

He sailed from Portsmouth in the ship *Edward* on 24 August 1762, and arrived at New York on 30 October. The governors of the college then discovered that they had no authority to appoint a vice-president and therefore made Cooper assistant to the president, professor of moral philosophy and a fellow of the college.

Cooper had not long to wait for advancement. On 1 March 1763 Dr Johnson, because of advancing years and his wife's death, resigned and Cooper was appointed president on 12 April. The Trinity Church lectureship, however, was withheld from him, and Cooper demanded that the governors pay him a salary equal to that which Dr Johnson had received as president and lecturer of the church. The governors declined and eventually the dispute was referred to the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Mr Vance writes of Cooper in his role of president as "a man of vision and aggressiveness . . . under his leadership the college grew in size, in wealth and in prestige, despite a determined opposition. During his administration new professors and professorships were added . . . the Medical School had its beginning, the library was greatly increased, New York's first public art collection was started in the college library, large grants of land were secured . . . the New York Hospital had its inception at the college commencement 16 May 1769, with Cooper as a promoter and a charter member."

When Washington sought a college for his stepson, John Parke Custis, King's was selected and the great man travelled to New York to place the young man in Cooper's care.



PLATE II.—The Temple at Duddon Hall.

In 1768 the governors of King's College conferred upon Cooper the LL.D. degree and in the same year he went to Boston and sat for his portrait by John Singleton Copley. By now he was one of the outstanding men in the Church of England in America and his reputation as an administrator and teacher stood very high. Nevertheless, his devoted support of the Anglican Church and his unswerving loyalty to the Royal government did not endear him to the American patriots, and in this very year he approached Lord Baltimore, through the Bishop of London, and asked him for a living in Maryland, to which he might retreat in case of an "accident".

In 1771 he was selected as the most suitable man to go to England on behalf of the Anglican Church and King's College. He sailed in the ship *Fox* on 13 October, and arrived at Dover on 11 November.

His mission included the putting forward of a request for the appointment of American bishops, support for a plan for educating and christianizing the American Indians, and the grant of a charter to change King's College into a great Royal American University to be endowed by the King, among other things. His mission largely failed, and after visits to relatives and friends, he left London on 24 July 1772. Though his return to New York was greeted with great enthusiasm, it was clear to Cooper that the storm clouds of the coming Revolution were gathering, and during the next few years he became the most hated loyalist in New York.

After the battles of Lexington and Concord, Cooper fled to the British warship *Kingfisher*, anchored in New York harbour in April 1775. Soon afterwards all seemed quiet on shore and he returned to his college duties, but about midnight on 10 May 1775 a New York mob bore down on the college and Cooper escaped in his night-clothes. He sailed for England in the ship *Exeter* on 25 May 1775.

He arrived home on 2 July and took up the Fellow-

ship of The Queen's College, to which he had been elected on 4 November 1766. He also held for a few months the curacy of St Mary's, Paddington, but learning that his Loyalist friend and fellow Cumbrian, the Rev. Jonathan Boucher, was almost destitute he resigned his curacy in his friend's favour at the end of 1775.

On 25 November 1777 Cooper was appointed senior minister of the Episcopal Chapel in Cowgate, Edinburgh, at a salary of £150 a year. Here he remained until his death. He enjoyed other preferments in England. From 19 October 1778 he held the Crown living of Neen Savage in Shropshire, and on 30 June 1781 he was inducted to the rectory of Cowley in Gloucestershire, another Crown living. On 18 September 1782 The Queen's College, Oxford, presented him to the living of Sulhamstead Abbots and Sulhamstead Bannister in Berkshire. He obtained a dispensation to hold the Gloucestershire and Berkshire livings in 1782. (Act Books, Archbishop of Canterbury, Index Library, lv 185.) At the same time he was re-instituted to Neen Savage, on 19 November 1782.

In his will (Appendix IV) he mentions another of his livings — Cleobury Mortimer in Shropshire — but strangely enough no record of his institution to this living can be found.

Cooper died in Edinburgh on 20 May 1785, and was buried, at his own request, in an unmarked grave in Restalrig churchyard.

Cooper was survived by his elder brother John, born in 1730. He had succeeded to Wha House in 1759, and it was there that his large family was born. He was a Major in the Cumberland Militia and appears to have been on friendly terms with Sir James Lowther, later first earl of Lonsdale. Mr Frank Warriner prints a letter from Major Cooper to Sir James in his *The Millom District* (1932) 49. This is dated 9 June 1771 and tells that ore has lately been discovered in Sir James's manor

of Thwaites, and it is thought the ore might be copper. The writer goes on to say that he once hinted to Sir James his desire to treat with him about mining royalties, and hopes to learn of Sir James' terms. Finally, if Sir James would like trials made, the writer is ready to carry them out.

Mr Vance says (p. 284) that Major Cooper became so involved financially during the war with the American colonies, that he was obliged to flee to Scotland to escape his creditors until he could sell the Wha House estate. This he did on 13 February 1784, the purchaser being John Robinson,⁵ of Ulverston, an attorney with a reputation for his sharp practices. The Major, who rebuilt Wha House and christened it Duddon Grove, died in France in 1788.

About 1790 the estate was acquired by Richard Towers, said to have been a cobbler's son from Ulverston, "who, having made money, wished to set up as a gentleman, but won notoriety by his ungentlemanly habit of beating his wife in public — once at Cartmel Races."⁶

Towers was, not unnaturally, unpopular in the district and fond of litigating against his neighbours. He was living at Duddon Grove in 1829.

Later the estate was inherited by the Rev. William Millers (son of Thomas Millers of Kendal), who married Margaret Towers, of Duke Street, Ulverston. Mr Millers, who was baptized at Kendal on 15 March 1767, went to Sedbergh School, and was a scholar of St John's College, Cambridge. In 1789 he was Senior Wrangler.

Some interesting facts about his marriage are contained in *The Diaries and Correspondence of James Losh* ii (ed. Edward Hughes, *Surtees Society* clxxiv). At page 71 Losh noted under the date 29 September 1828, when he was visiting Lancashire North of the Sands: "We saw Mr Millers whom I knew 44 or 45 years ago, a raw, bashful

⁵ Robinson also bought Beckfoot. See Article XXIII.

⁶ Information from Mrs J. C. Cooper, Towers acquired Beckfoot from Robinson.

lad at Sedbergh. After that he became a Cambridge Senior Wrangler, not certainly of the highest order, but still that is a situation not to be attained without considerable talents as well as great industry. He afterwards married an uneducated country girl who, by the death of some relations, got a fortune of £50,000 or £60,000, and he is now a kind of half parson and half squire, very little indeed of a literary person and his manners exhibiting a curious mixture of awkward shyness and conscious self-importance."

Millers died at Duddon Grove on 24 February 1843, and was succeeded by his only child, Frances Esther Millers, who, according to local tradition, was murdered by a maid, to whom she left money, and her ghost is said to haunt the grounds. Her death certificate, however, reveals that she died at Millom on 21 February 1847, aged 34, the cause of death being certified as "measels aneurism burst 3 hours".

The will of Miss Millers is dated 30 September 1846. She left to the ministers of Thwaites and Broughton-in-Furness and the owners of the estates of Duddon Grove, Ulpha, and Broadgate £2,000 to be invested, and directed that from the annual income the trustees should pay £30 a year to the schoolmistress of Buckman Brow School (whom they were to appoint), who was to occupy the schoolhouse rent free. She was to teach the girls sewing, reading, writing, arithmetic and the Church catechism. The girls were to be catechised by the minister in Thwaites Chapel on three successive Sundays each Michaelmas. They were to be taught to sing psalms by a properly qualified person, who was to receive a reasonable remuneration. The schoolmistress and girls who lived near the school, and who might attend school on Sundays were to go to Broughton or Thwaites Chapels once every Sunday morning, and were to attend school from 2 until 4, to be instructed in religious duties, sickness, inevitable accidents and unfavourable weather only excepted.

The trustees were to have complete discretion as to the manner of admitting girls and the numbers. The ages of the girls were to be not less than five and not more than sixteen. The trustees were to buy fuel for the schoolmistress, and fuel, books, paper, slates and pens for the school, and were to provide premiums or tokens to the girls for good conduct and behaviour and proficiency in learning. The residue of the estate she left to her "dear uncle, the Reverend George Millers of Ely", whom she appointed executor. The witnesses were Henry Remington and Mary Lewthwaite.

The will was proved in P.C.C. on 29 April 1847 by the Rev. George Millers, who also proved the will in the Archdeaconry of Richmond on 8 August 1849, when he swore that the testator's goods within the Archdeaconry were under £4,000.

The Rev. George Millers died in the College, Ely, in his 77th year, on 3 January 1852. His obituary in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (1852, i 310) says: "He was brother to the late Rev. William Millers . . . who left his only daughter a considerable fortune; she died, bequeathing estates in the North to her uncle, but he was too much attached to Ely to leave the place."

APPENDIX I.

Will of William Cooper 1677 (Archdeaconry of Richmond)

Nuncupative will of William Couper of Whoase, parish of Millom, yeoman, 28 April 1677 — my sons John and Leonard, my daughters Agnes and Elizabeth.

Proved 20 June 1677 and on 14 September 1678 tuition of Leonard and Elizabeth, children of William Couper, was granted to John Carter, Miles Wenington and Anthony Benson, all of Millom, yeomen.

APPENDIX II.

Will of John Cooper 1704 (Archdeaconry of Richmond)

In the name of God Amen the twenty eighth day of March

Anno domini 1704 I John Couper of Whoase in the parish of Millom and County of Cumberland yeoman being at present sick of body but of sound and perfect mind and memory praise be given to almighty God do make and ordain this my present last will and testament in manner and form following (that is to say)

First I commend my soul into the hands of almighty God hoping through the merits death and passion of my saviour Jesus Christ to have full and free pardon of all my sins and to inherit everlasting life and my body I commit to the earth to be decently buried at the discretion of my executors hereafter named

And as touching the disposition of all such temporal estate as it hath pleased almighty God to bestow upon me I give and dispose thereof as followeth

Imprimis I will that all my debts and funeral charges shall be paid and discharged by my executors hereafter named

Item I give and devise unto John Couper my eldest son all my freehold estates lands and tenements situate at the Whoase aforesaid in consideration which the said John Couper his heirs executors administrators or assigns shall pay or cause to be paid the just sum of one hundred pounds when he the said John Couper shall come to the age of twenty one years in manner and form following viz

Twenty pounds unto Mary Couper my eldest daughter unto Joyce Couper twenty pounds unto Elizabeth Couper twenty pounds unto William Couper my second son twenty pounds and unto Miles Couper my youngest son twenty pounds and provided any of the said five children shall die before they come to the age of twenty one years that then the survivors shall have and enjoy their part and proportion equally amongst the said survivors.

Item I give unto John Couper my aforesaid son one table and frame standing in the house at the Whoase aforesaid one pair of bedsteads standing in the chamber which I am now laying on and also my desk and plough gear and also the cupboard in the house after Bridget Couper my wife's decease

I give unto my eldest son John Couper aforesaid one shilling being a legacy in consideration of the rest of my personal estate

All the rest and residue of my personal estate as goods and chattels whatsoever I do give and bequeath unto Bridget Couper my loving wife and Mary Couper Joyce Couper Elizabeth

Couper William Couper and Miles Couper my aforesaid loving children which I do make full sole and joint executors of this my last will and testament

In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal the day and year first above written

John Couper

[Witnesses] John Wenington
John Fox
Robert Casson
Miles Wenington

Proved 17 October 1704

APPENDIX III.

Administration of goods of William Cooper 1760 (Archdeaconry of Richmond)

Administration of the goods of William Cooper of Whahoase parish of Millom, gent. was granted 16 March 1760 to son John Cooper of the same place, gent., the widow Elizabeth having renounced. Co-bondsmen James Postlethwat of Dalton in Furness, gent. and John Fox of Hallthwaite in Dalton in Furness, cooper.

APPENDIX IV.

Will of the Rev. Myles Cooper 1785 (P.C.C. Ducarel)

In the name of God Almighty and my Saviour Jesus Christ whose Minister I am and whose faithful Servant I hope to die I Myles Cooper LL.D. President of King's College New York Fellow of Queens College Oxon Rector of Cowley in Gloucestershire Vicar of Neen Savage in Shropshire and Senior Minister of the Episcopal Chapel in Edinburgh do make this my last will and testament this seventh day of May in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and seventy two [*sic* but should be 1782?] hereby bequeathing all my worldly substance in the manner following viz: in equal proportions to the children of my Brother Major John Cooper of the Cumberland Militia and of Whahouse in the same County esqr and the children of my deceased sister Esther Wenington late of the city of Carlisle or to such of my said nephews and nieces as shall be living at the time of my decease to be equally divided share and share alike among them all and I appoint my good Friends Sir William Forbes Banker in Edinburgh Bart. John Blackburn esqr of Bush Lane London and the Revd Thomas Dalton B D Fellow

of Queen's College Oxford trustees for carrying my above mentioned intentions into effect and execution hoping they will excuse the trouble which my opinion of their goodness and integrity induces me to give them on this solemn occasion

Myles Cooper

Edinbrugh [*sic*] May 7 1782

Memorandum I owe 40 or 50 pounds to Mr Danson taylor in London and about the same sum to John Tabor Kempe esqr Attorney General of New York the monies due to me are about one thousand pounds in the hands of Mr William Matthews merchant in Green Lettuce Lane London interest 5 per cent 2dly two hundred pounds in the names of John Penleaze esqr of King Street Cheapside interest the same 3dly near a thousand pounds of my Brother Major Cooper aforesaid with all the interest due upon the whole 4 six or seven hundred pounds in the hands of Sir William Forbes and Co Bankers in Edinb and Cumming and son of the same city and occupation 5 some money due due [*sic*] to me for my two livings Cleobury Mortimer in Shropshire and Cowley in Gloucestershire N.B. The MS sermons marked J W [?] at the end of each are to be given to the Reverend James Williamson of Chalbury Oxfordshire and those marked in the margin T P R N [?] to be disposed of with my other effects They are originals and capital performances worth at least 3 guineas a piece and fit for any congregation 70 $\frac{1}{2}$ in the hands of my nephew William Wennington my salary from New York all but 250 $\frac{1}{2}$ which has been remitted to me is not very likely to be recovered tho' it is justly due to me but all my affairs have been shattered to pieces by this abominable Rebellion which was principally owing to the Duke of Richmond Paddy Burk Rockingham that vain Fool and other such miscreants who now hold their good King in the most ignominious Bondage and I fear will attempt his life as they have already murdered his reputation.

30th September 1785 On which day appeared personally William Matthews of Green Lettuce Lane London and William Dodding Brown of Upper Ground [?] in the parish of Christ Church in the county of Surry gentleman and . . . made oath that they knew and were well acquainted with the Reverend Myles Cooper late of the city of Edinburgh Doctor of Laws deceased for several years before and to the time of his death which happened in the month of May last and that during such their knowledge of and acquaintance with him . . . they . . . have often seen him write and subscribe his name to writings and were and are thereby become well acquainted with his manner and

character of handwriting and subscription and having now carefully viewed and perused the paper writing hereunto annexed purporting to the [*sic*] last will and testament and codicil of the said deceased the said will beginning thus "In the name of God Almighty and my saviour Jesus Christ" ending thus "which my opinion of their goodness and integrity induces me to give them on this solemn occasion" and thus subscribed "Myles Cooper" the said codicil beginning thus "Memorandum I owe 40 or 50 pounds to Mr Danson taylor in London and about the same sum to John Tabor Kempe esqr Attorney General of New York" ending thus "as they have already murdered his reputation" they . . . do . . . depose and say that they do verily and in their consciences believe the whole body series and contents of the said will and codicil beginning and ending as aforesaid and the names "Myles Cooper" set and subscribed at the foot or bottom of the said will to be all of the proper handwriting and subscription of the said Myles Cooper the testator deceased Wm Matthews Wm D Brown. Same day the said William Matthews and William Dodding Brown were duly sworn to the truth of this affidavit before me Geo: Harris surrogate . . . Jas. Heseltine Not. Publ.

This will was proved at London with a codicil on the eighth day of October in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty five before the Worshipfull William Wynne . . . surrogate of the Right Worshipfull Peter Calvert . . . Master Keeper or Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury . . . by the oaths of John Blackburn esqr the Reverend Thomas Dalton Bachelor in Divinity two of the executors of the said will according to the tenor thereof they having been first sworn duly to administer power being reserved of making the like grant to Sir William Forbes Baronet the other executor according to the tenor of the said will when he shall apply for the same.

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COOPER of WHA HOUSE

M = Millom T = Thwaites

William Cooper of Whoase, Millom, Yeoman = Mary —
 bur. 17 May 1677 (M) bur. 21 Nov. 1661 (M)
 Will, nuncupative 28 April 1677, proved Archy of Richmond 20 June 1677

John Cooper of = Bridget Fox = (2) Jeffray Benson of Leonard Cooper. Agnes Elizabeth Mary
 Whoase, Yeoman. perhaps dau. of Edmund Fox of Waterbleane and bap. 28 April 1669 (M) m. 2 Nov. 1687 (M) m. 16 Feb. 1709/10 (M) bur. 23 Jan. 1728/9 (M) Presumably the Leonard who bought Beckfoot in 1704 see Art. XXIII. bur. 22 March 1674/5 (M)
 Will dated 28 March 1704, proved Archy of Richmond 17 Oct. 1704

John Cooper bur. 21 Dec. 1692 (M) bur. as of Whoase, bachelor, 23 May 1721 (M)
 William Cooper = Elizabeth [Dickson*?] bur. 8 Sept. 1778 (T)
 of Whahoase gentleman, bur. 17 Aug. 1759 (T) admon. 16 March 1760
 Miles bap. 5 Dec. 1703 (M) bur. 31 Jan. 1728/9 (M)
 Agnes bap. 20 Nov. 1690 (M) bur. 1 July 1700 (M)
 Mary living 1704
 Joyce = Myles Brockbank bap. 25 Feb. 1694/5 (M) m. 5 Feb. 1718/9 (M)
 Margaret bap. 29 July 1697 (M) bur. 1 June 1700 (M)
 Elizabeth living 1704

John Cooper major, Cumberland Militia of Wha House which he sold 1784. bap. 10 July 1731 (T) d. France
 Rev. Dr. Myles Cooper bap. 19 Feb. 1736/7 (T) President of King's College, New York, etc. d. 20 May 1785 unmarr.
 William Cooper merchant, Antigua bap. 29 July 1740 (T) d. 1770
 Bridget bur. 21 Feb. 1734/5 (T)
 Esther or Hester = Rev. Miles Wennington (1726-71) bap. 2 May 1730 (M) d. 1779 m. by lic. 20 June 1753 (T)

William Cooper bap. 24 June 1764 (T)
 John Mabell Cooper b. 14 Sept. 1765 bap. 17 Dec. 1765 (T)
 ? Elizabeth bap. 5 July 1768 (T)
 Miles Cooper bap. 6 June 1770 (T) d. Calcutta Oct. 1802
 Jane bap. 26 July 1772 (T) d. unmarr. c. 1796
 James Lowther Cooper bap. 22 June 1774 (T) d. on his passage home from India 27 July 1796
 Ann Margaret bap. 11 June 1776 (T)
 Augustus Cooper of General Howe's West India Regt. d. of yellow fever in Jamaica 14 Aug. 1796

* There is a Lancaster marriage bond 8 July 1728 for William Cooper, Yeoman and Elizabeth Dickson, spinster, both of Beckbank, parish of Millom.