

THE LIBRARY OF A FORFAR-SHIRE LAIRD IN 1710.

BOOKMEN of the present day are apt to regard the Scottish country gentleman of the early eighteenth century as one whose interests lay anywhere but in literature, and to imagine that he must have had enough to do improving his infertile acres, without indulging in any of the whims peculiar to the bibliophile.

This impression will, we think, be somewhat modified after a glance at the 'Catalogue of Books to be sold by Way of Auction at Dundee, the 20th of March, 1710,' part of which has been reprinted by Mr. Wedderburn, K.C., in 'The Wedderburn Book.' The books were those that belonged to the then deceased Sir Alexander Wedderburn, 2nd Baronet of Blackness, a son of Sir John, and a descendant of the illustrious brothers Wedderburn, of 'Gude and Godlie Bal-lates' fame. The Catalogue has the volumes arranged (after the old style) according to their sizes. There were 170 folios, 555 octavos, 148 quartos, and 86 duodecimos. Altogether there were more than 1,100 volumes, including treatises on theology, law, philosophy; histories, Greek and Latin classics, demonology, and witchcraft.

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In the matter of novels and the *belles lettres* the Baronet had evidently kept himself abreast of the times. Among his light literature were 'The Turkish Spy' (published in 1702), 'The Spanish Libertines' (translated by George Stevens in 1707), and 'A London Spye' (1706), by Edward Ward (who kept a tavern, and was pilloried for his satirical verses, 'Hudibras Redivivus,' and was lampooned in the works of Pope). These books are now well-nigh forgotten, and very rare.

The first edition of Jonathan Swift's 'Tale of a Tub,' published anonymously in 1704 (the price of which now fluctuates between £5 and £10) was another of the works of the time that found its way from London to Dundee, probably two or three years before the Union was an accomplished fact. The 'History of the Renowned Don Quixote,' in 4 vols., dated 1706—being the seventh English translation since 1612, and now worth about £2—was secured at the sale by the Laird of Auldbar for £9 12s. Scots (16s. stg.); while Mr. Martin, of Grange of Monifieth, obtained 'Montaigne's Essays made English by C. Cotton' (3 vols., 1693) for £2 Scots (3s. 4d. stg.).

As might have been expected, Shakespeare's Works found no place in the Laird's library, for Shakespeare had not then 'come to his own.' Milton's Works, Butler's 'Hudibras,' King James VI.'s Works, Bacon's 'Essays,' Hooker, Hobbes, Jeremy Taylor, and Locke were among the English classics that found their way from the sale to the libraries of other lairds in Dundee district.

We are not told who secured the copy of the

romantic, if not always reliable, Hector Boece's History (Paris edition, 1574), which realised £13 10s. Scots (or £1 2s. 6d. stg.), but the Laird of Powrie managed to get for £6 Scots (10s. stg.) Monsieur Rapin's 'Critical Works in 2 Vols. Englished by several hands'; Mr. John Hill paid £2 Scots (3s. 4d. stg.) for Dr. Duncan's 'Advice against the Abuse of Hot Liquors,' done from the French; and Innerichtie, another local savant, besides buying several Latin works on Demonology, showed his appreciation of English literature by carrying off for £1 17s. (Scots) 'Remarks upon Poetry,' by Thomas Blount (1694), 'an author,' according to Chalmers, the Scottish historian, 'in many ways not inferior to Montaigne.'

Parts i. and ii. of that epoch-marking book, 'Choice Collection of Scots Poems by several Hands'¹ (1706), which, according to literary historians, was precursor to the great flood of late eighteenth century ballads, were bought for 17s. by Robert Wedderburn, a brother of the deceased laird; while cousin Alexander, who, five years later, was to show active sympathy with the Stuart cause, chose three books, 'Manning's Life of the Emperor Theodosius,' 'A Lady's Letters of Travels into Spain,' Ainsworth on 'The Five Books of Moses, the Psalms, and the Song of Solomon,' a folio, published in 1639, at £1 7s. stg., said by Lowndes to be a 'laborious and useful work, containing a literal translation of all the books mentioned therein, as well as annotations upon

¹ The third part of this work was not published until 1711. The three parts are now worth about £4 4s.

them.' The commentator Henry Ainsworth was an English nonconformist, who, on account of his religious principles, was forced to live in Amsterdam, where he acted as minister to a congregation of 'Brownists,' or 'Independents' — the spiritual ancestors of the 'Congregationalists' of to-day. Ainsworth's reputation as a scholar of rabbinical and oriental literature is said to have been equalled by few in Europe of his time. He died in the city of his exile in 1622.

The top price was reached by the disposal for £60 Scots (£5 stg.) of the then newly translated 'Bayle's Historical and Critical Dictionary' — the published price of which was £3 3s. in London — a work which had been proscribed in France and in Holland on account of the author's heterodox opinions. At the present day one may pick up a copy for a few shillings. Almost as costly, and assuredly much more recondite, were the works, in six volumes, of the German Jesuit scholar, Athanasius Kircher, bearing the mystic titles, 'Oedipus Aegyptiacus,' 'Ars Magna Lucis,' and 'Sphinx Mystagoga,' which fetched £57 Scots (£4 15s. stg.). Another expensive purchase was the copy, in two volumes, of Plutarch's 'Lives,' 'by Several Hands,' at £49 10s. Scots (£4 2s. 6d. stg.), which indicated very clearly that the 'bidding' among the Scots lairds present at the sale was very keen. Altogether the sale realized £3,553 6s. 4d. Scots (nearly £300 stg.) — a very respectable sum in those days, when, in England, and still more in Scotland, the value of money was much higher than at the present time.

That the Baronet was no exception to the other

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Scots lairds of his day in his taste for reading is amply testified by some of the purchases already referred to, and by the fact that more than eighty purchasers at the sale were lairds in the neighbouring districts, and in Fife and Perthshire.

The presence of so many book-buyers from this class at that early period of the eighteenth century, and their evident interest in all kinds of literature, go far to explain the extraordinary activity and output which later decades of the same century were to witness in the prose writings of David Hume, Reid, Adam Smith, Robertson the historian, Smollett, and Boswell, and in the poetry of Thomson, Ramsay, Blair, Home, Hamilton of Bangour, Falconer, Beattie, and Bruce, till the Augustan Age of Scottish Literature culminated in the works of Ferguson and Robert Burns.

C. A. MALCOLM.