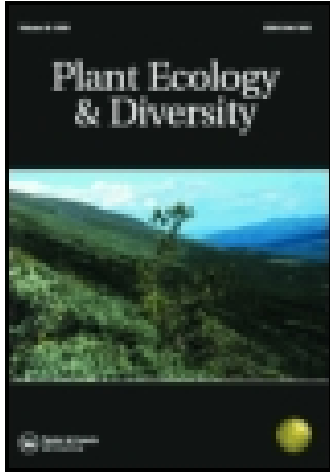


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PATRICK BLAIR, SURGEON APOTHECARY, DUNDEE. By Mr. ALEXANDER P. STEVENSON. Communicated by Professor BAYLEY BALFOUR, F.R.S.

When, on Friday, 25th January 1884, Professor Struthers, in the show-yard in East Dock Street, dissected the famous Tay whale, whose articulated skeleton now figures in the City Museum, I suspect very few knew or remembered that nearly two hundred years before another equally monstrous mammal underwent the same treatment, and its skeleton and counterfeit presentment figured in a Dundee "Hall of Rarities" of that period. I don't know that the pomp and ceremony of the one dissection could be compared with the other, for in the former case there had been some attempt made to make the dissection possible and so far easy, and, in the words of the veracious reporter of the *Dundee Advertiser*, "the band of the 1st Forfarshire Rifle Volunteers discoursed during the day airs of a lively and popular character, which undoubtedly rendered the proceedings less solemn than they might have been, and may have helped, as was remarked, 'to keep down the smell.'" In the other case, where the Dundee doctor and naturalist of whom I wish to tell you first comes to view, there was no arrangement of any kind; it was merely a fortunate accident, and his ready action and skilful hands and eyes, which made the dissection possible, and so it happened that "the first elephant dissected in Great Britain" was this Dundee specimen.

The story, I think, will prove interesting; many details are given in the communication made to the Royal Society of London by the anatomist "Mr. Patrick Blair, Surgeon Apothecary, Dundee, Scotland."

Robert Chambers, in his "Domestic Annals of Scotland," gives 1680 as the year when the first elephant was seen in Scotland, and quotes from a contemporary writer a very quaint description of the "great beast" which was shown through the country, and which formed the subject of some litigation, those who farmed it out refusing to pay the fee of £400, "as it did not fulfil all the owners promised it would do," to which they pleaded that it "could not drink every time it was shewn."

The elephant with which Dr. Blair had to do, had been exhibited over a large part of Europe, and ultimately found its way to these northern regions, and Dr. Blair in his paper heads a paragraph "HOW THE ELEPHANT FELL IN OUR WAY."

After some stay in Edinburgh, her keepers conducted her to the North, and on their return came along the sea-coast, but there being but few places on the road for making advantage, by long and hurried marches they came towards Dundee, and when they were within a mile of this place the poor animal, much fatigued and wearied, fell down. All their endeavours to get her on foot again proved ineffectual. What followed smacks of the wise men of Gotham. "They digg'd a deep Ditch, to whose Side she might lean till she were sufficiently rested; but that prov'd her Ruin; for shortly afterwards there fell great Rains, which filled the Ditch with Water. So that, after lying in the puddle a whole Day, she died next Morning, being *Saturday*, April 27th, 1706." When the keepers saw that she was dead, they came to the magistrates of the burgh, and having made oath that they had done her no designed injury, they got a certified attestation to that effect. The magistrate, Captain George Yeaman, then Bailie, afterwards Provost, and ultimately Member for Dundee in the United Parliament in London, was made a present of the "Cadaver" or carcase. Captain Yeaman went to see the dead animal, taking Dr. Blair with him "in order to have the Skin flea'd off, which," says the Doctor, "was his chief design, and the Body opened, which was mine. As I was very glad of the Opportunity, so was I concern'd because of the disadvantage I was at, which kept me from prosecuting what I design'd: For there went out a great Multitude, the Day was very hot, and being the last Day of the Week the Subject could admit of no delay, especially since it lay in the high Way and open Fields; so that I scarce had any convenience to pry into, or see anything of moment, much less to enquire nicely into the Structure of Parts, as the Subject required." And then the unwieldy hands of the "unruly Butchers" were making sad havoc in their progress of opening the animal, and, "whether I would or not, they did so slash the *Sternum* and mangle several of the *Cartilages*, as to render them useless, cutting and tearing wheresoever

their clumsy hands came." Left to himself, he had not much above an hour to dissect the subject when light failed, and all the time he had to work as best he could "amidst a Throng and Rabble," and "in mighty hot weather." Night fell and Sunday intervened, wherein no anatomist might work, at least in the open, and on Monday the "mighty hot weather" had made itself apparent on the cadaver, and some of the parts had been carried away by the country people; however, thanks to the pains and care of Provost Yeaman, these parts were afterwards recovered, and ultimately Dr. Blair managed to elaborate, from the material he secured, an exhaustive paper, which, entitled "Osteographia Elephantina," with four large copperplates, filled over a hundred pages of the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society for 1710. The article was published in a separate form in 1713, largely due to the fact that papers on the minute anatomy of the hair and skin of the same elephant were being read to the Society by Leeuwenhoek, the famous optician and microscopist. These sections had been secured by him when the animal was being exhibited in Holland: Dr. Blair, then M.D. and F.R.S., dedicates the book to Dr. John Arbuthnot. His plates, he says, "might have been finer done in London; but since I had the Original by me, whereby I was able from time to time to correct in the Engraving what Errors happened in drawing the Figures, I rather chose to have them done in Dundee." The four plates bear that they are done at the expense of Patrick Blair, and that the engraver was Gilb. Oram. Taodunensis. Before leaving this part of the subject, it may be sufficient to say that Dr. T. Thomson, in his history of the Royal Society, speaks of Blair's paper as "a most surprising one. If we consider that all his observations were made from one animal, we must admit his exertions must have been uncommon and his address great to have made his account so minute as it is," while the author of a paper on the elephant in the "Transactions" in the early years of the nineteenth century mentions Blair's account as "wonderfully accurate."¹

¹ I have lately learned that Professor Boas, Copenhagen, who is at work on a monograph on the anatomy of the elephant, thinks very highly of Blair's work, and has pointed out that certain points of anatomical structure were more correctly stated in his paper than by any observer who has written since.

Dr. Blair, however, was not like "Single-speech Hamilton"; he did other work which is worth noting, and had a life history full of interest. As a physician, as a botanist, and as a man, his is a personality which deserves to be better known. It is frequently stated he was born in Dundee. That is very probable, but I cannot say so definitely, nor fix the date of his birth. Maclaren, in his edition of Thomson's "History of Dundee," says he was born about 1680—on what authority he does not state; but as Blair in 1717 speaks of having been in practice for twenty-eight years—that is, from 1689,—he must have been born many years previous to the date given by Maclaren. His family was connected with Dundee, and in 1625 a namesake, also a medical man, was made an honorary Burgess of Dundee for "meritorious service to the Commonweal"; probably enough for doing his duty in one of those epidemics which devastated some of our towns in the good old times. Our Patrick Blair says in one of his books—and the passage is worth quoting, both for its reference to his family and the illustration it gives of his botanical methods—"I have known the *Vicia dumetorum multiflora flore albo* continue in the same spot, at Glesclune, in Perthshire, my brother's estate, a good many years. I found the *Artemisia flore albo* at Lethindy, my Father's Estate, near to the former, had it cultivated in a Garden, and it never altered. I found *Anagallis aquat. S. Becabungae off.* with a white flower near Perth, had it cultivated in several Gardens, and it still continued the same. I found only one stalk of the *Campanula pratensis flore conglomerato albo*, among a great many others, from a dark purple to this pure white, growing at Maidlengare, now Magdalen Green—*garre*, from old Saxon *garth* or meadow—near Dundee, in great abundance, propagated it in my own and several other Gardens, and it never vary'd." (His point was that the white flowered varieties are "real species," "they never degenerate or vary, as the finest Flowers in Gardens do.") Where he got his training I have not been able as yet to ascertain. He is familiar with Edinburgh men whom we know to have been Leyden graduates, and a search I made in the list of English-speaking graduates at Leyden shows a Patrick Blair, but at the date given (1734) Dr Blair was dead.

In an account he gives of a case of poisoning at Peasehill, in

Fife, opposite Dundee, in 1694, when "there was a great famine in Scotland, so that the poor People gathered what kind of green Herbs they could get and made a green Broth, sprinkling some Oatmeal amongst them, the Farmer's family used the *Cynoglossum maritimum procumbens* (which is found plentifully as you go to Naughton, among the dry pebbly or channelly Sand)," taking it for Colewort, with disastrous consequences. He says this was reported to him, as he "was then in the Low Countries for my further Improvement in my Profession."

He details surgical cases with which he had to do in Flanders in 1695 and 1697, the results of fighting, duelling, and accidents; and in his botanical reminiscences, he speaks of this or that plant having been seen by him growing profusely near Ghent, in Flanders, or near Vilvorde, in Brabant, and at other places. His intimate acquaintance with the work of Continental botanists would also seem to indicate that his wander years abroad had been somewhat prolonged. In 1706, as we have seen, he is in Dundee; but from the position he then held it would be safe to assume that he had been some considerable time in practice.¹ In a poisoning case, he was asked by the magistrates to open the body, and, with other physicians in town, was *subpœnaed* to the trial in Edinburgh. I have tried to find the date of this case, and of the trial, but have failed; it would be subsequent to 1702, however. It forms the substance of a letter Blair wrote to Dr. Richard Mead, in which he indicates how useful Mead's book on the "Mechanical Action of Poisons" had been. The death was caused by arsenical poisoning, and the methods

¹ Bower, in his "History of the University of Edinburgh," referring to Blair as an "eminent philosopher who has been most unaccountably neglected in Scotland," proves that he was settled in Dundee in 1701. He quotes an advertisement from the "Edinburgh Gazette," of 29th September of that year, in which Mr. Blair, who designates himself "surgeon-apothecary in Dundee," proposes to publish a "*Manuductio ad Anatomiam*, or a plain and easy method of dissecting, preparing, and preserving all the parts of the body of man, either for public demonstration or the satisfaction of private curiosity." The work was then ready for the press, and, upon suitable encouragement, would shortly be published. I suspect the encouragement was not forthcoming, and consequently the work never reached the press or the public. Writing to Petiver, of date 8th February 1709, Dr. Blair mentions the work as one of several treatises that he has by him, "which in time I design to expose to (the) publick." Sloane, MSS. 3321.

which nowadays can actually collect the arsenic used on the tissues being then unknown, the medical men had to rely upon the fact that the conditions the post-mortem revealed were those which followed the action of arsenic, and they appealed to Dr. Mead's book as justifying their statements, and the judge accepted their finding.

Next we find Dr. Blair in correspondence with Sir Hans Sloane, interested in his collections and the Royal Society, of which at that time Sloane was secretary. Then came the episode of the elephant, and a correspondence with Sloane's friend and co-worker, the apothecary, naturalist, and collector, Mr. James Petiver. These were the days when earth and sea, at home and abroad, were being searched for their natural history productions of every kind, the outcome of which, so far as the plant world was concerned, was the Method or Classification that would arrange, co-relate, or identify the finds, and which, through Morison the Scotsman, Ray the Englishman, and Tournefort the Frenchman, led up to the great system of Linnæus. Blair preferred Tournefort to Ray, but admired the Aberdonian Morison still more. He preferred Morison, writes a friend, somewhat caustically, "with more nationality than judgment." We have seen how the elephant was dissected and the account sent on to Sloane for the information of the Royal Society. This also led to the formation of a Natural History Society in Dundee. Blair engaged the "interest of several honourable and learned Gentlemen in the Neighbourhood, and the Physicians and Surgeons in Dundee, to use all means for Improvement in the Natural History." They erected a public hall, at their own private charges, to hold their collections, with which, writing to Petiver, July 26th, 1708, he says they have come a good length, and had established a Physic Garden, whereof he was overseer. In this hall was stored the stuffed skin and the mounted skeleton of the elephant.¹

Some paragraphs in the "St. Andrews University Bulletin," quoting from the University minutes, show the doctor was in request for his skill as a working naturalist.

¹ Blair, when sending Petiver "an guinea for the treatise you design, whereof in your last,"⁵ asked him to "design me in the subscriptions, Fellow of the Society for natural improvements of Dundee." (Sloane, MSS. 3321).

LIBRARY BULLETIN OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. ANDREWS.

No. 7.

July 1902.

Vol. I.

(THE STORY OF A SKELETON.)

Library Annals.

1707, *Jan.* 30. The University being met, appointed Mr Scrimmour (the receiver of the Library money) to give four dollars of the Library money to the Rector, to be given by him to Mr Arnot, chirurgion, for his assisting at the dissection, and an extract of this shall be his warrant.

University Minutes, vol. ii. p. 151.

1707, *Feb.* 17. The University appointed Mr Scrimmour to advance, out of the Library money, six fourteins shilling pieces, for transporting the bones of the scellet to Dundee.

University Minutes, vol. ii. p. 152.

1707, *May* 22. The University being met, and it being propos'd that Mr. Blair, having now brought over the sceleton, should be pay'd for the same, which was judg'd reasonable, and therefor they appointed Mr. Alexander Scrimmour, Library Questor, to advance ane hundred merks Scots out of the Library money for the said Mr. Blair, his pains and expences for making the said skeleton and bringing it over, and three pounds Scots to his servant of drink money, and to give out two pounds sixteen shillings Scots upon incidental expences, and this act to be his warrant.

University Minutes, vol. ii. p. 156.

Mr. Maitland Anderson, the St. Andrews University Librarian, who drew my attention to this incident, said his impression was the "sceleton" was still in the University; but Dr. Jas. Tosh, of the Natural History Department, assures me he can find no trace of it, which perhaps is not surprising, seeing the bigger preparation has disappeared, not to speak of the "Hall of Rarities" itself. In the account of the town of Dundee, prepared by Dr. Robert Small, the parish minister in 1792, for Sinclair's "Statistical Account of Scotland," it is stated that the skeleton was in existence a few years before, but all search for it has been fruitless. In 1825 a letter of inquiry appeared in the "Dundee Advertiser," but practically there was no answer. except that someone had heard that some proverbially thrifty townsman had had the bones ground down

to make a top dressing for some of the fields in Strathmore, and so the "poor beast" of Blair's narrative got back to earth again. The Physic Garden also has vanished; no trace of it can be found, unless it be that some of the plants which Dr. Blair told Petiver he required—and most probably got—as they were not to be had in this neighbourhood, are the progenitors of those which now are come across in and around Dundee.¹ This loss of the Garden is a pity, for, as Professor Bayley Balfour writes me, "The interest in the Dundee Garden lies in this, that it would be one of the earliest founded in Britain. Oxford is first, then Edinburgh (1670), next would come Dundee." Other papers, anatomical, botanical, and surgical, were contributed to the Royal Society by Blair, and in 1712 he was elected an F.R.S., an honour he ever highly esteemed, and tried, by his natural history work, especially botanical, to maintain. In the many letters which passed between Petiver and himself, and which now form part of the Sloane MSS. in the British Museum, the Doctor is a very interesting and likeable figure. Concerned about some botanical and pharmaceutical MSS. of his which are in Sloane's hands, which he (Sloane) seems to think highly of, and which have had the approbation of Dr. George Preston, Professor of Botany, at Edinburgh, "will they likely be taken up by the publishers?" Unfortunately, Mr. Ray's books were a glut in the market, and no bookseller would look at other books in Latin on Botany. It was disheartening, and Mr. Petiver's suggestion that they should

¹ By the formation of Whitehall Street in 1883, an early residential part of Dundee was largely destroyed. In this closely packed block of buildings, extending from Crichton Street on the east to Coultie's Wynd on the west, many of the leading families of the town had their residences in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Cloves intersected the block, passing down from Nethergate to Fish Street. Sometimes the pathway was open to the sky; at others the way led through dark arched passages under the houses. In Scott's Close there was a low-roofed passage some 40 feet long. Covering half the length of this was a cross house of one storey, while over the rest of the passage was an open space which at one time had been a garden. "The ground for this overhead garden had been rich loam for the cultivation of flowers, although latterly it became merely a trodden platform" (Lamb's "Old Dundee"). The Dr. Patrick Blair of 1625 (see *ante*, p. 264) possessed property in this quarter, and it is possible that *here* was the "physic-garden" of his descendant. Only an enthusiast like the later surgeon-apothecary would have been at the pains to make use of so unlikely a site.

be Englished was worth considering ; but there was no English terminology as yet to take the place of the Latin. And then there was this pupil and that friend come to London whom "dear Mr. Petiver" was asked to be of service to. One youth "had an impediment in his speech, but was otherwise very knowing in the apothecary art," was on his way to Jamaica ; " would Mr. Petiver (who also was an apothecary) try and recommend him to a shop to keep him from being idle till he can have passage." Mr. Lyon, by the way, got passage, but had the misfortune to be taken prisoner on his voyage to Jamaica and carried into France, and a year later he is back at Mr. Petiver's and still set on going to the West Indies.

Again, Mr. James Dundas bears a letter to Petiver, a special friend of the Doctor's, " whose particular study is the mathematics, wherein he has attained to such a degree of knowledge that he has acquired a great esteem in these parts"; would Mr. Petiver give himself the trouble to introduce Mr. Dundas to such as he thinks would be useful to him in that science? Mr. Dundas will tell him all about the Garden, which has now been in existence for three seasons.

He tells how Dr. Wm. Raitt, a neighbour, had recently called on Tournefort, and from what he had told him he, Dr. B., was not surprised to hear of Tournefort's death ; it was, however, " a general loss to the vegetable kingdom." The letters are mostly dated from Dundee, although occasionally, in 1711 and 1712, " Coupar-in-Angus" appears, and then the desire grows to have a personal knowledge of Sloane and Petiver, " although the loss to his business here for such a time and the charge of the journey are two great impediments." Still, he thinks the seeing and communing with his friends would " abundantly compensate that, because I may acquaint you with a great many things that paper will not bear."

The journey was made, but there is no information given as to how the distance was covered, whether by ship from Dundee or Leith, as his specimens and drugs came or went, or by that coach which in October 1712 began to run between Edinburgh and London, performing the journey, as the advertisement states, " in thirteen days without any stoppage (if God permits), having eighty able horses to

perform the whole journey, each passenger paying £4, 10s., allowing each passenger 20 lbs. of luggage; all above, 6d. per lb. The coach sets off at six o'clock in the morning."

Dr. Blair proposed leaving Dundee in February or March 1713, but I have come across no account of his stay in London, nor the meeting of the friends, although no doubt there would be pleasant times—the London botanists made the most of their "herborisings." Petiver, for example, writes to a kindred spirit, giving a description of one of their outings, and tells that when they reached Winchelsea they were entertained at the Mayor's house, and the place not affording any wine, they were regaled with excellent punch made by the Mayoress, "every bowl of which was better than the former one" (Sloane MSS. 344, p. 279).

In a letter dated Birmingham, October 9th, 1713, Dr. Blair gives his "kind landlord and special friend" Petiver some news as to his homeward journey. He had been at Oxford and saw Bobart, who had charge of the Botanic Garden there, and as Bobart was also a believer in Morison,¹ and ultimately worked out and completed the system of classification which Morison's accidental death prevented, there would be some congenial talk. He saw the Ashmolean Museum, "but was so surfeited in his appetite after seeing Sloane's and Petiver's collections, that he had no extraordinary relish for it, though there be abundance to satiate an hungry stomach." He went to Lichfield to see Sir John Floyer, the medical man who is perhaps best known from the fact that by his advice young Samuel Johnson was sent to be touched by Queen Anne for scrofula—King's Evil. They discoursed upon several parts of the practice of medicine, particularly the cold bathing, as to the virtues of which the two were agreed. Blair related an experience of his own, which Floyer passed on to another medico, and which later on appeared in print, somewhat different from the original tale. In one of his memoirs Dr. Blair gives his original version, which is worth repeating here, from its local connection, as a sample of the narrator's style, and as an illustration of how they did things in this city of ours two hundred years ago. I may premise that in the paper

¹ "He (Bobart) is as biggot on Morison's Method as you are upon Ray's."

from which I quote there is a good deal of sensible and clear writing apart from the "case" given.

"There was a Man so raving Mad, that he was bound in Fetters; having first tried all Evacuations usual in such Cases, together with Opiates in great Quantity, but to no purpose, I at length plung'd him *ex improviso* into a great Vessel of Cold Water, and at the same time throwing with great Violence Ten or Twelve Pails full of Cold Water on his Head; but that not succeeding, the next Day, having the Conveniency of a Fall of Water about half a Mile off, I caus'd him to be placed in a Cart, and strip'd from his Cloathes; and, being blindfolded, that the Surprise might be the greater, there was let fall on a sudden a great Fall or Rush of Water, about 20 Foot high,¹ under which he was continued so long as his Strength would well permit: This succeeded so well, that after his return home he fell into a deep Sleep for the Space of 29 Hours, and awaken'd in as quiet and serene a State of *Mind* as ever, and so continues to this Day, it being now about 12 Months Since." Later on in the paper, the Doctor rather naively admits that "in some hypochondriac and paralytic Cases, I have not found it—the bathing—succeed so well."—Letter I., Misc. Obs.

When Dr. Blair visited London again, he went under very different conditions, and his next meeting with his friends Sloane and Petiver was within the walls of Newgate Prison. My friend Professor Balfour wrote once of that "arch-Jacobite Blair,"² but I do not think there is quite sufficient justification for this expression. Undoubtedly Blair was familiar with many who were strongly attached to the Stuart cause. His friends and correspondents included Dr. Arthur, who, in 1715, was mixed up in the attempt to capture Edinburgh Castle for the Jacobite cause. Dr. Archibald Pitcairne was known to him, and they had consultations together over some special patients. His friend Lord Colville (of Ochiltree), to whom he refers as drawing his attention to certain plants,—“a learned and curious nobleman, skilled in music, and well versed in botany and other parts of the natural history,”—was one of the steady opponents of the Union of 1707 in the Scots Parliament, and, according to Defoe's History, his name was invariably among the "Noes." Dr. Blair was sufficiently

¹ I am inclined to think this must have been the Dens' Burn, now enclosed in the extensive works of Messrs. Baxter Bros., Ltd.

² "Scottish Notes and Queries," November 1904, p. 77.

acquainted with the Earl of Mar to ask Mr. Petiver to call upon him. He tells him that the Earl "was a most curious person," and would readily become a subscriber to his "Gazophylacium." And further, Blair's father, his brother, and, later on, his nephew, were all Stuart partisans, and both in 1715 and 1745 suffered for the cause, being amongst those excluded from the Act of Amnesty. The Doctor, perhaps, had other objects in view than sight-seeing and converse with medical men and botanists in that protracted journey of his back from London. That may be, though I doubt it. Certain it is, his next appearance in London is as prisoner in Newgate. In the "Registrum de Panmure" an account is given of the Battle of Sheriffmuir, and the rescue of the Earl of Panmure, who was wounded, and had fallen into the hands of the Hanoverian troops. In the stirring story of this rescue, we learn that the Earl's brother, Harry Maule of Kelly, was assisted by a Dr. Blair, who, both by Jervise and A. C. Lamb in "Old Dundee," has been identified with the Naturalist, and it was always a puzzle to me how Dr. Blair, if he was at Sheriffmuir, and accompanied Panmure abroad, yet could about the same time be a prisoner in Newgate. The Stuart papers in the King's collection at Windsor, published some time since in the Hist. MSS. Com. Reports, drew my attention to the fact that there was a Dr. *John* Blair—probably also a Dundee man—who was active in the cause, and to whom a commission was given as "Physician to the King" (James VIII.). I got on the track of Dr. *Patrick* Blair when I found among the list of the officers of Lord Nairn's battalion who surrendered at Preston, "Patrick Blair, Chirurgeon." As the surrender took place on the same day Sheriffmuir was fought (November 13th, 1715), it was evident the Dr. Blair of the rescue must be another person. From Preston the prisoners were removed to London, the journey being made in severe and wintry weather, and extending from 3rd November to 9th December. It was made on horseback, the prisoners marching between troopers, with hands and arms pinioned. On their arrival in London the numbers were so large that they had to be distributed to various London prisons until they could be brought to trial. Blair was placed in Newgate, and his trial took place on March 31st,

1716. He pled "guilty," and, like his companions, was sentenced to death. Many of his fellow-prisoners emitted the same plea. It was their best hope. By pleading guilty there was a chance of pardon; whereas in the case of a conviction on evidence, clemency was less likely to be had. In Newgate, Blair was visited by his friends Sloane and Petiver. Sloane was a person in favour at Court, and his services were in request to secure Blair's pardon.

In a statement prepared for Sloane's use, Dr. Blair says that "he was in no respect accessory to the late troubles, but happening to reside near the parts in which the rebellion broke out, the gentry forced him to accompany the army as a medical attendant" (Sloane MSS. 4038). There seems to have been considerable delay in securing the pardon. Letters passed between Blair and Petiver, in which the Doctor inclines to think Sloane was indifferent to his fate, and somewhat tardy in his actions, and certainly the official intimation came under rather dramatic circumstances. On the evening of the day preceding the date fixed for his execution, some friends, at his request, came to see and spend the evening with him. Still no word of the pardon was forthcoming. Petiver, in a letter to Sloane, tells the story. "The Doctor," he said, "sat pretty quietly till the clock struck *nine*, and then he got up and walked about the room; at *ten* he quickened his pace; and at *twelve*, no reprieve coming, he cried out, 'By my troth, this is carrying the jest too far.'" The reprieve, however, came soon after, and in due time the official pardon.

Dr. Blair, as may well be supposed, found himself stranded in London when set at liberty. He need not return to Dundee; his business there would be quite gone. Presumably his friends there, whose support was the chief reason of his joining the division led by Brigadier Mackintosh into England, were all scattered. Dundee was strongly Jacobite; so much so that when Argyll reached the town after Sheriffmuir, he found it necessary to appoint new magistrates and town-clerk, all the town's officials having thought it their safest plan to leave the neighbourhood. Blair's friends and admirers in the Royal Society, no doubt, did what they could, and his Scots fellow-countrymen encouraged him to start practice in London. He resumed his acquaintance, among others, with Alex. Geekie, "surgeon

and citizen of London," who left his library to his native village of Kettins, and "mortified" such sums, that pupils of that village school are still receiving the benefit of this kindly remembrance of the donor's home at Baldowrie. In a short time Blair became intimate with the most active botanists of the time, and joined them in their herborisings. He gathered together a collection of his "Observations in Physick, Anatomy, Surgery, and Botanicks," which was published in 1718. A "Discourse on the Sexes of Plants," which he read before the Royal Society, gave such an exhaustive and experimental demonstration on this subject, that he was induced to amplify his matter and publish a volume on this, and on the common physiology of plants and animals. This work—"Botanick Essays"—published in 1720, is the one by which he is best known. It strengthened the arguments in proof of the sexes of plants by sound reasoning, and some new and striking experiments.

But all this time he was finding the struggle for existence very severe. He writes Sloane in 1719 that he "was nearly ruined," and ultimately he was forced to consider the question of retiring to some country place, where he might live a quieter life, and have more opportunity of securing a reasonable livelihood for himself and his family. In April 1720 he removed to Boston in Lincolnshire, and here he remained till his death, and from which his last work was issued in decads or sections, and this, practically, was the English version of the work he had started upon when in Dundee. Previous to his leaving London, however, in August 1719, as Dr. John Martyn carefully records, he came across a young man, the son of a London merchant, and at that time occupied in his father's counting-house in the city, but whose tastes lay strongly towards botany and natural history. This led to an intimacy between the old man and the young inquirer which is one of the most cheering episodes in Blair's life. He always had, as I said before, an interest in the young men who were his pupils, and now this "agreeable sweet youth" of twenty quite captivated the heart of the older man. All his wide knowledge was at the young man's disposal; they "herborised" together while he was yet in London, and after his removal to Boston an uninterrupted correspondence was maintained between them till Blair's death.

They found that they had both been working upon a "new method" by which to classify plants, founded upon "the seed-leaves"—cotyledons, we now call them. Blair tells his friend all he knew, the experiments he hopes to make in the spring. A reference by Martyn to some observations of Cæsalpinus (d. 1603), "giving the first hint of the circulation of the blood, upon which Harvey afterwards so handsomely enlarged," leads the Doctor to write, "that this has frequently been seen in a great many discoveries made within these three hundred years in Natural History, where the hints have been given by one, enlarged by another, discovered by the third, and still greater improvements made by the fourth"; and then he goes on to show how previous vegetable anatomists had given hints as to the "sexes of plants," "but Dr. Nehemiah Grew was he who made the full discovery." Their own experiments on this subject are then discussed, and he advises that the *Lychnis* tribe be "strictly examined by you and all your other acquaintances." This letter, he says, is the first he has "written in his newly formed greenhouse," which, in its way, was used as his laboratory, much as that still more famous greenhouse at Down, in Kent.

I do not know what practice or income Dr. Blair made for himself in Boston. He writes hopefully, and apparently he had no desire to follow the example of his friend Dr. Arbuthnot, to whom he dedicated his book on the Elephant. Arbuthnot worked away for a time at Dorchester, until one fine morning he mounted his horse and left the place in sheer disgust. "No one would die there," he said, "and he could not live in it." Blair did, however, live in Boston, and evidently made the most of it. The flats of Lincolnshire, its sands and seashore, reminded him of the other "Holland" of his earlier years; the teeming bird-life of fen and shore gratified his love for ornithology, and gave him opportunity to add to his young friend Martyn's collection. And it is not the least pleasant aspect of those later days of Dr. Blair's that his regard for this "amiable youth" was as sincerely returned; Martyn, amongst other services to his friend, revising Blair's proofs for his London printers.

Dr. Blair had high hopes of the work Martyn would do. "If you live to see the number of years I have done," he wrote him, "I rejoice at the thought of your own contributions to

the advancement" of the science they both loved so well. Dr. Blair's intuitions and hopes were well founded. John Martyn lived to be the first Professor of Botany at Cambridge, and spent a long and active life in the interests of his science. He never forgot his helpful, admiring Scots friend, and always insisted that Dr. Blair "was his preceptor in Botany, and the most intimate friend of his early years." It is worth remembering that this Dundee doctor thus helped to inspire the good work which Cambridge has done for Botany, and which is associated with the names of the Martyns (father and son holding the chair between them for ninety-two years), Henslow and Babington.¹

The "Pharmaco-Botanologia, an Alphabetical and Classical Dissertation on all the *British* Indigenous and Garden Plants of the New *London* Dispensatory," Blair's last work, was published in decads, and passed through the press from 1723 to 1728. In his preface he tells the story of its origin. "Being obliged to give Botanical Lectures (at Dundee) to some Students in Physic and Pharmacy, then under my Care, I first planted the Dispensatory Plants alphabetically in my Garden, and then dictated a History of them in Latin." The efforts to publish the work I have already referred to, and this, as I have said, is practically an Englished version of it. Referring to his lectures to the Royal Society on the sexes of plants, etc., he says that "now being retired to a Country Place, I have proposed to employ my leisure Hours in discoursing on the Practical, as formerly I did on the Theoretical part of the Indigenous and Home-bred Vegetables." "Yet"—careful Scotsman as he was—"not to withdraw myself from the Exercise of my Profession in too close a Pursuit of a prolix Subject," he "propos'd to parcel out a few Plants at a time," to give his reader "Time to Ruminare upon one Part while I am preparing another for his Entertainment." His reader, he goes on, "will soon see no ostentatious Affectation, no vainglorious Itching to be an Author, has prompted me to publish a Work upon a Subject of this Nature; I plead not the Desire and Solicitations of Friends; what I have most in my View, is, to manifest the Glory of God and his Omnipotence

¹ The record of the Chair of Botany at Cambridge is surely unique:—

John Martyn, 1733-1761		J. S. Henslow, 1825-1861
Thomas Martyn, 1761-1825		C. C. Babington, 1861-1895

in endowing Man with a rational Faculty to discern these wonderful Productions of his divine Wisdom, and his providential Care over Man ; who, as he has since the Fall been liable to such Infirmities as the Weakness of his Nature, the Mismanagement of himself in this lapsed State, or perhaps vicious Inclinations or his immoderate Debaucheries have brought upon him, and made him subject to divers Diseases, and various Tortures, Torments, and bodily Pains and Afflictions ; so he has provided such a vast Variety of Remedies, always, almost in his View, which applied in a regular Manner, by knowing and well skilled Persons, are capable, if not to Cure, at least to lighten a burdensome and heavy Load of Sickness, and assuage the Vehemency of his Pains. Nor is the Providence of God less observable in providing to every Climate the fit Antidotes to remove the Epidemical Infections the Inhabitants of such a Soil or Climate are most obnoxious to," a pregnant instance of which, he says, was to be seen in his first decad, where *Artemisia* is treated. "Such a potent Febrifuge as Wormwood abounds in a place where Agues and Fevers are so Epidemical." One may smile at some parts of Dr. Blair's confession of his faith and practice, but at least it is a not unworthy one. Neither is his desire to advance the knowledge of Botany. "I must adapt my Discourse to those of the meanest Capacity, and convert the Technical Words or Botanical Terms of Art into such English as may be easily understood, otherwise I could do no Service, because I am sensible the expressing them in the Original Greek or Latin is one of the Reasons why Botany has hitherto been so long neglected by those whose Business it is to know it ; and I rather chuse to render so delightful a Science so easy, that it may be universally known, than that it should remain as a hidden Treasure in the Hands of a very few. So that my principal Business must be . . . to allure the Reader and stir him up into a desire of diving more deeply into it."

The work did not come out monthly as anticipated. but at irregular intervals, and ceased altogether in 1728, when the letter H had been reached. The usually accepted explanation was, that the stoppage was due to the author's death. The supposition was correct. A document I had the good fortune to come across in the Register House,

Edinburgh, records his death at Boston in February 1727— or, as we should say, February 1728, for at this time the legal year did not begin till March,—January and February forming the closing months of the year, coming naturally after the ninth and tenth months—November and December. His death must have been somewhat sudden; there is evidence that he was in London in December 1727, arranging for the issue of a new edition of his “Miscellaneous Observations.”

Some day I am hopeful I may obtain further information as to his later years, but meantime this sketch may draw attention to the little known life of this interesting and attractive Dundee doctor and naturalist of two hundred years ago