

OLD SCOTTISH BURGHAL LIFE :

Illustrated from Kirkcudbright
Records.

BY W. DICKIE.

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I propose to place before you extracts from the earliest extant records of the Town Council of the royal burgh of Kirkcudbright. These are selected from a manuscript volume of minutes of proceedings covering the period from 1576 to 1682.

First I shall deal with the Constitution and Functions of the Council itself.

CONSTITUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL.

Even at a much more remote date than that with which we here start there had been a wonderful development of representative institutions in the towns of Scotland. The earliest existing charters to royal burghs, belonging to the eleventh and twelfth centuries, confer the right of electing councillors and magistrates upon the "hail communitie." To this phrase Mr Cosmo Innes has attached the restricted interpretation—"the whole body of qualified burgesses;" but the popular franchise, whether it were as broad-based as the language of the charters indicates or narrowed to the circle of burgesses, was superseded in the fifteenth century by a system of nomination, known as that of the close corporations. The change was brought about by Act of Parliament; and the particular mode of appointment in use during the period with which we are concerned was regulated by an Act of the Convention of Burghs passed in the year 1552. That Act directs that the "and Council" shall choose the new on the Wednesday before the feast of Michaelmas (29th September); that the two bodies shall meet jointly on the

next Friday to choose leets of candidates for the various offices of Provost, Bailies, Treasurer, and Dean of Guild; and that on the Tuesday following Michaelmas, the old Council and its child, the new, shall again convene, having this time associated with them the Deacons of Crafts, to make the final election from the leets thus drawn up. In the case of Kirkcudbright, however, there were no Deacons of Crafts until 1681, when the trades were first incorporated.

The first of the Kirkcudbright minutes is of date 3d October, 1576, and is a record of "the chesing of the office men." This is the first: "The qlk day Robert M'Clellane is chosin dene for ane yeir, and sworne." Entries in identical terms follow with reference to other appointments in the order given, viz.:

Herbert Gledstanis and Jon Meckill,
bailies.

Thomas Andersoun, clerk.

Johnne Crauford and three other "offi-
ciaris."

Thomas M'Clellane of Bomby, Provost.

Johnne Gledstaines, thessaurar.

Thomas Cant, kirkmaster.

Then comes a list of the Council, which consists of the Provost, the two Bailies, and the councillors. It will be observed that neither the Dean nor the Treasurer is of the Council. This first, "Thomas M'Lellen"—to use the spelling of the name adopted by himself—was afterwards knighted, and was the father of the first Lord Kirkcudbright. The castle which he built still stands in the town over which he ruled. Of the Bailies, Herbert Gledstanis sat in the Scottish Parliament as the burgh's representative. It would appear that the hon. member's education did not include the art of writing, for he was one of four members of the Convention of Burghs in 1582 who subscribed the Acts then passed "with our hands at the pen, led by Johnn Guthrie, notar, at oure command." The deficiency was one which he shared with the commissioner from the city of Glasgow.

OFFICIALS OF THE TOWN.

The Council seems to have possessed an ample establishment. In addition to the

officials mentioned in the minute I have quoted, and the executioner, to be afterwards referred to, we have a record, first in 1600, of the appointment of a drummer and a piper. The former was to get £10 of fee "and his meit through the town," feeding apparently at the tables of the burghesses turn about. Whether he was expected to provide music for the feast with his drum does not appear. Those who had not houses were to pay him 3s 4d per day for his food; and any who refused were to be poinded for double that sum. The piper was a functionary of older standing. In 1581 his remuneration was fixed at £5 per annum, but it seems to have increased. In 1600 it was stipulated that he was to receive "his dewtie usit and wont," and the drummer and he were to "pairt (or divide) the yule wages betwix them," this no doubt being some perquisite at the Christmas season. The "Kirkmaster" corresponded to some extent to our modern beadle. The "tounship" in 1578 ratified an act of the minister and elders directing that he was to be paid ijs for ilk marriage and xijd. for the baptisme of ilk substantialious mann's bairn, vjd for the simpl (simple, *i.e.*, common) folk; the kirkmaster fylland ane forme and buik to the brydgrum and bryd, and [certifying?] thairin to the solemnizatioun, and haifand ane besein and towell to the baptisme." At a later appointment it is minuted that the kirkmaster is to ring the church bell, and also to "ring the burriall bell throw the toun when nytboris [that is inhabitants] deceisses, and to mak the graiffes, for the qlk he sall haiff of ilk deceisset honest man vjs viijd." The Council also appointed a "knok-keeper," or keeper of the clock, and to one holder of the office of kirkmaster, who would seem to have been in the building trade, payments were made, under the title of "wardane," "for the mending and uphalding of the kirk and for the tolbuith mending." Then in 1598 the court was equipped with an official corresponding to our procurator-fiscal. In that year Robert Bell was elected "pr. for the common weill, and he to expone, delait [prosecute], and reassoun upoun all effairis tuching the weill of this burgh and commounis of the same."

THE COUNCIL'S RELATION TO CHURCH AND
EDUCATION.

The Council had even more intimate relations with the Church than those implied by the appointment of the beadle and the upholding of the fabric. In the year 1580, at the Michaelmas election, they appointed six "eldaris to the Kirk," to hold office for one year; but this appears to be a solitary entry of the kind. If they did not appoint the minister, they regulated his income; in 1602 they stipulated to pay the Rev. Robert Glendinning £100 a year. And they did their best, according to their light, to secure him a congregation. An Act of the Council passed in 1596 imposed a penalty of forty pence on all persons who should "han, sweir, curs, rail, or speik any evill or profane speichess contemp-teuselie, or flyte on the gait" (brawl on the street). It further directed that all the inhabitants should attend the Church services twice every Sabbath, "befoir and efter none," and should also "convene to the examinationis ilk day being advertissit," under a like penalty of forty pence for every absence. The "examinations" would be special diets fixed for the catechising of the flock by the minister; but there were regularly, in addition to the Sabbath services, two preachings on week days, Wednesdays and Fridays.

The Council also appointed the schoolmaster, and sometimes they conferred the office on the parish minister. Mr. James Dodds was one of these reverend pluralists; and the Council and community, in whose name the appointment runs, undertook to pay him as schoolmaster a salary of twenty merks, with £3 additional for "chalmer maill," that is house rent, and he was to receive a quarterly fee of 12d "of ilk toun bairn that he leiris" (learns). A minute of slightly later date, and relating to the incumbency of a successor, shews that the recovery of the fees was sometimes a matter of difficulty. "And the toun bairnis to pay thair quarter feis afoir the terme, and gif they pey nocht within ten days efter the terme, the said James to expell thame furth of the scule." A successor in the ministry, Mr David Blythe, was also the schoolmaster, and it was stipulated that he

should have under him "ane sufficient learnit doctor" as assistant. But the Council did not find the dual appointment satisfactory, and after a trial of sixteen months they discharged him "as schuill Mr, in respect they haid fund him insufficient to wait thairon, because of his office of ministrie and uthir effairis."

PAYMENT OF THE BAILIES—CUSTOMS OF
WINE AND SALT.

The work of criminal jurisdiction appears to have been left to the bailies. The dispenser of justice was considered not unworthy of his hire, and that hire took a very curious form. The Provost, Bailies, Council, and "hail communitie," assembled on the 18th of April, 1594, did statute and ordain "that ilk baillie and the common clerk of the town shall have, now and in all tymes cuming, at ilk meltat, [*i.e.*, meal], viz., at dennarand supper, ane quart of wyne of ilk schip that cummis within this port with wyne, so lang as the schip is in leiffing thairof, conforme to auld use and wont." Following upon this we have orders of the court upon protesting shippers to deliver over to each Bailie and the town clerk two quarts of wine for each of four days occupied in discharging the cargo, and decisions that burgesses of the town as well as strangers are liable for the impost. The magistrates and burgh officers were also entitled by old custom to a duty in kind on imported salt and on victnals generally. This is incidentally disclosed in a minute of 5th October, 1597:

"The quhilk day the Provost, Baillies, Connsall, and communitie of the said burgh, understanding that the bailzeis of the said burgh and officiaris of the same are diminishit of ane pairt of the old custome salt, has thairfoir statnte and ordaint that the balyeis present and to cum, ilk ane of thame, sall haif for thair fyall [salary] yeirlie the soum of v. lib. [£5]; and appointis and ordains the officiaris to haif eqly [equally] amangis them, of ilk persoun that beis chargit in the tolbnithe, iijs. iiijd. [3s 4d], for trubil or uther occasionn, for thair fyall. But [without] prejndice awayis [always] to the peck of victuall appoint for thame for ilk boit [boat] that cummis in with victnall."

This arrangement had not, however, been satisfactory, and a year later an attempt was made to put things on a better footing by making the hard-worked bailies a present of the fines—"unlaws" they are called—which were recovered, and in consideration of this they were to give up their £5 salary. The minute bears that they were to receive "the unlaws of all bluids, bluid-wytes [terms descriptive of assault to the effusion of blood], unlaws of straikis [common assaults, I suppose], deforcements, disobedience of magistratis or officiaris in thair office, or injurious speichis to bailies or sik lik." This is a curious and comprehensive catalogue; but it does not appear to cover all cases for which fines might be imposed; for example, it does not at least in set terms extend to the class of offences of which we have just read—cursing, railing, and "flyting on the gait." At an earlier period (in 1584) the fines had been farmed out to William M'Ghie and Thomas Hall for £28.

Civil suits were disposed of in the burgh courts, frequently before an assize or jury. In one case, for example, concerning a charge of forestalling the burgh in purchasing a cargo of wine, it is recorded that "the Provost and Balyeis selectit the said former assysis, being unsuspect burgesses of the said burgh, to tak cognitioun and tryall thairanent." The proceedings were conducted with considerable formality, there being references to written pleadings. One Hercules Hay, an innkeeper, figures as pursuer in several actions. One of them was decided in the manner which still obtains in regard to prescribed accounts. It was referred to the defender's oath. "quha, being rypelie advysit thairwith," made oath that she owed him nothing, "boit that it was all payit qlk sche ressavit; quhairfoir the judges absolvis hir simplicitir thairof." Hercules was a man of substance and laird of Castledykes, which he had let on lease to a brother. He sued that brother's widow for past due "maill," or rent, of the land, and also for delivery of certain personal property of his deceased brother, which he claimed as "airschip." It is curious to read in the inventory of the articles, along with a "pleuch, pleuch graith," and measures and implements

of various kinds, such an entry as this : " Item, ane cuntar burde carvit, with tabill and ches, pryce ten merks." "Tabillis" is an ancient term for the game of draughts, and we have in the carved centre board, the "tabill," and the chess the necessary provision for still popular forms of fireside recreation.

The magistrates felt themselves burdened with the number of suits brought before them, and as a check to frivolous litigation it was enacted (February, 1580) that every pursuer who lost an action ("tynis" is the expression used) should pay a penalty of eight shillings. They were, nevertheless, jealous lest their tribunal should be deserted in favour of a rival jurisdiction, and another of the Burgh Acts provided "that na persoun indwellar within this burgh mak ony complent to ony out toun maister [magistrate?] for ony caus or occasioun, or move thame to seik relief of the stranger [?]; bot that they meine [*i.e.*, complain] thameselffis to the saidis Provost and Bailzies, the ordinar judges, ffor decisioun, and put order to qtsumever actionn, quarrell, or controversie thair fallis out betwix nychtbor and nychtbor; and quha deis in the contrair sall pay xl. lib. money of unlaw, tyne thair fredome, and be banishit the toun for evir."

BARBAROUS PUNISHMENTS.

Banishment from the town was a common form of punishment, and it was frequently accompanied by personal chastisement of a severe nature. Thus, on 17th February, 1588, John M'Come was sentenced to be "scurgit throw the toun and brunt on the schouder, and thairefter banishit the toun for evir," for "sundrie crymes and innormeteis," which are not particularly specified. At the same sitting of the court four women—Jonet M'Burnie, Kate M'Morrane, Mey Forsythe, and Jonet M'Lene—for "sundrie abhominabill crymes and evill deidis, qlkis wer notour and sufficientlie provin," were ordered to remove themselves out of the town "the morne, in the morning, with ba; and baggage; and gif they failzie thairin, the saidis judges ordanis thame, and ilk ane of thame, to be apprehendit and tane, and thaireftir the said day to be scurgit and brunt on thair schouderis, as wes practeisit on Johnne M'Come, but partialitie." In

the same month another person was sentenced to be banished from the town "in respect of diverss his evill doings, leiding ane ill lyfe and conversatioun." In March, 1600, the Council enacted that breakers of the seventh commandment who were not able to pay the penalties imposed for their trespass were to have their heads "torkit" at the market cross on a market day, and were thereafter to be banished the town. Torking was a species of torture of the nature of pinching or puncturing.

TRADE IN WINE—INTERCOURSE WITH FRANCE.

In glancing at the trade of the burgh one is surprised at the extent to which wine figures in it. This, of course, is due to the fact that Kirkcudbright was a port, and there was a good deal of intercourse with France and other parts of the continent. The frequency of this intercourse is illustrated by an agreement embodied in a record of the burgh court of the year 1581. John M'Cuffie, burgess of Kirkcudbright, and Thomas Masonn, burgess of Ayr, "Scottismen," thereby acknowledged to have received a certain quantity of wine from Anthony Sympsoun, merchant in Dieppe, who is termed a "Frenchman," but whose name suggests recent naturalisation, and they oblige themselves or their heirs to pay the price to him at Rochelle or Bordeaux, or in any other part of France where they might happen to meet him or any person having power to act on his behalf, before the Fastern's Eve next ensuing. This same Masonn and another burgess of Kirkcudbright consent to decree passing against them in the burgh court for a sum of about £2900 as the value of a cargo of wine and salt brought in a Dundee ship. We have references to trade with "the Isles," or Hebrides, from which salt was brought, and to the arrival of a ship "of Pittinweme" laden part with wine and part with iron.

A "FORESTALLER."

It was one of the privileges of the corporation of a burgh that it had a right of pre-emption on all goods brought to the market. To infringe this right was to forestall the town, and forestallers were sharply dealt with, as

one Robert Edgar, a burghess of Dumfries, found to his cost. A cargo of wine had been brought to the port by Henry Osborne, a burghess of Ayr, and he offered it to the magistrates on behalf of the town at £90 per tun. It was refused at that figure, and the bargain seems to have hung fire. The vendor had apparently considered it "off" altogether, for he sold the wine to Edgar. Thereupon the magistrates proceeded against the purchaser as a forestaller. They offered to let him off easily by paying him whatever figure he had promised to buy at. But Edgar would not forego his bargain. He had reason to repent his obstinacy; for the charge against him was brought to trial before the magistrates and an assize of "unsuspect burghesses," who found him guilty; and the court declared the wine to be "confiscat and escheatit to our soverane lord's behove and thairis;" in what proportion is not stated, but it may be presumed that the town retained at least the lion's share of the prize.

FIXING THE PRICE OF WINE, BREAD, CANDLES, AND ALE—PERIODS OF SCARCITY.

In harmony with the spirit which animated the national legislature of the period, the Magistrates and Council intermeddled in many matters which are now recognised as falling properly within the sphere of private enterprise and individual judgment. To fix the price of commodities was regarded as one of their ordinary duties. In 1582, for example, they directed that no Bordeaux wine was to be sold dearer than 3s 6d the pint, under pain of confiscation of the hogshead. "The assize of bread" was a regular institution in burghs; and in various minutes we find the price of an article variously styled "the caik" and "the quarter caik" fixed at eightpence. Occasional reference is made also to "the candill," which in two years is to be sold at 2s 8d per pound. The figures, of course, refer to the Scotch coinage.

But the most regular entry of this nature has reference to the "assize of ale." It was the custom in the month of October, when it had been ascertained what the nature of the harvest was, to fix the figure at which the ale, brewed from the oats grown in the district,

should be sold during the succeeding twelve months. I quote in full a quaint minute on this subject. It relates to the year 1578.

“The qlk day the Provost, Bailzeis, Counsall, and commounitie, haiffand considerit the fertilitie of the ground this instant cropt and the cornis being weill collectit and gadderit, be ressoun of the gude harvist (thanks unto the Lord), haiffand also herd be report of utheris that nocht onelie this countrie but all other countries within this realme, and utheris without the same, also adjacent thereto, hes in lykeways prosperitie and welth of the saidis cornis ; quhairby it apperis to thame na derth is lyke to be this instant yeir, and also herand tell that the aill is sauld in Drumfreiss for four penneis the pynt : Ffynds thairfoir that the aill may be sauld for iiijd [fourpence] the pynt within this burgh, gude and sufficient : Thairfoir statutes and ordains that no oistlair within this burgh sell aill derar nor the said pryce for ane yeir, under the pane of xxs. [20s] for the first falt, and the nixt falt doubland, and the third falt tripland, and taking out also of the rest of the aill to the mercat croce, and be delt thair to the pure [poor] : Provyding that it sal be lesum [lawful] to the saidis oistlaris to tak vd [fivepence] for ilk pynt qll [till] Setturday at evin nixt is : and ordains the Deane to pas with diligence to the countrie and put siklyke ordeir to the oistlaris therein.”

The thankfulness expressed for the abundant harvest and the safe in-gathering may in this connection raise a smile. But we must bear in mind that the state of the corn crops was at that period a matter of the most vital concern to the whole community. Deficiency meant not simply the possible inconvenience of a slight rise in price ; but, if the shortcoming were serious, it involved literal famine. There was no potato crop on which to fall back ; foreign countries could not redress the balance by sending of their surplus ; and the means of internal communication were so limited and slow that a supply would be obtained with difficulty even from other parts of our own country which might have been less affected by an adverse season. In these circumstances periods of scarcity, more or less general, were of frequent occurrence in both Scotland and England. No wonder, then, if the community

were devoutly thankful that for one year at least they were free from fear of dearth.

This was the last of a series of fat years. In 1579 the lean cycle began with a rise to sixpence. By 1595 the price had trebled, the pint then selling at twelvecpence. Scarcity and high prices, operating on human cupidity, had the usual effect of leading those who had supplies to hold them back in the hope of reaping still larger profit from the greater extremity of the community. Penalty clauses were inserted in the annual Ale Act to check this practice. The minute of 1599, for example, directs that "na oistlar reteine aill in their houss abone ane galloun, but sell the same to all nychtboris, gude and sufficient, under the same pane [£5], deilling of the aill at the croce [giving it away, that is, to the populace], and discharging [that is, forbidding them] of forther brewing." Those years of distress synchronise with a similar experience throughout the country. The year 1597 in particular is emphatically characterised by Professor Thorold Rogers, in his valuable book on "Work and Wages," as one of "fearful famine" throughout England; and the following year was remarkable in Scotland for the general blighting of the crops.

FREQUENT OCCURRENCE OF "THE PEST."

A terrible accompaniment of recurring famines was, "the pest," or plague. There was in the burgh an hospital known as "the Pest-house." We find the Council on the alert to prevent the introduction of the malady from other places. On 22d January, 1577—or, according to our present calendar, January, 1578, for the legal year was then reckoned from 25th March—order is made that "nane within the burgh travell nor trafik in Ingland, nor on the bordouris thair of, for the pestis causs [because of the pest], qlk is in the saidis bordouris, under the pane of tinsall of thair fredome; and that nane reset ony travellaris out of Ingland, nor bordouris thair of, without ane sufficient testimoniall, under the pane of ten pundis."

In 1585 Kirkcudbright itself had been visited. On the 9th of March, 1586 (1585 according to the reckoning of the period) the Council made arrangements for pay-

ment of fees due to "the clengeris," these being persons employed to use means for the recovery of those afflicted with the plague. The town lands of the Borelands and Millflat were then let out to the burgesses in "skairs" or small plots; and in order to raise the necessary money the Council directed that each holder of these lands was to pay two years' rent in advance. They were more peremptory in their demand than a modern Chancellor of the Exchequer, for they enacted that the money should be paid over to the collector "betwix and the morne at evin," under pain of their skairs being declared "vacant and in the toun's hands." In October of the same year the Council voted an honorarium of five merks to "Jonet Mertene," for "certane plesirrs and guid service done" by her "the tyme of the pest, and for hir help."

Some years later the Council were in dread of a return of the pestilence, which had broken out in a neighbouring town. They cut off all intercourse with the afflicted place, and turned the whole householders into a body of watchmen to see that the cordon was not broken. These precautionary measures are set forth in these terms, under date 20th April, 1599:

"Understanding the pest being now ill in Drumfreis, and willing na resorting or traffik be betwix the said tounis for feir thair of, statutis and ordains that the hail inhabitants within this burgh that reasis reik thairin [a graphic expression designating a householder—the possessor of a hearth] wache in thair awin persoun, or ellis ane als [as] sufficient in thair steid, at the sicht of the Baillies, under the pane of xl s. ilk fault and tynsall of their fredome; and that nane hant or gang to Drumfreis, or benethe the watter of Ur, or resset ony benethe said water, under the said pane, without consent of the Baillies."

"WATCH AND WARD"—A FEAR OF INVASION.

In another minute dealing with the duty of "watch and ward" we seem to hear an echo of the fears of Spanish invasion which haunted the country even after the days of the Armada, while Scotland was distracted by the intrigues of noble factions. It is of date the day before Christmas, 1595, and it made order that watch was to be kept nightly by six

armed persons to be chosen for that purpose by the bailies. Negligent watchmen were to be pnnished "in the stokis or gorgattis;" and their "puttar furthe" (the person, we presume, who had sent a negligent substitute) was to pay a fine of forty shillings. And "in case of ony tumoult or uproar in the toun, ilk persoun to be in reddiness, at ane schout or clink of the comoun bell, to ryss and cum to the gait boidint with wapponis, under the pane of tynsall of thair fredome and banishment of the toun for evir, and also under the pane of ten pund of unlaw."

AMUSEMENTS.

We have already seen that the worthy burgesses of the sixteenth century relaxed themselves indoors with draughts or chess. Of the fondness of the young men for athletics we have incidental evidence in several of the minutes. In 1597 the grass of the Friars' Kirkyard—that is the burial ground of the old church that stood where the castle now is—was let to Thomas Hall on a nineteen years' lease, snbject to these conditions, among others: that he was to build and maintain a dyke around it, but was to leave a style and door, which should be "patent" all day, but locked at night, "and it sal be lesum to the toun and young men thairof, to big buttis thairin and use archerie, and to repair and gang thairintill, as they haif occasioun: secludane [excluding] all players of futeball, cache-kyllis, and uthir games out of it, bot allanerlie [only] the buttis." "Cache-kyllis" may be a local term for a primitive form of lawn tennis, which in old Scotch was termed cache-pole or catch-pule. Archery butts or targets seem to have been provided elsewhere; for in February, 1579, a disposition was granted to Robert Hall, burgess, of certain common land "beneth the toun and at the bnttis." The churchyard seems to have been a popular resort for purposes of recreation. In an earlier minute (of 1580) we find a prohibition against the playing of "the keich-ball upon the Freir Kirk, for demolishing the sklait thairof."

EARLY CLOSING OF ALE-HOUSES.

The civic rulers of those early days were

alive to the importance of regulating the business of the ale-house keeper in other ways than fixing the price of his goods. It was an offence to be drinking in such a house "after ten horis at evin," and the penalty fell not on the keeper of the house but on his customers.

FORBIDDING USE OF BUTCHER-MEAT.

A curious enactment of a sumptuary character appears, with variations, in minutes of 1580, 1589, and 1595. Its purport is to forbid the eating of butcher-meat either on Friday or Saturday. "Oistlars," as the innkeepers are termed, are forbidden to "roist or seith" flesh on either of these days, and the owner of a house in which any is used is to be fined five merks. One of the minutes bears that the purpose of the prohibition is for the "downputting of dearthe." An Act of the Scottish Parliament of earlier date (1567) had forbidden the eating of flesh on three of the days of the week, for the vaguely expressed reason that "it is great hurt to the common weil of this realm, the indifferent and dayly eating of fleshe within the same."

THE BURNING OF A WITCH.

A superstitious belief in witchcraft possessed all classes of the people during the period over which this period extends. I have found no trace in the minute book of the cruel persecutions to which it gave rise. But there is extant an account of the Burgh Treasurer of Kirkcudbright for the year ended at Michaelmas, 1698, which throws a lurid light on this dark page of history. It contains a long list of items referring to the execution of a poor woman, Elspeth M'Ewen, belonging to Dalry, against whom the Kirk-Session of that parish instituted a prosecution on the accusation that she possessed and exercised the power of the evil eye. A special commission was issued to the Steward-Depute and various lay commissioners to try her, with a jury, at Kirkcudbright; and on their sentence, confirmed by the Privy Council, she was given to the flames. We seem to hear them crackling and to see the tortured flesh shrinking as we read such callous entries as these:

Item for peits to burn Elspeth wt.....	j	0	0
Item for twa pecks of colls	0	16	0
Item for towes [ropes to tie the poor creature to the stakes], small and great.....	0	4	0
Item for ane tar barle to Andrew Aiken.....	j	4	0
Item to Hugh Anderson for carrying of the peits and colls	0	6	0
Item to William Kirk [the executioner] qn she was burning, ane pint of aill.....	0	2	0
Item payed to Robert Creighton, conform to precept, viz. : eight shillings Scots for beating the drum at Elspet M'Queen's funerall, and to James Carson, his wife, threeteen shillings drunken by Elspet's executioner, at seall times.....	j	j	0

The executioner was on the regular staff of burgh officials, and in receipt of a weekly allowance; but in his old age he had eked it out with the seeking of alms, and the tragedy just recorded by attaching increased odium to his office seems to have cut off supplies. In a pitiful petition to the Council he represented that when he went to the country the people bade him go home to the town "and cast stanes at me," and to relieve his indigent condition the Council made him a special grant of six shillings Scots.