NOTICE OF THE TESTAMENT DATIVE OF SIR PETER YOUNG, KNT. OF SEATON, DATED 1628; WITH SOME REMARKS ON THE STATE OF SCOTTISH AGRICULTURE AT THAT PERIOD. BY HUGH W. YOUNG, F.S.A. Scot.

While searching for information regarding Sir Peter Young of Seaton, tutor to King James the Sixth of Scotland, I met with the Testament Dative and Inventory of his “guides geir and dettis,” a document which throws a flood of light upon the value of agricultural subjects early in the seventeenth century. Sir Peter Young had at his death a considerable amount of land in his own hands, and farmed pretty extensively, considering the size of his estate. His Testament Dative (of which a copy is annexed to this paper), besides showing the value of wheat and oats, bear and peas, horses and cattle, &c., also gives the wages of the servants he employed, male and female, in the year 1628. The prices and payments are all in Scots money, but by valuing one pound Scots then as equal to one pound sterling of our present money, we will come pretty near the true relative values.

Accepting this as a guide, it will appear that the value of agricultural produce has not undergone much change. Young oxen fit for the plough are valued at twenty-two pounds, old oxen at thirteen pounds, and “three year auld stottis and quoyes” at twelve pounds each. Horses, again, are very high priced, and there are not many tenants or proprietors nowadays who use horses of a similar relative value. The four coach horses are valued at two hundred pounds each; one young mare at sixty-six pounds; and “ane meir with ane foill” at one hundred and thirty-three pounds. The farm horses are put down at the average price of twenty-six pounds each. The sheep stock are valued at a sum very similar to what is the present price of fairly good sheep. The yeld sheep, that is the wethers and gimmers, are put down at forty shillings each; while the hogs, or lambs of the previous year, are valued at twenty shillings a head.

The prices put upon the grain appear to be very high, and unless the
year 1627–8 was a very bad or late year, of which the estimates give no indication, the prices, especially of wheat, point to a state of great prosperity in Scotland at that time. The oats are valued at 66 shillings per boll, the wheat at 133 shillings per boll, the bear at 96 shillings per boll, and the peas at 94 shillings per boll. These prices of course include the fodder and straw; but still they are very high, and show that agriculture was then in a most flourishing state. It does not appear how these prices were struck, as there were no regular Fiers Courts held at that time. Our present Fiers Courts are regulated by an Act of Sederunt dated 1723. It is said, however, that fiers prices were struck in the county of Haddington as early as 1627, and in some of the other Scottish counties in the end of the sixteenth century. Some sort of Fiers Court was probably held in Forfarshire at this period, to regulate prices of grain, and the above figures may be safely taken as true value.

One statement in the Inventory also shows the returns of the wheat crop to be about 4½ that of the seed sown, from which it would appear that Sir Peter must have farmed in advance of his time; three returns being often considered a fair crop for good land.

Ten bolls of wheat sown are estimated to produce 42 bolls of crop, but these estimates were usually under the mark, and it will be pretty safe to make the crop 45 bolls, or 4½ returns.

The lands of Easter Seaton are of good quality, and the exposure is to the south-east, full in the face of the sun and the sea, and the lands are still considered to be above the average of arable land in Scotland. The situation, as regards climate and soil, is not unlike the lands about Banff; and in 1683 we find the Laird of Troup writing as follows:—

“In our best outfields if we reap the fourth or fifth corn we are satisfied. Yea, the third is very well thought of.” He adds, “the only universal grains of this countrie are bear and oats; any other are of little use with us.” From this it appears that the best outfields near Banff would only average four returns of the seed sown for the easily raised crops of bear and oats; no doubt, the exposure is colder, and to the north, but to get a yield of 4½ returns of wheat would require farming and manuring of a higher order than ordinary in these times.

1 The Scotch boll was 6 bushels.
In 1618, a few years before the date of Sir Peter Young's death, I find that Taylor, the water poet, says in his *Penniless Pilgrimage*, that Scotland was full of cattle and corn, and that the farming was equal to English farming,

"In great abundance plenty—
'Twixt it and England little odds I see."

Taylor also says, that he was credibly informed that in that year (1618) the grain shipped from the port of Leith for foreign parts, amounted to no less than 80,000 bolls of wheat, oats, and barley, of four English bushels to the boll, and adds, "which makes me wonder that a kingdom so populous should nevertheless sell so much bread corn beyond the seas, and yet to have more than sufficient for themselves." This is an enormous quantity of home-grown grain to be shipped from Leith alone, but Taylor is an honest and trustworthy authority, who always did his best to be accurate.

That the farming at Easter Seaton was of a high order is proved also by the fact that Sir Peter Young used harrows made of iron. Iron harrows before the end of last century were, I should think, almost unknown in Scotland, and yet we find in the Inventory, "Item sevin pair of irone harrowis, five cairts and waines, &c., price forty pounds." It is probable that Sir Peter, who had been much abroad in Italy, Denmark, and Germany, had introduced many of the improvements he had seen in foreign agriculture, and that the "irone harrowis" were of these.

The next point of interest in connection with the farming of this period is the wages paid to the servants. The sums due to them are mentioned, but not the length of time for which service was to be paid. There is little doubt, however, that the wages due were in most cases for one year's service, from Whitsunday to Whitsunday; but a few of the smaller sums would likely be for outworkers, paid by the day or month. It appears that the highest paid man (likely the overseer or grieve) had sixty pounds, besides which he would be allowed meal, fuel, and milk, or a piece of land. The next two men had forty pounds, and, of course, their food or perquisites; this was invariably given to
farm or body servants at that time, and is so still. For the rest of the wages due it is difficult to fix the length of time served, as the sums owing are so irregular. It is likely, however, that the sums of twenty pounds are due to the female servants for one year's wages, and that the smaller amounts are for various shorter periods. It is evident from the exact division of the money, that "David Dalgettie" received the wages, for half the time served by "Gilbert Paterson," whatever period that was.

There is a sum of money owing to the creelman, which shows that the fuel used at that time was peats; the creels being used for carrying the peats out of the moss. A considerable sum is also due to the candlemaker, and a sum of thirty-six pounds for "schone," the master having to find the servants in shoes.

The rents of the farms belonging to Sir Peter Young were all paid in grain. Grain rents were general in Scotland at that period, and down to a recent date; but how the value of the crop was fixed, or what the proportion paid to the laird was, does not appear.

It is probable, as I have suggested elsewhere, that some kind of a Fiars Court was then in existence.

In concluding these few remarks, one can only wish that the information given in this Inventory was more full and complete. What strikes one most on reading this document, is the great prosperity which Scottish agriculture experienced at this period, and with agriculture certainly the whole country prospered. Scotland was, it is evident, fast recovering from the throes of the Reformation, and progressing even then to a great future, when the civil wars of Montrose and Cromwell struck her down; and the later persecutions of the Stewarts brought the whole land to the verge of ruin.

It is doubtful if Scotland was ever again in as healthy and flourishing a state as it was in 1628, until long after the battle of Culloden, in fact till the very end of the eighteenth century.
The Testament Dative and Inventarie of the guidis geir and dettis of vmquhill ane honorabill man Sir Piter Zoung of Seattoun Kiiicht Lord elimosinar to his Majestie the tyme of his deceis guha deceissit in the plaice of Seattoun within the parochine of Sanct Vigiane and Schirreffdome of Forfare vpon the sevint day of Januar the yeir of God 1716 tuentie aucht yeires faithfullie maid and given vpe be Michael Anna and Marjorie Zoungis lawfull bairnes execotoris datives decernit to their said vmqnhill father be decreit of my lord commissar of Sanct Androis the xxiiij day of October the yeir of God 1716 tuentie aucht yeires

In the first the said defunct the tyme of his deceis foirsaid had the guidis and geir following of the pryces and valoris efter specefeit viz upone the landis and maines of Seattoun tuelle young pleuch oxin pryce of the peice overhead xxij lib. Summa ij lxiiij lib. Item six auld oxin pryce of the peice overhead xij lib. vj s viij d. Summa lxxx iiij lib. Item four cotch hors pryce of the peice overhead ij lib. Summa vij viij d. Item ane gray beld curirse naig pryce l lib. Item ane meir pryce lxiiij lib. xij s iij d. Item ane meir with ane foill pryce j cxxxiiij lib. vj s viij d. Item sawin vpone the saidis landis of Seattoun ten bollis tua flrlottis quhyte estimat to the feird curne extending to xlij bollis quhyte pryce of the boll corne and fodder vj li ub. xiij s iiij d. Summa ij li lxxx lib. Item in the barne and barne yard of Seattoun xxxj bollis tua flrlottis quhyte pryce of the boll vj li ub. xij s iij d. Summa ij cxxxiiij lib. Item mair thair xij bollis tua flrlottis peis pryce of the boll corne and fodder iiij lib. xij s iij d. Summa lxxiij lib. Item lxix bollis beir pryce of the boll iiiij lib. xij s iij d. Summa ij cxxxiiij lib. Item thretten scor ten bollis aittis pryce of the boll iiij vj s viij d. Summa ix vij lib. Item ane cotche pryce iiij lib. Item sevin pair of irone harrowis fyve cairis and waines and thrie plewis with thair ganging geir pryce of the haill xl lib. Item sawin in the law thrie bollis halffe boll quhyte estimat to the feird curne extending to xiiij bollis quhyte pryce of the boll corne and fodder vj li ub. xiij s viij d. Summa lxxxiiij lib. vj s viij d. Item standing in the barne and barne yard of the law ten bollis halffe boll quhyte pryce of the boll vj li ub. xij s iij d. Summa lxxi lib. Item mair threttie sex bollis beir pryce of the boll corne and fodder iiij lib. xij s iij d. Summa j cxxxiiij lib. Item of peis and benis nyne bollis pryce of the boll iiij vj s iij d. Summa xl lib. Item of aittis sevin scorr threttein bollis pryce of the boll iiij iiij lib. vj s viij d. Summa v xviij lib. Item vpone the landis and maines of Arbeikie thretie twa young pleuch oxin pryce of the peice xxiiij lib. Summa vj iiij vij lib. Item thair ellevin auld oxin pryce of the peice xiiij lib. vj s viij d. Summa j cxxxiiij lib. xij s iij d. Item sex ky with calffis pryce of the peice overhead xx lib. Summa j cxxxiiij lib. Item thrie thrie yeir auld stottis and quoyes pryce of the peice xiiij lib. Summa xxxvj iiij lib. Item tua tua yeir auld stottis pryce of the peice xiiij lib. Summa xx lib. Item ane quoy of tua yeir auld pryce x lib. Item four
yeirling stottis and quoyes pryce of the peice vj lib xiiij s iiij d...
third part beir pryces respective foirsaidis Summa iii\-\.lxxxiii\-\.lvij\-\.b v\-\.s viij\-\.d
Item be Johnne Dureis in Dunbarnet for his fermes crope foirsaid thrie chalders wictuall tua part maill and third part beir pryces respective foirsaidis Summa ij\-\.lvij\-\.lb Item be my lord of Garleis and his cautioneris j\-\.m\-\.lib money principall with tua yeires annwell thairof preciding the defunts deceis extending to ij\-\.cli\-\.b
Item be Walter Arnott in Scottistoun iiij\-\.vij\-\.x\-\.s viij\-\.d
Item be Sir Walter Stewart of Minto Knieht and his cautioneris j\-\.m\-\.iij\-\.xxiii\-\.li b v\-\.s viij\-\.d
Item be ... Durhame of Duntarvie j\-\.u b
Item be my lord of Marre of bygaine few dewtieis of the lordschip of Torphichen iiij\-\.vij\-\.b
Item be Sir Walter Stewart of Minto Knieht and his cautioneris j\-\.m\-\.iij\-\.xxiii\-\.li b v\-\.s viij\-\.d
Item be David Mitchelstone for his fermes crope foirsaid threttie four bollis wictuall tua part maill and third part beir pryces respective foirsaidis Summa j\-\.clxxxij\-\.vb v\-\.s viij\-\.d
Item be Thomas Fowlar thair threttie four bollis wictuall for his fermes the said crope pryces respective foirsaidis Summa j\-\.clxxxij\-\.vb v\-\.s viij\-\.d
Item mair be him of bygones tuelffe bollis yeirlie crope 1625 and 1626 yeires pryces foirsaidis Summa lviii\-\.lb

In the first to Alexander Petrie serveand of fie lx\-\.lb. Item to William Hodgstounn xl\-\.lb Item to Henrie Petrie of fie xl\-\.lb Item to James Clark of fie xiiij\-\.lb v\-\.s viij\-\.d Item to Gilbert Patersone of fie xiiij\-\.lb v\-\.s viij\-\.d Item to David Dalgetie of fie v\-\.lb xiiij\-\.lb iij\-\.d Item to Matild Cant of fie xx\-\.lb Item to Helene Durward of fie xx\-\.lb Item to Agnes Bowman v\-\.lb v\-\.s viij\-\.d Item to Beigis Robertsone of fie v\-\.lb iij\-\.d Item to Issobell Myln of fie xxij\-\.lb v\-\.s viij\-\.d Item to the chamberlane of Aberbrothok for the few dewtieis of the Law crope 1627 lxxxvij\-\.lb v\-\.s viij\-\.d Item to Issobell Blair serveand of fie xl\-\.lb Item to Alexander Lyndesay of fie xl\-\.lb Item to Maister Silvester Lambie minister at Glames of teynd the said yeir v\-\.lb v\-\.s viij\-\.d Item to Maister James Rait minister at Maines of teynd v\-\.lb v\-\.s viij\-\.d Item to the aires and executouris of vmquhill Doctor Henrie Philpe minister at Aberbrothok xxxvij\-\.lb v\-\.s viij\-\.d of teynd Item to Maister James Philpe minister Lwnan furth of the teindis of Arbeikie the said yeir for his stipend twelffe bollis maill and sex bollis beir pryce of the boll overhead v\-\.lb v\-\.s viij\-\.d
Summa lxxxvj\-\.lb Item to him of small teynd viij\-\.lb Item to Alexander Watson merchand burge of Dundie for merchandise v\-\.lxvij\-\.lb xvij\-\.s v\-\.d Item to William Buchane merchand burge of Aberbrothok v\-\.vxl\-\.lb v\-\.s iij\-\.d Item to Alexander
Snyth merchand burges of Dundie iijxliij Item to Marione Guidlad lxxiij Item to . . . . and Robert Murray hir spous jxix Item to Williame Saidlar xvil Item to . . . . spous to Williame Galloway xxx Item to Marione Fyffe xvilxj viij Item to Johe Rany cordiner in Aberbrothok jxlvj xiii Item mair to him for schoone xxiij Item to . . . . spous to Maister Patrik Carnegie xvj Item to Andro Wood xxx Item to David Symson alias Sco candlemaker xviij xij Item to James Litiljohn vjlib xij Item to Johnne Ogilvie in Montrois xviij xij Item to Alexander Scott in Vlischheawin xiiij xij Item to Margaret Wallintyne xvil xiijs xij Item to Robert Stremar in Montrois xiiij xiji Item to James Scott creilman xij Item to . . . . spous to Maister Patrik Carnegie xvil Item to . . . . spous to Marjorie Youngis the vther tua executoris Thaill guidis and geir contenit in this aboue wreattin testament saiff and furth cumand to all perteis havand interest thairto as law will.

This present Invenarie and Testament befoire wreattin togidder with the executoris thairin aboue constituite is confirmit vpone the tuentie sext day of November the yeir of God jmcxxviij yeires The said Michaell Young ane of the executoris aboue wreattin for himseffe maid faith etc. As also the said Anna Young ane vther of the saidis executoris for hir selffe and in name of Marjorie Young and hir sister ane vther of the executoris being minor siclyke maid faith etc. And David Lyndesay of Kynnetles and Maister Thomas Lyoun of Cossinnes be thair band produceit ar becume cawtitioner conjunctlie for the said Michaell Young ane of the saidis executoris and James Maister of Calwill and David Boisuall appeirand of Balmwtto ar becume cawtitioner conjunctlie for the saidis Anna and Marjorie Youngis the vther tua executoris That the hail guidis and geir contenit in this aboue wreattin testament salbe saiff and furth cumand to all perteis havand interest thairto as law will.