

IV.

CONTRACT BETWEEN THE CITY OF EDINBURGH AND JOHN MEIKLE,
FOR A CHIME OF MUSICAL BELLS, 1698. FROM THE ORIGINAL
PRESERVED IN THE ARCHIVES OF THE CITY OF EDINBURGH.
COMMUNICATED BY DAVID LAING, Esq., F.S.A. Scot.

In collecting materials to illustrate the history of St Giles' Church, Edinburgh, I met with a somewhat curious document, being a contract for supplying a chime of Bells in the year 1698. But the Church had previously been supplied with various other Bells. In the Council Records, 20th July 1554, there is an Act "anent the Bellis," by which it is declared that Sir Henry Loch the Sacristane, was not only "to find stringis to all the Bellis inwith the stepill, but siclik to watter and soup the Queir once every oulk (week); and further, that in all tymes cuming the grete Bellis be nocht rounng fra ten houris at evin quhill fyve hours in the mornyng." At a later period (8th May 1560) the Council understanding that the Kirk might be "servit with three Bells, one rung to the prayeris, ane uthor for serving of the knock [clock], and the third to be the common bell," the Dean of Guild was ordained "to tak down the Marie Bell," and to keep the same till he received further instructions. Accordingly, on the 26th of the same month, the Council resolved that the said Bell and the brazen pillars within the church be converted into artillery, and sent for that purpose to Flanders, if this could not "be gudlie done in this country."¹ We however find that these brazen pillars, amounting to 218 stone weight, were sold by warrant of the Council for 18s. (Scots) per stone; and as no further notice is taken of the Mary Bell, it had been allowed to remain, and it evidently was THE GREAT BELL OF ST GILES, which is described as curiously ornamented with figures of the Virgin and Child, and having a Latin inscription, dated in the year 1460. This Bell, in consequence of having suffered damage, was taken down in 1774, and I fear it was then destroyed for the sake of the metal.²

¹ See the Bannatyne Club volume, "Charters of the Church of St Giles, Edinburgh," pp. xli. xlix. Edinb. 1859. 4to.

² Ibid. pp. xix. cix.

But now for the Chimes, with one remark. The music bells were designed to gratify the citizens of Edinburgh between the hours of one and two, or their dinner hour, when it was customary to have the shops closed and all business suspended. But times have changed, and the bells also. Being myself daily within their sound, I could wish that these bells, whether performing popular airs or ringing peals on occasion of public rejoicings, were not quite so doleful.—The date of the contract is 1698, but previously, in 1681, when it was proposed to divert to other purposes the amount of Moodie's bequest for building a new church in Edinburgh, upon the ground that the town had no use for another church, it was stated: "The Towne offers to buy with it a pele [peal] of bells to hang in St Geills' steeple, to ring musically, and warne us to the church," and also to build a new Tolbooth, &c."¹ But these and other proposals were not sanctioned, as it came "near to sacrilege to invert a pious donation." The Scottish Parliament, on the 15th of June 1686, passed an "Act in favours of John Meikle founder," granting him for 19 years the privileges of a manufactory "for casting Bells, Cannons, and other such useful instruments." From the list of donations, *supra*, p. 159, it will be seen that a hand-bell, with Meikle's initials, and the date 1696, has been presented to the Society. The Contract is as follows:—

"AT EDINBURGH the Eighteenth day of March J^m vj^c and Nynty eight years, It is agreed, contracted, and finally ended, betwixt the pairties following, To witt Sr. Archibald Mure of Thorntoune Lord Provost of Edinburgh, William Menzeis, Archibald Rule, George Mitchell and James Nairne Baillies thereof, Patrick Halyburtoun Dean of Guild, and Samuel McClellan Thesaurer of the same, Together with the remanent Council and deacons of Crafts, ordinar and extraordinar of the said burgh for themselves, and as representing the whole body and community thereof On the one part And John Meikle founder burges of Edinburgh On the other part, In manner following, That is to say, fforasmuche as the said Lord Provost, Baillies and Council, haveing (conforme to their act of the date the Eighteenth day of February last) approved of a Re-

¹ Fountainhall's Historical Notices, vol. i. p. 324; see also vol. ii, pp. 656, 867, regarding the appropriation of this bequest for erecting the Canongate Church.

port of ane Committee of their number anent ane agreement and communing betwixt the Committee and the s^d John Meikle for makeing a good and sufficient Cheme or Sett of Musicall Bells exactly tuned conforme to the Rules of Musick to be placed and fixed according to Arte upon the high Church Steeple of St. Jeills for the decorment of the City after the fashion and manner of other Cities abroad, which the s^d John Meikle did undertake to performe in manner mentioned in the s^d Report, Therefore the s^d John Meikle hereby binds and obliges him his aires exērs and successors whatsomever to make a good and sufficient Cheme or Sett of Musicall Bells according to the Rules of Musick for the use of the good toun of Ed^r consisting of ffifteen in number and to be of different Notes of Musick rising or falling gradually according to the Scheme or Scale condescended on by the s^d Committee and the s^d John, and subscribed be the Lord Provost and Magistrats and the s^d John Meikle, So that the smallest or uppermost bell of the highest Note be C—sol—fa and about Six pound weight, and all the rest of the same mettall to descend gradually conforme to the said Scheme till they come to the lowest or largest Bell, And to be made of good weell mixed mettall fit for the purpose and exactly tuned conforme to the s^d Scheme, which tuning is to be determined or judged by Thomas Pringle wryter to the Signet Mr George Barclay minister of the Gospell, Henry Crumbain and Francis Toward Masters of Musick, after the Bells are finished, And binds & obliges him and his fors^d to put the present Magistrats names and year of God on the largest Bell, All which the s^d John Meikle binds and obliges him and his fors^d to doe and performe betwixt and the first day of July next, And that under the penalty of Ane Hundred pounds starling money. For the which causes the s^d Lord Provost, Baillies and Council bind and oblige them and their Successors succeeding to them in their rēxive offices and places to content and pay to the s^d John Meikle the sume of Seventy two Shillings Scots for each pound weight of the s^d Bells made in manner fors^d And that immediately after the finishing thereof, Declaring allwayes Lykeas it is hereby expressly declared with consent of both pairties, that in case the s^d Bells be not exactly made & tuned in manner fors^d then the s^d Lord Provost Baillies and Council are and shall in no manner of way [be] obliged to pay any money for the same, And for the more security both pairties are content and con-

sent to the registration hereof in the Books of Council and Session or any others competent. That Letters of horning and all oyr^s needfull on six dayes may pass hereon, And for that effect constituts,

Their pro^rs &c. In witnes whereof (written be Alexander Sympson wryter in Edin^r) both pairties have subscribed thir presents with their hands, place, day, moneth and year of God above written Before thir witnesses, James Nasmyth clerk deput of Edin^r and Richard Strachan wryter in Edin^r.

Ita est Æneas McLeod clericus
Communitatis Burgi de Ed^r
Not: Pub: au^{te} regali in pre-
missis requisitus ac de sp^ẽali
mandato dicti Prepositi Bali-
vorum Consulum et Decan-
norum artium dicti Burgi
Testan^ẽ hoc meo signo et
Subscriptione manuali.

Æ. MACLEOD.

J. NASMYTH *witnes.*

RICH. STRACHAN *witnes.*

Indorsed

Contract and agreement betwixt
The good toun of Ed^r And
John Meikle Cheime of bells 1698./

For the use of the above Contract I am indebted to James Laurie, Esq., one of the City Clerks; and in like manner the following illustrative documents, preserved among the old vouchers of the Treasurer's Accounts, were kindly communicated by Robert Adam, Esq., City Accountant, a Fellow of the Society:—

ACT OF COUNCIL IN FAVOURS OF JOHN MEIKLE, 1699.

Edinburgh the first of September j^m vj^c nynty-nyne years.

THE which day, the Lord Provost Ballives Council and Deacons of Crafts ordinar and extraordinar being conveend in Council The Com-

AR^D MURE *Prov^t.*

W^M MENZIES *Baillie.*

AR^D RULE *Baillie.*

GEO: MITCHELL *Baillie.*

JAMES NAIRNE *Baillie.*

1698 PATTRICK HALYBURTTOUN.
Deinagill [Dean of Guild.]

SA: M^CLELLAN *Thes^r.*

JOHN MEIKELL.

mittee appointed to consider the petitione given in be JOHN MEIKLE Founder anent the Cheyme of Musicall Bells Reported, that they having heard him fully thereanent did find that over & above his Contract with the Good Toun, he did furnish six other Musicall Bells, and having taken advyce of the best musicians in the Toun anent the said Cheyme of Bells, They declared that they were extraordinary well done, and that the Nobility, Gentry, and the whole nightboors of the Good Toun were well pleased and satisfied therewith, and the Committee having considered that the said John Meikle was really a considerable loser by his Contract with the Toun, and that he had been at great expences in goinge abroad to take advyce and buy the metall, and his frequent casting of severall of the said Bells thrie or four times befor they could be brought to their true tune Were therefor of opinion in consideratione of his great trouble, charges and expences, and the making of the said six other musicall Bells not containd in his Contract, and upon his making other two big Bells F & G Sharp he should have the summ of One Thousand pounds Scots in satisfaction. of what he can ask or demand of the Good Toun, As the Report under the hands of the Committee bears, which being considered be the Council, they approved thereof and appoints the said John Meikle to make the foresaid two Bells F and G # to be tuned at the sight and by the advyce of the persones containd [named in the former Contract, and appoints the present Toun Thesaurer to pay to him the one-half of the forsaid summ of Ane thousand pound Scots presently and upon the finishing and delivering of the said two other Bells, appoints the said Thesaurer to pay the other half, in satisfaction of all that he can ask or crave of the Good Toun upon that account or any other manner of way Whereanent thir presents with his discharge shall be a warrant.

(Extracted) JA. STEWART.

DECLARATONE MR BARCLAY AND MR TOWARD ANENT THE TWO BELLS
F AND G #. 1700.

WEE, Mr George Barclay Minister and Francis Toward Musick Master doe hereby testifie and declare to the Hono^{bl} Counsell of Edr That the two Bells F and G sharp which John Meikle founder was appointed by Act of Counsell to furnish are accordinglie casten and furnished by him;

and are weel tunn'd bells and have been hinging and play'd upon in the high steeple of this Burgh these thrie months bygane As witnes these presents subscribed with our hands Att Edinburgh the twenty-fourth day of July 1700 years

GEO. BARCLAY.
FRANCIS TOWARD.

On the back of the above Act of Counsell there are two receipts by Meikle, or as he writes it, Meikell, acknowledging his having received from George Lawson present Toun Thesaurer the sum of £500 Scots, 27th November 1699; and of other £500 in full and compleat payment, &c. 5th July 1700; each of them are signed

JOHN MEIKELL.

In the Treasurer's Accounts, 1698-1700, these sums are thus entered :

“ To John Meikle in compleat payment of the Musick Bells, per Act^t and discharge £1000 (Scots).”

WEDNESDAY, 16th *February* 1859.

ROBERT CHAMBERS, Esq., in the Chair.

The following Gentlemen were balloted for and elected Fellows of the Society :—

FOUNTAIN WALKER, of Foyers, Esq.
ALEXANDER THOMSON, of Banchory, Esq.
GEO. AULDJO JAMESON, Esq.

The Donations to the Museum and Library included the following :—

The Pistols of the Poet ROBERT BURNS. By the Right Rev. BISHOP GILLIS. These weapons are a pair of double-barrelled, smooth-bored pistols, 16 inches in length, the barrels being 10½ inches long, with flint locks, and the name BLAIR engraved on the lock-plate; and LONDON in sight or centre groove between barrels; the letters DB and double proof

stamp being repeated on each barrel. The Pistols are full stocked, of walnut wood, with chamfered butts, small silver name-plate, and have ironwood ramrods. (See the communication respecting this donation, at the subsequent meeting.

Fragment (being nearly half) of a coarse Clay Urn, containing in the clay scales of mica; 5 inches high and about 4 in diameter, ornamented with straight lines made by twisted cord, alternating with rows of small circles; it was found at Ardochy, on the Estate of Glenquoich, Inverness-shire. Some Pieces of Charcoal dug up in a Stone Circle near Callernish, in the Lewis. By Right Hon. EDWARD ELLICE, Esq., M.P. Mr ELLICE accompanied the donation with the following descriptive account:—

“The vase or urn was discovered in 1856, in the course of deep trenching some low land at Ardochy, on the estate of Glenquoich, about six miles west from Invergarry, on the road to Loch Hour Head. The workmen came upon a flat stone about 18 inches below the surface, which was found to be the cover of a stone receptacle (or cist), about $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet long by 2 feet wide. This receptacle was formed of single flat slabs of stone—bottom, top, sides, and ends—the jar was then perfect, and stood open in the middle of this place. It had some black greasy-looking deposit inside about an inch in depth, and the bottom of the receptacle was also covered by deposit of the same colour and description, quite different from the surrounding soil. This is the description given me by the workmen. They emptied the jar, and washed it, breaking one side off in the operation; their idea being that it contained burnt flesh or bones. The receptacle was broken up and ploughed in long before I heard of the discovery.

“The charcoal was taken by myself out of a small stone fireplace or altar at the foot of the largest of the stones in the druidical circle near Callernish, in the island of Lewis, July 1858.

“I happened to be there whilst the excavations ordered by Sir James Matheson were taking place. The tops of the stones had alone been visible above the moss till the excavation was begun. The moss was then dug out to the depth of above 7 feet, very solid; heavy black peat of slow growth, on the top of a rising ground, from which there was drainage on all sides. The excavations disclosed an inner circle of

smaller stones, the whole of the floor inside the outer circle being causewayed, and there being four other altars or fireplaces similar to the one from which I took the charcoal. The bottoms of these altars were paved with smooth round seashore pebbles, which must have been brought a distance of more than 20 miles, the nearest place where such stones can be found. Several of the stones of the outer circle were lying prostrate upon the paved floor. These must have fallen before the moss began to grow. (See page 212, and Plate XXV.)

"This circle is about three quarters of a mile distant from the great cross of stones at Callernish, described in Pennant, [figured and described in Vol. III. of Proceedings of Soc. Ant. Scot., page 380, and Vol. IV. page 110]. There was more charcoal in these stones, but I only brought away this piece as a curiosity. Some bones had been found in another altar of the same description at the great cross, but I did not see them. They had been sent away to Stornoway, and the workmen could not form any idea as to what they had belonged to."

A Six-sided Pot Quern, with centre iron pivot, and ring, and three depressions on upper stone; 16 inches in diameter by 10½ inches deep outside, found in the removal of an old building near Warriston Close, during the formation of the new street from the High Street to the Waverley Bridge. From the DIRECTORS of the RAILWAY STATION ACCESS COMPANY.

Small Stone Celt or Hatchet and Flint Arrow Head, from Canada.
By A. W. BUIST, Esq., Berryhills, Fife.

Abury Illustrated, by William Long, Esq., M.A. Devizes, 1858. 8vo, pp. 72. By JOHN THURNAM, M.D., Devizes.

Notes on the prior existence of the *Castor fiber* in Scotland. Edinburgh, 1858. 8vo, pp. 40. By CHARLES WILSON, M.D., F.R.C.P.E., the Author.