

I.

NOTICE OF AN EARLY MS. OF FORDUN'S CHRONICLE, THE PROPERTY OF
ALEXANDER PRINGLE, Esq., OF WHYTBANK. BY W. F. SKENE, Esq.,
LL.D., F.S.A. SCOT.

Since the volume containing the Latin text of Fordun's Chronicle has been printed and circulated, another early MS. has been communicated to me through Mr Douglas the publisher, by Mr Pringle of Whytbank, to whom it belongs. I was not aware of its existence, and regretted that it had not been made known to me in time to have included it in the account of the MSS. which I have from time to time laid before the Society, and which I prefixed, in the shape of a preface, to the printed text. Fortunately, an examination of the MS. has relieved me of the feeling of regret, which I also had, that I had not known of it in time to use it in collating the text. I think, however, it is desirable that I should at all events communicate a short account of it to the Society, so as to add it to the notices of the other MSS. of Fordun which have already appeared in your Proceedings.

It is a MS. of the fifteenth century, written on parchment, and apparently not in the same hand throughout, the latter part being, so far as I can judge, written in a different hand from the former. The initial letters are rubricated throughout, but the larger initials at the

beginning of Books I., II., III., and IV., have been cut out, to which extent the MS. has been injured. In other respects it is in good preservation. The titles of the chapters are also rubricated as far as the twelfth chapter of Book IV., after which they have been left blank, and are written in a later hand.

The oldest name on the MS. is "Hen. Sinclar episcopus de Ross." It occurs at the top of the second folio, and also at the end of the MS. He was of the Rosslin family, was Bishop of Ross from 1560 to 1564, and the MS. appears to have belonged to him. The next name is "W. Santclair of Roislin Knecht." It occurs at the end of Book I., and also at the end of the MS., after the Bishop's signature, where the date is added, "Anno Domini Mv^olxv" or 1565. He was the Bishop's nephew, and a well-known collector of MSS. His name appears on several of the MSS. of Fordun. The next name on the MS. is the following:—"Liber Magistri Roberti Elphinstone," also at the end of the MS. On the next blank leaf is "Mr Alexander Thomesone Pastor Edinensis 1636;" and on the first page is "Ex Libris Dⁿⁱ Guil. Cunninghame de Caprintoun." From the Caprinton family it passed to the present possessor, Mr Pringle of Whytbank, through his mother, who was one of the co-heiresses of the last Sir William Cunynghame of Caprinton.

In the list of MSS. of Fordun extant in 1701, which was made out by Father Thomas Innes, and is printed at the end of my first paper in your Proceedings, vol. viii. p. 239, is the following:—"Scotichron in your Patr. Russel Carthus. 7 libris penes Wil. Cuningham." This is the MS. in question, as it also contains seven books, and it is here attributed to Patrick Russell, because after Book V. occurs the following colophon:—"Predictos quinque libros Dominus Johannes Fordoun presbyter compilavit. Residuum vero quod sequitur continuavit Dompnus Patricius Russaill Monachus Vallis Virtutis ordinis Cartusiensis et ad finem perduxit, additis tamen interim et incertis nonnullis ab incerto autore prout et in prioribus quinque libris." This colophon is written in a later hand, and has been added subsequently to the transcription of the MS. It is precisely the same which is also added in a later hand to the Donibristle MS., a very different MS., as it contains the whole sixteen books. I have already shown that the Carthusian MS. in the Advocates' Library is the real compilation of Patrick Russell, and that the

colophon properly belongs to the Harleian MS., which appends a continuation, taken from the Carthusian MS., to the five books of Fordun, and where a similar colophon in the same handwriting as the continuation is to be found. As the Donibristle MS. bears on the last page a memorandum to the effect that it "is sene oure be Williame Sanclair of Roislin knyght," and his name also appears on this MS., it is probable that Sir William Sinclair caused this colophon to be added to both MSS. It is singularly inappropriate to this MS., as it contains the original work of Fordun only, without any continuation.

I have examined the MS. very carefully, and I find that it corresponds closely with the Wolfenbüttel MS., and is in fact an exact counterpart of it. The contents are exactly the same, and any mistakes of the transcriber of the Wolfenbüttel MS. are here repeated. The handwriting is of the same period, and I should have been inclined to think that they might possibly have been two transcripts of the same original, were it not for two circumstances which point to this MS. having been transcribed from the Wolfenbüttel MS.

In my account of the Wolfenbüttel MS. I mentioned that "in the first thirty-three chapters, which are beautifully written, the initial letters and the titles to the chapters are rubricated; but the rubrical initial letters and titles are after that omitted, a blank space is left for them, and the writing becomes less careful. At the end of Book II., chapter 52, we find the sentence—'Deo dicamus gratias. Plume me fault pour meulx escripre et du vermoeil pour rubrichier;'—that is, 'I have not a pen that will write better, nor vermilion for rubricating.'" Now, in this MS. the initial letters and the titles of the chapters are carefully rubricated throughout this part of the MS.; but, notwithstanding, the apology is carefully repeated, as if the scribe had been copying mechanically a MS. in which he found it, for though applicable to the Wolfenbüttel MS., it is quite inappropriate to his own transcript. He adds, however, in rubrical letters, "quod L . . laday," which is evidently meant for the name of the writer of the Wolfenbüttel MS.; but though the first letter appears to be an L, the next letter is erased, and the word "laday" partially so. He then adds, also in rubrical letters, "Explicit liber secundus. Graces a Dieu."

After the table of contents of the Third Book he repeats the expression

in the Wolfenbüttel MS. of "Quod my gray gusse penne," and adds in rubrical letters, "Expliciunt tituli capitulorum libri tercii;" and at the foot of the page, "Incipit liber tercius Cronicarum per magistrum (mā) A. L." At the end of the Third Book is in rubrical letters, "Explicit liber tercius per moy L. . . ." Here the name had been written in full, and has been erased. After the table of contents of Book IV. we have in rubrical letters, "Expliciunt tituli capitulorum libri quarti;" and at the foot of the page, in rubrical letters, "Incipit liber quartus Cronicarum. Dieu en soit loué;" that is, "God be praised for it." The rubrical titles cease with chapter 12 of this book, and the handwriting changes in the middle of chapter 41, after which we find no more of these rubrics. The scribe seems to have been a foreigner, from the use of these French expressions.

In the subsequent part of the MS. the antiphon "Tu autem Domine," which occurs in that part of the Wolfenbüttel MS., is omitted, and the expression at the end of Book V., chapter 9, "and yai ware hande for hande;" but other expressions are copied. That part of the Wolfenbüttel MS. which forms Appendix I. in the printed volume breaks off abruptly in the middle of a sentence, and so does this MS. In the Wolfenbüttel MS., in that part which forms Appendix III. of the printed volume, the scribe in copying has transposed a leaf, and the same mistake has been made in this MS.; but the leaf has been cut out for the purpose of putting it in its proper place, and is now loose. At the end of the MS., on a blank page, is the following in large letters:—"Servire deo regnare est, quod J. de L.," which probably gives the initials of the scribe.

It is obvious that this MS. is an exact counterpart of the Wolfenbüttel MS., and is a transcript made about the same time. The text corresponds so exactly that it would not have afforded me any variant readings had I had it to collate when I was editing the Latin text; and its value consists in this, that we have in this country a duplicate of the Wolfenbüttel MS. from which I took the text of Fordun, and which, from its being in a foreign library, is not readily accessible.