

III.

NOTE ON AN ORIGINAL DOCUMENT IN THE HANDWRITING OF WILLIAM BRYDONE (OR BRYDEN), IN ALL PROBABILITY THE TOWN-CLERK OF SELKIRK, WHO IS SAID TO HAVE FALLEN AT FLODDEN. BY JOSEPH BAIN, F.S.A. Scot.

The beautiful ballad "The Flowers of the Forest," given in the *Border Minstrelsy*, is said to have been written to commemorate the heavy loss of the men of Selkirk, eighty of whom, with Sir William Brydone, their town-clerk, are believed to have fallen at the battle of Flodden. Tradition adds that James IV. knighted the gallant town-clerk the evening before the battle. Brydone's sword, in Sir Walter Scott's time, was said to be in the hands of a descendant of the same name at Selkirk, and the town possessed a banner said to have been captured from the English at Flodden. This last is not described by Sir Walter. An eminent, though sometimes severe, critic, Ritson, according to Sir Walter, doubted the authenticity of the story, in respect of the number slain, for he thought that eighty shoemakers were out of all proportion to the size of a small Border town. Sir Walter, however, and the authorities quoted by him, argued that perhaps the word "souters" meant no more than burgesses, shoemaking being the principal if not sole trade there. As to the town-clerk, he observes that he was a notary in that capacity, as shown by his signature to various deeds. Now it is curious that it does not seem to have occurred to Sir Walter, as a lawyer, that Brydone as a notary must necessarily have been a churchman, as all notaries were before the Reformation, holding their commissions from the Pope or the Emperor. This subject was recalled to my mind on reading the original document now described.¹

¹ Sir Henry Dryden showed it among other old deeds to me at Canons Ashby last autumn, as having been sent to him many years ago on account of the notary's name being "Dryden." On looking at it I saw the D was a B. On this Sir Henry kindly gave it to me from its interest as regards Brydone, and I promised to make a note of it for the Society's *Proceedings*.

This is an instrument of seisin, dated 31st May 1508 in favour of Sir William Cranstoun of that Ilk, Knight, in two husbandlands called "the Stewart lands," in the lordship of Craling and barony of Mynto, in Roxburghshire, in virtue of a precept by the overlord Sir John Stewart of Mynto, Knight, dated 19th of same month.

It is somewhat dilapidated by time, and worn away in parts. The chief interest is in the usual notarial docquet. There, "Willelmus Bryden presbiter Glasguensis Dioceseos ac publicus auctoritate Imperiali notarius," attests the transaction, and states that the document was written "manu meâ." Now I have scarcely a doubt, looking at the nearness of time and place, that this person is the same as the town-clerk of Selkirk. Being a priest, he was entitled to the appellation of "Dominus" or "Sir," as a "Pope's Knight," and there was no necessity for the king conferring knighthood on him, if indeed the king could knight a churchman, which I doubt. His wearing a sword may also be questionable, as the proper weapon of a churchman was a club or mace. But the Borderers were a rough people, and churchmen may not have been strictly confined to the use of the priestly weapon in those parts.

But he certainly could not leave lawful descendants, though those who call themselves so may be collateral.

Tradition has here, as usual, made considerable additions to the substratum of original fact—in itself of considerable interest.