

VII.

IS "JOHN KNOX'S HOUSE" ENTITLED TO THE NAME? BY CHARLES
J. GUTHRIE, ADVOCATE, F.S.A. SCOT.

In this paper I propose to answer the old question,—“Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is?” (1 Sam. ix. 18), and to maintain that what we have all hitherto known as John Knox's House in the High Street of Edinburgh is entitled to that name, because, during a portion at least of his residence in Edinburgh, John Knox resided in it.

The house has survived assaults from many quarters. In 1849 the Dean of Guild ordered its removal as dangerous, and also, it is believed, because it unduly narrowed the street. This attack was successfully repelled by the proprietors of the house, nobly assisted by the Society of Antiquaries, led by the Honorary Secretary, Mr—now Sir Daniel—Wilson, and backed up by a large section of the general public throughout Scotland.

Thereafter the house was repaired at great cost. The roof was renewed. The upper portion of the front wall above where the outside woodwork begins, was taken down and rebuilt with the old stones; the projecting window on the south side which had fallen down at the time when the front of the adjoining house, Lord Balmerino's, collapsed, was replaced; modern internal divisions were taken out, and other repairs were effected from time to time, with the view first to restore the house as nearly as possible to its original condition when it was Knox's residence, and second, to ensure its permanence. Recently the lower, and in themselves less interesting, rooms have been fitted up as a library for John Knox's works in all their editions, for writings of his contemporaries, and for later writings illustrative of his life and times; and also as a gallery of portraits of Knox and his contemporaries, and pictures of the places in Scotland, England, France, and Switzerland in which he lived and laboured.

The temple of Janus remained shut for thirty-five years. But in 1887 there appeared in the *London Standard* a letter stating that,

while the site of the present house was the site of Knox's actual residence, the present house itself was not more than forty years old, and that it had in short no more to do with John Knox than with John Bunyan. The startling thing about this letter was that the writer professed to "mind the biggin' o't." It fell to me to point out in reply that the writer was confounding John Knox's house with the adjoining house of Lord Balmerino, which was entirely removed about the date mentioned by him. He did not attempt a rejoinder; and so that siege was raised. Recently an attack on the authenticity of the house has been made in this learned Society. Dr Miller has not directly asserted his ability to prove that Knox never resided in the house which now bears his name, but I observe that the newspapers which have dealt with the matter have assumed that to have been his object; and I shall discuss the matter on that footing, and give the reasons why I think this new assault has left entirely untouched the authenticity of the house popularly known as John Knox's.

By some it may be thought that I am attaching too much importance to the question. From this opinion I venture to differ. I prefer the view taken by this Society in 1849. The proprietors of the house might be considered prejudiced in its favour when, appealing for funds to repair the house, they said, "In raising the necessary sum we look for aid of the Society of Scottish Antiquaries and the public generally, who have so nobly stepped forward at the very hint of outrage to so dear a relic." The action of the Society of Antiquaries cannot be thus discounted. Sir Daniel Wilson, writing on 25th June of that year on behalf of our Committee, referred to the house as "so interesting a relic, and so picturesque an ornament of our Scottish capital," and said: "The Committee are unanimous in their desire to leave no means unemployed for rescuing the ancient mansion from destruction." At the citizens' meeting held in the same month, chiefly convened through Sir Daniel's exertions, a resolution was passed "strongly reprobating the destruction of the mansion of the great Scottish Reformer as disgraceful to the national character, and destructive of one of the most interesting features of the Scottish capital;" and in a circular issued by a general committee, comprising such men as Adam Black, Sir George Harvey,

Sir William Allan, Professor Shank More, Sir James Y. Simpson, Dr David Laing, and Sir Daniel Wilson (I name them by their later and more familiar designations), this statement was made:—"The Committee confidently appeal to every true-hearted Scotsman to show, in an age when Germany has preserved the lodgings of Goethe and Schiller—when Italy still reveres the mansion of Tasso, and venerates even the doorway of Dante's house—when England has just rescued from destruction the dwelling of Shakespeare—and when France holds sacred the houses of Corneille and Voltaire—that Scotland regards as no less sacred her memorials of genius, and the debt of gratitude she owes to her great Reformer."

First consider on whom does the burden of proof lie. I unhesitatingly assert that the onus, and a very heavy onus, lies on anyone who asserts that Knox's house has no title to the name. They have to overcome the enormous presumption which arises from the recorded acceptance of the genuineness of the house since, at least, 1806, when the house was described as Knox's in Stark's "Picture of Edinburgh," published in that year. I shall show immediately that prior to that date there were no publications in which you would expect to find the tradition mentioned. If so, thence arises another presumption, recognised in all systems of law because derived from common sense, that a tradition probable in itself and reported so long ago as universally accepted, must be presumed to have come down from the time to which it relates.

Observe the facts as to this universal belief in the genuineness of John Knox's house.

Not only has this house been treated in all guide-books and histories written during this century as entitled to the name, but all the works dealing with the subject written by the most competent antiquaries have equally admitted the justice of the claim. I refer to such books as Sir Daniel Wilson's *Memorials of Edinburgh*, and the Bannatyne Club's *Charters of the Collegiate Church of St Giles, Edinburgh*. Further, the house has been accepted as genuine by the two men—both of them learned and cautious antiquarians—who have done most to place Knox's life and Knox's works in the commanding position which they now

occupy. I mean his biographer, Thomas M'Crie, and the editor of the six volumes of his works, David Laing. Last, but not least, as I have incidentally mentioned already, this Antiquarian Society committed itself long ago to the same view. Why did the Society of Antiquaries join with the proprietors of the house in a resolution to use every endeavour to preserve it? Solely and entirely because unquestionably it had been the house of the Reformer.

It is said that the only evidence in favour of the house is that of tradition. Be it so. The same sneer would deprive us of Shakespeare's birthplace at Stratford, and of Bunyan's cottage at Elstow, of half the articles which excited such intense interest in the Tudor, Stuart, and Guelph Exhibitions, and of a large number of the treasures in our own Museum, including John Knox's pulpit and Jenny Geddes' stool. The value of tradition is a question of circumstances. Than implicit acceptance of everything that tradition tells us, however contrary to probability, there is nothing more absurd—except absolute rejection of every thing, however probable, which stands only on tradition. Here every circumstance accords with the truth of the tradition—the fact that the house was admittedly in existence in Knox's time; its proximity to St Giles'; its prominent position, the nature of its ownership at the time, which will be referred to immediately; and its ample internal accommodation, both natural and necessary for a man who was in constant communication and intercourse with the greatest in the land—Scotch nobility and gentry and foreign ambassadors—all correspond with what one would expect to find in John Knox's house. Inside the house a room is now shown as John Knox's study, which has not only a traditional right to that name, but exactly accords with that "warm study of daills" (that is, as I take it, lined with deals), which the Town Council ordered to be made for John Knox in 1561. And the amount and character of the rest of the house accord with the amount and character of the accommodation which a man in Knox's position might be expected to possess. But not only ought a tradition to accord with probability; to be of any value it must be reasonably continuous. For instance, the traditional sites in Jerusalem are utterly worthless because, for 300 years after the death of Christ, no Christian was allowed within the Holy City. When Christians ulti-

mately returned to Jerusalem they had no means whatever except the purest conjecture for fixing the holy sites. In Edinburgh, on the other hand, during the 300 years which have elapsed since Knox's death, a statement as to the locality of Knox's house would inevitably be handed on from one generation to another, down a line of unbroken interest and belief in the Reformer and his work. Why that statement should be made about the wrong house rather than the right, I cannot imagine.

How then is it proposed to overcome this presumption? Partly by positive evidence derived from extant documents, and partly by certain arguments founded on what it is suggested would probably happen. The first requires careful consideration; in regard to the second I shall merely remark meantime that except it amount to necessary inference it can never overcome the presumptions above mentioned.

Take first the positive evidence. It has been stated as if the documentary evidence as to where Knox lived in Edinburgh covered practically the whole period from his settling in Edinburgh in 1560 to his death in 1572. But the document which formed the foundation of the whole argument against the present house is dated 8th April 1563, nine years before the Reformer's death, and is in no way inconsistent with John Knox's subsequent residence in a different house from the one mentioned in it. And the very latest of any of the writings relied on against my view is of date 4th March 1569. I want to emphasize this point, because, if I am stating it correctly, it results in the total failure of my opponents to achieve their object. After doing their very worst, they leave three years and ten months up to 24th November 1572, when Knox died, during which they are unable to adduce any proof whatever against the tradition that he resided in the house in question. I challenge their conclusions as to the preceding period. But I do so more as an antiquarian than from my interest in the existing house. Neither I nor the general public care much where Knox spent the earlier years of his time in Edinburgh. What we want to see is not the 39 Castle Street, but the Abbotsford. Assume all the views of my opponents about the years from 1560 to 1563, or even to 1569, to be correct. If the last three, nearly four, years are left untouched, there is

sufficient for every lover of the house to identify in it the place where Knox spent part of the crowning years of his unique career, and which witnessed the death of the greatest clergyman and the greatest statesman whom Scotland has yet produced.

But, while no *evidence* is forthcoming relating to these latter years, four suggestions have been made to justify the belief, or rather, I should say, the impression—for they could never justify a belief—that Knox was not resident during these years in the present house.

First, it is said that the titles of the house make no mention of Knox. This is the suggestion of a layman, which to any one skilled in title-deeds will only provoke a smile. You look in titles for the names of *proprietors*, not tenants; and I know neither evidence nor probability that Knox owned any part of the house in question.

Second, it is alleged that the house belonged in Knox's time to James Mosman, the goldsmith, and that the Town Council Records contain no entries of payment of rent to James Mosman. Neither they do; they do not contain payment of rent after 1569 to James Mosman or to anybody else, for the very good reason that, as the Council Records show, Knox was getting in these later years a regular stipend, out of which he evidently paid his own house rent. His stipend from the town, not to speak of an extra salary also paid to him, was considerably higher than the salary of the Judges of the Court of Session, and not much lower than that of the English Judges of the same period.

Third, it is objected that the house is not referred to as John Knox's in such works of last century as Hugo Arnot's *History of Edinburgh*, or Maitland's *History of Edinburgh*. This argument ignores the point of view from which these works were written. Even a cursory perusal of them shows that their authors dealt with Knox only in his public capacity, and evinced neither interest in him nor knowledge of him in his private life. They neither refer to this house nor to any other house as occupied by him. Besides, this argument proves too much. It would equally disprove the authenticity of Moray House, Queensberry House, and many other residences of eminent persons, none of which are associated in these histories with these persons. If my opponents pursue this method of reasoning far enough, they may earn the proud

epitaph of having deprived Edinburgh of all her most interesting mansions.

Suggestion number four is founded on the alleged recent origin of the tradition. It does not appear to be mentioned in any earlier printed work than Stark's *Picture of Edinburgh*, published in 1806. Two observations, in addition to what has been already said, fall to be made under this head. First, to be of any force, earlier works must be produced in which the tradition is absent, and where it would naturally have been expected to receive notice. None are put forward except Arnot's and Maitland's *Histories*, neither of which are in point. In truth, Stark's was the first of the modern guide-book series. But, second, in Stark's book the tradition is dealt with as something well known to all and accepted by all; just as it is in 1811, in Dr M'Crie's first edition of his *Life of Knox*, and, as I shall point out immediately, it is somewhat singular, if the tradition was an invention referable to that period, that no one should have then made the discovery and exposed the fraud. A part of what Stark says is worth quoting:—"Among the antiquities of Edinburgh may be mentioned the house of the great Scottish Reformer, John Knox. It stands on the north side, at the foot of the High Street, and projecting into the street, reduces it nearly one half of its width." Then after a description of the front, he adds, "The edifice itself is one of the oldest stone houses in Edinburgh. As in the course of the improvements of the city this building will in a few years perhaps be removed, it is to be wished that the sculptured stones could be preserved, in memory of a man who, whatever were his faults, by his bold eloquence and undaunted conduct pulled down the fabric of a superstition which had shackled the mind for ages."

If then there is neither evidence nor plausible suggestion to overcome the tradition that Knox lived in the present house during the last three or four years of his life, let us accept meanwhile all the views propounded by Dr Miller in reference to the preceding period, and observe the strong probabilities thence arising in favour of the house as Knox's residence during his later years. We are told that at 4th March 1569, when the documentary evidence ends, Knox was inhabiting Robert Mowbray's house, then in the possession of John Adamson and his wife Bessy Otter-

bourne. According to Dr Miller that was a back tenement, and therefore out of public view and access, and almost necessarily badly lighted. What more natural than that Knox, in his later and most honoured years, accustomed to entertain ambassadors and the Lords of the Congregation, accustomed to receive messengers from the Court, should have been provided or should have provided himself with a house fronting the street, and with apartments more spacious than any house behind could have contained? Then it appears from the Town Council Minutes, dated 1568 and 1569, that not only was the house he inhabited during those years in bad repair, but that his landlord John Adamson and his spouse were unwilling to put their house into proper repair for Knox's accommodation. These facts make it still more probable that Knox would remove from a house so dilapidated and so churlishly administered.

Assume, then, that John Knox's house was from 1569 to 1572 the property of James Mosman, the jeweller, an adherent of Queen Mary's cause, who was hanged as a traitor in 1573, is there any improbability in Knox being Mosman's tenant during those years? It cannot be suggested that Mosman must necessarily have lived in the house himself, because Mosman had other houses in Edinburgh, specially in Forrester's Wynd and in Liberton's Wynd. He was what we would now call a property speculator, or very probably these heritages may have come to him in banking transactions in connection with bad debts. His age was one of money-lending, discountenanced by the law, but openly carried on under an elaborate system of ingenious devices in conveyancing for evading the statutes against usury.

I would be quite content to leave the matter on the footing above explained, namely, that no reason whatever has been shown for doubting the accuracy of the tradition that Knox lived in the house in question during the portion of the last three years of his life which he spent in Edinburgh, and died there. But since the matter has been stirred, I think it is right to point out shortly the grave doubts which the very documents founded on by Dr Miller throw on his whole theory, even in reference to the earlier period from 1560 to 4th March 1569, and to indicate the reasons which exist for believing that, at all events for a portion of that time, Knox resided in the house now associated with his name.

The view against me as to the period from 1560 to 1569 involves two assumptions: First, that Knox resided all the time from 1560 to 1569 in Robert Mowbray's house, and second, that Mowbray's house was a back tenement, and therefore cannot be the house in question.

Consider, first, the assumption that Knox resided all the time in Mowbray's house.

My first observation is that for at least fifteen months of the time Knox did not reside in that or any other house in Edinburgh. Rizzio was murdered on 9th March 1566. Knox was suspected, I believe quite unjustly, of complicity in the murder. He fled within a few days thereafter, first to Kyle, and then to England. Before the end of the month—as Randolph, the English ambassador, writing from Berwick to the Earl of Bedford mentions—Knox's house, along with the houses of the others suspected of complicity in the murder, was, to use his own words, "taken and spoiled." That meant that John Knox would take away his few books, and that his furniture and other goods would be appropriated or destroyed. Such an occurrence was very likely to have broken the continuity of Knox's residence, and to have led him, when he returned in June or July 1567, into a different house. The same conclusion is borne out by the different names of the proprietors to whom Knox's house maill was paid by the Town Council. Not to mention the earlier names of John Cairns and others prior to November 1560, we find house maill paid to Robert Mowbray between 1560 and 1564, to Robert Scott's spouse in 1566, and to John Adamson and Bessy Otterbourne in 1568 and 1569. In regard to Robert Scott's spouse, it cannot be said that Robert Mowbray was dead in 1566, because the register of deeds in the Town Council Chambers shows that Robert Mowbray was dealing in property on 10th May 1567. From the evidence as a whole I conclude that while Knox certainly occupied Mowbray's house from Martinmas 1560 till sometime in 1564, it is almost certain that he was in other houses between 1564 and 1569. Assuming now that Mowbray's house was not identical with the present house, there is nothing to show that for a part of the time Knox was not in the present house, as well as during the subsequent period from 1569 to his death in 1572. Thus assuming Mowbray's house not to have been the present house, as to which

I shall speak immediately, the case against the present house is reduced to this, that Knox was not in it from November 1560 to November 1564, that is, for four years out of the twelve during which more or less continuously he resided in Edinburgh.

To come now to the second question—Is the present house proved not to have been the one belonging to Mowbray?

This can be considered from two points of view. It might be proved that the present house was James Mosman's, in which case it might be plausibly argued that it could not have been Mowbray's, although even that inference would need to be taken under reservation of those complicated wadset transactions so unintelligible to laymen, under which you often had truly two separate proprietors, the one the real and the other the ostensible. It is the knowledge of such transactions as these which always makes lawyers slow to accept views on Scotch feudal conveyancing from antiquarians who do not fully understand the highly technical documents in which they are contained.

But there is another method of proof. Positive evidence may be adduced to show that Mowbray's house was in a different situation from that occupied by the present house. Both methods have been tried, and, as I read the documents, both have failed.

The identification of the house as Mosman's rests on statements of alleged identifications of certain fixed points. The ground of these identifications has not been stated. But in a question of this sort, where everything depends on the correct scientific reading of mediæval Latin documents, I must decline to accept any such identifications without a full recital of the steps by which they are reached. The documents must be set out because each of them will require separate consideration, both of its meaning and of its trustworthiness. A pretty extensive acquaintance with documents of the period in question does not incline me to place absolute trust either in their verbal or general accuracy. The conveyancing of the period was full of legal and actual fictions. Cases are not unknown where false boundaries were deliberately introduced into titles, in order, by prescriptive possession, to acquire ground to which the possessor had no right whatever. These words of warning would be pertinent, even if we had original deeds still extant.

But we have not even got copies of them. We have only a description of a feudal transaction taken by the Town Clerk or one of his subordinates, who might, for aught that we can tell, be the most inexact and inaccurate of men. It is a delusion born of happy ignorance to speak as if the entries in the Town Clerk's protocol books were unquestionably accurate. The untrustworthiness of protocol books was notorious. It was their very untrustworthiness that procured for us our model system of land registration. A statute of 1604, passed to remedy their abuses, states that "his Majesty's subjects had suffered great hurt by a number of the protocols being vitiated and destroyed, by riving out of the leaves, inserting leaves of new paper, falsifying instruments thereupon, and altering the dates of others." That is the sort of mess of pottage on account of which it is gravely suggested that we should give up what every Scotsman considers a part of his birthright! It would, in my view, be nothing short of absurd to peril the existence of one of Edinburgh's greatest sources of interest, as is proposed to be done, on the verbal accuracy of a few words, I might say one word, in—not an original document, or even a compared copy—but only a jotting of a transaction made by a municipal official of absolutely unknown capacity.

Consider now the positive evidence adduced in support of the view that Mowbray's house was in a different situation from the present one. It consists of an isolated entry, dated 8th April 1563, in one of the protocol books kept by the Town Clerk or the Common Clerk, as he was then called, Alexander Guthrie. Now it is right to notice that entries in any such books, however accurately kept, require to be used with caution. For instance, when looking into the subject some years ago, I thought I had made a great discovery when I found in the protocol books of William Stewart, senior, under date 8th and 15th January 1560, references to a house belonging to John Knox. But a further study, not merely of the protocol books, but of the facts of the Reformer's life, satisfied me that the John Knox of the 1560 protocol books could not have been the Reformer, and that I had lighted on a genuine specimen of the genus mare's nest. Further, as already hinted, the value of such books depends entirely on the accuracy of the particular Town Clerk. I have no doubt from the name that this Town Clerk was

a most admirable person, but an examination of his protocol books did not satisfy me that he was specially reliable in respect of accuracy. For instance, I found on folio 40 of the book kept by him an infeftment in favour of the same Robert Mowbray, of certain lands on the south side of the High Street. The southern boundary of these lands is stated to be the Nether Bow. But from the context it appears that the Nether Bow must have been on the east of the property. By a clerical blunder, the Nether Bow is said to be "ex australi parte," instead of "ex orientali parte." This looks a trifling blunder; but, as will presently appear, if Alexander Guthrie or his subordinate made the same mistake with Robert Mowbray's other property, then the whole basis of the argument in favour of Mowbray's house having been in a different situation from the present house disappears. Other holes in Alexander Guthrie's work might easily be picked. For instance, he narrates that the bailie of the burgh who appeared at Robert Mowbray's infeftment was an honourable man, Andrew Sklater; but when subsequently the very same bailie is referred to, he is called "the foresaid Baillie, Mr John Spence." I make these observations, not with the view of putting aside these documents as valueless, but to show the absurdity of the view which accepts everything reduced to a written record, and rejects everything which has come down by oral tradition. Both equally need examination, because in both you may have innocent mistakes, and in both you may have deliberate misrepresentation.

Assume, however, the perfect accuracy of this single isolated entry in Alexander Guthrie's protocol books, on which the whole case against the identification of Robert Mowbray's house with the present John Knox's house is perilled. The view against me is that the boundaries of Mowbray's house are stated in the entry dated 8th April 1563, and that these boundaries show that the house was a back tenement, having a front tenement belonging to some one else facing the street. If this be correct in all its details, it follows that the present house, which is unquestionably a front tenement, could not have been Mowbray's house, and that in 1563 John Knox could not have been residing in the present house. Of course it leaves unaffected the question of where Knox lived during the nine subsequent years before his death.

The entry is as follows :—

"Et ibidem praefatus Robertus totam et integram magnum suam mansionem et edificium unacum horto et cauda ejusdem nunc inhabitatam per Joannem Knox ministrum cum suis pertinentibus jacen infra dictum tenementum inter Borealem Lacum dicti burghi ex boreali et anteriorem terram dicti tenementi ex australi partibus."

I translate the Latin thus :—

"And there the foresaid Robert (resigned) all and whole his large dwelling-house and building, along with a garden and appendage of the same, now inhabited by John Knox, minister, with its pertinents, lying beneath the said tenement, between the North Loch of the said burgh on the north and the front land of the said tenement on the south parts."

The translation is simple enough ; any schoolboy might do it. But the most skilled conveyancers may differ as to the effect of the passage. What is the "said tenement"? Are the boundaries applicable to Robert Mowbray's whole property, or only to the garden and appendages? On the answers to these questions depends the whole theory that Robert Mowbray's house did not face the street. It is enough for my purpose that the matter is left by the Town Clerk in doubt, and that, to say the least of it, there is much to be said for the reading, which, if correct, would make Robert Mowbray the owner of a tenement stretching with its garden and appendage the whole way from the North Loch on the north to the High Street on the south.

In coming to a right judgment on the whole matter, the construction of the house itself cannot be put out of sight. It really contains two houses, one which was formerly entered by a stair with an opening opposite to the Fountain Well, and the other entering by an outside stair facing the High Street. It is not at all impossible that Knox may during part of the period have only inhabited one of these houses, both of which are now included in the present John Knox's house ; so that even if Dr Miller's front tenement had any existence, it would be sufficiently satisfied by applying the name to the portion of the house entering by the outside stair, leaving the back part as the portion actually inhabited by Knox and his family.

In conclusion, the matter may be summed up thus :—The direct evi-

dence adduced against the authenticity of the house has been shown to stop in 1563, leaving nine years unaffected. The unfavourable inferences which are sought to be deduced from later documents have been restricted to 1569, leaving fully three years unaffected; while the suggestions tending to throw doubt on Knox's residence in the house during the three years and ten months subsequent to that date have been shown to be devoid of weight. At the very worst, therefore, those interested in the authenticity of John Knox's house are left with a period of between three and four years during which not even a reasonable doubt of the accuracy of the hitherto universally received tradition has been suggested. In regard to the prior period all that has been proved is what no skilled person ever doubted, namely that John Knox did not live in the house during the whole period.

I close with a point which I commend to the serious consideration of those who may still retain any lingering doubts of the genuineness of our ancient house.

As already mentioned, four years ago I had to expose the absurd suggestion made in the London *Standard* that John Knox's house was first erected not more than forty years ago. The assailants of the house now repudiate that view entirely, arguing strenuously that the faults of the house are not by any means those of youth. Indeed, according to them, it is a very ancient sinner, hoary in its fraud, having successfully deceived at least two generations of credulous Scots and simple-minded foreigners. It is not denied that from its age, its situation, its accommodation, its ownership, it might have been Knox's house; but it is said it was not. Why? Because the tradition associating it with Knox is of recent origin. Disprove that, and this new assault will be as effectually silenced as the other was. The proof is not far to seek. As I have said, it implies ignorance to expect statements about the situation of John Knox's house or any similar person's house in the old histories, which regarded all such trivialities as beneath their dignity. But there is no better proof than that of necessary inference. Here it is.

It is suggested, if not positively asserted, that the tradition originated with Stark in 1806. He was an Edinburgh printer, not a stranger to be gulled by native wags. So I suppose the charge is that Stark deliberately

invented the tradition. At that time Edinburgh possessed five newspapers: the *Caledonian Mercury*, the *Courant*, the *Edinburgh Advertizer*, the *Edinburgh Herald*, and the *Weekly Journal*, and one magazine, the *Scots Magazine*. It is strange that none of these publications should have pounced upon this deliberate fraud, and exposed it to public scorn. It is startling to think that Dr M'Crie, writing his life of Knox at the same period—for his first edition was published in 1811—should have lent himself to a fraud so transparent because so recent. But something stranger remains behind. As mentioned already, in 1849 a fierce discussion took place between the authorities of the Dean of Guild Court on the one hand, and the proprietors of the house, along with the Antiquarian Society, on the other. It was fought not only in the Dean of Guild Court, but in the leader and letter columns of the *Scotsman*, the *Witness*, the *Caledonian Mercury*, and the *Scottish Free Press*. The one side urged the removal of the house because it was ruinous and an obstruction to the thoroughfare. The other urged its preservation because Knox had resided in it. At that time there were thousands of persons in Edinburgh whose memories stretched back far behind the time of Stark's alleged invention. The history of the house became the subject of enquiry by the most skilled antiquarians of the day. Its age and the character of its construction was reported on by such architects as Thomas Hamilton, David Bryce, and R. W. Billings. The preservation of the house was not defended on account of its age. Edinburgh possessed at that time many houses equally old, if not older. It was urged, and successfully urged, solely on the ground of its having been the residence of Knox. If it was not his residence, then the only grounds for its retention disappeared. Why, I should like to know, was the view now presented not even so much as hinted at by those who desired the removal of the house? If the view of the recent origin of the tradition is correct, that must have been known to those who took part in the controversy. Is it conceivable that they would have omitted an argument which lay on the very surface of the question, and the establishment of which would have been absolutely fatal to the views of those who desired to retain the house, because it would have removed the only ground on account of which they desired its retention? The only conclusion which

I can draw is that Stark merely repeated and handed on a well-founded tradition which had come down in unbroken sequence from Knox's own time.

"Magna est veritas et prevalebit." True. Let us, if truth demands the sacrifice, give up John Knox's house, and all the sites associated with the men who have given to Scottish history any interest and importance which it possesses. But if part with them we must, it will only be on positive proof, not on abstract possibilities; on evidence, not on conjectures. Such evidence, such proof—if it exists—has still to be produced.
