

I.

WHERE DID JOHN KNOX LIVE IN EDINBURGH? AND THE LEGEND OF "JOHN KNOX'S HOUSE." BY ROBERT MILLER, F.S.A. Scot.

The first reference to any house provided for the use of John Knox in Edinburgh is to be found in the minute of Council dated 8th May 1560 — "the provest, ballies, and counsall ordanis Alexander Park, thesaurer, to delyuer to Johne Carnis the sowme of xl. li. for furnesching of thair minister John Knox in his houshold; and becaus the said John Knox hes bene furnesit vpone David Forresteris expenssis sen his cuming to this toun be the space of xv. dayis lastbipast, ordanis the said Johne Carnis to ressave the said David comptis, and mak him payment of the sowmes debursit be him on the first end of the sowme of xl. li. to be delyuerit to him." The Dean of Guild's accounts for the period May to October 1560 contain also the following item:—"to Margaret, his barne¹ [Hepburn], the relict of umquhill Patrik Irland, for the said Johnis howss maill at the heving [leaving?] thereof x marks." On the 15th of May in this same year, 1560, the treasurer was ordered to pay for "ane lok to Johne Knox ludgeing."

A difficulty arises at this point as to how many houses are indicated in these references to payments. There might possibly be three, there are almost certainly two, but there might only be one. It is quite permissible to interpret them, in the absence of further identification, as applying to the separate houses of Cairns, Forrester, and Ireland. It is equally permissible to assert that Cairns had made provision for Knox being lodged in Ireland's house at Forrester's expense. The dates would authorise such a supposition, but the probabilities and the natural interpretation of the Council minute are against it.

¹ This curious mistake was made by the clerk when transcribing the accounts in 1560.

The minute of 1st June 1560, by which the treasurer was ordained "to deliyuer to Johne Carnis the sowme of xx. li. for furnesing of Johne Willok, preacher," is one amongst several that would seem to indicate that Cairns, who held the position of "Reader" in St Giles', was also the agent through whom payments were generally made on account of the ministers. The entries, interpreted in this light, refer to him rather as paymaster than as what, in modern parlance, would be described as a "keeper of furnished apartments." As regards Forrester, however, the case is different. It was in his house that Lord Seton, who was Provost of Edinburgh in 1558-59, was lodged, and his expenses were defrayed by the Council. The minute of 2nd September 1559, which orders these expenses to be paid, indicates that Lord Seton resided there from Whitsunday until August. Forrester's house would thus be naturally regarded by the Council as a fitting abode for Knox when he arrived in Edinburgh in 1560, or, at least, until a more permanent residence could be secured.

David Forrester was a bailie of Edinburgh, and a member of one of the old patrician families of the burgh. Adam Forrester was "Alderman" or Provost in 1373. His descendants became the Lord Forresters of Corstorphine, and were the founders of its ancient collegiate church. Forrester's Wynd had its name from them, and it was here that David Forrester lived. This wynd ran from the High Street to the Cowgate, and opened on the High Street on the spot where the Buccleuch statue now stands. Almost opposite Forrester's Wynd, but a little farther to the west, was the entrance to Ireland's Close, named, as was the custom of the time, from a family of Ireland or Irland who resided there. Their house was at the bottom of the close, and stood on a spot opposite the south-east corner of the Bank of Scotland, which is now occupied by the houses of St Giles' Street. This close was afterwards called Dunbar's Close, changing its name, as was the common practice, with its owner. A sasine of 1st February 1754 records that at that date three generations of Dunbars had owned property here. Popular tradition asserted that it was given the new title because houses in it were occupied by the victors

after the Battle of Dunbar, and a house in the neighbouring close was pointed out as the residence of Cromwell himself; but sober history must record the more prosaic reason.

As far back as 1536 (21st November), sasines bear witness to a tenement in this locality which had been possessed by "the late John Ireland," and the property can be traced through sasines of 1538 (28th May), 1538-39 (3rd March), 1540 (4th and 13th November), 1541 (19th August and 23rd December), 1543 (20th December) to 1543 (21st December), when a tenement here came into possession of Patrick Ireland, son of the late John Ireland and Margaret Hepburn, his spouse, by resignation from David Ireland, "son and heir of the said late John," who was seised in the property on the same date by assignation from his mother and her second husband. David possessed already what had been apparently the front portion of his father's property abutting on the High Street.

The property of Patrick Ireland is identified (21st December 1543) as being bounded by "a tenement and lands respectively of John Arbukill and Robert Adamson on the west, the North Loch on the north, and the waste backland of the said tenement on the south, and the tenement and lands respectively of the heirs of the late James M'Calzeane and the late Walter Young on the east." The identification of property from a description of 1543 might possibly be open to challenge as vitiated by the burnings of Edinburgh in 1544 and 1545, but a sasine of 22nd October 1551 identifies the tenement by practically the same boundaries—"tenement of Patrick Ireland, burgess, on the north side of the High Street, between a tenement of Mr Thomas Makcalzeane on the east, a tenement of the late John Arbukle and the late Robert Adamson on the west, and the North Loch on the north." Thomas Makcalzeane had become proprietor, on 4th September 1551, of the half of the property of Walter Young, referred to in the sasine of 1543. This makes the descriptions of 1543 and 1551 identical. It appears from another sasine of 1551 (31st July), and a sasine of 13th April 1552, that Patrick Ireland was a baillie at that time. His ownership of the property described can be traced further through sasines of 12th January 1552-53 and 30th

March 1554, until he is referred to, in connection with the ownership of the same and surrounding properties, as "the late Patrick Ireland" on 1st April 1559. But his name had not quite disappeared from the neighbourhood in 1754, when in the sasine of 1st February already referred to, the tenement in question was described as situated "at the end or foot of the close, of old called Ireland's Close, now Dunbar's Close."

The next item that refers explicitly to any particular house as retained for John Knox is that in the Council minutes for 4th September 1560—"the ballies and counsaill, haveing consideratioun that, for the eis of Johne Knox, minister, Johne Durie, talyeour, removit him furth of the ludgeing occupyt be the abbot of Drumfermeling to the effect the said minister mycht enter thairto, ordanis Alexander Park thesaurer to content and pay to the said Johne Durie the sowme of viij. merkis, and the samyn sall be allowit, etc. ; and als the saidis ballies and counsaill faithfullie promittis that how sone thai may provide the said minister ane vther ludgeing, to enter the said Johne to the possessioun thairof." No other item has yet been discovered that can help to identify the "abbot of Drumfermeling's ludgeing." Wherever it was, it was clearly intended that the occupation should only be temporary. A comparison of dates would indicate that it might either be Patrick Ireland's house already referred to, or another house in which John Knox was residing five months later ; but in any case, his occupation of Ireland's house and of this, if it be a separate house, was of very short duration.

The next item in order, that of 14th February¹ 1560-61, brings us to Knox's first settled residence in Edinburgh, if it again should not be identified with the house that Durie vacated. The treasurer was ordered on that date to pay "Robert Mowbray, heretour of the hous occupyt be Jhone Knox, . . . the sum of x merkis as for the dewtie thairof the tyme the samyne wes occupyt be the said Johne to the fest of Mertynas last and fra thinefurth to pay him termelie according to fyftie merkis in the yeir so lang as the samyne sall be occupyt be him." This extract shows that a fifth part of a year's rent was paid for the time that Knox

¹ In the printed extracts this is 12th February.

occupied this house before Martinmas 1560. Allowing that sum for the broken period of two months, it brings the date of Knox's entry very close to 4th September, on which day he was evidently living in Durie's house. The evidence, however, in favour of the identification of Mowbray's house with Durie's is not conclusive, as it is quite possible, though it can hardly be said probable, that the Council may have succeeded in renting Mowbray's house as a permanent residence for Knox within a few days of the passing of the minute of 4th September. The phraseology of that minute, on the other hand, scarcely points to an occupation of Durie's house that was to extend to over six years.

The Council records show that rent was ordered to be paid for Mowbray's house on 12th February 1560-61, 29th November 1564, "as vther thesavraris hes done of before," and 25th September 1566. It was, therefore, in this house that the "warm study of deals" was erected, which has always been so prominent in the popular accounts of John Knox. The order to build it, which was given to the Dean of Guild on 5th November 1561, was one of the few items from the Council records referring to Knox that had become public property :—"with all deligence to mak ane warme studye of daillis to the minister, Jhonne Knox, within his lugeing abone the hall of the samyn, with lychtis and wyndokis thairto and all vther necessaris." It was in this house that Knox's first wife, Marjorie Bowes, died in the close of the year 1560; and it was to this house that Knox brought his second wife, Margaret Stewart, in 1564, a girl of seventeen. It was here also that Knox entertained the Duke of Chatelherault and the English resident or ambassador, Randolph, at the historical supper-party of the last Sunday in November 1562, when Knox did his best to secure the adhesion of the Duke to the side of the English and the Reformers.

The history of the property on which Mowbray's house stood has been traced back in the protocol books to before 1539. The names of two John Browns, father and son, are prominent in the title-deeds that refer to it. John Brown, the father, had possessed the whole strip of land, with the buildings upon it, that extended from the High Street to the

North Loch. John Brown, the son, would seem to have been the owner only of the portion that fronted the High Street. This John Brown, the younger, was executed in the year 1539 as a heretic, in virtue of a sentence pronounced by Cardinal Beaton ; and his house in the High Street was granted on the forfeiture of his properties to a Mr James Foulis of Colinton, Clerk of the Rolls. "The backlands," extending from this house to the North Loch, were found in possession of Elizabeth Carkettill in the year of this John Brown's death. She, with the consent of her husband, Adam Stewart, resigned this property on 23rd September in this same year to her three daughters—Katherine Hopper, Janet Hopper, and Helen Stewart—and their husbands, with the exception of a small portion at the extreme north end, bounded by the North Loch, and extending $5\frac{1}{4}$ ells from north to south, which she had disposed of to Thomas Chisholm and Helen Napier, his spouse. The first-named of the three daughters was married to Andrew Mowbray. On 22nd November 1549, George Lundy, son of Helen Stewart and David Lundy, became seised of the third of the property that had passed to his mother, and he executed a resignation of this on the same date to Katherine Hopper, described as the relict of the foresaid Andrew Mowbray. On 4th May 1555, Robert Mowbray, son of Katherine Hopper, obtained possession of the whole property that had passed from Elizabeth Carkettill to her daughters, by seizin of his late father's third part of his mother's share, and of the third that belonged to Janet Hopper, described as relict of Mr Hugh Rigg.

It appears from the protocol books of Alexander Guthrie, Town-Clerk of Edinburgh, that an instrument of sasine was expedé on 8th April 1563 in favour of Robert Mowbray, son and heir of the late Andrew Mowbray, and Jonet Cant, his future spouse, in certain properties on both the north and south sides of the High Street, including that already referred to in the sasine of 1555.¹ The description of this latter property is interesting, as it is more particularly identified by being the

¹ The properties already belonged to Mowbray. They were now settled jointly on himself and his future wife.

residence of John Knox,—“thereafter the said bailie (Andrew Sklater) passed to a tenement of land of the late John Brown, lying on the north side of the said burgh, between a tenement of land of David Fernelie on the east, and a tenement of land of Robert Hopper on the west, and there the said Robert (Mowbray) resigned, by delivery of earth and stone into the hands of the said bailie, All and Whole his great mansion and building, together with the garden and tail of the same, now inhabited by John Knox, minister, with their pertinents, lying within the said tenement between the North Loch on the north and the foreland of the said tenement on the south.”

A progress of titles connecting Mowbray's sasine with the title of the present proprietors of the greater portion of the ground, who are the Corporation of Edinburgh, has been made out partly from the protocol books of the various town-clerks, and partly from existing titles. From these the exact situation of the subjects contained in Mowbray's sasine can, with certainty, be ascertained.

The first link in the progress after Mowbray's sasine is a sasine, of date 28th March 1565, in favour of Robert Scott, one of the clerks of the Lords of Council, and Elizabeth Scott, his spouse, proceeding on a resignation by Robert Mowbray and his spouse “of the backlands of the said Robert Mowbray, built and waste, under and above, with garden, tail, waste, porch, close, and transe thereof, having ish and entry by the front and by the back, lying within a tenement of the late John Brown, burgess, on the north side of the High Street, between a tenement of land of the late David Fairlie on the east, and a tenement of the late Robert Hopper on the west, the foreland of the said tenement on the south, and a certain piece of tail of the said lands pertaining to the heirs of the late Thomas Chisholm lying beside the North Loch on the north.” It will be noticed that this latter boundary—that by the late Thomas Chisholm's “piece of tail” on the north—carries back the identification to the resignation executed by Elizabeth Carkettill on 23rd September 1539.¹

¹ As showing the persistence of these old boundaries, this “piece of tail” of Chisholm's is found regularly referred to as late as 1678 (20th May).

The contract of 24th March 1564-65, in pursuance of which this sasine of 1565 was effected, identifies the property further as inhabited by John Knox — “the samyn and all their pertinentis now inhabet be Johnne Knox, minister of Edinburgh, lyand within the burgh of Edinburgh, on the north syd of the Hie Streit thairof, within the tenement of umquhile Johnne Broun, betuix the foirland of the said tenement at the south pairte, and the Pece Tail of land pertening to the airis of umquhile Thomas Chisholme on the north pairte, with the Yet, Throchgand, and Enteres thairto, and all utheris thair pertentis; quhilk Tenement of umquhile Johnne Broun lyis in the said burghe, on the north pairte of the Hie Streit thairof, betuix the tenement of umquhile Farnlie on the east pairte, and the tenement of land (of) umquhile Mr Richard Hopper on the west pairte.”

With this full identification of the property in question, there is no necessity for entering so minutely into the particulars of its history since 1565. Mr Robert Scott, son of the Robert Scott, Clerk of Session, was infeft in the subjects on 23rd September 1568, and to him succeeded his son, John Scott, in 1593 (30th March) (designed in a later sasine as Mr John Scott of Tarvet), who sold the property in 1612 (10th December) to Thomas Spier, merchant, burgess of Edinburgh. On the death of Thomas Spier, his three daughters succeeded (1616, 28th December) to the property, and on one of them dying a few years later, the other two became *pro indiviso* proprietors of one-half each. In 1629 (1st May) Rachael Spier, one of the surviving daughters of Thomas Spier, and then wife of John Jackson, alienated her half to Thomas Charters, merchant. Process of division followed in 1630, and the property was divided up between Thomas Charters and Sarah Spier, who was the other surviving daughter of Thomas Spier, and is described in the sasine to her that followed the proceedings on 1st July 1631, as “relict of Mr Robert Foullis, advocate.” The position of Mowbray’s property becomes localised in more modern terms in the sasine to Charters (1630, 29th April), as bounded by “Bruce’s Close on the west.”¹ Henry Charters, son

¹ A sasine of 25th January 1566, and previous sasines, give the origin of the name

of Thomas Charters, succeeded to his father's portion of the subjects, and alienated it to Sir James Hope of Hopeton, Knight, one of the Senators of the College of Justice, sasine in whose favour was recorded 13th October 1652. The other portion of the subjects also fell into the hands of the Hopeton family, and in 1686 (29th September) Charles Hope of Hopeton alienated the whole subjects to Alexander Abercrombie, vintner. In this sasine the property is again referred to as bounded by "the close called Bruce's Close on the west." Abercrombie appears soon afterwards to have got into difficulties, and Robert Watson, one of his creditors, obtained from the Court of Session, on 1st December 1694, a "decret of vendition and alienation" of the subjects in his favour. That decret was assigned to Robert Mill (or Milne) of Balfarg, the King's master-mason, and Patrick Steill, merchant, burgess of Edinburgh, who were infeft in the same subjects on 18th November 1696. The sasine in their favour narrated that they had built a great new tenement upon the "greater part" of the subjects. The property is referred to in the various documents that passed between Abercrombie, Watson, Mill, and Steill, as bounded by Bruce's Close on the west. A property that intervened between Abercrombie's property and Mary King's Close was acquired also by Mill and Steill from Thomas Young of Rosebank, one of the bailies of Edinburgh. The sasine in their favour bears date 18th November 1696, and the property is described as bounded on the west by "the lands of the late Robert Scott," and on the east by "the transe of the said [King's] Close." The building erected by Mill and Steill on Scott's property extended also over this property as far as the line of Mary King's Close.

Subsequent sasines of the years 1697, 1698, and 1699, recorded in the

"Bruce's Close." Robert Bruce of Binning granted in that year 24 marks yearly out of his "backland" to Thomas M'Calzeane of Cliftonhall, advocate, the same who is referred to frequently in the text. This "backland" is described as bounded on the east by "a tenement of the late — Carkettill, now pertaining to Robert Scott, writer,"—the tenement in which John Knox lived. Bruce's Close has been better known for more than two hundred years as Warriston (or Warriston's) Close. It ran between the properties owned in 1566 by Bruce of Binning and Scott.

protocol books of Æneas MacLeod, give the history of the alienation of the different portions of the building erected by Mill and Steill between Bruce's Close and Mary King's Close, and in these documents the name Bruce's Close is replaced by the modern designation, Warriston's Close, as the boundary on the west. A large part of it was acquired in 1699 by the Society of Writers to the Signet, who ordered a board to be put up, with the inscription, "Writers' Court," which has been a familiar name ever since. Its boundaries are accurately defined in these and later title-deeds. A sasine of 1702 (17th November) refers to "that new stone tenement of land lately built by Robert Milne, wright, and Patrick Steill, merchant, commonly called the Writers' Court, lying on the north side of the High Street, bounded between the close called Mary King's Close on the east, the close called Warriston's Close on the west. . . ."

The history of the "backlands" of John Brown, father of him who was executed for heresy in 1539, is now complete, along with that of the buildings which had existed on them at different times. They are represented by a strip of land on the eastern side of Warriston's Close, which has been recently appropriated for the extension of the Royal Exchange buildings, and the corresponding piece on the north of Cockburn Street between it and the site of the North Loch. The front portion of the elder John Brown's property, which, it will be remembered, passed into the hands of Mr John Foulis of Colinton, belongs now also to the Corporation of Edinburgh, which thus possesses so much of that long strip of his which extended to the North Loch as is bounded by the High Street on the south and Cockburn Street on the north, and by the line of the present Warriston Close on the west. Mowbray's property, which had John Knox as one of its tenants, contained a house and garden, situate, as the better class of houses were situate, at a little distance from the front or high street. John Knox's house was thus either the second or third house in what is now Warriston's Close, and was situated on the east side of the close, with another property—that purchased in 1696 by Mill and Steill from Thomas Young—intervening between it and Mary

King's Close, which was the next close to the east. The western portion of the Cockburn Hotel now extends over part of the garden that was attached to Mowbray's or Knox's house.

The tenement erected by Mill and Steill stood, until quite recently, at the north-west corner of the Royal Exchange Square. It was acquired in 1896 by the Corporation of Edinburgh, who demolished it to make way for an extension of the City Chambers buildings. Among the titles of the tenement, which were handed to the city when it was purchased by the Council, is an inventory of writs, dated 8th April 1696, which contains most of the writs in the progress which have been already mentioned. The new additions to the Council Chambers are to occupy its site, and, together with their corridors, will extend right through from the site of Mary King's Close on the east to Warriston's Close on the west. It appears, then, that as the building which the Burgh Court and Council Chamber is to replace occupied the "greater part" of the ground on which the house formerly stood that was occupied by John Knox, the western part of the new home for the deliberations of the Town Council of Edinburgh will occupy the exact site of the home, for the most important years of his life, of the great Scottish Reformer, who was so intimately associated with the Town Council of his day in the years which he spent on this spot.

The next reference to rent paid by the Town Council of Edinburgh is that contained in the minute of 19th November 1568—the Treasurer ordained "to cause mend and repair the necessaris of Jhone Knox dwelling hous, vpoun the expenssis of Johne Adamsoun and Bessie Otterburn his spous, coniunct fear thairof, and deduce the samyn of thair hous maill, becaus thai haif bene oft tymes requyrit to do the samyn and refussit."

A search has been made in the protocol books of the Town-Clerks of Edinburgh for the purpose of finding the title of John Adamson and Bessie Otterburne, his spouse, in the hope of identifying the house in which Knox lived during, at least, 1568 and 1569. The result leaves no doubt as to the neighbourhood in which Knox resided, but the identi-

fication has not proved so exact as that in connection with the properties of Forrester, Ireland, and Mowbray.

It has been found that John Adamson and Bessie Otterburne, his spouse, were infest in three different properties, one or other of which must have contained the house referred to in the foregoing minute.

The sasine in favour of John Adamson and Bessie Otterburne in these properties was recorded in the protocol books of Alexander King, Town-Clerk, on 31st July 1551. It narrates that Patrick Ireland, bailie,¹ gave "corporal possession in heritable sasine and conjunct infestment" to John Adamson, son and heir of Alexander Adamson, burgess of Edinburgh, and to an attorney in name of Elizabeth Otterburne, his spouse, and the longest liver of them two, in :—(1) All and Whole his, the said John Adamson's lands, built and waste, under and above, with yard, tail, waste thereof, and their pertinents, lying within the wester tenement of Francis Tennand, son and heir of the late Mungo Tennand, burgess, lying in the burgh of Edinburgh, on the north side of the High Street, between the easter tenement of the said late Mungo on the east, and the tenement of land of John Symson on the west, and also between the land of Patrick Crichton of Lugton on the south, and the North Loch of said burgh on the north; (2) His, the said John Adamson's other land, with halls, chambers, kitchen, pend, and other pertinents lying within the said tenement, between the foreland thereof on the south, and the said land of the said Patrick Crichton on the north; and (3) His, the said John Adamson's land or mansion, under and above, with its pertinents, lying within the tenement of land of the heirs of the late John Maxton on the north side of the High Street, between a tenement of land of the laird of Haltoun on the east, and a tenement of the late Alexander Bonkill on the west, a land of John Cunyngham on the south, and a land of the Abbot and Convent of Newbottill on the north. These are the only properties which belonged to Adamson and Otterburne, or, at least, to which they had a duly recorded title.

¹ This is the Patrick Ireland in whose widow's (Margaret Hepburn's) house Knox was residing during part of 1560.

Further search has been made in the protocol books, and in the inventories of writs and old plans in the possession of the Bank of Scotland, for the purpose of locating these properties, with the following result. The property first described stood partly on what is now a portion of the solum of St Giles Street, and partly on the site of the shop in St Giles Street occupied by Messrs William Green & Sons, law publishers. The property second described lay to the south of the first property, the tenement of Patrick Crichton of Lugton intervening, and was situated immediately behind the front tenement facing the High Street. The third property was situated nearly opposite the corner of High Street and Hunter Square, and lay at some distance north from the High Street. It stood about the south side of the Poultry Market, which has only recently been removed, in consequence of building operations in connection with the formation of the new North Bridge Street.

The progress of titles of each of the three properties subsequent to the sasine above mentioned may be briefly noticed to show how this identification of sites has been reached.

The first infestment in the first subjects contained in John Adamson's and Bessie Otterburne's sasine, after that of John Adamson and Bessie Otterburne themselves, was that of Alexander Adamson, their son, who created in 1585 a burden of 100 merks over the property in favour of Hector Rae, merchant.

In 1602 (2nd June) a sasine was expedite in this portion of the subjects in favour of George Heriot, elder, goldsmith, father of the George Heriot who founded Heriot's Hospital. The description in this sasine varies somewhat from the description given in the sasine of John Adamson and Bessie Otterburne. It is as follows:—"That land or tenement of Alexander Adamson, son and heir of the late John Adamson, lying on the north side of the High Street, opposite the Old Tolbooth, between the lands of the late Gilbert Lauder on the east, the land of the late Mr Thomas Makcalzeane of Clifton Hall on the west, the lands of the late Patrick Crichton of Lugton on the south, and the North Loch on the north." The words introduced in this description, "opposite

the Old Tolbooth," are of importance, as helping to localise the subjects.

The next sasine found in the protocol books is one in 1625 (31st January) in favour of Franciscetta Heriot, spouse of John Ceraris, and lawful daughter of Patrick Heriot, brother-german of the late George Heriot, jeweller to His Majesty, as lawful and nearest heir of the late George Heriot, elder, goldsmith, burgess of Edinburgh, her grandfather. This sasine is in the subjects in which George Heriot, senior, was infeft in 1602, and also in an annual rent of 100 merks payable out of the subjects. Immediately thereafter the said Franciscetta Heriot, with consent of her spouse, resigned the said subjects and annual rent of 100 merks in favour of the Provost, Bailies, and Council of Edinburgh, who were infeft therein in the person of their Treasurer.

The property thus conveyed to the Provost, Bailies, and Council was held by them for a short time as Governors of Heriot's Hospital, and was sold by them in 1635 (18th August) to Patrick Forbes, merchant, and Elizabeth Newton, his spouse.¹ No information of any importance can be obtained from the various infestments which followed,² until we come to a sasine of 1691 in favour of Thomas Brown, bookseller, burgess of Edinburgh, which gives the description of the subjects in the

¹ The sasine on vendition and alienation to Patrick Forbes and Elizabeth Newton bears to have been executed by the Provost, Bailies, and Treasurer of Edinburgh, Mr James Hannay (Dean of St Giles'), Mr Alexander Thomson, and others, ministers of Edinburgh, as Governors of Heriot's Hospital. This Dean Hannay was the only Dean of Edinburgh on the attempted restoration of Episcopacy by Charles I. It was whilst he was reading for the first and last time the prayer-book, which had been imposed upon Scotland by Royal command, that the tumult occurred in St Giles' (1637), in which a stool was hurled at the Dean's head. This was the signal for the disorders that brought about the Civil War and the subsequent beheading of the King.

² The following are the remaining Links:—1645, April 22nd, Sasine to Robert Fynlaw [or Finlay] and Margaret Maisson, his spouse; 1654, May 11th, to Sir James Stewart of Kirkfield, Knight, late Provost of Edinburgh; 1666, October 24th, to Alexr. Lessels, merchant, and Margaret Thomson, his spouse; 1686, March 11th, to John Lessels, merchant, burgess of Haddington, brother and heir to the aforementioned Alexr. Lessels; 1691, August 15th, to Thomas Brown, bookseller, burgess of Edinburgh, and — Calderwood, his spouse.

terms already mentioned, and adds that a great new stone tenement had lately been built on the subjects by the said Thomas Brown. This stone tenement came into the hands of the Bank of Scotland, who were infeft therein in 1801 (12th November). It was removed when St Giles Street was formed.

The second subjects contained in John Adamson's and Bessie Otterburne's sasine passed in 1585 (24th February) to Alexander Adamson, son and heir of John Adamson and Bessie Otterburne, and from him in 1600 (10th May) to John Aitken, merchant, and then in 1610 (22nd September) to Robert Aitken, his son and heir. In Robert Aitken's sasines the description is a little fuller than that given in the previous sasines, and gives some further light on the locality of the subjects. The description bears that the subjects lay in the close called Adamson's Close, on the east side of the transe thereof, and on the north side of the High Street, opposite the Old Tolbooth. Sasines in favour of various parties followed, but as these give no additional information, they need not be noticed¹ until we come to a sasine in 1698 (24th August) in favour of Alexander Gavinlock, mason, burgess of Edinburgh. This Alexander Gavinlock demolished the buildings, and erected, partly on the site thereof, and partly on the site which intervened between Adamson's property and the High Street, a new stone building, which was afterwards known as Gavinlock's Land. The only other sasine remaining to be noticed is that of the Bank of Scotland, which acquired Gavinlock's Land in 1848. The subjects in that sasine

¹ The links are as follows :—1631, May 19, John Aitken, son and heir to Robert, who resigned them immediately to James Riddell, merchant, and Margaret Lowrie his spouse. 1672, March 25, Sasine on resignation by the said John Aitken in favour of the aforesaid late James Riddell, bailie. 1685, March 13, Decreet of Adjudication at the instance of Andrew Kerr, of the subjects foresaid. 1690, May 7, Letters of Horning thereon, charging the Magistrates of Edinburgh to infeft the said Andrew Kerr. 1697, May 7, "Ane appretiatione by fifteen sworn men by warrant from the Toun Council of Edinburgh, whereby they found that the said Backland acquired by the said Alexander Gavinlock from the said Andrew Kerr on the West side of Bailie Broun's Close, . . . they value and estimate at 9 years' purchase," &c.

are described as the great stone building now called Gavinlock's Land, lying on the north side of the High Street, and opposite the head of Forrester's Wynd.

The situation of these two properties of John Adamson and Bessie Otterburne is thus placed beyond doubt. They both lay "opposite the Old Tolbooth." They were on the north side of the High Street, "opposite the head of Forrester's Wynd." A tenement intervened between the second of them and the High Street, and this second property was, in its turn, separated from the one first named by the lands of Patrick Crichton of Lugton. The second property was reached by a close which is called Adamson's Close in the sasines of 1610 and 1631. The buildings on the east side of the present St Giles Street cover the site of the old "Adamson's Close,"¹ and the pavement on the east side of the street is formed over part of the properties that belonged, in the sixteenth century, to John Adamson and Elizabeth Otterburne, the landlords of Knox, the Reformer.

The third subjects contained in John Adamson's and Bessie Otterburne's sasine passed, in 1585, on the death of John Adamson, to Alexander Adamson, his son; and after various infestments,² which all give the same description as that given in Adamson's sasine, they came, in 1684, into the hands of Robert Newlands, glover, burges of Edinburgh. Robert Newlands, son of this Robert Newlands of 1684, appears to have erected a new tenement on the subjects. A sasine is found, of date 22nd June 1711, proceeding on an obligation by him, in which the subjects are described as "the said Robert Newlands' tenement on the north side of the High Street, in the close called the Mid Fleshmarket Close,

¹ The Close giving access to properties here was known from the owners at different times as Adamson's Close, Heriot's Close, and Broun's Close. See Sasine of 1600, May 10, 1610, September 22, and 1631, May 19, for "Adamson's Close"; the "Appretiatione" of May 7, 1697, for "Bailie Broun's Close"; the Sasine of August 24, 1698, referred to above, for "Hartis," (*sic*) or "Heriot's Close."

² 1602, January 15, George Kirkwood, Albany Herald. 1613, October 23, George Kirkwood, younger son of preceding. 1647, April 9, Elizabeth Kirkwood, daughter of preceding. 1675, September 13, Sir James Standsfield of Newmilns, Knight. 1684, August 18, Robert Newlands, glover.

on the east side of the transe thereof, between the land sometime of Alexander Borthwick, vintner, on the east, the tenement of the late Robert Hepburne of Whitburgh on the north, a tenement of Robert Brown, bookseller, on the south, and the said close on the west." It will be seen that this new description does not contain anything to identify it with the old description contained in John Adamson's sasine. There is no doubt, however, that the two descriptions relate to the same property. Both point to the same spot. A sasine of 21st January 1691 mentions that John Maxton's tenement, referred to in the description in Adamson's sasine, lay "on the north side of the High Street, opposite the Salt Tron," thus establishing the fact that the locality of the old description was the same as that of the new.¹

The subjects known as Newlands' Land passed through various hands after Newlands ceased to be connected with it, and ultimately, on 15th January 1790, a sasine is found in favour of the city of Edinburgh of the ground storey of the tenement.² That sasine gives some further information in regard to the locality of the subjects. It mentions that they lay on the west side of Bull's Close, that being the close immediately to the east of the Mid Fleshmarket Close. The sasine of 1711, taken along with this, suggests that the tenement extended between the two closes. It would appear that the property thus acquired by the city

¹ Other evidence from the Stent Rolls, the Register of Deeds, the Dean of Guild Court Records, and the title of the adjoining properties, which it is not necessary to go into minutely, can be adduced to confirm this.

² Extract from "Titles to the Edinburgh Markets":—"1771, September 6, Disposition by William Wilson of Soonhope, writer in Edinburgh, trustee for Robert Bailie, merchant in Edinburgh, conform to the said Robert Bailie's trust disposition dated 12th March 1756, and registered in the Books of Council and Session 22 August 1789, in favour of the said Wm. Wilson and other creditors, of the ground storey of Newlands' Land, lying on the north side of the High Street, on the west side of Bull's Close, as bounded in the ancient rights and infeftments thereof, in favour of John Stewart, writer in Edinburgh, who has right to the same by assignation from William Reid, merchant, of date 6 Sept. 1771, who bought the same at a roup on 9 Aug. 1771; and which ground storey of Newlands' Land was disposed by Thomas Scott, Clerk to the Signet, Commissioner of Thomas Balleny, tenant in South Parks of Lesly, to the City of Edinburgh, on 15 January 1790."

formed part of the recently removed Flesh and Poultry Markets. It may be added that Bull's Close and Mid Fleshmarket Close are not now in existence. They were swept away when Cockburn Street was formed.

Knox must have lived, during 1568 and 1569, if not longer, in one of these three houses thus accurately identified—the second property from the High Street on the east side of the present St Giles Street, or the fourth property from the High Street in the same quarter, or the second from the High Street, opposite the corner of the present Hunter Square ; but no indication has been discovered, so far, which identifies a particular one of the three as his. That must still be left uncertain.

No trace has been found of any reference which could imply that Knox had changed his residence between 23rd November 1569, when rent was paid to John Adamson, and May 1571, when Knox was forced to leave Edinburgh for a time. He returned from St Andrews in August 1572, after a truce had been arranged which permitted Knox and his friends to “frelie enter, and dwell in their awin houses, as sall pleis them induring the said trewis and abstinence.” By a curious coincidence, which may not be without bearing on the question, a John Adamson's name—“Jhone Adamesoun”—appears as the first of three witnesses to his will, which was executed at St Andrews in May 1572. John Adamson, his Edinburgh landlord, was also one of his elders, and it is more than probable that he was amongst the number of those opposed to the Queen's party who were forced to leave Edinburgh along with Knox in obedience to the proclamation of Kirkealdy of Grange. If that was so, both Adamson and Knox, as well as the others who had been compelled to leave, would naturally return after the truce to the houses which they had left.

THE LEGEND OF “JOHN KNOX'S HOUSE.”

A house at the Netherbow in Edinburgh is popularly called “John Knox's House,” and is said to have got the name from having been the residence of Knox, the Reformer. There has not been discovered a

shadow of historical proof for this statement, and the tradition that Knox lived in it can be traced back only for about ninety-two years from this present date of 1898. This leaves a gap of two hundred and thirty-four years between the death of the Knox of Queen Mary's time and the first trace that any such belief existed.

Once the legend was started that John Knox had resided in a house at the Netherbow, it grew apace. In its first two appearances in public, it was singularly plain and unadorned; but these are faults that were amply atoned for before long. Stark, in his *Picture of Edinburgh*, which was published in 1806, describes the supposed house as follows:—“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.” It has been stated that “the value of tradition is a question of circumstances,”¹ but the “circumstances” here is a bald assertion with no possible suggestion of proof.

It would seem, indeed, as if at the very outset there had been some little doubt as to which particular house in that neighbourhood should be associated with Knox. A Dean of Guild process of the year 1839 assigns the name to the house immediately east of that now known as John Knox's House. This house is spoken of elsewhere as Lord Balmerino's house,² and the process states that “on the morning of Sabbath, the 17th February 1839, that old wooden tenement (commonly called John Knox's Land) on the north side of the Netherbow, Edinburgh, belonging to Matthew Frier, baker, St Patrick's Square, fell down into the street, and that parts of it still remain in a tottering condition.” Warrant was granted on the 21st, ordering that the remaining parts of this tenement should be taken down or made secure. But the name, “John Knox's Land,” was not attached to Frier's tenement alone. The Dean of Guild officer reported on 18th February that

¹ C. J. Guthrie, in *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, 1891, p. 334, “Is John Knox's House Entitled to the Name?”

² See Sir Daniel Wilson's *Memorials of Edinburgh*, vol. ii. p. 53.

another house, referred to also as "commonly called John Knox's Land," and apparently the present "John Knox's House," was "in an insufficient and dangerous state to the inhabitants thereof and the public." The fall of Frier's tenement had left those on each side of it insecure. This second "John Knox's Land" was the tenement on the west. If it was not so situated, the expression, "John Knox's *Land*," of these documents of 1839 cannot be connected with the "John Knox's *House*" of to-day.

It will be noticed that the description given by Stark, bald as it is, is much more definite than that given in the Dean of Guild Court proceedings of 1839. It connects Knox with one particular house, and apparently with that known now as John Knox's House. Taking that for granted, a search which has been made in the Dean of Guild Court records has pushed the modern history of the house fifteen years farther back than the date of the publication of Stark's volume. These documents show that the upper storeys or flats of this tenement had become ruinous by 1791, and the building was before the Dean of Guild Court regularly between that date and 1852, when it was reported at last to be "now perfectly safe, both in respect to the inhabitants and public." Warrant was granted on 28th August 1791 by the Court, at the suit of one of the proprietors, that the roof should be repaired, as the rain was finding its way through the third and fourth storeys into the second; and a process was issued on 19th July 1798 against the proprietor of the upper storey for his share of the expense; but in neither of these official papers is there any suggestion of any association with the name of Knox.

We arrive on surer ground a few years later. A petition to the Magistrates by the Procurator-Fiscal, of date 30th December 1847, complained that the fourth storey of a tenement of land, commonly called "John Knox's Land," or "Knox's Land," had, "for a period of more than three years, lain waste and uninhabited," and craved authority to deal with it in accordance with the Act of Charles II.—"Anent Ruinous Houses in Royal Burghs." Comparison of the proprietors' names in 1791, 1798, and 1847, shows that this building, which was

“commonly called John Knox’s Land” in 1847, and reported to be “waste and uninhabited” in the fourth storey, is the same building which was reported to have a defective roof in the former of these years, but which had been repaired by 1798. After 1847 there is no doubt that the expression, “John Knox’s Land,” or “John Knox’s House,” means the house at the Netherbow, which, after many vicissitudes, came into possession of the Free Church in 1868, and is still shown as the house in which the Reformer lived. Two of the surnames of the owners, given in the process of 19th July 1798, appear again in the documents relative to the second-named “John Knox’s Land” of 1839, and authorise the supposition that they also refer to this same house. The next writer after Stark who mentions Knox as having resided in the neighbourhood of the Netherbow is M’Crie, whose *Life of Knox* appeared originally in 1811. His statement is not much more explicit than that of Stark. It is given in a footnote, as if it were considered of not sufficient importance or authenticity for the text:—“The house which the Reformer possessed is situated near the bottom of the High Street, a little below the Fountain Well. These three words are inscribed on the wall—“ΘΕΟΣ, DEUS, GOD.” This occurs, in a reference to Smeton, as the authority for the last public appearance of Knox, after having presided and preached in St Giles’ at the installation of Lawson as his colleague and successor. The exact words that Smeton used are as follows:—“After he had blessed the people, with his wonted cheerful spirit, but with feeble body, and leaning on his staff, he departed to his house, accompanied by almost the whole meeting, from which he did not afterwards come forth alive.”¹ It will be noticed that Smeton gives no indication whatever in these words of where John Knox was residing; and the natural inference would be that, in the feeble state of health in which Knox was at this time, it could not be so far from St Giles’ as the Netherbow, if he was to walk there even with assistance. But of this, more later.

¹ *Eximii viri Joannis Knoxii . . . Vera . . . Historia*, by Thomas Smeton, Principal of the University of Glasgow, 1579.

After 1811 the legend becomes embellished, and it assumes a variety of forms. It was distinctly ornate by 1823. Sir Daniel Wilson quoted, in the *Proc. Soc. Ant.* for 1890-91, pp. 157-58, the following description of the house as given by Robert Chambers in his *Traditions of Edinburgh*, the first edition of which appeared in the year given above:—"Close beneath the window there has long existed a curious effigy of the Reformer stuck upon the corner, and apparently holding forth to the passers-by. Of this no features were for a long time discernible, till Mr Dryden (then tenant of the house) took shame to himself for the neglect it was experiencing, and got it daubed over in glaring oil-colours at his own expense. Thus a red nose and two intensely black eyes were brought strongly out on the mass of face, and a pair of white iron Geneva bands, with a new black gown, completed the resuscitation." These sentences do not appear in the revised reprint of 1868, but many other items confirmatory of the tradition are given. John Knox's study was there, that the magistrates ordered for him in October 1561; the window was there, from which he harangued the crowd below. There was a small room still to be seen, which served as a baptistery; and there was a well, as the house in which Knox lived was known to have a well; and the window where his effigy appeared was the window through which a musket-ball was fired at the Reformer's head before he left Edinburgh in 1571.

A new edition, the seventh, of M'Crie's *Life* appeared in 1855, edited with notes by his son. The legend appears in one of these notes much in the same form as in Chambers' *Traditions*, but with important differences. Knox took up his abode in the house at the Netherbow in 1560, and it remained his principal residence until his death in 1572. It was whilst living here that he lost his first wife, and it was to this house that he brought his second. It was through one of its windows that a musket-shot was discharged which must infallibly have killed him if he had been occupying his usual seat. It was here that he penned his *History*. It was to this house that he "crept down the street," never

to leave it alive; and his study—"undoubtedly" the one ordered in 1561—remained very much in its original form.

Every one of the statements made by Chambers and the editor of M'Crie's *Life* have been proved, where proof of any kind is possible, to be incorrect. It was shown, before the publication of the 1855 edition of M'Crie, that the figure on the outside of the house was not Knox at all, but Moses, though the statement that it was the Reformer preaching in a pulpit was repeated by Chambers in 1868. The editor of M'Crie's *Life* mentions this correction of the legend, and it is not unimportant to observe that M'Crie himself seems not to have known, in 1811, that the figure was intended for either Moses or Knox. He quotes the inscription correctly to which Moses is pointing, but says nothing further about it. The pulpit was an altogether modern affair, copied from the pulpit of St George's Church, which was erected in 1814. The red nose and the Geneva bands and black gown disappear with Knox himself. The "study" was not the study ordered in 1561. Knox did not live here from 1560 to 1572. He is not known to have preached from any window. It is not known why he should have kept a private baptistery. There was no well in this house when it was examined in 1896. So much for the embellishments. The legend is left now in the form in which it was known to Stark and M'Crie—the simple assertion that Knox lived in Edinburgh at a house, then and still existent in the Netherbow.

The legend also differs considerably and vitally in the mouth of its different narrators respecting the period of Knox's occupation of "John Knox's House." Stark and M'Crie say nothing definite. M'Crie's editor says he resided here generally from 1560 to 1572, the whole period of his settled career in Edinburgh. Chambers says the tradition was that this was the residence or manse of John Knox during his incumbency as minister of Edinburgh, from 1560 until (with few interruptions) his death in 1572. This is an integral part of the full-blown legend, and the statement passed unchallenged until 1891, when it was shown for the first time, from the original Council records, in a

paper contributed to the Society of Antiquaries, that Knox did not live here between 1560 and 1569.¹

Sir Daniel Wilson, who, as secretary to the Society of Antiquaries, had done good service in securing the preservation of the old house in 1849, though in the mistaken idea that it was John Knox's manse, attempted in 1891 a mild justification of the tradition, in so far as that there was nothing inconsistent with probability in the belief that the house was Knox's latest home;² but he acknowledged immediately afterwards that there was "no evading the fact that Knox never did live in 'John Knox's House.'"³ A reply was attempted in another paper, read before the Society of Antiquaries,⁴ in which Sir Daniel Wilson was quoted as one of the "most competent antiquaries" who "have admitted the justice of the claim." The writer of this paper maintained boldly that "every circumstance accords with the truth of the tradition."⁵ "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.⁶ Definite proof was furnished by the original writer in another communication to the Society of Antiquaries, of date 8th May 1893,⁷ that Knox lived in other houses from 1560-1569, though the sites of the houses were incorrectly given. When Sir Daniel Wilson published the second edition of his *Memorials of Edinburgh* in 1891, though he had the strongest desire to adhere as far as possible to the popular belief, he could only make the colourless assertion that "in the absence

¹ *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, 1891, p. 138, "John Knox and his Manse," by Peter Miller, F.S.A. Scot.

² *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, 1891, p. 156.

³ *Private Letters of Sir Daniel Wilson; Edinburgh, printed for private circulation, 1897*, letter dated 11th January 1891.

⁴ *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, 1891, p. 335, "Is 'John Knox's House' Entitled to the Name?" by Charles J. Guthrie, Advocate, F.S.A. Scot.

⁵ *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, 1891, p. 336.

⁶ *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, 1891, p. 337.

⁷ *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, 1893, p. 406.

of other evidence, we may welcome such guidance as tradition supplies, and still think of the house that has so long borne his name as the lodging where his last days were spent."¹ Against this must be set his private opinion quoted above. The latest biographer of Knox, P. Hume Brown, in his *Life of John Knox*, published in 1895, could not go further than Sir Daniel Wilson in the *Memorials* of 1891: "To Mosman's house ['John Knox's House']," Hume Brown says, "at all events, tradition points as the residence; and if we attach any weight to the tradition, that house would in all probability be the one in which his last days were spent. . . . Against the tradition that points to Mosman's house as a residence of Knox, no satisfactory evidence has been adduced."²

The minutes of the Town Council of Edinburgh show clearly where Knox lived between 1560 and 23rd November 1569. The houses that Knox occupied during these ten years have been accurately identified, and Mosman's is not one of them. Documentary proof fails us between November 1569 and Knox's death in November 1572, for the simple reason that no documentary proof of the kind already referred to is known to exist. It was a very troublous period in Edinburgh—a time of practically civil war. The Treasurer's accounts show a blank from 1567 down to 1581, and there are no records of the meetings of the Town Council from 1571 to 1573. The only period as to which almost nothing can be said is that between November 1569 and May 1571, when Knox was constrained by his friends to leave Edinburgh. This interval of eighteen months is of no special importance in dealing with the picturesque aspects of the legend, as it was not during it that the affecting scene occurred when Knox was conveyed to his home after his last sermon, nor could anything that occurred during those months have consecrated his residence as the Mecca of Scottish religionism, and the spot hallowed by his death. As it is, we know that in November 1569 he was living in a very different quarter of Edinburgh, and there is not a hint anywhere that he changed his residence at that time. Moreover,

¹ Vol. ii. p. 50.

² Vol. ii. pp. 318, 319.

as will be shown hereafter, the history of the house at the Netherbow is well known for the years covered by Knox's ministry in Edinburgh; and it was about the most unlikely house in the burgh that would have been chosen by him or for his use.

There is left still for examination the period of less than three months which elapsed between the return of Knox to Edinburgh in August 1572 and his death on 24th November. Routed out of the earlier years, the legend takes refuge here. The same remarks apply to these months which have already been made concerning the eighteen months that followed November 1569, with this additional note, that since it has been shown that there is not the faintest shadow of reason for believing in the original form of the statement, so far as that Knox is said to have lived at a particular house in the Netherbow for the eleven years from 1560 to 1571, there is no reason whatever for assuming that the statement is true concerning this particular twelve weeks. There is, firstly, no possible proof. There are, in the second place, no Council documents. In the third place, the history and ownership of the Netherbow house are well known, and everything points to its occupation by the owner himself. In the fourth place, the authorities for the period make not the slightest allusion to the Netherbow. And fifthly, the condition of Knox's health made his residence at the Netherbow, under the circumstances narrated by these authorities, practically impossible.

Nothing of the history of the Netherbow house was known when the legend was originated, and when this history was accidentally discovered written upon the walls of the house itself, the legend had got a seventy years' start. During the repairs made after its demolition had been ordered by the Dean of Guild in 1849, some dilapidated wooden excrescences were removed, which had been added by its later owners or occupants. The so-called "preaching window" disappeared, and a fine renaissance window and sculptured tablet were disclosed. The tablet bore a shield charged with three crowns on a chevron between three oak trees, with the initials I. M. and M. A. on either side. For thirty years longer these letters and arms remained a complete puzzle. The meaning

of the heraldic emblems was then discovered,¹ and a search in the protocol books of the city of Edinburgh that ensued revealed the story of the house beyond doubt.

A building which existed on this site in 1525 had belonged to John Arres and Christina Reidpeth, his wife. This had, no doubt, disappeared with the others, when Edinburgh was burnt by Hertford in 1544. But in 1556 another house on the same site belongs to James Mosman and Mariot Arres, and the property remains in the possession of this James Mosman, with one significant short interval, until the forfeiture of his property after Mosman's execution in 1573 as an adherent of Queen Mary. The arms are the arms of Mosman, as given by Nisbet and Stodart, with the addition of three crowns on the chevron, to indicate that the bearer was a goldsmith like his father, who made the closed arches that still adorn the Scottish crown. The initials are those of James Mosman and his wife, through whom he came into possession of the property. In 1568 James Mosman and Mariot Arres conveyed this house to John Mosman, goldsmith, their son, and his heirs in fee, but reserved to themselves the liferent for their whole lives. We learn, from a sasine of 23rd February 1571, that Mariot Arres was dead, and that James Mosman was about to marry for the second time. So what was more natural than that he should secure a residence for his wife in what was probably then one of the best houses in Edinburgh. He bought back the fee from his son, and immediately infeft himself and his future spouse, Janet King, in the family residence in the Netherbow. Where does Knox come in? Nowhere. It was quite a common practice to insert the name of the occupying tenant in the conveyance of any property disposed of, and in at least two cases John Knox's name is so mentioned in connection with one of the houses in which he undoubtedly lived, but there is no mention of him here. The names of owners remain unchanged in the successive title-deeds often for centuries, and where the property has had a well-known tenant, his name is introduced by way of identification long after he had ceased to reside in it, and sometimes long

¹ By Mr R. C. Walker of Newport, Fife.

after he had died. The date of the sasine of 1571 is only three months before Knox's enforced departure from Edinburgh, and no identification of the property could have been stronger than such as "presently occupied by John Knox, minister."

Mosman had property elsewhere in Edinburgh and Scotland, and the names of other tenants have been transmitted in the documents of transfer. Is there any reason for the name of the most prominent of them being omitted, except that he never was a tenant of Mosman's at all, and that if it had been known in time that the house was Mosman's, no one in the nineteenth century would have ever said he was, as no one ever said he was in the two hundred and thirty-three years between Mosman's forfeiture and 1806? There is thus not alone not a particle of evidence to show that Knox lived in Mosman's house before 1571, but everything points most strongly the other way. Mosman needed the house for himself, and the sasine of February 1571 shows that he took it back again from his son. Mosman, besides, was a strong supporter of the Queen, and it was not at all natural that he should let his house to Knox, even if family necessities had not stood in the way.

But, say the supporters of the legend, whether Knox lived in Mosman's house before May 1571 or not, he lived there from August 1572 until his death in November. "It is enough for us that Knox died there."¹ There is, however, no ground for this statement. On the contrary, if Knox lived there from 1569 to 1571, his residence there again in 1572 involves the further assumption that Mosman, a notorious Romanist and zealous supporter of the Queen, hazarding, and afterwards losing, his life in defence of all that Knox held most abhorrent, was willing to keep his house empty for fifteen months to oblige one of his most irreconcilable foes, or turn out of his house at practically a moment's notice, that the Reformer might be reinstated.

But, again say the supporters of the legend in its most attenuated

¹ *Free Church Monthly*, September 1896, p. 210, "John Knox's House, Edinburgh: The Property of the Free Church of Scotland." By Charles J. Guthrie, M.A., Advocate, Legal Adviser to the Free Church of Scotland.

form, Mosman's house was empty, he had taken refuge with Kirkcaldy of Grange in the Castle, and he remained there until the surrender of the Castle in 1573.¹ Alas for the legend, there is again not only no proof of this statement, but there was no reason for Queen Mary's adherents to take refuge in the Castle until some weeks after the death of Knox. The historical fact is that the truce between the parties, which was concluded on 31st July 1572 for two months, was extended subsequently until the end of the year, more than a month beyond the date of Knox's death.² "The presumption," therefore, instead of being that Mosman "entered the Castle of Edinburgh at some date previous to Knox's death,"³ is rather that, as a shrewd business man, he would attend to his goldsmith's booth as long as he could. Why Mosman, whose party had been in possession of Edinburgh before the truce, should leave his house within a few days after the arranging of the truce, in order that possibly his most dangerous foe should take undisturbed possession, is one of those mysteries of which only the necessities of an untenable position could justify the defence.

It appears thus, from the historical facts of Mosman's house, that there is not the faintest probability that Knox could ever have lived in it. This absence of any probability that Knox lived in it deepens into a certainty that Knox did not die in it, when we take into consideration the fourth and fifth points already referred to, the statements made by the authorities for what happened during Knox's last days and when on his death-bed, and the information that we have respecting the condition of his health during his residence in St Andrews in 1571-72, and the twelve weeks that was his latest period of residence in Edinburgh.

The only original authorities for Knox's final period in Edinburgh are his secretary, Richard Bannatyne, who wrote a *Journal of the Transactions in Scotland* in the years 1570-73, and Thomas Smeton's *Eximii viri Johannis Knoxii, Scoticanæ Ecclesiæ instauratoris, Vera*

¹ P. Hume Brown's *Life of John Knox*, vol. ii. p. 319.

² P. Hume Brown's *Life of John Knox*, vol. ii. p. 280. Hill Burton's *History of Scotland*, edition 1897, vol. v. p. 116.

³ P. Hume Brown's *Life of John Knox*, vol. ii. p. 319.

extremæ vitæ et obitus Historia, appended to his *Responsio ad Hamiltonii Dialogum*, published in Edinburgh in 1579, seven years after Knox's death. Smeton was one of Knox's intimate friends, and was appointed Principal of the University of Glasgow in 1580. Neither of these makes the slightest allusion to a house at the Netherbow, or, indeed, to the locality of a house anywhere. There is nothing whatever in Bannatyne to quote relevant to the matter. He seems to have known nothing of the affecting scene, so often depicted both in words and on canvas, of Knox creeping down the High Street to the Netherbow, supported on the arm of a favourite attendant, with the street lined after the manner of a royal pageant with those to whom he had just been preaching in St Giles', who fell in behind their beloved pastor as he tottered feebly on.

It will be noted in M'Crie's version that he makes no mention of the Netherbow. He adopts what are practically Smeton's words, but with amplifications, and refers to Smeton as his authority:¹—"He [Knox] descended from the pulpit, and leaning upon his staff and the arm of an attendant, crept down the street, which was lined with the audience, who, as if anxious to take the last sight of their beloved pastor, followed him until he entered his house, from which he never again came out alive." M'Crie claims the present house, in a footnote, as the one referred to, but Hume Brown puts it, without quoting any authority, boldly into his text, whilst omitting M'Crie's pictorial details:—"Leaning on his staff, and attended by almost the entire congregation, he made his way home to his house at the Netherbow Port."² Premising that Smeton himself was not an eye-witness, and that he penned his account of Knox seven years after Knox's death, we may again quote his exact words:—"These things having at length been performed, after he had blessed the people, with his wonted cheerful spirit but with feeble body, and leaning on his staff, he departed to his house, accompanied by almost the whole meeting, from which he did not afterwards come forth alive."

¹ Edition 1855, p. 270.

² *Life of John Knox*, vol. ii. p. 285.

M'Crie had thus no authority for his expression "down the street," and Hume Brown has none for his "house at the Netherbow Port." We may add that the expression translated by M'Crie "audience" ("down the street, which was lined by the audience") and by Hume Brown "almost the entire congregation," may be interpreted as applying necessarily to the "elders" or "Kirk Session" only.

The authorities for the period lend no countenance to the assertion that Knox went to die at the house at the Netherbow Port. The testimonies as to Knox's physical condition—the fifth point in this review of the evidence at our command—show that it was most unlikely that he should have lived at so great a distance from St Giles', and a practical impossibility for him to have walked to that place after a long and fatiguing service, even though "leaning on his staff." The distance between St Giles' Church and the Netherbow is fully four hundred and ten yards. In no previous portion of the residence of Knox in Edinburgh had he lived farther than eighty yards from his church. The old manses at the west of the churchyard were still in the occupation of the former Roman clergy, and the Town Council naturally provided their minister with a manse in the immediate neighbourhood of his church, and not at the farthest corner of the burgh.

It was recognised in 1571 that Knox's years were numbered, and if he resided near St Giles' before that period, it became imperative that his house should be near it now. As early as October 1570, he "was stricken with a kind of apoplexia, called by the phisitionis resolutione, whairby the perfect vse of his toving was stopped."¹ He wrote himself to a correspondent in May 1572 that he was "lying in Sanct Androis half deid";² and in his will, which is dated 13th May 1572, he says:—"Ane deid man haif I bene almaist thir two zeiris last bipast." Melville gives the following graphic description of his condition in these months spent in St Andrews as an exile from his work in Edinburgh:—"I saw him everie day of his doctrine [preaching] go hulie and fear. [slowly

¹ Bannatyne's *Transactions*, Edinburgh, 1806, p. 54.

² Works, vol. vi. p. 615; quoted in Hume Brown's *Life*, vol. ii. p. 274.

and warily], with a furring of martriks [martens] about his neck, a staff in the an hand, and guid godlie Richard Ballenden, his servant, haldin up the uthar oxtar [armpit], from the Abbey to the parochie kirk, and be the said Richard and another servant lifted upe to the pulpit, whar he behovit [required] to lean at his first entrie."¹ His condition became worse after his return to Edinburgh. Killigrew, the English agent, wrote to Cecil about a month before Knox's death:—"John Knox is now so feeble as scarce can he stand alone, or speak to be hard of any audience; yet doth he every Sondag cause himselfe to be carried to a place where a certayne nombre do here him, and precheth with the same vehemence and zeale that ever he did."² Bannatyne adds, concerning the last sermon he preached, on 9th November 1572, at the induction of Lawson as his colleague:—"At that tyme [he] declared to the whole assemblie (as his waik voce wald serue, quhilk was hard but of a fewe) the dewitie of ane minister and also theair dewitie to him likwayis."³

After the return of Knox to Edinburgh in August 1572, he asked the Magistrates to arrange that he should preach in some smaller place than St Giles', "whare his voce might be hard, gif it were but vnto ane hundret personis."⁴ They granted him the use of a room in the New Tolbooth, which had been recently built at the south-west corner of St Giles', with which it communicated through a covered way. Part of the church itself was also appropriated in connection with this building. It was here that Knox preached his last sermon, and from this that he proceeded with his audience into the body of the church to perform the ceremony of the admission of Lawson to the joint pastorate of Edinburgh.

There is thus no reason to believe that the crowd was very great which—if we are to accept Smeton's account as authentic—accompanied him afterwards to his house, even if we interpret the Latin word used by Smeton in its widest sense. But what are we to think now of the

¹ *Diary*, 1556-1601, p. 26.

² Killigrew to Cecil, 6th October 1572, Knox's Works, vol. vi. p. 633. Quoted in Hume Brown's "*Life*," vol. ii. p. 284.

³ *Transactions*, p. 413.

⁴ Bannatyne's *Transactions*, p. 286.

claims of a legend that makes it necessary for a man who was "half dead" and could scarcely stand alone or speak to be heard of any audience, to walk practically half the length of Edinburgh between his church and his house, even granting him the support of a staff, as put by Smeton, or the further aid of his servant's arm, in the slightly coloured reproduction of M'Crie's? It was not likely, when Knox and his friends were at liberty to return to Edinburgh, that there would be any scarcity of houses in which to shelter a dying man, and the most reasonable supposition of any is that he returned to the house he had quitted in May 1571. It has been shown that this was in all likelihood the house of John Adamson and Bessie Otterburn, for which rent is recorded to have been paid up to 23rd November 1569. This house was within a few yards of the church, across the street, and a little way down a close, which would still answer to M'Crie's late embellishment of John Knox creeping down the street to his house to die. No one would ever have dreamt that he would go to Mosman's, or that Mosman's house would have been open to receive him, had it not been for the one statement made in 1806 in such an unpretending fashion, and on no authority, by the compiler of a popular guide-book to Edinburgh, that a house, which would "in a few years, perhaps, be removed,"¹ had been the residence of the Reformer Knox.

The foregoing discussion has shown that there was never any foundation for the statement that Knox lived at the Netherbow. It has shown further that the legend attached to the present house is an invention altogether of the present century, and that Stark cannot be held responsible for its popular and varying forms. The history of the house to which the legend points has been investigated, and no room has been found for any tenancy by Knox. Lastly, it was a physical improbability, deepening into an impossibility, that Knox should have spent his last three months in life in Mosman's house. The cumulative negative evidence is overwhelming against any association of Knox, the Reformer, with the Netherbow.

It so happens that there is abundant evidence in favour of what may

¹ Stark's *Picture of Edinburgh*, 1806, p. 103.

be designated a positive proof, that though the house at the Netherbow may have taken its modern name from a John Knox, it was not from the John Knox who died on 24th November 1572, and was buried two days afterwards in St Giles' Churchyard.

The name of "Knox," and even of "John Knox," seems to have been a common enough one in Edinburgh during the sixteenth century. A family with that surname held property at what is now the north-east corner of the Royal Exchange for at least three generations, and a "Knox's Close" existed in this quarter in 1568. The protocol books give the names of David, Stephen, and Gilbert Knox as owners here between 1502 and 1542. The same authorities record the succession to a property in the neighbourhood of Bank Street, which had been in the possession of a William Knox before 1517, but had passed to his son and heir, John Knox, who disposed of the property in 1520.

Another "John Knox" had owned property in the quarter of the Netherbow before 1501, and his name has been traced as descriptive of property in that neighbourhood from 1501 until 1740. This "John Knox" had been well known in his time. He was a burges of Edinburgh, and when an identification is needed of property in a sasine, it is referred to as bounded by "John Knox's" "lands" or tenements or close. So deeply had he inscribed his name on this locality, that a close, formed, probably, on part of his property, is referred to in 1561 as "Knox's Close." It retains this name in 1577, 1579, 1672, 1675, and 1681. Even if it were from a later Knox that it had this name in 1561, it would strengthen the case against the Netherbow house having been the residence of the Reformer, by showing that two Knoxes had made themselves prominent in this district before that year. It appears, from John Foular's protocol book, that, on 17th September 1501, "Metta Knox, daughter, and one of the heirs, of the late John Knox, with the consent of John Paterson, her husband, resigned her Lands within the tenement of her said father, between the Land of Helen Knox, her sister, on the south," etc., etc. An entry in this same protocol book,

17th January 1501-2, in which entry John Knox is described as having been a burghess of Edinburgh, shows that Metta Knox possessed lands which ran from her sister's land on the High Street to the grounds of Trinity College, and that she alienated them also to the purchaser of the foregoing.

A sasine in John Stevenson's protocol book, of date 22nd December 1547, describes certain property in this neighbourhood as "lying within a tenement of the late John Knox, now pertaining to Marion Crichton, Lady Rothes, on the north side of the High Street." A sasine in the protocol book of Alex. King, of date 30th March 1554, identifies another property as bounded on the east by "a tenement and Lands of the late John Knox"; and another in Alex. Guthrie's protocol book, of date 29th November 1570, refers to a sale of presumably the tenement referred to on 17th January 1501-2—"a tenement of the late John Knox on the north side of the High Street." This sasine of 1570 shows that the John Knox of the latter part of the fifteenth century was still well remembered, or that his name was considered sufficient to identify property in the neighbourhood of the Netherbow only two years before the Reformer's death. This last property is further identified in a sasine of 3rd September 1577, as lying to the east of Gray's Close. Gray's Close is within a hundred and ten yards of the so-called "John Knox's House," and John Knox's property lay between the two abutting on the north side of the High Street.

The identification of properties, by reference to their relation to "the tenement of the late John Knox," continued to, at least, as recently as 1740. A renunciation is recorded, under date 19th February of that year, in George Home's protocol book, of an annual rent "out of a tenement of land on the north side of the High Street, on the west part of Gray's Close, between the tenement of the late John Knox, thereafter of John Rig, on the east, and the tenement of John Henderson on the west." May one not surmise that here we have tracked the legend home to its lair, and that either Stark or Stark's unknown informant had seen the name, "John Knox," in some title-deeds of property in this

locality, and was led immediately to the conclusion that no John Knox could be of importance but one!¹ It was a natural enough mistake and a pardonable one at the time. But a more popular use of the name Knox in the locality had, as has been already mentioned, sprung up before 1561, through its adoption as the name of a close. It appears, from a comparison of the sasine, of date 30th March 1554, which contains a reference to "the lands of the late John Knox," with sasines of date 23rd November 1579, 18th December 1672, 16th April 1675, and 9th March 1681, that this close stood either on, or immediately to the east of, the lands possessed by the John Knox of 1501. The name of the close points either backward to the Knox who possessed its site sixty years before, or to a family of that name who resided in it when the Reformer settled in Edinburgh, and who were of sufficient importance to serve as a landmark in the locality. It shows how tenacious a hold the name of Knox had taken of the neighbourhood of the Netherbow even in the days of the Reformer. Its site is marked now by Morrison's Close or by some of the buildings that extend between Morrison's Close and North Gray's Close.

¹ This is very different from a "charge that Stark deliberately invented the tradition." See *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, 1891, pp. 346-47.