

## I.

NOTES ON THE INVENTORIES OF THE HOUSE OF ROSSIE, NEAR  
MONTROSE, DATING FROM THE YEAR 1693 TO 1740. BY  
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The old house of Rossie stood on the south side of the South Esk, a few miles west of the town of Montrose, and a short distance from the site of the present mansion-house. The Castle of Craig, mention of which occurs several times in the inventories, was demolished many years ago. It stood in the present garden of Rossie, where a fragment of its ruin still exists, or till recently existed.<sup>1</sup> In Ochterlony's account of the shire of Forfar, 1684-5, Craig and Rossie are described as "two excellent houses, rebuilt, with excellent good yards, orchards, and planting. Craig hath an excellent fountaine, with a large basone of hewen stone, whereunto water is conveyed by pypes of lead from a spring at a good distance." A third house to which that author refers as belonging to the family was doubtless Ulis-haven, or, as it is called in these inventories, "Ulisses Haven."

Patrick Scott succeeded to Rossie and Craig on the death of his father in 1690, and three years thereafter married Margaret, daughter of Sir Archibald Hope of Rankeillor, one of the Lords of Session, and is said to have died in 1731, leaving several children.

In the year 1739 Margaret Scott, his widow, made an inventory of all the furniture and plenishing in Rossie, also of the linen from the Craig, of one-third of the plenishing of Ulisses Haven, and of such other furnishings, etc. as were her own property. The inventories seem to have been made for one of her family, probably for her son on the occasion of his marriage, and her vacating the house of Rossie for his young bride.

As in great part the furnishings of all mansion-houses from one period to another must remain of the same character—a bedroom must

<sup>1</sup> Warden's *Forfarshire*.

have its bed, and a dining-room its table and chairs—it were a needless task to set down here lists of such articles as are still in common use, or which in their description show no peculiarities. I shall therefore merely abstract from the inventories, which extend to thirty-two pages, such material as may be of special interest.

The first list is that of the “Linens from the Craig, after my husband’s death.”

This includes, besides the usual linen, feather-beds, cods (pillows), cod wares (pillow-cases), a scarlet bed with silk fringes, a blue bed, and a purple bed—four-posters, with their canopies and curtains of bright-coloured material; and we may here note that the beds in Rossie are likewise described by their colours—green, red, and yellow—that in the lady’s own room being “a copper-coloured Alasand-bed.”<sup>1</sup>

Next follows an “Account of the Tea Equipage.”

There is a black tea press, in which no doubt the “equipage” was kept. The china is red and white, and the morning cups and “trinchers” (*i.e.* plates) “uniform to the cupps” are blue and white. There are also afternoon cups, which shows that tea was in frequent use. A silver “tract pot” and a china “draw pott” we should now simply call tea-pots. There are coffee mills, for the coffee was roasted and ground at home; and a silver “transvarer” is presumably a punch-ladle for transferring punch from the bowl to the glass.

The list of glasses contains “10 water glasses with 8 saucers for them,” and also, besides glass decanters, four of “lime,” *i.e.* earthenware; 4 capps, which are small wooden bowls for containing food; “2 wand baskets lined with white iron,” and “6 bottle frames,” which were probably wine slides. Of wine-glasses there is no mention, but in a press in the big hall and in the closet off my lady’s chamber were to be found two “caves,” with glasses in them. At this period nests of glasses, *i.e.* a number of small tumblers fitting closely into each other,

<sup>1</sup> Alexander, or Bourde de Alisaundre, a stuff which took its name from Alexandria in Egypt, where, though not exclusively, it was manufactured. It is supposed to have been a striped silk.—(*The Drapers’ Dictionary.*)

and probably all contained in a case with a lid, were in common use, and I suggest that such may have been the "caves" referred to, or perhaps wooden cases, such as are still met with, containing an assortment of glasses and bottles.

The dining-room was well hung with family portraits. "My Lord Rankeillor and his Lady," "Sir William Nairn and his Lady," and many presentments of the Scott family, looked down from its walls. "A Jolly Companie behind the Door" and "Remember That" were works of a different class. "A corner cupboard with a pretty picture on the tope" is a variety of corner cupboard unknown to us now. The only furnishings conspicuously absent from the inventory of the room, in fact from all the rooms, are carpets; but from this it must not be inferred that there were none—for Turkey carpets, or rugs, were to be found in the houses of the wealthy in Scotland at least a century before this date. The omission of baths of all sorts will, however, quite justify the inference that they did not exist.

In the drawing-room were more family portraits. "My great-grandfather's portrait," Sir Thomas Hope of Craighall, King's Advocate, Lord Craighall's picture and his Lady's, and several more. In the panelling above the fireplace—the "bress"—was a "pretty picture," and "The Emblem of Old Age" was skyed above the door. There were six "two-armed chairs"—not the luxurious arm-chairs of the present day—and a pair of spinets, to which the ladies, in their flowered brocades, with their powdered hair, sang their old-world songs and ballads. A clock that went eight days, a weather-glass, a mahogany tea-table, a box with playing tables, the latter probably for chess and backgammon, and a mirror completed the furnishing,—a scantily furnished drawing-room, you may say, for a mansion that boasted eighteen chairs and several tables in the dining-room; but the drawing-room occupied a less important position among the public rooms in those days, and was probably only used by the ladies of the household as a boudoir. The furnishing of the bedrooms was on a much more lavish scale, as the fashion of receiving company in them had not perhaps gone out in

Scotland by this date. In the Green room we find, besides six ordinary chairs, an easy-chair, an "armed chair," two stools, and a large settee, "the room hung" either with stamped leather or fabric of some sort, wall-papers not yet being in use. The "Stamped room" suggests leather hangings. Only in the "Dark room," where the blue bed was, and in the nursery, were there chests of drawers. In the "big hall" were the presses where the great stores of hand-woven linen lay in lavender, and there also stood a resting chair, which certainly suggests comfort. There were ten rooms, including closets, dark and light, in which were beds. The female servants most likely occupied the "woman house," probably an outhouse, where, with the spinning-wheels and "chack reels" for winding the yarns, were three beds, "with bedding conform." In "Rossie's garret" lay the usual miscellaneous collection of articles, superannuated or not in daily use, that such places contain,—a cradle and cradle cover, with its curtains, a stone table lying flat on the floor, pewter plates, moulds for moulding candles, sets of weights, "hisps," *i.e.* hanks of yarn, "for working fowling nets," boxes, hampers, a side-saddle, and a hobby-horse. There was a laundry, well found with all requisites, and a kitchen, with pots, pans, and dishes in abundance. In the inventory of the kitchen utensils we may note—"colop tongs," "a footman for the tea kettle,"—the footman being an iron or brass stand with feet for holding a kettle before the fire,—while seven pewter chamber-pots, as well as four of earthenware, and four of stone, seem strangely out of place. There were numerous candlesticks and snuffers, and but three bells—a large bell, which probably was used to announce the arrival of the dinner hour; one hanging bell, perchance connected with the dining-room; and a chamber bell, not specified as hanging. This completes the furnishings of the various apartments.

A milk-house there was also, wherein were churns and cheese fitts, *i.e.* vats; a brewhouse, with the vessels wherewith to brew the beer—kimmers, masking vats, wort stones—as well as a supply of barrels, ankers, and casks, and a cellar containing four buffstands, powdering tubs, two flower stands, a meal chest, a salt girnel, and two "tonnels."

Now we shall consider the special inventories ; and first let us look at that detailing the linen. What quantities of it there appear to be ! Table linen and sheets by the dozen—the former carefully marked with initials, and dates ranging from 1693 to 1724, and distinguished by various “knotts” or patterns. There is the “levinder knott,” “the hundred rose knott,” “the heart knott,” “the star knott,” “Craig knott,” “Balgais knott,” “Dutch knott,” “Rossie knott,” and an “old-fashioned knott that came from the Craig.” The fingering<sup>1</sup> blankets date from 1666 onwards, and are several of them parti-coloured—scarlet and green—red, green, and black—and one large pair was “sewed all round scarlet and green.”

At the church, in the Rossie loft no doubt, were “two carpets, two black cloacks and carpets upon the seats,” and also there are noted “Two communion cups, which I delivered Mr Stephen, minister of Craig, was left by Strickathrow’s great-grandfather.”

The list of articles the writer of the inventory received from her “worthy mother, Lady Rankeilor,” besides much linen and a press to keep it in, included two cradles with their furnishings, the Alasant stuff bed, with its bedclothes ; “one hundred ells of stuff for hanging the room” ; “4 pieces for a bed of stamp stuff ; also one dozen Rushia leather chairs for the bigg hall.”

A faint savour of romance hovers around the next lists—those of her wedding gifts and her trousseau. We sometimes fancy that the giving of wedding gifts is a comparatively modern fashion. This is quite a fallacy, as the following shows :—

Account of what silver plate came by me and Tokens from my Friends in the year 1693.

By the Earle of Southesk, a Bigg Silver Dish in two halis—which is at present made in a tea-pott, and two silver juggs.

By the Countess of Rothess, silver casters, three for suggar, mustard, and peper.

By my Lady Hopton, two salvers, a caddel dish, a silver jugg.

By the Countess of Weems, a ring with three Large Diamonds and four small betwixt them.

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<sup>1</sup> Of fine material, as distinguished from wheeling blankets of coarser make.

By the Countess of Leven, a ring with one Emerald, with three diamonds in each end of the Emerald.

By Lady Marg<sup>t</sup> Weems, now Countess of Northesk, a massy gold ring, w<sup>t</sup> two dozen fine Dyper (diaper linen).

By my uncle Sir John Aiton, a Ring w<sup>t</sup> six Diamonds.

By my aunt, Sir John Harper's Lady, a four guinea piece, w<sup>t</sup> my grandfather and grandmother's picture, and my great-grandfather's picture, Sir Thomas Hope of Craighall.

By Mr Wylie, a bigg glass and six agget hefted knives.

By Lady Commiston, a five guinea piece.

By Mrs James Martine, two silver candlesticks.

By Mrs Arbuthnot, Rossie's mother's sister, one feather bed, w<sup>t</sup> a bolster and two cods, two pair of sheets, and four codwars.

By Rossie, my husband, a gold watch, two gold sealls and a silver one, one Diamond Ring w<sup>t</sup> seven diamonds, a Diamond Ring w<sup>t</sup> one stone, a Ring with a garland, w<sup>t</sup> a pretty pocket glass and five five guinea pieces, and a fine sable tippet, a fine paste necklace, a dressing glass, w<sup>t</sup> boxes of all sorts that were useful. A pair gold philigram buttons.

By my Father, a Ring w<sup>t</sup> a large Ruby, w<sup>t</sup> three diamonds on each side, a Ring w<sup>t</sup> other seven set as a Rose.

By the Lady Knox, a necklace of Amethysts, three ells of broad gold lace.

By my Mother, a small jewel for a Breast, set like a large Rose.

By Rossie's Father, a pretty Jewel, which I gave the Earle Southesk's son in a present, as I did all the rest, among my children and kind friends.

By Mrs Armer, a chained Ring w<sup>t</sup> 7 or 8 Turkasses in't.

Sent by my Mother after I came to Rossie, five stone of wool, w<sup>t</sup> sixty Ewes and Lambs.

By the Earle Northesk, a very Handsome Galloway.

By my Lord Southesk, a fine cow and calf, a breed of Geese, Ducks, and Turkeys, and feasine fowls in plentie.

By my uncle Sir James Weems, twelve dozen parret coal.

The gifts are remarkably varied—fine jewellery in abundance—farm stock, poultry, pheasants—the latter, I think, probably kept in an aviary to be killed for the table when required. The twelve dozen parrot coal is puzzling. This mineral, now generally known as cannel coal, is used in the manufacture of gas, and is not a good household coal. It burns with a very bright light, and is said to have been used in former days as a luminant, and such a purpose it may have been intended to serve in this instance. It was, or is still, obtained at Torrie in Fife.

Surely this young lady must have been endowed with an unwonted charm to have had so many precious tokens of friendship bestowed on her; and does not her kindly nature shine out even through the dry details of her inventories—as when she mentions the distribution

of her jewels among her children and kind friends? The next entry following the list of "tokens" relating to her trousseau suggests the current of her thoughts back to those far-off days, near half a century before, when, as a youthful bride, she came to the house of Rossie or the Craig. The details may help us to picture her wandering in the "excellent good yards" or orchards at Rossie, or seated beside that "excellent fountaine with its large basone of hewen stone" in the garden at the Craig. Thus does it run :—

"As to my cloathes, I bro<sup>t</sup> w<sup>t</sup> me A Green and stript floured w<sup>t</sup> cherry and silver Mantua<sup>1</sup> (and) Pettycoat trim'd w<sup>t</sup> a deep silver fringe and Galloons,<sup>2</sup> lyn'd w<sup>t</sup> a cherry tushey,<sup>3</sup> w<sup>t</sup> silver.

"A Liomond<sup>4</sup> Mantua and pettycoat stript and floured w<sup>t</sup> silver and Liomond, lyned with a Liomond good silk and spotted the mounting fabricade, and mounted w<sup>t</sup> small silver fringes as was the fashion.

"A cherry and green broad stript, as was all the rest, lyn<sup>d</sup> w<sup>t</sup> a black and white damask all through.

"A petty coat trimed w<sup>t</sup> silver fringes, other gowns in abundance conform to my age. Stayes and Linnens in abundance, and pettycoats and smoke<sup>5</sup> pettycoats conform to the above.

"With a suit of handsom Riding cloaths mounted w<sup>t</sup> six dozen Beatten silver buttons as was the fashion, being a silk camblet cotton skirt lin'd w<sup>t</sup> silk.

"My own syde sadle w<sup>ch</sup> I had when a maid.

"Two stone twice hackled lint."

The house of Rossie has long since disappeared, and the property has passed from the hands of Margaret Scott's descendants; but from these inventories, which she laboriously compiled in her old age, we may conjure up a picture of her home, and even obtain a faint glimpse of the personality of the writer herself.

The original inventory was kindly lent to me some years ago by the late Mr J. Douglas Walker, Q.C., a descendant of the Scotts of Rossie.

<sup>1</sup> A loose gown.

<sup>2</sup> A species of silk ribbon used to edge or border clothes.

<sup>3</sup> Tissue.

<sup>4</sup> (?) Lemon.

<sup>5</sup> Smock.