

III.

GEORGE FOULIS (1569-1633) AND THE CARVED STONES OF RAVELSTON. BY GEORGE A. FOTHERGILL, M.B., C.M.

Wrapt, as it were, round a small monogram, delicately carved in stone, and perfectly preserved, which is to be seen in the old garden at Ravelston, close to Edinburgh, is a long and entertaining history of social life of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a history connected with the town and country doings of various prominent members of the then large family of Foulis, which is still represented in Midlothian, and by Sir William Liston-Foulis, tenth baronet, the owner of Millburn Tower, Woodhall, who traces his descent to the builder of Ravelston.

The two persons whose initials were also prettily carved, in the year 1624, on the shaft of a very peculiar fountain, now secluded amongst gigantic and carefully trimmed holly and yew hedges, some of them 16 feet in height, in the old-world garden of Ravelston, were both almost as well known to Edinburgh as any people who walked the ancient "Historic Mile." The "G. F." stands for George Foulis—not "Sir George Foulis," as the author of *A Midlothian Village* makes him out to be—who purchased the Ravelston estate in the year 1620, and built the house—the old house, and not that in which Miss Murray-Gartshore (the owner) now resides—and laid out the gardens, between the years 1620 and 1624. The "J. B." recalls his second wife, Janet

Bannatyne, a daughter of George Bannatyne, after whom the Bannatyne Club (now extinct) was designated, so long after his death as 1827, a club which Sir Walter Scott was mainly responsible for inaugurating.

The first sight of that monogram—and it is somewhat rare to find the initials of *two* people worked into one character, or cipher—caused me at once to include it in my sketch-book, and I tackled another of the old stones during the same visit.

Ravelston being still a private mansion, and not open at any time to the public, and there being in circulation only one small and scarce book, viz. *A Midlothian Village*, besides the four volumes concerning Scottish architecture by Messrs Macgibbon & Ross, which discusses this corner of Midlothian, the stones here are in consequence not widely known; in fact, remarkably few people know of their being there at all.¹

THE FOULIS FAMILY.

By way of leading up to the subject of my paper, I will refer to a few interesting facts regarding various members of the Foulis family, which appears to start, as do so many old Scotch families, with a burghess of Edinburgh in trade.

- One James Foulis, of the Skinners' Guild, who married Margaret, a daughter of a Fifeshire laird, Sir James Henderson of Fordel, is the first Foulis to figure in the pedigree—there is no authenticated link between him and the older Linlithgow Foulises. The date of his birth is not given, but he must have been born somewhere about the middle of the fifteenth century, certainly not later than the middle of the latter half of it, for his son, Sir James Foulis, was King's Advocate in 1520. It was the latter who purchased the Colinton estate from Lord Kilmaurs

¹ Since writing this paper I have come across a rare little book, *Biographical Annals of the Parish of Colinton*, by Thomas Murray, LL.D. (Edmonston & Douglas, 1863). Here there are ten pages devoted to Foulis of Colinton. If we are to understand that the information regarding this family and that of Ravelston, which we find in *Foulis of Ravelston's Account Book*, is correct, then we must admit there are several errors in Murray's account, as there are also in Anderson's *Scottish Nation*, another work giving particulars of the Foulises, which are very misleading to one engaged over the history of this family.

in 1519; and he died in 1549. His sons and grandsons were not conspicuous members of society; but of his five great-grandsons,¹ the eldest, James Foulis of Colinton, was knighted; George, the subject of this sketch, was appointed Master of the King's Mint in Scotland; Robert was an advocate; David followed King James VI. into England, and was created a baronet (1619), and founded a long line of Yorkshire baronets—the baronetcy only becoming extinct so late as 1876²; and John was the youngest, whose granddaughter, Anna Foulis, married Sir John Hope of Hopetoun.

The eldest son, Alexander, of the eldest of these four great-grandsons of Sir James Foulis, was made a baronet in 1634; and his son, James Foulis, became Lord Justice-Clerk (1684), being styled Lord Colinton; he died in 1688. There were three more generations of baronets in that line, the last being Sir James Foulis, whom I have termed "The Antiquary," and to whom I intend referring later, and then that baronetcy passed to the descendants of George Foulis of Ravelston.

No family so closely associated with trade as the Foulises undoubtedly were for such a lengthy period, was much better connected or held in higher esteem. They were related to the Primroses, the Hamiltons—Margaret, daughter of James Foulis of Colinton, was married to the first Earl of Haddington,³ early in the seventeenth century—the Wardlaws, the Sinclairs of Steviston, while the Marquis of Linlithgow⁴ descends from a Foulis; and John Hay, nephew of the first Earl of Tweeddale, married Jean, daughter of Sir John Foulis of Ravelston, Bart., and their only

¹ See *The Account Book of Sir John Foulis of Ravelston*, edited by the Rev. A. W. C. Hallen for the Scottish History Society.

² Mary, the only child of the eighth and last baronet, was married in 1850 to the second Baron de l'Isle and Dudley. She died 1891. Her son is the present peer (see Burke's *Peerage*).

³ See Burke's *Peerage*.

⁴ Sir James Hope, Knight of Hopetoun, sixth son of Sir Thomas Hope, first baronet of Craighall, married for his first wife, Anne, only daughter and heir of Robert Foulis, of Leadhills, co. Lanark. In 1641 Sir James was appointed Master of the King's Mint and a Lord of Session (1649). He was grandfather of the first Earl of Hopetoun, Knight. (See Burke's *Peerage*.)

child married Lord William Hay. The present Baron de l'Isle and Dudley's mother was a Foulis (see Burke's *Peerage*); and a number of influential Edinburgh merchants were also allied to them, including Byres of Coates, that fine old house which is to be seen now in the close of St Mary's Cathedral.

THE ACCOUNT BOOK OF SIR JOHN FOULIS OF RAVELSTON.

In 1894 there was published for the Scottish History Society *The Account Book of Sir John Foulis of Ravelston* (1671-1707), which is most valuable as throwing a light upon the social side of Scottish history during the seventeenth century. If we read it aright we find it to be full of life and character.

The late Dr Foulis allowed his ancestor's private accounts to be edited by the Rev. A. W. C. Hallen, a Fellow of this Society, and to be printed in full. But we are not concerned with Sir John Foulis, Bart., the grandson of the subject of this paper, though, in passing, I might mention that he owned and resided at Ravelston, where he lived a gay life, and was four times married, his first wife, Margaret, a daughter of Sir Archibald Primrose, Bart., bearing him thirteen children. His eldest son took the name of Primrose; his grandson,¹ Sir Archibald Primrose,

¹ Sir John Foulis's eldest son Archibald (*b.* 1663, *d.* 1684) succeeded to the Dunipace estate left him by his maternal grandfather, Sir Archibald Primrose, and had to exchange the patronymic Foulis for Primrose.

Archibald Primrose was succeeded in the estate by his brother George (*b.* 1667), who also took the name of Primrose. He had a son Archibald, and dying during his father's lifetime, never succeeded to the Ravelston baronetcy. The son Archibald, who succeeded his grandfather in the title, was then known as Sir Archibald Primrose of Dunipace, Bart. He had also inherited the Ravelston estate in 1707, but sold it in 1726 to Alexander Keith, nearly twenty years before he (Sir Archibald Primrose) was beheaded and the title forfeited.

In 1724 Sir Archibald was married to Mary Primrose, his cousin, and a daughter of the first Earl of Rosebery. His lady attended his execution at Carlisle, and returned to Scotland to die within a month of the execution.

It will be seen by the above that Ravelston was not owned by a Foulis or a Primrose at the time of the 1745 Rebellion.

Sir William Murray, Bart. of Ochertyre, Perthshire, married first (1833) the only daughter and heir of Sir Alexander Keith, Knight-Marischal of Scotland, of Ravelston,

second baronet (who sold Ravelston) was executed for taking part in the '45 Rebellion; and his (Sir John's) third son, William Foulis, had the Woodhall estate settled upon him, and inherited the MS. of the now famous *Account Book*, which, I believe, has finally found its way, by gift, to the Advocates' Library.

SIR JAMES FOULIS, BART. ("THE ANTIQUARY") OF COLINTON.

Those who have not yet dipped into the first volume of the *Archæologia Scotica* will be interested to learn that a Foulis, Sir James, the fifth baronet and last of his line at Colinton, was the first to figure as a contributor to that series of volumes. The subject of his first paper was this:—"An inquiry into the origin of the name of this Scottish Nation (presented to the Society of Antiquaries at Edinburgh, December 1780, by Sir James Foulis, Baronet of Colinton)." He inquires, in another paper of the same volume, into the beverage of the ancient Caledonians, and arrives at the conclusion that they drank ale. Altogether he had five papers in the volume.

There is a considerable amount of dry humour noticeable in his writing. I give one instance; and if would-be antiquaries bore it in mind, we should not have to contend with so much absurd presumption at their hands. Sir James Foulis remarks that "many suppose the ancient Scots made a liquor by bleeding birch-trees; but they can give no other reason for believing it was so, than only because it was *possible* it *might* be so." However, the writer rather gives *himself* away when he proved—to his *own* satisfaction—what they did *not* drink, and came to what they *did* drink, proving this to be ale, and by their own language, *his* only evidence being that "ol elmi" means "I drink."

Sir James, however, was a very thoughtful and clever man, of whom Playfair, in his *Baronetage of Scotland*, quotes the following:—"That and had to take the additional name of Keith. She died in 1853. Sir W. Keith-Murray then (1854) married the youngest daughter of the first Marquess of Hastings. His son by his first wife, the present Sir Patrick Keith-Murray (*b.* 1835) of Ochertyre, succeeded to the Ravelston estate, but sold it in 1872 to his uncle, the brother of Sir William Keith-Murray, and father of Miss Murray-Gartshore, now of Ravelston.

keenness of spirit without which nothing great or good ever yet was accomplished, which directed his sword in his youth through the enemies' ranks, impelled him, in maturer age, to the prosecution of studies connected with the too-much-forgotten honours of Scotland."

GEORGE FOULIS OF RAVELSTON ("MONETARIUS REGIS").

Let us now turn to George Foulis himself, the founder of the Ravelston Foulises. He was the second son of James Foulis, the Colinton laird, and Agnes, a daughter of Robert Heriot of Lumphoy. He was born in 1569. We know but little about him beyond the fact that he was by trade a goldsmith,¹ who eventually was appointed *Monetarius Regis*, which means Master of the King's Mint. He must have been in possession of a comparatively large fortune to do what he did, for he purchased a considerable amount of land and built upon it one of the best houses in Midlothian, which would cost him no small sum of money, if we are to judge by some of the walls still standing, and the portions of carved stones preserved in the Ravelston gardens. But his second wife's fortune was probably larger than his own.

His first wife was Sybilla Gilbert, whom he married in 1596. Nothing beyond the fact that she bore him two daughters is known of this lady.

On p. 50 of the Appendix to the Introduction of Sir John Foulis' *Account Book* we read:—

"George foulis and Janet Bannatyne my spous was marriet the first of Junii 1603."

This Janet Bannatyne was his second wife. Then follows a list of the births of their children—they had sixteen born to them in sixteen years (1604–1620), the mother surviving till 1631. The names of their respective godfathers and godmothers are also noted down, as well as a few other remarks, such as "He departit this lyf in Inghland at y^e siege of York in Junii 1644" (referring to their son Patrick Foulis, *b.* 1610);

¹ An uncle of his, Thomas Foulis, was also a goldsmith, and his brother, John Foulis, was one too. (See *Foulis of Ravelston Account Book.*)

and, "He was killed at y^e battlè of Kilsythe in Sep. 1645 zeirs" (concerning a son David, *b.* 1619).

*Members of the families of Nisbet (Sir William of the Dean), Foulis of Colinton, Bannatyne of Newtyle (including the George Bannatyne), Heriot (the father of the founder of Heriot's Hospital), Craig (Sir Lewis Craig of Wright's Land, a Lord of the Session), Sinclair, Anott (Sir John Anott—Arnott (?)), Hamilton (Thomas Lord Binning, created Earl of Haddington), and others well known, were amongst those called upon to act as sponsors for this large family.*¹

George Foulis, "noted for his riches and for his faith and integrity and modest mind and charity to all," died in his sixty-fifth year, on the 28th May 1633.

JANET FOULIS (NÉE BANNATYNE).

As to his second wife Janet (*b.* May 3, 1587), the mother of all his sons, she was the only surviving child of George Bannatyne and Isabell Mawchan. Her father (*b.* 1545) was one of the *twenty-three* children born to "James Bannatyne of Newtyle in Angus-shire, a writer and burges of Edinburgh," and Katherine Tailliefer, "a woman of godly conversation with whom her husband lead a pleasant life." Their eldest surviving son, Thomas of "Newtyle," became one of the Lords of the Session by that designation.

George Bannatyne possessed a rich collection of Scottish poetry, which formed his chief title to respect. It was compiled and transcribed very neatly by him in 1568, during one of those terrible visitations of the plague; eight hundred pages of really close writing in three months! and we have his own authority for this: he was only twenty-three years of age at the time.

Entering business at a later date, he became a member of the Guilds, and made, it is said, a fortune in some trade or other, afterwards enlarging it by judiciously lending out his money.

As a poet, he was but an indifferent one: he wrote some verses which

¹ See *The Account Book of Sir John Foulis of Ravelston.*

have come down to us, but are never read except for the sake of curiosity on the part of an antiquary. One of his poems sets forth "his lady's beauties and his own despair in a tone of frigid extravagance." The lady's looks must indeed have startled "the man in the street," for, according to the poet, they appear to have resembled "a bush burning in red flames, but without smoke." George Bannatyne, then, comes down to us not as a poet, but only as the friend and lover of Scottish poetry. Such, in brief, was the father of Janet Foulis.

In Greyfriars Churchyard, on the west side, a handsome tomb was erected to the memory of George and Janet Foulis; and this shows their portraits in stone, as well as sundry emblematical figures for the purpose of attesting the wealth and respectability of the good couple.

Their son George Foulis (the second of Ravelston) married twice, his first wife, Christian, being a daughter of Wardlaw the laird of Pitreavie; and his second wife, Jean, daughter of Sir John Sinclair, Bart., of Stevenston, Haddingtonshire, a wealthy Edinburgh merchant.

The Ravelston estate passed out of the hands of the Foulis family early in the eighteenth century (1726), having been purchased by one of the Keiths. Miss Murray-Gartshore, the present owner, and to whom I am indebted for some of the keynotes of this account, descends from the father of the Murray of Ochtertyre who married (in 1833) the Keith heir to this estate, and is in no way descended from the Keiths.

THE CARVED STONES OF RAVELSTON.

Somewhere about the year 1835 the old house at Ravelston was burnt down¹ and the central portion of it was entirely gutted, leaving but the north wing (which has undergone some little alteration, and been turned into a house for the head gardener and steward, Mr

¹ Miss Murray-Gartshore tells me she is not absolutely certain of the date of the fire, for the only letter she possesses in which the fire is alluded to is not dated. She writes, "I think it may have been about 1835, or a little later, for my uncle (Sir William Keith-Murray, Bart.) was married to Miss Keith in 1833, and he was here at the time *after* his marriage." I mention this because it has been stated in various accounts that the fire took place about 1800.

Jardine), and a tallish staircase-tower with crow-stepped gables towards the south.

Mr Thomas Ross seems to think the whole building was of the "Z" plan, like its neighbour Craigerook. On the east, south, and west sides is a very high wall, the original one built between the years 1620 and 1624; there is also an entrance archway, immediately east of what remains of the house, and in some respects similar to the old Adamson Arch still standing at Craigerook.

Running up the hill in a southerly direction, and also enclosed by high walls, are the beautiful gardens, about 200 yards in length. There is a drive on the east side of the eastern garden wall leading to the house, with an old archway at its southern extremity, adjoining which, on the west side, there once stood a small lodge, levelled to the ground about thirty-seven years ago, when the new lodge was built, forty yards further south, on the other side of what was formerly the old road, the avenue of trees still remaining to show the line of it.

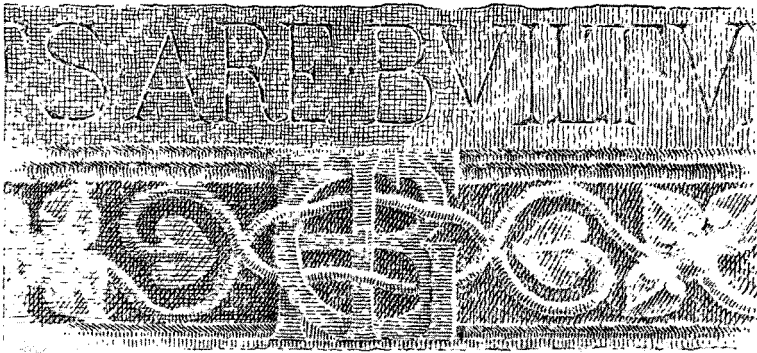
The chief objects of interest in the holly and yew garden are: A fountain in the centre: a summer-house, and the stones with the arms of Foulis (showing the three bay leaves) and Bannatyne (*arg.*, on a cross *az.*, between four mullets *gu.*, a crescent *or*) carved upon them, as well as some ornamental strapwork. These were all moved by Miss Murray-Gartshore from an old building in the wood, known as an ice-house.

The stones forming the entrance to the summer-house all belonged to the old mansion. It consists of the fireplace of the dining-hall, round which is some beautiful carving; three rows of totally different designs follow one another round this fireplace. Outside is a fluted Greek "fret"; inside is a series of quatrefoils¹ and squares, the latter ringed in the centre and placed diamondwise; while between these is a

¹ I might note that these quatrefoils are *not* similar in design to those larger ones of the "1622" doorway of the tower; on this doorway, which bears the motto "NE QUID NIMIS" and the initials of the same George Foulis and his wife, there are quatrefoils of three different patterns.

modification of the ancient "dog-tooth" pattern, most decorative and delicately carved. Surmounting the Greek "fret," and below these ornaments, is a cornice (fig. 1) with the scroll-work and small monogram to which I have referred, and a date, with text from the New Testament :

I · MAR · 1624 · YE · ALSO · AS · LIVELY · STONES · ARE · BVILT · VP · A
SPIRITUAL · HOUSE · 1 · PETER · 2 · 5.



I. MAR. 1624.
I.B. & G.F. = James Bennet and George Foulis who, between 1620 and 1624, built the old house, which was burnt down, somewhere about 1800. Above the monogram is this text: "YE ALSO AS LIVELY STONES ARE BVILT VP A SPIRITUAL HOUSE 1 PETER 2 5"

Scotch work on mantel-piece of old hall, RAVELSTONE now converted into a summer house in the Yew garden.

Fig. 1. Cornice with inscription, scroll, and monogram.
(With reference to the above date, 1800, see footnote, p. 83.)

I might note here, that in *The Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland* the first four words of the text are given incorrectly as "YEAR · SO · AS · LIVEY." Above all this are three ornaments, being the apices (one showing the tympanum) of dormer windows with their respective finials, a Scotch thistle, a rose and a mullet.

The fountain is 11 feet in height from the top (where sits a unicorn just now hornless, and with a new pair of hind legs) to the ground.

It consists of a rectangular shaft, *above* the basin, becoming conical towards the top, with a dragonesque, half beast, half fish, at each angle, and conventional wings springing from the heads, and a leaden turtle's

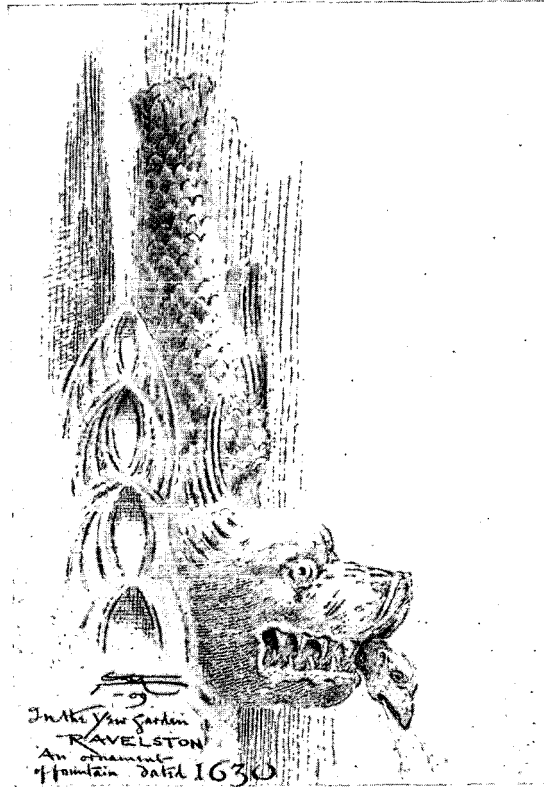


Fig. 2. Dragonesque monster on the fountain.

head and neck protruding from each of the four mouths, through which the water flows into a small basin, supported below by a pedestal, resting on two wide and low steps.

I have never before seen this combination of dragon's head and wings,

fish's body and fins, and turtle's head, but as it is quite in accordance with the peculiar taste of the seventeenth-century sculptor, it may not be original in conception here. There is certainly no "dolphin" about the ornament, as one author calls the monster; it is quite evident that wings support those grotesque heads, which, moreover, do not at all resemble what we are accustomed to see at the anterior extremity of a dolphin's body.

Neither of the authors who have referred to this fountain in their

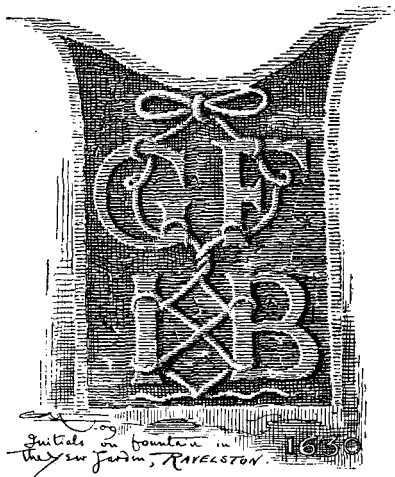


Fig. 3. Interknotted Initials.

books have noted that two of the dragons' heads, pointing respectively to the south-west and north-west, are modelled entirely in lead. When this was done I cannot say, but it is evident that the original stone heads were broken at some time, and were replaced by the easiest method, viz. in lead.

I may state that the shaft is rectangular, with the four angles sliced off for floral ornaments; and that the initials appear on one side, and the date is on the opposite side. The knotting with one ribbon of the

four letters together, which I have shown very carefully in my drawing, is also new to me, though Mr Thomas Ross tells me he has seen something of the kind in several other places in Scotland, at Hatton House and Castle Menzies; the two pairs of initials, however, at the latter place are *not* so united with the same ribbon, each pair having a "knot" to itself.

All the old part of Ravelston, I am told, was built out of the quarry immediately north of the *old* house; and that long-since disused quarry, as seen from the road leading down to Craigcrook, is now, in its overgrown state, and with a fine sheet of water surrounded by tall trees, one of the most beautiful sights around Edinburgh.

SIR WALTER SCOTT AND RAVELSTON.

I cannot wind up this account of Ravelston without referring to Sir Walter Scott, who in his early days not infrequently visited the *old* house. The Mrs Keith of that time who resided there was born a Swinton of Swinton, and sister to Sir Walter's maternal grandmother; and I also gather from J. G. Lockhart's *Life* of the great author and poet, that this house and its garden furnished him in after days with many of the features of his Tully-Veolan, as pictured in *Waverley*. Sir Walter had always considered those massive hedges of yew and holly in the venerable garden as the ideal of the art.

It is interesting to note here that one of the pall-bearers that followed Sir Walter Scott's remains to Dryburgh Abbey was his cousin William Keith, brother of Sir Alexander Keith of Ravelston.

Let me add just this one tale about him, as it alludes to the very archway which I have said is still to be seen east of the old house, and through which we now proceed on our way to that garden of gardens.

A lady who had been visiting her friends the Keiths at Ravelston, had written a letter in which she says she "distinctly remembers the sickly boy (Walter Scott, then not seven years of age) sitting at the gate of the house with his attendant, when a poor mendicant approached, old and woe-begone, to claim the charity which none asked for in vain at

Ravelston. When the man was retiring, the servant remarked to Walter that he ought to be thankful to Providence for having placed him above the want and misery he had been contemplating. The child looked up with a half wistful, half incredulous expression, and said, 'Homer was a beggar!' 'How do you know that?' said the other. 'Why, don't you remember,' answered the little virtuoso, 'that

'Seven *Roman* cities strove for Homer dead,
Through which the living Homer begged his bread'?

The lady smiled at the '*Roman* cities,' but already,

'Each blank in faithless memory void
The poet's glowing thoughts supplied.'

BIBLIOGRAPHY.

1. *The Catalogue of the Bannatyne Club.*
2. *Memorials of George Bannatyne*, a volume of the Bannatyne Club.
3. *The Account Book of Sir John Foulis of Ravelston, 1671-1707*, printed for the Scottish History Society, 1894.
4. *The Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland*, by D. Macgibbon and T. Ross, 1892.
5. *A Midlothian Village*, by G. Upton Selway, 1890.
6. *The National Dictionary of Biography* (Smith Elder).
7. *Archæologia Scotica*, vol. i.
8. *Playfair's Baronetage of Scotland.*
9. *Monteith's Theatre of Mortality.*
10. *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.*, by J. G. Lockhart.
11. *Biographical Annals of the Parish of Colinton*, by Thomas Murray, LL.D. (Edmonston & Douglas, 1863).
12. *Anderson's Scottish Nation.*