

I.

A ROYAL GIFT TO THE HAMMERMEN OF EDINBURGH IN 1641.

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The number of pre-Reformation buildings left in Edinburgh is singularly few. Those that remain have (with one exception) been either partially restored or are in ruins; and it is left to one modest little chapel, in the Cowgate of Edinburgh, to have the unique distinction of being, at least by its exterior, in the same condition as when it was originally built, now over three centuries ago. I refer to the Magdalen Chapel, which, if we exclude the spire, is the only religious edifice of pre-Reformation times practically untouched. Founded, as is well known, before 1544, it is not till 1547 that we are enabled to get authentic information as to the purpose and intention of the founders, Michael Macqueen and Janet Rynd, his widow. The charter containing the directions and rules for the working of this pious and useful Institution is of great length, and is considered to be the last of its kind executed in Edinburgh before the Reformation.

It is not my intention to go into any detailed account of this charter or description of the building, but to refer to a remarkable gift or mortification given to the chapel by King Charles I., nearly one hundred years after the founding of the Institution. According to the foundress's instructions, the Hammermen of Edinburgh were made patrons of the endowment, and it is to this fortunate circumstance that the preservation of the building is due. Founded primarily for the service of a chaplain to say masses for the souls of the pious founders and other relatives, it also included the maintenance of seven poor men known as "beidmen." The Reformation took away the necessity of the first part of the intention of the founders, but the Hammermen, with a noble and patriotic spirit, continued, as long as they remained an Incorporation, to carry out the wishes of Janet Rynd for the care of the poor with the means placed at their disposal. How earnestly they

succeeded in carrying out this trust is afforded by the fact that by 1640 they had increased the number of beidmen from seven to twelve, and it is at this date that the worthy craftsmen's hopes ran high by the gift of His Majesty King Charles I. of the sum of one hundred and nine pounds sterling annually (a very large sum in those days) for the beidmen. From a careful inspection of the notes of the accounts of the legacies left to the chapel and beidmen from 1555 to 1636, it appears that the whole sum invested available for the trust only brought fifteen pounds sterling annually, and during that period the amount not so earmarked was only a little over eighty pounds sterling. It can be seen that, considering the poverty of the endowment, the Hammermen nobly carried out the pious work; and it also is evident that they must have contributed largely themselves. In 1640 they were at their wits' end to carry on the charity, and we can enter into their feelings when the announcement of this regal, and to them magnificent, benefaction was made known. I quote the minute dealing with the matter, which is in language exceedingly quaint:—"20th October 1641. There compeared Richard Maxwell and in presence of ye Deacons Maisters and haill craft presentit yame an gift of mortification fra his Majestie to yame as patrons to ye use of ye beidmen of ane hundret and nyne pounds sterling yearly out of ye Bishoprik of Dunkeld. And desyrit that they would pay ye chairges yairof and give ye king thanks yairfor. To the quilks was answerit that they wald willinglie pay ye chairges. As also all in an vote give him heartie thanks for his pains." This gift, the largest the foundation ever received, is contained in a document, a copy of which fills up four folio pages of closely written manuscript. As it is too long for insertion here, a condensed account follows:—

CHARLES R.

Our Sovereign Lord understanding that yair is an hospital fundit and situated within ye towne of Edinburgh known of old and callet ye Magdalene Chapel quair of ye Hammermen of Edinbh. is patrons, quilk was appointet and fundit for ye maintenance and supplie of decayed aged distrest tradesmen. And ye quilk hospital through the failure of ye rents yairof yair was only at the beginning seven beidmen to quhand yay addit five, extending to twelve persons in number. The half yerof of ye rentes of ye said hospital being not able to sustain, and having suplicated other supplies of rent, as appointed to have been the intention of ye foundress of ye samyn, so as it wald sustain supplies and mainteun yame old aged distrestet persouns as occasions sould present. And his majestie being willing to gratify and suplie ye samyn.

Therefore our said sovereign lord out of his zeal and affection he carries to ye Lord of God and out of his pious and most cristian disposition as common father patron, and defender of all pious donations and mortifications to colleges, hospitals and schools. And for encouraging of all cristian disposed people to advance all godly works.

Ordains an list of mortifications and gift to be grantit under his highness great seal as divers service granted mortified donated and disponed.

To his majestie's leiges The present deacon and maisters of ye hammermen as representing ye haill body and to yair successors from tyme to tyme patrons of ye said hospital for ye suplie, use, and maintenance of beidmen and decayed tradesmen within ye samyn ye particular feus and tak duties under written payable furth of ye rents of ye Bishoprik of Dunkeld now vacant in his majestie's hands and as his highness's gift and disposition through ye abolition and suppression of Bishopsis within this realm in all tyme coming namely ye sum of one hundred and twenty six pounds thirteen shillings and four pennies annual duty be ye Marquis of Douglas his heirs and successors for his tounes of Boucle and Prestonmair, for ye feu duties of ye tounes and lands of Preston forty shillings. The sum of Twenty pounds of tak duties by James Earl of Murray for his toun of Graynock (probably Greenock), The sum of forty six pounds of tak duties by ye Earl of Cambell for his touns of Aberdagie, Ye sum of eleven pounds of feu duties be ye laird of Gairontoll for his feu duties of ye lands of Dalpwen. Ye sum of ten pounds thirteen shillings four pennies by ye laird of Inchmartin for ye lands of Sknago, Ridell, Markle and easter Caputet, Ye sum of Thirteen pounds six shillings and aucht pennies of feu duties by Mr. Robt Nairne Advocate for his lands of Mukarse, Ye sum of three score and twelve pounds of tak duties for ye Viscount of Stormeyth for ye touns of ye mains of Hunting tower and haill baronies yarof, Ye sum of Twenty five pounds six shillings and aucht pennies by Holbrant Oliphant of Condie for ye touns of Condie, Thirty eight pounds thirteen shillings and four pennies by William Oliphant and Dame Marjorie Graham his mother for ye tounes of Wester Kinnardis, Ten pounds thirteen shillings and four pennies be Holbrant Keir for ye tounes of nether Balcanger and Wester Kinnardis.

Four score sixteen pounds six shillings aucht pennies by Sir. Patrick Douglas of Kilspindie for ye lands of Aberladie.

Ane hundred pounds by James Inglis for Crawmond mains with ye tounes yairof. Thirty six pounds eleven shillings by ye Earl of Haddingtoun for his lands within ye toun of Aberladie and many others.

And yairby making and constituting ye said Deacon and Maisters of ye Hammermen and yair successors to ye use and maintenance of ye said beidmen and poor of ye said Hospitall to ye said tak and feu duties payable furth of ye rentes of ye Bishoprik of Dunkeld in all time coming."—The deed goes on in the then legal fashion, and giving them full power to take and uplift and pursue for these rents, and finishes up with: "Given at Holyrud Hous ye nynteen day of October ye year of God 1641."

It is difficult to understand what induced King Charles I. to make this donation, seeing that his great scheme of forming Edinburgh into a Bishopric, and St Giles Church the Cathedral of the new diocese, had been by the action of the inhabitants on the 23rd of July 1637 totally overthrown. Evidently bearing no ill-feeling for the unexpected tumult, King Charles, with a magnanimity that is remarkable, conveyed this mortification, and got it ratified by the Scots Parliament, as a token of his goodwill to the Hammermen of Edinburgh. One curious feature brought about in connection with the attempt to found Episcopacy in Scotland is, that from this date, 1641, down to within recent years, the Hammermen of Edinburgh professed more or less Episcopalian views; and it may have been for the part or sympathy they showed during the Jenny Geddes riot that the King was influenced to make such a bequest.

Be that as it may, the Hammermen entered with great zeal into the acquisition to the funds of their chapel, and having committed themselves to paying the charges of securing the rights, soon found that it was a dear gift to them. The scattered locations of the feus and of their holders made it a most difficult matter to collect the dues. What with warnings, hornings, and counsel to represent them, the charges incurred in a year in enforcing their right was found to amount to the sum of one thousand four hundred and twenty-nine pounds three shillings (Scots), which they ordered to be paid out of the gift "quhen" ye same should be received. These expectations were doomed to disappointment, for although they received a fair sum the first year, the whole amount did not come near the sum incurred, so they made the balance of the debt a bond on the foundation. It had never crossed their minds that difficulties would arise in gathering these feu-duties, and so far as the accounts show not one-tenth of the annual rental was ever received. The Hammermen also entered into some extravagant schemes, such as enlarging their official collector's house, an operation that entailed considerable expense; and in the fulness of their joy they presented Sir James Carmichael, the King's Advocate

(who had a great share in securing the gift for them), a perpetual right of presenting one beidman to the foundation. To enable them to pay off the debt incurred, which, as the years went on, was still growing, they made special efforts, and at the sacrifice of several of the original endowments of the hospital this was accomplished. A change of collector was the outcome of this state of affairs, and by 1647 the whole of the original Magdalen Chapel endowments are so mixed up with the ordinary receipts of the Incorporation, that they never appear as a separate item again. All traces of King Charles' gift disappear after the above-mentioned date, which shows the disordered state Scotland was in after the King's execution, and points to the fact that the nobles and gentry evaded their payments. The revival of Episcopacy in 1662 by Charles II. next took away any little right they had, and so ended a royal gift that was fraught with great possibilities.

Although the Incorporation of Hammermen of Edinburgh were saddled with the effects of this debt, they never allowed the beidmen to suffer, as, by the trade dues and other sources of income, they rather increased the benefits of the charity; and although "the beidmen," as a name, disappear after 1665, yet after this they are termed "the poor," showing that the Hammermen implicitly followed out the intention of the founder to the best of their abilities through all the centuries they survived as an Incorporation.

Nearly half a century later the King's gift turned up again, but in a different manner. Mention is made above of the gift to Sir James Carmichael by the Hammermen of a right to nominate a beidman in perpetuity to the foundation. This right granted to Sir James does not appear ever to have been taken advantage of, as undoubtedly that nobleman, who died in 1672, would clearly understand the difficulties that arose in connection with the mortification. However, the Hammermen did not cancel the right of presentation, and it remained in abeyance till 1710, when the worthy old craftsmen were dismayed by the announcement of a claim by the Earl of Hyndford (who was a grandson of the above Sir James Carmichael) for the money which was allowed yearly for the maintenance of a beidman. Powerful and influential though that nobleman was, the Hammermen resisted the claim, and, having engaged Sir William Calderwood as their consulting lawyer, they had the satisfaction of successfully gaining their case. The original interlocutor giving the judgment is still in existence (extending in length as a roll to thirteen feet), and it, in substance, brings out that the action of Charles II. in establishing Episcopacy in 1662, took away the mortification; and as the right of presentation had been given on the strength of the perpetuity of the mortification, its cancelling had the

same effect on the presentation. It is interesting to note that on the death of the last Earl of Hyndford, in 1817, the title became extinct, the property passing to the Fife branch of the family, namely, the Anstruthers of Anstruther and Elie, who then took the name of Carmichael.