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**1932**



## INCORPORATION OF CORDINERS OF THE CANONGATE, 1538-1773

THE records of a trade guild or incorporation which counted kings and queens among its patrons or customers at one of the most momentous periods of Scottish history whet one's curiosity. Will they reflect light on, or retail gossip concerning, the great episodes in the tragic history of Holyroodhouse, about which one never tires of hearing? If not, shall we find the Cordiners (cordwainers or shoemakers) discussing the old fashions in footwear of which we know little? Will they, for example, describe the black satin shoes that were worn by Mary, Queen of Scots, one of which is in Cordwainers' Hall, London—a dainty shoe with satin strips set to overlap at the instep, and which, with jewelled buckle, secured the shoe to the foot? Or shall we be told something relating to that other shoe of brocaded satin which, according to tradition, the same fair Queen dropped on her ride to Hermitage—a relic that is now in the little museum of Jedburgh? May we expect to learn how the royal cordiner made for Darnley those marvellously contrived shoes out of an ell and a half of 'luke' velvet? One can imagine how the Cordiners shook their heads when, immediately after the murder of Darnley, they heard that one of the dress shoes or 'mullis' which one of their number had made for Maitland of Lethington had been picked up in the garden of Kirk o' Field.

Alas! the Minutes of those fateful years are lost; but even if they had not been lost they would have uttered no syllable

of report on any of the great events of the time, for the Minute Book clerks of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were no whit different from their successors of to-day in keeping to the business in hand. It is from reports of law-suits, from the records of the Privy Council, and from the Minutes of the Incorporation for the period 1610 to 1773 that we learn of the activities of the Cordiners, and of their landmark and memorial in the Canongate, to wit, the tenement opposite Moray House with the engraved scroll and open Bible with quotation—the tenement known as 'Shoemakers' Lands.'

The history of the Cordiners of the Canongate may be divided into four parts: (1) from 1538 to 1609; (2) from 1610 to 1652; (3) from 1653 to 1743; and (4) from 1744 to the close of their active career.

### I

In 1538 the Bailies of the Canongate granted a charter or seal of cause in favour of the select company of shoemakers in that Burgh of Regality, who were thenceforward to be regarded as a trade incorporation with all the rights and privileges enjoyed by similar organisations throughout Scotland, rights which included the power to levy dues from the shoemakers and cobblers<sup>1</sup> in the Canongate who were not members. The older guilds on which the Incorporation of Cordiners was modelled had, if not an ecclesiastical origin, at least a strong association with the Church. The Cordiners, like all the other craft guilds, met in church for business as well as for worship, and their custom of beginning every meeting with prayer, which endured to the latest days of the craft, owes its origin to pre-Reformation times.

The Roman Catholic Church allotted to each craft guild its own patron saint or saints, who, among the Cordiners,

<sup>1</sup> Cobblers were vendors, as well as repairers, of old boots and shoes.

were Crispin and Crispinian, the two brothers who worked as shoemakers in Soissons and were martyred in A.D. 287 for their efforts in the cause of Christianity. Further, the title of deacon or kirk-master, enjoyed by the head of every craft, is derived from the ancient Church.<sup>1</sup> From it, too, the Cordiners, in 1554, obtained one of their most valuable concessions. The revenue derived from the fees paid to them by the shoemakers and cobblers of the Canongate was increased to a considerable degree by similar dues levied on the same class of artisans in the outlying parts of the Barony of Regality—North Leith, the Pleasance or St. Leonard's gate, and part of St. Ninian's Row. With that purpose in view (which, however, they diplomatically kept in the background) the Cordiners, one fine August day, waited upon the Lord Abbot in the Abbey church of Holyrood. In their petition to the Abbot, as Superior of the Barony, they began by craving permission to build an altar, and then sought an augmentation of the church services, praiseworthy objects which could only be accomplished by conferring power on their Incorporation to levy dues on the shoemakers in the places mentioned. The Abbot approved of the idea, though he appears to have had no faith in the prompt fulfilment of the Cordiners' promise to improve the church. For, in the 'Letter of Licence' which he issued (a document which ranks as a charter or warrant of much value to the Cordiners) the Abbot narrated that

'Andrew Purves, deacon or kirk maister, and others, having exposit that where first for the loving of God Almighty, the honour of the realme, the worship and profit of our burgh and the profit of all our sovereign lady's leiges and others repairing thereto, and for augmentation of divine service at ane altar to be biggit within our said abbey, where sanct Crispin and Crispinian, their patrons sall stand and for eschewing of unsufficient craftsmen of their occupation . . .

<sup>1</sup> The use of the title was at certain periods illegal. Cf. Act of Parl. (Scot.), 1555. The London Guild of Cordiners had a 'Master.'



PART OF THE INSIGNIA WORN BY THE DEACON

it is our will that the Cordiners dwelling within our Regality in the town of Leith on the north side of the water . . . in St. Leonard's gate and beside our chapel of St. Ninian outwith St. Andrew's port, be in brotherhood and fellowship with the deacon and masters of the cordiner craft in the Canongate, and to pay their duties with them for upholding divine service and to the altar whilk sall be biggit siklike as they suld do. Heirfor we have given these letters for us and our successors . . . full freedom and licence to the deacon and masters of the said craft of Cordiners and their successors, to receive and uptake from all . . . cordiners in Leith, St. Leonard's gate and St. Ninian's Row suchlike . . . duties as they take from the shoemakers in the Canongate. Provided that the deacon and masters build the altar within six years, and fee and uphold a chaplain . . . the money to be received from them to be warit upon the reparation and upholding of the altar, chaplain and service.'

The Cordiners, who doubtless availed themselves of the utmost limit of time allowed by the Abbot, must have congratulated themselves on having kept their money, for six years later there arrived the Reformation; the Reformers tolerated no altars. The Cordiners, however, had secured their chief purpose; the shoemakers of every part of the Regality were subject to them and would continue to pay to the coffers of their Incorporation in the Canongate.

There is no means of ascertaining what were the feelings of the Craft on realising the meaning of the Reformation. Gone for ever were the old *fêles* with the miracle plays, in which they, along with other crafts, took part. Yet the boisterous farces and Robin Hood revels which were banned by Act of 1555 may, however, have been surreptitiously played, as they were in Edinburgh in 1561, when a 'cordiner's servant' was about to be hanged for breaking this law, to the indignation of all craftsmen, who rescued the victim and imprisoned the Bailies in a writing booth. Gone also was the annual procession on Corpus Christi Day when all the crafts, wearing their regalia and with banners displayed, marched through the bounds of the Barony.

But the Cordiners continued to hold their meetings in the Abbey Church. They also retained their seats there for public worship and paid the dues required for the upkeep of the services not only in that, their parish church, but in the church of North Leith, to which they were wont every year to march in procession, not for spiritual enlightenment but simply to impress the North Leith people with their superior right to seats in the church there.

Before admission to the Craft the Cordiners were obliged to swear on oath that they would

'fully maintain and uphold the religion presentlie publicly professed within this kindome . . . as the undoubtit veritie and trewth of God, groundit upoun the Scriptoris, to witt the old and new Testamentis, and to profess the same sincerelie . . . and to renounce the contrarie religioun profest be our adversaries, the papists, as erroneous and fallss, not groundit upoun the sacred and canonicall writtin word of God.'

If in pre-Reformation times they had been in the habit of working on Sundays, that practice was checked by the Reformers, for any who were found 'schaipand or schewand on the Sabbath day or strolling in the streets or fields betuix tounis in time of preiching and praying on the said day' were to be fined eight shillings. Though the obligation to take the oath to uphold the Protestant faith remained to the close of the Craft's long career, there is only one instance where the craftsmen were sceptical of the orthodoxy of a candidate. James Dykes, the candidate in question, was, if not a Catholic, a loyal adherent of the House of Stewart. When, in 1680, he applied for admission to the Incorporation, James, Duke of York, was in residence at Holyroodhouse, and was in the habit of hearing Mass celebrated in the chapel there. Dykes may have been an attender. In any case, though he took the oath and was duly admitted, it was minuted 'that in case he shall be found at any time professing or maintaining the Roman Religion, callit papistrie, he shall lose his libertie.'

The Duke became King in 1685, and was deposed in 1688. In 1693, when fears were entertained of a Catholic rising in his favour, the Government of William III. passed an Act requiring every holder of a public office to take the Oath of Allegiance with the 'Assurance.' The 'Assurance' was a declaration of William's position as King *de jure* as well as *de facto*. Dykes, who had been elected Deacon in 1693, refused to take the Oath and 'Assurance.' He was therefore ineligible to perform the duties of Deacon and ought to have resigned. He did not, but left off calling meetings, and that was awkward for every one. The Craft in consequence summoned a meeting to consider what should be done; they then resolved to appoint the Deacon of the previous year to carry on as *interim* Deacon until Beltane 1694. A fresh appointment was then made, but so far from expelling Dykes, in terms of their Minute of 1680, the meeting approved of his appointment as Deacon's 'Second' or Vice-Chairman. James Dykes was evidently popular.

Every applicant for admission to the Incorporation had a series of oaths to take before he was admitted a freeman. He was obliged to swear that he would 'maintain and defend the liberties and privileges of this burgh and especially of our own Trade, with his body and goods'; that he would be obedient to his superiors, the Bailies and Council, and to their laws, constitutions and ordinances; that he would be respectful to the Deacon and masters and give due obedience to 'whatsomever things' they commanded concerning the welfare of the Craft; that he would concur with the Craft's officer and assist him when employed in the Craft's affairs; that he would honestly and faithfully serve his Majesty's lieges in his calling; would bear burden, conform to ability, in the exactions and contributions enjoined for the welfare of the Craft's affairs; and that he would perform, fulfil and observe 'all acts and statutes made or to be made and set down in the Trade's books.'

Nor was this all. The candidate had to satisfy the members of his ability to make a pair of boots, shoes and slippers, an examination which, in later times, was entrusted to the 'sey' or essay masters. No instance has been found of a candidate having been rejected on account of a badly made pair of boots or shoes or slippers, but one applicant who submitted as his essay the work of another was refused admission. On submitting his own handiwork, however, a few months later, he was duly admitted. The Cordiners were indeed a forgiving body.

In some craft incorporations undesirable candidates were occasionally 'turned down' because of the alleged insufficiency of their 'essay.' Another but less successful test was employed by the Canongate Cordiners. They required such candidates to make their essay in three days' time, while indulging others with the long period of twelve months. The Cordiners of North Leith, on the other hand, were not required to pass any examination until 1654, when two Cordiners of the Canongate and one of North Leith were appointed examiners of their 'essay.' A clogger—almost the only one who applied—was admitted after lodging as his 'sey' a pair of clogs; while a cordiner of 1682, who was already a member of the Incorporation, anticipating more profit from making the leather furnishings of hackney coaches (which had then become popular), had to satisfy his brethren of his competence to undertake the new branch of the trade before fixing up his signboard.

The Cordiners derived their income not only from the unfree shoemakers and cobblers of the Canongate, and the affiliated Cordiners of the Pleasance, St. Ninian's Row and North Leith, but from the 'upsets' or fees which were fixed according to the candidate's relationship to the Craft. Those who had served five years of apprenticeship, and the journeymen or 'servants' with seven years' service in Canongate, were admitted on payment of forty pounds Scots (£3, 6s. 8d.),

while the stranger, or 'incomer,' to the Canongate had to pay a hundred merks (£5, 11s. 1½d.). In addition, drinks and dinners had to be provided for the Craft, perquisites which were stopped in 1649, because 'the common good of the trade was nothing profited thereby.' A sum of £20 Scots was then substituted. Certain concessions were granted to those who had married the daughters of members of the Incorporation, but these concessions did not come into force until 1649.

There was a goodly proportion of apprentices who, like the 'Farmer's Boy,' married the master's daughter and in time succeeded to the master's business. One lawyer availed himself of the privilege accorded to sons-in-law of Cordiners (*i.e.* obtaining the privileges of membership) without passing the necessary test on condition that he would not undertake to trade as a cordiner. That lawyer had an eye on the Clerkship of the Incorporation. A few years afterwards the Clerk, an old man, resigned, and the 'freeman cordiner' lawyer secured the appointment.

The apprentices were lodged, fed, and taught their trade by the masters, who were evidently paid for these services by the parents, to judge by the difficulty experienced in finding any of the Craft willing to accept the orphan son of a member as an apprentice. It was long customary for the master to 'stand' a drink ('a four hours') to his fellows on receiving an apprentice, but the practice was discountenanced by a rule made in 1649 under which the 'prentice paid eight merks instead. Some masters were in the habit of paying small sums to their apprentices, contrary to the laws of the Craft. On several occasions the Deacon emphasised the illegality of the practice, though the apprentices might, in the last year of their apprenticeship, be paid 2s. Scots 'for ilk piece of work,' a sum which was increased in 1678 to 2s. 6d. and in 1726 to 3s. for each pair of boots or shoes made by them. The proportion of apprentices to masters was strictly regu-

lated, no master being permitted to employ more than one apprentice in three years. That rule, however, was rescinded in 1739, when, on account of 'the looseness of trade,' masters might have as many apprentices as they pleased. It is singular to find that no apprentice was allowed to leave the Canongate after expiry of his indenture unless he relinquished the trade of Cordiner or went overseas. The journeymen were also hampered in the choice of employers, and none from Edinburgh could be engaged unless permission had been given by the previous Edinburgh employer. It was an offence against the Craft for a master to lure a skilful journeyman from a brother craftsman, and the busy, prosperous Cordiners, who had more work than they could accomplish without employing more journeymen, were ordered to offer the surplus work to those who were free to undertake it. Only after failure to find such substitute was he entitled to engage the services of unfreemen. The hardest hit were the busy cobblers, who were on no account to have journeymen.

The laws of the Craft were directed towards making it a brotherhood, and in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the results seem to have been fairly successful. No brother was to assault another brother. If any had a grievance against his brother craftsman he must not go to law about it but complain to the Deacon. Whatever the Deacon said or did the craftsmen had to respect, and any who were discovered to have spoken disrespectfully of a law or of the Deacon were fined. Several instances of infractions of this rule will be mentioned later. One is irresistibly reminded of many points of similarity between these Crafts and Freemasons, particularly in regard to the law against revealing Trade secrets, that is telling to outsiders anything spoken about at the meetings of the Craft. We shall refer in our narrative to one case of the kind.

Varied in size were those wooden booths that were built close to the houses on both sides of the Canongate—from

Holyrood to St. Mary's Wynd. Some booths had a master and a journeyman and, perhaps, an apprentice; others had several journeymen all busy hammering or sewing. The booths that quickly arrested the attention of passers-by were those of armourers, whose shining morions and swords were closely examined by cavaliers and men of war. Then there were the booths of the Cordiners where ladies saw the latest styles in footwear, done in the best of craftsmanship. But there were booths that did not readily catch the eye, that had, in fact, become too small for the man with a growing business. The tenants of these would cast envious eyes on the better placed or larger booths, and would often try to secure them by secretly offering a higher rent. But the laws of the Cordiners did not permit these unbrotherly schemes, and to try to take another's booth or house 'ower his heid' was punishable in a fine of forty shillings. Again, the enterprising cordiner who surreptitiously leased two booths for his increasing business was, when discovered, fined forty shillings. It was impossible to escape detection, and every case of infraction of any of the Craft's laws was certain to be reported to the Incorporation.

The meetings of the Craft were deemed of the utmost importance. Every member was compelled to be present. Until 1653, when the Convening House was ready, the annual meeting, at which office-bearers were elected, was held on the Calton Hill on Beltane Day, or, if that day fell on a Sunday, on 2nd or 3rd May. The other meetings were held at the pleasure of the Deacon. Intimation to all members was made by the Craft officer,<sup>1</sup> who went from booth to booth 'wairning' each to repair to the Abbey Kirk, or the Canongate Tolbooth, or MacNeill's Craigs (as the Calton was called), or to the Convening House, at 'eleven hours of the forenoon of the morrow,' or at 'twa of this efternune,' according to

<sup>1</sup> From 1769 the officer delivered a billet to each member instead of making an oral intimation.

the time of intimation. If the officer called on the evening before the meeting, the names of those who failed to attend were entered in a book of 'Absents,' and the amounts of their fines were carefully noted up at the close of each quarter, when each had to pay. If, however, their summons to attend was made on the same day as the meeting was due to be held a smaller fine was exacted. Nor did the late-comers escape. They were termed 'ceros,' a corrupted form of *sero*, meaning late. The 'ceros' were those who came after the sand of the time-glass had run down and been reversed. The Clerk was prompt in entering the names of the 'ceros' in a book kept for the purpose, as well as in rendering the amount on quarter day. There were times, however, when the rule was relaxed and fines were remitted. The utmost endeavour was made to preserve decorum at the meetings. Each member was obliged to obey the Deacon, and not to speak when another was speaking. Specific rules were laid down but not always enforced for dealing with defaulters.

As already stated, the office-bearers were elected at the meeting held on Beltane Day. The Deacon was first chosen and held office for a year, or two years if he proved popular. He had the right of selecting his 'Second' or vice-chairman, but the practice from 1640 onwards was to elect the retiring Deacon. The ceremony adopted in the election of the Deacon was for the retiring Deacon to take by the hand the man whom he desired, to a part of the room where those whom the others proposed were assembled. Only those members who had paid their dues and were not in debt to the Craft had the right to vote. The history of the Incorporation shows that it was rare to find all the voters thus qualified to exercise their votes, in consequence of which there were at times disorderly meetings.

Then were elected the Boxmaster or Treasurer (whose post was for long the indispensable stepping-stone to the

Deaconship), the 'Masters,' or Council, who, until 1653, were six in number, when they were increased to nine. From 1663 they numbered ten.

The 'little masters' were a later part of the Craft Cabinet, and their duties were mainly to go through the Regality along with the officer and collect the licences paid by the unfree shoemakers and cobblers. The two Keymasters, who were also elected annually, kept the keys of the 'little kist,' in which were stored the Craft's writs. The large 'box,' containing the money, was for some years looked after by the Deacon and Boxmaster, but in the second half of the seventeenth century it was customary to appoint two members who held no other office. There was also from 1643 to 1682 a 'lityll quhyt tine box,' for which one member was made Keeper and another Keymaster. Every fortnight it was their duty, along with the Clerk, to 'goe throw it' and see that all was right. The Clerk held office *ad vitam aut culpam*, and was a lawyer or at least a 'writer,' a term which did not always indicate a qualified legal practitioner; several of the Craft's clerks were Notaries Public. It was a common practice for a Clerk who had held office for many years to resign on full pay, his successor having to consent to hand over the emoluments during the other's lifetime. One exception to that clerkly custom is recorded in 1732, when Alexander Home, who was son-in-law of a member and had become a freeman in virtue of that fact, was unanimously elected by the Craft, against the expressed wish of the retiring Clerk to nominate his successor. The custom of paying the Clerk an annual salary did not begin until 1678, but the older practice of rewarding him with certain fees was continued.

With a few exceptions the Clerk signed all Minutes until 1732, when both Deacon and Clerk signed. That innovation is not altogether explained by the illiteracy of the average Deacon, though in great measure it does account for it. The Craft did not attach much importance to the ability to read

and write until 1671, when an act of the Craft enjoined that only those who could 'read and wrytt' might sit with the Clerk to check the voting.

The officer,<sup>1</sup> who was also elected every year, was generally a poor member of the Craft, who was paid like the Clerk out of the fees of intrants and moneys for summoning members to meetings and special duties; but from 1752 he also received an annual salary. In one case, an officer who was a favourite was given a free house and an allowance for coats and boots. From 1731 there were also annually elected two members whose duties were simply to attend all meetings of journeymen and to report, doubtless, any projected plots to the masters.

The reports sometimes showed deficits, the Boxmaster 'restand' to the trade sums of money, and when the Incorporation lent money to those who were not always 'sure hands.' Keen partisanship attended the election of the Deacon, and when one was elected by the votes of those who were in debt to the Craft the election ought to have been void; but on some occasions the majority would not conform to the law until the matter had been reported to the court of the Conventry and a decision in favour of the minority had been given.

The good fellowship of the Cordiners was made evident in many ways. When a freeman fell ill he was visited, and if in need was given money. In the event of his death all the members were obliged to attend the funeral. Those who failed to do so without good reason were fined. Funerals demanded in most crafts the wearing of hats instead of the everyday bonnet; but the Cordiners, unlike most crafts, had no law on this point. They had their own morteloth, or pall covering, which was part of the customary equipment of all funerals in those days. There are many references in the Minutes to widows who applied for financial assistance because

<sup>1</sup> 'Beadle' was the term used by the Guild of Cordwainers of London.

they could not meet the funeral expenses. In all such appeals the Cordiners acted graciously, and gave the necessary aid. Many of the widows became pensioners, receiving periodically sums of half a crown or three shillings, which had then greater purchasing power than it has to-day.

Care for the poor was indeed one of the cardinal objects of all trade incorporations, there being no sure sources of relief for those unable to work. The charity workhouse was introduced into the Canongate in 1761, when the Cordiners, with other crafts, were able more easily to make provision for their poor. To this institution the members contributed, and the Deacon was always one of the directors.

The increasing prosperity of the Cordiners of the Canongate was a source of annoyance to the Cordiners of Edinburgh, who could not brook rivals so close to them, and their jealousy was intensified by the practice of the Canongate shoemakers in competing with them in their weekly market. The Canongate Cordiners were often assaulted and their goods seized. Many free fights took place of which no records remain. In December 1568 the Canongate shoemakers went to their feudal chief—the Commendator of Holyrood—with a long tale of their woes. The Commendator then appealed to the Lords of Secret Council in behalf of his subjects. He mentioned these assaults as being 'molestations' of daily occurrence to the cordiners, tailors, smiths and other craftsmen of the Canongate. The North Leith Cordiners, who were of his Barony of Broughton, had been likewise maltreated, and some had been imprisoned because they declined to pay dues to the Edinburgh Cordiners. In consequence, the Lords of Council ordered the offenders 'to desist and cease fra all attempting of ony thing against others by violence . . . but to persew all their actions by order of law and justice.'

The Lords of Secret Council have been blamed for partiality towards the Edinburgh craft. Certainly they were never

really severe in their awards against the town of Edinburgh in the frequent appeals made by the craftsmen of the Canongate. These appeals, which were formulated only after repeated assaults, are therefore not reports of isolated acts of oppression. In 1607 the Bailies of the Canongate joined the Deacon of the Canongate Cordiners in his protest against the action of the Edinburgh Cordiners in committing the said Deacon (T. Lowrie) to ward for merely buying hides in the public market. In the narrative of that appeal we are told that 'although the like oppression has often been attempted before against the smiths, wrights and other craftsmen of the Canongate, this last act has proceeded only from the greed and instigation of John Kneland, Deacon of the Cordiners of Edinburgh, who desire to keep for themselves the whole profit of the public market.'<sup>1</sup> The Lords ordered the Edinburgh men to set Lowrie at liberty. Later, in the same year (1607), the Canongate Cordiners, represented by Charles Fortoun, Deacon, T. Lowrie, Thos. Masoun, John Paterson, Arthur Barrie and Hector Craig, complained to the Council that, having gone to the Edinburgh market to sell 'schone, mullis and other workmanship made of leather,' John Kneland and others had reft from them 'by way of bangstrie, ten pairs of shoes which they detain.'

## II

The Cordiners of 1610 evidently felt that that year would be memorable in their annals. They had, in a measure, established themselves in the eyes of all the authorities and had just concluded a fresh treaty of alliance with their neighbours, the Incorporations of Hammermen, Tailors and Baxters, the 'Band' of May 1546 having apparently been inadequate. The treaty of 1610 (the terms of which are printed in vol. xiv. of the *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club*)

<sup>1</sup> Register, Privy Council, vol. vii. p. 321.

made the position still more secure, by the co-operation of these bodies in all appeals to Law and Parliament, and in the supervision by the Court of Conveners (comprising the deacons of the four allied Crafts and their 'Seconds') of all questions remitted to them by any of the four crafts mentioned. This Court of the Convenery, with its Deacon-Convenor, was undoubtedly of much value to all minorities in the crafts concerned, for it redressed the injustices which occasionally arose. In short, the Court of the Convenery was, for the craftsmen, a court of *dernier ressort*, whose decisions the craftsmen were bound to obey.

The Cordiners, having put their affairs in order by codifying their laws, altogether felt that they had entered upon a new era in their corporate life. The occasion being thus auspicious, the Deacon and masters decided to put away their unfinished Minute Book, and to begin afresh with a new one which they presented, and which, curiously, is the only survivor of all their records. A handsome volume of 792 pages, bound in brown leather, with the arms of the Cordiners in burnished gold on front and back of the volume (*i.e.* a crown surmounting a shoemaker's shaping knife), it served the Craft for no less than one hundred and sixty-three years. The book is indeed worthy of the dedication printed on a flyleaf at each end, which narrates that 'Alexander Law, Deacon, Thomas Lourie, Second, Cuthbert Pinkartoun, Boxmaster, John Craig, elder, Charles Fortoun, William Nicolson, Alexander Menteith, William Arthoure, Henrie Fethie, all being Masters to the saide Deacon, quha gevis this Buke freely to the Craft, and God's blessing.'

The public spirit shown by these office-bearers of 1610 is in striking contrast with the meanness displayed by their successors of May 1773, who, having reached the last vacant page in the book, utilise it in making the following entry:—

'This book being now filled up and exhausted by sundry acts and deeds of the Incorporation, therefore the meeting ordain the following

precedents and acts of the trades to be wroth and made out in one of their old books, wherein there appears to be plenty of room to hold the same for some years, and ordain this Sederunt book to be laid by but kept haill and entire so as to be seen or considered when necessary or called for att all times.'

The Minute Book is rather disappointing in the early years of the seventeenth century owing to the brevity of the entries. Indeed, it is not until about 1640 that the Clerk condescends to refer to some of the items discussed at the meetings. The earlier clerks contented themselves with entering the names of those who had been admitted freemen of the Incorporation from the year 1554. Probably these earlier Minutes would have been fuller had the members known how to read and write. Alexander Law, the donor of the book, was one of the illiterates, and the earliest Minute which bears the signature of the Deacon is one of the year 1622, when 'Archibald Lourie' signs 'with my hand, the 20 of March 1622.' But the practice of the Deacon signing the Minutes did not become general until 1739. Evidently the 'licences' granted by the Bailies of the Canongate to teachers were not fully taken advantage of by the craftsmen of the seventeenth century. Nevertheless the Cordiners, in 1671, made it a rule that at their meetings only 'the men of the Craft that can reid and wrytt' are to be 'chosein to sitt with the clerk for gaithering and wrytting the books faithfullie, and they are sworn thereto.'

The topics discussed (but not minuted) at the meetings of the period 1610-1618 were the overbearing conduct of the Edinburgh Cordiners and the irregular ways of the Canongate Bailies. There was no cessation of hostilities. The Edinburgh Cordiners continued to assault their brethren, the Canongate Cordiners, on every convenient opportunity; while the maltmen, who formed the majority of the Canongate Council, tried to exclude the crafts' deacons from their place in the Council. The Canongate trades were further harassed by the rival claims of the Lord Superior, through his Bailie,

and the Bailies of the Canongate as regards the government of the lieges. In 1612 relief was obtained, first by the Privy Council ordaining both parties to proceed in their lawsuit with 'sick diligence as goodly may be,' and ordering both parties to find caution for ceasing to molest the inhabitants—the Bailies of the Canongate in a sum of 5000 merks and the Bailie of the Regality in 3000 merks.<sup>1</sup>

The indignation of the Incorporation was again roused when they learned that the Bailies had deposed their Deacon, Alexander Law, the donor of the Minute Book, because he had obeyed the Lord of the Regality and taken on the duties of a constable. This high-handed action had also incensed the said lord, Bellenden of Broughton, who lost no time in presenting his case before the Privy Council. 'Yet true it is,' he said, that 'John Thomson, one of the Bailies of the Canongate and seven councillors' (who are named), 'disdaining that any good ordour whair of they themselves ar not capable, sould be establischt amangis thame, bot that all thingis sould be directit, ordourit and reullit be thame according to the formar abuse and confusioun' . . . deprived him of his place on the Council. The Lords of the Council found that the Bailies had proceeded unlawfully, and ordered them to restore Deacon Law to his seat on the Council.<sup>2</sup>

But the magistrates of the Canongate were not to be allowed to carry on as they had been doing. In that same year (1612) the Cordiners complained to the Privy Council of the 'verie grite abuse and corruption in the election of magistrates and office-bearers' which had gone on 'for the last twelve years,' by which 'the ancient and lovable form of election which had depended on the voices and consent of the multitude is now reduced to the voices and consent of thirteen persons only, of whom nine are maltmen and four deacons of crafts.' The latter were thus outvoted by the maltmen, who

<sup>1</sup> Register, Privy Council, vol. ix. p. 443.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. ix. p. 336.

had for twelve years mismanaged the affairs of the burgh. The Cordiners therefore appealed for an order on the burgh magistrates to return to the customary form, namely, that the old Council choose the new, and that both (old and new) should choose the Bailies and other office-bearers. Further, that one in each craft should vote on the election, and that no office-bearers be continued in office for more than one year, in accordance with the Act of James III., fifth Parliament, cap. 29.<sup>1</sup>

The craftsmen won, the Lords of Council decreeing that the Bailies and Councillors should elect seven persons who had not that year been on the Council. These would hold office during the forthcoming year, and would, along with the old Council, elect the Bailies and other office-bearers for the present year. The thirteen, who were to constitute the new Council, were thus to comprise the two old Bailies and the Treasurer, two new Bailies and a new Treasurer, together with the seven persons above referred to.

The Lords, in grandmotherly fashion, counselled the old Bailies to 'proceed to election in a peccable and quiet manner, with calmness, modesty and discretion, as becometh dewtiful, honest-heartit subjectis, forbearing all privat grudges, heart-burning, distemperat humours and passions . . .,' while 'the haill inhabitantis' were to 'reverence, acknowledge and obey the personis so to be electit and chosen in every thing concerning their office.' The Bailies certainly proceeded to the election with calmness and in a peaceable manner, but they took care to hold their meeting on a day when they knew that the Cordiners would be engaged with their own affairs. Not only so, but in order that none might attend the meeting at which the Council was elected, an officer was ready to lock the door in the face of the unwelcome Cordiners, as he ostentatiously did, putting 'the key in his pouches.' It was vain for the indignant shoemakers to make a fresh appeal,

<sup>1</sup> Register, Privy Council, vol. ix. p. 462.

for the Privy Council held that there had been no irregularity in the proceedings.<sup>1</sup>

Many years elapsed before the craftsmen had secure possession of their seats on the Council, and throughout the interval they had repeatedly to defend themselves against the violence of the Edinburgh Cordiners. In two cases (both in 1618) the victims complained to the Privy Council. Henry Fethie was walking quietly up the High Street one Sunday when two Edinburgh Cordiners 'spotted' him. Unable to restrain their animosity, they gave chase, and having caught Fethie, assaulted him and relieved him of his cloak and Sunday hat—and all this, as the complainer stated, 'without respect to the Lord's holie Sabbath.' The Lords ordered the culprits to return the cloak and hat to Fethie, but awarded no punishment. The other case was also a Sunday affair. Though they were forbidden to 'schaip and schew' on Sabbath, the Cordiners could apparently carry goods to their customers on that day. Alexander Simpson, who was an employee of Alex. Law, was proceeding along Leith Wynd 'within the liberties of the Canongate' with a pair of 'camrone heeled watt leather schone' when three Edinburgh men, two Cordiners and the town officer, set upon him and seized the shoes, which they kept. Again the Lords of Council refrained from punishing the delinquents, merely ordering them to restore the shoes or pay 30s. to Alex. Law.<sup>2</sup>

The burning question among Cordiners in many Scottish towns during the first two decades of the seventeenth century was the execrable leather provided by the tanners, and how to

<sup>1</sup> Register, Privy Council, vol. ix. p. 494.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Bruce, deacon, was arrested by order of the Deacon of the Edinburgh Cordiners while returning from a funeral at Greyfriars'. Taken to the Tolbooth, he was examined by the Edinburgh Cordiners as to the practice of the Canongate taking 'made work' into Edinburgh. On a later visit to town, Bruce was again arrested, and placed in gaol. He appealed to the Privy Council, who ordered his liberation and payment of his expenses in a sum of twenty merks.—R.P.C., vol. xiii. p. 139.

get a remedy. The leather which was bought by the Cordiners was 'weit, raw and stinkand.' The tanners, unlike other craftsmen, set up in business without having proved their fitness, and even without any apprenticeship. In the agitation which was begun in 1617 by the Edinburgh Cordiners petitioning the Privy Council,<sup>1</sup> the Canongate Cordiners had no share, whether, as is likely, from spite on the part of Edinburgh, or because they possessed competent tanners. The Edinburgh Cordiners, who were supported by their brethren of East and West Lothian, stressed the incompetency and 'sluggishness' of tanners in every part of the country, and told how the Cordiners of Border towns, like Dumfries, Annan, Kelso, Duns and Jedburgh, made sure of getting well-tanned hides by buying from tanners who came to their markets from Carlisle, Morpeth, Durham and other north of England towns. The Lords of Council took a serious view of a matter in which they, like every one else, were affected; accordingly, they decided to import English tanners as instructors to their Scots colleagues, and appointed Lord Erskine, son of the Earl of Mar, as general administrator.

Seventeen English tanners were obtained and sent as instructors to various towns in Scotland, to the indignation of the Cordiners throughout the country, who lost no opportunity of abusing the unfortunate Englishmen. In the frequent complaints to the Privy Council on behalf of the assaulted English instructors the Canongate Cordiners were never mentioned, but their guiltlessness was more probably due to the fact that no instructors had been sent to their burgh, than to any feelings of restraint or of decorum. If they were free from blame in this epidemic of assault, the Cordiners, in common with all the other crafts of the Canongate, had not scrupled to defy the king—James VI.—when, in preparation for his visit to Holyrood in 1617, he sought lodgings for his retinue and stables for their horses among the residents of

<sup>1</sup> Register, Privy Council, vol. xii. pp. 159-171.

the Canongate. The Bailies, who had tried to obey the royal command, had perforce to write a dutiful letter to His Majesty regretting their inability to comply, as the 'Canongate was full of noblemen, gentlemen and officers of His Majesty's forces.' No doubt that was an exaggeration, but the craftsmen and other householders had experience of James's views in regard to payment of accounts and were taking no risks. Their temerity in refusing to find the accommodation was to be punished, the Bailies being ordered to 'tak present order with the persons disobeying and refusing the said billets, and to punish them to the terror of others.' And there the matter seems to have ended.

Elsewhere we learn how every householder in the Canongate throughout the seventeenth century grumbled and protested vigorously, but generally in vain, against the authorities, who made a practice of quartering troops upon them and of compelling them to find room for distressed foreign workmen. Nevertheless the Cordiners, who doubtless secured more customers from these additions to the population, increased in wealth and began to look about for adding to their comfort and that of their poorer brethren. One of their main objects was the support of their indigent members, likewise the widows, who were given small sums periodically from the Craft's box. The Incorporation evidently felt that more could be done in this direction if they had property, from the rents of which they could depend on setting aside fixed sums for such poor. Again, it was a drawback to have to depend on others for leave to meet in the Abbey Church, or the Tolbooth, or worst of all to climb the Calton Hill in order to discuss their affairs—burdened in every case with the strong-boxes.

It is therefore not unreasonable to infer that the act which was passed in 1628 ordaining every member of the Incorporation to contribute quarterly a fixed sum was made with the object of obtaining such a property. Further, though we are in the habit of regarding the celebration of centenaries as

a custom of much later times, it would almost appear as though the Cordiners of 1628-1638 had the centenary of their Craft's institution in their mind. In August 1638 they took stock of their revenue, found it amounted to '600 or 700 merks Scots,' meditated on the kind of property that sum would realise, and decided that it would be insufficient, from the 'maills and duties' of its houses, to yield enough for their 'decayit members.'

Determined to find the money, they immediately drew up a 'Band of Union amangis themselfis' for securing a Convening House which would be a 'spur to uther, our neighbour Tradis to excel and stir thame up to the syke guid wark.' Every member was in consequence obliged to contribute monthly a minimum of four shillings. The Minutes disclose but one list, though there must have been several. In it items ranging from 24s., paid by the Deacon, to 4s. paid by ordinary members, are detailed. Two contributors from the Pleasance and the Leith Cordiners, who are not particularised, gave 53 shillings. Was the collection from the Leith Cordiners gladly given? That would be too much to expect, for in 1633 they had refused to pay the quarterly fees required of them under the Ordinance of 1628, and only complied after judgment had been given against them by the Baron Bailie of the Canongate. The Leith Cordiners must have lamented their unfortunate situation under an oligarchic Incorporation and a partisan tribunal.

The Cordiners of the Canongate were unremitting in their efforts to obtain their property. By November 1638 they had actually bought from Robert Robertson for £1000 Scots one of the three tenements which later comprised their historic 'Lands.' The centenary landmark consisted of 'ane foreland or tenement with ane back house lyand in the Cannogait on the north syd thairroff.' Eight years later (December 28, 1646) they purchased from the same proprietor the two adjoining 'tenements of land with tua yairds and

pertinents,' paying for these 3700 merks, and to the magistrates of Edinburgh as superiors, a composition of 120 merks. The Clerk 'and his man,' for their pains, received 100 merks. The Incorporation, having but 1600 merks in their box, had to borrow the remainder. They granted a bond for 1500 merks to the Deacon, and another for 800 merks, to David Sheriff, a brewer, who was repaid at the following Martinmas, the money being found in the following manner:—500 merks from the Craft's box and 300 merks borrowed from the Craft's old friend, Alexander Law. A further sum of 1500 merks, borrowed from another member, James Paterson, enabled the Incorporation in 1647 to take possession of their 'Lands.' These must have enhanced the status of the Incorporation as well as provided a valuable investment. The Cordiners were thenceforth able to draw the rents from the tenants, whose names and rentals the Clerk carefully entered in the Minutes:—

George Cairncross, for the haill houssis possest be him, viz. the four houssis and cellar: his dwelling hous and laich hous and his wark hous . . . . .		£96	6	8
George Peiris, for his dwelling hous and wark hous . . . . .		25	6	8
James Robesone, for the tua yairds . . . . .		40		
Mathow Wedderburne, for his dwelling hous . . . . .		12		
Adame Wedderburne, for his dwelling hous . . . . .		13	6	8
Archibald Hamilton, for his dwelling hous . . . . .		12		
James Elsinie, for his dwelling hous . . . . .		9		
Issobel Inglis, for hir dwelling hous . . . . .		8		
David Shirreff, for his dwelling hous, brewhouse, loft and stabill . . . . .		62		
Bessie Broun, for hir dwelling hous . . . . .		12		
Johne Cockburne, for his dwelling hous . . . . .		16		
Jonet Merteine, for hir dwelling hous . . . . .		26		
James Paterson, for his dwelling hous and littill loft . . . . .		38	13	4
Robert Erskine, for his dwelling hous . . . . .		24		
Patrik Angous, for his dwelling hous . . . . .		8		
		<hr/> £402 13 4.		

The Clerk who was responsible for setting forth the above particulars in the Minutes did not detail the names of the successive proprietors, as did his predecessor of 1638 of the proprietors of the first tenement bought. But in the Canongate Register the names are detailed from the date of the Craft's purchase.

The Incorporation was undoubtedly virile and prosperous. The Deacon and masters at this period were, one fancies, becoming somewhat bumptious, self-righteous and overbearing; and the 'Shoemakers and Gowf Bal Makeris' of North Leith were made more and more a kind of milch cow for increasing their steadily growing wealth. That body of expert golf-ball makers, who have escaped the eye of the historians of golf, arouse one's interest for various reasons. They are probably the earliest association of golf-ball manufacturers in the kingdom, a fact alone which entitles their career to careful consideration. Unfortunately, the records of North Leith are too fragmentary to give the desired information; all that we know of them is that given in the Minutes, which represents them under the yoke of the Canongate Cordiners from 1554. Their title of 'Golf Ball Makers' was evidently an official one, derived in 1638 from the Crown, in succession to James Melville, who, in 1618, received (from James VI.) the title and monopoly for twenty years, partly in virtue of the excellence of his ball-making, and partly as an attempt to suppress the practice of importing golf balls from Holland. The North Leith shoemakers, the successors of Melville, were conveniently near the golfers on Leith Links, and though they have left no record of their proficiency in the game comparable with that of the Canongate Cordiner, James Paterson, the partner of the Duke of York, they evidently took a keen interest in golf. Andrew Dickson, the 'fore caddie' to the Duke, was either son or grandson of Andrew Dickson, 'Shoemaker and Gowff Ball Maker in North Leith.'

As members of the Barony of Broughton, they had to pay tribute to the Cordiners of the Canongate, the chief burgh of the Barony. If they grumbled and protested against the tyranny of their neighbours in the Canongate—and they did so in 1633—what must their feelings have been when they were summoned in 1640 to a meeting in the Canongate and concussed into a much stronger bond of vassalage? The Canongate Cordiners dignified the Bond as 'Articles and Institutiones set doune and condescendit upoun mutuallie betwixt,' but it was really downright coercion.

The Leith shoemakers and golf-ball makers were to have the privilege of admitting freemen, on condition that the 'bills' given in were handed over to the Canongate Incorporation. These sums were:—30s. in the case of a freeman's son, 40s. in that of an apprentice, and 5 merks for a stranger. The other dues to be paid by such intrants were: £5 from a freeman's son, £10 from an apprentice, and £20 from a stranger. Of these sums the Canongate Incorporation were to have two-thirds and the Leith shoemakers the remaining third, while a similar division was to be made in regard to the unlaws or fines paid. All other income received by the Leith shoemakers was to be halved with the Canongate Incorporation. As an afterthought there is added the rule that all apprentices are to pay 40s. for their 'booking,' which, along with 'the wine and other pertinents,' was to be delivered to the Canongate Incorporation.

There is a smugness about the Canongate Cordiners which finds expression in their final clause that these dues must be paid 'without defalcation and fraud.' They were 'to imploy their awin third to pius uses as mantenance of their awin pair and utheris necessar affaires.'

Why the Leith men suffered these unfair terms and exactions for over thirteen years it is difficult to understand; but in 1654 they did appeal against them to the Court of the Deacon Convener of the Four United Trades, who reduced

the Articles of 1640, ordering the principal parchment to be destroyed and the copy in the Minutes deleted. In its place the Deacon Convener and his Court set forward a fresh code, which contained considerably better terms for the Leith shoemakers. First and foremost, the Canongate Incorporation were not to receive any part of the entrance fees paid by Leith Cordiners for admission to their fraternity. Nor was the overseer to continue (as in the past) to be chosen from the Canongate Cordiners. The selection, however, of the overseer was to be exercised by that body. In 1640 the Canongate Cordiners were quite unconcerned with the ability of the Leith shoemakers to make boots or shoes; they required no essay from any candidate. That was bad and contrary to the professed spirit of the Cordiners, whose certificate, entered in the Minutes, bore that the freeman named was competent to serve the lieges. Accordingly, in 1654, the Deacon Convener insisted on such a proof being shown by every candidate in North Leith—the essay master to be selected from one of their own number, but the essay to be made in the Canongate Convening House.<sup>1</sup>

The North Leith Cordiners gained much by their appeal to the Deacon Convener. Their rights and privileges were now almost equal to those of their brethren in the Canongate, among whom they might settle if they chose, on paying the ordinary entrance dues. The Canongate men could no longer impose arbitrary dues without the consent of the Deacon Convener of the Four United Trades, and they had now to pay their share in the upkeep of the parish church of North Leith.

There are two concessions which strike one as curious and of questionable advantage: (1) the right to the use of the Craft's mortcloth at funerals; and (2) the duty of the Canongate craftsmen to attend funerals of Leith Cordiners. The mortcloth of the Incorporation was to be available for the

<sup>1</sup> An exception was made in 1728, when John Niccol, in North Leith, was exempted from an essay as his 'qualifications are sufficiently attested.'

North Leith men, on the usual terms; while all the members of the Four United Trades—Hammermen, Tailors, Baxters and Cordiners—were thenceforth bound to be present at the funeral of every North Leith Cordiner; and not of them only but of their wives, sons and daughters! On the other hand, a similar obligation lay upon the North Leith Cordiners with regard to the Canongate brethren and their allies. The mortcloth, in those far-off times an indispensable pall covering, was both costly and scarce. It was in much demand by outsiders, who had to pay higher fees for the hire of a Trade Incorporation's mortcloth. And this demand was even greater after 1650 owing to the loss of the mortcloth belonging to the Church of Holyroodhouse.<sup>1</sup> Why all trades should have insisted on their members attending the funerals of not only their fellow craftsmen but those of their wives and families under penalty for absence, it is difficult to understand.

During the decade, 1640-1650, the Deacon and masters of the Incorporation of Canongate Cordiners took their duties seriously. They faithfully administered to each intrant the oath to 'maintain and defend' the National Covenant and (from 1643) the Solemn League and Covenant. If they exacted the utmost from the dependent Cordiners and Golf-ball Makers of North Leith, they were punctilious in seeing that none of their members infringed on the liberties of a neighbouring community, and they tried hard to maintain rigid discipline among their own Craft.

In April 1643 the Incorporation discovered that Archibald Lowrie had been engaged in making illegal contracts with shoemakers in South Leith, who were under the jurisdiction of Edinburgh. Nor was that all. William Lowrie, a brother of the delinquent, had been heard to 'utter most maliciouslie, irreverentlie and impertinentlie, most evill and improper speiches in the heiring of honest men, tending to the hurt and prejudice of their awin trad and libertie and hail libertie of

<sup>1</sup> Canongate Burgh Records in City Chambers.

other traidis within this burgh, expres contrair of all guid ordour and actis of Craft.'

Both brothers were summoned to a meeting of the Craft to answer the charges made against them. The Deacon of the Tailors' Incorporation, who was Convener of the Four United Trades, presided. Archibald, who had himself been Deacon a few years earlier, had to suffer the brunt of the Deacon Convener's homily on the enormity of his offence, which was 'to the prejudice of the Craft . . . who might be drawn in contest with their brethren of Edinburgh, betuixt quhom there has been continual love from strife and [bad] neighbourhood.' But the Deacon Convener was rather overstraining the goodwill sentiment in the Canongate and Edinburgh relationship. Having expressed his views, the Deacon Convener put the question of punishment to the meeting, when the members 'all in ane voce' resolved that Archibald Lowrie should have no place nor vote at any meeting until satisfaction was given. Then followed the charge against William Lowrie. If the meeting expected to find a penitent, they were speedily and rudely undeceived, for William defiantly admitted the truth of the accusation, and made matters worse by 'maist contemptuouslie declaring he would nowayes be impede by the said Deacon Convener nor his companie . . . and behavit himself as gif he had no respect to God or man, by shaking his head and chirping his teeth in inhuman manner, and uttering disdainful and opprobrious speeches, nowayes respecting nor acknowledging the place nor persons.' Again the meeting 'all in ane voce, in his presence, dischairges and excludes the said William Lowrie from having any vote . . . until he give full satisfaction for his said wrangs and misbehaviour, according to equitie.' It speaks much for the forbearance of the outraged Deacon and masters that they waited for six months before recording this Minute in the Minute Book, in the hope that the brothers would apologise. But the two Lowries 'abyding obstinat,' the Deacon was

forced to give effect to the sentence, and thus the entry, damaging to the memory of the brothers Lowrie, was made in the Minutes of September 1643, 'to remain perpetuallie to the exampell of utheris not to be countit the lyke.'

Two years later the Incorporation were in the throes of one of the plagues that periodically devastated Edinburgh. The year 1645 is also notable for the number of historic battles between Royalists and Covenanters, but in the Canongate it was long remembered with feelings of horror for the havoc wrought by the plague. The street was almost deserted, and the suffering were removed to huts built in the adjacent Park of Holyroodhouse. That the plague checked the activities of the Incorporation cannot be doubted, there being an ominous silence, so far as entries in the Minute Book are concerned, between 5th May 1645 and 23rd March 1646. Before the end of the spring of the latter year, the operations of the Cordiners were manifest once more in the fresh accessions to the membership. Moreover, towards the close of 1646 they obtained possession of their second and third tenements, though they did not occupy their Convening House for some years.

The arrival of Cromwell in the Canongate in 1648 may have excited the curiosity of the Cordiners, but it was the effrontery of Alexander Cairnes, merchant, in keeping boots and shoes for sale that put them out of temper. Some of the Incorporation entered his shop, seized the illicit goods, and frightened the shopkeeper. Cairnes was ordered to appear before the Deacon and masters, who administered the necessary rebuke, and fined him £3 Scots, which was duly paid. The office-bearers of 1648 were strict disciplinarians and keen temperance reformers. For several years Parliament had been vainly attempting to put down the growing evil of drunkenness. The Deacon and masters also determined to suppress it as well as swearing among their members. In their Act of 1648, after observing how by drunkenness 'the creatures (were) abused, much pretious tyme (was) misspent';

... how it 'impoverished men, besotted them in their spirits and unfitted them for the service of God and the dewties of their calling'; how it caused 'weaknes and manye diseases brocht upon the bodie' ... it was enacted that whoever was found 'swearing, cursing or blaspheming the name of God ... or profaning the Sabbath Day or drinking wyne, ail or beer or any other drink whatsoever in a tavern efter eight hours at evine; or be fund drunk at anie tyme, or drinking wyne in a tavern either in this towne or in the citie or suburbs about, shall be convened befor the trad (except upon lawful and necessar occasionis) and efter a sharp rebuik and admonition shall be fined 40s. Scots if he is a freeman, 20s. if a journeyman, and, if an apprentice, 13s. 4d.' For a second offence the penalty was to be doubled, while those found guilty a third time were to be dealt with by the Deacon Convener.

In this laudable endeavour to put down excessive drinking the Deacon and masters were really re-enacting an old law of the Incorporation made in 1610. Every apprentice, journeyman and freeman were to be informed of this Act, and at their entrance to the Craft were to pledge themselves to observe it. Two months later, in February 1649, the time-honoured custom of making intrants pay for a dinner to the Craft was ended by an Act that aimed no doubt at putting down the drinking which accompanied that meal, as was the case in the booking of apprentices, the engaging master having hitherto been obliged to supply a quantity of drink, known in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a 'four hours.'

Some of these hard-drinking and hard-swearing members may have been dealt with by the zealous office-bearers, but if they were, their offences must have been condoned or forgiven under admonition, for no record appears of a fine having been imposed. The Incorporation was evidently as powerless to cope with the vices prevalent among their members as was the Government with the lieges at large. Drunkenness and bad language persisted, as subsequent records prove.



ARMOUR WORN BY THE CORDINER, WHO, AS 'THE BLACK PRINCE,' RODE IN THE PAGEANT OF ST. CRISPIN

## III

The intrusion of Cromwell's Commissioners in Scotland, and particularly in Edinburgh, marked a new era in the history of the Canongate. Elsewhere the effects of their rule were obliterated with the Restoration of Charles II.; but in the Canongate the evil consequences remained until the burgh was absorbed by Edinburgh. This state of affairs was due to (1) the refusal of the Canongate magistrates to take the oath acknowledging the rule of Cromwell and his officers, as the Edinburgh magistrates had done; and (2) the vassalage of the Canongate to Edinburgh as a result of the purchase by Edinburgh in 1630 of the Superiority of the Canongate. Not until 1652 did Edinburgh interfere in the municipal government of the Canongate. In that year the magistrates of Edinburgh sent certain proposals for the approval of their Canongate brethren, proposals which were submitted to every Incorporation in the burgh of Regality. The terms were harsh. Edinburgh insisted on making choice of the Bailies of the Canongate from a number of selected Edinburgh burgesses or Canongate burgesses, as they thought proper. Secondly, the Council of the Canongate was to consist of two Bailies and thirteen burgesses of the Canongate, who were to be selected by the Edinburgh magistrates from a list of sixteen, sent to them by the Canongate Council, to which three were to be added by Edinburgh. Furthermore, it was stipulated that all who applied for burgess-ship should be sworn and admitted by the Canongate Bailies, but the fees were to be handed over to Edinburgh.

The Edinburgh magistrates, evidently feeling that their terms would not find acceptance in the Canongate, intimated that they would at once appoint the Council for the Canongate. The Incorporation decided to send a refusal to each article in the Edinburgh edict, and arranged that their Deacon would meet the Deacons of the other crafts and take suitable

measures for opposing the tyrannical Edinburgh magistrates. What steps were actually taken the Minutes do not disclose, but elsewhere we learn that an official, known as the Baron Bailie, was intruded and—if the charges against him be true—exercised his powers despotically and corruptly.<sup>1</sup>

From the lack of information in the Minutes of the second half of the seventeenth century, and in respect of the numbers of intrants to the Incorporation, one might infer that the times were prosperous and that the Cordiners steadily increased in wealth. The first inference, however, would be wrong. The Privy Council records mention frequent appeals regarding the distressing poverty of the Canongate, the unfair quartering of troops upon the residents (which on one occasion led to a tumult among the apprentices), and the old complaint of intruded foreign workmen. If some of these complaints were true, it is equally true that many rich people resided in the Canongate and appear to have kept the Cordiners fully occupied. In 1671 the craftsmen reformed their procedure at annual meetings. In the code which they then drew up we are shown the meeting-hall with the Deacon in the chair, and the Clerk seated at the table, at which stands the Craft officer, ready to carry out all orders. The Clerk opens the proceedings with a special prayer, read only at annual meetings. Next, every member is questioned as to whether he has brought his quarterly accounts and paid these to the Boxmaster. All defaulters are watched lest they attempt to exercise their vote. This scrutiny of the members occurred every quarter-day. According to the 'Trew Order' made in 1671, defaulting members were to be removed; but that never seems to have been carried out. All members 'that can reid and wrytt' were accorded the privilege of sitting 'along with the Clerk for gaithering and wrytting the books faithfullie.' In the election of the Deacon the procedure was as follows:—The Deacon, on leaving his seat, took by the

<sup>1</sup> Court of Session Papers, 1739, *Smart v. Jack*.

hand one who had served as Boxmaster in some earlier year, and set him apart, there to await the completion of the leet. That done, the members selected another, who stood beside the man of the Deacon's choice and the Boxmaster for the year just ended. The Clerk, with the roll of members before him, then directed the officer to call upon the Deacon for his vote (or rather two votes), after which the members voted by a 'show of hands.' These being 'sichtit,' the official elected was known 'be pluralitie of votes and received by the hail craft, under sign taken by the hand.'

The Deacon's election was followed by that of the Boxmaster. The person retiring from the office, styled the 'old boxmaster,' was put on the leet along with two chosen by the members. Voting then proceeded in similar fashion to that in the case of the Deacon. Until 1671 the Deacon's 'Second,' or vice-Deacon, was selected by the vote of the Craft from a leet of three. But with the enacting of the 'Trew Order' in that year this arrangement ceased. It was then decided that when a new Deacon was elected, the retiring or 'old deacon' became automatically 'Second' to the new Deacon, to whom he was bound to 'give his best advyse.' Where, however, the Deacon was re-elected, the Craft had power to place two on the leet with the 'old' Second, the votes deciding who was to be the new Second.

The six masters (subsequently increased to ten) were selected from a leet of twenty, of whom sixteen were nominated by the Deacon. One, however, might be at once appointed by the Deacon and another by the Boxmaster, the remaining eight being selected by the votes of the Craft. Finally, all the members took oath to obey the acts of the Deacon, Boxmaster and masters. The officer, in addition, had to swear that he would faithfully carry out the duties put upon him by the Deacon. The Craft's entire laws were revised five years later, but only a few alterations were made on the code of 1610.

The Incorporation appear to have been very well satisfied

with their condition, and some of their money they spent in the external adornment of their Lands. In 1677 they placed over one of their doorways the elaborate escutcheon and scroll with open Bible and the first verse of the Scottish metrical version of the 133rd Psalm.<sup>1</sup> Again, in 1682, the Incorporation bought a handsome deacon's chair for the Convening House, which stood behind the Lands. But hard times were in store. Only the annual meeting was held in 1682, when office-bearers were elected, but no additions were made to the membership. In 1683 only one was admitted from the Canon-gate and two from North Leith: in 1684 there was but one admission. The entire burgh at this time was in a state of depression. In 1685 the Deacons of the Trades joined the magistrates of the Canongate in petitioning the Privy Council for the redress of certain grievances. 'For several years past,' it was urged, 'they have been sadly and lamentably groaning under a great and insufferable burden in finding room for five companies of Foot soldiers and several of His Majesty's Guard, gentlemen of Artillery, Ordinance,' etc. Another grievance was the

'great and considerable yearly stent whereby the poor inhabitants are redacted to such straits and difficulties that the very *cloaths of their bedds* are dayly poynded for their respective proportions; and thereby through the same burden, are every day forced to desert the place, not only leaving behind them their wives and children to charity . . . but also leaving houses waste. And seeing the West Port and Potterrow are free of these, and as the Canongate, in respect of decay of trade and poverty and that a considerable part is inhabited by noblemen, gentlemen, officers and soldiers . . . who are not liable, they crave . . . to have speedy relief.'<sup>2</sup>

To this petition no redress was given. Indeed the burdens were increased that very year by an additional squadron of King's Guards.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This elaborately sculptured stone is reproduced on p. 39 of vol. xvii. of *The Book of the Old Edinburgh Club*.

<sup>2</sup> Register, Privy Council, 3rd ser., vol. xi. pp. 175-176.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 256.



TABARD WORN IN THE PAGEANT ON ST. CRISPIN'S DAY  
(For description, see p. 136)

As a result of these injustices strong resentment was felt by the Canongate people which found vent in frequent tumults. How far the Cordiners may have shared in this resentment it is impossible to judge; they probably benefited by getting additional customers. In 1677 they had, in obedience to the King's command, made 'as many shoes for the troops' as they could manage, for which, also by the King's command, they were to be 'carefully paid.'<sup>1</sup>

With the advent of the Revolution in 1688 matters improved. The Cordiners, along with the Hammermen, Baxters and Tailors, presented a petition to Parliament for ratification of all the privileges which they had enjoyed under their ancient Seals of Cause, and they were also granted exemption from all local taxes on their buildings.<sup>2</sup> Further, an appeal was made to the Incorporation by the shoemakers and cobblers of South Leith who worked at stalls situated on the boundary of North and South Leith. For many years they had paid to the Craft 40s. per annum for that privilege, but now pleaded their inability to pay so large a sum. The Craft reduced the fee to 7s. 6d.

The Incorporation having now time to put their affairs in order, the Deacon began by reminding the brethren of their neglect of the old and 'laudable custom' of marching in procession to 'hear sermon' in North Leith Church, and threatened absentees with a fine. There was never any occasion, however, to exhort the craftsmen<sup>3</sup> to take part in another time-honoured procession. For a long period it had been the custom on October 25—St. Crispin's Day—for the Craft to celebrate their patron saint by a splendid pageant. First, they met in the Convening House, where they elected one of their number 'King Crispin,' upon whose head they placed a crown similar to an actual royal

<sup>1</sup> Register, Privy Council, 3rd ser., vol. v. pp. 333-334.

<sup>2</sup> Acts, Parliament of Scotland, vol. xi.

<sup>3</sup> Probably the journeymen were the chief actors in the procession.

crown.<sup>1</sup> Composed of crimson plush, it was fitted into a yellow metal framework, with 'jewels.' 'King Crispin' wore a red satin and ermine robe, carried a sceptre, and had his heralds and other officers of State, including a mail-clad knight known as the 'Black Prince.' The picturesque cavalcade, part of which was mounted, and all the members of which were dressed in quaint costumes, marched through the bounds, to the apparent delight of the community. How strongly the spectacle must have appealed to every member of the Craft is evident from the fact that it was held until at least 1820. Sir Daniel Wilson knew a person who had witnessed the pageant, and was able to recall an old survivor, the widow of the cordiner who, for many years, had played the part of the 'Black Prince.' The old lady had also acted the part of the 'Princess.' Some idea of the magnificence of that annual fête may be found by visiting the Municipal Museum in Lady Stair's House, where, in a large glass case, are displayed the regalia of the Incorporation, consisting of the crown, sceptre, sword of state, two faded tabards,<sup>2</sup> two velvet gold-braided caps with red and blue ostrich feathers, an array of batons and other accessories. To the right of the case is the suit of armour of the 'Black Prince.'

The Canongate Cordiners were romantic as well as practical. The amazing wealth of the Indies, and the Darien scheme for acquiring a share of it, fired their imagination,

<sup>1</sup> In 1820 the 'coronation' took place in the Picture Gallery of Holyroodhouse.

<sup>2</sup> The following is a description of the Royal Arms on one of the tabards (*circa* 1714-1801):—Quarterly 1st, Two coats impaled dexter Gules, three lions passant guardant in pale Or, sinister Or, a lion rampant Gules, armed and langued Azure, within a double tressure flory counter flory of the second; second, Azure, three fleur de lys Or, for France; third, Azure, a harp Or, stringed Argent, for Ireland; fourth, Per pale and per chevron 1st Gules, two lions passant guardant in pale Or, for Brunswick 2nd Or, semée of hearts a lion rampant Azure, for Lunenburg; 3rd Gules, a horse courant Argent, for Westphalia over all an inescutcheon Gules, charged with the golden crown of Charlemagne proper. These arms are repeated on the arms and back; suspended from the collar is the badge of the Cordiners—a shoemaker's knife surmounted by a Royal Crown. (See Illustration.)

as it did that of so many Scots of the time. At a meeting held on April 10, 1696, it was decided to 'give ane hundreth pound sterling' to the promoters.

But the Incorporation was far from being exemplary. The swearing and drinking, which had been so long deplored, continued, and in December 1698 the Deacon tried once more to mend the manners of his brethren. Censors were appointed, whose duty it was to take note of all offenders and to report them to a future meeting. Those who were proved guilty were to be fined 40s. for a first offence. But this plan does not appear to have had any more success than those of earlier days. In spite of their coarseness the craftsmen were careful of the funds. In 1704 the office-bearers decided that the old mortcloth, which had been in use for more than a century, was too dilapidated for further use. They therefore agreed to buy a new one of velvet, but, instead of drawing upon the Craft's money, they invited contributions from the members, and £156, 6s. was collected.

The Union of the Parliaments in 1707 did not materially affect the Cordiners. The aristocratic and the wealthy among the residents of the Canongate still remained. The intrants to the Incorporation, though not numerous, were not fewer in the years immediately following than those admitted just before the Union. From 1700 to 1708 the admissions numbered 13; from 1689 to 1709, 37; from 1709 to 1718, 17; and from 1709 to 1728, 38.

While steadily building up their fortunes, the Incorporation did not forget to give alms to decayed members and their widows. The risk of fire in their buildings had not indeed occurred to the Cordiners, until they received a communication from the directors of the 'Edinburgh Friendly Society against Fire,'<sup>1</sup> in which they were reminded of recent fires in 'Edinburgh and suburbs.' The Incorporation thereupon decided to invite the directors to 'visit and inspect' their

<sup>1</sup> The first insurance company established in Edinburgh.

rental, after which insurance was to be effected on £1840 of the property of the Craft.

A nasty jar they had in 1742, when the members were made aware that a portion of their funds was missing. Consequently, fresh regulations were drawn up with a view to restricting the powers of the Deacon and the Boxmaster, and to ending the practice of these officials in lending the Craft's money. In future all loans were to be granted only after leave had been given by a meeting of members. In every transaction the Keymasters were to be witnesses to all that was put into and taken out of the box. Then the Boxmaster's accounts were to be scrutinised by the Deacon and Masters before quarter-day—'to see if they are right cast and truly stated,' and any balance was to be put on the table at the meeting, 'to be disposed of as Trade think fit.'

The duties of the Boxmasters included letting the Craft's houses, uplifting the rents, paying the Incorporation's debts, and taking care of their property. If the Boxmaster kept his accounts correctly for more than two years he was to receive an honorarium. It is curious that no ex-Deacon or ex-Boxmaster could be again eligible for the office of Boxmaster unless he were 'in necessity,' in which case he was given £5 per annum as salary. Tradesmen were to be employed by the Trade, not by the Deacon or Boxmaster. The fines as well as the dues of intrants and apprentices were not to be in the custody of the Boxmaster but in that of a member appointed annually by the Craft. From the fines and dues were to come the grants to the poor of the Craft, and the kirk seats were to be repaired out of money derived from the same source.

Among other regulations enacted at this time was one that no member in debt to the Incorporation could vote at meetings—a law which was frequently broken and a cause of much disorder. It was also ordained that none holding a lucrative post either in the burgh or in the Craft should have

a vote, a rule which, it is not surprising to learn, was shortly afterwards rescinded.

The office-bearers clearly realised when these rules were made, that much money belonging to the Incorporation was missing. Creditors were pressing, though it is only by the slenderest of hints that one arrives at the facts. Well might the members decline the proposal made in 1743 by the Bailies of the burgh to contribute towards the establishment of a poorhouse in the Canongate, for the blow fell towards the close of the same year, when proceedings were instituted in the Court of Session to sequester the Incorporation. There was no escape. The Cordiners of the Canongate were declared bankrupt, Ninian Cunningham, writer, being appointed trustee. As a result, the 'Shoemakers' Lands' were taken from the Craft and sold. The creditors evidently realised the insolvency of the Incorporation long before the Deacon and Masters awoke to the fact. Moreover, the news of their sequestration led many to suspect fraud on the part of the office-bearers, and the creditors, with a view to ascertaining the facts, had the Deacon, Boxmaster, and Masters summoned to the Court of Session, where it was found that their insolvency was 'due to a long series of mismanagements in times past, and not to any fraud or wilful abuses committed by members still living.'

As the Cordiners 'signified their willingness to give up all the effects of their Incorporation,' the creditors were satisfied, all except 'Thomas Grant, late Bailie in the Canongate,' who was a creditor to the extent of £80, and who, after arrangements had been made by the trustee, 'laid arrestments in the hands of the tenants' of the Incorporation. The trustee, who raised an action to remove these arrestments, explained the facts to the Court, and told how the creditors had 'waived their right to the cordiners' quarterly payments and upsets of new members, as these went to the poor of the Incorporation.' As an afterthought, he added that they 'would never

come to anything.' Grant and his counsel, in their 'Information,' made full use of the liberty then allowed litigants to libel their opponents. The printed statement, while it must have caused pain to those concerned, is now distinctly amusing. After naming individually the Deacon, Boxmaster, and ten Masters, Grant refers to them as

'The Twelve Wise Men who, after stratagems to get peoples money into their clutches, were at an end, judged it proper to retire and abscond for no less than eight days in February 1743—particularly Deacon Smith, who fled the country and stayed in Carlisle and skulked there for six months. Conscious of their guilt as notorious, fraudulent bankrupts, they knew the Abbey would afford them no protection . . . that the masters of this Incorporation have, for a considerable time bypast, been carrying on a traffic in which the highest disingenuity and grossest fraud that possibly can occur, is now become manifest. The Incorporation made a fair appearance in the eye of the world and had the cunning to preserve its credit, while at the bottom it was unsound and rotten. May it not, then, be deservedly compared to a Band of Pirates or a Den of Robbers? Nay, the crime here perpetrated seems worse than open Robbery. Is there any action on Earth more full of perfidy and Deceit than to take the money of an honest, industrious person, when one knows he is not able to repay it?'

But the 'honest, industrious' ex-Bailie had to take his place beside the other creditors. The Cordiners were now 'landless' and almost penniless.

#### IV

With surprising ingenuity, however, the Cordiners set about the recapture of their old-time prosperity. They sought several avenues towards that objective. For one thing, they cut down the clerk's salary to a mere pittance, and for another, they cancelled all arrears due by various members, but gave warning that they would exact every penny from absentees from and latecomers to their meetings, in sums of 3d. and 1d. Scots respectively. Formerly, members in arrear with

their quarterly subscriptions were prohibited from voting, but they were now to be prosecuted. This resolution, however, was not carried out, probably because of the legal costs. Despite their financial state, the members continued to hold their meetings in the Convening House in Shoemakers' Close, no longer, however, as proprietors, but as tenants paying an annual rent, which was raised from 10s. in 1744 to 17s. in 1752.

Though all were bent on rebuilding the shattered fortunes of the Incorporation, the members individually were becoming increasingly troublesome to the office-bearers. At the first annual meeting after the bankruptcy, when a new Deacon was to be elected, exception was taken to the candidature of ex-Boxmaster James Cathie. One member alleged, after the manner of ex-Bailie Grant, that Cathie was unfit, in respect that he had, when Boxmaster, 'intromitted with public money . . . and applied the same to his own use.' There were other allegations, all which, he added, were 'notoriously known to most part of the burgh of Canongate.' In these circumstances 'his election would be construed as an expression of the members' acquiescence in his irregularities.' The protest passed unheeded, Cathie being elected by a majority. His tenure of office was, however, of short duration, for on appeal to the Court of Conventry the election was declared null and void, members who were in arrear with their subscriptions having voted. But Cathie did not demit office without a protest, which was accompanied by an exhibition of bad temper towards his successful rival, whom he accused of having failed to return all payments received by him when collecting the dues of unfree cobblers and shoemakers. Whether the accusation was founded on fact or not, it did show a looseness in the Craft's supervision of the 'little masters,' which was quickly put right by requiring reports of the sums received each year from these sources, and insisting upon the officer accompanying the 'little masters' on their collecting 'rounds.'

magistrates, heritors, kirk session and Incorporated Trades in four equal parts. This arrangement was strongly disapproved of by the Cordiners, who instructed their Clerk to inform the magistrates that they 'would pay £1 stg. but no more on any account.'

Two years later (1757) the magistrates again offended the Cordiners, and delegates were appointed from the Incorporation to 'wait upon the magistrates to see what remedies they proposed to make regarding their seat which was rendered almost useless.' If the magistrates refused to 'put their seat as formerly,' they were to be sued for damages. The magistrates did refuse, and an action was raised in the Court of Session. The records of the result are unfortunately not extant; but it is abundantly clear that the Incorporation were keenly interested in their parish church, and that they kept their seats in repair, employing at various times a wright to make certain alterations, and on one occasion instructing a litster to dye black the 'cloth coverings.'

The Incorporation had been asked several times to help in the establishment of a poorhouse for the Canongate, but had been obliged to decline in view of their own indigence. In 1753, however, their fortunes were so far in the ascendant that they agreed to pay £5 stg., though they stipulated that they should 'not be bound to continue.' The same question was again raised in November 1759, when the Cordiners, on learning that the magistrates and heritors were bent on carrying on 'so pious and laudable a work,' decided to contribute £8 stg. In recognition of this aid the Deacon and Second were placed on the Board of Management.

As they steadily regained financial stability, the Cordiners became increasingly mindful of their own poor. One of their dependants was ex-Deacon Robert Merston, who, in 1754, petitioned for help, as his furniture had been seized for payment of rent 'and would be roused next day.' His debt was £2, 2s. stg. In his petition Merston said he was 'reduced to

straits by misfortunes.' The sum required to defray the debt was thereupon taken from the box and sent to Merston. Two years later Merston, 'an old member, now in great distress,' received 10s. stg. 'of charity, to support him in his indigent circumstances.' In the same year John Christie, another 'old member,' was given 5s. stg., while seven widows of members each received 2s. per quarter 'till further orders.'

In 1755 the members, with a view to making their money yield as much as possible, instructed the Boxmaster to take out the sum in the box and put it, along with other sums amounting to £40 stg., into the bank of William Cumming for 'such interest as he will give.' But Cumming declined to deal with the Incorporation, and the money was lent to Thomas Foggo, banker, 'on his note,' till further orders. Later, the Craft were disappointed to learn that the rate of interest was lower than they had expected. Nevertheless, they were able to purchase in 1758, by means of a loan, the top flat of one of their old tenements for £21, 15s.

The Canongate between the years 1749 and 1774 was a very different thoroughfare from that of two centuries earlier. Not only had the picturesque but inflammable wooden houses been superseded by stone tenements,<sup>1</sup> but the long familiar craftsmen's booths were now few. By this time the master cordiners had adopted the fashion of permitting their journeymen and apprentices to work in the houses of different people, an arrangement which relieved masters of the difficulty of finding suitable shop accommodation. Moreover, the monetary saving to the masters was a benefit to those journeymen who found room for others to work alongside them, because, from each workman who worked there, the householder charged 1d. per week. The apprentices alone were likely to suffer. They were supposed to learn from the master, but in most instances it was the journeymen who were

<sup>1</sup> An Act of the Privy Council in 1674 required all tenements to be built of stone and lime.—Register, Privy Council, 3rd ser., vol. iv. p. 182.

deputed to teach them. As the latter were paid, not by the day or the week, but for each pair of boots or shoes made, the time spent on the apprentices' training must have been scanty.

Another problem, and a much more serious one, was manifest not only among the Cordiner journeymen of the Canongate, but among craftsmen in every considerable town in Scotland and England—the problem of their wages. The masters might congratulate themselves on economising in shop accommodation, but they were unaware of the measures devised in these private houses—measures which were soon to involve masters and workmen in expensive litigation, with the prospect of imprisonment in the case of the latter for daring to rebel against unfair conditions.

But before these conflicts arrived the Incorporation had engaged in several lawsuits while avoiding others. For example, they declined, in 1753, by a majority of 14 to 3, to be drawn into opposition to a project of Edinburgh which sought from Parliament power to have North Leith joined to South Leith.

The Incorporation was considerate of the needs of their officer, William Cathie, who, besides having a free house, and coal and light in their Convening House, received periodically '£1 stg. to help to buy a coat,' and '5s. to buy a pair of shoes,' because he was 'an old and good servant.' Cathie's widow, again, was permitted to remain in the house at a rent of £2 stg. But the old ideals of brotherhood were too often lost sight of. In April 1755 a serious infraction of one of the Craft's oldest laws was revealed when John Nairn and Andrew Gray were overheard, in Mrs. Orrock's house in Leith Wynd, revealing Trade secrets. Both denied the charge, which was made by the Boxmaster. The latter's word was preferred, and, on a vote being taken for expulsion, the craftsmen showed their feelings in various ways. Six voted for expulsion; other six did not vote, while three left the meeting before the

vote was taken. Nairn and Gray were expelled, but were readmitted a month later.

More serious was the disorder that marked the meetings of this period; so much so that, in 1760, a member protested that as the meetings of the Craft were 'very irregular and turbulent, he ought not to be liable in payment of fines for absence.' While David Hendry did not disturb a meeting, he 'in a public manner said that he despised the Trade and their posts and would not serve, though elected, as a little master.' For this he was summoned to a meeting, and after his case had been heard, was told to wait outside the room until a decision was reached. Hendry accordingly withdrew, but not to wait. The situation was most amusing: the judges ready to administer punishment and the prisoner gone! A further summons was issued, but we hear no more of Hendry.

The case of William Ramsay was in some respects much worse, for he had called the Deacon a 'scoundrel.' On being summoned Ramsay apologised, and urged as his excuse that he had been drunk, and 'doubted not the truth of the accusation.' The majority were in favour of Ramsay's suspension for a year, but that sentence was revoked a month later, on the motion of the Deacon, who 'heard that the culprit was sensible of his fault.'

The last decade of the Craft's career, covered by these Minutes, shows us a picture of a well-regulated organisation with a large interest in the Insurance Company of Edinburgh, and with a share in the control of several public concerns. The Deacon and masters still keep a vigilant eye upon those who infringe their privileges—the 'unfree' shoemakers and cobblers, and resort to the Sheriff Court when they deem it necessary to bear down the obstinate. Further, the Craftsmen are exemplary in their care of the poor 'decayed' members and their dependants, withholding assistance from none but widow Cathie, whose application is rejected 'because she had

sufficient already.' There is the distressing case of one member who, not long after getting ten shillings in charity from the Incorporation, is put in prison for debt. And from prison he sends word that if the Incorporation will but lend him thirty shillings to permit of his liberation, he will repay the loan. The members are anxious to relieve their fellow-member, but rightly entertain no hope of repayment. The applicant's case is hopeless, but they give him twenty shillings to assist him towards getting his freedom. Another gratuity of ten shillings is given from the Craft's funds, and this 'old, failed member' is finally 'enrolled as a pensioner of the Incorporation' along with eleven widows. In 1772 the annuities paid to these pensioners are considered with a view to increases being made. Moreover, the Craftsmen are equally sympathetic with those who have fallen behind with their quarterly subscriptions, and with those, too, whose fines for absence from meetings have reached large figures. All these defaulters get rebates.

On the other hand, a deaf ear is turned to all appeals by employees for an increase in their wages. The journeymen had been in the habit of holding their meetings in the old Convening House in Shoemakers' Close; and in 1768, when they were unable to pay the rent, the Incorporation granted an extension of time. The journeymen were disappointed, and evidently feeling that they must adopt the measures common among craftsmen in the late eighteenth century of combining to secure fair treatment, twenty-five undertake to finish the tasks upon which they were employed, and then to seek employment from those who will give them an increase of twopence on each pair of shoes and sixpence on each pair of boots which they made. Their pay was not regular, but depended on the work accomplished, and was at the rate of 1s. 10d. for a pair of boots. They therefore regarded themselves free to offer their services wherever they pleased. But as the law then was, they were in the

wrong, and the Incorporation took every step to crush these unfortunate journeymen. The Craft made agreements with the Cordiners' Incorporations of Edinburgh, Potterrow and Portsburgh, as well as with those of Glasgow and Dundee, to the effect that no journeymen from the Canongate would be employed by any of these organisations for a period of six months. The Incorporation also applied to the Sheriff for a warrant to imprison the twenty-five 'rebellious' journeymen, and succeeded in getting thirteen sent to gaol until they undertook to return to work. The journeymen concerned, though they signed their bond to resume work, interpreted the Sheriff's order as applying to work for *any* cordiner. They accordingly transferred their services, some to complaisant masters who were not members of the Incorporation. Others set up for themselves in the Mint (Cowgate) and St. Ninian's Row, where all were 'free.' This led to further applications to the Sheriff by the Incorporation, and appeals by the journeymen, who finally raised an action in the Court of Session. The Minutes are disappointingly meagre in detailing the progress of this lawsuit, which occupied a whole year before a decision was reached. The grievances of the journeymen, as given in the *Memorial* laid before the Court in 1770, are interesting in many ways. For twenty years their wages had been stationary, while the cost of living, notably house rents and prices of foodstuffs, had increased. About 1750 'channeled pumps' had been the fashionable footwear, but these had gone completely out of fashion. As the 'channeled pumps' were easily made, their disuse had meant a loss of 2s. 6d or 3s. on the weekly wage.

How the action ended we are unable to state, for no record can be traced in the entries in the Court of Session Minutes of the period, nor in the Minutes of the Incorporation. All that the Cordiners chronicle are the expenses to which they were put, and the proportion which the Edinburgh Incorporation assigned to them. These costs they at first flatly refused

to pay, but later decided to refer the question to 'two goodmen' of the Canongate whom they found in two brewers. If they disagreed, the matter was to be decided by a third person. And there the Minutes end.

Nothing of the later history of the Incorporation is known until 1833, when the office-bearers were examined, along with other privileged crafts, by the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into and report upon all Craft Guilds in Scotland. It was evidently declining then, and in 1843 the decline became accentuated by 'frequent deaths' and no accessions to the membership. Money difficulties made matters worse. From the few Minutes found recently in a thin ledger, we learn that the Deacon did duty, or, to be exact, failed to do duty as Deacon and Boxmaster and refused to deliver either books or money to the Incorporation. The kirk session of North Leith pressed for payment of a debt which the members could not pay because the rents of small houses due to them had not been paid. Finally, in 1852 they realised that it was impossible, 'even if it had been desirable to keep up the Incorporation any longer.' Accordingly, it was decided 'to realise the small property belonging to the body, and to divide the same . . . and so close the concern.'

C. A. MALCOLM.

#### NOTES ON LANDS OF HIGH RIGGS, DRUMDRYAN, AND TOLLCROSS

THE earliest authentic information regarding the lands of High Riggs, Drumdryan, and Tollcross goes back to the beginning of the fifteenth century. How long before that they were known by these names cannot be stated, but the surprising thing is, that at the present day these distinctive titles are still applied to portions of the original areas.

Situated south-west of Edinburgh Castle, the history of these lands well repays study. Those of High Riggs, as having the largest area, first demand attention. The name suggests a stretch of land under cultivation. The lands of High Riggs extended from the Potterrow on the east to Drumdryan on the west, and formed a plateau which gently sloped to a shallow sheet of water known as the South Loch. They were bounded on the north side by the Grassmarket and West Port. The original grant of High Riggs to the family of Touris of Inverleith has not been preserved, but probably the earliest recorded mention of the lands is in a charter granted in 1439 by John Touris to his son. Here is an abstract of the charter<sup>1</sup> :—

Apud Edinburgh, 2nd Septr. 1458. Rex confirmavit cartam Johannis de Touris de Inverleith et domini de Dalry (qua concessit filio suo Petro de Touris heredibus ejus vel assignatis pro ejus servitio — terras de Heriggis prope juxta burgum de Edinburgh, vic. ejusdem, ex parte australi dicte ville, inter viam regiam que ducit a dicta ville ex parte orientali ecclesie. S. Joh. Bapt. sub muro castri de Edinburgh ad le Borrow-mure<sup>2</sup> ex parte una, et communem viam regiam que ducit

<sup>1</sup> *Register of the Great Seal*, vol. ii., 1424-1513, item 616.

<sup>2</sup> Certainly not St. John's Chapel on Burgh Muir, which was not built till the year of Flodden. See *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club*, vol. x. pp. 97-8. The church referred to appears to have been near the foot of the Castle Rock, and *Laing Charters*, Nos. 118 and 137, seem to indicate that it was within the burgh.