

REMARKS SUGGESTED BY DR. RAVEN'S "CALEDONIAN  
CAMPANALOGY."<sup>1</sup>

By JOSEPH BAIN, F.S.A. Scot.

Few Scotsmen, as Dr. Raven justly infers in his opening remarks, know anything of the old parish church bells, still to be found here and there north of Tweed, the attention of those interested in bells having been chiefly directed to the small Celtic hand bells. It is quite new to myself, and doubtless to most others connected with the West of Scotland, that so interesting a bell as the "tongueless *Katerina*" is still to be found in the tower of the Cathedral Church of Glasgow. I feel pretty sure that not one of the historians of the city makes the least mention of it. The date given by Dr. Raven as 1554, no doubt from personal inspection, is just three years after the enthronement of James Betoun, the last pre-Reformation archbishop of the see. The records of the city for this period are very scanty, and it is not likely that anything more of this bell can be learned, beyond what it tells of itself, for which we are indebted to the researches of Dr. Raven.

Something more, however, can be said on the subject of the Great bell of the Cathedral, which, Dr. Raven says, "records its fabrication in Holland in 1583, by the gift of Marcus Knox, a merchant in Glasgow." He adds: "It was re-cast by Thomas Mears of the Whitechapel foundry in 1790." The re-casting is undoubted—not so the alleged gift by Knox, and the casting in Holland. These two "fabrications" have passed current for more than 150 years. The former is due to the fertile imagination of John McUre, the first historian of Glasgow—the foreign origin of the bell is a later addition, unheard

<sup>1</sup> *Journal*, vol. xlix, p. 10 (by J. J. Raven, D.D., F.S.A. Read 13 Aug. 1891). The delay in making the following remarks is accounted for by the present writer

not having heard Dr. Raven's paper at Edinburgh, and only seen it in print a few weeks ago.

of till the bell was recast in 1790. McUre, who published his book in 1736, when describing the Cathedral and its western tower or campanile (demolished by an act of vandalism about fifty years ago) says there were then two large bells in that tower, the larger one "gifted by Marcus Knox, merchant in Glasgow, at the Reformation"—a statement repeated by every city historian since his day, sometimes with apocryphal additions of their own. There is no authority for this assertion, in the council records of the city of Glasgow, which are extant, tolerably complete, from the year 1581. There is on the other hand, written evidence founding the strongest presumption that the two bells in the western tower were given by Archbishop Dunbar, the predecessor of Archbishop Betoun. In his will, confirmed on 30th May, 1548,<sup>1</sup> he directed his executors to pay a bell founder—whose name is somewhat uncertain, but reads like "Amis"—for making and founding two bells, their carriage, hanging, and other expenses (as in his contract with the workman), the sum of 196*l.* 1*s.* 1*d.*, and for the repair of the campanile (the western tower) in which they were to be hung, 106*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.*

One of his executors, James Houstoun, was sub-dean of Glasgow, and there is no doubt he fulfilled the Archbishop's directions as to the bells and tower. Houstoun himself founded the collegiate church of St. Mary and St. Anne in Glasgow, and died in 1551. From three entries in the minutes of the Town Council of Glasgow, on 28 June and 2 August, 1595, and 4 November, 1596,<sup>2</sup> it seems certain that the larger of these bells had been cracked or damaged so as to require re-casting, and the cost of this was defrayed by a tax of 700*l.* *Scots*, laid upon the town's people, called "the extent of the bell." On the last of these dates, the council minute bears, that count and reckoning being made with Arthur Allan, concerning the price of "the Hie Kirk<sup>3</sup> bell," there is found to have been paid to him of the entire price of the bell (which was 1002*l.* 0*s.* 4*d.* and expenses of "hamebringing" thereof), these amounts, viz., the old bell metal 198*l.* 9*s.*,

<sup>1</sup> Now in the General Register House, Edinburgh. 169, 182.

<sup>2</sup> *Burgh Record Society*, vol. i, pp. 168,

<sup>3</sup> The local name for the Cathedral.

and the tax or stent, &c., 760*l.*, making the balance due to him 50*l.* 11*s.*<sup>1</sup> The first entry shows that the contract for re-casting was made with him on 1 October, 1594, and it is evident from his name he was not a foreigner.

These council minutes also show that there was, at this very date, a burgess of Glasgow named Marcus Knox, who was chosen treasurer (out of eight candidates) on 1 June, 1596. Here, then, is the germ of his mythical gift. In his capacity of town treasurer he would be authorised to pay, and no doubt paid the bell founder Allan the balance found due him on 4 November that year, and tradition, rolling on like a snowball, has finally credited him with paying the expense *out of his own funds*, thus depriving the real donor, Archbishop Dunbar, of the merit due to his munificence.

For these references, which confute the baseless tradition regarding this bell, I have to thank Mr. Robert Renwick, Depute Town Clerk of Glasgow, who with his usual kindness, took great pains in the matter, and favoured me with extracts from unprinted council minutes.

The long inscription remains to be noticed. It was some time ago honoured in *Notes and Queries*,<sup>2</sup> "as being the longest known in this country," and certainly merits the remark. Here it is—

"IN THE YEAR OF GRACE 1594, MARCUS KNOX, A MERCHANT IN GLASGOW, ZEALOUS FOR THE INTEREST OF THE REFORMED RELIGION, CAUSED ME TO BE FABRICATED IN HOLLAND FOR THE USE OF HIS FELLOW CITIZENS OF GLASGOW, AND PLACED ME WITH SOLEMNITY IN THE TOWER OF THEIR CATHEDRAL. MY FUNCTION WAS ANNOUNCED BY THE IMPRESS ON MY BOSOM.—*Me audito, venias, doctrinam Sanctam ut discas.* AND I WAS TAUGHT TO PROCLAIM THE HOURS OF UNHEEDED TIME. 195 YEARS HAD I SOUNDED THESE AWFUL WARNINGS, WHEN I WAS BROKEN BY THE HANDS OF INCONSIDERATE AND UNSKILFUL MEN. IN THE YEAR 1790, I WAS CAST INTO THE FURNACE, REFOUNDED AT LONDON, AND RETURNED TO MY SACRED VOCATION. READER, THOU ALSO SHALT KNOW A RESURRECTION. MAY IT BE UNTO ETERNAL LIFE. *Thomas Mears fecit, London, 1790.*"

No person with ordinary intelligence, can fail to see that this is modern, and was evidently drawn up at the time of the re-casting in 1790. There were then three clergymen connected with the Cathedral, which at that time was partitioned into three presbyterian places of

<sup>1</sup> These expenses of re casting seem to be Scots money.

<sup>2</sup> 7 Series, xii, p. 426.

worship, and these gentlemen in concert with the town council, most likely composed this very odd legend or "Song of the Bell."

Thinking there might possibly have been some inscription on the broken bell when re-cast by Mears, I asked Messrs. Mears and Stainbank, twenty years ago, if there was one? But I learned from these gentlemen that there was nothing of the kind in the register which they have long kept of legends on bells sent to them. They have a copy of the 1790 inscription, which says the original bell was given in 1584. Dr. Raven makes it 1583, while the date is usually said to be 1594.<sup>1</sup> All are, perhaps, equally incorrect, if it is the Dunbar bell of 1548, for the other dates, like the gift, are mere tradition.

I am acquainted, though not by actual inspection, with two other church bells in Lanarkshire, one made by the founder of the Cramond bell mentioned by Dr. Raven, and perhaps still in the ancient royal burgh of Rutherglen, near Glasgow, thus described 100 years ago:—"The bell is 7 feet in circumference, at the brim; and is ornamented with the following inscriptions, SOLI . DEO . GLORIA . MICHAEL . BURGERHUYS . ME . FECIT . MDCXXXV . CAMPANAM . HANC . CIVES . RUTHERGLENENSES . ECCLESIAE . SUAE . PAROCHIALI . DONANT." The other was then in the parish church of East Kilbride in same county, "cast by one of the most celebrated bell founders in Europe," bearing this inscription:—"PETER . VANDEN . GHEIN . HEFT . MI . GHEGOTEN . MCCCCCLXXXX" (1590). It was said to have been cracked by violent ringing on a day of rejoicing, held by the people of Kilbride when they heard the news of Lord Dundee's death at Killiecrankie.<sup>2</sup> on 17 July, 1689.

<sup>1</sup> Which corresponds with the 195 years elapsed when it was broken in 1789, as the bell is made to-day.

<sup>2</sup> *History of Rutherglen and East Kilbride*, by David Ure, A.M., 1793, pp. 81, 209.