

NOTICE OF A BRACKET TIMEPIECE WHICH BELONGED TO ARCHBISHOP SHARP, AND OTHER ARTICLES BEQUEATHED TO THE SOCIETY BY MISS MACLAURIN; AND ALSO OF THREE TIMEPIECES IN THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, ST ANDREWS. BY ALEXANDER J. S. BROOK, F.S.A. Scot.

(Read 11th March 1901.)

Miss Elizabeth Anne Maclaurin, who bequeathed the timepiece and other articles enumerated below to the Society also left the following description of them and an account of their history to be printed in the *Proceedings* :—

“As the last surviving member of the family of my father, the late Mr Peter Maclaurin, Writer, Edinburgh, I have now arranged to bequeath to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, of which my brother, the late Mr Henry Maclaurin, was for many years a member, the following articles :—

“(1) An antique ebony timepiece which belonged to Archbishop Sharp; (2) an autograph letter from Sir Walter Scott to my father, thanking him for having been the means of procuring for him the old wood-work of the Abbey Church, Dunfermline; (3) eight volumes of Sir Walter Scott's poetical works presented by him to my father.

“One of Sir Walter Scott's forenoon visits to us while we lived in Castle Street was purposely to see the antique timepiece which has now been for many years in our possession, and which formerly belonged to Archbishop Sharp. It is a valuable spring timepiece, unique in construction and appearance. It is independent of hands to indicate the time, like an ordinary clock. The dial is of brass, square in shape, consisting of two parts; the inside edge of the upper part is in the form of a semicircle divided into sixty little notches for the minutes, with dots to indicate every five minutes and Roman numerals I, II, and III, to mark the quarters of each hour. Each figure, representing for the time being the hour, takes exactly sixty minutes to pass from the left to the right hand side of the semicircle, and as one figure disappears on the right hand side, the succeeding figure immediately appears on the left. There is an apparatus for lighting it up at night, and a concealed chimney to allow the smoke to escape. Within the space enclosed by the semicircle there are painted figures of the flying hours, and on the lower half of the dial under the semicircle there is a spirited little painting of riders on horseback, with dogs, etc., preparing for a hunt. It has engraved at the base of the dial the maker's name ‘Joseph Knibb, Londini fecit.’ The case, which is of oak veneered with ebony, is square in form, surmounted by a pediment, and has spiral pillars at each side of the dial.

" This timepiece was brought down from London by Archbishop Sharp along with another timepiece of ordinary construction and appearance. The latter he presented to the College of St Andrews, with which he had been so long connected, and the former he retained for his own use. It remained in the possession of his family until upwards of seventy years ago. At the death of Major Johnston, one of the Archbishop's descendants, it and other family relics were dispersed, and the valuable timepiece came into the possession of my father, who prized it very highly as an antique. Sir John Leslie and the old Earl of Buchan (founder of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland) both came to see it, and being old St Andrews' students, distinctly remembered to have seen the other timepiece there, which Archbishop Sharp had given to the College; and also to have heard of another and rarer one which he had purchased at the same time for himself, and which, at the time they were students, was still in the possession of his family."

With the view of corroborating the latter part of Miss Maclaurin's story inquiry was made at St Andrews, when it was ascertained that there were three timepieces in the University Library, all made by Joseph Knibb, the maker of Archbishop Sharp's timepiece. Obviously, the starting point in inquiring into the probability of these clocks having been purchased by Archbishop Sharp is to ascertain if Joseph Knibb was a contemporary of the Archbishop.

Fortunately his history is well known. He joined the Clockmakers' Company of London in 1670,¹ and carried on business both in Oxford and London. He made a clock for Windsor Castle in 1677. In the Camden Society's *Secret Services of Charles II. and James II.* there are various accounts of payments to him on behalf of King Charles. From the following advertisement in April 1697² of the sale of his stock it will be noted that he made many curious kinds of clocks.

"At the Clock Dyal, in Suffolk Street, near Charing Cross, on Friday, 23rd inst., will begin the sale of a great Parcel of very good Pendulum Clocks, some do go a year, some a month, some a week, and some thirty hours: some are Table Clocks, some repeat themselves, and some, by

¹ It is most probable that Joseph Knibb was in business for some years before he joined the Clockmakers' Company. The jurisdiction of that Company only extended to ten miles from London, and as Joseph Knibb was first in business at Oxford, there was no necessity for him joining it.

² *London Gazette*, April 15-19, 1697.

pulling, repeat the hours and quarters: made and sold by Joseph Knibb at his House, at the Dyal, in Suffolk Street, aforementioned."¹

If Archbishop Sharp purchased one or more of these clocks it would thus appear that he must have done it shortly before or after 1670.

It might have been expected that some assistance would have been obtained from Archbishop Sharp's private papers. Unfortunately, few of these are now in existence. A note-book containing an account of his private expenditure between the years 1662 and 1666 is printed in the *Miscellany* of the Maitland Club, but it contains no reference to any clocks.

The late Miss Sharp, who is mentioned by Boswell in *Dr Johnson's Tour to the Hebrides*, collected a great quantity of papers relating to her ancestor, Archbishop Sharp. Her nephew, General Bethune of Blebo, having been detained prisoner by Bonaparte after the Peace of Amiens, she, despairing of his return, unfortunately ordered them all to be burnt previous to her death. Much genuine information relating to the private affairs of the Archbishop has thus been lost.

There are no records of how the clocks came into the possession of the University of St Andrews. The first notice of them in the Minutes of Senatus is on 23rd February 1697. "Which day the University met, Messrs Robert Ramsay and Colin Vilant, who were appointed to compare the books in the public library with the fullest catalogue, made report that they had fulfilled the said appointment, and that they had made a list of the clocks and mathematical instruments in the said library, and that they find a thermometer marked as broken by Mr John Arrot."

The next reference to them appears in a catalogue drawn up and attested on 18th May 1714:—"Three pendulum clocks, whereof two have long and the third a short pendulum." This corresponds exactly with the timepieces at present in the University Library.

After this date there are numerous entries of small sums paid for their repair, which need not be quoted.

¹ For further particulars regarding Joseph Knibb, see *Old Clocks and Watches and their Makers*, by F. J. Britten, 1899, p. 204.

On the two long-cased timepieces there are traces of old labels with remains of handwriting upon them, at least a century and a half old; but nothing can be made out now except a few odd letters.

The other timepiece, known in St Andrews as "Gregorie's Astronomical Clock," is said to have been used by Professor Gregorie, the famous astronomer, when making his observations from the Library, where part of the apparatus he used is still to be seen. James Gregorie was appointed to the Chair of Mathematics in St Andrews in 1670. He shortly conceived the idea of starting the teaching of Astronomy. This was cordially agreed to by the University, and sufficient money was collected to make a commencement. In a commission dated 10th June 1673, Professor Gregorie was authorized to collect further funds, and was ordered to proceed to London to "purchase such instruments and utensils, as he, with advice of other skilful persons, shall judge most necessary and useful for the above-mentioned design." There can be little doubt that it was on this occasion that the "Astronomical Timepiece" was bought. Gregorie can, however, have made but little use of it, for on returning from London after completing his commission, he found his position in St Andrews completely changed. Through jealousy and other causes the professors conceived a dislike for him. His salary was suspended, the University servants were commanded to take no notice of his orders, and the students were forbidden to attend his lectures. It must have been therefore a considerable relief to him when he received an invitation to become Professor of Mathematics in Edinburgh University, whither he proceeded in November 1674. He died within a year afterwards, about October 1675.

It is not unlikely that the fact of Professor Gregorie having gone to Joseph Knibb for his timepiece may have led Archbishop Sharp to obtain his from the same clockmaker. In December 1674 the Archbishop went to London, from which he returned in August 1675. When there he purchased a silver baptismal basin and laver which he presented to the High Church, St Andrews, and which is still in use.

There is nothing impossible in the suggestion that at the time he purchased the bracket timepiece for himself, he also bought one or both of the two long-cased timepieces which stand on each side of the fireplace of the University Library; but nothing definite is known as to their history.

We will now proceed to describe the four timepieces more fully.

ARCHBISHOP SHARP'S TIMEPIECE (fig. 1).

It is hardly necessary to do more than supplement Miss Maclaurin's description of this. The case is made of oak veneered with ebony, and is square in form, surmounted by a pediment. It measures over all 24 inches in height by 14 inches in width. The oldest form of bracket clock was square with a flat top, and the addition of the pediment was an after-enrichment which, with the spiral or corkscrew pillars, marked the period 1670-1680. The method of indicating the time is curious, and illustrates one of the many "notions," as they were called, which prevailed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The dial is square in form, and made of brass. Its lower half is filled with a spirited representation of a hunting party, painted in oil colour with a distinct feeling of the Wouverman School, and is probably the work of one of the many Dutch artists then in London. The upper portion is pierced out into a semicircular panel, on the inner edge of which are sixty notches indicating the minutes, with dots for each five minutes. Above the semicircle are pierced out Roman numerals to mark the three quarters of the hour. Beneath this upper dial, under the space of the semicircle, there is another dial which is painted in oil colour with a representation of the flying hours. This is movable, and revolves once in two hours. There are two circular openings in it, lying exactly opposite to each other, in which the figure of the hour appears, entering at the left and disappearing at the right hand side. Beneath these openings are two discs, having the hours pierced out on their borders. Around the edge of each disc are six raised pins which,

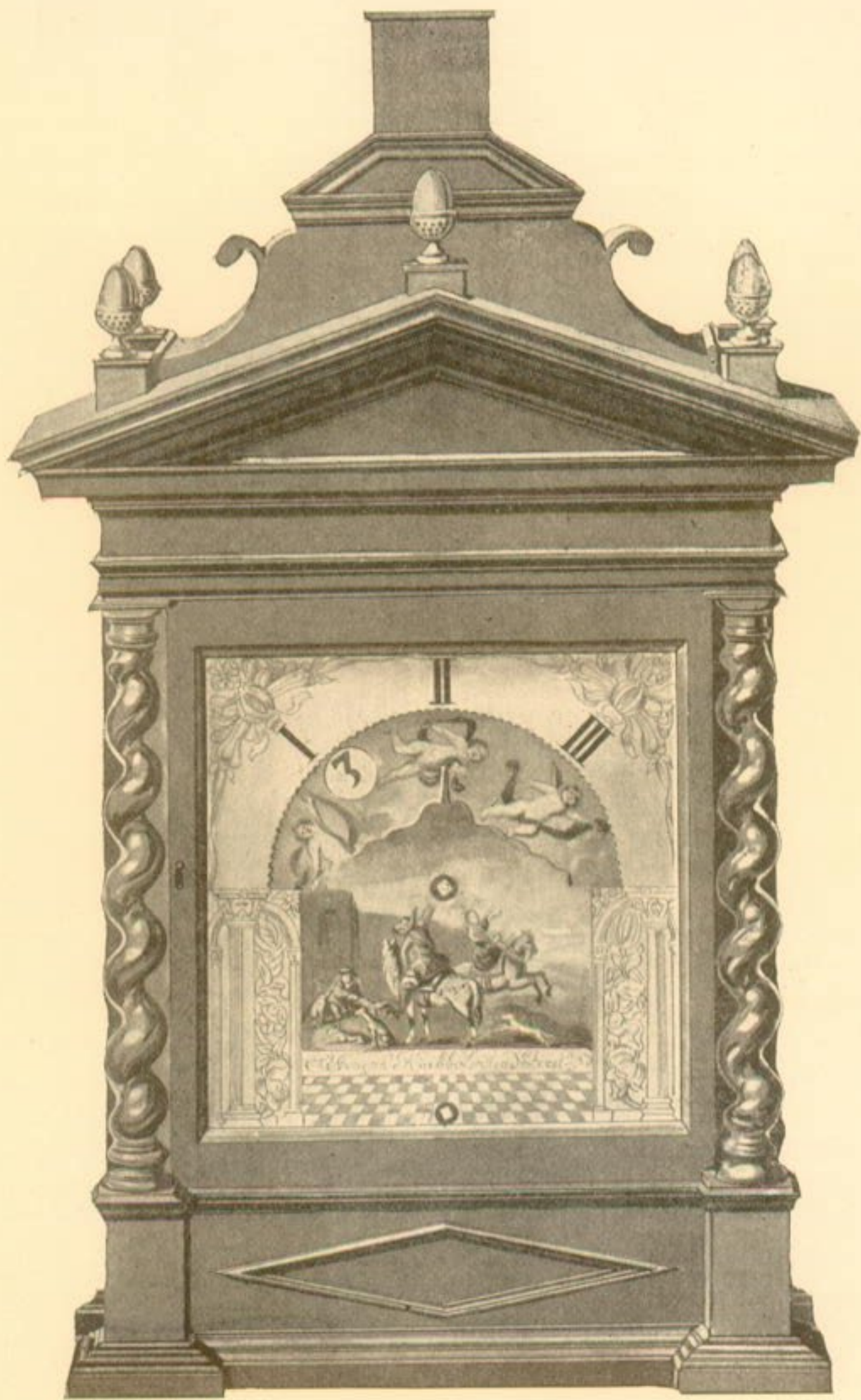


Fig. 1. Archbishop Sharp's Timepiece.

as they come in contact with a stationary pin upon the plate of the movement, move the discs forward one hour. The circles enclosing the chapters 7 and 8 show the positions of the openings on the front of the dial. By referring to the illustration (fig. 2) the contrivance will be readily understood. As only one-half of this circular dial is visible in the semicircular opening, only one hour can be seen at a time. At the base of the dial is engraved in script the maker's name, "Joseph Knibb, Londini fecit." Immediately below this is the winding square, and in the centre there is another square for setting the clock to time.

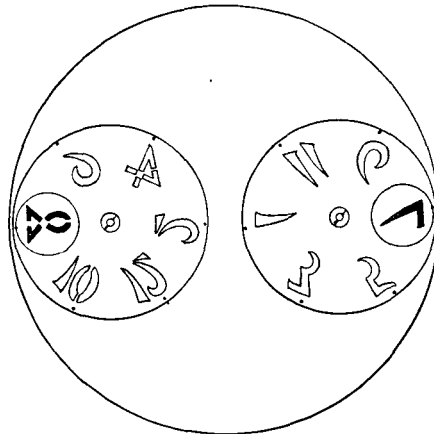


Fig. 2. Back of Lower Revolving Dial showing discs with pierced chapters.
(Scale, $\frac{1}{3}$ linear.)

The movement is a spring timepiece of the usual type, and is beautifully engraved at each corner of the back plate with a floral ornament. The escapement, which is that known as the verge or crown wheel, is the original one, and has happily not been altered in any way. The pendulum is short, and is supported at the back on a knife edge—a method much in vogue at that time, but long since abandoned.

Immediately above the movement is a wooden shelf for supporting an oil lamp with three wicks, which slides in through an aperture in the side of the case. This, when lit, distinctly shows the time through the

pierced chapters in the dial — those denoting the hours being backed with red silk, while the quarters are clear. Above the oil lamp is a concealed chimney for carrying away the smoke, and in the back door of the case there are also a number of small holes to aid the ventilation. From the appearance of the wood-work it is evident that frequent use has been made of this contrivance.

GREGORIE'S ASTRONOMICAL TIMEPIECE (fig. 3).

This has originally been a bracket wall timepiece. One of the ogee sides of the bracket can be seen in the illustration. The case is made of fir stained and polished black. It has stood for upwards of two centuries with its side and front exposed to the south, and is consequently much blistered. Apparently after it was brought to St Andrews it was converted to a long-cased timepiece by the addition—evidently the work of an unskilled local joiner—of a narrow-waisted trunk (measuring only $6\frac{3}{4}$ inches in width) and a base. The different character of the workmanship and where the addition joins the original can be noticed at a glance.

The hood of the case is square, surmounted by a pediment, measuring over all 15 inches high, and in its design it is tasteful and well proportioned. It has no door, and to obtain access to the movement the hood slides up and is held in position by a catch at the side, the remains of which can still be seen.

The dial is made of brass, and is a beautiful piece of work. The time is indicated on two silverized circles. The smaller, enclosed within the larger, has the hours engraved in Roman numerals; while the larger is divided into sixty seconds, each of which is subdivided into three, as the pendulum beats thirds of seconds. Both hour and seconds' hands (there is no minute hand) are elaborately pierced and carved, as was customary in high-class clocks of that period. The four spandrels are engraved with a floral ornament of similar character to those on the back plate of Archbishop Sharp's timepiece.

The movement of this timepiece is also in its original condition. It is

of simple construction, and contains only three wheels with an ordinary tick-tack escapement actuated by a weight, which requires to be pulled up each day. The pendulum shows the same interesting feature as in Archbishop Sharp's timepiece, being supported at the back on a knife edge.

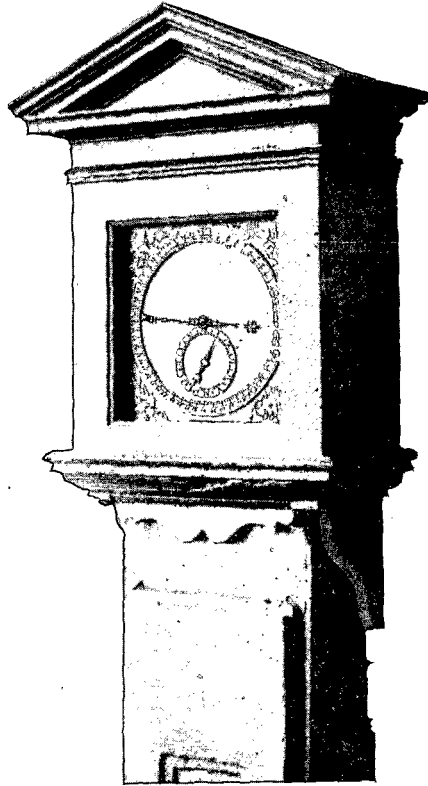


Fig. 3. Gregorie's Astronomical Timepiece in the University Library, St Andrews.

TWO LONG-CASED TIMEPIECES.

These two timepieces are externally practically the same in appearance. The cases are made of oak veneered with walnut, with the doors in walnut root. Walnut veneer was very commonly used for clock cases in

the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. They are narrow in the waist— $10\frac{3}{8}$ inches—and have had the wood inside hollowed out on each side of the pendulum ball.

The hoods (fig. 4) are square in form with spiral pillars at the corners,

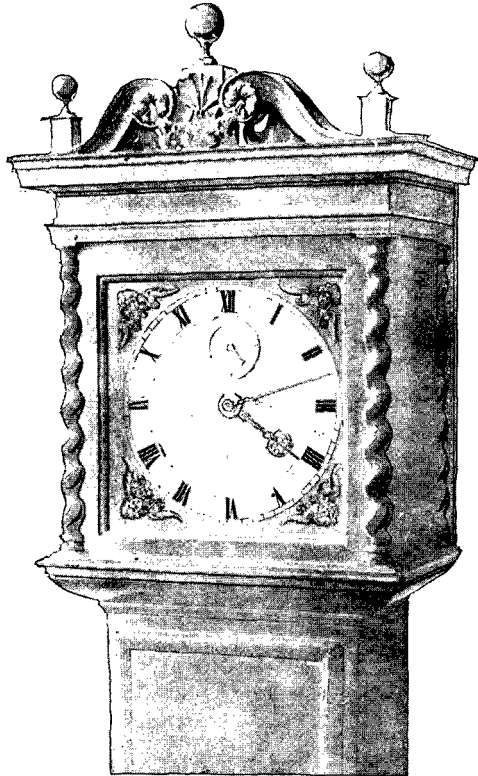


Fig. 4. Hood of Timepiece in the University Library, St Andrews.

surmounted by a richly carved scroll and shell ornament. They have brass dials with silverized hour and seconds circles, and cast and chased spandrils.

In old clocks the hour circles had many distinguishing marks. In

these timepieces the inner edge of the hour circle is divided into quarters, the half-hour mark being longer and terminating in a fleur-de-lys. This was used when clocks had only one hand, and after the introduction of minute hands gradually ceased. The raised spandril or corner ornament is also characteristic. It is the earliest design which was used, a cherub's head with wings, and remained current till 1700.

The hands are also worth notice, being elaborately pierced and engraved.

The name of the maker, "Joseph Knibb, Londini fecit," is engraved in script on both timepieces at the base of the dial below the hour circle. Even such a detail as the maker's name is of interest. This seldom appears in Latin after the seventeenth century, and was altered in position to the inside of the hour circle between the figures VII and V towards the end of that century. Name-plates appear to have been introduced about 1715.

The movements of both these timepieces are of the usual type. One of them has an ordinary anchor escapement, while the other is dead-beat (probably an alteration in later years). It is interesting to note that both of them have a contrivance to maintain the power during the process of winding, and also a shield to cover the winding-hole, which works automatically along with this.

LETTER FROM SIR WALTER SCOTT TO MR PETER MACLAURIN.

The following is the account prepared by Miss Maclaurin of the circumstances under which the letter from Sir Walter Scott, which forms a portion of her bequest to the Society, was sent to her father :—

"During the Autumn of 1822, my father, the late Mr Peter Maclaurin, paid a visit to an old and valued friend, the late Mr David Mitchell, accountant in the Bank of Scotland, Dumfermline. Both being keen antiquaries, they were talking of the oak-work which had recently been removed from the old Abbey Church of Dumfermline, as, after the opening of the New Abbey Church, the old one was no longer used as a place of worship, but simply as a vestibule to the New Church, and it was dismantled of all the old oak ornamentation. My father felt sure that the old carved oak-work which was lying there, piled up in heaps, would be a very acceptable gift to Sir Walter Scott, who was then fitting up Abbotsford, and he particularly requested Mr Mitchell, who was one of the

Bailies and in fact the leading man in the Town Council, to get for him the pulpit and whatever other portions of the carved wainscotting the Magistrates of Dunfermline had it in their power to bestow. On returning home, my father called on Sir Walter Scott, who was quite delighted with the offer of the old oak-work. Mr Mitchell handsomely redeemed his promise to my father by securing for Sir Walter all that the Town Council could give, and furnished him besides with valuable information as to how he could get possession of the 'King's Gallery' which, being the property of the Crown, could only be obtained by applying to the Barons of Exchequer. It is almost needless to add that the application to the Barons was successful, and that instead of one, as he at first expected, Sir Walter received six cartloads of the carved oak of the Old Abbey Church to fit up the baronial hall at Abbotsford.

"After the matter had been so far satisfactorily arranged, Sir Walter sent to my father the following autograph letter of thanks :—

"DEAR MR MACLAURIN,
 "I beg you will accept my best thanks for all the trouble you have had about the Pulpit. I will send in a cart for it next week, and intend to employ it in lining a little Gothick cabinet or boudoir in this place. The Chief Baron will be here in two days. I will try to touch him up for the Gallery also. I am much indebted to Mr Mitchell for the pains he has bestowed to gratify my hobby-horse.

I remain, dear Mr Maclaurin,
 Your obliged humble servant,
 WALTER SCOTT."

ABBOTSFORD,
 12th October 1822.

"In *Lockhart's Life of Scott*, under date 1822, Sir Walter writes as follows :—'I have had three grand hauls since I wrote to you ; the Pulpit, Repentance Stool, King's Seat, and God knows how much of carved wainscot from the Kirk of Dunfermline—enough to coat the hall to the height of seven feet, supposing it boarded above for hanging guns, old portraits, intermixed with armour, etc. It will be a superb entrance gallery.

"In a footnote Lockhart adds 'for this haul Sir Walter was indebted to the Magistrates of Dunfermline.'"

THE POETICAL WORKS OF SIR WALTER SCOTT, Bart., In Eight
 Volumes. (Edinburgh : A. Constable & Co., 1822.)

The following is Miss Maclaurin's account of the circumstances which led Sir Walter Scott to send these volumes to her father.

"Shortly after the successful negotiation about the carved oak, my mother was so fortunate as to secure an addition to the furnishings of the Baronial Hall which Sir Walter highly prized, vizt., an antique cradle grate which had formerly belonged to Archbishop Sharp, a well authenticated relic. One of my mother's sisters was married to the Rev. John Ross, parish minister of Crawford, in the Upper Ward of Lanarkshire. While visiting at the Manse in 1823, my mother accidentally heard that a grate which had formerly belonged to Archbishop Sharp was in the possession of James Craig, carpenter, in the village of

Crawford. It immediately occurred to her that it might be an acceptable gift for Sir Walter Scott, and she went to see it and ascertain its history. It had been brought to Crawford Manse by Mrs Maconochie, the wife of a former incumbent, Mr Ross's predecessor, who, after being for twenty-five years parish minister there, resigned his charge in 1806, and went to reside in Edinburgh.

"Mrs Maconochie (*née* Wallace) was, I believe, a grandniece of Archbishop Sharp. James Craig informed my mother that the first time he was sent for to go to the Manse to do some odd jobbing after Mrs Maconochie's arrival she handed him a draught of ale, telling him to be sure to drink it out that he might see the two angels at the bottom of the jug. She added, 'they say that this jug belonged to my grand-uncle, Archbishop Sharp. Of that I am not sure, but this I can vouch for,' turning towards the grate, 'this grate, I know, did for a certainty belong to Archbishop Sharp and came to me by direct inheritance.' And well-cared for and highly thought of, was the said grate, and while in the Manse it was always kept as bright and clean as hands could make it. When Mr and Mrs Maconochie were preparing to leave Crawford for Edinburgh, and cart after cart was packed full of their furniture, the old lady could never see a safe enough corner anywhere for her precious grate, and when the last cart-load was leaving the Manse and there was still no suitable place for it, she begged Mrs Macqueen, the wife of a neighbouring farmer, to take great care of it and give it house room until she sent a cart purposely for it. But the cart never came, as both Mr and Mrs Maconochie survived but a few months after they went to Edinburgh. Mrs Macqueen also died, and the poor old grate was sadly neglected and thrown out at last into an open porch, where lying exposed for many months to wind and weather it became quite red with rust. After his wife's death, Mr Macqueen became bankrupt, and at the sale of his furniture and effects James Craig bought the grate for a trifle and took it to his own house. When my mother called there to see it James Craig gave her its history, word for word, as he had it heard from Mrs Maconochie. My mother happened to mention that she also had a relic of Archbishop Sharp—a valuable timepiece, whereupon James remarked 'then the clock and the grate should gang the-gither.' My mother asked him if he would part with it in exchange for a modern grate and a table for his parlour, and he agreed most willingly to do so, as it was far too extravagant a grate for him, being much too large to put a fire in. So the exchange was effected without delay, and my mother had the grate brought into Edinburgh and presented it to Sir Walter Scott, who sent it to Sibbald, the smith and ironmonger, to make the best he could of it. Instead of bronzing it, as Sir Walter expected, he cleaned it up beautifully and duly sent it on to Abbotsford. Writing in 1823 Sir Walter alludes to it in the following terms—'By-the-bye, for the Hall, I have got an old massive chimney grate, which belonged to the old persecutor, Archbishop Sharp, who was murdered on Magus Moor. All our grates must be contrived to use wood as well as coal with what are called half dogs.'

"In 1822, shortly after receiving the old oak wood-work and the cradle grate, Sir Walter kindly sent a copy of his Poetical Works in eight volumes (now bequeathed to the Society by Miss Maclaurin) addressed to my father, 'With Sir Walter Scott's Compliments.' In getting them afterwards handsomely bound the sheet of paper with these words and the address was inserted as a fly-leaf in the first volume."