

ART. VII.—*On the McMechan Chap-Books in the Jackson Library, Carlisle.* By HENRY BARNES, M.D., LL.D.

Read at Carlisle, April 26th, 1917.

A CHAP-BOOK is defined in Halliwell's *Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words* as "a little book printed for the purpose of being sold by hawkers," and in Slater's *Library Manual* it is described as "a small book or pamphlet carried about for sale by hawkers." In these *Transactions*, o.s. xiv and xvi, the late Chancellor Ferguson published a full account of the Chap-Books then in the Jackson Library. Most of the books described by him contain only 8 pages, but a few have 24 pages; nearly all have a woodcut on the title page, and where a date is given it is either in the last decade of the eighteenth or the first two decades of the nineteenth century. Several of these have been printed in various towns in Cumberland, and the Chancellor has given us an account of many early Cumberland printers.

About four years ago the late Mr. Thomas McMechan of Wigton, founder, publisher, and printer of the *Wigton Advertiser*, sent me a collection of Chap-Books which he wished to be added to the Jackson Library. They are 44 in number, all in excellent condition. Many of them, in addition to the woodcut on the title-page, contain several other illustrations. Only one of them bears a date, viz.: 1856. It is entitled "History of the Kings and Queens of England from William the Conqueror to the present time." It is probably one of the last of the Chap-Books published. All the others I should judge to be of a much earlier date. Many of them I recognise as familiar friends of my early days. I have a distinct recollection of how we enjoyed in the winter evenings

such stories as *The Life of Richard Turpin*, a most notorious Highwayman ; *The History of Whittington and his cat* ; *The History of Jack and the Beanstalk* ; *The Voyages and Travels of Sinbad the Sailor* and some others.

Several of them contain matters of local interest. The first of these is " *The Life and Adventures of David Haggart*," written by himself while under sentence of death. It describes the career of a notorious criminal who visited various towns in England, Scotland, and Ireland, committing numerous robberies, and was finally arrested for the murder of a warder at Dumfries, tried at Edinburgh, and executed.* He says he visited Carlisle with a fellow criminal after some successful work in the south of Scotland, but they only stayed here four weeks, did not attempt any business, but amused themselves with riding in the morning and passed the evening at gambling-houses, and twice or thrice went to dances. They then went to Kendal where they found themselves £43 richer by one transaction. 2.—" *The History of Sir William Wallace, the renowned Scottish Champion* " is worthy of notice. It relates many wonderful stories of Wallace's exploits, in which he defeated the English in several combats, chased them almost entirely out of Scotland, and describes how he even marched into England, laid Cumberland and Northumberland waste and humbled the English. 3 and 4.—The " *Sins and Sorrows spread before God*," a sermon by the Rev. Isaac Watts, D.D. and is embellished by a portrait presumably of the author ; and there is also a collection of " *Divine Songs for the use of Children* " by the same Dr. Watts, author of the well-known hymns " *Let dogs delight to bark and bite*," and " *How doth the little busy bee*." I think the publisher must have been greatly enamoured of the portrait because he takes it to illustrate the " *History of Mahomet*,"

* Readers of George Borrow's *Lavengro* will remember the passage about David Haggart (chap. viii) which suggests Borrow's knowledge of this chap-book as well as his early personal acquaintance with Haggart.

the great Imposter." The same portrait is put on the title-page of three other Chap-Books, viz. : " History of the Life and sufferings of the Rev. John Welsh, sometime Minister of the Gospel at Ayr," " The Life and wonderful Prophecies of David Cargill, who was executed at the Cross at Edinburgh on the 26th of July, 1680, for his adherence to the Covenant and work of the Reformation," and " A choice drop of honey from the Rock of Christ or a short word of advice to saints and sinners," by Thomas Willcocks. 5.—" The Life and meritorious Transactions of John Knox the Great Scottish Reformer." His story is probably familiar to all and needs no comment. 6.—" History of the Life and Death of the great Warrior Robert Bruce King of Scotland " has a striking woodcut of a combat on its title page, which probably represents the fight between an English knight, Henry de Bohun, and the Scottish king at the battle of Bannockburn, which is fully described in the text. 7.—" The History of Prince Charles Edward Stuart, commonly called the Pretender " describes how Charles invested Carlisle in November, 1745, with an army of 5,000 men, how the city surrendered in less than three days, and how his father was proclaimed king of England and himself Regent, " by the Magistrates in all their formalities." A full account of the march to Penrith and the subsequent campaign is given. 8.—" The National Songster or Comic and Sentimental Songs for the Million " is not an uncommon form of Chap-Book and a perusal shows that its title is fully justified.

Only two printers' names are to be found on the title pages ; J. Brydon, Edinburgh, is responsible for the " History of Columbus " ; Francis Orr and Sons, Glasgow, are put down for two, viz. : " The History of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob," and " Divine Songs for Little Children." The rest have the imprint " Glasgow : printed for the Booksellers."

The following is a complete list : 1.—The History of

Columbus the Discoverer of America. 2.—Ali Baba and the forty thieves. 3.—The History of Cinderella or the little glass slipper, to which is added the Babes in the Wood. 4.—A Prayer Book for families and Private Persons. 5.—The History of Joseph and his brethren, embellished with cuts, to which is added the Life, Journeyings, and Death of the Apostle Paul. 6.—The Voyages and Travels of Sinbad the Sailor. 7.—The History of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, embellished with cuts, to which is added an account of Jonah's Mission to the Ninevites. 8.—The Pilgrim's Progress from this world to that to which is to come. 9.—The Life and Adventures of David Haggart, written by himself while under sentence of death, with an account of his execution. 10.—The History of the Kings and Queens of England from William the Conqueror to the present time. 11.—The Song Book, a choice collection of songs, duets, and glees, sung at different places of public amusement. 12.—The Wife of Beith,* being an allegorical Dialogue containing nothing but what is recorded in Scripture. 13.—The Life and meritorious Transactions of John Knox, the Great Scottish Reformer. 14.—History of the Life and Sufferings of the Rev. John Welsh, sometime Minister of the Gospel at Ayr. 15.—The Spaewife or Universal Fortune Teller wherein your future welfare may be known by Physiognomy, Cards, Palmistry and Coffee grounds. Also a distinct Treatise on Moles. 16.—The True Fortune Teller or Universal Book of Life. 17.—The Story Teller. The Murder Discovered. The Widow and her son. Encounter with a lion. The Soldier's Wife. The Conflict between Grant and M'Pherson, at Hell Bridge, a dangerous pass in the Highlands of Scotland. 18.—The Art of

* *Sic.* The opening lines of the text are :—

“In Beith once dwelt a worthy wife
Of whom brave Chaucer mention makes.”

Chaucer, of course, wrote of “The wife of Bath.” Beith is a market town in North Ayrshire about 18 miles s.w. of Glasgow, where the chap-book was printed.

Swimming rendered easy by Dr. B. Franklin. 19.—The national Songster, or Comic and sentimental Songs. 20.—The Popular Songster, a collection of favourite songs. 21.—Mother Bunch's Golden Fortune Teller. 22.—A Choice drop of Honey from the Rock of Christ by Thomas Willcocks. 23.—Sins and Sorrows spread before God, a Sermon by the Rev. Isaac Watts. 24.—Divine Songs for the Use of Children by I. Watts, D.D. 25.—History of Sir William Wallace, the Renowned Scottish Champion. 26.—History of the Life and Death of the Great Warrior Robert Bruce, King of Scotland. 27.—A Token for Mourners with a selection of Scripture Promises relative to the troubles of Life. 28.—The Life and Prophecies of Alexander Peden. 29.—The Life of Richard Turpin, a most notorious Highwayman. 30.—The History of Prince Charles Edward Stuart, commonly called the Pretender. 31.—A Tale of the Rebellion of 1745, or the Broken Heart, to which is added the Three Wishes and the Adventures of two Teetotallers. 32.—The Life and Wonderful Prophecies of Donald Cargill who was executed at the Cross of Edinburgh on the 26th of July, 1680, for his adherence to the Covenant and work of the Reformation. 33.—The History of Mahomet, the Great Imposter. 34.—History of James Allan, the celebrated Northumberland Piper. 35.—The famous History of Valentine and Orson. 36.—History of the Kings and Queens of England from the Reign of William the Conqueror to Victoria the first, Part I. 37.—History of the Kings and Queens of England and Scotland, Part II. 38.—The Way to Wealth or Poor Richard's Maxims improved, etc. 39.—The History of Moses, embellished with cuts. 40.—The History of Whittington and his cat and the Story of Puss in Boots. 41.—The History of Jack and the Beanstalk. 42.—The History of the Black Douglas with an account of the Battle of Otterburn. 43.—The History of Napoleon Bonaparte. 44.—The Life and History of Mary Queen of Scots.