

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

PRECEDING CATALOGUE OF BOOKS.

In presenting this Catalogue to the Society, I beg leave to mention some observations that have occurred to me, though they may differ from the ideas commonly entertained respecting the importance of such ancient libraries. We are accustomed to hear of the great learning of the religious men who, in old times, inhabited the monasteries of Ireland; and such learning, though in a less degree, has also been imputed to the religious in this country. Great lamentations have accordingly been made for the loss of their libraries, which the imaginations of some authors have replenished with ample stores of valuable books.

I apprehend, however, that there is no reason for very great regret on this account, or to think that there was either much learning, or many books among our ancient clergy. The notion that there was, must have arisen from the great figure which a small degree of learning necessarily made in the eyes of rude people, possessed of little learning or knowledge of books.

Some manuscripts have come down to us from the Irish monks of old times; but it may be questioned whether they shew any

degree of learning that can be called extraordinary. This learning, such as it was, ought to have been increased, when they came to have a close connexion with the Church of Rome; but, even after that connexion was established, their inferiority only becomes more conspicuous.

If this observation is just with respect to the Irish monks, it must hold in a stronger degree with regard to the clergy and monks of Scotland. As to the most early period of their history, that of the Culdees, (who did not acknowledge subjection to the Roman church), it seems certain that these ancient priests have not left any books to enable us to judge of their learning; at least, we have seen no books attributed to them. After the establishment of the Roman hierarchy in this country, the inferiority of the priests to those of the Continent is obvious. Many monasteries were established, and some upon prior Culdee foundations, upon the principles of the orders of the Roman church. But all their records shew that, for the most part, foreigners, and not natives, were at the head of them. And historically we are informed, that whole bodies of monks were brought from England and France, and planted in the newly established, or newly modelled religious houses of Scotland.

It is not the object at present to go into any discussion of particular facts, in support of these propositions, though, with some expence of time and labour, such might be brought forward. The general proposition in view is, that the learning of our ancient monasteries, and value and importance of their libraries, have been greatly overrated. We may safely infer the same thing of our secular clergy before the Reformation.

One of the best ways of judging of this matter is to consider

what books they were commonly possessed of, and used. It will be found that their books were few in number, and very limited as to the extent of the field of knowledge which they embraced.

Dr Jamieson, in his Account of the Culdees, has given a catalogue of a library of a religious house, viz. the Priory of Lochleven, about the year 1150. No doubt this library was at the time thought to be ample, and to contain all the books the society needed. However, it consisted of only *seventeen* volumes; and among these there was not a *complete copy of the Bible*—only some detached parts. The rest were either such books as were used in the ordinary service of the church, and not even a complete collection of these, unless their form of worship was very different from that of Rome; or, *2dly*, Some theological books, such as the *Libri Sententiarum*, or commentaries upon them. There is not in this collection one classic author, Greek or Latin, nor any book on philosophy or general literature. We may, therefore, conclude that, at the time alluded to, (about 1150) this was not a learned society, nor were they provided with the means of becoming so.

This house had been an ancient seat of Culdees, and was well endowed; therefore, upon the idea of learning prevailing among these priests, we have a right to presume it would be well provided with books: And we may conclude it was so, in an equal degree at least with any other establishment of the same kind. Yet we cannot help thinking it was a miserable collection for a body of priests, possessed of whatever learning was in the country.

General assertions of the great learning of the monks and priests of ancient times, and erroneous notions of collections of valuable books in their possession, afford no distinct ideas on this subject. An inquirer into those matters naturally

seeks for the facts on which such assertions are founded, or notions entertained. In order to afford the satisfaction wanted, it would be desirable to collect and examine all catalogues or inventories of collections of books belonging to religious houses, or other ecclesiastical corporations in this country; and, if a number of them were brought together, they would afford grounds for judging of the degree of learning which the clergy usually possessed, or had an opportunity of acquiring. There are a number of chartularies or registers of bishoprics and religious houses yet extant, wherein materials may probably be found; and those who make this matter an object of inquiry would do well to examine them, and extract whatever they contain respecting the books and libraries of those churches.

One of these chartularies has fallen in my way; and, as it makes no part of any collection in this country, I have made a copy from it of a catalogue of books, which, I presume, will be curious and gratifying to persons who are disposed to inquire into the state of literature in this country in former times.

The chartulary of Glasgow, and all the other archives of that Bishopric, were carried to France at the Reformation, and lodged in the Scotch College at Paris. After the French Revolution, the chartulary was brought to this country upon loan, where I had an opportunity of seeing it, and copying from it the catalogue which I now lay before the Society.

The chartulary itself consists of two volumes written on vellum, one more ancient than the other. They are in a great measure copies of each other; but each contains a variety of deeds which the other has not. The more ancient volume commences with the period of David I. before he was king; and contains a great number of deeds from the restoration of the See by him, then

Prince of Cumberland, till a period preceding the Reformation. The second volume is chiefly a transcript of the former; but it contains a number of deeds of more modern date, respecting endowments by individuals, of chapels, altarages, &c. which are not in the first.

The first volume contains the catalogue now alluded to, and bears to have been taken by four Canons of the church, on 24th March 1432. It includes also the ornaments, jewels, reliques, &c. which are at present passed over, as not connected with the object of this paper.

Before entering into consideration of the number and nature of the books in this catalogue, it is proper to mention that it lies under some disadvantages, which deprive us of some part of the information we had reason to expect from it.

It seems to have been originally drawn up not by very learned hands; as several books are mentioned with which the compilers appear to have been unacquainted; for they do not give either the names of the authors, or the subjects. Several books have no description or distinction, but merely the first words on the first or second leaf. The first of these marks might lead us to find out the book meant; but the reference is most frequently made to the first words of the second leaf, either because the first leaf has been obscure, or that the beginning of the second leaf might afford a better distinguishing mark of the individual copy, than the first word of the first leaf, which fell to be the same in every copy. But even the transcription of these words is frequently erroneous, shewing that the compilers were but imperfectly acquainted with the Latin language, and not at all with the book itself.

Farther errors have been added in transcribing the catalogue.

into the Chartulary. The transcriber has been still more unequal to his task than the compilers. He appears to have been little acquainted either with the Latin language, or the books described; and the writing is more indistinct and worse formed than the rest of the book. He has been ignorant of the import of many of the contractions used, and in consequence has made some of them unintelligible, and evidently misread and copied erroneously a number of words. Hence I have been unable to decypher in a satisfactory way some of the passages, as to which I have used my best powers of conjecture; but, as to some others, I am obliged to confess myself unable to find out the true reading.

These observations it is necessary to keep in view, in order to account for the obscurity that will be found in some passages, and because it is uncertain whether we can ever see the original whence the copy was taken.

Before taking notice of the species of books appearing in this list, it may be remarked, that, as it is near 300 years later in date than that of Lochleven, and belonged to one of the richest churches in Scotland, so the number of books is much greater, there being no less than 165 books particularized, many of them distinguished as *solennes, auro illuminati, magni voluminis, &c.* shewing they were particularly fine and expensive books. The collection may therefore be considered as ample for the time, and that it corresponded to the wealth of the establishment to which it belonged. Compared with modern libraries, it appears to be an insignificant collection; yet, when we consider the amount that must have been paid for writing and vellum for so many large books, we must think that such a collection could not be procured without incurring a very heavy expence.

The particular books are sufficiently detailed in the catalogue itself; but it may be useful to give the following general view or classification of the kinds of books which composed this library, as shewing what studies most commonly occupied the learned of that period.

I. The first class is that of books necessary for the service of the church, consisting of, 1. *Missals*, ten in number, belonging to the high altar, and to different altars and chaplanries in the church. These are described as *notata* or *non-notata*, i. e. with or without the music: and as *magni* or *parvi voluminis*, or *illuminata*.—2. *Breviaria* or *Portiforia*, which are also described as with or without the music, and are seven in number.—3. *Psalters*.—4. *Antiphonaria*.—5. *Gradalia*.—6. *Processionaria*.—7. *One Collectarium*.—8. *One Ordinarium*.—9. *Libri Pontificales*.—10. *Liber Hymnorum, &c.*

1. No. 1—10.
2. No. 17—23.
3. No. 24—27.
4. No. 28—34.
5. No. 35—40.
6. No. 41—45.
7. No. 46.
8. No. 48.
9. No. 51, 52, 53.
10. No. 58.

II. Then follow bibles and detached books, or parts of the scriptures, and a concordance, nine in number.

No. 11, 13, 14, 50, 57, 107, 110, 114, 134.

III. Legends and lives of saints, including those of Saint Kentigern, the patron Saint of Glasgow, and Servanus, said to have been his teacher.

No. 15, 16, 47, 49.

IV. Books of the Civil and Canon law, of which there is a complete, and apparently an expensive, collection.

No. 54, 55, 56, 60, 61, 90, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 128.

V. Theological books, comprehending several works of Saint Augustine, Saint Jerome, Bede, Saint Bernard, &c. Among these the *Libri Sententiarum*, as the then standard book of theology, and commentaries upon them, make a principal figure. There

No. 59, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 74, 80, 81, 82, 83, 87, 93, 94, 95, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 108, 109, 111, 112, 113, 115, 116, 125, 126.

129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 135, 139, 140, 141, 142, 144, 145, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165.

are also some commentaries and expositions of different parts of the Scriptures. Of some of these books I have not discovered the precise titles nor authors' names, the reason of which has been mentioned above. To these may be added one book con-

No. 73. taining the statutes of the Council of Tours.

No. 63, 77, 79, 85, 96, 127, 137, 146, 153.

VI. There are some books which may be termed Philosophical, as treating of Morals, Metaphysics, or Natural Philosophy; among which are some of Aristotle's works, but Latin translations.

No. 12.

VII. Of classical books there are very few, and these not the most eminent. There is, however, a *Catholicon* or Great Dictionary of the Latin tongue, compiled by *Johannes Balbus Januensis*, (or, of Genoa) described as *valde preciosum et solenne*. It was the dictionary chiefly used in those times, and accordingly was printed so early as 1460. It is a book of great size, and consequently expensive. There are two MS. copies of it in the Hunterian Museum at Glasgow, each in two immense volumes, one marked with the name of *Peter Burman*. A sight of these copies will help one to form an idea of the great expence which this book would cost in writing and vellum. The other books of this class are Valerius Maximus, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Sallust, Boetius, two copies, and Seneca's *Epistles*, which the transcriber has erroneously written *Epitaphium Senecæ*, as he has described the first words of Sallust to be *Omne bonum*. The Collection does not contain one book in the Greek language.

No. 71, 76, 86, 92, 143.

VIII. *Lastly*, There are some books, most of which seem to be theological, which are so imperfectly described, that their authors or subject does not appear, nor have I been able to guess

them; the difficulty of doing so being increased by the way adopted for distinguishing the books, viz. the first words of the *second* leaf, which cannot be ascertained without a careful inspection of the very book intended—a matter of no small trouble, independent of the difficulty of finding the book.

It has been already said, that this collection may be considered as an ample library, according to the state of the times, and must have cost a large sum of money. A number of the books are mentioned as having been donations, probably purchased abroad by the donors. When we review the catalogue, we may give up any regret we may have felt for the loss of those books, so far as they are known, supposing them to have utterly perished; and of any of those we do not know are irretrievably lost, we may be comforted by the consideration, that probably the loss to the learned world is not great.

Having suggested this consideration, I hope I may venture, without exciting great grief, to mention that it is very doubtful whether any of these books existed in the Scotch College previous to the French Revolution; but, if they did, there is very little reason to doubt they were either destroyed or scattered during the time of the wars which followed that event. Still it would be desirable that inquiry were made as to the history of the Scotch College in that period, and its present state; as it would be satisfactory to know what became of the books, and more especially of the papers and records of the Scotch churches which were lodged there at the Reformation.