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# JAMES SCOTT

c. 1770-1828

First Resident Dentist in Glasgow

## *A Contribution to Dental History*

By J. MENZIES CAMPBELL, F.R.S.E.,  
D.D.S., L.D.S., F.I.C.D.

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## *A Contribution to Dental History*

By J. MENZIES CAMPBELL\*, F.R.S.E., D.D.S., L.D.S., F.I.C.D.

JAMES Scott, one of a family of six (three sons and three daughters) was born about 1770 in the village of Dunning, Perthshire, where his father, Andrew Scott, was in business as a clock and watch maker.

Two of James Scott's brothers, John and William, migrated to Edinburgh, where the former became a watchmaker and the latter a clockmaker. Both died around 1800. Two of his sisters, Margaret and Janet, died in infancy. His other sister, Mary, lived with him until his death.

Surprisingly, Andrew Scott's name does not appear in either Baillie's *Watchmakers and Clockmakers of the World*, or in Smith's *Old Scottish Clockmakers*. He was, nevertheless, an accurate and skilful craftsman, as evidenced by examples of his work, still to be found throughout the country. For instance, as recently as February 18th, 1948, there was sold among the contents of the Mansion House of Inverdunning a long-case clock, in a fine antique mahogany Chippendale case, its brass and silvered dial having "Andrew Scott, Dunning" engraved on its arch.

### First Knowledge of James Scott

Our first knowledge of James Scott, the dentist, is through the medium of the under-noted advertisement in *The Glasgow Courier* of May 13th, 1802. It reveals that, although he was then located in Edinburgh, he purposed visiting Glasgow.

\* Author of *A Dental Bibliography, British and American, 1682-1880*.

"Mr. Scott, 28, South Bridge, Edinburgh, informs the public that he has directed his attention, in a particular manner to the study of the removal of the Diseases to which the Teeth and Gums, the Eyes and the Ears are subject. His information in the science and practice of medicine, he has obtained at the University of Edinburgh and at public and private lectures in London.

"Mr. Scott has been induced by the advice of many of the most excellent professional gentlemen in the Metropolis and in Edinburgh to confine his practice to the removal of the diseases of the Teeth and Gums, the Eyes and the Ears, as hitherto no person of science has paid that attention to these departments of the healing art, which their importance in the animal economy require. Hence he presumes that his services in the line of his profession, will be accepted by many of the genteel and discerning part of the inhabitants of Glasgow.

"Mr. Scott's dexterity and method of supplying the want of teeth, he is convinced, will give complete satisfaction.

"Paterson's Lodgings,

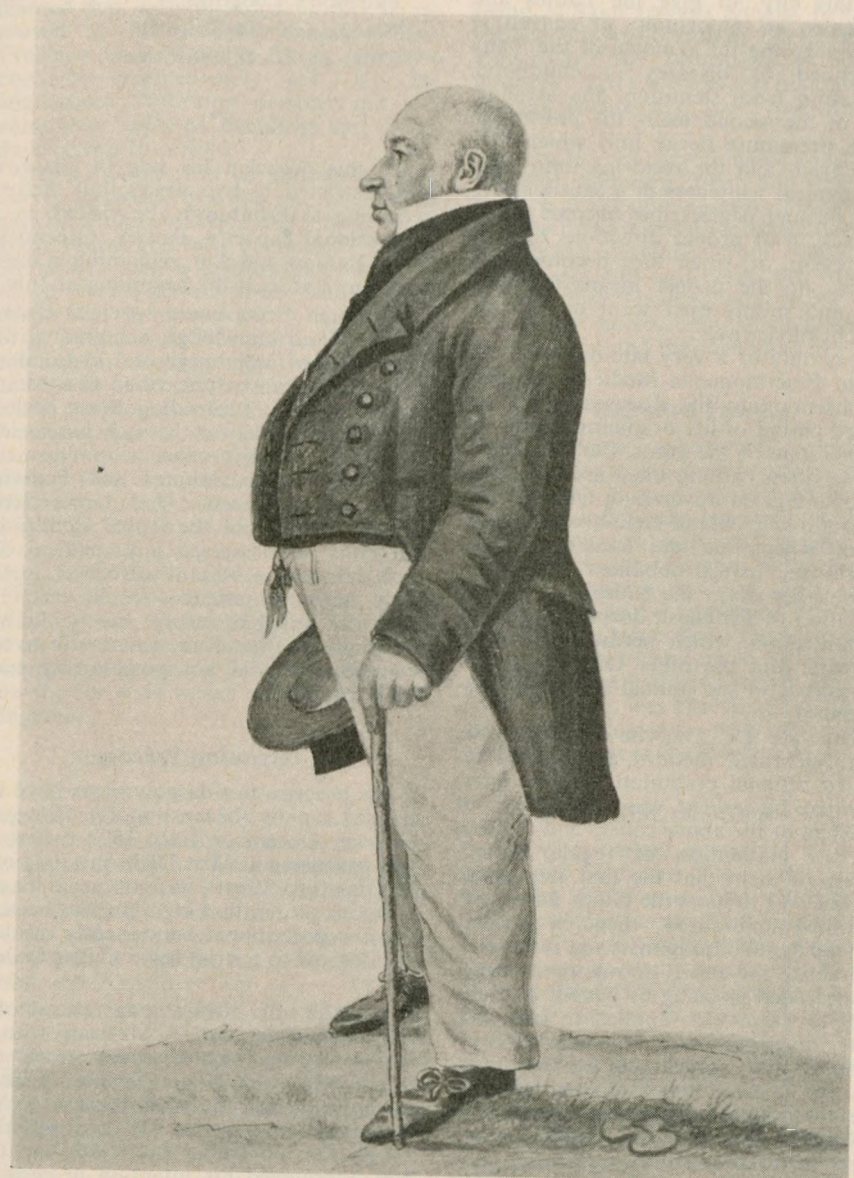
"No. 21, Glassford Street.

"Entry by Garthland Street."

\* \* \*

In *The Glasgow Courier* of May 20th, 1802, there appeared this very verbose and bombastic advertisement:

JAMES SCOTT



By courtesy of the Glasgow Dental Hospital and School

James Scott, 1820

"Mr. Scott, Surgeon Dentist, 28, South Bridge, Edinburgh, intends annually to visit this city, to give the Ladies and Gentlemen an opportunity of consulting him concerning the removal of the many unattended to diseases in childhood, originating from dentition, the arrangement of the second teeth, the prevention of the premature decay into which they are subject, and the restoring unto them their natural whiteness in a safe manner, when, through neglect, they become yellow or black, with proper directions to keep them clean, or, when they become loose or fall out, the proper means to fasten them and supply their want by Mineral Paste or otherwise.

"It is only of a very late date that the regular Practitioner in Medicine has paid any attention to the diseases in an advanced period of life originating from the morbid state of the gums, Carious Teeth, etc., so often baffling them and affording an advantage to advertising Quacks such as Tooth-Ache, Head-Aches, erroneously termed Rheumatic and treated as such; general and partial debilities of the nervous energy often the cause of a wrong formation of the chest, during the period of ossification, which period ends about 14 years, and the other Diseases or derangements in the animal economy arising therefrom.

"The late Dr. Darwin of Derby, the most celebrated medical author and respected rational practitioner in the quarter where he resided, was so conscious of the effect of the above causes and diseases and the inattention of regular practitioners to them that the first step in his practice was to have the Gums and Teeth examined and cured; then, in general, with the depth of judgment and rationality of practice for which he was remarkable, he succeeded in being of benefit in many cases to those who applied to him. Mr. Scott mentions this incontrovertible authority as it agrees with his own practice, and he could mention many other respectable names with a view to convince individuals as well as the regular practitioner of the necessity of bestowing more attention to this source of disease. Mr. Scott, conformably to the opinion of the celebrated late John Hunter of London, in his Treatise on the Natural History of the Teeth, would at the same time guard the Public from applying to many who style themselves Dentists, without the co-

operation and opinion of a regular Practitioner in Medicine.

"Paterson's Lodgings,

"No. 21, Glassford Street.

"Enter by Garthland Street."

\* \* \*

On this occasion his stay in Glasgow was restricted to two weeks, but, before returning to Edinburgh, he visited, in a professional capacity, Paisley, Greenock, Port-Glasgow and Ayr, remaining in these areas until at least the beginning of July.

Although Scott made specious claims to specialised knowledge, acquired at the University of Edinburgh and in London, no evidence can be unearthed to substantiate these, but misleading Press notices were very prevalent in the early nineteenth century. The only persons, whom he mentioned by name (Hunter and Darwin) were then deceased! Had James Scott been a Member of the Royal College of Surgeons or possessed any medical degree, he, such a blatant advertiser in his early years of practice, would certainly not have failed to inform the public accordingly. It, therefore, seems safe to assume that he did not possess any such qualification.

### Increasing Practice

His practice in Glasgow must have increased rapidly, because in *The Glasgow Courier*, December 10th, 1802 (when he was practising at Miss Dickson's lodgings, 59 Glassford Street), he announced his decision to stay in that city. He thus became the first practitioner permanently resident in Glasgow to restrict his activities to dentistry.

He was not, however, far ahead of a well-trained dentist, D. McLean, who, it is known, had served seven years' apprenticeship with Robert Spence, of Edinburgh; and, later, acted as assistant to Mr. Grice, of London, and Mr. Lea, of Edinburgh. On November 2nd, 1802, McLean had announced his intention of residing permanently in Glasgow (but this was not immediately effected), and continuing to practise at "The Buck's Head," Argyll Street. Another dentist, John Alexander, was, in 1803, also practising, as a resident dentist, at 449 Gallowgate.

It is known that Scott continued to prosper, because, from advertisements, it is learned that, early in January, 1803, he removed to the recently deceased Mrs. French's house, 9 Miller Street, where he could be consulted daily until 1 p.m. He emphasised "Working persons and servants may apply on Mondays and Saturdays before 10 o'clock."

Eight months later he announced that, due to increased practice, he required an assistant, and stressed that "none need apply unless genteelly connected." Miller Street was then a fashionable centre, in which resided certain of the leading merchants and "tobacco lords."

In the middle of January, 1804, Scott was again visiting Renfrewshire. At Greenock he could be consulted at Mr. Hill's, Surgeon; and at Paisley, at Messrs. Watt and Muir's, Surgeons. In this connection, it is interesting to recall that Robert Watt, a member of the Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow, published, in 1806, a work on "*Cases of Diabetes, Asthma, Consumptions. . .*"; and, later, compiled *Bibliotheca Britannica*.

In June, 1804, Scott moved to No. 6 Miller Street, announcing in the public Press that those desiring to consult him should do so soon, as he would shortly be leaving for a six weeks' visit to friends in England!

### Scott Ceases to Advertise

Unfortunately for the historian, he apparently decided, in 1805, that, as his practice had expanded so markedly, there was no necessity for further advertising. Consequently, all that is subsequently available are small dignified notices, which appeared at irregular intervals, intimating his forthcoming visits to towns in Renfrewshire and Ayrshire.

An interesting sidelight! In *The Glasgow Courier*, of December 21st, 1805, James Scott's name appeared in the list of subscribers to a monument, about to be erected in the City of Glasgow, to the memory of Lord Nelson; he had donated £3 3s.

Scott continued, up to the time of his death, to practise at different numbers (9, 6, 8 and eventually 19), in Miller Street.

Although established in Glasgow, Scott regularly visited Edinburgh. As far as can be ascertained, his practice there was conducted, up to 1811, in a lodging-house. His

name did not appear in the Edinburgh Directory until 1812-1813, his address then being 24 Saint James's Square. In fact, in the social news column of *The Edinburgh Advertiser*, July 14th, 1812, it was announced: "Arrived this morning at 24 St. James's Square, Mr. Scott, Surgeon Dentist."

From 1813 to 1824 his name appeared at 10 Saint Andrew's Street; and from 1825 to 1827, at 18 South Saint Andrew's Street. In these days, it was no mean achievement to journey regularly from Glasgow to Edinburgh, and *vice versa*. For example, in 1803, the "Hawke Long Coach," with four "able" horses, completed the distance in six hours; and the fare was 12s.

### Lucrative Practice

James Scott, undoubtedly, appears to have had the most lucrative dental practice in Glasgow. A contemporary writer, who knew him intimately, has recorded that he was skilful, and prospered rapidly; and that he had seen him earn twenty guineas for a forenoon's practice. Such success would seem to be confirmed by the fact that, in 1809, James Scott's name appeared among the list of persons to whom licences to shoot game had been issued. He, along with a friend, was the tenant of Boghall (one and a quarter miles from Beith), which was part of the Fenwick Moor.

### Scott, the Man

There is marked unanimity in the descriptions of James Scott. He, a jovial bachelor to the core, lived extravagantly. In appearance he was bald-headed, plain-featured, pock-pitted, portly, undersized and showy in his attire. As will be noted in the portrait (1820) of Scott, he is holding headgear similar to a cut-down top hat with a curled brim, not unlike that in the sketch of the apothecary in Volume 1 of Thackeray's *Pendennis*.

The appointments of his home (where he practised) were unusual; for instance, the walls of his dining-room, from cornice to skirting-board, were adorned with plate-glass mirrors.

As for Mary, who was her brother's senior by a few years, although no beauty, she was ever smiling and attentive. Like James, she was eccentric in both dress and habits.

Every afternoon (Sunday included), from three till four o'clock, these two remarkable oddities could be seen riding through the streets of Glasgow, mounted on small, well-groomed, white and grey ponies, attended by a smart boy (in most attractive livery) and a barking poodle dog.

A contemporary equestrian dentist was the eccentric Martin Van Butchell. Scott, on his many visits to London, must have seen him, seated on a piebald pony, riding through the West End. Doubtless the interest, which these excursions always aroused, and a resulting lucrative practice, were responsible for Scott deciding upon a similar course of action!

### Prevailing Street Attire

It is interesting to record the prevailing street attire of many of James Scott's patients in the opening years of the nineteenth century.

The gentlemen were more showy than elegant. Their unbuttoned coats, usually blue or grey, enabled the wearers to display to full advantage gaudily coloured waistcoats, from which dangled a large bunch of gold seals. Their shirts, because of the frills, were very noticeable. Around their necks were worn large "upholstered" scarves. Breeches, stockings and shoes encased the legs and feet. The elderly usually carried a cane under the arm.

As for the ladies of that period, their outdoor dress was drab, compared with the male garb. If married, they invariably wore a long rather tightly fitting black silk cloak, trimmed with lace of the same colour.

### Scott as Expert Witness

James Scott's vanity would seem to have increased from the time he was cited to appear as one of the expert witnesses at the High Court of Justiciary at Edinburgh on June 6th and 7th, 1814, at the trial of Granville Sharp Pattison, lecturer on anatomy, Andrew Russell, surgeon and lecturer on surgery, and Robert Munro and John McLean, students—all of Glasgow.

They were charged with the crime of ruthlessly and feloniously violating the grave of Mrs. McAllister in the Ramshorn Churchyard, Glasgow, and removing her body to the dissecting rooms, where it was

alleged to have been found and identified. Such persons were then popularly termed "Resurrectionists."

This case aroused considerable interest and indignation throughout Britain, particularly as Pattison and Russell were well-known academically.

The undernoted brief statement is to be found among the records at the Justiciary Office, Edinburgh:

"Whereupon the Procurators for the Prosecutor proceeded to adduce the following witnesses in proof of the Indictment, who being all lawfully sworn, purged of malice and partial counsel, emitted their dispositions *viva voce* in presence of the Court and Jury, without being reduced into writing."

As this embargo extended to all newspaper reports, it is not surprising that the *Glasgow Herald* of June 10th, 1814, complained in these terms:

"Our Reporter was, therefore, told that he could not be allowed to write down notes of the evidence, which prevents us from laying the case fully before our readers."

Be that as it may, the writer is extremely fortunate in possessing manuscript notes of the evidence of the three dentists at this trial, namely: James (son of John, already mentioned), Alexander for the prosecution, and James Scott, of Glasgow, and Robert Nasmyth, of Edinburgh, for the defence.

### The Evidence

Briefly, here are the salient features of their evidence.

James Alexander stated that he had been Mrs. McAllister's regular dentist and had constructed for her an upper set of artificial teeth shortly before her death, having previously (as was the prevailing custom) broken off the natural teeth at the gum margins. Consequently, he was asked to accompany the Town Officers (with a search warrant) to the College, as being the person most likely to be able to identify the body. He declared that he could fit the denture he had made into the mouth, and that it articulated with the mandible produced. He naïvely commented (doubtless to add weight to his evidence!) that a set of teeth fashioned for one mouth would not fit another! He also informed the

Court that he had begun his training as a dentist when aged fourteen and that he had then been in practice for about ten years.

James Scott was the first dental witness cited for the defence. He resolutely denied that Alexander had succeeded in fitting the artificial denture to the palate in question. He further stated that, in the corpse produced, the teeth were loose and carious.

Robert Nasmyth (later Dentist-in-Scotland to George IV, William IV and Victoria), the next dental witness, stated that he had served for six years as a dissector under Dr. John Barclay, and consequently was well versed in cadavers. He controverted Alexander's evidence as to the upper artificial set articulating with the natural teeth in the mandible produced, and added that it equally well fitted four different cadavers!

There were, in all, seventeen witnesses for the prosecution and twenty for the defence.

The verdict was: "All in one voice find the accused not guilty, and the libel not proven."

Although the evidence for the prosecution seemed conclusive, nevertheless, confusion had obviously arisen by either accident or stratagem between two female cadavers—one that of a married woman and the other of a *virgo intacta*. The Town Officers, in their impetuosity or ignorance, had seized the latter, or at least parts of it—to the profound relief of Pattison, Sharp, *et. al.*

An interesting sequel! The following is quoted from Granville Sharp Pattison's evidence before a Select Committee of the House of Commons, in reference to the McAllister trial:

"In the first year I taught, there was a body disinterred and there was a skull without teeth found in my dissecting rooms; and because this person had no teeth, I was dragged away by the police, carried through the populace, and pelted with stones. I was then indicted and tried like a common criminal in Edinburgh, a man sitting on each side of me with a drawn bayonet."

When asked what was the result of this trial, he replied: "An acquittal, which cost me £520."—*Glasgow Herald*, September 22nd, 1828.

In their heyday of riding through the city, Scott and his sister had their portraits

painted by Andrew Henderson (1783-1835), who, after having studied for a time in London, came to Glasgow in 1813. Although he there achieved considerable success as a portrait painter, he is today better known as the editor of a volume of Scottish proverbs, published in 1832. Unfortunately, in spite of many inquiries and an extensive search, the writer has, to date, been unable to locate this portrait, which was included in the Exhibition of Portraits held in Glasgow in 1868.

### Contemporary Comments

Contemporary comments concerning James Scott are extremely valuable. For instance, in a letter written in January, 1815, to a Balliol College friend, John Gibson Lockhart, who lived very near James Scott, mentioned that he derived considerable amusement from the antics of "a little fat, coarse, bandy fellow . . . who carried personal vanity to the most daring height I have ever witnessed." Lockhart explained that Scott (who, in his ignorance, regarded himself as without peer) and he had one evening been present at a punch-party, when several persons began to rag the dentist so unmercifully that Lockhart felt impelled to intervene in his favour. He did this by maintaining that the fact of Scott being a "tooth doctor" was unassailable proof of the advanced civilization of the times. In support, he added that he trusted the people of Britain would soon appreciate, like the ancient Egyptians, the importance of having specialists for each part of the body, instead of practitioners who treated every ailment.

James Scott was evidently so highly appreciative of Lockhart's intervention that next day he invited him to a "royal dinner." In describing the company present, Lockhart stated that Scott's guests were rich, ostentatious and coarse humorists, and that his host's vulgarity was instanced by passing round with the dessert the jaw of a Roman soldier and a set of teeth picked up at the Battle of Borodino. These productions evoked ribald laughter. Scott drank his liquor from a glass about a foot high!

### Scott Lampooned

Lockhart, a brilliant jester, delighted at all times to indulge in practical jokes.

Consequently he was not slow to appreciate that James Scott would prove an excellent target for lampooning by him and his associates of the Blackwood clique, including John Wilson ("Christopher North"), James Hogg ("The Ettrick Shepherd") and John Galt. They certainly exercised their ingenuity to the fullest! This did not, however, present any insuperable difficulty. Scott was proud of the nickname, "The Odontist" which had been bestowed on him.

It is hardly necessary in this article to refer at length to their exploits. Suffice to allude to one or two colossal hoaxes, which appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine*, whose publisher did not doubt the authenticity of the articles which continued to reach him from the pen of "Dr." James Scott. In fact, Blackwood expressed to Lockhart a desire to meet this genius, whom he had discovered!

In 1819 this announcement appeared:

"Books Preparing for Publication

"Lyrical Ballads with a Dissertation on some popular Corruptions of Poetry. By James Scott, Esq. Two small volumes. 12 mo."

Also, in July, 1820, the following:

"The Testimonium

A Prize Poem

by

James Scott, Esq., etc.

(etc. repeated fourteen times!)

"The Literary and Philosophical Society of Glasgow having this year selected as the subject of their Prize Poem, *Blackwood's Magazine*, the following composition given in with the motto '*Palmas qui meruit ferat*' was unanimously judged worthy of the Dargavel Medal. We are the more highly gratified by the compliment paid to us in these beautiful verses because they are now acknowledged as the production of our excellent friend and valued correspondent, Dr. Scott.

"We have to return our best thanks for the honour the Society has done us in permitting us to enrich our pages with this masterpiece of Western genius. C.N."

("C.N." is, of course, "Christopher North.")

This was probably the most ludicrous jest which Lockhart ever foisted on the public. He had "picked" Scott's brains so

cleverly, and studied him so closely, that there were sixty-three verses, each ending in "Blackwood"; and all were in the odontist's accustomed phraseology and drollery. As an example, here is verse xxxvi!

"Envy they say's a rotten tooth—that tooth  
From Jeffrey's\* jaw, with joy himself  
extract would,  
Then like the eagle, he'd renew his youth  
Breathing the 'Ellangowan air' of  
Blackwood."

Further, Lockhart and his clique continued to compose songs, poems and letters to the editor, all in James Scott's name; and these, likewise, were published in *Blackwood's Magazine*. *Captain Patoun's Lament* was, however, Lockhart's best effort. Those who knew Scott never doubted that he had written all that was attributed to him.

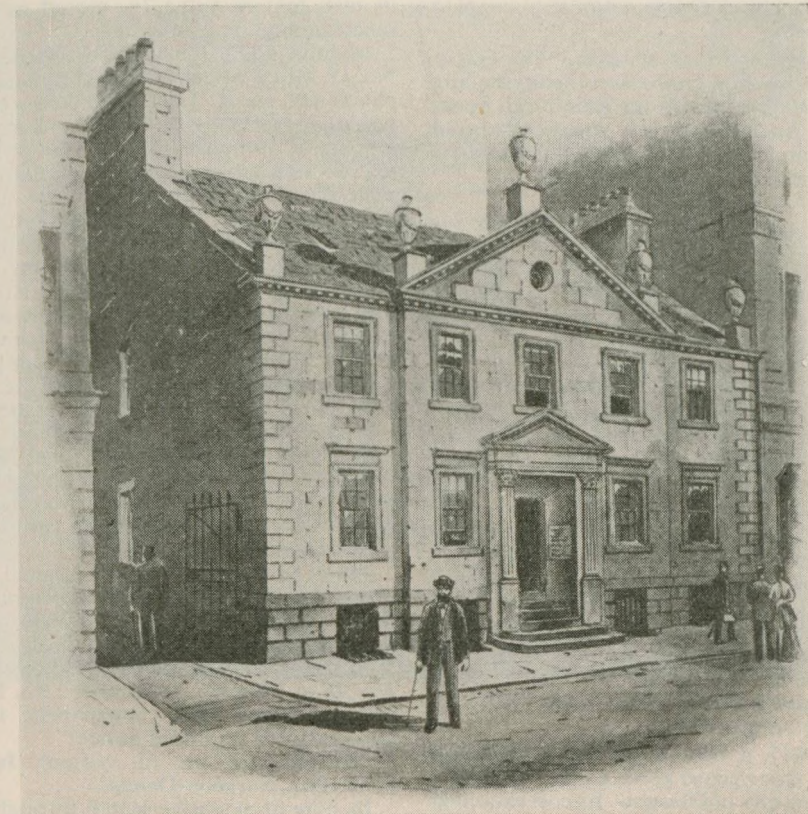
Convivial spirit as he was, Lockhart was content to enjoy the humour of Scott accepting to his own glorification the authorship of something which he was totally incapable of writing.

#### Entertained in Liverpool

Shortly after the appearance of *Captain Patoun's Lament*, James Scott, it has been stated by Hogg, visited Liverpool, where his fame had preceded him. Soon after his arrival, he was acclaimed as "Ebony's Glorious Odontist" and a poet of the first rank! As an outcome, the intellectuals there arranged a public dinner in his honour, and he accepted this compliment, replying with aplomb to the toast of the evening! In spite of uncouth manners, Scott was acknowledged as a natural genius of the Scots *bourgeois* type. It is interesting to record that the adulation which he received caused him—a mixture of shrewdness and showmanship—actually to believe that he did write *Captain Patoun's Lament* and everything else attributed to him!

Although the writer has endeavoured to unearth details of the above-mentioned dinner, his efforts have proved unsuccessful. It is, however, probable that it was the Literary and Philosophical Society of Liverpool (instituted 1812) that entertained Scott. Unfortunately, the minutes of this

\*Francis Jeffrey, Advocate, and Lord Rector of Glasgow University.



By courtesy of Maclure Macdonald and Company

#### A typical Miller Street house in James Scott's time

Society for the date under review are not available.

"Christopher North," in *Noctes Ambrosianæ* (a series of seventy symposia in *Blackwood's Magazine*) introduced "The Odontist" as one of his characters, depicting him as a buffoon, rather than as a sage.

In *The Steam Boat*, first published anonymously in *Blackwood's Magazine*, and in 1822 in volume form, the author (John Galt), who knew Scott intimately, stated that he—refers to himself as Thomas Duffle—left Glasgow in a stage-coach for Edinburgh, to embark at Leith on a steamboat for London, where he arrived in time for the Coronation of George IV.

#### Visit to Paris

On the return voyage, Duffle came across a fellow passenger, "The Great Odontist" (James Scott), as usual flourishing his cane! If the conversation quoted be any criterion, it amply confirms Scott's entire lack of culture.

"The Great Odontist" was returning from a lengthy visit to Paris. His comments on the French, although pithy, were uncouth. He was equipped with a plentiful supply of various wines for the voyage, and these he willingly shared with the passengers, male and female alike. He proved to be convivial company, amusing everybody with incredulous stories, and

songs sung in a coarse, unmusical, rasping voice.

On disembarking at Leith, "The Odon-tist" insisted on Duffie accompanying him in the stage-coach to his Edinburgh house in St. Andrew's Street, where he stayed with him for two days and was entertained with the maximum hospitality.

### Recognition of Ridicule

Although flattered by being associated with such erudite circles, it nevertheless dawned upon James Scott that he was being ridiculed. In the height of passion he, in 1822, wrote letters not only to Mr. Blackwood, but also to John Galt. This correspondence, blustering, stupid and threatening, demanded indemnity for the derision, which he had been forced to endure by being regarded as a "poor silly chap."

Scott subsequently called on Mr. Blackwood with the dual object of substantiating grievances and securing redress. Being a shrewd judge of character, Blackwood promptly recognized Scott's type. Consequently, he placated him by pleasantries, eventually inviting him to dinner. Scott willingly accepted, and there were no further complaints.

In 1817, a botanic garden, 6½ acres in extent, was opened about a mile westwards from the city of Glasgow. Its cost exceeded £6,000, of which the University contributed £2,000 on condition that the Regius Professor of Botany should have the use of the lecture room in the garden and access to all the plants.

The balance of the expense was raised by subscription, mainly in the form of transferable shares. James Scott was the holder of one of these. It is, therefore, highly probable that he was frequently to be seen in the botanic garden, particularly in the summer, when there was a military band and fashionable public promenades in which the ladies predominated!

It is very unlikely, however, that, although a frequenter of taverns, Scott was ever a member of the exclusive "Jumble Club," as has, no doubt jocularly, been stated; at least, there is no reliable record of any such association. This club was founded in 1799 for card-playing. Located in Buchanan Street, Glasgow, it possessed very fine furniture and plate and choice wines. During a period of scarcity of silver,

its own tokens, value 7s., passed as currency among the members.

In June, 1826, James Scott removed to No. 19 Miller Street, having contracted to pay £3,000 for it. This house consisted of two main storeys, with a half-sunk storey, attics and outhouses. There were at least ten rooms, kitchen, laundry and cellars. As with all the other dwellings in the street, there was a small garden at the rear, with attractive flowering shrubs and fruit trees. Mr. John Miller, of Westertoun (the feu), after whom the street was named, had specified in the original title-deeds exactly the type of houses that were to be erected on the twenty-four building plots which comprised the street, and he was determined to uphold proper amenities.

It is interesting to record that in 1818 only four of the houses in Miller Street were lighted by gas. The others (among them that of James Scott, who was then in No. 6) were illuminated by oil lamps and penny candles!

James Scott was one of the original subscribers to *The Glasgow Medical Journal*, first issued in February, 1828, as a quarterly publication.

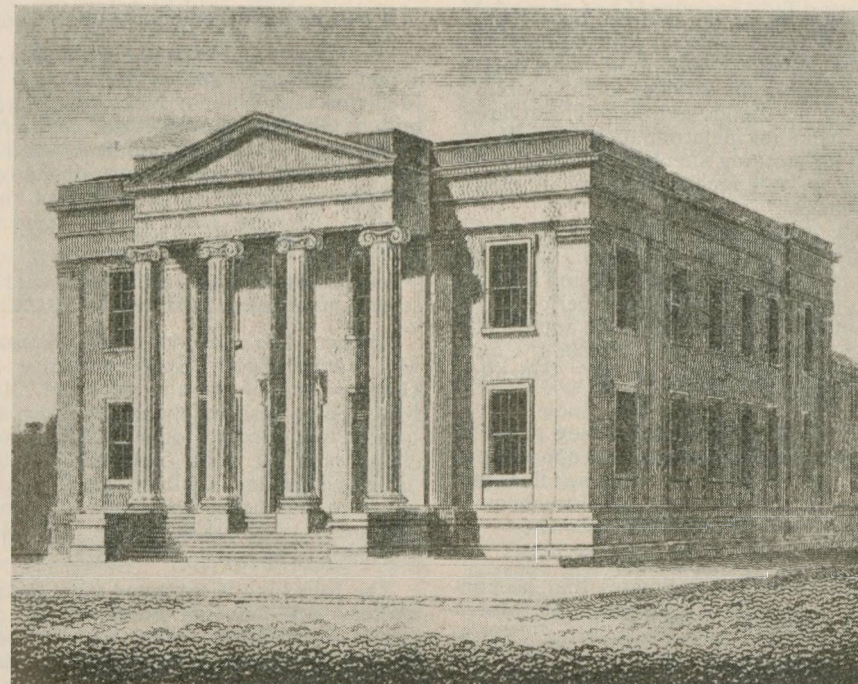
In the obituary column of the *Glasgow Herald* of Monday, September 15th, 1828, and in several other newspapers, there appeared this very brief notice:

"At Glasgow on 2d. current, James Scott, Esq., Surgeon-Dentist."

In spite of extensive search through the Glasgow and Edinburgh newspapers of that period, no other notices have emerged concerning him. This certainly seems strange, as he had been at least a colourful personality and well-known as a dentist in two cities.

It was only natural that James Scott, an ardent Gael and a Dissenter, should be interred in ground belonging to a dissenting place of worship! This was the beautiful Wellington Street Chapel of the United Presbyterian Church, which had only recently been erected at a cost of £10,000 to house a congregation which had begun in 1793 in the Anderston district of Glasgow as a Secession Church, an offshoot from an earlier Antiburgher Church.

Below this chapel were crypts for interment, where a contemporary writer assured the public that all those buried there would enjoy perfect safety, security and calm, undisturbed repose! Doubtless this fact influenced James and Mary Scott, with clear visions of the McAllister case,



From "Glasgow Delineated"

### Wellington Street Chapel

when they decided upon their final resting places!

As James Scott died intestate, his sister Mary, as next-of-kin, inherited his estate.

### Scott's Assistants

It was not long until notices appeared in the public press intimating that Mr. Daniel A. Cameron, Mr. Scott's "articled assistant" (a term liable to wide interpretation) and Mr. Smith, who had the "principal management of Mr. Scott's business for fourteen years" (likewise a vague claim) were about to embark on practice on their own behalf, the former at Morrison's Court and the latter at Turner's Court.

Here are two of their typical advertisements:

"Daniel A. Cameron, articled assistant to the late Mr. Scott of Miller Street, intimates that he will carry on Business at

his Lodgings, Morrison's Court in the meantime, in the same excellent style as the late professional gentleman. Mr. C. respectfully states that whatever improvements were suggested to him, while with Mr. Scott, will be adopted. He also assures those favouring him with their practice, that his terms will be reasonable. Mr. C. feels pleasure in being able to refer to Messrs McLeod, Surgeons, 33, Argyle Street for all necessary information. Mrs. Douglas' Lodgings, Morrison's Court, 108, Argyle Street, Glasgow."—*The Glasgow Chronicle*, September 17th, 1828.

(Incidentally, it is interesting to record that Mr. D. A. Cameron, author of *Plain Advice on the Care of the Teeth*, began the study of dentistry in 1823. In 1838 he was practising in George Square, Glasgow.)

"Mr. Smith, Surgeon-Dentist, who has been in the employ, and had the principal

management of the late Dr. Scott's business for nearly fourteen years, hopes it will not be thought presumption on his part in thus offering his services to the Nobility, Gentry, his friends and the public at large; and from his determination to pay the most unremitting attention to business, he trusts he will receive a share of public patronage.

"He cannot help expressing his grateful thanks to those gentlemen, who have spontaneously come forward, and not only patronised him at this early period of his outset, but promised their own and friends' future patronage. 17, Turner's Court, Glasgow."—*Glasgow Herald*, September 19th, 1828.

Mr. Smith died in the spring of 1829; and Mr. Cameron, an obvious opportunist, was not adverse to bringing this fact promptly and prominently before the public in the undernoted advertisement:

*"Surgeon Dentist"*

"Mr. Cameron intimates that he continues to practise at his Apartments, Morrison's Court, Argyll Street. Mr. C. has to add that, since the death of Mr. Smith of Turner's Court, he is now the only remaining assistant to the late Mr. Scott of Miller Street. Mr. C. still refers to his respected friends, Messrs Macleod, Surgeons, 33, Argyll Street. Mrs. Douglas' Lodgings, Morrison's Court, 108, Argyll Street, Glasgow."—*Glasgow Herald*, June 12th, 1829.

Mary Scott survived her brother by only three months; and her similarly brief obituary notice appeared in several Glasgow newspapers. Here is a copy of one of them, from *The Glasgow Chronicle*, December 24th, 1828:

"On the 10th December at her house, Miller Street, Miss Mary Scott, sister of the late James Scott, Esq., Surgeon Dentist."

On November 27th, 1828, she had executed a will, in which she bequeathed to John Campbell, a surgeon in Glasgow, and John Fraser, a joiner in Lanarkshire, everything equally:

"All lands, tenements, heritages and goods, gear, effects, debts and sums of money—real and movable, all and whole of that lodging and office-houses in Miller Street, lately built upon, all and whole of that piece of waste ground lying to the west side of Miller Street."

It was, however, incumbent upon them:

"To lay out and expend such a sum of money as Richard Miller Esq., Doctor of Medicine and William Jack, upholsterer, both of Glasgow, should fix and determine in erecting a suitable monument or other such memorial to the memory of the late Mr. James Scott, Surgeon-Dentist, her brother, over his grave in the crypt of Wellington Street Chapel."

In consequence, this notice appeared in several newspapers in December, 1828:

"Notice. The creditors of the deceased Mr. James Scott, Surgeon-Dentist in Glasgow and of the also deceased, Miss Mary Scott, resident there, his sister, are hereby requested to lodge notes of their claims with Mr. John Campbell, London Street, within one month of this date, with a view to their being discharged. Glasgow, December 18, 1828."—*The Glasgow Chronicle*, December 19th, 1828.

The following is extracted from the inventory and personal estate of the deceased James Scott—prepared by a well-known firm of auctioneers and appraisers—recorded when the will was proven in Glasgow on February 12th, 1829, with John Campbell, Surgeon, and John Fraser, Joiner, as executors:

- "(1) Appraised value of household furniture and plenishings, stock-in-trade in the dwelling houses of the said James Scott, surgeon-dentist in Glasgow and Edinburgh belonging to the defunct .. .. £ 463 s. 7
- "(2) Twenty-six shares in the capital stock of the Anderston Water Coy., valued at £7 per share .. .. 182
- "(3) The deceased Mr. Scott's interest in 15 other shares at £2 10s. per share .. .. 37 10
- "(4) One share in Botanic Garden at .. .. 5
- "(5) Bill dated 25 December 1824 by James Reid and William Simson—not subscribed—to Mr. Scott, payable one day after date .. .. £20
- "(6) Do. dated 29 July, 1819 to Mr. Scott by Mr. Gibbon £8

"(7) Do. dated 10 June, 1819  
Thomas Smith to Mr.  
Scott .. .. £5  
£33  
"All bad, but valued at 1/- per  
share .. .. 1 13  
£689 10

"Said also to be a few small debts owing, but these cannot be ascertained at present, as books do not make them appear—enquiry to be made as to these."

\* \* \*

This must certainly strike the reader as a surprisingly small estate in view of James Scott having for upwards of twenty-six years carried on two extensive dental practices. Possibly, however, this is explained by the fact that he spent lavishly on conviviality—wine, food, dress, riding, travel, etc.

The validity of Mary Scott's will (which, of course, included her brother's estate) was immediately contested by her cousin and heir-at-law on the grounds that the document bore substantial erasures and lacked her signature and that of witnesses. His pleas succeeded and Mary Scott's will was declared null and void. It is interesting to note that the inventory of her own personal estate amounted to £85 7s.

**Sale of Scott's Possessions**

The stage was now set for the sale of James Scott's possessions—furniture, jewellery, books and dental equipment. The following three advertisements appeared in the early months of 1829:

**"Household Furniture"**

"Gold watches, Jewellery, Silver Snuff-boxes, Cabinet Pianoforte, Bed and Table Napery, etc.

**"By Auction"**

"On Thursday, the 26th current, at 11 o'clock, within the Lodgings of the late Dr. James Scott, Surgeon Dentist, No 19, Miller Street.

"The whole of the household furniture, etc. belonging to the late Dr. James Scott, consisting of Mahogany Sideboard, Dining, Tea, Turnover, Pembroke and Loo Tables, Wine Cooler, Mahogany Wardrobe and Desk, Chests Mahogany Drawers,

Mahogany and Hardwood Stuff bottomed Chairs, Haircloth Sofas, set Ironside China two Chronometers, large bookcase in three parts, china, crystal and stoneware, mahogany Secrétaire, Poster and Tent bedsteads, feather beds, blankets and straw mattresses, Lobby Lamp, Table and chairs. Eight-day clock, waxcloth, carpets, grates, fenders and fire arms, dressing glasses, basin stands, large gilt framed mirror, ivory handled knives and forks, paintings, prints, Easy chair, violin and case, portable writing desks, mahogany night table, bed and table napery kitchen grate, Patent tin jack, and the whole of the kitchen utensils. Also gold and silver watches, rings, silver snuff boxes, silver waiter, large silver box, dirk, sword and pistols, etc. etc. The watches and boxes will be put up at 2 o'clock. The furniture to be seen day previous to the sale.

**To Surgeon Dentists**

"There will be sold by public roup, on Tuesday the 24th current in the premises as above.

"The whole extensive and valuable collection of Teeth, which was selected by the Doctor, when on the Continent, with great care, and at heavy expense. A considerable quantity of Sea Horse Teeth, Powder and Brushes, with a number of instruments and books connected with the profession.

"To be seen on Saturday and Monday prior to the sale from 12 to 4 o'clock.

"Sale to commence at 11 o'clock forenoon.

"J. & W. Graham, Auctioneers, No. 90, Argyll Street, Glasgow."—*Glasgow Herald*, February 16th, 1829.

**"Dr. Scott's Furniture"**

"The sale of the furniture of the late Dr. Scott will be continued this day at 19, Miller Street.

"To commence at 11 o'clock forenoon.

"J. & W. Graham, Auctioneers, Glasgow."—*Glasgow Herald*, February 27th, 1829.

**"Sale of Books by Auction."**

"In the Subscriber's Sale Rooms, 90, Argyll Street, there will be sold by public roup, on Tuesday, the 10th current, and following nights

"The Library of Books, which belonged to the late Dr. Scott, Surgeon Dentist, including among other valuable books, Lizars Anatomical Plates, Encyclopædia

Perthensis, 24 volumes: Voltaire's Philosophical Dictionary, 6 vols., Rollin's Ancient History, Lindsay's Chronicles of Scotland, Playfair's Geography, 6 vols., London Medical Dictionary, Thomson's Chemistry, Lives of Great Painters, 5 vols., Johnson's works, 15 vols., Spectator, 8 vols., Gregory's Mechanical Plates, Napoleon's Expedition to Russia, Bible, 4 vols., etc. etc.

"Sale to commence each evening at half past 6 o'clock.

"Further particulars will be inserted in the Catalogue, which may be had by applying at J. & W. Graham, Auctioners, Glasgow, 5th March, 1829.

\*"N.B. The premises occupied by the late Dr. Scott, Miller Street are at present to let, affording an excellent opportunity for a surgeon dentist."—*Glasgow Herald*, March 6th, 1829.

It transpired that, on purchasing the property and land in Miller Street, James Scott had, on June 2nd, 1825, executed a contract with the then owner. The purchase price had been fixed at £3,000—£1,000 to be paid at Whit-Sunday, 1826 (the date when Scott entered into possession) and £2,000 at Whit-Sunday, 1836, with interest at 4½ per cent.

Further, it was clearly stated that failure to discharge these obligations on or before 1836 entailed the property and lands reverting to their original owner, with certain additions as penalties. Scott's heirs and executors were to be held responsible for implementing this bargain.

In view of such a heavy onus, it is not surprising to learn that within a short time his cousin was forced, because of substantial debts, to dispose of his inheritance by a Trust Disposition. It was not, however, until 1838 (following an arrangement with the earlier owner to postpone the date of payment of the outstanding £2,000, interest and other charges) that the property was finally sold to the proprietors of the Glasgow Waterworks.

While litigation concerning wills and property was in progress, James and Mary Scott were resting peacefully in the crypt of a beautiful building of Grecian architecture, immune, as they had anticipated, from any interference. Nevertheless, Robert Burns was right when he wrote:

\*Doubtless due to legal difficulties, and consequent insecurity of tenure, no other dentist ever occupied this house.

"The best laid schemes o' mice and men  
Gang aft a' gley."

Due to various reasons, conditions in this crypt declined and became highly objectionable. Consequently, at the instigation of the Sanitary Authority of Glasgow, it was in 1870 closed as a place of interment. This is not surprising when it is realized that the Church was then surrounded by business premises and in proximity to a main railway terminus.

Nevertheless, nine years elapsed before drastic measures were taken, in the form of a special Act of Parliament, to enforce the interment elsewhere of the remains of all persons buried in this crypt, and these, of course, included James and Mary Scott! The Act determined that, under the supervision of the Medical Officer of Health of Glasgow, all the remains were to be removed to the Necropolis or other cemetery in or near the city along with all tombstones, monuments, tablets or other memorials then in the crypt, and that these were to be re-erected in or near the places of re-interment.

Although the writer has assiduously searched the records of the Necropolis and other burial grounds, no trace whatsoever can be found of the ultimate resting places of Glasgow's first resident dentist and/or his sister, due, doubtless, to the fact that the proposed memorial was never erected, because of the short time between the two deaths and an invalid will.

Consequently the remains of that dynamic personality, James Scott, now rest (following an unexpected second journey within fifty-one years) in an uncharted area around Glasgow; and on the site of his original interment there stands the magnificently appointed Alhambra Theatre!

#### Scott Assessed

Let us, as briefly as possible, consider certain salient features and thus enable us, justly, to assess James Scott, not only professionally, but also socially.

It must straightway be conceded that he was a skilful dentist, who "made money" quickly. Further, he was very progressive, because in May, 1802, he was using Mineral Paste Teeth. It would seem not improbable that he, like so many early dental practitioners, acquired manual dexterity from training by watch- and clock-makers. In his case, it is extremely likely,

because his father and brothers followed these crafts!

Contemporary dentists, like Scott in his early years of practice, made extensive use of the public Press in order to attract clients. Incidentally, in this connection, it is remarkable how much history has thereby been revealed, e.g., the names of those who trained them, with whom they acted as assistants, and where previously they practised.

High-sounding indeed were many of Scott's press notices during the few years he advertised. Nevertheless, they apparently purposely failed to reveal anything reliable concerning him or his career prior to 1802; extensive search in late eighteenth century newspapers has not disclosed anything regarding him.

It must, however, be conceded that his rapid and sustained success cannot be attributed to there being few other dentists in Glasgow. On the contrary! Besides many resident practitioners during James Scott's lifetime, there were several who visited Glasgow regularly. These included: Alexander Angus (Edinburgh), Edward Braham (Princes Street, Edinburgh), Mrs. Davidson (her husband practised along with her as a corn extractor), John Gray (Old Burlington Street, London), J. G. Greig (Edinburgh), T. D. Kidd (24 Queen Street, Edinburgh, lately with J. Paterson Clark, London), Mr. Law (Pall-Mall, London, Dentist to the Prince Regent), James Lewis (son of James Lewis, of Rotterdam), Mr. Ruspini (Pall-Mall, London, son of Chevalier Ruspini, Surgeon-Dentist to the Prince and Princess of Wales), Robert Spence (Edinburgh) and Mr. Yaniewicz (Edinburgh).

That James Scott was active no one can gainsay. Besides conducting busy practices in Glasgow and Edinburgh, he found time to visit in a professional capacity various towns in Renfrewshire and Ayrshire. Further, he indulged in horse-riding, rented a shoot, and, not infrequently, travelled in England and on the Continent.

The fact that, with a wide choice of dentists available, James Scott was chosen, along with Robert Nasmyth, as an expert witness for the defence in the Ramshorn "Resurrectionist" case is sufficient proof that he was then recognized as an outstanding dental practitioner.

That James Scott moved into 19 Miller Street (which he had earlier purchased), in 1826 confirms the view that, although he

died twenty-seven months later, he was then in robust health; otherwise such a very shrewd person would not have decided upon this momentous step.

The details of James Scott's furniture, books, etc., as outlined by the auctioneers in their advertisements of his sales, present a problem to us today. On the surface, they would certainly appear to reveal the owner as an educated, cultured person, yet, from all contemporary reports, he was the anti-thesis! May not this seeming paradox be explainable by a modern parallel! It is not unknown for a "self-made" man, who has prospered beyond even his wildest dreams, to emulate the better educated and more cultured sections of the community by acquiring, e.g., works of art and expensively bound volumes, and thereafter posing to the indiscriminating as a connoisseur and a bibliophil!

Such is the attitude of mind of the snob, who desires to impress; and James Scott is self-condemned on that count. For instance, when advertising, in 1803, for an assistant, he stressed this condition: "None need apply unless genteelly connected"!!! Let us, now, review the evidence of those who knew Scott socially and intimately.

James Hogg (1770—1835), in his Reminiscences, referred to James Scott as a strange, uneducated little man, but acknowledged his skill as a dentist; also, that he was very hospitable at both his Glasgow and Edinburgh houses. Further, he asserted that Scott was utterly ignorant of everything literary, and was a droll, joking tippler who delighted, in a coarse, rasping voice, to roar and sing (as his own) the songs which Lockhart had "fathered" on him. John Galt (1779—1839), too, confirmed these points.

The letters which Scott wrote in 1822 to both William Blackwood and John Galt indicate his meagre education.

John Strang (1795—1863) stated that Scott, like most men who enter a new profession without much literary or scientific education, was by no means distrustful of his own abilities. He also alluded to his marked love of approbation.

The opinion of J. G. Lockhart (1794—1854) is already crystal-clear to the reader; in fact, in a letter to a friend, he remarked: "He (Scott) considers himself as the greatest man now alive."

Peter Mackenzie (1799—1875), a frequent visitor at Scott's Glasgow house, has

## JAMES SCOTT

recorded that, although a highly successful dentist, he was, nevertheless, a very illiterate man who lived sumptuously. He further remarked that Scott, whose weight was around eighteen stones, was a ludicrous figure astride his docile pony.

In a letter dated July 27th, 1820, written by the wife of "Christopher North" (1785—1854) to her sister, she referred to Scott as "a good-natured dentist . . . poor man, he could not write a line if his salvation depended upon it."

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (various dates); J. Galt, *The Steamboat*, Edinburgh, 1822; Mrs. Gordon, *Christopher North*, Edinburgh, 1862; J. Hogg, *Autobiography. Poetical Works*, Vol. V, Glasgow, 1852; A. Lang, *The Life and Letters of John Gibson Lockhart*, London, 1897; P. Mackenzie, *Reminiscences of Glasgow and the West of Scotland*, Glasgow, 1865—6; Mrs. Oliphant, *Annals of a Publishing House. William Blackwood and His Sons*, Edinburgh, 1897; D. Small and A. H. Millar, *Sketches of Quaint Bits of Glasgow*, Glasgow, 1887; J. Strang, *Glas-*

*gow and its Clubs*, Glasgow, 1856; *Glasgow Delineated*, Glasgow, 1836; National Library of Scotland; Glasgow University Library; Mitchell Library, Glasgow; Baillie's Institution, Glasgow; Edinburgh Central Library; Inverness Public Library; Registrar-General, Edinburgh; Keeper of the Registers and Records of Scotland; Curator of Historical Records, Edinburgh; Clerk of Justiciary, Edinburgh; Town-Clerk, Glasgow; Sheriff-Clerk, Lanarkshire; *The Glasgow Herald*; *The Scotsman*; *The Perthshire Advertiser*; *The Inverness Courier*, etc., etc.