THE LITERARY CLUBS AND SOCIETIES OF EIGHTEENTH CENTURY SCOTLAND,
and their influence on the literary productions of
the period from 1700 to 1800.

Written by D. D. McElroy
1951 - 1952
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**INTRODUCTION.**
- a. importance of the subject. xiv
- b. need for a systematic treatment. xvi
- c. sources of material. xvii

**CHAPTER ONE - DEFINITIONS.**
- a. comparison of eighteenth-century clubs and societies with those of the present day. 1
- b. two questions regarding their differences. 2
- c. the ascendancy of the "scientific" spirit. 3
- d. the resulting "Division of Labour" in intellectual affairs. 4
- e. eighteenth-century preoccupation with the problem of form. 5
- f. characteristics of eighteenth-century literary societies. 7
- g. definitions of the three terms "association", "club", and "society". 8
- h. characteristics of each of the three types of organizations defined above. 9

**CHAPTER TWO - THE AGE OF IMPROVEMENT.**
- a. situation of the Lowlands at the beginning of the century. 12
- b. national resolution to "improve". 14
- c. early "improvement" societies:
  - i. The Society for the Reformation of Manners. 15
  - ii. The Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge.
- d. The Honourable the Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture in Scotland - the first of the "improving" agricultural and manufacturing societies. 19
- e. other societies for the improvement of agriculture etc.:
  - i. at Ormiston.
  - ii. in Ayrshire.
  - iii. Edinburgh Select Society.
  - iv. at Coupar.
  - v. at Dunfermline.
  - vi. at Buchan.
  - ix. Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland.
BEST COPY

AVAILABLE

Variable print quality
f. aims of the "gentlemen improvers".
g. "improvement" a pervading idea in all fields of Scottish endeavour.
h. the resolution to accept English examples.
i. the appropriateness of the term "The Age of Improvement".
j. the three periods in the Age of Improvement:
   i. the period of preparation.
   ii. the period of achievement.
   iii. the period of recognition.
k. the types of literary societies active in each of these periods.

CHAPTER THREE - THE PERIOD OF PREPARATION: 1700 - 1745.

a. the influence of The Tatler and The Spectator in Scotland.
b. the Easy Club and Allan Ramsay.
c. letter from the Secretary of the Easy Club to The Spectator.
d. Journal of the Easy Club.
e. the Easy Club not "Jacobite" nor were Ruddiman and Pitcairn members as is commonly believed.
f. the members and the activities of the Easy Club.
g. address from the Easy Club to the King requesting dissolution of the Act of Union.
h. letter from the Secretary of the Easy Club to an absent member.
i. Allan Ramsay as Poet Laureat of the Club.
j. other attempts to write English poetry.
k. the Athenian Society of Edinburgh.
l. the Fair Intellectual Club of Edinburgh.
m. an account of the Fair Intellectual Club in a letter to a member of the Athenian Society containing a description of the Society, the rules, etc.
n. speeches delivered by members of the Fair Intellectual Club.
o. a collection of poems prepared and published by the Fair Intellectual Club.
p. two societies which have become thoroughly confused:
   i. Ruddiman's "Society for Improving in Classical Studies".
   ii. the Rankenian Club.
q. three known facts concerning the two societies.
r. the vexing problem of Lord Kames's membership in the Rankenian.
s. a description of the Rankenian Club.
t. list of members of the Rankenian Club.
u. anecdote regarding members of the Rankenian Club and Bishop Berkeley.
| v. | Ruddiman's "Society for Improving in Classical Studies". | 71 |
| w. | description of the Society. | 73 |
| x. | members of the Society. | 74 |
| y. | relative importance of the Rankenian Club and Ruddiman's Society. | 75 |
| z. | a society of "associated critics." | 77 |
| aa. | their endeavours to discredit Ruddiman's edition of Buchanan's History. | 78 |
| ab. | a Dutch edition of Buchanan's works anticipates the projects of the "associated critics". | 79 |
| ac. | a "Society for the Improvement of Medical Knowledge". | 82 |
| ad. | the publications of this Society. | 84 |
| ae. | the Society becomes the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh. | 87 |
| af. | letters from Colin Maclaurin regarding the development of the Philosophical Society. | 88 |
| ag. | causes of the reorganization of the Medical Society. | 91 |
| ah. | the Political Economy Club of Glasgow. | 95 |
| ai. | Scotland as a leader in the institution of "improving" societies. | 97 |

CHAPTER FOUR - THE PERIOD OF ACHIEVEMENT 1745 - 1770.

a. | hiatus caused by the Rebellion of 1745. | 98 |
b. | renewed activities of the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh. | 99 |
c. | David Hume joint editor of the first volume of the Society's Essays and Observations. | 99 |
d. | contributions to the Philosophical Society's Essays and Observations. | 100 |
e. | contributors to the Essays and Observations who resided outside Scotland. | 103 |
f. | Hume's preface to the Essays and Observations. | 104 |
g. | Lord Kames as a leader in the Philosophical Society. | 107 |
h. | other members of the Society. | 109 |
i. | organization of the Society. | 110 |
j. | William Cullen introduces a new function into the Society's proceedings. | 111 |
k. | friendly atmosphere which prevailed in the Society and an incident which illustrates it. | 112 |
l. | similar societies in Glasgow and Aberdeen at this period. | 115 |
m. | Cochran's Political Economy Club in Glasgow still active. | 116 |
n. | Adam Smith and other members of Cochran's Club. | 116 |
o. | subjects of discussion in the Political Economy Club. | 117 |
p. | the Literary Society of Glasgow. | 118 |
q. | early meetings of the Society. | 119 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAGE NUMBERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>r. laws of the Society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s. discourses read before the Society in 1764 - 1765.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t. questions discussed in the Society in 1765.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u. evaluation of the influence of the Literary Society of Glasgow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. the Philosophical Society of Aberdeen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w. description of the Society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x. members of the Society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y. moderation of the Society in the matter of liquid refreshments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>z. David Hume and the Philosophical Society of Aberdeen — an anecdote.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aa. friendly attitude of the Scottish literati illustrated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ab. relative importance of Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Aberdeen as intellectual centers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ac. the Select Society of Edinburgh founded by Allan Ramsay, junior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ad. founding members and their first meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ae. rapid growth of the Society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>af. laws of the Select Society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ag. resolutions of the Select Society to raise a fund and erect a society for &quot;Encouraging Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ah. origin of the idea for such a society traced to Dublin and then back to Scotland and the Honourable the Society of Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture in Scotland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ai. &quot;Rules and Orders of the Edinburgh Society for Encouraging Arts, etc.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aj. relationship between the Select Society and the Edinburgh Society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ak. questions debated in the Edinburgh Society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al. premiums offered by the Edinburgh Society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>an. literary prizes offered by the Select Society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ao. both societies attack the problem of servant's &quot;vails&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ap. the problem of writing and speaking the Southern English dialect in Scotland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aq. two anecdotes which illustrate the problem stated above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ar. Thomas Sheridan gives lectures in Edinburgh on the English tongue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as. Select Society organizes the Select Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of the English Language in Scotland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at. regulations of the new Society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>au. crisis in the affairs of the Select Society and its subsidiary societies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PAGE NUMBERS.

- av. causes of the failure of the Select Society and its subsidiary societies examined. 178
- aw. early symptoms of a decline in the Select Society. 180
- ax. close of the Society. 186
- ay. influence of the Select Society evaluated:
  i. first Edinburgh Review published soon after its institution and by its members. 188
  ii. support offered John Home's Douglas. 190
- az. economic influence of the Edinburgh Society for Encouraging Arts, Sciences, etc., evaluated. 192
- ba. evaluation of the influence of the Select Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of the English Language in Scotland. 195
- bb. societies which were organized after the example of the Select Society - the Belles Lettres Society. 197
- bc. special features in the organization of the Belles Lettres Society. 199
- bd. success of the Society. 202
- be. William Lothian's address to Lord Greville on his admission to the Society as an ordinary member. 203
- bf. the Theological Society. 205
- bg. evaluation of the work done by the Belles Lettres and the Theological Societies. 207
- bh. the Newtonian Society. 209
- bi. 1764 a fatal year for Scottish literary societies - next flurry of activity not until 1770. 212

CHAPTER FIVE - THE PERIOD OF RECOGNITION 1770 - 1800. 213 - 353

- a. European recognition of Scottish intellectual achievement. 213
- b. Edinburgh a "hot-bed of genius". 215
- c. the rise and the significance of the incorporated societies. 220
- d. more "progeny" of the Select Society - the Speculative Society of Dundee. 223
- e. admission of women to the meetings of this Society. 224
- f. the Robinhood Society of Edinburgh. 226
- g. becomes the Pantheon Society. 228
- h. nature of the Pantheon Society. 230
- i. controversy over the value of public disputes. 231
- j. description of the Pantheon Society. 234
- k. public interest in Pantheon debates. 235
- l. decline of the Pantheon Society. 237
- m. Pantheon debates in verse. 239
- n. the Canongate Debating Society. 242
- o. the Mirror Club - developed from the "Feast of Tabernacles". 244
- p. description and members of the "Feast of Tabernacles." 245
- q. members of the Mirror Club. 246
Mirror Club resolves to publish a periodical paper — The Mirror and The Lounger. 248

Henry Mackenzie as editor of both papers. 250

previous attempts at periodical papers in Scotland. 251

success of The Mirror. 253

The Mirror's "Enquiry into the Causes of the Scarcity of Humorous Writers in Scotland." 256

relative merits of The Mirror and The Lounger. 261

Mackenzie's review of Burn's poems in Lounger No. 97. 264

Burn's Bachelor's Club of Tarbolton. 265

"History of the Rise, Proceedings, and Regulations of the Bachelor's Club." 266

Robert and Gilbert Burns and the Mauchline Club. 269

letter from Gilbert Burns defending the literary activities of the Club. 270

effect on Burns of his club activities. 273

interest in reading clubs and circulating libraries stimulated by the political events of the latter half of the century. 273

first efforts to establish a public library in Aberdeen. 274

other circulating libraries and reading clubs. 278

a letter from Robert Burns to Sir John Sinclair regarding a book club which Burns had organized under the title of the Monkland Friendly Society. 280

John Galt, the Public Library of Greenock, and the French Revolution. 282

the appearance of a new type of intellectual organization — the specialized society. 285

the Juridical Society of Edinburgh. 285

founding members and a description of the Society. 286

the Juridical Society compiles a "system of Styles." 289

the Society's fluctuating fortunes. 290

union of the Juridical and the Logical Society. 292

an account of the Logical Society. 292

reasons for the union. 294

the rules of the joint society a reflection of the need for a more general appeal. 295

the Philalethic Society — more evidence of the need for a society with general interests. 297

rules of the Philalethic Society. 298

members of the Philalethic Society until 1800. 301

an increase of scientific societies organized along specialized lines. 301

their failure to achieve a lasting success and their eventual absorption into the Royal Physical Society. 302

the Royal Physical Society. 302

the smaller societies which eventually became amalgamated with the Royal Physical Society. 304
ay. the Chirurgo-Physical Society. 305
az. the American Physical Society. 306
ba. the Hibernian Medical Society. 307
bb. an early Chemical Society. 307
bc. the Chemical Society which joined with the Royal Physical Society in 1812. 308
bd. the Natural History Society. 308
be. a volume of the Society's Transactions. 309
bf. members of the Society. 311
bg. the Didactic Society. 312
bh. a new variety of professional-convivial society the Harveian, the Celsian, the Galenian, and the Aesculapiian. 312
bi. the Harveian and the Aesculapian Societies. 312
bj. prize essays sponsored by the Harveian and the Aesculapiian Societies. 314
bk. the incorporated societies proper - the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. 316
bl. the antiquarian interests of the Scots. 317
bm. an antiquarian joke, the fabulous wig of the Wig Club. 317
bn. the joke explained. 318
bo. events leading up to the organization of the Society of Antiquaries. 321
bp. Lord Buchan's "Discourse" in which the projected Society is outlined. 323
bq. early meetings of the Society. 326
br. Society of Antiquaries undertakes the type of national survey afterwards conducted so successfully by Sir John Sinclair. 327
bs. the personality and intellect of Lord Buchan. 330
bt. the Society of Antiquaries petition for a Royal Charter, and are opposed by the Professors of the University, the Philosophical Society, and the Curators of the Advocates' Library. 332
bu. the Royal Society is projected in opposition to the petition of the Society of Antiquaries. 333
bv. petty jealousies existing between the literati and Lord Buchan's group of amateurs. 333
bw. renewed activities of the Philosophical Society. 334
bx. the Newtonian Club, description, members, and laws. 334
by. Royal Society of Edinburgh a descendant of the Philosophical Society. 336
bz. the European pattern of the Royal Society. 339
ca. like the Philosophical Society the Royal Society has two classes - i.e. Physical and Literary. 340
cb. activities of the Literary Class. 341
cc. biographies prepared for outstanding members. 341
dd. a "lost" ode recovered, (Collins's "Ode on the Superstitions of the Highlands.") 342
Mackenzie's paper on "the German Theatre." 343

cf. the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland. 344

cg. importance of the union of the Highlands and Lowlands of Scotland. 345

ch. earlier societies devoted to the interests of the Highlands and the Highlanders. 346

\[\sqrt{ci.} \text{ the Highland Society's resolve "to pay proper attention to the preservation of the language, poetry, and music of the Highlands."} 347\]

\[\sqrt{cj.} \text{ the Highland Society and the Ossian controversy.} 348\]

\[\sqrt{ck.} \text{ other societies in Scotland devoted to antiquities and/or "improvement".} 351\]

ci. the Literary and Antiquarian Society of Perth. 352

cm. latter development of these societies a proper subject for a similar survey of the nineteenth century. 353

CHAPTER SIX - STUDENT CLUBS AND SOCIETIES. 354 - 410

a. Scottish Universities as centers of eighteenth-century "Enlightenment. 354

b. special factors in Scottish national background which made debating clubs popular with students. 355

c. convivial clubs also thought well of by Scottish students - the Collegium Buttermere of Aberdeen. 359

d. the Nine Tumbler Club at St. Andrews. 360

e. more serious matters - "the first Theological Club in Marischal College." 361

f. the Aberdeen Medical Society. 361

g. but Edinburgh supplies most examples of student's organizations. 362

h. historical background of Edinburgh student societies. 362

\[i. \text{ "a society...among students of natural philosophy."} 363\]

j. the Medical, later the Royal Medical Society. 363

k. why classified as a student's society. 364

l. its origin. 365

m. acquisition of a library and meeting hall. 367

n. attempts to gain a Town-Charter fail, but the Society later obtains a Royal Charter. 369

o. other activities of the Royal Medical Society. 371

p. members of literary interest: 373

\[\text{i. Oliver Goldsmith.} 374\]

\[\text{ii. Mark Akenside.} 374\]

\[\text{iii. others.} 374\]

q. the Brunonian controversy. 374

r. duels between members of opposing factions lead to serious criticism of the Society. 376

s. a debating society in which William Robertson and many of the Edinburgh literati were active while students at the University. 377

t. the Speculative Society of Edinburgh. 378
u. its student origin. 379
v. acquires a meeting hall within the College. 381
w. highlights of the Society's activities up to 1800. 382
x. the high calibre of its members and their praise of the Society. 384
y. the Theological Society. 587
z. the Dialectic Society. 587
aa. rules of the Society. 388
ab. the Juvenile Literary Society. 590
ac. the Literary Society. 592
ad. the Academy of Physics. 593
ae. rules and extracts from minutes of meetings. 594
af. Glasgow as a scene of student's clubs and societies. 597
ag. first signs of trouble which continues intermittently throughout the century. 598
ah. the Triumphant or Trinampherian Club. 402
ai. the Sophocardian Club and the Anticapadian Club. 403
aj. clubs attended by Alexander Carlyle. 404
ak. more trouble—the General Society and the Parliament of Oceana. 406
al. a peaceful period—the Eclectic, the Dialectic, and the Academic Societies. 407
am. another protest—Francis Jeffrey and the Elocution Society. 407
an. the Historical and Critical Society. 408
ao. the Discursive Society. 408
ap. the Juridical Society of Glasgow. 409
aq. a tribute to Scottish student organizations. 410

CHAPTER SEVEN—ACADEMIES OF ART. 411
a. an explanation as to why these organizations are included. 411
b. common errors respecting eighteenth-century Academies of Art. 412
c. the Academy of St. Luke. 413
d. an "Academy of Drawing" granted the use of rooms in the College of Edinburgh in 1731. 415
f. defense of Robert Foulis's "whimsical" plan. 416
g. practicality of the plan for the Academy. 420
h. details of the plan. 423
i. account of the Foulis Academy. 425
j. notable visitors to the Academy. 427
k. Robert Foulis's account of his endeavours to promote the fine arts in Scotland. 428
l. a disastrous auction winds up the affairs of the Academy. 431
m. an appreciation of the efforts of Robert Foulis. 433
n. other academies of art in Glasgow. 433
o. the Edinburgh Trustees' Academy. 436
p. did not become an academy of fine arts until late in the century. 436
q. the appointment of John Graham and his extension of the activities of the Academy. 437
r. an appreciation of Graham's work. 438
s. a Society for National Improvement in the Fine Arts. 439
t. the objections of Edinburgh merchants and manufacturers against the transformation of their school of crafts into an academy of fine arts. 440
u. their objections ignored. 440

CHAPTER EIGHT - FICTITIOUS CLUBS AND SOCIETIES. 441-493
a. significance of fictional clubs and societies. 441-
b. connection between fictitious clubs and the periodicals of the period. 442
c. three types of fictional societies:
   i. those which appeared in periodical papers, or were used as the pretext for an essay. 443
   ii. those which appeared in works of fiction.
   iii. those which were "invented" to embellish matters of fact.
d. the Critical Club, and the Letters of the Critical Club. 444
e. "a small club of lovers" - the Cupid's Supper Club. 446
f. a Glasgow Cupid's Club, (a parody of the above). 447
g. societies used as a pretext for pointing a moral in the Addisonian manner - the Inexorable Order of Pinchers. 450
h. "a society of gentlemen", being theatrical critics writing in the Scots Magazine. 452
i. the Witling Club. 454
j. the Sentimental Society in Aberdeen. 455
k. the Female Cheerful Society. 457
l. the Potations Club. 459
m. the Society of Essences and Perfumes. 459
n. a fictitious "Improving Club." 461
o. fictitious political organizations appearing at the time of the French Revolution. 462
p. another type of fictitious political club used to disguise reports of Parliamentary debates. 465
q. the "Political Club" in the Scots Magazine. 466
r. the Robinhood Society. 468
s. fictitious societies as publishers of periodicals and other works. 469
t. the "society of gentlemen" who produced the first Encyclopaedia Britannica. 470
u. the "society of gentlemen" who produced the Medical and Philosophical Commentaries. 471
v. the staff of the Edinburgh Magazine and Review not a "Society" properly so-called. 472
w. an anecdote in which David Hume suffers at the hands of the "society of gentlemen" responsible for the Edinburgh Magazine and Review. 475
x. other examples of periodicals whose staff went under the title of "a society of gentlemen." 475
y. an anecdote involving the poet Campbell and Dr. John Leyden. 477
z. clubs in fiction - Sir Walter Scott. 478
a. the Bautherwhillery Club in Waverly. 478
ab. Pleydell's "High-Jinks" in Guy Mannering. 480
ac. the question of the identity of Pleydell briefly examined. 483
ad. clubs in The Antiquary. 484
ae. more clubs in Scott's novels. 485
af. John Galt and his fictional clubs. 487
ag. Robert Louis Stevenson a worthy successor of Scott and Galt in the matter of fictitious clubs. 488
ah. a fictitious society which appears in a Johnsonian anecdote. 489
ai. the "inventions" of Robert Chambers. 490
aj. defense of Chambers as a writer of pleasant fiction. 493

CHAPTER NINE - NON-LITERARY CLUBS AND SOCIETIES OF LITERARY INTEREST. 494 - 557
a. eighteenth-century conviviality. 494
b. importance of convivial organizations. 496
c. club literature - the Royal Society of Archers. 497
d. the Caledonian Hunt - patrons of Robert Burns. 499
e. the Worthy Club. 501
f. the Whinbush Club. 503
g. an examination of the credibility of "Hell-Fire" clubs. 503
h. the Revolution Club. 507
i. the Griskin Club and Home's Douglas. 509
j. an anecdote of considerable literary interest. 510
k. Boswell and Scottish literary organizations. 512
l. Boswell's Soaping Club. 513
m. the Poker Club. 516
n. vulgar errors regarding this interesting organization. 518
o. the true nature of the Poker Club. 521
p. extracts from the MS. Minutes of the Poker Club. 527
q. the Antigalican Society. 527
r. its connection with the Poker Club. 528
s. dual nature of the Poker Club. 529
t. the Younger Poker Club. 530
u. the Cape Club. 531
v. literary activities of the Cape Club. 532
w. origin of the Club's name. 534
CHAPTER TEN - CONCLUSION.

a. rapidity of change in the eighteenth century.

b. the significance of the Highland frontier and of the Lowland's efforts to civilize the Highlands.

c. the achievements of the century.

d. the "commercial" literary interests of the Scottish literati.

e. distinctive qualities of the Scottish literati.

f. the reasons for these qualities.

g. a comparison of the literary circles of London and Edinburgh.

h. the importance of literary clubs and societies in the intellectual development of Scotland.

i. their effects upon the works of literature produced by their members.

j. the growth of the scientific ideal.

k. the literary-debating society the most significant type of eighteenth-century literary society.

l. the attitude of the men of the eighteenth century toward these societies illustrated.

m. membership in a literary society an act of faith.

n. the moral of this thesis drawn with a heavy hand for the reader.

APPENDIXES.

'A' — "Membership of the Literary Society of Glasgow."

'B' — "Philosophical Society of Aberdeen."

'C' — "List of Members of the Select Society, 1754-63."
APPENDICES.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAGE NUMBERS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;List of Members of the Select Society, 1759.&quot;</td>
<td>589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;List of Members of the St. Giles Society, 1763.&quot;</td>
<td>592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Questions to be Debated in the Select Society.&quot;</td>
<td>594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Discourses and Questions Debated in the Belles Lettres Society.&quot;</td>
<td>602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;A List of Members and Visitors to the Belles Lettres Society.&quot;</td>
<td>618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Contents of a Volume Described in the National Library of Scotland Catalogue of Manuscripts as 'Notes and Speeches on Questions Debated in the Belles Lettres Society'.&quot;</td>
<td>628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;On Disputing Societies in general, the Pantheon and Medical Society of Edinburgh, with a proposal for remedying certain inconveniences to which all disputing societies must be subject.&quot;</td>
<td>635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Pantheon Debates.&quot;</td>
<td>639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Minutes of the Meetings of the Academy of Physics.&quot;</td>
<td>646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;List of Members of the Poker Club, 1768.&quot;</td>
<td>651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;List of Members of the Poker Club, 1776.&quot;</td>
<td>652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Speech delivered by the Preses of a Literary Society in the North Country, upon adjourning their Meeting for some time.&quot;</td>
<td>655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;A Discourse delivered at the first opening of the Perth Miscellaneous Club.&quot;</td>
<td>658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Of Society in general, and Polemical Society in particular.&quot;</td>
<td>661</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BIBLIOGRAPHY.

i. Printed Books.  

ii. Supplementary List of Printed Books.  

iii. Pamphlets and Manuscripts.  

iv. Articles and Periodicals.  

670 - 697
INTRODUCTION.

The importance of clubs and societies in the social, economic, political, and literary history of the eighteenth century has been pointed out by nearly every observer and every student of the period. It is rarely, in fact, that one finds such unanimity of opinion among authors. Alexander Carlyle, Henry Cockburn, Thomas Somerville, Henry Buckle, John Gibson Lockhart, Sir Henry Craik, Henry Gray Graham, and Harold W. Thompson, to name only a few, have all made particular mention of the role played by the organizations which form the subject of this thesis. The final reference to these varied and interesting...

1. "In the eighteenth century the progress of knowledge became so remarkable, that the new principle of intellectual superiority made rapid encroachments on the old principle of aristocratic superiority. As soon as these encroachments had reached a certain point, they gave rise to an institution suited to them; and thus it was that there were first established clubs, in which all the educated classes could assemble, without regard to those other differences which, in the preceding period, kept them separate. The peculiarity of this was, that, for mere purposes of social enjoyment, men were brought into contact, who, according to the aristocratic scheme, had nothing in common, but who were now placed on the same footing in so far as they belonged to the same establishment, conformed to the same rules, and reaped the same advantages. It was, however, expected that the members, though varying in many other respects, were to be all, in some degree, educated; and in this way society first distinctly recognized a classification previously unknown; the division between noble and ignoble being succeeded by another division between educated and uneducated. The rise and growth of clubs is, therefore, to the philosophic observer, a question of immense importance...." (Buckle: History of Civilization, Vol. 2, page 415.) "The Scottish Universities were noted for their debating and literary societies.... These clubs, perhaps the most characteristic and valuable feature in Scottish education, were sometimes conducted with such vigour as to need admonition...."
organizations rightfully belongs to Gregory Smith who, after a plea for "a comprehensive account" of Scotland's (that is to say Edinburgh's) "crowded talent," suggests that "the historian of these literary activities finds an easy approach through the membership of the more representative clubs."

When the weight of this evidence is considered, one can only be amazed or surprised that no systematic survey of Scotland's clubs and societies has been undertaken heretofore. Abundant material is available; for a great deal has been written about Scottish clubs and societies, particularly about those which were in existence during the period to be covered by this thesis. But the fragmentary and scattered nature of this material makes the task of becoming acquainted with it a truly formidable one for anybody except one who, like myself, has set out with the deliberate intent of discovering all that is known about these eighteenth-century organizations.

When I first became interested in these matters, it was only after

(Thompson: Scottish Man of Feeling, page 61.) "From the earliest years of the century, when the universities were acquiring greater influence and further expansion by the substitution of the professorial for the tutorial system, a custom sprang up which had important results in stimulating intellectual activity. This was the formation of clubs, beginning amongst the students, but developing into associations of men of mature years and busy lives." (Craik: Century of Scots History, Vol. 1., page 431.) "If we wish to seek for the beginnings of Scottish literature, we shall find it in the clubs of gentlemen that met in dingy taverns, in dark wynds of Edinburgh. There they had their gatherings over ale and claret, where they would discuss politics, books, and ballads...." (Graham: Scottish Men of Letters, page 7.) See also: Cockburn: Memorials of His Time, page 24 and 67; Somerville: Life and Times, page 39; Lockhart: Life of Scott, Vol. 1, page 74; and Carlyle: Autobiography, passim. Many other testimonies to the same effect will appear in the pages which follow.

considerable searching, that I was able to find a satisfactory account of an organization, the Select Society, which had among its members such famous men as David Hume, Adam Smith, William Robertson, Hugh Blair, and James Boswell. This state of affairs suggested at once that there was sufficient need for a survey which would gather together the available information concerning the Scottish clubs and societies which were active during this period. This opinion was soon confirmed when I discovered that there was a great deal of manuscript material which had been only superficially examined, or had been altogether neglected. The issue seemed quite clear. If opinion as to the significance and importance of these organizations was unanimous, and if there was a lack of a survey which looked steadily and wholly at this single subject, then there was a need for such a survey, and I determined to do my best to supply it.

In the fulfillment of this resolve, I have set for myself three objectives: first, to accumulate the available information regarding

---

1. There has been considerable lamentation in the past that the records of Scottish clubs and societies were not available. "It cannot be sufficiently deplored that the minutes of the social clubs of Edinburgh ... have been lost." (Nolan: Franklin in Scotland, page 85. See also Book of the Old Edinburgh Clubs, Vol. 1, page 8, "Report of the First Annual Meeting," Appended to Vol. 1.) As the reader may discover for himself, I have found ample material for my purpose. The libraries of Edinburgh, the National Library of Scotland, the Edinburgh Room of the Public Library, and the University Library, have many items of interest besides those which I have found pertinent to my subject. The impression that there were many organizations for which records no longer exist is largely an illusory one. It is due, in large part, to the fictions of Robert Chambers, which he propagated in his charming but unreliable Traditions of Edinburgh. Chamber's book, which has become the bible of Scottish antiquities, creates the impression that the city was teeming with clubs and societies which probably had no real existence outside his fertile imagination. I have examined this matter in Chapter 8, page 490 f.
the clubs and societies of the period from 1700 to 1800; secondly, to investigate the influence of these clubs and societies on the national life and thought during that period; and thirdly, to supply biographical and background material for other investigators, students, and writers concerned with the period. In accomplishing these objectives, I have taken my material from the histories, biographies, diaries, collections of anecdotes, private correspondence, and the numerous periodicals of the period. While there is no question of my having exhausted this material - I have not had time, for example, to examine unpublished correspondence - still I feel that I have accumulated sufficient information to form a solid foundation for the erection of a more comprehensive work on the subject, should such a work ever be undertaken by a future scholar. In compiling the information which my research has availed me, I have been guided throughout by a desire to set before the reader as much original material as possible. This may be criticized as having made my thesis excessively long, but I have felt that future biographers would find the work of greater value because of this detailed information.

Regarding the many sources of material which I have examined, there is one final word I would like to say. It has frequently been lamented that eighteenth-century Scotland has been too much neglected. While I do not pretend to judge this matter, I do feel that the country, its people, and the men who have written about them, deserve

as much attention as one is able to give. It may or may not be unusual, but I have found that my interest in the period has never flagged. A great deal of the vitality and charm of the age is still evident in its literary remains; and this is particularly noticeable in the freedom, the friendliness, and the community of mind and spirit, which were such marked features of the clubs and societies of that century of tremendous achievement.
CHAPTER ONE

DEFINITIONS

Although it is not easy to give an adequate definition of the terms "literary club", or "literary society", it is not difficult to demonstrate that the organizations to which the terms were applied in the eighteenth century differed greatly from those of the present day. In the eighteenth century, a literary society was an organization of learned men who combined for the purpose of exchanging ideas on any subject which was of interest to themselves, to the other members, or to mankind at large. When we speak of literary clubs and societies today, however, we may be referring to a number of types which were totally unknown in the eighteenth century. Among these unknown types, we can list the clubs which have been formed to celebrate the anniversary of a favourite author, and perhaps to read and discuss his works, though this latter activity is by no means regarded as a necessary part of such an organization. Such are the Burns Clubs, the Scott Clubs, the Stevenson Clubs, and so on. Another new type of literary society has been modelled on the scientific learned societies which were so successful during the nineteenth century. These societies, which are organized for the purpose of facilitating and supporting highly specialized work in a narrow field, did not exist in the eighteenth century in the numbers, or in the form, in which they exist at the present day. In fact, it is only when we refer to student
societies that we have a true connection with the past, for the student
literary societies of two centuries ago were very similar to those
which are active today, and it is significant that a number of them
have been in existence continuously since that time. Student socie-
ties, however, are in a special category, and must be treated sepa-
rately. The fact that they have not altered appreciably in over two
hundred years is reason enough for this, and proof that the interests
and needs of Scottish students have remained fairly constant for at
least two centuries.

But not only do we find that a number of types of twentieth-
century literary societies were unknown in the eighteenth-century, a
complete list of Scottish literary organizations existing today re-
veals how completely the general type of eighteenth-century literary
society has been forgotten. This fact raises the vital question as to
the essential differences between our literary organizations and those
which existed two centuries ago. These differences, which are impor-
tant, must be clearly understood before we progress any further, be-
cause it would be a grave mistake to think of the eighteenth century
organizations in terms which are appropriate only to present-day
literary societies.

We can ask ourselves two questions concerning this matter: first,
"What are the essential differences between the eighteenth- and twen-
tieth-century literary societies?"; and, secondly, "How did they come
about?" The answer to the last question has already been given above,

1. The Speculative Society, the Dialectic Society, and the Royal
Medical Society. For a description of these societies, see
Chapter 6.
for nearly all the changes which have occurred in the organization and the methods of work of literary societies are a result of the ascendancy of science, and the ensuing domination of the "scientific" approach in nearly all intellectual endeavours. This is too well known to need a great deal of description, and a brief passage from a nineteenth century study of British learned societies will provide us with the essential facts. This passage, taken from a work by the Rev. Abraham Hume (1)

On referring to the names and objects of the societies, ... we are naturally impressed with the variety of forms under which Science appears, while Literature exists barely in name. Indeed, the modern and extended use of the term "science" in part accounts for this; for we apply it now to almost any subject which is or may be followed out upon fixed principles: it is less ambiguous to say, therefore, that science is extensively cultivated, and literature scarcely at all.... Many societies are established upon a comprehensive basis, and nominally include literature as well as philosophy or science; but in too many cases it is only nominally, as not a single literary paper is read in some of them for years, and in others every question of a social or miscellaneous character is called literary! In the Royal Society of Edinburgh there was formerly a literary section as well as a scientific one: the communications, however, became few in number on the former subject, though some of them were far from unimportant; and at length the division was abandoned.... A few years ago, the importance of philology and the researches upon that subject by continental scholars, led to the formation of the Philological Society, yet even such an unpretending auxiliary as this, literature will not be permitted to retain unquestioned, as it is now called the science of philology.

This passage is interesting not only for the information which it contains, but also as evidence that Hume's attitude toward literary matters was completely under the spell of the "scientific" method of which he complains. This attitude is revealed, for example, in the surprise

1. Abraham Hume: Learned Societies, page 47.
with which he observes that in some societies "every question of a social or miscellaneous character is called literary!" In the literary societies of the eighteenth century, such a procedure was accepted without question. It was only after the intellectual "Division of Labour" which occurred during the nineteenth century that an attitude such as Hume's could have developed; before that it had been universally assumed, and correctly so, that though men had widely differing interests, they could still derive considerable intellectual stimulation as well as instruction through their associations with one another, and through a general exchange of information.

It is interesting to observe that although Hume is unaware of the influence which it has had upon his own thought, he fully understands the change which occurred between the eighteenth century and his own day. This understanding is revealed in the following passage:

The extent to which "Division of Labour" has been carried in scientific inquiry, is truly astonishing. In the mental as in the physical world, mankind seems anxious to manufacture for the wholesale trade; and each narrows the range of his inquiries and investigations to a point, that his ideas may be more permanently concentrated upon it. In former times, it was thought sufficient if Literature and Science were persecuted generally; now, division has only suggested further subdivision. There are separate societies for astronomy, chemistry, geography, and geology; there is a separate one for the microscope; and almost every branch of natural history is represented by a peculiar class of inquirers....

The essential difference between the eighteenth and the twentieth

century literary society is a direct result of this change. In the eighteenth century, a literary society was composed of historians, scientists, political economists, agriculturalists, medical men, artists, orators, philosophers, and any other individuals whose interests were intellectual. In the twentieth century, we are so accustomed to seeing a separate organization for the historian, for the scientist, for the political economist, and for each of the others, that we are quite unaware that a different arrangement has ever existed. The most striking thing about the eighteenth-century literary organization is its inclusiveness, and the most remarkable characteristic of the members of such organizations was the patience with which they sat through lengthy discussions of biology, geology, chemistry, economics, poetry, surgery, botany, history, philosophy, physics, and so on. But merely to observe that such a state of affairs has previously existed does not give the reason for it.

What was it that these eighteenth-century thinkers found in common? The explanation may lie in the differences which existed between the intellectual tempers of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. The eighteenth, with its bias to classicism, was primarily concerned with effecting as perfect a unity as possible of matter with form. The nineteenth century, with its rough and ready test of utility, its intoxication with the deceptive promises implicit in the chaos of romanticism, and its satisfaction with the rapid movement which gave it the illusion of progress, was prone to neglect considerations of

1. For the supreme example of this inclusiveness, see the description of the Glasgow Literary Society, Chapter 4, page 119 f.
form so long as the mere substance of intellectual inquiry was so rewarding. In other words, it was their consideration of the problem of form which compelled the men of the eighteenth century to organize their composite "literary" societies, and it was a disregard of form, and an intense preoccupation with subject-matter which led the men of the nineteenth to effect the "Division of Labour" which has so fragmented the learned world. It was the consideration of form, for example, which was the common ground upon which learned men of the eighteenth century could meet with mutual benefit, irrespective of their primary interests. When the consideration of form was subordinated to the frantic desire to accumulate the facts and the data which comprise the raw material of knowledge, this common ground no longer existed, and as each worker could no longer see anything to interest him outside his own field, his intellectual world shrank to the dimensions of his chosen subject.

A consideration for form, then, was a marked characteristic of the eighteenth-century literary society. Subject-matter, however, was not neglected, as we shall have many occasions to observe in later chapters. But subject-matter was regarded as merely the material upon which the ingenuity of man could work, and it was the result of this imposition of form which men combined to judge. Lawyers, doctors, scientists, historians, political economists, and men representative of all the intellectual pursuits of man, believed in the necessity of making themselves intelligible, and when they judged one another's

1. See, for example, the "Charge to Lord Greville on his Entry into the Belles Lettres Society, Chapter 4, pages 203 - 205.
efforts, they did not pretend to a mastery of the subject which they did not have, but were willing to accept the facts if they were presented with a configuration which showed that skill and care had been taken in assembling them.

A typical eighteenth-century literary society, therefore, provided a forum for the free discussion of a limitless variety of subjects, and in these discussions, matters of fact were not as important as matters of form. Such societies provided a discriminating and intelligent audience upon which a nervous author could try the effect of his latest essay. In such a company, extravagance or eccentricity received short shrift, and only the responsible and competent literary craftsman could rely upon a patient and attentive hearing. The results of the strict discipline under which nearly all literary composition was carried out seems to have justified the pains that were taken, for the eighteenth century undoubtedly produced a higher percentage of readable books than any other period in English literature.

The period during which the eighteenth-century type of literary society was most active was the hundred years from 1745 to 1845. But these dates mark merely the period during which the type flourished, and they do not cover, for example, the period during which the type was developed. Further, from 1800 onwards, the eighteenth-century type of literary society was so firmly established, that succeeding organizations from that date onward are distinguishable only by the varying degrees in which they drew away from the old and inclined to the new types with which we are familiar today. The dates which I have chosen to mark the beginning and the end of the period I
intend to cover, therefore, have been chosen to cover the rise and
development of the eighteenth-century literary society, and to avoid
needless repetition after this development has reached its height.
I have chosen, therefore, to deal with the eighteenth-century type of
literary society as it developed and as it finally appeared between
the years 1700 and 1800.

So far I have said nothing concerning literary clubs and associ-
ations, as distinct from literary societies, and before I do, it is
necessary to examine the three terms, 'association', 'club', and
'society', in the light of their eighteenth-century usage. The first
thing to be observed about these three words is that in the eighteenth-
century, as to-day, there was very little distinction made between
them in common usage. There was, or so I believe, a general feeling
that an association was usually a more businesslike affair than either
a club or a society; and there was probably a further inclination to
regard a society as being a slightly more sedate and purposeful or-
ganization than those which one familiarly referred to as a "club".
Such distinctions were, in fact, a reflection of the true state of
affairs, for the clubs, literary and otherwise, generally met in tav-
erns, and they were characterized by a convivial disregard for formal-
ity which has been caught for all time in the scene in which counsel-
lor Pleydell appeared at "High-Jinks" in Scott's novel Guy Mannering.
By way of contrast, most of the organizations which bore the title of
"society" or "association" had a more sober purpose, a more business-
like procedure, and a more formal method of choosing candidates for
admission. These distinctions, however, should not be taken as rigid
and mutually exclusive; for informality was a characteristic of nearly all types of organizations, as the word-picture drawn by Samuel Rogers of Adam Smith soundly sleeping at a meeting of the Royal Society of Edinburgh after a hearty meal at the Oyster Club so charmingly convinces us. The true distinction between eighteenth-century literary organizations lay not in the names they gave themselves, but in the purpose for which they were organized. The Rankenian Club, for example, which met for improvement in composition and to discuss literary and philosophical problems, was more nearly the type of eighteenth-century literary society than was the famous Select Society which was really not much more than a debating club. These fine distinctions, however, can be made much more effectively when the individual organizations are under examination.

In my discussion of this subject I have assumed throughout that a club was an informal organization which met primarily for convivial reasons. The term society, on the other hand, I have understood to mean an organization which, though it certainly did not rule out the pleasures of the table, had a somewhat more formal purpose and procedure. This distinction also applies to those few organizations known as "associations", though there may be some justification for adding the further distinction that an association usually has a narrower range of interests than the type of literary society which predominated during our period. Whenever the problem of the title of an organization arises, it should be borne in mind that many times the nature of an institution may change while the title remains unaltered. Or, to

add further confusion, it appears that many times the word which should indicate with some degree of precision the type of organization which has been adopted, is chosen for some completely irrelevant reason such as its euphony or alliteration with the other words of the title, or because of an imagined or real connection with another organization which may, or may not, have been organized for a similar purpose. In this way it seems certain that the Select Society, to which Alexander Carlyle often perversely refers to as the Select Club, chose its title for its excellent alliterative qualities; and though it may have been imagined by the inaugurators of the Speculative Society of [Aberdeen] that they were carrying on the work begun by the much more famous Speculative Society of the University of Edinburgh, it is impossible to imagine two organizations whose whole tone, membership, and purpose were so utterly different.

Despite the difficulties that must always remain in using three terms with such strong tendencies to masquerade as each other, I hope that the reader will find my few preliminary suggestions helpful. There is one hint that may prove more helpful than all the rest, and that is to keep always in mind that the title of an organization is not always a good description of its type and purpose. The purpose for which it has been organized must be accepted as the true designation of each club, society, or association which we examine, for organizations of the same type, with a similar purpose, and frequently of the same origin, may have very dissimilar titles. It is always

1. For the Speculative Society of [Aberdeen] see Chapter 5, page 225. For the Speculative Society of the University of Edinburgh, see Chapter 6, page 378.
important, in other words, to get to the substance of our subject, and not to allow ourselves to be led astray by the empty promise of some high-sounding title, or by a title more modest than the result.
The situation of lowland Scotland in the early part of the eighteenth century is well known. Caught, as she was, between two frontiers, and oppressed with the task of defending herself against the largely imagined threats of the detested Southrons, as well as the more genuine depredations of bands of Highland barbarians; and after decades of bloody and internecine religious strife, of military occupation, of poverty, disease, ignorance, and superstition, Scotland, in 1700, was reeling under the recent calamity of the failure at Darien, and the disaster of repeated bad harvests. This

1. "England was always the 'auld enemy' to be feared, watched, opposed. Until the Union of the Crowns in the sixteenth century, or perhaps one had better say the Union of the Parliaments in the eighteenth century, England was always endeavouring to annex Scotland, and Scotland was persistently refusing." (Watson: The Scot of the 18th Century, page 27.)

2. For a discussion of the Highland frontier, and of the threat of the last remaining "White barbarians" to the peace and prosperity of the Lowlands, see Toynbee: A Study of History, Vol. 1, page 237; Macleod: The American Indian Frontier, Chapter XIII, "Celt and Indian: Britain's Old World Frontier in Relation to the New," page 152 f.; Buckle: History of Civilization, Vol. 3, page 152; Hume Brown: History of Scotland, Vol. 3, pages 150, 224, and 287; Baert: Tableau de la Grand-Bretagne, Vol. 1, page 145; and Trevylan: History of England, page 538. Most of these works treat the problem as a social and political one. Hume Brown, however, gives some indication of the economic aspects of the raids which were made upon the Lowlands out of this Northern "Afghanistan". "A remarkable computation made at the close of the rebellion of 1745 sums up as follows the annual losses
nation, many of whose citizens regarded themselves as among God's "elect", appears to the unbigoted observer as being a nation which God had forgotten: forgotten, that is, unless it is possible to regard the impending Act of Union as a sign of divine Grace, a proposition which, though it has everything to recommend it, has never been popular north of the Tweed.

As a nation, however, Scotland was not unaware that the general increase of material prosperity and the intellectual achievement of her neighbours were in sharp contrast to her own abject poverty in both these spheres. She was, in fact, acutely aware of her "backward" state and, prompted by pride and a desire to share in the good things of life, she resolved to "improve" herself, and to bring herself abreast of the times by imitating and emulating her sustained by the Lowlanders from Highland creaghs: value of cattle-lifting, 5000 pounds Sterling; cost of attempts to recover them, 2000 pounds Sterling; expenses for guarding against theft, 10,000 pounds Sterling; blackmail, 5000 pounds Sterling; loss arising from understocking the ground from fear of plunder, 15,000 pounds Sterling; total, 37,000 pounds Sterling."

(Nothern Rural Life, pages 196 - 197, quoted in Hume Brown: History of Scotland, Volume 3, pages 207 - 208.) It is also interesting to compare the description given by Bailie Jarvie in Scott's Rob Roy to those contained in the above works. The entire episode of the small party's visit "across the line" is reminiscent of Cooper's tales of the American frontier. Before 1745, a visitor to the Highlands had to be well known, or well armed. For a general description of Scotland's economic plight, as well as her intellectual backwardness, see the works of Fletcher of Saltoun, (Political Works, Volume 2.), H. G. Graham, (Social Life in Scotland, passim.), and Hume Brown: (History of Scotland, Volume 3, passim.)
traditional enemy, the English. In following the example of her more prosperous neighbour, Scotland had much to gain and very little to lose. What little treasure there had been, had been squandered in the desperate gamble of Darien, and the shattering of that last pleasant dream of an independently won prosperity brought the harsh reality of Scotland's need for the protection of the English fleet, and of the other economic and political sanctions by means of which the English held their empire. Alone, Scotland could do nothing. Her historical predicament demanded that she gain powerful allies, and that she open her southern border to the invasion of new ideas, new techniques, and a new language. If this meant some sacrifice of a cherished independence, it was paid, no matter how reluctantly, as the price of national salvation, for there was no real alternative. The impulse to follow the Southern example is forcefully described by J. Y. T. Greig in his biography of David Hume. In speaking of Hume, he makes the following observation:

"... with most Scotsmen of his day, David wished to anglicize his mother country, in her speech and literature at any rate. In the circumstances, he was right. It was Scotland's only hope, as events proved. If Scotland could be called civilized

1. If this sounds altogether too much like the present-day cant of "progress", I hasten to assure the reader that it is phrased in the language of the period under examination. It should not surprise us that a previous age would speak, when attempting to do much the same things as ourselves, in the same language. Asia has merely replaced Scotland as one of the backward areas which are in need of "improvement".


..."
in 1780, it was mainly due to English influence, which the Union fostered. Imagination boggles at the thought of Scotland in the XVIIIth century without the Union.

Despite the rather lurid quality of Greig's treatment of this aspect of Scottish development, I must agree with his last statement, for I do find it impossible to imagine the Scotland of Hume's day without the Union.

The Union of 1707 came as the first historical milestone in a process which, for our purposes, can be regarded as beginning in 1700. In the first year of the eighteenth century, an event took place which stands as a sign of things to come. This event, though not important in itself, serves admirably as a symbol of three important themes. The first of these has already been mentioned, and that is the Scottish nation's aspirations for prosperity through "improvement". The second, which has also been mentioned, is the acceptance of the English as models for imitation. And the third thing, which is new, is the emergence of the voluntary association as a device for furthering these national aspirations and for promoting the wider acceptance of the English models.

The event to which I have referred was the organization in Edinburgh of a Society for the Reformation of Manners. From a pamphlet which appeared shortly before the organization of this society, we learn that the success of such societies in England and Ireland had excited the desire among some Scots to follow their example. The pertinent part of the pamphlet reads as follows:

1. A Letter from ***** A Magistrate, to his Freind ***** in the Country. See also the pamphlet entitled A Discourse of Suppressing Vice &c., page 64. The latter contains a sermon on the subject by William Wishart, senior.
19 June, 1700. The Commissioners appointed by the late General Assembly of this National Church, considering how much Immorality and Vice do still abound in this Nation, through the neglect of the due Execution of the Laws against Prophaneness, and it being recommended to them by the said Assembly, to assist and encourage any Proposals that should be made to them, for the more effectual Suppressing of the same. And being likewise informed, that the Christian Endeavours of such as have entered into Societies for Reformation of Manners both in England and Ireland, have through the Blessing of God proven very effectual for curbing and punishing Vice, and advancing Sobriety and Virtue, and some of the said Commissioners having seen and perused a Treatise written upon that Subject, Entitled in Account of the Societies For Reformation of Manners with a Perswasive &c. And most of them having seen and perused the Abstract thereof, they are so well satisfied with the purpose and great and main design thereof, as very proper for exciting persons of all Ranks to a more through Reformation in their own Lives, and Advancement thereof among others,) that as they Reckon themselves obliged to Bless God, who hath put it into the Hearts of others to go before them in so Laudable an Example, and their duty to imitate the same in their own Persons; So likewise to Recommend it to all Ministers and Elders to peruse the said Book and its Abstract, and Study to induce all Piously disposed Persons, to imitate the Laudable zeal of these worthy Societys & their methods so far as may be suteable to the Circumstances and Laws of this Nation, and the Constitutions of this Church, for Compassing so Glorious an End, and so absolutely necessaire to the Prosperity and wellfare both of Church and State....

Here we see the desire for national improvement expressed as a reformation of manners which is described as being a "Glorious End, and so absolutely necessarie to the Prosperity and wellfare both of Church and State". The example to be followed is that of the English, and the means of effecting this "Glorious End", is to organize an association for the purpose of bringing about, the desired "Reformation of Manners."

The establishment of the Society for the Reformation of Manners, however, was not the only English example which was followed in Scotland at this time. The English Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, which had been established in London in 1701, was the model
for a similar organization which was incorporated in Scotland in 1709. The activities which led to the organization of the Scottish society, however, began soon after the establishment of the English Society, and many of the leaders in the newly-formed Society for the Reformation of Manners in Scotland were active in this new endeavour. The motives for the new institution, as given by Maitland in his History of Edinburgh, demonstrate once again that national improvement through reformation was uppermost in the minds of these Scottish patriots.

In the Year 1701, divers Men in Edinburgh, concerned in the Reformation of Manners, reflecting on the gross Ignorance, Atheism, Popery and Impiety wherewith the Highlands and Islands of Scotland abounded, which was chiefly owing to the Poverty of the People, whereby they were rendered unable to get their Children instructed in the Principles of Religion and Virtue; which these Reformers commiserating, they in-deavoured to remove the melancholy and unhappy Scene, by attempting to bring about a Reformation in those Parts, for which Purpose they entered into a voluntary Subscription to raise Money for obtaining so good and desirable an End. The first Attempt they made was at Abertarf, in the Shire of In-vernness, where Popery and Irreligion greatly abounded:

Although this initial effort resulted in failure, the project was not given up, and Maitland goes on to explain how the movement grew, and how it finally gave rise to the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge.

Though the worthy Undertakers were not discouraged... yet, in their private Capacity found they were unable to carry on so great and extensive a Work; wherefore they endeavoured to find out Means whereby Funds might be settled, and so many Persons concerned as were equal to the Design; and to that End applied

---

to divers Members of the General Assembly of the Church, to obtain the Concur-
rence and Assistance of that Convention in so great and good a Work. Which being laid before them and taken into Consideration by the said Assembly in the Year 1706, recom-
mended the same to their Commission, who, after divers Con-
ferences with the Undertakers, published Proposals for a Sub-
scription, for propagating Christian Knowledge, not only in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland but in foreign Parts, to which was annexed an Obligation, to be subscribed by such as were willing to promote such laudable work: ... 

The Society for the Reformation of Manners in Scotland and the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge are the first indications of a deep desire among the Scottish people to improve their nation through voluntary co-operative effort. As Maitland has pointed out in the passage quoted above, the realization that little could be done by individuals in the great task of educating the Highlanders led to the formation of a society through which support could be given by all who had the means and the inclination. At the time when these two societies were organized, however, the impulse which gave rise to them had not yet acquired the concentration which it afterwards displayed, nor had it developed the characteristic impulse which enables us to describe it as a national movement. By 1723, however, the urge toward improvement had become so pronounced that it is possible to delineate it by the judicious selection of one of its favourite terms, a term which appears with convincing constancy in the titles of clubs and societies, and in the economic, political, and patriotic literature of the period. The term to which I refer is that of "improvement," for the movement with which we must deal here is best described as the "movement for national improvement." The appropriateness of this term can best be demonstrated by giving ex-
amples of those associations which were a direct result of the movement.

In 1725 there was organized an agricultural association which bore the title of The Honourable the Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture in Scotland. This association, which was suggested by "the Duke of Athole and other persons of great distinction", held its first meeting on the 13th of July, 1725, and very soon its membership of 300 included "some of the most eminent Scotsmen of the time... The baronetage, Knightage, and gentry of the country were largely represented." Under the direction of a committee chosen from among this illustrious membership, the technique of improvement, at least as it was practised in agriculture, soon became fully developed, and the example of these Scottish "Improvers" became so widely and so enthusiastically imitated that there is some justification for describing the resulting activities as a "craze" which brought nearly as much derision as it did praise to its instigators. However, if it is possible to derive some amusement from their excesses, the success and the lasting benefit brought to their country by these same "Improvers" is proof enough that their activities were in keeping with the needs and the inclination of the time. The following announcement of the purpose of the newly-formed association, could, with the exchange of an occasional word, be taken as a manifesto of the entire movement for national improvement:

The Noblemen and Gentlemen mentioned, considering in how low a State the Manufactures in Scotland are, and how much the right husbandry and Improvement of Ground is neglected, partly through the want of Skill in those who make Profession thereof, and partly through the want of due Encouragement for making proper experiments of the several Improvements that the different Soils in this country are capable of: Therefore, being willing and desirous to contribute to the Advancement of so great a Benefit as may be reaped from the two Articles mentioned, they do resolve to meet once in every fourteen Days of the Months of June and July, November, December, January, and February; and to have under their consideration such Measures as may be proper for advancing the foresaid Ends; and the first Meeting to be on the first Friday of July next where each Member is desired to be present, in order to the framing of such Rules as may be proper for the future Management of so laudable an Undertaking.

Although the Honourable the Society of Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture in Scotland has been described as the first agricultural association ever to be organized in Great Britain, the impulse behind it was the same as that which caused the formation of the Society for the Reformation of Manners, and the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge in Scotland. In writing of the economic condition of Scotland, Robert Maxwell, one-time secretary to the association and editor of the Society’s Transactions, makes the following statement:

If our Agriculture and Manufactures were improved and carried on to the Height they could bear, we might be near as easy a convenience in our circumstances, as even the People of our Sister Kingdom of England; seeing neither our Soil nor our Climate is unfriendly, and since we enjoy the same Privileges of Trade with them,... If we are far behind, we ought to follow the faster.

Once again we have traced the three main tendencies of this period, the impulse toward improvement, the acceptance of English examples; and the formation of associations and societies to carry

the necessary work forward. And the Honourable the Society of Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture was only the first of such institutions. On the suggestion of this association, the government of the day established the important Board of Trustees for Manufactures and Fisheries in Scotland. In 1757 there appeared a notice of a Society for the Improvement and Promoting of Agriculture and Manufactures at Ormiston. This society, so Robert Maxwell informs us, was formed in imitation of the Honourable the Society of Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture which was organized, as I have already noted, in 1723. In 1748, notice is given in the Scots Magazine of a Society for Improving of Agriculture and Manufactures in the Shire of Ayr, and in 1755, the Select Society of Edinburgh organized the Edinburgh Society for Encouraging Art, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture in Scotland. Throughout the rest of the century, similar associations were formed. In 1759, there appears the Society of Improvers at Coupar; in 1760, the Chicken Pye Club of the Parish of

1. Ibid, page 308 f. We shall meet with the Board of Trustees again in Chapter 7, page 435 f.
2. Caledonian Mercury, Monday, January 10, 1737.

Note: For other examples of eighteenth-century "improving" agricultural societies, see Sinclair: Statistical Account of Scotland, 21 volumes, 1791 - 1799. These societies are listed in the Subject Index under "Farming Societies."
Dunfermline, "an association of landed proprietors", was active; and in 1769, the Buchan's Farmer's Society was formed for "the improvement of agriculture." A Dumfries and Galloway Society was organized in 1772 for the purpose of encouraging stock-raising and the cultivation of turnips. In 1776, a Society for the Improvement of Agriculture in the Counties of Dumfries and Kirkcudbright was formed, and in 1785, the most famous Society of "Improvers" of all, the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland, was formed at Edinburgh. Now all these societies followed a general pattern, and their members were drawn primarily from one class, that of the landed proprietors. The most fitting description for such associations, therefore, is that they were the meeting places of the "gentlemen improvers" of Scotland.

But the "gentlemen improvers", as the title of some of the societies given above suggests, did not confine their interests to "stock-raising and the cultivation of turnips." The most ambitious of the "improvement" societies undertook to encourage "Art, Sciences,

5. Ibid, page 45 f.

Note: For other examples of eighteenth-century "improving" agricultural societies, see Sinclair: Statistical Account of Scotland, 21 volumes, 1791-1799. These societies are listed in the Subject Index under "Farming Societies,"

..."a description of the Society, see Chapter 4, page 1...
and Manufactures" as well as agriculture. And it is significant of the pervading spirit of "improvement" that this association, the Edinburgh Society for Encouraging Art, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture, was organized by the Select Society, a debating society which had originally been formed for "the mutual improvement in the art of speaking of its members." And the Select Society was not the first literary society to exhibit the improving spirit. Far from it, as we shall soon have ample cause to remark, the movement for national improvement which was so strongly felt in agriculture was paralleled by similar efforts in literature and science. And in these fields, the three elements we have noticed previously, those of the desire for improvement, of the acceptance of English models, and of the organization of co-operative associations as a means for accomplishing both, are equally plain. The term "improvement", therefore, was much more than an economic slogan, for it represented a national attitude of mind which recognized Scotland's true situation and embodied, in that recognition, the resolve to equal, if not to exceed, the accomplishments of her more prosperous and more productive neighbours. The success which followed this resolve is well known. In science and in literature, as well as in husbandry, trade, and manufacturing, Scotland improved herself to the point where she became the model for others to follow.

The source of Scotland's inspiration for her literary improvement has been ably traced by a Scottish author who himself experienced the changes which he has described so eloquently for us.

1. For a description of the Select Society, see Chapter 4, page 138 f.
In writing of the Union and its effects on Scottish literature, Ramsay of Ochtertyre observes the following:—

The union of the kingdoms in the year 1707 produced great though not immediate revolutions in the sentiments and tastes of our ingenious countrymen. Indeed that memorable event hath led to consequences, good and bad, which were not forseen by its able promoters or opponents. These, however, were the natural fruits of a free and constant intercourse between the Scots and the wealthy nation which had already attained to a high pitch of eminence in letters, arts, and arms. In those circumstances, it is not surprising that the former should gradually drop their national prejudices, when thus surrendering them in whole or in part was connected with their interest or their fame. Whether in our other deviations from the modes and manners of our forefathers, we have always acted with discretion, may admit of some doubt; but the most zealous admirers of ancient times must confess that to our old rivals we are in some measure indebted for the great progress which our countrymen have made in the belles lettres and authorship.

In view of all that has been said, I would like to suggest that the most appropriate title which can be given the eighteenth century in Scotland is the "Age of Improvement", and if it is allowed that the "Age of Improvement" is an appropriate title for the period 1700 to 1800, and that its main characteristics have been correctly analyzed and described, then we have made the first positive step toward placing the literary societies of the period in their proper perspective. But it is only the first step, for though the title may be applied significantly to the whole of the century, the progress which was made by the movement for national improvement permits certain divisions to be made. There came a time, after sufficient progress had been made, when the emphasis was shifted from the preparation for the tasks in hand to the performance of them. And this, in turn, was

followed by a period during which recognition of Scottish accomplishments became general in England and on the continent. Thus it is possible, by signifying the special quality of each of these periods, to divide the century into three periods which corresponded to certain phases in the general movement for national improvement. To the first of these periods, "the Period of Preparation", I have assigned the dates 1700 to 1745. For the second, "the Period of Achievement", the dates 1745 to 1770 seem most appropriate, since during those years Scottish men of letters performed the intellectual tasks which were to make Scotland famous throughout the Western world. From 1770 to the end of the century, came the "Period of Recognition". It was during these years that all the learned men in Europe recognized and celebrated Scotland's reputation and cultural prestige. In actual fact, the two later periods overlap to a great extent, for recognition of Scottish genius frequently followed hard upon the publication of significant works. The histories of Hume and Robertson, for example, were outstanding successes, and both men were firmly established in the world of letters long before the year 1770. And as early as 1764, Voltaire paid the Scots an ambiguous compliment for their effusive genius. In an article in the Gazette littéraire de l'Europe, in which he reviewed Lord Kames's Elements of Criticism, Voltaire wrote of Kames and of Scotland as follows:

1. Gazette littéraire de l'Europe, avril, 1764, page 98. There is a different version of the passage I have quoted which appears in Les Voyageurs Français en Écosse (1770 - 1830) et Leurs curiosités Intellectuelles: par Margaret I. Bain, page 16-17. Bain's version reads: "C'est un effet admirable des progrès de l'esprit humain qu'aujourd'hui il nous vient d'Écosse des règles
M. Home porte ainsi sur tous les Arts des jugemens qui pourroient nous paroître extraordinaires. C'est un effet admirable des progrès de l'esprit humain, qu'aujourd'hui il nous vienne d'Écosse des règles de goût dans tous les Arts, depuis le Poème Épique jusqu'au Jardinage. Il est vrai qu'on aimeroit mieux encore voir de grands Artistes dans ces Pays-là que de grands raisonneurs sur les Arts; on trouvera toujours plus d'Ecrivains en état de faire des Élémens de Critique, comme Milord Kaims, qu'une bonne Histoire, comme ses compatriotes M. Hume & M. Robertson.

Although this is rather grudging admiration, it is admiration none the less, and Voltaire's preference for the Scottish artist over the Scottish critic was soon to be gratified, for at the very time he was writing his article, James Macpherson's Ossian was being accepted in Europe with unquestioning approval.

1. "The words were ironically meant, but they point to what was an indisputable fact - the remarkable intellectual activity of"
Despite his sarcasm, it will be noted that the French satirist spoke with respect of David Hume and William Robertson. Hume, who had recently been in France, had been enthusiastically received and universally admired. In France, at least, he was recognized to be a man of genius, and, when he returned to settle permanently in Edinburgh in 1769, his reputation brought an additional lustre to the northern capital. The fact that Hume chose to return to Edinburgh, despite his previous resolution to remain in Paris, is an indication of something more than national sentiment. Edinburgh offered what could be found in no other city in Europe, a circle of men of genius confined in a small space. When Hume joined the intimate circle of the Edinburgh literati, his presence confirmed the opinion of many that the city was, as Matthew Bramble words had described it, a "hot-bed of genius." By 1770, therefore, Edinburgh had become generally recognized as one of the intellectual centres of Europe.

of Scotland in every important sphere of thought, and her original contribution in each of them," (Hume Brown: History of Scotland, Vol. 3, page 225.) "Voltaire's egregious sneer at Lord Kames's Elements of Criticism was in reality a concealed eulogy of the Scottish Enlightenment." (Mossner: The Forgotten David Hume, page 202.)

1. Graham: Scottish Men of Letters, page 45 f. See also Greig: David Hume; Mossner: The Forgotten David Hume; and Laing: Life of Hume.


3. That sentiment was not a strong compulsion with Hume in deciding him to return to Edinburgh we know from a letter which he wrote in 1772 to Benjamin Franklin. (This note is continued on next page.)


In each of the three periods we have been considering, there appeared a number of new literary societies which were evidence of the three stages of progress which had been reached by those active in the movement for national improvement. In the first period, the Period of Preparation, these societies consisted of groups of individuals who sought to improve themselves in the arts of composition and public speaking, or who gathered together to exchange information on the many subjects which were deemed ripe for improvement. In the second period, a subtle change in the existing literary societies, and in those which were newly established, placed the emphasis on achievement. Publication of the work done by members became an established practice, and many societies were organized in such a way that it was an obligation of membership that a certain amount of finished material be contributed by each member during a set period. In the third period, literary societies became chartered corporations through which the honour of membership could be conferred upon those individuals who had made, or seemed likely to make, valuable contributions to human knowledge. In this threefold change, we can trace the progress of the single ideal of national betterment throughout the century which I have chosen to entitle the Age of Improvement.

"I really believe, with the French author of whom you have favoured me with an extract, that the circumstance of my being a Scotchman has been a considerable objection to me. So factious is this country! I expected, in entering on my literary course, that all the Christians, all the Whigs, and all the Tories, should be my enemies. But it is hard that all the English, Irish and Welsh, should be also against me. The Scotch likewise cannot be much my friends, as no man is a prophet in his own country. However, it is some consolation that I can bear up my head under all this prejudice. I fancy that I must have recourse to America for
Literary societies which began as organizations for the improvement of the techniques of science or literature, became forums in which essays were read, criticized, amended, and prepared for publication to the world. Still later, a number of the later type of societies became, through the granting of a Royal Charter, an incorporated body very similar to the Royal Society in London, and the privilege of membership in this society, the Royal Society of Edinburgh, became regarded as conferring nearly as great an honour as that of the older and more famous English Society. It was just in this way, that the Medical Society which was established in 1731, "for the improvement of medical knowledge", became, in 1737, the Society for Improving Arts, Sciences, and still later, the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh. The Philosophical Society continued active until 1783, at which time it provided the nucleus upon which the Royal Society of Edinburgh was erected. At each successive

justice. You told me, I think, that your countrymen in that part of the world intended to do me the honour of giving an edition of my writings, and you promised that you should recommend to them to follow the last edition, which is in the press. I now use the freedom of reminding you of it." (Greig: Letters of David Hume, Vol. 1, page 257, letter number 469, to Benjamin Franklin, dated Edinburgh, 7 February, 1772.) It is interesting to note that Hume's "fancy" that he must have "recourse to America for justice" has been, rather belatedly it must be admitted, fully justified. In his The Forgotten Hume, the American scholar, Ernest Campbell Mossner, has made an interesting re-evaluation of Hume as a man of letters. "In sober truth it must be put on record that, with a single important exception, Johnson's imposing literary production did not equal Hume's, whether in quality, in scope, or in influence. The exception was the Dictionary." (Mossner: The Forgotten Hume, page 195.

1. For the Medical Society, see Chapter 3, page 82 f.

2. For the later development of the Philosophical Society see Chapter 4, page 98 f., and Chapter 5, page 334 f.
reorganization of the society it is possible to trace the shift of emphasis which I have outlined in the three periods of the Age of Improvement.
CHAPTER THREE.

THE PERIOD OF PREPARATION 1700 - 1745.

Three events mark the beginning of the Scottish impulse toward national improvement. The first of these, which took place in 1700, was the establishment of the Society for the Reformation of Manners; the second, which began in 1701, was the first rational attempt at bringing civilization to the Highlands through education, an attempt which led to the erection of the important Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge; and the third, which was, indeed, the culmination of this first phase, and by far the most significant event to occur in Scotland during the first half of the eighteenth century, was the Union of the Parliaments which took place in 1707.

Evidence of the influence of the rising desire for national improvement, in so far as it was reflected in the formation of literary clubs and societies, did not appear in the realm of literature until after the Union; but the first indication of the course which Scottish literary men were to pursue came with the wide acceptance and admiration of the works of Addison and Steele. In speaking of the Union and of the influence of The Tatler and The Spectator in Scotland, Henry Grey Graham writes as follows:

Certainly the Union had a great effect in stimulating Scottish

intellectual interest and widening the literary taste. Scots
gentry who went as members of Parliament to Westminster would
bring back books from London, and in various ways literature
penetrated to remote rural mansions as to city life, conveyed
in cadger's creels. Thus to young ladies were borne the echoes
of far-away gay London life, of fashions, and follies, and in-
trigues they should never share. By the firesides they would
read aloud the adventures of Orinadas and Millaments, or of Sir
Roger de Coverly, in accents whose broad Scots would have a-
mazed the heroes and heroines of whom they read - an uncouth,
incoprehensible tongue, which would have made Will Honeycomb
roar with laughter, and Sir Roger utter gentlemanly oaths of
exasperation as he listened.

The effect of English periodical papers on Scottish literature
is elegantly traced for us by Týrtler in his invaluable biography of
Henry Home, afterwards the celebrated Lord Kames. After giving a dis-
tressing picture of the condition of Scottish culture, Tytler informs
his readers:

A taste for polite literature, had, however, begun gradually
to diffuse itself in Scotland, even from the time of the pub-
lication of the Tatlers, Spectators, and Guardians; and, as in
England, the effect of those writings, and more particularly
of the papers of Addison, was conspicuous in substituting an
ease and elegance of composition as a more engaging vehicle
for subjects of taste, in the room of the dry scholastic style
in which they had hitherto been treated: so, in Scotland, the
attention of our youth, fresh from their academical studies,
which yet retained a strong tincture of the antient school
dialectics, was insensibly attracted to the more pleasing top-
ics of criticism and the belles lettres. The cultivation of
style became an object of study; and in a few attempts at
that lighter species of essay-writing, of which Addison had
furnished a model, we see the dawning of a better taste in
composition than had hitherto appeared in any publication
from the Scottish Press.2

One further quotation concerning the influence of the work of
Addison and Steele will serve as an indication of the relationship of


2. For a discussion of early Scottish attempts to imitate the English
publications, see Chapter 5, page 251 f.
the English periodical papers to the literary societies which form the subject of this thesis. The quotation to which I refer reads as follows:

The periodical papers published by Steele, Addison, and their associates in England, appear to have first awakened a taste for refinement of composition and for critical disquisition on the north of the Tweed. Other causes contributed to quicken and foster this taste, among which were the various literary and philosophical associations formed at Edinburgh.

For further proof of the revolutionary effect of the English periodical papers on Scottish attitudes and in reviving and refreshing interest in style among Scottish literary men, we need only examine the circumstances which led to the establishment of the Easy Club to which Allan Ramsay belonged, and of which he wrote, in such a delightful strain:

1 love ye well — O let me be One of your blythe society, And, like yourselves, I’ll strive to be Aye humorous and easy.

One of the provisions of the Easy Club was that the members should take a pseudonym "from some eminent person". Allan Ramsay chose the name of Isaac Bickerstaff, and when the club resolved, three months after its institution, "that one Spectator be Read at every meeting till all be Read," Ramsay, as was appropriate to his chosen role as Bickerstaff, was appointed to provide the first volume.

4. Ibid, page 49.
Any further doubts as to the relationship of the Easy Club to the success of The Tatler and The Spectator in Scotland, must certainly be dispelled by the following letter which was written by the secretary of the Scottish club to the authors of The Spectator:

Edinburgh, August 15, 1712.

Sir,
Did I think it a pardonable fault to praise a man to his face, I could with a great deal of satisfaction discover my judgment of your writings. However, allow me for once to tell you that your happy talent for raising such handsome thoughts from subjects which to men of an ordinary capacity would seem altogether barren, makes me hope you may perhaps find something in what I presume to trouble you with, which will not be altogether disagreeable.

I am a member of a civil society which goes under the name of the Easy Club. The main reason of our assuming this name is because none of an empty, conceited, quarreling temper can have the privilege of being a member, for we allow all the little merry freedoms among ourselves, rallying one another at our meetings without the least appearance of spleen upon account of whatever we discover to be amiss or weak in any circumstance of our conversation, which produces rather love than dislike, being well persuaded of the esteem each of us hath for his fellow, and his design to see no blemish in his character.

Our Club consists just now of eight members, all of us within some months of either side of twenty-one, unmarried, and resolved not inconsiderately to rush into a state of life even the wisest cannot foresee whether it shall be more happy or miserable, without making the tryall, and when be the luck good or bad there is no disengaging. I confess a married life has many tempting advantages, but I am affrighted when I see so many daily instances of these being overbalancing by a greater number of inconveniences which attend that state, and to which nothing but death alone can put a period. Therefore we are resolved as much as possible to subject every passion to the pleasure of freedom, each of us knowing how to live upon our own without the help of a well promised ill paid portion.

Tho' our humours be sympathetically united, yet there are several pleasant varieties in our qualifications, or rather in what we discover ourselves to be admirers of in others. Every member at meeting is called by the name of whatever author he is assigned to by the sort of topic.

hath the greatest esteem for. Our Wit goes by the name of Lord Rochester; our Mathematician, Sir Isaac Newton; our Merchant, Sir Roger L'Estrange; the grave Poet, Sir Richard Blackmore; our Historian, George Buchanan; the Merchant, Robert Collinson; the Humorist, Thomas Brown, and the Censor of the Club, Isaac Bickerstaff.

The first thing that induc'd us to join in a Society was the reading of your Spectators, where it is frequently recommended, and the better to make us acquainted with such fine thought, we have observed as one of our fundamental laws that one, two or more of the Spectators shall be read at every meeting. That in case any passage or sentence occur we have any scruples or doubts about, every one may give his thoughts out, and thus (as the rubbing of two hard bodies together will smooth both) we have all been satisfied about the thing, each of us by ourselves could not be convinced of. Consider, Sir, we are but young, and have need of advice; and seeing you are the fittest person can do it, I earnestly beg you'll lay down the best methods and rules to be observed in a Society of our constitution, and to say something in vindication of Societies in general and this in particular from the implacable hatred of some here who have professed themselves irreconcilable enemies to us and all such who attempt the forsaking of vice and aiming at virtue. Hoping in some issue you'll answer the expectation of him who has a profound respect for you, and your incomparable writings, I subscribe myself your admirer.

--- G. Buchanan.

1. "His real name was John Fergus, as is proved by a stitched manuscript of twenty leaves, in the handwriting of 'Buchanan,' that is now in our possession. Its title page reads partly thus: 'Discourse of George Castriot, King of Albany (by the Turks called Scanderbeg) to his Captains. Written in French by Mr. De Scudery. Translated September 5, 1709.' On the third page is written: 'Edinburgh July 20, 1715 Mr Geo: Buchanan dedicate.' On the fourth page is written: 'This Translation being ye work of some leisure hours when I was a student of the French Language is humbly Dedicate to my fellows the gentlemen of the Easy Club, Geo: Buchanan, July 20, 1715.' And on the title-page, below 'Translated September 5, 1709,' appear the words 'By John Fergus' — words which were obviously added by 'Buchanan' when he wrote the dedicatory matter in 1715." Gibson: New Light on Allan Ramsay, page 53. Rogers: Social Life in Scotland, vol. 2, page 557, identifies 'Buchanan' as "John Clerk, younger of Penicuik, afterwards Sir John Clerk, Bart., and a member of the Privy Council." Rogers is very unreliable in these matters, and, I believe, he was completely mistaken in his identification of "George Buchanan" as John Clerk. There is absolutely no evidence that John Clerk, younger of Penicuik, was ever a member of the Easy Club.
But the significance of the appearance of the Easy Club goes much deeper than merely reflecting the popular success of the English periodical papers in Scotland. The introduction to the club's "Journal" clearly exhibits the three essential elements of that movement which I have described as the movement for national improvement, for in the Easy Club we have the first important example of a co-operative literary organization which was devoted to the improvement of Scottish cultural life through the study of English examples. The introduction to which I have made reference reads as follows:

Journal of the Easy club, established in Edinburgh May 1712.

The Gentlemen who Compose this Society Considering how much ye immaturity of years want of knowing ye world and Experience of living therein Exposes them to ye Danger of Being Drawn away by unprofitable Company To the waste of the most valuable part of their time Have Resolved at sometimes to Retire from all other Business and Company and Meet in a Society By themselves in order that by a Mutual improvement in Conversation they may become more adapted for fellowship with the politer part of mankind and Learn also from one another's happy observations ... On ye second day of their Meeting after some deliberation it was unanimously determined their Society should go under the name of the Easy Club designing thereby that their denomination should be a Check to all unruly and disturbing behaviour among their Members. To prevent which also each of them are still'd with a particular name taken from some eminent person whose Character tho they are sensible of their own insufficiency fully to Maintain yet every One knowing something of his patrons history have him before them as an example which as the wise say is more prevalent in Reformation than precept. And each member being always call'd by his Patrons Name at the meeting makes it impossible he should forget to Copy what is Laudable in him and what is not so to Reject.

A list of the "Patrons" reveals at once the strong southern influence which was felt at this time. I have already stated that Allan Ramsay chose the name of Isaac Bickerstaff; other members chose as their


It is now generally recognized that a great deal of nonsense has been written about the Easy Club, and particularly about Allan Ramsay's connection with it. Until the appearance of a very unusual work by Andrew Gibson, little was actually known about the organization, though much had been guessed, and a great deal more had been "discovered" by those literary crystal-gazers whose efforts have made many Scottish works so attractive, so readable, and so completely unreliable.

Andrew Gibson, with the aid of the manuscript "Journal of the Easy Club," which he obtained in 1907, revealed the factual barrenness of nearly all the "biographies" which were written about Allan Ramsay up to the time his work appeared in 1927. If we tend to regard with some dismay his method of attack, which has the effect of devaluing the literary reputations of a number of highly respected, if not revered, Scottish authors, his fault is expiated by his service to truth; and I, for one, am grateful to him for the fine demonstration he has given of the value of the records of literary clubs and societies, and for displaying so expertly how they may be most effectively used.

1. See the letter from "Geo. Buchanan," quoted on page 35 and 47.
3. Gibson demonstrates conclusively that Robert Chambers, Oliphant Smeaton, and Alexander Fraser Tytler, were writing fiction rather than biography. Only George Chalmers, of all the biographers of Ramsay that Gibson has examined, escapes with some credit.
Perhaps the most valuable of Gibson's services to Allan Ramsay's reputation, and to that of the Easy Club which has been so closely identified with him, was his conclusive demonstration that the Easy Club was not a "Jacobite" organization, as had been generally assumed, and that neither Dr. Pitcairn, the physician, nor Thomas Ruddiman, the grammarian, were among its members.

The inclusion of Dr. Archibald Pitcairn among the youthful members of the Easy Club was, as Gibson has demonstrated, a sign of biographical wishful-thinking. In order for the "Dr. Pitcairn" of the Easy Club to have been the original Scottish physician and author of Latin verse, two things would have been necessary. First, there would have had to be an exception made to the Club's otherwise invariable rule that each member should always be "call'd by his Patron's name." Second, Dr. Pitcairn's presence at the meetings where his name was mentioned would have been a startling phenomenon, for he had died in 1713, the year before his name first appeared in the Club's records. As for Thomas Ruddiman, there is absolutely

1. "Mr. Gibson is very probably correct in scotting the old suggestion that the Easy Club was suppressed after the Rebellion of 1715 because of its Jacobite sympathies. The same writer has conferred another service by his proof that Ruddiman and Pitcairn were not members of the club...." (Burns Martin: Allan Ramsay, page 26.)

2. "A claim that had been made to enhance Ramsay's reputation," (Ibid, page 26.)

3. The records of the Easy Club reveal clearly how impossible it was for Pitcairn to have been a member. "That Member hitherto call'd Mr. Colinson (formerly Sir Thomas Heywood) objected against his name saying he had never formally chosen that Author for his patron and Crav'd he might be allowed to choose, which was granted whereupon he 'Chose the Dead Dr. Pitcairn' (a man of

4. 

5. 

no indication that he was ever a member of the club, but to the biographers who were simple-minded enough to include Dr. Pitcairn, this was apparently no valid objection.

The matter of spurious membership is relatively easy to disprove, but the task of dispelling the illusion that the Easy Club was a "Jacobite" organization is a far more formidable task, so strongly is the legend established in the literary tradition of Scotland's past. And the task is rendered more difficult by the confusion which is bound to exist when the sentiments of the members are confused with the functions of the organization. That Allan Ramsay and some of his cohorts had Jacobite sympathies must have been true, it is so widely believed. But I beg to remind the reader that this did not necessarily make the Easy Club a "Jacobite" club, if we understand by that term that the association was the equivalent, say, of the Revolution Club of Edinburgh which met to celebrate the Revolution of 1688 and the Hanoverian Succession. There is a strong element of sentiment admixed with the methodical insistence that every organization of this period, 1700 to 1745, must necessarily have been Jacobite. The attitude which this sentiment has fostered shows a certain amount of naivete in assuming that the Jacobites were something in the nature of a political party temporarily out of office. Jacobitism, if I under-

---

great parts and of ye humour of this Society) for his patron at the same time subscribed the laws by his Name." (Journal of the Easy Club, meeting of December 15, 1714.) Although Dr. Pitcairn, by virtue of his age and his position, was not eligible for membership in the Easy Club, we know from a remark made by Wodrow that he had his own literary coterie. Wodrow tells us that he has heard "that the Modest Apology for Mr. M'Millan is writt by a club, The Lady C., once a sweet singer, her son, with Doctor Pitcairn, and Arniston, were the composers of it." (Analecta, Vol. 1, page 278, year 1710.)
stand the situation correctly, was a treasonable matter, and if the "Jacobite" organizations of which one hears so much had conducted their affairs as openly as the Easy Club, the members of them would have been instantly proscribed. If any "Jacobite" club was bold enough to keep written records, I haven't come across them, though I have heard rumours enough that such clubs existed. But rumours do not make facts, and what evidence we do have of the Easy Club's activities is not of a nature to instill any great confidence in the hitherto general assumption that it was active in the "Jacobite" cause.

The Easy Club was established on May 12, 1712, at which time it consisted of six young men, including Allan Ramsay, who was known for the purposes of the club, as "Isaac Bickerstaff." The others were James Stewart, who took the name of "Lord Rochester"; an unidentified member who is known to us only by his pseudonym of "Tom Brown"; a Mr. Edgar, known as "Sir Roger Le Strange"; an unidentified member who took the name of "Sir Isaac Newton"; and, finally, another unidentified member who took the name of "Sir Thomas Heywood". These six friends were joined on the twelfth of June, 1712, by a member who chose the name of "Sir Richard Blackmore," and on the twenty-seventh of June, 1712, by John Ferguson, who, as "George Buchanann," became their Secretary and Clerk Register.

Thus constituted, the club continued to meet until April, 1713, when its meetings were suspended for some unknown reason until November fifth of the same year, at which time meetings were resumed although

2. Ibid, pages 53-55, and notes.
There were only four members then residing in Edinburgh. At the first meeting of the new session there was evidence of a change in the attitude of the members which indicated that the club was being reconstituted rather than merely being resumed after a period of inactivity.

From the records of the club we copy the following interesting minute:

Sr. Richd. Blackmore Isaac Bickerstaff Mr. Geo. Buchanan and Tom Brown accidentally fell a talking of the Club and finding themselves a quorum and that there were no more members for ye Time at Edinbh Resolved their meeting into the Easy Club and Chose Isaac Bickerstaff praeses. Then proceeded to Consider the state of the Club and the Reason of their so long Vacance (which was much Regreted by them) and beginning to Concert new Regulations and Methods for the Better uniting the society One and all of them Expressed a sincere Regard to the Constitution of ye club and hearty Resolution to adhere to and pursue all ye approvable designs of the establishment after which Mr. George Buchanan Representing what Scotland has suffered what we now in a More- inglorious manner do are like to suffer by the Perfidy, pride, and hatred of England and how great an affront was put upon ye Scots Nation by Contemning our own Countrey and Choosing English men for our Patrons he said if they continued in this he had Reason to fear their easiness would dwindle into stupidity and Concluded declaring That he thought it would be an honourable article in the Constitution of a Club of Scots men (who have Resolved to be called by other names than their own) To pay a dutifull Respect to the heroes and authors of their own Nation by Choosing them for their patrons. And proposed it might be an Article in ye fundamental Constitution of this Society - as a Mean to Maintain in us Love to our Native Countrey which we see dayly decaying and animate us to projects for her interest.

Scots Blood was fire and flaming fir'd itself In other Breasts which kindly took ye Blaze.

All took ye hint and it was Unanimously Resolv'd in warm expressions by each that none of this Club shall have english but Scots Patrons. So immediately Renouncing their former deliberate upon ye Choice of new patrons and that Member formerly nam'd Isaac Bickerstaff did choose Gawin Douglas sometime bishop of Dunkeld and a famous old Scots poet for which he is chosen by that member. Tom Brown is now Samuell Colvill a Scots poet and humorist Sr. Richd. Blackmore choose Blind Harry an old Scots poet author of ye Epique poem on Wallace. Mr. Geo: Buchanan continues the same.

These resolutions were cast into appropriate laws by the Secretary, George Buchannan, and were approved and written into the club's records at the next meeting on the twelfth of November, 1713. In the words of George Chalmers, the Easy Club was "affecting great independence" in thus resolving "to adopt Scotish patrons in place of English names."

Although the Easy Club was not too happy at first with its new constitution, for it held only seven meetings in the new session that began in November 1715, after an interval of almost a year it began to meet once more and continued with a meeting every Wednesday evening until the last week in June, 1715. During this time additional members were admitted until the maximum of twelve was reached. In these meetings, evidence of the member's dissatisfaction with the Union became plainer, and on the second of February, 1715, the following entry appears in the "Journal":

Gawin Douglas demanded his Patent as Poet Laureat to ye club who being all acquaint with his Naturall abilities for poetry and some of his performances it was unanimously aggreed he should be honoured with ye Character of Poet Laureat to ye Easy club upon qch ye Secretary was appointed to give him one extract of this Act as an evidence of their favour and his dignity — and to expede his patent in due form as soon as possible — after which Mr. Easy with advice of ye Club desired of him that a poem upon Ease might by his first performance — After some discourse on Public affairs and ye Ruined Circumstances of Scotland by the late Union it was Resolv'd the Club should Address ye King for ye Dissolution of it — upon which Mr. Easy appointed L. Bellhaven, Jon. Barclay, H. Boece and Geo: Buchannan each of them to form an address against ye next meeting. Then after some conversation qr in it was Resolv'd the Club should next meeting partake of ye Diversion of the
times in an easy imitation of party humour... ye club adjourn'd.

From the minute of the meeting held on the ninth of February, 1715, we learn of the results of the resolution to present an address to the King.

Wednesday feby 9 all The Ten Members now at Edinburgh being Conven'd - Hector Boece chosen praeses Rolls call'd and Minutes of last Sederunt Read.... Then the Club proceeded to elect a Member to Represent them in Parliament to Maintain ye fundamental Laws honours and privileges of the Society.

if impung'd there and after a little imitation of Party struggle chose Mr. George Buchannan who after returning The Club Thanks for the honour Conferred upon him assure'd them he was of no party at all But would Study in this Employ to Behave as an easy fellow and Then as Secretary he produced a Poem upon ease comis'd by G: Douglas at the Desire of ye last Meeting - which was Read, approven the Author Thanked and Ordered to be Recorded - after which he also presented 3 addresses drawn in obedience to order of ye last Meeting two of them by himself one of which was approven he was ordered to present to ye King as parliament Man and appointed to be Recorded. After 2 hours easy Diversion with Politicks without any ill humour it was Enacted that the Club shall never be actors or intermedlers in politicks as a Society qch was ordered to be Registrate as an act of Sederunt.

Then after a dram to ye health of ye 2 absent members we walk't out of our Dome and it Being Moon Light, Mr. Easy, L: B: B: H: D: L: G: D: and G: B. Convoyed Z: Boyd half way to Leith. Returning in good humour and very Blyth ye Praeses.

The change in the attitude of the members toward the Union may have been a result of the growing Jacobite feeling in Scotland which came to a climax in the rebellion of 1715, but it was not necessary to be a Jacobite to feel dissatisfaction with the Union. As is well known, the prosperity which had been promised as a result of the joining of the Scottish and the English Parliaments was slow to develop, and the immediate result of the Union was disastrous for

1. The "Mr. Easy" referred to in the passage quoted above is the member who was chosen to preside. (Gibson: New Light, page 39, note.)

2. Ibid, page 57.
Scotland. But whatever the individual sentiments of the members were, the letter which was framed by "George Buchanan" and approved by the Club is a model of loyal devotion to the existing monarch. This letter, which I have quoted below, appears to me to be a very strong indication that the Easy Club was not indulging in any treasonable traffic. The sentiment which it expresses of "Patrial love" and of "Loyalty" may have been dissimulation, but if so, it was dissimulation without purpose. There is no indication that the letter was ever sent, and although there may be possibly be those who suspect it to be a blind to cover up the real purposes of the organization, such a strained explanation is far less convincing than that which accepts the letter for what it purports itself to be, the previous complaint of loyal and loving subjects. The letter in question reads as follows:

Address to the King for ye Dissolution of the Union

Drawn by G: Buchannan approven by the Club and ordered to be sent. Sign'd in ye club feby 9, 1715.

Sir,
Allow us your Majesties subjects of the Easy Club Natives of the Most Ancient Kingdom of Scotland to Address your Majestie

1. "The beneficial results of the Union were slow of being felt, and for some twenty years the people saw less of the advantages than of the hardships it entailed - heavier taxes, more duties, vexatious restrictions, and dangerous competition with the trade of England, and a lost trade with France," (Graham: Social Life in Scotland, pages 513-514.) See also Hume Brown: History of Scotland, Vol. 3, passim.


3. For the minute of the meeting at which this letter was read, approved, and signed, see page 45, above.
as a Society, full of Patrial love and acted by principles truly calculated for ye benefit of mankind which cannot be better and more fully expressed than by our Name. Though we are Restricted by our Constitution from Concerning or Declaring ourselves in Publick affairs and Nationall politicks (being of no party) Yet when our Countrieys grievances are proclaim'd by all factions we allow our Selves to appear and as true Sons of Fergusia have Courage to own our sentiments and adhere to our first Resolution of Contributing all our powers for ye advancement of ye Interest of our Country. And there being now an Unhappy Occasion for our Appearance As we pray Almighty God to Deliver us, and preserve our posterity from the Miseries Scotland now groans under So we hope to Receive the Mercy by your Majesties hands which brings us to The Throne at this time to Expose the Cause of ye Lamentable declining Condition of our Country under all ye Ruining Discouragements imaginable. And to plead — Which we are the more encouraged to do as the Antiquity of the Royall line of Scotland is ye most Splendid Jewell in Your Majesties Crown Bright and blazing with heroes and Saints attracting and Commanding Respect from all the Princes of Christendom as a Dutifull Acknowledgement of Cadets to their Common Chief and as your Subjects of Scotland have been Remarkably Loyall and faithful to your Royall predecessors by a dutifull adherence in ye worst of times which with their own Heroick Valour and Conduct under ye favour of providence has kept a Scepter in their hands these 2000 years which few nations or families can Boast of. The Consideration of which we hope will determine your Majestie to do all possible for ye interest of a people you are so much Concern'd in and Maintaining that Naturall Love and Loyalty we have always express'd to your Royall Family and as our interest cannot be effectually promoted, our Love maintain'd and our Loyalty secur'd But by your Majestie's dissolving our late Union with England the first cause and fountain of all the greatest ills Scotland Suffers our fears We earnestly _ Beg with all ye Concern a sense of the greatest Evil can be imagined to affect us with You will Employ your Sovereign Power and influence to do as soon as possible and Restore to us that Freedom and independency we so long Enjoyed under the fatherly Administration of your Royall ancestors By doing this your Majestie will declare yourself the descendent and truly worthy ye Offspring of the great Fergussi who first founded the Scots Monarchy and after Restor'd it from ye worst of Circumstances Your Memory will be truly glorious and your Reign a bright Exemplar of ye Love and duty of a Scots monarch. We shall not determine who is to blame for this greatest Misfortune ever happen'd to Scotia Your Royall Wisdom can best Judge of it But we hope there were few thinking Men in England but will grant (now after tryal) that peace and friendship with all their advantages may be better established and secur'd between Scotland and England otherways than by this Union which will certainly maintain Eternal discord and discontent to ye prejudice of Both which may be put to an end and a solid peace
and good Understanding settled and secured by a federacy between ye parliaments of ye 2 Kingdoms Beggin your Majesties pardon for our importunity we Beg Leave only to add this which we are assur'd of from many sad proofs — That if this Union be not speedily dissolv'd Scotland will be Ruin'd ye name of Scots men which was life and soul to armies and Confederacies will be furied and ye glory of ye Best of Royall families must fall hoping your majestie will hear us and graciously hasten to Relieve and Redress us we are May it please &c.

If the reader will accept the evidence of the extant records of the Easy Club, and reject the wild surmises of the host of literary muddlers who have thoroughly clouded the issue in the past, I submit to him that this letter, which was the culminating of the political activities of the Club, such as they were, is conclusive proof of the corporate loyalty of that organization, and that in so far as the Club was concerned, irrespective of the individual attitude of its members, the letter alone is sufficient reason for rejecting the charge of Jacobitism which has so unfairly, and so unreasonably been brought against them. In addition to the letter, however, there is the corroborative evidence of the club records which, after the letter itself had been framed and approved, record the Club's resolution to exclude politics forever. And the enactment "that the Club shall never be acters or intermedlers in politics as a Society," was apparently made in good faith, for from this point on political matters disappear from the Club's records.

Having forsaken politics, at the meeting of Wednesday June 29, 1715, the members discussed "Friendship". This discussion which may have had some connection with Ramsay's poem "On Friendship",

1. See the minute of the meeting of February 9, 1715, quoted on page 43, above.
led to a resolution to correspond with an absent member. This member, Mr. Edgar, or "Sir Roger L'Estrange", had left for Leyden at the end of April in the year 1713 "to prosecute his study of the law." In accordance with the Club's resolution, a letter was written to Mr. Edgar, who had been given the new name of Michael Scott in absentia.

This letter, which provides us with a very lively and engaging picture of the Club's activities, reads as follows:

To Michael Scott,

Last Wednesday the subject of our conversation in the Easy club was friendship we had not long discours'd of it and considered our selves as engaged to one another by that nearest relation till we found we are justly blameable for being so much wanting to our selves and unfaithfull to our obligations to you as a friend and fellow member of this society by so long neglecting epistolary correspondence Upon which I was appointed to write you as I here do without any ceremonie That we excuse you as not knowing whether ye club yet subsisted and frankly acknowledge our selves in the wrong But we hope that your good humour and agreeable easy temper will easily pardon this neglect.

To make some amends I shall give you a short account of the state of the club for these 2 last years We had no meeting for 6 months after you left this place Then we had about 2 months session In which we made some improvements upon our constitution We rejected English patrons and chose Scots authors or heroes. Richd. Blackmore is Blind Harry, Heywood is Dr. Pitcairn, Tom Brown chose Samuell Colvil But he is now ejected and extruded the Club I continue the same We have added Zach Boyd Sir Wm. Wallace L. Beilhaven Davie Lindsay Hector Boethius and John Barclay all of your acquaintance We call you By the name of Mich: Scot if you are not pleased you have the liberty of choice.

During this session there was a poetick war between Gawin and Id. Napier we were often amused with letters and poems and spent many evenings very agreeably After this we had 10 months vacance till the 6th of Decr. last from which time we have not failed to meet once a week.

The Corporating spirit gains upon us and we grow every day more Sociable & as a proof of it by a special act have appointed the 12th day of May being the day this our Societie first met and was constituted An Anniversary Feast to be observ'd in all time coming By the Club and accordingly spent ye 12th of Last month in Countrey Diversions mirth and Jollity and ended it as true gallick Juice inspir'd we Remembred you frequently that day.

Our Correspondence and friendship is so settled and secured that we now meet in a hall or Dome of our own where we enjoy our selves at large free from tavern noise and the Slavish obligations of drinking contrary to our inclinations. Here we are in no fear of being overheard By such who are Ready to misconstrukt our innocent Mirth But have all the advantage of a private Retreat.

Our Conversation is as free of party as ever But upon all other subjects we express our selves with a great deal of freedom.

George Buchannan.

The account contained in this letter is valuable for the reason that it helps us to place the Easy Club in its proper classification. From "Buchannann's" description of the activities of the organization, of its lack of formality, its conviviality, and its "poetic war", it is obvious that the Easy Club belongs to that class of literary assemblies which I have designated literary clubs, and it is worthwhile to observe at this point that the Easy Club is not only the first of such clubs, but that it may also be taken, for the purposes of this study, as a model for the many similar institutions which came after it. For one thing, it was the custom in the Easy Club to elect at each meeting a "praeses", whom the members addressed as "Master Easy". We shall have cause to notice that this organizational device was adopted by many famous literary clubs, and that it was common to many literary societies as well. A second feature of the Easy Club which it will be well to keep in mind is that the members formed, in effect, a select and sympathetic audience upon which the Poet Laureat, Allen
Ramsay, could try his poetic gifts, and "it was probably under the patronage of the Easy Club that Ramsay made his bow to the world at large as a poet."

It may have occurred to some readers that the Scottish poetry of Allan Ramsay is hardly convincing evidence of a tendency for Scottish authors to imitate English examples. But even if this argument is allowed, and there are those who have found flaws in it, Ramsay was not the only poet who was active in Scotland at this period.

From Ramsay of Ochtertyre, we learn that there were young persons in Scotland who had "bethought themselves of writing English poetry." Although Ramsay of Ochtertyre was apparently unaware of the fact, the young persons to whom he referred were of both sexes. This circumstance, which excites little interest today, was of a sufficient rarity in Ramsay's day to have warranted his comment had he been aware of it. The laird of Ochtertyre, however, still has much of interest to tell us:

Whilst Allan Ramsay was high in request, some of his countrymen bethought them of writing English poetry. Who were the earliest promoters of this seemingly romantic undertaking?

2. "The introduction of southern English as the standard form of speech after the union of the crowns, and still more after the union of the parliaments, gradually modified the characteristic language of Scotland, till most of its distinctive features disappeared, while a literary jargon was developed which was neither pure Scotch nor pure English, and which has been happily termed "fancy" Scotch. The first notable poet who wrote in this mongrel dialect was Allan Ramsay (1686 - 1758)." (The Americana Encyclopedia, Vol. 15, article on Scotland - this work has no pagination.)
4. Ibid.
it would be idle now to enquire, but in the year 1719 there is written evidence that there were societies at Edinburgh, consisting partly of poetical men. If their first essays in compositions did not bespeak first-rate genius, the very attempt deserved praise. By drawing the attention of their countrymen to English poetry, they called forth the latent powers of persons to whom Nature had been more liberal in her gifts, though their modesty hindered them to break the ice by any vigorous effort. Those would be wits would hardly have been mentioned here had they not been the precursors of men whose works have been admitted into the Canon of English poetry. Thomson and Mallet, the most eminent of them, commenced their career at Edinburgh nearly about the same time; and though very different men in all respects, their friendship continued without interruption to the last.

The societies of "would be wits" to which Ramsay of Ochtertyre referred are not known, with the exception of the Athenian Society of Edinburgh which he mentioned in his note to the passage quoted above. However, very little is known of this society, but it

---

1. At this point, Ramsay adds a long note. "In the year 1719 five translations of Horace's 'Epistle to Nero' were printed at Edinburgh, with a rambling dedication, written by one who styles himself a member of the Athenian Society. Four of them are written by Scotsmen. The first by a Mr. Stewart, to the Duke of Marlborough; the second by a Mr. Boyd, to Mr. Rowe, poet laureate; the third by a Mr. Cunningham, to Bishop Hoadley; and the fourth by Mr. Joseph Mitchell, to a Lady in favour of a lover. Of the three first nothing, even their Christian names, is known at present, only they seem to have been men of some fashion, and are greatly praised by the dedication for their taste and proficiency in the belles lettres. Mitchell, who was an author by profession, published a small volume of poems, which were little thought of at the time. Ramsay says he had written a tragedy. Of the translations it is needless to say much, as they are below mediocrity. Mr. Abercromby told me that Callender of Craigforth, father to the late John Callender, Mr. Robert Symmon, and Mr. Duncan, minister of Tillicoultry, were members of Mitchell's club. Of the first of these three, Richard Dundas of Blair (no poetical man) spoke slightingly, as a flimsy, affected lad. He died young. Mr. Symmon was afterwards travelling governor to Lord Brooke, latterly Earl of Warwick. Mr. Abercromby and I supped in his house at London in March 1758, when he appeared to be a lively, learned, pleasant man. Mr. Duncan was a man of much wit and genius, and very amiable in his manners, a great friend of Mr. Abercromby and his lady." (This note is continued on the next page.)

2. See note #1 directly above.
seems likely that it was modelled on the Athenian Society of London.

But if Ochtertyre had mentioned that there was a society of young ladies active in the movement to promote English poetry, we should have known at once that he was referring to the Fair Intellectual Club of Edinburgh.

The Fair Intellectual Club was a society which was founded by three young women in May 1717. The names of the founders are unknown, but there is an excellent account of their club contained in their Account of the Fair Intellectual Club in Edinburgh: In a Letter to an Honourable Member of an Athenian Society there, which was published as a pamphlet in 1720 by James M'Euen, an Edinburgh bookseller.

He got his death by travelling on a tempestuous winter day to preach at Norriestown. Mitchell, who afterwards went to London, and became a ministerial writer, published, in conjunction with associates, a work entitled the 'Scots Miscellany,' which is now very rare. The poems are in general but indifferent; the best one by Mallet, then a very young man, and a very poor one by Craigforth. In December 1762 I saw, in Mrs. Walker's Inn at Dunfermline, a small volume of poems by that class of people. I remember neither the title nor contents, but I was struck with many verses by the author of the 'Night Thoughts,' to these juvenile poets, praising them for their generous attempt to introduce the English muses into Scotland. I wished, on my return to that country, to have got hold of this literary relique; but Mrs. Walker was dead, and everything sold or dispersed. (Ramsay of Ochtertyre: Scot-land and Scotchmen of the 18th Century, Vol. 1, pages 22-23, note.)

1. For the Athenian Society see The Athenian Gazette: or Casuistical Mercury, resolving all the most nice and curious questions proposed by the ingenious, etc. London: 1691. Also the Athenian Oracle, being an entire collection of all the valuable questions and answers in the old Athenian Mercuries, and a supplement to the Athenian Oracle. To which is prefix'd The History of the Athenian Society, and an Essay upon learning By a member of the Athenian Society. London: 1706, 1710, and 1728.

2. An Account of the Fair Intellectual-Club in Edinburgh: In a Letter to a Honourable Member of an Athenian Society there, By a young Lady, the Secretary of the Club. Edinburgh: Printed by J. M'Euen and Co., 1720.
In a letter to M'Euen which appeared as a preface to the pamphlet, an anonymous member of the Athenian Club related how the account of the Fair Intellectual Club came to be published:

Mr. James M'Euen, October 16, 1719.

Sir,

We have at length, through the Interest and Means of the Honourable C. C____m. Esquire, prevailed with the Ladies of the Fair Intellectual Club, to publish their Secretary's Letter, written to him some Months ago. Accordingly I have the Authority and Pleasure to convey the Manuscript, faithfully transcribed to your Hand; that so rare a Pattern and Example of Female Excellence may be no longer conceal'd, but set out to the View and Imitation of the less polite Part of that delicate Sex. Believe me to be with much Respect,

Sir,

Your, etc.,

The letter to "the Honourable Member of the Athenian Society" which contains the account of the Fair Intellectual Club reads as follows:

Sir;

The intreaties of that Honourable Society whereof you are so deservedly a Member, have, with difficulty, prevail'd on our Club, to let you into the Secret of its Original and present Constitution. Accordingly, I am honoured by my Sisters, to entertain you, with a brief detail of the most considerable circumstances, in our History....

In the Month of May 1717, three young Ladies happened to divert our selves by walking in Heriot's Gardens, where one of us took Occasion to propose that we should enter into a Society, for Improvement of one another in the Study and Practice of such Things, as might contribute most effectually to our Accomplishment. This Overture she enforc'd with a great deal of Reasoning, that dispos'd the other two cheerfully to comply with it. The Honour of our Sex in general, as well as our particular Interest, was intended, when we made that Agreement. We thought it a great Pity, that Women, who excell a great many others in Birth and Fortune, should not also be more eminent in Virtue and good Sense, which we might attain unto, if we were as industrious to cultivate our Minds, as we are to adorn our Bodies.

1. Account of the Fair Intellectual Club etc., preface.

2. This may have been the "Mr. Cunningham" mentioned by Ramsay of Ochtertyre. See note #1 on pages 50-51, above.

3. Account of the Fair Intellectual Club etc., page 1 f.
In writing to you, I flatter my self, it is needless to insist in proving we are capable of a great many Arts and Virtues, that we too much neglect to Study and practise; neither need I mention the Reasons that determin'd us to make such a Transaction. The Hints already offered are sufficient to let an intelligent Person see, we neither go out of our Sphere, nor have acted inconsiderately in what we have done; And more to the same purpose may fall in naturally hereafter. In the mean time, I shall proceed to tell you, That, according to our Paction, we resolved to meet in my Chamber on another Day, when, after deliberation, we might concert Measures jointly for the Establishment of our Club. When the appointed Time came, we met, and delivered by Turns, the Sentiments we had prepared before hand by our selves. After much serious Conference, 'twas concluded, That, neither a lesser nor greater Number than Nine should make up what we were to Name, The FAIR INTELLECTUAL-CLUB. We were apprehensive it would not be easy to find out other Six, whose Humours and Qualifications would render them every way fit and agreeable Companions, in that Relation. However, we resolv'd to spare no Pains in making a prudent Choice. And in Order to maintain our wished for Harmony and Order, we immedi-ately proceeded to adjust some Things among our selves, ere any more were invited to join us. But finding it a Matter of great Importance to our Club, to have it well established, we judged it expedient to adjourn our Meeting yet some Days further, and, in the Interval have our Thoughts busied, concerning what might be most proper to be gone into, at our Meeting. Each of us gave in a written Scheme of what we thought most expedient to be agreed on, for the Regulation of the Club. We reasoned on every Article proposed, and recorded, in a separate Paper, what-soever we gave mutual Assent unto. Thus rejecting all the Over-tures made by any of us, that were not approv'd and received by us all, we fix'd on a few Articles, to which we unanimously agreed, on that Occasion. Yet because we were conscious of the Importance of the Transaction, it was judg'd requisite to ad-journ till another Day, that we might be the more disposed to subscribe to what was concluded before.

You must have the Charity, Sir, to believe we were very serious and deliberate in our Retirements, while we endeavoured to be fully satisfied in our own Minds concerning the Reasonableness and Expediency of what we were to do. The more Time we spent in thinking and conferring together upon the Measures we had laid down, we were the more cheerfully disposed to adhere to them; in so much that, when the Time of Meeting came, we were all ready to accomplish our Design, with the greatest Hope of Success and Expressions of mutual Love and Friendship.

The Original of our Club being this far fairly represented to you, Sir, it will not be thought unnatural in the next place, to deliver the Contents of the Paper which we subscribed, upon the first Thursday of June, and which I here transcribe from the Original it self; as follows.
The Rules and Constitutions of the
Fair Intellectual-Club in Edinburgh.

We, whose Names are underwritten, being sensible of the Disadvantages that our Sex in General and we in particular labour under, for want of an established Order and Method in our Conversation; And being ambitious to imitate the laudable Example of some of our Brethren, that make the greatest Figure in the learned polite World, in so far as we are capable and may reasonably be allowed, by entering into a mutual Compact and Agreement, to act for the Interest and Improvement of one another, in our Meetings; have resolved to establish a Club called, The Fair-Intellectual-Club; and hereby declare our Assent, and Purpose to observe, (whilst we are alive and unmarried) The Rules and Constitutions, which follow:

1. That we shall maintain a sincere and constant mutual Friendship, while we live; and never directly nor indirectly reveal or make known, without Consent of the whole Club asked and given, the Names of the Members, or Nature of the Club.

2. That none shall be invited or admitted into the Club before her Name be proposed in it, and her Merits considered, and Allowance given by all the Members to have her introduced.

3. That none shall be declared a Member of our Club, before she hath, in our Presence, subscribed her Name to the Rules and Constitutions thereof.

4. That we shall never admit more than Nine into our Club, whereof Five shall be counted a Quorum sufficient to act in Absence of the rest, as if the Number was compleat.

5. That none shall be invited or admitted into our Club before she be fifteen Years of Age, nor after her twentieth Year is expired.

6. That altho' different Principles and Politicks shall be no Hindrance to the Admission of Members into our Club, being Protestants; yet none shall presume to urge these directly or indirectly in our Meetings on Pain of Censure.

7. That altho' we may, on proper Occasions, make Excursions in Commendation of the Genius and Conduct of other People; yet none shall be guilty of practising the willy Arts of Censure and Ridicule, on Pain of Censure.

8. That every Person at her first admission into the Club, shall entertain the Club with a written Harangue, and deliver the Sum of Ten Shillings Sterling, for the Use of the Poor, as we shall direct.
9. That one shall be chosen at the Beginning of each Quarter of the Year, in our Meetings, to whom we shall address ourselves when we speak, by the Name of Mistress Speaker, and pay all the due Respect to her that becometh us to owe, whom we empower to determine Differences, silence Debates, censure Transgressors, state Votes; and in a Word, to perform all the Offices that one in the Character of President may reasonably be allowed to do.

10. That Mistress Speaker shall entertain the Club with a written Speech of her own Composure, immediately before the Election of one to succeed her in the Chair.

11. That we shall elect a Secretary to the Club, at the Beginning of each Quarter, immediately after the Choice of Mrs Speaker; and that she shall record in a Book, and have the Custody of the Minutes of our Management, as of all other Papers presented to the Club.

12. That Mrs Secretary shall read over the Minutes of all that pass'd in the Club during her Quarter, immediately before the Election of one to succeed her.

13. That we shall punctually attend on all the Meetings of our Club, which for ordinary are to be once a Week; and that Absents shall be censured, unless their Excuses be found to be good.

14. That whosoever refuses to submit to the Command and Rebukes of the Club pronounced by Mrs Speaker, shall be expelled from it, if sober Reasoning can't prevail.

15. That when Death, Marriage, or other important Occurrences shall in the Course of Providence, remove any Member from our Club, Care shall be taken to make a speedy Supply of her Room, lest the Club suffer, or go to nothing.

16. That we shall not be limited by our Subscriptions from making new Regulations, Additions or Alterations, for our greater Good and Improvement, from Time to Time, as we shall see Cause.

These Articles, above mentioned were subscrib'd by us three, that compos'd them, before any were invited to join us. Two Weeks pass'd ere we could agree in the Choice of one to be a Member; We thought we cou'd not be too cautious of admitting others into our Club, which we designed for such noble Purposes. We were ambitious of a rational and select Conversation, compos'd of Persons who have the Talent of pleasing with Delicacy of Sentiments flowing from habitual Chastity of Thought; We were eager to keep out Pretenders to Mirth and Gallantry, and all such who with constrain'd, obscene and painful Witticisms,
pester People in mix'd Companies. At Length we unanimously
pitch'd on Three, whose Genius and Conduct were most agreeable.
These we endeavoured by several honest Means to gain. The
six met, according to a Faction, in my Chamber, where I in
Name of my Sisters, informed them of the Nature of our Club,
and read over the Rules and Constitutions of it in their
Hearing, to which they cheerfully subscribed. Now we had a
sufficient Quorum, and were capable to act, according to our
Rules, as we judg'd expedient. A Day was appointed for our
Meeting, when we were also to choose a Speaker and Secretary.
But ere the Time came, we found a seventh Member to our
unspeakable Satisfaction. Out of the Seven Mrs. Speaker and
Mrs. Secretary were chosen. You need not doubt, Sir, but we
made a prudent Choice of Mrs. Speaker. As for me, who had
the Honour to be made Secretary, I shall not be so proud as
to appear sneakingly Modest, by running down my own Abilities
for the second Post in our Club, which consisted merely in a
greater Dexterity in Writing than the rest pretended to. Mrs.
Speaker being plac'd in her Chair, and I at the Table, with
proper Materials for the Discharge of my Duty, the Club agreed
that we should adjourn our Meeting till the first Thursday of
July, and in the Interval seek out other two Ladies qualified
to join us, and make our Number complete. As also, Mrs. Speaker
was required to prepare a Speech to be delivered by her at the
opening of our grand Assembly. It happened very luckily, that
before the first Thursday of July came, our Club was made up;
Thus gradually are great Affairs brought to perfection.

In her speech to the members of the Fair Intellectual Club at
the opening of their "Grand Assembly", Mrs. Speaker, after holding
forth at some length on their duties in the matter of cultivating morals
and in the practice of Christian behaviour, suggested measures to be
taken "to improve our Minds in useful knowledge, and render us exemplary

to all who observe our Conduct!"—

'Tis requisite we should also, with due Dependance on the
divine Blessing, read proper Books in our respective Abodes.
The Circumstances of Life make these less our Study, than
of the Male Sex, yet the Propensity we find in our Natures to
read, and the Improvements some of our Kind have made by
Study, may satisfy us that it is an Injustice to deprive us
of those Means of Knowledge. How else shall we express our
Fondness to have our Natures reform'd and refute these
scandalous Aspersions cast upon our Sex, that we are made

1. Account of the Fair Intellectual Club etc., page 17.
up of Pride., Affectation, Inconstancy, Falsehood, Treachery, Tyranny, Lust, Ambition, Wantonness, Levity, Disguise, Coquetry, and the like ill things, so often in the mouths and Writings of Men? For my Part, Ladies, I think the safest and surest Way of Gainsaying such light Accounts of our Sex, is to think them all Truths, till we can work up our own Minds and Practice to such a Pitch of Greatness, as we may look down with Pity on the vulgar Mistakes concerning us. Let us endeavour to attain such Habits and Dispositions of Soul, as cannot be justly censured; till we arrive that Length, I don't see how we can be secured from Raillery, or yet offended at it. Accordingly our Studies should chiefly be such, as lead to Rectitude of Mind and Life: And if I were to name proper Books for that Purpose, I could not make a better Choice than, I believe, all of you have already done in reading The Whole Duty of Man, Bishop Tillotson's Sermons, Charon on Wisdom, The Tatler, Spectator, Guardian, Lady's Library, Hallifax's Advice to a Daughter, Reflections on Ridicule, The Gentleman Instructed, Lucas on Happiness, and the like. These are of constant and universal Use to form the Mind, and direct us in all the Relations of Life that do now, or may possibly concern us, as Women and Christians. And how useful and entertaining will it be for us frequently to converse in our Meetings, on Subjects concerning which we have read in our Retirements!

The same speech contains, besides these admonitions to improvement, certain compliments to the lady members for their accomplishments:

I believe I carry the Commendation no further than it should be, when I say, that by your Diligence you understand History, Geography, Arithmetick and such like Business, so useful in Life, as well as any of your Sex. Nor do you confine your Studies so much, as to neglect the French and Italian languages, which are accounted so polite and fashionable in this Age. But when I consider the Improvements all of you have made in the English language, I can never cease to admire your Judgment and Application. As nothing less than a right Taste of the Excellency and Beauty of Writing and Speaking well, could determine you to be at due Pains to attain them; so, without great Industry and Application, it had been impossible for you to have become Mistress of the English Language in such Perfection; especially considering, how difficult it is for our Country People to acquire it.

There is further proof that the Fair Intellectual Club was active in promoting interest in English literary models. The Club was


2. For a discussion of the efforts of the Scots to learn English, see Chapter 4, page 166 f.
responsible for the publication of a Collection of poems under the title of the Edinburgh Miscellany. This Miscellany is of considerable interest, because in addition to contributions from the members of the Fair Intellectual Club, it also contains "the earliest productions of Thomson, Home, and Mallet." In a preface to the collection,


2. Some of the more interesting pieces in the collection are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To a very boring and Speculative Gentleman, by Mr. Hume. (Home?)</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On a certain dull Beau at the Play-House, by the same hand.</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ode xxiii of Anacreon, English'd by the same hand.</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Song, by the same hand.</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epithalamium On the Marriage of My Lord ____ with Lady ____. By a young Lady of the Fair Intellectual Club, present at the Marriage. (initial) H.</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Song by the same hand.</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Pastoral Elegy, Sacred to the Memory of her dearest Lover. By a young Lady, a member of the Fair Intellectual Club. (initial) H.</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To the Countess of ____ Concerning the Present State of Love and Poetry. By a member of the Fair Intellectual Club. (initial) C.</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
one of the members of the Fair Intellectual Club explained the
purpose and the motives behind their efforts:

The Publishers of this Miscellany have the Pleasure to entertain their Country, and particularly this good Town, with a variety of Poems, that had either never been compos'd, or never seen the Light without it. There are indeed several Performances Scattered throughout this Volume that have formerly appear'd in print, and would have got no Place here, if the Nature of a Miscellany had not require'd their Presence, or if People cou'd have had the Patience to peruse them with all the Disadvantages that bad Paper and Types afforded elsewhere. Most of the Pieces that are new, or were never published before, have the initial Letter of their Author's Name subscribed to them, as they were convey'd to us. We don't pretend to know every one whose Productions we have judg'd tolerable, and worthy of a Place in this Collection. But, if we guess right, the best of 'em are done by young People, at School or College. This we reckon, is so far from being a reproach to the Miscellany, that it shou'd recommend it, and give a promising Idea of our rising Generation. And we own it, we have ventur'd to publish several juvenile Poems, where the Dawings (sic) of a good Genius appear'd, merely to encourage the Authors, and raise a generous Emulation amongst their Companions. Perhaps our Fondness to cherish the sprightly Youth, has occasion'd some Blunders here and there in this Volume, which we would not have indulg'd in the Performances of more grown People. Yet, we are confident, there are

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Of a Country Life, by a Student in the University.</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(initial) T. (Thomson?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upon Happiness, by the same hand.</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verses On receiving a Flower from his Mistress, by the same hand.</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horace, Book I. By James Arbuckle.</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Pastoral Inscrib'd to Mr. M____l., by a Youth in his Fifteenth Year. (initials) D. M. (David Mallet?)</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter II of Solomon's Song, by the same hand.</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Grove or Interview, by the same hand.</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epithalamium on The Marriage of a Friend, by a boy in his Fifteenth Year. D. M.</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. The Edinburgh Miscellany, preface.
fewer Faults in their Productions, than may be found in the Poems formerly printed in the Scots Miscellany and other Papers, publish'd by Men of Character. As for the Ladies, who have generously contributed to make up this Work, we are proud to declare, that, tho' they have sent us few of their Compositions, they have sent nothing that is refuse. And therefore, while we publicly thank them for the Assistance already receiv'd, we beg they will continue to shine like the brighter constellations amongst Luminaries of a dimmer Aspect. The rest of that delicate Sex, will excuse us, tho' we particularly thank the Fair Intellectual Club for the Poems they have been pleas'd to favour us with for publick use. And we presume the ingenious Readers of their Performances will allow us to intreat them to send more to bespangle the second volume.

Tho' the snarling Part of Mankind may easily find Matter to work on here; tho' they may censure, very justly, a great many Poems taken separately; yet there are also Pieces against which Malice it self can find no Exception, for the sake of which the rest may be allowed to pass Scot-free (to use our own Idiom) in a work of this Sort. If the Refuse were judiciously separated from the good stuff, in many English collections of Poetry, we wou'd have fewer, at least less bulky ones at present. But 'tis not our Design to curry Favour to our selves, or to obviate the Objections that may be rais'd against the following Miscellany, from a Plea of Error in the Undertakings and Performances of others. As we are conscious of the integrity and Generosity of our Endeavours for the Honour of our Country and the Improvement of the Youth, so we dread not the Fury of those who think 'tis modish and witty to Censure. We reckon we are secure enough against the Arms of Envy, yet freely allow others to think and speak as they please concerning Poetry and this particular Collection; Tho' we can't help putting the Readers in mind, that since they are not solemnly invited to the Entertainment, but come accidentally, they ought to be contented with what they find. And pray what have they to complain of, but too great variety? Where, tho' some of the Dishes (as a certain Author writes) be not served in the exactest Order and Politeness, but hash'd up in haste, there are a great many accommodated to every particular Palate. To like every thing shows too little Delicacy; and to like nothing, too much Difficulty. So great is the Variety of this Collection, that the Reader who is never pleas'd will appear as monstrous, as he that is always so. Amongst such different Hands and Agreements it cannot be expected that they, should all be equally finished; neither, if they were so, would they be so esteemed by Readers of different Palates. The worst Poem here may please somebody. To please every one would be a new thing, as to write to nobody's satisfaction would also be prodigious. And the same Poem that pleases not a Reader's Humour and Taste at one time, may at another.
We shall conclude, when we have advis'd the Readers to pass over what suits not their Humour, since the shortness of the Poems and their various Subjects cannot but afford something in one Place or another of the Volume that may be entertaining. Our Book-seller desires we should add, that, since there are none of our own Compositions here, the second Volume (which may succeed this very soon) shall contain a considerable Number of them.

W. C.

Although the second volume did not make its appearance, the Edinburgh Miscellany apparently achieved some success as a second edition was called for. And although nothing further is known regarding this club of young women, it is obvious that the fair sex of Edinburgh did not neglect the cultivation of English literary models, and it is interesting to observe that like their male counterparts, they chose to do this in the fashionable form of a literary association. But I suppose that there will be those who will regard the Fair Intellectual Club, especially in view of the notorious fondness of Scottish ladies for their Bonny Prince, as nothing less than a group of female Jacobites who were as deeply involved in plots for the restoration of the Stuart's as were the masculine conspirators of the Easy Club.

With the aid of the records which have survived of the activities and organization of the Easy Club and of the Fair Intellectual Society, it has been possible for me to give a detailed and relatively straightforward account of those organizations. We shall realize just how important such records are when we are confronted with the task of presenting the separate details of two

1. "In this second edition there appears to be a leaf wanting being pages 93 & 94. - This has been occasioned by a substitution of David's Elegy p. 85 for two poems which occur in the first edition, which have apparently given offence, named 'Str____s' Farwell to
very similar associations which have, during the intervening years, become so inextricably confused that they appear at first sight to be one organization. The two societies are the Rankenian Club, established in 1717, and a "Society for Improving in Classical Lore" established by Thomas Ruddiman the grammarian in 1718. Of the two societies, it may be said that though little is known of the one established by Thomas Ruddiman, the tradition which has survived of the Rankenian Club's activities is of sufficient importance to make the disappearance of its records, if any were kept, a very real loss to the history of Scottish literature. An article in the Scots Magazine for May, 1771, for example, contained the following evaluation of this literary society:

In 1717 a society, called, The Rankenian Club, from the master of the tavern at which it met, being instituted, at Edinburgh, by some young gentlemen of the first abilities in those days, Dr. Wallace was one of its original Fellows; and the deceased Dr. Wishart, Principal of the College, the celebrated Mr. Maclaurin, Professor of Mathematics, the late Sir Andrew Mitchel, Knight of the Bath, Dr. Young, author of an admirable treatise on opium, and others, of whom several are still alive, were numbered among its members. Its object was mutual improvement by liberal conversation and rational inquiry; its influence, however, was not confined to the individuals of whom it consisted. It is well known, that the Rankenians were highly instrumental in disseminating through Scotland freedom of thought, boldness of disquisitions, liberality of sentiment, accuracy of reasoning, correctness of taste, and attention to composition; and that the exalted rank which Scotsmen hold at present in the republic of letters is greatly owing to the manner and the spirit begun by that Society....

When dealing with such an important organization, it is disappointing indeed to have to rely on mere hearsay, or on the fallible evidence which the memory of individual members provides. Such evidence, however, is certainly better than nothing, though, as shall presently be abundantly clear, it can be very confusing.

Despite the lack of precise knowledge, however, a great deal has been written about both the Rankenian Club and the society established by Thomas Ruddiman. When these accounts are compared, three facts appear to be well established. The first of these is, as has already been mentioned, that there were actually two separate literary organizations, instead of one, though they may have met in the same tavern. The second fact is that the first of these organizations, the Rankenian Club, was established in 1717. It is very important to observe that Henry Home, afterwards Lord Kames, and Thomas Ruddiman were almost


1 certainly not among its members. The significance of this seemingly irrelevant fact will appear in a moment. The third fact is that a second society, "for the improvement in classical learning", was established by Thomas Ruddiman in 1718, and we know that soon after its establishment the society was joined by Henry Home.

Of these three facts, the uncertainty concerning the membership of Lord Kames and of Thomas Ruddiman in the Rankenian Club is a most vexing issue. Despite the definite statement of John Ramsay of Ochtertyre that Kames was not a member; that Ruddiman, according to his biographer George Chalmers, left positive evidence that he was not a member; and that neither appeared in the only reliable list we have of the members of this society, Kames himself, in a conversation with James Boswell, made a statement which implied that he was a member of the Rankenian. But not only does Lord Kames make his statement that he was a member of the Club, he makes the same claim for Thomas Ruddiman. And this perplexing contradiction to all that was known heretofore comes in a most dangerous form, for Kames's statement is included in the Malahide papers of James Boswell. I have said the most dangerous form, because the Malahide papers were truly the find of the century, and I believe that until we become a little more used to the wonder of them, there will naturally

1. See the arguments set forth on pages 65 - 67.
3. "Whatever was the reason, he (Lord Kames) was not a member of the Rankenian club," (Ramsay of Ochtertyre: Scotland and Scotsmen in the 18th Century, Vol. 1, page 196, note.)
4. For the evidence that Ruddiman was not a member of the club see pages 67 and 72, below.
be a strong predisposition to accept them as the final authority. But if I may be allowed to pour a little cold water on the heat of their sensational reputation, I would like to point out that the Malahide papers, as wonderful as they are, must be evaluated on the same basis as any similar documents. Even the magic name of James Boswell cannot make facts out of fiction.

The episode which led Kames's implication that he was a member of the Rankenian Club began when Sir Alexander Dick of Prestonfield sent James Boswell a few remarks for use in preparing a biography of Lord Kames, a work which Boswell was then seriously considering. Sir Alexander's remarks read as follows:

Anecdotes From Sir Alexander Dick for Mr. Boswell's use Relative to Lord Kames. Feb. 12, 1780.

Sir Alexander thinks it was about the year 1722 or '23 that he first came acquainted with Mr. Henry Home, advocate, now Lord Kaims, when he was initiated in a club which met every Wednesday evening to hold discourses and disputations upon various subjects, chiefly of Philosophy and Law. Questions in Religion, he thinks, were not allowed, though sometimes they were slyly introduced. The Father of the Club was the very learned old Mr. Thomas Rudiman, a Printer, and Keeper of the Advocates' Library... and I think this was called the Rankinian Club, (from one Rankin who kept the house,) if my memory does not fail me.

On the following day, Boswell took Sir Alexander Dick's account to Lord Kames, and he records a number of somewhat caustic observations made by his Lordship under the date of February 13, 1780. These remarks follow:

Told me (by Lord Kaims) 13 February 1780, written Down next day.

---

He said Sir Alexander Dick was quite mistaken as to the origin of the Rankinian Club—that Religion was excluded. On the contrary, their topics were chiefly Religious, and the only property they had in common was a Bible... Ranken's house was at the head of Kennedy's Close. My lord could go to it yet. The club was very cheap, only twopence apiece.

If we test this direct evidence, which was given, significantly enough, some sixty years after the event, by the touchstone of our three facts, the results are truly disconcerting. If Thomas Ruddiman was "the Father of the Club," it cannot have been the Rankenian at all, but must have been the Society for Classical Studies which Ruddiman formed in 1718. It will be noted, however, that Sir Alexander Dick's statement regarding the name of the organization to which both accounts refer is conjectural. "I think this was called the Rankinian Club," writes Sir Alexander, "if my memory does not fail me." We have evidence which indicates that Sir Alexander Dick was himself a member of the Rankenian, and though it is nowhere stated that he was also a member of Ruddiman's society as well, I am certain that he must have been, how else could he have remembered a club in which Ruddiman took part. In the long interval which intervened between his activities in those organizations and his account of one of them sixty years later, the two clubs must have become thoroughly confused in his mind.

In his statement, Lord Kames apparently made the same mistake as Sir Alexander Dick in assuming that the club of which Thomas Ruddiman was "the father" was the Rankenian. It would be very convenient if I could accept Lord Kames's statement as being correct and admit him as a member of the Rankenian Club, especially as it is of that.

1. See the list of members on page 69.
circumstantial nature which is very convincing. He has, for example, indicated that he had a very clear memory of the tavern in which the club met. Judged by the facts which I have found it necessary to accept, however, Kames's statement must be disallowed.

There is the documentary proof, which I have described in detail on page 72, below, which definitely states that Ruddiman was a member of only two clubs, neither of which was the Rankenian. There is John Ramsay of Ochtertyre's statement that Kames was not a member of the Rankenian. And the only list of members which has been handed down by a member of the Rankenian Club, which I have given in full on page 69, does not bear the name of either Lord Kames or of Thomas Ruddiman. Despite the evidence contained in the Malahide papers, therefore, it would be, in my opinion, a serious error to admit that Sir Alexander Dick and Lord Kames were actually describing the Rankenian Club as they believed. And on the basis of this opinion, I have regarded both their accounts as applying to the society of which Ruddiman was actually the founder, the Society for the Improvement of Classical Studies.

It will be seen, from what has just gone before, that I have not exaggerated the inconvenience which a lack of proper records for the important Rankenian Club entails. Some information, however, has been provided by various authors who have written of the earlier half of

1. A part of the difficulty could be gotten over if it could be proved that both the Rankenian and the Society for Improving Classical Studies met in Ranken's tavern. That Ruddiman's society met in a tavern seems very likely, for that was the custom of the day. But, unfortunately, there is no positive evidence to indicate the place of meeting. We may only assume that Ranken's tavern, if it was suitable for the meetings of the one group, would have been suitable for the other. But this leaves the matter in as uncertain a state as before.
the century, and though we must be cautious in accepting any particular statement of fact, the general picture of the organization, I believe, can be traced with sufficient accuracy to make it well worth our while to examine the details which have been given us.

The most concise description of the Rankenian Club appears in Bower's *History of the University of Edinburgh*. After pointing out that the Rankenian was one of a type of associations formed for the purpose of imitating "the example which had been given in England", Bower goes on to explain the activities of the Club as follows:

> The gentlemen who composed it spent their hours of meeting in literary conversation, making critical remarks of any new works of merit that were published; or on the style, sentiment, or manner of authors of established reputation. One of their number was appointed to deliver an essay upon some prescribed subject at each meeting; concerning the merits of which, every member was requested to give his opinion.

It is worth noting that the practice of hearing "an essay upon some prescribed subject at each meeting" was adopted by nearly every literary society which was organized after the Rankenian. This is further proof of the fact to which I have already drawn the reader's attention, that a preoccupation with matters of form and style was a characteristic of the Scottish literary societies of this period.

In *Tytler's Life of Henry Home, Lord Kames*, we are provided with a list of members which was compiled by "George Wallace, Esq., Advocate, one of the last surviving members of the Rankenian."

2. See Chapter 1, page 5 f.
The Reverend William Wishart, D. D., one of the Ministers of Edinburgh, and Principal of the University.

Archibald Murray of Murrayfield, Esq; Advocate.

The Reverend Robert Wallace, D. D., a Minister of the New North Church of Edinburgh, author of an Estimate of the Numbers of Mankind, and Characteristics of the Present Political State of Great Britain.

The Right Reverend Isaac Madox, Lord Bishop of Worcester.


Mr. John Stevenson, Professor of Logic in the University of Edinburgh.

The Reverend George Turnbull, Professor of Moral Philosophy in the Marischal College, Aberdeen, author of Principles of Moral Philosophy, and various other works.

Colin Maclaurin, A. M., Professor of Mathematics in the University of Edinburgh, author of A System of Fluxions, Account of Sir Isaac Newton's Philosophy, and various other works.

George Young, M. D., Physician in Edinburgh.

John Smibert, a painter of reputation.

Mr. Charles Mackay, Advocate, Professor of Civil History in the University of Edinburgh.

The Reverend William Hepburn, Minister of Inverkeilor, in Angus.

Michael Graham of Gartmore, Esq; Advocate.

The Reverend George Wishart, D. D., Minister of the Tron Church, Edinburgh, Principal Clerk to the Church of Scotland.

Sir Alexander Dick of Prestonfield, Baronet.

Sir John Pringle, Baronet, M. D., Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh, Physician to their Majesties, and President of the Royal Society of London.

Charles Maitland of Pitrichie, Esq; Advocate, Member of Parliament.

Alexander Boswell of Auchinleck, one of the Lords of Session.

Sir Andrew Mitchel of Thainstons, Advocate, K. B., afterwards Plenipotentiary at the Court of Berlin.

After the Club had subsisted above forty years, and its attending members were much diminished by death and accidental separation, it was resolved, that the sons of the original members should be invited to become associates. In consequence of this resolution, the following gentlemen were added to its number:

Thomas Young, M. D., Professor of Midwifery in the University of Edinburgh.


John Maclaurin of Dreghorn, one of the Lords of Session, author of a Collection of Criminal Trials; Observations on
some Points of Law, Etc.

23. Alexander Murray of Henderland, one of the Lords of Session.

In the Winter of 1771, a few months after the death of Dr. Wallace, the Rankenian Club resolved to discontinue their regular weekly meetings; and a few occasional meetings were afterwards held, down to the year 1774, from which time it ceased altogether.

The literary discussion which took place in the Rankenian Club was, in keeping with the fashion of the day, predominantly metaphysical. There is, indeed, a pretty legend that the club entered into a correspondence with Bishop Berkeley, who, after some correspondence with its members, is said to have stated that though they pushed his theories to "amazing lengths," that his reasoning "had nowhere been better understood than by this club of young Scotsmen." So impressed was the good Bishop, or so goes the story, "that he wished to have carried them to Bermuda, where he proposed to found a college for the Americans." The young men, however, did not accept his invitation. According to one author, they refused because they were "too much attached to their native country to accept of the Doctor's offer"; according to another, because they thought his project "visionary".

An attractive story, certainly, but there must be sober doubts about it, for the biographer of Bishop Berkeley reports that he "failed to find any documentary record of this interesting incident."

5. Fraser: Life and Letters of Bishop Berkeley, page 224, note.
When we turn to the literary society which was established by Thomas Ruddiman approximately a year later, we find that there is even less information available to us. But what little there is appears to be of a higher accuracy than that which has just been examined in connection with the Rankenian Club. There is, for example, an excellent description of the organization in an article which appeared in *Hogg's Instructor* for 1852.

In the year subsequent to the institution of the Rankenian Club, another association was established at Edinburgh, the object of which was mutual improvement in the classical literature of Greece and Rome. This is the second literary society which appears from any authentic documents, to have statedly assembled in Scotland. It was a fundamental rule of the Society, that it was not to meddle with affairs of church and state—very wise provision; for literary men, whose sentiments may differ on political and ecclesiastical questions, may, with perfect good feeling, meet each other in intellectual discussion on many subjects which crowd the vast field of literature. The original members of the society were the famous Thomas Ruddiman, its founder, and the master of the High School of Edinburgh. Among others who afterwards joined it, were Dr. George Wishart, formerly referred to, and several advocates including Henry Home, better known as Lord Kames, whose insatiable thirst for knowledge of every kind made him extremely zealous in the support of institutions for intellectual improvement. The time was employed in conversation, and in reading dissertations composed by the members; but none of the fruits of the labours of this institution appear to have been given to the world, nor is it known how long it continued to exist.

The documentary evidence to which this author refers is very insignificant. In Dr. Chalmers biography of Thomas Ruddiman, the "authentic document" is described. "I found an account of this society," writes Chalmers, "in a manuscript note, of the handwriting of Ruddiman, at the end of the pamphlet entitled *Furius.*" Chalmers has quoted a part of this note which reads as follows:-


He (Ruddiman) never was concerned in any (societies) but two; the one, which was set up many years before he was engaged in it, and consisted of gentlemen of considerable rank, such as Sir Thomas Moncrief, and Sir William Scott, of doctors of physic, and of episcopal ministers; the other was set up by schoolmasters, who were joined by persons of greater consequence, for improving themselves in useful learning, without meddling with church, or state.

The resolve not to meddle "with church or state" is a constant theme in these accounts, and it is interesting to compare this with Lord Kames's own testimony that the discussions were "chiefly religious." It may well be possible that both recollections are correct. It strikes me that in a philosophical discussion it is perfectly feasible to introduce the subject of religion without "meddling" with the affairs of the church, and to talk of political theories without particular reference to existing institutions. Sir Alexander Dick was undoubtedly correct when he observed that although "questions of religion were not allowed, sometimes they were slyly introduced." We need not assume, however, that the constitution of the society remained for ever unchanged. What may have begun as a society "for the cultivation of classical literature," could easily have developed into an organization in which all could join for the purpose, as Ruddiman himself stated it, of "improving themselves in useful learning". Four years after the institution of this society, at the time of which Sir Alexander Dick wrote, a step already had been taken toward greater freedom of discussion; and it need not disturb us that Lord Kames remembered that religion

1. This society has disappeared from sight.
2. See the quotation from the Boswell Papers on page 65, above.
was the main topic of conversation, for his memories of the society may have been a reflection of activities which took place at an even later period. And this change in the character of this society is not unusual, for it is the nature of literary societies to reflect changes in the interests of their members. A rigid and immutable definition of subject-matter was not a feature of the eighteenth-century literary society. On the contrary, there was a decided tendency to include an ever increasing range of subjects. Any seeming contradiction in the accounts which have been handed down concerning this society, therefore, may be taken as evidence of such a development.

At a time when the society was concerned with classical studies, its membership reflected the predominant interest. Alexander Bower, in his History of the University of Edinburgh, gives us the following picture of the club at this period:

Several of the members of that association were accurate scholars; and afterwards gave proofs of their acuteness as critics in philosophy, and the ardour with which they prosecuted their favourite studies. Besides Ruddiamn, Mr John Love, one of the masters of the high-school, who afterwards removed to Dalkeith, was an eminent classical scholar. His review of Trotter's Latin Grammar is a masterly performance, and may still be perused with profit, though the treatise which gave occasion to it has long sunk into oblivion. The notorious Lauder was also a member, who, whatever may be affirmed of his morals, was undoubtedly a good linguist, which even his absurd and wicked attempt to prove Milton guilty of plagiarism sufficiently shewed. These and others were speedily joined by Mr Home, afterwards Lord Kames, who was not as yet called to the bar; but feeling the effects of having neglected the cultivation of classical learning he began about this time to study, with his accustomed ardour, those ancient monuments of elegant composition. Mr Archibald Murray, Mr James Cochran, and some other members of the Faculty of Advocates, together with Mr George Wishart, afterwards one of the ministers of Edinburgh, considered themselves as honoured by being admitted as members.

From the pen of Sir Alexander Dick we have the following account of the society at a time when it was joined by young Henry Home:

The Father of the Club was the very learned old Mr. Thomas Rudiman, a Printer, and Keeper of the Advocates' Library. A Nonjuror Clergyman, likewise a very learned man, whose name was Mr. Gullin, was next in iminence, and they two, Sir Alexander, (then Mr. Cunningham, a student of Medicine,) imagined were the contrivers of this meeting. Being keen Jacobites both, they thought it was a good opportunity of Assembling first, young Gentlemen, whose Parents were well inclined to the old cause; 2dly, Gradually to bring in young Presbyterian Clergymen, Students of Divinity, Law, and Physic, to hear the disputations, which often tended to keep alive the Spirit of Jacobitism, or rather the interest of the family of Stewart, which the late Civil War, seven years before, had almost extinguished. Mr. Henry Home was then one of them that gave regular attendance every Wednesday evening (at 6 o'clock); ... Mr. John Mene, a Writer of Whigish principles, very shroud (i.e. shrewd) and fond of disputation, a man about thirty, took a considerable Share in the disputes which occurred.

Mr. George Wishart, then, I think, a minister of Edinburgh, Mr. Campbell of Succoth, Mr. Ogilvy, (Lord Finlater's Brother,) a Lawyer, Mr. Archibald Murray, a lawyer of some standing, and Mr. Rume, a Clergyman from the Merse, - These Gentlemen, with about a dozen more whose names I have forgot, were the first who received Questions that were laid before them, which they discus'd with great Warmth after having chosen a President.

Mr. Boswell, then of Auchinleck, your worthy father, came in sometime afterwards, and many more lawyers. This was held the best place to acquire the power of Public speaking, and Sir Alexander could observe by degrees had greatly improved our old friend Lord Kaims in his powers of Disputation and public speaking, as it did Mr. Ogilvy, who became a real Orator, but who died unluckily before his fortune was established. Had he lived, by his powers and connexions, (his father having been Chancellor) he must have been made President of the Court after Old Dalrymple's death, and would have been an infinite service to Kaims, as they lived together like Brothers. I must not forget (and Lord Kaims knows it very well) there was one Michael Ramsay, a very debauched, licentious Creature, who took pleasure in corrupting all the youth of families that came in his way, by carrying them to lewd women, drunken companions who like himself neither feared God nor Man. This Wretch Sir Alexander well remembers to have helped to corrupt Mr. Ogilvy, Kaims, and Willy Hamilton, and would brag (of) such a thing.


2. George Wishart and Archibald Murray were also members of the Rankehanian Club. See the list of members on page 69, above.
This explains the 300 pounds of debt contracted, which was like a millstone upon Kaim's neck. Sir Alexander had always a detestations at that fellow, and in his own mind called him "Michael the Arch Devil."

Henry Home himself, who was then the famous Lord Kames, made a number of observations concerning individual members which are not without interest. His remarks, which follow, reveal his proclivity for intellectual mischiefmaking, and his primary concern with metaphysics and religion as topics for discussion:

(The society) consisted mostly of Students of Divinity. Lord Kames, Ogilvie, and Campbell of Succoth went into it to puzzle and make mischief, and they succeeded but too well with many, making them Deists. My Lord had to speak to them to be decent. Michael Ramsay was a harmless creature, and Sir Alexander Dick misunderstood his character. They used to attack Jacobitism too severly to Mr. Thomas Ruddiman who was no reasoner. Bishop Gullin was a dull man. Not probable he was even the compiler of Carnwath's Memoirs, for they are in the Careless stile of a Gentleman not accustomed to write.

In regards to the relative importance of the Rankenian Club as compared with that of Ruddiman's Society for Improving in Classical Studies, the unknown author of an article in Hogg's Instructor observes the following:

Of these two societies, the Rankenian Club was doubtless the most important. Not that it is meant to depreciate the cultivation of Grecian and Roman literature, to the revival of which, in the fifteenth century, Europe is indebted for her intellectual superiority to the other divisions of the globe, and by the aid of which, the most gifted poets, orators, historians, theologians, and philosophers, whom Britain has ever produced, have had their genius invigorated, their views enlarged, and their taste purified. But the cultivation of the English language was of much greater consequence. The

2. It is interesting to observe that none of the men mentioned by Lord Kames are listed as being members of the Rankenian Club. See the list of members on page 69, above.
probability that it would become the vernacular tongue throughout Scotland — the state of perfection to which it had been brought, rendering it one of the best instruments of thought and vehicles of communication — the incomparably rich and ever-advancing literature of which it was the depository, rivalling, or surpassing, the most admired productions of Greece and Rome; — all these circumstances lent their weight in establishing the importance of cultivating the English language and English literature. At one period of our history, our learned countrymen, who carried the passion for the study of the classic learning of antiquity to excess, preferred the Latin tongue to their own as the medium of communicating their thoughts through the press, and when it is considered, not only that their Latin writings would have the advantage of being read by the learned in every nation, but that from its superior polish and greater copiousness, the Latin language gave fuller scope to their genius, and expressed their ideas with greater elegance, vigour, and even copiousness than their own, in its then rude and unformed state, there is no reason to wonder at the preference. But a taste for the acquisition of a classic English style was now beginning to appear; and, though feeble at first, and far from being widely diffused, it was, in the middle of the century, to become a passion similar to that which existed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries for the requisition of skill in the Latin tongue. It was in the highest degree desirable that this taste should be cherished and invigorated, and to give an impulse in the right direction, was the meritorious object aimed at by the Rankenian Club.

Because it regards Ruddiman's society as being strictly for the purpose of classical studies only, this evaluation is undoubtedly unfair. But the emphasis it places on the importance at this period of the study of English literary models and in mastering the English language is in keeping with the temper of the age. The study of form, however, be it of Latin or of English examples, was an important concern of both these "improving" societies. And it is this concern with form which serves to remind us that both of the literary societies we have been discussing belonged to an age when the first phase of the movement for national improvement was at its height.

Not all the societies which appeared at this period, however, were so perfectly in keeping with the predominant spirit of the age. The strength, as well as the historical necessity, of the movement.
for national improvement is demonstrated in the unproductive career of a society of "associated critics" which was organized for the purpose of vindicating Buchanan, "that incomparably learned and pious author from the calumnies of Mr. Thomas Ruddiman." The vindication of Buchanan, however, was only to be the first step; for Wodrow, in writing of the same society, informs us that "a larger and more important subject they have before them: and that is, a Vindication of our Reformations and Reformers from the objections by Popish and pretended Protestant writers, which they will fall about after they have brought their designs as to Buchanan to some bearing. Particularly Knox, Murray, and Morton, are to be vindicat, and our Reformation by Presbiters. This Society, if continued, will certainly be of very great use."

Despite Wodrow's optimism, however, the endeavours of the "associated critics" came to nothing. Though they promised an entirely new edition of Buchanan's works, complete with a new life of the author, such a work never appeared. And, having failed thus to bring "their designs as to Buchanan to some bearing," their plans for a vindication of Knox, Murray, and Morton could never have been seriously considered. Their greatest failure, however, is implicit in the exclusively Scottish interests which they attempted to cultivate. When all eyes and all interests were fixed on the English example of economic prosperity and literary elegance, there were precious few in Scotland who had the time or the patience to spare for the ill-contrived ill-writ, and ill-mannered diatribes of a society of literary diehards.

If the reader has any doubts as to the validity of this observation, and if he is a Scotsman he may possibly feel that the situation has been inaccurately described, the comments of a Scottish author of some merit should convince him that the associated critics had not exactly found the certain road to a popular success. After examining the Society's manuscript quarto volume entitled Notts to vindicate the Truth and clear off the Aspersions by, or in, Mr. Thomas Rudeman's preface to Mr. Robert Freebairn's edition of George Buchanan's History from calumnious spirit; or Mr. James Anderson Antiquary and others their Vindication of Buchanan, Chalmers makes the following observation:

A short preface sufficiently instructs the reader as to the contents of this elaborate volume,—"This contains an apology for publishing a new and correct edition of the illustrious George Buchanan's works intended by some eminent and learned men anno 1717, as a most critical and just vindication of that incomparably learned and pious author, from the aspersions and calumnies of Mr. Thomas Rudeman, in Mr. Robert Freebairn's edition of Buchanan's works, anno 1715." As these profound scholars could not write vulgar English, Adam Watt, the professor of the Roman language, at Edinburgh, had the charity to cloth their nakedness with a Roman Dress. Animated by the kindness of Watt, they proceeded to stuff eighty pages with Notts upon the Annotations of Ruddiman. The reader is wearied, and confounded; but, he is neither convinced, nor informed. Considering Buchanan as infallible, the critics only laboured to demonstrate, how easily prejudice may convert falsehoods into facts, and ungrateful scandals into fair reports.

Chalmers continues in the same vein when he considers the "critics!"

preparations for writing a new biography of Buchanan:

About the Life of Buchanan, the associated editors showed still more zealous anxiety. They criticized the critic most unmercifully. But they did not instruct the reader. They did not reveal then what had not been revealed before.

1. Chalmers: Life of Ruddiman, pages 75-76.

2. Ibid, pages 76-77.
They had not sent to St. Andrews, and to Paris, in order to ascertain the dates of Buchanan's literary honours. They had not searched the records for the successive epochs of his political preferments. They had not ransacked the state papers for anecdotes, which had more clearly illustrated his genuine character. They only laboured, with the powers of impotence, to criminate his editor. The days, however, are past, when writers, who have only their captiousness to recommend them, can hope to find a reader, even among the abettors of faction.

The "eminent and learned men" who met in 1717 as the "associated critics" are listed by Chalmers as follows:—

This incomparably learned and pious society consisted of the following persons: Mr. James Anderson, (the) famous antiquary; the reverend and erudite professors, Hamilton and Smith; Charles Macky, the professor of History; (Sir) Robert Stewart, the professor of Natural Philosophy; the Rev. George Logan; (Sir) Archibald Steuart (Denham), the advocate; with many others of inferior note.

In 1724, these men invited Robert Wodrow to join in their circle. At this period, Wodrow informs us, the "critics" had before them "proposals from Holland", where Langerak, the bookseller of Leyden, was making plans for reprinting Buchanan's works in two quartos, with a preface by Burman of Leyden. The reaction of the "critics" to this anticipation of their own promised publication is interestingly related by Wodrow:

Burman had wrote over to Mr. Charles M'ky, who was with us, to know if any helps to that new Edition might be expected from Scotland? The Society considered the danger of spreading Ruddiman's Edition of Buchanan, with his praeface and notes, which are so unfavourable to Buchanan, and to our Reformation, and civil liberty, and therfore agreed to take all means to prevent the Dutch edition, till a remedy was provided at least to go along with the disease, and an antidote with the poison; and desired Mr. M'ky to signify to Professor Burman that there was some gentlemen in Scotland, upon giving a new Edition of Buchanan, with a refutation of Mr. Ruddiman's praeface and notes, and severall other things, and had materials ready, and would, as soon as possible, publishe it here, (for the Society

had no hopes of a correct edition in Holland,) and if they would delay their impression in Holland till this were ready, it would be much for their own advantage. That the Society designed to print no more copies than were subscribed for, and would bear the charges of the work, and if they would go on in Holland, they desired Mr. M'kic would signify that it was in our power to prevent the sale of their edition, by publishing an advertisement in the Forraigne Journalls of what was designed here.

The proposed Dutch edition evidently had the effect of stimulating the laggard activities of the "critics", as it had been seven years since their original proposal to rectify the errors committed by Ruddiman. This new frenzy of activities, however, serves merely to illustrate how ineffectual their previous efforts had been, and we see in Wodrow's description of them all the marks of a new undertaking:

The Society had before them a list of books and MSS. to be made use of as materials for the answer to Mr. Ruddiman; and as they meet on Tuesday every fourteenth-night, so they parcel out the subject to be considered to the different members, and order them to bring in extracts and remarks upon that subject against the next meeting. They agreed to read Mr. Ruddiman's praeface, and bring remarks on it to the next meeting.

This episode, which certainly could have done little to advance the reputation of Scottish scholars abroad, ended with a well-deserved rebuke to the "associated critics." The reaction of the Dutch literary men is described for us by Chalmers as follows:

With the impatience of a bookseller, who has advanced his money, Langerak urged Burman to proceed; alleging, as his preface told the readers, "that the boastings of the favourers of Buchanan, in Scotland, were perhaps idle and vain." Being thus disappointed, by their frivolousness, Burman published his edition of Buchanan's words, in 1725, with Ruddiman's Preface and Notes as they were ....

At a later period, the "associated critics" were involved in a controversy which was occasioned by the appearance of Jebb's *Vita et Febus Gestis Marieae Scotorum Reginae*. According to Chalmers, "the confederacy was mortified to see two folio volumes, which represented Mary, and her cause, in a favourable light." "In this distress the confederacy summoned James Anderson to give a counter-publication..." And he came out into the world, in 1727, and 1728, with four volumes of *Collections relating to the History of Mary Queen of Scotland*.

This work, so Chalmers informs us, was greeted with "the censures of the critics," and "the frowns of the public." Chalmers' evaluation of the reception given Anderson's work, however, may have been coloured by his own prejudices in the matter. In the controversy which has surrounded the vexed question of the Martyr Queen, neither side has deserved many compliments for unimpassioned reasoning or for fairness of mind.

But we are in danger of losing ourselves in this insignificant and unessential literary squabbling. It is sufficient, for the purpose of this thesis, to point out once more that the literary countermarch attempted by the "associated critics" merely indicates the strength and direction of the main stream of literary development.


2. Robert Chambers, for example, describes Anderson as "a man of no small merit as an editor of historical muniments." (Chambers: *Critical Domestic Annals of Scotland*, Vol. 3, page 488.) But even Chambers is shrewd enough to recognize that this society "for cultivating historical literature" was "not destined to make any great permanent mark on the age." (Ibid, page 477.)
George Chalmers, whose criticism of this organization was so outspoken, was an example of the type of man of letters which this development tended to produce, and this goes a long way toward explaining his sympathy for Thomas Ruddiman who was one of his literary ancestors. Both Chalmers and Ruddiman gave every indication of their awareness that the values of the "associated critics" were antithetical to their own. But it is time to return to the more profitable task of examining those societies which, in contrast to the backward-looking defenders of the "incomparably learned and pious society" of critics, were preparing Scotland for her brilliant future.

The next literary society to appear in Scotland is of particular interest, as its development, over a period of fifty years, is a reflection of succeeding stages made in the movement for national improvement. The organization to which I refer is the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh. Before I begin a description of the Philosophical Society, however, it will be necessary to give an account of an earlier society out of which the Philosophical developed. In later chapters, we shall discover how the Philosophical Society led to the establishment in its turn of still another important society, the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

In 1751, a society "for the improvement of medical knowledge" was instituted in Edinburgh. An account of this society, which is generally referred to as the Medical Society, appears in a biographical sketch of Dr. Alexander Monro, primus, who was the first Professor of

2. Not to be confused with the Royal Medical Society, which was a student's organization at the University of Edinburgh. For this Society see page 365 f., Chapter 6.
anatomy at the University of Edinburgh. Dr. Monro, as will be learned from the following quotation, was largely instrumental in making a success of the society's resolve to publish interesting medical cases and important medical speculations:

When patients were received into the infirmary, and a regular register kept of all their cases, it was reasonably expected that many histories worth publishing might be extracted from that register, and might assist to form volumes of medical observations or essays, which it was proposed should be published from time to time. With this view, the professors of physic associated with Doctors Drummond sen., Francis Fringle, Lewis, Clerk, Cochran, Porterfield, Dundas, and Mr. Macgill surgeon. Professor Monro was appointed their secretary, and directed the register kept of the weather.

During the first year, the members attended the meetings of their society regularly, and made remarks on the papers presented to them; but, after the publication of their first volume in 1752, they grew remiss in their attendance, and very soon the whole care of this collection fell upon the secretary; so that no other member so much as saw any of the papers except what they were authors of, till printed copies of them were sent to them by the bookseller.

In each of the six volumes this society published, the name of our author (i.e., Monro) is prefixed to several papers; besides which, he wrote all the anonymous papers, one or two excepted, and the account of new medical books and improvements published in the different countries of Europe; and he had likewise the trouble of collecting and arranging the materials of many of the other papers, which were transmitted to him in letters, not properly digested.

These volumes of medical essays and observations have undergone various editions; and have been translated into the French, Dutch, and German languages. A very excellent judge, Dr. Haller, is pleased to observe that they are such, that no physician can well be without them....

The success of the publications of the Medical Society brought great credit to the Medical school of the University of Edinburgh, and, as a result, "many foreigners repaired to Edinburgh; and British subjects, instead of going abroad, gave the preference to the schools of their

1. The Edinburgh Magazine and Review, April 1774, page 339 f.
native country. These publications consisted of five volumes of medical essays entitled, Medical Essays and Observation Published by a Society in Edinburgh. Between 1732 and 1739, the Society published four volumes of essays. A fifth volume, in two parts, appeared in 1742 and 1744 under the auspices of the newly formed Society for the Improvement of Natural Knowledge, or, as it is better known, the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh. The Medical Essays themselves deserve some comment because of their wide distribution and their influence on the development of medical knowledge. As has already been stated, the society's publications underwent "several Editions", five to be exact, and were translated into several foreign languages. The method employed in the presentation of the essays seemed, from the outset, destined to be popular. The function and intent of the Medical Essays was explained in a preface to the first volume:

No Complaint is more general among those who apply to the Study of any liberal Science, than their being under a Necessity of perusing such Numbers of Books as are wrote on the several Parts of each of them: A Labour that can have no End, since one Book serves only as an Introduction to another, while a few Pages might contain all that is new or valuable in most of them. It must however be confessed, that many good and useful Remarks and Discoveries are lost, by the Unwillingness of some ingenious Men to appear in Print, and by others having neither Time nor Inclination to compose a sizable Treatise, who would communicate necessary and beneficial Observations to the World, if they had a proper Opportunity to do it in a Sheet of two.

2. The first volume is dated 1733, though it is said to have appeared in 1732. The practice of predating new publications was common at this period. "It being an ordinary circumstance with booksellers and printers, towards the close of a year, to date publications as if printed in the subsequent year." (Kerr: Life of Smellie, Vol. 1, page 29.)
The Society proposed "one probable solution" to the problem as follows:

One probable Method of remedying these two Discouragements to Learning is, to publish Collections of small Treatises, submitted to the Examination of a Society of such who had particularly studied the Science which is the Subject of each Tract; and who should give some short Account of the most remarkable and useful Discoveries and Improvements made by the contemporary Authors in their own Profession; By which we would soon have more Authors, and fewer Books, to the great Advancement of Learning, and abridging of our Studies.

After examining the examples set by the publications of the Royal Society of London, the Academie Royale des Sciences at Paris, the Academia Scientiarum Imperialis at Petersburgh, and the Academia Naturae Curiosorum in Germany, the Medical Society resolved that their publications should include the following items:

I. A Register of the Height of the Barometer, Degrees of the Thermometer and Hydroscope, the Quantity of Rain that falls, the Direction and Force of the Wind, and State of the Weather at Edinburgh for Twelve Months; compared with Observations of the same kind, communicated by Correspondents.

II. An Account of the Diseases which have been epidemick, or most universal in Edinburgh, in the several Seasons of the preceding Year, with an Extract from the Records of Burials; which shall also be compared with any Accounts of the same Nature sent from other Places.


IV. Figures necessary to explain Instruments, Operations, Descriptions, etc., in any of the foregoing Tracts.
V. Discoveries or Improvements made anywhere else in the several Branches of Medicine.

VI. An alphabetical Index of the Contents.

The part to be played by the society in all this is also described in the preface to their first volume. Their intentions in this matter are laid down as follows:-

We are to revise all the particular Observations and Essays transmitted to us, and to reduce them to the most convenient Order, publishing each in the Author’s own Words; only we beg to be excused, if we delay to insert any Paper which appears to us deficient in Facts, or not so methodical, till these Circumstances, of which we shall inform the Author, are cleared up. We do not however pretend by this Power to reject Observations, tho’ some Circumstances are omitted, if they are otherwise useful, nor to suppress Essays that are ingenious, tho’ the Propositions they contain are contrary to our Way of thinking. All we propose by reserving this Choice of Papers, is to acquaint the Author of such Omissions or Objections as might be taken Notice of, that, by supplying and correcting them, the Work may be made more acceptable to the Publick; and therefore we persuade ourselves, that this Part of our Labour will prove one of the greatest Encouragements to procure us Correspondents.

The policy outlined in the preface to the first volume was followed in the preparation of the first four volumes of Medical Essays and Observations. In the first part of a fifth volume the following notice announced a change in the organization which had been responsible for the previous publications:-

A Society being formed in this Place for the Improvement of Natural Knowledge, in which all the Branches of Medicine are included; and the Members of our Society being adopted into this new one, the Design of publishing more Volumes of Medical Papers was dropt some Time ago.

It is now at the Desire of the Gentlemen of this new Society that we cause this fifth Volume to be printed, which was so much enlarged by the Papers which they generously furnished us from their Repository, that we are obliged to divide it into two Parts....

The development of the Medical Society into the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh, however, brings us once more into the realm of the eighteenth-century literary society. The Philosophical Society, with its inclusive intellectual interests, was the very type of that class of societies which dominated the intellectual scene in the eighteenth century, and which has so completely disappeared in the intervening years.

In the transactions of the Philosophical Society, which appeared under the title of Essays and Observations, Physical and Literary, the following account is given of the development of the Medical Society into the Society for Improving Arts and Sciences:

After the medical society of Edinburgh had published those volumes of essays, which have met with so favourable a reception from the public, a proposal was made them to enlarge their plan, and to carry their disquisitions into other parts of medicine. All the sciences are remarked to have a close connection together: but none more than those of medicine and natural philosophy. And the Society soon observed, that should it turn its inquiries into more general knowledge, it could reap the advantage of preserving all its old members; and needed but open its door to gentlemen of other professions, who might enrich it with their observations and discoveries.

It has often been stated that the suggestion to expand the interests of the Medical Society came from Colin Maclaurin, who was then Professor of Mathematics at the University and "one of the most brilliant disciples of Newton." In his own account of the origin of the society, however, Maclaurin states that the plan came from "some gentlemen" but he does not give their names. In two letters to Dr. Johnston, Professor of

1. Essays and Observations, Physical and Literary, Preface. See also, for a reprint of the same, the Scots Magazine, April, 1754, pages 184-185.
Medicine in the University of Glasgow, Maclaurin gives a number of interesting details concerning the newly-formed society:

Dear Sir,

I was moving my family out of town last week, and had not time to write you an account of what passed on Wednesday. There met 21 in number; Lord Lauderdale, Aberdour, Clerk, Hope, St. Clair, Sir John Clerk, Drs. Clerk, Stevenson, Pringle, Plummer, Porterfield, Boswell, Alston; Messrs. Craw, Monro, Wallace, Gray, Short, Lynn, St. Clair, and I. A plan that had been formed by some gentlemen was read, and, after some alterations, was approved. Lord Lauderdale was chosen to preside at that time. It was agreed the number should not exceed 42, at least for some time. There were several named who had accepted, but were not present, as Lord Minto, Sir James Dalrymple, Mr. Fullarton of Fullarton, Mr. Scott of Scotstarvet, Drs. St. Clair, Rutherford, Simpson, and Martin at St. Andrews. There were some who had not been spoke to as yet, being at a distance, but had been named from the first; as Lord Advocate, Lord Elphingston, Mr. James Stirling, and some others I cannot just now recollect.

It was thought necessary to distinguish the number into ordinary and extraordinary; the latter not to exceed 18 of the 42. The former are, in their turn, to give in a paper at the meetings of the society, which are only to be monthly, September and October, being excepted. The obligation returns only in about 2 years and a half. This was thought necessary, that they might always be sure of having something at each meeting. Lord Aberdour, Clerk, and some others of distinction, listed as ordinary members, to encourage the design.

They expressed much satisfaction on my acquainting them you had accepted, and left it to your choice under which class you should be; though it would be more agreeable and encouraging if you would be of those that engage to furnish something in their turn. There are already 22 of this class; and they drew by lot what day each should give in his paper. If you accept, it will not come to your turn till 1740; for the course of those papers begins only in December next. Mr. R. Simpson declined accepting, for reasons I do not fully comprehend: I make the best apology for him I could by reading that passage in his letter where he excuses himself. I was somewhat out of countenance, as he was one of those I had proposed, and I could not entirely justify his reasons. I have no orders to desire it, but I wish you could prevail on him before December, when the numbers are to be filled up.

1. Scots Magazine and Edinburgh Literary Miscellany, June 1804, pages 421-423. "Two original Letters from Professor Mac-Laurin to his friend Dr. Johnston, Professor of Medicine in the University of Glasgow, giving an account of the Institution of the Physical Society of Edinburgh, in 1737-8."
That the meetings of the society may be employed about those things which relate to the design of their institution, a council was chosen of 15 for the management. A president, two vice presidents, two secretaries, and a treasurer were chosen. In the election of those, regard was had to such as live in or near the town, for a considerable part of the year. One of the secretaries has, in his province, the general parts, geometry, astronomy, mechanics, optics, etc. The other chemistry, anatomy, botany, etc.; and what is of a more particular nature, Lord Aberdour was chosen president, Sir John Clerk, and Dr. Clark, vice presidents, Dr. Plummer and I secretaries, Mr. Lynn, treasurer. The members pay a guinea annually for the expenses, making experiments, etc.; but such as reside at a distance are to be exempt from payments. A new election is to be the first Tuesday of December annually. Next meeting is to be the first Tuesday of June; I am to find some materials against that meeting. There is to be another meeting the first Tuesday of August, and another the first Tuesday of November, before the regular course of the papers begins. We shall be much obliged to any who will help us to any materials for these diets. If you would send me any thing to be communicated, with your name, or without it, as you please, short or long, it will be acceptable.

Lord Hope has made the society a present of a brass quadrant, 5 foot radius, that cost at least 40 guineas when it was new. This is a good beginning, and there seems to be a good deal of spirit for this design at present. I hope it will continue and have good effects.

As all the gentlemen have a particular esteem for you if you would take the trouble to recommend any thing with relation to the plan; or if you knew any member you think proper to be associated, there will be great regard shewn to it. I think I have mentioned to you what was most material. I proposed to those who first formed the plan, that my two colleagues, Mr. J. Gregory, and Mr. Stewart, should be of the number, and their professions seemed to require it; however, for reasons I cannot describe, this was delayed till December, though I urged it might be sooner.

I am, Dear Sir, Your most obedient, Most Humble Servant, Colin Mac-Laurin.

May 9th, 1738.

Dear Sir

If I had not been much hurried, I would have sent you some account of what has passed at the society. I wrote to you that Dr. Plummer gave us a paper on menstrums in January, Dr. Pringle on a specific for the dysentery in February. It was my turn in March, I gave two papers; the first one was on the figure of the earth, when I shewed how to deduce the ratio...
of the diameter from observations accurately, and applied it to the Jamaica experiment, and the late mensuration of the Polar circle by the French. The second was an account of a set of experiments I had made concerning the quality of the (blank) by which it rarifies flame; and a project for measuring the variations of this quality with a diary I had kept for a month. In April, Dr. Stevenson gave us a paper on animal heat, when he argued against its proceeding from attrition. I can only give you hints of these papers. In May, Dr. Porterfield read us a case of the hydrophobia. These were the papers that were given in regularly, according to lots that had been drawn last June. There were several papers besides these; some mechanical, some relating to the antiquities of the country; some I gave that related to astronomy, and some giving an account of experiments that had been made, particularly to shew, that, in a cylinder level pipe the water presses with very great force on the sides of the pipe. It is Mr. Craw's turn in June, who is one of the best acquainted with mechanics I have met with in this country. If my fluxions were out of my hands, I design to apply more closely to the business of the society. May we not some day expect something from you? I assure you it would be well received.

I am, With particular respect, Dear Sir,
Your Most obedient, Most humble servant,
Colin Mac-Laurin.

Whether MacLaurin can be credited with the suggestion for the reorganization of the Medical Society or not, it is certain that he was one of the leading men in the new association. He performed the duties of secretary, and the society, in his death in 1746, paid him the following tribute:

We met with an irreparable loss in the death of Mr. MacLaurin, one of our secretaries. The great talents of that gentleman are generally known and highly esteemed in the literary world; but the society have also particular reason to regret in him the loss of those qualities which form an excellent academician. Indefatigable himself, he was a perpetual spur to the industry of others; and was highly pleased with the promotion of knowledge from whatever hands it came. At the time of his death, a number of discoveries, sufficient to have formed a volume, had been communicated to him; but, being mingled with his other papers, have been dissipated by various accidents; and the society could recover but few of them.

1. Essays and Observations, Physical and Literary, Preface.
As interesting as it is to speculate on the identity of the person who was immediately responsible for the erection of the Philosophical Society, the motives which lay behind the success of that organization are even more interesting. In his History of Edinburgh, Maitland, who gives the most circumstantial account of the Society, describes the situation which gave rise to it as follows:

Many Advantages having accrued to the Publick from the Studies and Labours of learned and ingenious Men, who having in divers Parts of Europe, erected themselves into Societies for the Improvement of Arts and Sciences, by experimental Philosophy and other Discoveries, both in Art and Nature, which have excited a generous Emulation among the Literati, who, on this Occasion, vie to excel in discovering the most occult Secrets of Nature, for the Benefit of Mankind.

That Edinburgh, at this Time, might not be wanting to contribute its Assistance in so Laudable and commendable an Affair, divers learned Gentlemen, about the Beginning of the Year 1737, began to think of erecting themselves into a Society in this City; and for the better attaining their desirable and valuable Purposes, resolved to communicate their Design to certain of the Nobility, Gentry, and others best qualified to assist them in their intended Undertaking.

Maitland goes on to give an account of the steps by which the Medical Society became the Society for Improving Arts and Sciences:

Pursuant to this Revolution, they applied to a small Society for their Advice and Assistance; that Fellowship, which some Time before had published divers Volumes of Essays and Observations, intitled Medical Essays, were not only ready and willing to promote the design, but the other Gentlemen to whom it was likewise proposed, were very zealous to advance and encourage the honourable and praise-worthy enterprize.

Thus encouraged, a general Meeting of the Undertakers was appointed to be held on the first Day of June, in the aforesaid Year; preparatory to which, a Plan was ordered to be made, and

laid before the said Meeting, for the good Regulation of the intended Society.

This Fellowship, which assumed the Name of The Society for Improving Arts and Sciences, and particularly Natural Knowledge, at first consisted of forty-five Members; but that Number, since, has been augmented to fifty-two, who are distinguished into ordinary and extraordinary; the former, by turn, are to supply the Society with Experiments and Discoveries in Nature, Art, and other curious Remarkables, to be read at their Meetings, and published in their Transactions; And the latter, or extraordinary Members, endeavour to promote Inquiries, and occasionally assist in carrying on the Designs of the Society.

Besides the ordinary and extraordinary Members, the Society has admitted divers learned and ingenious Gentlemen, in several Parts of Europe, as Members and Correspondents in foreign Parts.

The ordinary Meetings of the Society are on the first Thursday of every Month, except those of September and October; and on the first Thursday of October; and on the first Thursday of December yearly; the Society, by Ballot, elect thirteen of the Number for a Council, whereof, in the same Manner, are chosen a President, two Vice-presidents, two Secretaries, and a Treasurer.

Whenever a Vacancy happens in the Society, or in a Meeting where two thirds of the Members agree to augment their Number; a List of Candidates is prepared and balotted for to fill up the Vacancy, and compleat the intended Augmentation.

At the annual Meeting for the Election of Officers, or new Members, a certain Sum of Money is agreed to be raised by the Members to purchase Instruments and defray the other necessary Expences of the Society.

By the late unhappy Rebellion the Meetings of the Society were interrupted for a considerable Time, but being renewed again, meet as formerly, and prosecuting the Ends of their Institution, we may in a short Time expect some of the Fruits of their Labours.

The first president of the new society was James, Earl of Morton, afterwards President of the Royal Society of London; its vice-presidents, Sir John Clerk of Pennycuik, one of the Barons of Exchequer, and Dr. John Clerk; its secretaries, Colin Maclaurin and Dr. Plummer; and its ordinary members, some of the most distinguished men of
In facts in the words of another author, "soon after its establishment," the Philosophical Society "could boast of possessing all the eminent literati of Scotland."

In 1742, soon after the appearance of the first part of the fifth and final volume of the Medical Essays and Observations, the Philosophical Society made overtures for contributions from "all Gentlemen, of whatever nation, who have experiments or observations relating to natural knowledge to communicate." A notice which appeared in the Scots Magazine for February, 1742, provides us with some interesting details.

A Society being formed at Edinburgh some years ago for the Improvement of Natural Knowledge, in which all the branches of Medicine are included; and the members of the society by whom the Medical Essays were revised and published being adopted into that new one, they have dropped their design of continuing the publication of more volumes of that work. The first part of the fifth volume was lately published, and the second part, which will finish their collection, is in the press. In the preface to what is last published, tho', from the demand for this book at home, and the translations of it published in different parts of Europe, they flatter themselves they have not been uselessly employed; yet they express their hopes, that the labors of the new society will prove of as much greater advantage to mankind than theirs as their plan is more extensive. To them they therefore cheerfully yield their place, and in their name invite the correspondence of all Gentlemen, of whatever nation, who have experiments or observations relating to Natural Knowledge to communicate, or who please to propose useful investigations or experiments to be made by the society. The letters designed for them are to be addressed to their two Secretaries, Mr. Colin Maclaurin, Professor of Mathematicks, Dr. Andrew Plummer, Professor of Medicine, in the university of Edinburgh.

From the tenor of this announcement, it appears likely that the projectors of the Philosophical Society had in view, at least for a secondary objective, the accumulation of material for, and the publication of, a new series of Essays. This ambition, however, was prevented from reaching its fulfillment by the rebellion of 1745, and the first volume of the projected publication did not appear until 1754.

Another plan, which was projected by the Society in 1743, was also forestalled by the disturbance of the '45. Notice of this scheme appeared in the Scots Magazine, and in the August issue for the year 1743 we find the following announcement:

The society established at Edinburgh for promoting natural knowledge, judging it agreeable to the design of their institution, and of general advantage to the country, to encourage the searching for the various kinds of minerals which it produces, have published an advertisement, inviting all those who discover any unusual kinds of earths, stones, bitumens, saline or vitrific substances, marcasites, ores of metals, and other native fossils, whose use and properties they may not have opportunity of inquiring into by themselves, to send sufficient samples of them, and a short account of the places where, and the manner in which they are found, directed to the Secretary of the Philosophical Society, Edinburgh; and they undertake to make proper trials, at the charge of the society, for discovering the nature and uses of the minerals, and to return an answer to the persons by whom the samples are so sent, if they are judged to be of any use, or can be wrought to advantage.

The Philosophical Society will appear in the next chapter when its activities, which were resumed after the rebellion of 1745, will be discussed at some length. At this point, however, we may observe that although its fortunes were to rise, and its membership to grow in influence and in intellectual dignity, even the early career of this, the first of the eighteenth-century type of literary societies,

is very significant. We have seen how the original Medical Society, with its narrow concern with "improving medical knowledge," was incorporated in a society which had expanded its interests until they took in the whole of natural knowledge, and included, indeed, all subjects except those of theology, morals, and politics. This expansion of interests, it will be recognized, is the exact reverse of the process of narrowing interests which has been going on since sometime in the middle of the nineteenth century. And, as has previously been pointed out, it is the inclusiveness of interests which was a marked characteristic of many eighteenth-century literary societies.

But, of course, not all the societies of this period were as inclusive in their interests as was the Philosophical Society. One organization which had only a single purpose, however, is interesting in that it reveals a growing interest in a new subject. The Political Economy Club, which was founded in Glasgow by Provost Cochrane about 1743, though it had only the narrow interest of economic matters, was a direct result of the increasing commercial activities of the city, and of the appearance of new intellectual interests as well. In this connection, it is interesting to recall that the most influential single work to come out of Scotland in the eighteenth century was

1. *Essays and Observations, Physical and Literary, Preface*. This Preface also appeared in the *Scots Magazine* for May, 1754, page 186 f.

2. See Chapter 1, page 4.

3. See Chapter 1, page 5 f.
undoubtedly Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, and the Scottish founder of the science of political economy was a member of this organization which "met once a week all the thirteen years Smith resided in Glasgow."

The first account of the Glasgow Political Economy Club, or the Merchant's Club as it was sometimes called, is given by Dr. Alexander Carlyle in his charming *Autobiography*. Writing of the year 1743, Dr. Carlyle gives us the following information:

"Few of (the Glasgow merchants) could be called learned merchants; yet there was a weekly club, of which a Provost Cochrane was the founder and a leading member, in which their express design was to inquire into the nature and principles of trade in all its branches, and to communicate their knowledge and views on that subject to each other. I was not acquainted with Provost Cochrane at the time, but I observed that the members of this society had the highest admiration of his knowledge and talents. I became well acquainted with him twenty years afterwards, when Drs. Smith and Wight were members of the club, and was made sensible that too much could not be said of his accurate and extensive knowledge, of his agreeable manners, and colloquial eloquence. Dr. Smith acknowledged his obligations to this gentleman's information, when he was collecting materials for his *Wealth of Nations*; and the junior merchants who have flourished since his time, and extended their commerce far beyond what was then dreamt of, confess, with respectful remembrance, that it was Andrew Cochrane who first opened and enlarged their views."

One of Adam Smith's biographers, John Rae, has pointed out that this was probably the first political-economy club in the world. If this is so, then Scotland must be given the credit for the innovation of two very interesting and influential types of economic organizations. Besides the Political Economy Club of Glasgow, it is claimed that the Honourable the Society of Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture of Edinburgh was the first agricultural society to be established in Great Britain.

1. Rae: *Life of Adam Smith*, page 92.
Britain. Very early in the period which I have called the Age of Improvement, therefore, we find that in the organization of corporate societies, Scotland was leading the world. In the next chapter we shall see how this lead was transferred from the organization of the societies themselves, to the achievements which their members made in the sciences and arts which they undertook to improve. When intellectual activity was resumed after the rebellion of 1745, the emphasis shifted from preparation to achievement. The young men who had spent their formative years in the discussions of the Rankenian Club, and in Ruddiman's Society for Improving in Classical Studies, and who had given evidence of increasing intellectual vigour in the formation of the more substantial Philosophical Society, were now at the height of their powers, and were soon to claim the attention of the learned world, for with the resumption of peace, Scotsmen were to demonstrate those powers which they had been so industriously cultivating during the years from 1700 to 1745. It is in the next chapter, therefore, that we must examine the ultimate result of those "improving" societies on those literary and scientific works by means of which Scotsmen captured the attention and the admiration of the Western world.

1. "Two types, mutual aid and study of technical problems. The latter is the British type which was formed in Scotland in 1725, in Ireland in 1751, one in the west of England in 1777, and one in London in 1793." (Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences; ed. by Edwin R. A. Seligman and Alvin Johnson, "Agricultural Societies.") The Irish society was established in imitation of the Honourable the Society of Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture. (Maxwell: Select Transactions, page ix.)
CHAPTER FOUR

THE PERIOD OF ACHIEVEMENT 1745–1770.

Whatever the Rebellion of 1745 may have been (and it has been variously described as "the last struggle of barbarism against civilization," as a "trifling insurrection," as "Charles Edward's astonishing adventure in Britain," as "the extinction of the last relics of feudalism in Scotland," and, finally, as "a blessing in disguise,"

it disrupted for a considerable period the development of Scottish literary societies. It was not until 1752 that the Philosophical Society renewed its activities, and this was the first sign that a corporate intellectual life had been resumed. From our point of view, therefore, the seven-years hiatus in the work done by the Philosophical Society represents seven years of lost opportunity.

These seven years, however, had not been altogether wasted, for when the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh again became active it had grown considerably in importance and its membership, although the

illustrious, Colin Maclaurin was dead, was of a considerably higher intellectual level than it had been previous to the long interruption in its career. The new secretaries, for example, who were appointed in 1752, were Alexander Monro, secundus, and David Hume. At the same time as they received this appointment, the secretaries were "directed to arrange, and superintend the printing of such papers as had been declared worthy of public attention." And the new officers were not idle, for we find that three volumes of "worthy" papers made their appearance; the first volume in 1754, the second in 1756, and the third in 1771. These transactions, which appeared under the title of Essays and Observations, Physical and Literary, when they are compared with the Medical Essays and Observations of the Medical Society, show at once through their broader scope, their increased intellectual weight, and their greater influence on the thought of the period, that a spirit of proud achievement had replaced the humbler mood which had prevailed during the Period of Preparation.

1. When Maclaurin died on May 14, 1746, a number of the papers which had been collected for the Society's published transactions were mixed with his papers, and, having been transmitted to London, were lost. This delayed the publication of a volume of essays until others could be assembled. (Bower: History of the University of Edinburgh, Vol. 2, page 338.)


4. See page 84, Chapter 3. A number of the essays from the Essays and Observations were reprinted in the Scots Magazine during 1754. (See Scots Magazine for May, page 233 f.; June, page 287 f.; July, page 334 f.; and August, page 373 f.) Benjamin Franklin, then in London, received "the proceedings of the Edinburgh Philosophical Society" as a gift from his friends in Scotland. (Nolan: Franklin in Scotland, page 100.)
The first essay in volume one was entitled *Of the Laws of Motion*. This essay was written "by the Honourable Henry Home, one of the Senators of the College of Justice," a man who is more familiarly known by his judicial title of Lord Kames. In volume three, Lord Kames again contributed to the *Essays*, this time with two very dissimilar efforts, one being *Observations upon the Paper Concerning Shallow Ploughing*, and the other being *On Evaporation*. These essays, while not particularly important in themselves, are of considerable interest as early evidence of the versatility of Kames's intellect. The Essay on the *Laws of Motion* also reveals his appetite for metaphysics. This taste for philosophical inquiry led to the composition and publication of the *Elements of Criticism* which won for the author a European reputation.

1. The second article was *Some Remarks on the Laws of Motion*, by John Stewart, Professor of Natural Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh. In this essay Professor Stewart "severely criticises Kames, and Periodically refers in a somewhat slitting manner to Hume's Treatise and Philosophical Essays." In a very characteristic letter, David Hume gently chides Stewart for his bad manners, and recommends that for the future he avoid "all raillery... both because it is un-philosophic and because it cannot but be offensive." For this letter see Greig: *Letters of David Hume*, Vol. 1, pp. 185 - 188, ltr. #91, and notes.

2. The paper upon which Lord Kames made his "observations" (Article III, page 68 and f., "Read before the Society in the year 1761") was *The Advantages of Shallow Ploughing*, by Mr. George Clark, (Article III, page 56 and f.). *On Evaporation* appeared as Article IV, page 80 and f.

3. For Voltaire's sarcastic comments on the *Elements of Criticism*, see page 25, above. Lord Kames had not only a "thirst for knowledge of every kind," but wrote on most subjects which were of particular interest in his day. A list of his publications follows:

- **1728.** *Remarkable Decisions of the Court of Session*.
- **1732.** *Essays on Several Subjects*.
- **1741.** *Decisions of the Court of Session*. * More on various subjects.*
Lord Kames, however, was not the only contributor to reach fame. The Essays also contain articles written by Colin Maclaurin; by Alexander Monro, secundus, then a student of medicine in the University of Edinburgh; and by his father, Alexander Monro, primus, who was Professor of Anatomy in the University. Two other contributors of

1747. Essays on British Antiquities.
1757. The Statute Law of Scotland Abridged.
1759. Historical Law Tracts.
1760. The Principles of Equity.
1761. Introduction to the Art of Thinking.
1762. Elements of Criticism.
1766. Remarkable Decisions of the Court of Session.
1772. The Gentleman Farmer.
1775. Sketches of a History of Man.
1777. Elucidations Respecting the Common or Statute Law of Scotland.
1780. Select Decisions of the Court of Session.
1781. Loose Hints Upon Education, Chiefly Concerning the Culture of the Heart.

(This list of publications was taken from a pamphlet by Sir David Dalrymple, entitled A Catalogue of the Lords of Session.) Kames's advice, when Sir Gilbert Elliot appealed to him on an obscure point of political economy, was in keeping with his practice. Kames advised Sir Gilbert to "go and write a book upon it if you want to understand it." (Tytler: Life of Lord Kames, Vol. 1, page 61.) Lord Monboddo (James Burnett) was heard to complain that Kames wrote "a great deal faster than I am able to read." (Graham: Scottish Men of Letters, page 181.)


In the University of Edinburgh, and Joseph Black, the discoverer of the principles of latent heat.

1. Of the Cold Produced by Evaporating Fluids, and of some other Means of Producing Cold, Article VII, Vol. 2, page 159 f., read May 1, 1755. "This is the only chemical essay he ever published; and evidently shows what might have been expected from him, if his genius had not strongly drawn him to the cultivation of medicine. Was it this short essay that was the more immediate occasion of his favourite pupil, Dr. Black, directing his attention so peculiarly to heat? or was Black 'the young gentleman, one of his pupils,' to whom he alludes in the paper?" (Bower: History of the University of Edinburgh, Vol. 2, page 385.) "In the end of the year 1755, Dr. William Cullen transmitted to the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh a paper entitled 'Some Reflections on the Study of Chemistry, an essay towards ascertaining the different species of Salts, being part of a letter addressed to Dr. John Clerk, etc.' This paper, intended to afford a specimen of an Elementary work on Chemistry, which he proposed to publish, contains more extensive and precise information, with regard to the general properties and relations of the different species of salts, than is to be found in any chemical work of the time. In particular, the distinctive characters and peculiar compounds of Soda — a substance at that time not generally admitted in this country (Scotland) to differ specifically from potash, but which had always been treated as such by Dr. Cullen in his lectures, — are described with a minuteness and accuracy which evince how intimately he was acquainted with the progress of discovery in Chemistry." (The paper did not appear in the Essays and Observations.)

'Dear Doctor, Edinburgh, January 1745 (misprint for 1754.)

I did indeed trust to Dr. David Clerk's giving you an account of the reception of your paper on the different species of Salt, but I find he wants to have some chat with Mr. Plummer in private before he writes to you. Mr. Russell (Professor of Natural Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh) tells me it was read and approved of, but that no particular observations were made upon it. Lord Kames afterwards took notice that there were some errors in the composition, which you were not used to fall into, and offered to undertake the correction of it himself; and I believe would have printed it immediately; but I thought it most proper to send it back (this note is continued at the foot of the next page.)

2. Experiments upon Magnesia Alba, Quicklime, and some other Alkaline Substances, Article VII, Vol. 2, page 172 f., read June 5, 1755.
For the first time, medical men residing beyond the borders of Scotland played a considerable part in supplying articles for a publication undertaken by a Scottish literary society. The fact that a respectable number of contributions to the Essays and Observations came from abroad is an indication of the growing reputation of the Edinburgh Medical School and of the success of Scotland's efforts in science and medicine. From London came articles written by Donald Monro, Physician to St. George's Hospital and from James Grainger, the Physician and poet; from Jamaica came a paper on the Anthelmintic Virtue of the Bark of the Bulge-water Tree, by Peter Duguid, surgeon; from America came contributions from Benjamin Franklin, Dr. John Lining, "Physician at Charleston in South Carolina," and Dr. Alexander Garden, also of Charleston, who was a member of the Society.

...to you again. Dr. David Clerk seemed to intimate that the introduction was generally thought to be rather too bold, and the whole wrote in too careless, and prolix a style — for I must tell you all the truth. But I believe few of them understood the meaning of it thoroughly. He objected against your making but one species of Volatile Alkali, whereas you divide the fixed into Vegetable and Mineral; for, said he, it flatly contradicts some experiments of Dr. Plummer's on the analysis of pit-coal, in which a fossil volatile alkali shewed itself. I perceived he did not understand you and explained your meaning; but he still objected that there had not been a sufficient number of experiments made on this fossil alkali (soda) to ascertain whether it really was exactly the same with, or different from, the animal and vegetable. I am afraid it would require a course of Chemistry almost to make them fully sensible of the truth of your observations that are to follow."

1. Dr. Gordon was a frequent contributor. He was responsible for the following articles:— (this note is continued at the foot of the next page.)

2. Article XV, Vol. 2, page 290 f., "by the late Mr. Peter Duguid, Surgeon in Jamaica, in a letter to Alexander Monro senior, M. D."


4. Article XIV, Vol. 1, page 456 f., Of the Anthelmintic Virtues of the Indian Pink, "in a letter to Dr. Robert Whytt, Professor of Medicine in the University of Edinburgh."
The fact that not one of the papers in the three volumes of Essays and Observations, Physical and Literary appears to be in any way "literary" does not seem to have caused any embarrassment to the editors. But this merely emphasizes the observation, which has already been made several times, that to the eighteenth-century eye, many things appeared to be literary which do not seem so to us. Lord Kames's essays on Motion and Evaporation, for example, were undoubtedly regarded as literary, as the one was philosophical, and the other was largely speculative. And even his Lordship's strictures on Shallow Ploughing, which came as a criticism of a previous article, would have been considered as inclining more toward the "literary" than to the "physical", for agriculture was still regarded as an art, and it was not until much later that it came to be regarded as a science.

The kinship which existed, in the eighteenth-century mind, between "natural philosophy" and "literature", is suggested in the Preface to the first volume of Essays and Observations. In discussing the origin and purpose of the new society, the editors wrote the following:

---


1. In 1790, a regular chair of Agriculture was established in the University of Edinburgh by William Pultney, Esq., who "mortified the sum of one thousand two hundred and fifty pounds sterling, as a fund for the payment of a salary of fifty pounds per annum." (Nwte: Prospects and Observations, page 359).

2. "The Preface is almost certainly Hume's. It bears all the marks of his hand..." (Greig: The Letters of David Hume, Vol. 1, page 185, note #7.)

3. Essays and Observations, Physical and Literary, preface. The preface was also reprinted in the Scots Magazine, April, 1754, page 184 f.
The object of this society is the same with that of other academies which have been established in different parts of Europe, the promoting of natural philosophy, and of literature, by communicating to the public such dissertations as shall be transmitted to them, either by their own members, or by others. 'Tis allowed, that these two branches of learning, especially the former, are more promoted by the observation of facts, than by the most ingenious reasonings and disputations.

But not only are the "two branches of learning" to be "promoted by the observations of facts", the author, or authors, of the Preface goes on to explain that it is in the very nature of a society to "correct and confirm", to excite emulation, and to assist men to arrive at "general truths." The Preface continues:

To a diligent, and even sometimes to a careless inquirer, many valuable experiments, no doubt, occur: and these would enrich our collections, though without this method of conveyance they would be entirely lost to the public. The united judgments too of men correct and confirm each other by communication; their frequent intercourse excites emulation; and from the comparison of different phaenomena, remarked by different persons, there often result general truths, of which, from one of these phaenomena, no man of the greatest sagacity could entertain any suspicion. Though the collection of experiments seems continually, by means of the learned societies, and the labours of individuals, to be augmenting, we need not entertain any apprehensions, that the world will ever be overwhelmed by the number of confused and independant observations. The heap does not always go on, increasing in bulk and disorder, through every age. There arise, from time to time, bold and happy geniuses, who introduce method and simplicity into particular branches of sciences; and reducing the scattered experiments to more general theorems, abridge the science of nature. Hints of this kind, we hope, may be able to pass through our hands; and at worst, our collections will be a species of magazine, in which facts and observations, the sole means of true induction, will be deposited for the purposes of philosophy.

Despite the lack of a sharp distinction between "natural philosophy" and "literature", however, the Philosophical Society did not hesitate to define a number of subjects which they had "resolved entirely to exclude from their plans." An announcement was also made to the effect that the Society accepted no responsibility for "the just-
ness of every reasoning, nor the accuracy of every observation" to appear in their publications. Concerning these matters, the Preface reads as follows:

The sciences of theology, morals, and politics, the society are resolved entirely to exclude from their plan. However difficult the inferences in these sciences, the facts on which they are founded, are extremely obvious; and we could not hope, by our collections, to be in this respect of any service to the public. The great delicacy of the subject, the imperfections of human understanding, the various attachments and inclinations of mankind, will for ever propagate disputes with regard to these parts of erudition. And it is the peculiar happiness of geometry and physics, that as they interest less the passions of men, they admit of more calm disquisition and inquiry.

It is not that the Society expect or propose, that what they communicate will be entirely above doubt and disputation. The papers, indeed, which they print, were all read before them, and they gave their consent to the inserting them in their collections: but they pretend not to warrant the justness of every reasoning, nor the accuracy of every observation. The author alone of each paper is answerable for the contents of it; and the Society are as willing to insert what may be communicated in opposition to the sentiments of any of its members, as in confirmation of them.

The editors modestly conclude their preface with an acknowledgment of the sovereignty of the public, and a frank admission that "all the merit to which they pretend, is that of exciting the industry of the learned, and of conveying their productions to the notice of the world." This is followed by a few short directions to those who may wish to contribute, which read as follows:

Whoever will favour the Society with any discourse which it comprehends in its plan, may send their papers to either of the secretaries, Mr. Alexander Monro, Professor of Anatomy at Edinburgh, or Mr. David Hume, Library-keeper to the Faculty of Advocates.

1. This was Alexander Monro, primus, the first of three Alexander Monros, father, son, and grandson, who held the chair of Anatomy at the University of Edinburgh for over one hundred years.
The Philosophical Society of Edinburgh is another literary society which probably did not keep records, or, if it did do so, its records have since been lost. And, once again, we have cause to complain of disappointment, for, lacking the society's records, we can have no real idea of the day-to-day activities of the organization nor of the members who participated in them. By piecing together the few scraps of information which have been handed down, however, it is possible to give at least an impression of the society's activities and organization.

Lord Kames, who was the leading spirit in many an "improving" society, was the natural leader of the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh. In a letter to William Cullen, Kames did not disguise the fact that he had managed to work himself into a strong position in the society:

Lord Kames to Dr. Cullen, Edinburgh, 26th December, 1752.

... Remember also to contribute to the Philosophical Society, about which I am turned extremely keen, now that I have got in a good measure the management of it.

1. "Lord Kames was remarkable for public spirit, to which he conjoined activity and great exertion. He, for a long tract of time, had the principle management of all our Societies and Boards for promoting the trade, fisheries, and manufactures in Scotland. As conducive to those ends, he was a strenuous advocate for making and repairing turnpike roads through every part of the country. He had likewise a chief lead in the distribution and application of the funds arising from the estates in Scotland which had unfortunately been annexed to the crown. He was no less zealous in supporting, both with his writings and personal influence, literary associations. He was, in some measure, the parent of what was called the Physical and Literary Society (i.e. the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh). This society was afterwards incorporated into the Royal Society of Edinburgh, which received a charter from the crown, and which is daily producing marks of genius, as well as works of real utility." (Smellie: Literary and Characteristical Lives, page 142 f.)

2. Thomson: Life of Cullen, page 75.
In another letter to Cullen, Kames gives us an example of the care he took in promoting the interests of the society, and in drawing talented men to Edinburgh:

Lord Kames to Dr. Cullen.

My Dear Sir,

You'll think it now too late for me to observe that the last epistle I had from you appeared to me extremely whimsical. A plan formed, (i.e. of moving Dr. Cullen to Edinburgh) - difficulties struggled with and overcome, - every thing ready for execution, - and, when the hour was come, given up without saying why or wherefore. I was really so well entertained with the oddness of the adventure, that I did not chuse to be undeceived by having a rational cause assigned. Now that the humour is over, I should be glad, if you write and answer, that you clap in a word or two upon the subject by way of postscript.

Change now the scene to the Philosophical Society, of whose works a second volume is preparing. A demand was made upon me for your paper upon Salts. I either dreamed it, or it was said to me, that you reserved that paper to make part of a greater work; if not, transmit it to me; and if you reserve it, I must insist upon some other paper from you in its stead. You told me you had one upon Remitting Fevers, the publishing of which may do you some service here, if you have not altogether abandoned your project (i.e. of moving to Edinburgh). I insist upon it as a point of right.

What are our friends doing in the College (of Glasgow) farther than teaching? Are there any discoveries? Is there any progress in science? Are they all vox et præterea nihil? I hope better things of them. But I want facts, and would not rest upon hopes. How goes on your farming scheme, in particular? In this science facts would be delightful. Your friend, at least your correspondent, Du Hamel is a ninny.

Yours Affectionately, Henry Home.

1. Thomson: Life of Cullen, page 75 f. Although this letter bears no date, it is reasonable to assume that it must have been written some time in 1754 or 1755. The second volume of Essays and Observations came out in 1756. Cullen had one contribution, see page 102, note #1, above.

2. The Society had already heard Cullen's paper on Salts. See page 102, note #1, above.
As for the other members of the Philosophical Society, it is possible to name only a few. Adam Smith, Alexander Monro, and David Hume were members; the Reverend Robert Wallace, one of the ministers of the Auld Kirk in Edinburgh, has been named as "one of the founders of the Philosophical Society;" and it has already been stated that Colin Maclaurin was also a founder. In addition to these men, there were certainly many others worthy of recording, but their names are unknown. A few names, however, are contained in a first-hand account of the society, and as this is the only record left by a member of the society, it is worth quoting at length. The passage reads as follows:

With the venerable Lord Kames as their President, and Dr. Monro secundus as their acting Secretary (for Mr. Hume, not long after his appointment, left Edinburgh), the Philosophical Society had regular meetings. And I had the honour of being admitted a member of that Society. I was admitted at the very same meeting with that highly respectable soldier, Sir Adolphus Houghton, then Commander of the Forces in Scotland, and Dr. John Hutton, the celebrated Geologist. As long as I continue to be blest with any considerable degree of memory, I shall never forget the pleasant and instructive evenings I passed in the company of those eminent Physicians and Philosophers, who were then the greatest ornaments of Edinburgh,—Lord Kames, Sir George Clerk, Drs. Cullen, Home, Hope, Black, Young, Monro, and many others. But all these, after having enriched the world by their discoveries, have now paid the debt of nature. Their immortal names, however, will live till the latest ages: and the Essays and Observations, Physical and Literary, which they published to the world, will ever hold a distinguished place in marking the progress of Science.

As for the organization of the Society, we know that the members.

1. Rae: Life of Adam Smith, page 107.
met at least once a month, and it is likely, from the practice of similar associations, that the members held some sort of meeting at a shorter interval, possibly one meeting every two weeks. At these meetings, papers were read and were then handed over to one of the members who made critical notes to be read at a later meeting. The papers could be submitted by members, or by non-members, and though the Society’s taste ran strongly to the physical sciences, the subject of the paper could be anything except theology, morals, or politics.

1. In the *Essays and Observations*, there appear two papers which were read a month apart. See notes #1 and #2 on page 102, above.

2. In a letter to Benjamin Franklin, David Hume writes of the Philosophical Society "the established rule of our Society is, that after a paper is read to them, it is delivered by them to some member, who is obliged, in a subsequent meeting to read some paper or remarks upon it." This letter was in reply to the one in which the American philosopher had sent Hume his "method of preserving houses from thunder." Franklin’s "method" was published in volume 3 of the *Essays and Observations*. (see note #4, page 105, above.) Greig: The Letters of David Hume, Vol. 1, pages 357-358, ltr. #192. Franklin was an interested spectator of all the Society’s affairs. In a letter to William Cullen, Franklin reveals his curiosity regarding that aspect of Cullen’s work which dealt with "fire":


I hear, that since I had the pleasure of seeing and conversing with you on the subject, you have wrote some of your sentiments of Fire, and communicated them to the Philosophical Society. If so, as it may be some time before their publication, I should think myself extremely obliged to you if I could be favoured with a copy, as there is no subject I am more impatient to be acquainted with. It should go no further than my own closet without your permission."

(Thomson: *Life of Cullen*, page 159; Franklin: *Works*, London, 1806, Vol. 2, page 75.) In his letter, Franklin introduced Cullen to an American by the name of Morgan. Morgan, who had a successful course of instruction at the Edinburgh Medical School, toured Europe, and, on his return to the American Colonies, was an active and successful medical practitioner. He also established a Medical Society in Philadelphia, and, according to Thomson, Cullen’s correspondence with him reveals a “minute description” of the organization. (Thomson: *Life of Cullen*, page 140-141.)

3. See the quotation from the Preface to the *Essays and Observations* on page 106, above.
When William Cullen moved from Glasgow to Edinburgh, shortly before 1760, he was responsible for the introduction of a new function into the Society. In writing to a correspondent in 1760, Cullen says:

There are just now many favourable appearances of a revival of the spirits of that society (i.e., the Philosophical). The meetings are regular and well attended. At each of them, of late, we have had sufficient employment, and are at present secure of employment at every meeting for a twelvemonth to come. At the meeting in June next, it is proposed that as many members as possible shall engage to read a paper or papers to the society, at one or other of their meetings in the course of the year 1761, but each member shall fix a particular day, so that every meeting of the year may be regularly provided for; and every member has at least six months to provide for it. There does not at present appear to be any doubt about the execution of this plan, and it is proposed that we shall continue hereafter, I hope, for very many years, at the meeting in June, to provide regular employment for the following year. This however, is by no means to hinder any member from making as frequent incidental communications as possible; and particularly, every member is desired to bring to every meeting as much literary news as he can, either from new books, letters, or even conversation.

The plan of "bringing as much literary news" as possible to each meeting was evidently Cullen's. Among his papers, his biographer discovered a review of the *Essai de Cosmologie, par M. de Maupertuis*, which appears to have been read by him to the Philosophical Society. Cullen's sentiments regarding this method of gaining information, which follow, are an interesting reflection of the means by which literary societies extended their interests and activities:

---


2. "If Dr. Cullen was not the first to suggest to the Society this mode of diffusing information, he was at least the first to put it in execution." (Ibid., page 137.)

3. Ibid., page 137.

4. "Of the utility of the mode of diffusing information which Dr. Cullen recommended, there can be no doubt but the multiplication..."
In my studies I find it of great use to be acquainted with
the books that are now daily published in different parts of
Europe. I do not doubt but other gentlemen of this company
know the benefit, and are equally desirous of being acquainted,
with new books. As all of these cannot occur to every one, nor
can the reading of all of them be undertaken by any one person,
I have always been of opinion, that a principal advantage to
be obtained by a frequent communication between a number of
persons devoted to study, is that of being more certainly and
sooner informed of new books, and being better directed in the
choice of them. I wish that this company may be particularly
intent on obtaining such advantage, and that each member of it
may zealously endeavor to be useful in this way. As the
company are not otherwise engaged for this evening, I propose
to lay before them an account of a new book. My discretion
may perhaps be blamed, but I hope my zeal will not. The book
I am to give you an account of, is a small duodecimo, printed
at Leyden 1751, and is entitled "Essai de Cosmologie, par M.
de Maupertuis." The purpose of the book is to give a new and
more satisfying proof of the Existence of God, whence his
motto is, "Mens agitat molem." The work is partly metaphysical,
partly mathematical; in either respect it falls improperly
under my cognizance, and works of this kind I shall hereafter
put into other hands; but I had a mind to set on foot such
labours; and not the subject, but the book's being the last
occurring to me, determined my choice.

In the meetings of the Philosophical Society, the atmosphere was
one of friendly co-operation. There is sufficient evidence of this
to warrant the generalization that intellectual disputes were carried
on by the Scottish literati with a degree of calmness and toleration
which has seldom been equalled. It may also be stated that the
commonest attitude of disputants was one of a genuine desire to be of
assistance in arriving at the truth. An exchange of courtesies
between Dr. Robert Wallace and David Hume, both of whom had written

of literary and scientific magazines, journals, reviews and
ewspapers, which of late years has taken place, has in a great
measure superseded its necessity; and their circulation now
communicates to all classes of society, advantages which, even
so late as the time of Dr. Cullen, could be enjoyed comparat-
ively by a few only." (Thomson: Life of Cullen, pages 138-139.)
essays on the same subject, is typical. The details of this transac-
tion are supplied by Ernest Campbell Mossner in his biographical study
of le bon David:-

At a meeting of the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh previous
to Hume's secretaryship, Wallace had read a paper on population
in which he maintained that the ancient world was considerably
peopled than the modern. The same thesis was then subscribed to
by a host of thinkers, of whom Montesquieu was but the most dis-
tinguished. Wallace's original contribution was the ingenious
argument that population varies directly with the food supply
and that the presumed superior agriculture of the ancients af-
forded sufficient proof of their superior numbers. This paper he
revised and expanded into A Dissertation on the Numbers of Mankind
in Antient and Modern Times and, upon being introduced to Hume,
immediately solicited his opinion. Returning the compliment,
Hume permitted Wallace to read his own manuscript Of the Popu-
losness of Antient Nations, upon which he had been working
since early in 1750. There, for the first time in the long his-
tory of the question, Hume maintained the superior populousness
of the modern world.

Although Wallace's essay, in its final form, was "openly written
against Hume's own essay," the agreeable philosopher corrected the proof-
sheets for his rival and antagonist, and when Dr. Wallace published
his Dissertation, he approved the following advertisement which Wallace

1. Mossner: The Forgotten David Hume, page 111. For other accounts of
this exchange, see Burton: Life of David Hume, Vol. I, page 364,
note; and Ramsay: Scotland and Scotsmen in the Eighteenth Century,

2. "Earl Marischal Keith told Rousseau that Hume had corrected the
proof-sheets of Wallace's Dissertation, though the work was openly
written against his own essay, On the Populousness of Ancient Na-
tions; and Rousseau was charmed with the anecdote and inserted it
in the Confessions (Bk. XII). For some obscure reason Burton pooh-
pooched the story (Life, ii, 295), and was very properly taken to
task by Morley (Rousseau, ii, 122 note). Fortunately a document
has now turned up which establishes the fact. The proof-sheets of
Wallace's Dissertation are among Laing MSS. in the University of
Edinburgh, (Bundle II, 96), and they are corrected in two hands,
Wallace's and Hume's. Hume's alterations are almost all stylistic.
For example, Wallace corrected a misprint their into then, and
Hume changed then into therefore." (Greig: The Letters of David
Hume, Vol. I, page 177, ltr. #85, note #3.)
had prefixed to his essay:-

The Author of this Dissertation on the Numbers of Mankind, is desired by the Philosophical Society at Edinburgh, to acquaint the Public, that it was composed several Years ago: and was read before them.

For his own part, as he has the Honour to be a Member of this Society, he had no Thoughts of publishing it, till it should have had a Place among their Works. However, as they had not determined when they were to publish their Transactions, he was advised to embrace an Opportunity of publishing his Dissertation at a Time, when he might hope for the Attention of the Learned, which had been already directed towards the Subject, by the Publication of Mr Hume's Political Discourse, Of the Populousness of Antient Nations. He has therefore published it in its original Form; only some inconsiderable Additions have been made to it, since it was presented to the Philosophical Society.

The Dissertation is followed by an Appendix on the same Subject, which was not read before the Philosophical Society. The Author thought he should not have done Justice to his Argument if he had omitted to subjoin those Observations, with which he was furnished by a Review of the Subject, and by a careful Perusal of Mr Hume's Political Discourse.

In this gentlemanly and courteous manner, therefore, the literati of Scotland assisted and encouraged one another to make those contributions to learning which made this period one of brilliant achievement.

1. "One small request Hume did make. 'Yesterday,' he informed Wallace, 'there was read in the Society an Advertisement which Lord Morton desired you should insert. If it be not printed off, I should be pleased that in mentioning my Name, you would call me Secretary to the Society.' "... Curiously enough, this Advertisement, approved of by Hume, does not comply with his request that he be called 'Secretary to the Society!'" (Mossner: The Forgotten David Hume, page 115.)

2. It has been stated by Kerr, (William Smellie, Vol. 1, page 28 - 30), that the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh offered prizes to encourage arts and sciences Kerr cites the example of a medal which bore the inscription "The Edinburgh Society, To Messrs. Hamilton, Balfour, and Neil, Printers in Edinburgh, For Their Edition of Terence, M.DCC.LVII." This medal, however, was not given by the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh, but by the Edinburgh Society for Encouragement of Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture. The following notice appeared in the Scots Magazine for January, 1758, page 45. "The Edinburgh Society for Encouragement of Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture, have adjudged the premiums..."
Although this closes the account of the Philosophical Society as it appeared between the years 1752 and 1770, we shall meet with it again in the next chapter when the origin of the Royal Society of Edinburgh comes under consideration. The Philosophical Society's influence, however, was not confined to the Edinburgh literati, for it drew its membership from the rest of Scotland, as well as from abroad, and its example was responsible for the establishment of similar societies in Glasgow and Aberdeen.

Glasgow and Aberdeen, after the example of Edinburgh, were each the scene for the establishment of the type of literary society which I have described as being most common in the eighteenth century. In Glasgow, the Literary Society was established in 1752, and the Philosophical Society of Aberdeen appeared in 1758. Both cities, it is interesting to observe, were the seats of universities, and this bears out the ob-

1. Some confusion has existed in the past as to the date on which the Literary Society of Glasgow was organized. (See esp. D. Murray: Robert and Andrew Foulis, page 56 f.) This confusion was the result of a singularly inept note which appeared in the Maitland Club's Notices and Documents Illustrative of The Literary History of Glasgow, page 15. The note refers to a statement supposed to have been made by Professor Richardson (in his Life of Professor Archibald Arthur, which appears as an Appendix to Arthur's Discourses on Theological and Literary Subjects) to the effect that Dr. Hutcheson (who died in 1747), "explained in the society the works of Arrian, Antoninus, and other Greek philosophers." The passage in which this appeared, however, was merely misinterpreted, and it contains no reference to the Literary Society of Glasgow.

3.16

Serversion—which has frequently been made—that the Scottish Universities were the center of the intellectual life of this period.

At the time when the Literary Society of Glasgow began in 1752, Cochrane's Political Economy Club, an association of merchant's who met to discuss matters pertaining to trade and commerce, had been in existence for over ten years. Cochrane's Club, in fact, was then at the height of its career, for it had been joined by its most illustrious member, Adam Smith, in 1751. The club's efforts in arousing interest in theoretical economics had been so effective that Robert Foulis, Glasgow's celebrated printer, had "found it worth his while to reprint such works on Economics as those of Mun, of Law, and of Coke on Trade and Navigation, Sir William Petty's Political Arithmetic, and Sir Joshua Child on Trade."

In addition to Adam Smith, it has been recorded that Dr. Wight, Professor of Ecclesiastical and Civil History in the University of Glasgow was a member. It has also been suggested that Sir James Steuart, the economist, "would almost certainly be a member of the club," and that Sir John Dalrymple "was probably a member at an earlier period." Other suggestions have pointed to Archibald Ingram, and to John Glassford.

2. For the establishment of the club see Chapter 5, page 96, above.
5. Rae: Adam Smith, page 94.
as members; and it has been stated that Alexander Speirs "was probably a member," and that James Ritchie "was almost certainly a member."
The names of other members have been lost, but from its success and its influence, it is reasonable to assume that the club was enthusiastically supported by a respectable number of the Glasgow merchants. The members of the club met weekly, and their discussions, as one would normally expect, centered on practical matters concerning trade and commercial dealings. "What," we find them asking, "are the effects of paper money on prices? on the currency: on the exchanges with other countries? What was the effect of small notes? what of notes not payable on demand?" But they also found time to consider the more philosophical aspects of their economic interests. Smith, in 1755, read before them a paper which embodied his ideas on "natural liberty in industrial affairs." It has also been suggested that Smith's activities in the Political Economy Club led Glasgow merchants to a more liberal attitude toward trade restrictions. But if Smith had much to contribute, he also gained a great deal. According to Alexander Carlyle, Smith freely "acknowledged his obligations" to the members of the club, and especially to Provost Cochrane who assisted him when "he was collecting material for his Wealth of Nations." It was in the Political Economy

4. Rae: Adam Smith, page 94.
Club that Smith acquired that practical knowledge of the details of commerce which enabled him to formulate and illustrate the doctrines which he later expounded.

The speculative attitude toward economic matters, however, was not confined to the Political Economy Club. When the Literary Society was formed in the College at Glasgow in 1752, it embraced not only professors and literary men, "but also several leading merchants, and the two printers, Robert and Andrew Foulis, which turned its attention to economic questions as well as to those of a literary and philosophical character."

When one comes to deal with the Literary Society of Glasgow, the task is made much lighter by the existence of authentic records. There is, for example, an extant Minute-book of this society which covers the years 1764 – 1779. For the earlier history of the society, which held its first meeting in January 1752, one can refer to extracts of the society's records which have been published by the Maitland Club of Glasgow. There are, in addition, the usual general accounts of the society which appear in biographies and general histories of the period. From these various sources, it is possible to give a detailed account of the society and its activities, and it is only this cumulative treatment.

which can be of any value, or even of true interest, for unless some-
thing is known of the daily activities of these societies, of the in-
terests of their members, and of their intellectual point of view,
nothing worth while is really known about them at all. In this re-
spect, the Literary Society of Glasgow is in a different position than
all the others I have dealt with thus far. For it is not only well
documented, but it is also one of the finest examples of an eight-
teenth-century literary society to be discussed in this thesis.

The first recorded meeting of the Literary Society of Glasgow was
held on January 10th, 1752. At this time the society consisted of
12 members, nine of whom were professors. The original members
were:

Mr. James Moor, Professor of Greek.
Dr. Robert Hamilton, Professor of Humanity.
Dr. Leechman, Professor of Divinity.
Mr. James Olaw, Professor of Logic.
Mr. Hercules Lindsay, Professor of Law.
Dr. R. Dick, Professor of Natural Philosophy.
Mr. George Ross, Professor of Humanity.
Dr. William Cullen, Professor of Medicine.
Mr. Adam Smith, Professor of Moral Philosophy.
Rev. Mr. Craig, Minister of Glasgow.
Mr. Richard Bethan.
Dr. John Brisbane.

The twelve constituent members were soon joined by others who were in-
terested in intellectual speculation:— Dr. Robert Simson, Professor of
Mathematics; David Hume; the two Foulis brothers, Robert and Andrew;
Joseph Black, Professor of Medicine; Dr. Thomas Reid, Professor of

Illustrative of the Literary History of Glasgow, page 132.
Moral Philosophy; and many other men of merit. The meetings of the Literary Society of Glasgow were attended by occasional visitors, and the students of the College were also sometimes allowed to attend.

After their first meeting on the 10th of January, the members of the society met three times, on the 16th, the 23rd, and the 30th, before their regular procedure was established of reading and criticizing a paper which had been prepared for that purpose by a member.

As there had not been sufficient time for "discourses in regular form" to be prepared, "accounts of new books were given ... Dr. Cullen dealing with the Cosmology of Maupertuis, Mr. Smith with David Hume's Essays on Commerce, and Mr. Clow with Harris's Hermes." On the 7th of February, "the first regular discourse was given by Professor Moor, On Historical Composition. After papers had been read individuals gave their views in the course of a friendly discussion, and the

1. For a complete list of members, see Appendix A, page 578.
2. "In a MS. Note-book of David Boyle of Whewalton, a student in the University, afterwards Rector of the University...he records that in 1789 he heard Dr. Hope read two papers before the Society: (1) 'A Discourse on the composition of Water,' and (2) 'Observations on the Theory of the Earth by Dr. Hutton and Answers to some of De Sae's remarks upon it.'" (Murray: Memories of the Old College of Glasgow, Page 100, note #1.)
4. "A volume of Moor's essays was printed by Robert and Andrew Foulis 1759." This volume contained the following subjects:

   February 6, 1752. An Essay on Historical Composition.
   March 1, 1754. An Essay on the Composition of the Picture described in the Dialogue of Cebes.
   February 8, 1755. An Essay on the Influence of Philosophy upon the Fine Arts.

"He also read an essay on the End of Tragedy according to Aristotle, which was published in 1763, 12 mo. It was afterwards reprinted by Andrew Foulis, printer to the University, 12 mo., 1794." (Notices and Documents Illustrative of the Literary History of Glasgow, pages 16, 151.)
varied talents and accomplishments of the members, as well as the wide range of subjects brought under review, gave weight and interest to the proceedings."

The activities of the Society between July, 1752, and November 2, 1764, are no longer available, but it is reasonable to assume that the organization and the interests of the members did not change to any great extent. In the session 1764 to 1765, we find the society operating under the following rules:

Laws of the Literary Society in Glasgow College:

1. The first meeting of the Literary Society shall be held on the first Friday of November every year and the Literary Society shall continue to meet on every Friday from that time till the second Friday of May inclusive which shall be the last meeting for that Session of the College.

2. If any Member shall not be within the threshold of the Room where the Literary Society meets when half an hour past five o'clock afternoon shall strike by the College Clock he shall pay Six pence and if he shall not come into the room before the President shall have left the chair he shall pay One shilling.

3. If any Member shall be absent from the Literary Society four successive nights and shall not make an apology for his absence in writing which shall be sustained by the majority he shall thereby cease to be a member of the Society provided the Secretary shall have given him warning upon the third night's absence.

4. All Members who live within one computed mile of the College shall be subject to the foresaid penalties unless they are sick out of town or giving public lectures in which last

---


2. At least I have not found them, but Rae: Adam Smith, page 95, says, rather optimistically, that the Literary Society's "minutes are probably still in existence somewhere."

3. Taken from a typescript "Copied from the original minute Book in the possession of William Henry Hill, Glasgow," by David Murray, Glasgow, 1892. This volume is in the Murray Collection of the University of Glasgow Library. The Laws were passed by the Literary Society on January 18, 1765.
case their attendance shall not be required till fifteen minutes after the Lecture shall be ended. No Member shall be held to be out of Town unless he shall be more than one computed mile from the College.

5. Every meeting of the Literary Society shall be ended when the President shall by the desire of the Society leave the chair. Any three members shall make a quorum to do business and all members who were late or absent shall be fined whether a quorum was present or not.

6. If any Member shall refuse to pay his fines when required in writing by order of the Society and when that order shall have been marked in the minutes the person so refusing shall thereby cease to be a Member of the Literary Society.

7. When any person shall be proposed as fit to be a Member of the Literary Society the proposal shall be made without consulting him and on the Friday preceding his election. If the person so proposed shall be rejected it is declared to be a Rule of the Society that no member shall mention to any one who is not a member that the person rejected was ever proposed. The Election shall be made by Ballot and if there shall be a negative Ballot he shall not be admitted. The Secretary shall be elected by Majority of Votes and shall hold his office during pleasure.

8. Every Member who lives within a mile of the College shall give a discourse in the order of his Seniority and when all shall have given Discourses Questions shall be proposed in the same order no one being obliged to give two questions till all shall have given one. The person who gave the last discourse or question shall be President and failing him his Predecessor and so on. And the person who shall give a discourse or illustrate and explain a question upon the second Friday of May shall be President upon the first Friday of November.

9. The President shall have the power of bringing three Visitors into the Society provided the Orator that is the person who is to give the discourse or question shall consent and the Orator shall have the power of bringing in three without asking the consent of any person and each of these six shall be admitted by producing a written order to the Secretary for that purpose. But this law concerning six visitors shall extend only to the members of this College and to the Inhabitants of Glasgow it being competent to the Society to admit any number of strangers they shall think proper.

10. The Secretary shall begin to read the Minutes of the immediate preceding night as soon as the College clock shall have struck half an hour past five o'clock after which he shall enter in the Minutes the names of such as were late or are absent, he shall exact fines from delinquents demand the subject of the discourse
for the next meeting of the Society and after entering it in the Minutes he shall read aloud the subject of the discourse which is to be given.

11. On the first Friday of November every Member shall deposite in the hands of the Secretary half a guinea which shall be forfeited if he shall not give his discourse in the order and on the day he ought according to Seniority but the half guinea so deposited shall be returned when the discourse shall be delivered in its order. If the person who is to give a discourse shall not inform the Society by word or writing of the subject of it on the Friday before it is to be given he shall pay half a Crown or if after that intimation he shall change his subject he shall pay the same sum. On the Friday before the last discourse is given for the current Session every member whose turn it shall be to give a question on or before the second Friday of May shall deposite in the hands of the Secretary five shillings which shall be forfeited if he shall not explain and illustrate his question in order. And in the same manner as with respect to discourses if a question shall not be proposed the night before it is to be explained and illustrated he shall forfeit half a crown.

12. The President shall have a casting vote but no vote except in the case of an equality. As soon as a discourse is read or question explained and illustrated he shall desire all the members to give their observations upon it. No reply shall be made by any person till every Member shall have given his observations and no member shall be interrupted in giving them provided he breaks not thro the laws of good breeding. Nor shall the person who gave the discourse or proposed the question make any reply till every one shall have spoken once after which he shall be at full liberty to reply to the whole. When his reply shall be finished the first order of speaking shall not be observed but if two or more attempt to speak at the same time the President shall determine who shall speak first. His business shall be to keep order to execute the laws to be attentive to strangers and to prevent every thing which may be hurtful to the good humour and decorum of the Society.

13. If the Secretary shall be absent and shall not send the books to the Society before the Clock shall strike half an hour past five he shall pay half a crown for that neglect. He shall enter the Minutes in a book and hang up in the place of meeting a list of the members in the order in which they are to give their discourses and a list also in another column of those who live more than a mile from the College.

14. The expenses of the Society for Coals Candles Books Etc., shall be paid out of the fines. If they shall be found insufficient each member living within a mile of the College shall contribute an equal share to make up the deficiency. If the fines are more than sufficient the overplus shall be kept in the Secretary's hand to be disposed of at the pleasure of the Society.
15. On or before the second Friday of May the Secretary shall every year clear all debts due by the Society and his accounts shall be settled and signed by the President.

16. All former Statutes of the Society are hereby abrogated. No changes shall be made in the above and no laws shall be enacted till a Bill or Overture of the changes proposed shall have been entered in the Minute Book and read two different Fridays and upon the third Friday the Vote may be called for passing such a Bill or Overture into a law and if it shall be passed it shall be added by the Secretary to the laws of the Society.

It will be observed from the above rules, that great emphasis was placed on attendance, punctuality, and the discharge of the individual member's duty in providing a discourse or a question for the "day he ought according to seniority." In this there is a decided emphasis on achievement in the form of productive effort on the part of each member. And, once again, we may observe the incredible range of subjects which the society covered. As shown in the minutes, discourses for the session 1764 - 1765 were given in the following order:

November 9, 1764. Mr R. Foulis read a Memoir on the discovery and Culture of Genius.

November 16, 1764. Dr Leechman read a discourse of Remarks on Mr Hume's natural History of Religion.

November 23, 1764. Mr Muirhead gave a discourse on the Origin and Progress of Poetry among the Romans.

November 30, 1764. Dr Moor gave a discourse on the Structure of the

1. The obligation to provide a discourse was taken seriously by at least one member, as, in fact, it was by all who were active in the Literary Society. David Hume, in a Letter to his friend Adam Smith, writes earnestly: "I beg you to make my Compliments to the Society, and to take the Fault on Yourself, If I have not executed my Duty, and sent them this time my Anniversary Paper. Had I got a Week's warning, I should have been able to have supply'd them; I should willingly have sent some Sheets of the History of the Commonwealth or Protectorship; but they are all of them out of hand at present, and I have not been able to recall them..." (Greig: The Letters of David Hume, Vol. 1, page 216, ltr. #107, to Mr Adam Smith Professor at Glasgow, 9th of Jany., 1755.)

2. Typescript of the Original Minutes of the Literary Society Etc. (see pages 121 - 124, above.)
Greek Language and the Method of Ascertaining the meaning of Particles in that tongue.

December 7, 1764. Mr. Anderson read some observations on Monsr. Montesquieu's On the Theory of Love.

December 14, 1764. Mr. A. Foulis read a paper on the first Religion of Mankind and the notion of a chaos.

January 25, 1765. Mr. Millar gave some observations on the Origin of the English Parliament and the changes which have happened in different periods.

February 1, 1765. Dr. Trall gave a Discourse on the general causes of Populousness.

February 8, 1765. Mr. Cumin gave some Remarks on Tragedies and the respective Excellence of the Ancients and Moderns in dramatic performances.

February 15, 1765. Dr. Williamson gave a History of the Rise and Progress of the true or Copernican System of Astronomy.

February 22, 1765. Dr. Wight gave a view of the Origin of the Mohammedan Religion and of the causes of its rapid progress.

March 8, 1765. A paper of Dr. Walker's was read giving an Account of some Experiments made to measure Heights by a Barometer with some Proposals to render that method more accurate.

March 15, 1765. Dr. Reid gave a Dissertation on Memory with observations on the Theories of some Modern Philosophers.

March 22, 1765. Mr. Robertson gave a History of regular architecture.

As every active member had not given his discourse, or had been excused from doing so, the first man on the list, (i.e. Robert Foulis who gave his dissertation on 9th November, 1764), proposed a question for discussion. These questions were as follows:

March 29, 1765. Mr. R. Foulis's question: What is faction? Distinguish from Patriotism.

1. Typescript of the Original Minutes of the Literary Society etc. (see pages 121-124, above.)
April 19, 1765. Dr. Leechman's question:—Whether there are Principles inherent in Society by which it must tend to its Improvement?

April 26, 1765. Mr. Muirhead's question:—Whether Anaxagoras was the first that introduced mind into the Make and Management of Nature?

May 3, 1765. Dr. Trail's question:—What was the intention of the Heathen Mysteries?

May 10, 1765. Mr. Anderson's question:—In judging of the Truth of Physical and Political Events is there any standard which the Mind can employ with Advantage? If there is, is it such a one as Tillotson and Hume have endeavoured to establish as the standard for judging of Miraculous Events?

This startling variety, however, may be regarded by some readers as not quite so remarkable as I have tried to make out. Such a blase attitude, if indeed it really exists, merely serves to demonstrate how quickly we become accustomed to a new proposition. But the genuinely astonishing fact is that the Literary Society of Glasgow maintained its inclusive outlook for at least thirty-five years. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the Literary Society of Glasgow was the place of origin of such dissimilar works as Adam Smith's Essay on Language, his Theory of Moral Sentiments, and of his Wealth of Nations; of James Moor's essays On the Influence of Philosophy upon the Fine Arts, On the Composition of the Picture described in the Dialogue of Cebes, and On Historical Composition; and of Joseph Black's papers "on

1. Murray: Robert and Andrew Foulis, page 58. Murray says that the Society was in existence until well past the end of the century, but as he did not give the source of his information, I have been unable to verify this. There was undoubtedly a literary society in the University of Glasgow in the early nineteenth century, but in order to state that such a society was a direct descendant of the Literary Society of Glasgow, there should be the positive evidence which Murray has neglected to give.

The Literary Society of Glasgow, because of its long life, respectable and talented membership, and the quality and quantity of the work done by its members, was one of the most important societies of the century. Very early in its history, the Society exhibited those qualities which were to make it, through its members, as great an influence on the future as any other society to appear in Scotland during this period. It is significant that membership to the society was open to the merchants of the town, for Scotland's future, as well as that of the whole of Great Britain, lay in the development of her commercial enterprise. The contributions of Adam Smith, who provided an economic theory for the impending "Industrial Revolution", and those of Joseph Black, whose work with heat provided the basic theories which enabled James Watt to give the "Industrial Revolution" the steam engine for its essential motive power, brought tremendous prestige to the Society. At a time when there was an ever increasing need for advances in the realms of science, economics, and technology, it was the members of the Literary Society of Glasgow who did much to fill that need.

If the Literary Society of Glasgow was one of the most impressive literary societies in the eighteenth century, the Philosophical Society of Aberdeen was one of the most productive. At the time the Society was organized, in 1758, Aberdonians were very much alive intellectually. "Nowhere in Scotland did science and the belles lettres flourish more during this period than in the two colleges of Aberdeen, particularly...

1. Lord Cardross (who was elected a member of the Society in 1763), quoted in Murray: Robert and Andrew Foulis, page 38. For Black's contributions, see also Murray: Memories of the Old College of Glasgow, page 183.
in the Marischall, where to good seed sown first by Blackwell and afterwards by David Fordyce produced ere long an abundant crop."

And in their efforts to ripen and harvest their crop of literary ideas, the Aberdeen literati were largely assisted by their literary society, the Philosophical Society of Aberdeen, or, as it was sometimes referred to, the "Wise Club."

There are several very excellent descriptions of this organization. The earliest comes from a Life of Dr. John Gregory which has been attributed to Alexander Fraser Tytler, Lord Woodhouselee, one of the Judges of the Court of Session, and the biographer of Lord Kames. As this account is the one from which all the others have ultimately been derived, it will serve admirably to give the essential details of the society. The account begins by drawing the reader's attention to the effect of the society in stimulating literary productions among its members:


3. "Life of Dr. John Gregory," prefixed to A Father's Legacy to his Daughters, by Dr. John Gregory. W. Forbes: Life of Beattie, Vol. 1, page 202, states that Tytler was the author.

4. "Life of Dr. John Gregory," prefixed to A Father's Legacy to his Daughters, by Dr. John Gregory, page 39-41. This account, with all its advantages, has several drawbacks. Tytler is inaccurate in a number of small details. For corrections, see the extracts from the article which appeared in Macmillan's Magazine for October 1863 beginning on page 129, below, see also Appendix B, page 581 ff.
It would be curious, in many instances, to trace the history of those literary compositions which have instructed or amused the world, and to mark the progress from their first rude sketches to their complete form and ultimate perfection. Some of the most admired works of those philosophers I have mentioned (i.e., Reid, Campbell, Beattie, and Gerard) owed their origin to a literary society, or rather club, (for it was a convivial meeting in a tavern), which was held weekly in Aberdeen, where a part of the entertainment of the evening was the reading of a short essay, composed by each member in his turn. The projectors of this institution, which the vulgar and uninitiated denominated the "Wise Club", were Dr. Reid, and Dr. Gregory. The society consisted chiefly of some of the Professors of the King's and Marischal Colleges of Aberdeen; but admitted, likewise, several gentlemen of the place, of a literary turn, or of agreeable conversation. Besides the more formal compositions read as discourses by the members, a literary or philosophical question was proposed each night for the subject of conversation at the subsequent meeting. It was the duty of the proposer of the question to open the discussion, and afterwards to abstract or digest the opinions of the several members in the form of an Essay, which was engrossed in the Album of the society....

Further details have been supplied by the author of an article which appeared in MacMillan's Magazine for October, 1863. The author of the article, who had access to the Society's records, gives the following summary of its activities and organization:

The Society was formed in January 1758. Meetings were held once a fortnight, on the second and fourth Wednesday of every month. It was enacted that each alternate meeting should "begin with a discourse or dissertation, not exceeding half-an-hour in length, the subject and design of it being intimate" (sic) "at a previous meeting." After the discourse was read, every member in his order, "had access to make his observations in a free but candid and friendly manner." The limits of discussion were strictly and, as we think, wisely defined. Thus: "Criticisms upon style, pronunciation, or composition, are to be avoided, as foreign to the design of the Society.


The member that discourses," it was also provided, "may answer to any observations made, but the observer is to make no reply without leave of the President."

Each member was required to bring forward a discourse once a year. Occasionally, at the end of a discourse and the observations made, and, as a rule, at each alternate meeting, a question, previously proposed by each member in his order was "conversed upon." The proposer of the question "had access to speak first, and the other members in their course." But no member could speak above twice on the same question without leave of the President. The nature of the subjects of the discourses and questions are carefully defined. We transcribe the rule on this head in full, as we find it in the Minute Book in Reid's hand-writing:— "The Subject of the Discourses and Question shall be Philosophical; all Grammatical, Historical, and Philological Discussion being conceived to be foreign to the Design of the Society. And Philosophical Matters are understood to comprehend — Every Principle of Science which may be deduced by just and Lawful Induction from the Phenomena either of the Human Mind or of the material World; All Observations and Experiments that may furnish Materials for Such Induction; The Examination of False Schemes of Philosophy and False Methods of Philosophizing; The Subserviency of Philosophy to Arts; the Principles they borrow from it, and the Means of carrying them to their Perfection. If any Dispute should arise whether a Subject of a Discourse or a Question proposed falls within the Meaning and Intendment of this Article, it shall be determined by a Majority of the Members present."}

1. The provision of the "Wise Club" which denied its members the small pleasure of verbal criticism may, by some, be regarded as a flat contradiction of my observation that eighteenth-century literary societies were pre-occupied with the problem of form. I would like to remind the reader, however, that there are large and small considerations of the problem. An evaluation of the general arrangement and content of an essay was certainly of more value to the mature men of letters and philosophers of the Philosophical Society of Aberdeen than minor pedantries and small bickerings about matters of style could possibly have been. Ideas, too, have form. Certainly a great deal of the attraction of certain philosophical systems is their balance and structure. In my opinion, the Aberdeen philosophers have only set aside the small problems of form in order to concentrate on the larger.

2. These limitations are unusual for a literary society of the period, but the Aberdeen group was unusual in that its members were very few and very select. In spite of their resolve to avoid all "Grammatical, Historical, and Philological Discussions," the reader will have noted that they still intended to cover a field that would include half of the learned societies of the present day. The society's definition of "Philosophical Matter" is still sufficiently broad to include all the sciences.
Care was taken that neither the discourses themselves, nor the observations made upon them, should pass away quite forgotten. Records of them were kept during the greater portion of the Society's existence. The discourses were recorded in one book, each by its author; the questions and abstracts of conversations on them, in a second— a duty devolving, in each case, on the proposer of the question recorded. The minutes and financial accounts were recorded in another book—the same which has given us materials for the present paper.

The Society chose members for itself, seeking only the fit though few. On a desirable "philosopher" being thought of, he was proposed—often, it would seem, without application on his part, or even without his knowing anything about it. No person was elected but by the unanimous suffrage of the Society, after notice given to all the members present or absent, and the due entry of the day of the proposed election in the minutes. The person elected was then "sounded" and, if willing to act, was admitted. Every member, in the early period of the Society, was President for one month in his turn; afterwards the office was held for a year. The President had an approach to autocratic powers.

In membership, the Aberdeen Philosophical Society was, as has been said, small but very select. The following list of members is provided by the editor of James Beattie's London Diary:

The original members of the society were: John Gregory, then Professor of Medicine at King's College and later of the Practice of Medicine at Edinburgh University, whose collection of lectures on psychology, as well as all the orders of Philosophy. (For some of the various subjects treated by the members of this Society, see Appendix B, 581). But the statement that they would investigate "the Subserviency of Philosophy to the Arts" is a real shocker. The philosophers I have known do not affect such a modest tone. Far from it, to them philosophy is the Queen of all the Arts, and of the Sciences as well. I suspect that it is either a misprint, a misreading on the part of the author of the article, or a slip of Reid's pen. If none of these is the true explanation, my admiration for the common sense and modesty of the eighteenth-century intellect, which is already large, would be immeasurably increased. (For the subjects of the discussions and discourses, see Appendix B, 583 f.

[2] Walker: James Beattie's London Diary, page 17 f. A complete list of members also appears in the article in MacMillan's Magazine, page 457 f., and in both biographies by W. and M. Forbes. I have chosen this particular passage not so much for its completeness, for all are complete, but for its identification of the members.
the Duties and Qualifications of a Physician was to give him a high standing in his profession; whose papers delivered to the society were to be published as A Comparative View of the State and Faculties of Man with those of the Animal World and to earn him some reputation as a philosopher; and whose Father's Legacy to his Daughters, was posthumously to make his name something of a household word; Thomas Reid, Gregory's cousin, then a regent at King's College and later Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow University, whose various philosophical works were to place him at the head of a new school of Scottish philosophers; George Campbell, from 1759 Principal of Marischal College and later also Professor of Divinity there, whose many writings were to raise him into high esteem in his own day as a psychologist and metaphysician; David Skene, the Dean of Faculty at Marischal College, a local scientist who carried out researches in various branches of Natural History; John Stewart, Beattie's old Professor of Mathematics; and Robert Trail, minister till 1761 of Banff and afterwards Professor at Glasgow, first of Oriental Languages and then of Divinity. Since the formation of the society four other members had been elected; Thomas Gordon, Professor of Humanity at King's College; Alexander Gerard, Beattie's former regent and predecessor in the Moral Philosophy chair; John Farquhar, minister of Nigg parish, near Aberdeen; and John Ross, then tutor at Banff Castle to Lord Deskford's son and later Professor of Oriental Languages at King's College. After 1761 only four more ordinary members and one honorary member were admitted before its dissolution in 1773. They were George Skene, Beattie's colleague in the Chair of Natural Philosophy; William Ogilvy, a regent at King's College who became Professor of Humanity there in 1765 and whose Essay on the Right of Property in Land appeared in 1782; James Dunbar, another regent at King's College, whose Essays on the History of Mankind in Rude and Cultivated Ages was an early attempt at a philosophical treatment of history; William Trail, Stewart's successor in the Mathematical chair; and James Trail, the Bishop of Down and Connor, Robert Trail's uncle, who was elected an honorary member at a meeting he attended in 1768. These men, most of them distinguished, or later to be so, in one or other branch of philosophy, were Beattie's companions and counsellors; and just as most of them owed something in their work to the common stimulus and sympathetic criticism of the Philosophical Society, so he owed much to it, both in his efforts to equip himself for the teaching of his subject and in the substance of the writings he produced. The society's places of meeting are uncertain, for, as is customary with such interesting antiquarian speculations, the number of cocksure statements regarding them has produced the usual chaos. It has been suggested that they met "alternately in Aberdeen and Old Aberdeen; at
the New Inn in the Castlegate or at the Lemon Tree Tavern in Huxter Row, both near Marischal College, or at the Red Lion Tavern not far from King's college. It has also just as confidently been supposed that they met "at John Beans', whose tavern was... somewhere in the Castlegate or Broadgate; or at Luckie Campbell's in the Aulton - situated probably in the High Street." Very likely they met in all five taverns, and perhaps more besides. One thing is certain, they did not waste their substance in riotous living. Extant tavern bills for the club's evening refreshment indicate that they spent, on an average, about eighteen pence each. An example of their expenses for an evening can be given in the following tavern bill:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To 1 Mutchken Punch</td>
<td>0 2 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To 2 bottles Red Port</td>
<td>0 4 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To 3 bottles Porter</td>
<td>0 1 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Supper</td>
<td>0 3 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Paips and Tobacco</td>
<td>0 1 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addition by Entertainment</td>
<td>0 1 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It has been stated that "only on one other occasion, as far as is known, did the bill exceed that amount." Such moderation seems a certain indication that the stimulation of the evening was due to the company and the conversation rather than the liquor. It will be well for the reader to remember this fact, for in later chapters it will be my duty to defend the Scottish literati from charges of too enthusiastic a particip-

The speculative activities of the Philosophical Society of Aberdeen gave rise to one of the most charming literary anecdotes of the entire century. When Dr. Thomas Reid had completed his *Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*, in which he endeavoured to exorcise the spectre of scepticism which had been raised by the philosophical writings of David Hume, he resolved, through Hugh Blair's interposition, to subject the manuscript to Hume's inspection. Le bon David, who at first regarded this proposal with an appropriate scepticism, was, upon examination of the proffered work, very well pleased. His reply to Reid was friendly and encouraging, and when Reid wrote to Hume on 18th March, 1765, he, too, was eager to extend a friendly greeting to the "arch sceptic". His letter reads as follows:

**Dr. Reid to David Hume, 16th March, 1765.**

When you have seen the whole of my performance, I shall take it as a very great favour to have your opinion upon it, from which I make no doubt of receiving light, whether I receive conviction or no. Your friendly adversaries, Drs. Campbell and Gerard, as well as Dr. Gregory, return their compliments to you respectfully. A little philosophical society here, of which all three are members (i.e. the Philosophical Society of Aberdeen), is much indebted to you for its entertainment. Your company would, although we are all good Christians, be more acceptable than that of St. Athanasius; and since we cannot have you upon the bench, you are brought oftener than any other man to the bar, accused and defended with great zeal, but without bitterness. If you write no more in morals, politics, or metaphysics, I am afraid we shall be at a loss for subjects.

---

1. See Chapter 9, page 520, note #2.
The other members of the Philosophical Society, with one exception, were warm admirers of David Hume's work. Dr. George Campbell had also submitted his *Dissertation on Miracles*, an answer to Hume's merciless essay *Of Miracles*, to Hume, and "had acknowledged in his preface almost infinite obligations to him." Only James Beattie was small-minded enough to permit his animosity towards Hume's ideas to affect his personal as well as his literary behaviour. Beattie's attacks on Hume, however, were never as popular in Scotland as they were in England where Beattie was "caressed, and invited, and treated, and liked and flattered by the great," and his Essay on Truth was finally published with the aid of a "pious fraud" perpetrated by two of the author's friends who not only advanced the cost of its publication because no Edinburgh bookseller would accept it, but to forestall Beattie's disappointment, advanced him fifty guineas "out of their own pockets", under the pretext that it was the bookseller's price for the work.

The friendly regard shown by Reid and Campbell for David Hume was a reflection of the general spirit of toleration and unenvying admiration which existed among Scottish men of letters. This spirit was an


3. "Strange to say, this famous work was launched on the world with difficulty. Booksellers refused it, but at last, under the persuasion of Beattie's friends, Mr. Andrew Millar consented to publish it, though only at the author's expense. Unwilling to hurt the author's feelings by this mortifying proposal, his admirers arranged quietly among themselves to pay the cost, and with amiable mendacity told him that it had been sold for fifty guineas, which, of course, they presented to him out of their own pockets." (Graham: *Scottish Men of Letters*, page 264.)
important element in the literary life of the time, and it goes a

great way toward explaining the charm and the attractiveness of the

Scottish literati. I shall refer again to these amiable characteristics

when the literary circles of Scotland and England are compared later

on.

If they were friendly and helpful in their dealings with those

who were so unfortunate as to be outside their group, the members of

the Philosophical Society of Aberdeen were of far more assistance to

one another. Nearly every account of the society has drawn attention

to the fact that its activities laid the foundations of the impressive

list of works produced by its members. There is also the direct

evidence of a letter written by James Beattie in which he gives a

detailed account of the origin of his Essay on Truth. This letter,

which was addressed to Sir William Forbes, one of the friends who

committed the "pious fraud" of assisting the Essay through the press,

reads as follows:

Dr. Beattie to Sir William Forbes, Aberdeen, 30th Jan., 1766.

1. See Chapter 10, page 566 f.


London Diary, page 17 (quoted on page 131-132, above); Graham:

Scottish Men of Letters, page 250; Coutts: History of the University

of Glasgow, page 314; Stewart: Life of Thomas Reid, pages 413-414;

Bower: History of the University of Edinburgh, Vol. 3, page 194;

Life of Dr. John Gregory (Prefixed to his A Father's Legacy to his

Daughters), pages 39-40 (quoted on page 129, above); M. Forbes:

Beattie and his Friends, page 21; Smellie: Literary and Character-

istical Lives, pages 5-6; Lives of Eminent Scots, published by the

Society of Antient Scots, Vol. 1, page 144 f.; and Macmillan's

Magazine, October, 1865, page 440 f.

I have of late been much engaged in metaphysics; at least I have been labouring with all might to overturn that visionary science. I am a member of a club in this town, who style themselves the Philosophical Society. We have meetings every fortnight, and deliver discourses in our turn. I hope you will not think the worse of this Society, when I tell you, that to it the world is indebted for 'A Comparative View of the Faculties of Man,' and 'An Enquiry into Human Nature, on the Principles of Common Sense.' Criticism is the field in which I have hitherto (chiefly at least) chosen to expatiate; but an accidental question lately furnished me with a hint, which I made the subject of a two hours discourse at our last meeting. I have for some time wished for an opportunity of publishing something relating to the business of my own profession, and I think I have now found an opportunity; for the doctrine of my last discourse seems to be of importance, and I have already finished two-thirds of my plan.

From all the evidence which I have examined, it is possible to draw only one conclusion. The Philosophical Society of Aberdeen, with its obvious bias in favour of encouraging the productivity of its members, was an outstanding example of the type of literary society which flourished during the Period of Achievement. In this connection, it is interesting to note that the Society was dissolved in 1773, that is, within two years of the date which I have set for the beginning of a new period. In this same year, Beattie was given a pension of two hundred pounds sterling by the crown, an example of royal patronage which may be taken as a sign of the growing reputation of Scottish authors.

I have spent considerable time in a detailed examination of the activities of the literary societies of Glasgow and Aberdeen, and it is now time to return to Edinburgh. In regards to the relative position of the three towns, and their respective literary societies, it should be kept in mind that although a lack of reliable information has made it impossible to treat the Edinburgh societies with a fullness which they deserve, Edinburgh none the less was the intellectual capital of eight-

eenth-century Scotland. The societies of Edinburgh, however, cannot be treated with the same convincing simplicity and directness as the provincial societies, and there is therefore some danger that the unavoidable complexities of the Edinburgh literary scene may sometimes disguise the fact that I am still heading in the same direction in which I started. But the reader must not lose sight of the fact that the three main themes, (the impulse toward national improvement, the desire to imitate English models, and the organization of societies as a means to both these ends), which have been the guides for this thesis from the beginning are still the most important aids to an understanding of the societies of this period. And such aids are of particular importance at this time, for I am about to discuss a society in which all three appeared. This society, which was the supreme example of an eighteenth-century "improving" literary society, was the Select Society of Edinburgh.

It is one of the well-established traditions of Edinburgh's past that the Select Society was originated by Allan Ramsay, the very talented and successful artist son of Allan Ramsay the poet. The younger Ramsay was a man of many talents, and no mean classical scholar. On Wednesday

And May, 1754, Allan Ramsay and fourteen of Edinburgh's "select" met in the Advocate's Library to organize the society which became "the parent of a numerous progeny of debating societies in Edinburgh." The original fourteen "select" were as follows:

Mr. John Jardine, Minister of the Gospel in Edinburgh.
Mr. Francis Hume.
Dr. Francis Hume.
Mr. Adam Smith, Professor at Glasgow.
Mr. Anderson.
Mr. Alexander Wedderburn.
Mr. Simon Fraser, Advocate.
Mr. Allan Ramsay, Painter.
Mr. James Burnett, Advocate.
Mr. John Campbell, Advocate.
Mr. Alexander Carlile, Minister at Inveresk.
Mr. William Johnston, Advocate.
Mr. James Stephenson Rogers, Advocate.
Mr. David Hume.
Mr. John Swinton, Advocate.
Dr. Alexander Stephenson.

With such an impressive list of members, we must recognize at once that this was to be no ordinary debating society. The presence of David Hume, Adam Smith, Alexander Wedderburn (who was to become Lord Chancellor), Lord Monboddo (then plain James Burnett), and Alexander Carlyle was alone sufficient to indicate that "this society had no affinity to the clubs

Carlyle: Autobiography, page 312, note. In two well-known accounts which deal with the origin of the Select Society, (Campbell: Lord Chancellors, Vol. 6, page 29; Ritchie: Life of David Hume, page 83); there is considerable confusion as to the relationship between the Select Society and the Poker Club. I have attempted to set this matter right in Chapter 9, page 518, note #1.


3. Taken from the list of members prefixed to the MS. Minute-Book of the St. Giles or Select Society of Edinburgh, in the National Library of Scotland. The Minute-Book does not indicate which are the founding members, but we know from Burton and Carlyle that there were fifteen present. The men listed above are the first fifteen in a list which was kept in the order in which members joined.
that are composed principally of raw half-thinking lads." The Select Society could boast at its institution "of having for its members a set of the ablest men Scotland ever produced, and it proved, therefore, an excellent school for eloquence." And eloquence was one aim of the society. Its dual purpose, as Dr. Carlyle informs us, the pursuit of "philosophical inquiry, and the improvement of the members in the art of speaking."

The new society grew rapidly. By 12th June, 1754, it had already doubled its original numbers, and by February of the next year, it had increased its membership to eighty-three. Among the sixty-eight new members were such able and talented men as John Home, the author of Douglas; Dr. William Robertson, the Historian; Sir David Dalrymple, author, jurist, and antiquarian; Sir Gilbert Elliot; Dr. Hugh Blair, Dr. Johnson's favourite Scottish author; Patrick Lord Elibank, Earl of Glasgow; Sir Alexander Dick; the Rev. William Wilkie, author of the Epistolary; the Duke of Hamilton; and Lord Kames. The number of members gradually rose to one hundred and thirty, and included "fifteen who were or became peers and eighteen who were or became law lords, not to mention clergymen of high birth, professors, scholars, and other small deer." These men met on Wednesday evenings, at first in the Advocate's

2. Ibid.
3. Stewart: Life of Robertson, Appendix, page 313, (Note A to page 165), written by Dr. Alexander Carlyle.
4. For a complete list of members, see Appendix C, page 586.
6. Rae: Life of Adam Smith, page 109, says the society met on Friday.
Library, and then when the society had outgrown the room provided for
then, in the hall above the Leigh Council House which belonged to the
St. Giles' Lodge of Masons.

1. MS Minutes of the Select Society, meeting of 13th November, 1754.

2. Ibid.

The laws which regulated the newly-formed society were as follows:

Rules and Orders of the Select Society, Instituted on Wednesday the twenty second day of May 1754.

1. That the Society shall meet at the Advocates' Library every
   Wednesday evening at six o'clock, from the twelfth day of
   November to the twelfth day of August.

2. That each member shall preside in his Turn, according to the
   order in which his name happens to stand upon the Roll; who
   shall leave the Chair and dissolve the meeting at nine o'clock.

3. That the Society shall consist of fifty persons; the number to
   be afterwards augmented, as the Society shall see cause.

4. That any Person desirous of being admitted a member, shall be
   proposed as a Candidate by a Writing subscribed by two members
   to be given in to the Secretary, and read by the President,
   after the Debates of the Evening are over.

5. That no election of such candidates shall be made the same
   evening on which they are proposed, nor at any time after, un-
   less one half of the members upon the Roll be present; and
   moreover, that there shall be no election made unless when
   there are more candidates than vacancies in the Society.

6. That at such Election the method of Proceedure be as follows:
   First, That every Member present shall out of the Candidates
   proposed, give in a list containing so many names as there
   happen to be vacancies appointed to be filled: and, at giving
   in his list, shall declare that he has made no Promise for
   whom he shall vote. Secondly, That such Candidates so voted
   for by list, shall then be ballotted for, one by one, begin-
   ning with him whose name appears the oftener upon the lists,

night. He apparently took this from Tytler: Life of Kames, Vol. 1,
page 176. A number of others have followed this error. Knight:
Conboddo and his Contemporaries; page 11; Gleig: Life of Robertson,
page xxxii, (Prefixed to Robertson's History of Scotland, Vol. 1);
Ritchie: Life of David Hume, page 89; Stewart: Life of Robertson,
page 165 f.; Hogg's Instructor, Vol. VIII, 1852, page 44; Rogers;
Social Life in Scotland, Vol. 2, page 571; Graham: Scottish Men of
Letters, page 111.
and so on till the whole vacancies appointed to be filled up are accordingly filled up. And no candidate shall be held to be elected by Ballot unless he shall have three fourths of the suffrages in his favour.

7. That annually upon the third Wednesday of October circular letters shall be sent by the clerk of the Society to each of the members, enclosing a printed Roll of the Society, and desiring their attendance on the first Friday of December, at six o'clock in the evening for a general Re-election. At which meeting, those persons whose names shall be struck out of the said Roll by three fourths of the Members then present, shall be excluded the Society.

8. That every Member upon his first Admission into the Society, and likewise annually upon his Re-election, shall immediately pay the sum of five Shillings Sterling into the hands of the Clerk towards defraying the contingent expenses of the Society; otherwise his name to be instantly struck off the Roll.

9. That every Member may propose any subject of debate, except such as regard Revealed Religion, or which may give occasion to vent any Principles of Jacobitism, by giving the same in writing to the Secretary after the conclusion of the debates of the evening, to be received, or rejected, by a vote of the Society; and if received, to be entered in a Book to be kept for that purpose. And the President before he leaves the chair, shall read the Question to be debated at the next meeting, being the first in order, unless it be agreed by a majority that some other Question standing in the Book be debated in its stead.

10. That every person may speak three times in a debate, and no oftener; the first time fifteen minutes and ten minutes each of the other times; adressing himself to the member presiding. And if two, or more, stand up at the same time, the member presiding shall call upon him whom he first perceived rising; always giving preference to him who has not spoke, or not so frequently, as the person or persons rising with him; unless any member rises to explain anything said by him and misunderstood, for which purpose he shall be allowed two minutes. No person shall be interrupted in his argument, nor shall any person present be named in a Debate.

11. That these Rules and Orders being passed by a majority of votes, (as all future ones shall also be) shall be established as the Laws of the Society, and fairly ingrossed on Parchment;

1. Questions to be Debated by the Select Society, a volume of MS. in the National Library of Scotland. I have included a transcript of this volume as Appendix D, page 594 f.
a copy whereof shall be delivered to each member requesting
the same, he being at the expense thereof.

12. That no Alteration of the above Laws, or additions to them
be enacted, or even debated in a general meeting of the So-
ciety, till such alteration or addition be delivered in writ-
ing to the Secretary, and afterwards referred to a committee.

The procedure outlined in the above rules was very simple. Each
member, in the order in which his name appeared on the role of membership,
would take the chair as praeses. After the business of the society had
been disposed of, a question would be debated. This question was promul-
gated at the previous meeting, and it was chosen from a book in which
all new questions suggested by the members were entered. An examination
of the volume containing the Questions to be Debated by the Select Society,
reveals the same multiplicity of interests as was observed in connection
with the societies already discussed. There is nothing to indicate, for
example, that the interests of the Society were very largely economic,"
as has been suggested. It is true, however, that the members were not
averse to economic speculation, and, further, that they exemplified the
improving spirit to the extent that they took positive steps to "encour-

1. For the Roll of Membership, see Appendix C, page 586.
2. Compare the practice of the Easy Club, page 48, above.
3. See Appendix D, page 594 f.
4. Rae: Life of Adam Smith, page 110. Rae quotes a notice which appeared
in the Scots Magazine listing subjects of debates held in the Edin-
burgh Society. (Scots Magazine, Vol. 19, page 163). But this notice
applies to the Edinburgh Society for Encouraging Arts, Sciences, Man-
ufactures, and Agriculture, which also had debates at their monthly
meetings, and not to the Select Society. In general, Rae's account
is very good, but he has failed to make a proper distinction between
the Select Society and its offspring, the Edinburgh Society. For
further discussion of this problem, see page 153, and note #3.
age arts, sciences, and manufactures." At the meeting held on 12th February, 1755, it was proposed "that a Committee might be appointed to consider whether the society might not by raising a voluntary contribution to be bestowed on premiums afford a considerable encouragement to the several usefull arts and manufactures in the country." This proposal was carried out, and on 12th March it was decided that a new society should be organized and that it should bear the name of The Edinburgh Society for Encouraging Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture. On 2nd April it was announced that the "first monthly meeting" of the Edinburgh Society was to be held on Monday, April 7, 1755.

The new plans of the Select Society were reported to its founder, who had gone to Rome "to read Latin," by the genial David Hume. Hume, who had been elected treasurer soon after the society was established, wrote to Allan Ramsay, giving him a detailed and enthusiastic report of the society's doings. His letter, which must have been written soon after the Select Society had embarked on its new venture, reads as follows:

It (the Select Society) has grown to be a national concern, Young and old, noble and ignoble, witty and dull, laity and clergy - all the world are ambitious of a place amongst us, and on each occasion we are as much solicited by candidates as if we were to choose a member of Parliament. Our friend young Wedderburn has acquired a great character by the appearance he has made. Wilkie the minister has turned up from obscurity, and become a very fashionable man, as he is indeed a very singular one. Monboddo's oddities divert - Sir David's (Lord Hailes) zeal entertains - Jack Dalrymple's rhetoric interests. The long drawling speakers

1. MS. Minutes of the St. Giles or Select Society.
2. Finlay: Art in Scotland, page 82.
have found out their want of talents, and rise seldom. In short, the House of Commons was less the object of general curiosity at London than the Select Society at Edinburgh. "The Robinhood," and "The Devil," and all other speaking societies, are ignoble in comparison. Such felicity has attended the seed which you planted. But what chiefly renders us considerable is a project of engrafting on the society a scheme for the encouragement of arts and sciences and manufactures in Scotland, by premiums partly honorary, partly lucrative. A box is opened for donations, and about one hundred guineas have been given in. We hear of considerable sums intended by Lord Hopetown, Morton, Marchmont, &c., who desire to be members. Nine managers have been chosen; and to keep the business distinct from our reasoning, the first Monday of every month is set apart for these transactions, and they are never to be mentioned in our Wednesday meetings. Advertisements have been published to inform the public of our intentions. A premium, I remember, is promised to the best discourse on Taste, and on the Principles of Vegetation. These regard the belles lettres and sciences; but we have not neglected porter, strong ale, and wrought ruffles, even down to linen rags.

The "project of engrafting on the society a scheme for the encouragement of arts and sciences and manufactures in Scotland" proceeded rapidly. A committee, which had been appointed on 12th February, 1755, to take action on the Select Society's resolution to "encourage arts, sciences, and manufactures", consisted of the following members:

His Grace the Duke of Hamilton.
My Lord Elibank.
Lord Kaims
Professor Alexr. Monro.
Sir David Dalrymple.
Mr. George Clerk.
Mr. Alex. Wedderburn.
Mr. Patrick Duff.
Dr. White.
Colonel Oughton.

1. "The Robin Hood was a famous debating club in London, of which Burke was at one time a member. By 'the Devil' Hume may have meant the Royal Society Club, which met at the Devil Tavern, near Temple Bar, from 1746 to 1780." (Greig: Letters of David Hume, Vol. 1, page 220, note 5.) There was also a Robinhood Debating Society in Edinburgh, but it did not appear until later. See page 226, Chapter 5, below.

2. MS. Minutes of the St. Giles or Select Society.
On 26th February, this committee submitted proposals for the erection of the new society. The meeting ordered one hundred copies of the proposals to be printed, and, in compliance with one of the said proposals, also ordered the election of ordinary and extraordinary managers for conducting the new Society, as Hume had related to Allan Ramsay. I have not seen a copy of the proposals which were printed by the Select Society, but the Scots Magazine for March, 1755, carried a reprint of them. The proposals read as follows:

Resolutions of the SELECT SOCIETY for the encouragement of Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture.

That Arts and Manufactures may, by the proper distribution of premiums, be promoted, is a certain truth, founded in reason, and confirmed by experience.

By premiums, a spirit of emulation is excited in every artist; improvements become universally known; and merit receives the testimony of public approbation.

A more substantial benefit than mere applause, arises also to the artist. He whose merit has been thus distinguished, will find, that although the value of the premium he has gained be incon siderable, the extraordinary demand for his goods will amply recompense his labour.

The SELECT SOCIETY, determined by these motives, appointed a committee of their number, to consider in what manner a design so laudable might be promoted.

Upon a report from their committee, the society came to the following resolutions, which they ordered to be printed, for the use of the members.

It was resolved, that the method of raising the fund should be by a voluntary contribution, either to be put into a box kept for the purpose, or to be paid to the treasurer on receipt.

With regard to the application of the fund, the society resolved, that the rewards of merit in the finer arts should be honorary; in the more useful arts, generally lucrative.

In the distribution of premiums, the first place, they thought,

was due to genius; it was therefore resolved, that the first premium be bestowed on the discoverer of any useful invention in arts of sciences.

After the example of foreign academies, the society resolved, that two subjects be annually proposed; one chosen from Polite Letters, and one from the Sciences; and that the best discourse on each, composed in this country, be distinguished by some public mark of the respect due to the taste and learning of the composer.

The art of Printing in the country requires no encouragement; yet, as to pass it by unnoticed, were slighting the merit of those by whose means alone it has attained that eminence, it was resolved, that the best printed and most correct book, which shall be produced within a limited time, be distinguished by an honorary reward.

The manufacture of Paper is strictly connected with printing; to the shame of this country, it is supplied with paper from countries which use not half the quantity of linen that is here consumed; in order to remedy this defect; to render people more attentive to their own interest, as well as to the interest of their country; to shew them the consequence of attention to matters which may seem trivial; it was resolved, that, for the first, second, third, fourth and fifth parcels of linen rags, gathered within a limited time, a reward be assigned in proportion to the quantity and goodness of each parcel.

Manufactures of Printed Cotton and Linen are already established in different places of this country: in order to promote an attention to the elegance of the pattern, and to the goodness of the colouring, as well as to the strength of the cloth, it was resolved, that, for the best piece of printed linen or cotton cloth, made within a certain period, a premium should be allotted.

The art of Drawing being closely connected with this art, and serviceable to most others, it was resolved, that for the best drawings by boys or girls under sixteen years of age, certain premiums be assigned.

The annual importation of Worked Ruffles, and of Bone-Lace and edging, into this country, is considerable; by proper encouragement, we might be supplied at home with these ornaments; it was therefore resolved that a premium be assigned to all superior merit in such work; such a one as may be a mark of respect to women of fashion, and may also be of some solid advantage to those whose laudable industry contributes to their own support.

The Stockings which in this country are made in looms, have deservedly a great reputation, for the goodness of the workmanship; the worsted, except what is imported, is generally not so good; it was resolved, that a premium be given, to encourage the spinning of good worsted yarn, in such a manner as the gentlemen skilled in these matters shall judge to be proper.
The demand, in this country, for English Blankets, has of late been very considerable; a great part of our wool might be employed in a manufacture of that kind; it was resolved, that for the best imitation of English Blankets a premium be assigned.

Carpets are made in several places in this country: to encourage the manufactures to vie with each other, it was resolved, that a reward be allotted for the best-wrought carpet, and of the best pattern and colours, made within a certain time.

Whisky is made in this country in considerable quantities, but is still capable of great improvement, in the quality and taste; it was resolved, that for the best tun of whisky distilled within a limited time a premium be assigned.

Scots Strong Ale has justly acquired a great reputation, both at home and abroad; but the trade might be carried to a much greater height. PORTER, which was formerly brought in considerable quantities from England is now made here by different brewers. In order to increase the exportation of the one, and enable us to supply ourselves with the other, it was resolved, that a premium shall be given for the best hogshead of each.

Those articles the society chose out, as a sketch of their design. What the most immediate encouragement, will best appear upon a more minute examination. Many other articles will easily occur; particularly in Agriculture, in which premiums may be of the utmost consequence. These, if there shall be a sufficient fund, it was resolved should be afterwards added.

That the management of this plan might not interrupt the proper occupation of the society; and as it can be better carried on by a small, than a great number of men; the following scheme of management was agreed to.

That the execution of this plan shall be committed to nine members of the society, who are to be elected annually. But to disburthen the managers of some part of the trouble of the society's affairs, they are to be free from the office of judging in the competition for prizes; which is to be executed by three members for each article intitled to a premium, who are to be chosen by the society every year, and who shall determine to which of the competitors for that article the prizes are due.

That the managers have a power to name their own secretary, and shall meet upon a day to be appointed by the society, with a power of adjourning themselves.

That three shall be a quorum; and that the treasurer to be annually named by the society, shall be, in course, one of the managers.

That there shall also be nine extraordinary managers annually chosen.
That for the particular business of this scheme, there shall be a meeting of the society on the first Monday of every month, excepting the three months of harvest vacation; and two extraordinary meetings, on the first Wednesday of July, and the first Wednesday of December. At these meetings, the managers shall lay their proceedings before the society.

That, previous to the two extraordinary meetings, there shall be a meeting of all the managers, both ordinary and extraordinary, who shall take a survey of their former proceedings, and consider what new matter shall be proposed to the society.

That every person who shall subscribe two guineas, or more, for the purposes of this undertaking, shall be a member of the monthly meetings for that year in which he contributes.

That the society for the above purposes take the name of, *The Edinburgh Society for Encouraging Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture, in Scotland.*

Names of the Managers.

- Duke of Hamilton
- Earl of Glasgow
- Lord Elibank
- Lord Deskford
- Lord Dalmenie
- Lord Kains
- George Drummond, Esq., Lord Provost of Edinburgh
- Sir Alexander Dick
- Sir David Dalrymple
- Colonel Aughton
- Mr. Alexander Monro, senior, P. A.
- Dr. Robert Whytt
- Mr. Andrew Pringle
- Mr. Gilbert Elliot, Advocates
- Mr. William Johnston
- Mr. Alexander Wedderburn
- George Clerk, Esq., of Drumcrieff
- Alexander Tait, secretary to the Edinburgh Insurance
- Adam Fairholm, merchant, Treasurer
- Patrick Duff, Writer to the Signet, Secretary

(The names of the extraordinary managers are marked thus - *.)

The same issue of the Scots Magazine announced the first regular premiums to be offered by the Edinburgh Society.

The origin of the idea of offering premiums is interesting. In a pamphlet entitled Rules and Orders of the Edinburgh Society for Encouragement of Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture, the following points to Ireland as the country whose example was followed:

To encourage genius, to reward industry, to cultivate the arts of peace, are objects deserving the attention of public-spirited persons.

That the inhabitants of Scotland may become diligent in labour, and excellent in arts, is the concern of all who indeed love their country.

For these good and useful purposes, the Edinburgh Society was instituted. The Gentlemen of whom that society is composed, were sensible that arts and manufactures can never be effectually promoted, unless a spirit of emulation be excited in the various artists and manufactures; a proper distribution of premiums seemed to them the most reasonable method of exciting this spirit. The experience of Ireland has demonstrated the usefulness of such premiums, when wisely directed, and equitably distributed.

The Irish society referred to in the Edinburgh Society's pamphlet was the Dublin Society. The Scots Magazine had long made a practice of carrying notices of the activities of this Society. As early as 1759 it had been suggested to Scotsmen that "the Dublin Society, established without any view beside that of serving their country, by instructing and assisting the natives in the improvements of the different parts of their country to the purpose most capable of rewarding their industry, have set your countrymen an example well worth their imitation." The interesting thing is

1. Introduction, page 3.


that the Dublin Society had formerly been instituted in imitation of The Honourable the Society of Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture in Scotland which was established in Edinburgh in 1723. The route had been devious, but the example of Scotland's impulse toward national improvement had been reintroduced, after the turmoil of the Rebellion, to reinvigorate her citizen's persistent striving for improvement. It will be noted, however, that the emphasis was now on achievement. Premiums were given for the best examples of workmanship, whether in manufactures, art, science, or agriculture. And often, when the quality of the goods did not justify an award, the premiums were withheld. The promoters of the Edinburgh Society did not subordinate every concern to quantity; quality was always to the fore. The emphasis on high-quality achievement may be illustrated by the society's statement in regard to Scottish printing:

The Art of Printing in this country requires no encouragement, yet, as to pass it by unnoticed, were slighting the merit of those by whose means alone it has attained that eminence, it was Resolved, That the best printed and most correct Book which shall be produced within a limited time be distinguished by an honorary reward.

And later on we shall see this same spirit at work in the Select Society's resolve to "employ the surplus of their annual contributions upon premiums

1. Maxwell: Select Transactions, Dedication, page ix. For the Honourable the Society of Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture in Scotland, see Chapter 2, page 19 ff., above.

2. See the list of awards published in the Scots Magazine for January, 1757, pages 49 - 52, for examples of this.

3. Maitland Club's Notices Illustrative of the Literary History of Glasgow, page 50; Scots Magazine, March 1755, pages 126 - 127; Rae: Adam Smith, page 113. See also page 114, note 2, page 147, above.
to be bestowed on certain subjects respecting Literature." But before
I relate the interesting developments which followed this resolution, it
is necessary to devote some space to explaining the rather involved re-
lationship between the Select Society and the Edinburgh Society for En-
couraging Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture.

As we have seen, the proposal which led to the establishment of the
latter was made in the Select Society on 12th February, 1755. On 26th
February, certain proposals were made by a committee which had been ap-
pointed for that purpose. These proposals recommended the establishment
of the Edinburgh Society, and outlined its methods and purposes. Accord-
ingly, the Select Society established the new Society, which operated
under the following Rules and Orders:

Rules and Orders of the Edinburgh Society.
The Edinburgh Society for Encouragement of Arts, Sciences, Manu-
factures, and Agriculture in Scotland, consists of all the members
of the Select Society, and of such other persons as contribute
Two Guineas yearly to the funds of the Society; these being mem-
ers thereof for every year in which they contribute, and have a
voice in all the transactions of the Society, and may elect or be
elected Managers or other Officers of the Society. The society,
thus constituted, meets, at their ordinary place, upon the first
Monday of January, February, March, and April, at six o'clock in
the evening; and upon the first Wednesday of July, upon the first
Monday and Wednesday immediately preceding the first Friday of
December, for the purposes hereafter specified.

The Society is to choose their President on each night by majority
of votes; that member present who was last in the chair, to pre-
side during this election.

1. See page 159, below.
2. These proposals have been transcribed for the reader on page 146 f.,
above.
3. The pamphlet entitled Rules and Orders of the Edinburgh Society for
Encouraging Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture, page 5 f.
4. The St. Giles' Masonic Hall, over the Leith Council House in Edinburgh.
At each meeting of the Society the President is to recommend diligence in procuring contributions and subscriptions for annual payments; and the subscription-paper and cash-box are always to be on the table before them.

The Presidents are to desire Gentlemen to offer in writing any proposals which they shall think advantageous to the Society.

After the ordinary affairs of the Society are determined, the members are to discourse on some subject relating to trade, agriculture, and improvement of arts in this country; each such subject having been proposed at the preceding meeting by the President, out of a list prepared by the Ordinary Managers, and approved by the Society.

The effect of these provisions was to create two separate organizations, although the membership of both was largely the same. "The Edinburgh Society was," therefore, "an organization originating within the Select Society, and forming part of it, while at the same time the two Societies were not wholly identical." As an illustration of the separateness of the Select Society and its offspring or daughter society, the Edinburgh Society for Encouraging Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture, the following entries in the minutes of the Select Society are revealing:

20th February, 1759. - A motion was made that this Select Society as they were so nearly connected with the Edinburgh Society they would be pleased to think upon the most proper method by which they could be more serviceable to the said Edinburgh Society.

27th February, 1759. - Resolved that as all the members of the Select Society are, by the Constitution, Members of the Edinburgh Society, that it be recommended to all persons of rank and fortune to join in the debates of the Select Society.


2. MS. Minutes of the St. Giles' or Select Society of Edinburgh.

3. This did not work both ways. While it was impossible to be a member of the Select Society without also being counted as a member of the Edinburgh Society, it was possible to become a member of the Edinburgh Society alone by simply making a donation of two guineas. But membership in the Edinburgh Society gained in this way did not entitle the holder to join in the debates of the Select Society.
who are already members to contribute to the Edinburgh Society; and that it will be expected of all candidates of rank or fortune who shall desire to be admitted into the Society (i.e., into the Select Society) that they should contribute towards carrying on the Edinburgh Society.

One of the distinguishing features of the Edinburgh Society was the nature of its debates which were held on economic subjects at its monthly meetings. A selection of the subjects of these debates, which were published in the Scots Magazine for March, 1757, reads as follows:

Questions debated in the Edinburgh Society.

What are the advantages to the public and state from grazing? what from corn lands? and which ought to be most encouraged in this country?

Whether great or small farms are most advantageous to the country?

What are the most proper measures for a gentleman to promote industry on his own estate?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of gentlemen of estates being farmers?

What is the best and most proper curation of leases of land in Scotland?

What prestations, beside the proper tack-duty, tenants ought to be obliged to... And what restrictions they should be put under?

What proportion of the produce of lands should be paid as rent to the master?

In what circumstances the rent of lands should be paid in money, in what in kind? and at what times should they be paid?

Whether corns should be sold by measure or by weight?

What is the best method of getting public highways made, and repaired: whether by a turn-pike, as in many places in G. Britain? by county or parish work? by a tax? or by what other method?

What is the best and most equal way of hiring and conducting servants? and, what is the most proper method to abolish the practice of giving of vails?

1. Scots Magazine, March, 1757, page 163. (See page 143, note 4, above.)
And the Edinburgh Society did not merely talk over these problems. The question debated on 20th May, 1757, was "What is the best method of getting highways made and repaired?" Following this debate, the Edinburgh Society prepared and published a number of articles in which proposals appeared for rendering "more complete the laws concerning highways, bridges, and ferries," and in June, 1759, the Society came out with a "Plan for repairing the Highways." As a result of this public-spirited agitation, the roads in Scotland were soon as well-surfed as any in Great Britain. A number of travellers, and among them was Samuel Johnson, made favourable comments on the excellence of Scottish roads.

The primary activity of the Edinburgh Society for Encouraging Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture, however, was not debating or publishing proposals for public improvements, but the offering of premiums and prizes for Scottish workmanship. The first list of such premiums, as has already been noted, was published concurrently with the proposals for establishing the new Society. This list, which contained twenty-three items, announced the Society's intention to award a gold medal for "the best discovery in science," "the best essay on Taste," and "the best dissertation on Vegetation, and the principles of Agriculture." A silver medal was offered for "the best printed and most

3. "That the improvement (of roads) was general we have the testimony of such visitors as Wesley, Pennant, Dr. Johnson, and Pocoke - the last averring that the road from Edinburgh to Perth was 'the finest turnpike road in Britain.' Pococke: Tours in Scotland, page 250." (Hume Brown: History of Scotland, Vol. 3, page 287.)
4. See page 149 and note 1, above.
correct book”, "the best printed Cotton or Linen cloth", the "best imitation of English Blankets", and "the best hogshead of Strong Ale and Porter." Cash prizes were offered for "the most useful invention in arts", for workmanship in carpets, for "drawings of fruits, flowers, and foliages, by boys and girls under sixteen years of age", for imitation Dresdenware and bone lace, and, lastly, for the greatest quantity of white linen rags for making paper. In 1756, the number of premiums was increased to ninety-two; in 1757, to one hundred and twenty; in 1758, to one hundred and thirty-eight; and, in 1759, to one hundred and forty-two. The complete details of these premiums and the names of the persons to whom they were awarded were published in the Scots Magazine, or in the Caledonian Mercury, to which the reader is referred for further details.


2. Scots Magazine, March, 1755, pages 126 - 130. Resolutions of the newly formed association, and a list of premiums proposed for the first year.


Scots Magazine, January, 1756, pages 48 - 49. A list of awards for the year 1755.

Scots Magazine, February, 1756, pages 105 - 106. A list of premiums for the year 1756.

Scots Magazine, March, 1756, page 147. Notice of intention to have practical farmers admitted to the association.

Scots Magazine, April, 1756, page 196. An announcement of awards.

Scots Magazine, January, 1757, pages 49 - 52. A list of awards for the year 1756.


Scots Magazine, May, 1757, page 260. An announcement of questions to be considered at the monthly meeting of the Edinburgh Society.


Scots Magazine, April, 1758, pages 211 - 215. A list of premiums offered in the year 1758.
While the Edinburgh Society for Encouraging Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture was thus busily expanding its activities, the Select Society was not idle. At a meeting on 16th July, 1755, a committee who had been appointed to consider some proposals how the society should extend its plan, brought in their Report, which read as follows:

Report of the Committee appointed to consider some proposals to be laid before the Society.

It is humbly proposed that the Select Society for promoting the laudable purposes which it has in view, should extend its plan in the following manner.

---

Scots Magazine, April, 1764, pages 229 – 230. A notice of the decline in the paid subscriptions of the association, and a consequent decrease in the number of premiums offered.
Caledonian Mercury, Wednesday, January 26, 1763. A notice of the society's intention to publish the awards at the Royal Infirmary at twelve o'clock, January 29, 1763.
Caledonian Mercury, April 27, 1763. A list of awards.
Caledonian Mercury, April 18, 1764. A list of premiums.
Caledonian Mercury, July 28, 1764. An announcement of a special meeting.

In addition to the above periodicals, the interested reader will find helpful information in the following publications:
Scottish Notes and Queries, December, 1889, pages 103 – 104, an extract from the General Magazine for 1755 announcing the formation of the association.
Rules and Orders of the Edinburgh Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture, (a pamphlet published by the society).
Scots Magazine, April, 1759, pages 160 – 182. "Extracts from articles, published by the Edinburgh Society, with a view to render more complete the laws concerning highways, bridges, and ferries, etc."

1. MS. Minutes of the St. Giles' or Select Society of Edinburgh.
I. That the Society should resolve to take into consideration all Essays, Questions and discoveries relating to the Arts and Sciences that shall be offered either by its own members or others.

II. That for this purpose the Society shall appoint Committees for Arts and Sciences, who shall receive and examine everything offered to the Society, and transmit what they shall judge to be worthy of its attention.

III. That there shall be at least four committees of this kind, one for natural history and chemistry; one for pure and mixed mathematicks, another for belles lettres and criticism, and a fourth for History and Politics.

IV. That the method of conveying Papers to the Society shall be by sending them sealed to the Secretary of the Society, who shall open and deliver them to the Presidents of the respective Committees, according to the nature of the subject contained, which shall be marked on the inside of the cover.

V. That the Presidents of the Committees take care to assemble them as often as they have anything of importance to communicate, or when they are desired by three members of a Committee.

VI. That the time for offering anything to the Society from the committees shall be at its ordinary meetings so soon after eight of the clock as the Debate shall be finished, when the Presidents shall call for Reports: which being made, the Society shall proceed on them as to them shall seem meet.

VII. That the Papers, after having been examined, by the society shall remain in the hands of its Secretary, to be kept for the Society's use, and disposed of as they shall direct.

Which Report being read before the Society it was ordered that it should remain in the Clerk's hands to be considered by the several members before the society should declare their mind concerning it.

The suggestions contained in the report were accepted at the meeting held on 50th July, 1758, and Alexander Monro, William Wilkie, Robert Wallace, Gilbert Elliot and Adam Smith were appointed to meet in John's Coffee house for choosing the committees. On 6th August, the committee reported "the following persons as proper members of the four committees, viz:-

1. MS. Minutes of the St. Giles or Select Society of Edinburgh.
That for that on Natural History and Chemistry.
Lord Dalmenie.
Dr. Francis Home.
Dr. John Hope.
Dr. Alex. Stevenson.
Mr. Alex. Monro.

II. For pure and mixed Mathematics.
Dr. Robert White.
Dr. David Clerk.
Mr. James Russell.
Mr. John Adams.
Mr. Robert Wallace.

III. For Belles Lettres and Criticism.
Mr. George Wishart.
Mr. Hugh Blair.
Mr. David Hume.
Mr. William Wilkie.
Mr. Adam Smith.

IV. For History and Politicks.
Lord Deskford.

The next step came on 7th January, 1756, when the rules committee proposed to the Society "that they should employ the surplus of their annual contributions upon premiums to be bestowed for the best dissertations on certain subjects respecting literature." The following entries in the Select Society's minute-book relate what followed upon this proposal:

21st January, 1756. - The Society took under consideration the proposal which had been laid before them by the committee on law the seventh of this month for employing the surplus of their annual contributions upon premiums to be bestowed for the best dissertations on certain subjects relating to literature; and agreed that they would lay out the surplus in that manner; and named Professor Alexander Monro, Mr. John Swinton, Mr. Alexander Wedderburn, Mr. David Rae, the Rev. Mr. John Jardine, and, Mr. Wm. Wilkie a committee to meet and consider on what particular subjects or

1. MS. Minutes of the St. Giles or Select Society of Edinburgh.
parts of literature the Dissertations should be for which premiums are to be proposed, whom they appointed to bring in their Report against the 4th of February next.

The committee which had been appointed, however, did not make its report until 18th February, 1756. At this meeting the committee made the following suggestions:

The Committee appointed by the Select Society to propose subjects for prizes relating to Literature, which the Society had resolved to add to those of the Edinburgh Society, humbly offer the following to their consideration.

I. History of the extent and duration of the Roman and afterwards the Saxon Conquests and Settlements in Britain to the North of Severus's Wall in Cumberland and Northumberland.

II. Account of the rise and progress of Commerce, Arts, and Manufactures in North Britain, and the causes which promoted or retarded them.

III. The most reasonable scheme for maintaining and employing the poor in North Britain, and how far this scheme can be executed by the laws now in force.

The proposed questions were approved by the Society, and at the next meeting it was resolved that the prize should be a gold medal. The society's resolution on this matter reads as follows:

25th February, 1756 - Resolved that the authors of the best dissertation on each of the said three subjects shall be entitled to a Gold Medal to be given by the Society of the value of five guineas.

In accordance with the Select Society's resolutions, the list of premiums offered by the Edinburgh Society for the year 1756 was augmented by three additional prizes, each consisting of a "gold medal of the value of five guineas," which was to be awarded for the best dissertation on one of the three subjects which the Select Society had suggested.

1. MS. Minutes of the St. Giles or Select Society of Edinburgh.
The fact that the prizes offered by the Select Society appeared on the list of premiums offered by the Edinburgh Society for Encouragement of Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture, serves to remind us that, in spite of their separate organizations and their separate interests, many times their respective activities were the result of a common impulse. And it could be no other way, since all the members of the one organization were also members of the other.

One such common impulse, which can be traced in the activities of both societies, was the movement to abolish the giving of "vails" or drink-money to servants. The agitation which this measure of reform precipitated between master and servant all but disrupted the genial affability of Edinburgh society, as the class which was to be deprived of an accustomed and cherished source of income was far from meek in their resentment at the attack on their privileges. The affair was undoubtedly begun as a debate in the Edinburgh Society for Encouraging Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture. We have already seen that one of the subjects for debate in this Society was "What is the best and most equal way of hiring and conducting servants? and, what is the most proper method to abolish the practice of giving of vails?" The activities of this patriotic association having been bruited abroad, as they were certain to have been when so explosive a subject was touched upon, the tempers of a number of domestics in and about the city of Edinburgh were so far from being improved that they were ripe for mischief at the slightest provocation. And that provocation was not long

1. See page 154, above.

in coming. On Wednesday, 16th January, 1760, James Townley's *High Life Below Stairs* opened at the Canongate Concert Hall in Edinburgh. This boisterous comedy, with its merciless exposure of the foibles of the serving class, antagonized the Edinburgh footmen beyond bearing. What followed is described by Arnot in his *History of Edinburgh*:

Although it is the province of the stage to lash the vices, and ridicule the follies of people in all ranks; yet, soon after the farce of *High Life Below Stairs* was published, the footmen, taking it in high dudgeon, that a farce, reflecting on their fraternity, should be exhibited, resolved that it should be no more performed. Accordingly upon the second night of its being announced in the bills, as a part of the entertainment, Mr. Love, one of the managers, came upon the stage, and read a letter, containing the most violent threatenings, both against the actors and the house, in case the piece should be presented; declaring, that above seventy people had agreed to sacrifice fame, honour, and profit, to prevent it. Notwithstanding this fulmination, the performers were ordered to go on. That servants might not be kept in the cold, nor induced to tipple in adjacent ale-houses while they waited for their masters, the humanity of the gentry had provided, that the upper gallery should afford, gratis, admission to the servants of such persons as were attending the theatre. Yet, did the only part of the spectators, which were admitted for nothing, presume to forbid the entertainment of their masters, because it exposed the vices of their own order. No sooner was the piece begun, than a prodigious noise was heard from the footmen's-gallery. They were ordered to be silent, but ineffectually. Many of the gentlemen discovered, among this noisy crew, their individual servants. When these would not submit to authority, their masters, assisted by others in the house, went up to the gallery; and it was not till after a battle, and thrust out of the house, that quietness could be restored.

This episode, which reflected so strongly the lack of fidelity and the ingratitude of the instigators of the disturbance, brought the entire class into discredit. And the disturbance in the theatre was not soon forgotten. The January issue of the *Scots Magazine*, a magazine which enjoyed a wide distribution among the Scottish gentry, added fuel

to the conflagration by publishing a long letter condemning the action
of the footmen and containing the suggestion that the disturbance was
part of a well-laid scheme of the instigators to raise servants wages.

It is very possible, that some of the footmen were such politi-
cicians, as to incite or give countenance to the riot, from a
view to promote the interest of their order. They knew that
the abolishing of their vails was projected; they knew that
some of their brethren intended so bold a stroke, as to dis-
appoint all the ladies and gentlemen of the entertainment ex-
pected from the farce; and they very reasonably concluded, that
such an attempt would ripen and forward the gentlemen's project,
and make them universally declare that their footmen must have
no more vails. The immediate consequence of this, they thought,
would be, the raising their wages much higher than before; and
they concluded that in a very little time, the vails would come
to be given in as great abundance as formerly, though perhaps a
little more privately; and so the whole increase of the stip-
ulated wages would be so much gained to their fraternity. That
this may really be the case, seems not improbable, whether any
of those footmen were so great politicians as to foment the
riot with that view or no.

On 29th January, the Select Society entered the fray. The minute
for the meeting held on that date reads, "Resolved that at next meet-
ing, previously to any discussion of the questions the Society will
take under their consideration the fitness of the practice of giving
vails or drink-money to servants." This resolution was carried out
on 5th February, 1760, when the society entered in their records the
following agreement which was to be binding on all members:

The Select Society having taken into consideration the practice
of giving vails, or drink-money to servants, and being convinced
that this custom, unknown to other nations, is a reproach upon
the manners and policy of this country, has a manifest tendency
to corrupt the morals of servants, to obstruct the exercise of
hospitality, and to destroy all social intercourse between fam-
ilies; the members did unanimously agree to exert themselves to

2. MS. Minutes of the St. Giles or Select Society of Edinburgh.
the utmost, in order to remove this publick nuisance: and, for
that purpose, they came to the following resolutions:

I. That from and after the term of Whitsunday next, every member
of the Society would absolutely prohibit his own servants to
take vails, or drink-money, on any occasion or pretence what-
soever, from the guests whom he entertained in his house.

II. That from that Term, no member of the society would, on any
occasion, offer vails, or drink-money, to the servants of any
person who had agreed to the former resolution.

III. That all the Members should use their influence in the other
societies to which they belong, in order to suppress the prac-
tice complained of, and to render Resolutions against it
generally.

The President of the Night was entrusted to recommend this to the
care of all the Members, upon their return to their own counties:
which having been done, several persons of Quality and Distinction
signified their intention to promote this laudable scheme in those
parts of the country with which they were connected.

Resolutions to abolish the custom of giving vails or drink-money
were now becoming general. The "Company of Hunters", the "Clerks to the
Signet", the "Heritors of Mid-Lothian", and the Society of Advocates all
resolved, from the following Whitsunday, to "abolish the pernicious prac-
tice." By June, 1760, similar resolutions had been taken in the counties
of Ayr, Berwick, Caithness, Dumbarton, Dumfries, Elgin, Fife, Forfar,
Galloway, Haddington, Kincardine, Linlithgow, Peebles, Renfrew, Ross,
Roxburgh, Selkirk, and Stirling.

The servants of these resolute reformers did not willingly give up
their cherished privilege. An article which appeared in 1762 gives us
some insight into their lack of enthusiasm for the resolutions of their
masters, and proves that the suggestion that "recruiting-officers and

their emissaries" might take a hand in the affair was no idle threat. The
article reads as follows:

When these resolutions came to take effect, it raised a general
mutiny amongst servants in Scotland, particularly in Edinburgh and
the neighborhood, where many of them left their services all at
once, and got into ships in order to come to London in quest of
new places and vails; but happily for the others most of them were
impressed in the Thames, and sent on board the fleet before they
had an opportunity of setting foot on shore. The account of this
soon reached Scotland, which put a stop to the defection; and now
servants there, having no expectations of vails, settle quietly to
their business. Their wages have been moderately raised; they are
become much more reasonable and tractable, as they now find they
must trust to their own good behaviour for a suitable encourage-
ment from their masters; and a person may now travel from one end
of that kingdom to the other, without having occasion to put his
hand into his pocket, except when he lodges at an inn.

There is every reason to believe that the resolutions to abolish
vails were faithfully carried out, and that the custom was absolutely
destroyed in Scotland. In 1763, there are indications that the agitation
had spread to the northern counties of England, to London, and even to
Ireland. The success of the Scottish gentlemen in ridding themselves
of this social nuisance was certainly the example which was being followed
in those places. But the Scots have always been denied a full share of
the credit due to them. When James Boswell "boasted that (Scotland) had
the honour of being the first to abolish the unhospitable, troublesome,
and ungracious custom of giving vails to servants," Johnson answered,
"Sir, you abolished vails, because you were too poor to be able to give
them."

The abolishing of vails, however, was not the only social reform
which engaged the attention of the Select Society. In 1761 we find the

members occupied in organizing a new association, the purpose of which was described in its title. The new organization was called The Select Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of the English Language in Scotland. As this episode in the history of the Select Society is very interesting from the point of view assumed in this thesis, and as it has been the subject of a number of highly imaginative conjectures in the past, I intend to treat it at length.

It has already been stated that the literary Scots of the Age of Improvement were preoccupied with the problem of form, and that in reaching a solution to that problem they had resolved, as they had in other fields, to follow the English example. We have seen how the English periodical papers were instrumental in turning the attention of Scottish writers to the improvement of their style, and how, later on, the Ran- konian Club, the Philosophical Society, and others were erected to effect the desired "improvement" in Scottish literary endeavours. The preoccupation of Scottish men of letters with matters of form and style, and the success of their ambitions to master "classical" literary English had been described many times. And the works of David Hume,

William Robertson, and Hugh Blair, to name only three of the most successful Scottish authors, were proof that Scotsmen could develop a literary style that was universally admired. But the greatest compliment ever paid to Scottish literary achievement came from Samuel Johnson, a man who was not predisposed to praise North Britain, when he wrote to Boswell, "Please to return Dr. Blair thanks for his sermons. The Scotch write English wonderfully well."

But writing English was one thing, and speaking it another. For one thing, the differences in the spoken dialect were wider, and of more durable nature. As an illustration of the difficulty that Scotsmen and Scotswomen of every class had in accustoming themselves to the Southern dialect, two anecdotes related by Ramsay of Ochtertyre are instructive. The first concerns a young Scotswoman who was apparently on a visit to Edinburgh:

A gentleman's daughter from the country being one day asked by a lady what plays she had seen, answered, Love for Love; and The Old Bachelor. "O fie, Mrs Betty!" said her friend, "those are smutty plays, not proper for young women." "Indeed," replied she, with great simplicity, "they did nothing wrong that I saw; and as for what they said, it was high English, and I did not understand it."

Ramsay's second anecdote reveals the difficulties met with by a Scotsman who had to appear in the Houses of Parliament after the legislative Union of 1707. It is also a revelation of the danger of relying on ill-

---

I heard Lord Kames say he was in London when three of the Lords of Justiciary were ordered to appear at the bar of the House of Commons about Porteous's affair. The night before he was invited to sup with them, when Lord Dun, who was a very worthy, but withal a very pompous man, said to his colleagues: "Brethren, I am sorry to say, neither of you will be understood by the House tomorrow. I am, you well know, in a different situation, having made the English language my particular study." Tomorrow came, when Lord Kames said Lord Royston was hardly intelligible; Lord Milton, though no elegant speaker, was well heard, and his meaning comprehended. As for Lord Dun, "Deil ae word, from beginning to end, did the English understand of his speech."

Despite these difficulties, the literati, the nobility, and the gentry of Scotland were determined to discard their northern dialect for a southern one, and early in the century there is evidence that instruction in English was being fostered among the lower classes as well. Henry Grey Graham tells us that in 1738 a master was removed from his post in a parochial school because of his being "not known in the new method" of teaching English.

There were, therefore, three important elements in the process which resulted in the general adoption of the Southern dialect in Scotland. The first of these was the difficulty which men of letters and

zen of affairs had in their essential task of mastering English. The second, was the widespread desire of the nobility and gentry to discard their "provincial" Scottish dialect for the "modern mode" which had been introduced from the south. The third element was the introduction of instruction in English in Scottish schools, and the preference given to teachers who were proficient in teaching that subject. These three elements should be kept in mind as they will be referred to in a later part of this chapter.

The Select Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of the English Language was a direct result of the lectures on elocution and the English tongue given by Thomas Sheridan in Edinburgh. Sheridan, who had arrived in Edinburgh on 10th June, 1761, began a series of lectures on 30th the same month. In the Scots Magazine for July, there appears a complete report of his efforts. This article reprints Sheridan's original advertisement, which gave a synopsis of the lectures:

Edinburgh, June 16, 1761.

Mr. Sheridan proposes to read two courses of Lectures; the first, on Elocution, the second, on the English Tongue; consisting of eight lectures each.

In the first, he will treat of everything necessary to a Good Delivery, under the following heads: Articulation, Pronunciation, Accent, Emphasis, Pauses or Stops, Pitch and Management of the Voice, Tones, and Gestures.

In the second, he will examine the whole state and constitution of the English Tongue, so far as relates to sound, in which he will point out its peculiar genius and properties, and specific difference from others, both antient and modern.

In order to do this in the clearest and most effectual manner, he will begin with the very first elements of speech, and thence proceeding through syllables and words, to sentences and verses,

lay open the principles of composition and numbers, in a manner hitherto unattempted. In this course he will point out the true source of the difficulty (at present thought to be insuperable) which all foreigners, as well as natives of different kingdoms and counties, that speak a corrupt dialect of English, find in the attainment of the right pronunciation of that tongue.

In the close he will point out an easy and practicable way of reducing the living tongue to a standard, and establishing such a method of teaching it, that the adult may become master of it with more ease and certainty, than of any other modern tongue; and that the rising generation in this country may be taught to speak it in its utmost purity.

The price of a ticket, which will admit one person to both courses, will be a guinea.

These lectures, reports the magazine, "were continued four weeks, every Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, at 6 o'clock in the evening. They were attended by more than 300 gentlemen, the most eminent in this country for their rank and abilities; who expressed no less satisfaction with the ingenuity and justness of his sentiments, than with the elegant and interesting manner in which he delivered them." Sheridan's lectures were obviously a great success, although there were some critical comments, even among those who most admired the Southern mode of speech. Young James Boswell, who had been among his numerous audience, recorded the following impression:

1. The lectures were given in Saint Paul's Chapel, Edinburgh. Dibdin: Annals of the Edinburgh Stage, page 111, wrongly says that the lectures were given in the "operating room of the Royal Infirmary."

2. "His lectures were generally approved, though they sustained some slight injury from the ridicule of Mr. Foote, who produced a burlesque on them in 1782, at the theatre in the Haymarket. (Scots Magazine, January 1789, page 41.) See also, for an account of the same incident, The Edinburgh Magazine or Literary Miscellany, Vol. 8, December, 1788, page 388.

Mr. Sheridan's lectures are vastly too enthusiastic. He is to do everything by oratory. It is like the verse in the Song extolling Drunkenness:

Alexander hated thinking,
Drank about at Council-board.
He subdued the world by drinking
More than by his conqu'ring sword.

Sheridan, however, did not fail to turn his success to further profit. The same article in the *Scots Magazine* which reported his lectures announced that he had advertised his intention of publishing the lectures, and that he was taking subscriptions for them. The article also contains another advertisement in which Sheridan announces his intention of giving a second course of lectures:

Mr. Sheridan gives notice, that he will begin a course of lectures on Tuesday next, the 28th (of July) instant, and finish it on Friday in the following week, chiefly intended for the use of the ladies, (Note: No ladies attended the former courses.) or such gentlemen as had not the opportunity of being present at the former course....

For our immediate purpose, however, a notice appearing in the same issue is of far greater importance.

Notice was given in the Edinburgh papers of July 27, that on the Tuesday following, the plan of a new establishment for carrying on, in this country, the study of the English tongue, in a regular and proper manner, was to be laid before the Select Society. Mention was made of this by Mr. Sheridan, on the Friday before, in the last lecture of his first two courses.

The Select Society, which was now well versed in the organization of

---

1. Owing to a twelvemonth's delay in the delivery of the books for which Mr. Sheridan had taken subscriptions, there was considerable dissatisfaction among his Scottish customers, and his reputation underwent some depreciation. See *Scots Magazine* for September, 1762, for articles covering this affair.


3. Ibid.
associations designed to promote Scotland's welfare, lost no time in setting their plans before the public. In the next issue of the *Scots Magazine*, that for August, a detailed proposal appeared under the title of *Regulations of the Select Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of the English Language in Scotland*. The text of these regulations reads as follows:

As the intercourse between this part of Great Britain and the capital daily increases, both on account of business and amusement, and must still go on increasing, gentlemen educated in Scotland have long been sensible of the disadvantage under which they labour, from their imperfect knowledge of the English Tongue, and the impropriety with which they speak it.

Experience hath convinced Scotsmen, that it is not impossible for persons born and educated in this country, to acquire such knowledge of the English Tongue, and to write it with some tolerable purity.

But with regard to the other point, that of speaking with propriety, as little has been hitherto attempted, it has generally been taken for granted, that there was no prospect of attempting any thing with a probability of success; though, at the same time, it is allowed to be an accomplishment, more important, and more universally useful, than the former.

In other countries, great and beneficial effects have flowed from the regular study of their own languages, and the art of public speaking, under diligent and well-instructed masters. And, in proportion as the dialect of any province is corrupt or barbarous, the necessity of studying purity in speech increases.

Even persons well advanced in life may be taught, by skillful instructors, to avoid many gross improprieties, in quantity, accent, the manner of sounding the vowels, etc., which, at present, render the Scotch dialect so offensive.

Among those in a more early period of life, greater effects may be expected from regular instruction. It is in their power, not only to guard against the more gross faults in speech peculiar to Scotsmen, but to attain, in some degree, propriety and elegance in discourse.

Such as are just entering upon their course of education, whose

---

organs are yet pliable and capable of being formed to new sounds and new habits, may acquire the power of speaking, not only with purity, but with grace and eloquence.

For these reasons, the Select Society, at a very numerous meeting held in order to consider this matter, did unanimously declare it to be their opinion, that it would be of great advantage to this country, if a proper number of persons from England, duly qualified to instruct gentlemen in the knowledge of the English Tongue, the manner of pronouncing it with purity, and the art of public speaking, were settled in Edinburgh; and if, at the same time, a proper number of masters from the same country, duly qualified for teaching children the reading of English, should open schools in Edinburgh for that purpose.

But being fully sensible, that there could be no prospect of procuring persons with the qualifications requisite for these stations, without giving them proper security for their encouragement and subsistence, the Society, in order to promote this laudable design by their example, did instantly begin a voluntary subscription, for raising the sum necessary towards carrying it into execution; and appointed some of their number to apply to the absent members, to other private gentlemen, and to most of the public bodies or societies in Scotland, that they might give it their countenance and assistance.

And as the direction of this scheme would greatly interrupt the proper business of the Select Society, and as it is equitable, that all contributors should have access to oversee and direct the application of the sums to be levied, it is therefore resolved,

1. That the Management and direction of this undertaking be vested in sixteen persons, to be elected as Ordinary Directors, in the manner after mentioned.

2. That, besides these, ten persons shall be elected Extraordinary Directors.

3. That the Ordinary Directors shall be impowered to elect their own Treasurer, Secretary, and other officers; to appoint the time and place of their meetings and to receive and apply the money subscribed.

4. That the Ordinary Directors shall employ as many teachers and masters as the funds will permit, and appoint them such salaries as to them shall appear proper, and oblige them to teach according to such plans or regulations as they shall judge most expedient for promoting the purposes which the subscribers have in view.

5. That two of the Ordinary Directors shall, on the first Monday of July and December, in each year, visit the schools taught by the masters whom they have appointed, examine the children under their care, and make a report in writing to the next meeting of the Ordinary Directors.

6. That, on the same days, two of the Ordinary Directors
shall call before them the teachers whom they have appointed, take account of their method of instructing those under their care, and inquire concerning their diligence and success.

7. That there shall be held two general meetings of the Society in each year, one on the second Wednesday of July, the other on the second Wednesday of December; of which meetings, not only all the members of the Select Society, but every other person, who shall subscribe one guinea yearly, for the space of three years, shall be members, and have a right to vote in all matters that come before them.

8. That the Ordinary Directors shall lay before each of these meetings, a report of their transactions during the six months preceding.

9. That the Directors, both Ordinary and Extraordinary, shall be annually elected, on the second Wednesday of December, by the foresaid general meeting of contributors; it being understood, that a third part of the Directors shall be changed each year.

10. That on Tuesday, the 4th of August, the Select Society shall elect Directors Ordinary and Extraordinary, who shall continue in office till the second Wednesday of December, 1762.

11. That the general body of contributors, together with the members of the Select Society, shall take the name of The Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of the English Language in Scotland.

N.B. In order to satisfy contributors, that teachers and masters properly qualified may be got, and shall be employed, it is proper to inform them, that Mr. Sheridan, whose ingenious and instructive lectures in this city first suggested the idea of establishing the society proposed, has not only engaged to find out teachers and masters, and to communicate to them his ideas concerning the proper method of performing their duty; but has also offered to visit this place, as often as the situation of his affairs will permit, and, during his residence here, to contribute his advice and assistance, towards carrying forward the operations of the society, in the most extensive and successful manner.

List of Ordinary and Extraordinary Directors named and appointed for the purpose above mentioned.

Ordinary Directors.

Lord Auchinleck
Lord Alenoor
Sir Adam Ferguson, Baronet
Mr. Walter Stewart, Advocate
Mr. William Johnstone, Advocate
Mr. George Dempster, Advocate
Mr. James Ferguson, *tertius*, Advocate
Mr. Alexander Tait, Clerk of Session
Rev. Dr. Hugh Blair
Rev. Dr. John Jardine
Rev. Dr. William Robertson
Dr. John Hope
Professor Adam Ferguson
Mr. John Fordyce, Merchant
Mr. John Adam, Architect
Mr. James Russell, Surgeon

**Extraordinary Directors.**
Earl of Errol
Earl of Eglinton
Earl of Galloway
Earl of Elgin
Lord Elibank
Lord Kames
Sir Alexander Dick
Mr. James Ferguson, Advocate, Dean of Faculty
George Drummond, Esq., Commissioner of Excise
Mr. Charles Hamilton-Gordon, Advocate

These regulations, the remarks which preface them, and the lists of Directors which are appended are an indication that the association was admirably begun and that it was well supported. The new Society, however, did nothing for twelve months. In August, 1762, the following notice appeared in the *Scots Magazine*:

The managers of the Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of English in Scotland, gave notice in the Edinburgh papers of July 28, that they had engaged Mr. Leigh, a person well qualified to teach the pronunciation of the English tongue with propriety and grace; and that they had fixed the prices and conditions of his attendance upon gentlemen in the following manner:

For one hour, during a month, to a single person, one guinea; for two or more persons, during the same time, half a guinea each; but that Mr. Leigh shall not admit more than six persons at one hour.

The reason for this delay is not known, but even in this inactive state, the society lasted longer than has been reported. Public notices of

---


2. Ritchie: *Life of David Hume*, page 101, writes, "A few weeks afterwards, (i.e. after the publication of the Regulations for the Society,
meetings of the Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of the 
English Language in Scotland indicate that the society met on 22nd, 
February, 1763, and on 30th July, 1764. The latter announcement is 
of particular interest, for it illustrates the close connection between 
the two societies which had their origin in the Select Society. The 
Caledonian Mercury for the 28th of July, announced "a general meeting 
of the subscribers to the fund of the Society for Promoting the Reading 
and Speaking of the English Language in Scotland." To this same an-
nouncement was appended a list of premiums offered for competition by 
the Edinburgh Society for Encouraging Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, and 
Agriculture. This connection is important to bear in mind, for it is 
an indication that the fate of the two societies was bound together.

What that fate was to be was fairly obvious. The two societies had, 
in 1764, reached a crisis, and the fact that the meeting of the Select 
Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of the English Language 
in Scotland held on 30th July, (which was to be the last of that organ-
ization), was called because "matters of great moment to the Society 
were to be laid before the meeting" is an indication of the gravity of 
the situation. As for the Edinburgh Society for Encouraging Arts,

1. The Caledonian Mercury, Saturday, February 19, 1763, gave notice of 
the meeting; and the same paper, on February 26, contained a report 
of the meeting.

In 1765, the Select Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of the English Language in Scotland was already dead, and the Edinburgh Society for Encouraging Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture was, in the words of Alexander Ramsay, "fairly moribund." The Caledonian Mercury for 18th March had a list of premiums, but only six were offered. And the same paper, on 15th July, once again carried the

ominous announcement:--

The contributors to the fund of the Edinburgh Society are earnestly requested to meet by themselves or by proxies in the Advocate's Library, on Tuesday next, the 16th current, at six o'clock in the evening, when matters of the utmost importance to the Society would be laid before them.

This meeting, which was actually held on 26th July, made the following desperate resolutions:

1. That the subscription money payable at Candlemas 1765 be immediately collected in order to answer the premiums now due.

2. That an action be raised against the subscribers who are in arrears for the subscription payable at Candlemas 1764, as well as for all preceding years, unless they pay up their arrears on or before the 12th of August 1765.

"After the intimation of threat of legal proceedings to enforce payment of arrears," writes Ramsay, "there was nothing more to be said, and we may therefore conclude that Mr. Secretary Barclay, on the 12th August, 1765, finally closed the books of the Edinburgh Society, and went grouse shooting."

In explanation of the failure of the three societies, it has been stated that "the ignominious result of all (the) mighty bustle" of the Select Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of the English Language in Scotland brought an end to the activities of the Select Society and to the Edinburgh Society for Encouraging Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture as well. The inference in all such...
reports is that the patriotic indignation of the Scottish populace, at this attack on their language, was such that all three related societies were regarded with such scorn that they withered and died away.

Although I freely admit that this explanation is plausible and that it has the attraction of simplicity, I would like to suggest that there are several cogent arguments against it. It is unfortunate that none of the authors who have offered this version of the downfall of the Select Society have given the sources of their information, for I have been unable to find any evidence of a popular outcry against the introduction of the new dialect. And as I have pointed out above, the men of letters, the men of affairs, the nobility, and the gentry of Scotland ardently desired to learn the "modern mode" of speaking; and the lower orders were not immune from the encroachments of the new dialect, for their schoolmasters were frequently chosen for their abilities in teaching English. It is true that a year or so after the Select Society was first organized, there was a public outcry against it, especially when the society offered its support to John Home's Douglas. The abuse which was directed at the Select Society at that time, however, was of a very different nature from that which would have been raised by the Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of the English Language in Scotland, and, in fact, it occurred five years before the latter society had made its appearance.

In view of the lack of evidence of any popular indignation raised

---

1. See page 168, above.
3. See page 190 f.
by the ambitions of the Select Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of the English Language in Scotland, I would like to suggest that the cause of its downfall, as well as that of the Edinburgh Society for Encouraging Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture, came from a gradual diminishing of interest in the members of the society which was their common parent, the Select Society of Edinburgh. As long as the Select Society remained in a flourishing condition, it had no difficulty in drawing the support of voluntary contributions for its various activities. But when the Select Society began to suffer from the increasing lack of interest and the non-attendance of its members, its dependant societies likewise suffered from lack of support. In June, 1756, two years after its establishment, I detect the first indications of a falling off in the enthusiasm of the members of the Select Society. In 1757, in 1759, and again in 1760, emergency action had to be taken to revive the interest of members.

In view of these facts, I feel that it is reasonably clear that the suggestion that the Select Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of the English Language in Scotland led to the downfall of the Select Society is not only wide of the mark, but that it is directly contrary to the facts. I believe that the life of the Select Society was actually prolonged, and not shortened, by its extra activities. In defence of this statement, I offer the reader the following analysis of the entries in the Minute-book of the Select Society.

As I have already stated, the first signs of a decline in the interest of the members of the Select Society in their organization

1. MS. Minutes of the St. Giles or Select Society of Edinburgh.
came in June 1756, only two years after the society was organized. On
the twenty-third of that month, it was recorded that, at the request of
certain members, the meeting night had been changed from Wednesday to
Tuesday. In itself, this may not appear to be very positive proof that
the Select Society had passed the peak of its vigour, but I would like
to remind the reader that for two years the members of the organization
had adjusted their activities to agree with those of the Society. What
we must recognize is that at this time the Society had reached the point
where certain members felt that it must adjust its activities so as to
avoid conflicting with their other interests. In other words, the Select
Society was no longer regarded as sufficiently important for its meetings
to come before all other considerations. The suspicion that this was a
genuine sign of weakness is borne out by complaints of ill-attendance
recorded in the minutes of the meetings held during December and January.
On 11th January, 1757, it was decided that action must be taken "to re-
vive the Society", and a committee of eight members was appointed to in-
vestigate the problem and to suggest appropriate measures for the con-
sideration of the members. On 25th January, the committee made its re-
port, and it was resolved to elect six presidents who were to serve an-
nually, instead of the usual practice of members taking the chair in
turn. It was also resolved that failure to pay dues was a forfeiture
of membership. The committee had also recommended to the Society that
any member resident in Edinburgh who missed three successive meetings,
should forfeit membership. This suggestion, however, was considered
too drastic, and it was deferred for further consideration.

The provision that six annual presidents should be elected was
obviously intended to tighten up the organization of the Society. With six responsible members sharing the burden of presiding over the meetings, there was reasonable assurance that there would always be someone present who was capable of directing the society's activities to worthwhile ends. The first six to be chosen as annual presidents were:

Mr. James Burnett, (later Lord Monboddo).
The Rev. Mr. William Robertson.
Sir David Dalrymple.
Dr. Alexander Monro.
Sir Alexander Dick.
Mr. Alexander Tait.

In spite of the measures which had been taken to "revive interest", the society continued to show signs of uneasiness. On 14th June, 1757, the meeting night was changed back to Wednesday, and on the following 7th December, on the suggestion of James Burnett, the meeting night was again changed to Tuesday. On 20th December, it was finally resolved that missing four successive meetings, one more than had been recommended by the committee, would forfeit the membership of any member who was resident in Edinburgh at the time of his absence from the society.

1. "When the Society was on the decline, by the avocations of many of its most distinguished members, and the natural abatement of that ardour which is excited by novelty and emulation, it was thought proper to elect fixed presidents to preside in their turns, whose duty it was to open the question debated upon, that a fair field might be laid before the speakers. It was observed of Dr. Robertson, who was one of those Presidents, that whereas most of the others in their previous discourses exhausted the subject so much that there was no room for debate, he gave only such brief, but artful sketches, as served to suggest ideas, without leading to a decision." (Stewart: Life of Robertson, page 314, Appendix "Note A to page 165," written by Alexander Carlyle.)

2. It is obvious from this list that although there may have been a falling off in interest, there was none in talent. The fact that six men of the caliber of those listed above could be found in the active membership of the association is sufficient proof of the high level of merit of its members. It is also the strongest possible motive for the present thesis.
new list of presidents for 1758, however, was as illustrious as the former. The six Presidents chosen on 21st February were:

- Lord Elibank
- Dr. Alexander Monro
- Mr. James Burnett
- Mr. Alexander Tait
- The Rev. Mr. William Robertson
- Dr. Cullen

Throughout the year 1758, the Society appears to have maintained a fairly steady attendance. The process of dissolution had merely been suspended, however, for on 13th February, 1759, the society resolved to admit "strangers to this country", but only as "a temporary expedient."
The resolution to admit strangers is innocent enough in itself, but the qualification that it was to be only a "temporary expedient" suggests that the step was taken merely to make up the membership of the meetings.

At this time there appears the first indication that the Edinburgh Society for Encouraging Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture was also in difficulties. At the meeting held on 20th February, the members of the Select Society made "a motion ... to think upon the most proper method by which they could be more serviceable to the said Edinburgh Society."

Having thought upon the most proper method of assisting the Edinburgh Society, the members, on the 27th of February, "resolved ... that it be recommended to all persons of rank or fortune who are already members to contribute to the Edinburgh Society; and that ... all Candidates of rank of fortune who shall desire to be admitted into the Society that they should contribute towards carrying on the Edinburgh Society."

This resolution was apparently successful, for the list of one hundred and

1. MS. Minutes of the St., Giles of Select Society of Edinburgh. See also pages 153 - 154, above, where these minutes are quoted in full.
forty-two premiums which the Edinburgh Society announced in March of 1759, was the largest ever to be offered by that organization. But it was soon to become apparent that this was the culmination of the Edinburgh Society's activities, for its decline after 1759 was as rapid as its rise had been since its organization in 1755.

At this time the Select Society may have had a short period of reviving energies also, for on 27th November, 1759, the number of "stranger guests was restricted to one who was to be invited by the Preses presiding over the meeting." The guest, contrary to the previous arrangement, could be either Scots or foreign.

1. There is a rather unpleasant legend concerning an English visitor who afterwards became a member of the Select Society. The story is told by Campbell: Lives of the Lord Chancellors, Vol. 6, page 35, (Campbell's account has been twice repeated. Mathieson: Awakening of Scotland, page 199; and Rae: Life of Adam Smith, page 119.) "The famous Charles Townshend, connected with Scotland by having married the Dowager Duchess of Buccleugh, had been admitted a member of the Select Society, and had spoken once with great brilliancy; but he never could be prevailed upon a second time to take part in the debate, and he threw out a number of gibes against the dialect in which the members expressed themselves, - doubting whether he could be intelligible to the audience, - hinting that he was often unable to follow their reasoning or fully apprehend their rhetorical figures. He jestingly asked them, 'why they did not learn to speak as well as to write the English Language? and proposed that in the mean time an interpreter should be employed.'" Campbell goes on to explain that this insult was one of the Select Society's motives for establishing the Select Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of the English Language in Scotland. Two Scottish accounts of Townshend's visit to the Society do not mention his sarcasms. Henry Mackenzie: Anecdotes and Egotisms, page 40, gives the following account: "The evening on which he (Charles Townshend) visited the Society, this great orator of the House of Commons was of course expected to speak. He spoke very indifferently, and the Society could not understand whence he acquired his great reputation in Parliament: but he afterwards said himself that a new audience, for which from their known talents he felt much respect, had overawed him so much as to choke his powers of speaking. Fortunately, however, after discussion of the question for that evening, some accidental topic occurred on which several members spoke; Mr. Townshend had by that time recovered his composure, and made an excellent impromptu speech, which redeemed his character for eloquence with the Society." The
From February to July in the following year, (1760), the society was again troubled with the problem of non-attending members, and in February, 1761, the meetings of the society were so ill-attended that the members present at the meeting held on the third of that month made provisions for a circular letter to be sent to all members inviting them to attend a meeting on "Tuesday the tenth instant ... in order to take under consideration some proposals for reviving the original spirit of the Society." On 10th February, a committee was appointed to examine the matter and to suggest appropriate measures to be taken. On the seventeenth the committee reported, but its proposals were deemed inadequate, and at the next meeting, held on 23rd February, the Select Society established, for the first time, a system of fines for unexcused absences from regular meetings.

With its members thus "encouraged" to be more punctual in their attendance, the Select Society continued its activities for two more years, though its membership was less than half of what it had been in the peak year of 1759. During these two years the society's records were often

---

account given by Alexander Carlyle: Autobiography, page 409, year 1749, substantially agrees with that of Mackenzie. "While Mr. Townshend was here, we had him chosen a member of the Select Society in one sitting (against the rules), that we might hear him speak, which he accordingly did at the next meeting, and was answered by Lord Elibank and Dr. Dick, who were superior to him in argument and knowledge of the subject. Like a meteor, Charles dazzled for a moment, but the brilliancy soon faded away, and left no very strong impression, so that when he returned to England at the end of two months, he had stayed long enough here." The discrepancies in these three accounts may be explained by the different points of view of their respective authors, but I suspect that Campbell's account is more literary embroidery. In any event, the Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of English was not established until two years after Townshend's visit to Edinburgh.

1. For a list of members of the Select Society in 1763, see Appendix C, page 666. 592-3
neglected, and the minutes are so sketchy that they give no adequate impression of the organization's state of health. It is certain, however, that the society continued to meet, and to hold its weekly debates.

As is so often the case with such records, the last entry in the Minute-book of the Select Society gives no indication that the activities of the organization were to be suspended. We know from the Caledonian Mercury for January, 1763, that the meeting to be held on 18th January was postponed until the twenty-fifth "on account that the solemnity for the Queen is to be celebrated to-morrow." And when the twenty-fifth drew near, another announcement appeared informing the members that "The Meeting of the St. Giles Society is postponed till February first, Tuesday, on account of the ordinary place of meeting being other ways occupied Tomorrow evening." The meeting announced for February first was held in the normal manner. The next entry in the Minute-book, however, that for 8th February, was the last to be recorded. This minute reads simply:

8 Febry. 1765. - Mr. Cosmo Gordon Praeses.
Last Quest. concluded.
Question for next night - "Whether a Union with Ireland would be advantageous to G. Britain."

There may have been other meetings after this, but they were not recorded. The question announced for debate on the "next night" is shown in the Question-book as having been debated, but whether this debate actually

---


2. Caledonian Mercury, Monday, January 24, 1763. As I have pointed out above, the St. Giles Society was another name for the Select Society. It was taken from the name of the hall in which they met. See page 152, note #4.

3. MS. Minutes of the St. Giles of Select Society of Edinburgh.

took place on the fifteenth of February, or at some previous meeting, there is no way of determining. Beyond 8th February, 1763, the Select Society lapses into silence.

It appears to me that there is only one conclusion to be drawn from these extracts, and that is that the process of decay and dissolution which finally destroyed the Select Society was a gradual one brought about by failing interest among its members, by its being too expansionist in forming subsidiary societies, by the demands made on its members for repeated contributions, and by the natural shocks that such institutions are heir to. There is absolutely no evidence, insofar as the records are concerned, to indicate that the Society was dissolved as a result of public indignation which was brought about by the activities of the Select Society for Promoting the Reading and Writing of the English Language in Scotland. In fact there is every reason to believe that the Select Society's offspring outlived its parent, for the Select Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of the English Language was still holding meetings eighteen months after the last recorded meeting of the Select Society proper. Unless further evidence is found to support the story which was begun by Thomas Edward Ritchie, embellished by John Lord Campbell, and repeated with variations by John Rae and Henry Grey Graham, I am firmly convinced that their picturesque version must be rejected. For the time being, therefore, it must be accepted that the failure of the Select Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of the English Language in Scotland had little or nothing to do with the downfall of the

1. For the final meeting of the Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of the English Language in Scotland, see page 176, above.
Select Society, nor with the dissolution of its near relation, the Edinburgh Society for Encouraging Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture. Indeed, what seems far more likely is that the failure of the Select Society was largely the cause of the failure of the two societies which it had established, and with which it had such close connections. I cannot but feel that if the Select Society had survived in all its original vigour, all would have been well.

Because of the close connection which existed between the Select Society, the Edinburgh Society for Encouraging Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture, and the Select Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of the English Language in Scotland, it is necessary to judge the success and the influence of these societies together. This means that their work must be judged on three levels; on the intellectual, on the economic, and on the social; for the combined societies must certainly have had a wide and lasting influence on all three of these aspects of Scottish life.

In the intellectual life of the capital, the Select Society loomed large. The Society's debates were, in the oft-quoted words of Dougald Stewart, "such as have not often been heard in modern assemblies:- debates, where the dignity of the speakers was not lowered by the intrigues of policy, of the intemperance of faction; and where the most splendid talents that have ever adorned this country were roused to

---

their best exertions, by the liberal and ennobling discussions of literature and philosophy." From Alexander Carlyle, we learn that the "most distinguished speakers in the Select Society were Sir Gilbert Elliot, Mr. Wedderburn, Mr. Andrew Pringle, Lord Kames, Mr. Walter Stewart, Lord Elibank, and Dr. Robertson. David Hume and Adam Smith never opened their lips." The effect of the Society in stimulating Scottish minds is described by Alexander Tytler, (Lord Woodhouselee), as follows:

The Select Society had an influence yet more extensive and permanent in diffusing the taste for letters in Scotland, and in kindling the fire of genius, which then began to display itself in various works, which have done honour to the national character. Besides the classical compositions of Hume, Robertson, Smith, and Ferguson, the writings of John Home, of Professor Wilkie, of Lord Hailes, Lord Monboddo, Sir John Dalrymple, the elder Mr. Tytler, all members of the Select Society of Edinburgh, have thrown a lustre on that institution, as marking the commencement of a literary era, which it is doubtful if the succeeding times have yet seen surpassed.

There is, in addition to Tytler's claims for the Society, the more direct evidence of the Select Society's intellectual stimulus in the appearance of the first Edinburgh Review in 1755. The Edinburgh Review, while it was not an official organ of the Select Society, was projected and carried out by a group of men who were all members of that organization. The editor of the Review was Alexander Wedderburn, and its most

1. Stewart: Life of Robertson, Page 166. For the subjects debated, see Appendix D, page 594.
2. Stewart: Life of Robertson, page 315, (Appendix, Note A to page 165, written by Dr. Alexander Carlyle.)
4. The Edinburgh Review, Numbers one and two, 8vo, 80 pp. Edinburgh; printed for G. Hamilton and J. Balfour. (Number one appeared in August, 1755; Number two in March, 1756.)
extensive contributor was Adam Smith. Other contributors were William Robertson, Dr. John Jardine, Hugh Blair, and James Russell, Professor of Natural History at the University of Edinburgh.

The Edinburgh Review met with a tempestuous reception, but as it only lasted for two numbers, it is probable that the effort was premature. At this period, the literary activity in & around Edinburgh was not varied nor extensive enough to support even a biannual review. The Review, however, did serve as an additional outlet for the energies which were stimulated among the Edinburgh literati by the Select Society.

At the same time that their Edinburgh Review had aroused the wrath of those who were outside the circle of the "Select", the members of the Society borrowed more trouble by giving their enthusiastic support to John Home's Douglas. Home, who was a popular member of the literati, received all the stigma that a Scottish clergyman turned playwright could expect. To his succor came such men as David Hume, Alexander Carlyle, Hugh Blair, and Adam Ferguson. The tenor of the generous abuse which this friendly gesture drew upon the coterie of "geniuses" has been expertly caught by the most recent of Hume's biographers, Ernest Campbell Mossner. The attacks came in the form of abusive pamphlets, some of which are not without a rude sort of


2. For the reception in Edinburgh of Homer's Douglas, see Graham: Scottish Men of Letters, page 63 f; Schmitz: Hugh Blair; Mackenzie: Life of John Home; Thomson: Scottish Man of Feeling; Greig: David Hume; and Carlyle: Autobiography. See also Chapter 9, page 509 f.
In his description of these paper "bullets", Mossner writes as follows:—

Most of the authors of these pieces lurk as unsuspected as they could wish; but some of them are known. The writer, first brought "into the mouths of the world" (in Ramsay of Ochtertyre's picturesque phrase) by his satires against the defenders of Douglas, was John Maclaurin, son of the famous Professor Colin Maclaurin, and himself later raised to the bench as Lord Dreghorn. In the Apology for the Writers against the Tragedy of Douglas, Maclaurin displayed all the rancor of an outsider against the Edinburgh Select Society, making no effort whatsoever to understand their literary program. His main attack was directed against Hume, their leading literary light:—

"Some years ago, a few gentlemen in this town assumed the character of being the only judges in all points of literature; they were and still are styled the geniuses, and lately erected what they called a select society, which usurps a kind of aristocratic government over all men and matters of learning. The first and fundamental maxim of this dictatorial club is, That a punctilious correctness of style is the summum bonum of all compositions: though the greatest genius should shine throughout a work, yet if in it is found an ungarded expression, a slip in syntax, or a peccadillo in grammar, ad piper et farras with it.

The Reverend author of Douglas was a worthy member of this society; and his tragedy, long before it appeared in public, was by this society, extolled with all the noise of declamation; and the little merit it has, exaggerated with all the amplifications of bombast.

A famous author whom I have mentioned more than once, said, in private, that "he would give the English 200 years past, and 200 years to come, and they would not be able to produce such another tragedy:" and the same gentleman has publicly told his namesake, that "he possessed the true theatrical of Shakespeare and Otway, refined from the unhappy barbarism of the one, and licentiousness of the other." This author must be forgiven for these rodomontades; for he frankly owns, that "it is less my admiration of your fine genius, which has engaged me to make this address to you, than my esteem of your character, and my affection to your person." Love, we all know, is blind; and it would be impolite to blame Corydon for running out extravagantly in the praises of Alexis."

In a second blast, a three-act farce of no little wit, Maclaurin relentlessly pursued the philosopher, the dramatist, and the Select Society, his title of The Philosopher's Opera revealing the chief object of ridicule. The leading figures in this piece, "as it ought to be represented at Edinburgh," are Satan, Mr. Genius as
David Hume, Mrs. Sarah Presbytery, 'relict of Mr. John Calvin,' and Jacky, dramatist and son of that lady, as John Home. The plot concerns the wooing of the now elderly Mrs. Sarah Presbytery by Mr. Genius and the success of Jacky's play by the puffing of the same swain.

Satan, long notoriously weak in Edinburgh through the dominance of the godly, having only "a small select society" to stick by him, appears in person on hearing of a Scottish clergyman's writing plays. "I thought," he explains, "the least I could do was to give my countenance to such a bold attempt to serve me." Upon making inquiries about other recent literature, Satan is reliably informed that Mr. Genius is the only author of note. Greatly impressed, Satan meets Genius, observing that he has read his books. "Why, then, Sir," replies that worthy, "you are convinced, I suppose, that there is no God, no devil, and no future state; — that there is no connection betwixt cause and effect; — that suicide is a duty we owe ourselves; — adultery a duty we owe to our neighbors; — that the tragedy of Douglas is the best play ever was written; and that Shakespeare and Otway are a couple of dunces. — This, I think, is the sum and substance of my writings." Genius departs, leaving Satan a little perplexed: "'Faith, I don't know well what to think of him. Are you sure he is true blue on our side? I confess, I have some suspicion, that he is a shrewd fellow, endeavouring to convert men to Christianity, by writing nonsense against it.'"

The economic influence of the Select Society, and of its offspring, the Edinburgh Society for Encouraging Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture, is easier to imagine than it is to prove by documentation. There is, however, an interesting document in existence which gives a clear impression of the attitude which seems to have prevailed at the time these societies were active. In November, 1760, young William Smellie, then twenty years of age, wrote an essay which he intended to enter in the contest for the best answer to the Select Society's competition. "For the best account of the rise and progress of commerce, arts and manufactures, in North Britain, with the causes of promoting or

As a preface to the essay which he printed in his *Characteristical Lives*, Smellie gives the following account of how he came to enter the competition:

"I was led to these observations by accidentally looking into the public papers containing the premiums offered by the Honourable Select Society at Edinburgh. Amongst many useful spurs to industry, which could have but small influence on a person unacquainted with the particular arts they are intended to encourage, I perceived that a Dissertation on the best Means of Supporting and Promoting Public Spirit was made the subject of a competition. I resolved most of the ideas I had acquired that bore any relation to this subject. Emulation ever natural to youthful minds, sprung up apace. The result was a resolution to submit the following thoughts to the judgment of that learned and truly public spirited body:—

Nothing can contribute more effectually to promote public advantage, than the errection of societies for propagating and encouraging arts, sciences, and manufactures. To see men of the greatest opulence and distinction in the kingdom forming themselves into societies, contributing large sums of money, and bestowing both their labour and time, in order to induce men of inferior ranks to improve their own branches of business, etc. must be a pleasing object of contemplation to every liberal mind. The effects produced by these truly patriotic associations fully justify the end of their institution. When the uninstructed part of mankind perceive, that they are even bribed to do their duty, a spirit of emulation naturally arises in their minds; each endeavours to excel in his particular profession, that he may obtain the approbation and reward of his countrymen; indolence and slovenliness retire apace; and industry, neatness, and ingenuity occupy their place.

The wonderful changes in the manners of the people, the great improvements in agriculture, manufactures, etc. which have appeared, within these few years, in this northern part of the united kingdom, must surprise and delight every benevolent heart. These unforeseen events are the native fruits of two or three public spirited societies, (Note: The Commissioners and Trustees for manufactures and improvements in Scotland: — Hon. Select Society of Edinburgh; — the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, etc.),

---

1. A prize for this subject was first offered by the Select Society in 1756. *(Scots Magazine, February, 1756, page 105.)* See also page 160, above.

the generous members of which have spared neither cost nor labour in exciting their countrymen to industry in every art which can contribute to public utility.

We presume not to make any criticisms on the manner of conducting these noble institutions: we should rather congratulate that country which gives birth to such ornaments of human nature; and our congratulations should be still more hearty, were the number of such societies increased, or the funds of the present ones greatly enlarged. — We shall in a few words explain what is meant by this observation.

Provided all or most of the men of fortune in each particular county in Scotland would create themselves into separate societies for the encouragement of arts, etc., within their own particular counties, we imagine that institutions of this kind would in a short time diffuse a spirit of improvement to the farthest bounds of the nation.

The advantages which would attend a prudent execution of this plan are abundantly obvious. — Manufactures, etc., who live at a great distance from the metropolis, allowing them to be properly advertised of the bounties offered by the Edinburgh Societies, must of necessity labour under several disadvantages which those who are less remote from the capital cannot feel. The risk and difficulty of transmitting specimens of their art to industry; the want of proper persons to direct their behaviour; nay, some country-mechanics are so very ignorant, that they are unable fully to comprehend the directions contained in a common advertisement. These, and many other difficulties, although of a trifling nature, are more than sufficient to cramp the influence of the societies at Edinburgh, especially in corners of the kingdom where indolence and ignorance are the characteristics of the people. It is even difficult to make persons in this situation believe, that money, or any other reward of merit, will ever be transmitted to them, unless they have had experience of it themselves, or seen it transmitted to others in similar circumstances. Time, and the diligence of the Edinburgh Societies, will no doubt obviate these difficulties. But the plan we have hinted at would, it is thought, be the means of introducing improvements in a shorter time, and of propagating taste, genius, and public spirit more universally over the kingdom.

I have already shown that the activities of the Select Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of the English Language in Scotland have generally been regarded rather unfavourably by many authors who have treated this period of Scottish history. The clamour of condem-
nation, however, is not unanimous; as there are one or two exceptional authors who have expressed approval of the much maligned organization. The most important of these is the Reverend Thomas Somerville who lived in Edinburgh at the time the Society was active. Somerville expresses his approval in the following terms:

In the summer of 1761, Mr. Sheridan, the father of the late celebrated Richard Brinsley Sheridan, made a visit to Edinburgh, and delivered a course of lectures on elocution—an event which gave a new direction to the pursuits of students in all the different branches of literature. He was patronized by the professors in the College, by several of the clergy, by the most eminent among the gentlemen at the bar, by the judges of the Court of Session, and by all who at that time were the leaders of public taste. His lectures were attended by ladies and gentlemen of the highest position, as well as by most of the students then in town, all of whom were charmed with his instructive criticisms, and still more with the select readings from the English classics which followed every lecture. A rage for the study of elocution became universal, as if it were the master-excellence in every profession. Among other results of Mr. Sheridan's visit, a society, consisting of literary men, was formed, for the purpose of concerting measures for the instruction of the young in this hitherto neglected, but now supposed, primary branch of education; and the lecturer was himself commissioned to send a teacher of reading and pronunciation, who should, besides the fees of his scholars, receive a fixed salary from the society. Since this time, correct pronunciation and elegant reading have, in Edinburgh, been reckoned indispensable acquirements for people of fashion and for public speakers, and perhaps have come to be overrated, particularly in pulpit oratory, to the neglect of attainments of a more important nature.

While it cannot be said that Somerville is whole-hearted in his approbation, still there is no indication of indignation in his attitude, and that is what is important. The fact that he regards the activities of the Select Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of the English Language in Scotland as having led the attention of young Scotsmen from "attainments of a more important nature" does not signify that he contemns the attempts to learn the Southern dialect.

Among more recent writers, the Rev. Alexander Macrae has written of the society as follows:

These efforts to acquire the Anglican accent and pronunciation excited the sarcasm of the old-fashioned, but the "modern mode," as it was sometimes called, continued to gain ground not only in Edinburgh but all over the country. The Scots speech was universally spoken then and until towards the end of the century by all Scotsmen of whatever rank, but it was spoken by the better classes with a refinement which ceased to be cultivated as southern English gradually became the spoken language of the educated, and for any trace of which one would listen in vain today in the Canongate or High Street of Edinburgh. Though David Hume was master of such an admirable English style in his writings, yet his speech, like that of most of his literary Edinburgh contemporaries, was broad Scots. By the end of the century educated young men of the better class spoke English, differing from that of the south only in the accent, which was not unpleasant to English ears.

Whether the reader agrees with me that the Select Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of the English Language in Scotland has been gravely misrepresented in the past, or whether he has made up his mind that I have overstated the case for the defence of that organization, there is no escaping the plain fact which was stated by Macrae that the Scots dialect had disappeared from everyday urban speech in Scotland.

It follows, therefore, that whether it was a failure or not, the Society was historically correct inasmuch as it supported and assisted the spread of the Southern dialect, for that dialect has not only been accepted in Scotland, but has become the recognized standard.

I have attempted to show the Select Society in its three roles: as a debating society, as an "improving" society, and as an association for the promotion of the Southern dialect in Scotland. There remains, however, one role of this versatile organization which has not been discussed

heretofore, and that is the part it played in Scottish intellectual life as "the parent of a numerous progeny of debating societies in Edinburgh."

One of the first debating societies which followed upon the example of the Select Society was the Belles Lettres Society of Edinburgh. In the extant records of this society there appears the following account of proceedings of the first meeting:

The following Gentlemen, viz.: The Reverend Mr. James Grant, James Sholto Douglas, William Govane, Thomas Robins, John Pringle, and Walter Campbell, Esquires, formed themselves into a society under the name of the Belles Lettres Society and resolved to meet every Friday night at six in the Evening within the College of Edinburgh and that at each of these meetings a Discourse shall be pronounced by one of the members and thereafter a Question shall be debated.

The Society Resolved that the Reverend Mr. James Grant shall be President.

The Society resolve that for some time the Members shall be allowed to choose the Topicks of their own Discourses and that the minimum of Time for pronouncing a Discourse shall be twelve Minutes and the maximum twenty five minutes And recommend to the members to study a perspicuous Brevity in their Discourses.

The Society resolve that the President shall choose the first Question to be debated then any of the Members may propose a Question having first applied to the President for the Society's Consent.

The Society resolve to admit members without Ceremony untill there shall be seven admitted But that none be admitted without a previous Application to and Consent of the Society.

Resolved That the Society shall at every meeting continue assembled

2. MS. Proceedings of the Belles Lettres Society. As none of the founding members appear as members of the Select Society, the Belles Lettres could not have been "another offshoot" of the Select Society as has been stated. (Schmitz: Hugh Blair, page 25.)
3. For the subjects of these discourses, see Appendix E, page 602 f.
4. For the subjects of the weekly debates, see Appendix E, page 602 f.
until their Business be dispatched. But not later than half an hour after eight and that each member who absents himself shall be liable in a fine of sixpence Sterling for every night's absence.

From the first, the Belles Lettres Society adopted and maintained a serious and purposeful tone. One of the first revisions of the Society's laws provided that "every member who shall be absent for four nights successively without adducing a proper excuse shall be extruded," and this provision was rigidly maintained. And gaining ordinary membership in the Society was a solemn ordeal. The aspiring candidate had to apply in writing in the form of the following petition:

Unto the President and Permanent Members of the Belles Lettres Society.
The Petition of A. B.
Humbly Sheweth

That as your Petitioner is fond of everything that may tend to his Improvement and sensible how well your Society is calculated for that purpose so he cannot fail to be desirous of making one of your number.

That your Petitioner by studying to acquit himself properly in his Discourses and adhering strictly to your Regulations shall endeavour not to be unworthy of so great an Honour.

May it Therefore please the Society at next meeting to Elect your Petitioner by Ballot and being so elected to admit him a member at the meeting thereafter in common form - And your Petitioner shall ever pray Etc. .

That the Petitioner is properly qualified to be a member of this Society is attested by ________.

The Society also made provision for creating a limited number of honorary members. Honorary membership was open to men of distinction, and also to ordinary members of the Society who had demonstrated their qual-

1. Resolution taken on Friday, March 2, 1759.
2. See the list of Ordinary Members, Appendix F, page 619.
fication for that honour by their punctual attendance at meetings and by their active participation in the functions of the Society. The first honorary member to be created in this was was the Rev. James Grant, who had been among the founding members, and who had been the Society's first president. The next ten honorary members were created for merit. In the order in which they appear in the records they were Mr. Alexander Murray, Advocate; Mr. Dick; Mr. Wm. Wallace, Advocate; the Reverend Dr. Robertson; the Reverend Hugh Blair; Mr. John Stevenson, Professor of Logic; David Hume, Esquire; the Reverend Dr. Fordyce; John Home; and Adam Ferguson, Professor of Experimental Philosophy. The fact that the Belles Lettres Society could attract such men is a certain indication that the Society's affairs were well managed, and that the members were skilled in debate.

After the first few months of its existence, the Belles Lettres Society adopted the practice of electing a praecey for each meeting. The two candidates nominated for the chair, and the speaker who was appointed to deliver the discourse for the meeting, were allowed to invite a certain number of guests. This practice of admitting visitors was found to be very beneficial to the Society, and from the list of visitors, which contains the names of many of the more illustrious of the Edinburgh literati, it is easy to discover the reason for the success of this measure. From 11th March, 1761, it was the practice to

1. After August 1, 1759, the requirement was two years continual membership.

2. For the list of Honorary Members, see Appendix F, page 618 f.

3. For the list of Visitors to the Belles Lettres Society, see Appendix F, page 623 f.
issue tickets for the "admittance of strangers."

In December, 1760, the Belles Lettres Society adopted a simple procedure for freeing their regular meetings from the press of business. From a minute for the meeting held on the eleventh we learn of the new arrangement. The minute reads as follows:

The Society having considered the many inconveniencies to which they are liable from the manner in which their private business is transacted in their ordinary weekly meetings Resolve that for the future All the private Business of the Society shall be transferred from their ordinary weekly meetings to an Extraordinary meeting to be held for that purpose the second Wednesday of every month after this date at 5 o'clock in the evening.

The practice of the extraordinary meeting for business became firmly established, and apparently met with conspicuous success. On at least one occasion, there were visitors present at the monthly meeting just as there were regularly at the weekly meetings for debate. It can only be imagined that such visitors would be present to study the manner in which the Society conducted its affairs, and, indeed, the Belles Lettres Society seems to have been a model of good management.

In 1760, the Belles Lettres Society began to draw the attention of the students then studying at the College of Edinburgh. Soon the Society was receiving petitions from students of law and divinity. Among the most noteworthy of the promising young men whose names appeared on the roll of members were Henry Dundas, (afterwards Viscount Melville); Robert Blair, (afterwards Lord President); and Thomas Somerville, (the author of a very pleasant autobiography). A few months earlier, another student member of the Society, the Honourable Arthur Duffy, who had gone

2. At the meeting held on February 11, 1761. See Appendix F, page 624.
to Glasgow to continue his studies, established a society there after the example of the Belles Lettres Society. On 7th December, 1759, the Secretary of the Belles Lettres sent "a copy of the Laws" to Duff "in order to assist him in the Institution of a Society after the plan of the Belles Lettres." In April, 1760, the members of the Glasgow association visited the Belles Lettres Society as "auditors".

In the year 1761, the Belles Lettres was in a very vigorous condition. Before the year was over, it had created all but four of its honorary members, and it had received so many petitions for ordinary membership that the members found it necessary to limit their number to forty. In addition, the rule of extrusions for non-attendance was revised so that two consecutive absences became a forfeiture of membership. Despite these restrictions, however, the Society soon outgrew the room in which it met; and in January it moved to "the room in which Drs. Rutherford and Whytt gave their lectures." The Society continued to meet in these rooms until 14th December, 1764.

1. *MS. Proceedings of the Belles Lettres Society.* Nothing further is known of this society in Glasgow.


3. The Society's records cease with the entry of minutes of the meeting held on this date. There is no indication in the minutes that the Society was contemplating dissolution, nor do the minutes of previous meetings contain any evidence of a crisis in the affairs of the Society. The year 1764, however, seems to have been peculiarly fatal to literary societies. The Select Society, (see page 186, above), and the Theological Society, (see page 205, below), both expired in that year, and the Edinburgh Society for Encouraging Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture, and the Select Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of the English Language in Scotland were both defunct by 1765, (see page 176 - 178, above). The minutes of the last meeting of the Belles Lettres Society read as follows:-

14th December 1764. Weekly Meeting. Honorary Members (present),
From all indications, the Belles Lettres Society was a very successful and hearty organization. During the five years of its existence, it gave all the signs of corporate health. It grew in membership; it expanded its interests; and it gave rise to other societies; all of which are symptoms of a successful society. A large measure of this success was due to the application of its members, and to their conviction that such a society was of genuine benefit to them. Among the papers which pertain to the Belles Lettres Society, there appears a volume of notes which have been labelled "Notes and Speeches on Questions Debated in the Belles Lettres Society". Upon examining this volume, I discovered that it was actually a notebook in which its owner, William Lothian, had entered notes which he obviously intended to use during his part in the debates. The notes which Lothian made in preparation for the debates

1. These papers, which are in the National Library of Scotland, consist of three large folios. The first is labelled, Proceedings of the Belles Lettres Society 1759 - 1761; a second volume is labelled Proceedings of the Belles Lettres Society - Minutes 1761 - 1764. Both contain minutes of the meetings. The third volume is as described above.

2. William Lothian, D.D. was admitted, when a young man, to the Belles Lettres Society on January 9, 1761. He afterwards became "first minister of the Canongate, Edinburgh, and author of a History of the
hold in the Belles Lettres Society are an interesting example of the diligence exercised by an ordinary member of this Edinburgh literary society. There is further evidence of the general earnestness of purpose which existed among members of the Society in Lothian’s “Charge to the Right Honourable Lord Greville at his Admission into the Belles Lettres Society.” This address, which Lothian delivered from the chair on the night which his Lordship was admitted, reads as follows:

My Lord,

You are now, according to your own Desire, admitted a Member of the Belles Lettres Society; a society which has justly acquired great Reputation among the Judicious and the learned; a Reputation which does Honour to the first Founders of the Society, and to those Gentlemen who still continue to support its Dignity and Spirit.

1. Notes and Speeches on Questions Debated in the Belles Lettres Society. Lord Greville was admitted an ordinary member on December 8, 1762. This night William Lothian was in the chair, and it was he who prepared and delivered this address. See note 2, pages 202 – 203.
The name of the Society sufficiently marks its Intention and Design. To promote liberal studies, and to give opportunities for a laudable Emulation are views which in former Ages were greatly regarded by every polite and refined Legislature. These studies are now looked upon as necessary to complete the Scholar and the Gentleman. They compose the ornamental Part of Learning, and Give Elegance to the more abstruse sciences. After we have laid up proper Materials, these are like the skillful Hand of the Architect which put them in due Arrangement and display their Beauty. These studies from being confined to a Few, are now become universal. The Taste which had prevailed for some time in this Country, makes a particular Attention to them necessary. Without these the abstruse Philosopher or Systematic Devine will in vain endeavour to communicate their Knowledge. Besides, great Penetration, Elegance and Propriety are now requisite. From several Instances it might easily be shown that our country is not so unfavourable to studies of this kind as some have imagined. Those who have been present at the Debates in this Society must acknowledge that Learning, Taste, and Genius have often been displayed. These indeed, might have been expected from the Gentlemen who compose this Society, but, without this opportunity, they might not, perhaps, have been so easily observed. These Branches of Science which fall within our Province, have many powerful Recommendations. Being of a general Nature, they always have some connection with these studies, which are more immediately the objects of our Pursuit. They ought not therefore, to be considered as separate, but, as they are in Truth, strictly connected together.

This Society was instituted that proper opportunities might not be wanting where Gentlemen of Taste might communicate their Opinions to one another, and receive mutual Improvement. In the antient Republick of Greece, Poets and Historians recited their Works in the Presence of a whole assembled Nation. Such an opportunity as this excited a Spirit of Emulation and gave Birth to some of the noblest Productions of the Human Mind.

This Society has now flourished for several years, and, if any thing may be concluded from the known Abilities of its Members, we have good Reason to hope that it shall long preserve that Character which it has already obtained, and continue to produce those many Advantages which are reasonably to be expected from an Institution calculated to promote so noble a Design, and so properly regulated in all its Parts.

You, My Lord, are already acquainted with the General Rules of the Society. At each Meeting a Discourse is Delivered by one of the Members on any Subject he pleases, and a Question is debated by the Gentlemen present. The other more special Regulations refer to Admission of ordinary members, the creation and Election of Honorary Ones, and to the preserving order in all our Proceedings. Such being the Constitution, and such the Design of this Society,
the Duty of a Member will easily occur to your Lordship. It
would therefore be inexcusable in me to detain your Lordship with
many Words on a subject in itself so very plain, and in recommending
a Duty in itself so very reasonable. Perhaps it might be suf-
ficient to say that the Society demands such from every Member,
and, from the Acquaintance with your Lordship, (they) expect it
from you in particular. However, there is one thing which I must
mention as President of the Society, because I think it worth the
Attention of all here present. It is, that an erroneous opinion
with Regard to the life of this Society has been entertained by
too many of its Members. They are accustomed to look upon it in
too trivial a Light, and their attendance upon the Meetings as a
weekly Amusement only amidst the Severity of their other studies.
From such a partial view, it is plain, many bad consequences must
follow. To this must be imputed the Thinness of our Meetings,
whenever the Town affords upon that day any other amusement. To
this likewise is owing that Languor and Indifference which is too
often observable. Whereas, on the other hand, were the Attendance
upon the Society regarded as immediately connected with our other
studies, and as serving to promote a Branch of Education in these
Days absolutely necessary, not only these bad consequences would
be prevented, but every Individual would feel its happy Effects,
and the Society would shine with redoubled Luster. Such happy
Days, I would gladly hope, are fast approaching. It is in your
Power, My Lord, to hasten their Progress. The Society expects
from you a regular Attendance, and your Opinion with regard to
the Subjects in Debate. Their sense of your merit engaged all on
your side, and now serves to confirm these Expectations. Allow me
only further to add, That any Application which your Lordship
shall think necessary for this Purpose will be amply rewarded by
the many Advantages it will confer upon your Lordship, and I may
assure you, in the Name of all the Gentlemen here, that the Fruits
of such Application will be gratefully accepted by this Society.

In his notebook, William Lothian has also entered some preparatory
notes for debates held in the Theological Society. Little is known of
this society except that it met in the College of Edinburgh between the
years 1759 and 1764. The only direct account, that of Thomas Somerville,
contains the following information:

---
1. For the subjects of these debates, see Appendix G, page 635 f.
2. Somerville: Life and Times, page 42 f. Somerville and his editor
have supplied a number of notes which identify the men referred to
above, these notes read as follows: "James Dickson (Mr. Dickson
entered into business as a bookseller in Edinburgh); John Martin
(He became Minister, first of Merton, and then of Spot, and died in
The Theological Society was not only a school of mental improvement, but a nursery of brotherly love and kind-affections. In the two first years of this Society, while limited to a small number, a general good-will and attachment united the whole body, and many intimate and lasting friendships were formed among its individual members. My warm attachment to James Dickson, Walter Young, Andrew Smith, John Robertson, afterwards minister of Kilmarnock, John Martin, John Cook, John Gowdie, Wm. Lothian and John Warden, originated from our fellowship in the Theological Society, and continued on my part, and I hope on theirs, unabated during their lives; for, while I am writing this in October 1813, John Cook, Professor of Moral Philosophy in St. Andrews, and Dr. Young, minister of Erskine, and perhaps not above six or eight more, are the only surviving members of the Theological Society, which, before its dissolution in 1764, had increased to a list of fifty or sixty names.¹

The darkest side of the history of this society, which diminished, perhaps, counterbalanced the advantages derived from it, I will not conceal. Our tavern adjournments, which succeeded our weekly meetings in the College, were the cause of expense, and sometimes of excess and irregularity, unsuitable to our circumstances and professional views. I can never forget the exquisite pleasure I derived from these social meetings - the unrestrained utterance of

¹ In a later part of his pleasant autobiography, Somerville mentions another member of the Theological Society. The member was John Brown, born 1736, who, as Somerville notes "started a new medical school based on a new method in Edinburgh." Regarding Brown as a member of the Society, Somerville writes: "In the Theological Society he used to speak at great length almost on every subject. His thoughts, however, were incoherent, his arguments superficial, and his style loose, diffuse, and inelegant." (Somerville: Life and Times, page 139.)
every thought - the harmless sallies of wit in which we indulged -
the profitable conversation introduced, and enlivened with mirth
and good humour - the affection with which my heart glowed towards
the partners of my pleasure - the generous purposes excited, and
often productive of friendly actions. But again, when I reflect
on the baneful habits by which some of the worthiest of my earliest
contemporaries have been enthralled, and which I have too much
reason to think germinated in the fascinating indulgences I have
described, and reflect by what a narrow escape my own health and
character have been maintained, ascribable chiefly to the fortunate
incidents of after retirement, and domestic connections, I recognize
a substantial moral amendment in that sobriety and temperance
now practised by persons of every age and rank, and am thankful
that the rising generation, in whom I am interested, are exempted
from temptations which have sometimes blighted the fairest blossoms
of genius and virtue.

Although neither the Belles Lettres Society nor the Theological
Society can be compared with fairness to the much larger and more influential
Select Society whose example they both followed, it seems certain that
within their limited scope they probably had a much more direct and lasting
influence on their members. Somerville, in speaking of his membership in
these societies, comes to the following conclusions:

To my attendance on these societies, more than to any branch of
reading or study, I impute any progress I have made in literature,
in composition, and in solid intellectual improvement. I thus ac-
quired, especially, some facility and correctness of expression,
and, what I deem of still greater importance, an estimation and
love of truth. A rule to which I invariably adhered, was to speak
only on such subjects as I believed to be within the compass of my
understanding, and to embrace and defend that side of the question
which accorded with my genuine sentiments, and appeared to be


2. Somerville is certainly speaking as one of Dr. Hugh Blair's pupils.
Compare the following passage from Blair's Lectures on Belles Lettres:

"In order to be persuasive speakers in a popular assembly, it is in
my opinion, a capital rule, that we be ourselves persuaded of what-
ever we recommend to others. Never, when it can be avoided, ought
we to espouse any side of the argument, but what we believe to be
the true and the right one. Seldom or never will a man be eloquent,
but when he is in earnest, and uttering his own sentiments. They are
only the unassumed language of the heart or head, that carry the force
supported by the most solid arguments. My exertions in both these societies also contributed in various respects to my advantage, by procuring me the esteem of several of my fellow-students. Most of the members of the Belles Lettres Society were sons of gentlemen of high rank, the greater number of them students of law, and I have, in the after course of my life, reaped the benefit of their favourable opinion and early attachment. In the Belles Lettres Society, Mr. Blair and Mr. Dundas were esteemed the best speakers, and gave early proofs of those splendid oratorical powers which afterwards raised them to pre-eminent prosperity and honour. Mr. Blair's speeches were not only brilliant, but full of sound argument, and strictly confined to the subject under discussion. Mr. Dundas excelled chiefly in readiness and fluency of elocution, but he reasoned feebly, and often digressed from the question. In discussions of a political nature, he always professed an enthusiastic attachment to Whig principles. The eminence which Mr. Dundas afterwards attained as a statesman and able debator surpassed the expectations I had formed from his appearances in the Belles Lettres Society and in the General Assembly, where he also took a

of conviction. In a former Lecture, when entering on this subject, I observed, that all high eloquence must be the offspring of passion, or warm emotion. It is this which makes every man persuasive; and gives a force to his genius, which is possesses at no other time. Under what disadvantage, then, is he placed, who, not feeling what he utters, must counterfeit a warmth to which he is a stranger?

"I know, that young people, on purpose to train themselves to the art of speaking, imagine it useful to adopt that side of the question under debate, which, to themselves, appears the weakest, and to try what figure they can make upon it. But, I am afraid, this is not the most improving education for public speaking; and that it tends to form them to a habit of flimsy and trivial discourse. Such a liberty they should at no time allow themselves, unless in meetings where no real business is carried on, but where declamation and improvement in speech is the sole aim. Nor even in such meetings, would I recommend it as the most useful exercise. They will improve themselves to more advantage, and acquit themselves with more honour, by choosing always that side of the debate to which, in their own judgment, they are most inclined, and supporting it by what seems to themselves most solid and persuasive. They will acquire the habit of reasoning closely, and expressing themselves with warmth and force, much more when they are adhering to their own sentiments, than when they are speaking in contradiction to them. In assemblies where any real business is carried on, whether that business be of much importance or not, it is always of dangerous consequence for young practitioners to make trial of this sort of play of speech. It may fix an imputation on their characters before they are aware; and what they intended merely as amusement, may be turned to the discredit either of their principles or their understanding." (Blair: Lectures, Vol. 2, page 216 f.)
keen part in the discussion of business. A list of the members, and the minutes of the Society were, a few years ago, deposited in the Advocate's Library by Lord Buchan, who was one of our number, and whose thirst of knowledge and assiduous application at that time, gave promising hopes of future eminence in the literary and political world.1

Another society which met in the College of Edinburgh at the same period as the Belles Lettres Society and the Theological Society was the Newtonian Society. The Newtonian was established in 1760 by a number of young men who had completed their University education, and who entered into the association "for their mutual improvement in literature and science, more especially in natural philosophy." An account of the Society was given to William Smellie's biographer by Robert Hamilton, then Professor of Natural Philosophy in the University of Aberdeen, and one of the Society's original members. Hamilton's account reads as follows:

The Newtonian Society was instituted in 1760, and was composed of young men, most of whom had completed their academical studies at the University of Edinburgh. Weekly meetings were held in one of the rooms of the College; at each of which a discourse was read by one of the members in rotation, and a subject discussed which had been given out for debate at the preceding meeting. The original design of the Society was chiefly directed to the prosecution of Natural Philosophy, whence the members assumed the

1. Somerville gives the following note on Lord Buchan:—"Lord Buchan's vanity overpowered his judgment, and disappointed the expectations which had been excited by the brilliancy of his talents, and his application to literature in early life." (Somerville: Life and Times, page 42.) This was David Stewart Erskine, 11th Earl of Buchan (1742 - 1829), brother of Henry and Thomas Erskine. He founded the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, (see Chapter 5, page 321, below). It is interesting to note that the name of Lord Buchan does not appear, in any of its forms, in the list of members of the Belles Lettres Society, (see Appendix F, page 618, below.).


3. Ibid, page 65, "Letter #8, from Dr. Robert Hamilton to Mr. Alexander Smellie, Aberdeen, 1 March, 1810."
the name of the Newtonian Society; but they afterwards extended their debates to miscellaneous subjects, though their discourses were always confined to natural science. The Society subsisted in this manner for several years; and though its members were fluctuating, as is usual with most societies, their number never exceeded twenty at any one time. Of the members of this Society, there are still in life, (i.e., in 1810), the Right Honourable Robert Blair, Lord President of the Court of Session; — the Reverend Dr. Samuel Charters, minister of Wilton; — the Reverend Dr. Thomas Miller, minister of Old Cumnock; — and the Reverend Dr. W. Macquh,ae, minister of St. Quivox. Among the deceased members were, the Reverend Dr. Henry Hunter, late of Londonwall; — the Reverend Dr. Andrew Hunter, late Professor of Divinity in the University of Edinburgh; — the Reverend Dr. Thomas Blacklock; — Michael Nasmyth, Esq., writer to the signet; — Dr. William Buchan, physician in London; — Mr. John Petrie; — Mr. James Gray, writer; — Mr. Michael Gardiner, surgeon in Dumfries; and Dr. Alexander Adams, late Rector of the High School of Edinburgh, was Secretary.

John Kay, in his Original Portraits, relates a rather pointless anecdote regarding Andrew Hunter's first attempt to deliver a dissertation to the Society. I have included it not so much for its intrinsic value, but on the long chance that it may prove useful to some reader whose interests are less specialized than my own:

An anecdote is told of Dr. Hunter in connection with this Society. He was at the time very young, and not sufficiently practised in the art of literary condensation. When it came to his turn to produce an essay for the evening, he had entered so sincerely and fully upon the subject, that he appeared at the forum with an immense bundle of papers under his arm; and commenced by stating that his discourse consisted of twelve different parts! This announcement alarmed the presses for the night so much, that he interrupted him by declaring that he had twelve distinct objections to the production of such a mass of manuscripts. The presses accordingly stated his twelve reasons, and was followed on the same side by six other members, who prefaced their observations by a similar declaration. During their opposition the temper of the young theologian remained unruffled; and it was not till the last speaker had finished his oration, that he took up his papers, and, without deigning to reply, walked out of the room.

1. For the part played in the Newtonian Society by Alexander Adam, see Life and Character of Alexander Adam, page 18.

As for the other discourses read before the Society, and the subjects of debates, it is now impossible to give much information. The whereabouts of the book of records is not known at present, if, indeed, it ever really existed. The contributions of one of the members, William Smellie, however, are known. "The first essay he ever wrote, was a 'Description of the Telescope and Microscope,' read before the Newtonian Society in August 1760, when he was twenty years of age." In the same year, Smellie, in writing to a friend, described another of his essays as follows:

Saturday last I delivered by Tangible Theory to the great astonishment of the wondering Newtonians. I am not satisfied with the execution. It is forty minutes long. To give my theory the finishing stroke, I was obliged to prove that the human soul is neither composed of fire, earth, air, or water, but a species of matter the next remove from these substances. I cannot propose to give you any idea either of the arguments or method of this very eccentric performance; but I hope in a month or two at farthest, you and I shall indulge our risible faculties with it in my Grotto del Cane.

In 1762, Smellie read the following three essays before the Newtonians:

I. "Whether are all Animate and Inanimate Bodies Made for the Immediate Use and Conveniency of Mankind; or, is that only a secondary end of their existence?"

II. "Whether Oratory, upon the whole, has been of Use to Mankind?"

III. A Discourse on Vegetation.

1. Kerr wrote to the author of the Life and Character of Alexander Adam that there was such a book in existence, but the latter failed to obtain permission to view it. See Life of Adam, page 18.


4. "Alluding to the confined air of his correcting-room." (Kerr's note.)


In keeping with the general practice of eighteenth-century literary societies, the Newtonians cultivated wide interests. The training which Smellie received in the sciences, and in composition, was to stand him in good stead when he undertook the task of editing and compiling the first edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, or Dictionary of Arts and Sciences in 1771.

After the dissolution of the Select Society, the Belles Lettres Society, and the Theological Society, all of which occurred in the year 1764, there was an apparent lull in the activities of adult literary organizations in Scotland. The next flurry of mature debating assemblies did not begin until after 1770. But this lull was more apparent than real, for beginning with the Speculative Society of the College of Edinburgh, in 1764, Scottish University students entered into a number of intellectual and forensic associations, doubtless in imitation of their elders of the Select Society, which have lasted to the present day. The activities of these student organizations, however, have been assigned to a separate chapter to which the reader is referred for further information.

---

1. For the Encyclopaedia Britannica, see Chapter 8, page 470.
CHAPTER FIVE.

THE PERIOD OF RECOGNITION, 1770 - 1800.

In dividing the Age of Improvement into its three phases; the period of preparation, the period of achievement, and the period of recognition, I recognized, as I have already stated, that the period of recognition is not as clearly defined as the two previous periods. One reason for this is the fact that recognition of Scotland's literary achievement had necessarily to come from abroad, and such recognition is often conditioned by factors which are irrelevant to the achievement itself. The French, for example, were among the foremost in their admiration for the work of Hume and of the other writers who figured largely in the period of achievement. But the French were not involved in those national prejudices which account for the intellectual myopia of Scotland's southern neighbour. It was something more than ignorance which caused Dr. Johnson to exclaim, in 1768, when Boswell talked to him of Scotland's "advancement in literature", "Sir, you have learnt a little from us, and you think yourselves great men."


2. Boswell: Life of Johnson, Vol. 1, page 346, (Everyman's Edition). Even when it came, English recognition of Scottish achievement was all awry. "The palm of literary celebrity in the 18th century was not given to the great writers of Scotland - to Hume for his brilliant philosophical essays, or Robertson for his admirable histories, or Adam Smith for his unequalled exposition of political economy, or to Reid for his acute, astute, intellectual work - but to Dr. James Beattie, author of The Minstrel, and the Essay on the Immutability of Truth which "avenged insulted Christianity". (Graham: Scottish Men of Letters, page 259.) See also Chapter 10, page 562 f.
In the next year, however, one of the "great men" had displayed the little he had learned to such advantage that he had received "the greatest price that was ever known to be given for any book." To a cultivated European, such an attitude as Johnson's must have seemed singularly perverse. A few years later, "a literary Hungarian writing from Paris," awarded to Scotsmen the following unqualified accolade:

Whenever the English mention Scotsmen to me in that contemptuous tone they sometimes affect, I advise them to go to Edinburgh to learn how to live, and how to be men. Your learned men, Robertson, Black, and Hume are looked upon here as geniuses of the first rank. Only two days ago, I saw Comte de Buffon, who named them all to me at his finger's tip, just as you might name Newton and Locke.

And the Edinburgh to which this writer referred was indeed a place for strangers to "learn how to live, and how to be men." Mr. Amyat, the

1. Wm. Robertson's History of the Reign of Charles V, published in 1769, received 4000 pounds. (Greig: Letters of David Hume, Vol. I, page 203, ltr. #431 to Abbe Morelet.) Chamber's Encyclopedia of English Literature gives the figure as 4500 pounds. Henry Grey Graham in his Scottish Men of Letters, page 106, leaves no doubt about Scottish superiority in literature at this period. "Within a few years, the English, who sneered at the Scots, were obliged to buy and to read their books. They read Ferguson for Roman history; Hume, Smollett, Henry for English history; Robertson and Watson for foreign history. In philosophy little had been produced in England since Bishop Berkeley wrote, and they therefore resorted to Hume and Reid, even to Beattie and Monboddo. They got criticism from Blair and Lord Kames; learned political economy from Smith; and docilely accepted poetry from the piping of the Minstrel. All this shows a remarkable contrast in literary activity between north and south of the Tweed."

2. Mossner: The Forgotten David Hume, page 202; Thompson: A Scottish Man of Feeling, page 185 (in French). The author was Tieman. A number of years earlier, Boswell had a conversation with the "Marcgrave of the Court of Baden Durlach in Germany" which he reports as follows: - "He told me he had been in England twice. He spoke English remarkably well. He talked of Lord Wemyss, Sir James Stewart, Lord Dunmore, all Scots, Bravol and my Lord March, too. His Highness knew well the present literature of Scotland. I talked to him of the Select Society, of my having been a member of it, of the same Society with Hume, Robertson, etc. He was attentive to every little anecdote." (Boswell: Private Papers, Vol. 3, page 161, Friday 9th November, 1764.)
King's chemist, once observed to Mr. Smellie, "that Edinburgh enjoyed a noble privilege not possessed by any other city in Europe." On being asked his meaning, he said, "Here I stand at what is called the Cross of Edinburgh, and can in a few minutes take fifty men of genius and learning by the hand."

As an illustration of that peculiar intensity of talent which caused Matthew Bramble, in Smollett's *Humphrey Clinker*, to describe Edinburgh as a "hot-bed of genius", nothing is more fitting than to refer to another work of fiction, this time from the pen of the "Wizard of the North", Sir Walter Scott. When Counsellor Pleydell gives Guy Mannering notes of introduction to the leading Edinburgh literati, the reader of Scott's novel is forcibly reminded how rich a store of talent existed in the Scottish capital:

1. Smellie: *Literary and Characteristical Lives*, page 161; Kerr: *Life of William Smellie*, Vol. 2, page 252; the story has been repeated by Graham: *Scottish Men of Letters*, page 106. Graham has also pointed out the intimacy in which Scottish men of letters lived in Edinburgh at this period: "The remarkable feature of literary society in Scotland in the second half of the century was the familiar fraternity in which these men lived. They all knew one another—most of them since boyhood, for they were all about the same age. They met one another almost every day of their lives; they belonged to the same set of society, ... etc." (*Ibid*, page 102.)


3. Sir Walter will shortly appear in this thesis as the participant in a number of outstanding student societies, see Chapter 6, page 384 ff.

4. Guy Mannering, page 348. For remarks on the identity of the original model for "Pleydell", see Chapter 3, page 483, below. Scott's chronology is a little out. The scene was supposed to have taken place in "the closing years of the American war (1775–1783)." At this time Mannering could have visited Hume only in his squat tomb on Calton Hill for he had died, rather gaily, on August 25, 1776.
On looking at the notes of introduction which Pleydell had thrust into his hand, Mannering was gratified with seeing that they were addressed to some of the first literary characters of Scotland— "To David Hume, Esq." "To John Home, Esq." "To Dr. Ferguson." "To Dr. Black." "To Lord Kames," "To Mr. Hutton." "To John Clerk, Esq. of Edinburgh." "To Adam Smith, Esq." "To Dr. Robertson." "To John Clerk, Esq. of Edinburgh." "To Adam Smith, Esq." "To Dr. Robertson." "To John Clerk, Esq. of Edinburgh." "To Adam Smith, Esq." "To Dr. Robertson." "To John Clerk, Esq. of Edinburgh." "To Adam Smith, Esq." "To Dr. Robertson." "To John Clerk, Esq. of Edinburgh." "To Adam Smith, Esq." "To Dr. Robertson." "To John Clerk, Esq. of Edinburgh." "To Adam Smith, Esq." "To Dr. Robertson.

I need scarcely remind the reader that Guy Mannering was about to visit a number of men who had contributed, or were to contribute, a great many of the ideas which have made our modern Western world what it has become, and that he had every reason to remark to himself, "Upon my word, my legal friend has a good selection of acquaintances—these are names pretty widely blown indeed. An East-Indian must rub up his faculties a little, and put his mind in order, before he enters this sort of society." I have already spoken of the achievements of Adam Smith and Dr. Joseph Black. From the point of view of Western culture, few contributions to the world of learning could have been more important than Smith's Wealth of Nations, and Dr. Black's discoveries in the physics of heat. As great as our debt is to them, however, some of the other men whom Mannering was to visit have even more striking claims to our admiration.

It is no exaggeration to claim for Hume that as the "greatest British

2. See Chapter 4, page 127, above.
3. As this remark is liable to be misunderstood, I will anticipate the objections of the reader by pointing out that, in the broadest sense, Western culture is nothing if it is not commercial (with Adam Smith as its economic prophet), and that without the motive power of the steam engine (thanks to Dr. Joseph Black through James Watt), it could have created only a small part, either for good or ill, of the incredible mass of machines and cities which its commercialism and its steam power have made possible. The cultural significance of industrialism are examined with great care, ingenuity, and insight by Oswald Spengler in his Decline of the West. It is to that work that the sceptical reader must turn for the complete argument of which I have but hinted.
Philosopher", and through his influence on Kant, he profoundly affected the course of modern European thought. And the Battle of Trafalgar, which was probably the most outstanding single event in British history, was fought and won with tactics which had been propounded in John Clerk's Naval Tactics. Drs. Robertson and Fergusson did much, with Hume, to raise the writing of history to an art and to place it in the front rank of belles lettres, and for this reason, Edward Gibbon looked to them as his masters.


2. See D. N. B. article on John Clerk, which states, "Nelson is said to have been a careful student of Clerk's book."

3. There are two letters of Gibbon's which are of interest here. Gibbon not only looked to Hume and Robertson as the leading historians of the day, he envied the intellectual environment in which they lived.

"Mr. Gibbon to Dr. Robertson, Bentinck Street, November 3rd, 1779.
"... I have often considered, with some sort of envy, the valuable society which you possess in so narrow a compass," (i.e. in Edinburgh.) (Stewart: Life of Robertson, page 268, Appendix.)

"Mr. Gibbon to Dr. Robertson. London, September 1, 1783.
"... I should have thanked you for the opportunities which you have afforded me of forming an acquaintance with several men of merit who deserve, and whose character and conversation suggest a very pleasing idea of the society which you enjoy at Edinburgh.... I should rejoice if I could repay these losses by a visit to Edinburgh, a more tranquil scene to which yourself, and our friend Mr. Adam Smith, would powerfully attract me....
I have been lately much flattered with the praise of Dr. Blair, and a censure of the Abbé de Mably; both of them are precisely the men from whom I could wish to obtain praise and censure, and both these gratifications I have the pleasure of sharing with yourself. The Abbé appears to hate, and affects to despise, every writer of his own times, who has been well received by the public; and Dr. Blair, who is a master in one species of composition, has displayed, on every subject, the warmest feeling, and the most accurate judgment. — I will frankly own that my pride is elated, as often as I find myself ranked in the triumvirate of British Historians of the present age, and though I feel myself the Lepidus, I contemplate with pleasure the superiority of my colleagues..." (Stewart: Life of Robertson, pages 269 - 272.) For
As for Lord Kames, and Dr. Hutton, though their works have been mostly forgotten, and their influence was ephemeral, each was honoured in his day for having excelled in his respective science as it was then understood. John Home, whose tragedy of Douglas is dead but not forgotten, needs no more apology than any other poet among the host of neglected dramatists. He understood the form and pressure of his time sufficiently to hold his audience, and that is excuse enough for his fleeting celebrity.

Recognition of Scottish genius may have been long in coming, but under the pressure of mounting achievements, it could not be totally withheld even by those whose attitude towards the Scots was anything but appreciative, and this included some of the Scots themselves. Yet even some reason, unknown to me, neither of these letters appears in The Private Letters of Edward Gibbon, edited by Rowland E. Prothero, 2 volumes, London: John Murray, 1897. Perhaps they were overlooked. If so, this is a serious fault in that collection. It is also interesting to note, in illustration of the eighteenth century conception of the relative merits of the Scottish and of the English historians, that a French author, G. Ruiler: La Jeunesse de Benjamin Constant, page 510, (Appendix to page 175), makes the curious error, when speaking of the appearance of Scottish literature in France, of including Gibbon among the Scotchmen. "... quand le libraire Pissot entreprend une 'Collection des meilleurs auteurs anglais', que la Gazette de France annonce le 16 février 1787 et dont le Journal des Savants donne le Prospectus en mai 1787, l'Ecosse y tient une belle place. Hume y figure pour 15 volumes, et en tête: puis viennent Fergusson (4 vol), Gibbon (9 vol), Robertson (13 vol)... Fergusson encore (1 vol), Smith (5 vol), Blair, sous réserve des écrivains dont j'ignorerais l'origine écossaise."

In 1770 there came a change for the better. The Scots of London organized a society which was called the Society of Ancient Scots, the purpose of which was to "cultivate a knowledge of (Scotland's) history and literature." A description of this society follows:

"From the Secretary of the Ancient Scots Society to the Public. The Literary and convivial Association known by the name of the 'Ancient Scots', is composed of a select number of Natives of Scotland resident in the Metropolis, who are fond of cherishing the re-
at the present day there is reason to believe that these men have yet to receive all the credit that is due to them. There were other visitors to Edinburgh, however, besides Guy Mannering, who found the intellectual and cultural climate exhilarating, and who did not stint their praise.

The poet Samuel Rogers described a visit to Edinburgh he had made as a

membrance of their common country, and cultivating a knowledge of its history and literature. The more effectually to promote these objects, each candidate for admission is required to accompany his application with an original Memoir, written by himself, of some Scotsman eminent in arts or arms, in letters or in science; and this specimen of his qualifications must be publicly read at some meeting of the society, previous to that on which the ballot, takes place. The Society is as old as the accession of James the Sixth (of Scotland) to the throne of England; but there is a long lapse in its history, during which the whole of its ancient records have been lost. In 1770, it was happily re-established in all its original vigour, and comparatively short as the succeeding period has been, the effect of the peculiar condition attached to admission into its body, is of a nature alike gratifying and important. The Society is now in possession of a body of Scottish Biography, which far exceeds all the published collections with which they are acquainted, in authenticity, in interest and in variety. Scarcely a single Scotsman who is known to fame for anything great or good can be named, who has not found, in some member of the Society, a zealous, if not an able biographer. Many of the memoirs are of a very original character abounding in facts not generally known; not a few have been written by individuals, neither rash in approbation nor ill qualified by education and habits to form a just appreciation of literary excellence...." (Scottish Notes and Queries, Vol. 2, page 92 f., letter from George St. J. Bremner, Pasadena, California, U.S.A.; also prefaced to the first volume of the Society's Lives of the Scottish Poets, by the Society of Ancient Scots, Re-established A. D. 1770. London: Printed for T. Boys, 1821-1822. For some reason this latter publication has been attributed to Joseph Robertson. The Catalogue of the University of Edinburgh Library lists him as "the probable author". The National Library of Scotland, which has two copies of the six-volume work, lists one under Joseph Robertson, and the other under the Society of Ancient Scots. From the nature of the publications, it is obvious that they could not have been the work of one man, as each of the longer biographies has the initials of its author subjoined. It may be, however, that Joseph Robertson was implicated in the editing of the volumes; though the notes in the volumes are signed by the initials A. S., which stand for Arthur Sempill, the Secretary of the Society.)

young man in the following terms:-

The most memorable day perhaps which I ever passed was at Edin-
burgh, - a Sunday, when, after breakfasting with Robertson, I
heard him preach in the forenoon, and Blair in the afternoon,
then took coffee with the Piozzis, and supped with Adam Smith.
Robertson's sermon was excellent both for matter and manner of
delivery. Blair's was good, but less impressive; and his broad
Scotch accent offended my ears greatly.

And Rogers was not the only one who found Edinburgh agreeable. A stud-
ious and talented young Swiss, Benjamin Constant, recorded that he spent
"the most agreeable year of (his) life" as a student at the College of
Edinburgh, where "le travail était à la mode parmi les jeunes gens
d'Edimbourg," and where "ils formaient plusiers réunions littéraires et
philosophiques."

But Scottish literary merit, which, under the terms of this thesis, 3
includes accomplishments in nearly every field of human inquiry, was
recognized in ways less devious than those which I have just set before
the reader. In the rise of a new type of organization which was soon to
appear in Scotland, the incorporated learned society, Royal Charters not
only recognized the solid merit of Scottish scholars, thinkers, men of
letters, and scientists, but also did what such recognition could to
guarantee that their societies would live unto perpetuity. The essential
difference between incorporated and unincorporated - the type we have
been studying up till now - is incisively drawn by the Reverend Abraham

1. Rogers: Table Talk, pages 44 - 45.

2. L. Constant de Rebecque: Le Cahier Rouge de Benjamin Constant, page
14. For the student societies of which Constant was a member, see
Chapter 6, page 365.

3. See Chapter 1, page 5.
Learned Societies are divided into incorporated and unincorporated. In the latter case, there is not necessarily any element of permanence about them; their constitution may be changed at any time by the concurrence of a due majority of the members; their objects, rules, and machinery may become totally altered in the same way; or they may silently cease to act, or become formally dissolved. But a society that is "incorporated by Royal Charter" is an official body publicly and legally recognized; it has perpetual succession and a common seal; and the statutes or bye laws, which are framed for the ordinary guidance of the members, must be in perfect accordance with the stipulations or principles of the charter.

The official names of the incorporated societies are unchangeable, being always coincident with those by which they are called in their respective charters; while those of other societies have no permanence beyond the wish of the members. Even in the latter, however, there is often a loose designation adopted for the sake of brevity; while the more formal one is that which is found in the laws of the society. When it is thought desirable to change the name of any society to a more appropriate one, the period of incorporation is the most fitting opportunity for it; and several, we find, have taken advantage of that occasion to do so. Thus, in 1783, the "Philosophical Society of Edinburgh" became the "Royal Society of Edinburgh."

When the Crown granted a Royal Charter to a Scottish intellectual organization, such a grant was an official symbol of recognition that that literary society had risen, through the achievements of its members, to a level that could be compared quite favourably with such organizations

2. For an account of this transformation, see page 338, below.
3. The incorporated societies of Scotland in the eighteenth century were the Royal Medical Society, incorporated 1778, (see Chapter 6, "Student Societies"); the Society of Scottish Antiquaries, incorporated in 1781; the Royal Society of Edinburgh, incorporated in 1782, the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland, incorporated in 1787; and the Royal Physical Society, incorporated in 1788. These societies are all treated with in the latter pages of this chapter.
as the Royal Society of London, the Academy of Sciences of Paris, the Royal Society of Sciences in Copenhagen, the Academy of Sciences of Berlin, the Imperial Academy of Sciences of St. Petersburg, and the many other learned societies of Europe. This official and public

1. It is of interest to record at this point that the first President of the Royal Society of London was Sir Robert Murray, or Moray, a Scot who was educated at the University of St. Andrews. In the eighteenth century, Sir John Pringle, a Scottish medical man, was President of this society from 1772 to 1778 (see the D.N.B. for further details.)

2. Many Scottish Scientists were made members of this organization. The earliest was probably Colin MacLaurin, the mathematician. "We are told, this month, that Mr. Colin McLauren, Professor of Mathematics in Aberdeen, has met with a peculiar honour in France this summer. The Academy of Sciences published a Physico-mathematical question to the learned, and ordered a premium to those who gave the solution that should be approved as best by the Academy. Mr. [MacLaurin was at] Montpellier, or some other place at some distance from Paris, and wrote a solution to the problem, and sent it, without signing it, only put a mark to it, and sent it as directed. The Academy declared it the best solution, and gave public notice that the gentleman who had sent such a mark might call at such a place and receive the premium, fifteen hundred livres, I think. That youth is like to prove an honour to this country." (Wedrow: Analecta, Vol. 3, page 161, July 1724.)

3. "In 1772 the gold medal of the Royal Society of Sciences in Copenhagen was adjudged to Professor Wilson for the best and most satisfactory dissertation on the sun-spots." (Glasgow Courant, 28th May, 1772, quoted by Murray: Memories of the Old College of Glasgow, page 252, note.)

4. "In 1795 John Ferguson was elected an honorary member of the Academy of Sciences of Berlin. He was also a member of the Academy at Florence, of the Etruscan Society of Antiquaries at Cortona, and of the Arcadia at Rome." (Small: Life of Ferguson, page 53.)

5. "On the 8th of August 1777, (William Robertson, the historian) was unanimously elected a member of the Royal Academy of History at Madrid.... He was, some years afterwards, elected one of the foreign members of the Academy of Sciences at Padua, and of the Imperial Academy of Sciences of St. Petersburgh...." (Gleig: Life of Robertson, page 111; Stewart: Life of Robertson, page 372, (Note I to page 271.)
recognition may be regarded as the final stage in the last phase of the Age of Improvement. With the formation of the Royal Physical Society, the Royal Society of Edinburgh, and the Society of Antiquaries, Scottish literary societies had reached the climax and the summit of their eighteenth-century development.

Before I attempt the history of the rise of Scottish incorporated learned societies, however, there are a number of unincorporated societies, most of which were among the "progeny" of the Select Society, which are worthy of attention. It is my intention, therefore, to begin my account of Scottish literary societies which were active during the period of recognition with these unincorporated societies, and to conclude with the Royal, or incorporated, learned societies which have brought so much honour and which have done so much credit to Scottish intellectual achievements both in the latter years of the eighteenth century and since.

After 1770, the first newly-organized literary society to appear in Scotland was the Speculative Society of Dundee. A notice of this debating society, which was the first in Scotland to admit women to its proceedings, appeared in the Weekly Magazine and Edinburgh Amusement for January 27, 1774:

Extract of a letter from Dundee, Jan. 22, 1772.

Amongst the several entertainments of this place, the Speculative

---

1. See pages 302 f., below.
2. See pages 534 f., below.
3. See pages 517 f., below.
Society claims the pre-eminence, formed on a rational system, it hath the resort of great numbers who feast on the knowledge and ingenuity of the speakers. Tribes of females, deserting the card-tables, flock thither and acknowledge the superiority of philosophy. This institution promiseth great success. Various questions are here discussed in a masterly and becoming manner. Here the young men may be trained up to oratory, and graceful deliverance, and afterwards become an ornament to the great council of the nation. Drinking entereth not the walls of this society, and Harmony and good Order keep the porch. This society hath taken for a device, a card on which is represented a view of the society upheld by three female Figures, Virtue, Eloquence, and Contemplation, and supported by two masculine ones, Knowledge and Learning, and the motto is, Dignum sanienti bonoque est.

Such flouting of convention as the admission of women to a public debating society certainly did not pass unrecognized. The Speculative Society of Dundee, as an organization which was so regardless of "sobriety and good order" as to admit "tribes of females", was immediately castigated in the following terms:

To the Publisher of the Weekly Magazine.
Edinburgh, February 4, 1774.

Sir, I happened to be in Dundee when the pompous encomium on a society appeared in your magazine. So different were the sentiments of every body in that place from those of your correspondent, that at first his panegyrick was universally considered as a burlesque; and it was not till the complacency, with which it was regarded by the members of that society, had been observed by their fellow citizens, that they discovered it to be serious, and to be the work of the eloquent men on whom it bestows such praises. A stranger, no doubt, will be surpris'd, when he is informed that this speculative body consists of men without education, and even without that natural vigour of understanding that might make their want of education a subject of regret - of men whose reading has been confined to the perusal of an invoice - and whose compositions have not extended beyond the drawing out of an account. The disputes of such untutored rhetoricians may afford entertainment to the tribes of females who have honoured them with their presence, but can scarcely be regarded as a model for those whose eloquence has a more important destination. Were they contented with the praises of sobriety and good order, they might remain uncensured: they

might even be permitted to appropriate to themselves the figure of
virtue, which, happily for us, is not necessarily excluded from any
station; but, when they join with it two others incompatible with
their employments, they only prove their ignorance of things with
which they affect to be so intimately acquainted. They seem to
have mistaken loquacity for eloquence, and dulness for contemplation.
I should ask their pardon for addressing them in Latin; but I can-
not help recommending to their consideration a proverb in that lan-
guage, much more to their purpose than the motto they have assumed.
Ne sutor ultro crepidam.

Yours, etc., B. C.

This, however, was not the final word. The members of the Dundee Spec-
ulative Society had something to say in reply, and they did not mince
matters when they did so. Their retort, which appeared in the next issue
of the Weekly Magazine but one, reads as follows:

To the Publisher of the Weekly Magazine.
Dundee, February 18, 1774.

Risu incepto res ineptior nulla est.

Sir, Anonymous and abusive letters are the spawn of cowards and
scribblers, and can only be licked into life by the favour of the
press. An ungentle, malicious and virulent attack on a body of
men in this place, equally destitute of truth or wit (has appeared
in your magazine). The author of this wretched performance seems
to be one of those odious and contemptible vermin which crawl on
the face of the earth to disturb the peace and quiet of mankind,
and, in the hard straining of his envenomed pen, hath unwittingly
done the members of the Dundee Speculative Society the honour of
being exceedingly dull upon them.

The several moral virtues and liberal arts are, if I mistake not,
diffusive; and it doth not appear that the society, on whom he looks
down with such avowed contempt, has monopolized these virtues, de-
siring shelter only under the wings of such worthy patrons. These,
Mr. Printer, have condescended to visit every degree of mankind
since the creation of the world; and I would advise this whiffling
pretender to learning, this person of invigorated understanding,
to say less about education, it being very impolitical and weak in
a man to be always talking of gibbets, whose father was hanged.

I have, I confess, neither inclination nor time to trespass on the

1. Weekly Magazine or Edinburgh Amusement, Thursday, February 24, 1774;
page 278 f.
public, or to enter into a further discussion of this matter at present. The fountain-head is defiled; and it is no pleasant task to dip into the united streams of malevolence, disappointment, and envy. I, however, take leave to tell him, that he would be better employed in completing his studies in the school of veracity.

Permit me, Mr. Printer, to conclude with the following lines from Dr. Swift.

True splendor gives the fairest mark
To poison'd arrows from the dark....

Yours, etc., D. M.

At the time when this well-mannered discussion was going on in the Weekly Magazine, there also existed in Edinburgh a "parliamentary debating club" which was known as the Robinhood Society, and which afterwards became the Pantheon Society. The Robinhood Society is said to have "enjoyed a considerable measure of popularity for some little time before it was transformed into the Pantheon. Its speakers assumed the role of some

1. There was a Robinhood Society in London from about 1752 to 1781. For further information on the London Robinhood, see the informative note in Boswell's Life of Johnson, edited by George Birkbeck Hill, revised and enlarged edition by L. F. Powell, 6 Vols., Oxford, at the Clarendon Press, 1934. Boswell, who paid the Robinhood in London a visit, described it as follows:— (Ibid, Vol. 4, page 92 f.) "I mentioned a kind of religious debating society, which met every Sunday evening, at Coachmaker's hall, for free debate; and that the subject for this night was, the text which relates, with other miracles, which happened at our Saviour's death. 'And the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.' Mrs Hall said it was a very curious subject, and she should like to hear it discussed. Johnson, (somewhat warmly) 'One would not go to such a place to hear it, — one would not be seen in such a place — to give countenance to such a meeting.' I, however, resolved that I would go.... I stole away to Coachmaker's hall, and heard the difficult text of which we had talked, discussed with great decency, and some intelligence, by several speakers. There was a difference of opinion as to the appearance of ghosts in modern times, though the arguments for it, supported by Mr. Addison's authority, preponderated. The immediate subject of debate was embarrassed by the bodies of the saints having been said to rise, and by the question what became of them afterwards; did they return again to their graves? or were they translated to heaven? Only one evangelist mentions the fact, and the commentators whom I have looked at, do not make the passage clear...."
parliamentarian of the day, and the affairs of the nation were discussed with a dignity and seriousness that would have done credit to the assembly of which it professed in some degree to be a counterpart."

The Robinhood Society also has a small place in Scottish literature, for it was mentioned by Robert Fergusson in two of his poems. In the "Mutual Complaint of Plainstanes and Causey," Fergusson makes Causey say:-

1. Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, Vol. 1, page 49. The author of the article which appears in this work adds that "very full reports of the debates are to be found in the contemporary pages of Ruddiman's Weekly Magazine, or Edinburgh Amusement. I have been able to find only one such report (Weekly Magazine, or Edinburgh Amusement, Vol. 20, Thursday, April 22, 1775, page 99.) which is entitled as follows:— "An Essay on the Question, whether Fatality he agreeable or not to Reason? Debated in the Robinhood Society on Thursday the 8th of April 1775. Humbly addressed to the Praeses, and inscribed to Dr. B____k." In earlier numbers of the same Magazine, (Vol. 10, Thursday, December 6, 1770, page 510 f.; Thursday, December 13, 1770, page 341; Thursday, December 20, 1770, pages 374 - 376; and Thursday, December 27, 1770, page 408.) there appear reports of Parliamentary debates under the fictitious title of the Robinhood Society'. For proof of the fictitious nature of this Society, see the same magazine for Thursday, December 13, 1770, page 549 where the following entry appears in the section devoted to reports from England:— "Tuesday a motion was made in the Robinhood Society, for renewing the debates on the subject of the Middlesex election, but it was overruled by a very great majority." This is obviously a device for getting around the parliamentary privilege, as it was then understood, which prevented the publication of verbatim reports of Parliamentary debates. It may be that the author of this article in the Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, Vol. 1, page 49 f., was well aware of this fact, but inasmuch as he has described the society as one in which the "speakers assumed the role of some parliamentarian of the day, and the affairs of the nation were discussed with a dignity and seriousness that would have done credit to the assembly of which it professed in some degree to be a counterpart", there is some cause to suspect that he regarded these reports as being those of the Edinburgh Robinhood Society. It will be noted that the one question which we can be certain was debated in the Edinburgh Robinhood, (the title of which appears in this note, above), was not in the nature of a Parliamentary question at all. See also my chapter on "Fictitious Clubs," Chapter 8, page 468 f.

But first, I think it will be good
To bring it to the Robinhood,
Where we shall have the question stated,
And keen and crabbitly debated
Whether the provost and the bailies,
For the Town's gude whose daily toil is,
Should listen to our joint petitions,
And see obtemper'd the conditions.

In a footnote to this poem, Fergusson indicated that the Robinhood was,
"A new instituted society, then held weekly in the Thistle Lodge, but
which now goes under the name of the Pantheon, and meets occasionally
in Mary's Chapel where the grand concerns of the nation are debated by
a set of Juvenile Ciceros."

The Robinhood Society also appeared in Fergusson's "Leith Races",
where it is the basis for a lively stanza:

> Siclike in Robinhood debates,
> Whan two chieles have a pringle;
> E'en—now some coull get his aits,
> An' dirt wi' words they mingle,
> Till up loup's he, wi' diction fu',
> There's lang and dreech contesting:
> For now they're near the point in view;
> Now ten miles frae the question
> In hand that night.

The reason for the change of the name and of the nature of the
Robinhood Society is not known. On December 23, 1773, however, the
parliamentary debaters of the Robinhood Society, became the fashionable
orators of the Pantheon Society. Instead of weekly meetings, they

---

1. Poems on Various Subjects, by Robert Fergusson, Part II, Edinburgh,
1779, page 43, note.


now met fortnightly, and they changed their place of meeting from the
Thistle Lodge to Saint Mary's Chapel in Middry's wynd. Sometime later
the Society again moved, this time to Saint Andrew's Chapel in Carrubber's
Close. The history of the Close, and of Saint Andrew's Chapel is, in
itself, worth repeating, as it gives some idea of the surroundings in
which the debates of the Pantheon took place. The best account of these
surroundings is that contained in Wilson's *Memorials of Edinburgh in the
Olden Time*, which reads as follows:—

This old close was the scene of the only unsuccessful speculation
of another poet whose prudent self-control enabled him through
life to avoid the sorrows that so often beset the minstrel's
path, and to find in the muse the handmaid of wealth. It had
already furnished accommodation for dramatic exhibitions, and
such feats of agility as pertain to the modern circus. Signora
Violante and a company of Italian mountebanks performed there
about 1720. At a later date she returned with a regular company
of English comedians, and met with such success that a strolling
company of players made it their resort for some years there-
after. Allan Ramsay wrote the prologue to their first night's
performance in 1726; and encouraged by the popular favour ex-
tended to such crude dramatic efforts, the poet at length under-
took the erection of a playhouse, still standing at the foot of
Carrubber's Close, (i.e. until 1872 when it was demolished),
which involved him in heavy loss. It was closed by the act for
licensing the stage, which was passed in the year 1737, and the
poet solaced himself by writing a rhyming complaint to the Court
of Session, which appeared soon in the *Gentlemen's Magazine*.

1. The Pantheon, "a Society for debate, which meets every other Thursday
in Mary's Chapel." (The Weekly Magazine, or Edinburgh Amusement,
Thursday, June 2, 1774, page 320.) See also the Calendonian Mercury
for Saturday, May 27, 1775. In 1779, the meetings were held weekly.
(See note on Boswell's attendance on page 237, below.)


3. Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, Vol. 1, page 50, see also the
"Treasurer's Report" in the same article, page 55-56.

The abortive playhouse has since served many singular purposes. It bore in later days the name of St. Andrew's Chapel, bestowed on it soon after the failure of the poet's dramatic speculation. In 1773 it formed the arena for the debates of the Pantheon, a famous speculative club.  

The ostensible purpose of the new society was the conventional one of "Improvement in public speaking." But there was an important difference in the new organization which distinguished it sharply from the Select Society which it undoubtedly took as its model. The Pantheon Society, and the Speculative Society of Dundee as well, were organized primarily as a form of public amusement. The number of spectators, who paid from sixpence upwards for their tickets, "varied from one hundred to about three hundred persons." A passage taken from the treasurer's statement for 1781, entitled Improvements on the Institution of the Pantheon, clearly reveals the primary concern of this officer of the society. After laying down certain financial reforms necessary to revive the plundered funds of the society, the treasurer suggests a number of changes in the debating procedure. He then continues as follows:—

These Arrangements are the more necessary, as the Pantheon has now to cope with the Theater, the Circus, and every other place of public Exhibition and amusement going forward in Edinburgh—Besides the Students at the College having of late formed them-

---

1. The date which Wilson gives for the occupancy of St. Andrew's Hall cannot be correct. James Boswell, (see note 2, page 237), records that he attended debates in St. Mary's Chapel as late as 1775.


solves into different debating Societies under penalties for Absence, lest Support and Emolument are now to be looked for from that quarter than formerly. The present being also a time of general Peace, all party spirit, and division of political sentiments are at an end for some time.

Although this public display of the members powers of dispute brought down the scornful condemnation of the lovers of truth upon the head of the Pantheonites, it had able defenders as well. The following article pretty well reviews the controversy regarding the merit of public disputes. The author ably states the case for the defence, and goes a step further by suggesting that such orations should be printed in the public journals:

Sir, Notwithstanding all that your critical friend Zoilus, (alias Philo-Rhythmicus, or the Candid Critic if he pleases) has advanced, and perhaps with justice, against modern Oratory, I must still profess my veneration for that elegant accomplishment, though indeed I could wish it were never employed but in the cause of truth. — I never hear a good sermon from the pulpit, Mr. Printer, or a sensible speech in the Pantheon, without wishing it were in print. — I have often regretted, that so much good sense and strength of argument as I have heard delivered both in Kirks and Mason Lodges, should die almost as soon as born, and be lost to the world for want of being recorded. The clergy indeed can scarce be blamed for not publishing their orations, however well executed they may be, as they are but too sensible, that this is not an age for encouraging the sale of sermons; for which reason the wiser part of them, spend as little of their time and talents in that dry study

1. See Appendix H, page 635 f.
2. Gentlemen and Lady's Weekly Magazine, Friday, April 22, 1774, page 393.
3. "English Oratory: which... is often injurious to an article of greater importance, I mean that precious jewel, which ancient philosophers are said to have searched so long for in the bottom of old pits and wells; in plain English – Truth! — I fear, Sir, many of our modern orators and philosophers too often exert their rhetorical powers with a quite opposite intention, – to plunge it into the well again, when it is fairly out — for, not to speak of stage rhetoricians, who honestly profess to live by fiction, — do not our ablest barristers, whose office it is to discover it, often endeavour to make Truth appear Falsehood, and vice versa?" (Zoilus in the Gentleman and Lady's Weekly Magazine, for Friday, April 1, 1774.)
as possible, knowing, that they will be much better rewarded, in this world at least, (and 'tis time enough to think of the next when it comes) — for writing history; — some of them indeed may
gain little even at this trade, but to print sermons at their own expense would be certain loss; and they are generally too prolix
for our Magazines: — but surely our Society Orators have no such excuse, when there are so many periodical publishers ready to print
works gratis, either weekly, fortnightly, or monthly, as they chuse,
or chance to deliver them.

I was one evening lately debating (though no orator, I assure you,
Sir, more than Zoilus), with a friend of mine, upon this subject,
who is a member of the Pantheon: — (A bold fellow, you'll say, to
engage with one of the gods;) — I insisted much upon his sending,
or allowing me to send you, one of his late orations, but found him quite invulnerable. — The most material argument he used in his own
defence was, "That it savoured too much of ostentatious vanity, to
print speeches that had been delivered so publicly, the composition
whereof being solely intended for the author's own improvement in
eloquence, and this purpose being obtained, a man would be despised
as a self-conceited fool who would afterwards publish them." — In
vain did I argue, that it was a public loss to suppress such excel-
le compositions, and that, granting there was any truth in his
supposition, private disadvantage always ought, (and with every
ture Patriot certainly would) give place to public benefit. — In
vain did I urge precedents in other Magazines: — Equally vain was
it to quote the old Roman Bard,

Scire Tuum nihil est: nisi te seire, hoc sciat alter,
or our own British poet, to prove,
That the worst avarice is that of sense:
All my arguments went for nothing with this over-modest dogmatic
Pantheonite.

They had more weight however last week with another young friend of
mine, just arrived from the north country, where he had been Preses
of a private Society, which he had the honour of closing lately;
when he delivered the following judicious Speech upon the nature of
Society in general, and of such Literary Societies in particular.
I also, (though with much difficulty) obtained another oration,
(on History) which shall be communicated, if you give this a place
in your useful Miscellany, and extorted from him a promise of trans-
mitting you some other Essays on subjects more generally entertain-
ing and interesting.

As I am informed you have many Subscribers in the North country,
where I see you have already several excellent correspondents, I

1. For this address, see Appendix L, page 656, below. The "private
Society" in the "north country", has not been identified, but see the
address for proof that it was not the Speculative Society of Dundee.
doubt, not the Gentlemen who are members of that Society, will be glad to see these Speeches preserved in your Miscellany: If any of them, or the members of any other Speculating Societies, here or elsewhere, will be so obliging as to communicate their own remarks upon the most important questions that came under their review, I doubt not but they will be as acceptable to all your readers, as to

Your Humble servant; Philo-Rhetor-Socio-Philus.
Edinburgh, April 11, 1774.

An obvious result of the public nature of the Pantheon debates was that the debaters largely confined themselves to popular subjects. But this was not always the case. In May, 1775, the Society debated the questions "Would unlimited Toleration in Religion be advantageous to a State?" and "Whether has Education, or a natural Disposition, most influence on our manners?" And in May, 1776, the Pantheon celebrated the opening of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland by debating the question "Whether would marriage or Celibacy in the Clergy tend most to promote the interests of religion and virtue?" The following is a description of the Society as it appeared to an anonymous observer at this time:-

1. Caledonian Mercury, Saturday, May 27, 1775. See also Appendix I, page 639.

2. Caledonian Mercury, Saturday, May 18, 1776. For other questions debated by the Pantheon, see Appendix I, page 639, below. Brief accounts of the Pantheon debates were also given in the Edinburgh Advertiser, (Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, Vol. 1, page 54.)

3. Weekly Magazine, or Edinburgh Amusement, Thursday, August 3, 1775, page 203 f. This article, in keeping with the practice of the period, has probably used the Pantheon Society as an excuse to put forward the personal ideas of the author. The bulk of the article is taken up with an examination of the issues involved in the American conflict, and the Pantheon, as it were, only comes in as a handy framework upon which the author has hung his argument. For example, the arguments for a peaceful settlement of the troubles with the colonies are four or five times as long as the arguments for coercion, which rules out the possibility that the article was fundamentally a report of the debate. And the author signs himself "A Friend to Peace", which I take as a certain indication of where his sympathies lay, and an indication as to the true purpose of the article. See also my Chapter on fictitious clubs and societies, Chapter 8, page 443 f.
To the Publisher of the Weekly Magazine.

Sir,

Having heard much of a literary society in this city, called the Pantheon, I was desired by some of my acquaintance, in a populous country town where I live, to inquire concerning the regulations of that society the first time I came to Edinburgh, as it was intended to institute one of the same kind in our town; and they requested I would transmit them an account of it by your useful Magazine. I accordingly applied to one of the members of the Pantheon for the necessary information, when he very discreetly gave me the following account, viz.

That their society consisted of about twenty members, all of whom obtained admission by having spoke upon three different questions proposed by the society; That they meet once in a fortnight during the summer and winter sessions, betwixt eight and ten o'clock in the evening, in order to debate upon a question that had been previously given out at the last meeting; and that every member must officiate as president, or clerk, in rotation for four successive meetings; but that a member not having spoke three times, on the meetings immediately preceding his turn for being president, disqualifies him for that office for that time, and the next in rotation who qualifies takes the chair:

That two hundred tickets are divided among the members to give to their acquaintances, as well ladies as gentlemen, for their admission as visitors; and that the visitors have an equal right with the members to speak and vote upon every question that is proposed to be publicly debated on in that society; and that every gentleman, members as well as visitors, after having given their ticket to a waiter at the door of the place of meeting, must give a sixpence to another waiter; a third gives each gentlemen a mutchkin bottle of rum punch and a glass; and thus provided, he may take his seat in any place of the room he pleases, except the seats allotted for the ladies, who pay nothing, and are also treated by the members with fruits to season; and that every member, who omits publicly to deliver his sentiments in the society for two meetings together, forfeits his share of the admission tickets; so that often the whole number of tickets are divided amongst only one third of the members. His silence in public likewise deprives him of interfering in the private business of the society in any respect; but the moment he again speaks on any public question, he is restored to all his privileges as a member.

The funds of this society arise from the small profits on the punch, which are so well managed, that out of them they pay their house rent, fruit for the ladies, candles, and waiters, and yet have a considerable reversion, every farthing of which they give in charity. Every visitor also, who speaks in that society, is intitled to three admission tickets for next meeting. -- Such are the principal regulations of that society.

I have been at several of their meetings, and was very well entertained, and was always greatly pleased with the strict regard that was paid to order and decency. In the time of the last general assembly, the question, "Whether unlimited toleration in religion would be advantageous to a state?" was there very ably debated by upwards of twenty
speakers, twelve of whom were clergymen, every one of whom, much to their honour, were in favour of toleration; and it was carried by a great majority in favour of toleration."

The last question that was debated on there was, "Whether lenient or coercive measures would be the most effectual method of terminating the differences betwixt Great Britain and her colonies?"

.... It was carried by a majority of nine, that coercive measures were the most prudent means of terminating the differences between Great Britain and her colonies. It was remarkable that most of the ladies, a very genteel company of near forty of whom were present, voted for coercive measures: so fond are the fair sex of power.

Now, Sir, if you will please insert this rude sketch of the Pantheon for the benefit of my country friends, you will much oblige,

Yours, etc.,

A Friend to Peace.

By 1776, the prestige of the Pantheon had become so considerable that an honorary membership in it was considered an desirable distinction.

And the Society's debates excited considerable public interest, as the

---

1. "Thursday last, the following question was debated in the Pantheon, viz. Would unlimited Toleration in Religion be advantageous to a State? - The meeting was extremely full, and the question very ably supported in both views of it. Many members of the General Assembly attended, several of whom spoke with great spirit and good sense in favours of unlimited Toleration. After the time allotted for the debates was expired, the vote was stated, limited, or not? when it carried, by a great majority, not. By the rules of the Pantheon, their meetings are only once a fortnight. Some of the Clergy, however, who were present on Thursday night, having expressed a desire again to visit the Society, and being sensible it would not be in their power to do so, were the meeting not to be held till that day fortnight, the members of the Pantheon, in order to gratify the curiosity of such of the Clergy as were anxious to partake of that rational amusement, very politely agreed so far to deviate from their original institution, as to appoint the following question to be debated on Thursday next, viz. "Whether has Education, or our natural Disposition, most influence on our Manners?" (Caledonian Mercury, Saturday, May 27, 1775.)

2. James Boswell, (see note 2, page 237, below), took considerable pride in the fact that the Pantheon had made him an honorary member. And he was right in doing so. "The members of the Pantheon, as a testimony of the high sense they entertain of the many private and patriotic virtues of the Right Hon. James Stodart, Esq; Lord Provost of the city
In consequence of the advertisement inserted by the Society in our Weekly Mercury of the 22d ult. offering two premiums of a Silver Medal each to the two best speakers in point of Composition and powers of Oratory, an uncommonly crowded audience assembled on Thursday the 6th curt, to hear the question debated, 'Whether Hope or Possession contributes most to Tenoral Happiness?" The curiosity of the public was so great, that the chapel was full at half past seven; and before eight (the usual hour of admittance) the door was obliged to be shut for some time, otherwise neither the President nor the Judges could have got access. Many ladies and gentlemen who had got tickets could not get admittance. The President took the chair at half past eight, when the debate began, and continued till ten, when a motion was made, that, on account of the great heat of the room, which prevented other speakers from rising, the debate should be adjourned till that day seven-night, and the money then collected given to the Society for relief of Industrious Poor.

This being unanimously agreed to, the Society met again last Thursday evening, when the house was also very crowded; but by the care of the members in restricting the number of tickets, none were disappointed of admission. We are persuaded, no question hitherto discussed in the Society has produced a greater number of speakers, or more ingenious reasoning, than appeared upon this occasion. The debate was resumed at seven, and continued till ten, when the President (Mr. Thomas Somers) concluded it in such an eloquent speech that the judges were at no loss to decide the

---


2. The offering of prize medals was apparently a fairly frequent event in the Pantheon. "Armstrong, John, a native of Leith, an licentiate of the Scottish church; who came up to London about 1700, and died there a few years after; was the author of some juvenile effusions of considerable promise. While at the University of Edinburgh, (1789), and only in his eighteenth year, he published a volume of 'Juvenile Poems, with Remarks on Poetry, and a Dissertation on Punishing and Preventing Crimes.' The Dissertation, last mentioned, had been honoured by a gold prize medal from the Edinburgh Pantheon (Debating) Society." (Lives of Eminent Scotsman, Vol. 6, page 97.)
Elocution Prize in his favour. The premium for Composition, we hear, will be decided some time next week, when the judges will meet privately for the purpose, and review the speeches of the different competitors. Although a great majority of the speakers at both meetings appeared in favour of Hope, the majority upon calling the vote was very small, being only 17 out of between 300 and 400.¹

The question given out for next meeting, which takes place on Thursday the 27th curr. is, "Whether does Money or Merit tend most to raise a man in the World?" The merits of the gainers will then be announced, and the prize-medals delivered to them in public.

In later years, however, the subjects chosen for debate were selected for their popular appeal rather than for their possible usefulness or for any other serious purpose, and the standing of the Society fell considerably. In 1785, James Boswell, who had frequently visited the Society and had taken part in its debates, found it "so crowded and blackguard" that he left it "in disgust".

1. Three of the speeches given in this debate were published. See The Edinburgh Eighth-Day Magazine for Thursday, March 22, 1780, pages 46-47; April 8, 1780, pages 101-106; and April 17, 1780, pages 139-143.

2. The course of Boswell's association with the Pantheon Society is instructive. The following extracts are taken from Boswell's Private Papers.

"Thursday 25 November (1775). - At eight I went to an Oratorical Society in Mary's Chapel, called the 'Pantheon', as a Militia for Scotland was to be debated: and, as I thought it of consequence to rouse a general spirit for it, I made a vigorous harangue and introduced an Eulogium on Lord Mountstuart as the Tutelary Patron of this country. I believe I did very well. I got applause enough from the company, about 100 Writers, Wrights, etc., etc., and the question carried for a Militia upon the votes of all present being taken. I suppose the visitors bore a great proportion above the members. There were a number of Officers of the 51 Regiment who all voted against a Militia. They were not fair Judges. I was made an Honorary Member...." (Private Papers from Malahide Castle, Vol. II, page 33.) For another Scottish society concerned with the Militia question, see under the Poker Club, Chapter 9, page 521 f.

"Thursday 21 December (1775). - At nine o'clock I went to the Pantheon, of which I had been made an Honorary Member, and heard a debate whether
On the thirtieth of September, 1779, the question "Whether Poetry, Painting, or Music has the greatest effect upon the passions?" was debated, and a poem upon a speech delivered at this debate appeared in the *Edinburgh or not Lotteries are beneficial to Great Britain." (Ibid, Vol. 11, page 44.)

"Thursday 15 July (1779). — Grange drank tea with us. At eight o'clock he went with me to the Pantheon, to which I had been particularly invited this night, as it was to be debated "Whether the British Legislature could alter the Articles of the Union?" I had no mind to go. But as they had made me an honorary Member, I thought it would be uncivil to resist a pressing invitation. I was pretty well entertained. But what was strange, I was so bashful inwardly that I delayed to speak till I had only time to give a short flourish seconding a motion to adjourn the debate till this day so night, that it might be maturely considered..." (Ibid, Vol. 13, page 268 – 269.)

"Thursday 22 July (1779). — I went this evening to the Pantheon, and in order to oblige the Society who had made me an honorary Member and to get some reputation among people of various ranks and professions who would spread it, I had studied the question, and I spoke really well to show that such Articles of the Union as are not plainly temporary, or when no reservations are made, cannot be altered by the British Legislature, which sits under those articles. The debate becoming rather too grave and serious, I rose again and made a Reply which produced high entertainment and Applause, expressing my anxiety lest the fair part of the Audience should go from the Pantheon with a Decision which would alarm them. For of what were we debating, — whether a Contract is to be kept? whether Articles of Union are to be kept? I assimilated the Union between England and Scotland — the Stronger and the weaker Country — to a Contract of Marriage, and I mentioned (as I sometimes look into old Books) a curious pamphlet, published about the time of the Union, On the Marriage of Fergusia and Heptarchus. I had great pleasure tonight in speaking, and the Question carried by a great Majority for my Opinion..." (Ibid, Vol. 13, page 271 – 272.)

"Monday 16 August (1779). — I dictated today from notes kept by the clerk of the Pantheon my speeches in that society on the Articles of the Union." (Ibid, Vol. 13, page 279.)

"Thursday 20 February (1783). — Went to the Pantheon in the evening to hear a debate on this curious question: whether it was most culpable for a young woman to marry an old Man or for an old woman to marry a Young Man. But it was so crowded and blackguard, I soon left it in disgust." (Ibid, Vol. 15, page 157.)

For other questions debated by the Pantheon Society, see Appendix I, page 639 f.
The appearance of poetry in connection with Pantheon debates was in keeping with that society's practice at this period of debating sometimes in verse. The part played by verse in the Pantheon debates was extensive, as is shown by the following account:

Many of the speeches delivered were in verse, and a number of these afterwards in contemporary publications. The well-known piece Rab and Rinran was apparently originally written specially for the Pantheon by the author of Watty and Meg, Alexander Wilson, who recited it in a debate on the question, "Whether is Diffidence, or the Allurements of Pleasure, the greatest bar to Progress in Knowledge?" The Loss o' the Pack, by the same writer, was delivered by him in a debate on the question "Whether is Disappointment in Love, or the Loss of Fortune, hardest to bear?" This piece subsequently became immensely popular when published in chap-book form, and thousands of copies of it must have been sold.

On 14th April, 1791, a debate took place on the question "Whether have the Exertions of Allan Ramsay of Robert Ferguson done more Honour to Scotch Poetry?" Wilson took part in this debate, as also did Ebenezer Picken, teacher of languages in Edinburgh and a minor poet, and these two published their contributions (in verse) in a pamphlet bearing the following title:

---
1. Edinburgh Eighth Day Magazine, Tuesday, October 12, 1779, page 178. This periodical also printed a number of prize-winning speeches given in the society. For a list of the questions debated, see Appendix I, page 639 f.


5. "In 1815 Picken published a collection of miscellaneous poems, songs, etc., in 2 Vols., and announced his intention to issue shortly thereafter a Pocket Dictionary of the Scottish Dialect." (Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, Vol. 1, page 53.)

The Laurel Disputed: of, The Merits of Allan Ramsay and Robert Fergusson Constrained; In Two Poetical Essays, Delivered in the Pantheon at Edinburgh, on Thursday April 14th 1791. On the Question, Whether have the Exertions of Allan Ramsay or Robert Fergusson done more Honour to Scotch Poetry? By E. Pickens, and A. Wilson.

Although the prize went to one of the supporters of Allan Ramsay, it seems likely that the best poem was produced by Alexander Wilson who maintained Fergusson's superiority "in virtue of his greater realism", a conclusion which has been accepted by one of the most recent of Allan Ramsay's biographers. Wilson's opinion on this matter appeared in his poem in the following stanza:-

It's my opinion, John, that this young fallow,
Exceeds them all, and Allan hallow,
And shews, at twenty-two, as great a giftie,
For painting just, as Allan did at fifty.

The decision of the Pantheon gathering in favour of Allan Ramsay, however, may or may not have been a reflection of the true sentiments of the generality, or even of the judicious few. Suspicion is cast upon the fairness of the proceedings in "Ford's edition of Fergusson's Works":-

Seven speakers, it appears, took part.... All took the side of Ramsay but Wilson, who, although his poem received the approbation of the audience, and by those best able to judge was esteemed the highest in literary quality of all the seven delivered, had yet to yield the prize, by seventeen votes of the meeting, to a Mr. Cumming, who was accused of gaining a majority by bribery. Tickets of admission, which cost sixpence each, were bought and distributed in abundance. The award was to be made by a vote of the audience;

1. To Robert Cumming for his Essay on the Question, "Whether have the Exertions of Allan Ramsay or Robert Fergusson done most Honours to Scotch Poetry?" Cumming's Essay was published as a pamphlet in Edinburgh, 1791.
3. Ibid page 152. See also page 27 of the pamphlet described directly above.
and to secure the majority which he actually attained, Cumming, it was said, purchased alone forty tickets, which he presented to ladies of his acquaintance, merely that they might attend and vote for him.

It is interesting to note that at this period, 1791, the motion to admit women to the Pantheon debates, which had been rejected in 1774, had been fully accepted, and that the ladies of Edinburgh were taking an active part in the proceedings. Inasmuch as the Society offered its activities as a public amusement, such a step must have been as inevitable as it would have been welcome to many of both sexes. In this new fashion, the Pantheon Society continued to hold its meetings "till about 1800."

---

1. When the motion was first made to admit women, in 1774, it was rejected. At that time the following poem appeared in the Weekly Magazine or Edinburgh Amusement, Thursday, March 5, 1774, page 306.

On hearing the Members of the Pantheon had resolved to admit no Ladies into their Society. By Miss J. S.

The eastern prophet did exclude
All women from his heaven;
And in our time a dread command
By Pantheonites is given,

'That now no fair shall entrance find
Into the learned hall,'
As Salique law precludes the sex
From ruling over Gaul.

But, gods! beware, perhaps ere long
You sorely will repent;
We can debar you access too;
Tis time then to relent.

* The Pantheon was the Temple of all the Gods; and under this name has a Society for public debate been lately instituted in Edinburgh.

It is interesting to note that when Boswell visited the Pantheon in July, 1779, there were ladies present. (See note for July 22, page 258, above.)

During the early days of the Pantheon, that is about 1776, another debating society, the Cannongate Debating Society made its appearance in Edinburgh. Nothing is known of this society, however, apart from the fact that on Wednesday 17th April, 1776, it was honoured with a poem spoken from the chair. The poem, which indicates that the Society was established by two gentlemen named Noble and Moodie, and that it was in rivalry with the Pantheon Society, reads as follows:

Spoken from the Chair, by the President of the Cannongate Debating Society, on Wednesday 17th April 1776.

When ancient Romans, the whole world did sway, Their poorest peasants could both sing and say; And that in public too,—none but could rhyme, In long orations at festival time. — But in this learned, polite, and polished place, There's few can say, "how d'ye" with a good grace. How many public men of sense and skill, That can't express their mind, do what they will. Our bar and pulpit boast indeed at large, And men of merit, likewise tread out stage; But have not we got sense as well as them, A small improvement makes us just the same. —Yes, now we hope this evil will be mended, Nay, this society here, must surely end it; And, if conducted on the plan laid down, 'Twill soon a rumour make thro' all the town. But what will the great Don's say up the street, When they see Canongatians turn'd polite? Ha! hai says one—pulling up his breeches, "Who would have thought to hear such clever speeches" If they had on as they have now begun, "They will our Pantheon beat, as sure's a gun."

1. The Scots Spy, or Critical Observer, Friday, May 5, 1776, page 106.
This was not the first society to compete, unsuccessfully, with the Pantheon:—"The debating society, which was some time ago erected in this city, having been dissolved on Monday the 2d current, the members generously resolved to apply their remaining funds to charitable purposes; and accordingly gave a benefaction of 12 pounds sterling to the society for relief of the honest and industrious poor in and about the city of Edinburgh," (The Weekly Magazine or Edinburgh Amusement, Vol. 24, Thursday, May 12, 1774, page 223.)
Yes, sure it is, that every one will find,  
That this our club likewise improves the mind.  
Our teaching learns ourselves; none tries to teach,  
But finds out things they thought above their reach.  
Then who would not a bumper drink to those,  
Who in our street did first this club propose?  
It was not me; not I; I would never  
Have thought on any thing that's half so clever.  
Here's to our founders both. — Noble and Mood, *  
And all those whose schemes doth tend to public good.

* Moodie.

The debating societies which have just been described, however, were  
not the only Scottish literary organizations to direct their activities  
toward providing entertainment for the public. In 1779, an association  
which afterwards became known as the Mirror Club began to publish a  
weekly paper. This was so well received in London as well as in Edinburgh  
that it may be said to have brought to its Scottish authors an admiring  
recognition of those lighter qualities in literary composition which they  
were long assumed (and no more so by the English then by the Scots them-  
selves) not to possess. The successful periodical, which was frequently  
classes as next in merit to the Spectator upon which it was modelled,

1. "The Mirror is deservedly much esteemed in England; and I have heard  
an high literary character declare it the best book of the kind, save  
the Spectator." (Pinkerton: Ancient Scottish Poems, page cx1, note.)  
See also, W. Forbes: Life of Beattie, Vol. 3, page 257, (Appendix Note  
(Q) to page 182.). "Both Burns and Scott deemed Mackenzie the 'Scott-  
tish Addison.'" (Thomson: Scottish Man of Feeling, page 179, note.)  
For Burns opinion, see Currie: Life and Works of Burns, Vol. 2, page  
301, ltr. Burns to Mrs Dunlop, ltr. No. xcv, Ellisland, 10th April,  
1790. Scott dedicated his Waverly "to the Scottish Addison." As for  
the Mirror being patterned after the Spectator, Gregory Smith: Scottish  
Literature, page 212 - 213, is as well qualified to speak as anyone.  
"It (the Mirror) was literary in the olden sense in which we think of  
the Spectator, and its avowed object 'to hold the Mirror up to Nature',  
was so truly spectatorial that the 'Scottish Addison' as Scott-styled  
Mackenzie, had the charge preferred against him that he was too literal  
a copyist of the English Model. It pursued its course with an old-  
fashioned amiability and elegance, and revenged itself on its critics  
by quizzing them in the approved Addisonian manner."
was called The Mirror.

The Mirror Club was a development of another small literary club, the Feast of Tabernacles, which was in existence as early as 1770. In his book on Scotland and Scotsmen of the Eighteenth Century, John Ramsay of Ochtertyre writes of the Feast of Tabernacles that it "was a club composed of lawyers and literary men, whose bond of union was their friendship for Mr. Henry Dundas, and who met at Perves's tavern in Parliament Square. The Mirror Club was a step from it." The step to the Mirror Club of which Ramsay speaks was one of reorganization, and not of distance.

Ramsay of Ochtertyre mentions only one member of the Feast of Tabernacles, Andrew Crosbie, of whom he says "he was one of the great ornaments of that Society, both in its frolicsome and serious moments, when

1. It is not known for certain whether the paper took its name from the club, or whether, as seems far more likely, the name of the periodical determined the title of the club.

2. "That the Feast of Tabernacles was flourishing in 1770 we know from the fact that the club presented to Mrs Cockburn of Cockpen (mother of Lord Cockburn) a large china bowl, with a framed testimonial stating that united by the Bonds of Freindship and in testimony of their superior regard, they have presumed to dignify with her name the Rolls of their Society!" (Harry Cockburn: Old Edinburgh Clubs, page 142-143.)


any point of taste and literature was to be canvassed. When a little warmed by liquor, nothing could be more joyous and interesting than his discourse, there being a happy mixture of wit and humour and information.

It has been conjectured that Dundas's brother-in-law, Archibald Cockburn of Cockpen, and John Maclaurin, Lord Dregburn, were also members.

It is not known exactly at what date the Feast of Tabernacles was reorganized as the Mirror Club. Harry Cockburn, in his paper on *Old Edinburgh Clubs*, has pointed out that Henry Dundas was Member of Parliament for Midlothian from 1774 to 1782, and for most of the time he was Lord Advocate. "We can, therefore," writes Cockburn, "readily understand that his time was mostly occupied away from Edinburgh, and if, as Mr. Ramsay says, the raison d'être of the club was the friendship for Mr. Dundas, we can suppose that his absence would cause a slackness in the meetings of his friends; hence a necessary reorganization of the club, and its transformation into the Mirror about 1778."

In 1777, however, there is evidence that the reorganization of the Feast of Tabernacles was already well advanced. At this time the club was joined by Henry Mackenzie, "The Man of Feeling". In his *Anecdotes and Facotisms*, Mackenzie has left an account of the club at this period.

---

1. Ramsay of Ochtertyre: Scotland and Scotsmen in the 18th Century, Vol. 1, page 454. For a discussion of Andrew Crobie as the original of Scott's Counsellor Pleydell in *Guy Mancering*, see my Chapter 8, page 483, below.


3. Ibid, page 143.

4. Thomson: *A Scottish Man of Feeling*, page 187. Thomson has not indicated the source of his information, but as he is accurate in the rest of his book, there is no reason to doubt him on this point.
In speaking of John Logan, Mackenzie writes:

He was one of a small literary club, chiefly of barristers, of which I was a member, along with Blair, afterwards President of the Court of Session, Mr. (afterwards Judge) Abercromby, Lord Craig, Lord Bannatyne, and Mr. George Ogilvie. We used to discuss literary subjects (generally drinking tea at the house of one of the members) without the formality of a set speech.

Logan, however, "a rather clever man, and an unpleasant one," did not remain a member of the group for long. When the association finally emerged as the Mirror Club, in 1779, there is no mention of him. At this time the members of the group were as follows:

Mr. Henry Mackenzie, "The Man of Feeling."
Mr. George Home, a Clerk of the Court of Session.
Mr. W. Craig.
Mr. Alexander Abercromby, Advocate.
Mr. M'Leod Bannatyne, Advocate.
Mr. R. Cullen, Advocate.
Mr. George Ogilvy, Advocate.

"All ... with the exception of Mr. Ogilvy, were contributors to the Mirror."

When the members of the Mirror Club began to issue those publications

1. Logan was a literary adventurer who was accused of victimizing his friend and fellow-poet, Michael Bruce, when he edited a posthumous edition of Bruce's poems. For more information see Mackenzie's Anecdotes and Egotisms, page 152.


3. Ibid, (Thomson's notes in the biographical index), page 275.


which have assured them a place of honour among the authors of periodical papers, they were materially assisted by a number of gentlemen who, while not members of the organization in the ordinary sense, may be regarded as corresponding members. These corresponding members at the time when the club issued the Mirror were as follows:

Mr. Richardson, Professor of Humanity in the University of Glasgow.
Lord Hailes, (Sir David Dalrymple), judge and historian.
Mr. Frazer Tytler, Professor of History in the College of Edinburgh.
Dr. Beattie, the author of The Minstrel.
Mr. David Hume, nephew to the Historian.
Mr. Cosmo Gordon, Baron of the Exchequer in Scotland.
Mr. William Strahan, Printer to his Majesty.

In 1785, when the same organization produced The Lounger, two additional "corresponding" members joined forces with them. These two men were:

Dr. Henry, the Historian.
Mr. Greenfield, Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres in the University of Edinburgh.

It has often been observed that the young lawyers and amateur authors who made up this group were men of no ordinary abilities. "No fewer than six of the essayists... (became) Judges of the Supreme Courts of Scotland (Lord Abercromby, Lord Craig, Lord Cullen, Lord Hailes, Mr. Baron


Gordon, and Lord Woodhouselee) and other members of the society were equally respectable for talents and literary accomplishments. When the Mirror Club began to prepare for its publications, its places of meeting were frequently changed in order to insure anonymity for its members. The club met "in Clerihugh's in Writer's Court," "in Stewart's Oyster-house in the old Fishmarket Close, or in Lucky Dunbar's in a narrow alley between Forrester's and Libertons Wynd, or in Somer's opposite the Guard-house in the High Street."

In the concluding number of The Mirror, Henry Mackenzie described how the periodical actually began:

The idea of publishing a periodical paper in Edinburgh took its rise in a company of gentlemen whom particular circumstances of connection brought frequently together. Their discourses often turned upon subjects of manners, taste, and of literature. By one of those accidental resolutions of which the origin cannot easily be traced, it was determined to put their thoughts into

---

1. W. Forbes: Life of Beattie, Vol. 3, page 290 f. (Note DD to Vol. 2, page 232.) Forbes had made a slight error at this point, Baron Gordon was a Baron of the Exchequer Court, not of the Court of Session. The title of "Baron" was not appointed to Scottish Law Lords.


5. Mirror No. 110, Saturday, May 27, 1780, Repeated in Couper: Edinburgh Periodical Press, Vol. 2, page 151, and Nathan Drake: Essays...On Periodical Papers, Vol. 2, page 567. "An interesting attempt to reconstitute the meeting at which the Mirror was founded is made in Macmillan's Magazine, for September, 1907. The first paragraph, however, is marred by a peculiar blunder." (Couper: Edinburgh Periodical Press, Vol. 2, page 153, note.) The blunder to which Couper refers is that of the author of this article calling "Lucky" Dunbar, the proprietor of the tavern in which the club met, a man instead of a woman. "Luckie or Lucky, (4) often used to denote 'the mistress of an ale-house.'" (Jamison's Scottish Dictionary.)
writing, and to read them for the entertainment of each other. Their essays assumed the form, and soon after someone gave them the name, of a periodical publication; the writers of it were naturally associated; and their meetings increased the importance, as well as the number of their productions. Cultivating letters in the midst of business, composition was to them an amusement only; that amusement was heightened by the audience which this society afforded; the idea of publication suggested itself as productive of still higher entertainment.

The idea of publication is said to have been suggested by William Craig.

In *The Lounger*, Lord Abercromby, writing as "a member of the Mirror Club" to Mr. Lounger, describes the meetings of the Mirror Club in the following terms:

I can never forget the pleasure we enjoyed in meeting to read our papers in the Club. There they were criticised with perfect freedom but with the greatest good humour. When any of us produced a paper which, either from the style or manner of it, or from the nature of the subject, seemed inadmissible, it was condemned without hesitation, and the author, putting it in his pocket, drank a bumper to its names. We had stated meetings to receive the communications with which we were honoured, which afforded another source of amusement. This pleasure, however, was not without alloy. We were often, from particular circumstances; obliged to reject compositions of real merit; and what was equally distressing, we were sometimes obliged to abridge or alter the papers which we published.

In view of the great indebtedness of the literature of Scotland to the men in the legal profession, (Kames, Boswell, Scott, Lockhart, and Jeffrey were all legal men), it is interesting to observe that all the members of the Mirror Club, with the exception of Henry Mackenzie, were lawyers. Mackenzie was also the only member who had previously had any


extensive experience in publishing his works, and it was certainly a wise
move of the association to place the editorship of the periodical in his
capable hands. It was Mackenzie—who undertook to supervise the prepa-
ration of the papers for the press, who safeguarded the anonymity of the
contributors (he alone was known to the publisher), and who contributed
by far the greatest number of papers.

The publisher who issued both of the Club's two series of periodical
papers, The Mirror and The Lounger, was William Creech. Creech at that
time occupied the shop "at the east end of the Luckenbooths, and facing
the line of the High Street." This shop was in a building which had
already become famous through the occupancy of Allan Ramsay, the poet,
who had established one of the first circulating libraries in Great
Britain there in 1725.

When Henry Mackenzie joined the club, at the request of William

1. For Mackenzie as editor of the Mirror and Lounger, see Couper: Edin-
3, page 291; (Note DD to page 252 Vol. 2); Craig: Scottish Periodical
Press, page 22; and Hogg's Instructor, Vol. 8, 1852, page 46.

Other counts vary somewhat:—Couper: Edinburgh Periodical Press, Vol. 2,
page 154, says Mackenzie supplied only 38 Mirrors; Scottish Notes and
Queries, Vol. 5, page 103 – 104, gives Mackenzie credit for 62 Mirrors
and 57 Loungers.

3. Grant: Old and New Edinburgh, Vol. 1, page 154; Wilson: Memorials of
Edinburgh in the Olden Times, Vol. 1, page 256; Scottish Notes and
Queries, Vol. 5, page 102; and Burns Martin: Allan Ramsay, page 33
and notes.

(Note 3 continued from previous page.) literary affairs, see also
Lockhart: Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk, Vol. 2, page 3, ltr. 28;
Lockhart: Life of Scott, Vol. 1, page 197 f.; Ramsay of Ochtertyre:
Scotland and Scotsmen in the 18th Century, passim; Newte: Prospects
and Observations, page 364 f.
Craig, "toward the end of 1777," "twenty papers had already been prepared." "Thirty-five 'unexceptional' papers were produced by January of 1779, 'when the publication was resolved on, a resolution which was rather assented to than approved by one half of the society.'" The first issue of The Mirror appeared on Saturday, 23 January 1779.

In undertaking the publication of a periodical paper after the fashion of The Tatler and The Spectator, the members of the Mirror Club were following a long established practice in Scotland. As has already been described, the appearance of the English periodical papers of Addison and Steele created considerable interest in Scotland. Steele's Tatler, which began on April 12, 1709, was reprinted in Edinburgh "some time about the beginning of February, 1710, by James Watson, an Edinburgh Printer." In the same year there appeared The North Tatler, "printed by John Reid for Samuel Colvil," which "was distinct both from Watson's reprint and from the Tatler of 1711." In 1711, a bi-weekly appeared under the title of The Tatler, by Donald Macstaff of the North. This publication was written by Robert Hepburn of Bearford, "at that time about 21 years of age." "Donald Macstaff" was the avowed imitator of "Mr. Bickerstaff, whose steps he proposed to follow." In 1717, the author of The

4. See Chapter 30 page 51 above.
Mercury or the Northern Reformer, one Duncan Tatler, announced: "I am come of the ancient and honourable Tatlers of the North. I am the only Tatler alive." The Echo, or the Edinburgh Weekly Journal, which appeared in 1729, "was made up of two distinct parts - one devoted to essays and letters, after the manner of the Spectator, and another larger, in which the journal fulfilled the function of a newspaper." The Conjurer, 1735, and The Review, 1737, followed in the same tradition.

In describing the latter publication, Couper draws attention to the fact that "A writer in the Scots Magazine refers even the authors of The Mirror and Lounger back to this paper, which he says 'exhibits a favourable picture of Caledonian wit, and humour, in which our brethren of the north have hitherto been supposed deficient.'" The Letters of the Critical Club, 1738, which professed, as the name indicates, to be the production of a society, however, were the last of such attempts of any importance in Scotland until The Mirror appeared fifty years later.

In contrast to that accorded to its predecessors, the reception and

6. Couper: Edinburgh Periodical Press, Vol. 2, page 69. "He adds that the late Dr. Robert Wallace, minister successively of New Greyfriars and the New North Churches, Edinburgh, 'was, according to our information, one of the principal authors of it.'"
7. See Chapter 8, page 444, below.
success of The Mirror was outstanding. The citizens of Edinburgh, when prompted by the favourable opinion of English "persons of rank and of taste," were quick to extend their support to the new publication, and if The Mirror languished at first, on its appearance in single issues, it was enthusiastically supported when it was published in a collected volume. The subserviency of Edinburgh to London in matters of literary fashion are sufficient to account for the delay in recognition of the true merits of this publication in the northern capital. In Lounger No. 30, which has already been quoted above, Lord Abercromby, writing as "a member of the Mirror Club," gives the following account of the reception of

The Mirror to Mr. Lounger:

You, Sir, started with many advantages which we did not possess. The public are now taught to know, that it is possible to carry on a periodical work of this kind in Edinburgh; and that, if tolerably executed, it will be read, and will hold its place with other works of the same kind. But when we boldly gave the Mirror to the world, a very different notion prevailed. It was supposed that no such work could be conducted with any propriety on this side of the Tweed. Accordingly, the Mirror was received with the most perfect indifference in our own country; and during the publication, it was indebted for any little reputation it received in Scotland, to the notice that happened to be taken of it by some persons of rank and of taste in England. Nay, Sir, strange as you may think it, it is certainly true, that, narrow as Edinburgh is, there were men who considered themselves as men of letters, who never read a number of

1. "The success, while the work continued in detached numbers, was but moderate. In Scotland many people whom a literary adventure like this should have interested, never read the Mirror, and of those who read it, many held it in very little estimation. It was from England its fame first arose, and when it came out in volumes, its sale was uncommonly rapid, and the opinion formed of its merit exceedingly flattering. It was then that its merit was first fully acknowledged in its own country." (Thomson: Scottish Man of Feeling, page 169.)

2. See page 249, above.

it while it was going on. — The supercilious, who despised the paper because they did not know by whom it was written, talked of it as a catch-penny performance, carried on by a set of needy and obscure scribblers. Those who entertained a more favourable opinion of it were apt to fall into an opposite mistake; and to suppose that the Mirror was the production of all the men of letters in Scotland. This last opinion is not yet entirely exploded, and perhaps has rather gained ground from the favourable reception of the Mirror since its publication in volumes. The last time I was in London, I happened to step into Mr. Cadell's shop, and while I was amusing myself in turning over the prints in Cook's last Voyage, Lord B came in, and taking up a volume of the Mirror, asked Mr. Cadell, who were the authors of it. Cadell, who did not suspect that I knew any more of the matter than the Great Mogul, answered, "That he could not really mention particular names, but he believed that all the literati of Scotland were concerned in it." Lord B walked off, satisfied that this was truly the case; and about a week after I heard him say at Lord M's levee, that he was well assured the Mirror was the joint production of all the men of letters in Scotland.

The lack of an initial success for The Mirror in Edinburgh is confirmed by the editor, who explained in the last number of the paper the difficulties which the Mirror Club had met with in its literary endeavours. Mackenzie, who had "consulted both (Adam) Smith and John Home about the final draft of the last Mirror, in order that the exit might be as graceful as possible," wrote as follows:

The place of its publication was, in several respects, disadvantageous. There is a certain distance at which writings, as well as men, should by placed, in order to command our attentions and respect. We do not easily allow a title to instruct or to amuse the public in our neighbour, with whom we have been accustomed to compare our own abilities. Hence the fastidiousness with which, in a place so narrow as Edinburgh, home productions are commonly


received; which, if they are grave, are pronounced dull; if pathetic, are called unnatural; if ludicrous, are termed low. In the circle around him, the man of business sees few who should be willing, and the man of genius few who are able, to be authors; and a work that comes out unsupported by established names; is liable alike to the censure of the grave, and the sneer of the witty. Even Folly herself acquires some merit from being displeased, when the name of fashion has not sanctified a work from her displeasure. This desire of levelling the pride of authorship, is in none more prevalent than in those who themselves have written. Of these the unsuccessful have a prescriptive title to criticism; and, though established literary reputation commonly sets men above the necessity of detracting from the merit of other candidates for fame, yet there are not wanting instances of monopolists of public favour, who wish not only to enjoy, but to guide it, and are willing to confine its influence within the pale of their own circle, or their own patronage. General censure is of all things the easiest; from such men it passes unexamined, and its sentence is decisive; nay, even a studied silence will go far to smother a production, which, if they have not the meanness to envy, they want the candour to appreciate with justice.

In point of subject as well as of reception, the place where it appeared was unfavourable to the Mirror. Whoever will examine the works of a similar kind that have preceded it, will easily perceive for how many topics they were indebted to local characters and temporary follies, to places of public amusement, and circumstances of reigning fashion. But, with us, besides the danger of personal application, these are hardly various enough for the subject, or important enough for the dignity of writing. There is a sort of classic privilege in the very names of places in London, which does not extend to those of Edinburgh. The Cannongate is almost as long as the Strand, but it will not bear the comparison upon paper; and Blackfriars-wynd can never vie with Drury-lane. in point of sound, however they may rank in the article of chastity. In the department of humour, these circumstances must necessarily have great weight; and, for papers of humour, the bulk of readers will generally call, because the number is much greater of those who can laugh, than of those who can think. To add to the difficulty, people are too proud to laugh upon easy terms with one, of whose title to make them laugh they are not apprised. A joke in writing is like a joke in conversation; much of its wit depends upon the rank of its author.

During the progress of the paper, however, still another difficulty had arisen. A paper written by William Craig, which appeared as Mirror No. 83 reflected the persistent difficulties of the Scots with their borrowed medium of expression, and renewed the old complaint that the

1. See Chapter 4, page 166, above.
Scots were lacking in humour:

Enquiry into the Causes of the Scarcity of Humorous Writers in Scotland.

In a paper published at Edinburgh, it would be improper to enter into any comparison of the writers of this country with those on the other side of the Tweed: but, whatever be the comparative rank of Scottish and English authors, it must surely be allowed, that, of late, there have been writers in this country, upon different subjects, who are possessed of very considerable merit. In one species of writing, however, in works and compositions of humour, there can be no sort of doubt that the English stand perfectly unrivalled by their northern neighbours. The English excel in comedy; several of their romances are replete with the most humorous representations of life and character and many of their other works are full of excellent ridicule. But, in Scotland, we have hardly any book which aims at humour, and of the very few which do, still fewer have any degree of merit. Though we have tragedies written by Scots authors, we have no comedy excepting Ramsay's Gentle Shepherd; and though we have tender novels, we have none of humour, excepting those of Smollet, who, from his long residence in England, can hardly be said to have acquired in this country his talent for writing; nor can we, for the same reason, lay a perfect claim to Arbuthnot, who is still a more illustrious exception to my general remark. There must be something in the national genius of the two people which makes this remarkable difference in their writings, though it may be difficult to discover from what cause it arises.

I am inclined to suspect, that there is something in the situation and present government of Scotland, which may, in part, account for this difference in the genius of the two countries. Scotland, before the union of the two kingdoms, was a separate state, with a parliament and constitution of its own. Now the seat of government is removed, and its constitution is involved in that of England. At the time the two nations came to be so intimately connected, its great men were less affluent than those of England, its agriculture was little advanced and its manufactures were in their infancy. A Scotsman was, therefore, in this situation, obliged to exert every nerve, that he might be able to hold his place.

If preferment, or offices in public life, were his object, he was obliged to remove from home to a city, which, though now the metropolis of the united kingdoms, had formerly been to him a sort of foreign capital. If wealth was the object of his pursuit, he could only acquire it at home by great industry and perseverance; and if he found he could not easily succeed in his own country, he repaired to other countries, where he expected to be able to amass a fortune. Hence it has been remarked, that there are more natives of Scotland to be found abroad than of any other country.

1. Mirror No. 83, Tuesday, February 22, 1780.
People in this situation are not apt to indulge themselves in humour; and few humourous characters will appear. It is only in countries where men wanton in the extravagancies of wealth, that some are led to indulge a particular vein of character, and that others are induced to delineate and express it in writing. Besides, where men are in a situation which makes it necessary for them to push their way in the world, more particularly if they are obliged to do so among strangers, though this may give them a firmness and a resoluteness in their conduct, it will naturally produce a modest caution and reserve in their deportment, which must chill every approach to humour. Hence though the Scots are allowed to be brave and undaunted in dangerous situations; yet bashfulness, reserve, and even timidity of manner, unless when they are called forth to action, are justly considered as making part of their character. Men of this disposition are not apt to have humour; it is the open, the careless, the indifferent, and the forward who indulge in it; it is the man who does not think of interest, and who sets himself above attending to the proprieties of conduct. But he who has objects of interest in view, who attends with circumspection to his conduct, and finds it necessary to do so, is generally grave and silent, and seldom makes any attempt at humour.

These circumstances may have had a considerable influence upon the genius and temper of the people in Scotland; and if they have given a particular formation to the genius of the people in general, they would naturally have a similar effect upon its authors; the genius of an author commonly takes its direction from that of his countrymen.

To these causes, arising from the present situation and government of our country, may be added another circumstance, that of there being no court or seat of the Monarch in Scotland. It is only where the court is, that the standard of manner can be fixed; and, of consequence, it is only in the neighbourhood of the court that a deviation from that standard can be exactly ascertained, or a departure from it be easily made the object of ridicule. Where there is no court, it becomes of little importance what dress the people wear, what hours they observe, what language they express themselves in, or what is their general deportment. Men living at a distance from the court become also unacquainted with the rules of fashion which it establishes, and are unable to mark or point them out. But the great subject for wit and ludicrous representation arises from men's having a thorough knowledge of what is the fashionable standard of manners, and being able to seize upon, and hold out a departure from it, in an humorous point of view. In Scotland, therefore, which, since the removal of the court, has become, in a certain degree, a provincial country, there being no fixed standard of manners within the country itself, one great source of ridicule is cut off, and an author is not led to attempt humourous composition; or, if he does, has little chance of succeeding.

There is another particular which may have had a very considerable effect upon the genius of the Scots writers, and that is, the nature of the language in which they write. The old Scottish dialect is now banished from our books, and the English is substituted in its place. But
though our books are written in English, our conversation is in Scotch. Of our language it may be said, as we are told of the wit of Sir Hudibras, that we have a suit for holidays and another for working days. The Scottish dialect is our ordinary suit; the English is used only on solemn occasions. When a Scotsman therefore writes, he does it generally in trammels. His own native original language, which he hears spoken around him, he does not make use of; but he expresses himself in a language in some respects foreign to him, and which he has acquired by study and observation. When a celebrated Scottish writer, after the publication of his History of Scotland, was first introduced to Lord Chesterfield, his Lordship, with that happy talent of compliment for which he was so remarkable, addressed him at parting in these words: "I am happy, Sir, to have met with you, — happy to have passed a day with you, — and extremely happy to find that you speak Scotch. — It would be too much, were you to speak, as well as write our language, better than we do ourselves."

This circumstance of a Scottish author not writing his own natural dialect, must have a considerable influence upon the nature of his literary productions. When he is employed in any grave dignified composition, when he writes history, politics, or poetry, the pains he must take to write, in a manner different from that in which he speaks, will not much affect his productions; the language of such compositions is, in every case, raised above that of common life; and, therefore, the deviation which a Scottish author is obliged to make from the common language of the country, can be of little prejudice to him. But if a writer is to descend to common and ludicrous pictures of life; if, in short, he is to deal in humorous composition, his language must be, as nearly as possible, that of common life, that of the bulk of the people; but a Scotsman who wishes to write English cannot easily do this. He neither speaks the English dialect, nor is it spoken by those around him; any knowledge he has acquired of the language is got from books, not from conversation. Hence Scottish authors may have been prevented from attempting to write books of humour; and, when they have tried it, we may be able, in some measures, to account for their failure.

In confirmation of these remarks, it may be observed that almost the only works of humour which we have in this country, are in the Scottish dialect, and most of them were written before the union of the kingdoms, when the Scotch was the written, as well as the spoken, language of the country. The Gentle Shepherd, which is full of natural and ludicrous representations of low life, is written in broad Scotch. Many of our ancient Scottish ballads are full of humour. If there have been laterly any publications of humour in this country, written in good English, they have been mostly of the graver sort, called irony. In this species of writing, where the author himself never appears to laugh, a more dignified composition is admissible; and, in that case, the disadvantage of writing in a language different from that in which the author speaks or those around him converse, is not so sensibly felt.
It is somewhat surprising that the contributors to The Mirror should have found such a tortuous explanation necessary. Their own attempts at humour, particularly those of Lord Hailes and Henry Mankenzie, had been quite sufficient to disprove the alleged lack of the faculty, and their continued success in the humorous vein was absolute proof that this group of Scotch writers suffered from no such deficiency. Regarding this matter, Alexander Carlyle, himself a prospective contributor to the periodical, may be said to have had the last word:

I shall take this opportunity of correcting a mistake into which the English authors have fallen, in which they are supported by many of the Scotch writers, particularly by those of the Mirror, which is, that the people of Scotland have no humour. That this is a gross mistake, could be proved by innumerable songs, ballads, and stories that are prevalent in the south of Scotland, and by every person old enough to remember the times when the Scottish dialect was spoken in purity in the low country, and who have been at all conversant with the common people. Since we began to affect speaking a foreign language, which the English dialect is to us, humour, it must be confessed, is less apparent in conversation.

1. "Mr. Mirror, it was with great pleasure that I observed in one of your papers a side thrust against playing at cards on Sunday, which with many other modes of vice we have learned from the people on the continent, and which I am very sorry to see prevails much more amongst us now than it did twenty years ago when I left the country...I had heard before I returned to my native land that there was a great change with respect to the rigorous observation of the Sabbath, and I found it so on experience. A man may now shave himself on Sunday morning, and powder his hair and walk after church time, and even visit his neighbours without giving offence, which was very far from being the case in my youth. But I little dreamed that it would have been possible for Presbyterians to have so far lowered the ideal of morality of the Sabbath as to have played at cards on any part of that day...I am one of those who think it very wrong to shock the people with whom I live...I go to the parish church on Sunday lest the people should think me a heathen or an infidel, and I continue to say grace tho' it be left off as genteel by many of my neighbours." (This paper was found among the unpublished MSS. of Dr. Carlyle of Inveresk..."evidently intended to appear in the Mirror, purporting to be dated from Perthshire, April 1, 1779, by a gentleman recently returned from the continent." Graham: Social Life in Scotland, page 121, note.)

The ground of this pretension in the English to the monopoly of humour is their confounding two characters together that are quite different — the humorist and the man of humour. The humorist prevails more in England than in any country, because liberty has long been universal there, and wealth very general, which I hold to be the father and mother of the humorist. This mistake has been confirmed by the abject humour of the Scotch, who, till of late years, allowed John Bull, out of flattery, to possess every quality to which he pretended.

The last issue of The Mirror appeared on Saturday, 27 May, 1780, and, as has already been indicated, it was very shortly afterward issued in a collected edition of "three duodecimo volumes in which the names of most of the authors were disclosed; and so successful were the essays in this form that within a year Mackenzie could write to his class-mate Carmichael, American Charge d'Affairs in Spain, that by 2 December 1780 five editions had been required." It is said that this success enabled the members of the club not only to hand "one hundred pounds of the proceeds to the Orphan Hospital," but also, "to buy a hogshead of wine for their own use." "Of The Mirror there were at least thirteen British editions before 1813; there were early American editions in 1792 and in 1793; there have been at least nine editions since 1817."

After the lapse of five years, the Mirror Club ventured into print with their second periodical which appeared "every Saturday for 101 issues between 5 February 1785; and 6 January 1787. This time the Edinburgh

1. See pages 254 - 255, and notes, above.


public received the essays with enthusiasm, though critics were found to complain that The Lounger was less lively than its predecessor. "The pages devoted to criticism in The Lounger were much more numerous than those which were allotted to the same province in The Mirror; and to those Mr. Mackenzie had contributed a large portion." One of Mackenzie's critical papers, Lounger No. 97, the "Extraordinary Account of Robert Burns, the Ayrshire Ploughman; with Extracts from his Poems," was "the most famous essay" to appear in either publication. The Lounger went to six editions before 1804, and since that time there have been at least eight others.

Although it has been generally assumed that The Mirror surpassed The Lounger, there is at least one dissenting voice of authority. In his comparison of the two periodicals, Nathan Drake writes as follows:

The Lounger has been considered by some critics as inferior to its predecessor; this does not appear to me to be the case; it cannot, indeed, boast of a narrative so pathetic as that of La Roche, or

---


3. December 9, 1786.


6. "While it was running, complaints were heard that the Lounger did not come up to the standing of the Mirror, and that verdict has generally been approved since." (Couper: Edinburgh Periodical Press, page 29; Thomson: Scottish Man of Feeling, page 192.; and Nathan Drake: Essays... On Periodical Papers, Vol. 2, pages 384-385.)

Venoni, in the Mirror; but it does not yield in any other requisite, either of character, humour, moral instruction, or popular criticism. On the contrary, I think it may be easily proved, that a larger proportion of good papers is to be found in the pages of the Lounger. They have both, however, contributed very highly to the purposes of edification and amusement, to the best and noblest objects of the genuine periodical essay.

But it is probably unfair to judge the two periodicals separately, as they were the products of the same group of men. The members of the Mirror Club, who acted as "a staff" under the editorship of Henry Mackenzie, have been described as the "earliest approach to the modern organization" such as one finds in periodical publishing at the present day. The Club therefore, undoubtedly did much to promote the success of The Mirror and

1. "The story of La Roche, (Nos. 42, 43, and 44), and of Louisa Venoni, (Nos. 103 and 109), are related with great simplicity and effect; the style is clear, sweet, and unaffected; and the characters are sketched with so much delicacy and adherence to Nature, with touches so powerful in awakening the softer passions, that they have called forth the tears of thousands." (Nathan Drake: Essays...On Periodical Papers, Vol. 2, page 369.) As is well known, the hero of La Roche was David Hume. Mackenzie, who admired Hume for his "good nature and benevolence", wrote of this story as follows: "The sentiments which such good nature and benevolence might suggest, I ventured to embody, in a sort of dramatic form, in the story of La Roche in the Mirror, in which Mr. Hume is made to say 'That there were times when, recollecting that venerable pastor and his lively daughter, he forgot the pride of literary fame, and wished that he had never doubted.' It will not, I hope, be an offensive egotism, if I inform the Society, (i.e. The Royal Society to whom Mackenzie was reading the paper in which this extract appeared), that, when I wrote that story, being anxious there should not be a single expression in it that could give offence of uneasiness to any friend of Mr. Hume, I read it to Dr. Adam Smith, and begged that he would tell me if any thing should be left out or altered. He heard it attentively, and declared he did not find a syllable to object to; but added, with his characteristic absence of mind, that he was surprised he had never heard of the anecdote before." (Mackenzie: Life of John Home, page 21. See also, for the same story, Burton: Life of David Hume, Vol. 1, page 58.)


The Lounger. And the success of the papers has been almost universally recognized. William Crotch, the publisher of both papers, stated that they "met with much public approbation." Pinkerton, whose opinions are always interesting, if sometimes eccentric, judged The Mirror as being "superior to the Guardian, Tatler, Connoisseur," but inferior "to the World," and quotes "an high literary character" who declared it "the best book of the kind, save the Spectator." And Boswell reported that Johnson, who had received a copy of the collected Mirrors, "spoke well of it."

The American biographer of Henry Mackenzie, Harold W. Thompson, who has frequently stated that The Mirror and The Lounger contain "the best of Henry Mackenzie's writing," has claimed that the popularity of the papers was "chiefly due to Mackenzie's contributions." Thompson has also claimed for Mackenzie's essays and tales in The Mirror and Lounger, that although "the Scots no longer read them," they are "essential for a knowledge of sentimentalism; for an appreciation of the eighteenth-century essay, or for an appraisal of the Scottish nation in its Golden Age."

3. Ibid.
He also describes Mackenzie's *Lounger* No. 97, "The Extraordinary Account of Robert Burns, the Ayrshire Ploughman, etc.," as "the most important single Scottish review of the eighteenth century," and there is some reason for believing that this is no mere biographer's exaggeration.

In evaluation of Mackenzie's article on Robert Burns, one of Burns' earliest biographers, J. Currie, wrote as follows:

At the time when Burns arrived in Edinburgh, the periodical paper, entitled the *Lounger*, was publishing, every Saturday producing a successive number. His poems had attracted the notice of the gentlemen engaged in that undertaking, and the ninety-seventh number of those unequal, though frequently beautiful essays, is devoted to An Account of Robert Burns, the Ayrshire ploughman, with extracts from his poems, written by the elegant pen of Mr. Mackenzie. The *Lounger* had an extensive circulation among persons of taste and literature, not in Scotland only, but in various parts of England, to whose acquaintance therefore our bard was immediately introduced. The paper of Mr. Mackenzie was calculated to introduce him advantageously. The extracts are well selected; the criticisms and reflections are judicious, as well as generous; and in the style and sentiments there is that happy delicacy, by which the writings of the author are so eminently distinguished. The extracts from Burn's


2. "It will ever be remembered to the credit of the *Lounger* and Mackenzie, that the paper contained one of the earliest and most appreciative notices of Burn's poems – December 9, 1788. 'It speaks volumes for the amiable author of the *Man of Feeling*,' says Prof. Saintsbury, 'that in the very periodical where he was wont to air his mild Addisonian hobbies he should have warmly commended the Ayrshire ploughman.' Burns himself was greatly delighted with the review, as well he might be, for it was a pronouncement in his favour by the then highest literary tribunal in the country." (Couper: *Edinburgh Periodical Press*, Vol. 2, page 175.) "The *Lounger* having an extensive circulation among persons of taste and literature, and being much regarded for the weight of its decisions, Burns could not have had a more favourable introduction to the notice of the world," (Lives of Eminent Scotsmen, Vol. 1, page 171.) "By this alone the fame of Burns was at once perfected in Scotland, for, by the pronouncement of the greatest tribunal in the country, all lesser judges were set free to give their judgment in the direction which their feelings had already dictated." (Chambers: *Works of Burns*, Vol. 2, page 18.) "It may be said with some truth, that this production of the *Man of Feeling* proved the means of deciding the fate, and probably the fame, of the bard." (Kay: *Portraits*, Vol. 2, part 2, page 303.)

poems in the ninety-seventh number of the *Lounger*, were copied into
the London as well as into many of the provincial papers, and the
fame of our bard spread throughout the island.

During the period which separated the publication of The *Mirror* and
*The Lounger*, the subject of Mackenzie's review, Robert Burns, was involved
in a debating and discussion club of his own. This club, which has re-
cently been revived, was the Bachelor's Club of Tarbolton. It is said
that the Bachelor's Club was organized by Burns "about the end of the year
1780." Burns, who was following the example of a previous debating club
which had been established in Ayr, was joined in his attempt by "his
brother and five other young peasants of the neighbourhood." The declared
objects of the Bachelor's Club were to afford relaxation after toil,
"to promote sociality and friendship, and to improve the mind." The club
held regular meetings until the autumn of 1782, at which time a minute book
was purchased and a short account of the proceedings of the society up to
that time were recorded, and the rules and regulations, provided by Robert
Burns, were entered. These records read as follows:--

History of the Rise, Proceedings, and Regulations
of the Bachelor's Club.


2. Nothing is known of this club.


1, page 49 f.

Of birth or blood we do not boast,
Nor gentry does our club afford;
But ploughmen and mechanics we
In Nature's simple dress record.

As the great end of human society is to become wiser and better, this ought therefore to be the principal view of every man in every station of life. But as experience has taught us, that such studies as inform the head and mend the heart, when long continued, are apt to exhaust the faculties of the mind, it has been found proper to relieve and unbend the mind by some employment or another, that may be agreeable enough to keep its powers in exercise, but at the same time not so serious as to exhaust them. But, superadded to this, by far the greater part of mankind are under the necessity of earning the sustenance of human life by the labour of their bodies, whereby, not only the faculties of the mind, but the nerves and sinews of the body, are so fatigued, that it is absolutely necessary to have recourse to some amusement or diversion, to relieve the wearied man, worn down with the necessary labours of life.

As the best of things, however, have been perverted to the worst of purposes, so, under the pretence of amusement and diversion, men have plunged into all the madness of riot and dissipation; and, instead of attending to the grand design of human life, they have begun with extravagance and folly, and ended with guilt and wretchedness. Impressed with these considerations, we, the following lads in the parish of Tarbolton, viz. Hugh Reid, Robert Burns, Gilbert Burns, Alexander Brown, Walter Mitchel, Thomas Wright, and William McGavin, resolved, for our mutual entertainment, to unite ourselves into a club or society, under such rules and regulations, that while we should forget our cares and labours in mirth and diversion, we might not transgress the bounds of innocence and decorum; and after agreeing on these, and some other regulations, we held our first meeting at Tarbolton, in the house of John Richard, upon the evening of the 11th of November, 1780, commonly called Hallowe'en, and after choosing Robert Burns president for the night, we proceeded to debate on this question — "Suppose a young man, bred a farmer, but without any fortune, has it in his power to marry either of two women, the one a girl of large fortune, but neither handsome in person, nor agreeable in conversation, but who can manage the household affairs of a farm well enough; the other of them a girl every way agreeable in person, conversation, and behaviour, but without any fortune; — which of them shall he choose?" — Finding ourselves very happy in our society, we resolved to continue to meet once a month in the same house, in the way and manner proposed, and shortly thereafter we chose Robert Ritchie for another member. In May, 1781, we brought in David Sillar, and in June, Adam Jamaison, as members. About the beginning of the year 1782, we admitted Matthew Patterson and John Orr, and in June following we chose James Patterson as a proper brother for such a society. The club being thus increased, we resolved to meet at Tarbolton on the race-night, the July following, and have a dance in honour of our society. Accordingly we did meet, each one with a partner, and spent the evening in such innocence and merriment, such
cheerfulness and good humour, that every brother will long remember it with pleasure and delight.

Rules and Regulations to be Observed in the Bachelor's Club.

1st. The club shall meet at Tarbolton every fourth Monday night, when a question on any subject shall be proposed, disputed points of religion only excepted, in the manner hereafter directed; which question is to be debated in the club, each member taking whatever side he thinks proper.

2d. When the club is met, the president, or, he failing, some one of the members till he come, shall take his seat; then the other members shall seat themselves, those who are for one side of the question, on the president's right hand; and those who are for the other side, on his left; which of them shall have the right hand is to be determined by the president. The president and four of the members, being present, shall have power to transact any ordinary part of the society's business.

3d. The club met and seated, the president shall read the question out of the club's book of records, (which book is always to be kept by the president) then the two members nearest the president shall cast lots who of them shall speak first and according as the lot shall determine, the member nearest the president on that side shall deliver his opinion, and the member nearest on the other side shall reply to him; then the second member of the side shall reply to him; then the second member of the side that spoke first; then the second member of the side that spoke second; and so on to the end of the company; but if there be fewer members on one side than on the other, when all the members of the least side have spoken according to their places, any of them, as they please among themselves, may reply to the remaining members of the opposite side: when both sides have spoken, the president shall give his opinion, after which they may go over it a second or more times, and so continue the question.

4th. The club shall then proceed to the choice of a question for the subject of next night's meeting. The president shall first propose one, and any other member who chooses may propose more questions; and whatever one of them is most agreeable to the majority of the members, shall be the subject of debate next club-night.

5th. The club shall, lastly, elect a new president for the next meeting; the president shall name one, then any of the club may name another, and whoever of them has the majority of votes shall be duly elected; allowing the president the first vote, and the casting vote upon a par, but none other. Then after a general
toast to the mistresses of the club, they shall dismiss.

6th. There shall be no private conversation carried on during the time of debate, nor shall any member interrupt another while he is speaking, under the penalty of a reprimand from the president for the first fault, doubling his share of the reckoning for the second, trebling it for the third, and so on in proportion for every other fault, provided always however that any member may speak at any time after leave asked, and given by the president. All swearing and profane language, and particularly all obscene and indecent conversation, is strictly prohibited, under the same penalty as aforesaid in the first clause of this article.

7th. No member, on any pretence whatever, shall mention any of the club's affairs to any other person but a brother member, under the pain of being excluded; and particularly if any member shall reveal any of the speeches or affairs of the club, with a view to ridicule or laugh at any of the rest of the members, he shall be for ever excommunicated from the society; and the rest of the members are desired, as much as possible, to avoid, and have no communication with him as a friend or comrade.

8th. Every member shall attend at the meetings, without he can give a proper excuse for not attending; and it is desired that every one who cannot attend, will send his excuse with some other member; and he who shall be absent three meetings without sending such excuse, shall be summoned to the next club night, when, if he fail to appear, or send an excuse, he shall be excluded.

9th. The club shall not consist of more than sixteen members, all bachelors, belonging to the parish of Tarbolton; except a brother member marry, and in that case he may be continued, if the majority of the club think proper. No person shall be admitted a member of this society, without the unanimous consent of the club; and any member may withdraw from the club altogether, by giving notice to the president in writing of his departure.

10th. Every man proper for a member of this society, must have a frank, honest, open heart; above any thing dirty or mean; and must be a professed lover of one or more of the female sex. No haughty, self-conceited person, who looks upon himself as superior to the rest of the club, and especially no mean-spirited, worldly mortal, whose only will is to heap up money, shall upon any pretence whatever be admitted. In short, the proper person for this society is, a cheerful, honest-hearted lad, who, if he has a friend that is true, and a mistress that is kind, and as much wealth as gently to make both ends meet — is just as happy as this world can make him.

From detached memoranda which Burns made on the "imprudent" side of the
question, it is known that he prepared in advance for his part in the debate on the question proposed for the first meeting held on Hallowe'en of 1780. In addition, Burns' biographer, Currie, gives the following as "further specimens of the questions debated in the society at Tarbolton":

1. Whether do we derive more happiness from love or friendship?
2. Whether between friends, who have no reason to doubt each other's friendship, there should be any reserve?
3. Whether is the savage man, or the peasant of a civilized country, in the most happy situation?
4. Whether is a young man of the lower ranks of life likeliest to be happy, who has got a good education, and his mind well informed, or he who has just the education and information of those around him?

After Burns had removed from Tarbolton to Mauchline, in 1784, the Bachelor's Club of Tarbolton survived for several years, but was eventually dissolved as a result of some disagreement among its members. In Mauchline, the two brothers, Robert and Gilbert, organized a second society similar to the first. Little is known of it other than that it was composed "chiefly of sons of farmers, a description of persons, in the opinion of (the) poet, more agreeable in their manner, more virtuous in their conduct, and more susceptible of improvement, than the self-sufficient mechanics of the country-towns." In the new society, fines for non-attendance, which at Tarbolton had been used to "enlarge their scanty potations", at Mauchline were devoted to the purchase of books, and the "first work procured in this

---

1. Currie: Life and Works of Burns, Vol. 1, page 118. For a description of this meeting see page 266, above.
manner was *The Mirror*, the separate numbers of which were at that time recently collected and published in volumes. After it, followed a number of other works, chiefly of the same nature, and among these *The Lounger*.

It is said that Burns had a very favourable opinion of Mackenzie's review of his work, and this may account in part for his interest in and his enthusiastic approval of these periodicals. Robert Burns, however, was not the only member of the club who was an admirer of the literary productions of the Mirror Club. The following letter, from the pen of Robert's brother Gilbert, was in reply to a criticism of Currie's that though *The Mirror* and *The Lounger* were "works of great merit," in his opinion, the young peasants would have been better employed with the "Penmanship of Butterworth, and the Arithmetic of Cocker":

Dinning, Dumfries-shire, 24th October, 1800.

Sir, I do not mean to controvert your criticism of my favourite books the *Mirror* and *Lounger*, although I understand there are people who think themselves judges, who do not agree with you. The acquisition of knowledge, except what is connected with human life and conduct, or the particular business of his employment, does not appear to me to be the fittest pursuit for a peasant. I would say with the poet,


3. Burns to Mrs. Dunlop, from Ellisland, 10th April, 1790. "You must know that I have just met with the *Mirror* and *Lounger* for the first time, and I am quite in raptures with them; I should be glad to have your opinion of some of the papers. The one I have just read, *Lounger* No. 61, has cost me more honest tears than any thing I have read for a long time. M'kenzie has been called the Addison of the Scots; and, in my opinion, Addison would not be hurt by the comparison. If he has not Addison's exquisite humour, he as certainly outdoes him in the tender and the pathetic." (Currie: *Life and Works of Burns*, Vol. 2, page 310 f.)

"How empty learning, and how vain is art,
Save where it guides the life, or mends the heart!"

There seems to be a considerable latitude in the use of the word taste. I understand it to be the perception and relish of beauty, order, or any other thing, the contemplation of which gives pleasure and delight to the mind. I suppose it is in this sense you wish it to be understood. If I am right, the taste which these books are calculated to cultivate, (besides the taste for fine writing, which many of the papers tend to improve and to gratify) is what is proper, consistent, and becoming in human character and conduct, as almost every paper relates to these subjects.

I am sorry I have not these books by me, that I might point out some instances. I remember two; one, the beautiful story of La Roch., where, beside the pleasure one derives from a beautiful simple story told in M'Kenzie's happiest manner, the mind is led to taste, with heart-felt rapture, the consolation to be derived in deep affliction, from habitual devotion and trust in Almighty God. The other, the story of General W., where the reader is led to have a high relish for that firmness of mind which disregards appearances, the common forms and vanities of life, for the sake of doing justice in a case which was out of the reach of human laws.

Allow me then to remark, that if the morality of these books is subordinate to the cultivation of taste; that taste, that refinement of mind and delicacy of sentiment which they are intended to give, are the strongest guard and surest foundation of morality and virtue. Other moralists guard, as it were, the overt act; these papers, by exalting duty into sentiment, are calculated to make every deviation rectitude and propriety of conduct, painful to the mind.

"Whose temper'd powers,
Refine at length, and every passion wears
A chaster, milder, more attractive mien."

I readily grant you that the refinement of mind which I contend for, increases our sensibility to the evils of life; but what station of life is without its evils! There seems to be no such thing as perfect happiness in this world, and we must balance the pleasure and the pain which we derive from taste, before we can properly appreciate it in the case before us. I apprehend that on a minute examination it will appear, that the evils peculiar to the lower ranks of life, derive their power to wound us, more from the suggestions of false pride, and the "contagion of luxury weak and vile," than the refinement of our taste. It was a favourite remark of my brother's, that there was no part of the constitution of our nature, to which we were more indebted, than that by which "custom makes things familiar and easy," (a copy Mr. Murdock used to set us to write) and there is little labour which custom will not make easy to a man in health, if he is not ashamed of his employment, or does not begin to compare his situation with
those he may see going about at their ease.

But the man of enlarged mind feels the respect due to him as a man; he has learned that no employment is dishonorable in itself; that while he performs aright the duties of that station in which God has placed him, he is as great as a king in the eyes of Him whom he is principally desirous to please; for the man of taste, who is constantly obliged to labour, must of necessity be religious. If you teach him only to reason, you may make him an atheist, a demagogue, or any vile thing; but if you teach him to feel, his feelings can only find their proper and natural relief in devotion and religious resignation. He knows that those people who are to appearance at ease, are not without their share of evils, and that even toil itself is not destitute of advantages.

There is a curious fragment remaining from Burns' Mauchline Club days, which, it has been conjectured, was written by the poet as an announcement of his new production, "Holy Willie's Prayer." This document reads as follows:

In the Name of the Nine. Amen.

We, Robert Burns, by virtue of a Warrant from Nature, bearing date the Twenty-fifth day of January, Anno Domini one thousand seven hundred and fifty-nine, (His birthday,) Poet-Laureat and Bard in Chief in and over the Districts and Countries of Kyle, Cunningham, and Carrick, of old extent, To our trusty and well-beloved William Chalmers and John M'Adam, Students and Practitioners in the ancient and mysterious Science of Confounding Right and Wrong.

Right Trusty, Be it known unto you, That whereas, in the course of our care and watchings over the Order and Police of all and sundry the Manufactures, Retainers, and Venders of Poesy; Bards, Poets, Poetasters, Rnyers, Jinglers, Songsters, Ballad-singers, Etc., Etc., Etc., Etc., male and female — We have discovered a certain ...., nefarious, abominable, and wicked Song or Ballad, a copy whereof We have here inclosed; Our Will therefore Is, that Ye pitch upon and appoint the most execrable Individual of that most execrable Species, known by the appellation, phrase, and nickname of The Deil's Yell Nowte: (Old Bachelors.), and, after having caused him to kindle a fire at the Cross of ayr, ye shall, at noontide of the day, put into the said wretch's merciless hands the said copy of the said nefarious and wicked Song to be consumed by fire in the presence of all Beholders, in abhorrence of, and terrorem to, all such Compositions and Composers. And this


2. Ibid.
in no wise leave ye undone, but have it executed in every point as this Our Mandate bears, before the twenty-fourth current, when in Person We hope to applaud your faithfulness and seal.

Given at Mauchline, this twentieth day of November, Anno Domini one thousand seven hundred and eighty-six.

God Save The Bard!

The effect on Burns of his participation in the Bachelor’s Clubs of Tarbolton and Mauchline has been described as follows:

Whether in the humble societies of which he was a member, Burns acquired much direct information, may be questioned. It cannot, however, be doubted, that, by collision, the faculties of his mind would be excited, that by practice, his habits of enunciation would be established, and thus we have some explanation of that early command of words and of expression which enabled him to pour forth his thoughts in language not unworthy of his genius, and which, of all his endowments, seemed, on his appearance in Edinburgh, the most extraordinary. For associations of a literary nature, our poet acquired a considerable relish;

These observations have been confirmed by no less a person than Professor Dugald Stewart of the University of Edinburgh. In a letter to Currie, who was preparing his biography of Burns, Stewart wrote:

I was led by curiosity to attend for an hour or two a Mason-Lodge in Mauchline, where Burns presided. (This was in the summer of 1787.) He had occasion to make some short unpremeditated compliments to different individuals from whom he had no reason to expect a visit, and every thing he said was happily conceived, and forcibly as well as fluently expressed. If I am not mistaken, he told me, that in that village, before going to Edinburgh, he had belonged to a small club of such of the inhabitants as had a taste for books, when they used to converse and debate on any interesting questions that occurred to them in the course of their reading. His manner of speaking in public had evidently the marks of some practice in extempore elocution.

Burns' "considerable relish" for literary associations, and the "taste for books" which he shared with his companions of the two debating clubs he

had established was by no means a rare thing in Scotland at that period. His brother Gilbert, whom we already know to be sympathetic with his literary tastes, expressed a desire, in the letter quoted above, to "have established in every parish a small circulating library, consisting of the books which the young people had read extracts from in the collections they had read at school, and any other books well calculated to refine the mind, improve the moral feelings, recommend the practice of virtue, and communicate such knowledge as might be useful and suitable to the labouring classes of men."

Attempts to establish such libraries had long been afoot in Scotland. In 1764, an eight-page pamphlet was issued in Aberdeen which contained the following proposals for establishing a society for the purpose of establishing a public library in that city:

As men of all ranks and professions in the present age have frequent recourse to books for their instruction or amusement, and most men can purchase but a very inconsiderable part of the books which they desire to peruse, public libraries have been established by subscription in most considerable towns where there is any desire of knowledge and improvement. And this indeed seems to be the only expedient whereby the benefits of the many valuable improvements which have lately been made and are daily making in various parts of Europe, can be quickly diffused, and the thirst of knowledge can be satisfied at a moderate expense. The principles of all the arts as well as of the sciences and learned professions have in this age been explained and published to the world in books. And in a public library properly furnished, not only the architect, the ship-builder, and the farmer, but even the tallow-chandler, and pen-maker, may find the latest improvements that have been made in his profession.

1. See page 271 f., above.
3. "The...remarkable proposal, reprinted from an eight-page pamphlet, dated 4th May, 1764, was the work of Professor William Ogilive. His theories on the land question are now known to have anticipated Mr. Henry George, and in this proposal as to public libraries he also anticipated Mr. Andrew Carnegie." (Scottish Notes and Queries, Vol. 3, October, 1889, page 67.)
A public library cannot answer these valuable purposes, without a considerable annual fund for the purchase of books, nor is it less necessary that the fund should be laid out with the best judgment for the general benefit of those entitled to the use of the books. The libraries for the public, are extremely deficient in both these respects.

For, first, the annual funds belonging to them are very inconsiderable, and in nowise adequate to the purposes of a public library. And it may be expected that those small funds will always be applied according to the humour and taste of academical professors, rather than for the general benefit of readers.

Several gentlemen in and about Aberdeen, moved by these considerations, are desirous to give a beginning to a work of so great public utility, have for some months bygone resolved to form a society at Aberdeen, for establishing a public library, for the benefit of those who now choose to enter, or hereafter shall choose to enter into this society, under the following regulations:

1. Every member shall signify his design of entering into this society, to Mr. William Ogilvie, Professor of Philosophy in King's College, two weeks before the first general meeting of the society. And shall pay half-a-guinea yearly, while he chooses to continue a member, or three guineas if he chooses to enter for life, to the said Mr. William Ogilvie, or the secretary of the society for the time, before the general meeting at which he enters. Every member shall likewise at his entry, promise that he will observe and keep the orders of this society while he continues a member thereof, and that he will faithfully, according to his skill and ability, discharge any office or trust committed to him by the society, according to the rules thereof.

2. The society shall meet twice every year, upon the 20th of June and December, or the first lawful day thereafter, at three of the clock in the afternoon; the first meeting being upon the 20th of June next, in the common hall of Marischal College, and the subsequent meetings in the common hall either of the King's or of Marischal College, as the society shall appoint, for ever after. The principal of the college where the meeting is held, being a member of the society, shall be president of the meeting. The annual payments of the first year shall be laid out for books to be deposited in the library of King's College, the annual payments of the second year for books to be deposited in the library of Marischal College, and so alternately ever after. And the payments for life shall go half to one library, and half to the other.

3. The society shall every year at their meeting in June, choose by ballot, four committees of their number, each committee consisting of three members, viz:- one committee for divinity, moral-philosophy, oriental learning, and ecclesiastical history; one committee
for medicine, natural philosophy, natural history, mathematics and the mechanical arts. One for law, politics, commerce, and agriculture; and one for civil history and the fine arts. Every member according to his order in the roll, shall put into a box his list for the committees upon a piece of paper rolled up. And the lists being examined and the votes numbered by the president and secretary; he who has most votes in the committee for divinity, shall be president of that committee, and have power to call a meeting of the same when he thinks fit. He who has the greatest number of votes after the president, shall be the second member; and he who has the greatest number of votes after the second member, shall be the third member for that committee. And the same is to be understood of all the other committees. After the first year, he that was second member of a committee shall of course be president of that committee the following year; and the third member shall be second. So that, the society shall only choose a third member into each committee. But if any member shall move for an entire new election of committees, it shall be determined by the ballot of the society, whether there shall be an entire new election, or whether a third member only shall be chosen into each committee.

4. These committees shall meet by themselves, for four months after their election, at least once a month, in one or other of the public libraries, and shall each of them make up a list of such books in their several professions as they judge most needful to be bought, at least such a number of such books as can be purchased with the fund for that year. Any of the committees may put into their list such books as do not immediately fall under any of the professions above-mentioned. They shall likewise, with each book, set down the price at which it may be bought, according to the best of their knowledge, and the edition which they choose to have. Any member of the society may attend any of the meetings of the said committees, and give his advice and assistance, if desired. Each committee shall fairly write out and subscribe two copies of their list, and shall give one subscribed copy to each library-keeper, before the expiration of four months after their election. If any member of a committee dissent from the rest, he shall give in a separate subscribed list as aforesaid, and every committee or dissenting member of a committee failing to give in such a list as aforesaid, shall forfeit five shillings, to be added to the annual fund for that year. The library-keepers shall keep the subscribed lists for the purpose after-mentioned, and shall also record all the books contained in them in a catalogue to be kept in each of the libraries for that purpose. After the first year, such books only are to be recorded as have not been recorded before, and those which have been recorded and bought, shall be marked in the catalogue with an asterisk or some proper mark.

5. The four committees shall, at the expiration of four months, be divided into three colleges; the first college consisting of the four presidents; the second of the four second members; and the
third of the four third members. The members of the committee for
divinity, being presidents of their several colleges, shall have
power to call them when they see cause. Each of these colleges,
shall meet by themselves, at least once a fortnight, for six weeks
after their division into colleges, in one or other of the libraries,
and having the foresaid subscribed lists laid before them (of which
every member may have a copy) shall from them all make up a list of
as many books, in the several professions, as can be purchased with
the society's fund for that year. Which list shall be subscribed
and given to the secretary of the society before the expiration of
the said six weeks, that any member of the society may have a copy
of these lists before the next general meeting. If the lists of the
three colleges agree, that shall be the list of books to be purchased
that year, and if they differ it shall be balloted at next general
meeting, which of the three shall be the list for that year. And
the list for the year being determined, the president of the society,
with the presidents of the several committees, shall forw th pur-
chase the said books, and have them put up in the library in which
they are to be deposited before the expiration of the year. The
books belonging to the society shall in each library be put in a
place by themselves, and a distinct catalogue shall be kept of them,
and they shall be lent only to members of the society, under such
regulations as the society shall appoint.

5. The president of the society, and the twelve members of the committees
for the time, shall be the council of the society, and may be called
together by the president, either of his own proper motion, or at
the desire of any of the other presidents, or of any three members
of the council. All proposals made for the better regulation of
this society, and promoting the end thereof, shall first be laid
before the council, and debated by them. Any member of the society
may propose any matter to the council, or attend any of the meetings
thereof. And what is resolved by the majority of the council shall
be laid before the next general meeting of the society, with the
reasons thereof, and shall be determined either in the affirmative
or negative by the ballot of the society.

7. The subscription of those who enter into the society for life after
the first five years, may be raised above three guineas, and made
more adequate to the annual subscription, as the society shall think
proper.

8. Any member of the society may give in to any of the committees a
list of such books as he would incline to have bought, and the
committees in their choice of books, shall have a regard to the
lists given in by members, as far as the fund will admit.

9. If any person, shall make a donation of books to this society, to
the value of ten pounds, he shall be for life, not only a member
of the society, but likewise an extraordinary member of any com-
mittee which he chooses.
This plan having been laid before both colleges, and their concurrence having been desired, in allowing the use of their public halls for the meetings of this society, and in having the books purchased by this society kept in their public libraries, and lent out only to members of the society, according to such rules as the society from time to time shall establish; that so the whole fund of the society may be applied to the purchasing of books: the masters of both colleges have unanimously granted this desire, and authorised the publication of these proposals.

These proposals, however, were not put into effect, and although Aberdeen had a circulating library of "several thousand volumes" in 1780, a public library, in the ordinary sense, was not established there until the beginning of the nineteenth century.

In other localities, the attempts, though not begun as early as those in Aberdeen, were further advanced by this period, (i.e. 1770 – 1800). Many of the earlier attempts amounted to nothing more than the clubbing together of a number of individuals to purchase the current periodicals and pamphlets issuing from the presses of London and Edinburgh. In 1770, David Hume wrote to William Strahan, "I am of a Club here that get down newspapers and Pamphlets from London regularly: so that you wont need to send me the Chronicle any more." The interesting, and perhaps the most significant, thing was that this device for obtaining current publications was not confined to men of Hume's class. With the political and Intel-

3. The wool traders of the Edinburgh Lawnmarket had a news club which has been described as "a dram-drinking, news-mongering, facetious set of citizens, who met every morn about seven o'clock, and after proceeding to the post-office to ascertain the news (when the mail arrived), generally adjourned to a public-house and refreshed themselves with a libation of brandy." (Grant: Old and New Edinburgh, Vol. 1, page 122, and page 94; see also Wilson: Memorial of Edinburgh in the Olden Times, Vol. 1, page 204.) In Glasgow, "when the Edinburgh post arrived with the London News, as it did at five
lectual ferment which was engendered by the spectacular events in America and later in France, interest in foreign affairs was greatly heightened among all classes in Scotland. The results of this interest in the revolutionary ideas which then shone so brightly and so new has been very ably described by Scotland's Historiographer Royal, Dr. Henry W. Meikle, as follows:

Although the standard of teaching degenerated during the latter half of the century, a school was yet to be found in nearly every parish, and such schools were supplemented in many cases by those of the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge. Ability to read and write was thus comparatively widespread, and was remarked by foreign visitors. Towards the close of the century there arose a demand for libraries, and reading clubs were formed. Even in country districts debating societies were not unknown. In manufacturing towns and the larger villages the mill was beginning to provide a natural means of social union for discussion, and quicker methods left the home working weaver free to devote some time to public affairs. The desire for newspapers testified to this new interest. "Although the parish consists wholly of the poorer ranks of society" wrote the minister of Auchterderran in 1790, "newspapers are very generally read and attended to, and the desire for them increases." ... The secular spirit, always associated with material prosperity, was beginning to affect the lower, as it had already affected the higher ranks of society; and the same acuteness which the former had displayed in religious controversy was now to be transferred to political discussion. The year 1792 was to show how far the writings of Paine had replaced Boston's Crook in the Lot, the Fourfold State, and Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress as the favourite reading of a large section of the Scottish people.

The miners in the lead-mines of the Earl of Hopetown, at Leadhills, where it is said the father of Allan Ramsay the poet worked, and where young Allan is supposed to have been a washer of ore, had "a common library, supported by contributions, containing several thousand volumes."

In the parish of Little Dunkeld, it was reported, in Sinclair's Statistical Account, that "newspapers and other periodical publications find their way to every corner of the parish. And several clubs have been formed, who purchase the Statistical Account of Scotland...." From the same source, we learn that in the parish of Banff, in 1798, a "book society" was formed, "on liberal plan, to consist of twenty gentlemen." The Statistical Account also contains an interesting letter from Robert Burns, who, at the request of Robert Riddell Esq., of Glenriddell, had undertaken the management of a small library for the district:

Robert Riddell, Esq., of Glenriddell, to Sir John Sinclair, Bart.

Sir John,

I enclose you a letter, wrote by Mr. Burns, as an addition to the account of Dunscore parish. It contains an account of a small library, which he was so good, (at my desire) as to set on foot, in the barony of Monklands, or Friar's Carse, in this parish. As its utility has been felt, particularly among the younger class of people, I think, that if a similar plan were established, in the different parishes, in Scotland, it would tend greatly to the

---


speedy improvement of the tenantry, trades people, and work people. Mr. Burns was so good as to take the whole charge of this small concern. He was treasurer, librarian, and censor to this little society, who will long have a grateful sense of his public spirit, and exertions for their improvement and information.

I have the honour to be, Sir John, Yours most sincerely, Rob Riddell.

To Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster, Bart.

Sir,
The following circumstance has, I believe, been omitted in the Statistical Account, transmitted to you, of the parish of Dunscore, in Nithsdale. I beg leave to send it you, because it is new, and may be useful. How far it is deserving of a place in your patriotic publication, you are the best judge.

To store the minds of the lower classes with useful knowledge, is certainly of very great consequence, both to them as individuals, and to society at large. Giving them a turn for reading and reflection, is giving them a source of innocent and laudable amusement; and besides, raises them to a more dignified degree in the scale of rationality. Impressed with this idea, a gentleman in this parish, Robert Riddell, Esq., of Glenriddell, set on foot a species of circulating library, on a plan so simple, as to be practicable in any corner of the country; and so useful, as to deserve the notice of every country gentleman, who thinks the improvement of that part of his own species, whom chance has thrown into the humble walks of the peasant and the artisan, a matter worthy of his attention.

Mr. Riddell got a number of his own tenants, and farming neighbours, to form themselves into a society, for the purpose of having a library among themselves. They entered into a legal engagement, to abide by it for 3 years; with a saving clause or two, in cases of removal to a distance, or of death. Each member, at his entry, paid five shillings; and at each of their meetings which were held every fourth Saturday, sixpence more. With their entry money, and the credit which they took on the faith of their future funds, they laid in a tolerable stock of books at the commencement. What authors they were to purchase, was always to be decided by the majority. At every meeting, all the books, under certain fines and forfeitures, by way of penalty, were to be produced; and the members had their choice of the volumes in rotation. He whose name stood, for that night, first on the list, had his choice of what volume he pleased in the whole collection; the second had his choice after the first, the third after the second, and so to the last. At next meeting, he who had been first on the list at the preceding meeting, was last at this; he who had been second was first; and so on, through the whole three years. At the expiration of the engagement, the books were sold by auction, but only among the members themselves; and each man had his share of the common stock, in money or in books, as he chose to be a purchaser or not.
At the breaking up of this little society, which was formed under Mr. Riddell's patronage, what with benefactions of books from him, and what with their own purchases, they had collected together upwards of 150 volumes. It will be guessed, that a good deal of trash would be bought. Among the books, however, of this little library, were Blair's Sermons, Robertson's History of Scotland, Hume's History of the Stewarts, the Spectator, Idler, Adventurer, Mirror, Lounger, Observer, Man of Feeling, Man of the World, Chrysal, Don Quixote, Joseph Andrews, etc. A peasant who can read, and enjoy such books, is certainly a much superior being to his neighbour, who, perhaps, stalks beside his team, very little removed, except in shape, from the brutes he drives.

Wishing your patriotic exertions their so much merited success,
I am, Sir, Your humble servant,

A Peasant

Robert Burns apparently took his duties as secretary to the book society seriously, for on the second of March, 1790, he sent to Mr. Peter Hill, an Edinburgh bookseller, the following order for books:

To Mr. Peter Hill. Ellisland, 2nd. March, 1790.

At a late meeting of the Monkland Friendly Society, it was resolved to augment their library by the following books, which you are to send us as soon as possible: - The Mirror, The Lounger, Man of Feeling, Man of the World (these, for my own sake, I wish to have by the first carrier); Knox's History of the Reformation; Rae's History of the Rebellion of 1715; and a good History of the Rebellion in 1745; A Display of the Secession Act and Testimony by Mr. Gib; Harvey's Meditations; Beveridge's Thoughts; and another copy of Watson's Body of Divinity. This last heavy performance is so much admired by many of our members, that they will not be content with one copy...

R. B.

In view of the explosive nature of some of the literature which the revolutionary temper of the time was producing, it was inevitable that the greater distribution of reading matter which has been described, should lead occasionally to awkward situations. It is not unknown today for certain works of a particular social or political virulence to disappear under the counter of a cautious public librarian. In much the same way,

the Public Library of Greenock, established in 1783, provoked young John Galt to a heated protest. In his *Autobiography*, Galt gives his version of the incident as follows:

During the French Revolution, when party spirit ran high, the committee who had the management partook of the excitement, and, at their suggestion, at a public meeting, the library was purged in some degree of the tainted authors: namely, Holcroft, Godwin, etc., and the books were transferred from the library-room to the custody of Mr. John Dunlop, the grandfather of my friend the Doctor. From this unheard-of proceeding in a Protestant land, great wrath was nursed in the bosoms of the young men connected with the library: mine was inflamed prodigiously, and I never spoke of Mr. Dunlop by any other name than the Khaliph Omer.... But to return to the library, to which I will ever consider myself as greatly indebted.

The fracas of banishing "the pestiferous books" had the effect, as might be expected, of bringing them into notice, and Godwin's *Political Justice* attracted my attention; in consequence, I read it....

But the Public Library of Greenock was not the only source of young Galt's intellectual nurture. In 1797, his friend William Spence was the instigator of a small literary society in which Galt took an active part. Galt's description of the society, which follows, tells all that is known about this organization:

During this period, (i.e. 1797), some half a dozen or fewer of my companions formed a monthly society, at the instigation of William Spence. We read all sorts of essays about every sort of subject, from the "cedar tree that is on Lebanon to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall", and afterwards discussed philosophical topics, and then had a supper. But we were not so wise when we broke up, which was after midnight, as when the sederunt commenced at seven o'clock. I was the youngest member, and certainly not the best writer; both

---


Spence and Park were superior; but it is curious to observe how early innate character begins to manifest itself. The essays of William Spence were very astronomical, we thought them profound; they were all about planets and comets, the cosmogony of the earth, the infinite divisibility of matter, and the boundless nature of primordial space; any thing of this world was too gross to enter into his speculative theories.

Park's essays were different; they inculcated propriety and prudence as virtues above all laud, and when ill health afterwards weakened his energies, no man could conduct himself with such a judicious estimate of the effect of his character.

My essays were rigmarole things; with the single exception of an allegory on Indolence and Industry, they were the most shocking affairs that ever issued from a pen. Yet crude as were the studies and the lucubrations of this society, it lasted several years, and undoubtedly had an important influence on the development, if not the formation of the minds of the members. At this day, I must claim for it the merit of having been very wisely conducted, especially when it is considered that it was composed of striplings, and some of them in after life distinguished for the ardour of their minds.

Besides the mental occupation which the library generated and the society stimulated, we began at this period to take a decided predilection for literature. Spence, with his mathematics and music, maintained a mystical predominance; Park and I were addicted to belles lettres and poetry. He was nearly a year older than me, and on my seventeenth birthday presented me with a congratulatory ode, which was as commonplace as any ditty in a young lady's album.

"The assembly lasted for several years; and as the meetings were held once a (month), were doubtless of some use, not only in stimulating to research, but in developing intellectual powers which might otherwise have remained latent."

---

1. Biographical Memoir prefixed to John Galt's Annals of the Parish, page viii. As much as I agree with the sentiment expressed in the quotation I have used above, I must point out that its author was lamentably inaccurate. He not only described the society's meetings as being weekly affairs, (Galt says, in his Autobiography, that it was a "monthly society"), but he states, directly in the teeth of Galt's own testimony to the contrary, (Autobiography, Vol. 1, page 42), that "Galt steered clear of the contamination of those pestilential writers Godwin, Walstonecroft, Holcroft, and Thelwall." The only conclusion that can be drawn from this is that he had never read the Autobiography.
During the same period that the Pantheon, the Speculative Society of Dundee, and the Canongate Debating Society were offering their debates as a form of public amusement, and the provincial clubs were no longer restricted to the aristocracy, the gentry, or the literati, there were further signs that a gradual breaking away from the classical type of eighteenth-century literary society had begun. There is evidence of this breaking away, for example, in the number of newly-organized unincorporated societies which were devoted to the pursuit of a single art or science. This tendency toward specialization was, as has already been explained, antithetical to the intellectual inclusiveness which was responsible for the development of the Rankinian Club, the Philosophical Societies of Aberdeen, Glasgow, and Edinburgh, and the Select Society of Edinburgh with its many imitators. These new societies, however, were not a complete departure from the traditional form of organization. The subject-matter which had been general, had now become particular, but belief in the validity of group discussion and in corporate judgment still persisted and did much to vivify these associations as it had done for others in the past.

The first specialized society to make its appearance shortly after 1770, was the Juridical Society of Edinburgh. It was organized in 1773.

1. See Chapter 1, page 1, above.

2. There was a society of law students about 1766 called the Forum Debating Society. "While prosecuting his studies for the Bar, Henry Erskine became a member of the Forum Debating Society; and in it took part in the discussion of many of the high questions which Scotch law students have, in each generation, proposed and answered to their own satisfaction, such as the "Justifiability of Suicide," upon which, in Sir Walter Scott's time, there was a minority of eight who voted in the affirmative; "the Guilt, or otherwise, of Queen Mary," and such topics. In these discussions he acquired a power of extempore speaking which was the foundation of his future success as a pleader." (Fergusson: Henry Erskine, page 92.) Rogers: Social Life in Scotland, page 586, Vol. 2, has confounded this society with the Pantheon, for which see above, page 228 f.
for the encouragement of the Study of the Law."

February, 1775, the following twelve Gentlemen, viz:—

John Russell junior. Alexander Alison.
Harie Guthrie junior. Phineas Hall.
John Farquharson. Thomas Macdonald.
John Lesley. Charles Stewart.
John Buchan. George Sinclair.

from a consideration, as their minute bears, of the many advantages resulting from Societies in general for the cultivation of any science, associated themselves into a Society for the study of Law." At the first meeting, Mr. John Russell, the senior member, read an introductory discourse which laid down the plan of the institution, and offered "suggestions on its utility." One object of the Society was "to go through a regular course of Scots Law." The book chosen as the basis of this course was Erskine's Institute, which was published in 1775, the same year the Society was organized. For five years, the Society made it a regular practice to appoint each member in turn to prepare a discourse on a specified section of this text. "After the discourse had been read, every member in his turn was required to deliver his opinion on the subject and also on


2. History of the Juridical Society, page 1. For a complete list of members see the "General List of Members" which appears as an Appendix to the History.


6. Ibid. This work was An Institute of the Law of Scotland in the order of Sir George Mackenzie's Institutions of that Law, 2 volumes. By John Erskine of Carnock, Professor of Scots Law in the University of Edinburgh.
the manner in which it had been treated. Another proposed function of the meetings proved to be unworkable, but as the reason for this failure has only been explained in legal terms, and is, therefore, incomprehensible to me, I must rely upon the account given in the History of the Society:

The next regulation was passed with a view to giving members a competent knowledge of the forms practised in the Courts of Justice, and of all the steps of procedure necessary in any action. It provided that there should be two persons appointed by the Society to act as agents for a pursuer and defender; that the pursuer's agent should libel a summons upon any point of law, which should be tabled and called in the usual form; that the agents should also appoint persons to be counsel for the parties, who should sign a regular outgiving and defence; and that this process should be carried on through all the various steps before the rest of the Society, who should judge of and determine the merits of each particular case which might come before them. This part of the business was highly eulogised in the introductory discourse, and so important was it considered that a provision was made in the laws for the contingency of the Society finding it inconvenient to take the merits of any such question into consideration at an ordinary meeting, in which event an extraordinary meeting was to be called for the purpose. It is not easy to see how any question of law could be satisfactorily discussed where both pursuer and defender had it in their power to shape their facts according to the case which they were desirous to establish. In the circumstances, it would be a difficult matter to frame either a relevant summons or a relevant defence, and the consultations between the agent and counsel for either party would more often be as to what facts should be imagined, with a view to their being averred, than what principles of law are applicable to given facts. It is not surprising that the plan was found to be unworkable, and that in little more than a year a resolution was passed to the effect that the regulation for carrying on a process should be considered as a part of the laws.

A third regulation provided that once a fortnight there should be "a discussion of questions of law previously handed out." "In June 1775, it.

2. Ibid, pages 4 - 5.
was resolved to debate a case every night, instead of once a fortnight as at first, and in 1782, when the discourses were abolished, an additional case for debate was substituted for the discourse of the evening so that there were then two cases discoursed each night."

In addition to following these provisions for conducting the business of the regular meetings, the members also made it a practice to submit to the society for discussion "any points of difficulty or interest occurring in their own practice. These questions, which were taken up at the close of the meetings, formed no part of the stated business and came up without notice, and it was optional to the members to remain during consideration of them."

The members of the society, who were drawn "almost exclusively from Apprentices to Writers to the Signet" met at first at seven o'clock on Saturday morning ... in the Scots Law Class-room in the College." But the Law Class-room was not the only place of meeting, for it is known that a considerable portion of business was transacted in other places - "John's Coffee House, Forrest's Coffee House, and the Exchange Coffee House, being constantly mentioned in the older minutes."

Shortly after it was established, the members of the Juridical Society adopted two additional functions which placed "subsequent members under deep obligations to them." The first of these was the establish-
ment of a legal library, and the second was the "conception and execution of the System of Styles." The library was begun, on a very moderate scale, in 1775, "when the Society recommended the Treasurer to purchase a copy of Mr. Erskine's Small Institute, (i.e. Erskine's Principles), for the use of members present at the meetings." From this small beginning, the Society's library, which still exists, grew until it became a valuable asset to the organization.

The compilation of a system of styles used in legal documents after the practice of the "first men of the profession", became one of the most important as well as one of the most valuable activities of the society. At first the styles were gathered and compared solely for the use of the members of the Society, but in 1786 the society prepared a volume of Heritable Styles for publication. The preface of this volume shows, in the Society's own words, the aim and scope of the undertaking as contemplated by the original compilers:

The Juridical Society has existed for about thirteen years. The improvement of the members in the knowledge of Law and of Conveyancing, was the original design of this institution; an object which, being in itself important, has been invariably prosecuted by the society.

To attain the knowledge of Conveyancing, no method appeared more proper than to collect the Styles commonly used on the same subjects by the ablest and the best employed conveyancers; to compare them together; to select the excellencies of each; and to form from the whole a system of Styles. This the Society were enabled to do with considerable advantage, as there were few writers of eminence in Edinburgh whose practice was not known to one or other of the members.


2. Ibid, pages 36 – 38. This work was entitled Collection of Styles, or a Complete System of Conveyancing, Adapted to the present Practice of Scotland.
It falls therefore to be remarked that although the present collection is offered to the public through the medium of the Juridical Society, yet the Styles are not properly the production of its members—they are rather to be ascribed to the abilities and experience of the first men of the profession. The arrangement and selection, only, belong to the Juridical Society, with the labour of collecting the Styles and reducing them to the form in which they now appear. In this employment, though apparently simple, much time has been spent and considerable attention bestowed; with what advantage, it is now the province of the public to determine.

The path of the Juridical Society, as one of the first specialist organizations to appear at this time, was far from smooth. At a time when

1. The Society was admired by at least one correspondent to the Weekly Magazine, or Edinburgh Amusement, (Vol. 22, Thursday, October 21, 1773, page 105 f.) "To the Publisher of the Weekly Magazine, Sir, When we consider the nature of man, and the many active and intelligent powers implanted in him by his beneficent Creator, we must certainly be convinced of this important truth, that they were not meant to lie in a state of inaction, but were bestowed upon him for the best and noblest purposes; and that, in proportion as he aims at improvement in knowledge, by the proper exertion of these faculties, he acts a part suitable to the dignity of his nature.

"It must likeways be observed, that the qualifications of mankind in this particular are various and different. To some Nature has been very liberal of her favours; to others she has dealt them out more sparingly; but to all such dispositions and abilities are given as may enable them to act some particular character in life with applause. The great difficulty lies in discovering that particular bent of the mind which appears more or less in almost every character, and may be properly termed Genius; for, like a diamond in a mine, this may lie for a considerable time unobserved even by its possessor until called forth by accident or time, and like it too, must then require the polish and refinements of education, to render its worth and value fully conspicuous.

"Among the various methods adopted for the cultivation and improvement of youthful minds, there are none, in my humble apprehension, more effectual than by encouraging a free communication of their sentiments, however rude and indigested they may appear. This will not only be a means of discovering, but also of improving genius, than which nothing can be of more importance either to society or individuals.

"I have been chiefly led into these reflections by the many societies of young gentlemen presently established in this place; and it gives me very great pleasure that they are so prevalent, when their sole aim is mutual instruction and improvement. But, although the investigation of general and speculative subjects must afford ample field for ingenuity and entertainment; yet, at the same time, I cannot help giving the preference to that particular choice of subjects, which is more necessarily connected with the profession to be followed in life. This proves of real utility and service, while the other tends
the tendency was still predominantly toward inclusive interests, the narrow concerns of a society which had as its sole purpose the study of law had little appeal to others than a few legal apprentices. Because of its restricted interests, it was inevitable that the Juridical Society should be subject to periodic withering as successive generations of apprentices blossomed and died away, and it should come as no surprise to the reader who has followed the argument thus far to learn that the Society was frequently in a state of near collapse because of the total

only to indulge the fancy and imagination. Sensible of this truth, I find there are several societies in this city entirely calculated for the improvement of its members in that branch of business they are bred to and mean to prosecute.

"Upon looking over the news-papers, I observed an advertisement for a meeting of the Juridical Society, which, from its name, I apprehend is composed of students of law. I must say that such an institution reflects very great honour on the gentlemen concerned in it, more especially so from the many difficulties to be met with in a study which has been always reckoned extremely laborious. The good consequences of such an association must soon be evident. It will not only be a very great benefit to the student himself, but also to the public in general. The character of a man of business in the law ought to be strictly inquired into; for, as matters of the greatest moment are often intrusted to his care and management, it is absolutely necessary that he be well versed in the duties of his profession, that he may act with honour to himself, and safety to his clients. A gentleman thus qualified despises the low mean artifices of trick and chicanery, which are with too much justice laid to the charge of many of the practitioners of the law; he acts from liberal and disinterested motives; and, while he consults his own interest, he at the same time considers it as subservient to his honour and reputation as a gentleman.

"If what I have advanced may prove any encouragement to young gentlemen in so laudable a practice, I shall think my observations well bestowed. I am, Sir, Yours, etc., Mentor. Edinburgh, October 8." Mentor's suggestions did bear fruit. "To the Publisher of the Weekly Magazine. Sir, In one of those juvenile societies alluded to by your ingenious correspondent Mentor, I had occasion, some time ago, to deliver the following thought upon a question proposed, with respect to the real advantage of learning to society. If you think they merit a place in your Miscellany, please insert them and oblige, Yours, etc., Juvenis. Edinburgh October 27." (There follows this an essay on eloquence.) The Weekly Magazine, or Edinburgh Amusement, Vol. 22, Thursday, November 4, 1773, page 172.
absence of members. The first sign of a chronic institutional anemia came in 1778 when it was often impossible to find a quorum (seven members, which was soon reduced to five) to make up a meeting. For three years, until 1781, no meetings were held. Upon its revival, a more equitable distribution of work among new members did much to reduce the risks of another failure; but in the session of 1796 - 1797, "it was found necessary, in consequence of the decayed state of the Society, to appoint a Committee to consider what steps could be taken to secure the attendance of Honorary Members, and to induce new members to enter, only three having been added to the Roll in the course of the two previous years. The Committee gave the matter very careful consideration, and in their report, besides making suggestions as to entry-money, etc., recommended that, if possible, a union should be effected with the Logical Society — a society which had been instituted rather more than three years previously for purposes similar to those of the Juridical Society."

All that is known of the Logical Society is contained in a short account which appears in the work which I have been quoting. This account reads as follows:

The Logical Society was founded in 1793, its objects being the cultivation both of law and general literature, the laws requiring that at each meeting the Society should hear an essay read, and should debate a question of law, or of a moral, literary, or political nature.

Applicants for admission were attested by two members who had attended the Society at least one year, the attestation bearing "That the Petitioner's character and abilities sufficiently qualify

2. Ibid, page 22.
him to become a Member of the Logical Society, and that he is a student of law, or has been and still continues in the profession of the law, but there was no restriction of membership to any particular branches of the profession. The admission of members was by ballot, the member on the first night of his attendance subscribing the Rules of the Society, and paying half a guinea as admission money.

The meetings of the Society commenced on the first Monday after the meeting of the Court of Session in November and May, at eight o'clock in the evening, and continued to be held every Monday at the same time till the last Monday of each Session, excepting the first Monday after Christmas, and Christmas itself if it fell on a Monday.

The business of the Society was conducted by three Presidents, who officiated in rotation, and a Secretary. These office-bearers had the usual powers, but the laws provided that it should be in the power of any member to call the President to account for his conduct after he had left the chair, and if found by the Society to have been deficient in his duty he shall be fined one shilling; but if not, the member who hath so called him to account shall be liable in the same penalty in case such complaint be found frivolous and vexatious.

An Ordinary Member was entitled to be elected as Honorary one after three years' regular attendance and punctual performance of the business allotted him by the Society during that period, provided fifteen ordinary attending members should remain on the roll. The election of Honorary members was made by ballot, it requiring two-thirds of the members to confer the privilege, and ordinary members alone voting.

The essay read at each meeting was on a subject intimated to the Secretary at the previous meeting, and when read was subjected to the criticism of the members present, the author having an opportunity of replying after every one else had delivered his sentiments. The essays were read by each member in rotation, in the order in which their names stood on the roll. There seems to have been no restriction on the subjects of essays. At each meeting, also, a question of the nature prescribed by the laws was discussed. At the previous meeting two members were appointed to debate the question, which was fixed on by him whose name stood first on the roll, the other having the liberty of choosing his side, which was opposed by the member fixing the question. A law question was debated at least once in three weeks.

In 1794 - the year after its foundation - the Society had nineteen names on the roll, and at least ten more joined before March 1797, at which time it had seventeen members, several of the senior members having in the meantime died or resigned.

Such is all that can be learned of the Logical Society. Its Minute Books, extending to four quarto volumes, were preserved in the Library of the Juridical Society in 1812, but seem to have been lost before 1826. This may probably be accounted for by the Society having been compelled between these years frequently to remove to different premises.
On the twenty-seventh of February, 1797, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the foundation of the Juridical Society, the Logical Society and the Juridical Society joined forces. The reason for this union, as given by the historian of the Juridical Society, is interesting:—

It is curious to observe that at the time of the last depression in the prospects of the Juridical Society a similar depression was felt by its only senior still in existence—the Speculative. In the history of that Society it is recorded that "the eight Sessions from 1789 to 1796 inclusive mark themselves into a separate portion of our narrative chiefly by the great depression of the Society. In the course of these eight years there were only forty-three new members, that is, about five annually, and the meetings were frequently prevented from taking place by the want of a quorum." The compilers of the History of the Speculative Society attempt to explain this state of matters:—"This apparent deadness," they say, "appears, from the remedies suggested, to have been owing almost entirely to the political condition of the times. The Revolution in France and its consequences brought all free discussion into discredit; and there were then some circumstances in the state of Scotland which caused even the association of a few young gentlemen assembling weekly for private debate, under the control of an ancient established College, to be looked upon by many with no very kindly eye." Without doubting that the causes here referred to would tend to have such an effect as is attributed to them, it appears that equally effective causes are to be found nearer home. The Juridical Society, from which all political questions were excluded, was in as languishing a state as the Speculative, while the Logical Society, which admitted political discussions, and which would have been equally if not more liable to be affected by the political condition of the country, was comparatively flourishing. The Speculative Society had always allowed political discussions very sparingly, and in 1794 had altogether banished them from its business. One at least of the causes that would have the most effect on both the Speculative and Juridical Societies is to be found in the institution of the Logical Society, which held out from its mixed program inducements which could not be offered by either of the other Societies, and which, immediately on its foundation, had a large roll of members all chosen from the class of gentlemen who, but for its existence, would, in all likelihood, have attached themselves either to the Speculative or to the Juridical Society.

It seems clear from this account that any unnecessary restriction

2. For the Speculative Society, see Chapter 6, page 580, below.
placed on the subjects for discussion, or any unnatural narrowing of the field of interest, was still regarded with disapproval. This observation, in view of the analysis which has already been given of the essential differences between learned societies of the eighteenth and of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is an indication that the tendency toward inclusive interests still existed in Scottish intellectual societies until the end of the eighteenth century.

When the Logical and the Juridical Societies joined forces, the joint Society retained the name Juridical, and published the following regulations:

Chapter V. Of Business.

1. Every ordinary member shall lodge with the Secretary, two or more cases in law, and two or more speculative questions, with his name exhibited to each, at least three weeks previous to the rising of the Society each Session, under the penalty of Sixpence for each Case and Question not so given in.

2. A Committee, consisting of five members appointed at the meeting on which the cases are lodged, shall select and determine what Law Cases and Speculative Questions so given in, are proper to be debated by the Society the ensuing Session, and shall appoint the Gentlemen who are to open and answer the Cases and Questions, and those who are to read the answers and essays after-mentioned, according to the order of the roll; the judgment of the Committee shall, in this respect, be final, and not subject to the review or control of the Society.

3. If the number of Law Cases and Speculative Questions approved of by the Committee, be not sufficient to supply the ensuing Session, they shall have to order those Members, whose Cases or Questions are rejected, to lodge new ones within ten days after notice; and any Member not complying with this order, shall pay Sixpence for every Case and Question rejected.

1. The Laws of the Juridical Society (established in 1775), a pamphlet.

2. The contents of the pamphlet are as follows:—Chapter I, "Constitutional Laws"; Chapter II, "Of Ordinary Members"; Chapter III, "Of Honorary and Extraordinary Members"; Chapter IV, "Of Attendance and Fines"; Chapter V, "Of Business"; Chapter VI, "Of Presidents"; Chapter VII, "Of the Secretary"; Chapter VIII, "Of the Funds of the Society"; and Chapter IX, "Miscellaneous Laws".
4. The Members shall open and answer the Cases and Questions, as appointed by the Committee, under the penalty of Two Shillings and Sixpence; unless such Members are sick, or out of town, and procure others to act for them.

5. In case any Member, appointed by the Committee to open or answer a Law Case or Speculative Question, or to read an Answer or Essay, leave the Society, the Presidents shall, as soon as this is known, appoint another Member to do the duty for him.

6. A Law Question shall be debated at the first meeting of the Society each session; A Speculative Question the night following; and so on, each alternate meeting; and the Committee shall arrange them accordingly.

7. The night on which a Law Case shall be debated, an answer thereto shall be read to the Society, but not till all the Members have delivered their sentiments; unless the majority of those present wish to hear it read sooner.

8. When the answer has been read, and the Society have delivered their sentiments upon it, the votes of the Members shall be taken, and the Case determined by a majority of those present.

9. The Member appointed to answer the Case, shall lodge his answer with the Secretary on or before the second meeting following that on which such Case is debated, written upon paper of uniform size with that formerly used for this purpose, with proper margins for binding; and he shall date and subscribe his answer, prefix to it a written copy of the Case, and subjoin the decision of the Society thereon, under the penalty of Two Shillings and Sixpence, attour performance.

10. There shall be an Essay read that night on which the Speculative Question is debated, and the author shall have the choice of his subject.

11. These Essays shall be delivered by the Members appointed by the Committee, in manner above mentioned, in the order their names stand in the roll; so that each of these Members shall read an Essay in his turn, or find some one to do it for him, under the penalty of Two Shillings and Sixpence.

12. The Member appointed to read an Essay shall intimate to the Secretary the subject of it, on the meeting previous to that on which the Essay is to be delivered, under the penalty of Sixpence.

13. The Essay, when read, shall be subjected to the criticism of the Members present, and the author shall only have an opportunity of replying after every one has delivered his sentiments.

14. No person shall speak more than once in the course of the criticism, without leave from the President.
15. The Member who is appointed to read the Essay, shall lodge a copy of it with the Secretary, within a month after the night of reading it, written upon paper of the same size with that used for the Answers, with proper margins for binding; and he shall date and subscribe his Essay, under the penalty of Two Shillings and Sixpence, attour performance.

16. Every motion that is made and seconded, must lie on the table till the meeting subsequent to that on which it is proposed, and then be determined by vote.

17. No member shall speak twice upon any one branch of private business, without leave of the President.

18. No private business shall continue after nine o'clock, without leave from the President.

19. The names of the members who deliver their opinions upon the Law Cases and Speculative Questions under discussion, shall be entered in the minutes of each meeting.

20. The business to be taken up in the following order:—
   1. The Roll to be called.
   2. Minutes read, and reports of Committees considered.
   3. The list of arrears to be read, and disputes relative to fines taken up and considered, and fines collected.
   4. Motions made at a former meeting discussed.
   5. Petitions received and balloted.
   7. The Essay read and criticised, if the night of a Speculative Question.
   8. Law Cases, or Speculative Questions, opened, debated, and decided by vote.
   9. The answer read before the vote is taken, if the night of a Law Case.
   10. The Roll called a second time, and the meeting adjourned by the President.

Although the interests and activities of the Juridical Society were, through the consolidation of that organization with the Logical Society, now of a more general nature, there was apparently still some need felt for a society which was organized on the broad lines of the Rankenian Club, the Béliers Lettres Society, or any of the other speculative societies which were typical of the eighteenth-century type of literary society. In the same year that the Juridical and the Logical Societies joined forces, a new society was organized under the name of the Philalethic Society.
These "lovers of truth" were bound together for the now time-honoured purpose of reading essays and debating all questions except those "of an abstruse, theological, or political nature." The regulations of the new society were as follows:

I. That the Society be named the Philalethic Society.

II. That the number of Members do not exceed twenty-five, exclusive of Honorary Members.

III. That the Society shall meet every Saturday evening at seven o'clock, and shall be constituted with prayer by the President within five minutes after the hour of meeting.

IV. That no person can be admitted a Member of this Society, who has not attended two years at college.

V. That before any person can become a Member of this Society, he shall present a petition, expressing his desire of Admittance, and that petition must be signed by at least two of the Members, who, from personal acquaintance with the petitioner, can vouch for his abilities and moral character. This petition must lie a week before the Society for consideration.

VI. That every Member, whether present or absent, shall contribute his share towards defraying the expenses of the Society, and upon admission, shall pay Five Shillings.

VII. That at the opening of every Session, four annual Presidents and a Secretary, who shall also hold the office of Treasurer, be elected from among the ordinary Members of the Society, and that each President preside in rotation.

VIII. That the Secretary shall mark down the name of each Member in the list, the time of his admission into the Society, his departure from town, and his return.

IX. That immediately after the Society is constituted, the Secretary shall call the roll, and every Member not present to answer to his name, shall incur a fine of three-pence; if

---

1. Regulations of the Philalethic Society. Edinburgh: Printed by James Muirhead, 1808. This is a pamphlet which, in the collection of the Edinburgh Room of the Edinburgh Public Library, is bound together with a MS. list of members of the organization.

2. Ibid.
not present till half-past seven o'clock, sixpence; and if not present till eight o'clock, he shall be considered as totally absent for that night, and incur a fine of one shilling; and that if any member be absent from the Society three whole nights successively, without producing a sufficient excuse, he shall be expelled from the society.

X. That the Secretary mark down the names of those members late or absent; and next night call for the excuses: and that a list of the fines unpaid be read over every night after the debate.

XI. That private business, such as examining excuses, discussing motions, etc., be postponed till after the debate.

XII. That each member shall in rotation produce an essay, the subject of which he may choose for himself; but shall communicate its title to the Society on the night of meeting previous to that on which it is to be read; and in case of failure, shall be subjected to a fine of sixpence.

XIII. That the essay do not take up more than half an hour, nor less than ten minutes; and that it be subjected to the remarks of the Society.

XIV. That two members be appointed in rotation, to support each a particular side of the question to be debated; that the other members be allowed to speak on whatever side they think proper; and when all the members have spoken, or declined speaking, the chief speakers may again rise in support of their respective sides, after which ordinary members may speak if they choose. No speeches are to be read.

XV. That the subjects of debate be chosen two weeks before the discussion takes place; that these be read out to the Society every night previous to its discussion; and that no questions be selected of an abstruse, theological, or political nature.

XVI. That there shall be no debate, later than a quarter after ten o'clock, that any member may then depart, but shall be bound by any determination of the Society made during his absence.

XVII. That every member may know the business to be discussed, motions shall be made immediately after the essay is read; but no discussion shall take place, and no motion shall be passed, till the night after it is proposed.

XVIII. That, if when a motion is discussed, the members seem desirous of delivering their opinions, the President shall read over their names as they stand in the list; and that none shall speak till his name be called.
XIX. That should the acting President, Secretary, Essayist, or Chief Speaker be absent, he shall incur a double fine, unless an excuse can be produced, which the Society shall sustain as sufficient. But if the absent Essayist have sent his essay, or the absent Speaker have sent his speech, or provided a substitute, he shall not be considered as liable to a double penalty. Every member shall be required to state clearly, and without equivocation, the nature of the circumstances that prevented his attendance, as far at least as these can be disclosed consistently with propriety.

XX. That order be always observed at the command of the President, under such penalties as he shall deem adequate.

XXI. That a Committee be appointed once in three months to examine the state of the funds and to select questions for the three following months.

XXII. That after three years regular attendance, a member shall be entitled to an Honorary Medal, and exempted from the ordinary business of the society. But when an Honorary Member undertakes any part of the business of the Society, he shall be liable, in case of failure, to the usual penalties; and that every Honorary Member shall always wear his medal when in the Society.

XXIII. That if an ordinary Member during his absence transmit essays regularly once in three months, or produce the requisite number at his return, it shall be reckoned equivalent to half attendance.

XXIV. That no strangers be allowed to visit the Society, unless introduced by the acting President, the Secretary, the Essayist, the Chief Speaker, or by the Honorary Members, and that they depart as soon as the debate is concluded.

The Philalethic Society, though it was rather slow to develop at first, was very successful. The members of the organization, from 1797, the year of its institution, to 1800, were as follows:

1. It continued at least until May 1822, by which time 298 members had been admitted.

2. This list is taken from the MS. list of members which is bound with the pamphlet containing the Regulations, (described on page 298, note 1, above), which is owned by the Edinburgh Room of the Edinburgh Public Library.
List of the Members of the Philalethic Society 1797 - 1800.

(entered) (departed) (returned) (honoured)

James Brewster Decr. 1797
John Cornack Decr. 1797
James Esdile Jan. 1798 May 1798 Nov. 1800
Alexander Stewart April 1798
William Grant Sept. 1798
William Hamilton Decr. 1798
Andrew Balfour Jan. 1799
Andrew Minian March 1799
Donald Bain March 1799
George Simpson June 1799
George Dunbar Nov. 1799
William Leitch Decr. 1799
David Brewster May 1800
Peter Simpson Decr. 1799, (extraordinary).

The experiment of specialization which was carried out by the Juridical Society, in spite of its limited success, was the first sign of a new intellectual spirit which may be summed up in the motto "divide and conquer."

From 1775 to 1780, a number of small societies were organized which pursued but one science. The short lives of these organizations indicates that their efforts were premature, but as a sign of things to come, their impulse toward specialization is of decided interest. The situation which prevailed in Edinburgh at this time, and which was responsible for the multiplicity of these societies, has been described, rather disapprovingly, by the historian of the Royal Medical Society who was writing in the year 1820:

The great and increasing number of Students, which the rising celebrity of the Edinburgh School of Physic attracted to that University, during the last forty years of the eighteenth century, gave birth to many scientific Associations, analogous in constitution and design, which, under the powerful excitement of mutual example, maintained an ardent and honourable contest for

1. (Stroud): History of the Medical Society, pages xlv and xlv. This passage has been repeated by the historian of the Speculative Society, History of the Speculative Society (1845), page 10 f.
fame and independence. The restlessness of activity, the desire of selection, the preference for particular studies, and in some instances, perhaps, the partiality of national, or even of personal feeling, were the probable causes of the minute distribution of labour and interest which now took place, and to a certain extent, no doubt, the detached exertions and liberal emulation of communities, as well as of individuals, may be productive of mutual benefit. But experience has shown, that the social stream, if branched out into too many channels, becomes languid and inefficient. Like the fasces of authority, which lose their force and dignity by separation, so the talents and resources, which might command prosperity in the aggregate, are found unequal to secure stability, when broken into feeble detail. Accordingly, the greater part of the Societies which multiplied during the period above-mentioned, after a longer or shorter career of vigour and activity, proportioned to the importance of their objects, and the ability with which they were conducted, unable to sustain the intervals of depression, to which all establishments of this kind seem occasionally liable, either finally dissolved, or, resigning their form and title, still preserved the connexion of their members, by gradually reuniting into a single and accumulating body.

The organization which finally absorbed the majority of the independent and specialized societies of this period was the Physical Society, or, as it became known after its incorporation in 1788, the Royal Physical Society. This society was, itself, the outcome of the union of two similar associations, the Medico-Chirurgical, formed in the year 1767, and the Physico-Chirurgical, established in 1771, which combined under the title of the Physical Society. The newly constituted

1. The records of the Royal Physical Society are kept in the Reference Room of the Edinburgh Public Library. There is no adequate history of the Society, but brief accounts are contained in the following works: Hume: Learned Societies, page 173; (Stroud): History of the Medical Society, page xlv; History of the Speculative Society, page 10; Comrie: History of Scottish Medicine, Vol. 1, page 340; and Bower: History of the University of Edinburgh, Vol. 3, page 367, Appendix. For notices see the Caledonian Mercury, Saturday, June 26, 1784; and the Edinburgh Magazine, or Literary Miscellany, Vol. 7, May 1788, page 744 (Appendix); Vol. 11, January 1790, page 9, (Appendix); and Vol. 12, (New Series), November 1798, page 339. See also The Laws of the Royal Physical Society. Edinburgh: Printed by P. Neill, 1819.

2. (Stroud): History of the Medical Society, page xlv; Comrie: History of Scottish Medicine, Vol. 1, page 340. The Union took place in 1782.
organization was far more successful than either of its components could have hoped to be. By May 1788, the roll of Honorary Members included the names of many famous scientists and men of medicine. At the same time, the Society was playing a leading role in Scotland’s scientific and medical development. In 1786, the Physical Society, as it was still known, was joined by James Mackintosh who was then a medical student at the University of Edinburgh, and he read a paper "on the instincts and disposition of animals" before the Society on 23rd February of that year.

1. The following is a list of Honorary Members admitted into the Physical Society from the period of its Union with the Chirugo-Medical in 1782 till May 1788 which appears in the Laws of the Royal Physical Society, page 38:

   - Daniel Bryan, M. D.
   - William Haws, M. D. London
   - Robert Cleghorn, M. D.
   - Stephen Dickson, M. D. Inst. Prof. in Colleg, Dublin.
   - Joseph Fox.
   - Gilbert Blane, M. D.
   - Charles Steuart, M. D.
   - Charles White, M. D. Manchester.
   - Andrew "ife.
   - Sir (Nathaniel) Barry, M. D.
   - William Nicoll, M. D.
   - Longfield, M. D. Cork.
   - Edward Allanson.
   - Thomas Henry, Manchester.
   - Thomas Park.
   - Binns.
   - James Hunter, M. D.
   - James Russell, Edinburgh.
   - Alexander Barron, M. D. Charleston, South Carolina.
   - Graham, M. D. Stirling.

   (this list is continued at the bottom of the next page.)

The Royal Physical Society, because of its Charter from the Crown, became by far the most stable organization of its kind to rise during the period under consideration. In 1796, the Chirurgo-Physical Society and the American Physical Society, "having in vain sought security by a coalition," both joined the Royal Physical Society. This was only

John Logan, M. D.
Moss, M. D.
William Irving, M. D. Chem. Prof. Glasgow.
John Adams, L. L. D. Boston, N. A.
Benjamin Franklin, L. L. D.
Daniel Rutherford, M. D. Bot. Prof.
Wilson, Glasgow.
Richard Pearson, M. D.
Groschee, M. D.
Callanan, M. D.
Houston, M. D.
B. G. Baumgarton, M. D. Copenhagen.
Percival Pott, London.
John Dawson, Sedberg.
Adam Kuhn, M. D. Nat. Med. Prof. in Univ. Pennsyl.
Benjamin Rush, M. D. Chem. Prof. do.
John Morgan, M. D. Prax. Med. Prof. do.
Samuel Foart Simmons, M. D. London.
Gerard, M. D.
Robertson, M. D. Perth.
Brandreth, M. D.
Barry, M. D.
John Richardson, M. D.
Andrew Wardrope, M. D. Edinburgh.
Tucker Harris, M. D. Charlestown, South Carolina.
Michael Renwick, Liverpool.
Phythian, M. D. do.
Thomas Butler, M. D.
James Hay, M. D. Edinburgh.
Earl of Dundonald.
Earl of Buchan.
John Clark, M. D. Newcastle.
Henry Boyse, M. D.
David Ramsay, M. D. Charleston, South Carolina.
Donald Macleod, M. D. Savannah, Georgia.
Peter Rayssoux, M. D. Charleston, South Carolina.
1. (Stroud): History of the Medical Society, page xlvii.
the first of such amalgamations. The Hibernian Medical, in 1799, the Chemical Society, in 1802, the Natural History Society, in 1812, and the Didactic Society, in 1813, all joined forces with the Royal Physical Society. It is interesting to note that all these societies were organized before 1800.

Details concerning the small societies which joined with the Royal Physical Society are not readily obtainable, and there is a real need for a history of the scientific organizations of this period. I have been able, however, to provide one or two facts regarding each of them, and that must suffice for my contribution toward such a history.

The earliest notice I have discovered of the Chirurgo-Physical Society was published in the Glasgow Courier in November 1791. This notice reads as follows:-

Edinburgh, Nov. 28. Chirurgo-Physical Society.

Friday night, the following gentlemen were elected Annual Presidents of the Chirurgo-Physical Society for the present session viz: -

Dr. Onofrio Scassi of Italy.
Mr. Alexander Edgar of Hamilton, Lanarkshire, re-elected.
Mr. Hugh Munro, surgeon, of Ferrintosh, Rossshire.
And Mr. Caleb Crowther of Leeds, Yorkshire.

1. Hume: "Learned Societies, page 173; Comrie: History of Scottish Medicine, Vol. 1, page 340; History of the Speculative Society (1845), pages 9-10; Laws of the Royal Physical Society, page 37 f., (contains lists of members of each society when it joined with the Royal Physical); and Stroud): History of the Medical Society, page xlvi. This last work has an interesting note on other societies which were active at this same time. "Besides those already enumerated, an American Medical, an Hibernian Physical, and a Chirurgo-Obstetrical Society, are said to have held regular Meetings in the Year 1792." (History of the Medical Society, page xlvi, note.) I have been unable to discover anything further regarding the societies mentioned in this note.
Mr. William Crane of Lincolnshire, was re-elected Tres., and Mr. Aitchison of Edin, was re-elected Sec.

The Society, at the same time, as a mark of their respect for Dr. John Lorimer, Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, Physician to the East-India Company, etc., and Dr. Blance, F.R.S., Physician to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, etc., unanimously elected these Gentlemen Honorary Members of the Chirurgo-Physical Society.

Besides this notice of November 1791, similar notices appeared in the same newspaper in December, 1792, and January, 1794.

At the time the American Physical Society joined with the Royal Physical Society, in 1796, it consisted of the following members:

John Murray.
James Vernon, M. D.
John Heddle, D. M.
David Walker, M. D.
John Adams, M. D.
Charles Sugrue, M. D.
Marcus Hardiman, M. D.
James Jones, M. D.
Robert Agarane, M. D.
William Tazwell
John Greenhow.
John Welsh.
Simes White, M. D.
Bartholomew Carter, M. D.
James Sheehy, M. D.
James Hulme, M. D.
Samuel Lowdon.
James Hamilton.
Thomas Hills, M. D.
James Hill.
Robert Buchanen, M. D.
John Kirkpatrick.
Hill Morgan.
Edmund Bainbridge.
Charles Windship.
John Wainwright.
Robert M. Haig, M. D.
Edward Thomas.

The earliest mention of the American Physical Society occurred in January 1790, when, in conjunction with the Royal Physical Society and the Hibernian Medical Society, the American Physical Society presented an address to Dr. Cullen on the occasion of his being honoured by the Lord Provost, the magistrates, the Town Council, and the professors and


2. Laws of the Royal Physical Society, page 68. For an account of the American medical students at the Edinburgh Medical School, see the University of Edinburgh Journal, Autumn 1950, page 126 f.
students of the University.

The Hibernian Medical Society, which I have just mentioned as being one of the societies which presented an address in honour of Dr. Cullen in January, 1790, consisted, at the time of its union with the Royal Physical Society, nine years later, of the following members:

- John Loy.
- William Thomas Russel, P. A.
- William L. Sayers, P. A.
- David O'Callaghan.
- Robert Bisnand.
- J. Ryan.
- Frederick T. Lynch, M. D.
- William Lynch.
- Dennis M. Carthy.
- William Armstrong.
- Philip Johnston.
- Carey.
- J. Reade.
- J. B. Bennet.
- P. M'Keugh.
- Galway.
- J. Latham.

- J. Finn.
- R. Purdan.
- W. Lawder.
- Elliot.
- Kirby.
- Cramer.
- Niblock.
- O. Rose.
- Bowen.
- Lawler.
- Wall.
- Fitzpatrick.
- Norcott.
- Hawker.
- Saunders.
- S. Cotham.
- W. H. Smyth.

My researches have turned up very little information regarding a Chemical Society in Edinburgh before 1800. There was, it is true, such a society in existence in 1786, but, as I shall presently explain, it is unlikely that this was the society which joined forces with the Royal Physical Society in 1812. Regarding this early society, I have discovered only one brief notice which reads as follows:

The Edinburgh Magazine, or Literary Miscellany.

The Chemical Society of this city chose their annual Presidents, when the following Gentlemen were elected to that office:

- Mr. John Haslam.
- Mr. Theobald M'Kenna.
- Mr. William Lecky.
- Mr. James Carmichael.

As for the Chemical Society which was united with the Royal Physical Society in 1812, it was undoubtedly an offshoot of the Natural History Society. The following letter from the biography of Dr. Cullen tells of plans which were being made, in 1800, to revive the Natural History Society by transforming it "into a chemical society:

In January 1800, writing about the condition and prospects of the "Natural History Society," he says: "Various plans of relief were proposed, and I at last suggested the turning the Society into a chemical society, that should provide itself with an apparatus and occasionally make experiments. The proposal has since been talked of among the members, and is, I believe, universally approved of. In mentioning it to Horner, he proposed an alliance with the Academy of Physics. Brougham, in the mean time, came home, and has entered keenly into our views.... Perhaps I am too sanguine; but I conceive that if I can give to the infant society a good organization, it may become an institution which you will have pleasure in patronising. We shall be able to draw into it all the young men of the place who have any turn for physical researches. It is proposed to meet in summer. Brougham is to write you in a day or two. He looks well, and his present appearance would give you much satisfaction. Horner and he are both particularly anxious that you should approve of the plan of a chemical society."

The Natural History Society, which we have just seen as being in difficulties in 1800, was organized in 1782, and the first essay was read before the Society on Dr. Harvey's birthday on April 12th. A beautifully prepared volume of the Society's transactions in manuscript may be seen in the Edinburgh Room of the Edinburgh Public Library. This volume contains discourses on the following subjects:

1. "Letter addressed to John Allen, in biographical notice of Dr. Thomson prefixed to his Life of Cullen, page 16." Quoted in Brougham: Life, Vol. 1, page 550, Appendix XVIII. Chemistry was a very fashionable study at this period. Francis Jeffrey, Henry Brougham, and all their acquaintances were very keen on it. See Cockburn: Life of Lord Jeffrey, Vol. 1, page 103 f., and see also Chapter 6, above, under the "Academy of Physic", on page 393.

2. See the account of the Harveian Society on page 312, below. I do not know if this date was intended, or was only a coincidence.
Transactions of the Society for Investigating Natural History, 1782 - 1783, Vol. 1

1. An Account of the Capra Ibex, and Capra repicapria Linnoei:
   Read 12th April 1782 by Dr. John Conrad Stockmar, from Switzerland.


3. An Essay on Collecting and Preserving Specimens of Plants.
   Read 19th April 1782 by James Edward Smith of Norwich.

4. On Calcareous Earth: Read 26th April 1782 by T. Hardy of Lincolnshire.

5. Some Observations on the Toad: Read May 3rd 1782 by Robert Batty of Kirkby Lonsdale in Westmoreland.

6. Some observations on the Melioration of Phlogisticated Air by Vegetables. Read May 10; 1782 by Francis Buchanan, A. M.

7. On the Preservation of Birds; Read 10 May 1782 by William Thornton of Tortola.


9. The Natural History of the Elephant; Read the 7th June 1782 by Herron: Diedr. Reýýrus of Hadburgh. (Not complete - title only.)

10. On Water-Spouts: Read on 14th June 1782; by Richard Kentish, of Bridlington, Yorkshire.


12. Particulars as Part of the Communications given into the Society on the 24th Day of May 1782 by Wm. Thomson.


14. Communications by the Earl of Buchan Read by W. Thomson the 28th June 1782.

15. On Electricity; Read 8th November 1782 by William Bache of Birmingham.


22. A Description of some Plants found growing without cultivation in Scotland. Read 16th Jan. 1783 by Francis Buchanan.


27. An Essay upon the Flowers of Muscous Plants. Read Feb., 20th, 1783 by John Walker, D. D. Hist. Nat. Prof. "N. The Above Paper was first read before the Philosophical Society the 4th January 1760 and the following Report made upon it according to the custom of that society by Dr. Cullen."


30. A Dissertation on Air, particularly with a view to explain some of the most important uses of the atmosphere and the changes which daily take place in it. Read March 20th 1783 by William Kinnaird of Edin.


32. A Description of the Herring. Read 10th April 1783, by William Archdeacon of Newcastle upon Tyne.

At the time of their union with the Royal Physical Society, the Natural History Society, and its subsidiary, the Chemical Society, consisted of the following members:

Honorary Members admitted in virtue of the Union of the Natural History and Chemical Society with the Royal Physical Society, 13th June 1812.

John Stuart of Luss.
P. M. Augustus Broussonet of Paris.
Baron Alstroemer of Sweden.
Marquis Hippolito Durazzo of Genoa.
Thomas Blacklock of Edinburgh.
John Burgess of Kirkmichael.
John Lightfoot.
Sebaldus Justinus Brugman of Leyden.
S. P. Pallas of Petersburgh.
Carolis Thunberg of Upsal.
Abraham Guigot of Paris.
Casimir Gomez Urlega of Madrid.
Nicolaus Josephus de Jacquin of Vienna.
Andrew Murray of Gottingen.
George Shaw of London.
John, Earl of Bute.
Francis Garden, Lord Gardenston.
--- Le Sage.
--- Romé de Lisle
--- Dr. Rougeau, Professor of Anatomy, etc., Bonn, Germany.
John Hall, M. D. Manchester.
Charles Stewart, M. D. Edinburgh.
Andrew Coventry, M. D. Professor of Agriculture in the University of Edinburgh.
George Baird, D. D. Principal of the University of Edinburgh.
Dawson Turner, Esq. Yarmouth.
Humphrey Davy, Esq. London.
James Edward Smith.
Henry Brougham.

Very little is known regarding the Didactic Society which joined
the Royal Physical Society on 17th May, 1813, except the members
who belonged to the Society at that time. In 1813, the list of
members of the Didactic Society read as follows:

J. Shank More.  
George Brodie.  
David Wight.  
Thomas Barclay.  
Charles MacLaren.  
John Symons, M. D.  
Edward Carbutt.  
William Ritchie.  
Charles Bardin.  
William M'Killean.  
John Tennant — Expelled, for not paying his debts.  
James Alexander Oswald, M. D.

In addition to the small societies of specialists which I have
just described, there were, at this period, a number of associations of
a kindred nature which were organized on professional lines. These
societies, namely the Harveian, the Celsian, the Galenian, and the
Aesculapian, had social as well as scientific interests.

The Harveian Society, or the Circulation Club as it was known
until 1829, an organization erected for the purpose of celebrating

1. The History of the Speculative Society (1845), page 13, contains an
account of a Didactic Society which reads as follows:— "An institution
with exactly similar objects with the Speculative, and which drew its
members from the same class of students, was founded in 1802, and was
dissolved about 1827. Its application for a charter or seal of
cause, created some alarm in the Speculative Society in 1810," but
this student's debating society, as it continued until 1827, could
not have been the one which was absorbed into the Royal Physical in 1813.


the anniversary of the birthday of Dr. Harvey, and "to commemorate
the discovery of the circulation of the blood by the circulation of the
glass", was one of a number of convivial medical clubs which were formed
in the eighteenth century, the others being the Celsian, the Galenian,
and the Aesculapian. The Harveian Society and the Aesculapian, however,
were distinctive in that they both offered prizes "for an essay on
some scientific subject." This practice was begun by the Aesculapian,
which had been formed in 1773, and was continued successfully by the
Harveian when that society was officially organized on April 12, 1782.


2. For the Celsian and the Galenian, see History of the Harveian Society,
page 2. For the Aesculapian, see The History of the Aesculapian Club;
Rogers: Social Life in Scotland, Vol. 2, page 389; The Scotsman,
Wednesday, January 30, 1884, "Old Edinburgh Clubs - Medical Clubs";
and the Edinburgh Evening News, Wednesday, February 9, 1949, "Old
Dining Clubs:... exclusive Aesculapian."


4. Although there is a general agreement that the Harveian Society was
not established until 1782, there was an organization of the same
name in existence as early as 1780. See the Edinburgh Evening
Courant, Monday, April 17, 1780; and the Glasgow Mercury, April
13 - 20, 1780, Vol III, # 120. According the the author of the
History of the Harveian Society, (or the Harveian Club Record),
the prizes which were announced in these notices, were those being
offered by the Aesculapian Society under the name of the Harveian
Society, a name which that organization assumed for such purposes.
I take this to mean that although we find notices of a Harveian
Society in 1780, they actually applied to the Aesculapian. For
other accounts of the Harveian Society, see the following works:
Hume: Learned Societies and Printing Clubs, page 177; Duncan: An
Account of the Life, Writings, and Character, to the late Mr.
Alexander Monro, Secundus, Delivered as the Harveian oration in
Edinburgh, for the year 1818, by Andrew Duncan. (There are a
number of these orations in the collection of the Edinburgh Room
of the Edinburgh Public Library.); Caledonian Mercury, Saturday,
April 17, 1784, #9765; Edinburgh Magazine, or Literary Miscellany,
Vol. 7, April 1788, pages 53-56, (Appendix); and the Scots
The object of the prize essays was "to foster a spirit of experimental inquiry among students at the School of Medicine." The prize essays which were sponsored by the two organizations were as follows:

### List of Essays and Successful Candidates.

**1777.** On the best criterion for distinguishing Mucus as discharged by expectoration. Mr. Charles Darwin of Lichfield.

**1778.** An enquiry into the cause of the red colour of the blood. Dr. Edward Stevens from St. Croix.

**1779.** An experimental enquiry concerning the nature and properties of the coagulable lymph or gluten of the blood. Dr. Arthur Broughton from Bristol.

**1780.** An enquiry concerning the nature and properties of the serum of the blood. No dissertation of sufficient merit presented.

**1781.** An enquiry concerning the nature and properties of the bile. Mr. Jonathan Stokes of Worcester.

**1782.** An enquiry concerning the nature and properties of the milk. The judges not being agreed, two prizes were conferred, one on Mr. Richard Kentish of Yorkshire, and one on Mr. Samuel Ferris of Wiltshire.

**1783.** An enquiry concerning the nature and properties of the Peruvian bark, and the comparative powers of the red and quilled bark. Two prizes were given: one to Mr. Ralph Irving, and one to Mr. Thomas Skeete of Barbadoes.

**1784.** An experimental enquiry concerning the nature and properties of Ipecacuanha, concerning the comparative powers of different kinds of it and of different parts of the root. Mr. Ralph Irving from Langholm.

**1785.** An experimental investigation of the nature and properties of Opiuma; of its different constituent parts and of their effects on the human system. Mr. John Leigh from Virginia.

---

1. *Hume: Learned Societies*, page 177. Hume states that the society was instituted in 1752. This error is probably due to a mistaken reading of his notes on the society.

1766. An experimental enquiry into the nature and properties of the *Hyoscyamus Niger* of *Linnaeus*: its effect on the human system, the comparative power of different parts of the plant, and their use in the cure of disease. Mr. Benjamin Smith Barton of Philadelphia in Pennsylvania.

1767. An experimental enquiry concerning the chemical and medical properties of those substances called *Lithontriptics*, and particularly their effects on the human calculus. Mr. Joseph Pinto Azaredo of Brazil in South America.

1788. An enquiry into the nature and properties of the *Nicotiana Tabacum* of *Linnaeus*, into the different active constituent parts of this vegetable, their effects on the human body and their use in the cure of disease. No essay of sufficient merit received.

1789. An enquiry into the nature and properties of those medical products which are obtained from a combination of ardent spirit with acids. No essay of sufficient merit received.

1790. Same as 1788.

1791. An experimental enquiry concerning the nature and properties of *Camphor*. It does not appear that a prize was awarded on this occasion.

In the *Medical Commentaries* for 1795 it is stated that the custom of Prize Questions had been for some years interrupted, in consequence of particular circumstances, and that it was now proposed to resume the practice. The following questions were set for the ensuing six years.

1796. An experimental enquiry demonstrating the effect produced on the human body, in a state of health, by the cold bath, where the heat of the water is below seventy degrees: the diseases in which it may be employed with advantage: and the bad consequences which are to be dreaded from it in certain affections.

1797. An experimental enquiry demonstrating the effects produced on the human body, in a state of health, by the tepid bath, where the heat of the water is from 70 - 90 degrees in Fahrenheit's thermometer: the diseases in which it may be employed with advantage, and the bad consequences which are to be dreaded from it in certain states of the system.

1798. Question in the same terms concerning the effects of the hot bath, where the heat of the water is above 96° F.

1799. Similar question concerning the effects of the vapour bath.

1800. Similar question concerning the effects of the medicated vapour bath.
The prizes offered for the best essay were, as at first offered by
the Aesculapian, a cash sum of five guineas, but as the Aesculapian was
only a small organization, it found the financial burden too heavy, and
this was one reason for organizing the Harveian "with a wider membership."

The Harveian Society offered either a silver medal, or "a quarto edition
of Dr. Harvey's works." But the value of these prizes is not as
significant as the persons who won them. The list of prize essays clearly
demonstrates another aspect of the Period of Recognition, and that was
the growing reputation of the Edinburgh Medical School. Prize winners
came from England, the West Indies, Brazil, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.
The reputation of Scottish scientists and medical men, and the success
of their teaching, drew students from many countries.

The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to the three
incorporated learned societies which lend distinction to the closing
decades of the eighteenth century, the Society of Antiquaries, the
Royal Society of Edinburgh, and the Highland and Agricultural Society
of Scotland. It is interesting, and even curious, that the first society
to be distinguished by a Royal Charter should be a society of amateur
antiquarians. The Scots, however, as has been observed by Gregory Smith
in his Scottish Literature, its Character and Influence, have long

2. Ibid, page 17.
3. See the list of Prize Essays on pages 314 and 315, above.
4. "The number of Medical Graduations at Edinburgh, during the first
40 years of its School, was 188; during the last 40 years of the
Century, 1014; shewing an increase during the latter period of more
than 5 to 1." (Stroud): History of the Medical Society, page xlv, note.
evinced a strong antiquarian interest in the past:-

Like Captain Grose, the Scot has "Ta'en the antiquarian trade." It is another of those striking contrasts in character, that with the keenest appreciation of what is called, in blessed epithet, the "practical" value of things there is found such zeal for the things that are merely old. It is like finding a Yale lock on a thirteenth century aumbry. There is no relic-hunter and relic-worshipper like your Scot.... Scotland is a land of monuments, and in one of these is national sentiment commemorated so bravely as in this literary cairn, to which so many hands have contributed. Is there a parallel to be found in any other small country, or, in like proportion, in any of the greater? The good folk of Edinburgh could finish their Valhalla on the Calton Hill with the shelf-loads of quarto and octavo gatherings from every nook of Scottish history and literature, which the printing-clubs and learned societies of the east, west, and north have added to the labours of single-handed venturers. We say "history and literature," for though the Scot has been partial to political and personal history and has an unsatisfied craving for the mysteries of the "tribe of Macfungus," he has not forgotten the poets. The early issues of the Edinburgh Bannatyne Club and the Glasgow Maitland Club bear testimony to an interest already aroused by collectors and commentators like Ramsay, Hailes, and Pinkerton.

The antiquarian interest described in the passage above reached a high point shortly before the Society of Antiquaries received its charter, and, indeed, the incorporation of such a society was, in itself, an indication that considerable corporate enthusiasm had been excited. The intensity and effectiveness of the activities of the enthusiastic amateurs may be seen in the ridicule they excited. The Wig Club of Edinburgh, for example, published the following letter in the Edinburgh Evening Courant for Wednesday, February 21, 1781:-

1. Gregory Smith: Scottish Literature, page 47.

2. The "Printing Clubs" which became such a success in the nineteenth century, (See Terry: Scottish Historical Clubs, and the continuation of his subject by Matheson: Scottish Historical Clubs,), were in the air at this time, (i.e. 1780 - 1800), and to Lord Buchan goes the credit for the first suggestion for such an organization, (See Rogers: Social Life in Scotland, Vol. 2, page 102.) The same idea had occurred to John Pinkerton. See his Literary Correspondence, Vol. 1, page 163.
Sir, - I am informed from good authority that, among the many valuable remains of antiquity that will soon be presented to the Antiquarian Society, none will be more admired than that invaluable relic now in possession of the Wig Club. This precious ornament was a gift from Cleopatra, the wife of Ptolemy Dionysius, to her lover, Mark Anthony. She, observing that his Worship was become rather bald, assembled her handmaids together, in order to deliberate how this defect might be supplied; they resolved unanimously to furnish each a ringlet from their beautiful tresses to adorn the amorous chief. The council broke up; and the Wig was soon completed. The moment Anthony assumed this delightful covering, he felt a rejuvenescence which agreeably surprised Cleopatra; in short, he constantly wore it until the day preceding the fatal naval engagement of Actium which lost him the world - and his wig! It had been put on board a galley with some other baggage, and was carried by Augustus in triumph to Rome. It occasionally adorned the head of many an emperor, until Constantine, that pious Christian, removed the seat of Empire from Rome to Bysantium. He that year (viz. 328) made a present of it to the Bishop of Rome.

The wig, at this period, underwent as great a conversion as Constantine did himself; for the clergy maintained it to be the gift of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon. But I will not fatigue you with a minute detail of all the wonders it performed, after it came into possession of the Church. There it mostly remained till Pope Clement X. sent it as a bribe to our very amorous monarch, Charles II, who was so delighted with the present that I am afraid he ever afterwards was assound Catholic in his heart. Be that as it may, he wore it often, and never visited the Duchess of Portsmouth without it. His brother James seldom wore it, but always considered it as a holy relic, and at the Revolution carried it with him to France. There it remained until his grandson, Charles Edward, undertook the conquest of these kingdoms. It composed part of his Regalia, and accompanied him upon that expedition. Into whose hands it fell after the Battle of Culloden, with other matters, shall be the subject of a future discussion. - I am, etc.,

A. B. C.

Harry Cockburn, whose account of the Wig Club in his Old Edinburgh Clubs is excellent, explains what lay behind this rather strange letter:

Now this letter is interesting for several reasons; it shows
that the club was in possession of a somewhat extraordinary wig,
which we shall see presently had belonged to the Earl of Moray,
but it is obviously impossible that it could have been a wig
actually woven from the tresses of Cleopatra's hand-maidens, and
passing through so many vicissitudes for nearly eighteen hundred
years, as stated in the letter! Why, therefore, were the members
said, by A. B. C, to be so anxious to announce their intentions
of presenting it to the Society of Antiquaries? The reason
probably was that 'A. B. C.', the writer of the letter, was a
practical joker, anxious to delude this newly-formed society into
accepting a spurious antiquarian gift. The Society, founded in
1780, was in many ways unpopular, and was perhaps rather a laughing-
stock at the beginning of its career. So much was it in disfavour
that on their petitioning the King for a Royal Charter, (granted
in March 1785), the University, the Advocates' Library, and the
Philosophical Society actually presented counter-petitions praying
that it should not be granted on the ground that each of them
were quite capable of treasuring the antiquities of Scotland; requests
that were, however, ignored.

Notices of the Club appear in the Edinburgh Evening Courant for
November 9, 1776; December 1, 1779; Saturday, February 12, 1780;
Wednesday, March 8, 1780; Monday, April 3, 1780; Wednesday, June
21, 1780; Monday, January 29, 1781; and Wednesday, February 21,
1781. See also the Caledonian Mercury for Wednesday, January 28,
1784. The following letter, which appeared in the Edinburgh Evening
Courant for December 6, 1779, is not without interest.- "To the
Printer of the Edinburgh Evening Courant, Sir, - The natives of this
island, have often been accused by Foreigners, particularly the
French, of being unsociable; but I believe unjustly: witness the
numberless societies that meet under the denomination of Clubs.
There is hardly a village but has its club; at the same time, the
whimsical titles which they assume, and which they affected to be
distinguished by, strongly mark the character of the good people of
these kingdoms. I suppose the antiquarians a century hence will be
as much puzzled to discover the meaning of the different terms by
which these knots of men chose to distinguish themselves, as to
explain an Egyptian Hieroglyphic. Some of them, however, may be
understood; the Revolution Club all may comprehend: the Poker may
be guessed at; it is an instrument, typical of stiffness (even to
a proverb) or inflexibility; and occasionally serves to stir up a
flame: the Capillaire, I believe, was instituted in garrison at
Gibraltar, by a noble peer, remarkable for sobriety; they meet on
the first day of the week, to denote their piety; and drink syrup
of capillaire, deluted with water, to evince their sobriety. The
mysterious rites performed at the Wig Club I am ignorant of: I was
however, entertained yesterday, by the effect that the perusal of
an advertisement produced upon a young Frenchman, a prisoner here
upon his parole, and who understands English tolerably well. I
happened to place myself near him in the Coffeehouse, he had a
newspaper in his hand, which he soon threw down and exclaimed,
The Society of Antiquaries of Scotland was first proposed on 1
14th November, 1780, by the Earl of Buchan. According to William

"On Dieu c'est pour deroger de noblesse!" "What is the matter
mon ami?" says I; "See, See," replies he, with truly Gallic vivacity,
"here is a general officer president of a society of barbers; with
a m-lord monte en croupe." In fact, I saw a meeting of the Wig
Club advertised for the 6th of December. It was in vain that I
told him, the members were neither wig makers nor hair-dressers,
but gentlemen of rank and abilities. God help me, I might as well
have attempted to convince him that Augustus Van Keppel beat the
French fleet. I gave up the point; but could not help thinking
that our advertisements must occasion many such mistakes abroad,
and that we are considered as a nation of oddities. My French-
man made a quick transition to the Caledonian Hunt; and asked me if
we had any wild boars in this country. But, Mr. Printer, I shall
take up no more of your time at present, as I intend soon to send
you a well-digested history of clubs. I am, Sir, your constant
reader, Carolus." The Coul Club of Glasgow (1796) also had an

1. For accounts of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland see:

Smellie: Account of the Institution and Progress of the Society
of Antiquaries of Scotland: a second part of the History appeared
in 1784. See also Archaeologia Scotia, Vol. 5, Appendix, for the
history of the Society from 1784 - 1830, (Archaeologia Scotia
is the name of the publication of this Society as it was published
in 1831). See also: Kerr: Life of William Smellie, Vol. 1, pages
Wilson: Memorials of Edinburgh in the Olden Times, Vol. 1, page 233,
and Vol. 2, page 214; Kay: Portraits, Vol. 1, part 2, pages 211,
2, pages 86-87, 160, 162; Kincaid: History of Edinburgh, page 117 f.;
Lives of Eminent Scotsmen, by the Society of Ancient Scots, pages
143-144, Vol. 4; and Hume: Learned Societies, pages 16 and 179. A
great deal of information concerning the Society is contained in the
Scots Magazine. The issue for May, 1774, pages 268-9, contains an
article which reflects the growing antiquarian interest of the period;
December, 1780, pages 621-623, contains extracts from a "Discourse,
delivered by the Earl of Buchan, at a meeting for promoting the
institution of a society for the investigation of the History of
Scotland, and its Antiquities, November 14, 1780."; the same issue,
page 671, contains a list of officers of the new society; Buchan's
Discourse is contained in an Appendix to the Volume for 1780, pages
695-699; the number for January, 1781, pages 50-51, contains a
notice of a meeting; in the issue for May, 1782, page 241, appears
a letter to the Secretary of the Society which accompanied a copy
of Dr. Gilbert Stuart's History of Scotland which he sent as a gift
to the Society, (for Stuart, see page 331, below, and Chapter 8,
page 473.); November, 1782, pages 613 - 614, contains an Anniversary
Not many years have elapsed since the jealousies of the two nations were succeeded by a warm and mutual attachment to the same family and constitution. During this short period, however, it will be allowed, that the progress of the Scots, in every species of art and of science, has been rapid. Neither have the researches of the Antiquary, notwithstanding the many disadvantages he had to encounter, been altogether neglected. But the labours of individual Antiquaries, unassisted by powerful patronage, and deprived of proper repositories, have hitherto produced no great emolument to the public. They, however, excited a taste for inquiries of this nature, which, for some years past, has continued to diffuse itself over the nation.

Address by the Earl of Buchan; August, 1783, page 445, a notice of the incorporation of the Society; November, 1783, announced a present sent from the King of Denmark to the Society; and the Appendix to the Volume for 1783, pages 673 – 681, contains a copy of the petition to the King for a Charter, together with a memorial, (unfavourable), from the Principal and Professors of the University of Edinburgh, a "Letter from some of the Curators of the Advocates' Library," and a memorial from the Philosophical Society, together with the answering memorial from the Society of Antiquaries; the issue for October, 1784, pages 511 and 512, contains a "Letter from Lord Buchan, on the Antiquities of Scotland"; October, 1786, pages 469 – 471, an Address by Lord Buchan on the Death of Dr. Gilbert Stuart read before the Society; and, finally, an Appendix to the volume for 1787 contains "Extracts from a Discourse delivered by the Earl of Buchan, to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, on the 14th of November 1787, being the seventh anniversary of its institution." Notices of the Society also appear in the following places: Edinburgh Evening Courant, Saturday, December 23, 1780, and Monday, January 8, 1781; Edinburgh Magazine, or Literary Miscellany, Vol. 8, July, 1788, page 102; and Vol. 6, (new series), May 1795, page 325. The Society is also briefly mentioned in the following works: Dalzel: History of the University of Edinburgh, Vol. 1, memoir, page 89; Carlyle: Autobiography, page 229, note; Thomson: Scottish Man of Feeling, page 239; Boswell: Life of Johnson, Vol. 5, (Tour of the Hebrides), page 518, note; Irving: Lives of Scottish Poets, Vol. 1, page 406; Miller: Andrew Crozie, page 16; Curiosities of a Scots Charter Chest, page 123; Chambers: Traditions of Edinburgh, Vol. 1, pages 71, 83, and Vol. 3, (Walks in Edinburgh), page 184; and Tonge: Art of Scotland, page 49. There are a number of letters to Lord Buchan, one from Horace Walpole, in the Laing MSS. in the Library of the University of Edinburgh, (see the Historical MSS. Commission's report on the Laing MSS., Vol. 2, pages 509 f., and 515.).

In the ordinary progress of human affairs, it was soon perceived, that this taste for investigating the Antiquities of our country could not receive any adequate gratification without the aid of a public establishment. An association, accordingly, similar to that of the Antiquarian Society of London, was projected by several gentlemen of eminence and learning, some of whom had made private collections, and were anxious that these, and others which they knew to be scattered through the country, should be preserved in a secure and permanent repository. The time, they found, was now arrived, when such a society might be instituted, without any apprehension of those consequences to national union which had formerly subsisted. They considered, that some useful materials, which had been amassed by eminent Antiquaries, were now perishing in the possession of persons who knew not their value; that others, still existing in public libraries, depended upon the fate of single copies, and were subject to obliteration, to fire, and other causes of destruction; and that it was an object of national importance to bring all these, either in their original form, or by accurate transcript, into one great repository, which should be rendered accessible to the republic of letters.

Though these, and many other advantages, were to be derived from an institution of this nature, the project continued to be the subject of speculation only, till the Right Honourable the Earl of Buchan, zealous to have it carried into execution, invited the following noblemen and gentlemen to his house, where he explained, to such of them as attended, the general plan and intention of the proposed association.

Right Hon. Lord Hope.
Hon. Henry Erskine, Esq.
* Allan M'Connachie, Esq.
Hon. Lord Kames.
Hon. Lord Hailes.
* William Tytler, Esq.
* Hugo Arnot, Esq.
Sir John Dalrymple H.M. Bart.
David Erskine, Esq.
John Davidson, Esq.
Rev. Doctor Blair.
James Colquhoun, Esq.
* Mr. William Smellie.
Hon. James Erskine, Esq.
* Mr. James Cumming.
* Mr. John Salfour.
John Caw, Esq.
* Mr. John Williams.
James Boswell, Esq.

Sir James Steuart-Denham, Bart.
Mr. John Syme.
Hon. Mr. Baron Maule.
Sir William Forbes, Bart.
John Swinton, Esq.
* Andrew Crosbie, Esq.
Geo. Clerk Maxwell, Esq.
Sir James Foulis, Bart.
Rev. Doctor Henry.
* Charles Hay, Esq.
Mr. John M'Gowan.
* Alexander Wight, Esq.
Mr. George Paton.
Doctor Gilbert Stuart.
* Mr. William Creech.
Mr. Alexander Brown.
* Mr. Thomas Philips.
* Mr. John Donaldson.

* These members on the list attended the first meeting.
After explaining the purpose of the meeting he had called together, and the reasons for it, Lord Buchan read a discourse to the fourteen individuals who had assembled. This discourse, in typical Buchan style, is a long, maundering, affair which covers the antiquarian history of Scotland from the Roman conquest to the accession of King James VI. But parts of it are worth quoting as they give some indication of the motive and purpose of the proposed organization. Lord Buchan began his discourse as follows:

Gentleman,

It has long been a subject of regret, that no regular Society for promoting Antiquarian researches has subsisted in this part of Great Britain. I have used the liberty to sollicit your appearance here, with a view to the establishment of Regular Meetings at my house, or elsewhere, of such Persons, in this city and neighbourhood, as are attached to the Study of the Antiquities of Scotland.

Some apology will be expected, and it is really due from me, for having ventured to take the lead in a Literary Association of this nature. And, without any false or affected humility, I can express my being truly sensible of the superiority of many of my countrymen in the knowledge of the subject, for promoting inquiries into which we have here met together. I likewise know, that there are many persons much better qualified for suggesting a plan of a Regular Society for the investigation of the subject proposed, and for connecting it with inquiries into such articles as are of more extensive utility to the public. I beg leave, therefore, to sollicit the Gentlemen present to prepare their opinions on this subject for the next meeting. In the mean time, I shall take the liberty to throw out a few loose thoughts concerning what has been already done, and what yet remains to be explored, in the line of our Scottish History and Antiquities; to which I shall add the outlines of a plan for the institution of regular meetings for these pursuits, and suggest some of the various objects of inquiry which might be usefully brought within the compass of such an undertaking.

1. Smellie: Account of the Antiquarian Society, pages 4-5. Extracts from the Discourse were reprinted in the Scots Magazine, December, 1780, pages 621-623.
As a part of his Discourse, Lord Buchan proposed the following rules and regulations for the organization and governance of the new society:

1st. It is proposed that a Society be instituted, by the name of the Society of the Antiquaries of Scotland.

2nd. That such new members as may be added to the present association be elected by ballot: That St Andrew's day be appointed for the annual choice of the officers of the Society, if on a lawful day, and, if not, on the Tuesday which shall immediately follow that day: That the ordinary days of meeting shall be twice a month, on every other Tuesday, during the sitting of the Court of Session for the winter, which will make eight or nine ordinary meetings in the year, and one extraordinary: That the officers shall consist of a President, Vice Presidents, a Treasurer, and a Secretary, to be elected by ballot, both in the first instance, and hereafter.

3rd. That the proceedings of the Society be regularly entered by the Secretary, in a minute-book to be by him kept for that purpose; and that such communications as shall be made to the Society shall be ordered to be correctly copied for the use of the members, and the originals returned, if desired.

4th. That, on St Andrew's day, immediately after the business of choosing the officers is concluded, the Society shall, by ballot, choose a committee of seven of their number, being constituent and ordinary members, who shall, from time to time, prepare the communications which are received (and agreed to be made public by the authors) for the press; but that no expense shall arise to the Society from these publications, which must be undertaken by such associations among the members as shall think fit to publish them, and who shall have a joint profit from the sale of such volume or volumes of the Transactions; and, further, that the Society shall cause to be prefixed to each of these volumes of Transactions, as advertisement, intimating that they are not published by the authority, or in the name of the Society, any further than the mode of publication may imply.

5th. It is easy to perceive the inconvenience which would attend the institution of a Society of this nature, to be supported by certain fixed annuities, liable to be paid by the members, on pain of expulsion, as is enacted by the Society of Antiquaries at London. Such regulations could not fail of giving disgust to many useful and worthy members, who, from occasional non-residence in the capital, or the neighbourhood, or from neglect,
might fall into arrears, which accumulating, might frustrate the intention of small annual contributions for extraordinary charges attending the Society. The idea, the wish, and even the expectation of the proposer of this plan is, that, by the zeal and good will of some opulent lovers of their country, and of such commendable pursuits, a joint purchase, in the person of a trustee, will be made of a house for the use of the Society, where the Secretary would reside gratuitously, and where he would have the care of such books, records, and antiquities, as might accrue to the undertaking. A house of 750 or 800 pounds value, upon a neat, and as we Scotsmen choose of late to call it, a self-contained plan, and about 200 pounds for fitting it for the use and reception of the Society, would answer the purpose. As to the expenses attending lighting the room of meeting, the small dues of the house to the corporation or proprietor, and other little incidental expenses, a very small voluntary aid from the members would suffice, and would, I am persuaded, be no less cheerfully granted.

6to. It is proposed, that the number of ordinary and constituent members of the Society shall not exceed fifty; and that by them the officers, committees, and members, constituent, honorary, and correspondent, shall be chosen by ballot.

7mo. That the objects of the Society be the antient, compared with the modern state of the kingdom and people of Scotland; the antient manners, customs, numbers, territorial divisions; the geography, hydrography, chorography, and topography of the country; the antient state of agriculture, and antient unpublished manuscripts relating to that subject; the language of the antient inhabitants, with the limits of the different dialects; mines, minerals, fossils, natural productions of every kind, and a topographical mineral map of the coal country of Scotland; the antient dresses, amusements, and music of the people, and a complete collection of the undecorated, simple, melodious, or warlike airs of the Scots and Gauls; the privileges of the people; the King; his prerogatives, court, great officers of state, household, demesne lands, palaces, hunting seats, justice airs, genealogy, regalia, council of state, mint, and the royal standards thereof, together with the various collateral inquiries connected with the same; the assemblies of the great barons, afterwards called parliaments; the nobility, with their antient tenures; and the gentry, or lesser barons, with their tenures and lesser jurisdictions; association of man-rent; curious unpublished local conventions and customs; antient and curious deeds hitherto unpublished, from private as well as public repositories; private missive letters; weights and measures; antient prices of provisions, and regulations of market and police; seals of office or arms; noble sports and amusements; the antient castles, houses, and mote-hills of the nobility, greater and lesser; accounts of their families; biographical gleanings of illustrious persons, with drawings of their unengraved portraits, and proofs of their authenticity; the
army, or array of the great vassals of the crown; the courts of honour or of arms; tilts and tourneys, weapon-taking, and military exercises; the antient military weapons; the two-handed sword, the claymore, the burk, the spear, the shield, the Lochaber ax, the mace, the Jedburgh staff, and others; the church, its influence, revenues, laws, festivals, and illustrious members; its foundations, religious houses, churches, monuments, rubrick; drawings of unengraved remains of its antient magnificence; the arts and sciences; the first patrons of them in Scotland; drawings of the most antient specimens of the arts in Scotland; and, in general, every thing that may tend to compare our antient with our modern attainments.

"When the discourse was finished, Lord Buchan moved, that another meeting should be held at his house on Tuesday the 28th of November, to consider the propriety of forming a Society upon the plan suggested in the paper he had now read. This motion received an unanimous approbation."

The meeting held on 28th November, "after canvassing the utility of the proposed association, and the mode of its regulation," resolved to meet again on 18th December "in order to form... a regular and permanent body, under the designation of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland."

On the day appointed, the Society met in the Hall of the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge and elected the following officers:

President, the Right Honourable the Earl of Dute.
1st. Vice-President, the Right Honourable the Earl of Buchan.
2nd. Vice-President, Sir John Dalrymple-Hamilton W'Gill, Bart.
3d. Vice-President, John Swinton of Swinton, Esq.
4th. Vice-President, Alexander Wight, Esq.
5th. Vice-President, William Tytler of Woodhouselee, Esq.
Treasurer, Sir William Forbes of Ftsligo, Bart.
Secretary, Mr. James Cummyng.

The constitution which was adopted at this time was based largely on Lord Buchan's proposals. One aspect of the organization, however,

is worthy of special attention as it was not only a little unusual, but was a reflection of a widespread interest among the Scots in the development of their country, and also a definite anticipation of the work done so admirably by Sir John Sinclair in his Statistical Account of Scotland. Smellie has described this aspect of the Society of Antiquaries activities as follows:

...To excite a taste for Natural History among our countrymen, the following plan was printed and dispersed, by order of the Society, through the different parishes of Scotland.

Account of the Parish of A.

Section I. The situations and boundaries of the parish, geographically and topographically described, with the names, antient and modern, of the parish, and the principal places in it; the latitude, longitude, and number of acres in the parish; how watered, etc. accompanied by two maps, one geographical, and the other representing a bird view of it, with a delineation of the nature of the ground, the boundaries of the different baronies or estates, courses of mines and minerals, etc.; heights of hills, the quality of their rocks, and, when practicable, trace the succession of their strata. In the geographical map, the boundaries of city and borough property, royalties, commons, etc.; remains of antiquity, fields of battle, antient seats, antient churches and chapels, etc. These maps to be on a scale of three inches to a measured mile of 5280 feet.

Section II. Nature of the soils in the parish of A; size of the farms; state of agriculture; the mode of husbandry; the rent of land; ordinary endurance of leases; some particular clauses and prestation in them; the ordinary produce of the best land in the parish; prices of labour, provisions, and tools of husbandry; how are the women and children employed?

Are there any farming clubs? the extent of the villages; fairs, markets, customs, amusements, dresses where singular, plantations of wood, the price of timber, how conveyed to a market, how rendered more easily transported, what diseases infest the trees, what remedies applied.

The number of inhabitants, taken from actual survey. Proportion of the births to the burials for ten years past. An account of the improvements that have been carried on lately in the parish, and by whom.

Section III. State of the high roads, bridges, navigable canals, etc.; expences attending them; what tolls? what materials for repairing? statute labour what? give drawings of any remarkable bridges, etc.; how supported?

Section IV. Mines, minerals, and fossils; stone quarries; prices of stone, lime, marle, etc.

Coal-mines. Give an accurate account of the time and manner they have been wrought, by whom, and to what extent; number and thickness of seams, quality, dip, and rise; how trending; metals cut through in shafting; depths of pits; machinery used in draining them. All accompanied by subterraneous sections, sections, representing the state of the mine, quantity of coal sold annually, etc.

Iron, lead, copper, cobalt, and other minerals discovered, in the same accurate manner. Accompanying these descriptions with specimens of the different articles.

In all pits, wells, quarries, and other excavations, mark the successive strata from the surface to the bottom, describe the materials of which they consist, and measure their respective thickness. Examine, particularly, where lime-stone appears, whether there are any shell moulds of shells, or any regularly figured bodies, and mark the depths at which they are found. Observe, likewise, what pebbles, ores, or singular stones, occur in the beds of rivers, etc.

Section V. Police, trade, and manufactures; description of the nature and extent thereof, whether increasing, or otherwise; number of hands employed: fisheries, where any, to be particularly described, and the promoters of these to be particularly and honourably mentioned.

Section VI. The antiquities of the parish, with drawings of such as are any way remarkable; as churches, monuments, obelisks, engraved stones, antient arms, old castles, or fortifications; together with transcripts of any inscriptions that are curious, antient, or throw light upon particular events or genealogies.

Give a drawing of the church on a scale of ten feet to an inch, with an account of its foundation, antient name; chapels, succession of ministers till the revolution, and other particulars relating to ecclesiastical history.

Section VII. Miscellaneous observations may conclude the account of the parish; and it will be proper to take notice of any remarkable decorations in the parish of gentlemens seats, such as noble mansions, elegant gardens, uncommon trees or vegetables; curious portraits of illustrious or learned persons, and remarkable instances of longevity; of the salubrity or insalubrity of the climate; and, in general, of such matters as could not be properly
introduced into the former part of the work.

Accounts of the parishes in Scotland, properly given on such a plan, when deposited in the Museum of the Society, each account, with its accompaniments, being contained in a drawer or repository marked with the name of the parish, and the whole arranged alphabetically, would exhibit a noble and complete survey of this part of the united kingdoms, and enable any remote or collateral heir to an estate, who could not reap any advantage from his predecessor's experience and observation, to have access at once to every necessary elucidation toward the improvement of his property; and, at the same time, this collection would be a most interesting and useful national attainment.

This projected survey, which was later carried out by Sir John Sinclair in the last decade of the eighteenth century, was the final stage in the movement for national improvement. The survey was, in effect, an accounting of the progress which had been made during the Age of Improvement. It is interesting to observe that even at this closing stage, it was a corporate society which first undertook to evaluate the gains that had been made, largely through the efforts of "improving" societies, throughout the century.

---

1. Sir John Sinclair's *Statistical Account of Scotland, 1791 - 1799*, was not undertaken, so far as I am aware, under the auspices of any public society. But this lack of public control did not escape without criticism. "There have not been wanting different individuals, public spirited indeed, but perhaps of too sanguine dispositions, who, struck with the subserviency of parochial distinction to the advancement of both civil and natural history, have addressed letters to the different parishes in Scotland, and particularly the clergy, inviting them to correspondence on whatever might appear most curious and interesting in their respective divisions. These gentlemen do not reflect that there is no individual, however distinguished by genius, rank or fortune, or even by a happy or rare union of all these advantages, who can possible be considered by a whole nation, as a fit centre of such general co-operation.

"A permanent project, on experiment to be continued for ages, an exploration that embraces so wide a space and so many particulars within the circle, should be placed under the management of a permanent body, and the countenance and protection, as well as the control of the nation.
The Society of Antiquaries of Scotland were now well and truly launched, and its enthusiastic reception by the public, and the donations from private collectors, as described by Smellie, insured its success. The Society undoubtedly owed its existence more to Lord Buchan than to any other individual. This amateur antiquary and meddler in literary affairs is an interesting if not a very attractive figure. He had been, according to Thomas Somerville, a disappointment to his friends because of the rather unusual development of his talents, and it is true that his mode of thought appears to have been largely egocentric in an age when egocentricity was regarded as the most deadly of intellectual sins. One aspect of Lord Buchan's peculiar genius may be seen in the following address which he read before the Society of Antiquaries on the occasion of the Death of Gilbert Stuart:

"If we did not know from experience how prone literary societies are to become the heads of factions; and how academicians, with a preposterous vanity that reflects satire and disgrace on themselves, are sometimes more ambitious of the fellowship of titled than of learned men; it would naturally occur, that the administration of such a national academy, such a mass of continued experiment and observation as is proposed, could not be placed in better hands than in those of the Royal Society either of London, or Edinburgh, or perhaps a Select Committee appointed by both. That faction might be suppressed, the false vanity of academicians controlled, such honours and rewards as might be held forth to merit fairly adjudged, and justice in all points done to all, I would widen the basis of the literary republic, by forming a General Council to be chosen annually by Delegates from the Royal Society of Edinburgh, the University, the Royal Burghs, the Counties, and above all the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, on the individual exertion of whose members, the success of the scheme in question would chiefly depend." (Wet: Prospects and Observations, page 427 f.)


2. See Chapter 4, page 209, and note #1.

3. For a glimpse of Stuart's character see Chapter 8, page 473, and notes.
Substance of the Address in which Lord Buchan announced the Death of Dr. Gilbert Stuart to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.

Gentlemen,

I am sorry to be obliged to acquit myself of the melancholy duty of informing you, that our eminent associate, Dr. Gilbert Stuart, died at his father's house in Fisher-row, of a dropsy and deep decline, on the 13th of this month (August 1786).

It is fit that I should do honour to the memory of a man who was attached to this Society in its infancy, and was useful to it in its progress; and I shall acquit myself of this duty with pleasure, for I think myself peculiarly fortunate in being able either to praise or to censure without being suspected of partiality; and this happy posture I have obtained by having been the uniform friend of Learning where-ever I have found it, and by shunning the prejudice and the violence of party.

Dr. Gilbert Stuart, Gentlemen, was a man of great abilities and of high attainments; but he was unfortunate, and his misfortunes and his disappointments pressed upon his genius, his temper, and his character.

Is it possible that it could be otherwise? Shew me the man who is not irritated by insidious jealousy and opposition, and by losing the road to professional fame and fortune, and I will shew you that he is not worthy of your care.

It was Stuart's misfortune to miss a situation in the University of Edinburgh, for which he was highly qualified, and in which, I think, he would have outshone his associates. This disappointment drove him to display his talents at the expense of a group of our literary men in Scotland, who, by puffing one another, had contrived to damn every man of letters who was not willing to range himself under their standard.

These men bore down every thing before them, and forced their enemies either to leave the country, or to submit to be pointed at in the street, as literary Dracunculi.

How disagreeable is it to remember, that the good-natured Hume, whose classic works will be read after the memory of these little men, who abused his friendship, shall be completely washed away by the tide of time, was at the head of this despicable club?

2. Buchan refers here to the Select Society of Edinburgh, for which see Chapter 4, page 153 f.
The personality of Lord Buchan, and his attitude toward the Edinburgh literati, as revealed in the passage quoted above, was undoubtedly responsible for much of the opposition which the Society of Antiquaries met with when they petitioned for a Royal Charter on 21st May, 1782. As soon as it became known that the Society of Antiquaries had made its petition for a Royal Charter, three memorials were sent to the King requesting that the Charter be denied. One memorial, bearing the signature of William Robertson, was on behalf of the "Principal and Professors of the University of Edinburgh. Another, bearing the signature of William Cullen, was from the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh. And a third represented the objections of the Curators of the Advocates Library. All three memorials were prepared in December 1782. The Society of Antiquaries, in their reply to the memorials, wisely, and correctly, argued that although they "have the appearance of being three... they are really one." This was a recognition of the fact that the opposition to the Society of Antiquaries came from the Edinburgh literati, which was composed of the city's leading lawyers and judges, the Professors in the college, and the members of the Philosophical Society. The Society of Antiquaries, therefore, answered all three memorials with the same arguments.

It had been argued by the University, and seconded by the Curators of the Advocates Library and the members of the Philosophical Society, that the new society was unnecessary, that it threatened the privileges of the University, and that their own plan for a society which would

"have for its object all the various departments of Science, Erudition, and Belles Lettres," to be called the Royal Society of Scotland, was preferable. To this the Antiquarins replied that as their society already existed, it was to be assumed that there was a need and a place for it in Scottish intellectual affairs. They rejected the University's claim that the country was "too narrow" to support two such societies, and denied that they had any intention of violating the privileges of the University's monopoly of teaching certain subjects. As for the alternative plan for a Royal Society of Scotland, they found that they themselves had some objections to it:

The Society of the Antiquaries of Scotland mean not to insinuate any objection against the erection of this new-projected Society. They may be indulged, however, with a single remark. The University admit the good intentions of the Antiquarian Society; and the liberality of the public has insured it success. The University likewise admit, that our limited plan comprehends two material branches of their more general and diffused project. Let the University, in these circumstances, answer the following query: Why is the Antiquarian Society, which includes antiquities and natural history, not comprehended as a branch of the intended Royal Society? Besides, this magnificent project of a Royal Society was never heard of till the Antiquarian Society had subsisted for near two years. It is much to be suspected, my Lord, that the scheme was invented by a few members of the University, for the sole purpose of giving a decent colour to an opposition which appears to have been dictated by an ill-founded jealousy.

The final outcome of this exchange of rather petty jealousy and conflict of personalities was that the Society of Antiquaries received their Charter on 29th March, 1785, and that the literati then immediately applied for a Charter for their own projected institution, and the

Royal Society of Edinburgh was incorporated 29th March, 1783, and held its first meeting on 23rd June of that year.

The Royal Society of Edinburgh, which, as we have just seen, was the rather negative result of the activities of the Society of Antiquaries, was an obvious continuation and culmination of the activities of the Philosophical Society. Shortly before the Royal Society of Edinburgh was formed, the Philosophical began to show signs of renewed vigour. This new burst of activity on the part of the members of the Philosophical Society led to the establishment of a small club which is not without interest. An account of this organization, which bore the name of an earlier society in which William Smellie and others were active, is as follows:

In the year 1778, a new society was instituted under the name of the Newtonian Club, which appears to have been in some measure connected with the Philosophical Society, the original of the present Royal Society of Edinburgh. The members of this new society were Dr. Andrew Duncan, senior, present Professor of the Institutes of Medicine; Dr. James Gregory, present Professor of the Practice of Medicine; Dr. Daniel Rutherford, present Professor of Botany; Dugald Stewart, Esq. emeritus Professor of Moral Philosophy; Mr. James Russell, present Professor of Clinical Surgery; all in the University of Edinburgh: Dr. Andrew Wardrop, Surgeon in Edinburgh; Alexander Keith, Esq. of Kebalston; the late Dr. John Hope, Professor of Botany in the University; the late Dr John Gardiner, Physician in Edinburgh; and the late Mr. William Smellie was Secretary. Of this club or society nothing is now particularly known, except by the two following short entries in their sederunt book, now in the hands of Mr. Alexander Smellie:

1. Cleig: Life of Robertson, page lx. Chambers: Traditions of Edinburgh, (walks in Edinburgh), Vol. 3, page 41 makes the very curious statement that "the Royal Society was instituted in 1718, by the masters of the High School of Edinburgh, and Mr. Thomas Ruddiman, whose reputation as a scholar must be familiar to every stranger."


3. See page 338, below.

Edinburgh, 7th May 1778.

Sederunt:— Dr. Andrew Duncan.
       Dr. Andrew Wardrop.
       Mr. James Russell.
       Mr. William Smellie.

At this meeting Dr. Duncan was chosen president, and Mr. Smellie secretary. It was then resolved that every member of the Philosophical Society may, on or before next meeting, become a member of the Newtonian Club, if they choose to apply; and that regulations should afterwards be formed for the admission of future members, and for the proper management of the club.

June 18th 1778.

Sederunt:— Mr. James Russell, elected President.
       Dr. Andrew Wardrop.
       Mr. Alexander Keith.
       Mr. Andrew Duncan.
       Mr. William Smellie, Secretary.

The meeting adopted the following regulations, under the name of

Laws for the Newtonian Club.

1. That as a multiplicity of laws has a direct tendency to produce confusion instead of order, it is resolved to limit their number as much as possible.

2. That no person be admitted unless he be a member of the Philosophical Society.

3. That the number of members shall never exceed twenty.

4. That one black ball shall exclude any candidate; and if only one black ball, there shall be a reballot.

5. The Newtonian Club shall meet immediately after the dismissal of every meeting of the Philosophical Society.

6. That, as this club consists entirely of Philosophers, it would therefore be ridiculous to make any laws for its internal police.

The revived activities of the Philosophical Society had also a direct bearing on the movement of interest in the direction of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, and was, in fact, largely responsible for
the resolution among the Edinburgh literati to establish their own incorporated society. In its official history, the Royal Society of Edinburgh traces its descent from the Philosophical Society:


The institution of societies of learned men who have united their labours for the cultivation of philosophy or of literature, is of an ancient date in several polished nations of Europe. It is, however, for the honour of Great Britain to have set the first example of an institution for these purposes, incorporated by charter from the Sovereign, and carrying on its researches under his patronage. A hint of this kind, to the Prince then reigning, is found in the works of Lord Bacon, who recommends, as one of the opera vera basilica, the establishment of Academies or Societies of learned men, who should give, from time to time, a regular account to the world of their researches and discoveries. It was the idea of this great philosopher, that the learned world should be united, as it were, in one immense republic, which, though consisting of many detached states, should hold a strict union, and preserve a mutual intelligence with each other, in every thing that regarded the common interest. The want of this union and intelligence he laments as one of the chief obstacles to the advancement of science; and, justly considering the institution of public societies, in the different countries of Europe, under the auspices of the Sovereign, to be the best remedy for that defect, he has given, in his fanciful work of the New Atlantis, the delineation of a Philosophical Society, on the most extended plan, for the improvement of all arts and sciences; a work which, though written in the language and tinctured with the colouring of romance, is full of the noblest philosophic views. The plan of Lord Bacon, which met with little attention from the age in which he lived, was destined to produce its effect in a period not very distant. The scheme of a Philosophical College, by Cowley, is acknowledged to have had a powerful influence in procuring the establishment of the Royal Society of London, by charter from Charles II.; and Cowley's plan is manifestly copied, in almost all its parts, from that in the New Atlantis. The institution of the Royal Society of London was soon followed by the establishment of the Royal Academy of Sciences at Paris; and these two have served as models to the Philosophical Academies of highest reputation in the other kingdoms of Europe.

In Scotland, similar associations for the advancement of science and of literature have, even without the benefit of Royal Patronage, and with no other support than the abilities of their members, attained to no common degree of reputation.

In Edinburgh, a Society was instituted in 1731, for the improvement of medical knowledge, by collecting and publishing Essays and Observations on the various branches of Medicine and Surgery, written by the members themselves, or communicated to them. The Secretary of this Society was the elder Dr. Alexander Monro, the first professor of Anatomy in the University of Edinburgh, and the founder of the medical school which has since attained to such eminence and celebrity. Under his care, the transactions of this Society were published at different periods, in five volumes 8vo., with the title of Medical Essays and Observations, etc.; a work which has undergone many editions which has been translated into many foreign languages, and is honoured with the encomium of Haller, as one of the most useful books in the sciences of Medicine, Anatomy, and Surgery.
Soon after the publication of the above-mentioned volumes of Medical Essays, viz. in 1739, the celebrated Mr. Maclaurin, Professor of mathematics in the University of Edinburgh, conceived the idea of enlarging the plan of this Society, by extending it to subjects of philosophy and Literature. The institution was accordingly new-modelled by a printed set of laws and regulations, the number of members was increased, and they were distinguished, from that time, by the title of The Society for Improving Arts and Sciences, or, more generally by the title of The Philosophical Society of Edinburgh. They chose for their President James Earl of Morton, afterwards President of the Royal Society of London; Sir John Clerk of Pennycuik, one of the Barons of Exchequer, and Dr. John Clerk, were elected vice-presidents; and Mr. Maclaurin and Dr. Plummer Secretaries of the institution. The ordinary members were some of the most distinguished men of letters in Scotland at that time.

A few years after the Society had received its new form, its meetings were interrupted, for a considerable space of time, by the disorders of the country during the rebellion in 1745; and no sooner was the public tranquillity re-established, than it suffered a severe loss by the death of Mr. Maclaurin, whose comprehensive genius, and ardour in the pursuits of science peculiarly qualified him for conducting the business of an institution of this nature. The meetings of the Society, however, were renewed about the year 1752; and the new Secretaries, who were the celebrated Mr. David Hume and Dr. Alexander Kunro junior, were directed to arrange and prepare for the press such papers as were judged worthy of being submitted to the public eye. The first volume of the Transactions of the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh was accordingly published in 1754, under the title of Essays and Observations Physical and Literary; the second volume was published in 1756, and the third in 1771.

It has always been observed, that institutions of this kind have their intervals of languor, as well as their periods of bhilliency and activity. Every associated body must receive its vigour from a few zealous and spirited individuals, who find a pleasure in that species of business, which, were it left to the care of the members in general, would be often reluctantly submitted to, and always negligently executed. The temporary avocations, and, still more, the deaths of such men, have the most sensible effect on the societies to which they belonged. The principle of activity which animated them, if not utterly extinguished, remains long dormant, and a kindred genius is required to call it forth into life.

From causes of this kind, the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh, though its meetings were not altogether discontinued, appears to have languished for some time, till about the year 1777, when its meetings became more frequent, and, from the uncommon zeal and distinguished abilities of the late Henry Home, Lord Kames, at the time elected President of the institution, its business was conducted with renewed ardour and success.
About the end of the year 1782, in a meeting of the professors of the University of Edinburgh, many of whom were likewise members of the Philosophical Society, and warmly attached to its interests, a scheme was proposed by the Reverend Dr. Robertson, Principal of the University, for the establishment of a new Society on a more extended plan, and after the model of some of the foreign Academies, which have for their object the cultivation of every branch of science, erudition, and taste. It appeared an expedient measure to solicit the Royal Patronage to an institution of this nature, which promised to be of national importance, and to request an establishment by charter from the Crown. The plan was approved and adopted; and the Philosophical Society, joining its influence as a body, in seconding the application from the University, his Majesty was most graciously pleased to incorporate the Royal Society of Edinburgh by charter.

The first general meeting of the Royal Society of Edinburgh was held, in terms of that charter, on Monday the 25th day of June 1785, and the Right Hon. Thomas Miller of Barskimming, Lord Justice Clerk, was chosen President of the meeting.

It was then unanimously resolved, that all the members of the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh should be assumed as members of the Royal Society: And it was likewise resolved, that the Lords of Council and Session, the Barons of Exchequer for Scotland, and a select number of other gentlemen, should be invited to a participation of the Society's labours.

At the second general meeting, the Secretary gave in a list of those noblemen and gentlemen who had accepted of the invitation to become members. He also informed the meeting, that he had been directed by the Vice president and members of the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh to deliver their minute-book, and all such dissertations and papers as were in their Secretary's hands, to the Royal Society. The minute-book and papers were accordingly received, and given in charge to the General Secretary.

The Royal Society of Edinburgh, after the fashion of the Continental societies upon which it was patterned, was originally a literary society not only in the eighteenth-century sense of the term, but in the twentieth-century sense as well. By this I mean that one phase of its activities from

1. Small: Adam Fergusson, page 42; "ae: Adam Smith, page 375; and Gleig: Life of Robertson, (prefixed to Robertson's History of Scotland), page lix.

2. The reader will recall, from Chapter 1, page 2 and following, that to the eighteenth-century mind, a "literary society" was any institution devoted to intellectual pursuits.
1782 to 1800 was entirely devoted to literary interests, and it was only after the end of the eighteenth century that the Royal Society became what it is today, predominantly a scientific organization. The original plan of the Society was that it should consist of two groups, and, after the fashion of the Philosophical Society from which it developed, the Royal Society designated these divisions as Physical and Literary. The Literary section, which is of primary interest here, was intended to cover "literature, philology, history, antiquities, and speculative philosophy." The two sections met separately under the chairmanship of one of their four presidents, and each confined their inquiries to the subjects of their branch of learning. The meetings of the Literary group were small and informal, and in them we may see the Edinburgh literati at their time honoured occupation of exchanging information in a corporate literary association. There is a pleasant anecdote which gives us an intimate glimpse into one of

1. "The Society at the outset was divided into two classes, one of which, the Literary Class, had for its department 'literature, philology, history, antiquities, and speculative philosophy.' That class ceased to appear after Vol. 4 of the Transactions, (1798)." (Terry: Scottish Historical Clubs, page 137.) "The subjects treated of and the character of the members were formerly of two kinds, Physical and Literary; but from the scarcity of Literary communications, the division has been abandoned." (Hume: Learned Societies, page 170.) See also Chapter 1, page 3; Thompson: Scottish -an of Feeling, page 286; Rae: Adam Smith, page 375; Lockhart: Life of Scott, Vol. 5, page 290; Forbes: Beattie and his Friends, page 198; and Schmitz: Hugh Blair, pages 26 and 118.

2. "(Adam) Smith was one of the four presidents of the literary class." (Rae: Adam Smith, page 375.) "On 17th November the literary class held its first meeting. Blair was elected one of the four presidents in charge of the literary half of the society. The others were Ilay Campbell, Dr. Robertson, and Lord Blicock." (Schmitz: Hugh Blair, page 118.)
these meetings. The story is told by Samuel Rogers who, on a visit to Edinburgh in 1789, attended a Royal Society meeting with his host Adam Smith:-

We (Adam Smith, Henry Mackenzie, and James Hutton) went to the Royal Society. Only seven persons there. Dr. Anderson read an essay on Debtors and the revisions of the laws that respect them, written by himself, very long and dull. Mr. Commissioner Smith fell asleep. Mackenzie touched my elbow and smiled.

One of the activities of the literary class of the Royal Society was of special significance in this period of recognition. Until well past the end of the century, "it was customary to give in their Transactions the lives of deceased members who (had) attained distinction by their works." This practice was, in effect, the second aspect of recognition which the Royal Society could at that time give to Scottish men of letters. Membership itself was a token of merit, and the preparation of a competent biography for its outstanding members was the best kind of recognition of accomplishment that such a society could give. The best examples of the Royal Society's biographies are probably those written by Dugald Stewart who prepared Lives for William Robertson, Adam Smith, and Thomas Reid. In his preface, Stewart tells his readers of the motives behind the biographies:-


2. Broughan: Lives of Men of Letters, Vol. 1, page 312. Compare the following:-- "It has been the custom of this society to commemorate, by memoirs or biographical notices, recorded in its Transactions, the most eminent of its deceased members - a custom which serves to gratify the feelings of friendship, as well as that curiosity naturally felt by the world to become acquainted with the pursuits, occupations, and habits of men who have distinguished themselves in the commonwealth of letters." (Hogg's Instructor, Vol. 8, 1852, p. 46.)

3. Stewart: Life of Smith, Robertson, Reid, Preface.
The three Memoirs contained in this Volume, were written in compliance with a practice, which, after the example of some foreign Academies, the founders of the Royal Society of Edinburgh were anxious to introduce at the time of its first establishment. In forming this design, they indulged the hope of being able, not only to preserve, in their Transactions, such notices with respect to the lives of their more distinguished Colleagues, as might be of use to future Biographers; but to record, while facts were yet recent, and recollections lively, the impressions which their characters and manners had left on the memory of their surviving friends.

But biography was not the only contribution which the Royal Society made to literature in its early days. Alexander Carlyle, for example, was instrumental in rediscovering a lost ode by Collins on the Superstitions of the Highlands, and for reintroducing it to the world through the medium of the Royal Society's Transactions. The circumstances of this literary find have been described by John Hill Burton in his continuation of Carlyle's Memoirs as follows:

"On the establishment of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1785, Carlyle made, through its Transactions, a very acceptable gift to literature. Johnson, in his Life of Collins, referred to the loss of an ode on the Superstitions of the Highlands, which Dr. Warton and his brother had seen, and "thought superior to his other works, but which no search has yet found." A poem so wild and sweet - so far beyond the bounds of the conventionalities of the day, and so full of imagery drawn direct from nature in her highest and most wayward flights - was not likely to be quite forgotten by any one who had seen it. Carlyle remembered having read it in 1749 with Home, to whom it was addressed, and John Barrow, who had been one of Home's fellow-prisoners in Doune Castle. After a search, Carlyle found the actual manuscript of the ode in an imperfect state. He and Henry Mackenzie set themselves to filling up the lacunae, and presented it in a complete shape to the Royal Society. Soon afterwards the ode was published from what was said to be an original and complete copy, which of course deviated from the other on the points where Carlyle and Mackenzie had completed it. This copy was, however, printed anonymously, and its accuracy has not passed unsuspected. The editor of Pickering's edition of Collins says: "The Wartons, however, had read and remembered the poem, and the anonymous

editor dedicated the ode to them, with an address. As this called forth no protest from the Wartons, it is to be presumed that they acknowledged the genuineness of the more perfect copy; and it has for that reason, though not without some hesitation, been adopted for the text of this edition."

This method of recovering "lost" poems had its dangers. Henry Mackenzie, who had assisted Carlyle in restoring Collins's ode, also read before the Society "some stanzas which he passed as written by Burns in a fit of indignation at the wood on the river Nith being cut down by the Duke of Queensberry." This jeu d'esprit, however, became rather more serious than Mackenzie had intended. "On being told that (Dr. Currie) proposed inserting those verses in a new edition of Burns, I thought it right to undeceive him as to their author. To my letter containing the real state of the matter the Doctor wrote a very kind and complimentary answer, and it procured me his acquaintance and correspondence."

Mackenzie's contributions, however, were not all of so frivolous a nature, as his biographer Harold W. Thompson has related:

But far more important than (the discovery of Collins's ode) was the discovery recorded in Mackenzie's Account of the German Theatre, read before the Society on 21 April 1788 and subsequently published in the second volume of the Society's Transactions, Papers of the Literary Class, pages 154 to 192.

This enthusiastic praise seems to have begun the real appreciation of German literature in Britain. In his German Influence in the English Romantic Period, the most recent study of the subject and the best, Mr. F. W. Stokoe follows a General Introduction with an entire chapter entitled Henry Mackenzie's Lecture, a chapter which develops the theory stated in the Preface, that Mackenzie's paper "marks conveniently for our purpose the beginning of a new era in the relations of the English public to German literature, and

2. Ibid.
helped, no doubt, to hasten the change. Other contributing factors are easily to be found, of course; there is particularly the growing distrust of France in the period of Revolution, the increasing importance and power of Prussia, the alliance against "hauty Gaul". So that when Mackenzie's Account was copied into magazines there was already a public in Britain willing to learn of German excellence. The chief preparation for German romanticism, however, as has been shown, was the British sentimental movement plus Scottish curiosity.

Walter Scott told Lockhart how Mackenzie's paper started him on his literary career and set a number of young men to studying German with a Dr. Willich, who conducted a class in Edinburgh between 1792-4. Scott's own earliest translations from German did not appear until 1796, but two of the older Scottish literati preceded him in publication. In 1792 Alexander Fraser Tytler brought out his translation of Die Rauber, with handsome acknowledgement to Mackenzie's paper; the Fourth London edition of this translation, that of 1800, has an advertisement by the publishers attacking another translation by the Rev. William Render, and states that Tytler's had had no less than three "editions" in London and three in Dublin.

Henry Mackenzie, who "was specially honoured with the duty of preparing the early volumes of the Transactions of both classes" of the Royal Society, was also a leading member of another organization which, though it may strike the reader as being difficult to imagine as being of a similar nature as the Royal Society and the Society of Antiquaries, also had literary interests. This society, the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland, was organized in 1784, and Henry Mackenzie was one of its founding members, and "wrote the introduction for its Prize Papers and Transactions, and besides many other services headed the committee which in 1805 rendered a famous Report on the authenticity of MacPherson's Ossian." Mackenzie's

1. For a description of the publications of the society in the eighteenth century, see Terry: Scottish Historical Clubs, page 157.

connection with the Highland Society, and the general situation which
brought the Society into existence, has been ably described by his
biographer Thompson:

At about the time when Mackenzie was helping to found the "Loyal
Society of Edinburgh, before which his paper on the German drama
was read, he was a leading spirit in establishing the Highland
Society of Scotland, which represents his other chief discovery
of the time. The important contributions of the Highlands to
Scotland's Golden Age have been stated well by Lecky: "The union
between the highlands and lowlands was perhaps an even greater
influence on Scottish national life and character than the union
of Scotland and England. The Highlands brought a strain of
romance to blend with the logic, and a temper of loyalty to colour
the passion for liberty of the Lowland Scotch; and the mixed
genius of the Scottish people, which curiously united the
sentimental with the practical, is largely the result of this
blending and colouring!"

1. Thompson: A Scottish Man of Feeling, page 293 f. For other accounts
of the Highland Society see the following works:— Ramsay: History
of the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland; A. M. Mackenzie:
Scotland in Modern Times, page 45 f.; and Grant: Old and New Edinburgh,
vol. 1, page 294. The Scots Magazine contains a great deal of detailed
information as the following chart serves to indicate:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Page(s)</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 1785</td>
<td>105-108</td>
<td>premiums offered by the Society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 1786</td>
<td>409-410</td>
<td>report of a general meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 1789</td>
<td>409-410</td>
<td>report of a general meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1790</td>
<td>489</td>
<td>report of the Society's committee on Shetland wool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1791</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>report of a general meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 1792</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>list of premiums distributed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1794</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>report of a general meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1794</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1795</td>
<td>64-65</td>
<td>do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1795</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 1796</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1796</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1797</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1797</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1798</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1798</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1798</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1799</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1799</td>
<td>491-492</td>
<td>do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 1799</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>notice of prize competition in piping.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Now though the Celtic Revival in letters began to flourish in Mackenzie's boyhood, the Highland Celts themselves were in wretched condition. The old hereditary jurisdictions were annulled after the '45, and the kilt was proscribed; for a time there was such harrying by the brutal Cumberland that even the Lowland Whigs protested. The elder Pitt's wisdom and magnanimity in enlisting Highland troops for his campaigns removed a little of the economic pressure from a region where every year 10,000 men enlisted in the army as the only escape from starvation. But the almost total failure of crops in the Highlands in 1762 brought matters to a head, and in the following year men like Mackenzie decided upon an organization which has proved of the utmost practical value, not only to the Highlands but to the Lowlands as well, and to the cause of scientific agriculture throughout the world. In Canada to-day and in the United States we are profiting still from the founding of the Highland Society of Scotland in February 1784.

In the first volume of the Society's Prize Essays and Transactions, not published until 1799, Mackenzie as editor gives the principal objects of its founders:

1. An inquiry into the present state of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, and the condition of their inhabitants.
2. An inquiry into the means of their improvement, by establishing towns and villages — by facilitating communication through different parts of the Highlands of Scotland, by roads and bridges — advancing agriculture, and extending fisheries — introducing useful trades and manufactures — and, by an exertion to unite the efforts of the proprietors, and call the attention of Government towards the encouragement and prosecution of these beneficial purposes.
3. The Society shall also pay a proper attention to the preservation of the language, poetry, and music of the Highlands.

The idea of a society devoted to the interests of the Highlands and its inhabitants was not new. A charitable organization, which bore the title of the Highland Society of Glasgow, was established in January 1727. The Highland Society of London, instituted in 1778,

See also the Edinburgh Magazine, or Literary Miscellany, Vol. 13, January 1791, page 83; Vol. 14, July 1791, pages 84-85; and Vol. 11, (new series), April 1798, page 255; for reports of general meetings.

had held the first of its many bagpipe competitions in Scotland at Falkirk in 1781, and the Gaelic Club in Glasgow, established in 1780 by charter from the London Highland Society, had already been established by the highland gentlemen of Glasgow "to remind them of Ossian, the melodious and noble prince of poets, as well as to converse as friends in the bold and expressive language of heroics in ages past."

In keeping with this interest in Highland traditions, and as a fulfillment of their resolve to "pay proper attention to the preservation of the language, poetry, and music of the Highlands, the Highland Society, soon after its institution, appointed "a bard, a piper, and a Professor of the Gaelic language." These efforts were followed up by essays on the Gaelic language, and the project of preparing a Gaelic dictionary. And the Society did not neglect the great issue of the day, the question of the authenticity of the poems of Ossian. Shortly after MacPherson's

---


4. Ibid.

5. Ibid, page 152 f. For the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland and the Ossian controversy see the following works:- Report of the
death, Henry MacKenzie proposed a motion, which was accepted, that the Society should "recommend to the Committee of directors, to take such measures as shall to them seem most proper and effectual for elucidating and ascertaining the History and Authenticity of the Poems of Ossian."

What followed upon this resolution is perhaps best presented in the words of the historian of the Society:

Ussian Inquiry.

The same spirit which led the Society to appoint the bard and the Professor of Gaelic induced it to assent to an inquiry, by a Committee of its members, regarding the Poems of Ossian. The poems issued by Macpherson in 1762, 1766, and 1765, had been read with avidity and translated into various European languages, but their authenticity, as is well known, was loudly questioned by Dr. Johnson, David Hume, Malcolm Laing, and others. The resolution authorising the inquiry was adopted at a meeting in July 1797, a year after the death of Macpherson, at a time, therefore, when a semi-official inquiry could be made without reference to personal feeling. The question submitted to the Committee was of a two-fold character. The Committee itself defines the inquiry to be first, "What poetry, of what kind, and of what degree of excellence, existed anciently in the Highlands, and which was generally known by the denomination of Ossianic, from its universal belief that its author was Ossian, the son of Fingal; and secondly, how far the collection of such poetry, published by Macpherson, was genuine? The Committee issued circulars containing queries which were addressed to such persons in the Highlands and Islands as seemed likely to afford information regarding the poems. It also obtained from Dr. Blair some correspondence he had had with various persons when instituting a like investigation. The report, which

---


is from the pen of the Chairman of the Committee, Mr. Henry Mackenzie, is a most elaborate document, and must have entailed a great deal of labour in its preparation. Owing to its length, it was not given in the Society's Transactions, but was published separately in 1805. It fills an octavo volume of upwards of 300 pages, of which one-half consists of an appendix of documents and correspondence.

It is unnecessary here to enter on the argument of the report, which is almost judicial in its impartiality; but the conclusions at which the Committee arrived may be stated. With respect to the first branch of the inquiry - the existence in the Highlands of poetry known as Ossianic - the Committee states "with confidence that such poetry did exist; that it was common, general, and in great abundance; that it was of a most impressive and striking sort, in a high degree eloquent, tender, and sublime." The second question, as to "how far the collection of such poetry published by Mr. James Macpherson, is genuine," the Committee observes "it is much more difficult to answer." It goes on to say - "The Committee is possessed of no documents to show how much of his collection Mr. Macpherson obtained in the form in which he has given it to the world. The poems and fragments of poems which the Committee has been able to procure, contain often the substance, and sometimes almost the literal expression (the ipsissima verba), of passages given by Mr. Macpherson, in the poems of which he has published the translations. But the Committee has not been able to obtain any one poem the same in title and tenor with the poems published by him. It is inclined to believe that he was in use to supply chasms, and to give connection, by inserting passages which he did not find, and to add what he conceived to be dignity and delicacy to the original composition, by striking out passages, by softening incidents, by refining the language, in short, by changing what he considered as too simple or too rude for a modern ear, and elevating what in his opinion was below the standard of good poetry. To what degree, however, he exercised these liberties, it is impossible for the Committee to determine. The advantages he possessed, which the Committee began its inquiries too late to enjoy, of collecting from the oral recitation of a number of persons, now no more, a very great number of the same poems, on the same subjects, and then collating those different copies or editions, if they may be so called, rejecting what was spurious or corrupted in one copy, and adopting from another something more genuine and excellent in its place, afforded him an opportunity of putting together what might fairly enough be called an original whole, of much more beauty, and with much fewer blemishes, than the Committee believes it now possible for any person, or combination of persons, to obtain.

The Ossian controversy has long been a dead issue, but it would perhaps be well to record at this point the conclusions of Sir Walter Scott who was, on this score, as reasonable as he was in most things.
In recording his opinion of the authentic nature of the poems, Sir Walter wrote:

Ossian's poems, in particular, have more charms for youth than for a more advanced stage. The eternal repetition of the same ideas and imagery, however beautiful in themselves, is apt to pall upon a reader whose taste has become somewhat fastidious; and, although I agree entirely ... that the question of their authenticity ought not to be confounded with that of their literary merit, yet scepticism on that head takes away their claim for indulgence as the productions of a barbarous and remote age; and, what is perhaps more natural, it destroys that feeling of reality which we should otherwise combine with our sentiments of admiration. As for the great dispute, I should be no Scottishman if I had not very attentively considered it at some period of my studies; and, indeed, I have gone some lengths in my researches, for I have beside me translations of some twenty or thirty of the unquestioned originals of Ossian's poems. After making every allowance for the disadvantages of a literal translation, and the possible debasement which those now collected may have suffered in the great and violent change which the Highlands have undergone since the (collection) of Macpherson, I am compelled to admit that incalculably the greater part of the English Ossian must be ascribed to Macpherson himself, and that his whole introductions, notes, etc., are an absolute tissue of forgeries.

Besides, there is something in the severe judgment passed on my countrymen — "that if they do not prefer Scotland to truth, they will always prefer it to enquiry," When once the Highlanders had adopted the poems of Ossian as an article of national faith, you would far sooner have got them to disavow the Scripture than to abandon a line of the contested tales. Only they all allow that Macpherson's translation is very unfaithful, and some pretend to say inferior to the original; by which they can only mean, if they mean any thing, that they miss the charms of the rhythm and vernacular idiom, which pleases the Gaelic natives; for in the real attributes of poetry, Macpherson's version is far superior to any I ever saw of the fragments which he seems to have used.

The Highland Society have lately set about investigating, or rather, I should say, collecting materials to defend, the authenticity of Ossian. Those researches have only proved that there were no real originals — using that word as is commonly understood — to be found for them. The oldest tale they have found seems to be that of Darthula; but it is perfectly different, both in diction and story, from that of Macpherson. It is, however, a

beautiful specimen of Celtic poetry, and shows that it contains much which is worthy of preservation. Indeed how should it be otherwise, when we know that, till about fifty years ago, the Highlands contained a race of hereditary poets? Is it possible to think, that, among perhaps many hundreds, who for such a course of centuries have founded their reputation and rank on practising the art of poetry, in a country where the scenery and manners gave such effect and interest and imagery to their productions, there should not have been some who attained excellence? In searching out those genuine records of the Celtic muse, and preserving them from oblivion, with all the curious information which they must doubtless contain, I humbly think our Highland antiquaries would merit better of their country, than by confining their researches to the fantastic pursuit of a chimera.

As the reader will recall, one of the provisions of the Society of Antiquaries was that, in addition to their inquiries into the nations antiquities, the natural resources of the country should be surveyed and developed. In the Highland Society, the latter activity, which we saw in the guise of the movement for national improvement at the beginning of the century, became once again the primary concern of a Scottish "improving" society, and matters of antiquarian or literary interest assumed a subordinate role. In other parts of the country, however, the combination of the improving spirit and the widespread interest in Scottish antiquities which we have seen in connection with the Society of Antiquaries of Edinburgh, gave rise to a number of provincial societies of a similar type.

The first of such societies was that instituted in Perth in 1784, "for investigating the history and preserving the antiquities and records of Scotland generally, and more particularly of that portion of it of which the City of Perth may still be considered as the capital."

2. The Society issued only one volume of Transactions in 1827, (Terry: Scottish Historical Clubs, page vii.)
When Robert Heron wrote of his visit to Perth in 1792, he described the Society as follows:

Perth is likewise distinguished by possessing an Antiquarian Society. This was instituted in the year 1784. The plan was, I believe, framed and suggested by the Reverend Mr. Scott, senior clergymen of the city. At a meeting of gentlemen, disposed to these pursuits, on the 16th of December, in the year above named, he communicated his plan for the institution and regulation of such a society. He accompanied this communication with an excellent discourse on the state of the Scottish history; on the original monuments remaining, by an examination and comparison of which it may yet be corrected and elucidated; and on the probability, that skilful and diligent investigation may yet recover many facts in our early history which are, at present, supposed to be irrecoverably lost in oblivion. Those gentlemen accordingly formed themselves into a society for the investigation of the Antiquities of their country. Their numbers have since been occasionally augmented by the accession of ordinary, honorary, and correspondent members. They hold their ordinary meetings on the last Tuesday of every month. They have one annual meeting at which a particularly punctual attendance of all members is expected. They have since, on the 25th of January 1787, extended their plan to the cultivation of philosophy, polite literature, and the fine arts in general. And, it must be confessed, that they have prosecuted the objects of their association with a degree of diligence and success which is highly honourable to them, and proves them to have been in earnest when they formally commenced Antiquarians. It is hoped, that they may be persuaded to favour the public with occasional volumes of their Memoirs and Transactions. Perth will then rank with Manchester in literature, as in manufactures.

As a reflection of the general interest in such institutions, Heron's comment upon the Library instituted in Galloway is revealing:

I should like to see the respectable and intelligent gentlemen of these parts, — add, as they easily might, to this laudable establishment of a public library, ... the institution of a Society for Improvements: and for the Investigation of the Antiquities of Galloway. Such an institution would naturally

1. Heron: Journey through the Western Counties, Vol. 1, page 141; see also, Hume: Learned Societies, page 185.

2. See note #2 on page 351, directly above.

3. Heron: Journey, etc., page 195, Vol. 2.
connect itself with the establishment of the Library. It should be select. Its meetings need not be frequent, but might correspond with the meetings of the Presbytery, --- of the Quarter-Sessions, --- or of the Commissioners of the Land-Tax and Supply; all which are held in Kirkcudbright. I despair not of living to see such a Society instituted here.

Although he was to be disappointed in his immediate hopes for the particular area of which he wrote, Heron certainly lived to see a number of societies of the type he described organized throughout Scotland before he died. But as the movement did not reach that stage until well into the next century, I shall leave the task of reporting on them to a future student who, if any such there be, wishes to continue this inquiry into Scottish clubs and societies which were organized in the nineteenth century.