

Bibliotheca Secunda.

A good story of the kind of volumes which appear in the library and one which also throws light on W.O.'s insatiable interest is as follows:-

An old volume of Scots Magazine, vol. xv, 1753, on page 73, under the date of February 1753, is an anonymous letter to the author of the Scots Magazine, from Renfrew, Feb. 1, 1753, signed C.M.

The card in the library under Bibliotheca Secunda is as follows:-

MORRISON (CHARLES) fl. 1753.

An expeditious method of conveying intelligence by means of electricity .

Scots Magazine, vol. xv, Feb. 1753, Edin. 8°, p. 73.

Bookplate of Sir John Hay, Bt.

(W.O.'s note:) (on card) - - - - -

The D.N.B. states that M. was a surgeon of Greenock, and afterwards engaged in the Glasgow tobacco trade and went to Virginia, where he died. His name is not on the roll of the F.P. & S. of Glasgow or of the University; nor is he mentioned in the S.G.L. or the Hist. Soc. of Virginia publications.

He describes three methods of transmitting messages along wires, electrically charged; he also tells how the wires may be insulated by means of a thin coating of Jewellers' cement.

There are a few items of medical interest in the volume, as the Bills of Mortality for Edinburgh and London, and the list of diseases and the number of patients in the Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh for the year 1752. Important from the literary side is the very full account of the trial of James Stewart for the murder of Allan Breck on which Stevenson based his well known novel.

*Inserted in the following:*

An anonymous correspondent of the Scot's Magazine, dated Renfrew, February 1st, 1753, signed C.M., and entitled "An Expeditious Method of Conveying Intelligence".

After a good deal of correspondence on the subject, Sir David Brewster gave up all hope of discovering the name of the inventor, and it was not till 1859, that he had the pleasure of solving the mystery in the following manner. He "received from Mr. Loudon, of Port-Glasgow, a letter dated 31st October, 1859, stating that while reading an article in the North British Review, his attention was arrested by

the letter of C.M., and having mentioned the fact to Mr. Forman, a friend then living with him, he told him that he could solve the mystery regarding these initials. Mr. Forman recollects distinctly of having read a letter, dated 1750, and addressed by his grandfather, a farmer near Stirling, to Miss Margaret Winsgate, residing at Craigengilt, near Denny, (to whom he was subsequently married) referring to a gentleman in Renfrew of the name of Charles Morrison who transmitted messages along wires by means of electricity, and who was a native of Greenock, and bred a surgeon. Mr. Forman also states that he was connected with the tobacco trade in Glasgow, and that he was regarded by the people of Renfrew as a sort of wizard, and that he was obliged, or found it convenient, to leave Renfrew and settle in Virginia, where he died. Mr. Forman also recollects reading a letter in the handwriting of Charles Morrison addressed to Mr. Forman, his grandfather, and dated 25th September, 1752, giving an account of his experiments and stating that he had sent an account of them to Sir Hans Sloane, the President of the Royal Society of London, who had encouraged him to perfect his experiments and to whom he had promised to publish an account of what he had done. In this letter Mr. Morrison stated that as he was likely to be ridiculed by many of his acquaintances, he would publish his paper in the Scots Magazine, only with his initials.

A script note below the above letter is signed T.K.M. (Prof. Monro of Glasgow).

As follows:-

There are several letters in the Greenock Library, Watt Monument, Union St., Greenock, bearing on the identification of Charles Morrison as the inventor of the electric telegraph. The above typescript includes a copy of an article from the Scots Magazine which gives all the important points in connection with the above mentioned letters. (Typescript furnished by Mr. J. M. Leighton, F.S.A. Scot., Librarian & Clerk, Greenock Public Library. August 1918.

T.K.M.