

**EXTRACTS FROM THE EARLIEST  
BOOK OF ACCOUNTS BELONGING  
TO THE TOWN TRUSTEES OF  
SHEFFIELD, DATING FROM 1566 TO  
1707, WITH EXPLANATORY NOTES**

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Extracts from the Earliest Book of Accounts Belonging to the Town Trustees of Sheffield, Dating from 1566 to 1707, with Explanatory Notes by John Daniel Leader

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**JOHN DANIEL LEADER**

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BY  
JOHN DANIEL LEADER,

*Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries.*

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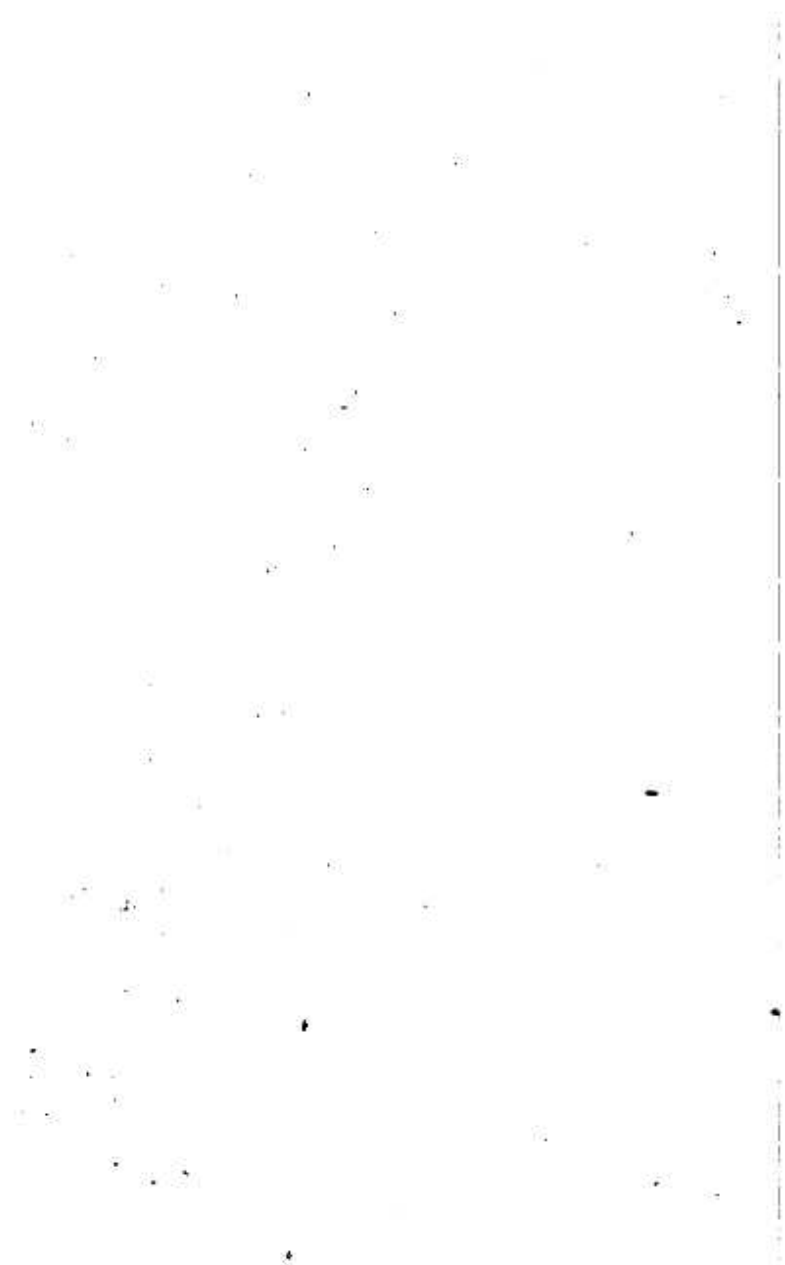
## PREFACE.

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THE following pages have appeared from week to week during the past twelve months in the Local Notes and Queries column of the *Sheffield & Rotherham Independent*. The earlier years are copied in full, as well as the memoranda of general interest, but there was so much sameness about many of the entries, occurring year after year, that I contented myself with extracting only what seemed the more instructive or the more curious items. The notes illustrative of the entries might with advantage have been largely extended, but I had to deny myself the pleasure of the research that would have been involved. I am under great obligations to the Town Trustees, and to Messrs. Vickers & Son, their clerks, for granting me the use of this most interesting volume; to Mr. B. Bagshawe, for assistance in decyphering some of the old writing, and to Mr. Alfred Scott Gatty, for notes from the Sheffield Court Rolls.

J. D. LEADER.

*Sheffield, August 1st, 1879.*



## THE ACCOUNTS OF THE BURGERS OF SHEFFIELD.

By the courtesy of the Town Trustees, I was permitted several years ago to make copious extracts from the oldest account book in possession of the Trust, a volume of great interest, and covering a period from 1566 to 1707. The result of the investigations into this volume will appear in the following pages, together with notes explanatory of the text. The accounts of the Town Trustees or Town's Burgesses of Sheffield date from the year 1566; but there can be little doubt that the body had its origin in 1297, when Thomas de Furnival granted a charter to his free tenants of the town of Sheffield, giving them all the tofts, lands, and tenements they then held of him in fee, reserving to himself a chief rent of £3. 6s. 8½d. In obtaining this grant the Sheffield men, perhaps a little late, but better late than never, were acting as their fellow countrymen in other towns such as Leicester, Preston, York, and Beverley had done. They were buying or begging themselves out of the arbitrary taxes, imposed by feudal lords; they were becoming owners in fee of the land on which their houses were built, and uniting themselves as a chartered community, to withstand injustice and oppression. They were better pleased to do for themselves what they could, in their own way, than to have it done for them in other people's ways.

Englishmen of those days were notable archers. They practised with the bow every Sunday, and were accounted the best marksmen in the world. Under the care of the Sheffield free tenants were placed two butts in the Wicker, the near butt and the far butt. They kept the township bow, and we shall find in the accounts several payments for new bow strings, which cost a penny each. Bishop Latimer, in his sixth sermon before King Edward VI.,



says: "The art of shooting hath been in times past much esteemed in this realm, it is a gift of God that he has given us to excel all other nations withal. It hath been God's instrument, whereby He hath given us many victories against our enemies. \* \* \* In my time my poor father was as diligent to teach me to shoot as to learn any other thing; and so, I think, other men did their children. He taught me how to draw, how to lay my body in my bow, and not to draw with strength of arms, as other nations do, but with strength of body. I had my bows bought me according to my age and strength; as I increased in them, so my bows were made bigger and bigger; for men shall never shoot well except they be brought up to it. It is a goodly art, a wholesome kind of exercise, and much commended in physic."

The Sheffield free tenants represented in the town the civil authority, while the Church Burgesses were entrusted with the management of part of the temporalities of the Church. At first the free tenants embraced both functions—civil and ecclesiastical—but when the Reformation brought a general disturbance of property devoted to "superstitious uses," the continuity was broken, and out of the turmoil two separate bodies emerged, one still called the Town's Burgesses, or free tenants, and attending to secular affairs; the other called the Church Burgesses, attending to the payment of assistant ministers, the repair of the church fabric and the relief of the poor. The Town's Burgesses remained satisfied with the old charter of Lord Furnival, the Church Burgesses were incorporated under Royal Charter in the first year of Queen Mary. These free tenants became the local governing body, acting together as a kind of merchant guild, the mediæval germ out of which our municipal institutions have grown. They repaired bridges and roads, paid the bellman and waites, collected the taxes, equipped soldiers, set up the archery

butts, provided arms and armour for the defence of the town, and generally acted as the local authority. In the following accounts we shall see the Town's Burgesses performing year by year unobtrusive but important duties. The names mentioned are those of the principal inhabitants, and it is curious to note how many of them have come down to us, either in the names of places or of still living persons. In Scargill croft, Coulston croft, Hawley croft, Sands paviours, and others, we have personal names surviving in localities. In the names of Creswick, Staniforth, Greaves, Holdsworth, Bower, Dickenson, Elliott, Ellis, Stacey, Spooner, Young, Bright, Webster, Barlow, Sorby, Lockwood, Newton, Broomhead, Nodder, Watson, Roberts, and many others, we have the names of families still flourishing among us.

The earlier years of the accounts have been copied entire, but it was not needful to continue this complete transcript throughout, for many of the entries are but repetitions of regularly recurring payments. I, therefore, only extracted such as seemed to possess features of originality or other interest. In the notes appended to the accounts I have endeavoured to explain historical allusions, obsolete or provincial words, and personal or local references, and trust the result will be to give some idea of the manner of men who dwelt in Sheffield during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. M. Taine has well remarked in the introduction to his "History of English Literature," "It is a mistake to study the documents as if they were isolated. This were to treat things like a simple pedant, to fall into the error of the bibliomaniac. Behind all, we have neither mythology, nor languages, but only men, who arrange words and imagery according to the necessities of their organs, and the original bent of their intellects. \* \* \* Nothing exists except through some individual man; it is this individual with whom we must become acquainted. When we have established the parentage of

dogmas, or the classifications of poems, or the progress of constitutions, or the modification of idioms, we have only cleared the soil; genuine history is brought into existence only when the historian begins to unravel, across the lapse of time, the living man, toiling, impassioned, entrenched in his customs, with his voice and features, his gestures and his dress, distinct and complete as he from whom we have just parted in the street."

If we can in any small degree enable our readers to realise this picture as regards Sheffield, the dry work of copying an old account book will not have been wholly thrown away.

J. D. LEADER.

The following appears on the title page of the book:—

Sheffield, anno dmi., 1566.—The Boke, as well of the Burgesses Rents there as also of the reconynges of the same howe and after what mann'r the sayde rents are ymployed as by God's grace within shall appeare. Made and begoyne in the yere of our Lorde God a MVcLXVI., which Boke was begon and w'ten by thands of me Thomas Braye (1) and maye appere within by the p'celle.

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(1) Thomas Braye also gave a book in which to keep the accounts of the Church Burgesses in 1557. His will is dated 11th Nov., 1569, in which he mentions "all my books" and "my poor kinsfolks." Wife Ann to have all testator's lands if she marry not till his son Francis is of age. He was buried at Sheffield 11th Sept., 1570. His eldest son, Francis Bray, married Joan, dau. of Thos. Mosley, of Eyam, yeoman, and by her had issue Thos. Bray, of Eyam, and Francis Bray. Thomas, m. Eleanor, d. of John Alton, M.A., and had issue Elizabeth, who mar. Francis Pierrepoint, third son of Thos. Earl of Kingston.