

(4to). He casually names a 'cosen Blague the surgeon' as 'attending on the wounded.'

[Le Neve's *Fasti*, i. 577; Reg. Abbot; Wood's *Fasti*, ii. 184; Reg. Whitgift, 3, 269; Reg. Grindall et Bancroft, Kennet; Wood's *Fasti*, i. 222, 227; communications from present Dean of Rochester, rectors of Bangor, Ewelme, Great Braxted, &c. &c.; Newcourt's *Repertorium*, ii. 91-2.] A. B. G.

**BLAIR, HUGH** (1718-1800), divine, was born in Edinburgh 7 April 1718. His father, John Blair, was an Edinburgh merchant, son of Hugh and grandson of Robert Blair, 1593-1666 [q.v.], chaplain to Charles I. Hugh Blair was educated at Edinburgh, and entered the university in 1730. An essay *περὶ τοῦ καλοῦ*, written whilst he was a student, was highly praised by Professor Stevenson and always cherished by its author. Boswell says (*Johnson*, 1760) that Blair with his cousin, G. Bannatyne, composed a poem on the resurrection, which was published as his own by a Dr. Douglas. He graduated as M.A. in 1739, and printed a thesis, 'De fundamentis et obligatione legis nature.' On 21 Oct. 1741 he was licensed to preach by the presbytery of Edinburgh. A sermon in the West church procured him the favour of Lord Leven, through whose interest he was ordained minister of Colessie, Fife, 23 Sept. 1742. In July 1743 he returned to Edinburgh, where he was elected as second minister of the Canongate after a contest. On 11 Oct. 1754 he was appointed by the town council and general sessions to Lady Yester's, one of the city churches; and on 15 June 1758 was appointed, at the request of the lords of council and session, to the High church, a charge which he retained during life. On 11 Dec. 1759 he began to read lectures upon composition in the university; in August 1760 the town council made him professor of rhetoric; and on 7 April 1762 a regius professorship of rhetoric and belles lettres was founded, to which Blair was appointed with a salary of 70*l*.

These appointments indicate the general estimate of Blair's merits as preacher and critic. He was one of the distinguished literary circle which flourished at Edinburgh throughout the century. He was a member, with Hume, A. Carlyle, Adam Ferguson, Adam Smith, Robertson, and others, of the famous Poker Club (*TYTLER'S KAMES*, iii. 78). He was on very friendly terms with Hume, whose house he occupied during its owner's stay in France. Their friendship was not disturbed by Blair's sympathy with Hume's theological opponents, as Hume judiciously avoided discussions of such matters (*BURTON*,

i. 427, ii. 116). He defended Kames, his intimate friend, when Kames's 'Essays on Morality' exposed their author to a charge of infidelity, and brought Campbell's answer to Hume's essay upon Miracles under the notice of Hume (*TYTLER'S KAMES*, i. 198, 266). He was intimate with Henry Dundas, afterwards Lord Melville, and through him had some influence upon Scotch patronage. He declined to use it in order to succeed Robertson as principal of the university, but is said to have been annoyed at being passed over in favour of Dr. Baird. Blair encouraged MacPherson to publish the 'Fragments of Ancient Poetry' in 1760, and eulogised their merits with more zeal than discretion in 'A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian, the son of Fingal,' 1763. In an appendix to a third edition (1765) he adduces some external testimony to their authenticity. The essay was much admired at the time; the substance had been given in his lectures. These were not published till 1783, when he resigned the professorship. He states in a note that he had borrowed some ideas from a manuscript treatise upon rhetoric (afterwards destroyed) by Adam Smith, who had given the first lectures in Scotland on the same subject in 1748-51. Smith and his friends seem to have thought the acknowledgment insufficient (*HILL*, p. 266). The lectures expressed the canons of taste of the time in which Addison, Pope, and Swift were recognised as the sole models of English style, and are feeble in thought, though written with a certain elegance of manner. A tenth edition appeared in 1806, and they have been translated into French. The same qualities are obvious in the sermons, which for a long time enjoyed extraordinary popularity. The first volume was declined by Strahan. Strahan, however, showed one of them to Johnson, who said that he 'had read it with more than approbation; to say it is good is to say too little.' Strahan hereupon bought it for 100*l*., and upon its success doubled the price. For a second volume he paid 300*l*., and for a third and fourth 600*l*. each. The first appeared in 1777; a nineteenth edition of the first volume and a fifteenth of the second appeared in 1794. A fifth volume, with an account of Blair's life by the Rev. Dr. Finlayson, appeared in 1801. A pension of 200*l*. a year was conferred upon the author in 1780, which he enjoyed till his death. The sermons were translated into many languages, and until the rise of a new school passed as models of the art. They are carefully composed; he took a week over one (*BOSWELL'S TOUR*, ch. iii.), and they are the best examples of the sensible, if unimpassioned and rather

affected, style of the moderate divines of the time. They have gone through many editions. Johnson seems to have had a warm esteem for Blair, who had been introduced to him shortly before Boswell's first introduction in 1763, and had been told by the doctor that 'many men, many women, and many children' could have written Ossian (BOSWELL'S *Johnson*, 24 May 1763). Blair omitted from his published lectures a passage in which he had censured Johnson's pomposity (BOSWELL, 1777). Blair is described by Hill and A. Carlyle as very amiable, ready to read manuscripts of young authors, full of harmless vanity and simplicity, and rather finical in his dress and manners. He had considerable influence in the church, and was reckoned as one of the leading men amongst the 'moderate' divines. But his diffidence disqualified him from public speaking, and he declined to become moderator of the general assembly. He married his cousin, Katharine Bannatyne, in April 1748, who died long before him. He had a son who died in infancy, and a daughter who died at the age of twenty-one. He preached his last sermon before the Society for the Benefit of the Sons of the Clergy in the seventy-ninth year of his age (1797). He died, after an illness of three days, on 27 Dec. 1800. Besides the writings above mentioned, Blair contributed to the short-lived 'Edinburgh Review' of 1755 a review of Hutcheson's 'Moral Philosophy,' and of Dodsley's collection of poems. His early system of notes led to the 'Chronological Tables' published by his relative, John Blair. A collection of the 'sentimental beauties' in his writings was published in 1809, with a life by W. H. Reed.

[Life by Finlayson; Life by John Hill, 1807; Burton's Life of Hume; A. Carlyle's Autobiography, pp. 291-4; Tytler's Life of Kames.]

L. S.

**BLAIR, JAMES, D.D.** (1656-1743), episcopalian divine, was born in Scotland (it is believed in Edinburgh) in 1656. He was educated in 'one of the Scottish universities,' but none of the notices of him specifies which it was. He obtained a benefice in the revived episcopal church in Scotland, but where does not appear. He retreated to England before the tempest which threatened the episcopal church after 1679. There, having been introduced to Dr. Compton, bishop of London, he was sent as a missionary to Virginia, where he arrived in 1685. He soon secured the confidence of the provincial government and of the planters, and proved himself far in advance of his contemporaries on the question of slavery. In 1689, when Sir Francis Nichol-

son was appointed lieutenant-governor of Virginia, Blair was appointed commissary, the highest ecclesiastical office in the province. By this office he had a seat in the council of the colonial government, presided over the trials of clergymen—a strangely mixed class at the period—and pronounced sentence upon conviction of 'crimes or misdemeanours.'

Being 'deeply affected with the low state of both learning and religion' in Virginia, he endeavoured to establish a college, and set on foot a subscription with this object, which, being headed by the lieutenant-governor and his council, soon amounted to 2,500*l.* The project was warmly supported in the first assembly held by Sir Francis Nicholson in 1691, and was recommended to the sovereigns, William and Mary, in an address prepared for the assembly by Blair, which he was unanimously appointed to present. He accordingly proceeded to England; William and Mary favoured the plan; on 14 Feb. 1692 a charter for the college was granted, the Bishop of London being appointed chancellor and Blair president, and the college was named 'William and Mary.' Among the most liberal contributors to the college was Robert Boyle.

On Blair's return to Virginia the opening of the college was repeatedly deferred, although Blair's enthusiasm never waned. In 1705 a destructive fire practically reduced the college buildings to ruins. Under the loyal support of the new lieutenant-governor, Spotswoode, the edifice was re-erected, and classes were afterwards commenced. But, according to the records of the college, it was not until 1729 that Blair entered formally on the duties of his office as president. Blair was for some time president of the council of Virginia and rector of Williamsburgh.

In 1722 he published his one work: 'Our Saviour's Divine Sermon on the Mount, contained in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel, explained, and the practice of it recommended in divers Sermons and Discourses,' 4 vols. 8vo. A second edition was published in 1732, under the supervision of Dr. Daniel Waterland, who prefixed a 'commendatory notice.'

Blair died on 1 Aug. 1743, aged 87. He bequeathed his library to his college. Two portraits of him are preserved in the college, one taken in youth and the other in later life. Bishop Burnet (*History of his Own Times*) calls him 'a worthy and good man.' George Whitefield wrote in his journal for 15 Dec. 1740: 'Paid my respects to Mr. Blair, commissary of Virginia. His discourse was savoury, such as tended to the use of edifying.'

He received me with joy, asked me to preach, and wished my stay were longer.'

[Preface to his Sermon on the Mount, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd editions; Dr. Miller's Retrospect, ii.; Bishop Burnet's History of his Own Times; Hawks's Ecclesiastical Contributions; History of Virginia; Dr. Totten MS.; Sprague's Annals of the American Pulpit, v. 7-9.] A. B. G.

**BLAIR, SIR JAMES HUNTER** (1741-1787), was the son of John Hunter, a merchant in Ayr, where he was born 21 Feb. 1741. In 1756 he was apprenticed in the house of the brothers Couetts, bankers in Edinburgh, where he made the acquaintance of Sir William Forbes, and the two being admitted to a share in the business on the death of the senior partner of the firm, they gradually rose to the head of the copartnership. In 1770 he married Jane, eldest daughter of Mr. John Blair of Dunksey, Wigtonshire, and on his wife succeeding to the family estate in 1777, he assumed the name of Blair. On his estate he effected remarkable improvements, introducing to his tenants the most approved modes of farming, and nearly rebuilding the town of Portpatrick, at which he established larger and better packet-boats on the passage to Donaghadee in Ireland. In 1781 he was chosen to represent the city of Edinburgh in parliament, and again in 1784, but on account of the claims of his professional duties he resigned a few months afterwards. In the same year, however, he consented, at the urgent request of the town council, to accept the lord-provostship. It was chiefly due to his energy and public spirit during his term of office that several important schemes for the improvement of the city were successfully carried out. He did much to further the rebuilding of the university, and contrived a plan for obtaining funds to erect the South Bridge over the Cowgate. Chiefly by his strenuous perseverance against strong opposition the scheme was successfully carried out, thus opening up a convenient communication between the southern suburbs and the city. He died of a putrid fever at Harrogate, Yorkshire, 1 July 1787, and was buried in the Greyfriars churchyard, Hunter Square and Blair Street, Edinburgh, are named after him. He held the appointment of king's printer.

Robert Burns, whose special regard for Blair was increased by his enlightened interest in agriculture, wrote an elegy on his death, a performance he acknowledged to be 'but mediocre,' although his grief was sincere. 'The last time,' says Burns, 'I saw the worthy, public-spirited man, he pressed my hand and asked me with the most friendly

warmth if it was in his power to serve me.' In a letter to Robert Aiken of Ayr, enclosing the poem, Burns also wrote, 'That I have lost a friend is but repeating after Caledonia.'

[Gent. Mag. lvii. pt. ii. 641-2; Edinburgh Magazine, vi. 43-4; Kay's Edinburgh Portraits, 1838, i. 62-4; Arnot's 'History of Edinburgh,' pp. 256, 264; Works of Robert Burns.]

T. F. H.

**BLAIR, JOHN** (*d.* 1300), chaplain of Sir William Wallace, was a native of Fife, and is said to have been educated at Dundee in the same school with Wallace. After continuing his studies at the university of Paris he entered holy orders, and under the name of Arnoldus became a monk of the order of St. Benedict at Dunfermline. When Wallace became governor of the kingdom, Blair was appointed his chaplain. According to Henry the Minstrel, Blair, along with Thomas Gray, parson of Liberton, 'oft one, oft both,' accompanied Wallace in almost all 'his travels,' and one or the other kept a record of his achievements. From these notes Blair 'compiled in dyte the Latin book of Wallace life,' from which Henry the Minstrel professed to derive the principal materials for his poem on the 'Acts and Deeds of Sir William Wallace.' The work of Blair is supposed to have been written in 1327. A professed fragment of it from a manuscript in the Cottonian Library was published with notes by Sir Robert Sibbald in 1705 under the title 'Relationes quædam Arnoldi Blair Monachi de Dumfermelem et Capellani D. Gulielmi Wallas militis,' 1327, and was also reprinted along with the poem of Henry the Minstrel in 1758. These so-called 'Relationes' are, however, nothing more than a plagiarism from the 'Scotichronicon.' He is said to have been also the author of a work entitled 'De liberata tyrannide Scotia,' which is now lost.

[The Acts and Deeds of Sir William Wallace, by Henry the Minstrel, especially Book V., chap. i., lines 525-50; Dempster's Hist. Eccl. Scot. Gent. (1627), p. 86; Mackenzie's Writers of the Scots Nation, i. 247-8, 264; Ross's Scottish History and Literature (1884), p. 60.] T. F. H.

**BLAIR, JOHN, LL.D.** (*d.* 1782), chronologist, erroneously said to have been a descendant of the Rev. Robert Blair (1593-1666) [q. v.], really belonged to the Blairs of Balthayock, Perthshire. The date of his birth is unknown, but he was born and educated in Edinburgh. Leaving Scotland as a young man, he became usher of a school in Hedge Lane, London, in succession to Andrew Henderson, author of a well-known history of the rebellion of 1745. In 1754 he

published, after elaborate preparations, his *magnum opus*, which he designated 'The Chronology and History of the World, from the Creation to the Year of Christ 1753, illustrated in fifty-six tables.' It was modestly dedicated to the lord chancellor (Hardwicke), and was published by subscription. In the preface he acknowledged great obligations to the Earl of Bute, and announced certain supplementary dissertations, which never appeared. The plan and scope of the work originated with Dr. Hugh Blair's scheme of chronological tables. The 'Chronology' was reprinted in 1756, 1768, and 1814. It was 'revised and enlarged' by Willoughby Rosse in Bohn's 'Scientific Library,' 1856. In 1768 Blair published 'Fourteen Maps of Ancient and Modern Geography, for the illustration of the Tables of Chronology and History; to which is prefixed a dissertation on the Rise and Progress of Geography.' The dissertation was separately republished in 1784.

Blair's first book was well received. In 1755 he was elected a fellow of the Royal Society, and in its 'Transactions' appeared a paper by him on the 'Agitation of the Waters near Reading' (*Phil. Trans.* x. 651, 1755). He had previously obtained orders in the church of England, and in September 1757 was appointed chaplain to the Princess-dowager of Wales and mathematical tutor to the Duke of York. In March 1761, on the promotion of Dr. Townshend to the deanery of Norwich, Blair was given a prebendal stall at Westminster. Within a week the dean and chapter of Westminster presented him to the vicarage of Hinckley. In the same year he was chosen fellow of the Society of Antiquaries. In September 1763 he left with the Duke of York on a tour on the continent, and was absent until 1764. In 1771 he was transferred, by presentation of the dean and chapter of Westminster, to the vicarage of St. Bride, London, and again to the rectory of St. John the Evangelist, Westminster, in April 1776. He was also rector of Horton (Milton's Horton) in Buckinghamshire. He died on 24 June 1782. The statement that his last illness was aggravated by the sad death of his gallant brother, Captain Blair [see BLAIR, WILLIAM, 1741-1782], is erroneous. They were only cousins. Blair's 'Lectures on the Canons of the Old Testament, comprehending a Dissertation on the Septuagint Version,' 1785, was a posthumous publication.

[Notes and Queries, 6th series, vii. 48; Anderson's *Scottish Nation*; researches in Edinburgh.]

A. B. G.

BLAIR, PATRICK, M.D. (*f.* 1728), botanist and surgeon, was born at Dundee, where he practised as a doctor, and in 1706 dissected and mounted the bones of an elephant which had died in the neighbourhood, and of which he contributed a description, under the title of 'Osteographia Elephantina,' to the Royal Society of London, published in 1713. Being a nonjuror and Jacobite, he was imprisoned as a suspect in 1715. He subsequently removed to London, and delivered some discourses before the Royal Society on the sexes of flowers. But he soon settled at Boston, Lincolnshire, where he published 'Miscellaneous Observations on the Practice of Physick, Anatomy, and Surgery' in 1718, 'Botanick Essays' in 1720, and 'Pharmaco-botanologia' in 1723-8, which closed with the letter H, it is presumed, through his death. His 'Botanick Essays' formed his most valuable work. In them he clearly expounded the progress of the classification of plants up to his time, and the then new views as to the sexual characters of flowering plants, which he confirmed by his own observations.

[Pulteney's *Progress of Botany in England*, 1790, ii. 134-140; Chalmers's *Biog. Dict.*]

G. T. B.

BLAIR, ROBERT (1593-1666), divine, a native of Irvine, Ayrshire, was born in 1593. His father was a merchant-adventurer, John Blair of Windyedge, a younger brother of the ancient family of Blair of that ilk; his mother was Beatrix Muir (of the house of Rowallan), who lived for nearly a century.

From the parish school at Irvine Blair proceeded to the university of Glasgow, where he took his degree of M.A. He is stated to have acted as a schoolmaster in Glasgow. In his twenty-second year he was appointed a regent or professor in the university. In 1616 he was licensed as a preacher of the gospel in connection with the established church (presbyterian) of Scotland. In 1622 he resigned his professorship, 'in consequence,' it is alleged, 'of the appointment of Dr. Cameron, who favoured episcopacy, as principal of the university' (ANDERSON, *Scottish Nation*). This reason seems improbable, for having gone over to Ireland he was called to Bangor there and ordained by the Bishop of Down on 10 July 1623. But he was suspended in the autumn of 1631, and deposed in 1632 for nonconformity. By the interposition of the king (Charles I) he was restored in May 1634. Yet the former sentence was renewed, with excommunication, by Bramhall, bishop of Derry, the same year.

It would appear that even in Scotland [see WILLIAM BIRNIE] and in Ireland presbyterians were received into the episcopal church without subscription.

Excommunicated and ejected, Blair, along with a company of others, 'fitted out a ship, intending to go to New England in 1635. But the weather proved so boisterous that they were beaten back, and, returning to Scotland, he lived partly in that country and partly in England. Orders were issued in England for his apprehension in 1637, but he escaped to Scotland, and preached for some time in Ayr. He was invited to go to France as chaplain to Colonel Hepburn's regiment, but after embarking at Leith he was threatened by a soldier whom he had reproved for swearing, and thereupon went ashore again. He also petitioned the privy council 'for liberty to preach the gospel,' and received an appointment at Burntisland in April 1638. He was nominated to St. Andrews in the same year, and was admitted there on 8 Oct. 1639. In 1640 he accompanied the Scottish army into England on its famous march. He assisted in the negotiations for the treaty of peace presented by Charles I, 8 Nov. 1641. After the Irish rebellion of 1641 he once more proceeded to Ireland with several other clergymen of the 'kirk,' the Irish general assembly (presbyterian) having petitioned for supplies for their vacant charges. He afterwards returned to St. Andrews. In 1645 he attended the lord president (Spottiswoode) and others to the scaffold. In the same year he was one of the Scottish ministers who went to Newcastle to speak very plainly to the king. In 1646 he was elected to the highest seat of honour in his church, that of moderator of the general assembly (3 June 1646). Later, on the death of Henderson, he was appointed chaplain-in-ordinary to the king, 'being paid by the revenues of the Chapel Royal.' The commission of the general assembly, in 1648, named him one of those for 'endeavouring to get Cromwell to establish a uniformity of religion in England.' The endeavour was a valorous one to impose presbyterianism on England. At the division of the church, in 1650, into resolutioners and protesters, he leaned to the former, 'but bitterly lamented the strife.' Summoned with others to London in 1654, that 'a method might be devised for settling affairs of the church,' he pleaded ill-health and declined to go. In the same year he was appointed by the council of England 'one of those for the admission to the ministry in Perth, Fife, and Angus.'

At the Restoration he came under the lash of Archbishop Sharp. He had to resign

his charge in September 1661, and was confined to certain places, first of all to Musselburgh, afterwards to Kirkcaldy (where he remained three and a half years), and finally to Meikle Couston near Aberdour. As a covenanter he preached at the hazard of life in moor and glen. He died at Aberdour on 27 Aug. 1666, and was buried in the parish churchyard. He left behind him a manuscript commentary on the book of Proverbs, and manuscripts on political and theological subjects. None were printed, and they appear to have perished. Fortunately his 'Autobiography' was preserved, and has been published by the Wodrow Society (1848); fragments were published in 1754. He married first Beatrix, daughter of Robert Hamilton, merchant, in right of whom he became a burghess of Edinburgh on 16 July 1626; she died in July 1632, aged 27. Their issue were two sons and a daughter: James, one of the ministers of Dysart, Robert, and Jean, who married William Row, minister of Ceres. His second wife was Katherine, daughter of Hugh Montgomerie of Braidstane, afterwards Viscount Airds. Their issue were seven sons and a daughter. One of these sons, David, was father of Robert Blair [q. v.], the poet of the 'Grave,' and another, Hugh, grandfather of Dr. Hugh Blair [q. v.]

[Autobiography, 1593-1636; Reed's Presbyterianism of Ireland, i.; Row and Stevenson's Hist.; Rutherford's and Baillie's Letters; Kirkcaldy Presb. Reg.; Connolly's Fifeshire; Chambers's Biogr.; Scott's Fasti, ii. 91; Hill's Life of Hugh Blair.] A. B. G.

BLAIR, ROBERT (1699-1746), author of the 'Grave,' was born in Edinburgh in 1699, the eldest son of the Rev. David Blair, a minister of the old church of Edinburgh, and one of the chaplains to the king. His mother's maiden name was Euphemia Nisbet, daughter of Alexander Nisbet of Carfin. Hugh Blair, the writer on oratory, was his first cousin. David Blair died in his son's infancy, on 10 June 1710. Robert was educated at the university of Edinburgh, and took a degree in Holland. Nothing has been discovered with regard to the details of either curriculum. From about 1718 to 1730 he seems to have lived in Edinburgh as an unemployed probationer, having received license to preach, 15 Aug. 1729. In the second part of a miscellany, entitled 'Lugubres Cantus,' published at Edinburgh in 1719, there occurs an 'Epistle to Robert Blair,' which adds nothing to our particular information. He is believed to have belonged to the Athenian Society, a small literary club in Edinburgh, which published in 1720 the 'Edinburgh

Miscellany.' The pieces in this volume are anonymous, but family tradition has attributed to Robert Blair two brief paraphrases of scripture which it contains, and Callender, its editor, is known to have been his intimate friend. In 1728 he published, in a quarto pamphlet, a 'Poem dedicated to the Memory of William Law,' professor of philosophy in Edinburgh. This contained 140 lines of elegiac verse. In 1731 Blair was appointed to the living of Athelstaneford in East Lothian, to which he was ordained by the presbytery of Haddington on 5 Jan. of that year. In 1738 he married Isabella, the daughter of his deceased friend, Professor Law; she bore him five sons and one daughter, and survived him until 1774. He possessed a private fortune, and he gave up so much of his leisure as his duties would grant him to the study of botany and of the old English poets. Before he left Edinburgh he had begun to sketch a poem on the subject of the 'Grave.' At Athelstaneford he leisurely composed this poem, and about 1742 began to make arrangements for its publication. He had formed the acquaintance of Dr. Isaac Watts, who had paid him, he says, 'many civilities.' He sent the manuscript of the 'Grave' to Dr. Watts, who offered it 'to two different London booksellers, both of whom, however, declined to publish it, expressing a doubt whether any person living three hundred miles from town could write so as to be acceptable to the fashionable and the polite.' In the same year, however, 1742, Blair wrote to Dr. Dodridge, and interested him in the poem, which was eventually published, in quarto, in 1743. It enjoyed an instant and signal success, but Blair was neither tempted out of his solitude nor persuaded to repeat the experiment which had been so happy. His biographer says: 'His tastes were elegant and domestic. Books and flowers seem to have been the only rivals in his thoughts. His rambles were from his fireside to his garden; and, although the only record of his genius is of a gloomy character, it is evident that his habits and life contributed to render him cheerful and happy.' He died of a fever on 4 Feb. 1746, and was buried under a plain stone, which bears the initials R. B., in the churchyard of Athelstaneford. Although he had published so little, no posthumous poems were found in his possession, and his entire works do not amount to one thousand lines. His third son, Robert [q. v.], was afterwards judge.

The 'Grave' was the first and best of a whole series of mortuary poems. In spite of the epigrams of conflicting partisans, 'Night Thoughts' must be considered as contemporaneous with it, and neither preceding nor

following it. There can be no doubt, however, that the success of Blair encouraged Young to persevere in his far longer and more laborious undertaking. Blair's verse is less rhetorical, more exquisite, than Young's, and, indeed, his relation to that writer, though too striking to be overlooked, is superficial. He forms a connecting link between Otway and Crabbe, who are his nearest poetical kinsmen. His one poem, the 'Grave,' contains seven hundred and sixty-seven lines of blank verse. It is very unequal in merit, but supports the examination of modern criticism far better than most productions of the second quarter of the eighteenth century. As philosophical literature it is quite without value; and it adds nothing to theology; it rests solely upon its merit as romantic poetry. The poet introduces his theme with an appeal to the grave as the monarch whose arm sustains the keys of hell and death (1-10); he describes, in verse that singularly reminds us of the seventeenth century, the physical horror of the tomb (11-27), and the ghastly solitude of a lonely church at night (28-44). He proceeds to describe the churchyard (45-84), bringing in the schoolboy 'whistling aloud to keep his courage up,' and the widow. This leads him to a reflection on friendship, and how sorrow's crown of sorrow is put on in bereavement (85-110). The poetry up to this point has been of a very fine order; here it declines. A consideration of the social changes produced by death (111-122), and the passage of persons of distinction (123-155), leads on to a homily upon the vain pomp and show of funerals (156-182). Commonplaces about the devouring tooth of time (183-206) lead to the consideration that in the grave rank and precedence (207-236), beauty (237-256), strength (257-285), science (286-296), and eloquence (297-318) become a mockery and a jest; and the idle pretensions of doctors (319-336) and of misers (337-368) are ridiculed. At this point the poem recovers its dignity and music. The terror of death is very nobly described (369-381), and the madness of suicides is scourged in verse which is almost Shakespearian (382-430). Our ignorance of the after world (431-446), and the universality of death, with man's unconsciousness of his position (447-500), lead the poet to a fine description of the medley of death (501-540) and the brevity of life (541-599). The horror of the grave is next attributed to sin (600-633), and the poem closes somewhat feebly and ineffectually with certain timid and perfunctory speculations about the mode in which the grave will respond to the Resurrection trumpet.

[The 'Grave' was constantly reprinted after Blair's death, but with no authoritative details about the author. Dr. William Anderson, in 1796, exactly half a century after Blair's death, collected from surviving members of his family such particulars as could still be recovered, and prefixed them to an edition of the 'Grave' published that year in a prefatory biography which contains all of a biographical nature which has been preserved about Robert Blair. Various brief accounts of his life which had appeared previous to that date had been entirely apocryphal.]

E. G.

**BLAIR, ROBERT**, of Avontoun (1741–1811), judge, was the third son of the Rev. Robert Blair, the author of the 'Grave' [q. v.], and Isabella his wife, the daughter of Mr. William Law of Elvingston, East Lothian. He was born in 1741 at Athelstaneford, where his father was the minister. Young Blair commenced his education at the grammar school at Haddington, where he formed a friendship with Henry Dundas, afterwards Viscount Melville, which only ended with their lives. From Haddington he was removed to the high school at Edinburgh, and thence was transferred to the university. In 1764 he was admitted a member of the Faculty of Advocates, and soon obtained a considerable practice at the bar, where he and Henry Erskine were often pitted against each other. In 1789 Blair was appointed by his friend Dundas one of the depute advocates, which office he continued to hold until 1806. For some years also he was one of the assessors of the city of Edinburgh. In 1789, at the age of forty-seven, Blair became solicitor-general for Scotland. This post he continued to occupy until the change of ministry which was occasioned by Pitt's death in 1806. During this period he twice refused the offer of a seat on the judicial bench, and both in 1802 and 1805 declined to accept the office of lord advocate. In 1801 he was elected dean of the faculty of advocates. Upon the return of his friends to power in 1807 he refused the offices of solicitor-general and lord advocate, but in the next year, upon the resignation of Sir Ilay Campbell, he accepted the presidency of the college of justice. This dignity, however, he did not long enjoy. He died suddenly on 20 May 1811. His old friend, Viscount Melville, who came to Edinburgh purposely to attend the funeral, was taken ill, and died on the very day the president was buried. This singular coincidence gave rise to a 'Monody on the Death of the Right Hon. Henry Lord Viscount Melville, and Right Hon. Robert Blair of Avontoun, Lord President of the College of Justice' (Edinburgh, 1811), written by an anonymous

author. Blair married Isabella Cornelia, the youngest daughter of Colonel Charles Craigie Halkett of Lawhill, Fifeshire. His widow, one son, and three daughters, survived him; but he left them so badly off that a pension was granted by the crown to his widow and daughters through the instrumentality of Mr. Perceval. He was a man of a very powerful understanding, with a thoroughly logical mind and a firm grasp of legal principles, but without any gift of eloquence or even of fluency of speech. He had such 'an innate love of justice and abhorrence of iniquity,' and took so liberal and enlarged a view of law, that he was eminently qualified to fill the post which he held for so short a time. It is somewhat remarkable that Blair never sat in parliament. As a recreation he took much pleasure in agricultural pursuits, and he brought his small estate at Avontoun, near Linlithgow, to the highest state of cultivation. His statue by Chantrey stands in the first division of the inner house of the Court of Session. Two portraits of him were taken by Kay of Edinburgh, one in 1793, and the other in 1799, etchings of which will be found in vol. i. of Kay's 'Portraits,' Nos. 127–8.

[Law Review, ii. 341–52; Kay's Original Portraits and Caricature Etchings, 1877, i. 313–6; Edinburgh Review, lxi. 31–2, 281–3; Scots Magazine, 1811, pp. 403–7.] G. F. R. B.

**BLAIR, ROBERT, M.D.** (*d.* 1828), inventor of the 'aplanatic' telescope, was born (there is reason to believe) at Murchiston, near Edinburgh. He was, in all probability, identical with the Robert Blair who wrote 'A Description of an accurate and simple Method of adjusting Hadley's Quadrant for the Back Observation,' appended to the 'Nautical Almanac' for 1788 (published 1783), and printed separately by order of the commissioners of longitude. But the first fact authentically known about him is his appointment by a royal commission, dated 25 Sept. 1785, to the chair of practical astronomy erected for his benefit in the university of Edinburgh, with a yearly salary of 120*l.* Being unprovided with instruments or an observatory, he held the post as a complete sinecure for forty-three years, eight of which he is said to have spent in London, where his only son, Archibald Blair, was established as an optician. When in Edinburgh he rarely entered the *Senatus Academicus*, and his name was even omitted from the list of professors furnished to the university commission, which began its sittings in 1826. In 1787 Blair undertook, with a view to finding a substitute for flint glass, the first systematic investigation yet attempted of the dispersive powers

of various media, the results of which were lengthily detailed in a paper read before the Royal Society of Edinburgh 3 Jan. and 4 April 1791. He was the first to attempt the removal of the 'secondary spectrum,' and succeeded in his attempt by a triple combination of two essential oils, such as naphtha and oil of turpentine, with crown glass; but his discovery of fluid media possessing the same relative, though a different absolute dispersion from glass, gave a far more brilliant prospect of practical success. This valuable optical property he found to belong to metallic solutions, especially of antimony and mercury, mixed with chlorhydric acid, and to the absolutely colourless refraction thus rendered possible he gave the name of 'aplanatic,' or 'free from aberration' (*Ed. Phil. Trans.* iii. 53). 'Could solid media of such properties be discovered,' Sir John Herschel remarked (*Encycl. Metr.* iv. 429), 'the telescope would become a new instrument.' Blair constructed object-glasses upon this principle, of which the performance was highly praised, in one case, at least, venturing successfully upon the unexampled feat of giving to an aperture of three inches a focal length of only nine. He took out a patent for his invention, and entrusted the fabrication of the new instruments to a London optician, George Adams the younger [q.v.]; but they never came into general use. An equally fruitless effort to establish a regular manufacture and sale of them in Edinburgh was made by Archibald Blair, under his father's directions, in 1827 (*Ed. Journ. of Science*, vii. 336). The fluid used in the lenses appears, in course of time, to have lost its transparency by evaporation or crystallisation, and the difficulty offered by the secondary spectrum is, by modern art, rather evaded than overcome.

Sir David Brewster relates (*Encycl. Brit.* art. 'Optics,' p. 586, eighth edition) that an instrument for magnifying by means of prisms, similar to the 'teinoscope' invented by himself in 1812 (*Ed. Phil. Journ.* vi. 334), was shown him by Archibald Blair as having been constructed by his father at an unknown date. The principle of the contrivance was arrived at independently by Amici of Modena in 1821.

Blair became a fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in January 1786, and at one period held the appointment of first commissioner of the board for the care of sick and wounded seamen. In this capacity he was instrumental in banishing scurvy from the navy by introducing the use of lime-juice, a method of preserving which for an indefinite time at sea he had previously ascertained (*Ed. Journ. of Science*, vii. 341). In 1827 he published at Edinburgh a small volume, en-

titled 'Scientific Aphorisms, being the outline of an attempt to establish fixed principles of science, and to explain from them the general nature of the constitution and mechanism of the material system, and the dependence of that system upon mind.' The large promise of the title-page is but imperfectly fulfilled by the contents. Extending Lesage's machinery for producing the effects of gravitation, he divided matter into three classes, distinguished by the size of the constituting 'projected,' 'jaculatory,' and 'quiescent' particles, in the mutual collisions of which he sought a universal explanation of phenomena of the material order, all motion being, however, in the last resort, referred to the action of mind. His health was by this time much broken, and he died at Westlock, in Berwickshire, 22 Dec. 1828.

An abridgment of his 'Experiments and Observations on the unequal Refrangibility of Light,' originally published in the 'Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh' (iii. 3-76, 1794), appeared in Nicholson's 'Journal of Natural Philosophy' with the title, 'The Principles and Application of a new Method of constructing Achromatic Telescopes' (i. 1, 1797), and, in a German translation, in Gilbert's 'Annalen der Physik' (vi. 129, 1800). The best account of the principle of his 'fluid lens,' or aplanatic telescopes, will be found in Sir John Herschel's article on Light in the 'Encyclopædia Metropolitana' (pars. 474-7).

[Sir Alexander Grant's Story of the University of Edinburgh (1884), i. 339, ii. 361; Cat. of Scientific Papers, i. 1867.] A. M. C.

**BLAIR, WILLIAM** (1741-1782), captain in the royal navy, was the son of Daniel Blair of Edinburgh, collaterally related to the Blairs of Balthayock. He became a lieutenant in the navy on 9 Oct. 1760, but did not attain his commander's rank till 6 Dec. 1777. He was posted on 18 April 1778, and commanded the Dolphin, of 44 guns, in the stubborn battle on the Doggerbank, 5 Aug. 1781. Notwithstanding her small force, the exigencies of the case compelled the Dolphin to take her place in the line of battle. Blair's conduct was worthy of the distinction thrust upon him, and won for him the special approval of the admiralty, and his appointment to the Anson, a new 64-gun ship, then fitting for service in the West Indies. In the January following Blair sailed in company with Sir George Rodney, and on 12 April, when the French were completely defeated to leeward of Dominica, the Anson was in the leading squadron under the immediate command of Rear-admiral



Drake, and was warmly engaged from the very beginning of the battle. Her loss was not especially great in point of numbers, but one of her killed was Captain Blair. A monument to his memory, jointly with his brother officers, Captains Bayne and Lord Robert Manners, was erected in Westminster Abbey at the public expense.

[Beatson's Memoirs, v. 405, 475, 479; *Gent. Mag.* (1782), lii. 337; *Notes and Queries*, 6th ser. vii. 122.] J. K. L.

**BLAIR, WILLIAM** (1766–1822), surgeon, youngest son of William Blair, M.D., and Ann Gideon, his wife, was born at Lavenham in Suffolk 28 Jan. 1766. He qualified himself for surgical practice in London under Mr. J. Pearson of Golden Square, by whom he was introduced to the Lock Hospital, and on a vacancy was elected surgeon to that charity. Blair was a master of arts, but it is not stated at what university he graduated. He became very eminent in his profession, and was surgeon to the Asylum, the Finsbury Dispensary, the Bloomsbury Dispensary in Great Russell Street, the Female Penitentiary at Cumming House, Pentonville, and the New Rupture Society. He was a member of the Royal College of Surgeons, London, and of the medical societies of London, Paris, Brussels, and Aberdeen. For some time he was editor of the 'London Medical Review and Magazine.' Blair was a very earnest protestant of the methodist persuasion, and laboured zealously in the cause of the British and Foreign Bible Society, to which he presented his valuable collection of rare and curious editions of the Bible, and many scarce commentaries in different languages. Once or twice he attempted lectures on anatomy and other subjects, but with little success. On his wife's death in March 1822 he resolved to give up professional practice, and to retire into the country. He accordingly took a house in the neighbourhood of Colchester, but before the preparations for removing were completed he was seized with illness, and died at his residence in Great Russell Street, Bloomsbury, 6 Dec. 1822.

His works are: 1. 'The Soldier's Friend, containing familiar instructions to the loyal volunteers, yeomanry corps, and military men in general, on the preservation and recovery of their health,' London, 1798, 12mo, 2nd edition 1803, 3rd edition 1804. 2. 'Essays on the Venereal Disease and its concomitant Effects,' London, 1798, 8vo, 3rd edition 1808. 3. 'Anthropology, or the Natural History of Man, with a comparative view of the structure and functions of animated beings in general,' London, 1805, 8vo. 4. 'The Vaccine Con-

test, being an exact outline of the arguments adduced by the principal combatants on both sides respecting Cow-Pox inoculation, including a late official report by the medical council of the Royal Jennerian Society,' London, 1806, 8vo; written in defence of vaccination in answer to Dr. Rowley. 5. 'Hints for the consideration of Parliament in a letter to Dr. Jenner on the supposed failure of vaccination at Ringwood, including a report of the Royal Jennerian Society, also remarks on the prevalent abuse of variolous inoculation, and on the exposure of out-patients attending at the Small-pox Hospital,' London, 1808, 8vo. 6. 'Prostitutes Reclaimed and Penitents Protected, being an answer to some objections against the Female Penitentiary,' 1809, 8vo. 7. 'Strictures on Mr. Hale's reply to the pamphlets lately published in defence of the London Penitentiary,' 1809, 8vo. 8. 'The Pastor and Deacon examined, or remarks on the Rev. John Thomas's appeal in vindication of Mr. Hale's character, and in opposition to Female Penitentiaries,' 1810, 8vo. 9. 'The Correspondence on the Formation, Objects, and Plan of the Roman Catholic Bible Society,' 1814; this engaged him in a controversy with Charles Butler of Lincoln's Inn (vide *Gent. Mag.* lxxxiv. pts. i. and ii.). 10. A long and elaborate article on 'Cipher,' in Rees's 'Cyclopædia' (1819), vol. viii. The engraved illustrative plates are erroneously inserted under the heading of 'Writing by Cipher' in the volume of 'Plates,' vol. iv. This article is incomparably the best treatise in the English language on secret writing and the art of deciphering. It includes a cipher method invented by Blair, which he declared to be inscrutable; but the key was discovered by Michael Gage, who published at Norwich in 1819 (though it is by a typographical error dated 1809) 'An Extract taken from Dr. Rees's New Cyclopædia on the article Cipher, being a real improvement on all the various ciphers which have been made public, and is the first method ever published on a scientific principle. Lately invented by W. Blair, Esq., A.M.; to which is now first added a Full Discovery of the Principle,' 8vo. 11. An article on 'Stenography' in Rees's 'Cyclopædia,' vol. xxxiv. 12. 'The Revival of Popery, its intolerant character, political tendency, encroaching demands, and unceasing usurpations, in letters to William Wilberforce,' London, 1819, 8vo. 13. 'A New Alphabet of Fifteen Letters, including the vowels,' in William Harding's 'Universal Stenography,' 2nd edit. 1824. 14. Correspondence respecting his method of Secret Writing, containing original letters to him on the subject from the Right Hon. W. Windham, G. Canning, the