

Thomas, third son of Provost John Coutts, was educated at Montrose, and soon after finishing his education started for London, where he engaged in mercantile pursuits. He was one of the promoters of the "Company of Scotland, trading to Africa and the Indies," a venture better known in history as the Darien Company. The latter failure of this expedition was for many years afterwards remembered in Scotland with feelings of regret and disappointment.

Although connected with this unfortunate venture, Thomas Coutts was sagacious and prudent, and like many more of his countrymen, he was continually on the alert, noting the rise and fall in price of those commodities in connection with the various markets in which he was interested. The following letter to his old and trusty friend, Bailie John Ferrier, in Montrose, shows the "canny Scot" to the best advantage:—

"LONDON, the 18th December, 1690.

"Mr. John Ferrier.

"Sir,

"Yours of the instant I have received. I have since I received yours been enquiring anent the ballance of your accompt and Stokeins. The executors are busie settling his books, for his indispositione this summer hes occasioned that his books are not in soe good order as could have been wished. Whoesover he seems to make mention of 21½ dozen of Stokeins belonging to you and you wreatt only of 21, but as yet I cannot find whom they wear disposed of, wherfore it wear not amiss to acquaint me what the Stokeins stood you in Scotland and of the half dozen, and if it cannot be found when they