

IV.

COMMUNICATION REGARDING THE PROPOSED NATIONAL EXHIBITION
OF SCOTTISH PORTRAITS. BY ALEXANDER CHRISTIE, Esq., SECRETARY.

In reference to the communication submitted to the Society at their meeting on the 22d of May, and the resolutions then adopted, the Secretary stated that he had addressed a letter to the Honourable B. F. Primrose, Secretary to the Board of Manufactures, which, with the reply, he now begged to lay before the Society.

“ HALL OF THE SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES,
27th May 1854.

“ SIR,—At a meeting of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, held on the 22d instant, a communication was made by Mr David Laing, one of the Fellows, containing suggestions as to the propriety of opening a National Exhibition of Portraits of Illustrious Scotsmen in Edinburgh in the course of next year. As the subject was warmly taken up by the Society, I was instructed to communicate with the Board of Trustees for Manufactures in Scotland, in order to ascertain how far the Honourable the Commissioners are favourable to a scheme which, it is understood, they at one time contemplated.

“ Such a collection has never been made by any nation, and the only approximations to it exist in the Valhalla erected by the ex-King of Bavaria in the neighbourhood of Ratisbon, and in the galleries formed by Louis-Phillipe at Versailles. The first of these consists mainly of busts copied from such authorities as were within reach, and the other contains many copies of doubtful authenticity, and therefore of little value.

“ On the importance of exhibiting—even for a short time—such a collection, I need hardly enlarge. The portraits of great men are scarcely of less value to the historian and the student of history than the written memoirs and correspondence of the times in which they lived and acted. To the painter of history they are invaluable, while they make the general public more deeply interested in the deeds and words of those with whose portraiture, in their habits as they lived, they have become acquainted; and this acquaintance can not be formed without an expenditure of time and money not often within the reach even of those to whose pursuits it is most necessary. A Descriptive Catalogue of such an Exhibition, if properly prepared, might serve as an interesting biographical record of the worthies of Scotland in early as well as recent times.

“ It was felt by the Society that without the sanction and support of the Board of Trustees—having national apartments at their disposal—the prospect of such an exhibition would be hopeless, as the proprietors of such treasures as the Society hopes to collect will hardly trust them to anything less than National custody.

“ Hoping that the Honourable the Commissioners will see in this project a worthy object of national effort, and not a mere gratification of antiquarian or ephemeral curiosity, and that they will feel inclined to lend it their efficient support, I have the honour to be, &c.

“ ALEX. CHRISTIE, *Secretary.*”

“ BOARD OF MANUFACTURES, EDINBURGH,
2d June 1854.

“ SIR,—Having laid before the Board your letter of the 27th ultimo, requesting the favourable consideration of the Board to a scheme by the Society of Antiquaries for a National Exhibition of Portraits of Illustrious Scotchmen in Edinburgh in the course of next year, and that the Board would grant the use of apartments for the purpose, I am directed to state that the Honourable the Commissioners approve very much of the object which has been brought under their consideration by the Society of Antiquaries; but having been given to understand that the Royal Scottish Academy have a similar object in view, they take leave to recommend that there should be some communication between the Society of Antiquaries and the Academy on the subject.—I am, Sir, your most obedient servant,

“ B. F. PRIMROSE, *Secretary.*”

It was then moved by the Secretary, and approved of by the meeting, that the Council be instructed to co-operate with the Royal Scottish Academy on the proposed National Exhibition of Portraits; and in doing so, he said, he would take the opportunity of congratulating the Society that through the energy and enterprise of our National Academy, there was every hope of the scheme being carried into effect.

After some congratulatory remarks by the Chairman on the close of another Session, the Society adjourned to the 30th of November—St Andrew's Day.