

## II.

### NOTE CONCERNING THE RESIDENCE OF THE BARONS BALMERINO IN LEITH. By D. H. ROBERTSON, M.D., F.S.A. Scot.

The mansion of the Lords Balmerino is entered by a narrow lane from the Kirkgate, by which it is bounded on the north; on the west by Coatfield Lane; and on the south by Constitution Street, from which the full front was seen until the recent erection of "St Mary's Star of the Sea," by which, and its connected buildings, it is now entirely concealed from view.

The building is thus described by Dr Daniel Wilson:—"It has a handsome front to the south, ornamented with some curious specimens of the debased style of Gothic prevalent in the reign of James VI. Its most striking feature is a curiously decorated doorway, finished in the ornate style of bastard Gothic. An ogee arch, filled with rich Gothic tracery, surmounts the square lintel, finished with a lion's head, which seems to hold the arch suspended in its mouth; on either side is a sculptured shield, on one of which a monogram is cut, characterised by the usual inexplicable ingenuity of these quaint riddles, and with the date 1631." He afterwards adds,—"Tradition may be right in assigning this mansion as the temporary residence of Charles II. in 1650." The arms are more easily deciphered. They are the Burgh Stewart of Scotland; quarterly, first and fourth, royal arms of Scotland (lion ram-

pant), second and third, azure, a galley (or lymphad), her sails furled." The crest should have been, "a sovereign in a chair of state in armour, royally crowned and robed; in dexter hand a dagger, in sinister an owl; the motto, 'Sic fuit est et erit.'" (The Balmerino family bore three bears' heads and a chevron). It is still in good preservation. From the absence of the crest, and the general appearance of the stone, I think it has been, with due deference to the authority of my friend Dr Wilson, built into the wall at a later period than the date bears. This conjecture may be considered as a fact, as the upper portion of the stone which surmounted the crest and completed the tablet was shown to the writer by James Wallace, Esq. It is now in the garden of 24 Royal Terrace, Edinburgh, where it was placed by one of the Sibbalds, who, in after times, was proprietor of both houses. The character of the carving—the coronet and monogram—are identical with those represented, and are readily recognised. The proper entrance to the mansion—alluded to in various minutes of the parish—was from the narrow alley in the Kirk-gate, where the main tower is still to be seen. It bears the coronet of an earl, with the letter C surmounted by the thistle.

In searching the huge mass of parish documents, I had no difficulty in coming to the conclusion that this was the mansion of the Lords of Balmerinloch, and that it was the same which afforded shelter to the royalty of Charles II. A digest of the grounds on which that opinion was formed had been noted, when, through the kindness of Mr W. H. Cooper, the following history, derived from existing titles, was communicated:—

"The house was built by John Stewart, Earl of Carrick, second son of Robert, Earl of Orkney, natural son of James V., in 1631; the Earl of Carrick sold the house and grounds, on 13th September 1643, to John, Lord Balmerinloch. The property was the residence of the Balmerino family from 1643 until the attainder of the last lord, after which the estates were sold, in 1755, to John, Earl of Moray. The disposition to the Earl by the Barons of Exchequer is dated 4th February 1755. On the 1st August 1755, the Earl of Moray sold the property in Leith to Lady Baird of Newbyth for L.700. Lady Baird was succeeded by her brother, General James St Clair of St Clair, and the General, on 11th September 1762, sold the property to Colonel (afterwards Lieutenant-General) Robert Horne Elphinstone of Logie Elphinstone for L.1050;

and General Elphinstone sold it to William Sibbald, merchant in Leith, for L.1475. (Signed) CHARLES BAXTER."

The house and grounds—the house being now subdivided, part of it occupied by the poorest class of tenants, and possessing little of its former grandeur—were sold in 1848 to the Roman Catholics, for the purpose of erecting a chapel and schools, for the sum of L.1800. The main obstacle, I understand, to the completion of the titles exists in the fact that one of the Lords Balmerino "shut up the road to the alter-stane of St Mary's, which led from Quality Street, through Charlotte Lane, to St Mary's Church in former times." We add one extract from the parish records:—

"4th November 1736.—Whereas sundry persons, inhabitants of Leith, have for some time past presumed to lay down rubbish and muck on both sides of the Coatfield gutter, that runs between the Lord Balmerino's lodging and Robert Douglas his tenement, called the Coatfield Lands, and lying in the Kirkgate of Leith," &c.

In 1745, Arthur, the last Baron Balmerino, after the battle of Prestonpans, joined Prince Charles Edward at Holyrood. He served throughout the campaign as colonel to the 2d troop of the Life Guards, and voluntarily surrendered, though it is said he might have made his escape, four days after the fatal field of Culloden. He was tried and condemned. His final declaration is in these words:—"I must acknowledge I did a very inconsiderate thing, for the which I am exceedingly sorry, in accepting of a company of foote from the Princess Anne, who, I knew, had no more right to the Crown than her predecessor, the Prince of Orange, whom I always looked upon as a vile unnatural Usurper. To make amends for what I had done, I joined the King when he was in Scotland in 1715, and when all was over, I made my escape, and lived abroad till the year 1734. . . . . When his Royal Highness Prince Charles Edward came to Edinburgh [1745], as it was my bounden and indispensable duty, I joined him, though I might easily have excused myself from taking arms on account of my age; but I never could have had peace of conscience if I had stayed at home when that brave Prince was exposing himself to all manner of danger and fatigues both night and day." He was executed on Towerhill, 18th August 1746, the Earl of Kilmarnock preceding him to the fatal stage. The last moments of the

Baron are thus graphically described by Robert Chambers in his History of the Rebellion :—" The appearance of Balmerino upon this fatal stage produced a very different sensation among the spectators from that occasioned by Kilmarnock. His firm step, his bold bluff figure, and, above all, his dress, the same regimental suit of blue, turned up with red, which he had worn throughout the late campaign, excited breathless admiration, rather than any emotion of pity, and made the crowd regard him as a being of a superior nature. Walking round the scaffold, he bowed to the people, and inspected the inscription on the coffin, which he declared to be correct. He also asked which was his hearse, and ordered the man to drive near. Then looking with an air of satisfaction at the block, which he designated as his 'pillow of rest,' he took out a paper, and putting on his spectacles, read it to the few about him. It contained a declaration of his unshaken adherence to the House of Stuart, and of his regret of ever having served in the armies of their enemies, Queen Anne and George I., which he considered the only faults of his life deserving his present fate. Finally, he called for the executioner, who immediately appeared, and was about to ask his forgiveness, when Balmerino stopped him by saying,—' Friend, you need not ask forgiveness ; the execution of your duty is commendable.' Presenting him with three guineas, he added,—' Friend, I never had much money ; this is all I now have. I wish it was more for your sake, and I am sorry I can add nothing to it but my coat and waistcoat.' He took off these garments and laid them upon his coffin for the executioner. In his immediate preparation for death this singular man displayed the same wonderful degree of coolness and intrepidity. Having put on a flannel vest, which had been made on purpose, with a cap of tartan, to denote, he said, that he had died a Scotsman, he went to the block, and kneeling down, went through a sort of rehearsal of the execution for the instruction of the executioner, showing him how he should give the blow by dropping his arms. He then returned to his friends, took a tender farewell, and looking round upon the crowd, said,—' I am afraid there are some who may think my behaviour bold ; but (addressing a gentleman near him) remember, sir, what I tell you,—it arises from a confidence in God and a clear conscience.' At this moment he observed the executioner with the axe, and going up to

him he took the fatal weapon into his own hand and felt its edge. On returning it, he showed the man where to strike his neck, and animated him to do it with vigour and resolution, adding, 'for in that, friend, will consist your mercy.' With a countenance of the utmost cheerfulness he then knelt down at the block, and uttering the following words,— 'O Lord! reward my friends, forgive my enemies, bless the Prince and the Duke, and receive my soul,' dropped his arms for the blow."

"In 1840 the coffin plates, then carelessly placed under the cushion of the chaplain's pew in the Tower Chapel, were shown to the writer. One was inscribed, 'Guilielmus Comes de Kilmarnock decollatus 18° Augusti 1746, Ætat. Suæ 42,' with an earl's coronet. The other bore, 'ARTHURUS Dominus. De Balmerino. decollatus 18° Augusti 1746 Ætatis Suæ 58,' with a baron's coronet. Lord Campbell, in his *Lives of the Chancellors*, observes,— "From Balmerino Walter Scott has taken the exit of Fergus MacIvor."

Arthur married Margaret Chalmers, a daughter of Captain Chalmers of Leith, who survived till 26th August 1765. The following letter, written by her to her sister the day after his execution, was presented to the Society by the writer of this paper in 1851. It is indorsed, "Lady Balmerino's letter to Mrs Borthwick, 1746":—

"DEAR SISTER,—This comes from a soer heart. Yestrday my dear lord Balmerino and lord Kilmarnock was beheaded, after which they war buried in the Tower. After that my lord Balmerino's frinds came to me and told me that my greif was very jost, for that day I was the widow to the gratest man on earth, for which it gives me grat eias [ease] to hear he dyed with so much coruge. I am to go from thas to the owther end of the Tower, hiving no mo . . . . day near the Tower. I shall let you . . . when I go thear. I have found . . . . thear your blasing to all frinds. I am [your] soerful sister,

"MARGARET BALMER[INO.]

"LONDON, *August 19th, 1746.*"

I add another document in connexion with the family. It is signed by George Home, town-clerk of Leith, the father of John Home, the author of "Douglas."

“ My Lords Commissarys of Edin<sup>r</sup>. unto your Lo<sup>ps</sup>. shows Elizabeth, Lady Dowager of Balmerino,—That upon the death of the deceast James, Lord Balmerino, your petitioner’s husband, there was application made to your Lop<sup>s</sup>. for inspecting his repositorys and delivering up to your petitioner the money that should be found therein, which was accordingly granted, and the money, to the amount of L.97, 5s. given up to your petitioner, upon her receipt to be accountable for the same, which lies in the clerk’s hands. And your petitioner’s said deceast Lord having died on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of January 1746 years, the petitioner did aliment his family from that time till the term of Whitsunday thereafter, and disbursed the said sum so received by her and much more, for which she is creditor to the said Lord Balmerino.

“ And seeing the Testament dative is now shortly to be expedie, and the said sum recieved by the petitioner as above was *bona fide* debursed by her for the maintenance of the defunct’s family, it is therefore just and reasonable that the said sum of L.97 ought to be deducted out of the Inventory to be confirmed, and your petitioner to get allowance thereof in part of the sum for which she is creditor for the maintenance of the family. And as your petitioner was informed there was a parallel case so decided by the Lords of Session betwixt the relict and creditors of Mr Hugh Murray Kinnimond, advocate, may it therefore please your Lop<sup>s</sup>. to find that the said sum of L.97, 5s. recieved by your petitioner as aforesaid, ought to be deduced out of the Inventory of the said Lord Balmerino’s confirmed testament, and the same allowed to your petitioner in part payment of the expense of the maintenance of the defunct’s family debursed by her.—GEORGE HOME.” To this we have a marginal note:—“ 7<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1746.—The Commissaries refuse the petition in respect of the answers, reserving to the petitioner to insist in a proper process for the maintenance of her family as accords.—ROBERT CLERK.”

The lithograph exhibited (from Dr D. H. Robertson’s “Sculptured Stones of Leith”) shows the sculptured stones referred to. The anagram I interpret,—I. S. E. C.:—JOHN STEWART, EARL OF CARRICK.