

LETTERS

TO THE

TREASURER OF THE SOCIETY,

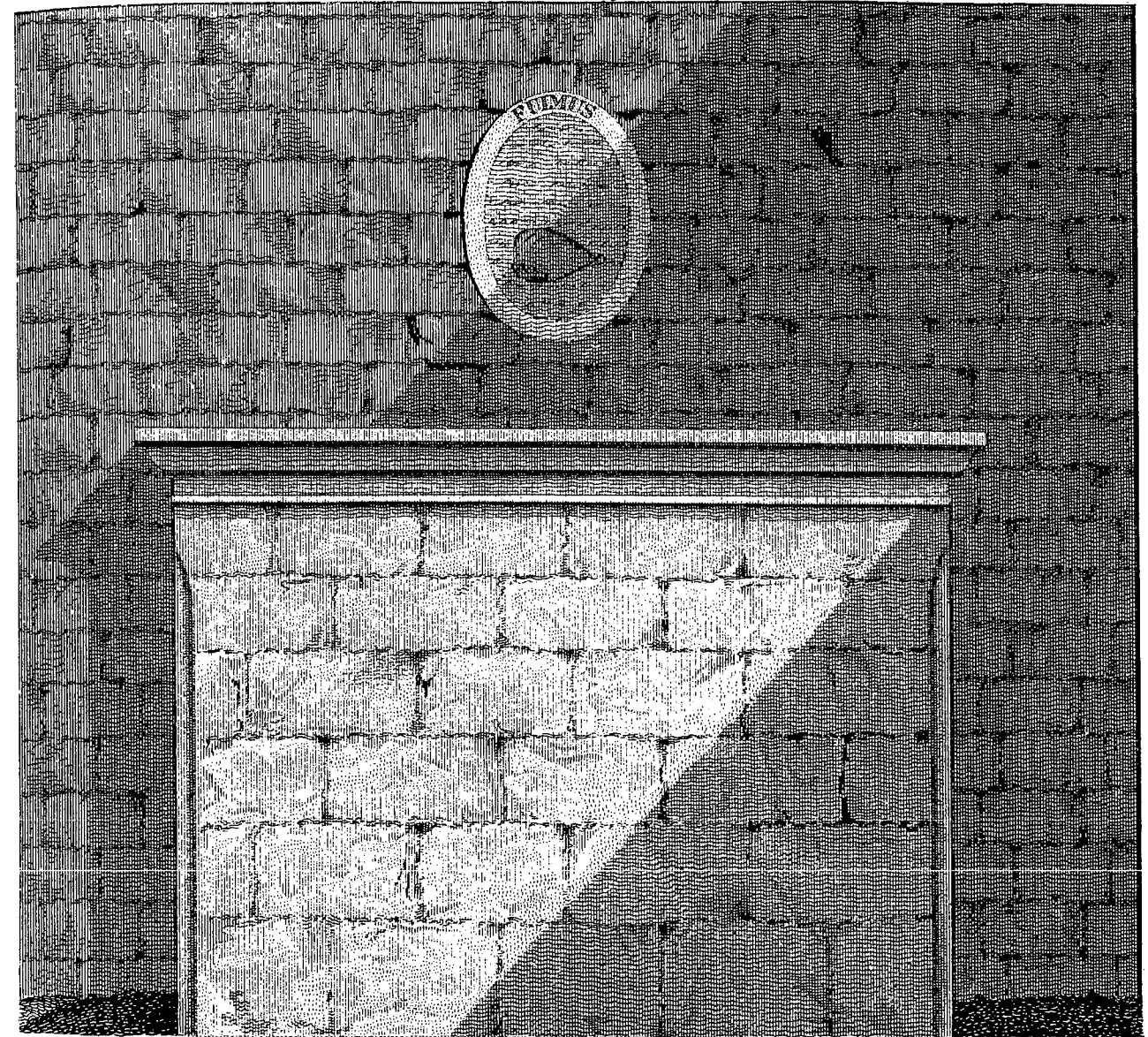
CONCERNING

THE DISCOVERY OF THE SILVER BOX CONTAINING THE HEART OF
EDWARD LORD BRUCE OF KINLOSS.

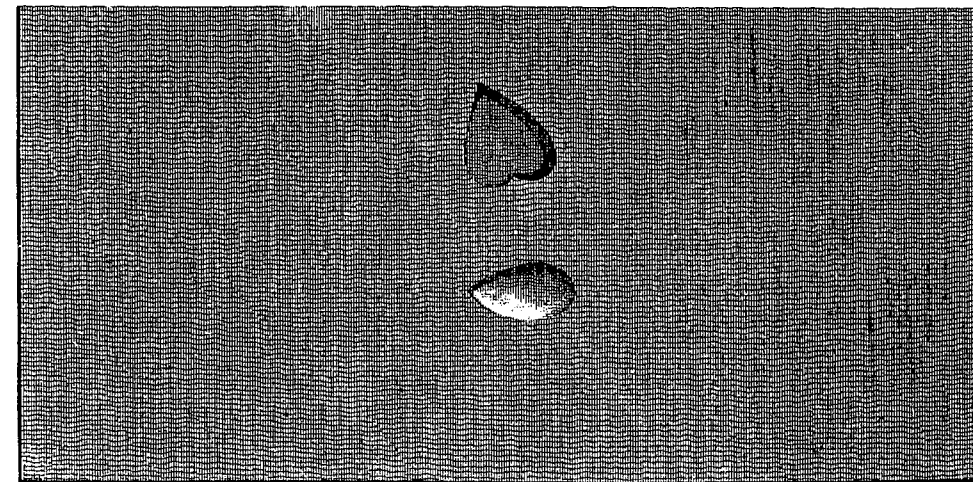
 LETTER I.

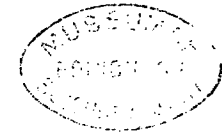
DEAR SIR,

THE discovery of the boxes was owing to Sir Robert Preston having given orders for the burial aile to be cleaned, which made him visit it, to give the necessary directions. The place recalled the old tradition of the Silver Heart, which had long been mentioned in the families of Valleyfield and Culross, in that vague way that little tales of wonder are often kept up in some families, without implicit belief being attached to them. He ordered the workmen to take down the building carefully, in order that it might be replaced again. This was done with difficulty, as nearly half of it was sunk, or built into the wall, the part projecting having very much the appearance of an altar. When the building was removed, they found a flat stone, like the common grave stones,—

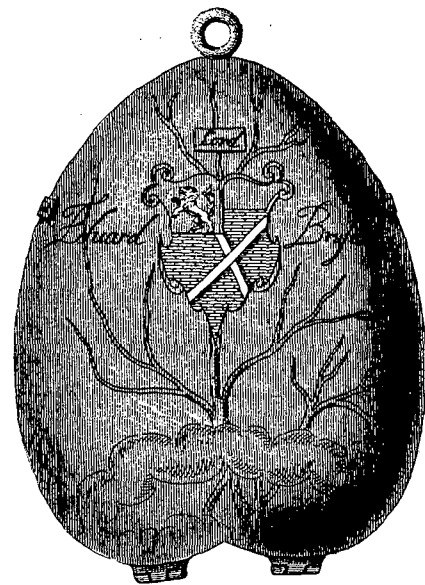


STONE IN WHICH THE BOXES WERE DEPOSITED.

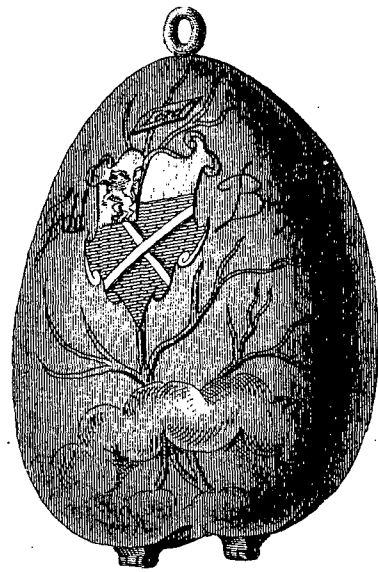




TOP VIEW
Fig. 1.



SIDE VIEW
Fig. 2.



no inscription or date. This stone was then lifted up, when under it they found one of similar dimensions, in which were sunk, in two excavations, the silver and a leaden box. This stone was about two feet below the level of the floor,—no inscription or date.

I must trust to my Indian ink and pencil for conveying to you and the Society of Antiquaries a more accurate description of the form of the boxes than I could furnish by words. The drawings, indeed, are by no means finished as I could have wished; but they convey a tolerably distinct idea of their appearance; and the top view of the silver box may be received as a pretty exact *fac simile* of the engraving. Both sides of this box, top and bottom, are similarly engraved. The silver box is perfectly entire;—time seems to have made no impression on it; and the engraving is as sharp as if it had been executed but yesterday. The leaden one is much corroded and decayed.

Upon opening the silver box, which has hinges and two hooks, we found a mass, with a considerable quantity of a fluid of the consistence and colour of chocolate; the whole perfectly inodorous. This is a very remarkable circumstance. The mass (which must be the heart), inclosed in fine linen, seems diminished from its original size, but felt firm to the touch. The contents of the leaden box or case, whatever they were, perhaps the intestines, were easily moved and separated with the point of a knife through the fractures made by time; but I could not perceive any smell from the case.

There can be no doubt of the heart being that of the unfortunate Lord Kinloss, from the inscription engraven on the box, *Edward Lord Bruce*. It is singular that the event should be preserved to us so minutely in the *Guardian*, vol. ii. where the chal-

Fig. 3.
VIEW OF INSIDE

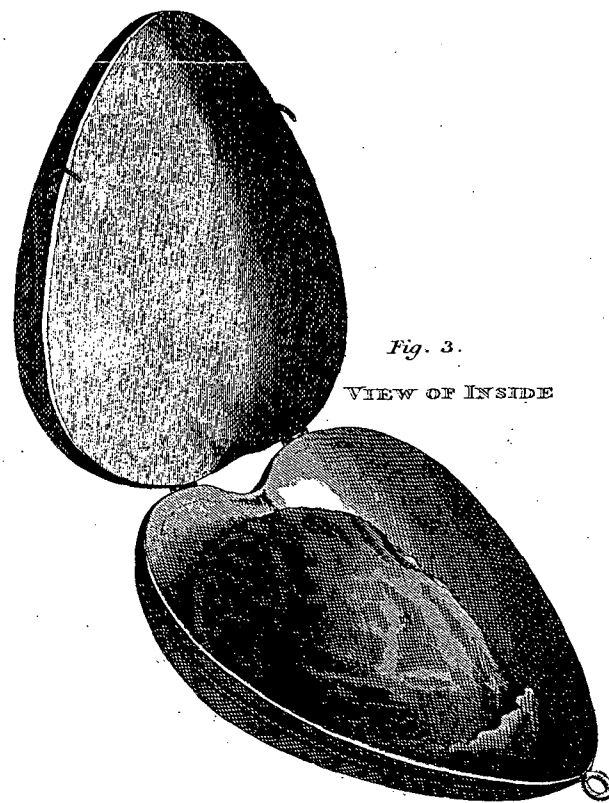


Fig. 4.
LEADEN BOX



ledge from Lord Bruce to Sir Edward Sackville is recorded, in No. 129; and the account of the fatal combat in No. 133.

Having the honour of being a member of the Antiquarian Society, I was anxious to take the drawings to present them with, being the first time I had an opportunity of laying before the Society any thing worthy of their attention. You will, therefore, confer an obligation on me, by mentioning this circumstance.

I am, DEAR SIR,

Your most obedient Servant.

PAT^K. BEGBIE.

Castlehill Cottage, 6th December 1808.

ROBERT SCOTT MONCRIEFF, Esq. Jun. Edinburgh.

LETTER II.

DEAR SIR,

THERE is no other account of the origin of the tradition, preserved in the families of Valleyfield and Culross, of the silver heart, except the one mentioned in my letter of the 6th December 1808. And the vague manner in which it had always been repeated in those families, threw a kind of mysterious uncertainty on the tradition, no way favourable to an implicit belief, but rather as a proof of its falsehood. And I have heard Colonel Robert Preston, a

man of considerable observation, uncle to the present Sir Robert Preston, smile at the story of the silver heart. His opinion was, that the projecting building (of which I send you a sketch) under which the silver box was found, containing the heart of Lord Bruce, was originally intended, either as a place to rest a coffin upon previously to interment, or perhaps as an altar.

It may be remarked, however, that there was a rude kind of heart painted upon the front of the altar-like building, which, I presume, had been from time to time renewed, as the painting grew obscure. I had observed this often; yet the impression it made on my mind was by no means a proof sufficient to satisfy it.

That no distinct account of this singular and interesting monument had been handed down to the present families, or retained by them, can excite no great surprise, when it is considered that neither of them were allied at that period to the family of Lord Kinloss; that the affinity of the descendants of the families of Lord Kinloss and Sir George Bruce of Carnock, with those of Culross and Valleyfield, took place after a lapse of seventy or eighty years; and that, during great part of this period, the descendants, both of Lord Kinloss, and of his uncle Sir George Bruce of Carnock, continued loyally and actively attached to the royal family, consequently involved in all the troubles of the times, from the death of Charles I. to the restoration of Charles II.; and that a considerable part of this period was spent in France and Holland with the exiled monarch. It will naturally occur that, during the lapse of so many years spent in this manner, a less distinct account of this singular transaction would be preserved than if the families had remained quietly at home.

With such slender hints and information, it reflects a great deal of credit on Sir Robert Preston, that he made the attempt to ascertain at once either the truth or falsehood of an old and very obscure tradition, by taking down the building; and in persevering afterwards, on finding only a plain grave stone, without any inscription, in removing this stone also, when the object of their search was discovered. He continued his laudable exertions, by corresponding with the inhabitants of that part of Holland where the sad catastrophe happened; inspecting the Chapel of the Rolls in London, where a monument is erected to the memory of the first Lord Kinloss, as one of the masters. He left nothing, in fact, undone, to obtain every information possible on the subject. He also gave orders that the whole of the limited information he had been able to procure, and the figure of the silver box, should be engraved on a plate of brass, fixed in a marble slab, and placed in the wall of the burying aile immediately above the altar. The following is a copy of the inscription:—

“FUIMUS.

“Near this spot is deposited the heart of Edward Lord Bruce of Kinloss, who was slain in a bloody duel, fought in 1613, with Sir Edward Sackville, afterwards Earl of Dorset, near Bergen-op-Zoom, in Holland, to which country the combatants repaired, the one from England, the other from Paris, for the determined purpose of deciding their quarrel. The body of Lord Bruce was interred in the great church of Bergen-op-Zoom, where, among the ruins caused by the siege in 1747, are still to be seen the remains of a monument erected to his memory. A tradition however existing, that his heart had been sent over to his native

“land, and was buried near this place, a search was made by Sir Robert Preston, Baronet, of Valleyfield, in the year 1808, when it was found embalmed in a silver case of foreign workmanship, secured between two flat and excavated stones clasped with iron, and was again carefully replaced, and securely deposited in the spot where it was discovered.

“For the particulars of the challenge and fatal duel, in which the Lord Bruce was killed upon the spot, disdaining to accept his life from his antagonist, who was also dangerously wounded, see Lord Clarendon’s *Hist. of the Rebellion*, B. i. and the narrative published in numbers 129 and 133 of the *Guardian*.”

Memorandums, &c. of the Alliance of the Culross and Valleyfield Families with those of the Bruces.

Sir Edward Bruce of Clackmannan acquired the lands of Blairhall, &c. about the year 1541. He married Alison, daughter of William Reid of Aikenhead, Esquire, and sister to the Bishop of Orkney. Issue three sons:

1. Robert succeeded his father, whose male line is extinct.
2. Edward Lord Kinloss.
3. Sir George Bruce of Carnock.

From whom are descended the Earls of Kincardine, Elgin, and Aylesbury. 1. Edward, second son, was a man of great abilities, and highly esteemed by King James VI. He was one of the ambassadors sent by James to congratulate Queen Elizabeth on the defeat of Essex’s insurrection. He then commenced a secret correspondence with the subtle Cecil; and, when James came to the throne, he made him a grant of the dissolved abbey of Kinloss in

Moray, and erected it into a temporal lordship, 22d February 1603, rewarding him also with the place of master of the rolls for life. He married Magdalen, daughter of Alexander Clerk, Esquire, of Balbirnie. He died 14th January 1610. Issue two sons :

1. Edward, the unfortunate Lord Kinloss.
2. Thomas, who succeeded his brother.

On the monument, in the Chapel of the Rolls in London, he is represented in a reclining posture, with his head resting on one hand. His hair is short ; his beard long, and divided towards the end ; his dress, a long furred robe. Before him appears a man in armour kneeling, possibly his unfortunate son, Lord Kinloss.

It has been suggested that the body of Lord Kinloss, master of the rolls, may be interred under the grave-stone that contains the relics of his son. I am inclined to think that this opinion has great probability ; and it is to be regretted that this stone was not removed at the time of finding the heart, to ascertain the fact. It is common to erect monuments to popular characters, where even their dust is not interred ; and although we find Lord Kinloss's monument in the Chapel of the Rolls, yet, as the chapel was only begun in 1617 by Inigo Jones, and as his death happened seven years previously, viz. in 1610, we may naturally conclude that his body was conveyed to Culross, to be interred in his own burying-place ; and that his unfortunate son, three years afterwards, perhaps anticipating his fate, would as naturally desire his heart to be sent and deposited near the body of his parent. If so, it is now inclosed in the very stone which covers his father's remains.

It appears that the first Lord Kinloss had acquired property

contiguous to the monastery of Culross previously to the year 1590 ; for he built a small house that year adjoining it. But, in the year 1603, he erected the very beautiful structure named the Abbey of Culross (to which the original house served only as an appendage), consisting of two flats or stories ; the windows having alternately over them $\overset{L}{E*B}$ and $\overset{D}{M*B}$,—that is, Lord Edward Bruce and Dame Magdalen Bruce. The upper story, being the third, was added by Alexander, second Earl of Kincardine, in 1670, who placed the Earl's coronets upon the two turrets. Therefore, the Abbey of Culross, properly speaking, was built in three distinct periods.

2. Sir George Bruce of Carnock, younger brother of the first Lord Kinloss, was knighted by James VI., was member of parliament for Culross, 1603, and appointed one of the Commissioners to treat of the Union, 1604. It is probable that he had acquired a right to the Abbey of Culross either before his brother Lord Kinloss's death, or soon afterwards : For we find James VI. visiting him there on his hunting parties ; and tradition states that the King and his courtiers were, on these occasions, most sumptuously entertained by Sir George ; and that his Majesty, at one of these visits, having expressed a desire to view the operations of his colliery, carried on upon a very magnificent plan, was conducted by a subterraneous passage nearly half a mile under the sea to a building which Sir George had in the Forth opposite Castlehill, called the Moat, where his numerous ships were loaded with coals and salt for different parts of the world. Sir George had arranged matters so that his Majesty should be brought up from his subterraneous travels to the building precisely at the time of high water ; when it is reported

that the surprised and frightened monarch, on looking around him, and perceiving nothing but the sea, called out "TREASON!" The gallant knight soon relieved his majesty; for he had an elegant barge, manned with seamen in splendid liveries, ready to convey the trembling King ashore, to partake of a superb entertainment at the Abbey. A room in the Abbey, which was hung with beautiful Gobelins tapestry, still retains the designation of "the King's room." The stones that composed the building of the *Moat* were disposed of many years ago, to build part of the pier of Leith. Part of them, however, still remains to point out the place.

Sir George Bruce, eldest son of the above-mentioned Sir George Bruce, married Mary, daughter of Sir John Preston of Valleyfield. Their son, Sir Edward Bruce of Carnock, created Earl of Kincardine by Charles I., died unmarried; and his estate and honours devolved upon his brother Alexander, second Earl of Kincardine. He was a man of great parts and singular endowments, a steady friend to the royal family, and highly esteemed by Charles II., who had been frequently supplied by him and his family with money in his distress, during his exile. He rewarded them with a peerage; and, after his restoration, appointed Alexander ambassador to Paris. It is related of this nobleman, that, while in Paris as English ambassador, he shod his horses with silver. He is mentioned as the first person that recommended pendulum clocks to be used for finding the longitude. He married Veronica Van Arsan, daughter to Baron Somersdyke of Amsterdam. Issue two sons and three daughters:

1. Charles, Lord Bruce, who died before his father, unmarried.
2. Alexander.

His eldest daughter, Lady Mary, married William Cochrane of Ochiltree, son and heir of John Cochrane of Ochiltree.

N. B. The line failing in William, seventh Earl of Dundonald, in 1758, the honours devolved upon Thomas Cochrane, lineally descended of Sir John Cochrane of Ochiltree.

William Cochrane of Ochiltree married Lady Mary Bruce eldest daughter of Alexander, second Earl of Kincardine. Issue nine sons and four daughters. Of whom were Thomas, eighth Earl of Dundonald; and Ann, Lady Preston, married to Sir George Preston of Valleyfield, Baronet.

Culross Abbey, and the adjoining property, belong now, by purchase, to Sir Robert Preston of Valleyfield, Baronet, son of the above-mentioned Sir George Preston and Ann Cochrane his lady.

The cause of the quarrel between Lord Kinloss and Sir Edward Sackville is not known. It may be observed, however, that Lord Bruce, in his first letter from Paris to Sir Edward Sackville, has the following remarkable passage:—"Were I not confident your honour gives you the same courage to do me *right*, that it did "to do me *wrong*:" and as Sir Edward Sackville, in his narrative, is silent on the subject, we are warranted, from this silence, in presuming that the origin of the quarrel, whatever it may have been, was not favourable to Sir Edward.

Pennant, in his View of London, has said: "The sad relation is given by Sir Edward Sackville himself. He seems solely actuated "by honour; his rival by the deepest revenge." This assertion, I contend, cannot easily be admitted. For, in this sad relation of Sir Edward Sackville, *the survivor*, he confesses that anger or wrath compelled him to stop short of the place destined originally

for the fatal scene, and to desire Lord Kinloss to stop and dismount at an improper place. His words are, "I bade him alight; which with willingness he quickly granted; and then, in a meadow, ankle deep in water at the least, bidding farewell to our doublets, in our shirts began to charge each other; having afore commanded our surgeons to withdraw themselves a pretty distance from us; conjuring them, besides, as they respected our favours, or their own safeties, not to stir, but suffer us to execute our pleasures, we being fully resolved, God forgive us, to dispatch each other by what means we could!" After the murderous business had been nearly accomplished by Sir Edward Sackville, he demanded of Lord Kinloss "if he would request his life?" Being still kept down by Sir Edward Sackville, he bravely replied, "he scorned it." Still continuing to hold him down, although he had now completed the murderous scene, his surgeon, afar off, cried out, that he, Lord Kinloss, would immediately die, if his wounds were not stopped; and when the surgeon did arrive, and beheld the mangled and dreadful situation of his Lord, struck with horror, I suppose, he snatched up the Lord's sword, and ran after Sir Edward Sackville; "and although my Lord Bruce lay weltering in his blood, and past all expectation of life, conformable to all his former carriage, which was *undoubtedly noble*, he cried out, Rascal! hold thy hand." This evidence from Sir Edward Sackville himself, contradicts most completely Pennant's harsh observation.

To the drawings formerly transmitted to you, I now add that of the leaden box or case, in the shape of a heart, of the natural size; and the stone, where the excavations are represented, in which the silver box and leaden case were found deposited. This stone is five feet eight inches long and two feet ten inches in

breadth. The one that serves as a cover to it is exactly of the same dimensions.

The form of the leaden case, being that of a heart, and also the excavation that contained it, makes some doubt arise in one's mind relative to it and its contents. If it contained only the intestines or other viscera of Lord Bruce's body, why in the shape of a heart? Why not a square or oval case? And why place any thing in this shape close to a real heart? I confess I am not satisfied; but to offer any explanation, must be mere conjecture. There cannot exist a doubt, however, of the substance within being in too great a quantity for any human heart.

The engraving upon the silver box appears to me to be a poor attempt of the artist to represent the intestines, and branches of the blood-vessels running over the surface.

I remain, very faithfully,

Your obedient Servant,

PATRICK BEGBIE.

Culross, Castlehill, 27th February 1815.

ROBERT SCOTT MONCRIEFF, Esquire.

It appears, from another communication, that the discovery was made on the 5th of November 1808; and that the silver box, containing the heart, was exhibited to the public on the 9th of the

same month, in a room of the Abbey of Culross. In the afternoon of that day, it was again deposited, with great ceremony, in its former situation, in presence of Lord Duncan, Sir Robert Preston, Mr Maconochie, and all the gentlemen of the neighbourhood, with a vast crowd of people of all descriptions. The place was immediately built up again as it originally stood.

The silver box would contain rather more than an English pint. Its circumference round the middle, when it was shut, was fourteen inches and a quarter ; and, by the length, fifteen inches and a half.*

* In the plates annexed, a representation is given of the silver box, and also of the monument or altar.