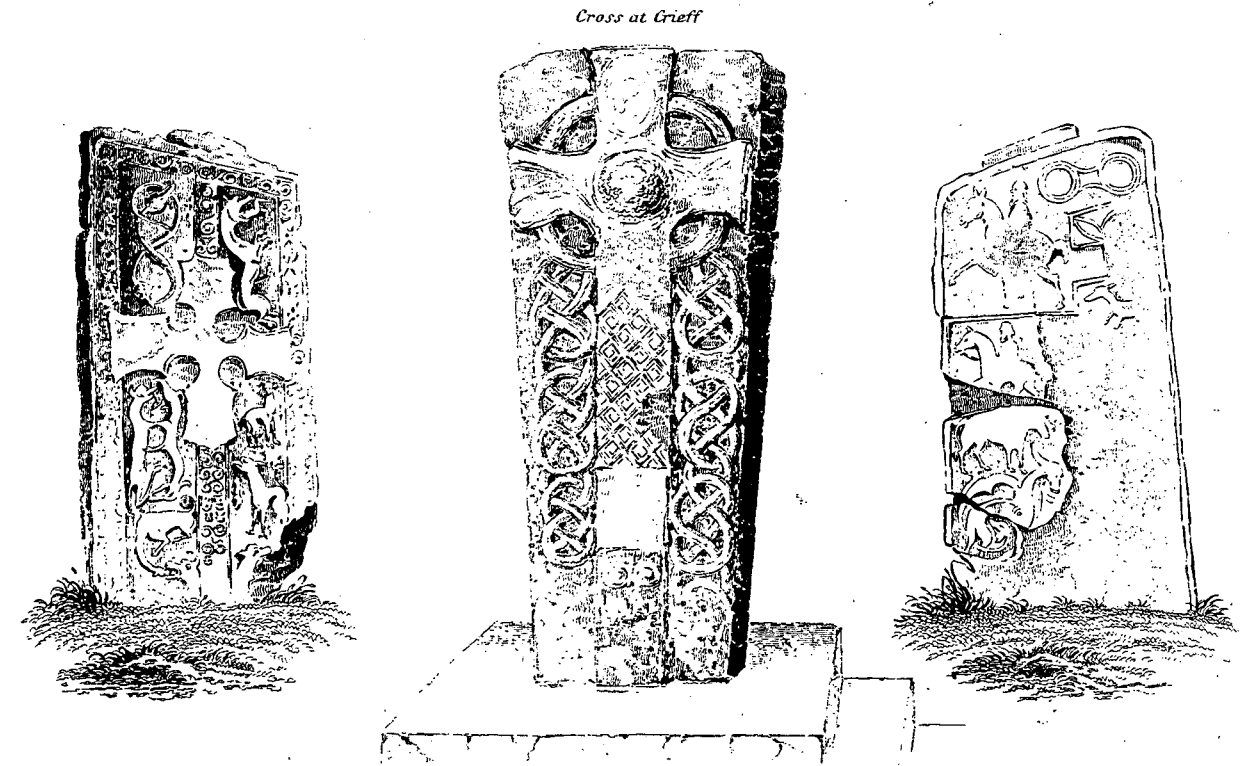


ACCOUNT  
 OF  
 QUEEN BLEARY'S TOMB  
 IN THE  
 ABBEY CHURCH OF PAISLEY.

*By the Rev. Dr Boog.*

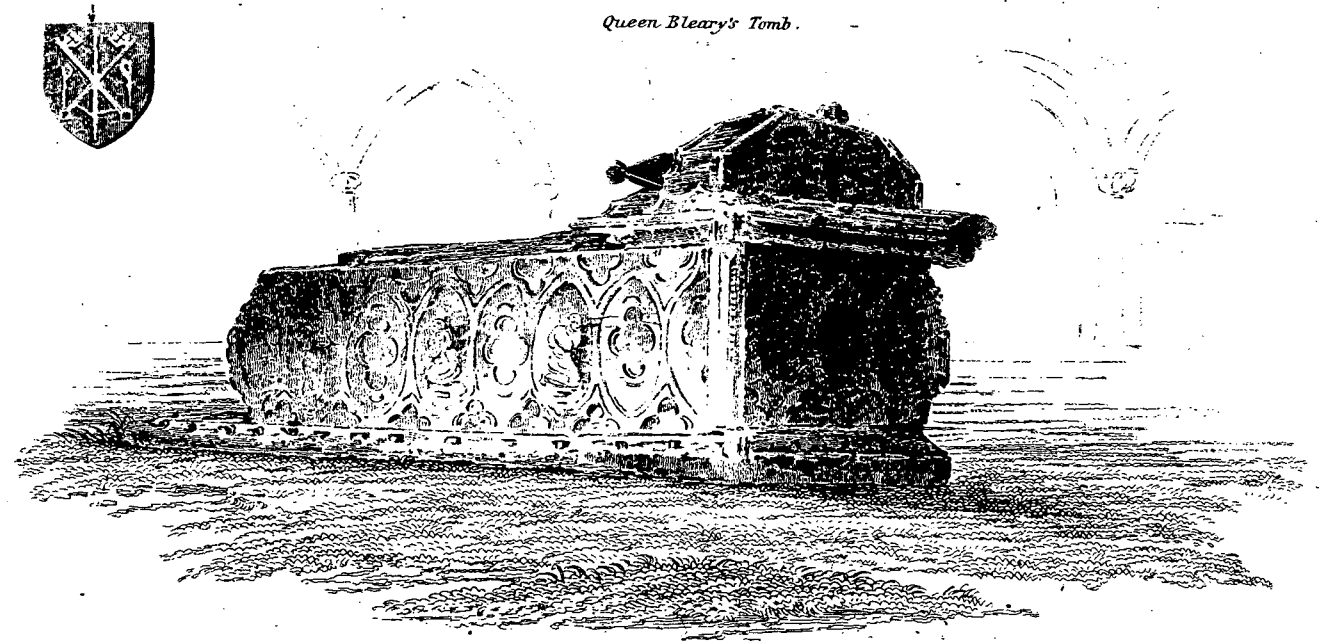
THE ancient monument, long known in Paisley under the name of "Queen Bleary's Tomb," stood originally in a small chapel, in the Abbey Church, formed by cutting off the south end of the transept, and adding to the east side of it a space of about 18 feet, giving, in all, an area for the chapel of nearly 48 feet by 24. The additional space is raised four steps, and thus sufficient height is obtained for a vault below,—the burying place of the noble family of Abercorn. Upon this elevation stood the altar: the piscina and the small recess in the wall for pix still remaining. A Gothic window of uncommon elegance terminates the east end; the stone work in perfect preservation; but the spaces for the glass shut up, in a very paltry manner, with slight



*Cross at Grief*



*Queen Bleary's Tomb.*



deal boards and bricks. Under the window runs a range of ancient sculptures: the figures produced by cutting away the stone around them, leaving the prominent parts *flush* with the wall. The subjects have not been ascertained; they are evidently religious; but the work is so different from any thing else about the church, that one cannot help referring them to a period prior to that of the building of the present fabric; and it is certain, from the foundation charter (1160), that a church existed at Paisley before that time. The figures have been somewhat defaced by a barbarous white-washing; the lime might, with a little pains, be scraped off, and the work preserved in future by applying a thin coat of oil paint, the colour of the original stone; an operation which has lately been had recourse to, with the best effect, upon some parts of the decaying mouldings on the church. The chapel is now lighted by a large but plain window, over the door, in the west end.

In the centre of the lower area of the chapel stood what was called "Queen Bleary's Tomb." It retained its original situation, till John Earl of Dundonald, who succeeded his brother William in 1704, having, for his second lady, married the Duchess Dowager of Beaufort, her Grace wishing, it is said, to have the chapel fitted up for the service of the Church of England, the tomb was then removed, and placed in a corner of the Abbey Garden. This must have been prior to the year 1720, when Earl John died; his lady survived but a very short time. The tomb rebuilt in its original form occupied this corner, till the time that Thomas Earl of Dundonald, resolving to feu off that part of the garden, found it in his way, and had it again removed, or rather taken to pieces; and the stones of which it was composed were thrown aside and forgotten; so much forgotten



that the writer of this, whose connexion with Paisley took place in 1774, was above 14 years in the place before knowing that such a monument had existed, or that its materials might possibly be discovered. In 1788, when the church underwent a complete repair, and masses of rubbish, which had accumulated in different places, were removed, stones which had formed part of the tomb were found, and were then loosely, but carefully put together in the "Kirk Court," or what had been the area of the cloisters.

It then appeared that the monument, exclusive of the figure, had been composed of twelve or thirteen large stones; three forming each side, one at each end,—three or four forming the table or platform for the figure,—and one forming the canopy for the head. There were wanting one of the stones of one side, the stone which formed the foot or east end of the tomb, and two or three of those forming the platform. The figure itself had been left, and sunk in the pavement close by the wall on one side of the chapel.

Each side of the monument is formed into nine compartments, of nearly a lozenge figure, but not angular. In that next the head of the monument is the representation of an Abbot, in his proper dress, with the mitre and crosier, with a full face, standing. The compartment following is filled by a quatrefoil, sunk in the stone. The two next are occupied each by the figure of an Abbot, in profile, kneeling, their faces directed to each other. A quatrefoil fills the next. Two Abbots, kneeling as before, follow; then the quatrefoil; and, lastly, an Abbot kneeling. The other side of the monument is precisely similar. Over the heads of some of these figures, is a scroll with the name of one or other of the Abbots of Paisley. The whole is very bold

work, and in excellent preservation; the most of it as sharp as when it came from under the chisel.

The stone forming the head of the monument, or west end, is divided into three compartments, each containing a shield; that in the middle, upright; the other two, elegantly inclined to one side. The middle shield bears "Two keys en saltier, between two crosiers en pale;" The shield on the right bears "The Fess chequé between three roses,"—the arms assumed by the burgh of Paisley: That on the left, "The Fess chequé surmounted by a Lion rampant," neatly cut, and well preserved. The table or platform for the figure projects considerably over the sides, and is cut into a very handsome cornice. The canopy is elegantly cut, and is precisely the canopy so common over a Gothic niche. It is laid, of course, on one side. What would be the top, if upright, bears a crucifix with the scroll over the cross, between a Mary and a Saint John. These three figures, though perfectly distinguishable, are considerably defaced, and, there is reason to suspect, intentionally. From a horror of every thing that savoured of Romish superstition, the ministers of Paisley (about the middle of the 17th century), as appears from the presbytery records, represent to the presbytery, "that there were divers monuments of idolatry about the Abbey church," and receive directions to have them removed. The effacing of the one offensive line ["Pray for his salvation"] in the inscription on the garden wall,—the nicely digging out the name and title of an abbot from a stone in the church porch, recording his death,—and the defacing of those figures on our monument,—were probably the result of this order of presbytery, and do some credit, at least, to the coolness and discrimination with which it was executed. "O si sic omnia!"

The figure itself is that of a female, quite perfect, except some of the more prominent parts of the countenance, which are somewhat defaced,—the consequence of its having been injudiciously placed so as to be trod upon by persons visiting the chapel. The hands are in the attitude of supplication, upon the breast. From the girdle is suspended, what, in spite of all remonstrances, the ladies who visit her persist in denominating her “Ridicule.” The figure leaves a considerable portion of the platform at the foot unoccupied; and where, no doubt, was placed the figure of a lion, a greyhound, or some other animal, as is common in monuments of this description. That figure is irrecoverably lost.

The extreme length of the basement is 10 feet; the breadth three feet seven inches; the height, from the bottom of the basement to the surface of the platform, three feet eight inches; the length of the figure itself six feet seven inches.

The want of the stone, which formed the foot or east end of the monument, is greatly to be regretted. If we may judge from other monuments in a similar style, it probably presented a coat of arms that decidedly marked the person for whom it was erected. As it now stands, it offers scarcely any thing to determine the question. With the inhabitants of Paisley, it has immemorially been Queen Bleary's Tomb; and Queen Bleary, with them, is without hesitation asserted to have been Marjory Bruce. Her son Robert II. is known to have had a weakness in one of his eyes; he might be King Blear-eye; but, if the courtesy of Scotland should have given the title of “Queen” to one who was only the *mother* of a King, there is no probability that it could ever have been given to Marjory Bruce, who died perhaps fifty years before her son ascended the Throne. Lord Hailes has, in a few lines, exposed the absurdity of the Paisley tradition. To

either, or both of his Queens, might the appellation of Queen Bleary have been given. Both are said to have been buried at Paisley; and if *this* is indeed the tomb of a queen, the circumstance of a “Lion Rampant,” the arms of the great family of Ross, surmounting the Fess chequè, may be some slight authority for assigning the tomb to Queen Eupheme Ross. The subject, however, still remains involved in much uncertainty. Lord Hailes, by an interpretation which he has given of a Gaelic word *sounding* like “Queen Bleary,” seems to separate the tomb entirely from that person. It is singular that on the tomb of a queen all the ornamental figures should be those of ecclesiastics, and the principal place assigned to a spiritual coat of arms; and the slight foundation on which Queen Eupheme's claim rests is somewhat shaken by the fact that the Fess chequè, surmounted by the Lion, is the armorial bearing of Stuart of Blaekhall, Baronet, lineal descendant of King Robert III.

A glimpse of light may yet be elicited from the names of the Abbots upon the monument. Presuming that none of them would have been honoured in that manner till after his death, we shall find a date, prior to which it is not probable that the monument would have been erected.

In a description of the chapel, the stone roof, arched and handsomely groined, should not have been forgotten.

There is a slight inaccuracy in speaking of the church as being the “Abbey” Church. It was both parochial and conventual. The foundation charters of the several altarages describe them to be founded in the *Parish* Church of Paisley.