

XXXIX. *Notice of the ancient Incised Slabs in the Abbey Church of Holyrood, (illustrated by a Series of Rubbings).*

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[Read to the Society, 13th January 1851.]

“ And marble monuments were here displayed
Thronging the walls; and on the floor beneath,
Sepulchral stones appeared with emblems graven,
And foot-worn epitaphs, and some with small
And shining effigies of brass inlaid.”

WORDSWORTH'S “*Excursion.*”

Having in a former paper, on the subject of “*Monumental Brasses,*” made a few introductory remarks on the interest and importance of the records of the tomb, more especially in connection with man's sense of immortality, I shall at once proceed to notice that curious class of sepulchral remains bearing the name of *Incised Slabs*, of which numerous examples occur in various parts of the kingdom. According to Mr Cutt,¹ these monuments were in common use among the Romans and Romanized nations at the commencement of the Christian era, and besides being inscribed with the name of the deceased person whom they commemorated, they frequently displayed the symbol of his calling and other emblematical devices. A similar fashion was adopted by the early Christians, many of whose monuments (still preserved in the Lapidarian Gallery of the Vatican at Rome) exhibit, in addition to the usual inscriptions, the figure of a Cross, Fish, or some other appropriate symbol. In the course of a few centuries, Incised Cross Slabs became very common throughout the whole of Christendom, and we can now obtain a connected series of these Christian gravestones from the times of the Apostles to the present day. The collection in the Lapidarian Gallery extends from A.D. 89 to A.D. 400. The next in order of date occur in Ireland, where the earliest that has hitherto been discovered is the stone of St Breacan, A.D. 500;² and other Irish examples bring down the series to the

¹ Manual of Sepulchral Slabs and Crosses, 1849.

² Engraved in Petrie's Ecclesiastical Architecture of Ireland.

11th century. One of the most ancient *English* Incised Cross Slabs occurs at Brougham, in the county of Westmoreland, of which the date is said to be 1185; and numerous interesting examples are accurately engraved on wood by Mr Cutt, the most elegant devices being referred by him to the 14th and 15th centuries.

On some of these slabs, as in the case of Monumental Brasses, a representation of the deceased is introduced; and in addition to the cross, various other devices are of frequent occurrence, such as swords, shields of arms, chalices, keys, hammers, shears, squares, and other symbols of trade. Occasionally they have merely an inscription round the border, without any symbol or effigy, and more rarely a simple cross, or some other device, unaccompanied by any inscription.

In Scotland, this class of sepulchral monuments is by no means uncommon. Besides those which occur at Holyrood, good examples are to be found at Ratho and Roslin, in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh; at Seton, in East Lothian; at St Andrews and Leuchars, in Fifeshire; at Kinkell and Foveran in the county of Aberdeen; at Kildalton, in the Island of Islay; and at various other places in Argyllshire.

On the present occasion, I intend to confine my observations to the more ancient examples at Holyrood Abbey. Both aisles of that venerable structure are entirely paved with tombstones,¹ chiefly consisting of large stone slabs, with an average breadth of about 3 feet, and varying from 6 to 7 feet in length,—of very few of which I have hitherto been able to discover any record. In order to preserve faithful copies of their devices and inscriptions,—many of which, from long exposure to the heavens, are being rapidly effaced,—in the month of May last (1850), I made *heel-ball rubbings* of all the most interesting slabs, about twelve in number, from some of which I have since prepared careful *tracings*. Of these, more than one-half exhibit the symbol of the cross, accompanied in some instances by a chalice, or

¹ It is to be hoped that these tombstones, which were evidently brought from the adjoining churchyard, will speedily be removed, and the interior cleared out to the original level, which will likely bring to view other and more ancient examples of incised slabs, and at the same time exhibit the bases of the columns. The present operations in lowering the ground on the exterior part of the building seems to render this imperative, and will greatly contribute to the preservation of the ruined walls, so much injured by damp.—D. L.

by handicraft emblems ; while the principal device on nearly all the others consists of a shield of arms. Three of the slabs have neither date nor inscription ; in two instances the characters are illegible ; while of the remainder, the earliest date is 1455, and the latest 1628. In the subjoined list, I have endeavoured to classify them as systematically as possible, and it may be mentioned that they all occur in the *north* aisle, with the exception of No. 1, which indeed is the only entire slab of any antiquity now remaining in the *south* aisle,—nearly all the other *old* stones in that part of the Abbey, consisting of mere *fragments* of slabs (inscribed with imperfect crosses, shields of arms, and the emblems of mortality), which appear to have been wantonly cut asunder for the convenience of paving !

No. 1. Slab, 6 ft. 3 in. × 3 ft. 5 in.

A *plain* cross, with steps at the base, and a simple-shaped chalice (the symbol of an ecclesiastic) on the sinister side of the stalk (speaking heraldically)—the whole surrounded by a border, consisting of two parallel lines, about 4 inches apart. No date or inscription.

Graduated steps are very frequently introduced at the base of the cross, and are intended to represent Mount *Calvary*,—by which name they are technically described.

No. 2. Slab, 6 ft. 5½ in. × 3 ft. 8 in.

Also a plain cross and “*Calvary*,” surrounded by the following inscription:—“*Hic jacet marjoria duncan uxor thome duncan que obiit xvi die Octob. A.D. MC. . . .*” (The rest of the date is illegible.)

No. 3. Slab, 7 ft. 3 in. × 3 ft. 6 in.

Plain cross and “*Calvary*.” On the dexter side of the stalk, a pair of compasses surmounting a device resembling a book ; and on the sinister side, a carpenter’s square surmounting a mallet. Inscription:—“*Hic jacet honorab. vir Johannes et 1543.*”

No. 4. Slab (evidently imperfect), 4 ft. 3 in. × 2 ft. 2 in.

A plain cross and “*Calvary*.” On the dexter side of the stalk, a mallet surmounted by a crown ; on the sinister side, another curious device, the

nature of which is rather doubtful. What remains of the inscription is quite illegible except the date, which is 1543.

No. 5. Slab, 6 ft. 4 in. × 3 ft.

A *Floriated* cross and "Calvary," without date or inscription.

The lilies at the termination of the limbs of the cross are generally supposed to be an allusion to the Virgin Mary, of whose purity they are the appropriate emblem. There is a slab of a similar character at the east end of the chancel of Seton church, in East Lothian.

No. 6. Slab, 6 ft. 3 in. × 3 ft. 2½ in.

A *Floriated* cross, with an ornamental base, bearing a strong resemblance to a slab at Bridgeford, Notts, which is engraved in Mr Cutt's Manual. (Plate xxvi., No. 2.) In this example, the lilies are considerably smaller than in the last. The following is the surrounding inscription:—"Hic jacet dns. Robertus Cheyne iv (?) prior hujusce monasterii qui obiit xvii die Sept. An. Dm. MCCCCLV."

The Holyrood Chartulary contains a list of the Abbots, but I have not been able to discover any notice of the Priors.

No. 7. Slab (evidently imperfect), 4 ft. 9 in. × 3 ft. 1 in.

An *Ornamental* Cross, of which the stalk passes through an elegantly shaped chalice. The base is broken off, and the only remaining portion of a surrounding inscription, at the top of the stone, is quite illegible.

In an interesting example found on the site of the Carmelite Friary at York, the limbs of the cross are terminated with vine leaves, while branches of the same spring from the stalk, which runs through a chalice, "beautifully symbolizing the idea, that the chalice was filled with the juice of the vine" (Cutt, p. 67.), by which emblem our blessed Lord is pleased to represent himself.

According to Mr Cutt, the *plain* cross is of very rare occurrence in England, being considered by the symbolists to be the cross of *Shame*, while the *ornamented* cross, on the other hand, represents the cross of *Glory*—the cross adorned with garlands—and alludes to the triumph of our Lord and Saviour. Among the admirable engravings which constitute by far the

larger portion of Mr. Cutt's volume, there are upwards of 100 examples of Incised Slabs, only one of which (Plate xiv., No. 4) at all resembles the plain crosses of Holyrood; while his instances of the floriated cross are very numerous. Accordingly, it appears to be worthy of remark that no less than *four* of the seven existing crosses at Holyrood are perfectly plain in their character.

The next monument which I have to notice is a very curious one:—

No. 8. Slab, 6 ft. 7 in. × 3 ft. 3 in.

Two large two-handed swords, each about 5 feet in length, bearing a very striking resemblance to the weapon used by our ancestors in the days of Wallace and Bruce, and surrounded by a border of two parallel lines, as in *No. 1, supra*. No date or inscription.

Several of the English examples exhibit a single sword, from 3 to 4 feet in length, placed by the side of the cross, but nothing similar to the *large* sword, unaccompanied by any other device, is to be found among them. It is by no means improbable that the Holyrood monument may have been intended to mark the resting-place of two brothers, or perhaps of a father and son, who perished in the same battle.

The four Slabs which remain to be described will perhaps be considered to possess less interest than those already mentioned.

No. 9. Slab, 6 ft. 10 in. × 3 ft. 4 in.

In the centre of this Slab, between the letters M · B ·, is an ornamental shield charged with a ship and three cinquefoils in chief. Above the shield is a hammer, between the letters B · H ·, surmounted by a coronet under the date 1592. Below the arms are a skull and a large bone (the common emblems of mortality), accompanied by the words "Memento mori," upon a semicircular scroll; the whole surrounded by the following inscription, which in some parts is not very legible:—"Heir lyis ane (honorabil) voman calet Marget Bakster Spous to Bartel Hamilton (Dak) Maker Burges of (ye Canengait.)"

No. 10. Slab, 6 ft. 6 in. 2 ft. 9 in.

In the middle of the stone an ornamental shield, between the letters M · E ·, exhibiting a pale charged with a cross crosslet fitchée issuing out of a crescent. Under the shield, the same motto and emblems of mortality as

in the last. The surrounding inscription is as follows:—"Heir lysis ane honorabil voman callit Margaret Erskin Lady Allardes and Dame xvii July 1599." I have not been able to discover the name of this lady in any pedigree of the Erskine or Allardice families, which I have had an opportunity of examining.

No. 11. Slab, cir. 7 ft. 2 in. × 2 ft. 9 in.

The inscription on this curious monument, which is in Roman characters, first goes round the border of the stone, and then proceeds regularly across the body of it as follows:—"Heir lysis y^e nobil and poton Lord, James Douglas lord of Cairlell and Torthorall wha marrid Duime Elizabeth Cairlell air and heritrix yairof; wha was slaine in Edinburghe y^e xiiii day of July in y^e zeier of God 1608 was slain in 48 ze." At the bottom of the slab is an ornamental shield impaled, but excepting three mullets on a chief in the dexter side, (constituting, along with a heart ensigned with an imperial crown, the well-known bearings of the House of Douglas), all the other charges are quite effaced. Probably the sinister side contained the arms of Carlyle, viz., a cross flory, or those of Torthorwald, a saltire and chief charged with three

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bezants. Over the shield are the letters I (D) (Lord James Douglas); on the dexter side D E, and on the sinister C and perhaps another letter, being evidently intended for Dame Elizabeth Carlyle. This James Douglas was eldest son of George Douglas of Parkhead (natural son of Sir George Douglas of Pittendreich), whose brothers were David 7th Earl of Angus, and James Earl of Morton, Regent of Scotland. His Lady was the only child of William, Master of Carlyle, who died in the lifetime of his father, Michael, 4th and last Lord Carlyle. In the year 1596, he killed Captain James Stewart, formerly Earl of Arran, and Chancellor of Scotland, on the score of his rigorous procedure against his uncle, the Regent Morton; and twelve years afterwards (as stated in the inscription) he was slain on the High Street of Edinburgh, by William Stewart, the nephew of Captain James, who ran him through the body with his sword, killing him on the spot. His eldest son was created Lord Carlyle of Torthorwald in 1609, and, according to Crawford, he resigned his title in 1638 to William Earl of Queensberry, who had acquired his estate.

No. 12. Slab, 7 ft. 2 in. × 3 ft. 7 in.

A plain shield at the top of the stone, surmounted by a Viscount's coronet. Quarterly, 1st and 4th, the sun in splendour; 2d and 3d, three mullets on a chevron, between a chief charged with as many mascles, and a unicorn's head erased in base. The following inscription goes round the shield in the form of a circle:—"Heir lyeth ane noble Lady D. Isobel Ker Vicountes of Drumlanrig 1628." She was the fourth daughter of Mark Ker, first Earl of Lothian, and wife of William Douglas, first Viscount Drumlanrig, (afterwards Earl of Queensberry). One of her elder sisters, Lady Margaret, whose first husband was James seventh Lord Yester, founded at Edinburgh, in the year 1647, the church which still bears her name.

It is worthy of notice that the shield on this slab, as well as that which occurs on the tombstone of Lady Allardice (No. 10 *supra*), contains only the maiden arms of the deceased, without any impalement of the husband's bearings.

Two other slabs are referred to, in Mackie's "Palaces and Prisons of Queen Mary," as occurring in the north aisle of the Abbey, the one being the monument of Bartouline Foliot, a Frenchman, who in the beginning of the 16th century paved, for the first time, the streets of our metropolis; the other, commemorating the decease of "ane honest man, Robert Votherspone, Burges and Decon of the Hammermen. R.V. 1520." These two stones either no longer exist at Holyrood, or cannot now be recognised, owing to the disappearance of the inscriptions.

The same volume mentions a "neat carved stone" (*i.e.*, in relief), in the south aisle, over the remains of Bailie Hunter and his Lady, with the family arms of *Polmood*, and the date 1619 (1609?). Of this slab, only about one-half now remains, and the charges on the shield (which is impaled) are considerably effaced. The dexter side exhibits a stringed bugle-horn between three mullets in chief, and a crescent in base; the sinister side is quarterly, the 1st and 4th quarters containing an animal's head and neck (somewhat resembling a *camel's*), and the 2d and 3d, a chevron between three charges, which are not very unlike *fishes*. Over the shield is a crescent, between the letters T. H. (Tho^s Hunter) and K.—(the initial of the lady's surname not being legible).—"Heir lyis Thomas Hunter Bailie his

spouse," is all that remains of the inscription; and accordingly there is nothing to assist one in deciphering the charges in the sinister side of the shield.

[Since writing the above, I have ascertained from Petrie's "Historical Account of Holyrood" (p. 61), that the name of the Bailie's wife was *Katrine Norman*. The family of Norman in Somersetshire, carries *argent* a chevron between three leopards' heads *sable*.]

I may mention, in conclusion, that the principal ancient *mural* monuments at Holyrood are those of Bishop Bothwell, 1593, and Hay of Easter Kennet, 1594, in the *south* aisle; Lady Stirling of Keir, 1633, Bishop Wishart, 1673, Countess of Eglinton, 1696, and Earl of Sutherland, 1703, in the *north* aisle; and Robert Douglas, Viscount Belhaven, 1639, in the *north-west tower*—the inscriptions on all of which will be found in Monteith's "Theater of Mortality."

It is probably well known that the Duke of Hamilton, as hereditary keeper of the Palace, can confer the privilege of interment in the Abbey, the duties connected with which are intrusted to an officer of the Crown, holding under the Privy Seal the situation of "Beadle and Keeper of the Chapel Royal," with a salary of £20 per annum. The appointment is now held by Mr Duncan Anderson (formerly of Hampton Court), who succeeded Mr Courtoy about eighteen months ago, and from whom I received much valuable assistance, while making the rubbings of the Slabs.

Almost every one is familiar with the gloomy appearance of the "*Royal Vault*," and its iron-grated doorway (situated at the east end of the South Aisle), which is still supposed to contain some of the bones of Darnley and others of the illustrious dead; and some of the Members of this Society have probably not yet forgotten the lovely morning in the month of July 1848, when the remains of Queen Mary of Gueldres (or of some one less renowned!),¹ after having been removed from their original resting-place in the Church of Holy Trinity, were solemnly deposited in that dismal cell.

¹ In reference to this allusion, it may be stated, that in the progress of demolition of the Church, there was discovered a leaden coffin, containing a female skeleton, adjoining the site of the High Altar. From the place of sepulture, the antique shape of the coffin, and the early period when the interment must have taken place, it was generally admitted that these mortal remains were those of the Foundress of the Church, and they were accordingly deposited near the entrance of the so-called "*Royal Vault*" of Holyrood.—D. L.