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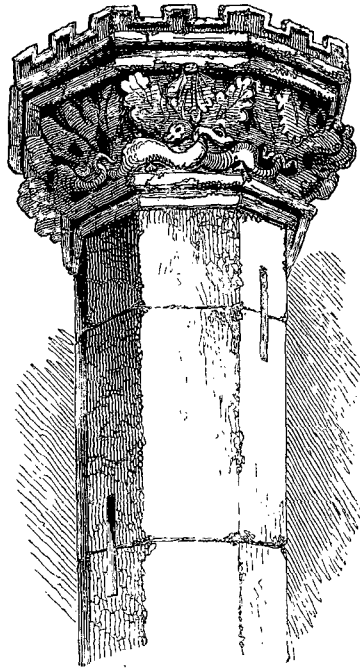
NOTICES OF THE CITY CROSS OF EDINBURGH, &c., &c., ILLUSTRATED
BY A MODEL AND DRAWINGS OF THE EXISTING REMAINS. BY MR
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The City Cross of Edinburgh, a model of which is now exhibited, and presented to the Museum of the Society, represents the building which was demolished in the year 1756. It appears to have been re-erected in the year 1617, as under that year, in Calderwood's History of the Church of Scotland, is the

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following statement:—"The Crosse of Edinburgh was taken down; the old long stone, about fortie foote or therby in length, was translated, by the devise of cretane mariners in Leith from the place where it stooode, past memorie of man, to a place beneath in the High Street, without anie harme to the stone; and the bodie of the old Crosse was demolished, and another buildit, wherupon the long stone or obelisk was erected and sett upon the 25th March."¹ The removal here described was considered necessary by the Magistrates of that period, for the purpose of widening and ornamenting the High Street, upon the occasion of the visit of King James the Sixth to his native country, which took place during the month of June following. Respecting the site of this old structure, or the period when it was erected, there does not appear to be any record; but the incident connected with it, of the mysterious proclamation warning King James the Fourth before he set out for the fatal field of Flodden, is well known. As above stated, only the *bodie* of the building was destroyed, the "long stone," and probably the pillars, gurgils, and medallions were used in the new erection.



Maitland, in his History of Edinburgh, relates some of the noble and ignoble purposes for which this structure was formerly used. "There," he says, "royal edicts were proclaimed; there public rejoicings took place, on which occasions bumpers of wine were distributed by Bacchus, seated on a gilded hogshead, to the populace, who danced round the building to the sound of drums and trumpets; at it also, state criminals were executed; books burned by the common hangman; persons scourged; ears cut off; noses pinched; and other events of a like nature." But although this author's work was published three years before the Cross was de-

¹ History, vol. vii., p. 243.

molished, and notwithstanding its historical interest, he neither gives an engraving, nor a description of the building; he seems, indeed, to be of the same opinion as those at whose instance it was removed, as he places it amongst other buildings by which, he says, "the High Street was greatly pestered and obstructed, and whereby the beauty of the noble street was greatly eclipsed." His successor, Arnot, has however supplied the omission: he not only gives a view, but describes the erection "as an ancient structure of mixed architecture, partly Grecian and partly Gothic, octagonal in shape, 16 feet diameter, 15 feet high, besides the pillar in the centre; at each angle there was an Ionic pillar, from the top of which a species of Gothic bastion projected; and between the columns there were modern arches. Upon the top of the arch fronting the Netherbow the Town arms were cut, in the shape of a medallion, in rude workmanship; over the other arches, heads also, cut in the shape of a medallion, were placed. These appear to be much older workmanship than the Town arms, or any other part of the Cross; they are in *alto rilievo*; the engraving is good, but the Gothic barbarity of the figures themselves bear the appearance of the lower empire. One of the heads is armed with a casque; another is adorned with a wreath, resembling a turban; a third has the hair turned upwards, from the roots to the occiput, whence the ends of the hair stand out like points. This figure has over its left shoulder a twisted staff. The fourth is the head of a woman with some folds of linen wrapped round it. The entry to the building was by a door fronting the Netherbow, which gave access to a stair in the inside, which led to the platform. From the platform rose a column, consisting of one stone, upwards of twenty feet high and eighteen inches diameter, spangled with thistles, and adorned with a Corinthian capital, upon the top of which was an unicorn."¹

The difference of workmanship between the Town arms and other parts of the building may be accounted for by the following circumstance, related in Nicoll's Diary (p. 81), under date February 7, 1652:—"by ordouris from the Commissionaris of the Parliament of England now sittand at Dalkeith, thair wer maissones, carpentaris, and hammermen direct to the kirk of Edinburgh quhair the Kinges sait wes erectit, and to the mercat croce of Edinburgh quhair his airmes, and unicorne with the crown on his heid wes set; and thair pulled down the Kinges airmes, dang down the unicorne with the crown that wes set upone the unicorne, and hang up the crown upone the gallowis. The same day the lyke was done at the entrie of the Parliament Hous and Nather Bow, quhair the Kinges airmes or portrat wes fund." It is just possible that after this rude

¹ History of Edinburgh, p. 302. Edinburgh, 1779, 4to.

treatment to their Cross, the magistrates of that day resolved to erect the City arms instead of the Royal arms, and so in all time coming give offence to neither Roundhead nor Royalist.

It will be noticed that the centre pillar is variously described; Calderwood calls it one stone "fortie foots," adding, "or thereby," which may mean longer or shorter; Arnot, one stone twenty feet; and Dr Wilson, in his "Memorials of Edinburgh," says, "it in no way corresponds with Arnot's description; it is an octagonal Gothic pillar, built of separate stones, held together by iron clamps, with a beautiful Gothic capital, consisting of dragons with their heads and tails intertwined, and surmounted by a battlement," &c. The discrepancy betwixt the first two authors may be explained by supposing that the one measured by guess, and the other by rule; that between the latter and Dr Wilson is set at rest by an event which took place on the morning that the workman began to destroy the building, related in the *Scots Magazine* for the year 1756, viz.—"The demolition of the Cross has now taken place. As soon as the workmen began, which was in the morning of March 13, some gentlemen, who had spent the night over a social bottle, caused wine and glasses to be carried thither, mounted the ancient fabric, and solemnly drank its dirge. The beautiful pillar which stood in the middle, fell and broke to pieces, by one of the pulleys used on that occasion giving way."

This building was of so great importance that its removal in 1756—just one hundred years ago—formed the subject of an Act of Sederunt by the Court of Session; and again, on the 13th Dec. 1785, as follows:—"The Lords, having considered the representations of the Lord Provost and Magistrates of the City of Edinburgh, setting forth that, when the Cross was taken away in the year 1756, a stone was erected on the side of a well in the High Street, adjacent to the place where the Cross stood, which by Act of Sederunt was declared to be the Market Cross of Edinburgh from that period: that since removing the city guard, the aforesaid well was a great obstruction to the free passage upon the High Street, which therefore they intended to remove, and instead thereof, to erect a stone pillar a few feet distant from the said well, on the same side of the street, opposite to the Old Assembly Close: of which the Court approve, and declare the new pillar to be the Cross." Instead of the new pillar which they "intended" to erect, the magistrates caused a few of the paving-stones of the street to be arranged so as to form an octagonal cross, and thus to indicate its former site.

In the year 1753, the curious old porch forming the entrance to the court in the front of Holyrood Palace was very unnecessarily removed. A doggrel writer of verse, under the name of Claudero, wrote some lines—"The Echo of

the Royal Porch of the Palace of Holy-Rood House, which fell under Military Execution, Anno 1753." In this he says, in the name of Auld Reekie,—

" My Cross likewise, of old renown,
Will next to you be tumbled down ;
And by degrees each ancient place,
Will perish by this modern race."

In due time there appeared two other broadsides (also included in Claudero's "Miscellanies"), being "The Last Speech and Dying Words of the Cross of Edinburgh, which was hanged, drawn, and quartered, on Monday the 15th of March 1756, for the horrid crime of being an Incumbrance to the street :"—

" Ye sons of Scotia, mourn and weep,
For Arthur's Ov'n, and Edinburgh Cross,
Have, by new schemers, got a toss :
We, heels o'er head, are tumbled down,"

The other professes to be—"The serious Advice and Exhortation of the Royal Exchange to the Cross of Edinburgh immediately before its execution," in which the author, with some prophetic foresight of the progress of such improvements, exclaims—

" The Luckenbooths, Weigh-house, and Guard,
By the new scheme, will not be spar'd."

These buildings, as obstructions to the public street, were eventually removed, and a few words regarding them, it is hoped, may not be deemed out of place.

The first of these was the Old Town Guard-House, which stood about 200 yards east of the cross, and is described by Sir Walter Scott as "a long, low, ugly building, which, to a fanciful imagination, might have suggested the idea of a long black snail crawling up the middle of the street, and deforming its beautiful esplanade." This building, which was 70 feet long, and 40 feet broad, divided into four rooms, was removed in the year 1785, the old veterans who composed the city guard being accommodated in apartments under the Tolbooth, until they were actually disbanded. A notice and view of this structure is given in "Kay's Portraits," vol. i., p. 429.

Another serious "obstruction" was the Luckenbooths or Booth-raw, a range of buildings which stood between the north side of the street and St Giles's, leaving a narrow passage on one side, in which booths or small shops were erected against the walls of the church, and reducing the street half its breadth

on the other side. At the east end of this "raw," which extended the whole length of the church, was a pile of building six stories high, called Creech's Land, the western extremity being the old prison. Erections of various heights, which filled up the intervening space, were removed about the year 1803, Creech's Land and Tolbooth being demolished during the course of the year 1817.

Another building, the City Weigh-House, famous for butter and cheese, stood at the head of the West Bow, not greatly in the way in peaceful times, but, "ane great impediment to the schottis of the Castell, the samyn being biggit on the hie calsey," in the times of trouble, and for which reason Cromwell "gaif ordouris for demolishing of the Weyhous, and upone the last day of December 1650, the Englishes began the work, and tuik down the stepill of it, that day, and so continued till it wes rased."¹ Ten years after, "the Weyhous of Edinburgh, quhilk was demoleist by that traittour Cromwell, at his incuming to Edinburgh, after the fecht of Dumbar, began now to be re-edified in the end of August 1660, but far inferior to the former condition."² This ungainly building was finally cleared away in 1822, to widen the passage to the Castle preparatory to the visit of George IV. A view of the "stepill" is introduced into the decorations of the ceiling of Mary of Guise's Chapel, formerly in Blyth's Close; upon the removal of the building the pannels of this ceiling were carefully taken down, and are now preserved in the Society's Museum.

The remains that now exist of the City Cross (which though small in itself, is so often mentioned in Scottish history), are, a part of the "long stone," now standing in a park at Drum, near Dalkeith, where it was placed in 1756; and five of the circular medallions, including the city arms, each of them three feet in diameter, which were obtained by Mr Walter Ross, who had them built into the front of Deanhaugh House, Stockbridge. Upon its demolition in 1814, they passed into the possession of the late Sir Walter Scott, and now adorn the garden-wall at Abbotsford; where, Dr John Alex. Smith informs me, may be seen a stone bason, stated to have also belonged to the building of the City Cross.³ This bason is of a circular shape, richly moulded along its upper edge, and shows on its sides the remains of four human masks, through the

¹ Nicoll's Diary, p. 40. Edinburgh Bannatyne Club, 1838. 4to.

² Ibid., p. 300.

³ In a minute of Council, dated 11th May 1660, it is ordered—"That the treasurer cause John Scott and Alexander Skirven prepare, upon the Cross, pipes of lead, and such other things necessary for running of wine at the spouts, and the treasurer to provide wine-glasses and other necessaries for the said use, with dry confections, and such others as shall be thought needful and convenient. And sicklike, the treasurer shall provide eight trumpeters." This order was preparatory to the celebration of the Restoration, being also the birthday of King Charles II., which was on the 29th May.

mouths of which fluids of various kinds have flowed ; it is three feet six inches in diameter, eight and a-half inches deep inside, and eleven inches on the outside ; its base is cut into an octagonal form, as if it had originally been placed on an eight-sided pillar or base. The bason formed the central part of a fountain which was erected by Sir Walter Scott before the south front of Abbotsford. I am also indebted to Dr John Alex. Smith for sketches of the medallions preserved at Abbotsford, copies of which are now exhibited, consisting of the arms of the city, the head armed with a casque, &c., and the others, as described by Arnot in his "History of Edinburgh," already referred to. It is understood that some other stones of the Cross, probably the three remaining heads from the octagon, passed into private hands along with a house which also belonged to Mr Ross. The woodcuts, showing part of the centre pillar and the view of the building, are from Wilson's "Memorials of Edinburgh in the Olden Time," and are obligingly contributed by the publisher, Hugh Paton, Esq., a member of the Society.

Attempts have at various times been made to induce the civic rulers to cause this building to be re-erected in *fac-simile* of the old structure, but without effect ; which is to be regretted, were it for no other reason than to enable the officials to comply with the injunctions contained in all Royal proclamations,—that "our will and pleasure is, therefore, and we charge, that this our proclamation seen, ye pass to the *Market Cross* of Edinburgh, and there make publication thereof ;" and also, to prevent the disappointment caused to strangers visiting the city, who are led to suppose that the Cross, so celebrated in history, is still in existence, from the style in which events that happen there are recorded in the newspapers. If the objection of "interrupting the free passage of the High Street" should be held as an obstacle, this would not apply to the space of ground lying between St Giles's Church and the County Hall, which has so far been acknowledged to be the proper site for the Cross, that for several years past it has been chosen for the erection of hustings on occasion of the election of Members of Parliament for the County and City of Edinburgh.

As a conclusion to this short history of the City Cross, may be appended the following notice of an application made by some of our Scottish Heralds to the Magistrates of Edinburgh, with their decision on the subject :—

In July 1848, Mr James Sinclair, Unicorn Pursuivant, Scottish College of Arms, a citizen of Edinburgh, presented a memorial to the Right Honourable the Lord Provost, Magistrates, and Council of the City, which, after narrating the circumstances connected with the removal of the old Cross and the act of sederunt, 21st January 1756, concludes with the following prayer :—"To fulfil

and complete the obligations undertaken by their predecessors, and resting upon them, to restore to dignity among the cities and burghs this capital of the kingdom of Scotland, by the re-erection of the old Cross, or another worthy of its place." The Magistrates and Council took considerable interest in the subject; a large deputation went to Drum in two carriages, but their decision was unfavourable. "Edinburgh, 7th December 1848.—The committee, having considered this memorial, and another of subsequent date from William Anderson, Marchmont Herald: having also referred to the minutes of Council, 1754–56, and visited the remains of the pillar of the old Cross, to be seen at Drum, are of opinion that no practical inconvenience arises from the non-existence of the Cross in Edinburgh, and that it does not seem either necessary or expedient to comply with the request contained in this memorial.

(Signed) GEO. WILSON, D.G."

