I.

HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE ALTAR-PIECE, PAINTED IN THE REIGN OF KING JAMES THE THIRD OF SCOTLAND, BELONGING TO HER MAJESTY, IN THE PALACE OF HOLYROOD. By DAVID LAING, Esq., F.S.A. Scot.

A Memorial was recently addressed to her Majesty at Balmoral, respecting the ancient Altar-Piece, so well known as exhibiting portraits of King James the Third of Scotland and his Queen. The purport of the Memorial was to point out the special interest with which, in this country, the painting has long been regarded as a work of art, and to pray that it might be transferred from Hampton Court to the Palace of Holyrood, as the most appropriate place for preserving authentic Portraits of the Royal Family of Scotland. On her return to Holyrood, her Majesty, through Sir Benjamin Hall, First Commissioner of Public Works, having been graciously pleased to comply with the prayer of this

Memorial, and the painting having now reached its destination, it was suggested that some detailed description of it would be desirable.[1]

In attempting to prepare such an account, my endeavour was to throw some light, not only on the persons whom it represents, but the place for which this altar-piece was designed, and the probable name of the artist. The result of a careful inquiry has proved somewhat unexpected; and I hope to be able to show, that the current statements on these points are altogether unfounded—namely, that the two leading portraits could, at no time of their lives, represent King James the Fourth and his Queen Margaret Tudor; that Mabuse could not have been the artist; and that, under no conceivable circumstances, could the painting have been executed for the Chapel-Royal of Stirling, which dates its foundation in the year 1501;—but, on the other hand, that it was painted not later than the year 1484, as the altar-piece of the Collegiate Church of the Holy Trinity, Edinburgh; and that in addition to the recognised portraits of King James the Third of Scotland, his Queen, Margaret of Denmark, and their eldest son, known as James the Fourth, one of the angel figures seated at the organ has good claims to be recognised as the only existing portrait of the widowed Queen Mary of Gueldres, by whom that church was founded in the year 1462.

The two pannels of fir, covered with gypsum, containing these portraits, measure, without the frames, about 6 feet 10 inches by 3 feet 8 inches; and they formed the folding doors of an altar-piece, being painted, as usual, on both sides. In Pinkerton's *Iconographia Scotica*, published in

[1] As this subject has not escaped notice in the newspapers, I beg to state, that the credit of this movement is entirely due to the enthusiastic zeal of my friend Mr W. B. Johnstone, R.S.A. Being the only persons concerned in preparing the Memorial, we thought it might defeat its object by giving it much publicity; and in the letter which accompanied the Memorial, when transmitted by the Lord Provost, it was remarked, "it would have been easy to have obtained numerous signatures to the petition, but it was considered more becoming to have only a few select names adhibited, sufficient to give some weight to the application." The Memorial in question was signed by the Duke of Hamilton, the Duke of Buccleuch, the Marquess of Dalhousie, the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, the Sheriff of Mid-Lothian, the President of the Royal Scottish Academy, Sir Archibald Alison and Mr Glassford Bell, Sheriff and Sheriff-substitute of Lanarkshire, Sir William Johnstone, and Principal Lee, Senior Dean of the Chapel-Royal.

1797, reduced engravings are given of three of the compartments; and he had the merit of first directing public attention to this picture, and of clearly pointing out two of the portraits to be those of James the Third and his Queen; although the old and incorrect descriptions were still appended to them at the late Manchester Exhibition, and repeated by Dr Waagen. The descriptions of this "exquisite painting," as Pinkerton terms it, are so accurate, that I cannot do better than quote his words, as they occur, in a somewhat comprehensive form, in his "History of Scotland."

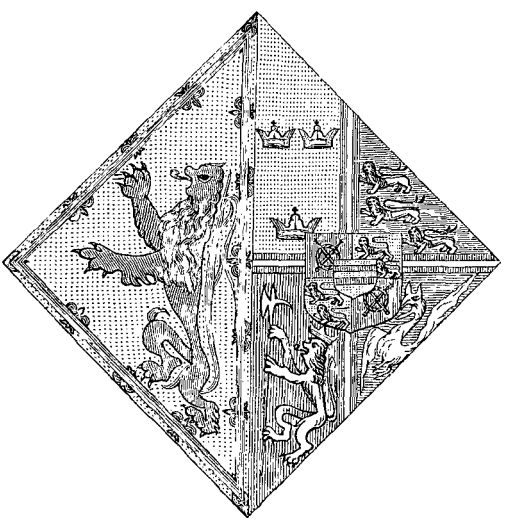
"That some eminent foreign painter," he remarks, "had also visited Scotland about 1482, appears from the celebrated picture at Kensington, in the form of a folding altar-piece, painted on both sides, or in four compartments. The first represents the King kneeling; behind him is his son, a youth about twelve years of age, which ascertains the date; and Saint Andrew, the patron saint of Scotland. The Royal Crown is not arched, nor was apparently till the reign of James V., when new regalia were ordered, but it has high fleurons of great richness; the robe is of a lilac hue, furred with ermine; the vest, cloth of gold. In the second compartment, the Queen appears, also kneeling, in a kirtle of cloth of gold and blue robe; her head-dress, one blaze of gold and jewels: the arms depicted with exact heraldry, indicate the daughter of Denmark; and behind her is a personage in plate-armour, apparently her father, in the character of St Canute, the patron of his kingdom.

"Of the two compartments, on the reverse of this grand piece, one represents the Trinity. In the other an ecclesiastic kneels; but his heraldry, of three buckles and a cheveron, can hardly be traced, except to the obscure family of Bonkil in the Merse.[1] Behind is a kind of organ, with two angels, not of ideal beauty, and perhaps portraits of the King's two sisters, Mary Lady Hamilton, and Margaret, then unmarried; a conjecture supported by the uncommon ornament of a coronet on the head of one of the angels. *Hardly can any kingdom in Europe boast of a more noble family picture of this early epoch;* and it is in itself a convincing specimen of the attention of James III. to the Arts."[2]

[1] "But it may be Sir William Rogers, or some other eminent foreigner."—*Note by Pinkerton.*

[2] History of Scotland, vol. i. p. 423.

That these paintings represent King James the Third and his Queen, is beyond all question; and the figure of the young Prince James, who was born on the 17th of March 1471–2, serves, according to Pinkerton's remark, to fix the probable date to the year 1484. James the Third, it will be remembered, was crowned at Kelso, in the ninth year of his age, on the 10th of August 1460. His marriage with the Princess Margaret of Denmark, their ages being about eighteen and thirteen years respectively, was celebrated in July 1469. In the one compartment, the royal arms of Scotland, the lion with the double tressure; in the other, the arms of Scotland and Denmark impaled, are exactly blazoned: In the first quarter, the latter exhibits three crowns for the three united king-



doms of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway; the second has the three lions of Denmark; the third, the lion and axe of Norway; and the fourth, the dragon for Sclavonia; with an escutcheon of pretence, surmounted by Oldenburg. The banner borne by the saint, frequently taken for St George, is, as Pinkerton states, the common cross of the Crusades, with the inscription AVE MARIA. His armour is a curious specimen of the plate-armour of the time: a gauntlet hangs by the sword; and a helmet ap-

pears in the preceding compartment. The ornament behind, apparently of oak leaves, is singular, and has not been satisfactorily explained.

With respect to these figures, it has been surmised, that as the one was St Andrew, the patron saint of Scotland, the other may have been the patron saint of Denmark, and the features those of the Queen's father, Christiern, the first monarch of the Oldenburg dynasty. I am, however, inclined to think that both these figures were portraits of two of the chief officers of State, or of persons connected with the royal household. The figure for St Andrew was conjectured, with apparent plausibility, to have been that of Schevez, Archbishop of St Andrews, who died 28th January 1496–7: it has, however, no resemblance to a fine medallion portrait of that prelate by an Italian artist.[1] It is also doubtful who should be held the patron saint at this period, whether St Olave or St Canute. Canute the Fourth, surnamed the Saint, was King of Denmark from 1080 to 1086. He was slain by his own people in a revolt, and by the Church was honoured among the saints with the title of Martyr.[2] Olave or Olaus, King of Norway, also surnamed the Saint, was slain in a battle in July 1030, having reigned sixteen years. He likewise was placed in the glorious fellowship of saints and martyrs,[3] and became titular saint of the Cathedral Church of Nidross, the name being afterwards superseded by that of Drontheim, the capital of Norway. The Islands of Orkney and Zetland, which Queen Margaret had as her dowry, belonged rather to Norway than to Denmark, although, at the time of her marriage, Scandinavia embraced the three kingdoms of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway.

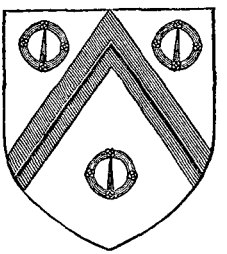
These two compartments, the King on the left hand, the Queen on the right, formed the external portion of the altar-piece. Upon opening these as folding-doors, the interior displayed the other compartments, as described in the words of Pinkerton already quoted. Fortunately, in the one to the right, with the ecclesiastic kneeling, the arms on the shield, three buckles and a cheveron, which he could only trace to "the obscure family of Bonkil in the Merse," serves to show, that this altar-piece was designed for the Trinity College Church of Edinburgh, and that the ecclesiastic kneeling was Sir Edward Bonkil, or Boncle, the

[1] In the possession of the Rev. Dr Wellesley, Oxford.

[2] Butler's Lives of the Saints, vol. i. p. 232.

[3] Ibid. vol. vii. p. 378.

first provost of that establishment, and, as such, the Queen's confessor. This designation of "Sir," it may be remarked, was quite customary for priests, who were called Pope's knights.



His name occurs in the earliest public notices of the church, after its erection had been confirmed by Papal authority. One or two instances may here be quoted. On the third of March 1471–2, "Sir Edward Boncle, Provost of the College of the Trinitie, beside the burgh of Edinburgh," brought an action before the Lords Auditors, against various persons, for withholding certain malis (or rents), payable to the funds of the College.[1] His name again occurs in the same record, 13th of October 1479.[2] But a more important notice occurs in the Acts of the Lords of Council,[3] on the 13th of April 1485, at or before which period this picture must have been painted. On that occasion the Lords of Council pronounced a decree, "that William Purves and Robert Purves, sall content and pay to *Sir Edward Boncle, Provost of the Trinitie College*, beside the burgh of Edinburgh, *in the behalf of the remanent of the Clerkis of the Kingis Chapel*, as factor to thaim of viij chalder of victual for the teynd schefis of the town of Fawnys," &c. The place referred to, in the parish of Soutray, formed part of the endowment of the College. How long Bonkil survived is uncertain.[4]

[1] Acta Auditorum, p. 23.

[2] Ibid. p. 86.

[3] Acta Dom. Conc., p. *115. See also pp. 52, 54.

[4] Mr Joseph Robertson has since kindly favoured me with some extracts from the Public Records, which show that Bonkil was alive in 1488, but was dead before 1496. These extracts refer to an annual grant of L.20 by King James the Third, with power to Walter Ramsay of Dunure, and Dom. Edward Boncle, Provost of the College of the Holy Trinity, "levare firmas earundem" (certain lands in Linlithgowshire), "ex tolerantia Domini Regis, sicut fecerunt per novem annos elapsos." (6 Julij 1479–5 Julij 1480).—The following payment, from the Customs of the Borough of Edinburgh (Rot. Scacc. no. 258), 14 Junij 1466–1 Junij 1467, is also curious: "Et Domino Edwardo Boncle preposito ecclesie Collegiate Sancte Trinitatis prope Edinburgh pro uno pare Organorum ad dictum Collegium, de mandato Domini Regis. x. libre." This, as Mr Robertson suggests, may be the very organ represented in the picture.

In 1502 we find the name of Mr John Brady, Archdeacon of the diocese of Lothian, as Provost of Trinity College.[1]

Having thus, I trust, identified the ecclesiastic, a key is apparently furnished to the entire composition. Hitherto I was unable to comprehend how the two angel figures could pass for the King's sisters. The Princess Mary long survived her second husband, the Lord Hamilton, who died in 1479;[2] and her younger sister, Princess Margaret, was then in disgrace. As the internal decorations of such altar-pieces were always the most important, it seemed quite inexplicable that any obscure ecclesiastic, or that the younger members of the royal family, who were then alive, should occupy such a conspicuous place. These compartments, in later times, being seldom or ever seen, except upon special application, I never had an opportunity of so carefully inspecting them as to draw any conclusions on the subject, until they were unpacked, a few days since, on their arrival at Holyrood. But if, in the principal figure, so happily represented in the character of St Cecilia, seated at the organ, we recognise the deceased Queen Mary of Gueldres, by whom the church was founded, accompanied by the Provost as confessor, offering up his devotions to the Holy Trinity, in whose honour that church was consecrated, the propriety of such a decoration for the high altar becomes at once apparent; and the more so, as this painting must have occupied a position above the spot where the Queen was interred. The coronet denotes her royal rank; her age is that of a person not less than thirty

[1] On the 1st of September 1502, a presentation to Mr John Brady, of the Provostry of the Trinity College, beside Edinburgh, contains a clause for the annexation of the vicarage of Wemyss perpetually to the Provost of the said College and his successors. (Regis. Secr. Sigilli, vol. ii. fol. 88.)

[2] The Princess Mary, eldest daughter of King James the Second, was twice married. Her first husband, Thomas, Master of Boyd, was, on their marriage in 1467, created Earl of Arran. Having soon afterwards been attainted, he fled to Denmark; but his wife, who accompanied him, is said either to have returned or to have been brought back, when a sentence of separation was pronounced in 1470. He died at Antwerp in 1471; and three years later she married, for her second husband, James, first Lord Hamilton, who died in 1479. In the year 1516, her name occurs as mediating between her son and the Regent, John, Duke of Albany. (Leslæus de rebus gestis Scotorum, p. 378. Romæ, 1578, 4to.) Their grandson James, second Earl of Arran, was Regent or Governor during the minority of Queen Mary, and created Duke of Chastelherault.

years of age, which she had attained at the time of her decease; while the younger figure behind the organ might, indeed, be her eldest daughter. An examination of the features will show a striking resemblance to her son King James, who, among his qualities, good and bad, may have inherited from her that taste for music for which he was remarkable.

But this explanation of the original destination of the altar-piece is further confirmed by the subject of the fourth compartment. I need scarcely remark, that such decorations for the high altar had always a special reference to the dedication of the church itself. Profane as such pictures cannot but be esteemed by Protestants, they were, and still are in Popish countries, viewed with the utmost veneration.

In the Collegiate Accounts referred to, one of the later entries relating to the original Common Seal as an object of idolatry may be quoted. It is surprising that the picture itself should have escaped the zeal of our iconoclasts; and it does not lessen its value to think that no other altar-piece in Scotland, prior to the Reformation, is known to exist.

> "*At the Trinitie College, the twentie-sex day of Junij, the zeir of God* 1574.
>
> "The quhilk day, the Provest and Prebendariis vnderwrittin, haveand respect to the reformatioun of Religioun and abolessing of Idolatrie, haue thocht expedient that thair commoun sele of the said College, be thair commoun consent of thair chaptoure, be changit and reformit; that quhair the samyn *contenis the ymage of the Trinitie efter the auld maner*, In place thairof sal be writtin thir wordis, SANCTA TRINITAS VNUS DEUS, and vnderneth the lyoun the Kingis airmes, with the foundatouris airmes, gif thai can be had. And this to be done with all diligence, that all evidentis to pas heirefter to be seillit thairwith, and thai that ar nocht seillit with the said sele efter the daitt heirof to tak na effect. . . . . Subscriuit be the said Provest and Prebendaris handis, day and place foirsaid. ROBERT PONT, Provest, wyth my hand." And six other names.

An impression of the original seal referred to, but in a somewhat imperfect state, still exists;[1] the type differs from the painting by the introduction of the Cross.

[1] See Henry Laing's Catalogue of Scottish Seals, No. 1021.

Had King James the Third escaped his untimely fate in June 1488, among the various noble edifices which were in progress, we may reasonably conclude, that he would not have allowed this church to remain in its half-finished state. We have seen from the public records in 1485, that it was called the King's Chapel. Had the church been completed, we may further presume it would never have been scheduled for railway purposes; and thus the good name of our city would have been saved from the reflection that, by their refusal to expend money upon the special purpose for which it was extorted from the Railway Company, a majority of Town Councillors require a decision of the Court of Session *to enforce the terms of an Act of Parliament* in regard to the restoration of the church. The series of accounts of receipts and expenditure, connected with Trinity College, which were rendered by the Provost, and attested by the Prebendaries, from the year 1503 to the time of the Reformation, is still preserved. Had their earlier accounts, or had those of the Lord High Treasurer during the reign of King James the Third (with the exception of the year 1474), been also in existence, we should have had no occasion to be content with suggestions, however plausible, on many interesting subjects. But these later accounts furnish some minute and curious particulars regarding the purchase of materials, and the slow progress made in adding to or repairing the portions of the church already built; and although it may add nothing to the weight of the statements which I have made concerning the destination of the altar-piece, it is worthy of notice, that in three of the compartments glimpses of the interior of a church are introduced, and these may be easily recognised, notwithstanding some discrepancies, as parts of the windows in the apse or choir of Trinity College Church, as it existed till the year 1848, when the entire building was so recklessly demolished.

The altar-piece is a diptych, and is evidently a complete and entire composition. Had it been otherwise, there can be no question that the subject of the Trinity would have formed the centre portion of the painting. In general, such paintings were triptychs; that is, besides the two wings, there was a centre composition, such as the Transfiguration, the Crucifixion, or the Taking Down from the Cross. In the present instance,

[1] His Queen, Margaret of Denmark, predeceased him in February 1486–7.

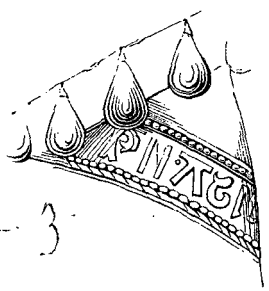
when we consider the subjects of the two internal compartments, I imagine that no such centre-piece ever existed. As it was not unusual to combine architectural ornaments along with painting, and as the high altar had no doubt previously a crucifix or an image of the Madonna, these paintings may have been designed, in connection with such an image, under a richly-carved Gothic canopy, for the centre compartment. In the Collegiate Accounts for the year 1503, we find—"Item (paid) for courtingis of plesans above our Lady head, and the freynzes of silk, xxix s." We have also notices in that year of the organ: "Item, to Sir Thomas Watson for the Organis for iij yeris, x li;" and "Item, for the mending of the Organis, viij s."[1]

As the painting of this altar-piece may, with some degree of certainty, be assigned to the year 1484, it remains to consider the question, Who was the artist? It has usually been ascribed to Jean Gossaert, called Mabuse. Dr Waagen, evidently misled by the current statement that the King represented was James the Fourth, and Queen Margaret, more than once ascribes the picture to that artist; but the period at which Mabuse is said to have flourished is too recent (1496–1532) to leave any room for this erroneous conjecture. But his remark on the picture itself evinces how well he could appreciate its merits. "Unfortunately" (are his words), "the heads have lost much of their original modelling by cleaning, especially that of the King, and have become very gray in tone. Nevertheless, the great animation of conception, excellent drawing, and masterly execution, make them very attractive to the true lover of art."[2] M. Passavant, whose skill and judgment in such matters is deservedly acknowledged, in his descriptions, says—"In the same room in Kensington Palace are two tolerably-sized wings, the centre picture

[1] In the same accounts, also, at later dates, an image of the Virgin is specially mentioned; but in one instance it was connected with the Mary aisle of Trinity Church.

[2] Treasures of Art in Great Britain, vol. ii. p. 366. In his later volume, "Galleries and Cabinets of Art in Great Britain," p. 227, Waagen mentions this picture in connexion with a portrait, attributed to Hans Memling, at Kensington Palace, belonging to the Prince Consort; and says that "both conception and colouring agree with the portraits by Mabuse belonging to the time when he executed those of the King and Queen of Scotland, now at Hampton Court." We might rather urge his resemblance in ascribing both works to Memling.

(unless the space was formerly filled up by carving) is missing. *These are works of considerable merit, and recall the style of a master, probably an Antwerpian, an Annunciation by whom, in the Boisserie Gallery, has been erroneously given out for a Hugo van der Goes.*"[1] The altar-piece is undoubtedly of the school of Van Eyck; and I should have been inclined to attribute it to Hugo van der Goes, the painter of similar subjects, preserved at Florence, Vienna, and other Galleries; but it appears that he retired to a convent in Flanders, and died in the year 1480. That the artist's name may be ascertained by a careful examination of the paintings of the Flemish school is highly probable; and even this altar-piece, if it should be subjected to the process of careful cleaning, might discover some inscription to indicate this. On the band of the head-dress,[2] under the crown of Queen Margaret, are some letters, supposed to be a monogram. Pinkerton gives them as "P. ANAG."[3] In a recent interesting work, in which the portrait is engraved in colours, to illustrate the Queen's rich head-dress, they appear to be PHAT. A more exact fac-simile is here annexed, as the best mode of ascertaining the meaning. It is, however, a mistake to suppose that painting was an unknown art in Scotland during the fifteenth century. One instance may at present suffice to prove the contrary. In the embellishments of the cathedral church of Dunkeld, by successive prelates, we find that Bishop Thomas Lauder, who held that see from 1452 to 1476, had painted on the wall, at the high altar, the twenty-four miracles of St Columba, and above these two figures of the Saint, in honour of whom, the patron saint of the Pictish nation in the eighth century, a monastery of Culdees had been founded at Dunkeld. Half a century later, the names of various painters are preserved in the Treasurer's Accounts of the reign of James the Fourth. Thus, in 1497, David Pratt, payntour in Stirling, received several small payments for "the altar



[1] Tour of a German Artist in England. By M. J. D. Passavant. Lond. 1836. 2 vols. post 8vo; vol. i. p. 114.

[2] Shaw's Dresses and Decorations of the Middle Ages, vol. ii. No. 60.

[3] Pinkerton's Scottish Gallery of Portraits, 1799 (Introduction).

paynting;" but this does not necessarily imply that it was either an altar-piece or any original composition. In 1502, he was at work on King James the Third's burial-place in the Abbey of Cambuskenneth. John Pratt, payntour, is also named about the same time. Sir Thomas Galbrayth, a priest, was chiefly employed in illuminating manuscripts. In September 1503, Mynour, "the Inglise payntour," brought to Holyrood portraits of Henry the Seventh, his Queen, the Prince, and of Margaret Tudor, "our Quene," and returned in the following month of November, on both occasions receiving from the King the sums of L.14 and L.30. Mynour's name was unknown to Walpole. In 1505 another artist is named—Peiris the payntour. But I need not enlarge at this time, and shall only add, that in the Inventory of Articles pertaining to the Chapel-Royal of Stirling, or, as it was called, the Collegiate Church of the blessed Mary and St Michael, in the year 1505, among other paintings there was one in three compartments, bearing the figure of Our Lady, with her Son in her arms, and two angels with musical instruments.[1] This obviously could not have been the present altar-piece, even if the latter had been painted during the reign of James the Fourth. In the Chapel of St Ninian in Stirling, offerings were frequently made by that monarch before the year 1501, the date when the Chapel-Royal was erected and endowed as a Collegiate Church, although its privileges were not fully confirmed by Papal authority until 1506 and 1508.

Of the subsequent history of the present altar-piece, no certain information has been discovered. Trinity College was conveyed, by a gift from the Crown, to the Provost and Magistrates of Edinburgh in 1567, but several years elapsed before it was constituted one of the parochial churches of the city. This painting was probably transferred either to the Palace or the Chapel-Royal of Holyrood. This chapel-royal, so frequently confounded with the adjoining abbey-church, stood at the south side of the Palace; but was demolished when the latter was rebuilt, in 1671, in its present quadrangular form, under the special instructions of Charles the Second. Here it was where Queen Mary had the Romish service performed, to the great scandal of the Reformers; and her son, James the Sixth, in 1616, directed that it should be adorned with carved

[1] MS. Chartulary of the Chapel-Royal of Stirling; and Sir J. G. Dalyell's Analysis, p. 70. Edinb. 1828. 8vo.

figures and stalls, for the English service, to the equal scandal of the rigid Presbyterians. We know that the various articles of furniture, paintings, library, &c., were removed from the Palace to England after the King's accession to the English throne in 1603;[1] yet as this painting does not occur in the Catalogue and description of the very remarkable collection of Pictures, Limnings, &c., which belonged to Charles the First, it may not have been removed until the year 1671.[2] But in the similar Catalogue of Pictures belonging to King James the Second, and consequently before his abdication in 1688, under the head Hampton Court,[3] we find enumerated—

"No. 955. One of the Kings of Scotland at Devotion, crowned by St Andrew; James the Fourth."

"No. 960. One of the Queens of Scotland at devotion; a Saint in armour by her."

But no mention is made of the paintings on the reverse.

When Kensington Palace, formerly known as Nottingham House, was purchased and enlarged by William the Third in 1691, these portraits may have been among the various paintings which were selected from St James', Windsor, and Hampton Court, to ornament this favourite residence of that monarch. In a list of the Kensington paintings in 1820, they are entered as Nos. 157 and 166, and then hung in the Queen's dining-room;[4] but in some new arrangements, about the year 1836, they were again transferred to Hampton Court. Having now reached their most appropriate place, we cannot but feel grateful to Her Majesty for having restored to this country a work of so much importance for illustrating the history of art in Scotland. Independently of any national interest in connexion with such authentic portraits, the picture itself, in

[1] See note in the Bannatyne Miscellany, vol. i. p. †185.

[2] Printed from the original MS. Lond. 1757, 4to. [See, however, the note added as a Postscript, at p. 21–22.]

[3] Ibid. Lond. 1758, 4to.

[4] Faulkner's History of Kensington, pp. 516, 517. Lond. 1820, 8vo. The portraits are still described there as James the Fourth of Scotland, and his brother Alexander; the other, as Margaret his Queen, and said to be painted during the fifteenth century, although their marriage only took place in August 1503. In C. M. Westmacott's British Galleries, &c., p. 52, Lond., 1824, 8vo, the reverse of the picture is vaguely described as "An Allegorical Subject, or a Priest at Prayers, supposed to be a portrait of Cardinal Beaton!"

its several compartments, displays so much skill in the composition, and such masterly execution, as to entitle it to a high place among the works of art produced during the latter half of the fifteenth century.

The accompanying outlines by Mr C. A. Doyle (see Plate I.), although on such a reduced scale, very successfully exhibit the composition of the Picture, with an effect much superior to any verbal description.

[Since the preceding communication was read to the Society, and copies of it printed in a separate form for private circulation, the original Paintings have, by authority of my Lords Commissioners of Her Majesty's Treasury, been placed within frames of large plate-glass, and raised on handsome oak pedestals, so that both sides of the pannels are exhibited to advantage. By this mode these interesting works of art, which have been visited by thousands in the Royal Picture-Gallery of Holyrood, are not now exposed to the risk of injury, as when the frames were placed against the wall in Hampton Court, opening upon hinges to allow the entire composition to be examined—although this was done only at rare intervals, and by special permission.

Nothing has yet been ascertained respecting the painter. That he was a Flemish artist, who had studied in Italy, is rendered highly probable by the connexion that subsisted between Flanders and Scotland, in matters relating to art as well as commerce, during the fifteenth century. In the National Gallery, London, No. 264, is a picture of "A Count of Henegau with his patron Saint, Ambrose," attributed to Gerard Vander Meire, a Flemish painter, and a scholar of Hubert Van Eyck, which bears a considerable resemblance to the Holyrood pictures; but, as he flourished in the first half of the fifteenth century, some other artist of that school must still be sought for.

There exists a curious document relating to a dispute between John Craufort, a monk of Melrose, and William Carebis, a Scottish merchant, in the year 1441, regarding the fulfilment of a contract, by which Cornelius de Aeltre, a carver of Bruges, engaged to furnish carved stalls for Melrose Abbey.[1] A carved figure might thus have been obtained as the centre-piece of this diptych for the altar. In the autumn of 1858, at Lübeck, and other towns in the north of Germany, I saw various in-

[1] Archæologia, vol. xxxi. p. 346. Lond. 1846. 4to.

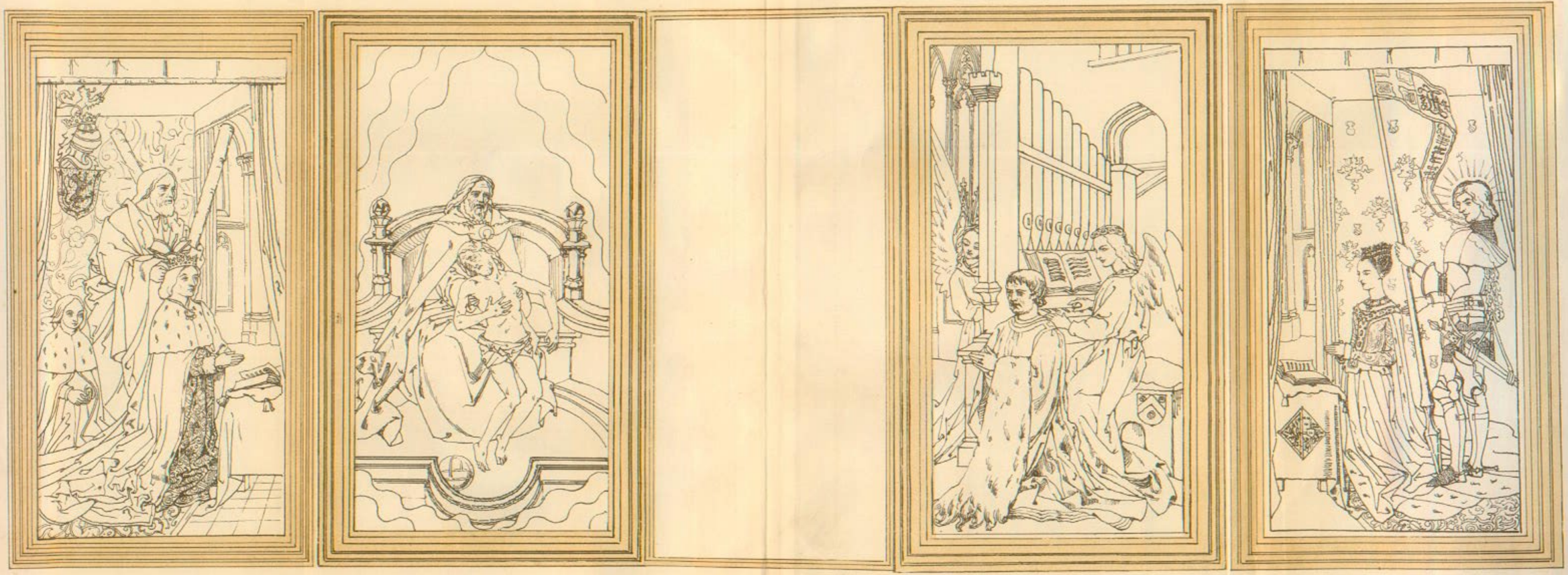
stances in which a carved image, the size of life, had originally stood in place of the paintings so common in the churches of Italy.

At p. 15, an extract is given for destroying the old Collegiate Seal. Having had a woodcut from one of the existing impressions of that seal made to illustrate a series of charters and other documents relating to Trinity College, now in the press for the Bannatyne Club, I avail myself of this opportunity to insert it.

But there is one circumstance connected with this altar-piece worthy of particular notice. Among the State Paper-Office documents there was recently discovered one entitled "A Note of all such Pictures as your Highness [King James I.] hath at this present, done by severall Famous Masters owne hands, by the Life," and supposed to have been written about 1623 or 1624. No. 1 is, "*Inprimis*, KING JAMES THE THIRD OF SCOTLAND WITH HIS QUEENE, DONNE BY JOAN VANAK."[1] This notice is peculiarly interesting, as it shows that the painting, upwards of two centuries ago, was attributed to a Flemish artist (John Van Eyck), and that it was actually brought from Scotland not later than the reign of King James the First (1603–1625), or possibly at a much earlier period, among the plunder carried off by the English during the reign of Henry the Eighth. We know, at least, that it could not have been painted by John Van Eyck himself: Hubert Van Eyck, his elder brother, was born at Limbourg, in Guelderland, in 1366, and John, who was about twenty years younger, died in 1445, aged 59.[2] But the influence of those two distinguished painters, it is scarcely necessary to observe, was not restricted to their own pupils.—D. L.]

[1] See the interesting volume of Original Unpublished Papers, illustrative of Life of Sir Peter Paul Rubens, collected and edited by W. Noël Sainsbury, p. 355.

[2] Michiels, Histoire de la Peinture Flamande, &c., tom. ii. pp. 8, 9, 84.

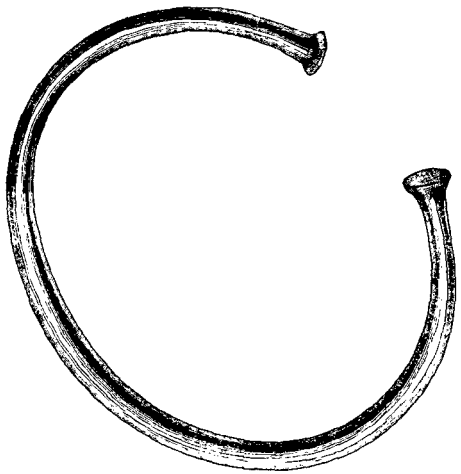


14*th December* 1857.

COSMO INNES, Esq., V.P., in the Chair.

The following donations to the Museum and Library were laid on the table:—

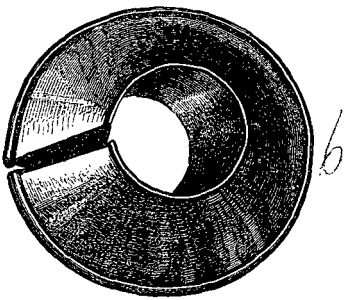
Two plain Gold Armlets, terminating in flattened button-like extremi-



ties (one of which is figured here of full size); one weighs 19 dwts. 6 grs., the other 17 dwts. 18 grs.: and

A curious hollow penannular Ornament of Gold. By P. DENNY, Esq., Dumbarton. The weight of this ornament is 11 dwts. It is 1⅛ths in. in diameter, by nearly ⅝ths of an inch in depth in the centre, and is well shown in the accompanying woodcut (see next page). These gold relics were purchased from a jeweller at Dumbarton; and the only information which could be obtained as to their history was, that they were pro-

cured from a Highlander, who stated (with the old law of treasure-trove before his eyes) they were found in a moss in the West Highlands in 1856. A penannular gold ornament of nearly similar character is described and figured in the "Archæological Journal," No. 51, September 1856. It was found in Anglesea; others have also been found in the county of Limerick, Ireland. The one now presented differs only in being more flattened and slender in its character, and the central opening is larger, being $\frac{5}{8}$ths of an inch across.



Four Placks or Achesouns of James VI., of mixed metal or billon, found at Prestonpans. By James Mellis, Esq., F.S.A. Scot.

These four specimens are alike.

Obverse—IACOBUS C. D. G. R. SCOTOR. The arms of Scotland crowned.
Reverse—OPPIDUM EDINBURGI. A thistle crowned.

The Achesouns, with the mint name in full (and not contracted "Oppid. Edinb.," as on the most common placks of this king), are given by Mr Lindsay as of the very highest rarity; but a great many have been seen since the publication of Mr Lindsay's work. They are, however, not nearly so common as the plack with the contracted mint name, and are of finer execution.

A Valve of a Joss Shell from Ningpo, China. By Alexander E. Mackay, Surgeon, R.N. The nacreous lining of this shell of a fresh-water mussel (*Anodon*) covers eight small images of Budha. Although the evidence this shell affords of the self-protecting power and instinct possessed by the animal of coating with smooth pearly matter foreign bodies, introduced either by accident or design, is sufficiently interesting to the naturalist, yet the fact has been so long and extensively known in science, that Mr Mackay thought the specimen might be more usefully devoted to an Ethnographical than a Natural History Collection, illustrating as it does the extraordinary ingenuity of the Chinese in recognising and taking advantage of this habit of the animal.

Archæologia, Vol. XXXVI., Part II. 4to. 1856.

Archæologia, Vol. XXXVII., Part I. 4to. 1857.

Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries, Nos. 43, 44, 45 of Vol. III., 1855–56, and No. 46, Vol. IV., 1857, London. By the SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES OF LONDON.

Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire. 8vo. Vol. IX. Session 1856–57. By the SOCIETY.

Archæological Journal. 8vo. No. 54. 1857. By the ARCHÆOLOGICAL INSTITUTE OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND.

JAMES JOHNSTON, Esq., Solicitor, was balloted for, and elected a Fellow of the Society.

The following communications were read:—