

III.

NOTICE OF A VOLUME OF THE "ACCOUNTS OF SIR WILLIAM BRUCE OF BALCASKIE, GENERAL SURVEYOR OF HIS MAJESTY'S WORKS (1674-1679)," FORMERLY PRESERVED IN THE CHARTER-ROOM AT KINROSS, AND LATELY PRESENTED TO HER MAJESTY'S GENERAL REGISTER HOUSE AT EDINBURGH, BY SIR GRAHAM GRAHAM MONTGOMERY, BART. OF STANHOPE, M.P. BY JOSEPH ROBERTSON, Esq., F.S.A. Scot.

The volume which I have to bring under the notice of the Society was long preserved at Kinross, the stately seat which was built for himself by Sir William Bruce, Surveyor-General of His Majesty's Works in Scotland, in the reign of King Charles II. It has now been restored to its place among the public records of Scotland by Sir Graham Graham Montgomery of Stanhope, Bart., M.P., into the hands of whose ancestor it is supposed to have passed along with the estate of Kinross.

It is an account, duly authenticated by the Lords of the Treasury, of the sums received and expended by Sir William Bruce in the construction and repair of the King's Palaces and Castles in Scotland, from January 1674 to March 1679. The reckoning is in Scots money—the value of which was then one-twelfth of sterling—and the amount which passed through the Surveyor-General's hands in the five years of the account was about L.160,000. About four-fifths of this sum were spent upon Holyrood. The other buildings for which outlay was made were the Palace and Castle of Stirling, the Castle of Edinburgh, and the island-fortress of the Bass. For this last work I find flagstones quarried at Dirleton; and both here and at Stirling the lime used was brought by sea from the well-known limekilns of Broomhall, on the north bank of the Frith of Forth, above Queensferry. One article of the Stirling expenditure I may venture to quote, as showing generally both the work done at that Palace and Castle, and the duties of the Surveyor-General:—
 "1679, January 11. Item for the accomptants charges and expences in going to Stryveling Castle, first for making the mappes of the Castle to be sent to His Majestie, and for surveying the Park dykes, attending

and ordering these works, the most part of the Park dykes being made new, the Pallace most part new roofed, floored, windowed with case, case-ments, and glass, and plaistered, which occasioned my being there eight or ten days together, for ten or twelve severall tymes with the wnder maisters." The charge for this trouble is L.600, which is in addition to the Surveyor-General's salary of L.3600 a-year. The salary of the Clerk of Works, I may add, was L.400 a-year. The storekeeper—who was also overseer at Holyrood—had the same allowance.

It was on Holyrood, as I have said, that four-fifths of the money accounted for were expended. The works, which made that Palace very much what it now is, were commenced in 1671, and had been so vigorously carried on, that in January 1674, when this volume begins, the mason-work was nearly completed. The chief things done from 1674 to 1679 were roofing, flooring, paving, plastering, wainscoting, glazing, painting, draining, enclosing, levelling the ground for the gardens, and bringing in spring-water from Arthur's Seat. For this last purpose lead pipes were laid to the Palace from St Anthony's Well and other places in the Park, and those stone vaults or cisterns were built, of which some still remain not much ruined. The drainage seems to have been an object of considerable care. Spouts from the roof were built into the walls; and large sums were spent on "the great syver," as it is called, which seems to have passed as well on the north side of the Palace as through St Anne's Yards. It was built of flag and wall stones dug from a quarry in the Park. Stones of better quality, such as lintels and soles of doors and windows, were from the quarry at South Queensferry. The choicest stones of all—such as were used in the cupola above the grand entrance—were quarried at Dalgetty in Fife, and brought by sea to Leith. This entrance seems to have been the chief piece of mason-work during the period of the account. Its four pillars were hewn from models made by a turner at the charge of 8s. each; and the royal arms, which appear both there and in the interior of the quadrangle, were cut from drawings made by Jacob De Wit, the Dutchman who in 1684-6 painted the Kings in the Picture Gallery. One other operation must be mentioned—the demolishing the capehouse, which, as we see in the drawing by James Gordon of Rothiemay about 1649, surmounted the old or north-western tower. This was removed, and a flat roof, or leaded platform, put in its

place. The tops of the turrets and turnpikes were at the same time crowned with gilt globes of copper, eight large and as many small, weighing in all seventy pounds, and costing L.105, the price of the copper being 30s. a-pound:

The mason, Robert Mylne, was a Scot; and so were the wrights, the smiths, the glaziers, the plumbers, and the painters at least of common work. But much of their material had to be sought elsewhere than in Scotland. Lead was brought from Newcastle. The glass was either English or French. White lead and linseed oil were imported from Holland. The "sex hundreth fyne large wanscott planks readie sawen, for lyneing severall of the roomes of the King's ovne appartment," were bought in Rotterdam, at a cost, including freight, of L.1217. They were put up by a Scottish carpenter, but the nicer wood-work had to be done by foreign hands. There is a payment of L.400 "to John Vansantvort, carver of timber, for cutting, carveing, and upputting of several pieces of carved work upon severall of the chimney and doore pieces of His Majestie's appartment in the east quarter of the Pallace." The easier task of "turning of wanscott ballasters, standing and hanging knubs for the timber scaile stair in the middle of the north syde of the north quarter of the Palace" was performed by a turner in the Canongate.

The ceilings of Holyrood are admired by every one. I am sorry to tell you that they were not wrought by Scotsmen. The plasterers were two Englishmen, John Albert or Houlbert, and George Demsterfield. They had moulds cut by a Scottish wright. They sent to Pitlessie in Fife for their best lime—that which was used "for whytneing of the plaister work at the Pallace." In preparing their plaster, they employed two sorts of hair—black or common at 6s. 8d., and white at 30s. a-stone. Their charge for "plaistering the third roome in the third storie of the inner syde of the north quarter of the Pallace, measureing in all with the cornice seventy yards," was 72s. a-yard. When they worked during the winter they had fires "for dryeing of roomes that wer plaistered in the roofe, and for keeping the frost air thairfrae."

Nine marble chimney-pieces were bought in London, by one of the Duke of Lauderdale's dependents, for L.2162. Other marbles were brought from Holland, along with the Dutch tiles, some of which still line the fireplaces.

The common painting was done by James Alexander and other Scotsmen. The Dutch De Wit was employed for the higher sorts. I transcribe the three passages which speak of his work:—

“1674, Feby 7th. Item payed to Jacob De Wett Dutch paynter L.98 12s. for two severall chimney-pieces paynted by him and for paynting in marble coullour ane chimney—L.98 12s.”

“1675, Julie 31. Item paid to Mr de Wet paynter L.120 Scots for ane piece of historie paynted and placed in the roofe of the Kings bed chamber in the 2d storie of the east quarter on the syde towards the Privie garden—L.120.”

“1677, April 6th. Item payed to Mr de Wet paynter L.36 Scots for drawing and extending at large his Majesties two coates of armes with supporters etc. belonging thairto to be a patern to the meason for cutting the saids coates of armes in stone, the one whereof standz since put wp upon the middle of the wpper part of the west fronteice of the east quarter of the Pallace, and the other over the top of the gate of the said Pallace—L.36.”

I regret that I have not had an opportunity, since this record came before me, of seeing whether De Wit's “history piece” and “chimney pieces” can now be identified at Holyrood.

The volume gives us a casual glimpse of what is now called the Chapel Royal—the noble church of the Abbey of Austin Canons, founded by St David. Only the nave survived, and that had been so neglected that it was found necessary “in the winter of 1673 to furnish iron glasbands for secureing and closeing wp the windowes to keep out the stormie weather the tyme that my Lord Commissioner his Grace was heir.” For this purpose 130 feet of old glass were refitted, and 311 feet of new English glass were put in.

It may not be without interest to note some of the prices of labour, and materials. The wages of a ditcher, from December to February, were 6s. 8d.; and from February to April, 7s. a-day. An overseer of quarriers had L.4 a-week. The hire of a “sledder,” with his horse and “sled,” was 20s. a-day. The great sewer was built for L.11 the rood. The lime with which it was built cost 13s. 4d. the puncheon load, and the sand 4s. a-load. The “new dyke in the church yard which runnes from the church toward the high way that leads from the Water Gate

eastward" cost L.11 the rood—being the price of the great sewer. The price of English glass was 11s. 3d. the square foot; of French glass, L.25 the creill, and L.18 the chest. Great trees were sawn into joists for 10d. a square foot. Lead cost 28s. a-stone. The price of ochre for painting was 3s. a-pound; of umber, 4s. 6d. a-pound; of Indian red, 7s. 6d. a-pound. The freight of a barrel bulk from Holland to Leith was 28s.—“being,” it is added, “the time of the warres.”

These accounts, I have said, end in January 1679; and in the autumn of that year the Palace was occupied by the Duke of York, afterwards King James VII. If this ill-starred Prince inherited nearly all the faults and failings of our Stewarts, let us remember that he shared in the love and knowledge of art by which so many of them were distinguished. One of the finest walks in the Park of Holyrood still bears his name; and he it was who first suggested the new town of Edinburgh, with a bridge over the North Loch, nearly a hundred years before a stone of either structure was laid.