

IV.

REMARKS ON THE CARVED CEILING AND HERALDIC SHIELDS OF
THE APARTMENT IN HOLYROOD HOUSE, COMMONLY KNOWN AS
"QUEEN MARY'S AUDIENCE CHAMBER." BY MR HENRY LAING.
(PLATE XLVII.)

[This Communication was illustrated by large coloured drawings of
the carved ceiling, and lithographed copies printed in colours for sale.]

To the student of history, and still more to the student of heraldry,
the beautifully decorated ceiling of the "Audience Chamber of Queen
Mary," in the palace of Holyrood, beneath which occurred so many
exciting and tragic events in the life of that unfortunate princess, cannot
fail to possess a more than ordinary interest. Even as an example of

decorative art of the sixteenth century, and apart altogether from the associations inseparable from Holyrood, it possesses peculiar claims to attention. Fully persuaded of this, I feel therefore greater confidence in presuming to offer a few brief remarks on it, and to exhibit a drawing which I have made from it. (See Plate XLVII.)

This ceiling is a very favourable example of the art of carving in oak—an art that, from an early period, has attained a high position among the fine arts; though, from its being chiefly confined to the mere decoration of furniture, has, in general estimation at least, scarcely attained the dignity of sculpture.

What encouragement the art received in Scotland, or how extensively practised by native artists, is difficult to say. To foreign artists has generally been given the credit for the best of these works; yet we may surely assume that, with the abundance of material at hand, and the great facility in the execution of this art, Scotland would not be far behind other nations.

Previous to the sixteenth century few specimens remain; but from the beginning and throughout that century many, very fine and perfect, are now preserved both in public and private collections, chiefly as household furniture, such as cabinets, chests, &c., exhibiting great beauty and variety of design, combined with freedom that justifies admiration, though they may not equal the productions of modern artists or a Grinlin Gibbons.

It is, however, in ecclesiastical decoration that oak carving fully developes its beauty and capabilities. This is abundantly proved by the elegant screens, stalls, and canopies in King's College Chapel, Aberdeen. The roof of the Cathedral there also is adorned with *about forty heraldic shields*, painted on wood, of prelates and nobles who were benefactors to the institution. The beauty of these has been nearly obliterated by repeated whitewashings; but it is a matter for congratulation that, by the judicious restorations now being effected, these fine works will be preserved from further destruction. To these examples must be added the well-known "Stirling heads" and this roof of Holyrood; the latter, though not of such imposing dimensions, yields to none of the above mentioned either in design or interest. To the herald, indeed, it may well exceed them, perceiving, as he does, in the central group of shields,

a graphic illustration of the alliance of Scotland with the great houses of Valoise (France) and Lorraine.

These shields are so well known, except, perhaps, that of Lorraine, that a particular blazon of them seems quite unnecessary. It will be sufficient to direct attention to the position they occupy, and which indicates the relation they bore, thus:—The shield of France (Henry II.) is placed immediately above that of his son Francis the Dauphin; in the corresponding panels are the Scottish shield (James V.), and that of his daughter, Queen Mary; while on the intersection of the panels is the shield of Mary of Lorraine (wife of James V.), uniting, as it were, all into one group.

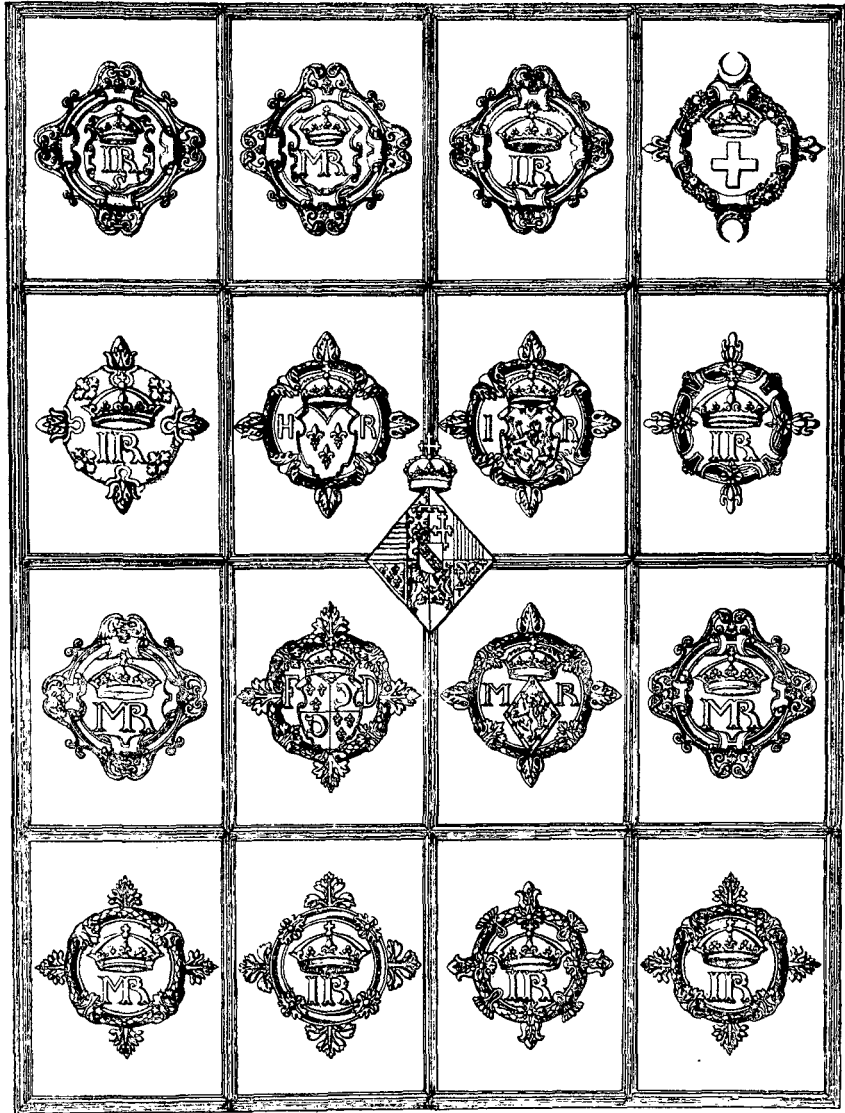
This shield of Lorraine bears eight quarters—1st, Barry of eight, argent and gules, for Hungary; 2d, France, ancient, for Anjou-Sicily; 3d, Argent, a cross-crosslet or, for Jerusalem; 4th, Or, four pallets gules, for Arragon; 5th, France, ancient, within a border gules, for Anjou; 6th, Azure, a lion rampant, contourné or, crowned, armed and langued gules, for Gueldres; 7th, Or, a lion rampant, sable, crowned, &c., as in the last, for Flanders; 8th, Azure, seme of cross-crosslets fitchée two barbells adossé or, for De Bar; over all a labell gules. On an escutcheon surtout or, a bend gules charged with three alerions, for Lorraine. It should be mentioned that the arms of Jerusalem, as given in the third quarter, differ from the usual representation of that coat, which is, argent, a cross potence between four crosses or. The reason for the variation here is probably to be found in the very limited space the artist had to work on.

These ensigns for Lorraine are said to have been assumed by the Crusaders, and have their origin in an event connected with the ancestor of the family, Godfrey of Bologne, at the siege of Jerusalem. The anecdote is well known, but as it is a mere fable, it is thought unnecessary to repeat it here.

The shield of the Dauphin affords most satisfactory proof of the date when this roof was executed. Henry II. having died (10th July 1559), Francis became king, and of course ceased to use the coat of Dauphiné, and assumed that of France, which he would impale with Scotland. It must, therefore, have been in the latter part of 1558, or the commencement of the following year, that this was done. Had it been later, the

shield would certainly have borne France and Scotland impaled, and the initials would have been F. R., not F. D., as we see them. Other evidence for the date has been sought for in vain, but to us this heraldic evidence is quite conclusive, and an interesting instance of the practical value of heraldry. The similarity of the general design with the "Stirling heads" leads to the same conclusion as to the date. *They* are believed, on good grounds, to have been executed about 1540; and it is by no means improbable that this roof at Holyrood, and that at Stirling, are the works of the same artist.

The surrounding panels are occupied respectively with the crowned initials of King James V. and Mary his queen, excepting the fourth panel at the top, which, as will be seen, is occupied with a cross beneath a crown within a border differing in design from the borders surrounding all the other medallions. For the explanation of this pretty-looking design, I regret being quite unable to offer any suggestion, but would respectfully solicit the communication of any that would elucidate it.



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W. & A. K. Johnston Lithog.

CEILING OF QUEEN MARY'S AUDIENCE CHAMBER IN THE PALACE OF HOLYROOD