

## IV.

NOTE BY JAMES PEDDIE, Esq., C.E., F.S.A. SCOT., RESPECTING A  
SCULPTURED STONE FOUND IN TAKING DOWN A HOUSE AT THE  
FOOT OF MARY KING'S CLOSE, EDINBURGH. (PLATE III.)

"CHAMBERS, 9 GEORGE STREET, EDINBURGH,  
*January 11, 1869.*

"SIR,—I beg, on behalf of the late firm of Wylie & Peddie, C.E., to present to the Scottish Antiquarian Society the accompanying Sculptured Stone. It was found during the taking down of the old houses for the purpose of forming Cockburn Street in 1859, lying in the foundation of a house in Mary King's Close, and has been in our possession since then.—I am, Sir, your most obedient servant,

"JAMES PEDDIE.

"To the Secretary of the  
Scottish Antiquarian Society."

Mr LAING, as Chairman, in moving thanks to the Donors of this interesting relic of local antiquity, expressed his opinion that the carving might be assigned to the middle of the fifteenth century.

A minute description of the sculptured stone, at the time of discovery, appeared in the Edinburgh newspapers, of the date 26th February 1859. We here extract it to illustrate the accompanying Plate, No. III., executed by Mr Adam from a large photograph of the stone compared with the original.

*"Discovery of an Ancient Piece of Sculpture.*

"Although the old buildings, now nearly swept away to make room for Lord Cockburn Street, did not possess much attraction for the archaeologist, either in respect of age or character, the excavations have brought to light a few interesting relics. Chief among these is a sculptured stone, which was found the other day, face downwards, in the foundation of a wall in Mary King's Close. The house was one of the oldest in the locality. The relic is of freestone, of a coarse quality, but apparently favourable to the action of the chisel, and in its present state is about 2 feet square, but has been evidently oblong in form, as, while it seems nearly complete in depth, the sides bear marks of portions having been

broken off. The subject of the sculpture is the administration of the last sacrament of the Romish Church, and represents an apartment, with the dying person on a couch, surrounded by figures of sorrowing relatives and officiating monks. The dying member of the Church, judging from the character of the couch, the tasseled pillow, and the furnishings of the apartment, is a person of consequence and rank. The host has apparently just been administered, and the recipient is devoutly preparing for the assault of the 'dread king.' Near the couch, at the side, stand some monks or priests, one of whom has dispensed the sacrament; a second bears a candle in the one hand, and a vessel with the 'holy oil' in the other; while the third also holds a candle, and has the service-book, which rests upon the couch, open before him; and at the foot of the couch a monk is kneeling in prayer. Seated at what appears to be a kind of cabinet is a figure, which, both in attitude and expression, gives eloquent token of a grief both deep and natural, adding greatly to the effect of the solemn and imposing scene. Near the couch, at the side opposite the monks, is a half-prostrate youth, who is also grief-stricken. The figures standing by the couch are stiff, and the monk in the act of praying, is deficient in earnest action; but the figure of the sorrowing friend at the cabinet is in itself a picture, being easy and artistic. As regards the date to be assigned to the work, there seems 'ample room and verge enough' for conjecture; but it is considered very probable that it belongs to the early days of the fourteenth century. Some of our local archæologists will, no doubt, be able to throw light upon the date, and perhaps also the place of its execution. Meanwhile the stone is in safe keeping, and now lies at the chambers of Messrs Wylie & Peddie, Thistle Street, the engineers for the new road.

"Among the other relics found in excavating the line of the new street is an ancient stone hand-mill, which has been presented to the Antiquarian Society;<sup>1</sup> and a lintel-stone in Anchor Close, with the inscription,—'ANGVSTA · AD · V SVM · AVGVSTA;' translated a 'narrow house for the use of an august person.' This stone, it is said, formed the lintel of the inner door of a house in which James the Sixth was once entertained at dinner."

<sup>1</sup> See Proceedings, vol.-iii. p. 203. The lintel-stone above mentioned was not presented to the Society, as the words may possibly suggest.



SCULPTURED STONE, REPRESENTING A DEATH-BED SCENE,

Found in taking down a house in Mary King's Close, Edinburgh.