

IV.

NOTES RESPECTING THE EARL OF MORAY'S TOMB AND ITS CONTENTS IN ST GILES' CHURCH. BY PETER MILLER, F.S.A. Scot.

The following announcement appeared in the *Edinburgh Courant* of January 23, 1830 :—"The operations now going forward on the south side of St Giles' Cathedral have rendered it necessary to remove the tomb of the Regent Murray, which stood in the Old Church, part of the new wall coming immediately over it. The contents of the vault were accordingly removed on Saturday to another previously prepared for them immediately to the east of the old one. Three lead coffins, laid one over the other, were thus removed ; the upper one, with its outer wainscot case was almost entire, and bore a plate with the words "Francis Stuart died at Rheims, August 1768 aged 22."—The one in the middle was almost entire, but the outer case of wainscot fell to pieces in the hands of the workmen,—the lead coffin was stamped with a crown and the dates 1670 and 1690, the under coffin was without any inscriptions, and had been crushed flat by the superincumbent weight of the others. There was also a small coffin, about 4½ feet in length, which had been placed at the side of the large ones, and on the top of the latter, also it appears, that an infant's coffin had been deposited, but it had fallen to pieces, and the bones of the child only remained. The whole were safely removed to the new vault, over which the old inscription will be placed when the wall is finished."

From *Notes* by David Laing respecting the Earl of Moray's tomb (in the *Proceedings*, vol. i. p. 191) it appears that an investigation was made in the month of April 1850, by the authority of the Town Council, upon a request made by the family. The reason for the investigation is stated to have been with the view of ascertaining whether the Earl of Murray (that is, the second Earl of Murray, who was slain at Donibristle by the Earl of Huntly, on the 7th of February 1591) had been interred in the burying vault of St Giles' or in Dalgetty Church. The particulars given by Mr Laing are from a notice written at the time by the gentlemen who superintended the investigation on behalf of the family. The details are much the same as in the preceding notice of 1830. It is only necessary to quote the reference to the third lead coffin, which in the preceding notice was described as having been crushed flat by the weight of the others that had been placed above it.

"The third, or undermost, was also a leaden one. It bore marks of considerable antiquity, showing the rounded form of the head and shoulders, and in many places was much indented, but had no inscription of any kind, though it is more than probable there had been an inscription, which may have been torn or rubbed off when the coffin was removed during the alterations of the church. A portion of the lead opposite to the face was broken, and through the opening was seen a part of the skull, the top of which had been sawn through, probably for the purpose of embalming, and the teeth in the upper jaw were quite entire. Though there was no way of positively identifying these remains with those of the Regent, still, from the fact of there being only three coffins in the vault, and it being clear that neither of the other two coffins was that of the Regent, there seems little doubt that this lowest coffin did contain his remains."

That conclusion of Mr Laing was a mistake, as was demonstrated on the 13th April 1879, when the contents of the Moray vault in the south transept of St. Giles' were carefully examined by Professor Douglas Maclagan, myself, Dr William Chambers, Mr Hay the architect, and other gentlemen, in the expectation of finding some clue to the remains of the Regent Murray. One coffin contained the remains of Francis Stuart, who died at Rheims, August 1768, aged 22, years. The other contained the remains of the Earl of Galloway, with the words—

"NAT 8 JANR 1670, OBIT 26 SEP 1690."

The third was a leaden coffin, very much flattened and shaped to the head and shoulders as described by Mr Laing in his notice, with a hole in the lead opposite the face. On opening a portion of the lead it was ascertained that the remains were those of a female apparently about fifty years old or more, and in a good state of preservation. The upper part of the skull had been sawn off. The hair was red; the front teeth were much worn down and one of the molars was decayed, with a hole on one side of it. Besides the coffins there were in the vault a considerable quantity of rubbish mixed with human remains—decayed portions of old coffins and the metal plate that had been on the coffin of Francis Stuart. Among a number of skulls that were in the vault one

of them excited much observation on account of the thickness of its walls. It had been sawn through in the ordinary way, was in good preservation, its walls seemed to be from $\frac{3}{8}$ inch to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in thickness.

The following extract from the Records of the Town Council of Edinburgh, dated 19th July 1588, clearly indicates whose remains they were :—

“At the desyr of the kin and freyndis of the vmquhill Countess of Argyle laitylly deceisset within the burgh, and for the luif and favour thair buir to hir vmquhill first husband the Erle of Murray, regent for the tyme, grants and consentis that sho be bureit in the Hie Kirk of this burgh, in the tomb and sepulchre of hir said vmquhill husband.”

It seems more than probable that when in 1588, eighteen years after the Earl of Murray was laid in the vault of St. Giles', his wife's remains were either placed above his, or placed alongside of them. The coffin containing the remains of the Earl of Galloway, which was very broad and exceedingly heavy, was placed above that of the Countess of Argyle and that of Francis Stuart on the top of the other two. The immense weight of the two upper ones sufficiently accounts for the flattened appearance of the lowermost.

James Earl of Murray married, in 1561, Anne, daughter of William Keith, Earl Mareschal, and by that lady had two daughters—Elizabeth and Margaret. The Regent was assassinated on the 23rd January 1570, in the 37th year of his age. His widow afterwards married Colin Campbell, 6th Earl of Argyle; she was his second wife and had two sons to him. His lordship died in 1584, and his Countess survived him four years, dying in July 1588. Her age cannot be ascertained from the peerage books.