

#### IV.

#### SCOTTISH SACRAMENT HOUSES. BY ARCHIBALD MACPHERSON, F.S.A. Scot.

Among the appointments of a church fitted for the Roman ritual none exceed in importance the provision required to be made for the housing of the "Eucharistic Reserve," by which, in the words of a recognised authority on the Rubrics, is meant "the consecrated hosts which are kept for the communion of the sick and the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament."<sup>1</sup>

The practice with regard to this has varied considerably at different times and in different places prior to the promulgation of a decree making reservation in a tabernacle fixed on the altar the only approved mode; and one of the ancient forms of tabernacle is the wall recess or aumbry. A number of examples, more or less entire, existing in some of the ancient churches of Scotland form the subject of this communication. They are known commonly by the name of "Sacrament Houses."

This name may have been handed down, or it may have been taken from an inscription on one of the aumbries (Deskford) in which the words occur. From that inscription it is quite clear that the aumbry in question was called a "Sacrament House" by those who erected it, and equally clear, even without the elaborate symbolical and other sculptures and appropriate scriptural texts which adorn it and illustrate

<sup>1</sup> Mgr. X. Barbier de Montault, *Traité pratique, etc.*, Paris 1885.

its meaning, that it was one of the forms, if not the only one, given to the tabernacle in Scotland in the sixteenth century.

Of the examples about to be described two belong to the preceding century, and in form and detail naturally show some difference in style compared with those of a later time, but both are, as unmistakeably, Sacrament Houses.

The illustrations, reduced from drawings made to scale on the spot, require to be supplemented with some description of details which they do not clearly show. The chief features of each example and its principal dimensions will also be briefly mentioned. A few notes bearing on the history of the aumbries or of the churches which contain them and some remarks of a more general character have been added.

*St Andrews.*—At St Andrews, in the Collegiate Church of St Salvator, founded in 1458 by that Bishop Kennedy who is said to have provided it so munificently with every requisite “baith inside and out,” is our first example (fig. 1), no doubt the work of the same pious benefactor.

The position given to this aumbry accords with the ancient rubrics, which prescribe a place “on the gospel side and near the altar;” but in placing it care seems to have been taken to leave room for the Bishop’s tomb, for, instead of being fairly in the side wall, it has been inserted across the angle formed by the meeting of that wall with the inclined wall of the apse. Even there it has suffered by the erection of the tomb, for one of the clustered piers of the latter encroaches so as to have necessitated the cutting of the capping of the aumbry.

The corbel course under the sill bears a sculptured representation of angels supporting a pyx of octagonal form, on the centre panel of which a “host” is indicated. The place occupied by this sculpture and the pose of the figures, with the sacred vessel between them, remind one at once of the Italian wall-tabernacles of the same period, which the good Bishop no doubt saw and admired during one or other of his journeys to Rome.<sup>1</sup> The cover of the pyx is pyramidal in outline, and

<sup>1</sup> A tabernacle in the form of a wall aumbry in the church of Santa Francesca Romana, the work of Mino da Fiesole (1431–84), and another in the church of the Santi Apostoli at Florence by Luca della Robbia (1400–80), show angels supporting a

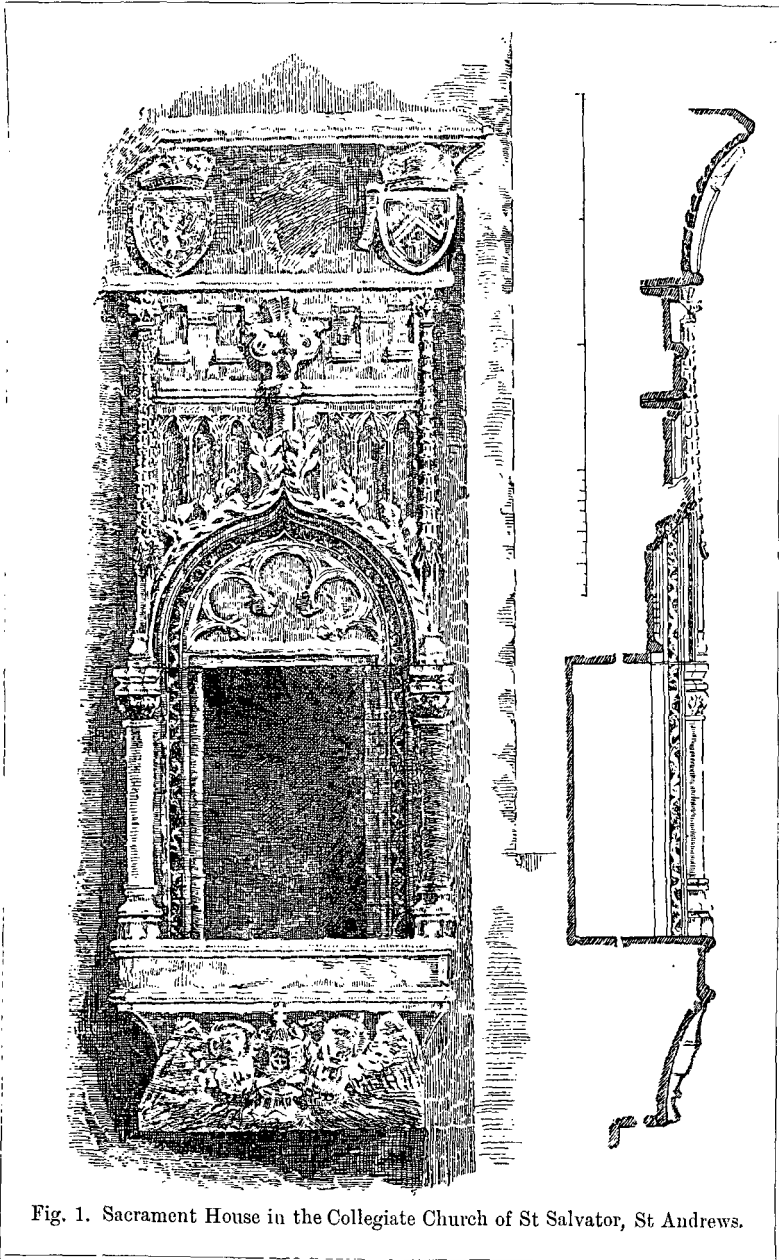


Fig. 1. Sacrament House in the Collegiate Church of St Salvator, St Andrews.

is finished with a small cross. On the plinth above one looks in vain for the inscription which it seems to have been fashioned to receive.

The niche or cavity, quadrangular in plan and section (fig. 2), measures 16 inches wide by 26 inches high, and is 15 inches in depth. It had been secured by a door, which would seem to have been wrenched off, for the jamb which held the crooks has in recent times been plastered up with cement.

If the regulations of the Scottish bishops of the time with regard to

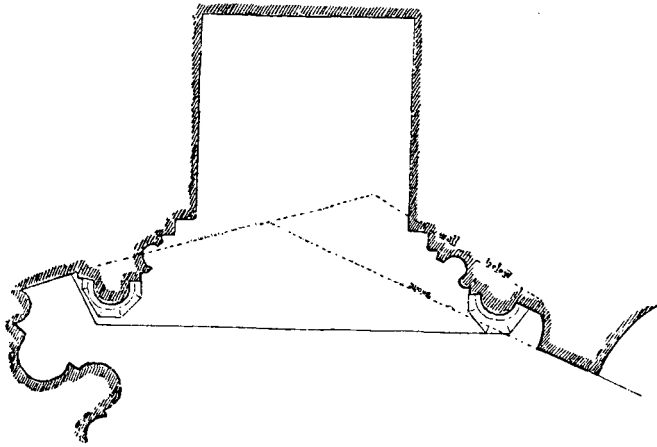


Fig. 2. Plan of St Salvator's.

such matters could be discovered,<sup>1</sup> there is no doubt that they would be found to insist on all due reverence being observed in the custody of the Sacrament, and to prescribe the measures to be taken by their

chalice with the host issuing from it ; in the latter case the figures appear on a frieze under the door of the niche. The inscription, on a small plinth surmounting the frieze, is, "Ego sum panis vivus qui de celo descendi."

<sup>1</sup> Among some ordinances of the earlier Scottish Councils given in *Statuta Ecclesie Scotiæ* are the following (vol. ii. p. 33): "De Sacramento Eucharistie" (59), ". . . quod Eucharistie in munda pixide conservetur nec ultra septem dies conservetur hostie consecrate," etc. Again, on page 57, "de Custodia Eucharistie et visitatione infirmorum" (117), "Renovetur hostia infirmis danda singulis Dominicis diebus et ponatur in loco honesto et securo." No more precise directions seem to be discoverable at present.

clergy to ensure decency and security ; and probably also, as in other countries where such regulations have been preserved, the penalties attaching to neglect on the part of the responsible cleric would be seen to be sufficiently severe. The door, therefore, of the aumbry may be safely assumed to have been solid, and secured by lock and key, and the interior lined with wood and draped with silk. It is not surprising that of such perishable materials no trace now exists.

The circular moulded shafts with carved capitals flanking the composition, and having the cap mouldings and the plinths of base octagonal on plan, the slender gabled pinnacles, and long drawn out finials decorated with minute crockets which rise above the circular form of the arch, the cusping of the inner splayed order, relieved by sinking the lintel, the crocketed hood-mould carried up and terminating in a bold finial at the level of an embattled upper course, are all features which belong to the Scottish Gothic of the period.

The design might have been considered complete with these, but there is added above a heavy capping, moulded and slightly hollowed and projecting, and with its simple horizontal line making a vigorous contrast with the vertical lines of the slender spirelets beneath. On this there remain sculptured two shields of Gothic form. The first, on the dexter side, bears the lion rampant, with a double tressure flowered and counter flowered with 14 fleur de lis. This shield is surmounted by a crown somewhat broken. That on the sinister side bears the arms of Bishop Kennedy : the shield, double tressured as before, has a chevron between three cross crosslets fitchy, and is surmounted by a mitre. These are placed towards the ends of the capping ; the space in the centre has borne some other device which has been defaced. One may make a guess at its character from what has escaped the spoiler's hands on some of the other Scottish aumbries.

*Easter Fowlis.*—At some distance from St Andrews, and separated from it by the estuary of the Tay, but still within the diocese, is the church of St Mernan at Fowlis Easter in Forfarshire, said to have been built by Sir Andrew Gray of Fowlis. The date of its foundation as a Collegiate Church is given as 1446.

The aumbry which it contains (fig. 3) was perhaps the gift of the

founder, but neither arms nor initials have been put on it to make that certain.

It is placed in the east gable of the church, towards the north end of

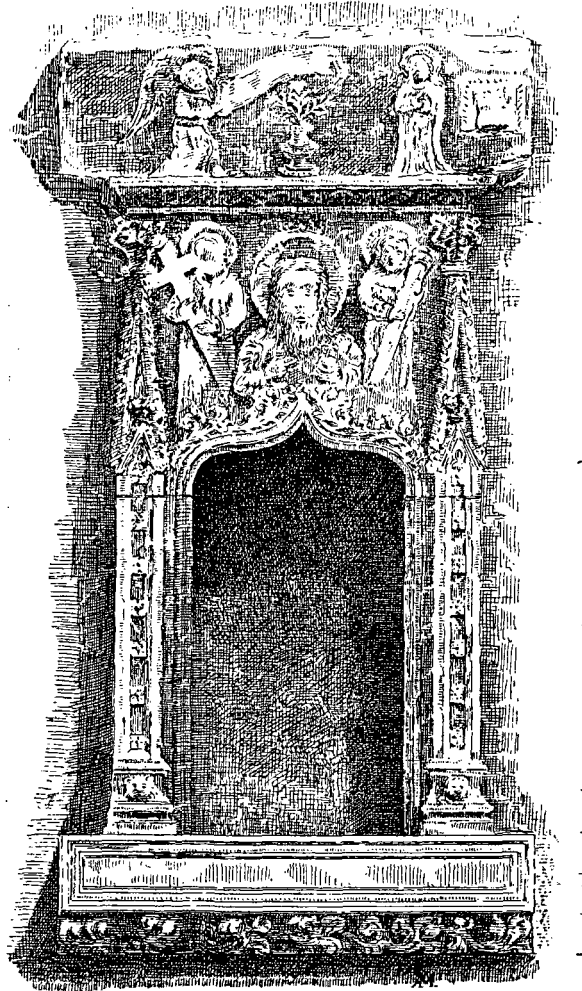


Fig. 3. Fowlis Easter.

the wall, a position not uncommonly, though more rarely, assigned to the sacramental aumbry.

While resembling the previous example in having a sill designed to receive an inscription, and in being finished at top with a somewhat heavy capping, and in architectural style generally, it has its own charmingly quaint peculiarities of design.

The flanking buttresses have panels sunk in the face, enriched with pateræ at intervals, and are finished with crocketed gablets and pinnacles. On their bases small heads, of which the meaning (if they had any) cannot be easily guessed, are sculptured.

Above the flat ogee arch with its crocketed hood-mould which forms the doorhead are some remarkable sculptures. In the centre the bust of our Lord appears, the head having a nimbus, on the circumference of which an enrichment of beads or jewels is carved. Unfortunately, large portions of the surface of the disc have scaled off, otherwise the three rays by which the mediæval artist distinguished the nimbus of a divine person might have been seen.

The right hand is extended in the act of blessing, the fingers being held as in the Latin rite. In the left hand is a globe, surmounted by a small cross fleurie.

On the dexter side is an angel holding the cross, and on the other a second angel holds the pillar of the scourging. Both are nimbed and habited in albs, but without wings.

The cornice has its hollow enriched with scroll leafage of the same character as that in the jamb mould of St Salvator's. Above this the capping, here without mouldings, bears on its slightly concave face a quaint sculpture of the Annunciation, carved like the other sculptures in low relief.

The angels' "ave," signified by the outspread scroll, and the pot of lilies placed between the figures, may be seen treated in a similar manner in many such representations. It is in the representation of another familiar accessory—the book of the Prophecies of Isaiah—so often placed on a desk in front of the Virgin, that the naiveté of the Scottish artist declares itself. The space at command being insufficient to permit of the book appearing on as large a scale as its significance

demands, in any customary position, the sculptor, with mediæval boldness, carves it displayed open and laid on a cushion behind the figure of the Virgin, whose love of contemplation is symbolised by it.

The niche (fig. 4), which measures  $15\frac{1}{2}$  inches in width at the door opening, by 28 inches in height, has a depth of 15 inches. The height

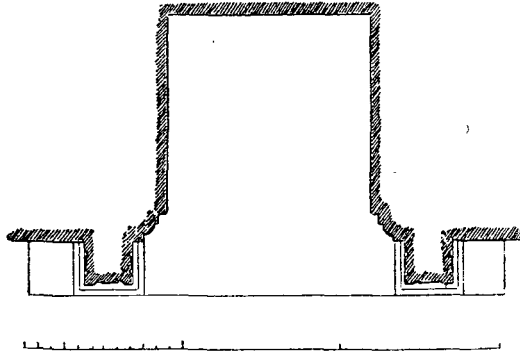


Fig. 4. Fowlis Easter.

of the sill above the ancient floor level could not have been more than  $3\frac{1}{2}$  feet.

*Airlie*.—In the parish kirk of Airlie in Forfarshire, besides the curious figure built into the west gable, and which is<sup>1</sup> supposed to have been taken either from the ancient church of St Medan of Airlie, demolished in 1783, or the chapel of Baikie dedicated to St John the Baptist, which disappeared much earlier, there is preserved, in a wall under the stair leading to the gallery at the east end, an aumbry (fig. 5), which, like the statue, is a relic of one or other of these vanished buildings.

It is of small size, ruder in design and workmanship, and considerably later in date than the previous examples.

The capping with which the latter are crowned is here wanting, or it has been omitted in the resetting of the aumbry in its present position. In the kirkyard a carved stone, used as a coping to the wall of a burial vault, might well be the missing feature. As in the case of both St Salvator's and Fowlis, the (supposed) capping does not

<sup>1</sup> *Memorials of Angus and Mearns*, Jervise.



correspond in length with the breadth of the structure. The carvings upon it are, however, similar in subject, as well as in character, to those upon the spandrel spaces of the aumbry, and, like them, rudely executed. The latter represent on the dexter side the cross and crown of thorns, and on the other side the five wounds of the Passion, signified by the hands and feet with the heart in the centre, all pierced. The

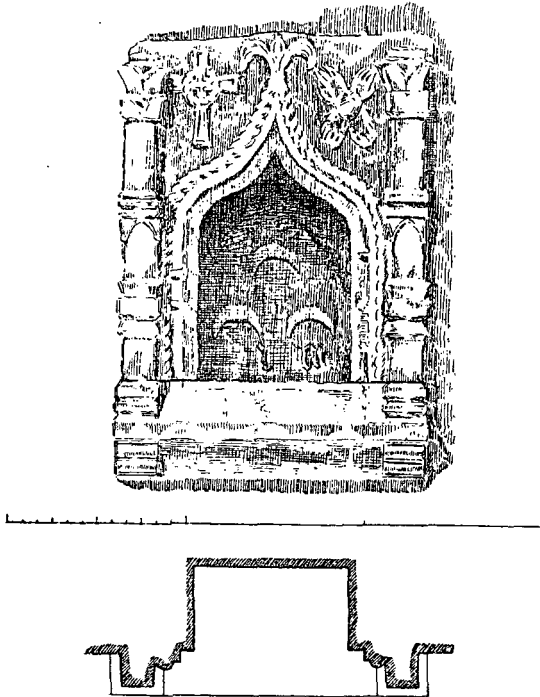


Fig. 5. Airlie.

carvings on the capping show some of the instruments of the Passion—the pillar, the scourge, the pincers, the seamless garment, as well as the cross and crown of thorns, and the five wounds, as we find them on the aumbry itself.

In general form the aumbry bears some resemblance to the others  
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already mentioned. The sill projects, it is splayed on the upper surface and hollowed beneath, and small moulded corbels interrupting the hollow at each end ostensibly carry the rude buttresses and pinnacles which flank the niche. There has been a door, as the holes for the hinges and fastenings show. The moulding of jamb is very simple—the chief member a half bead carved as a cable.

The niche is about  $10\frac{1}{4}$  inches wide, and rather less than 6 inches deep; the height to the crown of the ogee arch is  $15\frac{1}{2}$  inches. The material is a red sandstone, found in the locality.

A very interesting feature has yet to be noticed. It is an inverted shield carved in slight relief on the back of the aumbry, and bearing three crescents, with some initials not easily made out. Jervise says the initials are W. F., and the shield that of a member of the family of the Fentons of Baikie, once flourishing in the district.

The inversion of the shield, however, deserves more attention than it has yet received. Jervise does no more than mention it. It will be observed that the whole of the aumbry above the sill is hewn out of one stone. This proves that the shield does not owe its curious position to chance. That it should have been placed within the little chamber is in itself surprising, until one remembers that sufficient space for it could not be had on the outside. The fact of its inversion is more difficult to explain.

Writers on Heraldry tell us that the bearer of arms found guilty of high treason was bound, by the laws of their science, to wear his arms reversed or inverted, as a mark of the disgrace attaching to his crime.<sup>1</sup> This we may conceive to have been done by the order of the judges of such a culprit, and perforce, scarcely by his own act. That the meaning attached to inversion was, at any rate, understood in the sixteenth century in Scotland may be gathered from what is related in *Birrell's Diurnal of Occurents* touching the behaviour of the populace of Edinburgh when Johnston, Warden of the West Marches, incurred

<sup>1</sup> Another example of inverted arms occurs beneath the eaves of the church tower of Kilbirnie, and a sketch of the panel containing the shield is given (without explanation) in the *Archaeological and Historical Collections relating to the Counties of Ayr and Wigton*, vol. ii., 1880. The armorial bearings there are those of Crawford impaled with Barclay.

their displeasure. It is chronicled on the 27th May 1598, "the Laird of Johnstoun his pictor hung at the crosse . . . with his heid down-ward and declarit ane mansworne man."

The offence which merited a somewhat similar mark of disgrace for the donor of the Airlie aumbry may have had some connection with an incident referred to in Jervise's account of the Fentons of Baikie, where it is told that the only son of a co-heiress and daughter of Walter Fenton of Baikie, by her marriage with David Lyndsay, younger son of the Earl of Crawford, was one of a party "charged with committing an outrage upon twa monks belonging to the Abbey of Cupar, and for hurting of the privilege and fredome of halikirk."

This happened towards the close of the fifteenth century. Is it possible that the sacrilege complained of by the monks of Cupar (who were patrons of the kirk of St John of Baikie) was thus done penance for?<sup>1</sup>

*Kinkell*.—The ruins of the church of Kinkell, near Inverurie in Aberdeenshire, contain a remarkable example of the Sacrament House (fig. 6). It is in the north wall of the chancel, within a few feet of the east end, and placed at such a height as could have been conveniently reached from the ancient floor level.

Here the idea of emblematic representation has been given a peculiar development. The whole structure is made to assume in outline the form of the Greek cross.

The sill, projecting, and enriched on the under side with carved foliage, having in the centre a shield with the lion rampant of Scotland, bears on the plinth ANO DNI 1524, and in the centre, MEMORARE, with A. G. following on the other side. The date enables us to identify the initials as those of Alexander Galloway, mentioned in records as late as 1543, and who was Rector of the church for many years. Besides taking a prominent place as a churchman, he had some reputation as an architect, among his works being a bridge over the Dee.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Such offenders were liable to excommunication and to be denounced from the altar—see *Stat. Eccl. Scot.* (122), "Denunciatio quater in anno in ecclesiis fienda."

<sup>2</sup> "Alexander Galloway, Canon of King's College and Prebendary of Kinkell, drew up in 1549 an Inventory of Jewels of the Cathedral. Over against the title-page, on a leaf by itself, is, azure a lyon erect, argent crowned or; round about the

His predecessor (probably) Master James Ogilvie, who died in Paris in 1518, is mentioned in the deed of erection of the Collegiate Church of Cullen as one for whose soul's benefit that pious work had been done.

The panelled buttress features, with their rudely crocketed pinnacles, the moulded jambs, the embattled cornice, debased as these features are, proclaim the lineal descent of this aumbry from that in *St Salvator's*. The inscriptions, and especially the sculpture on the lintel, mark the spread of the devotion formally inaugurated by the establishment of the feast of Corpus Christi in the fourteenth century. The monstrance, or remonstrance, as it is variously called—the vessel used for the exposition of the host—supported by adoring angels, is here adopted for the first time, among the examples we are considering, as an appropriate decoration for the Scottish Sacrament House. The sculpture is badly defaced and worn.

The panelled compartments, forming the side arms of the cross, bear on the ribands or scrolls, and allowing for contractions, the legend, *HIC EST SERVATVM CORPVS DE VIRGINE NATVM*.

At the beginning and end respectively of the second scroll the initials A. G. are repeated, placed on the reverse or upturned face of the riband. Vestiges of initials are apparent in similar positions on the other scroll. Jervise<sup>1</sup> gives these initials as A. A., and if, as is probable, they were such, they may be accepted as those of Alexander Anderson, who was Vicar of Kinkell in the time of Sir Alexander Galloway.

The panel above, forming the upper arm of the cross, has also contained a sculpture, now defaced. The niche, rectangular in plan as in elevation, measures in width 16 inches. It is 21½ inches high and 10½ inches deep, including the jamb moulding. The back of the niche has, however, been built up, so that it is doubtful if the depth was originally as stated.

The church, belonging to the ancient deanery of the Garioch, and having for its tutelar St Michael Archangel, was an important one in its day, there having been attached to it the patronage of six other churches in

shield is Mr A. G., and beneath it is the motto *MEMORARE*, the same being the coat worn by Fergus, Lord of Galloway, under King Malcolm III." See Spalding Club *Collections*.

<sup>1</sup> *Epitaphs and Inscriptions*.

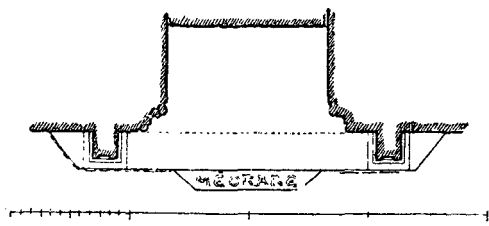
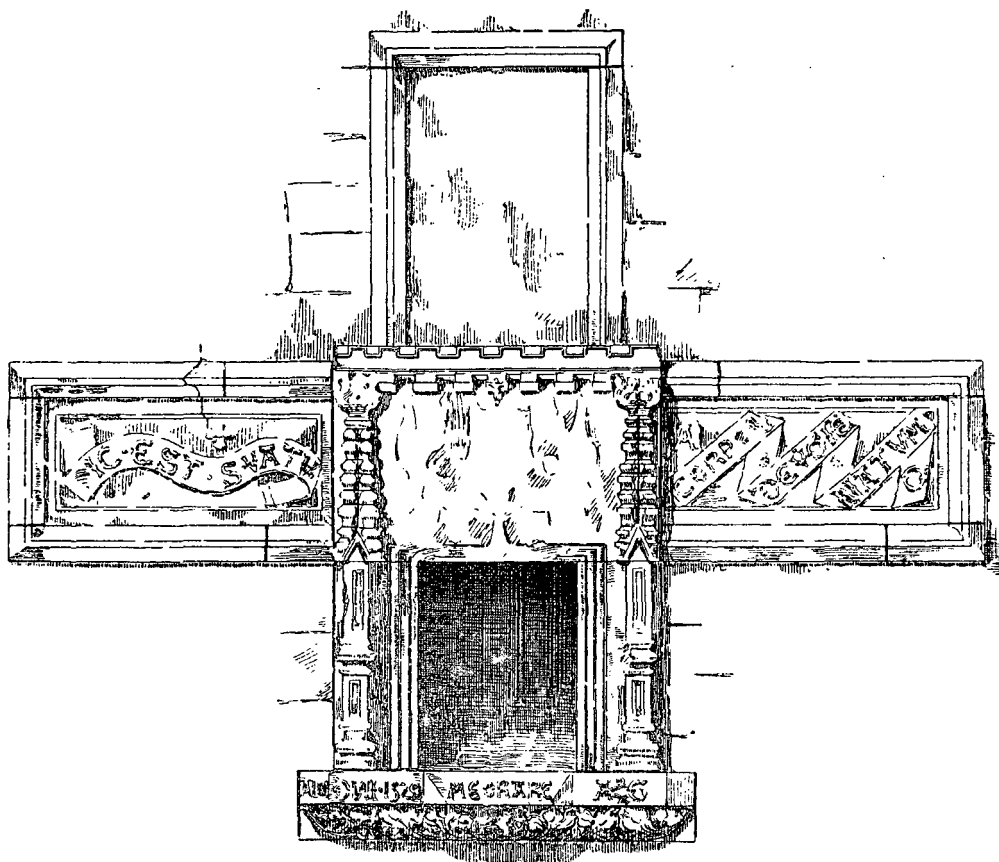


Fig. 6. Kinkell.

the neighbourhood. The incumbent was made a prebendary of Old Aberdeen Cathedral in 1420 or 1424.<sup>1</sup>

Friendly relations between the church and the cathedral continue, and the gift of certain lands in 1543 to the Chaplain of the cathedral by the Alexander Galloway already mentioned is recorded. Alexander Anderson, sub-principal of King's College, being a witness to this deed, is designated Vicar of Kinkell.

From the inventory of ornaments belonging to the chapel of King's College drawn up by the Rector in 1542, it appears there was an altar of the venerable sacrament there dedicated to St Michael, built by the Rector of Kinkell, and a place on the altar for the sacrament of *pyramidal form* given by him. There is also mention of silk vestments for the same.

The church was unroofed in 1771, and much of the building has now disappeared. The extreme dimensions are given as 80 by 24. It is a pity that, after having been preserved in defiance of positive orders for their destruction while the building was in use as a parish kirk, that some care is not now being taken to protect this most interesting aumbry and the other sculpture, built into the same wall.

*Kintore*.—At Kintore, a few miles from Kinkell, and a better known place now, there are the remains of a Sacrament House (fig. 7) fixed in the wall of the staircase of the parish kirk (which was built in 1819).<sup>2</sup> It was placed there only within the last few years, having been removed from a more exposed situation in one of the outside walls of the church.

What we now see is only the upper part of the Sacrament House from the lintel of the niche upwards, and the only dimension of the latter that can be given is its width, which is 16 inches.

On the lintel in raised letters is the word JESVS, and a second word, the letters of which are much wasted, appears to have been MARIA.

It should be noted that the ancient church was dedicated under the invocation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Above this there is a panel, which no doubt formerly contained some

<sup>1</sup> *Registrum Episcopatus Aberdonensis*, vol: ii. p. 253.

<sup>2</sup> *Statistical Account*.

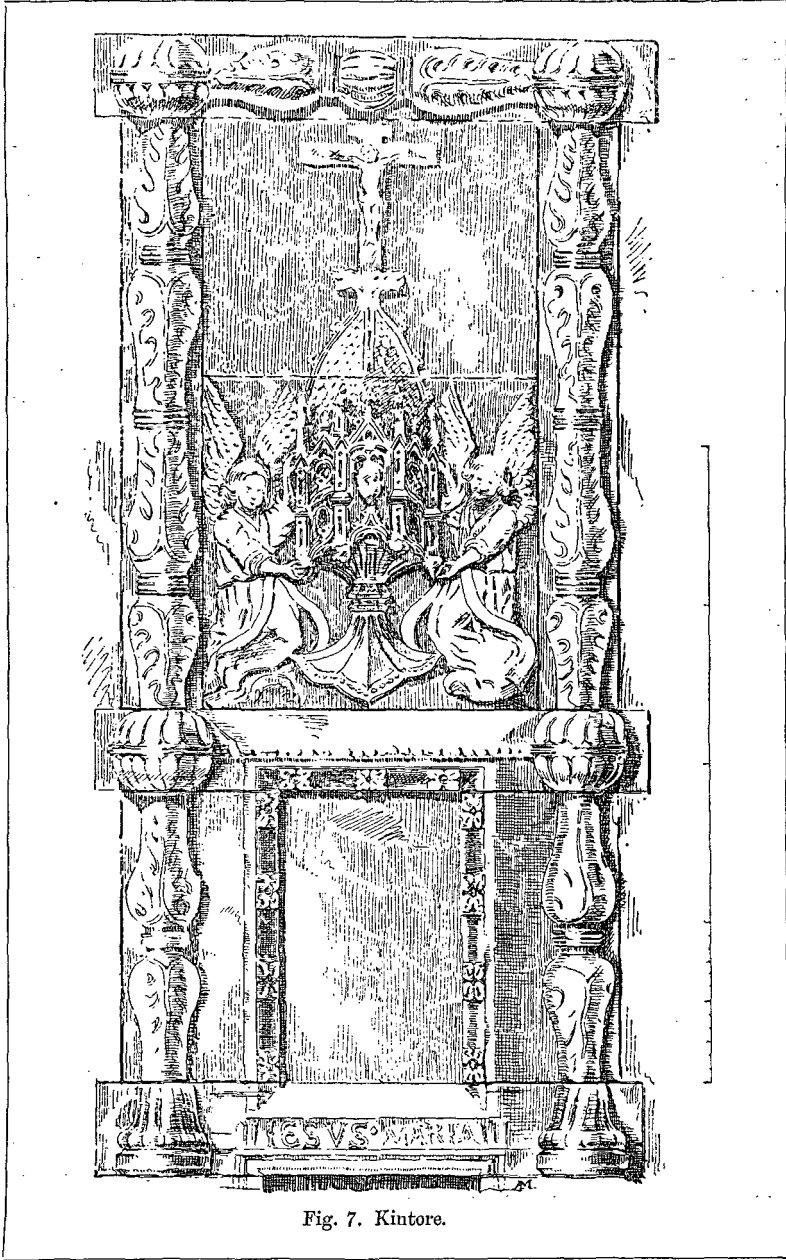


Fig. 7. Kintore.

sculpture, now entirely removed. It measures  $13\frac{3}{4}$  inches wide by  $21\frac{3}{4}$  inches high, and is framed in a massive moulding having Gothic pateræ placed at intervals.

The upper part exhibits a spirited sculpture in low relief of angels in reverential attitudes sustaining the monstrance.

The angels wear stoles gracefully arranged, and the sculpture generally is better than on any of the other examples enriched with this subject. The monstrance is Gothic in design, and represented as if octagonal in plan with buttresses and pinnacles at each angle, and between these there is tracery of flamboyant character, interrupted in the centre compartment to show the host, now badly defaced.

The foot of the vessel is represented as jewelled; the quasi-domical form of the roof or cover of the monstrance is another indication of the later date of this example. The crucifix appears above the monstrance, the figure unfortunately being much defaced. The whole is framed within a heavy moulding assuming the form of a baluster in the portions repeated, reminding one of Italian work, and marking the advance of the Renaissance in Scotland.<sup>1</sup>

The accompanying half-plan (fig. 8) is taken through one side of the middle stage. The material used is sandstone, and the extreme dimensions of what is left of the Sacrament House are 7 feet  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch high by 3 feet 3 inches wide.

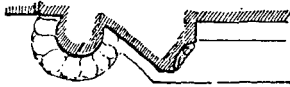


Fig. 8. Kintore.

*Turriff*.—The erection of a belfry or clock chamber at the east end of the old church of Turriff sometime in the seventeenth century caused the building of a wall across the sanctuary, and this wall conceals the greater part of the Sacrament House. Only one jamb is left visible. It is in the north wall, a few feet removed from the original east end. The material is sandstone. The character of the work shows it to be slightly earlier in date than Kinkell, but there cannot have been many

<sup>1</sup> An aumbry in Sta Maria in Trastevere, Rome, has pilasters at sides of a baluster form such as at Kintore. The work is by Mino da Fiesole. The aumbry now bears the words "Olea sancta," and has been removed from its original position in the church when its destination was changed.



years between them. The initials A. L., tied together in a precisely similar way to those on the Kinkell example, point to Alexander Lyon, an ecclesiastic, and a son of the fourth lord of "Glammiss," who, it is recorded, built the choir of this church. He died in 1541.<sup>1</sup>

The scroll, filling what remains in sight of the sill, has also borne lettering, which evidently has been chipped off. The removal of the wall which blocks up the remainder might enable us to see some remnants at least of the ancient inscriptions which were borne by lintel as well as sill, and to ascertain the dimensions of the aumbry other than the height, which is  $22\frac{1}{2}$  inches at door opening.

The church was dedicated to St Colin, or Cowan, or Congan, as it is variously given, and is said to have been 120 feet long by 18 feet wide. It is now in ruins. The incumbent of Turriff was a prebendary of Aberdeen, as that of Kinkell was.

*Auchindoir*.—In West Aberdeenshire, the old church of Auchindoir furnishes another example treated as regards its design in a most original way.

The plan is adopted of making the whole structure emblematic by giving to it the form of the pyx or ciborium used for the service of the sick.

It appears to me to be from the character of the work contemporary

<sup>1</sup> "John, fourth Lord of Glammiss, succeeded his father in 1497; . . . he had children George and John, both Lords of Glammiss, and Mr Alexander Lyon, Master of Murray, who was a singular scholar in these tymes, and was tutor to his brothers' sones, and lyeth buried in the quire of Turreffe which he built. . . . He dyed in the yeare of God 1541." (From the) Pedigree of the House of Glammiss, MS. of seventeenth century, *Antiq. of the Shires of Aberdeen and Banff* (Spalding Club).

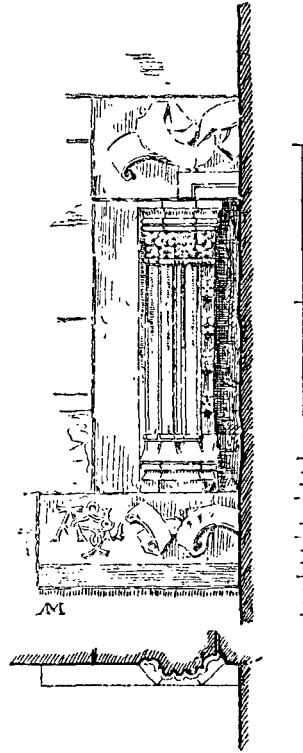


Fig. 9. Turriff.

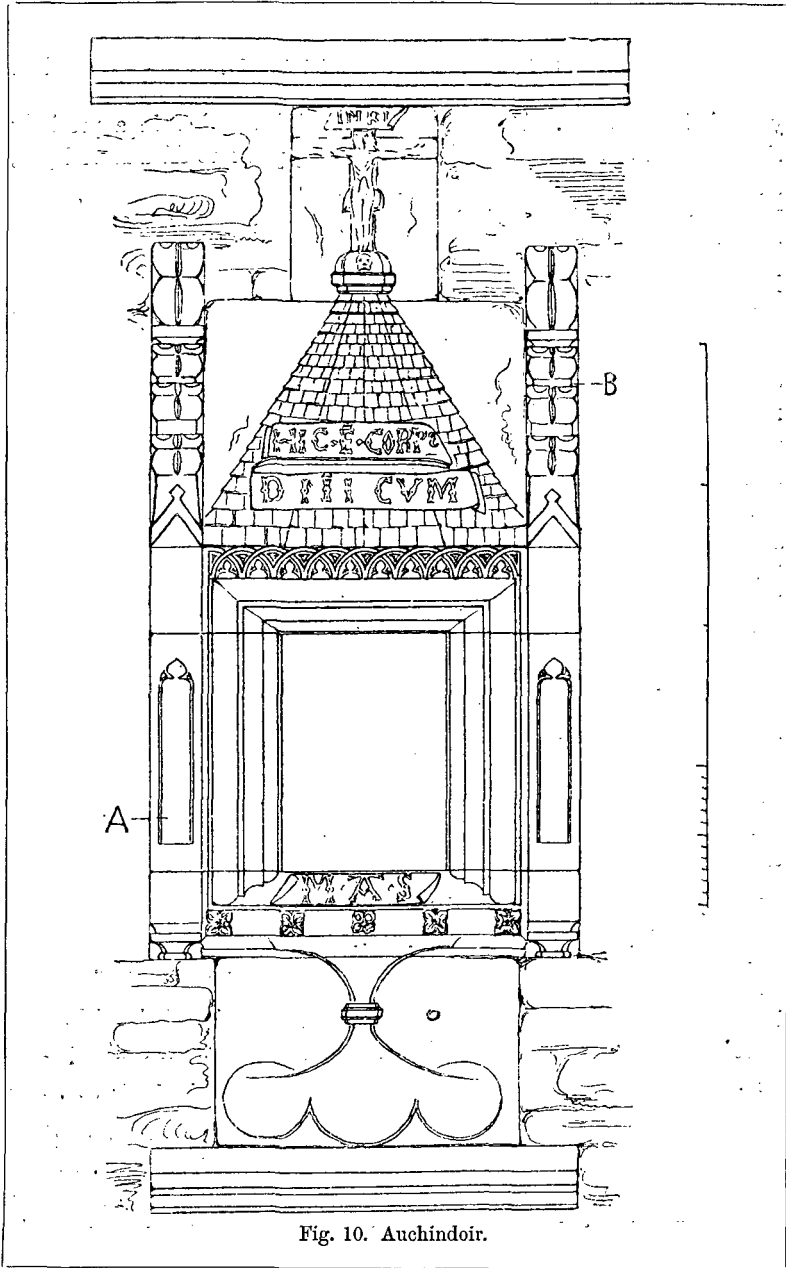


Fig. 10. Auchindoír.

with the Kinkell example, at any rate not later, and to belong therefore to the early years of the sixteenth century. The niche, which is rectangular in form of the door-opening, appears as if supported by the stem and spreading foot of the sacred vessel. It is flanked by panelled buttresses with crocketed pinnacles, between which on the lintel runs a cusped enrichment as a cornice. Above this a pyramidal roof or lid rises surmounted by a crucifix. On this upper part the legend (with

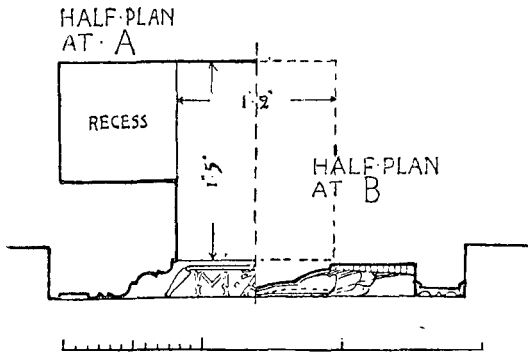


Fig. 11. Auchindoir.

many contractions) reads, HIC EST CORPVS DOMINI NOSTRI JESV CHRISTI VIRGINIS MARIAE.<sup>1</sup> A skull is represented at the foot of the crucifix. M. A. S. appearing on the sill has been taken to mean MEMORARE, with the donor's initials.<sup>2</sup> The M. may have been, however, only intended for "Magister."<sup>3</sup>

The church was under the invocation of the Blessed Virgin.

*Cullen.*—The old church of Cullen, still used as a parish kirk, was erected into a collegiate church in 1543 by Alexander Ogilvy of that ilk and others,<sup>4</sup> and to this date may be assigned the sacrament house

<sup>1</sup> As given in the *New Stat. Acc.*

<sup>2</sup> Mr F. W. Troup, architect, London, who has kindly allowed me to reproduce here a drawing contributed by him to the Edinburgh Architectural Association's Sketch-Book, takes this view regarding these initials, the word "memorare" being thus given the meaning of a petition to be remembered by the faithful in their prayers.

<sup>3</sup> See note (2) on Kinkell, p. 99.

<sup>4</sup> *The Church and Churchyard of Cullen*, by W. Cramond, A.M.

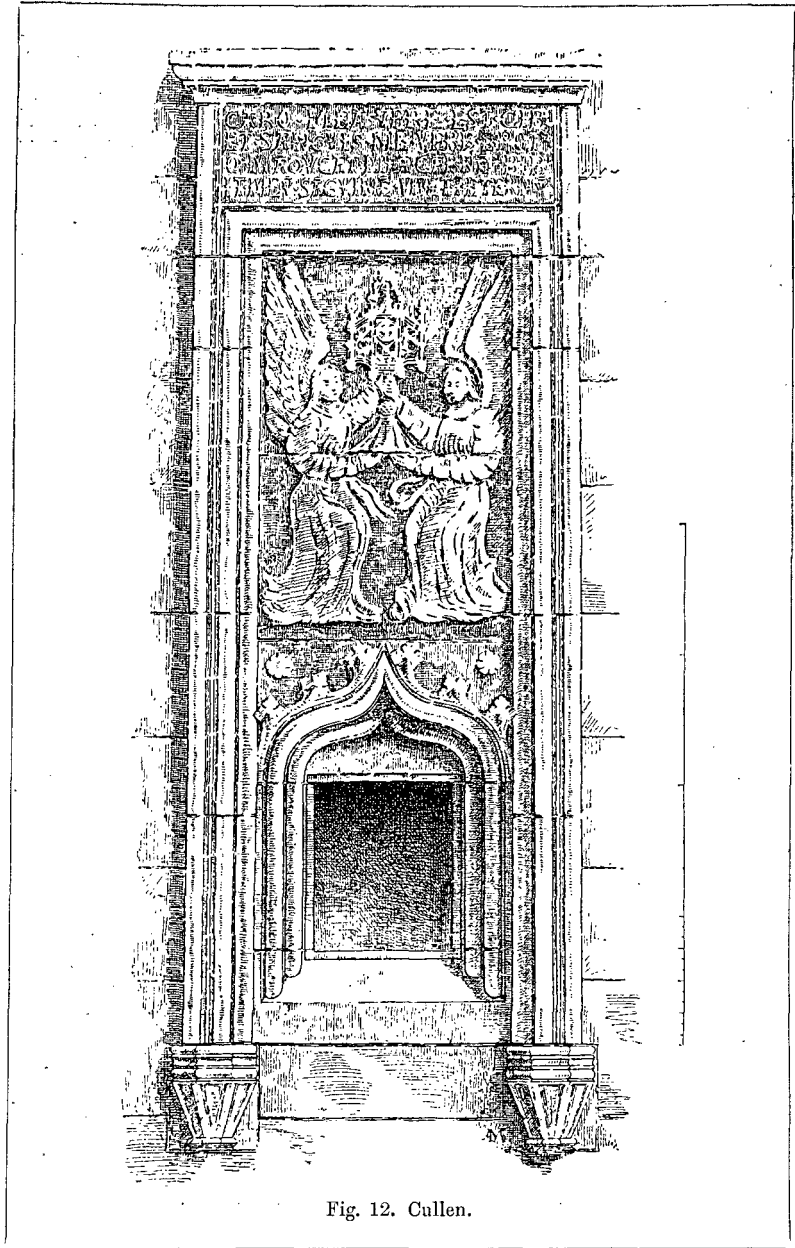


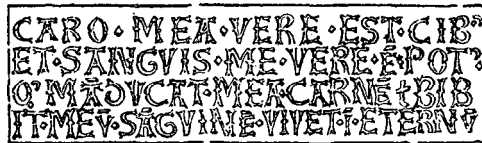
Fig. 12. Cullen.

which it contains. It is worthy of note that there is no inscription nor any initials or blazonry to indicate that any particular individual had a right to the credit of its erection. Probably it was only part of the scheme of foundation in which so many others, besides the nobleman referred to, had a hand. Its place is in the north wall, about 5 feet from the east gable measuring to the centre of the aumbry.

The reappearance of the angels and the monstrance sculptured in low relief may be pointed out as the most important and significant feature of the decoration.

The angels, again habited in albs and stoles, hold between them the sacred vessel, in form like a reliquary of Gothic character. The form adopted for the monstrance by the artists of the Renaissance in Italy and ever since in use, known as the "sun" monstrance, had not apparently made its way into Scotland.

The lunette or clasps which hold the host can still be clearly seen, and on the host itself the crucifix and the outlines of our Lord's figure have been carefully carved. The wings of the reliquary have tracery which assumes the form of the letter S so distinctly that one can scarcely avoid taking it as intended for the initials of "Sanctissimum Sacramentum," although one of the letters shows in reverse. The text which fills the panel above is from the sixth chapter of St John's Gospel, and is contracted, as so many of those inscriptions are.



There are marks and holes in the stone-work which show that provision had been made for veiling the tabernacle, as well as for securing it with a door.

*Deskford.*—The chief among the founders of Cullen was lord of the lands of Deskford, and in the church bearing that name, now in ruins, he erected a sacrament house more elaborate than any other. The inscription on the lower part, in incised letters of Gothic character, runs

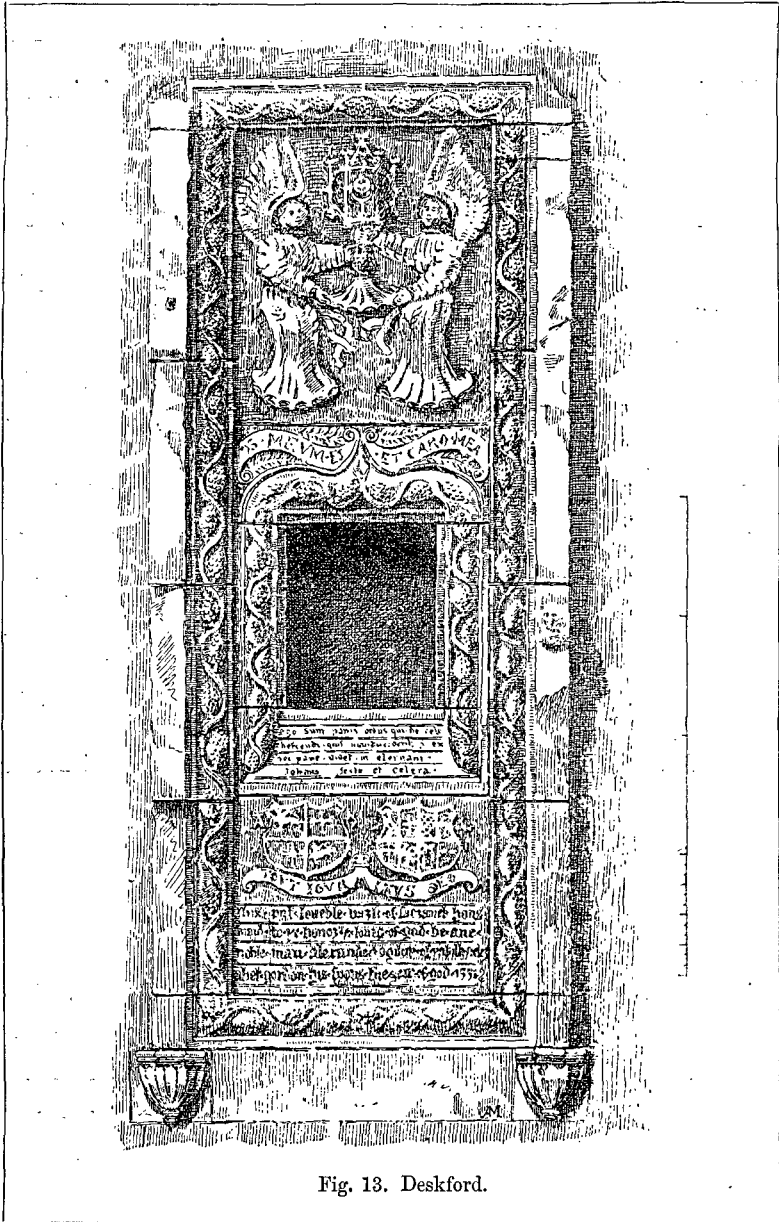
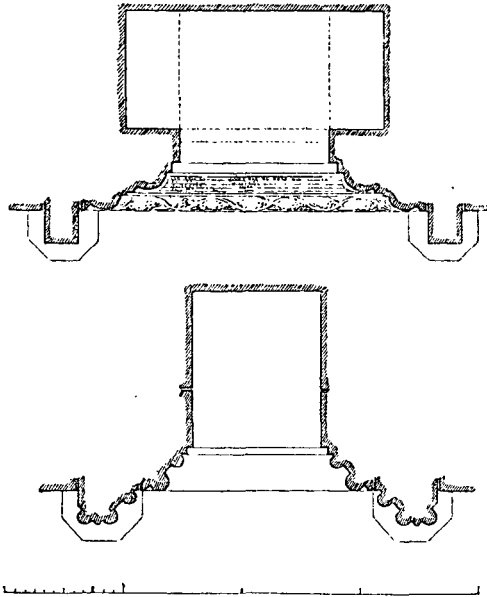


Fig. 13. Deskford.

thus: "This pnt (present) loveable wark of Sacrament house maid to ye honor and loving of God be ane noble man Alexander Ogilvy of pat ilk, Elizabet Gordon his spous the yeir of God 1551."

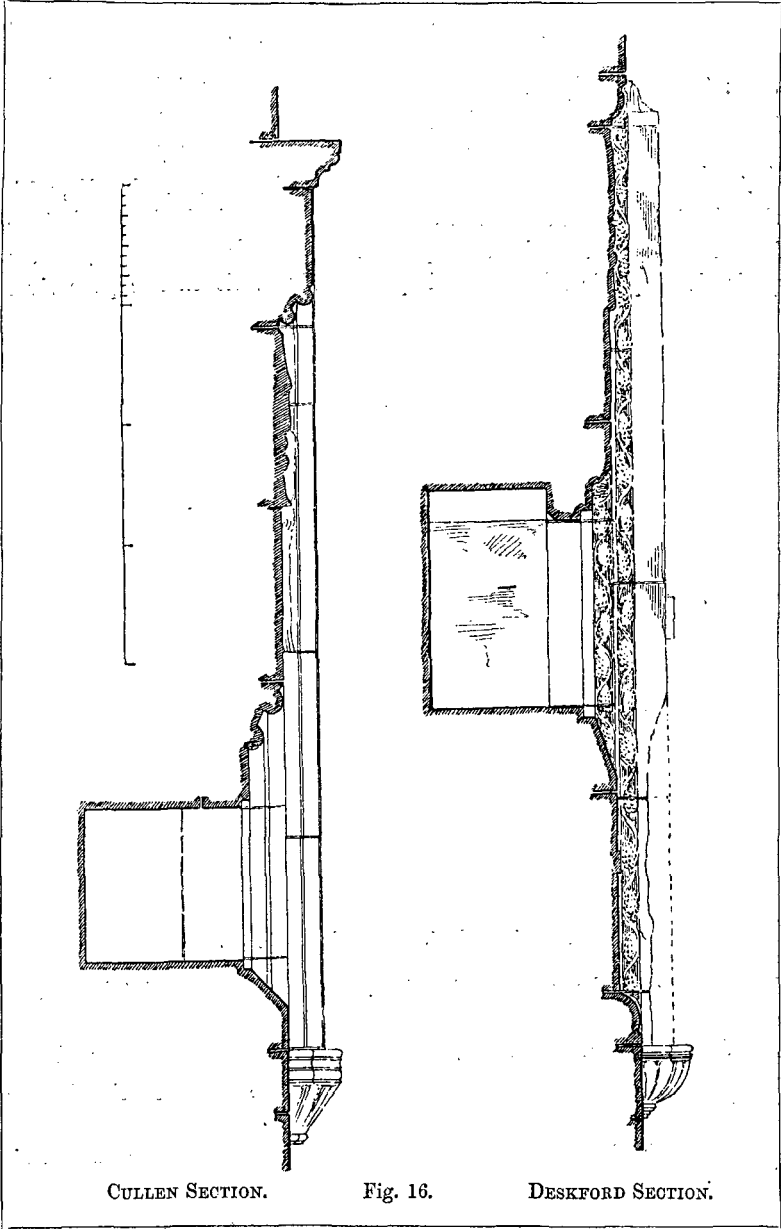
Above this are the arms and mottoes of himself and his wife, with their initials, and on the sill of the aumbry (also in incised letters) there is a text from the sixth chapter of St John's Gospel, "ego sum panis vivus qui de celo descendi quis manducaverit ex hoc pane vivet



Figs. 14 and 15. Deskford and Cullen.

in æternum—Johans sesto et cetera." Again on the lintel we find another text, "os meum es et caro mea," "Thou art my bone and my flesh," from Gen. xxix. 14.<sup>1</sup> The subject of the angels and the monstrance is repeated in this sacrament house, probably by the same hands that were at work on the Cullen example.

<sup>1</sup> The speech of Laban to Jacob when he had heard from him the cause of his journey.



CULLEN SECTION.

Fig. 16.

DESKFORD SECTION.



The carved moulding which surrounds the whole and is repeated on the jamb and lintel of the doorway is peculiar, as is also the enrichment of the spandrels of the cusped lintel. On none of the other sacrament houses do we find the grapes and wheat-ears represented, which are emblematic of the sacrament under its accidental forms. On the buttress to the right hand a small projecting shield, now mutilated, shows the initials of the lady repeated, E. G.

The aumbry is again in the north wall of the church, a few feet off the east gable. With reverent care it is now enclosed in a wooden casing, having a hinged and lockfast door.

*Pluscarden.*—The last example I have to mention is that of Pluscarden, smaller and more rudely executed than any of the others. It is on examination at once seen to be an insertion of the sixteenth century, the solid ashlar of the chancel having been displaced to make way for it. The rudeness of the little structure and its sculpture—again the angels with the monstrance—bespeak either lack of means or reverence on the part of those concerned; probably the former, for the donors, who appear to have got in return for this and other service done to the Abbey two coble fishings for nine years, could scarcely have been wealthy. Moreover, this extremely rude specimen of a sacrament house was brought from Flanders.<sup>1</sup> Some remains of its neighbour still exist in the sacristy.

It is the smallest of the sacrament houses included in the present notice, the size of the receptacle for the pyx being only 8 inches wide by 7 inches in depth; the height at centre of opening does not exceed 14 inches. The usual checks for the door frame appear in the jambs. The extreme dimensions are 2 feet 7 inches across by rather less than 4 feet 6 inches in height. Measuring from the centre of the aumbry it is distant 17 feet from the east wall of the chancel. In that position it would still be only a little in advance of the altar,

<sup>1</sup> Robert Harwor, prior, grants a charter bestowing two coble fishings for nine years on Robert Innes of Roth Mackenzie and others, "the occasion of this gift was for service and defence done to the Abbey, especially in removing of robbers, and for providing two tabernacles in the Abbey—that is to say, one at the hie altar and one other to our Lady—both made in Flanders," as quoted in the *Religious House of Pluscardyn* by the Rev. S. R. MacPhail, A.M.

which here would occupy a detached position well away from the east gable.

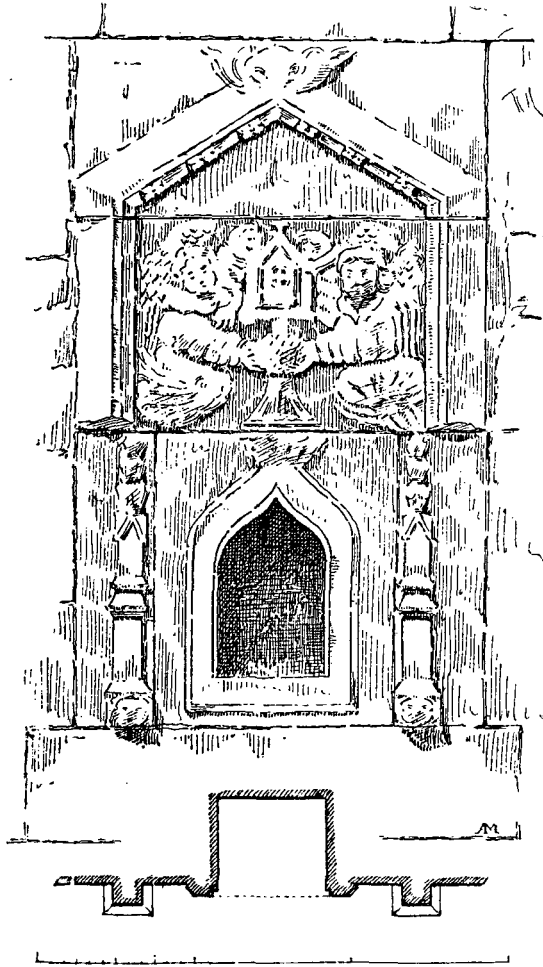


Fig. 17. Pluscarden.

It is noteworthy that these few examples of the Scottish Sacrament

House are confined within a tract of country extending from St Andrews to Elgin, and forming part of the ancient dioceses of St Andrews, of Aberdeen, and of Moray. It does not necessarily follow, however, that this mode of reservation was peculiar to one part of Scotland; it would be equally unsafe to conclude that the general custom throughout the country, and consequently "the divergence of the Scottish from the English practice after the War of Independence is hereby illustrated."<sup>1</sup> On the contrary, the existence even of a much larger number of sacramental aumbries (and it is exceedingly probable that there was formerly a much larger number) would not amount to positive proof that other forms of the tabernacle were not in use in Scotland at the same time. The "place on the altar for the Sacrament of pyramidal form," which the Rector of Kinkell gave with the altar of St Michael to King's College, was in all probability a tabernacle resembling those now in use, and there may have been many such in the country.<sup>2</sup> It is obvious that these stood little chance of escaping destruction, and there is no room for surprise that none have come down to our day.

The use of the "Suspensio," or suspended ciborium, may also have accompanied that of the aumbry. If we turn to what is known about such things in other countries where they have been dealt with more tenderly, we shall find that considerable latitude was allowed as to the particular mode of reservation, provided always that security and decency, with due reverence, were attained; different practices being observed at the same time not only in one diocese, but even in the same church.<sup>3</sup>

The portable tabernacle (placed on the altar) which was in use in some parts of France in the fifteenth century, was obviously wanting in security, and in 1457—just about the date of our earliest example—the Bishop of Grenoble,<sup>4</sup> on account of the inconveniences resulting

<sup>1</sup> The conclusion arrived at by Mackenzie Walcott.

<sup>2</sup> M. A. De Caumont and some other French archaeologists consider the use of a tabernacle on the altar one of the earliest modes of "Reservation."

<sup>3</sup> In the collegiate church of S. Julien de Tours it was the custom to reserve in an aumbry for the administration of the Sacrament to the sick of the parish, while a second reserve to be used for the religious attached to the church was provided in a "Suspensio."—*Histoire Archæologique, &c.*, par M. l'Abbé Jules Corblet.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

from its use, orders the reserve in his diocese to be henceforth kept in an aumbry, to be formed in the right-hand wall of the apse, and which is to be lined inside with wood, and to have a solid door made to fasten with a key. Such were the terms of the direction to his clergy in the middle of the fifteenth century. He was, however, only reviving an ancient fashion, perhaps the most ancient fashion of all.

The oldest tabernacles existing are the aumbries of the churches of Rome, SS. Cosimo e Damiano, S Sebastiano sul monte, S Clemente, Sta Maria Trastevere, and others. In these churches the modern tabernacle placed on the altar has now been adopted for use, but the ancient aumbries are still to be seen. At Sta. Croce in Gerusalemme, also in Rome, the old aumbry continues, in spite of modern regulations and in right of immemorial usage to serve its original purpose.<sup>1</sup> So also with a number of other ancient aumbries in European countries, chiefly in Germany. Their continued use is tolerated on account of their venerable history.

The aumbry, however, is no longer in strict accordance with the authorised rubrics, and a wish expressed to revive its use in Belgium rather more than fifty years ago was met by a decided negative from the Sacred Congregation of Rites. In the fifteenth century, on the contrary, its revival received high approval; and in Italy about that time many very beautiful examples were carved in marble or moulded in terra-cotta and majolica. From these aumbries of the Renaissance the later of the Scottish aumbries derived some part of their detail and emblematic decoration. Angels habited much alike play an important part in the ornamentation of both, the inscriptions are in some cases identical, and the details here and there, notably in the baluster-like frame of the Kintore example, may be traced to an Italian precedent.

No doubt other specimens of the Sacrament House exist in Scotland; one was mentioned the other day in a newspaper report of a visit paid to the Bass Rock; others may yet be discovered hidden behind the strapping and plaster which cover the walls of some of the ancient churches still in use as places of worship.

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire Archæologique, &c.*, par M. l'Abbé Jules Corblet.