

I.

JAMES GIFFORD, A SCOTTISH SCULPTOR OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY, AND SOME OF HIS WORKS IN TWEEDDALE. BY THOMAS ROSS, F.S.A. Scot.

In the village of West Linton, Peeblesshire, there are several sculptured stones, dating from the 17th century, displaying very considerable artistic skill, of which little notice has been taken hitherto, and no representations have ever been published. They are at present built into the wall of a modern cottage, but originally formed part of the internal adornment of a house which stood on the same site till about 1864, when it was taken down.

This house (fig. 1) was built and occupied by James Gifford. It was a narrow, oblong building, with a door in the centre, and a straight



Fig. 1. View of James Gifford's House at West Linton.

stair leading to the upper floor. The walls were harled, and it had a thatched roof. The house on the extreme right in the sketch was also pulled down, and the site is now occupied by a shop. The cottage to the left, with the sundial on the corner, still stands.

The panel shown over the doorway was occupied by the stone (fig. 6, p. 153), having two shields containing the arms of Gifford and his wife.

There was also a cross or well in the village, surmounted with figures, and dating from the same period, which was unfortunately taken down quite recently, and on or near its site a jubilee erection has been set up, preserving on its front the principal figure of the old well.

Besides these sculptures, Sir James Fergusson, Bart., of Spitalhaugh, has in his mansion of Spitalhaugh several carved stones which belonged to the house in Linton, and were secured by his father when it was taken down, and I beg to express my indebtedness to Sir James for his kindness in allowing me to sketch the stones and for information regarding them.¹

Of the stones in the village, the principal one is about 4 feet long by 27½ inches high (fig. 2), and contains portrait busts of the artist, JAMES GIFFERD, and of his wife EWPHAM VEATCH. The portraits, in profile, face each other, and are separated by a very conventional rose tree on which birds are perched. This, as we shall see, was a favourite device of Gifford's, and formed an important part of his stock-in-trade. On either side of the tree is a shield: one contains the arms of Veitch of Dawyck—three cows' heads cabossed; from the other the arms have been effaced. The stone is surrounded with a carved border of leaves and flowers.

The next stone (fig. 3), measuring about 32½ inches high by 20 inches wide, is divided into four panels, each 13½ inches high by 8 inches wide. Along the upper margin, the centre, and bottom of the stone is an inscription, now in part obliterated, but which Mr Sanderson copied some years ago while it was legible. It was:—"The first man is IG

¹ I have also to express my obligations for information and assistance to Mr Balfour Paul, Lyon King of Arms, to Mr William Buchan, Town Clerk, Peebles, to Mr John Ritchie, Lavender Cottage, Lincoln Hill, Iron-Bridge, Salop, from whose drawings, figs. 1, 5, 6, 9, 11 are copied, and to Mr Robert Sanderson, Parish Clerk, West Linton.

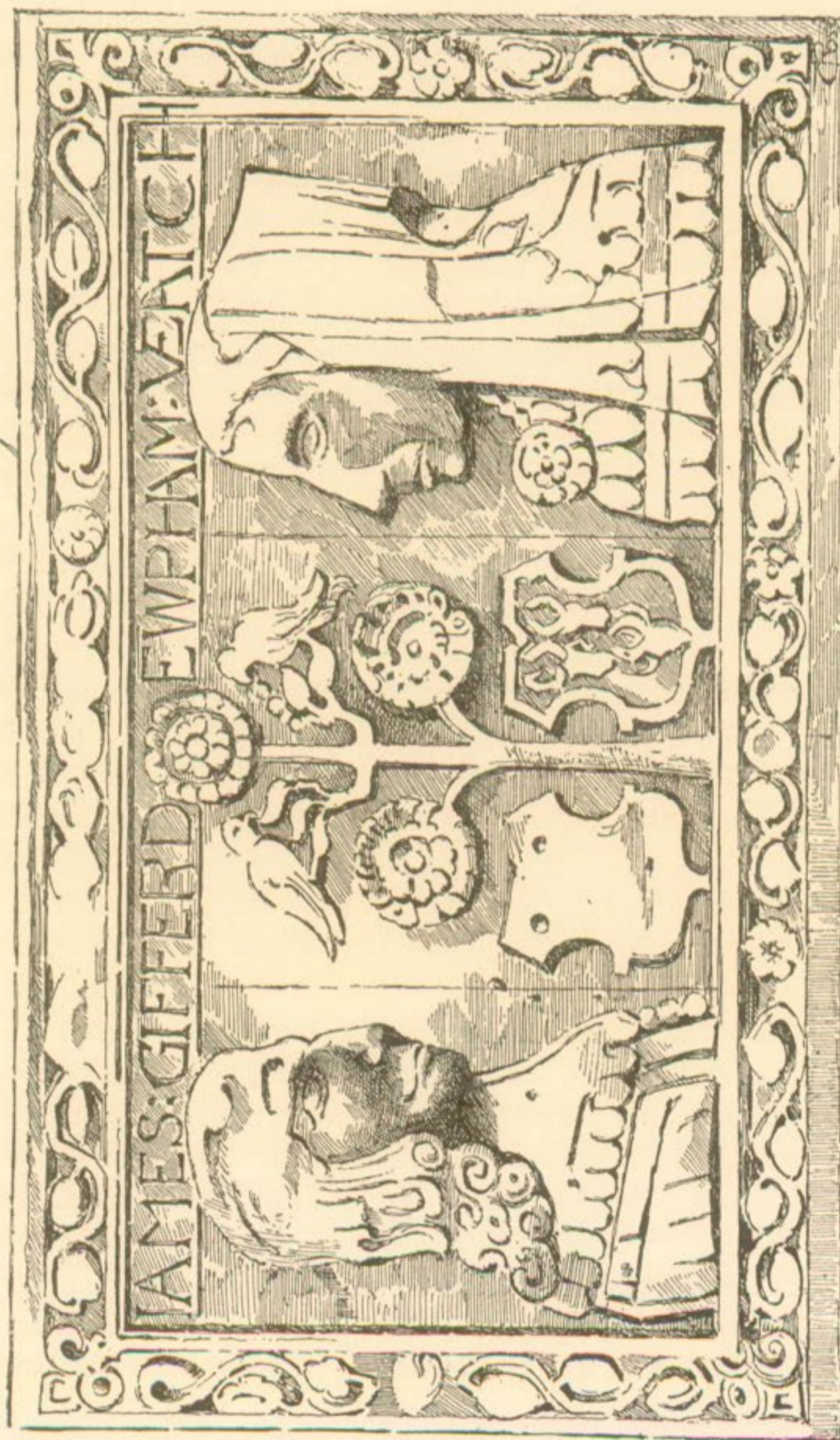


Fig. 2. Stone with Busts of James Gifford and his wife Eupham Veitch.

Brother of Shirefhall 1445." "Six Progenetors of James Geferd w(ith) His awne Portract and Eldest Sone." "Wrought by me James Geferd Architector ye 7th May 1660."

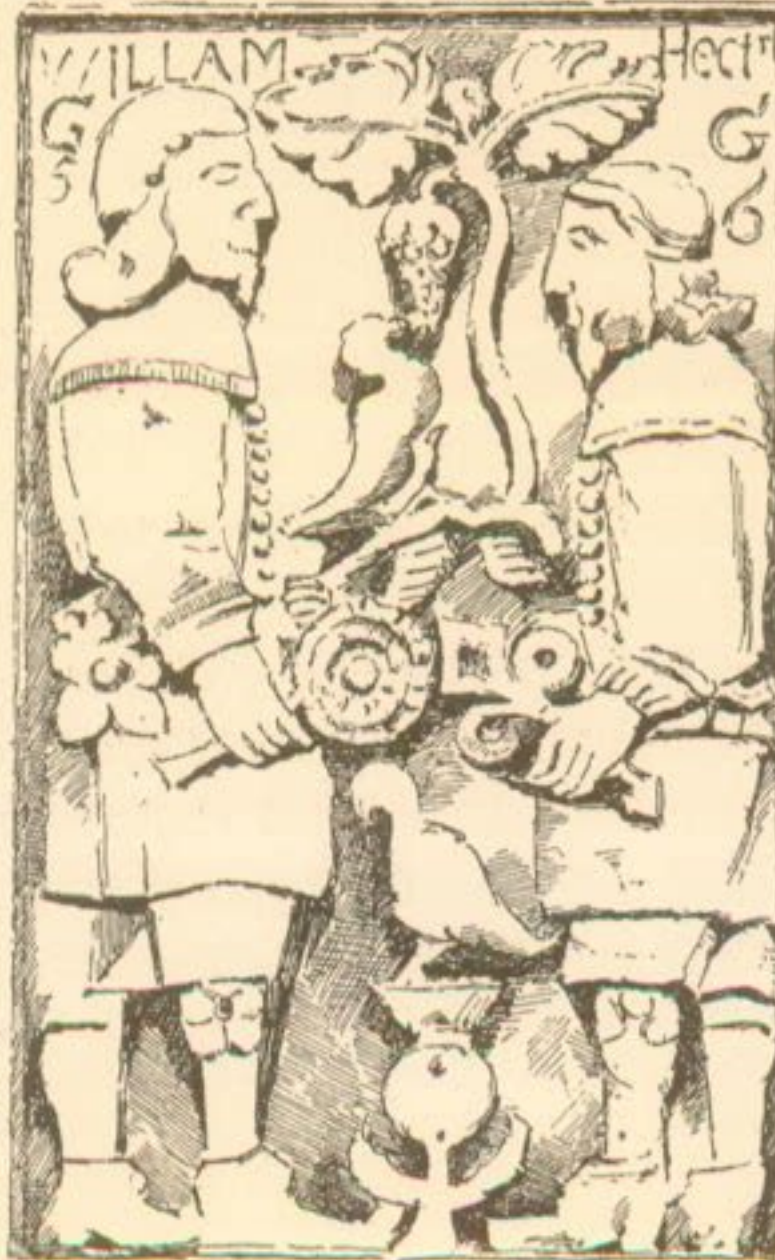
There are several instances of the use of the word 'Architector' at about this period. In the *Memorie of the Somervills* (preface 1679), James Hamilton of Fainart is called "the principal architector of that age." In the minutes of the Town Council of Glasgow for 9th October 1678 there occurs another instance of the use of the word—"The said day, in answer to the supplications given in by Alex^r. Tom, Architector, upon several considerations, the said Magistrates and Counsell hes given and grantit, and heirby gives and grants libertie and licence to the said Alex^r. Tom to reside within this burgh, and to exerse his employment and calling in Architectorie and Measonrie, and fra the dait heirof to the term of Candlemas 1680." Again, at the beginning of the century, Patrick, Earl of Strathmore, excuses himself for not employing the 'Public Architecturs.'

A detailed description of the figures is unnecessary, as the drawings show them sufficiently, but a few remarks may be made regarding their meaning. Each panel contains two figures, numbered from 1 to 8. The first three contain the 'Progenetors,' and the fourth the "Portract and eldest sone."

No. 1 is Jacobus Gifford. No. 2, name obliterated. No. 3 looks like Hiram, or it may be Hugan, Hugh being a frequent name among the Giffords. No. 4, name obliterated. No. 5, William. No. 6, Hect^r. No. 7 is the sculptor, and his son John No. 8. The father is represented considerably taller than the son, and both are gorgeously arrayed with Vandyked collars, loose short jackets or coats, with wrought cuffs and short cavalier trousers. At the foot of the latter, in the case of the father, there hangs a triangle, probably intended to symbolise his calling. In his right hand he holds a bird. The son holds a vine branch in his right hand and a rose in his left; at their feet a bird is perched on the top of a rose. The other quarters are very similar, but the dresses are not quite so elaborate. The sinister figure always bears a branch,



SIX PROGENETORS OF JAMES GEFERD WITH HIS AWNE PORTRACT AND ELDEST SONE



1660

Fig. 3. Stone with Progenitors

The Artist and his Son.

and the dexter a bird, except in the second quarter, where he holds an open book with clasps.

It is needless to inquire into the symbolism of the birds, branches, roses, and other things so often repeated in these panels, as probably not much more is intended beyond a decorative effect by their introduction.

I am not in a position to say definitely who the 'Progenetors' represented on these stones were, but add a few notes. Probably No. 1 represents the James Gifhert whose name stands second in the "Books of Assumption of Thirds of Benefices"¹—in connection with Newbottle Abbey, and this is the same James Giffert of Sheriffhall who is charged, along with a crowd of others, in 1565, as having been concerned in the slaughter of David Rizzio,² his name standing the 15th in a list of somewhere about 60 or 70 men. He was summoned to appear before the Council, but of course did not do so, and was a few months later denounced a rebel. No. 2, his son James Gifford, younger of Sheriffhall, appears in 1586 and 1587 to have held the Castle or Fortalice of Sheriffhall, and had to find caution that he would deliver it to Jeane Hoppringle, spouse of James Giffart, elder, "if it shall be found that he should do so."³

No. 3.—In 1591 there is one Thomas Giffert, tutor of Sheriffhall, who is denounced by the Council for taking private revenge rather than seeking the protection of the courts of law. It may possibly be that he is the person represented with the open book which may have a reference to his transactions with the estate.

The third stone (fig. 4) is 27½ inches high by 14 inches wide, and contains a figure of the artist and his wife. Each holds a cluster of grapes in the left hand, and a rose in the right, with a bird seated on a rose between them. Towering over their heads, and filling the upper part of the panel, is a very conventional tree with fruit and birds on its branches.

¹ *Registrum Sancti Marie de Neubolle*, Bannatyne Club, p. 323.

² *Records of Privy Council*, vol. i. p. 437.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. iv. pp. 128-223.



Fig. 4.



Fig. 5.

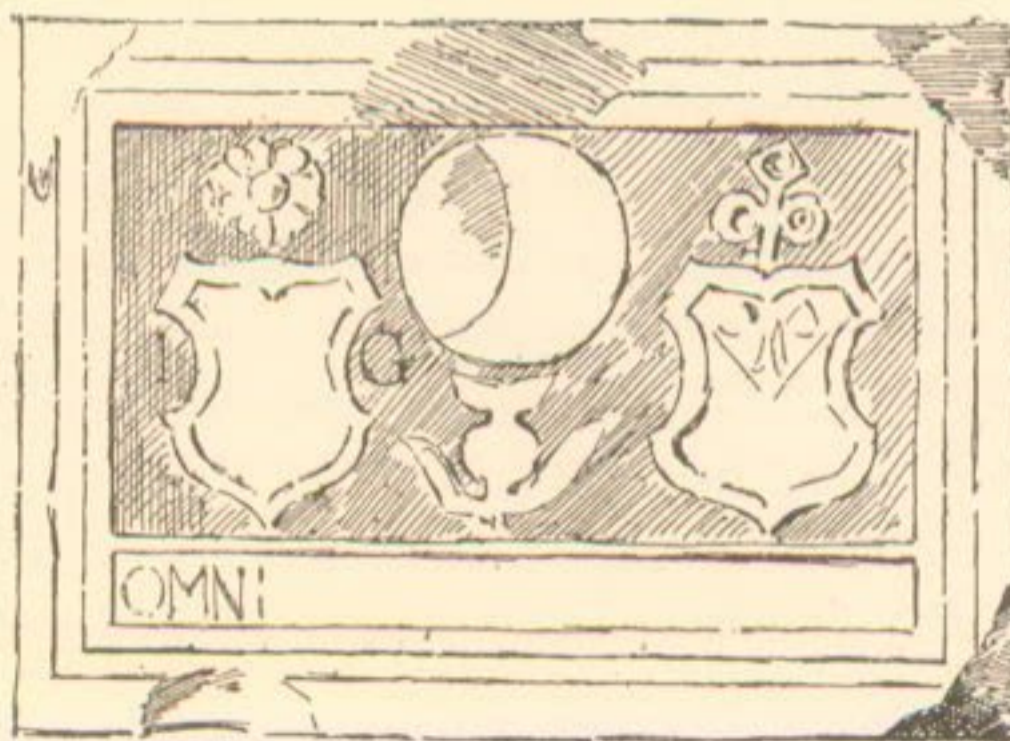


Fig. 6.

Figs 4, 5, 6.

These three stones formed the decorations of a fireplace, and during the latter occupation of the house they were concealed by a plaster partition.

The stone (fig. 5) is believed to have adorned the ingoing of the windows, with others, in the place usually occupied by the shutters. The Heron with the Eel in its mouth was probably a familiar enough sight in Gifford's time, along the marshes, which extended in the neighbourhood of West Linton. It is not known what has become of this and the other stones of the set.

The stones at Spitalhaugh are built into a fireplace, the two (fig. 7) forming the jambs, and the other (fig. 8) forming the lintel. The jambs are each divided into two panels about 30 inches high by 10 inches wide. They are carved in the same style as those already described, with figures facing each other, and the same symbols of branches, roses, and birds. The first, however, is somewhat different. It represents an attendant, with cloth over his arm, presenting a cup to a gigantic man, who is enjoying a pipe of tobacco. On the centre part of this stone is cut: IG · ME FECIT 1660. The stone (fig. 7) used as the other jamb has the upper figures labelled Venus and Dianna respectively. The under panel contains the artist and his wife, with their names cut in the centre margin and the date 1666.

On the ingoing of the first of these two stones there is a shield with the Gifford arms impaling those of Veitch.

The stone forming the lintel (fig. 8) is carved in a more architectural style than any of the others. The carving extends to about 4 feet in length by about 15½ inches high. It contains a rose tree in the centre, and on either side the familiar 17th century scroll, with two panels beyond on each side, the first containing a thistle, and the end ones a rabbit and a squirrel, both carved with great spirit. Alongside each scroll a shield is introduced, one bearing three ermine spots in chief and a crescent in base, with the initials IG above; the other bearing the Veitch arms, with the initials EV. There are also two vanes carved on the stone, containing the monograms IG and EV.



IG·ME FECIT·1660



JAMES GIFFORD 1666 EVPHAM VEITCH



Fig. 7.

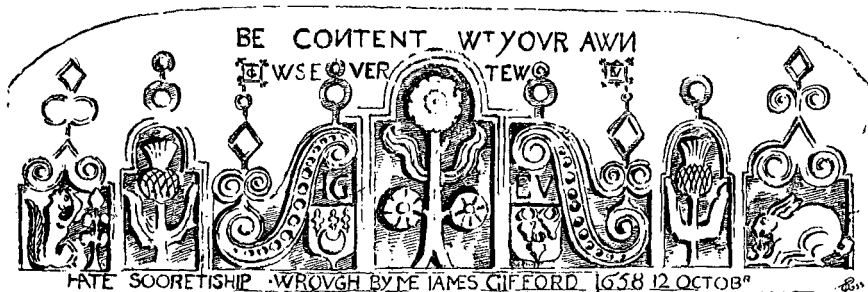


Fig. 8.

Above the decoration runs the inscription :—

BE CONTENT W^T YOVR AWN
WSE VERTEW.

And beneath :—

HATE SOORETISHIP. WROVGH BY ME IAMES GIFFORD 1658 12 OCTOB^R.

These Spitalhaugh stones originally decorated the windows in the upper floor of Gifford's house in a similar manner to those referred to under fig. 5.

As already mentioned, Gifford erected a well or cross in West Linton, and adorned it with sculptured figures of his wife and children. According to Dr Chambers,¹ it bore the inscription—"The Lady Gifford's Well, Erected 1666, Renewed 1861." Captain Armstrong, in his notes to the *Description of Tweeddale* (p. 158), thus describes it:—"The cross, now decayed, is a lively specimen of natural genius, without the assistance of art; being the entire labour of one *Gifford*, a small feu proprietor in Linton; which he erected 1666, at his sole expense, to perpetuate the memory of his beloved wife and five children; she is represented in a devout posture, on a pedestal, supported with four infants round her, and a fifth on her head." A view of the cross, with the statue of Eupham Veitch, but without the children, is preserved in the "Market Crosses

¹ *Chambers's History of Peeblesshire*, p. 460.

of Scotland.”¹ The view of the well here given is from Mr Ritchie’s collection. In it the statue is represented as having been coloured, and he states that on a certain day in each year the apprentices of the village

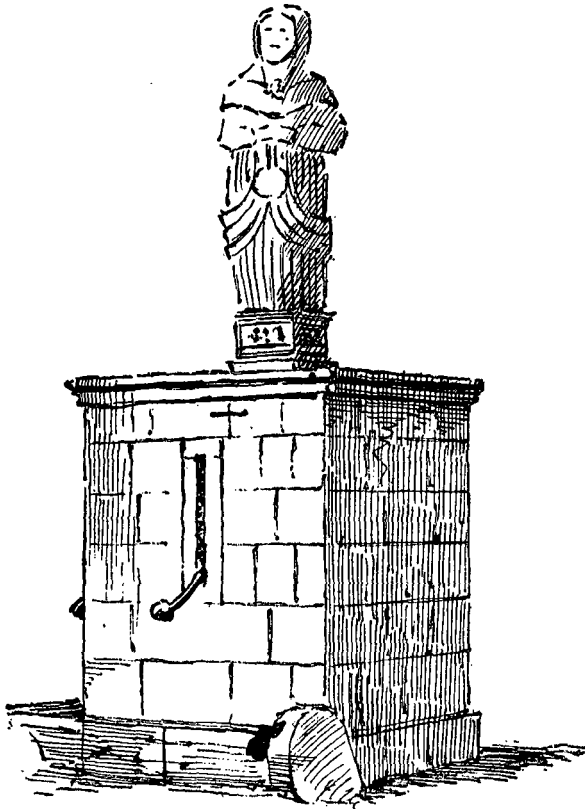


Fig. 9.

met and renewed the colour. The monument will be recognised as quite in the manner of the 17th century, when it was very common to represent

¹ “The Market Crosses of Scotland,” by James Drummond, R.S.A., F.S.A., read before the Society in February 1861.

a husband and wife surrounded by their children. Probably the most elaborate example of the kind in this country is the Bruce Monument at Culross Abbey, erected about twenty years before this one.

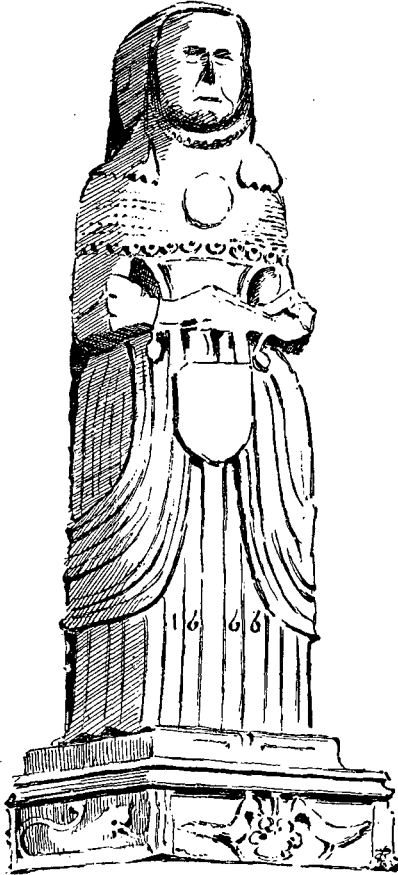


Fig. 10.



Fig. 11.

The statue (fig. 10) is not equal in merit to the other carvings, the drapery being stiff and formal, but there has been a considerable amount

of fine work on the upper part of the dress, now mostly decayed. The pedestal on which it stands has a lion carved on each side, and two birds pecking at a rose in front. On the folds of the lower part of the dress in front the date 1666 is cut. The back view of the figure (fig. 11), now concealed, is from one of Mr Ritchie's drawings. At North Barr,¹ near Erskine Ferry, on the Clyde, is the figure of a lady bearing a sundial on her head, whose dress is very similar to that of Lady Gifford. The dial on the head is an odd conceit, and so is the child on the mother's head. When we further observe that the lady holds a rose in her hand, as so many of Gifford's figures do, the opinion may be hazarded that this also may be a work of his.

In all likelihood the dial on the cottage alongside Gifford's house (fig. 1) was likewise carved by him, and it is a particularly interesting example.²

The statue of one of the children which adorned the well is preserved at Spitalhaugh, and is of considerable merit.

James Gifford, the author of these remarkable carvings, was, as he is careful to inform us, brother to the laird of Sheriffhall near Dalkeith. The family were tenants or vassals of Newbottle Abbey, and in a complaint made by James Giffert, younger of Sheriffhall, to the Privy Council in 1567, he quaintly lets us see their relationship to the Abbey:—"That quhair his fadir, he and his predecessouris, hes bene and ar auld and kyndlie tenentis and possesouris of the eist and west mylnes of Newbottill, with the mylne landis, multures, suckin, and thair pertinentis this mony yeris bigane, be sindry nynetene years takis set unto them be the Abbottis and Conventis of Newbottill for the tyme, and yet are in possession thairof," etc., etc.³

Our Gifford was a *Portioner* in West Linton, holding of the Earl of March, the superior, but, in the time of the Regent Morton, it was a pendicle of Dalkeith, so that in taking up his abode in West Linton, Gifford would not be oppressed with the feeling that his dwelling was among strangers.

¹ See *Proceedings of the Society*, January 1890, p. 246.

² *Ibid.*, p. 184.

³ *Records of the Privy Council*, vol. i. p. 590.

Most of our information regarding him is obtained from the Works of Alexander Pennecuik, a minor poet, physician, and naturalist, who resided at and was proprietor of the estate of Newhall. The estate of Romanno also belonged to him, so that he occupied a good social position. He spent part of his youth on the continent, and settled at Newhall as a physician about 1680. He had an extensive practice which led him to know every feature of the locality and most of its inhabitants as well. He must have been considerably younger than Gifford, having been born in 1652, while Gifford was a married man and father of a family in 1658. This disparity of years, however, did not screen the sculptor from the ridicule of the poet, as in "An address to the Prince of Orange, praying for relief from certain vexations for the portioners of Linton," etc., he says:—

"Lastly, great Sir, discharge us all
To go to court without a call ;
Discharge Laird Isaac, and Hog-yards,
James Giffart and the Lintoun lairds."

* * *

"And that they go, on no pretence,
To put this place to great expense."

In another burlesque poem, called "*The Linton Cabal*," Gifford appears as one of the invited guests to a carousal held by the smith of the village, whose opinion of them may be gathered from the two verses—

"Now welcome, by my faith good fellows,
I see you haste, like nimble swallows ;
Lord keep your craigs lang frae the gallows,
That we may drink together.

"But tell me, sirs, how this can be,
The storm made all our sheep to die,
And yet spar'd such a company,
Come let us then be frolic."

Gifford's contribution to the hilarity of the evening will be found in the poem and need not appear here.

This 'portract' of James Gifford is not quite in accordance with our ideal

of a Covenanter ; but, nevertheless, according to Captain Armstrong¹ and the author of the Memoir of Dr Pennecuik, Gifford was one of twelve persons from Tweeddale who took up arms and was present at the Skirmish of Rullion Green, fought on the 28th November 1666, some three or four miles east from West Linton. From this affray he evidently got away with a whole skin, but not without some little hardship, as he appears with many others to have had to take refuge in the caves about Newhall. In the neighbourhood is a very remarkable rock called Harbour Craig, which terminates a long stretch of moorland, and presents the appearance of a ruined castle. On its face are carved a great many names, with dates ranging from 1662 to 1666. Among these, in large letters, but much weather-worn, I GHIFERD is conspicuous.

Surely to advertise himself in this way was the height of folly, if the carving was done at the time he was in hiding, as Captain Armstrong suggests.

Harbour Craig adjoins the scene of the *Gentle Shepherd*, and in Act II. scene i. there is a supposed reference to it and the hiding Covenanters, where Symon, giving his friend Glaud the news of the return of Sir William and the Restoration, says :—

“ I coudna rest till I cam o’er the burn,
To tell ye things hae taken sic a turn,
Will gar our vile oppressors stend like flaes,
And skulk in hidlings on the heather braes.”

According to Dr Chambers (p. 461) there is a tradition that the art of stone-carving was introduced to Linton by masons employed at Drochil Castle, and that the best grave-stones in the locality owe their designs to Linton men. There seem to have been some specimens of Gifford’s handiwork in the parish churchyard, but they are now lost. There is a small stone in Peebles churchyard, which may be by him. It represents a boy who wears clogs, but is very much decayed. Mr P. F. Dunlop, Millburn, Dolphinton, has two small pieces of stone carved by Gifford,

¹ The Works of Alexander Pennecuik, with the Description of Tweeddale, with Notes, by Captain Armstrong, pp. 20, 97.

one with his initials, the other being the top of a grave-stone. Mr Dunlop also mentions one in Penicuik and another in Dunsyre, which he says may safely be put to Gifford's credit, but I have not been able to identify them.

Gifford appears to have been a second time married, as he had a son James baptized in April 1676, whose mother's name was Jean Brown. He was an elder in the Parish Kirk, and his signature appears in the Records at least once about the year 1690.¹

He was a man of very considerable genius as a sculptor, his works arresting attention by their striking individuality and fine decorative effect. They are such as entitle him to be reckoned as one of the Scottish artists of his age, and had more respect been paid to them and to their preservation, this would probably have been more apparent than it now is. For one in his position to have adorned his house with so many sculptures shows that he must have had an inborn love of art, combined with the artistic desire to surround himself with whatever of beauty he could create. And further, his gift of the Cross Well shows him to have been a man of public spirit, desirous that his fellow villagers should participate in his enjoyment of art. With this picture in our imagination, we may forget the coarse satire of Penneuk, and remember him by such specimens of his handicraft as have come down to us, and by his evident love and pride in his wife and family.

¹ Note by Mr Robert Sanderson, Linton.