

## I.

### NOTES ON JAMES FIFTH'S TOWERS, HOLYROOD PALACE.

By JOHN SINCLAIR, F.S.A. Scot.

We may question if in the whole of Scotland there is one spot which is better known or more deeply impressed with tragic associations than the Holyrood of Mary Stuart. Not only to our own countrymen but to the English speaking nations it has become a pilgrimage of never failing interest; and even in the devotee from foreign lands who can only mutter the words 'Marie Stuart' as he finds his way through the old Towers, the same keen sense of profound interest is manifest. The regal palaces of Falkland, Linlithgow, and Stirling's towering stronghold have each their tales of strife and roll of births and royal Stuart deaths, but the story of Mary Stuart's six years' misery in her father's Towers of Holyrood has made an indelible mark in Scottish history.

What has been often designated as descriptive treatment of James Fifth's Towers has yet left us without one thorough exposition, either of their external elevation and varied changes, or of their curious and somewhat intricate interiors in which so many historic and tragic events have occurred. Even in the *Proceedings* of this Society there is a singular paucity of that exact periodical tracing which we expect to find from the study of such a deeply interesting pile. We may except from this remark, however, the lucid description of the ceiling of Queen Mary's Audience Chamber by Henry Laing,<sup>1</sup> which, strange to say, has never yet found its way out of the volume, not even into the pages of the official guide. It is hoped that an initiatory paper such as this may lead the way to a further investigation, not only dealing with the Towers as they stand, but with the unsolved question whether they originated with James Fifth or his ill-fated father.

James Fourth was married to Margaret Tudor in 1503 in the Abbey of Holyrood, and there was some sort of a royal palace ready to receive her then. It appears that although Henry Seventh had long proposed the alliance,<sup>2</sup> it was not till 1502 that the royal pair were formally affianced; and part, at least, of the palace was ready in 1503, as described in glowing terms by John Younger, Somerset Herald.<sup>3</sup> That it was of a somewhat extensive nature there is clear and convincing proof. On his arrival, we are told, after *Te Deum* had been sung, "the King in a most loving manner conducted the Princess out of the church through the cloisters

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings*, vol. ix. p. 381.

<sup>2</sup> About 1495. See Tytler's *Scotland*, vol. ii. p. 261. Rymer's *Fœdera*, vol. xii. p. 572. Rymer, vol. xii. p. 765, gives the date of the dispensation for the marriage 5th August 1500. See Tytler, vol. ii. p. 269. Wilson, vol. i. p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> *History of Holyrood*, pp. 25 and 124. That there were apartments for the Stuart kings in Holyrood long previous to this is beyond any doubt, for as early as 1430 the Queen of James First gave birth to twin sons in the Abbey, the elder of whom died, the survivor being James of the Fiery Face. James Third made it his residence almost constantly; then followed his son James Fourth, who appears to have much frequented the Abbey, and received there the historic sword presented by Pope Julius II., which forms part of the *Regalia of Scotland*; but seemingly he had become convinced that the offices of the Canons of St Augustine were not suitable, and hence arose the first royal palace to receive his bride.

to her apartments in the adjoining palace. After a brief space the Princess was brought by the King into 'the Great Hall,' where she was introduced to a great company of ladies," etc.<sup>1</sup>

In the Treasurer's Accounts of 1502-3 mention is made of the construction of 'a new hall,' the construction of 'the gallery and boss windoes,' and the 'turatis of the for-yet,' which 'turatis' do not lead us to James Fifth's Towers, but to the gateway at the entrance to the palace yard. Then we have note of 'the Queen's great Chamber,' of 'the King's Oratory,' and of 'the Queen's Oratory'; but there is nothing to bring us nearer to the three Towers.<sup>2</sup> In the *Liber Cartarum Sancte Crucis* it is stated:—"After his treaty of marriage with King Henry Seventh for the youthful Tudor, he set earnestly to work for the bigging of a palace beside the Abbey of the Holy Croce."<sup>3</sup>

After Flodden, John, Duke of Albany, was recalled from France, and in 1515 took up his residence in Holyrood and continued the work of James Fourth which had been carried on till his death.<sup>4</sup> It should be here noted that a certain Maister Logy is mentioned as early as 1504-5 receiving payment for "aiding and topping the chimnais," and for "completing of the 'toure' in Halyrudhous"; and in the first of these years a grant of £40 yearly is made to him for his diligence in the 'bigging' of the palace beside the Abbey of the Holy Croce.<sup>5</sup>

With the exception of the faint trace we have in Logy's payments for completing 'the toure,' there is little to guide us to a solution of the question—Were the Towers which are named after James Fifth in any

<sup>1</sup> Account of John Younger, Somerset Herald. *History of Holyrood*, p. 27. Leland's *Collectanea*, vol. iv. p. 289.

<sup>2</sup> Treasurer's Accounts. *History of Holyrood*, p. 124.

<sup>3</sup> Dr D. Wilson's *Edinburgh*, vol. i. p. 25. *Liber*, Preface 58.

<sup>4</sup> Dr Wilson's *Edinburgh*, p. 48. Grant, vol. ii. p. 62. *History of Holyrood*, p. 125.

<sup>5</sup> Grant, vol. ii. p. 60. *History of Holyrood*, p. 124. Treasurer's Accounts. In all likelihood this may have gone on till the arrival of Albany in 1515. Dr Daniel Wilson says:—"There are numerous entries in Treasurer's Accounts which give evidence of the progress of the building in 1515-16." James Fifth was at this time in the Castle, under the tuition of Gavin Dunbar.

'shape part of James Fourth's palace? But there is one other reference worthy of notice. An annalist,<sup>1</sup> cited in the preface to the *Liber Cartarum Sanctæ Crucis*, records that "the Duke of Albany committed the Lord Houme in 1515 to the 'auld toure' of Holyrudhouss which was founded by the said Duke."<sup>2</sup> Taken in conjunction with the records of Maister Logy and the Duke of Albany as to the 'auld toure,' and looking to the fact of the jail being in the present Towers apparently constructed and fitted for such a use, and having all the appearance of antiquity, there is some room for the belief of those who argue that the Towers were only remodelled and extended by the Fifth James.

It will thus be seen that this corner of Holyrood has three claimants for the honour of its erection; and while there is not much more than supposition to back the claim for James Fourth, there is still less in the case of the 'Ducke of Albany,' although there is a distinct historical assertion to the contrary. It may be, however, that the whole three took part in the 'bigging' of the Towers, beginning between 1501 and 1503 with James Fourth, carried on after his death by Albany, and finished or remodelled by his son, after his translation from Stirling to Edinburgh in 1524 when he was in his twelfth year, on Albany's final retreat to his native France.

In the *Diurnal of Occurrents* it is recorded that James, in 1524, was brought from Stirling to Holyrood at twelve years of age. Then in Pitscottie's Chronicle:—"In the spring of the year 1525 he founded a fair palace in the Abbey of Holyroodhouse and three great towers till rest into when he (James Fifth) pleased to come."<sup>3</sup> Hawthornden (p. 23)

<sup>1</sup> Marjoreybank's *Annals*. Pitscottie, vol. ii. p. 296.

<sup>2</sup> This is most perplexing, as it is the very year in which he came from France, and but two years after the death of James at Flodden. It is puzzling to connect Albany with the founding of an 'auld toure,' for if it had years at all, surely they should hark back to James Fourth at least! Unless we presume that the 'auld toure' is one seen in both Hollar and Gordon, situated in the south court, then the prison in which Lord Houme was 'wardit' is still, as it doubtless was then, in the old Towers called James Fifth's.

<sup>3</sup> In *Memorie of the Somervills*, vol. i. pp. 315, 316, it is stated that the architect was the unfortunate Sir James Hamilton of Finnart.

says of James in 1525 :—"The King in great magnificence and pomp is conveyed from the Castle to his Palace of Holyrood, and the Estates assembled in the wonted place of the town of Edinburgh." It will be noted that both the *Diurnal of Occurrents* and Pitscottie's Chronicle ascribe the Towers to James Fifth ; but not so with Hawthornden, who simply speaks of the Palace as an already completed fabric at the advent of the youthful James. Dr Wilson, writing in 1873, says :—"He seems to have diligently continued the works begun here by his father, and tradition still assigns to him, with every appearance of truth, the erection of the north-west Towers of the palace, the only portion of the original building that has survived the general conflagration by the English in the following reign.<sup>1</sup> On the bottom of the recessed panel of the north-west Tower could be traced about thirty years ago in raised Roman letters, gilt, the words 'Jacobus V. Rex Scotorum.'"

It is evident that when David First founded the Abbey of the Holy Cross, he placed the building as nearly as possible in "the centre of the hollow between two hills where he gat the croce," with the grand western doorway looking up the way of the Canons towards the Castle where they dwelt (we are told by Father Hay), till the time of William the Lion.<sup>2</sup> By looking at the Earl of Hertford's sketch (fig. 1), it will be seen that this position of the Abbey drove the builders of the Stuart palace towards the south side of the ground, and some of the present generation remember that the straggling erections called "St. Ann's Yard" ran south almost to the foot of the crag. These efforts did not, however, clear the front of the Abbey, for the north-west and north-east Towers were raised in a direct line with its south Tower. It is quite possible that the façade of the original palace consisted of the straight front alone, and that the Towers were afterwards added, but happily leaving a clear space back to the Abbey except a corridor, probably open,

<sup>1</sup> "The forepart of the palace is terminated by four high towers, two of which, towards the north, were erected by King James V., and the rest by King Charles II." Slezer, *Theatrum Scotiae*, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Father Hay's MS. Notes, quoted in *Lib. Cart. Sanctæ Crucis*, p. 22.

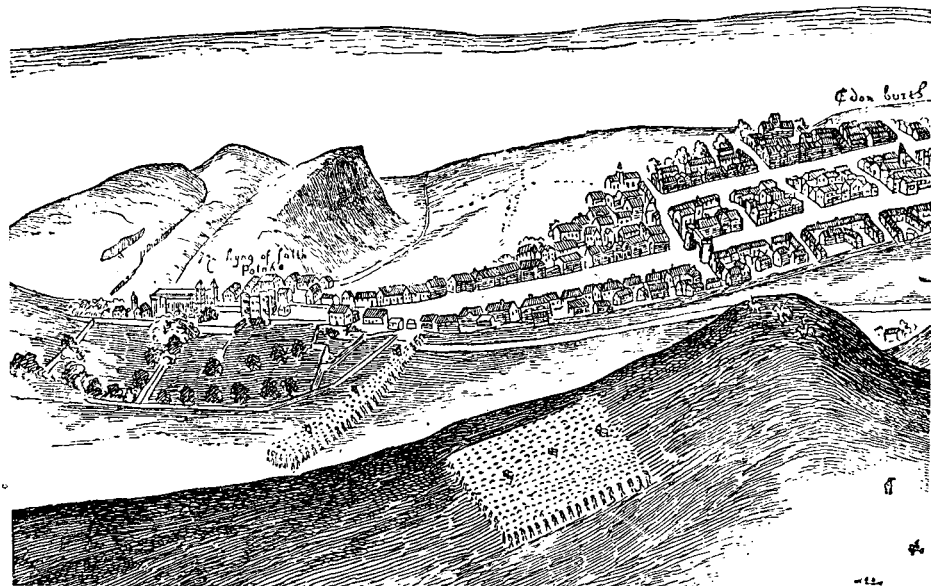


Fig. 1. View of Edinburgh in 1544, showing Hertford's army entering the Watergate.  
(Cottonian MS., British Museum.)

leading to, and in connection with, the nave through its south Tower. This connection is visible to some extent in the Hertford sketch.

Looking at the view by Hollar<sup>1</sup> (fig. 2), there is something very like a slender Tower to the north of the palace front where it joins James Fifth's Towers. If this is so, it lends colour to the theory that the Towers were the latest addition to the Stuart palace, whoever was their builder, as that slender Tower is no longer to be seen; and on comparing the two buildings of Falkland and Holyrood as they now stand, as regards the union of the Towers with the façade, it will be seen that they are entirely in harmony with each other.

In the Hertford sketch it is clear that no other union existed between the east or rear of the Towers and the Abbey than the pathway or corridor, of which there is a faint tracing. If, as has been surmised, it was a built connection between Towers and Abbey, it was not unlikely one of those open corridors of which French Paris spoke in his confessions when on trial for aiding Henry Darnley's murder.

On assuming his regal powers, James, as we have seen, proceeded to follow up the work of his predecessors in the 'bigging' of Holyrood, and it is at this period that his claims to the north-west Towers arise. Thus, in the Treasurer's Accounts of that time, there are disbursements as the cost of the 'new werk,' which many writers regard as pointing to the construction of the Towers which still bear his name.

If, then, we assume that these Towers, as they appear in Hollar and Gordon of Rothiemay's views, are the work either by extension, remodeling, or entire founding of James Fifth, it will not be difficult to follow the changes which took place at this corner of the palace during the minority of Mary, and the reign of her son, to the burning by Cromwell, and finally to their incorporation with the fine production of Sir William Bruce, to whom they gave the initiatory idea of the grand façade of the present palace of 1679.

During the minority of Mary Stuart, the Master of Works was John

<sup>1</sup> The views shown in figs. 2, 3, 4 and 5 are from blocks lent by Messrs Cassell & Co.

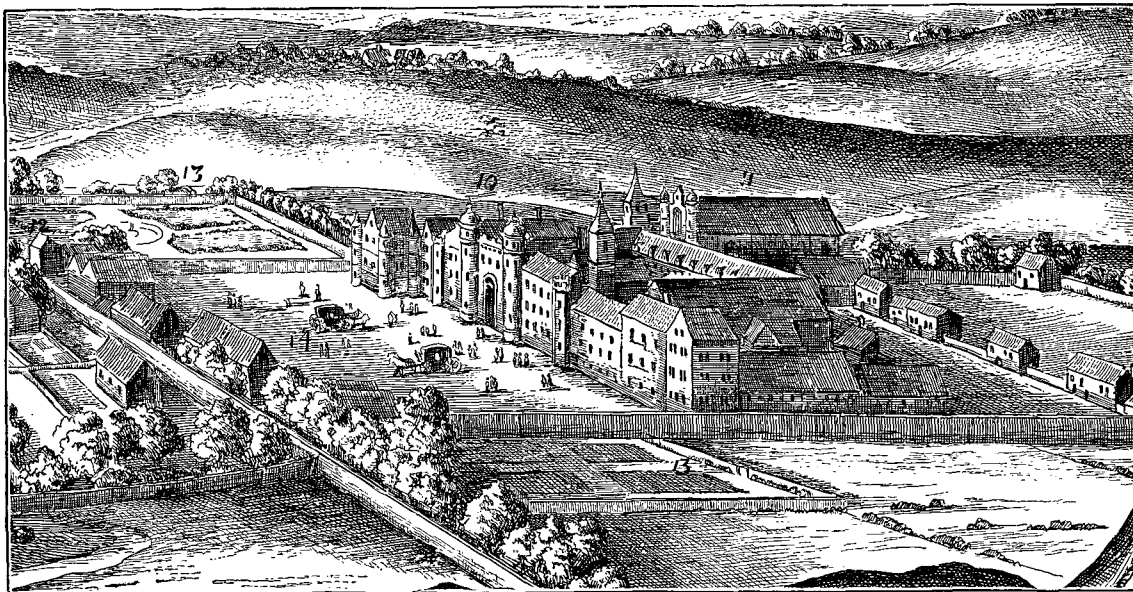


Fig. 2. Hollar's View of Holyrood Palace.



Hamilton of Crage,<sup>1</sup> and although we have no special mention of extensive operations or additions to Holyrood after his appointment in 1543, it is quite certain that both repairs and extensions must have gone on, as the palace was twice damaged by the English, viz. :—in 1543 by the Earl of Hertford, and again in 1547.

In 1579 Sir Robert Drummond of the Hawthornden family succeeded Hamilton,<sup>2</sup> and in 1592 William Schaw, a distinguished builder and favourite of Queen Anne, took office. These three Masters of Works apparently were in office during the lifetime both of Mary and James Sixth, when Holyrood assumed the shape and dimensions which we find depicted in Hollar and Gordon.

A close inspection of Hollar's view will show an entire change from that of the invasion map of 1543. The north side exhibits the hitherto open space between the Towers of James and the south Towers of the Abbey to be filled with a range of buildings forming one side of a court or quadrangle as at present; but it also shows that the builder had still left an open space between the Abbey and the old Towers, as it was in the Hertford plan, by keeping his erections further south. This pleasing feature cannot be followed in the plan by Gordon of Rothiemay (fig. 3), but we have no trace of the Tower which in Hollar united the façade of the palace with the Towers at the north-west. The bird's-eye view fortunately lays before us the elevation of this north side, looking south into the court, showing it to be a building with dormer windows similar to those now existing, and an arched doorway in the centre.

Another change in connection with the Towers appears in this view. A building called Regent Moray's house is seen clinging like a swallow's nest to the northern side, with an apparently spacious roadway in front, separated from the court-yard of the palace by a wall, and having a door into the south royal gardens. If this be the same building drawn by Blore (and published in 1826), it was there up till well into the second quarter of this century; the marks of its junction with the Towers are

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings*, vol. xxx. p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

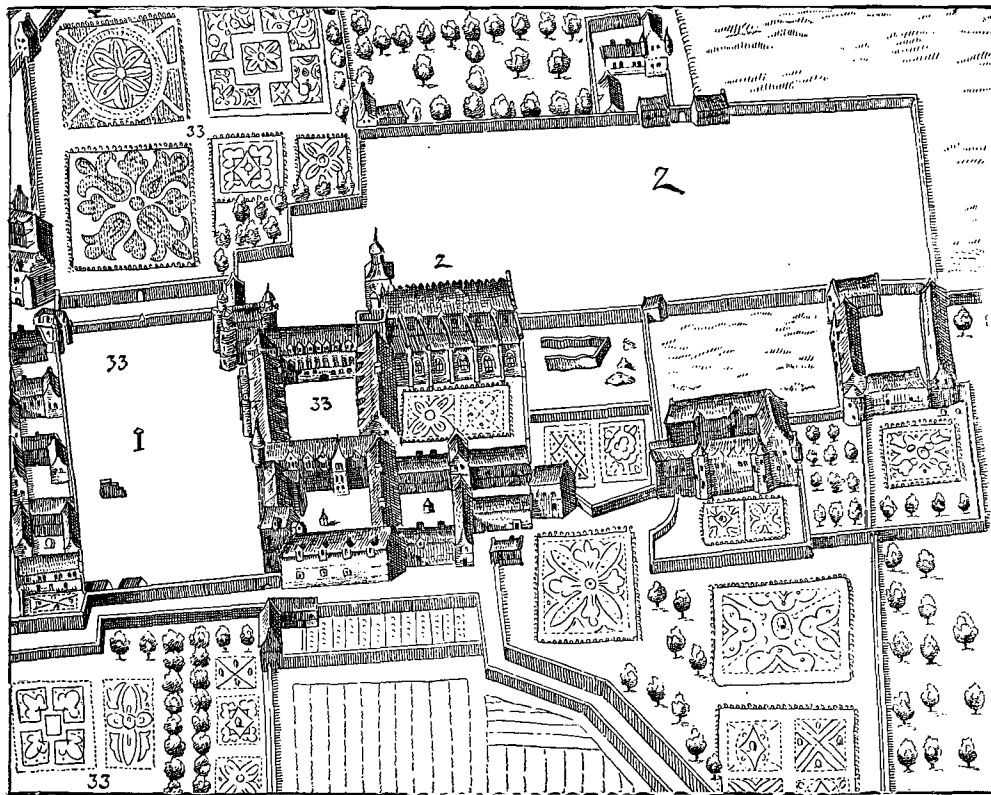


Fig. 3. The Palace of Holyrood House (33), the South and North Gardens (33), the Abbey Kirk (z), and the Kirkyard (z). (After Gordon of Rothiemay's Plan.)

quite visible on the masonry of the walls. If they were Moray's apartments in Holyrood, it is fair to infer that he had entry into the private stair leading up to his sister's rooms. The wall separating the Towers from this building where the round of the stair bulges out is only 5 inches in thickness, and at the taking down of the old house, had to be renewed at the points of contact. In the same sketch we see the turreted gateway leading to the house, and the south wall which separates it from the palace yard, as in Rothiemay. To the north-east of this house Rothiemay gives us another first view of Croft-an-Righ, with its turreted mansion also called after Regent Moray, which, having been purchased from Mr Hector Gavin, was in 1859 fitted up as dwellings for gardeners, keepers, etc.

The Towers, with their enormous walls from 6 to  $7\frac{1}{2}$  feet thick, appear to have bravely weathered every attack, and up to this day preserve their fair proportions almost intact. In the other portions of the large straggling palace great industry must have been displayed in their reconstruction, for on Brantome's arrival with Queen Mary in 1561, he spoke in high terms of the palace as being "a handsome building, and not like anything else in the country." This interval of fourteen years, there is little doubt, had initiated the great change, in the northern elevation at least, which we see so well displayed in Hollar. The Master of Works was John Hamilton of Crage, dating from 1543, and no change is noted till 1579, when Sir Robert Drummond took office.

During that time the palace had taken its present form of a great central court, but with other detached courts which are now gone. In both views of Hollar and Gordon, we see the gradual creeping up of the palace from the north-west Towers to the south Tower of the Abbey, which it appears to have ultimately engulfed. It seems impossible to come nearer to the precise period of this reconstruction. Thus, we find in the work on *Ecclesiastical Architecture* by M'Gibbon and Ross, that the change is disposed of in one short sentence:—"The north-west Tower (Abbey) is still preserved, but its companion Tower, which formerly stood at the south-west angle, was demolished when the palace

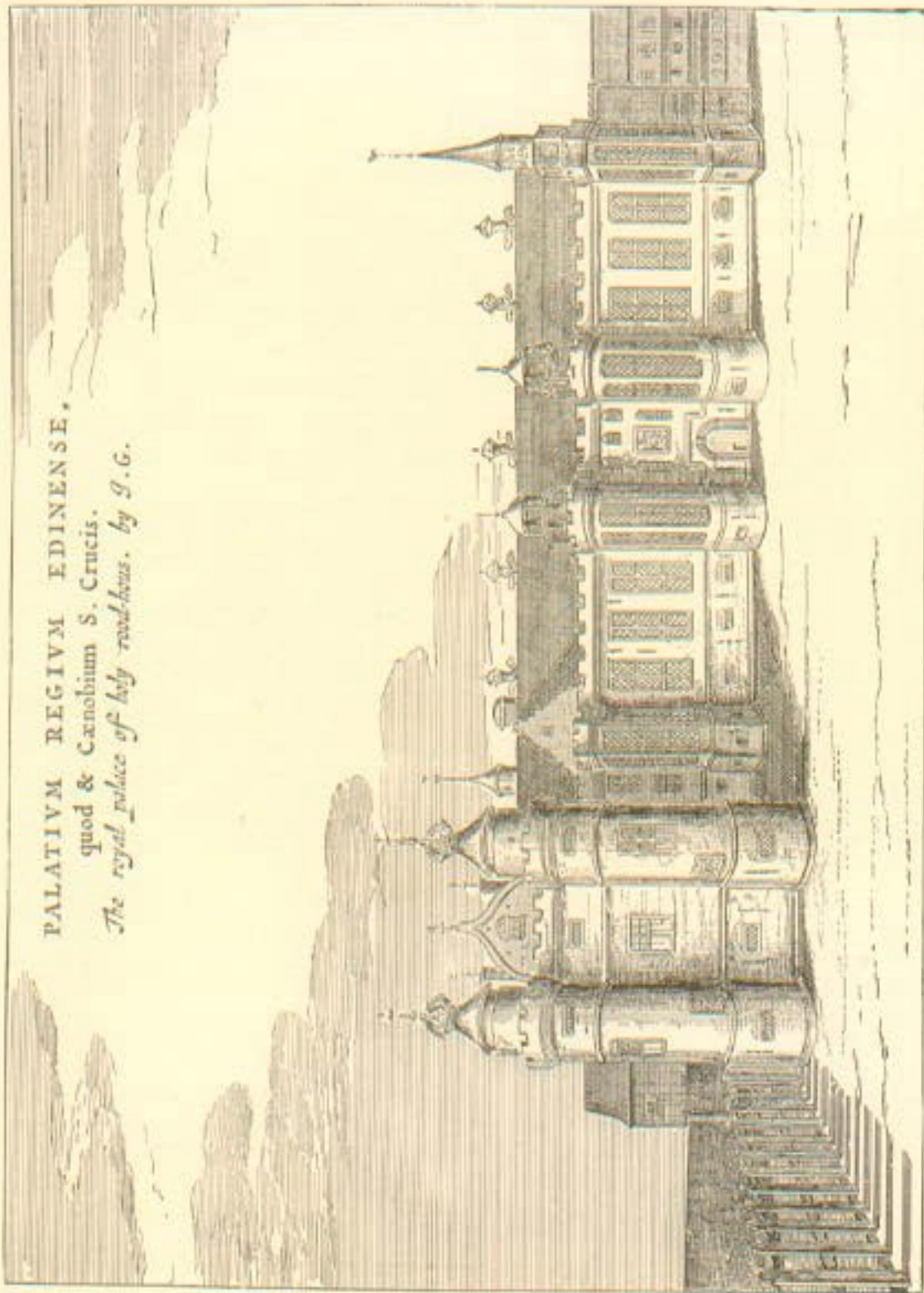
was rebuilt in the 17th century"—that is, the present erections designed by Sir William Bruce in 1671, and finished in 1679.

From Gordon's full front view of the palace taken before the advent of Cromwell, we may form a perfect idea of the building as it was in the time of James Sixth and Charles First, and probably in that of the unfortunate Queen of Scots (fig. 4).

The palace at that period consisted of five courts, and the buildings were of a decidedly straggling nature, showing the want of an original settled plan, except the front elevation flanked by the north-west Towers. Whether these Towers were the last erection of the west front and an afterthought is an open question, but we know that the design of Sir William Bruce followed on the same lines, as proved by his addition of the south-west Towers in complete harmony with the other side—in fact, adapting the whole of the present façade to harmonise with the ancient Towers on the north.

In the final view, published by Blore in 1826 (fig. 5), we have the palace of Sir William Bruce as now existing, showing the so-called Regent Moray's house—now gone.

With the exception of the first floor and the pinnacles of the three turrets, the views presented to us from 1543 till just before the Cromwellian burning in 1650, show little signs of structural change. The west front with its two empty panels, which, it is believed, had at one time been filled with the royal arms of Scotland, gives a rather curious illustration of the first floor reported as Lord Darnley's from what it is now. Small prison-like windows are represented, more like those of a guard-house; but those of Queen Mary show as in their present position. We have clear proof that the famous historical rooms of the fair but unfortunate Stuart are clearly traceable, both in their external aspect and internal arrangement, to the earliest time of the Towers. Both externally and internally the first floor has undergone some change. The ground floor is, in its western front, a strongly vaulted apartment built like a fortress, with arch, pier, and buttress, and has long been used as a wine cellar. Here began the private stair leading up to Darnley and



PALATIUM REGIVM EDINENSE,  
quod & Canobium S. Crucis.  
*The royal palace of holy rood-hous. by G. G.*

Fig. 4. Holyrood Palace as it was before the fire of 1650. (Facsimile, after Gordon of Rothiemay.)

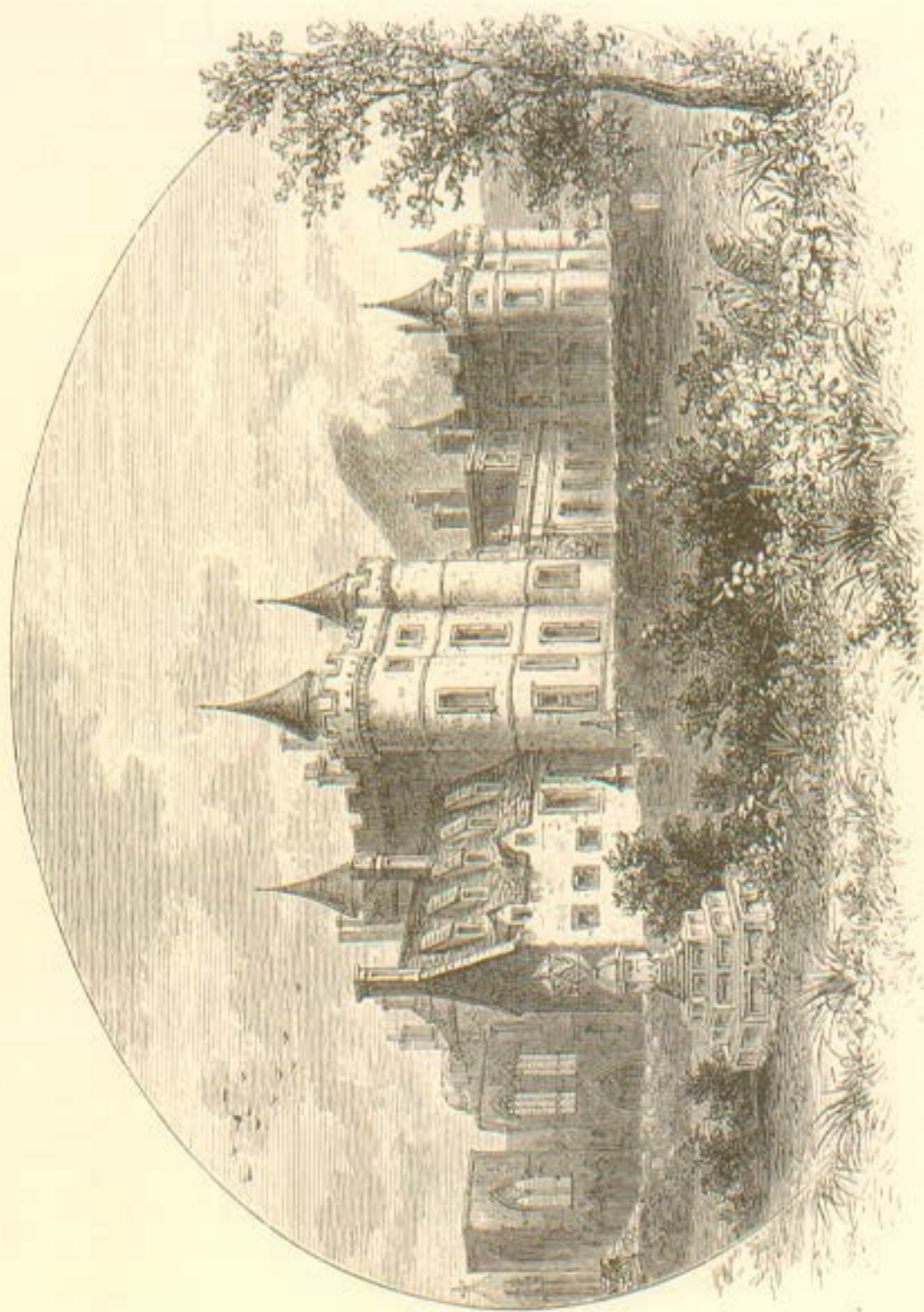


Fig. 5. Holyrood Palace, the Regent Moray's house (adjoining the Palace, on the north), the Royal Gardens, and ancient Horologe. (From a drawing by Blore, published in 1826.)

Queen Mary's rooms (fig. 6), and there is no trace of windows sufficient to lead to the belief that it ever was a residence of Henry Darnley. It does not need much penetration to notice where the existing windows of Darnley's rooms have been reconstructed, thus accounting for the difference between the present aspect and that of Rothiemay's large front

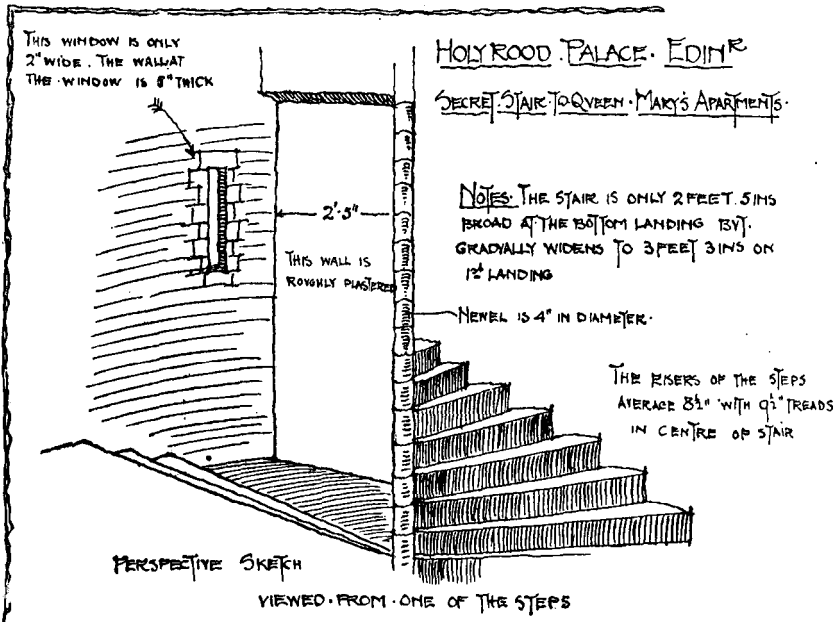


Fig. 6. Private Stair, Holyrood Palace.

view (fig. 4). His rooms were below those of the Queen, and on the first floor, and an inspection of the masonry shows where they have been remodelled.

Previous to the conflagration of 1650, the pinnacles of the turrets were finished with fanciful devices like imperial crowns, now replaced by plain spiral terminal tops. The roof was high and pointed with a fan-like west front, where now it is flat and battlemented. At the foot of

the left empty panel may be seen the shelf-like strip on which Wilson tells us the words "Jacobus V. Rex Scotorum" were inscribed; and clear traces of the filled-up sockets where the iron bars of the windows were embedded are quite visible. The first floor appeared to be barred on the inner side of the lintels close to the glass, but the two upper floors—viz., Queen Mary's rooms and the jail—were protected by iron gratings fixed, prison-like, on the outer face of the walls, a striking commentary on the state of society and value of human life even in a royal palace at that time.

At the foot of the west front of the Towers the ground has been lowered about 3 feet, particularly at the north-west corner. At the north side may be easily seen the new masonry filled in when taking down the building called "Regent Moray's house" (fig. 5). None of the historians take the slightest notice of this building; even our local writers, Arnot and Maitland, completely ignore it, though it was there during their lifetime. It may have been the house of Lord Robert, however, if we bear in mind that Regent Moray's mansion was said to be in Croft-an-Righ, and also if we give any weight to the following extract from the *Diurnal of Occurrents*:—"The next day Lennox rode in state to the Abbey of Holyrood, and entered the lodging which had been honourably prepared for him in the house of Mary's brother, the Lord Robert, Commendator of Holyrood, *beside* the said Abbey."

On the flat north wall of the Towers, the air-slots which were left in the elevation (whence, in the middle of this century, the so-called Regent Moray's was removed) are plainly seen, and guide us to the position of the private stair which is built, not in the Tower as is generally thought, but entirely within the wall, which at this spot is  $7\frac{1}{2}$  feet thick. At the bottom of the wall no trace of a doorway is to be seen, leading us to the belief that the exit was inside the ground floor of the palace, thence along to the Abbey.

Higher up, near the jail windows, we see the single slot which lights and airs a secret stair of singular width and construction leading into the prison. This wall joins on to the largest of the three Towers



which contains the stair leading up to Queen Mary's rooms, the jail, some store-rooms, and the roof. On the ground floor of this north-east Tower another private stair ends; but on the walls outside there are no signs of exit, which must have also been through the basement. And in Queen Mary's audience chamber, near the entrance door where Rizzio was flung to die, is another private stair built inside the wall, and leading up to opposite the jail door.

These Towers, at all events, whoever was their original founder, show a width and strength explanatory of their being the sole survivors of the original Palace of Holyrood. If we take the west front, we find a thickness of  $7\frac{1}{2}$  feet, and at the turrets 4 feet. The east face, which was originally clear of all buildings towards the Abbey, is of the same thickness, viz.,  $7\frac{1}{2}$  feet. The north and south walls are fully 6 feet, and the wall dividing the Towers from the more modern palace of Charles Second is over 5 feet. The external changes, from 1543 till Cromwell's time, may be summed up briefly:—alterations on Lord Darnley's floor, on the panels, on the roof and turret tops, and on the north side. The roof, in particular, is first shown with flat-topped turrets, then with high pitched roof and pointed turrets as at present, then with the crown-topped pinnacles and high roof, and finally the present elevation.

The power given by Charles Second to Sir William Bruce to punish the refractory operatives at the rebuilding of Holyrood in 1671-9, is, in the light of modern Trades Unionism, so very curious in its phraseology, and points so clearly to our "auld toure prison," that a quotation may be pardoned:—"With power also to the said Sir William Bruce, during the space aforesaid, to do all other things necessary and requisite as to him shall seem expedient, and to punish, mulct, incarcerate, and amerce delinquents and transgressors at the said works and courts, by himself or his deputies (as oft as need shall be), for this purpose, within the said palaces, houses, and precincts thereof to us pertaining."<sup>1</sup>

There is little to add which bears sufficient interest, as we are now nearing the top of the old Towers. Half a flight up the principal stair,

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings*, vol. vi., Third Series, pp. 60-61.

and immediately under the flat lead-covered roof, are some store-rooms which must have been frequently subjected to harsh usage and much change. A few steps more and the roof is reached, round the battlements of which there is the usual narrow way. The turret tops have entrance from this path. The leaden capes and the three upper courses of masonry towards the front are quite of recent date, and evidently the result of kindly watchfulness over the grand old Towers, which, for nigh four centuries, have weathered every storm, and proudly borne the name of the gallant Fifth James.