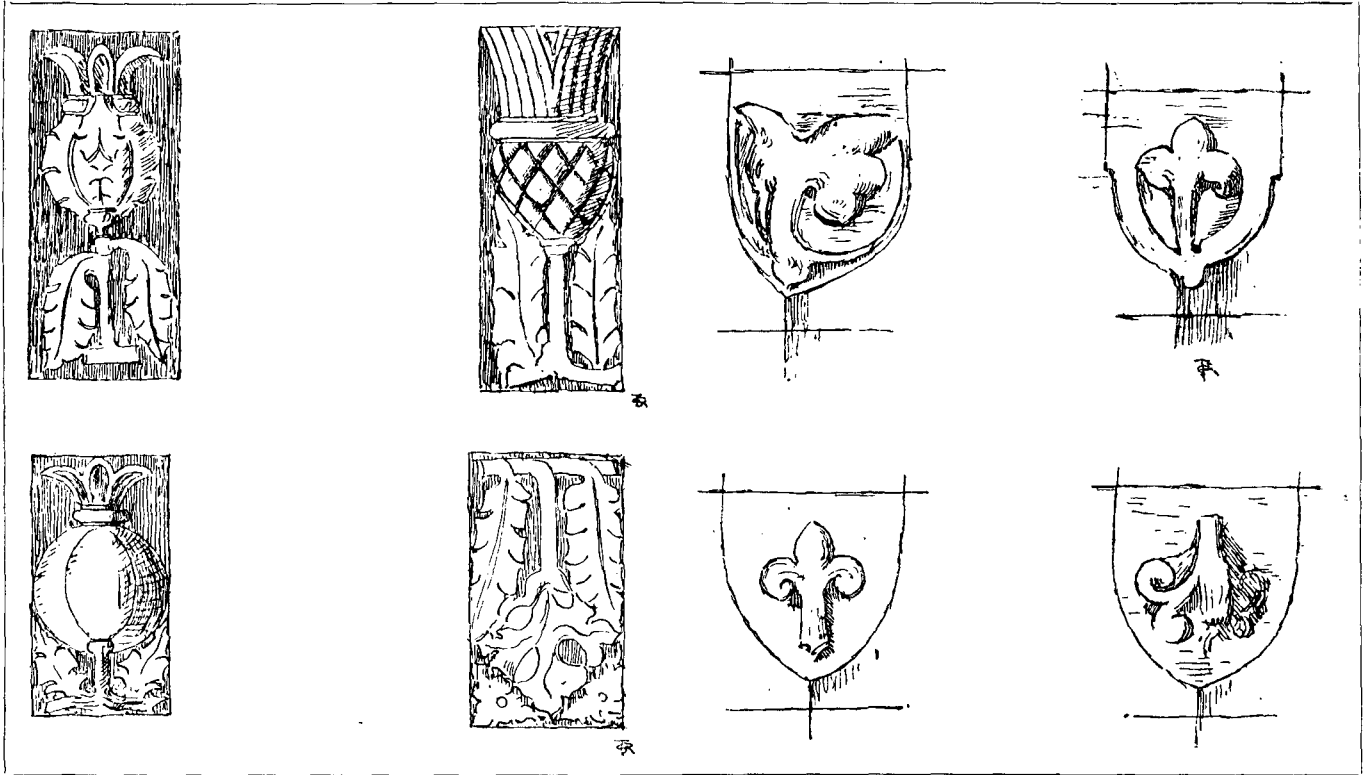


IV.

NOTES FROM KIRKWALL. By T. S. ROBERTSON, F.S.A.Scot.

Kirkwall Cathedral is the most remarkable building in Orkney. As a work of art, its beauty and purity of style can be fully appreciated by its numerous visitors, and it is peculiarly interesting to the antiquary on account of the known dates of its foundations, and several subsequent additions and alterations. But it requires more study than the writer of this paper was able to give it, on account of the shortness of his visit to Orkney. He saw, however, a few interesting details, which seem to have been hitherto overlooked. On the west wall of the south transept of the cathedral there is enclosed within a railing a collection of pieces of sculpture in stone and wood, which for the most part belongs to the 17th and 18th centuries, and amongst these there are four panels and part of a canopy in the Gothic work of the 15th century in oak, of which sketches are here given. The sculptures of the 17th and 18th centuries are properly arranged, but one of the Gothic panels is turned upside down. By this, one is reminded of the difficulty of understanding without a special education the meaning of conventional art. At the east end of the cathedral, which corresponds in style with the Early English, the splays on the angles of several of the outside buttresses have sculptured base terminations, of which here are a few slight sketches.

St Ola's Church in Kirkwall is also interesting. Here is a sketch of its late round-headed door, which, although simple, is perhaps unique in decoration. The usual hollow moulding on its jamb and archivolt contains a spaced ornament, which seems to have been executed by a mason who had not been able to draw or model, but who, in spite of his



Sculpted Panels and Base Terminations at Kirkwall Cathedral.

want of skill, produced flowers as bold and effective as the most learned sculptor could have done. The designer, however, like all real artists, made the most of his materials, and the capacity of the man who worked under him.

There is a house in the main street which has a round-headed door, with a projecting moulding like that of the chimney-pieces so common in the late castles of Scotland. It may be of interest to note that this house is dated 1668.