

III.

FURTHER NOTES ON TEMPERA-PAINTING IN SCOTLAND, AND OTHER DISCOVERIES AT DELGATY CASTLE. BY A. W. LYONS, F.S.A. SCOT.

Since my last communication to the Society of Antiquaries on *Tempera-painting* (vol. xxxviii. p. 151), Mr Fred. R. Coles was good enough to bring under my notice two other buildings, Huntingtower Castle and Delgaty Castle, wherein further examples of that peculiarly quaint style of decorative painting were to be seen.

With a view to giving some additional interest to the former series of water-colour drawings, I purpose including a few detail sketch-notes of others, mostly already dealt with, but by way of comparison of the work in many of these examples as well as the two to which this paper particularly refers.

In neither of these two examples do we find those qualities so richly possessed by many of the others in good design, fine drawing, and juicy colouring. But with all these deficiencies they are far from being uninteresting, if for no other reason—a personal one perhaps—than the technical education and delight their close examination and study have given me. They reveal not only the many peculiarities of a peculiar style, but the “technique” of an extremely quaint and now almost forgotten art, besides enabling us to have a peep at a phase of Scottish life, and telling something of the manners and customs prevalent towards the end of the sixteenth and the early part of the seventeenth century, when the idea of the mansion began to predominate over that of the castle.

Many of these paintings show remarkably fine detail carefully drawn and cleverly painted. Evidence of this may be instanced¹ in the Montgomery aisle (figs. 1 and 2), the painted roof in Falkland Palace, which

¹ *Proceedings*, vol. xxxv. p. 109, and vol. xxxviii. p. 159.

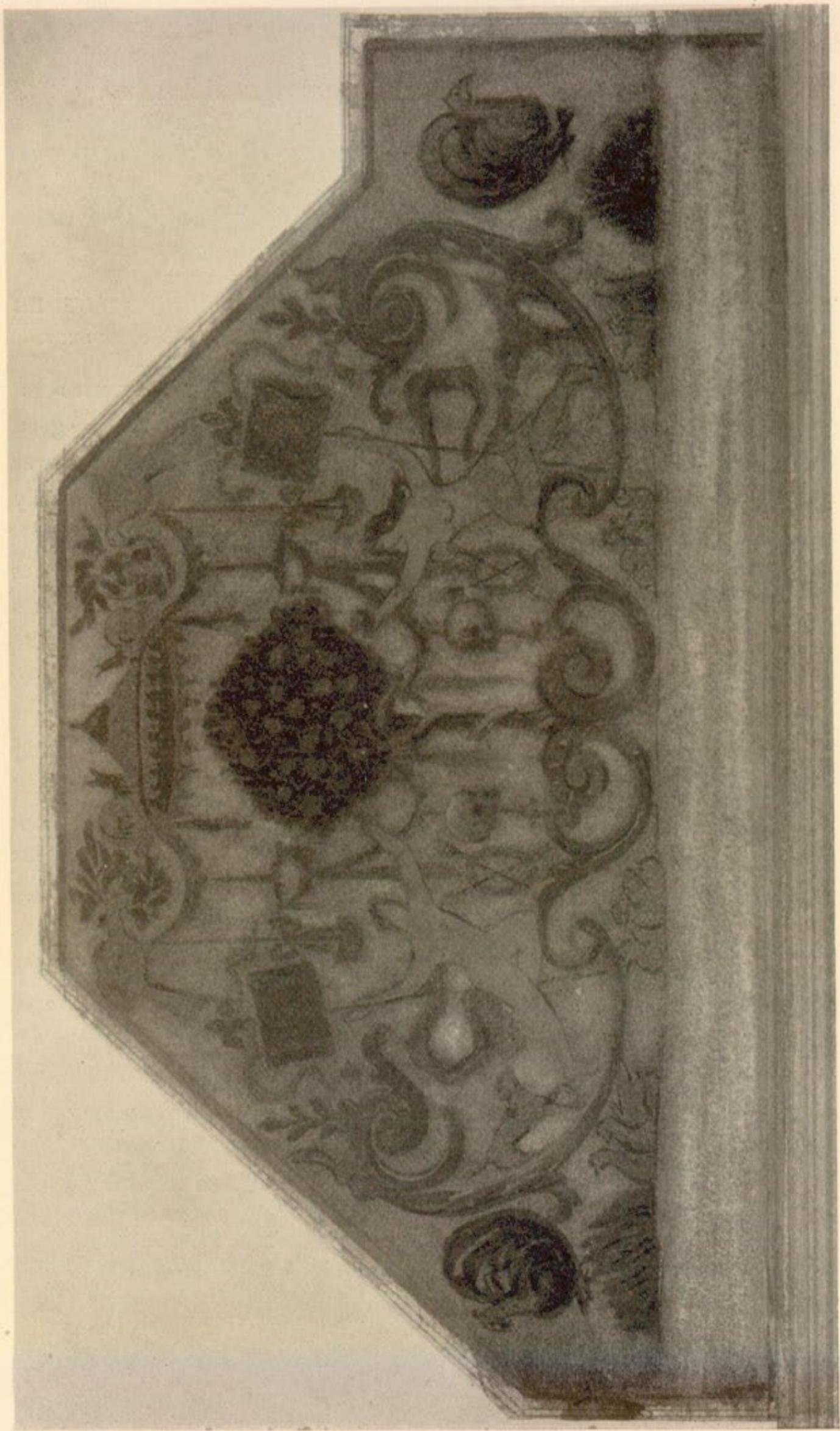


Fig. 1. Panel in the Ceiling of the Montgomery Aisle, Largs.

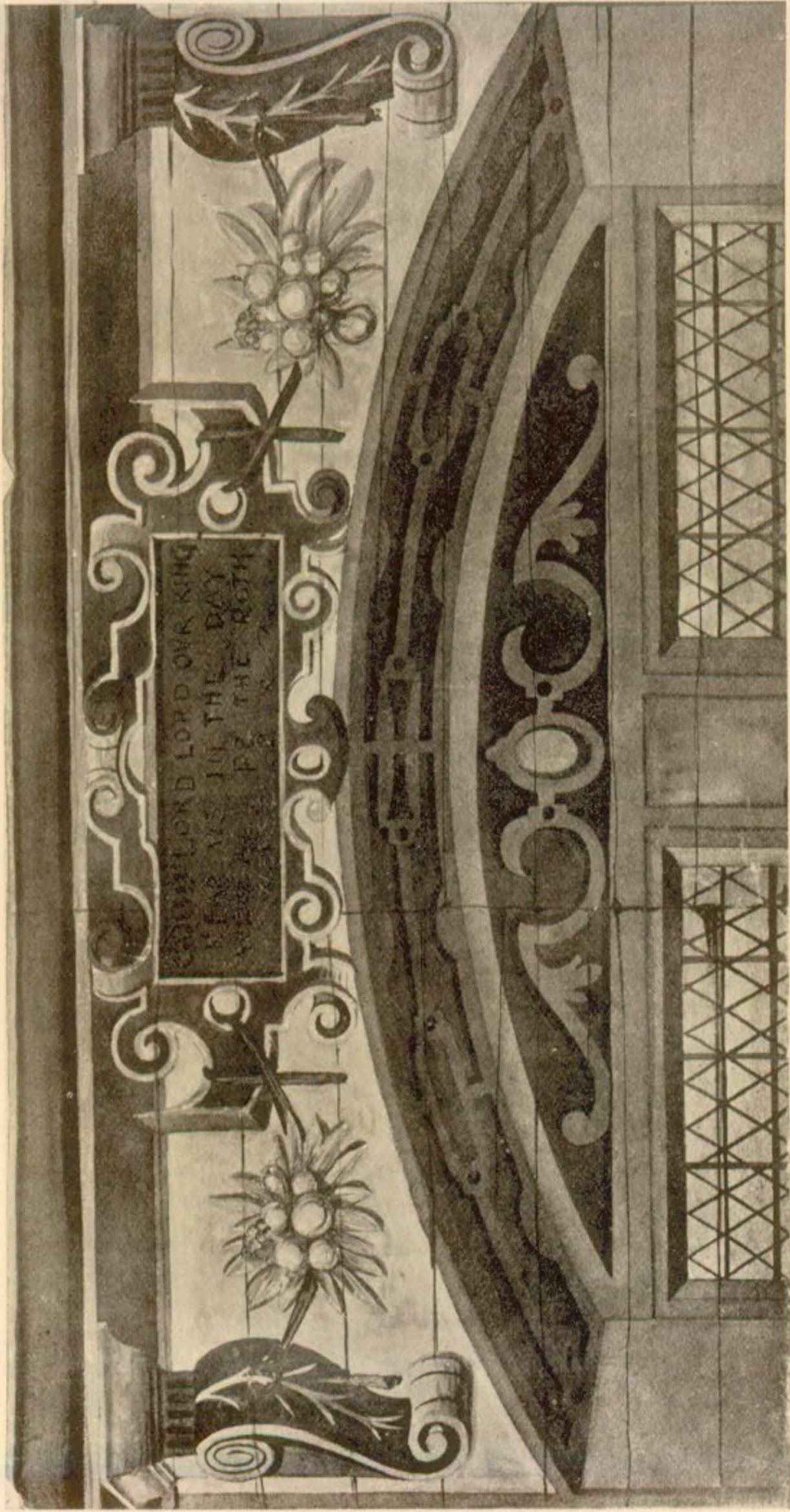


Fig. 8. Portion of Frieze in the Chapel Royal, Falkland Palace.

is particularly fine, and the frieze in the Chapel Royal, Falkland Palace (figs. 3 and 4).

The illustration giving a view of the Royal pew as restored (fig. 5)



Fig. 4. Panel to right of the Frieze shown in fig. 3, at the Chapel Royal, Falkland Palace.

also shows the older portion of the painted frieze immediately above, which was traced out for the Marquis of Bute in 1896, and from which the water-colour drawing was made. It also formed the key for the restorations (or rather the entirely new paintings on fresh timber-boards)

based upon the old design. The older portions were never touched except in the tracing-out, when charcoal lines were used, and these were afterwards "varnish-fixed," so that now they can be much more easily seen than was originally the case.

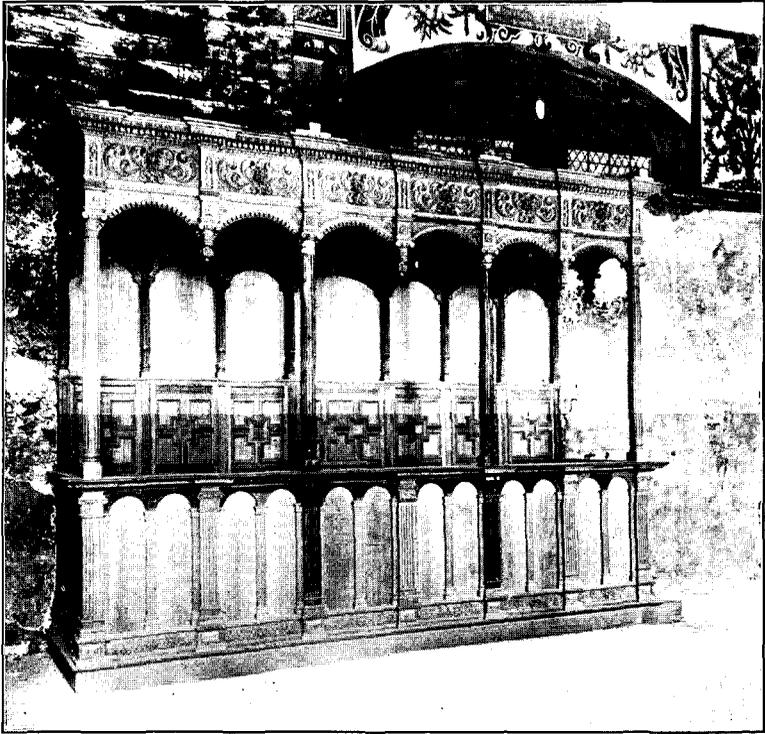


Fig. 5. The Royal Pew in the Chapel Royal, Falkland Palace.

A much ruder rendering reigns supreme in not a few other examples, chiefly those of the flat timber-joisted class, as may be seen at Cessnock Castle (figs. 6 and 7) and Aberdour Castle—a place which must have been very profusely decorated on ceilings and walls; even the doors themselves, as shown in fig. 8, have not escaped the paint-brush. A

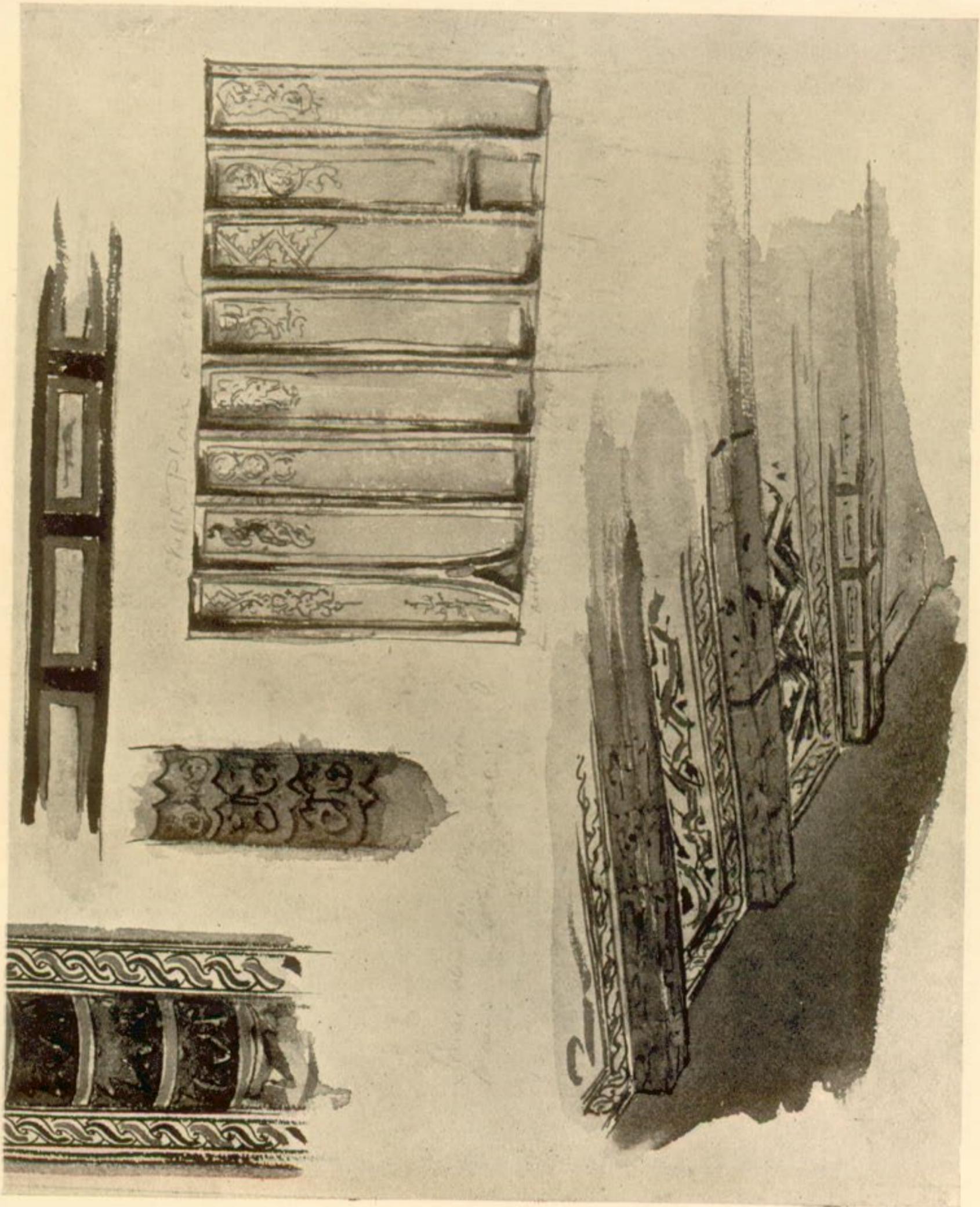


Fig. 6. Details of Ceiling of the Hall in Cessnock Castle, Ayrshire.

characteristic feature in this style of decoration is the heraldic-embazonment principle of colouring adopted in their production: a principle in capable hands—as no doubt many of these painters were—that is certain to meet with a good measure of success, besides having its reward in the permanency of the colours employed; for, after all, the range of colours is rather limited, and rightly so if permanency is to be a feature. It is more due to this, combined with the methods of application and manipulation, than to any other cause that much of this style of colouring has remained so astonishingly fresh even to this day.

Before dismissing the general subject, however, it may be interesting to note the numerous curiosities many of those paintings contain, full of fantastic humour—proverbs setting forth advice in wisdom, and quaint mottoes giving expression to sentiments of piety and hope—all, more or less, illustrative of a particular period, and serving to identify them with the time of the accession of James VI. (at the Union of the Crowns in 1603) and with the general outburst of congratulatory verse of every kind addressed to the new king.

HUNTINGTOWER CASTLE, PERTHSHIRE.

Huntingtower Castle, Perthshire, is situated about three miles north-west of the city of Perth, on the Crieff Road. Formerly known as Ruthven Castle, it has much historical interest. It was the scene of the incident known as the Raid of Ruthven, which took place in 1582.

The building, or rather buildings, because there are two towers, are now sorely dilapidated, and it was not without misgivings that Major W. L. Mercer and myself set out on our investigations.

After spending some considerable time in searching over the building, many indications, although very much obliterated, were traced giving sufficient evidence that this was yet another place whose apartments had borne much of that quaint, decorative work.

As may be expected of a building in such a ruinous state, we never

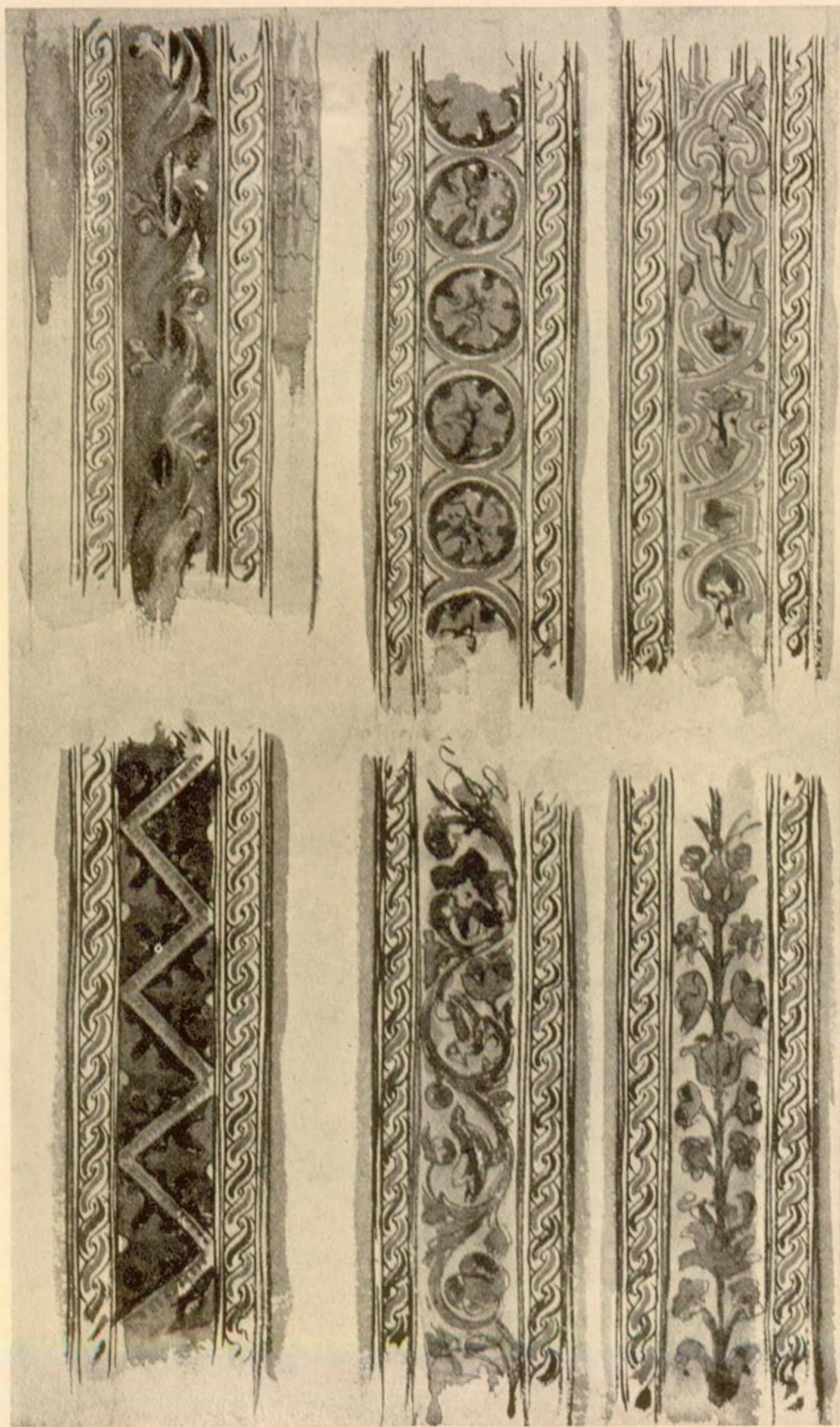


Fig. 7. Details of Ceiling in the Hall, Cessnock Castle, Ayrshire.

anticipated meeting with very much more success than that already attained by the indications of fresco traced in one of the windows.

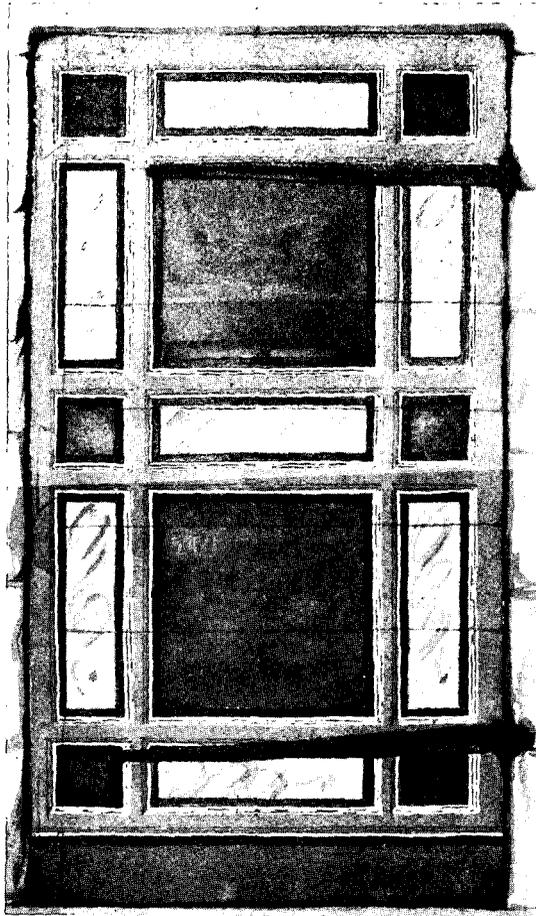


Fig. 8. Tempera-painted Door in Aberdour Castle.

- Acting on former experience, however, it was decided to lift the flooring-boards of an upper room, and there the usual discovery was

made. The original timber-joisted roof beneath, now plastered over, had its panel surfaces coarsely painted with a lozenge-shaped interlacing in black on a white ground, while the principal beams and cross-joists were decorated with a rude kind of "ermine" powdering in white on black, and black over yellow.

The present lath and plastered ceiling may have been, as Major Mercer suggested, placed there by the Duke of Athole after the forfeiture of the Ruthven family, but I am rather disposed to think that the ceiling was painted for the Athole family. The plastered ceiling is of much more recent date.

The evidence for this belief is strongly borne out by the heraldic-embazonment principles of colouring to which I have already alluded as being a striking and characteristic feature in this style of decoration. The colours employed are *or* (yellow) and *sable* (black), the colours of the Athole arms. The ermine powdering on the joists and the white ground of the panels may safely be taken as representing the "fur" and the white taffeta lining of the coronation robes worn by a duke.

Another prevailing tone in many of those paintings is their striking family sameness, not only in similarity of design but in actual technique. In comparing several points in the details of some of those ceilings, such as Huntingtower and the examples exhibited in Dundee Museum in 1894 and 1896, as well as parts of the work at Delgaty, the manipulation in the painting and the method of colouring have a remarkably close resemblance in "touch," as if by the hand of the same painter.

DELGATY CASTLE, ABERDEENSHIRE.

Delgaty Castle, Aberdeenshire, has much more interest to invite attention. It is situated about two miles east of Turriff, and remains to this day in splendid preservation, being "one of the finest specimens of the baronial mansion¹ which is still inhabited."²

¹ See the *Scottish Historical Review*, "A Northern Baronial Mansion," by James Ferguson, K.C., vol. vi. p. 248.

² At present by Ainslie Douglas Ainslie, Esq.

There is no doubt that the present building was preceded by a castle or keep of much greater antiquity; but whether the ancient walls were entirely removed it is somewhat difficult to determine, although in my own survey of the building the thick walls of the original tower seem to have remained and to have been used in plan, altered internally, and roofed in with the more modern extensions erected at various times to meet the requirements of later dates.

The time under discussion, however, is that of the painted ceiling—a time when many of those old castles were renovated for more modern purposes and the improved mode of living.

The walls of many of these apartments, especially in the finer examples such as Holyrood Palace, Pinkie House, and Falkland Palace, were undoubtedly hung with tapestries, while others of a ruder type of building containing in most part flat cross-joisted roofs appear to have had most of their wall-surfaces timber-lined, and decorated in designs of some geometric pattern. Such geometric designs were not uncommon at that time, and, like all the other portions of the decoration, seem to have been greatly influenced by the finer examples of French and Italian mediæval art.

Delgaty Castle owes much of its extreme interest to Miss Rachael Ainslie Grant-Duff, to whom I am greatly indebted for much information and for the facilities afforded me in taking my notes and making the water-colour drawing. Besides being a very able artist, she seems to have a faculty for discovering rare and curious things in and around this fine old castle, and the unique collection she has brought together transforms this room—which contains the painted ceiling—into a veritable museum.

The timber-joisted roof (figs. 9 and 10) is 18 feet 4 inches long by 14 feet 2 inches wide, divided into nine long compartments by ten cross-joists, each varying in width from $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches to 5 inches broad by $7\frac{1}{4}$ inches deep. It had been lathed and plastered over for sixty years previous to its discovery in 1885. The colouring is remarkably fresh,

with the exception of the faces of the beams. These, as may be expected, would become somewhat obliterated in removing the lath and plaster ceiling.

At the outset this gives another example of the "principles of colouring" to which I have already referred. The colours contained in the Hay and Forbes armorial bearings are distributed throughout the entire ceiling, and especially the two panels flanking the central panel which bear the three "lucky shields of Scotland" standing out in all their pomp, and reminding us of the legendary narrative of the honours conferred upon "Hoch Hay" and his two sons at the battle of Luncarty.

The two side panels are "impaled" in the colouring, as in the Hay and Forbes impalement of their shields, upon a ground indicative of the colours as contained in the charges of the Hay coat of arms.

The ornamentation also bears that family likeness to much of the work on the roof in Aberdour Castle,¹ and the lettering to that on the sides of beams at Collairnie Castle.²

There are figures of various kinds represented on the ceiling—grotesque and semi-bestial: a merman playing a violin, quaint flower-vases, heraldic wreaths, floral, architectonic, and other varieties of ornamentation.

The dexter side of the centre panel gives great prominence to the blazonry of the Hay family, who appear to have descended from a second brother of the first Earl of Errol: *arg.* a cinquefoil *az.*, between three inescutcheous *gu.*, surmounted by a helmet and motto, encircled by a rather broadly treated laurel-wreath, flanked by the supporters—somewhat primitively attired—holding the ox-yokes, and the initials A. H. for Alexander Hay of Delgaty.

The shield on the sinister side of the same panel represents the impaled armorial bearings of Hay and those of the family of Forbes

¹ *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries*, vol. xxxviii. p. 155.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 156 and 157.

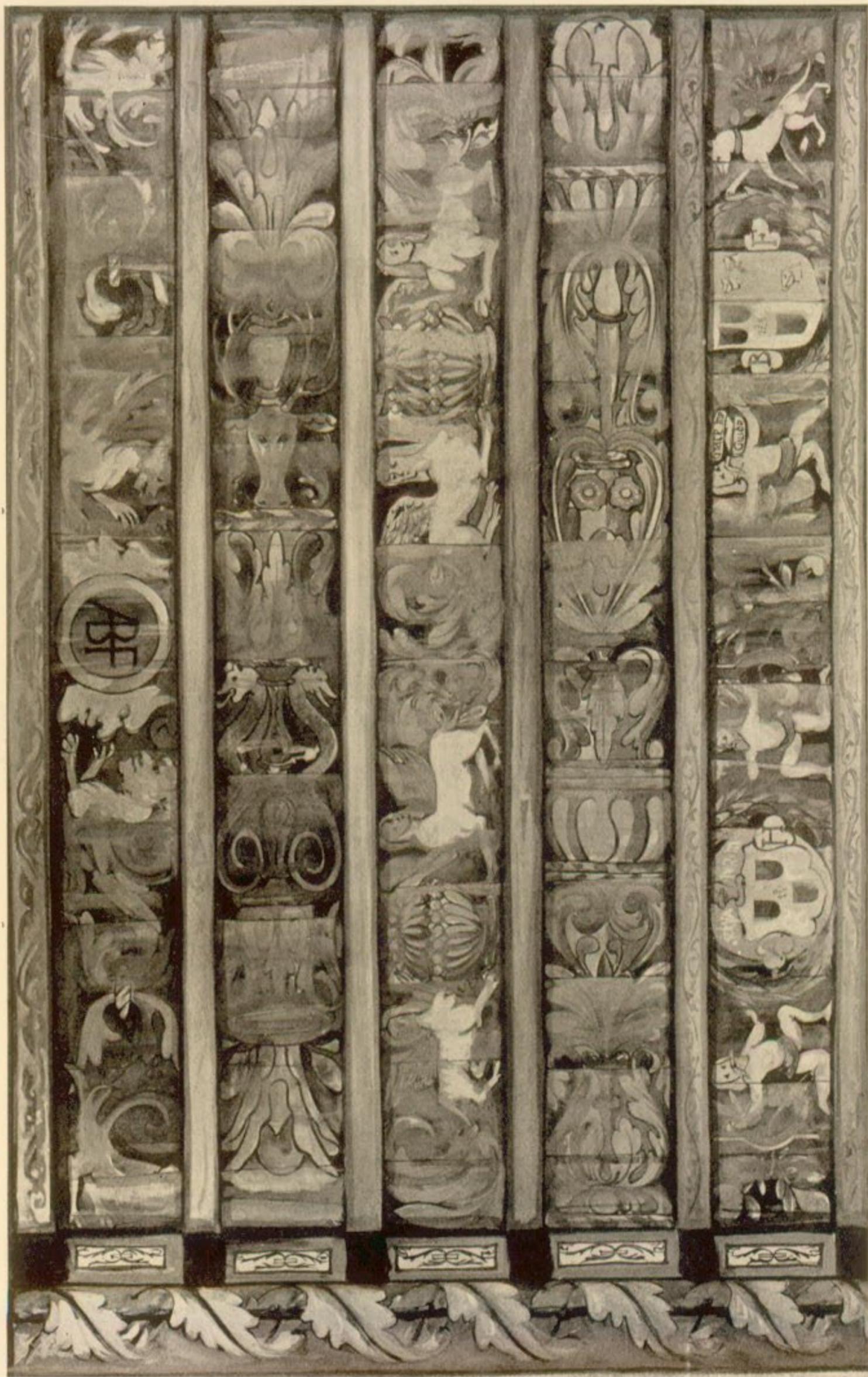


Fig. 9. Half of the Painted Ceiling in Delgaty Castle, Aberdeenshire.

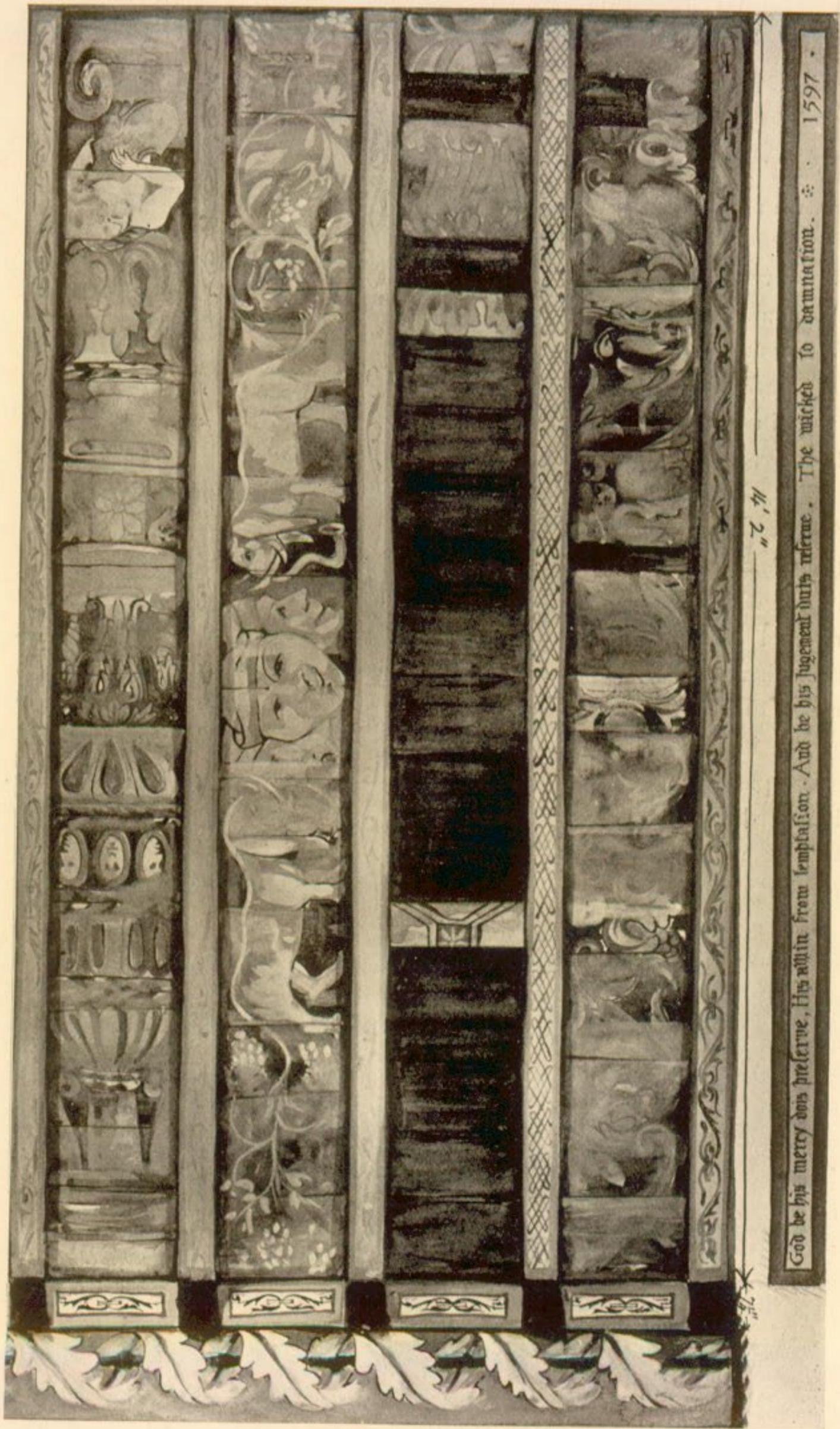


Fig. 10. Half of the Painted Ceiling in Delgaty Castle, Aberdeenshire.

—*az.*, three boars' heads, coupéd *arg.*, muzzled *gu.*, encircled with laurel-wreath as on the other, bearing the motto "Grace me guide," flanked by their respective supporters, with the initials B. F. for Barbara Forbes, the seventh daughter of William, seventh Lord Forbes, who married Alexander Hay of Delgaty—her second husband. The combined monogram of these four initial letters, as shown in the centre of the first panel drawn within a broad circular band, may be looked upon in a symbolical sense as the matrimonial tie uniting those two families.

The stag's head, although treated decoratively, has its presence explained by the Forbes crest—a stag's head. The elephants, with their fantastic trunks and floriated tails, seem to have some connecting link with the family of Oliphant. Laurence, first Lord Oliphant, married Lady Isobel Hay, daughter of William, first Earl of Errol, so that there is every reason to believe that such a family reference is meant to be conveyed. The crude rendering of the three heads, represented in different ways and in separate panels, retains much of the grotesque element, although the clue to their interpretation is perhaps indicated in the three larger heads with chapeaux, as meant to represent the three Kings, the Magi, or "Wise Men of the East," associated with the birth of Christ.

The carved stone (fig. 11), now inserted in the gable-wall of the Old Church at Turiff, has no doubt the same biblical reference. The carving, like the painting, is very crude; but it is interesting in the fact that even with the lapse of time the work of the chisel has a most striking resemblance in technique to that of the brush, as revealed on the painted ceiling, and in all probability both were the work of the same hand. The history of the stone seems to be unknown, but its present position is to be regretted. Exposed as it is to the elements, it will soon be obliterated beyond all recognition. Its proper abode, whatever its history may be, is in Miss Grant-Duff's unique and historical collection, if not in the keeping of the Society of Antiquaries.

The whole painting with its many interesting features has a most delightful framework in the sixteen lines of quaint sayings lettered on the sides of the beams in German black-text with red capitals on a white ground. There seems a little inconsistency in the spelling of some of the words and a curious mixture of styles in the capital letters; but these minor deficiencies, along with the slight renovation a few parts have undergone, do not rob it of its interest as being one of the



Fig. 11. Carved Stone in the gable wall of the Old Church at Turriff.

most complete and best-preserved examples of a quaint art. The quotations have been found to be taken from a book entitled *The Treatise of Moral Philosophie containyng the Sayings of the Wyse, Sette foorth and enlarged* by Thomas Paulfreyman. The date of the original publication of this treatise is 1547. I have not been able to discover any definite association with the date on the ceiling—1597.

The lines of quotations, so far as could be traced, are very complete. The style of the lettering is shown in fig. 10. They are as follows:—

1. God resisteth the proud in eberie plaice, Bot to the humill he gibes his grace. Trust not therfore, to ritches, bewtie or stryngth. All these be vaine & sall consume at length.
2. Flye cobetousnes & also from prodigalitie. For nether of them agreeth with honestie. Quhen thou hes to doe with thy gryter, eith with
3. Quhair that he heris or seis, Quhiddir they be truth lawis or lies, Quhair ebir he ryddis or gois he shall have few freindis & many fois.
4. Thou quhilk health of bodie do habe, The best erthlie gyft that ebir god gabe, Habe pitie on them that suffer affliction. So sal thou enioye deathie
5. Gyf a gude turn into the hes sein brocht. Remember their upon, And foryet it nocht; For god, law, & natur, condemnis the Ingrat. The vilitie of that vice notang cand delat.
6. Do gude unto strangers ebir be myn advyce, For in so doyng thy honestie sall arisie, For quhy it is a far better thyng, To habe freindis, than be a king.
7. The freindis whome posyt or lucre Increase, Quhen substance fayleth their withall will seas. Bot freinds that ar coupled with hart & love, Nether feir, nor force, nor fortune may remobe.
8. Thy awin deith, and Christis passion, This fraudfull warld, and hebinlie gloir, The eternall paine and damnation, Se thou remeber ebir moir.
9. Gyf thou be afflicted, be one that is riche, Either be bered be a man of might. To suffer it quietlie think it not muche. For oft be suffering, men cum to their richt.
10. Go labour in thy youth to conqueis sum rent, To support the puir, the neddy and pacient Thou art more blest to gyf, not to take. The puir man's cause is aye put abake.
11. Quhen men be auld, they usen oft to tell, Of their dedes past, other gude or bad. Therefore in thy youth order thyself so weil, That of thy dedis to tell thou may be glade.
12. For tyme never was, nor never I thynk sall bee, That treuth on shent sall speik in all thyngs free. Ane Just man tren & leill, His saw sud be his seill.
13. Both hatred, love & their awin profit, Cause Judges oftymes the treuth to foryet. Purge all these vices therfore from thy mynd. So sall ryt reule the, & thou the treuth find.
14. Weil war the man that wist in quhome that he main trust. Weil war the man that kneu the fals be the
15. God be his mercy dois preserbe, His awin from temptation. And be his Jugement duis reserbe the wicked to damnation. 1597.
16. About all thing, love God abobe, And as thyself thy nyghbour love; So sall thou keip the teine commandis, Quhilk god wryt with his awin handis.

The painted scroll-frieze in most part had become almost obliterated, and in places it has been repaired ; but in the original portions its technique betrays itself as having a rightful claim to be considered as of the same period as the painted ceiling. I am rather convinced that the painted geometrical design shown in fig. 12 has had more to do with the

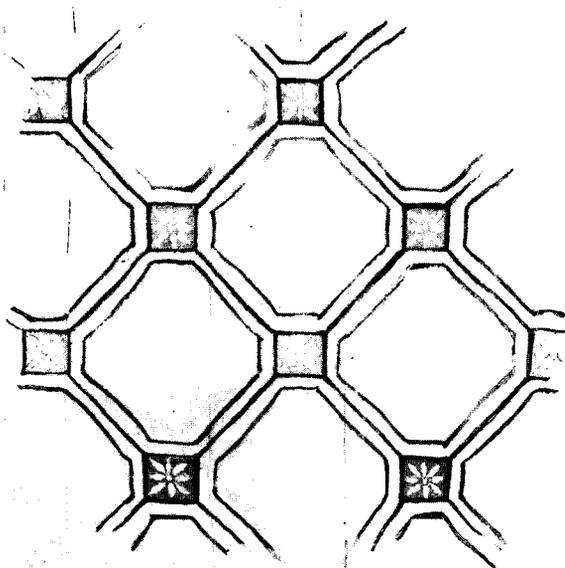


Fig. 12. Painted Geometrical Design at Delgaty Castle.

decoration of this apartment than the painted frieze. The design as shown—extended—is in the same heraldic colours as those in the armorial bearings. It is based upon the smaller and original portion now inserted into the second last panel on the ceiling. It is very interesting that this small portion of painted timber-lining has been inserted—although it has no meaning on the roof,—because it proves beyond any doubt that much more painting must have existed throughout the building than that already brought to light.

It also makes me slightly suspicious that the greater amount of the painted timber-lining has been removed from its original position to be split up and used as lathing in the plastering of the ceiling of a more subsequent date.¹

Another and later discovery at Delgaty was a beautiful piece of

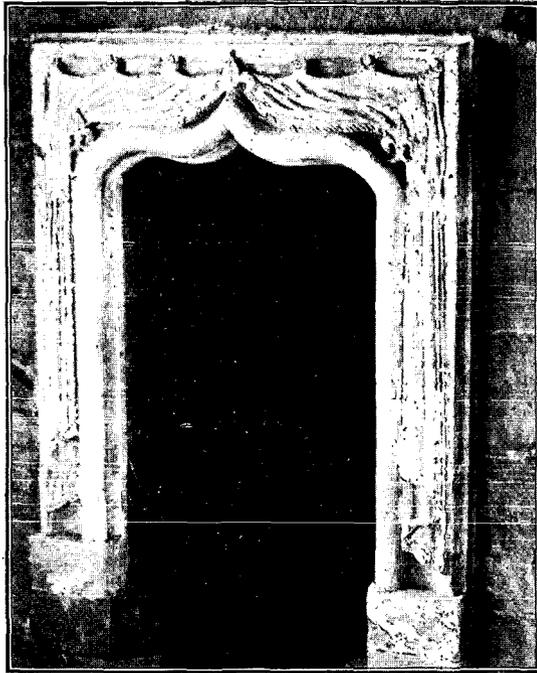


Fig. 13. Gothic Niche at Delgaty Castle.

carving in stone which had been buried in an old chimney. The design is that of a depressed Gothic arch, measuring 3 feet 3 inches by 4 feet 1 inch, and bearing a carved representation of a draped curtain caught up in the centre, and tucked at either side by a fleur-de-lis. It has every appearance of having been a shrine, and most probably was

¹ This was discovered to be the case at Elgin Priory in 1897.

taken from the chapel. Evidently those who hid it were anxious for it to be well preserved, as it was carefully wrapped in moss and the stonework in front was very carefully and solidly built. When found, the carving was in three pieces and has since been set up in the fireplace of the chimney.

An interesting tradition existed at Delgaty that the records had been burned by a mad woman. There was nothing to further this tradition until the discovery of a large amount of charred parchments in a turret which was entirely walled up until about ten years ago.

The entrance to the secret passage has unfortunately been lost; but evidence has been forthcoming at various times to suggest its existence. To whatever other uses the passage may have been put, it is extremely likely that it was a means of escape during the Catholic persecutions. This seems probable, as the passage lay in the direction of Kinninmonth, which was a great refuge for the Catholics and has been described as a very "Cave of Adullam." Many famous and cultured men from the colleges of Douay and Clermout took shelter there, among them Father Anderson, who is known to have been there in 1611. We have in his own words a vivid description of his perils. He says: "The ministers are searching for me everywhere, but I have many times escaped their hands by an evident miracle." Another name associated with this place is that of Father John Ogilvie, on account of whose execution in 1614 great indignation was felt in the neighbourhood.

In conclusion, I should like to add a few notes taken in Aberdeen on my way home from Delgaty Castle. An old building at 45 Guestrow has lately undergone some extensive renovation, and is at present used as a common lodging-house.

The stone carved door-heads and other parts, besides the various plastered ceilings, all bear evidence of their having been done for the Skene family. Whether or not the whole of the building belongs to the same period is uncertain, but the outward structure and the internal treatment of the various rooms rather point to the early eighteenth century. The portions to which I wish to refer are the bits of painted decoration

brought to light in the recent renovations. In what seems to be the older part of the building there is a small apartment—probably a portion of what may have been a much larger room partitioned off—having a tempera-painted roof, which, although very much faded, gives the room the appearance of having been used as a private chapel. The subjects represented are evidently meant to portray the Ascension, the Crown of Thorns, and the Five Wounds. The surrounding framework and other ornamentation are chiefly composed of fruit and foliage. Interesting though these features are, it is very doubtful if sufficient gutting has taken place to give decisive proof as to the extent and nature of the decorative work revealed on the roof of this small apartment.

The other interesting part of the building is in a small panelled room of more recent date—an ante-chamber, no doubt; but the painting—in oil—almost permits my imagination to associate it with the stage-coach and tavern days, its chief characteristics being those exhibited in the many examples of “blob”-painting, so peculiar to the early part of the eighteenth century. The panels have their surfaces entirely occupied by extremely bold imitations of nondescript marbles, while the styles and mouldings are very profusely decorated with groups of figures, buildings of various kinds, besides landscapes and other ornamentation. The technique—of Flemish influence—is very bold, firm, and skilfully done, revealing the hand of a dexterous craftsman.

The methods of many of these earlier craftsmen and their productions are well worthy of close examination and study, because of the fact that it is the productions of artists rather than their lives that make the history of art.

Although in this later period of decoration there is a decided line of demarcation separating it from the earlier tempera-paintings, yet the links are sufficiently close to form quite an interesting chain of evidence, showing beyond a doubt the great extent to which these decorative paintings must have been prevalent throughout Scotland.

Many of these paintings of both periods, in tempera and in oil, if not the finest of art treasures, are certainly unique as being the pro-

ducts of particular times and a peculiar temperament. The work of the eighteenth century appears to have had its crowning effort in Alexander Runciman's famous production at Penicuik House, about 1780, unfortunately destroyed by fire in 1899.