

I.

NOTE ON SOME SIXTEENTH-CENTURY NEEDLEWORK HANGINGS IN
DALMAHOY HOUSE AND IN THE ROYAL SCOTTISH MUSEUM.
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In the paper which I had the honour of reading to the Society last year upon three hangings of sixteenth-century needlework, I referred to three strips of needlework of similar character belonging to the Earl of Morton and preserved in Dalmahoy House. Through Lord Morton's courtesy I have been able to obtain a photograph of these strips, and I have also, through the courtesy of the Director of the Royal Scottish Museum, obtained photographs of two strips of the same kind of work which at one time were in the collection of the late Sir Noël Paton, and are now in the collection in Chambers Street. For the sake of convenience I shall refer to the set of hangings I described last year as the "Rehoboam set," as they depicted the history of that monarch; Lord Morton's set I shall refer to as the "Dalmahoy set"; and the Royal Scottish Museum set as the "Museum set."

As I mentioned last year, the Rehoboam set and the Dalmahoy set have much in common, and accordingly the date of the former has an indirect bearing on the date of the latter. I must, therefore, ask you to pardon me for going back on my last year's paper for a few minutes.

Last year I flattered myself that I had made out a fairly good case for identifying the Rehoboam set of hangings with the Rehoboam tapestries inventoried in Mary of Guise's effects in 1561. My reasons were briefly (1) family tradition that they had belonged to Mary Queen of Scots; (2) the beauty of the design and workmanship; and (3) the improbability of there having been in Scotland at that date two sets of hangings depicting the story of Rehoboam. This last reason was, of course, the strongest, and, unfortunately for me, it has fallen to the ground. Mr Warrack has drawn my attention to the fact that in the inventory of James V.'s effects in 1539, reference is made to tapestries depicting the history of "Roboam," six pieces being mentioned. Between that date and 1542 five of these pieces have disappeared from the royal possession, for another inventory of his effects in the latter year mentions only one piece as remaining. Now, although the existing Rehoboam hangings (three in number) may still be those mentioned in the inventory of 1561, and with the one mentioned as remaining in 1542 make up the total of four therein referred to, the costumes depicted make it quite impossible for them to have been those inventoried in 1539. It is obvious, therefore,

that there were in Scotland in the sixteenth century at least two sets of hangings depicting the history of Rehoboam, a fact which considerably modifies the strength of my argument. Furthermore, when this fact was brought to my notice I deemed it necessary to subject the costume to a much more careful analysis than I had before attempted, with the result that I have now doubts as to the date of the needlework being as early as 1560.

Perhaps I may be allowed to mention here, as a parenthesis, that the more I have looked into the question of the costume of this period, the more difficult I have found it to come to a decision as to the date of any particular dress in the second half of the sixteenth century unless when extremes of fashion are depicted. For practically fifty years the ladies wore close ruffs and open ruffs according to the occasion and to taste, farthingales, head-dresses, and hats of very similar character; while the men wore ruffs or linen collars indiscriminately, hose and trunks of various sorts, cloaks long and short, with and without sleeves, and hats of a various and nondescript character.

That I am not alone in experiencing this difficulty is evident, for Planché writes in his *British Costume*: "The large trunk hose, the long-waisted doublet, the short cloak or mantle with its standing collar, the ruff, the hat-band and feather, the shoes and roses are all seen in the earliest paintings or prints of this period, and the positive date of the introduction of either seems to be a difficult and debated question even to those who lived nearest the time." Thus Randal Holmes, writing in 1660, states: "About the fortieth year of Elizabeth the old fashions which men used at the beginning of her reign were again revived, with some few additions made thereto, such as guises, double ruffs, etc." It is, therefore, with extreme diffidence that I put forward my opinion as to dates based on costumes; still there are certain points, often small ones, that give an indication of whether the costume is early or late, and it is to these I shall refer.

With this explanation I shall turn first to the Museum hangings (two in number) (fig. 1), because they seem to me to be the earliest in date. They are thus referred to in the private catalogue of the late Sir Noël Paton: "(No. 558, piece of tapestry in frame) Queen Elizabeth receiving an embassy, probably the proposal of marriage from Philip of Spain—of much interest for costume, etc.; 4 feet 10 inches by 1 foot 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches; from Murthly Castle": "(559, piece of tapestry in frame) Queen of Sheba before Solomon—also most interesting for costume, same suite; 58 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches by 1 foot 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches; from Murthly Castle."

As will be seen, Queen Elizabeth is seated on her throne with her ladies-in-waiting, while the Spanish envoy, accompanied by two gentle-

men-in-waiting and a small page (who is extremely difficult to make out), is handing her a letter. I would draw attention to the bodices of the ladies, which are square cut at the neck, the upper part of the bust and throat being filled in with what seems to have been known as a "partlet." This shape of bodice is practically the same as that in use in



Fig. 1. Needlework Hangings in the Royal Scottish Museum.

the reigns of Henry VIII. and Mary of England, only in these reigns it was left open at the throat and neck.

Turning to the skirts, these are not so voluminous as they are to be found later on in the period. As you will see, they open in front, showing the underskirt and producing the effect of an inverted V-shaped panel. As a whole, the female costumes much resemble that of Mary of Guise, as shown in her portrait in the National Gallery, London. I would also point out the fan in the queen's hand, which is of feathers, and which is of the earliest form of fan of the period.

Turning to the men's costume, the hats are of an early form of the

period, and attention may also be directed to the band round them formed of twisted silk. Not that this gives much of an indication of date, for although it is the earliest form of hatband, it is found in use well on into the next century. The doublets show little of the "peascod" shape, which reached its extreme development during the reign of Henry III. of France; the hose and gartering are of an early form.

The shoes are slashed in a way common until the end of the century, but they seem to be a little puffed at the toe, which would indicate their being of an early form.

Turning to the other Museum hanging—namely, King Solomon receiving the Queen of Sheba,—King Solomon is seated on his throne, which strikes one as being a little ungallant, while the queen approaches him, her train being carried by two maids-in-waiting. The style of the ladies' dresses is still more definitely marked than in the other picture, and the costume of the men is more assuredly early. In particular, it will be noted that the shoes of the male figure in the right-hand corner are of the pattern worn in the reign of Henry VIII. known by the name of "Bear's Paw Shoe." On the whole, I am inclined to think that these two pieces date about 1560.

For the purpose of comparison I now refer to the Rehoboam tapestry (fig. 2). As already stated, I think that this is of very much the same date as the Dalmahoy hangings. The costume is much the same in both, although there are one or two distinctive features in each. Perhaps it is in the ladies' costumes that we see the similarity most marked. In both sets of hangings it will be noticed that the ladies' bodices are now cut high to the throat without the intervention of a partlet; note should also be made of the fact that one of the figures bears a muff, a point to which I shall afterwards refer. The men for the most part wear the double linen collar, and not the ruff. Nothing as to date can be deduced from this fact, as both kinds of neck-gear were in use during the latter half of the sixteenth century, and both may often be seen appearing side by side in the same picture.

It will be observed that the men's doublets are much more "peascod" shaped than those shown in the Museum hangings, while the upper hose, or breeches, are of a totally different character, being comparatively tight and coming down to below the knee, where they fasten in an unobtrusive way. These, I think, are of the kind termed "Venetian," and they are to be met with from the middle of the sixteenth century to well on in the seventeenth. In fact, they must have made their appearance before 1550, if Planché is correct in stating that Desperriers referred to this class of garment in derision as "culottes," for Desperriers committed suicide in 1544. They were particularly fashionable at the French Court about 1580.



Fig. 2. "Ane tapestrie of the historie of Roboam," mounted on a screen.

I would also draw attention to the shoes, as they are similar to many in the Dalmahoy tapestry. It will be observed that they show slashing only at the heels, and I failed to find a representation of any shoe of exactly this pattern. I feel sure that this peculiarity is accounted for by the fact that the figures are wearing over their ordinary shoes slippers known as "pantobles" or "pantoffles," from the French *pantoufles*. These slippers had no back part, and, according to Stubbs, when walking about the streets it was necessary for the wearer to kick his toes against stones, sticks, etc., in order to keep them on. He also mentions that many strained their legs from the sole of the slipper only reaching halfway under the heel. This peculiarity will be clearly seen in these representations. Of course the use of such slippers permits of only the back part of the slashed shoe being seen.

I would also draw attention to the earrings worn by the courtiers. This, again, is a custom, examples of which are to be found from 1547 onwards; amongst other portraits where these appear is one of Henri II. of France. It was, however, in the reign of his son, Henri III. (1574 to 1589), that the custom became most fashionable at the French Court. I should be inclined to assign these hangings to this period were it not for their similarity to the Dalmahoy hangings.

To these hangings (fig. 3) I shall now turn. These are even finer than the Rehoboam hangings in fulness of design and in general decorative effect, although they have not been so well preserved. They are also of more particular interest in that they are said to have been worked by the Maries of Mary Queen of Scots during their imprisonment in Loch Leven Castle—that is, between the middle of June 1567 and 2nd May 1568.¹

Looking to the fact that Loch Leven was a Douglas stronghold, and that the head of the Douglas family, the Earl of Morton, was a leading man at the time, and was regent of the country immediately after this date, that he is known to have laid his hands on everything he possibly could, and that the hangings are now in the possession of his descendants—the pedigree is an extremely good one. In fact, it is so good that, unless one found something represented of a proved later date, one would feel bound to accept it, and use the hangings as a basis for dating costume, rather than attempt to date the hangings from extraneous knowledge. So far as I am able to judge, there is nothing shown in the hangings which can definitely be said to be of later date than 1568, although there are two objects depicted which are not generally supposed to have been

¹ Nothing has been said either in this or in the former paper as to the designer of these hangings. Whoever he was, he must have been an artist of no mean capacity, and the point is one of considerable interest. After Queen Mary had been a month in Loch Leven Castle she asked for "an imbroderer to draw forth suche worke as she would be occupied about" (Stevenson's *Selections*, Maitland Club, p. 220), but history is silent as to who was sent.

in use quite so early, viz. muffs and closing fans. Muffs, according to the French archæologist Monsieur Quicherat, were novelties in France in the reign of Henri III.—that is, between 1574 and 1589,—and he refers to the fact that there was then no name for them, the word “manchon” at that time, and for long afterwards, meaning the sleeves which came

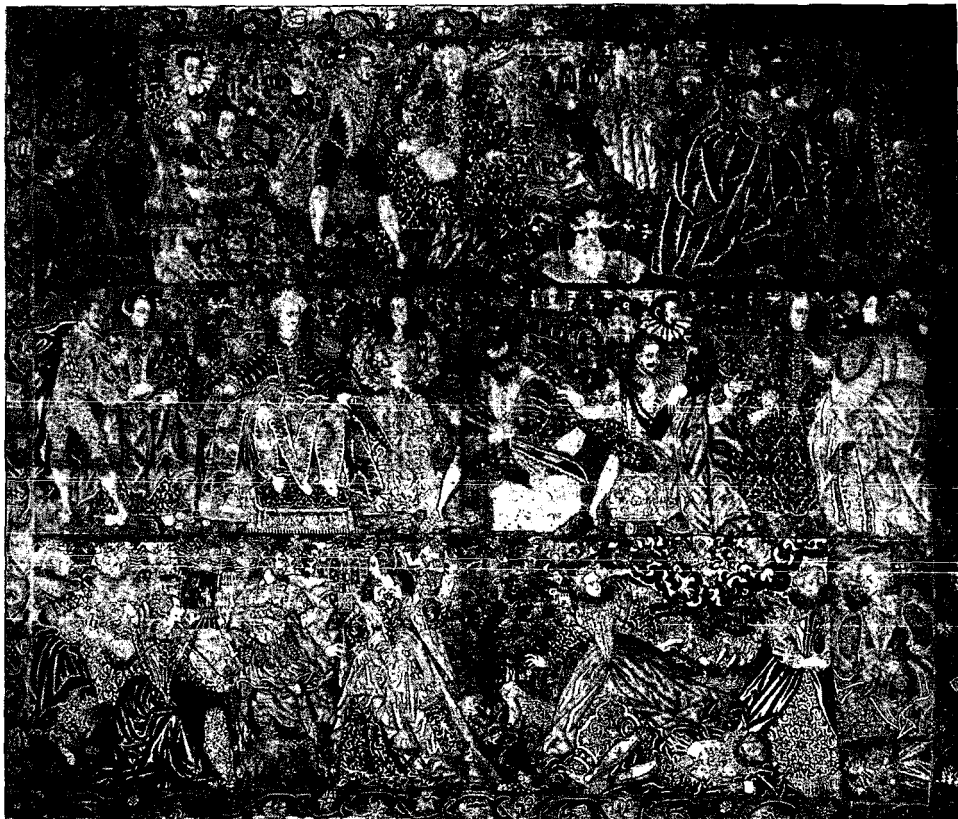


Fig. 3. Needlework Hanging belonging to the Earl of Morton.

down to just above the elbow. Stubbs, who wrote in 1581, and who took note of most things to do with dress, does not refer to them.

The earliest recorded picture of a lady with a muff to which I have seen reference occurs in a work by “Gaspar Rutz,” published in 1588, where the muff is shown as hanging by a cord from the lady’s waist. If, therefore, we accept the date of these hangings, the examples of muffs in them and the Rehoboam set are probably the earliest known. In the

same way, although feather fans of various kinds were common by the middle of the sixteenth century, Fairholt expresses the view that folding fans did not come into use until the beginning of the seventeenth century. He is, however, mistaken in this, for in a picture in the Louvre representing the festivities at the marriage of Duc de Joyeuse in 1581 folding fans are clearly depicted. The hangings before us therefore only set back the use of these articles by a year or two.

Glancing, generally, at the costume, which is marvellous in its magnificence and detail, it will be seen how much it resembles that shown in the Rehoboam hangings. The courtiers, however, do not wear earrings, and have long cloaks and ruffs instead of short cloaks and linen collars. The doublets are rather more markedly "peascodded" than those in the Rehoboam suite, and the men, instead of wearing their chains round their necks, wear them over their shoulders and round their bodies like bandoliers. I have failed to find any exact contemporary representations of chains worn in this way. In this set the pantoffles are again in evidence, though some of the figures are without them.

The figures of the queens in the two top strips have very peculiar discs on the upper part of their sleeves—the design in the one case being of a formal brooch-like character, and in the other the face of the sun in his splendour. I have seen nothing like these in any illustrations of costume. It may also be noted that the footstool of the throne is *semé* of fleur-de-lis. Does this indicate that she is a French queen?

I believe that at one time these hangings were rather neglected; at all events, it was necessary to have them patched together, and it will be noticed that the figure in the top left-hand corner, and also the figures in the bottom right-hand corner, have been sewn in. These may, or may not, have belonged to the original suite. Personally, judging from their appearance, I think they did not. This may be a matter of considerable importance, as I shall show hereafter.

The question that most naturally arises in regard to these hangings is, What story do they represent? I am sorry to say that this story has not as yet been identified, although it is obviously of a most romantic and dramatic nature.

The top strip apparently depicts a king and queen dancing in a garden to music played by a courtier on a guitar and by a lady on a clavichord, which has as a support a most decorative dragon. There is also a delightfully fat queen either arguing or dancing, it is difficult to say which, with another king in the right-hand corner, while two ladies-in-waiting watch in the background.

The middle strip depicts a queen on her throne apparently watching one of her courtiers having his leg cut off by a most murderous-looking

saw, his stocking having been drawn down his leg and made into a roll round his ankle. Or it may be that the roll is a fetter that is being removed from the victim's foot, which would be more in keeping with his comparatively cheerful appearance and with the fact that his stocking and shoe have been left on.



Fig. 4. Figure with Muff bearing Letters.

In the lowest scene we have what appears to be murder, pure and simple, as there is a gallant stretched in the foreground with an arrow through his temple, surrounded by a bevy of distracted females, while a classical warrior makes off with a bow in his hand. In the background there are the figures of a man and woman lying together in a garden, either asleep or dead, while in the clouds above them Jupiter and an Elizabethan-clad goddess are shooting arrows at them. The decorative effect of the whole is wonderful, but what does it all mean?

I referred above to the figure of the lady in the right-hand bottom corner, who, I thought, did not form part of the original design. As will be seen (fig. 4), she has a muff in her hand, and that muff has on it the duplicated letters as shown in fig. 5.

These in many ways resemble the trade-marks put upon tapestries by their designers and makers in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, but they are not the same as any of the recorded specimens. It will be observed that, as the circle with the stroke through it is an old way of indicating 1000, all these letters have a numerical meaning, and the question arises, Do they indicate a date, and, if so, what date? The letters have been in every case doubled, but one is inclined to think this must have been done for decorative purposes, and that they are intended to be read single. Of course, they may be initials of those who plied their needles at the work, or they may have been added as a jest by some worker, but one would much like to know what they mean.

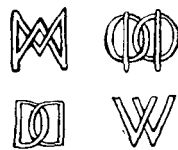


Fig. 5.

I may add, in conclusion, that none of these hangings show any signs of three fashions which were common during the last quarter of the century, viz. shoes of more or less modern design with big rosettes; lovelocks hanging down to and along the shoulder; and gauze or net cloaks with transparent collars standing up behind the head and having

the appearance, more or less, of wings, so common in the pictures of Queen Elizabeth and Queen Mary.

No doubt the shoe with the rose is found about the middle of the sixteenth century, but it is not common until the last quarter of it, and the absence of these three fashions is in favour of the view that these hangings date prior to 1570.

Up to the present I have dealt entirely with figures and costumes, but the garden scenes depicted and the landscapes in the background, especially those in the Dalmahoy set, are well worth careful study. The buildings, ruins, and scenery as shown in the latter have a distinct suggestion of Southern Europe, and I would draw attention to the bay surrounded with houses, and with shipping in it, seen behind the antique warrior as perhaps having something to do with the story.

All three sets of hangings show many different kinds of flowers, most of which can be identified. Amongst others, there is a fine specimen of the Scottish thistle in the Rehoboam set, occupying such a prominent position as to suggest a compliment to the nation. I cannot close this note without also referring to the quaint collection of animals, birds, insects, and reptiles, which add to the decorative effect and are in themselves of no small artistic merit.