

II.

NOTE ON A CLOTH OF ESTATE TRADITIONALLY SAID TO HAVE BEEN WORKED BY MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS AND HER LADIES WHEN IN ENGLAND. BY W. BALFOUR STEWART, F.S.A. Scot.

This cloth of estate, which is traditionally said to have been worked by Mary Queen of Scots and her ladies, is the property of Miss Power, who succeeded to it through her ancestors the Jermyns of Rushbrooke Hall, Suffolk. The cloth has been in possession of the Jermyn family for several generations, but how they became possessed of it is not known, nor is there any history of it prior to that time.

About 1834 Rushbrooke Hall, was let, and the tenant had so little regard for this cloth that he used it for a rug in the billiard-room. When it began to look shabby he gave it to a cottager, and the owner, Mr Jermyn, on his return found that it was being used as a bedcover, and redeemed it for a payment of 2s. 6d. It was "restored" by his daughters, with rather unfortunate results.

So far as can be judged, the lozenges and ovals were void of design, and were no doubt intended to contain a design worked on finer material to be superimposed on them. It will be seen, however, that the four shields which have been superimposed upon the lozenges in the four corners do not exactly fit these lozenges, but spread over their limits and interfere with the general design. Furthermore, the material on which the cordelière border is worked, although finer than that of the carpet, is not so fine as the material on which the shields are worked, so again we have the doubt as to whether the border and the shields belong to one another. The owner, however, states emphatically that these shields, with their crowns and the cordelière border surrounding them, were art and part of the original design. What was in the other lozenges and ovals is not known, except that there is a tradition that the oval in the centre contained the design of a tree with a cardinal's hat. The cloth still shows traces of gold thread worked through it.

In 1834 Miss Jermyn, afterwards Lady Trevelyn, the daughter of the Rev. George B. Jermyn, then the owner of this cloth, wrote to her father that she had seen a cloth of similar design in Edinburgh, and sent him a description of the same. He replied that his cloth corresponded exactly with his daughter's description of the cloth in Edinburgh, except that the Edinburgh one contained crowns and ciphers; that similar crowns and ciphers may at one time have filled the worn-out ovals in his cloth, although he thought one or two of these ovals contained human figures.

As there were always two cloths of estate used on state occasions, one forming a carpet and the other a canopy, it would be of much interest

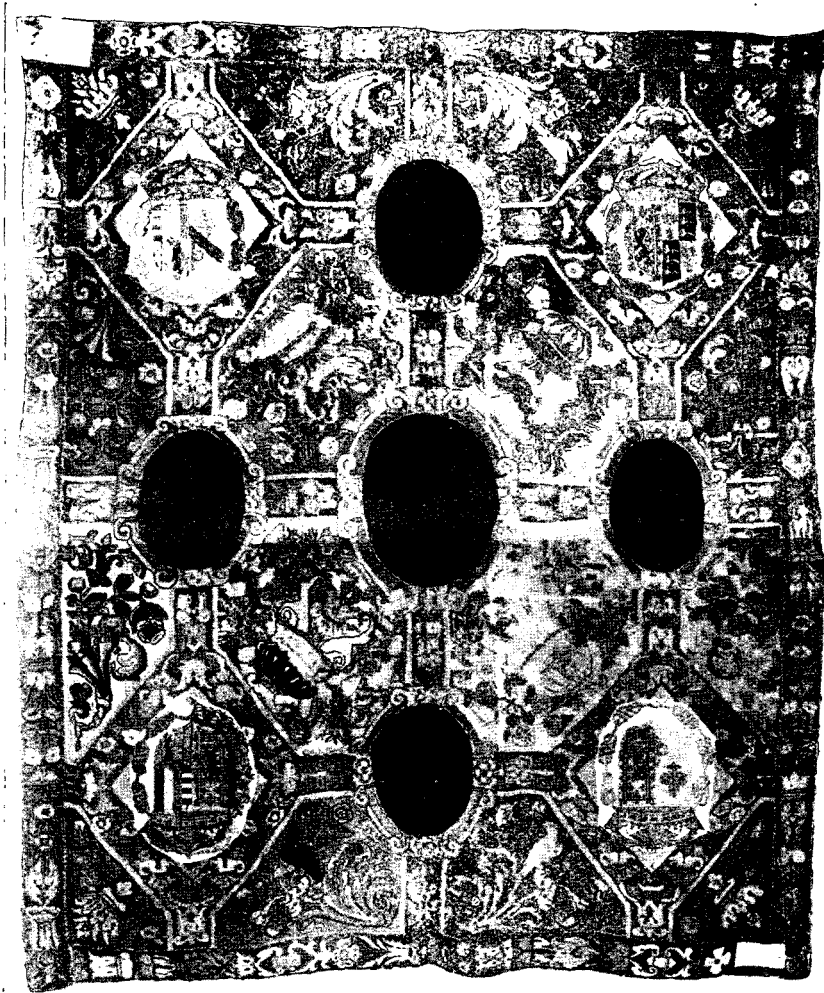


Fig. 1. Cloth of Estate traditionally said to have been worked by Mary Queen of Scots and her Ladies.

to compare the subject of this note with the cloth of estate referred to in 1834 as being in Edinburgh, and perhaps some member of the Society may be able to give some information as to what has become of it.

In the inventory of the effects of Mary of Guise handed over to her

daughter, Mary Queen of Scots, in November 1561, the following description of a cloth of estate may be referred to as showing a considerable resemblance to the example before us:—

“4. Item ane claith of estate of claith of gold and drauchtis of violett silk partit equalie with violett velvet, quhair there is the armes of Scotland and Lorayn with crownit cyphers all in broderie furnesit with thre pandis and the taill all freinyeit with threid of gold and violet silk.”

The cordelière knotting round the shields, to which after-reference will be made, was quite a known form of decoration in the sixteenth century, as the following extract will show. It is from the same inventory, and is taken from the description of another cloth of estate: “And upon the silver cordeleris knottis of gold quhair of thair wantis sum fassis.”

It may be mentioned that the cordeliers, or cord-wearers, were the strictest branch of the Franciscan friars, so called on account of their wearing a girdle of knotted cords, and were at one time a very powerful order, especially in France.

A note appended to this same entry clearly indicates that these cloths of estate were not all worked on the one piece, for we read: “In Julii 1566 it was broken to put crammosie velvet in place of the claith of silver. It is in Striveling.” Obviously here the cordelière knotting was superimposed on the cloth of silver and not worked on it, and this separability between groundwork and decoration is confirmed by other references in the same inventory, more particularly in relation to bed hangings.

The following is a note of the shields by Mr J. Paul Rylands, F.S.A.:—

On this cloth of estate there is a pictorial pedigree of Mary Queen of Scots in four escutcheons of the arms of her paternal and maternal grandparents, her father and mother, and herself. These shields are not now in regular order, and it is probable that they were misplaced when the work was repaired. As they now stand we have: (1) the queen's maternal grandparents, (2) her paternal grandparents, (3) her own arms, and (4) those of her father and mother.

The escutcheons are:

(1) Quarterly of eight: 1st, Hungary; 2nd, Naples or Sicily; 3rd, Jerusalem; 4th, Arragon; 5th, Anjou; 6th, Gueldres; 7th, Flanders; 8th, Bar; with a label of three points gules, and Lorraine on an escutcheon of pretence; impaling the Bourbon (Vendome) arms dimidiated. This shield is for Claude de Lorraine, Duke de Guise, and his wife Antoinette, daughter of Francis de Bourbon, Comte de Vendome.

When the tapestry-work was repaired, the three lions passant-guardant argent were omitted from the bend in the Bourbon coat.

(2) The royal arms of Scotland; impaling the Tudor royal arms of England. This shield is for James IV. and his wife Margaret, daughter of Henry VII.

(3) The royal arms of France dimidiated; impaling the royal arms of Scotland. This shield is for Francis II. and his wife Mary Queen of Scots.

(4) The royal arms of Scotland; impaling the arms of the Duke de Guise, described above. This shield is for James V. and his wife Mary, daughter of Claude de Lorraine, Duke de Guise.

Each of the four shields is ensigned with a French arched crown, the coronet being composed of fleurs-de-lis and fleurons (strawberry leaves) alternately. The same crown appears, above two shields of France and Poland, on the title-page of Jerome de Bara's *Blason des Armories*, 1581. It is not the correct coronet of the French king's crown, which was composed of fleurs-de-lis only, but seems to have belonged (necessarily without the arches) to the French princes other than the children of the king; an example of this coronet may be seen above the arms of the Princess Margaret d'Angoulême, Queen of Navarre, sister of Francis I., in Fox-Davies' *Art of Heraldry*, 1904, pl. cxxviii., described on p. 450.

In Segoing's *Armorial Universel*, 1679, this coronet is described as the "couronne de prince," as distinguished from the "couronne de fils de France," which is composed of fleurs-de-lis only. In d'Eschavannes' *Traité complet de la science de Blason*, 1880, the same coronet is described as the "couronne des princes du sang," and the coronet with fleurs-de-lis only as the "couronne des enfants de France."

It would seem that the use of crowns and coronets in the sixteenth century was not exact.

Another peculiarity is that all four shields are surrounded by what seems to be the Cordelière, an order instituted in 1498 by Anne de Bretagne, after the death of her first husband Charles VIII., for widow ladies of noble families. The Cordelière was subsequently placed round the armorial bearings of many widows; it was so used by Queen Henrietta Maria after the execution of Charles I., and appears on her personal seal which closed a letter to her son Charles II., dated 22nd October 1651, in the Seaforth collection.