

## I.

NOTE ON A WATCH SIGNED "HIERONYMUS HAMILTHON SCOTUS ME FECIT 1595," WITH VIEW OF EDINBURGH CASTLE ON THE DIAL. BY SIR JOHN R. FINDLAY, K.B.E., F.S.A.Scot.

Little is known of the earlier Scottish watchmakers, though one of the most notable of early watchmakers in this country and the first master of the Incorporated Clockmakers was a Scot, David Ramsay, whom James VI., on his accession to the throne of England, appointed keeper of his clocks and watches. There are in existence a considerable number of watches signed by him, one of which bears the legend, "David Ramsay Scotus me fecit," and is described in the *Archæological Journal*, vol. vi. p. 415; another in the French style in the British Museum bears the same inscription. The watch illustrated (fig. 1) bears on the back the legend "Hieronymus Hamilthon Scotus me fecit 1595." Its origin, or at any rate the origin of its maker, is further emphasised by the fact that on the face, above the dial, it bears the Scottish crown surmounted by the Scottish lion sejant (fig. 2), and below the dial the fleur-de-lys surmounted by a crown. In the centre, in a circle within the dial figures, it has a representation of a hill surmounted by castellated buildings, flanked on the one side by buildings on a lower level, and on the other by a group of spires. In the foreground is open country, and between this and the abrupt ascent of the rock is a surface that might well be water. The scale is small and the buildings are indicated rather than drawn. They do not occupy the whole of the top of the hill but are crowded together on the left-hand side. There can be little doubt that it is intended as a representation of Edinburgh Castle, as seen from a point to the north-east sufficiently distant to enable the end of the town to be seen on the east, and perhaps the old church of St Cuthbert on the west. The watch itself is octagonal, of a type common about 1600. It is made of brass gilt, with a perforated case, and has but one hand. It strikes the hours on a bell fixed inside the back of the case. The general style of the ornament is very similar to that of a watch made by David Crayle in London about 1610, which is figured in Mr Britten's book, and to that of a watch made by M. M. in Augsburg in 1610, now in the Berlin Kunstgewerbe Museum. The ornament of the case-covers of the three watches is almost identical, consisting of a circle filled with a cross-shaped pierced ornament and surrounded by a ring which is filled with a tracery of cusped, heart-shaped perforations.

The general character of the case is undoubtedly South German, but it is not more German in character than the case of the watch signed "Richard Crayle Londini fecit." There is, however, one notable difference between the two. In the English watch there



Fig. 1. General view of Watch.

is but one row of twelve Arabic figures, as was the usage in this country and in France. In Hamilton's watch there is a second row of Arabic figures denoting the hours 13 to 24, inside the Roman figures. The cypher 2 is of the Z-shaped South German type, whereas in French and British work of the period the round-topped figure is always used. The numbering of hours from 1 to 24 is the Italian.

system of reckoning from sunset to sunset, which was only superseded about the middle of last century. It also obtained in Bavaria, and is to be found on most Augsburg watches of the period. Had it not

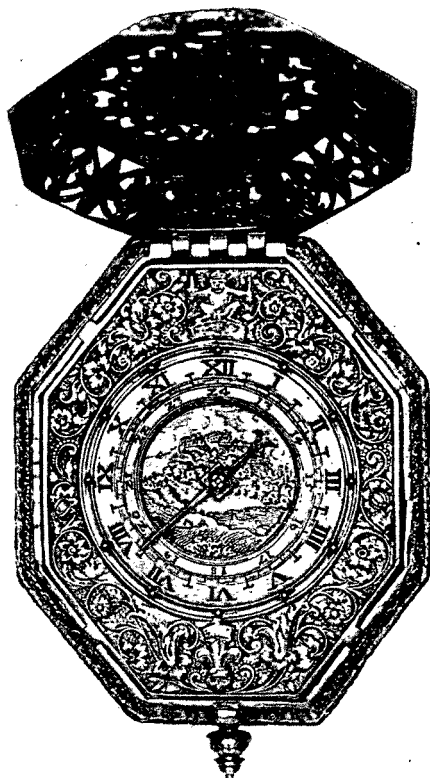


Fig. 2. Dial of Watch.

been for the inscription, the view of the Castle, and the Scottish emblems, the watch would be undoubtedly ascribed to some Augsburg maker. Yet inscription, emblems, and view are not of the nature of an addition to an imported article, and there is no reason to doubt that it is, as it professes to be, the work of a Scotsman. Whether this

Scotsman merely copied a German model, whether he had learned his craft in Augsburg, the centre of the industry in Bavaria, or whether it was made by him when in Bavaria, the evidence available does not enable us to determine. The figuring on the dial points to the latter view. But wherever it was made, the picture of the Castle on its face would seem to be the earliest extant view of the Castle as reconstructed by the Regent Murray after its destruction in the siege of 1573. The earliest accepted view of the Castle after it was rebuilt is that of Gordon of Rothiemay, which was made in 1647, fifty-two years after the date of the watch. Literal accuracy is not to be looked for in any representations of this period, and even if the engraving on the face of the watch had been executed from a careful drawing, it probably suffered a little in accuracy at the hands of the engraver. The disposition of the buildings, however, corresponds so closely with the seventeenth-century drawings of the Castle as to show that it is not a conventional representation, and must have been based on an original sketch. To the left can be seen the Palace buildings, below them being what might well be the Half-Moon Battery. In the centre is a higher building which is either part of the same building, or the building remodelled by Billings. Gordon of Rothiemay's view shows a similar arrangement. To the right are lower buildings with gable roofs, just about where one might expect to see Queen Margaret's Chapel. The general resemblance to the buildings which are known to have then existed, and to the skyline they would have presented from the north-east, is sufficiently close to indicate that if the watch, as internal evidence seems to indicate, were made in Southern Germany, the engraving must have followed a careful drawing of the actual buildings. To say more than this would be to go further than the evidence warrants.