

IV.

HERALDIC DECORATION ON THE CASTLES OF HUNTLY AND
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Amongst the outstanding features of Huntly Castle is the effective manner in which heraldry has been applied to the decoration of the structure, so that it is not merely a panel inserted upon the house but part of the architectural *ensemble*, and the result has been extraordinarily



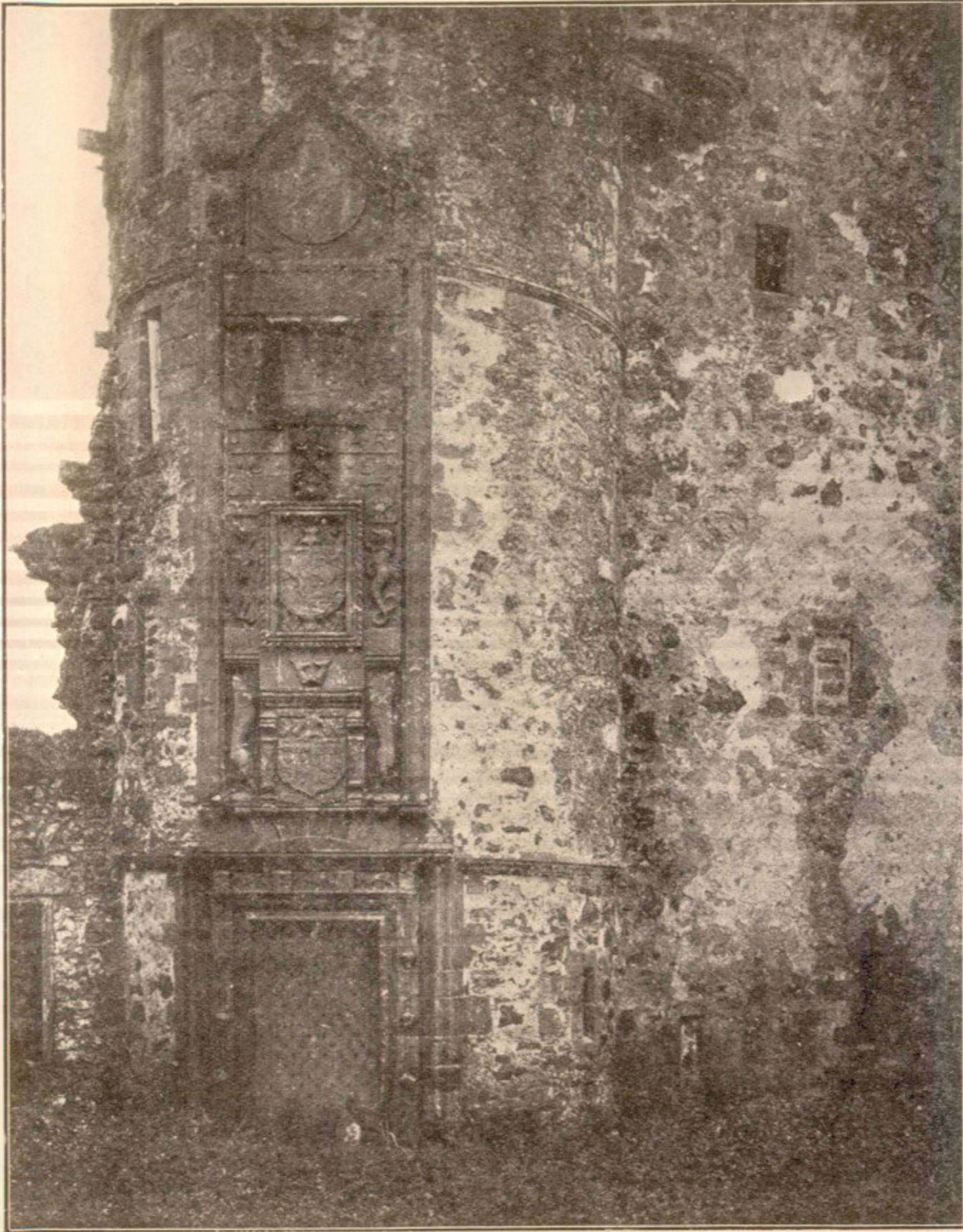
[Photo A. B. Beattie, Huntly.]

Fig. 1. Huntly Castle: view of "Palace" from the south after conservation.

picturesque, and indeed remains so even in its present damaged condition. Approaching the castle from the south we look up to a row of lofty bow windows, knit together by two great bands of lettering, containing the names of the builder and his wife—George Gordon, Marquis of Huntly, and Henriette Stewart, Marquise of Huntly (fig. 1). Design of this nature was not unknown at the period. Hardwick Hall exhibits another instance, but I know of no such stately example as the tall bow

windows crowning the lofty solidity of Huntly's massive palace. The lettering is separated by mullets, which in this situation are somewhat difficult to explain, unless they bear some subtle reference to the family claim to the oft-sought Earldom of Moray. That some heraldic significance is implied is evident from the appearance at the central window, of the fleur-de-lis of Darnley, the charge from the Marchioness's achievement. The dummy window above, however, displays a typical Scottish armorial tympanum with the quartered shield of the Gordons of Huntly; *1st* and *3rd*, the boars' heads of Gordon; *2nd*, three lions' heads for the Lordship of Badenoch; *3rd*, three crescents within a tressure for Seton; *4th*, three fraises for Fraser. Of the main gateway on the east no decorative traces remain, but from the decoration of the palace block one may infer that this also would be highly decorated, presumably with the arms of Huntly, immediately above the door, and over them the Royal Arms of Scotland, somewhat after the style which is still visible at Tolquhon. Within the courtyard, however, where the causeway leads to the great doorway of the palace, we find in the round staircase tower, which still exists of a height of some 45 feet, a composition which is probably the most splendid heraldic doorway in the British Isles, for achievement after achievement stretches up the side of the tower, connected by delicately moulded panels, so that when all was fresh and emblazoned in colour, and the corbelled turret above was complete, it must have been a truly imposing entrance (fig. 2). First, above the door itself come four small shields upon the over-lintel, charged respectively with (1) the quartered arms of Huntly, (2) the initials of the Marquis and Marchioness, (3) the arms of Lennox, (4) shield with date 1602. Between them are three animals, apparently greyhounds, creatures which have always been the Huntly armorial supporters. One is surprised that the initial and date should have been inscribed upon the two secondary shields, where one might have expected to find the arms of the Marquis's maternal ancestors, Hamilton and Keith. The opportunity for incorporating these does not, however, seem to have struck the builder, and since the Huntly's associations with the Royal Officers of Arms had too frequently been the arrival of "Letters of Treason" and other such executorials, no doubt the Marquis did not seek heraldic assistance in such matters—beyond the actual details of the bearings. The artistic composition is so much the more to the credit of the Marquis.

The long moulded façade of the tower displays four panels, of which the first contains the impaled arms of Huntly and Lennox, being those of the Marquis and his wife, Lady Henriette Stewart. These are



[Photo H.M. Office of Works.
Fig. 2. Huntly Castle: view of Great Door.

supported by the collared hound of the Gordons upon the dexter, and a somewhat damaged animal, which is presumably the wolf of Lennox, upon the sinister. It is noticeable that both the Gordon and Darnley mottoes are incorporated, and in the intervening space between the 1st and 2nd panel is an open crown in detail more of a Royal nature than the accepted pattern of crest coronet, which—if it appeared in the earlier work—*tempore* Mary Queen of Scots, may not have escaped her adherents when pointing out that Huntly was too magnificent a building for a subject. From the coronet, however, emerges not only the Gordon stag's head but also the bull's head of Lennox, a somewhat incongruous combination; but an exactly similar arrangement is found later on, in the memorial to Udny of that ilk at Newburgh, and the practice of displaying the crest of the wife's family along with one's own seems to have been fairly usual in seventeenth-century Scotland. In the panel above appears the Royal Arms of Scotland, impaled with those of Denmark, being those of James VI. and Anne of Denmark. The arms of the Queen show: quarterly, (1) Denmark, (2) Norway, (3) Sweden, (4) Gothland, and (5) in base, Vandalia. Over all dividing the first four quarterings, the cross of the Dannebrog and over all an inescutcheon, charged with an escutcheon *en surtout*. The two last are not carved, so the details were presumably painted only. The first should have shown quarterly, (1) Holstein, (2) Stammarn, (3) Ditmarken, (4) Lauenburg, whilst the escutcheon *en surtout* would have borne, per pale, dexter, Oldenburg, sinister Delmanhorst. Supporters on the dexter by the Scottish Unicorn, holding the Royal banner, and on the sinister the wyvern of Denmark, holding a banner charged with a similar wyvern. The badge of St Andrew is pendant beneath the Royal shield; and I would remind you that only eleven years later, in 1613, in Mennevius, *Deliciae Equestrium sive Militarum Ordinem*, details are given of what purports to be the rules of the Order of the Thistle, to which Order Bishop Leslie had also referred in 1578, and it is also referred to in a Sinclair pedigree dated 1590, in the Lyon Office. There is thus good reason to believe that the Thistle *as an Order* actually existed at and before this time. Indeed, it appears to have had its rise in the reign of James III., revivals under James IV. and James V., and thereafter to have been kept alive by the badge in the Royal Arms, though no revival as a knightly brotherhood took place until the reign of James VII. It is, indeed, somewhat curious that each of the revivals of the Order appears to have been associated with the banding together of a chivalric brotherhood in defence of the Church of Rome, whose tenets had indeed been introduced into Scotland along with the veneration of St Andrew.

Above this panel appears the Royal Crest of Scotland, the lion sejant upon the crown, whilst on either side appear the initials of King James and his wife: I.R.6, *Jacobus Rex, Sextus*, and A.R.S. *Anne Regina Scotorum*, whilst the Royal motto, IN DEFENS, has been got in by affixing it to a panel across the leaf-embellished moulding of the upper panel, wherein are depicted the emblems of Our Lord's Passion, above which appears the motto: "A B S N *Nobis gloriari nisi in cruce domini nostri Jesu Christe.*" In the moulded panel above this appears a blazing sun within a circle of clouds, along with the motto, *Divina virtute resurgo*,

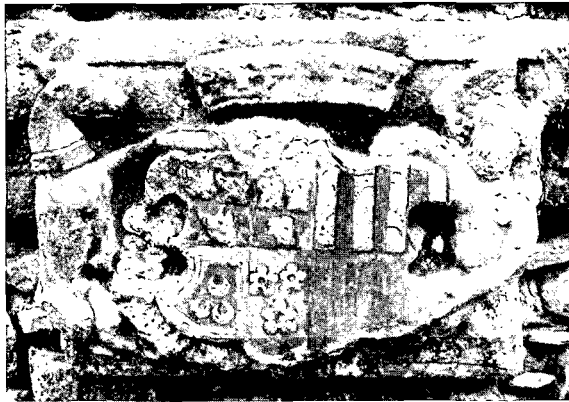
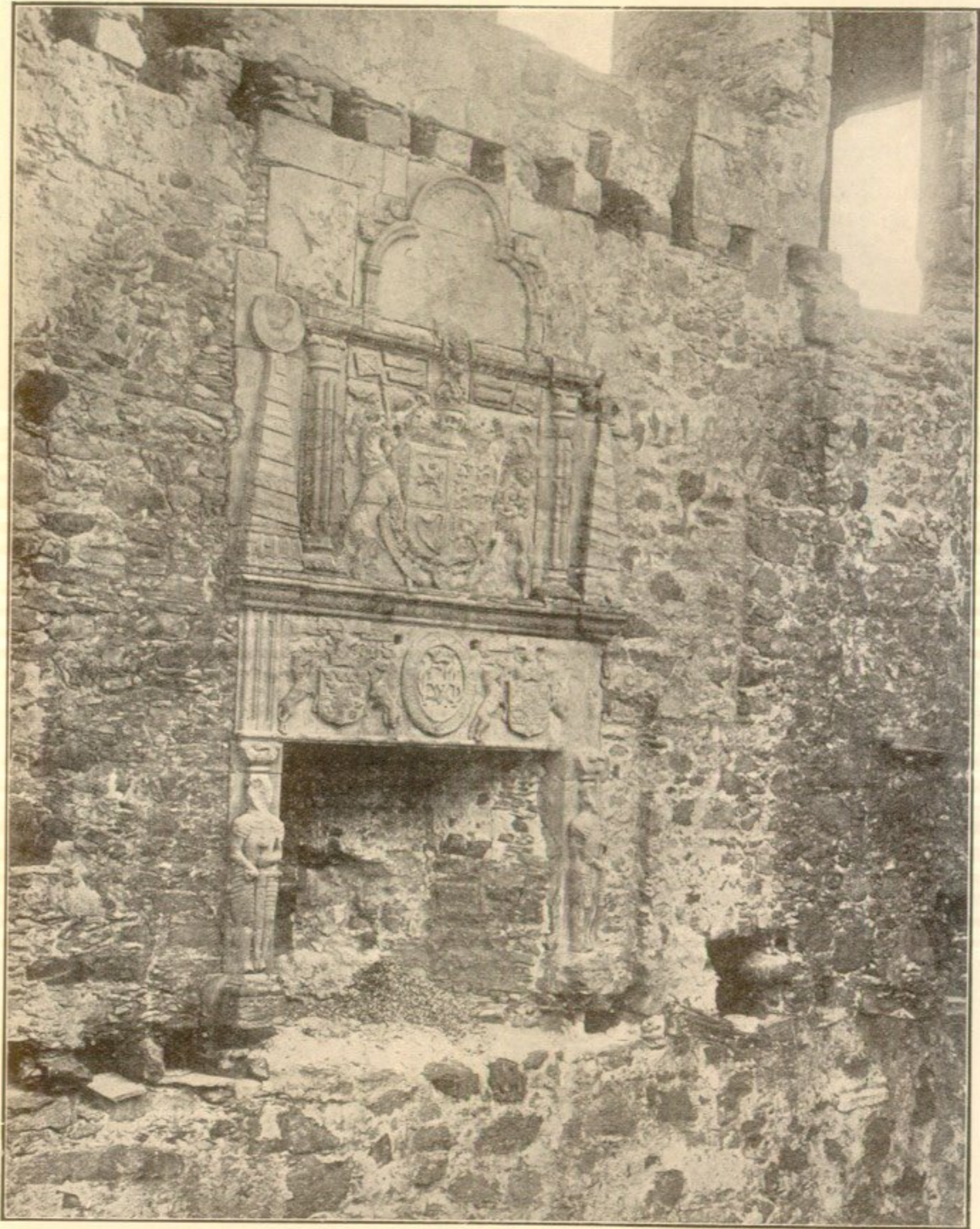


Fig. 3. Huntly Castle: Arms of the fourth Earl of Huntly and his wife, Elizabeth Keith, on north wall of "Palace."

whilst at the top of mouldings on either side are a lion sejant affronté and a double-headed eagle, presumably representing Scotland and the Holy Roman Empire, or the Norse raven. Surmounting the whole combination is the figure of St Michael; but this and the two sacred panels beneath it have been sadly defaced by the activity of Major Strachan, who in 1650 busied himself in defacing "the popish emblems." On the north wall of the palace is a particularly pleasant achievement of the 4th Earl and his wife, Lady Elizabeth Keith, which is an instructive piece of carving, since it shows the comital achievement adapted to a situation in which horizontal latitude was required, and here we see the fancy shield type of the sixteenth century expanded so as to show both the arms of husband and wife effectively, and above, the old-fashioned Scottish type of Earl's coronet used before the Union (fig. 3). The dexter supporter is the Huntly greyhound; but the sinister, instead of being, as might have been expected at the period, the Keith roebuck, is a somewhat French-looking Cupid with elevated wings. The initials

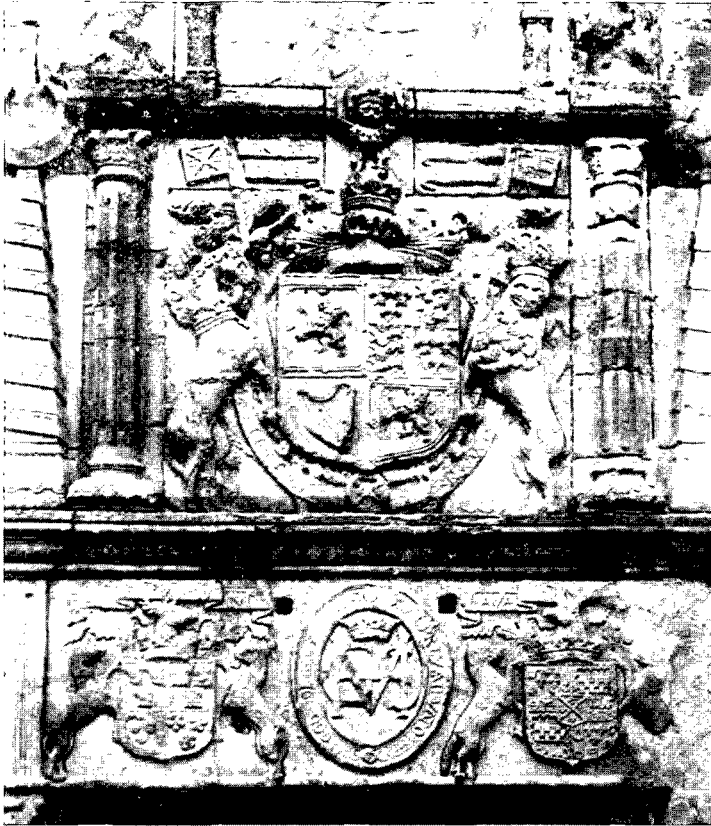


[Photo H.M. Office of Works.]

Fig. 4. Huntly Castle: Great Fireplace.

and arms of this couple—conjoined per fess—along with the date 1553, are also found on the spurstone of the building.

Within, on ascending the staircase to the great hall of the palace, the fireplaces of the hall and great chaumer have been torn out and



[Photo W. Douglas Simpson.

Fig. 5. Huntly Castle: Detail of Great Fireplace.

have disappeared, though a drawing of one of these is extant in the Library at King's College, Old Aberdeen. It shows a lozenge ensigned with coronet and containing a monogram. The lozenge is supported by two savages and the space of the lintel on either side is filled by what appear to be two horses courrant. Presumably this was the fireplace of the Marchioness's room. The elaborate ceilings, decorated with tempera paintings and mottoes, also have vanished.¹ In the upper

¹ Shaw, *History of Moray*, vol. ii. p. 410.

chambers there still remain two splendid mantelpieces, one of which is, like the staircase tower, an outstanding example of everything that an armorial fireplace should be (figs. 4 and 5). It bears the date 1606. The jambs on either side are supported by knights in armour, whilst upon the lintel appear the full achievements of Huntly on the dexter and Lennox on the sinister, with between them an oval, inscribed with the motto: SEN GOD DOE VS DEFEND, VE SAL PREVAIL VNTO YE END,



Fig. 6. Fireplace on second floor of "Palace."

and within it the coronet and cipher of the Marquis and Marchioness. The use of the complete achievements and shields forms a symmetry which would have been impossible if Lady Henrietta's lozenge alone had been displayed. Along the moulding of what we might call the mantelshelf is the inscription: TO THAES THAT LOVE GOD AL THINGIS VIRKS TO THE BEST; whilst the overmantel is supported by two fluted columns, which have been surmounted by carved figures—presumably of a sacred character, since they also have been defaced—between which are displayed the usual large achievement of the Royal Arms, indicating that the castle was the seat of an immediate vassal of the Crown; for as Bartolus, the celebrated legal writer, observes:

"Whilst subjects may not display the arms of their Sovereign, they may do so relatively, by placing them above their own arms in the centre of their wall," as an indication of the feudal relationship of superior and vassal.¹ This is the explanation of what would otherwise appear a lavish display of the Royal Arms upon so many baronial castles in Scotland. On either side, outwith the pillars and completing the design of fluted pilasters above the knightly jambs, are two cones, twisted round with ribbons, bearing the name and title of the Marquis and Marchioness, surmounted respectively by a Seton crescent and by a fleur-de-lis of Aubigny. Above, there is a moulded panel which has evidently contained a sacred device, now either completely weathered

¹ Innes of Learney, *Scots Heraldry*, pp. 124, 161.

away, or, as I suspect, defaced by Major Strachan. In the adjoining chamber there is another interesting but less imposing fireplace, in which the central motive is the impaled achievement of the Marquis and Marchioness, now, however, in a much decayed condition (fig. 6). On either side are the carved busts of a lady and gentleman, whom we may suppose may be intended to represent the builders. On the chamber of the round tower on this floor can still be traced a fragment of a painted achievement of the Huntly arms, and there are traces of others on the sides of other window openings, from which we may deduce that whilst the walls were no doubt hung with tapestry, the window recesses had been elaborately decorated with heraldic achievements painted upon the stucco plastering of the walls.

In the course of the excavations were discovered some other fragments which have, or may have, formed part of armorial bearings—as the fragment of an armorial shield with the Gordon arms undoubtedly does; whilst two griffins, each supporting a shield, must, I think, in some way refer to the period or personage of Elizabeth Gray, widow of the 4th Earl, who married for her second husband the Earl of Rothes, whose supporters were griffins. These are the only heraldic griffins which seem in any way associated with the history of the building.

BALVENIE CASTLE.

At Balvenie¹ we meet with heraldry applied in a very different but none the less effective manner to a building which in a sense is of somewhat similar style, though markedly different in appearance to the palace block of Huntly. We find the same round tower and the row of ornamental windows, though these are of a different and much less pretentious type, consisting of little semicircular bows which must have looked very attractive if glazed with curved leaded panels. Here the heraldry is applied in a row of moulded panels situated above the bow windows and beneath the eaves course which may have been lighted by dormer windows. The central panel displays the Royal Arms of Scotland, surmounted by the open crown and surrounded by a spray of thistles, the whole being evidently copied from the style of heraldic drawing in the time of Lord Lyon Sir Robert Forman of Luthrie, which is indeed confirmed by the next panel, situated above and midway between two of the bay windows, and above a bold scroll with the proud motto: FVRTH FORTVIN AND FIL THI FATRIS, which, discounting the banal "fill the fetters," probably did have a *double entendre*,

¹ There are unfortunately no photographs of the Balvenie panels, and from their height such are not easily to be obtained.

meaning either "file thy fetters (off)," or "fill thy fatris," if the last word be read in the meaning "coffer." At any rate the coat-of-arms above, surmounted by its comital coronet, displays the arms of the Stewart Earls of Atholl: Quarterly, 1st and 4th, paly of six Or and Sable, for Atholl; 2nd and 3rd, a fess chequy, for Stewart, along with the initials I.S., standing for John Stewart, 4th Earl of Atholl (1542-79), whose arms, impaled with those of his wife, Lady Elizabeth Gordon, appear in the third panel, situated at the top of the narrow angle staircase turret, this shield being impaled: Dexter, the quarterly coat of Atholl; and sinister, the quarterly coat of Huntly: 1st, the boars' heads of Gordon; 2nd, the lions' heads of Badenoch; 3rd, the crescents of Seton; 4th, the cinquefoils of Fraser. On a lower level, above the arched gateway with its heavy iron yett, and between the two principal windows of the first floor, is another recess, now devoid of any coat-of-arms and surrounded by a cable moulding, but one surmises it may have displayed the achievement and supporters of the house of Atholl.

Within the courtyard on either side rise two circular towers, each with a doorway leading to its turnpike stair, and above each of these doorways is a recess for a coat-of-arms. Both are now empty. When, however, I first went to Balvenie in 1913 the carved shield was still, according to my recollection, in one of these openings, and in 1926 Dr Douglas Simpson noticed in the transe a shield which had apparently come from one of them, in which the first quarter, displaying the six pales of Atholl, was alone distinguishable. McGibbon and Ross, however,¹ state that the shield over the southern door displayed Atholl impaling Forbes, being therefore evidently the achievement of John, 3rd Earl of Atholl, 1522-42. The sketch, however, suggests that it was another shield displaying the arms of the 4th Earl, impaled with Gordon, since neither of the wives of the 3rd Earl, Grizel Rattray or Jean Forbes, would have had a quartered shield. Conceivably, the shield in the transe displayed the arms of Atholl and Forbes, so that the two turrets may have been embellished with the arms of the third and fourth Earls.

There was, however, at Balvenie other and more elaborate heraldry, of which only fragments exist to-day, for amongst those collected in the course of clearing the courtyard are the remains of the muzzle and shoulder of a chained unicorn, as in the Scottish Royal Arms,² and this must have formed part of a large and magnificent carving of a heavily-cut and artistic style, for I have seldom seen a better cut piece of chain

¹ *Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland*, vol. i. p. 387.

² The unicorn being a sinister one, and the post-union achievements always showing the unicorn on the dexter in Scotland, it follows that the fragment is part of an achievement older than 1603.

and tufting. It has all the characteristics of the best heraldic art. Perhaps it surmounted the fireplace, either in the vaulted hall or the north hall adjoining, or it may have been over some doorway leading to the other and now vanished suites of apartments which at one time surrounded the interior of the courtyard.

Both these castles are excellent examples of how armorial bearings have been used as an effective element in architectural decoration, and also in such a manner as to preserve the history of the structure and the identity of the builders of various parts involved.
