

SCOTTISH BARONIAL

A NOBLE STYLE IN ARCHITECTURE

THE art which endures is that which is greatly distinctive, besides being beautiful. Waiving the first endeavours of primitive man, for these doings are far too remote to be seen clearly, it may be asserted with complete assurance, that never yet did a school of artists ply their craft, who did not begin by relying on a senior school. A very long page would be needful, whereon to show forth the debts which France owed, on the one hand to Italy, on the other to the Low Countries. And if the Greek achievement was fully as individual as the French, in its early stages Hellenic art tells clearly of discipleship of Egypt and Assyria. The architecture called Scottish Baronial is notably among those things, which combine distinctiveness with beauty. But in approaching a tribute to this work, it behoves to remember that it could not have from the start its markedly idiosyncratic temper. Who were the preceptors of the initial artists in the formula?

There is widespread the idea that the Franco-Scottish alliance originated with the marriage of Mary, Queen of Scots, to the Dauphin. But the league was ancient on that event, and it would seem to have been David I, crowned King of Scots in 1124, who first brought about intimate relations between his compatriots and the French. Caring before all else for things ecclesiastical, he was founder of most of the Scottish abbeys; and one of his actions was to bring to his dominions a group of French monks who were skilled in building. Thus it was normal that soon there should stand revealed, alike in churches and castles in Scotland, an affinity with French architecture. And when, at the outset of the 15th century, the French poet, Alain Chartier, delivered at the royal

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court of Scotland an oration, he spoke of the sentiments implied by the Franco-Scottish alliance as positively inborn with either of the realms involved. At this time the weaving of tapestries was becoming one of the chief industries in the Low Countries, the requisite wool being largely, if not exclusively, obtained direct from Scotland. In 1449 her reigning monarch, James II, took to wife a Flemish lady, Mary of Gelderland. This marriage was no doubt arranged, so as to benefit the commercial friendship of Scotland with Holland and Flanders. And her link in that way with those lands was destined to be as important to her intellectual life, as was her political bond with France.

When the invention of gunpowder made it impossible to withstand sieges in castles, the French school began to renounce the raising of such, in favour of constructing châteaux in a style which, related to that in the coeval churches, has therefore come to be known as French Domestic Gothic. If in the fifteenth century architects in Scotland by no means ceased to erect strongholds, they also commenced to build at that time manorial homes resembling the new French châteaux. Like the latter, the Scottish houses had high-pitched roofs, dormer windows, and towers crowned with cones. But in contrast with their model in France, these manors usually had overhanging turrets also, a relic of the castellated fashion. Nearly always, the gables in the novel class of Scottish houses were decorated with series of notches, which were spoken of as the corbie-steps. And, as with some other terms used in mediaeval Scotland, this one was of French extraction, its root being the word *corbeau*. Nevertheless, the steps do not appear to figure on buildings in France, whereas they are a salient ornament in the Low Countries, and it was probably from them that Scotland derived the idea. The tendency towards height, in the relative sense, was like-

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wise signal in the new Scottish edifices. But if the same was also prominent in Flanders, this does not necessarily mean that Scotland acquired it from that source. Owing to the peril of English incursions, through a long period Edinburgh was enclosed in walls. Space was consequently invaluable; towering houses were the inevitable solution. And it is not impossible it was merely this trait, in the Scottish capital, which led to height becoming so outstanding a feature of manorial domains in Scottish Baronial. Built invariably with stone, these mansions with island sites echoed by their tallness the city houses which were joined together.

The word castle is very often used with no great attention to its significance. Strictly speaking, it means a place which is defensible, and there are numerous large mansions in Scottish Baronial which are always described on maps as castles, linked with some further designation. The name 'castle,' however, is not wholly unreasonable. For the transition from the castellated form to the one whose inspiration was France and the Low Countries, was a very gradual affair. Pitcapple Castle, Aberdeenshire, dates from the 15th century, and is among the most beautiful of all houses in Scottish Baronial. But it is not merely the inclusion here of overhanging turrets which gives the place the look of a stronghold, for the smallness of the windows bestows on Pitcapple something of the grim air of a fabric designed to withstand onslaughts by armed men. At Falkland Palace, Fife, the original portion was apparently raised in the mid-fourteen-hundreds; at Holyrood Palace, Edinburgh, the initial section was constructed about the close of that same cycle. And, at either of these structures too, the old part at issue has more of the severe temper of a stronghold than of the genial tone reasonably looked for in a mansion. Lauriston Castle, not far from Edinburgh,

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and the Canongate Tolbooth within that town, were both built in the sixteenth century, the second-named being especially fine. And each of them bears a somewhat gentler aspect than the earlier, analogous buildings.

Although Scottish Baronial, near relation that it is of French Domestic Gothic, is essentially a mediaeval formula, it enjoyed vogue long after the Middle Ages were over and Scotsmen had ceased to build churches in the pointed fashion. The golden age of Scottish Baronial was the seventeenth century; it remained throughout that epoch the standard or orthodox way for manorial homes in Scotland, and a great number of fine places were built then in the mode. Peffermill House, Gogar House, and Stenhousemill, are all near Edinburgh, and each of them dates from the sixteen-hundreds, as again do Lickleyhead, Aberdeenshire, and Northfield, East Lothian. But the golden age in Scottish Baronial could not have been such, had it not been at this time that the style acquired its great distinctiveness. And if Holyrood is so similar to a French château, that the kinship was at once commented on by Brantôme, when the poet came to that Edinburgh palace with Mary, Queen of Scots, conversely in the characteristic works of the 17th century, the resemblance with French Domestic Gothic is really slight. As that era advanced, architects inclined to give places towers which were square, instead of round, as previously. And if overhanging turrets largely disappeared, it was common to introduce at some corner a device which was clearly a souvenir of those things. At a point, say a third of the way from the top, the descending line went inwards for a little, and then continued its descent, straight to the ground. If as seen above, there had been a hint before the golden age, that Scottish Baronial would take to itself gentleness, the fabrics of the sixteen-

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hundreds proclaim that no love for that element grew widespread then. Remaining as the builders so resolutely did, faithful to the old fondness for height, these men constructed edifices which almost inevitably were austere. The beauty achieved was as that of a grey day in winter, and had about it nothing of the rose and nightingale.

The typical masterpieces in Scottish Baronial mostly delight by their diversity and their rambling nature. Like their kinsmen, the Gothic churches, they inspire the gaze to wander from part to part, discovering in each an independent interest. The Classic or Renaissance form, ruled in contrast by symmetry, began to come into Scotland from France even before Scottish Baronial had reached its golden age. And, in the seventeenth century, it was far from unusual with architects in Scotland to design places, in which they mingled with their national, manorial formula, a little of the incoming Renaissance manner. For instance, at Argyll's Lodging, Stirling, the dominating feature is round towers surmounted by cones, the entrance being nevertheless Classic. Another example of this duality is Balcaskie, Fife, ascribed to Sir William Bruce (*ob.* 1710), the eminent master who bestowed on Holyrood, additions in the Renaissance style. In 1696, he devised purely in that fashion, Hopetoun House, not far from Edinburgh, and thereafter the Classic mode rapidly gained sway over the Scottish school. As the seventeen-hundreds neared their close, Scottish Baronial seemed to be wholly forgotten.

If in England the revival of mediaeval architecture began with Horace Walpole, in Scotland it originated with the last man in whom the action would have been expected. Fervent Classicist as he was, Robert Adam left behind him on his death, plans for a Gothic building, St. George's Chapel, York place, Edinburgh.

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And it is not surprising that Sir Walter Scott, with his passion for the Middle Ages, chose for his customary place of worship the anomaly by Robert. When the novelist began to dream of possessing a fair Tweedside mansion, he already owned the farm house, Clarty Hole, which had dormer windows yet also a Classic portico. Scott's idea was to enlarge the farmhouse by joining it to a proximate edifice, and the resultant Abbotsford is a rambling structure, with tower, turrets and corbie-steps, the portico being conspicuous by its absence. If Scott's creation of this place, and the stories which he wrote there, fostered the little flower of mediaevalism which Adam had planted, a further nurturing came presently from Robert Reid, City Architect in Edinburgh. In 1829 he was called on for a new fabric for St. Mary's College, St. Andrews. And although he was nothing if not a Classicist of the Adam school, he responded on this occasion with a beautiful building, which strongly recalls Scottish Baronial places of the end of the seventeenth century.

About the time Reid took this memorable step, there was started the resuscitation of the Scottish abbeys and cathedrals, which had fallen into a desperate state owing to the disregard for the architectural forms of the Middle Ages. The inauguration of rebuilding these ancient homes of prayer, could scarcely fail to stimulate the returning interest in Scottish Baronial. And shortly William Burn was asked to enlarge Pitcapple Castle, already mentioned, his addition being little in harmony with the original part of the dwelling, yet duly designed in the old manorial style of Scotland. He had a brilliant pupil in David Bryce (1803—1876), and it was this master who was veritably the captain in bringing back Scottish Baronial. He chose the style for a host of country seats, among his best being Tollcross House, now encircled by Glasgow;

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he contended that the mode was suitable for large public buildings in towns, and he demonstrated this faith by the Royal Infirmary in Edinburgh, and Fettes College in the outskirts of that city. Of his pupils was Sir Rowand Anderson, one of whose actions was to employ the reanimated fashion for his own residence, Allermuir, Colinton, Midlothian. He showed here that Scottish Baronial was appropriate for villas of no huge size, and Anderson in turn had a pupil in the late Sir Robert Lorimer. He has built in the ancient manorial style of Scotland, with a beauty which surely rivals that attained by any of the mediaeval artists in the formula, and a notably fine thing by him in it is Laverockdale, again at Colinton. In recent years the manner long ago derived from France and the Low Countries has been used for so big a variety of places in Scotland, cottages besides suburban houses and public institutions, that doubtless there are numerous people who do not realise that the thing was dead, when Reid built the beautiful St. Mary's.

The best modern structures in Scottish Baronial mostly, though not all, reflect the historic or traditional tendency towards height. And, in consequence, if they are richer in windows than the old edifices in the mode are, these new houses have something of the austerity which marked their predecessors. It was right that this trait should become a salient one in the national, manorial style of Scotland. For the physical beauties which she presents are in endless cases of the bleak type, and it was only buildings of an austere cast which would harmonise well with such scenery. Architecture is great when the fabrics loom an inevitable part of their environment, as though they had grown up of their own accord. And the finest things in Scottish Baronial seem as natural as their encircling mountains, 'brown heath and shaggy wood.' For based though the formula was, on studies of Conti-

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mental schools, it took to itself idiosyncrasies, kin to those of Scottish soil. It is to the credit of Sir Banister Fletcher that, in a monumental book which is familiar to all, or nearly all, devotees of the building craft, he has assigned a page to Scottish work and its individuality. But there has yet to come, from architectural critics in general, realisation that the rarest flights in Scottish Baronial are among the crowning glories of their motherland, and that these works merit a niche of importance in the annals of architecture as a whole.

W. G. BLAIKIE MURDOCH.

ETERNAL REST GIVE UNTO US

○ DARKNESS-FRIGHTED one
Let faith thy fears outrun.

Within thy Father's arms
Peace be to death's alarms.

And on God's mothering breast
Take, child, untroubled rest.

VINCENT McNABB, O.P.