

I.

THE PAINTED CEILING IN THE MONTGOMERY AISLE OF THE OLD CHURCH AT LARGS, AYRSHIRE. BY ANDREW W. LYONS, ARCHITECT, EDINBURGH. (PLATE I.)

The roof of the aisle has an extended plan of 29 feet 3 inches long by 24 feet 6 inches broad, barrel-vaulted, and is lined with wood; the boards are from 6 to 10 inches in width by 8 feet and 10 feet 6 inches in length.

The ceiling is divided by an imitation moulding painted in monochrome, into forty-one compartments of different shapes and sizes, all of which have paintings representing various subjects, either historical, emblematical, or heraldic.

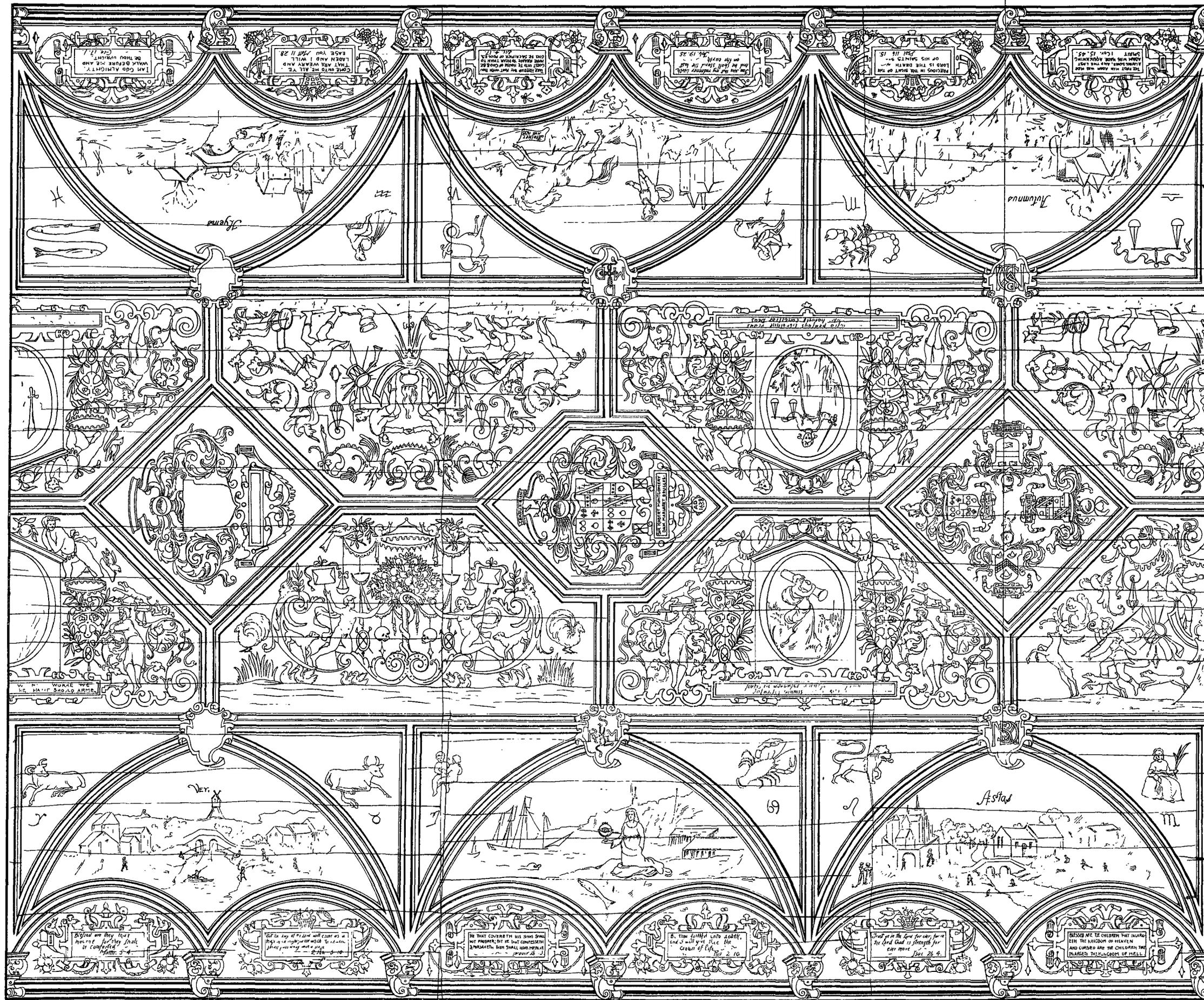
The centre panel contains a mantled escutcheon charged with the quartered armorial bearings of Montgomery and Eglinton impaled with those of Douglas and Mar, surmounted by a knight's helmet, coronet and crest, with the motto "Gardez Bien."

Beneath the coat-of-arms is an oblong cartouche lettered with the names of Sir Robert Montgomery and Dame Margaret Douglas, and suspended therefrom is a small circular tablet bearing the date A.D. 1638.

On either side of the centre panel is a square compartment, diagonally placed. That on the right is furnished with four small shields charged with the arms of the houses of Eglinton, Sempell, Drumlandrig, and Lochinvar, all surmounted by coronets and crests respectively, with their names beneath the bearings, lettered in neatly painted cartouches. The panel on the left bears an escutcheon, similar in design to that of the centre, but is charged with no heraldic emblazonment.

Adjoining these three central compartments are other eight divisions most elaborately painted with very chaste ornament, intermingled with cartouche, figures, and animals.

Four of these (two of which are semi-divisions and sorely defaced) contain an inner oval-shaped panel bearing painted figures intended to



OLD CHURCH OF  
LARGS,  
AYRSHIRE.

Tempera-painted-ceiling  
- on wood - IN THE  
MONTGOMERIE AISLE

*Halker*  
fecit 1638.

ANDREW W. LYONS, DEL.  
EDINBURGH. 1897.

Scale Feet.

represent the four cardinal virtues, and still partly readable, in an elongated cartouche beneath the subjects, are Latin and English inscriptions.

Other three (two of which are also semi-divisions) are painted, mostly in ornament, with some slight emblematical figure-work representing hunting and ploughing.

The remaining division bears a very quaint painting of Eve being tempted by the serpent.

Beneath these are other six Gothic-shaped divisions (three on either side).

The four extreme panels have figured scenes representing the Seasons, together with landscapes of the surrounding district, showing views of an old castle, Largs Church, and other buildings.

The two in the middle bear paintings evidently intended to represent historical events in the life of the Montgomeries. One of the pictures is said to depict the tragic death of the wife of Sir Robert Montgomery, who died from the effects of a kick which she received from her horse at Largs Fair in 1624. This panel also bears the inscription "Stalker fecit," with date 1638. A facsimile of the signature is shown on the margin of Plate I.

The twelve sub-divisions between the Gothic-form compartments are painted with the zodiacal signs. On the apex of each of these arches is a quaint cartouche bearing the knotted initials and monograms of Sir Robert Montgomery and his spouse. The field of two of these, like that of the escutcheon in the left centre panel, bears no embellishment.

The double-arched course is divided into twelve compartments (six on either side). These are furnished with rich cartouche-work, painted in bright colours, and have Scriptural texts lettered in gold on a blue ground. These texts are quoted from the Geneva version, not from the authorized version of the Scriptures.

The imitation moulded ribs rest on and spring from painted corbels, bearing on their faces small and neatly executed shields charged with minute symbols.

The most of the work is repeated four times with very slight occasional alterations.

When this drawing was made in 1897, traces of pounce-work were observed, showing that the full-size design must have been very carefully drawn out and pounces prepared before proceeding with the painting.

The design of the ceiling and that of the monument has every appearance of having been made by the same artist. Probably native talent was employed to execute the work, undoubtedly under the personal supervision of Sir Robert Montgomery. This gentleman died in 1651, so that the building of the aisle, 1636, the painting of the ceiling, 1638, and the erection of the monument, 1639, were all carried out in his own lifetime.

The ceiling, which is most elaborate, well proportioned, and beautiful in design, may claim to be the best example of early seventeenth century *Tempera Decorative* painting extant in Scotland.