

ART. XXVII.—*On Legends and Inscriptions over Doorways of Old Houses in Cumberland and Westmorland.* By MICHAEL W. TAYLOR, M.D., Edin., F.S.A. Scot.

*Read at Royal Archæological Institute at Carlisle, August 3rd, 1882.*

THE entrance or gateway or doorway has ever been the part of a building which has received the largest share of architectural treatment and decoration; and it has been a very prevalent usage at all times, that over the entrance there shall have been displayed some token or distinctive indication of personality or ownership. As early as ever an ensign or emblem was borne as a mark of distinction in the field of battle, the banner of the knight floated pendent over the front of his fortress wall, and possibly a wooden shield blazoned with his device would be hung over the gateway. The sculpturing the shield in stone was a later practice; the earliest instances are found on monumental effigies in the thirteenth century; and it was not until the import of heraldry expanded, and the significance of armorial bearings assumed a wider range, that the insignia came to be carved in stone on the castle wall.

The remains of these carved escutcheons are found abundantly on the castles and halls of Cumberland and Westmorland, but in this paper I cannot pretend to deal with the heraldic aspect of the enquiry, but will exemplify only such mottoes, epigraphs or legends, which occur outside the heraldic achievement, or appear on independent tablets by themselves.

#### XIII. CENTURY.

The earliest example in our district of an inscribed external mural tablet in domestic architecture, is that which is now presented over the outer gateway at Brougham Castle

Castle, near Penrith. The inscription is in raised old English characters, and runs thus :—



This stone is about 20 inches square, with the panel sunk three inches within a chamfered frame; it is not in its original site, but was removed to this place over the outer gate, during repairs to the castle, about thirty-five years ago. It has been a contested point of discussion,\* as to the date of this stone, and as to who this particular Roger was. For this reason : there were two Rogers de Clifford, and both of them made great additions to and alterations in the old Norman keep of Brougham. The first Roger, the first of the Cliffords in Westmorland, acquired the heritage by marriage with Isabella de Veteripont in 1268. It was this Roger, who in the beginning of the reign of Edward I. added the range of buttressed structures which abut on the northern aspect of the keep, and what is now the inner gateway with its groined vaulted archway. The Countess of Pembroke, in her memoirs, asserts that in her day this stone stood in the wall over this inward gate; it is almost certain that the inscription commemorates the fabric which the first Roger raised at the end of the 13th century.

#### XIV. CENTURY.

The second Roger, the grandson of the former, was Baron here, from the 25th of Edward III. for thirty-nine

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\* See paper on Brougham Castle, by the Rev. Canon Simpson, Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archæological Transactions, vol. i., p. 60.

years,

years, and he made further extensive additions to the Castle on the south and east, and he also erected the fore-building with decorated windows and an outer gateway, and it seems, he set over his gateway his coat of arms carved in stone. This shield is gone, but it was seen and described by Hutchinson in 1766, though the charge was probably much effaced, as he mistook the checky as representing the arms of the Vallibus or Vaux family, in consequence of the obliteration of the fesse, which divides the checky escutcheon of the Cliffords.

No doubt the usage may have obtained in this country, of setting up a stone shield carved with the device of the knight, over the entrance to his castle or hall, but if so the remains of these have disappeared, and I am not prepared with any examples of this period either of heraldic or other inscriptions.

#### XV. CENTURY.

But in the fifteenth century we find that the pretensions of heraldry had assumed a wonderful amplitude; its import to denote not only personality and hereditary descent, but also alliances and marriages, became extended, and the escutcheon, instead of exhibiting one coat only, as it did originally, was often impaled with a multiplicity of charges. The assumption of heraldic emblems for architectural decorative purposes progressed apace. Shields and armorial devices were imported everywhere into the details of the perpendicular period; not only externally, into the spandrels of doorways and windows and stone panelling, but in the woodwork of the roof and wainscoting and furniture of the time.

There was a curious stone found a few years ago in the wall of the tower of Hutton John, where it is still preserved. This tower is a Border Pele of probably 14th or early 15th century; it belonged to a family of the name of Hutton, who are traced back to the reign of Edward III., and who  
became



SCULPTURED DOOR-HEAD SLAB,  
 FOUND IN  
 HUTTON JOHN TOWER.

ARMS.

HUTTON,	}	<i>Fesse between 3 Cushions, C. with fleur-de-lys.</i>
HUTTON JOHN.		
BARWISE,	}	<i>Chevron between 3 Bears' Heads.</i>
LANGRIGG.		

became extinct in that of Elizabeth, when one of the co-heiresses married a Hudlestone. The stone in question is a flat slab, about 40 inches by 20 inches, and has a half round bead moulding. In one corner there is presented a shield with the arms of Hutton, a fesse between three cushions charged with a fleur-de-lys, quartering a chevron between three bear's heads, which I take to be Barwis of Langrigg. On the face of the stone there is carved a figure which represents an eagle with outspread wings and talons, with the hinder half of a fox apparently, and along the top line of the stone runs this inscription :—

**Thys mayd Tomas**

in Old English characters deeply carved, which present the fifteenth century style, though possibly it might be later.

On the tower of Dalston, near Carlisle, there is an inscription somewhat mutilated, with Old English letters all reversed, which has been described as\* :—

**John Dalston Elizabet Wiphe made ys byldyng**

This relegates the erection or re-building of this Pele Tower to the early part of the fifteenth century, in the reign of Henry IV.

It has been described that the arms of John Clifford and his wife were carved over the gatehouse at Appleby Castle, which would fix the date thereof about 1418; his son Thomas built the hall, chapel, and great chamber here, and

\* Hutchinson Cumberland, vol. ii., p. 448, with a woodcut giving a *fac simile* illustration.

at

at the bottom of the chapel window was this inscription :—

**Is Chapple was built by Thomas  
Lord Clifford Anno Domini One Thousand 400. 54.**

#### XVI. CENTURY.

When we come into this century, the custom of carving the family arms, often with the full external heraldic embellishments, over the hall door, was universal, and the remains of tablets of this date are of frequent occurrence. From about the middle of this century a great building epoch commenced in Cumberland and Westmorland ; there was quite a passion to extend and enlarge domestic buildings. The accommodation afforded by the gaunt grey walls of the Border Pele Tower no doubt had been felt to be insufficient, for domestic requirements, even a hundred years before ; hence we find a dining hall was added to the Pele Tower in many instances in the fifteenth century, as at Yanwath, Sockbridge, Kirkbythore, and other places. But it was in the Tudor period, and particularly during the reign of Elizabeth, that the erection of a more extended scale of domestic structures, amongst the Manor Houses in the north, became the mode.

Besides the elaborately sculptured arms over the gateway, or porch or entrance, it was very usual to carve an inscription, testifying the name of the builder and date, or a rhyming legend often quaintly expressed. Of these, I will give such examples as have come under my notice.

Amongst the earliest of these tablets is one set by Christopher Crackenthorpe in the 25th of Henry VIII., over the entrance to a goodly range of buildings, which he attached to a Border Pele of an earlier date at Newbiggin in Westmorland. The legend runs thus :—

**Christopher**

Christopher · Spækanthoupe · thus · ye · me · calle ·  
 Whye · in · my · tym · dyde · bylde · this · halle ·  
 The · yer · of · oure · lordē · who · lyst · to · se ·  
 A · M · fyve · hundred · thyghty · and · thye ·

There is a fifteenth century Pele Tower in the neighbouring parish of Cliburn, which was held by a family of the name of Cliburn, since the time of Edward III. One Richard Cliburn altered the tower, and put up a range of buildings and offices inclosing three sides of a court yard, all having the character of the Elizabethan period. Over the entrance he set a stone, not, however, now in its original place, on which are carved the arms of Cliburn, three chevrons interlaced at base, quartering Kirkbride, a cross engrailed. The shield is flanked with the initials R. C., with this inscription underneath in old German letters:—

Richard · Cliburn · thus · they · me · cawd ·  
 Why · in · my · tyme · hath · bealddē · ys · Hall ·  
 The · year · of · ourē · Lord · God · who · lyst ·  
 To · to · neam · . . . 1567 · . .  
 . . . R · D · Weyson ·

The last line is difficult to decipher in consequence of the weathering of the stone. But the rendering of “*Who lyst . . . for to neam*” is likely to be correct, as an index is afforded by comparing it with the ending somewhat similar of “*Who lyst to see,*” in the foregoing inscriptions at Newbiggin Hall. It seems that Richard Cliburn copied his neighbour

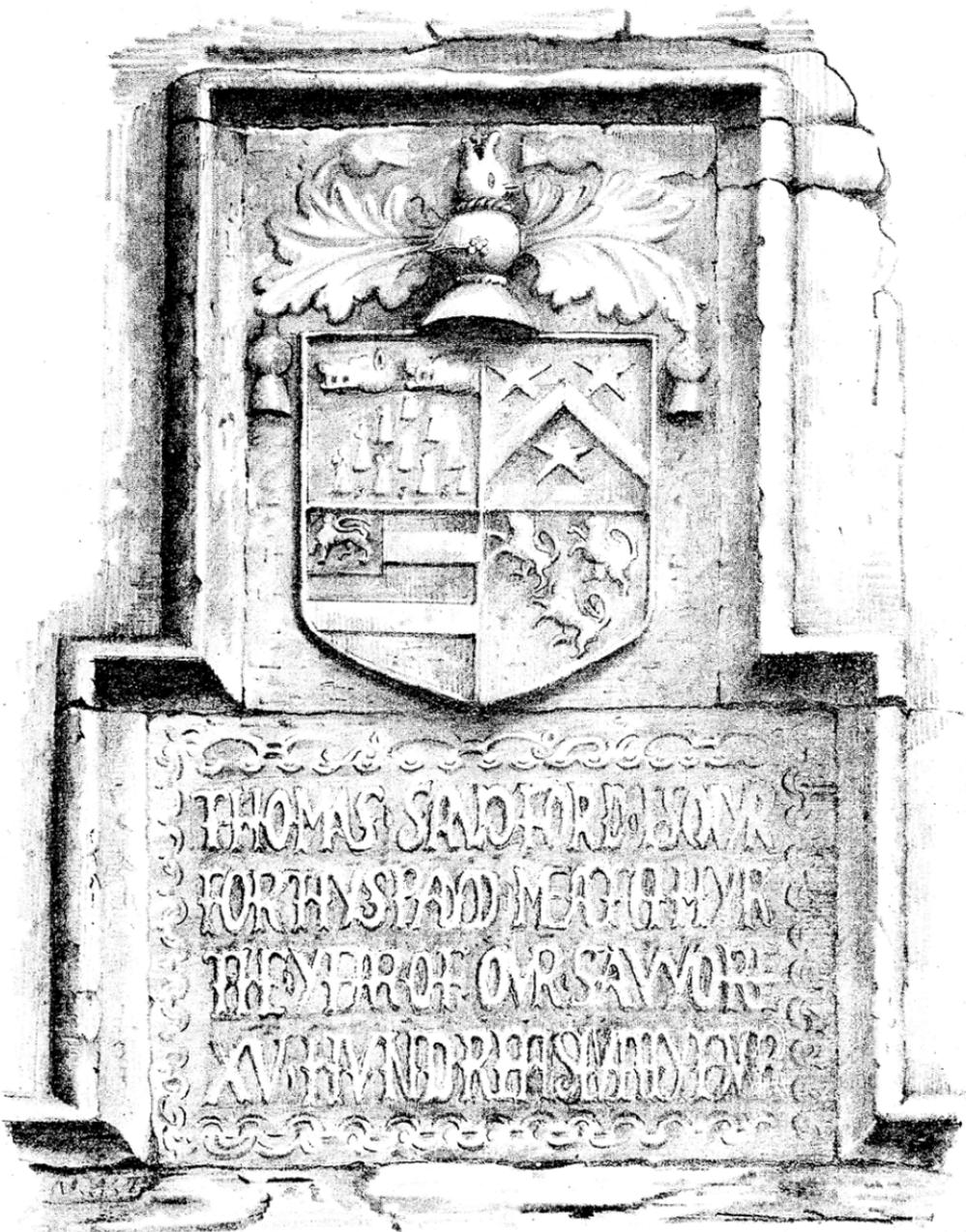
neighbour Crackenthorpe, and wrote the word name, as "*neam*," in the very way it is pronounced in this country to the present day. Cliburn allowed the "*mayson*" the mild conceit of perpetuating his initials on the stone, and a very good "*mayson*" he was, as his handiwork is well executed.

One of the largest of the tower built houses in the neighbourhood of Penrith is the very imposing structure of Askham Hall, the ancient seat of the Sandfords, the lords of the manor. Here again the tower, probably late 15th century, forms the core of a number of buildings which have been grouped round it. The entrance to these is by an arched gateway. Here again you have the full achievement carved in stone, and containing the arms quarterly of Sandford, English, Crackenthorpe, and Lancaster, and underneath this inscription in capitals curiously conjoined and contracted :—

<p>THOMAS · SANDFORD · ESQVYR.          FOR · THYS · PAYD · MEAT · AND · HYR          THE · YEAR · OF · OUR · SAVYORE          XV · HUNDRETH SEVENTY FOUR.</p>
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The cluster of old structures at Catterlen Hall, near Penrith, affords a good illustration of the changes of style and accommodation which have been successfully developed in domestic architecture. The Border Pele, with its embattled parapet and its projecting gurgoyles made to resemble cannon, probably stood alone for 150 years; then to this, in the 16th century, were added the hall and kitchen, and again in the middle of the 17th century an imposing building, with classic features, with an external flight of steps leading to a new dining or guest chamber.

Over



OVER THE GATEWAY,  
ASKHAM HALL,  
WESTMORLAND.

Over the drip-stone of the entrance to the Elizabethan hall we find enclosed within a hood moulding a shield bearing a fesse chequy betwixt six garbs, quartering a cross flory. They are the arms of the then owner Vaux and his alliance Delamore. Around the shield, within a garter, occurs this quaint legend, cut in old-fashioned Roman capitals in relief:\*

“ LET MERCY AND FAITHFULNESS  
NEVER GOYE FROM THEE.”

Underneath is the following inscription:—

<p>AT THIS TYME IS ROWLANDE VAUX LORDE OF THYS PLACE AND BVIL DED THIS HALL Yr OF GOD. 1577.</p>
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Again the doorway to the later building is surmounted with a tablet ornamented with Ionic pilasters containing the armorial insignia of Richmond and the lady of the house, the heiress of Vaux (the alliance between whom had just taken place) with the date—1652.†

Underneath is the motto—

“ DEO VIVENTE JUVANTE.”

An example of the curious manner in which marriages

\* During the latter part of this century the style of lettering these inscriptions underwent a change. Instead of the small German characters, Roman capitals came into use; with the letter  $\bar{\Lambda}$  crossed at the top, and the D retaining the tail of the small German  $\mathfrak{D}$ .

† For illustration see paper by Author “On Catterlen Hall,” Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archæological Society, vol. i., page 330.

are

are recorded in these inscriptions occurs at Johnby Hall. There is a shield with the arms quarterly of Musgrave, Martindale, Tilliol, and Stapleton, encircled with a garter, inscribed :—

O · GOD · GIVE · ME · VISDOM · TO · BELOVE · THE.

And underneath :—

15—83

NICOLAS MVS

GRAVE · MARET · MARGARET  
TELLEL · HEYRE THOMAS  
HIS · SONE · MARET ELISABET · DAC  
RE · WILLM · HIS · SONNE · HERE · NO  
VE · DVELL · MARRET · ISISABEL · HE  
YRE · TO · MARTENDAL · TO GOD · I · PR  
AYE · BE · VITH · VS · ALLVAIE ·

On the little manor house of Huthwaite Hall, in the parish of Setmurthby, there is this :—

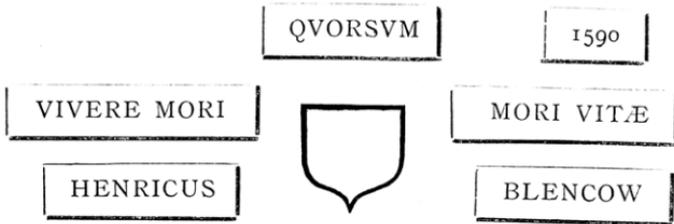
John : Stoyburn  
esquire : & elizabeth  
his wyfe : did make  
cozte of this : work  
in . the · daiz of ther Lyfe :  
An<sup>o</sup> D<sup>mi</sup> 1581. An<sup>o</sup> R<sup>x</sup> 25

On

On the tower at Whitehall, in the parish of Allhallowes, are the Salkeld arms, and underneath :—

FRANC[ISCVS] SALKELD
EQ THOMAS SALKELD
HOC FECERVNT. 1580.

In the neighbourhood of Greystock there is a fine example of an old manor house, consisting of two embattled towers, connected together by an intervening building, containing a dining hall. The main tower is, however, in a ruinous state. It is Blencow Hall, and it was the seat of the ancient family of the Blencowes. Over the principal doorway in the courtyard there are shields bearing the arms of Blencow and Crackenthorpe, and the initials H.B., and below the curious legend which runs thus :—



The correct interpretation of this composition as it stands here, is enigmatical; it is not very obvious, and it has given rise to some disquisition in our society (see *Transactions* of Cumberland and Westmorland Archæological Society, Vol. i., p. 335). It so happens, however, that the motto has been re-produced elsewhere, with a slight variation. Shortly after Blencowe had made his domestic alterations, one Nicholas Williamson was engaged in building Millbeck Hall, on the shore of Bassenthwaite Lake, at Under-Skiddaw. Williamson had probably seen the legend at Blencow Hall, and appreciated, doubtless, the

the moral sentiment of the conception. So that he adopted an echo of the adage, and set it up over his doorway, where it still exists, at Millbeck, with this variation in the latinity :—

1592. QVORSUM M · W ·
VIVERE · MORI · MORI · VIVERE ·
NICHOLAVS WILLIAMSON

With this reading the meaning of the inscription becomes evident, and it may be construed as follows :—

“ Whither ? ” ( “ are we going ” ) “ to live (is) to die,”  
 “ to die (is) to live ” ( “ eternally.” )

#### XVII. CENTURY.

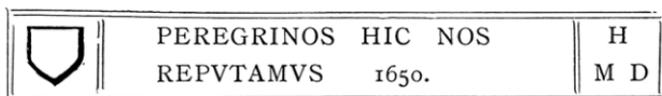
In the first quarter of this century a good deal of building still continued in these counties, as may be seen from dates inserted here and there, and also from the style and mouldings in vogue during the Jacobean period, as exhibited in stone work in chimney pieces, &c., and in the wooden panelling and wainscoting. At Crakeplace Hall, in the parish of Dean, there is a stone over the doorway with the following legend and date :—

1612
CHRISTOPHER CRAKEPLACE BVILT THE SAME
WHEN HE WAS SERVANT TO BARON ALTHAM.

But it is seldom that we find inscriptions bearing dates of the second quarter of this century. The disturbed state of country during the troublous times of Charles I. and the Commonwealth hindered engagement in works of domestic building.

building. But after the Restoration another great era set in; and from 1650 to the year 1700, examples of inscribed dates over doorways are everywhere numerous. The carving is always in Roman capitals, and consists generally of the initial letters of the Christian names of the husband and wife, with that of the surname above and between them and, also the date. Those entitled to arms set up their shields, but not always with the external ornaments of the escutcheon, as was the prevalent custom in the preceding century. If there were a legend it was almost always now in Latin, and embodied some trite aphorism or moral sentiment.

Thus, at Greenthwaite Hall, near Greystoke, the Halton of that date put up a panel under the drip-stone of his porch with these words :—



enunciating the pious sentiment “ Here we consider ourselves sojourners.” Ten years after this, in 1660, Halton ventured to display carved in a tablet above this panel his full escutcheon with crest, mantling, and scroll.\*

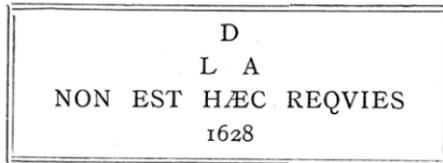
The old vicarage house at Barton, in Westmorland, has this inscription over the doorway :—



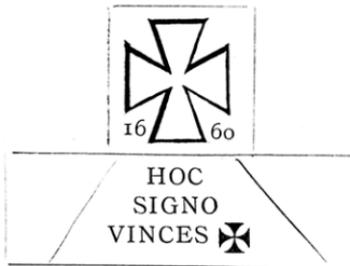
\* Arms :—Party per pale, a lion rampant, quartering three bars between three mullets.

This

This parsonage was built by Dr. Lancelot Dawes, vicar here for forty-five years; and Bishop Nicolson, in his Visitation, refers as follows to the circumstance:—"That he might reasonably tell the world that it was designed for his successors, and not for himself, since he alwaies resided at the hall on his paternal estate, which was also chiefly of his own building." The same old vicar put up over the entrance of the hall alluded to this pious sentence:—

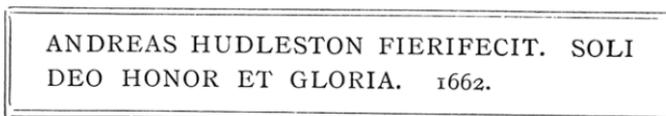


On a gable at Hutton John there is the emblem of a cross patée, with the date 1660, and the words "Hoc Signo Vinces" underneath.



The Hudleston at this time was an adherent to the old religion.

At the same place over the doorway of the "*pleasaunce*" there is a finely carved lintel, with three shields and crest, and this inscription and motto:—



Over

Over the entrance of Rottington Hall, near St. Bees, the abode of the ancient family of Sandys, there was at one time this adage :—

FELICEM TIBI DET DEVS INTROITUM.

Over the door of an old house at Eamont Bridge, within a panel on raised letters, the following is displayed :—

OMNE. SOLVM. FOR  
TI PATRIA. EST.  
H P. 1671

This is a quotation from Ovid.\*

The motto, "Fear God," seems to have been not unusual ; it occurs in the following way over the doorway of a tenement at Westnewton :—

F. V. : FEAR GOD  
16 75

And, again, on a little old house in the centre of the village of Blennerhasset, in the parish of Torpenhow, it stands thus :—

GOD  
J. I. N. I. 1686 FEARE

\* I learn from Mr. W. Jackson, St. Bees, the following curious circumstance in connection with the above motto :— General Ludlow was one of those who signed the death warrant of Charles I., and who on the Restoration, mistrusting his safety, expatriated himself and established himself at Lausanne. Over his door he put the above Latin quotation, doubtless claiming the personal aptitude of the signification, "To the resolute man every soil is his country."

as if the sculptor had lost room for the last word, and finished it on the space above.

On the old grange house of Demains, near Kirkoswald Castle, there is a panel with two lines divided thus:—

K THOMAS.	DEVS	BENET. 1622
B BARTRA	VVLT	BARTRAM F: **

This inscription is intended to be read in three perpendicular columns thus:—"Thomas Bartram and Benet Bartram made F(*ecerunt*) (this house) A.D., 1662." "God will ("it.")

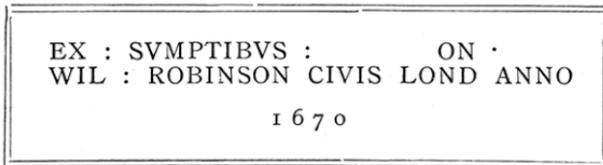
At Pelutho House, in the Abbey Holme, over the doorway there is the following parental monition. It is carved in raised capitals on the lintel, which is surmounted with a handsome hollowed dripstone.

	REMEMBER · SON · WHEN · I	
	AM · GON · I · WAS · THE · FOVN	
	DER · OF · THIS · STON · FER · G	
16		OD 85
FS · IS · AS · IS · D		

Although the execution of the carving *in relievo* was fairly good, yet the masons at this time were not particular as to the disposal of the terminal letters of a word at the right hand end of the panel, for, on want of room, they put them above or below the line indifferently.

About the end of this century, one Robinson, a merchant in London, built and endowed a charity school for poor children in Penrith, and over the doorway of the building, which

which is a good example of the style of the period, he thus recorded the fact that it had been built at his cost :—



The letters were at this time always cut in relief in Roman capitals. The practice in thus cutting the initials and date was universal, even in the commoner houses, not only over the doors and chimney pieces, but on all the heavy articles of finely carved oak furniture, which were made all over the country, in great profusion, during this period. The cupboards, dressers, long settles, and chairs of the best carving and workmanship, belong to this age, and these occupied not only the manor houses, but the granges, farm house hostelries, and dwellings of meaner pretensions. The best pieces are from 1660 to 1698.

But after the end of this century, the practice of carving *in relievo* the date and monogram, or a legend, over the entrance, fell into disuse in the more sumptuous houses; and examples after 1700 occur chiefly in those of the commoner sort, and the work is altogether of an inferior description, and is cut into the stone, or in *intaglio*.

The causes of the suspension of the custom are not far to seek. After the downfall of the Stuarts, a national feeling of discomfiture crept in towards usages which pertained to that dynasty and to former times. The desire of parading the pretensions of heraldic prerogatives fell away with the decline of the practice of that art, and the architectural style of domestic buildings assumed a new model. The low mullioned window, with its graceful hood, moulded in cavetto, the doorway with its bevelled jambs, its recessed  
lintel,

lintel, and moulded dripstone, were held to be vulgar and old-fashioned, and the adoption of the Italian style of frontage became the rage. The form of the enrichment of the entrance was now adverse to the display of shields, or tablets, or of lines of lettering. Voluted brackets and consols supported a classic entablature with its frieze and cornice. The pediment with the broken arch was a favourite adjunct here during the Queen Anne period. Finally, there appeared the columnar ordinance as an application to the doorway, and the projection of the pro-style portico of the Georgian era.

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