

XVIII.—*A Short Notice of Arnold Bronckhorst, Portrait Painter to King James VI. Communicated by ALEXANDER MACDONALD, Esq. F.S.A. Scot. With an original Account for Painting Portraits of His Majesty and of George Buchanan.*

[Read, 10th April 1826.]

So LITTLE is known respecting the state of the Fine Arts in Scotland at an early period, that, previously to the time of Jameson, it would be difficult to name any native artist of the least celebrity. Various foreigners, however, were occasionally led to this country; and the encouragement they received seems to have been sufficient to induce them to a protracted residence. Among this number, during the minority of King James VI. was Arnold Bronckhorst, a person of some note, and of whose history a few particulars occur in a work, entitled '*The Historie and Discoverie of the Gold Mines in Scotland,*' written in the year 1619 by an Englishman of the name of Atkinson (a). He speaks of Bronckhorst as 'being known to be a good artist, skilfull and well scene in all sorts of stones, especially in meneralls and menerall stones;' and gives the following account of his visiting Scotland. After stating that 'Queen Elizabeth of famous memory was possessed often with a good opinion of the Gold Mines in Scotland,' he informs us that, 'about some forty years by-past (that is, in the year 1578 or 1579) one Cornelius Devosse, a most cuninge pictur maker, and excellent in arte for triall of meneralls and menerall stones, sometimes dwelling in London, a young man well acquainted with Mr Nicholas Hilliard, a goldsmith, then principall drawer of small pictures to the late Queene Elizabeth, procured the same Hilliard to adventure with him into Scotland, and to send his servant and friend as an agent thither, by name Arthur Van-Bronckhurst; for at that time there was a great report and fame that went of the naturall gold gotten within the kingdom of Scotland,' &c.

From the work referred to, it appears that, after obtaining Queen Elizabeth's patent, sanctioned by the Privy Council of Scotland, Bronckhorst searched various mines, and found gold in sundry places; but he was forced to leave it all at the mint-house in Scotland, although, by patent, he was authorised, on certain specified terms, to take the unrefined gold with him into England: 'And it is written (says Atkinson) 'that the Earl of Morton, being then Regent, would not give way unto Van-Bronckhorst his patent, although the said Bronckhorst became a suitor at least for the space of 4 monthes, and did not prevaile unto this day. And so at last he was forced to become one of his Majesties sworne servants at ordinary in Scotland, to draw all the small and great pictures for his Majesty; and by this means Mr Hilliard and Cornelius Devosse lost all their charges,' &c.

(a) This curious volume was published for the members of the Bannatyne Club, Edinburgh, 1826, 4to, at the expense of Gilbert Laing Meason, Esq.

This account of Bronckhorst's appointment of portrait painter to his Majesty is confirmed by an original precept preserved in the General Register House, dated 9th September 1580, by which King James, in his munificence, authorised his treasurer to pay him the sum of 100 merks; 'quhilk we have grantit him as ane gratitude for his repairing to this countrey.' And the following appointment is recorded in the Register of the Privy Seal (a):—

'Ane Letter maid to Arnold Bronckhurst, flemyng, Makand, constituand and ordinand him owre Soverane Lordis Painter, and gevand him the office thair of for all the dayis of his lyvetyme with all feis, dewiteis and casualiteis usit and wont: For using and exercing quhair of his Hienes gevis and grantis to the said Arnold ane yeirlye pensioun of ane hundreth pundis money of this realme,' &c.—'At Glasgow the nynetene day of September the yeir of God I^m v^c lxxxix yeiris.'

The following is an exact copy of this curious Account and precept for payment, subscribed by the King, and also by the Earls of Argyll and Angus, two of his Majesty's Privy Council, at Holyroodhouse, 9th September 1580:—

'CERTAINE POURTRAITURES MAID BE ME AT HIS MAJESTEIS COMMAND
AND DELYVERIT LAITLIE TO HIS HIENES QUHAIROF I HAVE
RESAVIT AS YIT NA PAYMENT.

ANE PORTRAICT OF HIS MAJESTIE FRA THE BELT UPWARD, LAST DELYVE-		
RIT, PRICE THEREOF,	- - - - -	xvj lib.
ANE OTHER PORTRAICT OF MR GEORGE BUCHANANE	- - - - -	vij lib.
ANE PORTRAICT OF HIS MAJESTIE FULL LENTH	- - - - -	xl lib.
		SUMMA lxiiij lib.

REX.

Thesaurair We greit yow weill It is our will and We charge yow That ye Incontinent efter the sycht heirof answer our lovit servitour Arnold Bronckhorst our Painter of the sowme of thrie score four pundis restand awand him for the thrie Portraictures and pieces abone mentionat maid and delyverit to us at our command; and siclyke of the sowme of ane hundreth merkis money quhilk we have grantit him as ane gratitude for his repairing to this countrey To be thankfullie allowit to yow in your comptis, keping this our precept together with the said Arnoldis acquittance therupoun for your warrant Subscryvit with our hand At Halyrudehouse the nynt day of September 1580.

JAMES R.

ERGYLL.'

ANGUSS.

(a) Registrum Secreti Sigilli, xlviij, 40.