

II.

NOTICE OF A MURAL MONUMENT IN THE KIRK OF WEEM.

By A. H. MILLAR, F.S.A. Scot.

The old kirk of Weem, near Aberfeldy, contains one of the most peculiar mural monuments in Scotland, and as it has not hitherto been noticed, so far as I can find, a description of it may be of value alike to the antiquary and the genealogist. Some reference to the history of the kirk of Weem is necessary to account for the existence of the monument within its walls; and the greater portion of the following sketch is derived from charters and family papers in the possession of Sir Robert Menzies, Bart., of Castle Menzies.

The kirk of Weem stands in the midst of the old parish burying-ground, a few yards from the highway which leads from Aberfeldy to Castle Menzies, by General Wade's famous bridge over the Tay, and not far from one of the entrances to the castle grounds. Its history is intimately associated with that of the Menzies family. The oldest charter in existence at Castle Menzies was granted by John, Earl of Athol, *circa* 1296, and contains a special clause reserving the patronage of the church of Weem to the granter. On 23rd October 1440, King

James II. presented David Menzies, who had become a monk in the monastery of Melrose, to the rectory of the kirk of Weem. In 1463 the Earl of Athol gave a charter to John Menzies, bestowing upon him the presentation to the rectory and to the glebe; and this gift was confirmed by James III. in the following year. The "tak and assedatioun" of the kirk was assigned to Duncan Campbell of Glenurchy, ancestor of the Breadalbane family, in 1488; and when the barony of Menzies was erected in 1510, by charter from James IV., the patronage of the kirk of Weem was specially included in the gift. The existing building probably belongs to this period, and may have been built by Sir Robert Menzies about the time when he erected the Place of Weem, in 1488. Though used for devotional purposes within living memory, it has long been abandoned for the more modern edifice that stands near it; and it has been utilised as the family-vault of the Menzies family since the death of Sir Robert Menzies (born 1745, died 1813), grandfather of the present baronet.

The original structure has consisted of an aisle running north and south, with an offset towards the east, where the altar formerly stood, thus presenting the appearance of a small nave and choir, with one pseudo-transept at right angles to them. The dimensions are about sixty feet from east to west, by forty feet from north to south, the choir being about twenty feet wide. Over a small ambry in the south wall the initials of Duncan Menzies, father of the first baronet, and of his wife, Jean Leslie, sister of the Earl of Rothes, who were married in 1623, may still be traced. A door-way near the south-east corner, now closed up and almost overgrown with ivy, bears a heraldic shield carved on the stone lintel, on which the arms and initials of Sir Alexander Menzies (father of Duncan), and of his wife Margaret Campbell of Glenurchy are blazoned, with the date 1600, and the Latin inscription:—

CONTENDITE INTRARE PER ANGUSTAM PORTAM.
 SANCTIS MORS IANUA VITÆ EST. MEMENTO MORI.

The knight thus commemorated was the builder of the monument which now stands within the old kirk, on the north wall of the choir.

Its form will be understood from the sketch now exhibited. It is richly carved and inscribed with armorial bearings, the lower portion forming a recessed altar-table, which projects beyond the line of the arch. On the pedestal at one side a male figure, nearly life-size, clad in armour, is mounted, the left foot resting on a skull, and one arm leaning on a cross, emblematical of Faith rising superior to Death. The open book in his hand has the Latin phrase carved upon it:—

QUIDQUID FIT SINE FIDE EST PECCATUM.

The opposite side of the monument is occupied by the well-known female figure with children, typical of Charity, and both figures are surmounted by elegantly carved canopies. A heavy moulded cornice runs horizontally along the whole structure, and at each corner a kneeling figure is placed, resting upon breaks in the cornice. These represent a knight of the sixteenth century and his lady, the latter holding a position over the figure of Charity, and the former appropriately situated on the same side as the mail-clad warrior, Faith. The faces of both effigies are turned towards the centre and apex of the monument, where a figure symbolical of the Creator is shown within a niche that rests on a truncated triangular pediment. The arms of Menzies and Campbell marshalled, and with their separate supporters, are carved on the façade of this pediment, together with the initials A. M. and M. C. Two angelic trumpeters recline on the cornice course, apparently summoning the dead to judgment; and before each of the kneeling figures a pedestal altar is erected, the upper surface being ingeniously sloped so that it may serve to represent a reading-desk to be used by them in the exercise of prayer. The spandrells between the arch and the cornice are filled in with cherubim holding wreaths with inscriptions, one of these being—TRIUNI DEI GLORIA, and the other—GLORIA DEO, PAX HOMINIBUS. The date of the erection of this monument is carved on the spaces between the canopies and the cornice, and is given as Janua. 24. 1616.

That portion of the structure which occupies the recess under the arch is of special interest, since the inscriptions declaring the meaning of the monument and the intention of its builder may be found there.

The emblems of death, the skull and crossbones, with trophies formed of mattocks and spades, a death-bell bearing the date 1613 (the date of the last death commemorated), and coffins radiating from a central cranium, are shown within a moulded circle; and on a large tablet beneath the following inscription, in somewhat obscure Latin, is cut:—

*Regia me peperit genetrix stirps alta Britanni Atholix at Lawers est mihi
avita domus, Atque abavam spectans Huntlaei filia pulchra est attaviae est
Edzel gens oriunda meæ.*

*D[eo] O[ptimo] M[aximo] S[equor]
Manibus et memoriæ illustris generosissime que herois Alexander Menzeis a
Veyme, et memoriæ Campbell suæ sponsæ qui Maiorum Boni nominis et
posteritatis ergo monumentum hoc extrui curarunt.*

TRANSLATION.

My mother belongs to the royal race of ancient Britons of Athol, and Lawers is the house of my grandmother, and also my great-grandmother is a fair daughter of the renowned Huntleys, and my great-great-grandmother is derived from the family of Edzel.

To God, the Best and Greatest, and afterwards

To the manes and in memory of the illustrious and most noble heroines from whom Alexander Menzies of Weem descended, and in memory of Campbell, his wife, who have been careful of the good name of their ancestors, and for posterity, this monument has been built.

Around the large slab six smaller tablets are placed, bearing memorial inscriptions of the noble ladies commemorated, and accompanied by accurately carved heraldic bearings of their different families. Sir Alexander Menzies was twice married, and as both his wives were dead before this memorial was built, he has placed their names on each side of the emblematic circle. The latest tablet is on the side nearest the figure of Charity, and the others are arranged in alternate chronological order, so that the oldest name is on the lowest tablet near the figure of Faith. The inscriptions are literally as follows:—

*Elizabeth Foster, filia Domini Garden sponsa se[cunda] domine Veym obiit
Veym 10 Novem. 1613.*

Arms.--A chevron between three bugles.

*Margareta Campbell, filia Domini Glenvrhye sponsa Domini Veym, obiit
z. 8. Sep. 1598.*

Arms.—1st and 4th, gyronny of eight pieces ; 2nd, a fesse chequy ; 3rd, a galley, sails furled, oars in action.

Barbara Stewart, filia comitis Atholiæ sponsa Jacobi Mēzes. mater conditoris huius sepylchri obiit z. 2 Av. 1587.

Arms.—1st and 4th, a fesse chequy ; 2nd and 3rd, paly of six, surmounted by an earl's coronet.

Christina Campbell, filia domini Lavers, sponsa Alexandri Menzeis de Veym, avia dicti conditoris obiit.

Arms.—Gyronny of eight ; a bugle for difference.

Christina Gordō [filia] comitis Huntley sponsa Roberti Menzies de Veym, militis, avia dicti conditoris obiit 1575.

Arms.—Quarterly ; 1st, three boars' heads, coupéd ; 2nd, three lions' heads erased, langued ; 3rd, three crescents within a double tressure, flory counter-flory ; 4th, three cinquefoils, surmounted by an earl's coronet.

Margareta Lindsey filia domini Edgel sponsa Roberti Mēzes de Veym, militis, avia dicti conditoris.

Arms.—1st and 4th, a fesse chequy ; 2nd and 3rd, a lion rampant, debruizéd of a ribbon in bend.

The front of the altar-table is decorated with three panels surrounded by carved scrolls in high relief, the top being supported by four tapering pilasters, embellished with floral incised designs. The keystone of the arch is carved into the shape of a cherub holding a shield, bearing the monograms A. M. and M. C. interlaced, and these arms are repeated separately upon shields placed over the course of the arch, one of the helmets surmounting the latter being placed *contourné* for decorative reasons.

No authentic history of the Menzies family, some of whose members are commemorated in this interesting monument, has yet been published. Nisbet's account, which has formed the text-book of more recent writers, is inaccurate in several instances, and dubious in many particulars. The following references are taken from a genealogical tree which I drew up last year for a special purpose ; and as it was founded upon charters and documents in existence in the charter-room at Castle Menzies, the statements may be accepted as authoritative.

The place of origin of the Menzies family is not certainly known. The earliest form of the name in Scotland was *Meygners*, and it is

supposed that the family can claim descent from the same stock as the noble family of Manners, now represented by the Duke of Rutland.

The first Menzies whom we can positively identify is Sir Robert de Meyners, who was made Great Chamberlain of Scotland when Alexander III. ascended the throne in 1249, and demitted that office in 1253. His name appears as witness to a charter in 1248, and he died (according to Fordun) in 1266. His son, Sir Alexander de Meyners, enjoyed the favour of Alexander III. until that monarch's death, and afterwards distinguished himself in the War of Independence, suffering a short period of imprisonment for his opposition to the designs of Edward I. He was the first of the family that settled at Weem, having obtained a charter of lands, in the neighbourhood of Aberfeldy, from John de Strathbogie, Earl of Athol, in 1296. He was married to Egidia Stewart, daughter of James, High Steward of Scotland (1243-1309), and Cecilia, daughter of the Earl of March; and he died in 1332, having survived his fellow-soldier and liege-lord, King Robert the Bruce, three years. In 1390, Sir Robert de Menzies, great-grandson of Sir Alexander, was shield-bearer to Robert II. and to John, Earl of Carrick, who afterwards became the second of the Stewart dynasty under the title of Robert III. Sir David de Menzies, grandson of Sir Robert, held an important position at the Scottish Court after the death of Robert III. (1406), and was named as one of the hostages for James I. in 1423. In the same year he was made Commissioner of the Islands of Orkney and Shetland, by King Eirik of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, during part of the minority of William Sinclair, the last of the Earls of Orkney. In 1440 he finally renounced the world, and sought the seclusion of a monastic cell within the Abbey of Melrose, where he spent the remainder of his days. Local tradition still associates the name of Sir David with the Holy Well of St Cuthberht, which occupies a position upon a shelving rock on the hill of Weem called *Craig-an-t'Shapail*. As has been said, he obtained from James II. the presentation to the kirk of Weem in the year of his retirement, and probably died shortly afterwards.

Sir John de Menzies, son of Sir David, according to Wyntoun, was "banneoure" or standard-bearer to the Earl of Mar, son of the Wolf of

Badenoch, and accompanied him to France, taking part in the battle of Liege in 1408. The chronicler relates an incident of this campaign, that had been told him by some eye-witness, and which redounds to the credit of Sir John as a martial hero.¹ He died *circa* 1451, and was succeeded by his second son John, who died in 1487 leaving one son, Sir Robert, the first of the family whose name appears on the mural monument.

Sir Robert Menzies is memorable in the annals of the family as the builder of the place of Weem. The former residence of the Menzies family was at Comrie Castle, on the banks of the Lyon; but as that place was partially destroyed by fire in 1487—the year of Sir Robert's accession—he erected a new castle near the base of the rock of Weem, at a short distance from the site of the present Castle-Menzies. Shortly after its completion (1503) the Place of Weem was destroyed by fire during a raid by the Stewarts of Fothergill. Sir Robert took legal action against the Stewarts, and though he obtained a decree from the Privy Council, ordering payment to be made for the damages he had suffered, his son had not obtained satisfaction of the claim fifty years after, as it was renewed during the reign of Queen Mary in 1553. Sir Robert obtained a charter from James IV., erecting his possessions in Strathtay and elsewhere into the free barony of Castle-Menzies. He was married to Margaret, daughter of Sir David Lindsay of Edzell (*ob.* 1527), ancestor of the Earls of Crawford, and Catherine Fotheringham of Powrie, and was great-great-grandfather of the builder of the monument in the kirk of Weem.

Sir Robert Menzies, knight, eldest son of the last-named, succeeded his father *circa* 1520, and was married to Christian Gordon, the second “heroine” commemorated by the inscriptions on the monument. This lady was the daughter of the third Earl of Huntly and Lady Janet Stewart (married 1503), the latter being the daughter of John, Earl of Athol, uterine brother of James II. Lady Christian Menzies died in 1575, having survived her husband for several years. Her son Alexander Menzies (1536–1558) was married to Christian Campbell, daughter of the Laird of Lawers, whose remote representative is the present Earl

¹ *Cronykil of Scotland*, xi. 27.

of Loudoun. The date of this lady's death is not recorded. Her eldest son James is memorable as the builder of the older portion of the present Castle-Menzies, which he completed in 1571. He was married to Barbara Stewart, daughter of the third Earl of Athol (*ob.* 1542), and died 29th July 1585. His wife survived him for two years, dying, as the monument records, in 1587, and it was her son Alexander who erected this quaint memorial of his ancestry in the female line.

Sir Alexander Menzies was not of age when his father died, but the exact year of his birth has not been recorded. He was Member of Convention for Perthshire in 1625, and survived his eldest and second son, the latter of whom died in 1631. As he was competent to sign a legal document in 1588, we may conclude that he was born *circa* 1567. In 1488 a bond of manrent was made between the then Laird of Weem, Sir Robert Menzies, and Sir Duncan Campbell of Glenurchay, and exactly one hundred years afterwards their descendants, Sir Alexander Menzies and Sir Duncan Campbell, renewed the connection, which had been temporarily interrupted, by a "bond of freindschip and amitie," dated 1588. The marriage of Sir Alexander and Margaret, daughter of Sir Duncan Campbell of Glenurchay, probably took place shortly after this time, as Sir Alexander is referred to as Sir Duncan's son-in-law in a second bond, dated 1596. Sir Alexander seems to have been specially proud of his alliance with Margaret Campbell, as he has used her heraldic bearings in conjunction with his own very profusely throughout the kirk, even to the neglect of his second wife, Elizabeth Foster's, meed of attention. Margaret Campbell died, according to the inscription upon her tablet, on the 8th September 1598, and the first memorial of her was the inscribed lintel over the door to which allusion has been made, and which was erected in 1600. Two sons and three daughters were born of this marriage,—(1) John, died, *vitâ patris*, before 1623; (2) Duncan of Comrie, married to Lady Jean Leslie, daughter of the Master of Rothes, in 1623, and died, *vitâ patris*, 1631, leaving a son, Sir Alexander, who succeeded his grandfather and was created first Baronet of Castle-Menzies in 1665; (3) Grizel, married to Sir Thomas Stewart of Grandtully, knight (born 1608, died 1688); (4) a daughter; (5)

Margaret (*ob.* 1670), married to Colin Campbell of Mochaster (*ob.* 1668), second son of Sir Robert Campbell of Glenurchay, ancestor of the fourth Earl of Breadalbane.

Of Sir Alexander's second wife, Elizabeth Foster, daughter of the Laird of Garden, no particulars have been preserved amongst the family documents. She was probably a descendant of Sir Duncan Forrester of Garden, king's comptroller, whose family was connected officially with the burgh of Stirling for a very long period. She seems to have had no children, and her death took place in 1613, as recorded on the monument, which was erected three years afterwards.

Sir Alexander Menzies must have married again shortly after the decease of his second wife, as it is recorded in the *Register of Sasines* for Perthshire, that in 1617 he and his spouse, Marjory Campbell, obtained a charter from William Murray, second Earl of Tullibardine, of "the mains of Garth, with the castle thereof," in conjunct fee to themselves and their heirs. I have been unable to discover anything further regarding this marriage. The Privy Council issued a licence, now in the charter-room at Castle-Menzies, "to Sir Alexander Menzies of Weem, his lady, and such persons as might be at table with them, to eat flesh during Lent, and on the forbidden days of the week, for the space of a year." The licence is dated "Holyroodhouse, 11 March 1628," and as Sir Alexander was certainly alive when his second son Duncan died, in 1631, it can refer to no other person. His grandson, Sir Alexander, who succeeded him, could not be more than four years old at this time, and there is no similar person to whom this document could apply.

The genealogy of the family of Menzies from the time of the first baronet (*ob.* 1695) till the present day, may be found in every Scottish Baronetage, and need not be pursued further. The foregoing sketch, however imperfect, is sufficient to show the relationship of the "illustrious heroines" to the builder of this interesting monument; an instructive example of Jacobean sepulchral art.