

## THE CATHEDRAL

*“Ye holy walls, that, still sublime,  
Resist the crumbling touch of time,  
How strongly still your form displays  
The piety of ancient days.  
As through your ruins hoar and grey,-  
Ruins yet beauteous in decay,-  
The silvery moonbeams trembling fly,  
The forms of ages long gone by  
Crowd thick on Fancy’s wond’ring eye,  
And wake the soul to musings high.”*

The Cathedral is, on one side, embossed in dark fir trees of very fine forms, and, on the other, placed in an exquisitely laid out flower garden opening to the river. It offers some highly picturesque subjects for the pencil, independently of its merely architectural details, which, in some parts, are, in themselves, considerably ornamental, and well deserving of the artist’s attention.

In the year 1817, when the fabric was fast tending to ruin, it was repaired and strengthened in a most judicious manner, without the slightest interference with that which remained, and on a principle well deserving of imitation.

When the mullions or other ornamental parts were in danger, they have been fastened with iron cramps; and wherever any fresh masonry was required for security, it has been so managed that the eye does not discover the repairs. Thus this building may yet stand for ages- the memorial of a period when Scotland vied with its wealthier neighbour, as far as its limited means permitted, in dedicating no small portion of its resources to the splendour as well as to the support of Religion. While we lament the fanaticism which levelled so many of our sacred structures with the ground we must not forget to record the liberality which, though late, has at length interfered to prevent the utter demolition of these testimonies of the piety of our ancestors.

Nor would it be just to pass over the noble individual-John the Fourth Duke of Athole-to whom Scotland and the arts are alike indebted for this attention. With a liberality akin to that which the country owes the Bridge of Dunkeld, he undertook also to convert the ruinous Choir into a Church for the service of the City. In effecting this, in a manner as durable as it is ornamental, the exterior of the building has, in this part, been restored, with some slight variations, to its original state; while the country has been provided with a Church which helps to remove the discredit so often and so unjustly attached to these structures in Scotland. Thus the repairs of a part and the restoration of the rest, have gone hand in hand; and everything has been done which ought or could have been done to protect and preserve the whole, short of that entire restoration, which was obviously impossible. It is due to the liberality of government to remember, that the exchequer advanced £1000 to towards these repairs; and still more so that the Duke of Athole, to say that his expense amounted to £5000.

It appears that Dunkeld was originally the seat of those establishments derived from St. Columba, which have been called Monasteries of Culdees; and it is also related that the bones of that saint were transported hither from Iona, by Kenneth MacAlpine. According to history, David the First converted this Monastery into an Episcopal see in 1127, by creating Gregory the First, who was then Abbot of Dunkeld, a bishop. These bishops appear also to have been at one time the primates of Scotland. After Gregory the First, the line of Episcopal succession, according to the record, is as follows:- Gregory the Second, Walter Bedun, John Scott, Richard de Prebenda, John of Leicester, Hugo de Sigillo, Matthew Scott, Gilbert, Galfred Liverance, Richard, David, Richard Inverkeithing, Robert d'Estoteville, Matthew de Crambeth, William Sinclair (the fighting bishop), Walter, Duncan, John, Michael Monymusk, John Peebles, Robert de Cardney, Donald M'Naughton, James Kennedy, Alexander Lauder, James Bruce, William Turnbull, John Ralston, Thomas Lauder, James Levingstone, Alexander Inglis, Robert, George Brown, Andrew Stewart, Gavin Douglas (celebrated in Scottish literature), George Crichton, John Hamilton, and Robert Crichton; this last ending the Roman Catholic line, in 1561.

The bishops after the Reformation were James Paton, Peter Rollock, James Nicolson, Alexander Lindsay, George Halliburton, Henry Guthrie, William Lindsay, Andrew Bruce, and John Hamilton.

What the nature of the early or original building was is unknown, and cannot be conjectured; but the records of the present have been preserved. The choir seems to have been the original church, and was built by Bishop Sinclair in 1318. Bishop Cardney, in 1406, founded the nave, and raised it as far as the second row of arches. Bishop Ralston finished the nave, and began the aisles of the Cathedral. In 1460, the Cathedral was finished by Bishop Lauder. In 1469 it appears that Thomas Lauder built the Chapter-house; commencing also the Tower, which was completed by Bishop Brown in 1501. There are also marks of alteration about the building, particularly in the addition of a gateway at the western end, of which there is no record.

That which the superstition of idle and profligate monks and bishops as their posterity think fit to term them, thus erected, the superior piety of their successors thought proper to destroy as far as they easily could, in 1560; at that time the Cathedral became a noble ruin, and stands to this day, a striking picture of mutability of human opinions. On the 12<sup>th</sup> August that year, an authority in the handwriting of Lord James Stewart, -judging from his signature,- and subscribed by him, Argyle and Ruthven, directed the lairds of Airtully and Kinvaid “ to pass incontinent to the kyrke of dunkeld, and tak down the haill images thereof, and bring furth to the kirk-yard and burn tham oppinly. And siclyk cast down the altaris, and purge the kyrk of all kinds of monuments and idolityre. And this ye faill not to do, as ye will do us singular empleseur; and so committis to the protection of God. Faill not, but ye tak guid heyed that neither the dasks, windcocks, nor durris, be only wise hurt or broken-eyther glassin wark or iron wark.” It would have been well had this order been literally obeyed; but the demolition was unfortunately carried out with a disposition of mind and temper more worthy of reprobation than applause. The Cathedral and choir were completely sacked. The windows were smashed, and the doors torn from their hinges. For the credit of the mob, it does not appear from the walls that

fire had ever been applied as one of their engines of destruction. Tradition affirms that what these lairds had left undestroyed was demolished by the Laird of Cardney, among whose family papers the original order for destruction is to be found. This laird unroofed the Cathedral, although one of his ancestors had honourably presided in it as bishop, whose tomb was, and still is, one of its attractions, and from whom part of his power as laird had been acquired.

With some exceptions, yet not greater than are found in many of the ecclesiastical structures of England, there is much more uniformity of style in the architecture of Dunkeld Cathedral than was usual in the works of this class erected in Scotland. Still, it is evidently compounded, being borrowed, both from the Norman architecture which followed the conquest and from more than one of the three properly Gothic periods which succeeded to that; chiefly, however, from the second and earlier part of the third, the last of which lies in the reign of Henry the Seventh. The date of the several erections correspond sufficiently to justify this derivation; allowing for those ornamental parts which, it is notorious, have, in all similar cases, been replaced at later periods than that of the original building. It is also very apparent that throughout all of Scottish buildings unity of style has not been preserved in the same manner as it has been in England. This is easily explained by recollecting that, in the latter country, the particular erections coincided in period with the introduction of each new style of which they were the examples; and that, as this became obsolete, the fashion itself ceased; while in Scotland, where the dates of the erections were generally far later than the first and second, and often even posterior to the subsequent style, the architects, from ignorance or inattention used indiscriminately whatever they had seen. The arts, in this part of the island, had not then made much progress; and want of adequate funds must also often have assisted in depriving these buildings of that accuracy of design and propriety of ornament which the more ample means of the English Church furnished or permitted.

To pass over that which now forms the Church, the length of the remainder, or ruined portion, is 122 feet, and its breadth, 62; that of the side aisles on each hand being twelve. The height of the walls to the spring of the main roof is about 40 feet. The tower is placed at the north-west angle of the building, being about 99 feet high, on a base of 24 each side. The body seems to have been distinguished from the choir by a high Gothic open arch, reaching nearly to the roof, which, being now built up, divides it from the Church.

Six round pillars of Norman design, with two half-columns of similar form on the terminal wall, separate the main aisle from the side ones; their height, without the capital, being 10 feet, and the circumference 13 and a half. The intervals terminate in sharp arches of the second style of Gothic, with fluted soffits, the capitals consisting only of simple mouldings. Above each arch is a semi-circular window without ornament, but divided into two acute parts, with a trefoil in the interval. The third stage is a smaller acute window, divided also into two parts, with trefoil heads, and with a quatrefoil in the interval. As there are seven arches, there are, of course, seven of both these kinds of windows in the length of the building. It should be added that the upper row is above the roof of the side aisles, and that the semi-circular ones communicate between these and the main aisle.

In the exterior of the building, the great west window is the most remarkable object: and, as far as can be conjectured from the remaining fragments of mullions, it appears to have been formed upon a very florid pattern. It is surmounted by a headband crowned with a finial, of the shape of the contrasted arch, so as to form a sort of canopy; while it is thrown out of the vertical line of the gable, apparently to make room for a smaller circular window with double spiral mullions, causing a strange want of symmetry without any apparent object. This small window is, however, of a very handsome design, and of perfect execution; and the gable is terminated by a florid cross, which is still quite entire.

The southern angle of the Cathedral terminates here in an octangular tower, supported by a buttress, resembling a watch tower, yet serving no apparent purpose in such a situation. The effect, however, is pleasing as the proportions are elegant; the summit terminating without a roof, in an enlarged kind of parapet, supported on a rose-carved moulding, and perforated on each face by panelled quatrefoils. There is a staircase in this tower, communicating by an ambulatory through the wall and along the bottom of the great window, with the main tower. The window at the east end of the Choir appears to have been originally of a handsome design; and it has now been restored with straight mullions, in the style of Henry the Seventh's age.

The corbel table beneath the roof is still nearly entire, and there appear to have been pinnacles along it; while, if we may judge of the whole by the remains of one, compounded of tabernacle work, still to be seen at the west end, they must have been very ornamental. The principal door at the west extremity of the Cathedral, which seems to have been an afterthought, or a more modern alteration, has a deeply fluted soffit standing on clustered columns, and is accompanied by a smaller one, both formed of sharp arches, a circular headed one close to them, giving entrance into the tower. There is also a lateral door entering through a porch at the south side, the remains of which, still displaying two crocketed pinnacles, bespeak considerable former ornament. Two niches, one on each side, appear to have contained statues; which, as may be expected, must have been among the first objects to suffer from the spirit of reform. There is also a canopy, which seems to have belonged to some armorial bearing.

The windows in the body of the Cathedral, which light the side aisles, are as remarkable for their diversity of design, as they are for beauty, presenting eight or ten distinct patterns, all formed on that plan in the division of the mullions, which marked the middle period of the sharp architecture. Combinations of circles are the most frequent.

The Tower is a plain building with buttresses at the corners and with three tiers of ornamental windows, somewhat irregularly placed. It seems to have remained unfinished at the angles, terminating in rude cones, in place, probably of intended pinnacles, as it is surrounded by an ornamental parapet of perforated trefoils, standing on a corbel table. It is not known, at least, that such pinnacles ever existed, and that they had been demolished during the injuries which the building has undergone.

The Chapter-house, on the north side, and attached to the body of the Cathedral, is entire; containing, beneath, one of the vaults of the Athole family; and, above, a room once used

as the charter room. It is chiefly remarkable, outside, for the four tall lancet windows with trefoil heads by which it is lighted; and, within, for the remarkably perfect and prolonged echoes of the lower apartment. In the Chapter-house there is a marble statue of John, the fourth Duke of Athole, erected by his Duchess in 1833. As also other monumental tablets of the family.

There was formerly to be seen, within the ancient choir, along the north wall, a very beautiful row of tabernacle work with trefoil heads; but the internal reparations necessary for the church have covered all but two or three, which remain as specimens of what the whole once were.

All else that is further to be seen deserving of notice consists of some ancient tombs that have survived the general destruction. The most remarkable of these lies in the same place, now a vestibule to the church. It is a statue in armour, but not of very good workmanship, having a lion's head at the feet, and with the following inscription round the stone: - "His jacet Alexander Senescalus, Filius Roberti Regis Scotorum et Elizabethae More, Dominus de Buchan et Badenoch, qui obit A.D. 1394." This personage was the celebrated Alister More Mac an Righ, the third son of Robert II., and better known by the name of the Wolf of Badenoch.

Within the ruins, in the south aisle, is a monument to Bishop Cardney, lying in a recess of the wall. The figure of the bishop is represented in pontificalibus, wearing his mitre. The inscription is much defaced. It bears date 1420.

In the north aisle stands the mutilated statue of Bishop Sinclair. Sinclair, who seems to have been alike fitted to command, either in the church or in the army, is worthy of some farther notice. It was he who, with sixty men of his own, made a junction with five hundred belonging to Duncan, Earl of Fife, and defeated a party of Edward the Second's troops near Dunnybirsell, displaying a spirit worthy of the Bruces and Wallaces of that proud era of Scottish history.

Among the ancient tombstones within the Cathedral may be mentioned those of the Dean of Dunkeld, 1476, and of the Rector of Moneydie, 1548.

On the edge of the burial ground, outside of the Cathedral, are two large stones "with shapeless sculpture decked," one of them in the form of an inverted cross, and the other covered with a rude representation of the twelve apostles.

By several writers mention is made of an epitaph of Margery Scott, who was buried here in 1728, it does not appear to have been inscribed on stone. Though devoid of merit, it may, as a chronological curiosity, interest the reader: \_

*"Stop, passenger, until my life you read!  
The living may get knowledge from the dead.  
Five times five years, unwedded was my life;  
Five times five years I was a virtuous wife;*

*Ten times five years, I wept a widow's woes;  
Now, tired of human scenes, I here repose.  
Betwixt my cradle and my grave were seen  
Seven mighty kings of Scotland and a queen;  
Full twice five years the Commonwealth I saw;  
Ten times the subjects rise against the law;  
And, which is worse than any civil war,  
A king arraigned before the subjects' bar,  
Swarms of sectarians, hot with hellish rage,  
Cut off his royal head upon the stage.  
Twice did I see old Prelacy pulled down,  
And twice the cloak did sink beneath the gown.  
I saw the Stuart race thrust out; nay, more,  
I saw our country sold for English ore;  
Our numerous nobles, who have famous been,  
Sunk to the lowly number of sixteen.  
Such desolations in my days have been,  
I have an end of all perfection seen."*

Amongst the recent monuments within the Cathedral, will be observed a plain and unassuming stone, marking the last resting place of General Charles Edward Stuart, Count Roehenstart, said to be the last descendant, and a grandson of Prince Charles. He died in Dunkeld in 1854. There is another stone marking the grave of Lieutenant-Colonel Holcombe, - a name well known in the religious world.

In the vestibule of the church there are handsome tablets to the memory of General Sir Robert Dick of Tullymet who fell at Sobraon, in 1846; and to the Rev. John Robb, minister of Dunkeld, who perished in the "Forfarshire" steamship, in 1838.

The above narrative was sourced from 'Dunkeld: Its Straths and Glens' published by A. M'Lean and Son 1865.