



EARL OF MAR'S LODGING, STIRLING.

RUINS OF THE EARL OF MAR'S LODGING.

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THIS fragment of a stately town mansion of the olden time is still the most interesting piece of domestic architecture in Stirling, except the Palace in the Castle, which in a few respects it resembles. It is unlike any other Scottish building of its class, and it seems probable that it may have been designed by some one trained under the French architect employed by James V. At first sight its appearance is not prepossessing. Turned towards the north-east, the sun seldom lights up its blinded and disfigured face, and it requires careful examination of the best preserved parts to appreciate its architectural merits. The facade has been symmetrical, dignified, and refined, and the details at once ornate and elegant. It seems to have more affinity to the Gothic style than to the Jacobean Renaissance. Yet we find in it nothing to support the popular tradition that it was built of stones taken from Cambuskenneth Abbey. Certainly no carved or moulded stones from the Abbey have been used unaltered. All such details have been carefully designed and executed for the position they occupy. The inner walls have been finished in the same costly style as the exterior, but all that now remains is a portion of the front wall and the vaulted basement. The octagonal towers at each side of the central gateway have doors in front, and contained stairs leading to the upper floors, but it is probable that the principal entrance to the first floor was in the courtyard behind, to which the centre passage led. This passage has no openings at either side, and the archway in the back wall has had no door. The basement seems to have been entirely isolated from the rest of the building, and it has this remarkable peculiarity, that at the end of each vault (three on each side) is placed in the front wall a door and a window separated only by a pier 18 inches broad. These openings facing a principal street irresistibly suggest the idea of shops! They are now built up, but may be seen in our illustration. Panels over the doors in the front of the towers and over the archway in the courtyard bear the following quaint inscriptions, still legible—

THE * MOIR * I * STAND * ON * OPPIN * HITHT
 MY * FAULTIS * MOIR * SVBJECT * AR * TO * SITHT.
 I * PRAY * AL * LVIKARIS * ON * THIS * LVGING
 VITH * GENTIL * E * TO * GIF * THEIR * IVGING.
 ESSPY * SPEIK * FVRTH * AND * SPAIR * NOTHT
 CONSIDDIR * VEIL * I * CAIR * NOTHT.

The building had a frontage of 120 feet, and appears to have stood exactly in the centre of an enclosure extending from the Church to a point about 32 feet north from the gable.

The history of this remarkable edifice is obscure. Significant references in various extant documents seem to warrant the following brief statement. The house was commenced by the Regent Mar about 1567, and was almost, if not altogether, completed before his death in 1572. It was afterwards occupied, and apparently possessed by his widow, Dame Isobell Murray, Countess of Mar* and subsequently by his son, the seventh Earl, who for a time filled the office of Lord High Treasurer, and who died at Stirling in 1634, presumably in his own house. During the Commonwealth the fortunes of the Mar family, who maintained their allegiance to the Stuarts, rapidly declined. Owing to fines and other exactions, one estate after another had to be sold, till little was left to them but the lordship of Alloa, and their misfortunes culminated during the Rebellion of 1715. For many years their noble mansion remained unoccupied and neglected. So little was it valued that in 1733 the Town Council obtained a lease of it and the garden attached on condition that they should uphold the roof in good repair. It was then converted into a "workhouse"—not a workhouse in the modern English sense, but a place where vagrants and vagabonds were compelled to work. It continued to be occupied in this way till it was so seriously injured during the Rebellion of 1745 that the Town Council, who had not come under any obligation to maintain the walls, were obliged to find a house of correction elsewhere. Thus deserted, the building soon became ruinous, but in 1760, when visited by that observant traveller, Pococke, it was still so complete as to excite his admiration, and he describes it as "a magnificent building, though in the bad taste of the time of James V."† About 20 years after Pococke's visit, however, in 1782, the Town Council, on the ground that the tenement "called Mar's Work" was ruinous and uninhabitable, decided that it should be taken down. Fortunately for some reason—probably that suggested by Billings, namely, to screen Broad Street from the north-west blast—they left the portion which still remains. It is worthy of notice that the building was never called Mar's Work till after its conversion into a workhouse, when it had become the abode of the very dregs of society. In the older records it is always called the Earl of Mar's House, or Lodging. Would it not be well to re-associate the name with the brighter memories of the past, and let what remains be known in future as "the ruins of the Earl of Mar's Lodging?"

* Extracts from the Records of the Royal Burgh of Stirling, 1529-1666, p. 84.

† Publications of the Scottish History Society, vol. I., p. 294.