The Scotch Regalia

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ALTHOUGH the English Regalia infinitely surpass those of the Northern Kingdom, both in workmanship and in intrinsic value, yet the history of the latter has borne so remarkable and so romantic a character, that they deserve considerably more attention than a mere passing allusion.

The employment of a crown at the commencement of a new reign, is an early feature of sovereignty in Scotland, as in other nations. At the coronation of Malcolm Canmore, in 1057, the high privilege of conducting a new monarch to his royal seat was permanently annexed to the Earldom of Fife—a ceremony which plainly implies use of a crown. Some two and a half centuries later, Edward I. poured forth his fury upon the unhappy John Baliol. The distracted kingdom was stripped of every vestige of independent sovereignty. The unscrupulous plunderers fell upon the sacred Stone and transported it, without more ado, to London; while the crown and such regal ornaments as were at that time in existence, were probably broken up. At any rate, they disappeared for ever.

When, however, the gallant Bruce had once more rallied the drooping spirits of his countrymen, he proceeded forthwith to reassert his country's rights. Like the ancient Scotch Kings who had gone before him, Bruce was inaugurated at Scone, in 1308, with as much solemnity as a maimed ceremonial would permit. In the absence of the Stone of Destiny, the new monarch had to content himself with the chair, of which it had at one time probably formed a part—while a plain circlet of gold was substituted for the old time-honoured crown of Scotland, gone never to return. Six brief years passed away, and the positions were reversed. The victor of Bannockburn proceeded to impose his ruthless and triumphant terms upon the craven-spirited son of a mighty father. Yet, strange to say, during all the negotiations which then ensued between the Bruce and Edward II., not one single solitary reference is recorded of the crown. It can scarcely be doubted but that the crown had been altered, or more probably still, destroyed, beyond all hope of recovery. Judging then by this fact, combined with the special character of its own ornamentation, we may reasonably assume that the present diadem of Scotland now to be viewed in the crown room of Edinburgh Castle, dates from the first quarter of the fourteenth century. It was distinctly mentioned, for the first time, at the coronation of King David II. in 1329, and from that time forward it was employed at the coronations of all the Scotch Kings in succession. The sixteenth century, and more especially, the reign of King James V. witnessed a considerable development in the ornamentation of this crown, together with the addition of at least one important item to the Scotch Regalia. James V. caused several new arches at the summit of the crown to be constructed, by foreign artificers, besides beautifying the whole with gold from the mine on Crawford Moor. His matrimonial connection with Mary of Guise and the reigning house of France was probably instrumental in bringing about these changes. In 1543 his daughter, the hapless Mary Stuart, at the tender age of nine months, was taken from her cradle to the great church at Stirling, and there invested with her father's crown, whilst the sceptre was placed in her tiny hand, to the accompaniment of her own piteous wailing. During the century which followed, both Charles I. and Charles II., despite the superior position conferred by their connection with English sovereignty, were compelled to undergo the ancient rites of the Scotch Kingdom at Scone in 1633 and 1651 respectively; the strength of the political feeling displayed in the North, precluding all attempts to dispense with the national ceremony.

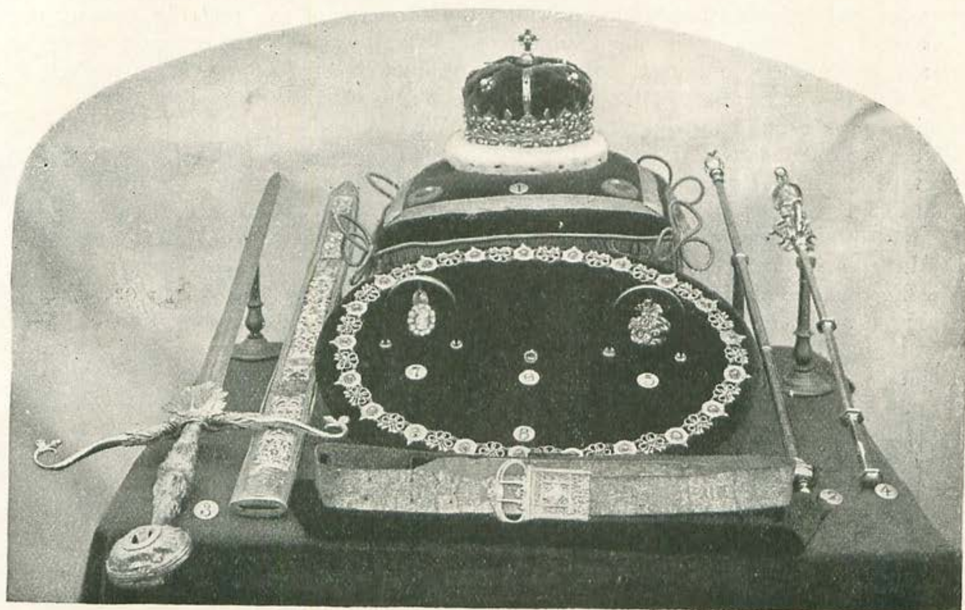
With the coronation of the last named monarch, however, a fateful era commenced in the history of the Scotch Regalia. A few brief years, and Cromwell with his Ironsides were sweeping over the land like a

scourge. Visions of Edward Plantagenet, or some still more terrible "Hammer of the Scots," were filling all hearts with abject terror. And so in the hope of attaining some real safety for their national treasures, the authorities placed the Regalia in Dunottar Castle, an impregnable rock overhanging the waves of the North Sea. Here George Ogilvie of Barras, a gallant soldier, defended his almost sacred charge night and day, stoutly refusing to surrender them under any pretext whatsoever. But, still, the threatened danger grew closer and closer at hand. Attempts were made to discover a more secure resting-place for the Regalia, by removing them to some inaccessible Highland fastness; but every effort collapsed in utter failure. At length, Lambert and his army sat down before Dunottar Castle, and the doom of the English Regalia seemed to be within an ace of repetition in the North. As has so frequently happened, however, female ingenuity proved equal to a perilous emergency, and the danger was averted. Three ladies shared the burden of this anxious secret—the Countess Dowager-Marischal, Lady Keith, with Mrs. Ogilvie and Christian Grainger, wives respectively of the Governor of the Castle and the neighbouring parish priest. The crown, sword, and sceptre, were carefully concealed in bundles of lint, and conveyed, by means of this subterfuge, through the ranks of the blockading army to the little church of Kineff, four miles distant. Here Grainger and his wife carefully secreted them. Dunottar very shortly fell, but no severity could wring the secret from either of the Ogilvies; not even the sufferings and privations which ultimately cost the poor lady her life. A period of sickening suspense followed, but the astuteness of the Countess-Marischal once more stood her in good service. She succeeded in placing the pursuers upon a wrong track, with the result that the Regalia remained in their hiding-place beneath the pavement of Kineff church, being guarded with loving care by the Graingers, husband and wife, until with the advent of the Restoration happier days dawned upon the land.

The Act for the Union of England and Scotland, which came into force in 1707 heralded a series of fresh incidents, almost equally exciting in the history of the Scotch Regalia. The anti-English party, borne along by the wave of popular feeling, succeeded in carrying a supplementary clause to the Treaty which enacted that "the Crown, Sceptres, and Sword of State, records of Parliament, &c., continue to be kept as they are in that part of the United Kingdom now called Scotland and that they shall so remain in all time coming, notwithstanding of the Union." This was a point gained, which, however, the English government met with a countermove. The danger of exposing to public view these treasures, so venerable and so beloved, symbolising, as they did, all that was opposed to English rule and influence, was sufficiently obvious. Accordingly, the authorities determined to erase them out of sight and out of mind. On March 27, 1707, the Commissioners of the Treasury took over the possession of the Regalia, to the indignation of the Earl Marischal, who declined to degrade either himself or his office, by his presence at the ceremony, in his eyes, so full of humiliation. The Regalia were henceforth lodged in the Crown room of Edinburgh Castle and hidden away in an iron chest. Many a long day was destined to elapse ere mortal eyes gazed upon them once more.

The years rolled on. A new generation arose which had never yet beheld these ancient emblems of Scotch kingship. Legends sprang up. A curious halo of mystery began to envelop the Regalia, till at length the impression spread abroad, that, entirely contrary to the promise contained in the Act of Union, they had been removed by stealth to London. Once and only once during the space of upwards of a century had the Crown room been opened, and then no attempt was made to investigate the contents of the iron chest, in which presumably the Regalia were reposing. At length, with the year 1818 the Prince Regent, who had taken the deepest interest in the whole subject, determined to solve the problem for good and all. The century which had just passed away had exercised a mollifying influence, and had succeeded in soothing the

passions and discords which accompanied the Act of Union. All apprehension as to possible political trouble was at an end. Accordingly, a Commission was appointed, prominent amongst whom was Sir Walter Scott. The duty was entrusted to them of conducting the necessary investigations. The iron chest was wrenched open—and then, amid a scene of the most intense excitement, the light of day fell once more upon these ancient "honours" of Scotland, while the royal standard was hoisted upon the castle tower, amid the mingled tears and plaudits of a delighted people. There they lay—crown, sceptre and sword—the marks of time being scarcely apparent. The handle and scabbard of the sword of state, it is true, were somewhat broken, and the head of the sceptre had been slightly bent. It is interesting to notice, however, that these very disfigurements were distinctly mentioned in an Act of the Privy Council dated so far back as July 10, 1621, when an official examination of the Regalia had taken place.



(From a photograph by A. A. Inglis, Edinburgh)

The Scotch Regalia

The Regalia were at once placed in a public position, and an authorised body of custodians was constituted. From that date onwards their history has been almost wholly uneventful; indeed, one event only stands out with any prominence. It was in the year 1830 when, by order of William IV., several highly interesting items were added to the collection, in the shape of the bequest made a few years previously to George IV., by Henry Cardinal York, the last descendant of James II.

Not only are the Scotch Regalia inferior in beauty, they are also fewer in number than the Regalia of England. On the other hand, quite apart from their stirring history, they possess certain points of interest which English cannot but envy. The crown is especially remarkable, displaying, as it does the combination of both Scotch and French workmanship. It consists of two circles, the lower adorned with Oriental pearls and precious stones, the upper with alternate sapphires and diamonds. This upper circle develops into ten cross-florées intermingled with fleurs-de-lys, and having for their respective centres a large diamond surrounded

by four pearls. Above rise the arches, and the cross-patée added by James V., which exhibit a marked difference in character to the rougher work of the Scottish goldsmiths. These arches are adorned with enamelled figures, while the centre of the cross-patée consists of an amethyst, together with a large pearl, beneath which are the initials I.R.V. The sceptre—a silver-gilt rod, surmounted by a capital of embossed leaves, supporting figures of Our Lady, St. Andrew, and St. John—bears the same initials. The scabbard of the sword of state is composed of crimson velvet, exquisitely adorned with filagree work and silver. The main subject of the ornamentation consists of oak leaves and acorns, the emblem of Pope Julius II. The title of that military pontiff is also indented in golden letters upon the blade; this sword of state having been presented by him to King James IV.

Second only to the crown, however, in general interest is the coronation ring of Scotland. For many centuries past, in England, the ring has always been treated as being the personal property of each individual sovereign, and is newly manufactured at the beginning of each reign. The Scotch ring exhibits a very remarkable difference, in that it must have been clearly intended to fit fingers of varying sizes. It is composed of a pale ruby, backed with red foil, engraved on which is a couped cross, enclosed in a circle of twenty-six table diamonds. It possesses a joint, resembling that of a bracelet, together with a long spring connected with the snap. It may be accurately described as being the only ring in existence which is the property of the nation.

The traditional history of this Scotch ring is of the most tragic, not to say melancholy, character. It is believed that it was the favourite ring of Mary Stuart, and that, after her judicial murder in Fotheringay Castle, it was transmitted to her son. From James it descended to Charles I. at whose coronation at Scone in 1633 it played a distinct part. Once more did this ill-fated ring figure at an untimely and ill-merited death; for, with almost his last breath upon the scaffold at Whitehall, Charles bequeathed it to Bishop Juxon in trust for his son. In due course of time the ring came into the possession of James II., and was carried away with him on his flight to the Continent. When, however, he was detained by the fishermen at Sheerness, the ring, which had been secreted in the King's underclothing, only escaped robbery by the luckiest of mistakes, on the part of the sailor who searched him. Thus the ring was passed on uninjured to James' descendants, till, by the bequest of Cardinal York, it became the property of the reigning dynasty once more, and was by them replaced among the royal jewels of Scotland, from which it had been separated for many a long year.

We can hardly conclude this brief account of the Scotch Regalia better than by quoting a touching story related by Frances Ann Kemble in the "Record of a Girlhood." "Sir Walter Scott told me," she writes, "that when the Scottish Regalia was discovered in its obscure place of security in Edinburgh Castle, pending the decision of Government as to its ultimate destination, a committee of gentlemen were appointed its guardians among whom he was one, and that he received a most urgent entreaty from an old lady of the Maxwell family to be permitted to see it. She was nearly ninety years old and feared she might not live till the Crown Jewels of Scotland were permitted to become objects of public exhibition, and pressed Sir Walter Scott with importunate prayers to allow her to see them before she died. Sir Walter's good sense and good nature alike induced him to take upon himself to grant the poor lady's petition, and he conducted her into the presence of these relics of her country's independent sovereignty, when he said, tottering hastily forward from his support, she fell on her knees before the crown, and clasping and wringing her wrinkled hands, wailed over it as a mother over her dead child. His description of the scene was intimately pathetic and it must have appealed to all his own poetical and imaginative sympathy with the former glories of his native land."