

William Schaw

Author of "The Schaw Statutes"

By Bro. DAVID MCGREGOR

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WILLIAM SCHAW was born in Scotland in 1550, and is thought to have been a younger son of Schaw of Sauchie. Of his early life we have no particular knowledge beyond the fact that he received a liberal education and devoted himself especially to the study of architecture, becoming sufficiently proficient in the art of building to warrant his appointment to the office of "The King's Master of Work," succeeding Sir Robert Drummond in 1583.

He had already become one of the household of King James VI and as such was among those who signed the original *National Covenant* on January 28, 1581, including King James himself.

He was one of three Commissioners appointed to arrange the matrimonial alliance of King James with Princess Anna of Denmark and accompanied his Majesty there in 1589, when the nuptials of the Royal couple were solemnized. The Royal party spent the winter and spring there, but Schaw returned earlier to make the necessary arrangements for their proper reception and accommodation.

One of the dowries bestowed upon the royal bride by King James was the Lordship of Dunfermline, an extensive possession and the ancient Royal seat of the Kingdom. Schaw had received the sum of 400 pounds "by his Majesty's precept for reparation of the house of Dunfermline before the Queen's Majesty passing thereto," which she did in July, 1590, remaining there for a couple of months. She frequently occupied this palace in later years and there gave birth to two of her children, Elizabeth, who became Queen of Bohemia and the ancestor of the present dynasty on the British throne, and her ill-fated son, Charles I.

SCHAW devoted considerable of his time and energy to the restoration of the old Dunfermline Abbey and adjacent buildings that had suffered greatly at the hands of the English invaders, and some of the present prominent features are the result of his skilled efforts, including the north porch, the steeple, the roof of the north and south aisles, etc.

Besides being the Master of the King's Work and Chamberlain to the Queen, he also held by royal appointment the office of *Sacris Ceremoniis Præpositus*, which is interpreted to mean Director of the Sacred Ceremonies of the Royal family; so that he was not only interested in the work of restoring the House of the Lord in Dunfermline to its original purpose, but was closely identified with the services conducted therein, and it is not surprising to learn that upon his death, after a short illness, on the 18th of April, 1602, he was buried close behind the pulpit-pillar situated about midway the North Aisle of the Church, and there a massive monument was erected in his memory by order of his Royal Patroness Queen Anna, with an inscription in Latin which translated reads:

TO his most intimate friend, William Schaw,
Live with the Gods, thou Worthy, live for
ever;
From this laborious life, Death now doth thee
deliver.

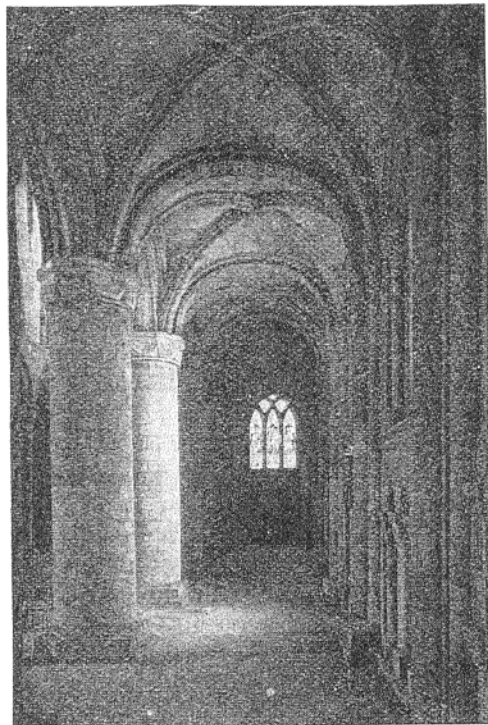
(Alexander Seaton's title was Earl of Dunfermline.)

D. O. M.

(To God, the best and greatest.)

This small structure of stones covers a man of excellent skill, notable probity, singular integrity of life, adorned with the greatest virtues, William Schaw, Master of the King's Works, Sacrist, and the Queen's Chamberlain. He died 18th April 1602.

Among the living he dwelt 52 years; he had travelled France and many other kingdoms for



NORTH AISLE, DUNFERMLINE ABBEY

improvement of his mind; he wanted no liberal art or science; was most skilful in Architecture; he was early recommended to great persons for the singular gifts of his mind; he was not only unwearied with labors and business, and insuperable, but daily strenuous and strong; he was most dear to every good man who knew him. He was born to good offices, and thereby to gain the hearts of men. Now he lives eternally with God.

Queen Anna caused this monument to be erected to the memory of this most excellent and most upright man, lest his virtues, which deserve eternal commendation, should fail or decay, by the death or mortality of his body.

IN 1754 this fine old monument was removed from its original site for the purpose of permitting *more light* to shine on the pulpit Bible. It was in part re-erected at the west end of the north aisle at the foot of the bell tower and immediately to the right of the memorial window shown in the accompanying picture. This picture and that of the monument as it is today were recently taken for this article.

A distinctive feature of the monument is a white marble stone about a foot square placed in the centre with his monogram carved thereon, the full name being readily traced in the interlaced letters in relief.

It has been suggested that this was a piece of his own handiwork, and had been incorporated in the monument as a memento of his ability as a craftsman, but while there is nothing to prove that it was or was not carved by him, there is little doubt of its being one of his own designs.

That he was a *Builder* in the fullest sense of the word, both in the material, intellectual and spiritual phases of life, there is no room for doubt; and he stood in as close relation to Scottish Masonry of his day as did Sir Christopher Wren to English Masonry a century later, even more so, for we know that he took an active part in the management of the organized Craft, which cannot be said with absolute certainty of Wren.

He was not only "Master of the King's Work," appointed thereto by his Majesty, but he also stood at the head of the Masonic lodges then in existence in Scotland. He held this position not merely by virtue of his appointment to the above office, but also by and with the consent of lodges themselves, as set forth in the preamble to the statutes laid down by him for the guidance and the observance of all the Masons in the realm.

BE it noted that the Warden was at that time the head of the individual lodge and, in accordance therewith, Schaw was known as the Warden-General of the Craft at large, these offices being now represented by that of the Worshipful Master and Most Worshipful Grand Master, respectively.

The Schaw Statutes, issued on December 28, 1598, were found in the earliest known records of the Lodge of Edinburgh (St. Mary's Chapel), the oldest existing lodge in the world today. They

were a revised revival of laws previously enacted, but which had fallen into desuetude, thereby engendering "manifold corruptions and imperfections both among themselves and in the Craft, giving occasion to many persons to conceive evil opinions of them and of the Craft by reason of their great misbehavior without correction."

The Craft had evidently fallen into some disrepute and it became the self-imposed task of Schaw to enact and enforce laws calculated to remedy that condition. These laws dealt with the social and business relations of Masons one to the other individually, their duties toward their employers, the admission and conduct of Apprentices and their promotion to Fellowcraft or Master Mason. They provided for the regular election of Wardens of the lodges, subject to the approval of the Warden-General, and required the implicit obedience of all to the laws as laid down.

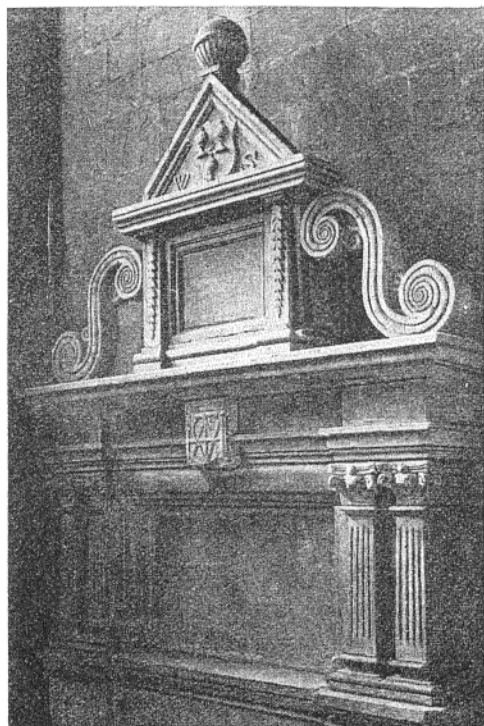
In pursuance of this policy of reform, he, as "Principal Warden and Chief Master of Masons," was called upon in 1600 to preside at the trial of John Browne, Warden of the Edinburgh Lodge for some infraction of those laws, of which he was found guilty and a nominal fine imposed.

While it is to be observed that these Statutes were enacted for the observance of operative Masons only, nothing being in them, either stated or implied, to indicate that any other than operative Masons were members of the Fraternity, it has been suggested and generally accepted that even then non-operatives were admitted to honorary membership, since the name of John Boswell, Laird of Auchinleck, appears among those present at that trial.

AT the risk of differing from so eminent an authority as Bro. D. Murray Lyon, author of the history of the Edinburgh Lodge, we venture the thought that there was nothing to prevent this brother from having been an operative

Mason "despite his title, power and pelf," which came to him by heredity. If we are to believe the "Old Constitutions and Charges" of the Fraternity, it was just for such as he that skilled masonry was originally developed to give remunerative employment to, and it does not seem that honorary membership would entitle him to take part in the trial of an operative Mason, especially the Warden of the lodge, for the violation of operative rules, much less sign his name with his "Mark" appended, as did all those present, the Mark being the talisman of their vocation, and the evidence of their accepted membership as operative Masons.

In further development of this reformation or reorganization of the Craft, and with a view to giving it a greater measure of prestige in the realm, Schaw was instrumental in having a charter given to Sir William St. Clair, of Rosslyn, in 1601 authorizing him to purchase or obtain at the hands of the Sovereign



WILLIAM SCHAW'S MONUMENT IN
DUNFERMLINE ABBEY

Lord (King James VI) jurisdiction over the Craft as patron and judge, and to his successors in line for all time to come. This was prompted no doubt by the desire to have a man of title and high standing as a disinterested judge to settle matters of dispute between members of the Fraternity or with their officers or employers—a court of last resort, as it were—a characteristic which still obtains

and seems to be inherent in British Freemasonry.

THIS introduction of the nobility into the Fraternity may be looked upon as the first step taken in recorded Freemasonry toward the development of non-operative or, as we know it now, Speculative Masonry, and William Schaw may be looked upon as the progenitor, unintentionally perhaps, of the Masonry of today.

MY IDEAL

By Bro. WALTER P. STEINHAEUSER, Litt. D.

'Tis he who daily, in the web of life,
 Draws through, unnoted by the careless throng,
 The thread of throbbing sympathy—a song
 Not set to music in all hearts, but rife
 With hidden meaning, running through the strife
 In souls responsive, making firm and strong
 The strands that in the woof crowd out the wrong.
 'Tis he who, chaste and pure as maid or wife,
 Can seal with love's own chrism the lips of pride;
 And weaving in life's mystic pattern strands
 Of loyal faith and truth, can subtly guide
 The longing soul and tender, eager hands
 To heights angelic—he who can confide
 In heaven, and gladly give all love demands.