

II.

NOTICE OF A HUMAN HAND AND FOREARM, PIERCED WITH NAIL HOLES, AND A BASKET-HILTED SWORD, FORMERLY PRESERVED IN THE FAMILY OF GRAHAM OF WOODHALL, YORKSHIRE, AS RELICS OF JAMES, FIRST MARQUIS OF MONTROSE. By J. W. MORKILL, M.A., AUSTHORPE, NEAR LEEDS.

In the middle of last century there lived at Woodhall, in the parish of Hemingbrough, in Yorkshire, a Jacobite gentleman, John Graham, Esq.,¹ who treasured as the most precious heirlooms of his house a withered arm, asserted to have been taken from the body of the famous Marquis of Montrose, who was executed at Edinburgh in 1650, and a sword said to have belonged to the same nobleman. At his death in 1773 these relics passed to his only daughter and heiress, Miss Maria Elizabeth Graham, who, dying unmarried in 1801, left them, together with the bulk of her property, including her estate of Woodhall, to one John Reeves, son of Charles Reeves, her steward. John Reeves died in middle life, in 1811, having made his brother Charles his heir. In 1834 the latter sold Woodhall to Robert Menzies, Esq., but kept the arm and sword, and these, with other relics of the Graham family, afterwards came into the hands of his daughter, Mrs Elizabeth Davies, of Ellerfield House, Sherburn-in-Elmet, in this county, from whom I purchased them in July 1891, and from whom, in 1894, I also purchased the portraits of Mr, Mrs, and Miss Graham of Woodhall, painted by Philip Mercier.

A statement in the handwriting of Mr Graham, which accompanies

¹ See an account of the Grahams of Woodhall in *History of the Parish of Hemingborough in the County of York*, by Thomas Burton, Esq., edited and enlarged by James Raine, M.A., D.C.L., and published in 1888 by Sampson Brothers of York, pp. 206-8. The relics are here mentioned, but the editor was evidently unaware of the existence of the Montrose arms upon the blade of the sword. It was not, indeed, until some six months after the latter came into my possession that I discovered the arms, by scraping away a thick coating of a greasy substance which completely hid them.—J. W. M.

the relics, explains how he became possessed of them. One corner of this document is unfortunately missing, but the remaining portion reads as follows :—

“The Noble Marquis before he suffered
 which he wrote the famous epitaph
 Major Thomas Graham it was kept
 I had a present made of the arm by
 had purchased it amongst other Cu
 to Mr Throsby when my worthy kins
 made me a present of it that the
 together

Woodhall.”

The Mr Throsby mentioned above was Ralph Thoresby, F.R.S., the Leeds Antiquary, in the catalogue of whose museum, printed in 1712, occurs the following entry :—“But the most noted of all the Humane Curiosities is the Hand and Arm cut off at the Elbow, positively asserted to be that of the celebrated Marquis of Montrose, whose Quarters were disposed of to several cities of Scotland, whence this was brought. It hath never been interred, has a severe wound in the wrist, and seems really to have been the very hand that wrote the famous Epitaph (Great, Good, and Just) for K. Charles I., in whose cause he suffered. Dr Pickering would not part with it till the Descent into Spain; when, dreading it should be lost in his absence, he presented it to this Repository, where it has more than once had the same Honour that is paid to the greatest ecclesiastical Prince in the world.”¹

The arm in my possession is identified with the one described above not only by the deep gash in the wrist,² but also by a label attached to it, upon which is written the following in Thoresby's own hand—“Marquis of Montrose's hand, p. 431.”³ The writing on this label is identified as Thoresby's by Canon Raine of York, and by others well acquainted with it. Moreover, it may be inferred from Thoresby's

¹ See *Ducatus Leodiensis*, by Ralph Thoresby, F.R.S., p. 431.

² When taken, Montrose was “sorely wounded,”—*Memoirs of Montrose*, by Mark Napier (1856), vol. ii. p. 770.

³ The page referred to in note 1 above.

words that the arm deposited with him was a right arm, in the absence of evidence that the Marquis wrote with his left hand.

The limb (figs. 1 and 2) is in a mummified condition, and has evidently never been interred: a hole through the centre of the hand, and a second one through the fleshy part of the arm near the elbow, suggest that it has been fastened by two nails. Two joints of the fore-finger which are missing, were stolen by a person to whom it was exhibited some years ago.

It appears from Whitaker's edition¹ of Thoresby's *Ducatus Leodiensis*, published in 1816, that at the sale of the latter's collection of curiosities in 1725, the arm of Montrose was purchased, *inter alia*, by John Burton,² M.D., the antiquary, a vehement Jacobite, and an intimate friend of Mr John Graham. He, then, it was who presented it to the latter.

I also received from Mrs Davies a second account of the relics, of later date than Mr Graham's, but evidently made while his was intact. It is in great part a copy of the older one, and was probably written by Mr Reeves. The sword is there stated to have been presented in the first instance by the Marquis of Montrose to a certain Major Thomas Graham,³ who in turn gave it to Mr Graham of Woodhall; and further, to be the very one with which the Marquis wrote on Leith sands his well-known lament⁴ on Charles I. This last circumstance, to which Mr

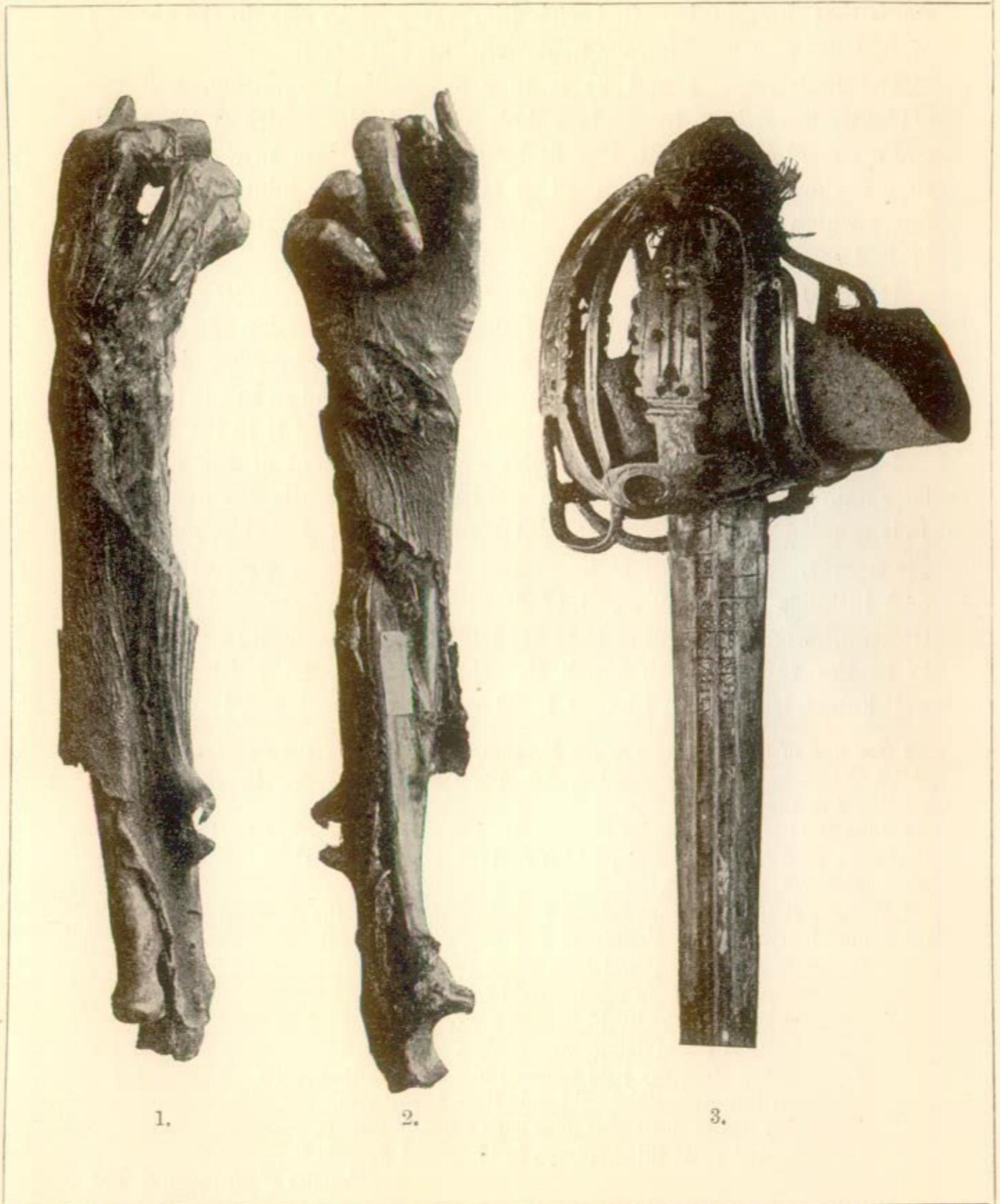
¹ See p. 3 of the *Catalogue of the Museum*, which follows the *Ducatus*. See also *Ralph Thoresby, the Topographer, his Town and Times*, by D. H. Atkinson, published in 1887, p. 435.

² John Burton married Mary Henson, the heiress of Woodhall, who, to relieve her husband's pecuniary difficulties, sold it in 1747-8 to John Graham. See *History of Hemingborough*, pp. 205-6.

³ Perhaps that Thomas Graham of Potento who carried the standard at the public funeral of Montrose. See *Memoirs of Montrose*, vol. ii. p. 831.

⁴ "Great, Good, and Just, could I but rate
My grief with thy too rigid fate,
I'd weep the world in such a strain
As it would deluge once again:
But since thy loud-tongued blood demands supplies
More from Briareus' hands than Argus' eyes,
I'll sing thine obsequies with trumpet sounds,
And write thine epitaph in blood and wounds."

—*Memoirs of Montrose*, ii. 693.



Figs. 1 and 2. Back and front view of hand and forearm.
Fig. 3. Sword showing shield with arms of Montrose.

Graham's account clearly refers, was evidently a tradition attaching to the sword in his time, but it is not confirmed by the biographers of Montrose. The sense of Mr Graham's mutilated story now becomes apparent. He first mentions the gift of the sword to Major Graham; secondly, the purchase and presentation to himself of the arm by Dr Burton; and thirdly, the kindness of his kinsman, the above Major Graham, or more probably his descendant, in giving him the sword, "that the (two relics might be kept) together."

The sword (fig. 3) bears its own marks of authenticity; for on either side of the blade, immediately below the hilt, the quartered coat of Montrose (three escallop shells on a chief quartering three roses, two and one), with the date 1570, is damascened in gold. The blade is double-edged, with a double groove running down the centre; it is encased in a leathern scabbard, which has been richly embossed. In the hollow of either groove, on both sides of the blade, is engraved the maker's name, "Hermann Keisser."¹ The hilt is of basket form, and appears to be of unusually small size. On the front of it are roughly scratched two letters, an "I" and either an "S" or a badly made "G". If the latter, they would be the Marquis's own initials; or if the former, they might stand for Jesus Salvator. According to the date 1570, the blade of the sword, if not the hilt, must have been made for an ancestor of the Marquis.

From the date, then, of the descent² into Spain, when it was deposited in Thoresby's museum by a person named Pickering, the history of the arm is sufficiently clear; but the scant and rather contradictory accounts of the disposal of the Marquis's limbs renders its previous fate less easy to trace.

The order of the Scottish Parliament³ under which Montrose suffered, directed his head to be fixed at the prison-house of Edinburgh, and his legs and arms to be fixed at the ports of the towns of Stirling, Glasgow,

¹ In Drummond's *Scottish Weapons*, plate ix., is an illustration of a sword very nearly resembling Montrose's, the maker of which is given as Hermann Reisser. Although possibly quite another person, the similarity of name suggests an error for Keisser. The letter K on my sword is so distinct as to preclude the possibility of mistake.—J. W. M.

² Probably some expedition in the war of the Spanish Succession, about the year 1704 or a little later.

³ *Memoirs of Montrose*, ii. p. 778.

Perth, and Aberdeen. We have the testimony of an eye-witness, the Rev. James Fraser,¹ that the arms were in fact sent to Dundee and Aberdeen; and as regards the latter place, his statement is confirmed by the evidence of a second eye-witness, Sir Edward Walker.² The editor³ also of *Montrose Redivivus*, a work published in 1652—that is, within two years of the Marquis's execution—substitutes Dundee for Perth, and adds, “but all of them (the limbs) were taken down afterwards by the English, or their permission,”⁴ which latter statement, as will be presently noticed, is confirmed as regards one of the limbs by the records of the city of Aberdeen.⁵

The first Parliament held in Scotland after the Restoration decreed honourable burial to the dismembered body of Montrose, and accordingly a public funeral took place at Edinburgh on May the 11th, 1661. For a contemporary account of the collection and interment of the Marquis's remains on this occasion we are indebted to the reports of a popular daily newspaper, the *Mercurius Caledonius*, of which the editor was the same Thomas Saintserf who has been mentioned as the probable author of *Montrose Redivivus*, and as a friend and admirer of Montrose.⁶ Under date Friday, January the 4th, 1661, this journal⁷ quotes

¹ Fraser writes, “I saw his (Montrose's) arm upon the Justice-port of Aberdeen, another upon the South-port of Dundee,” *ibid.*, ii. 809. The editors of *Deeds of Montrose* (pp. 534–5) point out that Dundee had no South Gate, since the river forms its southern boundary, and that Fraser's statement is therefore wrong. But as the editor of *Montrose Redivivus* also names Dundee in this connection, it would seem probable that Fraser is mistaken only as to the particular gate of Dundee, not as to the town itself.—J. W. M.

² In 1650 Sir Edward was lodged in Aberdeen at a house opposite to the Tolbooth on which he “saw affixed one of the hands of the most incomparable Montrose.” See *Deeds of Montrose*, by Murdoch and Simpson (1893), p. 534.

³ A translation of part 1 of Dr Wishart's *Commentary on the Wars of Montrose, together with the Continuation of his Historie, and a Relation of his Death, &c.*, was published in London in 1652, under the title *Montrose Redivivus*. Napier gives reasons for supposing the author to have been Thomas Saintserf, a fast friend and admirer of Montrose. See *Memoirs of Montrose*, ii. 837 and i. 912. But see also *Deeds of Montrose*, Critical Introduction, pp. xlv–vi.

⁴ *Montrose Redivivus*, p. 186.

⁵ See note 5, p. 71.

⁶ See note 3, above.

⁷ *Memoirs of Montrose*, ii. 826–9.

the resolution of Parliament "that his (Montrose's) body, head, and other his divided and scattered members may be gathered together and interred with all honour imaginable." On January the 7th details are given of the removal of the trunk from the Burgh Moor¹ and of the head from the Tolbooth at Edinburgh, and on March the 1st is announced the disinterment of a "member" (an arm, according to Sir Edward Walker) at Aberdeen,² but no record appears of the recovery of the remaining limbs, of which, indeed, the ultimate fate is unknown to history. It is true that, in his account³ of the interment of the remains in St Giles's Cathedral on May 11th, Saintserf declares, "all that belonged to the body of this great hero was carefully re-collected, only the heart,"⁴ but no evidence corroborative of this statement has been found. The municipal records of only one of the four towns to which limbs were allocated contain reference to their restoration,—those, namely, of Aberdeen,⁵—a fact, however, which perhaps merely points to the probability of the others having fallen into private hands. But even in the latter case we should equally have expected to find some notice of their recovery in the pages of the *Mercurius Caledoniensis*.

¹ The Burgh Moor, now known as the Meadows, on the south side of the city of Edinburgh, was in Montrose's time the place of execution for the worst criminals, and there, at the foot of his gibbet, the Marquis's trunk was buried. *Memoirs of Montrose*, ii. 812-13.

² The "member" had some time previously been removed from the walls of the Tolbooth at Aberdeen, and been buried in Lord Huntly's vault in the church, whence it was now taken in order to be sent to the body at Edinburgh. *Deeds of Montrose*, p. 535. If Sir Edward Walker be right, the arm in my possession must have been the one impaled at Dundee.—J. W. M.

³ Entitled *The true funeral of Montrose*. See *Memoirs of Montrose*, ii. 830-7.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 814 and 819-25.

⁵ A minute of the Council of Aberdeen, under date the 25th Feb. 1661, reads as follows:—"The said day, the Counsell haveing informatione, &c., that it was the desyr of ane noble and potent Earle, James, Marques of Montrose, that that dismemberit part of the bodie of the lait murtherit Marques of Montrose, his father, suld be soucht out of the place of the Church of this Burghe, wher the samen was interrit efter it wes taken doune from of the pinnacle was put up by the enimies of the said Marques, and that the samen suld be taken up and preservit, till order suld come for transporting the samen to the bodie," &c. (*Council Register*, vol. liv. 248-9.) *Deeds of Montrose*, p. 535.

The story of the removal of the limbs by the English some ten years previously is, as already shown, in one instance fully confirmed, and there is no reason to question its accuracy in other cases. That being so, the theory that one of them was carried across the border is not improbable.

On the other hand, if any of the genuine limbs had been wanting, their place could have been easily supplied, and in that way the full complement of bones might have been actually buried.¹

It will be remembered that Thoresby received the arm from a person whom he calls Dr Pickering, seeming, by the omission of any further description, to imply that he was a person well known in the neighbourhood.

A Cromwellian officer, one Captain Pickering,² who is said to have stood high in the esteem of his chief, was in 1653 living at Topcliffe Hall, in the parish of Woodkirk, some four and a half miles from Leeds. He lived later at Tingley Hall, in the same parish, where he died in April 1699. Now, an English Roundhead officer named Pickering is known to have been on friendly terms with the officers in local commands in Scotland,³ and to assume his identity with the Pickering of Topcliffe—a not unreasonable conclusion, seeing the name is uncommon,

¹ Dr Cameron Lees, the Minister of the High Kirk (St Giles's Cathedral) at Edinburgh, in 1891 informed me that some few years previously a careful search was made in the crypt beneath the Chepman Aisle, where the Marquis's remains are supposed to have been buried, but that no trace of them could be found.—J. W. M.

² For notices of Captain Pickering see *History of Morley*, by William Smith, pp. 137, 146; also *Walks in Yorkshire* (Wakefield and neighbourhood), by W. S. Banks, pp. 530, 531 (note); also *The Northowram Register* (Heywood and Dickenson), edited by J. Horsfall Turner, p. 95. His will, dated 14th September 1698 (pr. at York), describes him as "John Pickering of Tingley in West Ardsley alias Woodkirk, in the county of York, gentleman." In it are named his three married daughters, Mrs Lister, Mrs Elston (wife of Thomas Elston of West Ardsley, minister of the Gospel), and Mrs Sykes (wife of Joseph Sykes of Leeds, merchant). The seal attached displays the arms of Pickering:—a lion rampant (Thoresby's *Ducatus Leodiensis*, p. 211) impaling a coat of which only a bend can now be deciphered. The burial of "Dom. Johannes Pickeringe" is registered at Woodkirk on 22nd April 1699.

³ Several of the Scotch officers owed Pickering money, a circumstance likely to have facilitated his obtaining a relic of the Marquis, had he wished to possess one. *Deeds of Montrose*, p. 536, note 25.

and a Yorkshire one—is to suggest a very possible explanation of the presence of the arm in the neighbourhood of Leeds. I have not succeeded in identifying Dr Pickering, nor, indeed, in determining the qualification which entitled him to be styled *Doctor*.

While on a visit to Edinburgh in the autumn of 1891, I submitted the arm to the opinion of the eminent anatomist, Sir William Turner, who was good enough to write the following report upon it:—

University of Edinburgh, New Buildings,
26th December 1891.

The right hand and forearm in the possession of J. W. Morkill, Esq., are dried and mummified. They bear evidence of having at one time been impaled. In the palm of the hand is a hole such as would be made by driving a nail through it, and on the inner side of the forearm is an appearance which could have been produced by pinching up the skin when soft and flexible and driving a nail through it.

The hand is small and well proportioned,¹ and obviously not that of a big man, or of one accustomed to manual labour.

There is nothing in the appearance of the hand irreconcilable with the view that it may be the hand of the Marquis of Montrose.

WILLIAM TURNER,
Professor of Anatomy.

I append also a letter on the subject of the relics from Lord Napier and Ettrick to Canon Murdoch, the joint editor of *Deeds of Montrose*, written upon the occasion of my having offered to deposit them in the Montrose Chapel in St Giles's Cathedral at Edinburgh:—

Thirlestane, Selkirk, December 14th, 1891.

My dear Sir,—The fact that an arm or hand of Montrose was preserved somewhere was familiar to me, but I cannot at this moment recall the source of my information, private or public. I will endeavour to trace it. Meanwhile, I hasten to thank you, and return the paper, which is extremely interesting.

There is nothing whatever improbable in the preservation of these relics, and their authenticity seems to be very fairly established by the evidence adduced. Should the relics be presented to the Church of St Giles, I think they ought to

¹ Montrose is described by Saintserf as “of a middle stature, and most exquisitely proportioned limbs.” *Memoirs of Montrose*, i. 92. The stockings which he wore at his execution, and which are now in the possession of Lord Napier, indicate a small foot. *Ibid.*, ii. 811.

be deposited in a little chest under the pavement in front of the monument, with an inscription on the flag above. It is not decent to have morsels of a Christian man handed about as a curiosity above ground. Just so, the head of Darnley should be restored to Holyrood Chapel. It would indeed have been deeply gratifying to my dear cousin Mark¹ if he could have lived to see the splendid monument to the memory of his hero, and the restoration of these remains to his tomb.—Believe me, very truly yours,

NAPIER AND ETRICK.