

OF THE
REIGN
 OF
DUNCAN THE SECOND.
KING OF SCOTS.

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WHILE the origin and early history of those nations which were first civilized are involved in darkness or fable, it is not to be expected that others, who were then barbarous, should be possessed of any ancient historical records. In the last class, therefore, must be placed the whole of the island of Britain, which owes entirely to its Roman conquerors its first partial civilization, and to their writers the only authentic history of its first inhabitants. After these writers, our sole dependence is on the partial accounts handed down to us by our monkish historians, after the conversion of the natives to Christianity, who, being chiefly confined in their Monasteries, had often but little opportunity of being well acquainted with the transactions of their own times; while their predilection for their own order, and its advancement, frequently in-

duced them to deliver false accounts of the characters and conduct of their contemporaries. Such has particularly been the case with the history of Scotland. Excepting the barren catalogue of a very obscure and doubtful race of Kings, whose lives are full of inconsistency and fable, we have no records worthy of notice; and of the few circumstances related of them, there are scarcely any in which our ancient annalists do not differ. For this reason, the history of Scotland, from the time of the departure of the Romans to the period of King Malcolm III. called Canmore, being upwards of five hundred years, has been, in a great measure, abandoned by our later writers; and, even since his reign, there is much uncertainty attending many of the chief occurrences contained in it. Yet, amidst such difference of opinions, there will sometimes be found such authorities and arguments as to ascertain a matter of fact beyond the possibility of contradiction; and there is so much pleasure in the discovery of truth, that the labour attending such investigations is judged to be sufficiently rewarded by it, even although the inquiry may have been in itself a matter of very little importance.

I have been led into these observations by perusing, in our older histories, the account of the reign of King Duncan II. which was so short, that he is scarcely numbered among our sovereigns. This prince was a son of King Malcolm III. and is said by Fordun and other authors to have been illegitimate, though, from the silence of several of them on that subject, and other circumstances, he appears rather to have been a lawful son of that monarch by a marriage prior to his union with St Margaret. He certainly was highly in favour with William Rufus, King of England, son of the Conqueror, by whose encouragement and support he was advanced to the throne of Scotland,

who must therefore have believed that he had a just claim to it ; although the history of his own family abundantly shews, that bastardy was at that time by no means so very disgraceful, and did not disqualify from the highest honours, not even from those of sovereignty itself.

Malcolm III. having been killed at Alnwick, along with his eldest son Edward, in 1093, left his other children so young, that, as had been very usual in Scotland, the government was assumed by their uncle Donald Bane, who held it for a short time, until he was expelled by this Duncan, assisted by an army of English and other foreigners. Duncan, though of a warlike disposition, appears to have been of a feeble character ; and having been obliged to dismiss his English auxiliaries, to whom he was chiefly indebted for his success against his uncle, was at length killed, probably by his instigation, in 1094, or, according to Sir David Dalrymple, in 1095. Most of our historians say that he reigned only six months ; but Fordun prolongs it to eighteen : “ Qui cum
“ per unum annum et sex menses regnasset, avunculi sui Dove-
“ naldi dolo, quem sæpius bello vicerat, per adminiculum cujus-
“ dam Comitum de Mernis, nomine Malpetri, Scotice *Malpedir*,
“ apud Monathethyn cæsus interiit, et in Insula Iona sepultus.” Fordun also quotes on this occasion the following verses from an earlier Monkish writer :—

“ Mensibus in regno sex regnavit Dovenaldus,

“ Malcomi regis frater in Albania.

“ Abstulit huic regnum Duncanus Malcolmidis

“ Mensibus tot anno rex erat in Scotia.

“ Hic fuit occisus Mernensibus in Monathethyn,

“ Malpedir Comitum plebs premit omnis eum.”

The last part of Fordun's account, that he was buried in Iona, would seem rather to favour the opinion of his legitimacy, or at least that he was recognised as a lawful sovereign.

This account of Fordun is farther confirmed by the ancient Chronicle quoted by Father Innes, which says that Duncan was killed at Monachedin. The words are,—“ Donekan Macmalcolm
“ regnavit sex mens. ; hoc interfecto a Malpedir Macloen, Comite
“ de Moerns, in Monachedin, rursum Donald M'Donechat reg-
“ navit 3 annis.” Yet, in direct opposition to these testimonies, we read in Hector Boece's History, that he was killed in *Monteith* by Malpendir, Thane of *Mernis*. It was this absurdity of Duncan's being killed by the people of the Mearns, in the distant county of Monteith, that first led to the present inquiry ; and the probability is, that Boece, in copying from the older writers, had mistaken the obscure place of Monythyn for Monteith. His account runs thus :—“ Hic Duncanus, Sconam accedens, rex de-
“ claratus est. Sed homo militaris, semper in Gallia aut Anglia
“ bellicis rebus antea deditus, nihil minus quam rempublicam
“ administrare didicerat, æquum enim ac justum militari haben-
“ dum more existimabat. Statim igitur Scotia seditionibus exar-
“ sit. Nec id Donaldum in Hebridibus latentem latuit. Quare,
“ corrupto Merniæ Comite Macpendiro, cædem nepoti Duncan-
“ per insidias parat. Macpendir, die pariter ac nocte occasione cap-
“ tata, tandem per noctem in Mentetho regem obtruncat, nemine
“ aut percussorem persequente aut cæsum dolente.” Buchanan appears to have borrowed his account of Duncan from his predecessor Boece, and says that he was killed in *Taichia*, which is understood to be Monteith. He says,—“ Nec Duncanus diu regnum
“ tenuit : homo enim militaris, et artium pacis non admodum
“ gnarus, cum imperiosius, quam civilis ratio exigebat, omnia

“tractaret, brevi in maximum majoris partis odium incurrit. Id
 “cum Donaldus exul, ad omnes ejus motus intentus, rescisset,
 “corrupto Macpendiro Merniæ Comite, Duncanum in Taichia
 “nocte curat obtruncandum.” Again, Joannes Major almost re-
 peats the same story, but gives the name of Malpet to the assas-
 sin of Duncan, and exposes, not unjustly, the uncertainty of the
 succession to the Scottish sceptre:—“Malcolmo Canmor sic in-
 “caute interempto, Scotorum regnum Donaldus Bane, Norvegiæ
 “Regis auxilio fretus, invadit. At contra Donaldum Bane pa-
 “truum Malcolmi nothus insurrexit, et, patrum in fugam con-
 “vertens, sibi ipsi diadema imposuit. Hic manifeste videmus,
 “quod nulla sanguinis propinquitas a regno capiendo impedit.
 “Egregia indole liberos Malcolmus Canmor reliquerat, et tamen
 “eorum regnum patruus, delirus senex, et nothus, qui raro bene
 “agere solet, perturbat, anno cum semis hic furcifer nothus reg-
 “navit. Patruus sui Donaldi et Comitis de Mernis, Malpet nomi-
 “ne, dolo interiit, quo interempto Donaldus iterato regnat.”

To these accounts Leslie, Bishop of Ross, adds, that Duncan
 was killed while fast asleep, during a very stormy night, but does
 not mention the place:—Duncanus, ejecto Donaldō, omnium
 “suffragiis reipub. proficitur. Sed rei militaris usus tantam illi
 “mentis feritatem impressit, ut sagatus turbulentos in reipub.
 “motus excitare, quam togatus turbulentos reip. motus mitigare,
 “maluerit; unde frequentes seditiones in plerisq. Scotiæ partibus
 “exarsere. Donaldus in Hebridum jam latens subsidio, literis
 “quorundam de hac re certior factus, Makpendirum Merniæ
 “Comitem pecunia ad Duncanum interficiendum tentat. Ad
 “eam rem fidem suam astringit Makpendirus, illamq. brevi post
 “liberat; nam Duncanum in tempestiva nocte, somno altissimo
 “sepultum, opprimit, Donaldumq. iterum regia dignitate ornat.”

In contradiction of this private assassination by the Earl of
 Mernis, Winton's Chronicle, which is as ancient, and perhaps as
 good authority, as any of those before quoted, affirms, with much
 more probability, that Duncan was killed in open war between
 him and his uncle Donald, assisted by Macpendir. Thus he writes
 in his quaint vernacular language:—

“Quhem Malcolme the Kyng thus was dede,
 “Hys Brodyre Downald than his stede
 “Fandyd to wyn and tak. Than he
 “Banysyd hys brodyr' barnys thre,
 “Edgar, Alysawnder, and Daiuy;
 “Thai fled fra' thare emys felny.
 “Thai had a brodyr of purchas,
 “That Malcolmys bastard sown than was,
 “Duncan cald, and wes duelland
 “With Willame, Rede, that of England
 “As Kyng that tyme bare the Crowne,
 “And herd of this presumptowne,
 “That hys Eme than tuk on hand.
 “Into the Kynrik of Scotland
 “He come wyth powere of this Kyng,
 “That England had in governyng;
 “Hys Eme than he chasyd swa,
 “That the flycht he gert him ta',
 “And fra him qwyt than wan the land,
 “And was a yhere in it wedand
 “And ane half. The Erle than
 “Of the Mernys, a manly man,
 “Agayne Duncane wyth his powere
 “Ras wyth Downald in-to were,
 “And slwe this Duncane swne to dede,
 “Hys Eme restoryd til his stede,
 “That befoir as King had he
 “That state he held than yheris thre.”

I have thus taken the trouble to examine and to quote all these various authors who treat of Duncan's short reign, not on account of the importance of the subject, but to exhibit a fair specimen of the uncertainty of our early history, the differences among those esteemed our chief historians, and thence the difficulty of reconciling their contradictions, and of discovering the truth in such a mass of fabulous or erroneous legends. Thinking it, from Buchanan's account, highly improbable that Duncan should have been killed by an Earl of Mearns, in the county of Monteith, and being locally interested in the inquiry, I was at a great deal of pains to investigate the matter; and, by the aid of written documents, was at length so fortunate as to discover the real scene and place of Duncan's death. The substance of this I communicated some years since to Mr George Chalmers, to be inserted in his Caledonia; but the train of evidence appeared to me so curious and highly satisfactory, that I judged it deserving of being treated more fully, and of being submitted to the consideration of this learned Society.

Trusting to Fordun as the oldest and most authentic historian, I marked particularly the name of the place which he assigns as the scene of Duncan's death; and found, from a series of ancient records, almost down to the present time, a place of that very name in the shire of Kincardine or Mearns, of which Macpendir (Henderson) is said to have been the Thane or Earl.

This place, according to Fordun, (and it may at the same time be observed, that it lies in the modern parish of that name) was called Monathethyn, Monathechyn, or Monathyne. Now, in the foundation charter of the Abbey of Arbroath from William the Lion, anno 1178, in possession of the Honourable Mr Maule, this place is mentioned twice. The first is in these terms:—
“Dedi etiam eis unam carucatam terre in *Monethyne* super aquam

“de Bervyn, quam Willus de Munfort, et Umfridus (1.) de Berkeley, et Walterus Scotus, et Alanus filius Symonis, et alii probi homines mei, per preceptum meum eis mensuraverunt.” And afterwards: “Et terram illam de Munethyn quam Philippus de Maleville, (2.) et Eva sponsa sua eis dederunt, et quam Walterus filius Sibaldi, (3.) dedit prædicto Philippo in matrimonio cum prædicta Eva filia sua, salvo servitio meo,” &c. This last donation is now a separate farm of the barony of Mondynes, well known to have been the property of the Monks of Aberbrothick, and called to this day Abbeytown, now belonging to the heirs of the late Lord Monboddo. Again, in Mr Robertson's Index to the Charters of King David II. p. 35, No. 22, there is one to Walter *Pitcarne* of the barony of *Moneythin*, in vicecom. de Kincardin. And also by the same King, p. 86, No. 206: “Carta confirm. donationis, quam Duncanus Norre fecit Waltero de Pitcarne terrarum de Moneyethyn, in baronia de Moneyethyn, in vic. de Kyncardyn,” &c. In addition to all these, and which must render the identity of the place with the present barony of Mondynes indisputable, I have in my possession, among the papers of the

(1.) This Umfridus de Berkeley was ancestor of the family of Barclay of Ury, as is clearly shewn by various original documents still preserved in the family.

(2.) Philippus de Maleville was proprietor of the estate of Glenbervie, in Mearns, which is only separated from Monythyn or Mondynes by the Bervie Water, and was about this time Sheriff of Mearns, concerning whose singular death, a tradition of his being boiled is still very current in that part of the country. *Vide* “Scott's Border Minstrelsy.”

(3.) Sibaldus and his son Walter were ancestors of the Sibbalds of Kair, also lying on the Bervie Water, and one of the chief families in Mearns. They are witnesses to many charters of this and the succeeding reigns, particularly to that granted by King William to the burgh of Aberdeen, as copied by Mr Kennedy in his late Annals. In another charter, the father is styled “Dominus Sybaldus Miles de Mearnis;” and the son is always named, as here, “Walterus filius Sybaldi.” The family continued to flourish until after the restoration of Charles the Second, and is now represented by Stuart of Inchbreck.

Sibbalds, an old retour, dated 1560, by which it appears that the same family of *Pitcairn* still continued proprietors of this estate ; for among other names in the inquest is mentioned *Alexander Pitcairne de Mondynnes*. The local situation, and even the ancient orthography of both places, are the same. They both lie on the Bervie Water, in the Mernis ; and the change of *Moneythyn* into *Mondynes*, from the time of David II. to that of Queen Mary, is in noways remarkable. It also deserves to be mentioned, that in a field upon this property, in a very conspicuous situation, there lately was, and perhaps still is, a large, rude, upright stone, without any carving or other ornament, rising six or eight feet above ground, evidently placed to mark some memorable occurrence ; and also on a low hill hard by, called the Knock Hill, on the same estate, there was a cairn of an immense size, containing at least many hundred cart loads of stones, a great part of which, it is believed, still remains. Whether the vestiges of a very ancient stronghold or fortress unknown to tradition, upon the same property, and called *Castletown*, may serve to point out the seat of Macpendir, or of the Sibbald family, must be left to conjecture or future inquiry.

I am well aware that this long discussion about a matter of so very little importance must appear dull and tedious to ordinary readers ; yet being addressed to a Society professedly instituted for the illustration of the antiquities of our country, it is presumed that it will not be altogether unacceptable. It is at least curious and amusing to observe the various ways in which the same event may be related by different authors. Without any knowledge of their respective characters, and other circumstances, it would prove an affair of considerable difficulty to determine, whether King Duncan II. was a natural or legitimate son of Mal-

com Canmore ;—whether he was killed in 1094 or 1095 ;—whether he reigned only six or eighteen months ;—whether the place of his death was in Monteith or Mearns ;—whether he was killed in open warfare, or secretly and treacherously assassinated during a stormy night while fast asleep ;—and, *finally*, whether the author of his death was called Malpedir, Macpendir, or Malpet.