

Of the League said to have been formed between the Emperor Charlemagne and the King of Scotland.

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FIVE or six years ago (anno 1773) two short treatises were published, one denying, and the other affirming, that the King of Scotland had entered into alliance with the Emperor Charlemagne. I will not here enter into the arguments alledged on either side, but only lay before the Society an observation I made on reading the history of those times, and which seems to have escaped the observation of all who have written on that subject.

To the account of the league is added, that the King of Scotland sent his brother William with four thousand men to serve under Charlemagne. This very name, *William*, made me look on the whole as an idle story, the inconsistency of which confuted itself. *William* is our way of contracting two Saxon words, *guild beaume*. These signify a *gilded helm*, which was an honourable distinction, and like an order of knighthood among the Saxons. Now, it seemed highly improbable that a Prince of Scotland should have a Saxon name, or title, in the beginning of the ninth century; and that matters happened so oddly, that this very Prince, with the honours of Saxony in his name or title, should be picked out to serve the Emperor, who made war on the Saxons for above twenty years. But, on reading Fordun's account of the matter, I could not help concluding that the Prince's name was *Gilmor*. Fordun, not understanding the meaning of the name, gives us several, of which the first is *Gilmerus*, and goes on running changes upon that word, such as *Gilermus*, *Gilerminus*, &c.

&c. till at last he comes to *Gulielmus*, and rests there, as if that were the true one; as it was a name that had become familiar, and been rendered domestic in his time. Later writers, as ignorant of the Gaelic as himself, have copied the name *William* from him; and by this one error deface and disgrace the annals of their country. I was confirmed in my opinion, by what Fordun, in another place, tells of a King of France, (which story he must have had from some French writer or relator), who, speaking of the brave leaders that had served under Charlemagne, among others, mentions the *Scoti Gillemore*. Fordun's having hit twice so nearly on the true name, which it is plain he did not understand, convinces me that he had taken his account of the fact from proper vouchers, as Gilmor was the only name or title the King's brother could have had. *Gille* means a lad; or, in composition, *Gil-mor*, literally translated, signifies no more than the Great Lad: But in those days, before foreign titles of honour were introduced, must have been specially applied to the King's son or brother; exactly in the same way as *Monsieur* in France, or *Infant* in Spain. Our Highlanders, to express their particular chiefs, insert the name of the clan thus, *Clan Chattan mor*, *Clan o'Duine mor*; and this effectually marks that they are speaking of their chief, though there may be in the clan many men greater than him, in a certain sense, that is, taller or broader than him: But to the King's brother, the title *Gilmor* must have sufficiently marked his rank. I have seen several Irish pieces, in which their national Saint, to whom perhaps more than regal honours were paid, is devoutly addressed by the epithet of *Gille*. We have sufficient instances of the English word *Child* having been used as a title given to the sons of persons of distinction. There is still to be found in Scotland the surname of *Mac-Gillemor*. By the various vicissitudes that time produces, the few that now bear that surname are reduced to the lowest rank of life. Perhaps there may be some people too apt to look with con-

tempt on those, to whose predecessors their predecessors would have humbly paid their court.

The two treaties mentioned above, are said to have been written by Lord Hailes and Lord Elibank. There was also another published by the eminent Doctor Arbuthnot, which I never saw. It seems a point that deserves the care and attention of this Society to procure copies of those three treaties, from which, and from the authorities to which they will direct us, that controverted part of history may perhaps be cleared up, and finally settled.

There was a native of the British Isles, greatly esteemed by the Emperor Charlemagne on account of his learning. Several of his writings have been published. I never saw them; and I believe few now a-days read them: But, as he was once greatly esteemed, and his name is still eminent, some neighbouring countries claim the honour of having given him birth. He had several names, but is most known by that of Alcuin Albinus. Set aside the Latin termination *us*, and there remains Alcuin Albin; which, translated into modern English, is literally Alcuin a Scotch Highlander. By that name he was known by his contemporaries, and it continues to this day.