

I.

NOTICE OF "THE BLACK BOOK OF BREADALBANE," PRESERVED AT TAYMOUTH, CONTAINING PORTRAITS OF SEVERAL MEMBERS OF THE BREADALBANE FAMILY, EXECUTED IN THE BEGINNING OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY. By COSMO INNES, Esq., F.S.A. Scot.

The little volume called the Black Book of Taymouth has been long known as a chronicle of authority in Breadalbane and the central Highlands. It first became known to the outer world, I think, by the notice of Pennant, that intelligent stranger who dug out so many interesting objects which had escaped our own earlier antiquaries.

The book is written from the beginning almost to the end by Master William Bowie, who seems to have filled the double office of tutor to the sons of the Laird and family notary at Balloch (now better known as Taymouth) under Sir Duncan Campbell, the seventh Laird of Glenorchy. He began the Record, as he tells us himself, at the desire of his patron, in the month of June 1598; and the last entries, in the hand of a younger scribe, are continued down to 1648.

The writer had the good sense to avoid the mythical and *pre-historic* period

of the Gael, and beginning at the precise point where his patron's family branched off from the main stock of Argyll in the beginning of the 15th century, he deduces the successive lairds and knights of Glenorchy exactly as he finds them vouched by the family charters. His chief interest indeed is in their acquisitions of property, which he formally announces to be the first duty of a gentleman, but he does not turn aside from noticing their worthy deeds of arms, their improvement and civilizing of their country, their building and embellishing of their Highland castles, and above all their most laudable zeal in doing justice against the hated and formidable name of M'Gregor.

Incidentally we learn from Mr Bowie that Sir Colin, the eighth Laird of Glenurquhay, who had a taste for pictures, fine furniture, Arras hangings, Flanders naperie, silk beds, as well as the hereditary love of architecture, employed two artists to paint pictures, chiefly from imagination, of historical personages. One of these is only distinguished as the "*German painter*," "whom he entertaint in his house aucht moneth, and that for painting of threttie broads of the kingis of Scotland, &c., and of the said Coline his awin and his predecessors' portraits, whilkis portraits are sett up in the hall and chalmer of dais of the house of Balloch," and who had for his labour one thousand pounds.

The other artist is more interesting to us. The notice runs thus:—

"*Anno domini 1635*.—Item, the said Sir Coline gave unto George Jamesone painter in Edinburgh for King Robert and King David Bruyfes kingis of Scotland, and Charles the first King of Great Brittain France and Ireland and his Majesteis quein and for nyne more of the queins of Scotland their portraits quhilkis ar sett up in the hall of Balloch the foume of tua hundreth thrieceor pundis. Mair, the said Sir Coline gave to the said George Jamesone for the knight of Lochaw's lady and the first Countes of Argyll, and sex of the ladys of Glenurquhay thair portraits, and the said Sir Coline his awin portrait, quhilkis are sett up in the chalmer of deas of Balloch, ane hundreth fourseoir pundis."

These notices show the rate of payment of the first of Scotch artists (L.20 Scots for each picture), and explain the series and many single pictures scattered over Scotland of historical and even imaginary persons, whose portraits can never have been painted from the life.

In connection with this book they have a further interest. We find that Jameson was working at Balloch while the Black book was writing, and they point to him as the probable artist of some rude but curious portraitures of the Lairds of Glenorchy on the blank leaves of vellum at the end of the volume.

The earlier of these, representing the ancient heroes of the race, without the possibility of any resemblance, are exceedingly hasty, rough, and careless. Some have found in their costume a warrant for asserting the antiquity of tartan and the Highland dress, but that I think is quite imaginary. The later lairds are more interesting, as giving portraits of persons whom the artist must have seen, and as more careful in their execution. The last, the picture of Sir Colin, the artist's patron, is very easily admitted to be the work of George Jameson.

The original manuscript volume is exhibited by special permission of the Most Honourable the President of the Society. Fac similes of the portraits contained in this interesting volume are in the course of preparation, at the expense of the Marquess of Breadalbane.