

I.

NOTICE OF THE PROBABLE AUTHOR OF THE UNPUBLISHED HISTORY OF SCOTLAND, ERRONEOUSLY ATTRIBUTED TO BISHOP ELPHINSTONE OF ABERDEEN. By WILLIAM F. SKENE, Esq., LL.D., F.S.A. Scot.

In the two papers which I had the honour of laying before the Society containing a description of the MSS. of Fordun's *Scotichronicon*, I showed that Bishop Elphinstone could not possibly be the author of this unpublished history, which consists in the main of the five books of Fordun, with a continuation to the death of James I. I showed, by a comparison of the MSS., that it must have been compiled in the year 1461, when Bishop Elphinstone was still a student at Glasgow College, and that the author himself tells us that he was in France from 1428 to 1430, and again from 1436 to 1445, while Bishop Elphinstone was not born till the year 1437.

In endeavouring to ascertain who the anonymous author of this unpublished history really was, we have, first, to put together all the indications afforded by the work itself; and, secondly, to examine whether the same marks apply to the history of any Scot, who was in France at the period above indicated.

The indications afforded by the MSS. are as follows:—

I. The author was in France during the period when the Maid of Orleans played her part, knew her personally, and was present at her death in 1430.

This appears from a "prologus," which is found only in two MSS., viz., the Marchmont and the Brussels MS. In this he tells us, "that he will narrate those wonderful events, which he has seen, known, and heard of beyond the limits of this kingdom, and especially of that wonderful maid, who was the cause of the recovery of the kingdom of France from the hands of the tyrant Henry, King of England, whom I saw, and knew, and was with her during all her acts in the said recovery, even to the end of her life."

II. He was also in France during the life of the Princess Margaret of Scotland after her marriage with the Dauphin, and was in a position which brought him into daily intercourse with her.

After narrating her death in 1445, he adds, "For I, who write this, saw her every day, alive and amusing herself with the King and Queen of France, and that continuously for nine years. Finally, at the time when the marriage was contracted between the King of England and the daughter of the King of Sicily, the Queen of France's brother, I saw her within the short space of eight days alive and well, and dead and embalmed, and lying in a leaden coffin in the Cathedral Church of Chalons."

III. He was a Scotsman, for he translated a Latin poem on the death of the Dauphiness into Scots, at the command of her brother James II. of Scotland.

IV. He was probably a cleric, because he tells us, in the prologue, that he compiled his work at the command of the Abbot of Dunfermline.

V. And he was also probably a Highlander, for he usually gives Highland names in their Gaelic form. Thus, when Bower mentions the Clan Katan, the author, in the corresponding passage, substitutes the Gaelic form of Clan Gillechatan.

Now, on turning to the Scots who were in France at this time, we find that, in 1420, the States of Scotland sent a body of 7000 men to the assistance of the French in their struggle with the English, under the command of John Earl of Buchan, Archibald Earl of Wigton, and Sir John Stewart of Derneley, who was made constable of the Scotch army in France. In 1425, according to Bower, Sir John Stewart was sent, along with the Archbishop of Rheims, on an embassy to Scotland, to obtain further assistance, and to negotiate a marriage between the Dauphin of France and the Princess Margaret of Scotland; and, in 1428, we find him in the town of Orleans, assisting with his Scotch troops in the defence of that town against the English, who besieged it. On the 10th February in that year, he was slain in a sortie from the town, and was buried in the Lady Chapel of the Cathedral of Orleans.

Now, in the French accounts of Jean Mauleon, receiver-general of taxes, there appears, in 1427, a grant to Sir John Stewart of a sum of money for the expense of his embassy to Scotland. It is as follows:—"Par mandement, du 24 Octobre à Messire Jehan Stuart, Connetable des Escoszays pour lui aider à faire son veaige en Escoce et pour autre causes, cinq cent livres." And this is followed by an entry, "A Maître Morice

de Boconan, parent dudit Connetable, 40 livres;" that is, to Master Maurice of Buchanan, relation of the said Constable, forty pounds.

The relationship between Sir John Stewart of Derneley and Maurice of Buchanan was this. Sir John Stewart had married Elizabeth, second daughter of Duncan, Earl of Lennox, whose eldest daughter Isabella married Murdoc, Duke of Albany. Their daughter, Isabel, married Sir Walter de Buchanan, by whom she had three sons—Patrick, his successor, *Mauritius de Buchanan*, and Thomas de Buchanan.

This Mauritius or Maurice of Buchanan was therefore grandnephew, by marriage, of Sir John Stewart of Derneley. He was a master of arts, as appears by the title of Maître, but must have been quite a young man, and in Sir John Stewart's suite, and therefore must have been in the town of Orleans, when Joan of Arc raised the siege, and entered the town in May 1429, only three months after Sir John Stewart's death. Maurice of Buchanan must thus have seen her, and known her, and may have been present at her death. After this he returned to Scotland; for Bower, in narrating the voyage of the Princess Margaret to France in 1436, under the charge of the Bishop of Brechin and the Earl of Orkney, gives a list of her suite. In this list he gives the names of six knights. Then follow "Magistri Johannes Stewart, præpositus de Methven, et *Mauritius de Buchanan, thesaurarius Delphinisæ, clerici.*" If Maurice of Buchanan was treasurer to the Dauphiness, he occupied a position that must have brought him into continual and close intercourse with her.

He was also, as we see, a cleric, a Scotsman, and a Highlander of Lennox, and thus combines in his person all the conditions indicated by the work itself.

There is, however, a curious corroboration of this in the MSS. In narrating the battle of Baugé, fought in 1421, when the English were defeated and their leader the Duke of Clarence slain, Bower states that the Duke was killed by the Earl of Buchan. The author of this work, however, in his account, says, that "in such a general conflict it was difficult to ascertain with certainty by whom each person was slain, but the public gossip was, that a Scottish Highlander, Alexander Macauslan from Lennox, a cadet of the family of the Lairds of Buchanan, slew the Duke of Clarence, in proof of which, the golden coronet, adorned with precious stones, which the Duke carried on his helmet, was brought from

the field of battle by the said Macauslan, who sold it to Sir John Stewart of Derneley for 1000 nobles, by whom it was afterwards pledged to Robert of Houston for a sum of 5000 nobles, which he owed." Now these facts could hardly have been known to one who was not in Sir John Stewart's suite, and his claiming the credit of having killed the Duke of Clarence for a Buchanan, points to his having been himself one of the name.

There is, however, reason to think that this was the work which was known by the name of the Book of Pluscarden.

George Buchanan, in his History of Scotland, refers on two different occasions to what he calls the Liber Pluscartensis, or Book of Pluscarden. Now, the first reference consists of a quotation of this very passage, in which the author claims for a Buchanan the credit of having slain the Duke of Clarence. In the second reference, he states that the author of the Liber Pluscardensis was the companion of the Princess, both in her voyage and in her death, and bears testimony to the affection borne her by her husband, and brother, and sister-in-law, and gives a poem full of her praise, which has been translated into Scots.

There is therefore little doubt that, by the Book of Pluscarden, George Buchanan means this unpublished history.

Pluscarden was a Cistercian Priory founded by Alexander the Second, and Spottiswood, in his account of it, adds, "It is commonly reported that the famous Book of Pluscarden, seen and perused by George Buchanan, was penned here." I am indebted to Mr Stuart for a passage in the history of the Abbots of Kinloss by Ferrerius, which bears that during the tenure of the abbacy by John Flutere, seventeenth Abbot from 1445 to 1460, the White monks were ejected from Pluscarden, and Black monks, or Benedictines, introduced. These monks seem to have come from Dunfermline, for in the chartulary of Dunfermline there is, in 1454, a commission by the Abbot of Dunfermline to the Prior of Pluscarden, in which it is called "a cell of Dunfermline," and "a convent now of the order of St Benedict"; and 1456, another commission by the Abbot of Dunfermline to William de Boyis, his sacristan, to visit the Priory of Pluscardyn, with a view to its reformation,—a commission which ended in the usual way, for in 1460 we find the Abbot confirming a deed granted by William de Boyis, Prior of the Priory of Pluscarden.

In the following year 1461, the author writes his history at the com-

mand of the Abbot of Dunfermline, which would be intelligible enough if he had then retired to Pluscarden, at that time a cell of Dunfermline, and under the Abbot's jurisdiction.

At the Reformation the Abbacy of Dunfermline had been granted in 1585 to Patrick, master of Gray, and in 1593 was annexed by Act of Parliament to the Crown ; but the Priory of Pluscarden was granted by Queen Mary in 1565 to Lord Seton, who conveyed it to his third son, Sir Alexander Seton, who was made an extraordinary Lord of Session in 1585, and took his seat by the title of Prior of the Priory of Pluscarden. The priory was confirmed to him in 1589, and on 4th March 1605-6 he was created Earl of Dunfermline. Now Lord Fairfax, in his note on the Bodleian MS. of this work, says, "Note that the Earl of Dunfermline told me in the year 1657, that he had a very fair ancient MS. of the history of Scotland formerly belonging to that monastery." This was no doubt the Book of Pluscarden, which had come into the possession of his father as Prior.

The conclusion I come to is, therefore, that the *Liber Pluscartensis*, or Book of Pluscarden, is the correct name of this work, and that it was probably compiled in the Priory of Pluscarden, in the year 1461, by Maurice Buchanan, who was a cleric, and had been treasurer to the Dauphiness.