

V.

EARLY NOTICES OF THE BASS ROCK AND ITS OWNERS. BY
JOHN J. REID, B.A., F.S.A. SCOT. (PLATE I.)

It is not surprising that the Bass Rock, which from so many points in the Lothians forms a conspicuous object in the view, should have been at a very early period selected as an abode by one of the numerous hermits of that Christianity which came to us from the west. It is recorded by Boece (Bellenden's edition, i. 37; *cf.* also *The Breviary of Aberdeen*), who wrote early in the sixteenth century, that St Baldred lived a solitary life upon the rock, and died there in 606 A.D., much as St Cuthbert lived and died upon one of the Farne Islands off the Northumbrian coast, some eighty years later, or as St Adrian, who, to quote Wyntoun, was martyred upon the Isle of May hard by,

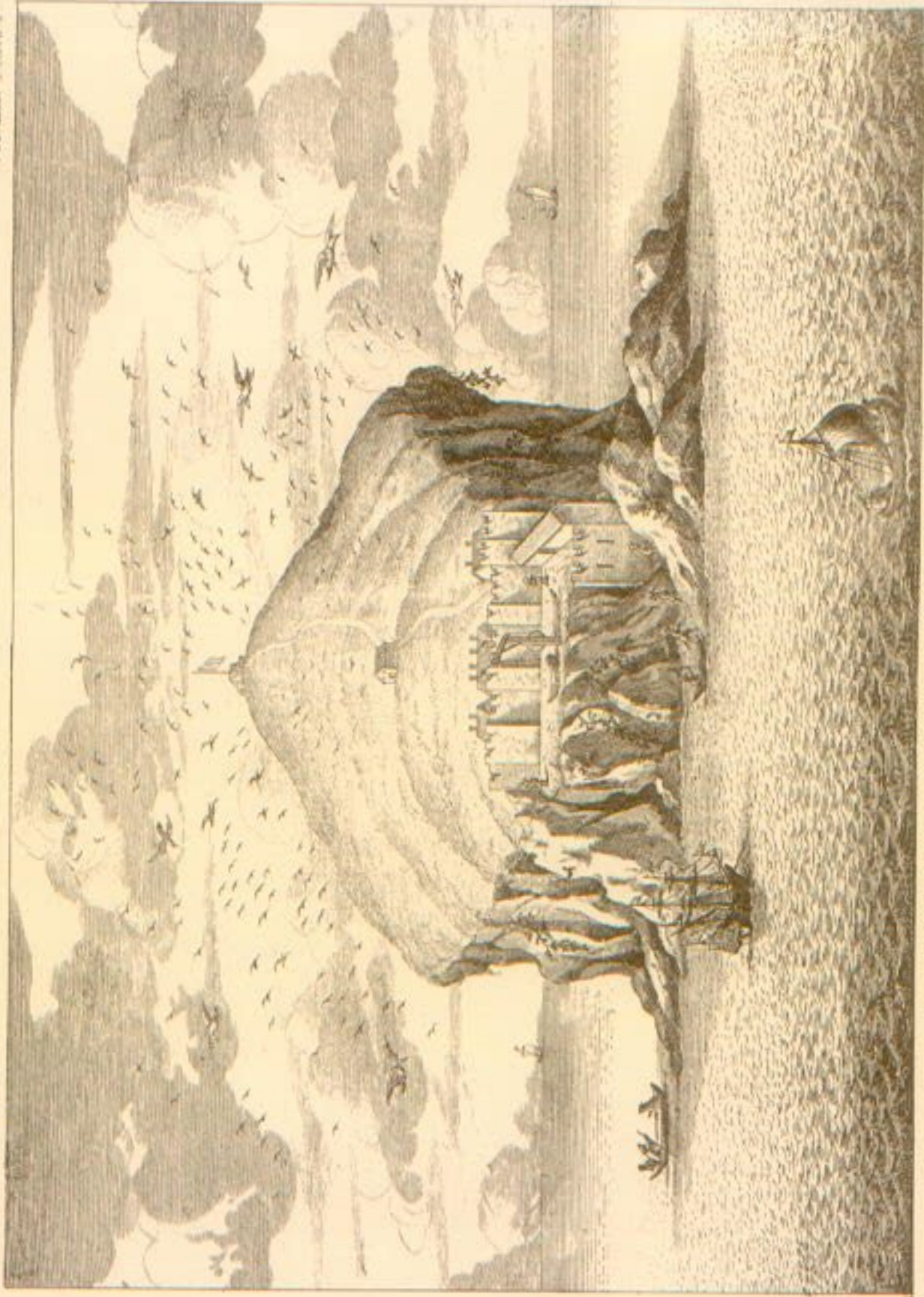
“and upon haly Thursyday
Saynt Adrian thai slwe in May.”

The name “Bass” is known elsewhere in Scotland; thus, “the Bass of Inverury” is an earthen mound on the banks of the River Ury, said by tradition to cover a plague-stricken castle. It is alluded to in a prophecy attributed, like so many others, to Thomas the Rhymer—

“Dee and Don, they shall run on,
And Tweed shall run and Tay;
And the bonny water of Ury
Shall bear the Bass away.”

I do not venture upon the subject of disputed derivations for the name, but the traditional memory of the first inhabitant is still preserved abundantly in the nomenclature of the district; for a small island in Auldham bay is yet called Baudron's Boat, a sea-worn cavity is St Baldred's Cradle, and a tall rock goes by the name of Baudron's Statue, besides wells both on the rock and on the mainland, and St Baldred's Whirl, an eddy in the River Tyne. Chalmers asserts that even so lately as the close of last century, a statue of the saint was still to be seen in the churchyard of Preston.

Beyond the fact of his existence the monkish legends about St



Insulae Bassæ ab ora Maris Australi The Prospect of y^e Bass from y^e South
(From Slezer's *Theatrum Scotiae*, 1690)

Baldred are so utterly improbable that I do not refer to them, and accordingly the interval between the date assigned as that of his death, and the first strictly historical notice of the Bass, extends to more than 700 years. In 1316, during the reign of Robert the Bruce, Robert of Lauder obtained a charter of one half of the Bass from William de Lambertton, bishop of St Andrews, a gift confirmed by a charter of John of Forfar, prior of St Andrews, the reddendo being one pound of white wax yearly to be paid at Tynnyngham (*Illustrations to Slezer's Theatrum Scotiae*). Sir Robert of Lauder was in 1329 employed on a mission to England, no doubt diplomatic in its character, and payments out of public funds amounting to £60 were made to him for the expense of his journeys to London and York. It has been surmised with every probability that the negotiations in which he was engaged related to the marriage of Prince David, afterwards David II., and Johanna, sister of Edward III. In 1330 he possessed hereditarily the fishings of Edrington, and was keeper of Berwick Castle and Sheriff there. For a short time after David's accession Sir Robert held the high office of Chamberlain of Scotland, for he is so styled in the *Chartulary of Aberdeen* in September 1333; and in the following December the *Black Book of Arbroath* also describes him as holding this dignity. These successive notices point to the great position already attained by the Lauders; and in 1337, I find an even more direct reference to the connection of Sir Robert with the Bass; for in the printed *Exchequer Rolls* there is an entry showing that a sum of 18s. was paid for bringing a boat hired for Sir Robert of Lauder, by this time also Justiciar of Lothian (justiciarius Laudonie), from the Bass to Aberdeen, "et in una batella locata pro domino Roberto de Lawedre del Bass usque Abirden, xvij s."

The names of other members of the same family occur during the fourteenth century; thus, the *Exchequer Rolls* have preserved the fact that in 1342 William of Lauder received a fee of £20 out of a certain benefice; and in the following year £10 was paid to "William de Lawedir, senior." Another member of the same family, "Alan de Lawedre," is mentioned in the same records as having received £6, 3s. 4d., "de precepto domini nostri Regis," in 1359. Amongst the witnesses to a charter granted on 25th May 1360 at Edinburgh, by

Thomas Stewart, Earl of Angus, to Sir Hugh of Eglyntoun, knight, of the lands of Ormdale in Cowal, is "Alan de Lawedre" (*Hist. MSS. Commissioners' Report on the Eglinton Charters*). So again, in 1360, the accounts bear the name of William of Lauder; whilst in 1369, along with John of Fawside, he accounted as bailie of Edinburgh. I am inclined to think that William, the bailie, was a son of the former William "senior," and not improbably a nephew of Sir Robert Lauder of the Bass. The isolated situation of that rock, and the difficulty of approaching it, seem to have suggested at a very early period its suitability as a place of confinement for State prisoners, who were thus quite secure, and yet not far from the various residences of the Scottish kings on either side of the Forth. Accordingly, my next reference is to a payment of £15 in 1370, for the expenses of the Earl of Mar, when "sub arresta Regis apud le Bass." Alan Lauder, probably the same person already named, figures in the Exchequer Rolls as an annuitant from 1371, and from 1374 onwards he enjoyed a salary of £10 as justice-clerk, be-south Forth—"Ten pounds sterling yearly during the king's pleasure, as the said Allan's salary for being justice-clerk upon the south side of the Water of Forth;" and besides this, he was also constable of Tantallon Castle, situated on the mainland right opposite the Bass. Alan was, I apprehend, a brother of William, who was still alive, and evidently a person of importance. In 1375, I learn from the Exchequer Rolls that he was custumar of Edinburgh, with Walter of Craibarry, and had been so for at least a year; whilst another reference shows that during his tenure of the same office, he had at one time Adam Forester as his colleague, and that they had become bound for the balance of King David's ransom. William of Lauder died either in 1375 or 1376, probably in the latter year, since for the arrears of his accounts of the year 1375, Alan Lauder became surety along with Forester, the surviving custumar. This alone seems to render it tolerably certain that William and Alan Lauder were relatives; but the Register of the Great Seal points to their having been brothers, for on 4th June 1382 Alan succeeded his brother William in the lands of Boroughmuir. Putting together what information we possess, I think it a safe surmise of the family connections of the Lauders in this century, to regard

Bruce's companion, Sir Robert of the Bass, as the elder brother of William Lauder "senior," and William and Alan, the two brothers, as sons of the elder William, or possibly nephews. The references to Alan Lauder in the Exchequer accounts, show that from 1371, when, as already mentioned, he had a pension "decem libras de cofris regis ad tempus vitæ," he had at least a good position at Court, then a matter of pecuniary as well as social importance. Through many accounts from 1375 downwards, his name may be traced as "custumarius de Northberwyk," beginning in that year with David Perysoun (Pearson) as his colleague. Alan Lauder probably inherited some means from his brother William, at any rate he got Boroughmuir; and if I am right in my belief that he was only a cadet of the Bass family, the emoluments of his various pensions and offices must have been turned to prudent purposes, for he saved money, and in 1377, the very year in which the constableness of Tantallon was added to his varied sources of income, he purchased the



Fig. 1. The Lauder Arms, on south front of Hatton House.

Hatton estate in Mid-Lothian. By the kind permission of Mr Findlay I am enabled to give (fig. 1) a print of the Lauder Arms as still graven on the ancient walls of Hatton House. No doubt this is the same Alanus de Laweder who about 1379 is found among the witnesses to a charter by Henry of Swynton, granting the lands of Little Swynton to Sir John of Swynton, Knight. Certainly in this year he was still custumar of North Berwick, and with "David, son of Peter" (Perysoun, Pearson), had a fee of £10 assigned to him. In the year 1384 the name of his cousin the Laird of Bass is again

given in a charter by Richard Edgar to Robert Edgar of Wedderlie, where he appears as a witness "Robertus Lawider Dominus de la Basse" (Jamieson's *Illustrations to Slezer's Theatrum Scotiæ*, p. 123; Nisbet's *Heraldry*, i. 344), so that we can with tolerable certainty distinguish between the Bass family and that in future to be designed "of Hatton," although the near connection between the two is further shown by a very curious document among those contained in the North Berwick Chartulary; I allude to the grant by James, Earl of Douglas, of certain subjects in North Berwick, "dilecto nostro Alano de Lawedyr." James was only earl from 1381 till 1388, when he was killed at Otterburn, so that the date within narrow limits is attained; and I cannot doubt that Robert Lauder of the Bass and this Alan were of the same stock, and that the latter is identical with the first laird of Hatton. In 1397 Robert received an annuity from the customs of Haddington, an additional proof of the widespread influence of the Bass family on the southern shores of the Firth of Forth.

When in 1405 Prince James, the heir to Scotland's throne, started upon an ill-fated journey to complete his education in France, the Bass Rock was the fortress from which he set out. At this time Robert Lauder was still laird of the island, and his kinsman Alan still custumar of North Berwick, though perhaps growing old and remiss, for in 1403 he was absent from the audit and forfeited his fee, and after that date his name does not actually appear; I infer, however, that his death did not take place until about 20th March 1407, up to which time his son Robert accounts as "executor testamenti quondam Alani de Lawedre patris sui nuper defuncti." This Robert was no doubt a younger son, for the name of Sir Alexander Lauder occurs in 1408, and I have found from an entry in the Chamberlain's Rolls that he was laird of Hatton. He was dead before 1434, and was succeeded in Hatton by William Lauder, either his son, or more probably his brother.

During the Regency of Albany, indeed from 1410 right onwards till 1426, the custumar of North Berwick was a Lauder, "George of Lawedre" being so designed, and being also described as a brother of Sir Robert of the Bass; and within the same period I find Sir Robert Lauder "de Bass," receiving payments from the customs of North

Berwick in 1413, 1414, 1415, and 1420, thus still marking clearly the connection of the principal branch of the family with the rock. No doubt this Sir Robert was the son of him named in 1384, and either grandson or possibly great-grandson of that Sir Robert who had been Chamberlain of Scotland in 1333.

When negotiations for the release of James I. were at last fairly set on foot in 1423, the laird of Bass was selected for the delicate and all-important post of ambassador to the English Court, just as, nearly a century before, his ancestor had been.

At length in 1424 King James I. returned from his long captivity in England, and at once consigned to the "Castle of the Bass," as to a prisoner, Walter Stewart, the eldest son of Murdac, Duke of Albany, his cousin. The person who received the payments for the prisoner's support was Sir Robert Lauder. In 1425 John Herring was constable of the castle, as I read the entry "*prout patet per unam indenturam Johannis Hering, constabularii dicti castri.*" Herring may not improbably have been the father of that "Thomas Heryng," who in 1462 is mentioned as "*Advocatus Domine Regine,*" advocate of the Queen Regent, Mary of Gueldres, and prototype of many a subsequent Lord Advocate. Whether this conjecture be well founded or not (and the fact of Sir Robert Lauder's having been justiciar of Scotland certainly does not weaken its probability), Hering, the constable of the Bass, was not long troubled with the charge of his noble prisoner, who, together with his brother Alexander, before the year 1425 was out, had perished on the scaffold.

King James I., though he visited with vengeance those whom he believed to be his enemies, was not unmindful of his friends, and his naturally fine and generous impulses seem to have found vent in many ways towards those who had helped to shorten the weary days of his captivity. Sir Robert Lauder of Bass shared, as I judge, in marks of royal favour, being at least as early as 1425 made Justiciar of Scotland, with James of Lauder (no doubt a relative), as justice clerk, "*ex parte australi aque de Forth.*" Sir Robert was also an auditor of Exchequer, and he obtained further from the king, on 14th December 1425, a confirmation as to Robert of Lauder of Edrington, justiciar of Scotland,

of the lands of the Crag and Ballingoune, and one-half of the Bass in the barony of North Berwick and constabulary of Haddington: "Terras de le Crag et de Ballingoune ac dimidiam partem de le Basse in baronia de North Berwik et constabularia de Hadingtoun" (*Reg. Mag. Sig.*). The allusion to Edrington, taken with the hereditary possession of the fishings of that place a century before by another Sir Robert Lauder, sufficiently, I think, identifies this Sir Robert as one of the old line of the Bass.



Fig. 2. Seal of William de Lawedre.

According to Nisbet, Lauder of Bass carried "gules a lion rampant *argent* within a double tressure flowered and counter flowered with flower-de-luses *or*; crest a solon goose sitting on a rock, proper; motto, sub umbra alarum tuarum." The heraldic writer cites as his authorities Pont's and Workman's MSS., where, he adds, the supporters are two lions.

With regard to the confirmation of one half of the island, I am inclined to find the explanation of what otherwise seems a puzzling circumstance in the fact, that originally the grant had come to the Lauders, as I have shown, in two portions—one from Robert the Bruce, the other from the Bishop of St Andrews. This charter of confirmation shows incidentally that the county of Haddington had, as yet, not emerged into a separate sheriffdom of its own, but was still only a constabulary, forming part of the vicecomitatus or sheriffdom of Edinburgh; and I may add that there can be no doubt that the divisions of East, Mid, and West Lothian into three distinct counties were not recognised until a period considerably later than the days when John Hering was constable of the Bass; for both Linlithgow and Haddington were then, as, curiously enough, they are now again once more, part of the sheriffdom of the Lothians.

In 1426 Sir Robert Lauder let the fermes of North Berwick, and I find that in the same year he and his brother George both refused to pay custom (*Exch. Rolls*, vol. v.). The same authority proves that Sir Robert was dead before 1451, and also that William Lauder of Hatton,

a kinsman to whom that property had descended, was dead before 1452. William may have been possibly a grandson of Alan, but much more likely a brother, younger than Sir Alexander the heir, who succeeded Alan, but older than Robert already mentioned as the "executor" of the first laird of Hatton.

The next event I have to record is, that in 1456 Alexander Ramsay, son and heir of Alexander Ramsay of Dalwolsy, sheriff of Edinburgh, accounted for the blench duty of the Bass, "de ijd albe firme de le Basse." Possibly this may indicate some interruption in the possession of the island by the Lauders. No doubt Ramsay may have been acting only as sheriff of Edinburgh, and in a judicial capacity; still it is worthy of remark that the Chartulary of North Berwick gives the name of Mariot Ramsay as prioress of that ancient foundation on 14th October 1463, and dead before 30th April following. The prioress may or may not have been of the same family with the sheriff, but certainly it seems probable that the Ramsays had, about this time, some connection with the Bass Rock.

The Lauders, however, were not long deprived of their island, if, indeed, they were so at all. Sir Robert, the Justiciar, had left a son and successor, Robert Lauder of Edrington, mentioned as in 1461 keeper of Berwick Castle, again in 1467 as custumar, and again in 1473 as receiving his fee as constable. David Lauder, probably another son, owned, in 1460, Popill, which had belonged to Sir Robert, but he was dead before 1466.

By 1478 Robert Lauder is again designed "of the Bass," in an action raised by him against David Hepburn of Wachtoun; and in the same year, as also in 1479, occurs an entry in the Exchequer Rolls "per solucionem factam Roberto Lawder de Bass in plenam solucionem pensionis sue ducentarum mercarum pro custodia castri de Berwic."

These Hepburns themselves are said for a time to have dispossessed the Lauders, and certainly during much of the fifteenth and all of the sixteenth centuries they were people of large estate. Some 200 years after this they lost the fine property then and still known as Gilmerton, which was delivered up to Sir Francis Kinloch by a judgment, to put it mildly, very remarkable. Lord Fountainhall says of the decision that it "for its strangeness surprised all that heard of it; for scarce ever any

who once heard the case doubted but it would be found a clear wadset ; and it opened the mouths of all to cry out upon it as a direct and downright inversion of all our rights and properties."

During the same year of his litigation with Hepburn, viz., 1478, several notices of Robert Lauder occur (*Act. Audit.*). On one occasion he was forced to pay 40s. to "Thomas Crag of ye Est Crag," for two horses illegally pointed by him ; and decret arbitral was pronounced in another case, where "Robert Lawdare of Bele" and "Robert Lawder of the Bas" had agreed to refer their differences. Very likely at this period the owners of the Bass were neighbours as troublesome as they were powerful, but at any rate they must have enjoyed to the fullest extent whatever pleasure may be derived from abundant litigation. Hardly were Robert Lauder's disputes with Thomas Crag and his namesake "of Bele" ended, when he is found taking up the cudgels of the law in self-defence against "John Fentoun of that Ilk," for recovery of two oxen taken by the latter from his lands (*Act. Dom. Conc.*) ; this was on 28th June 1480, and within a week he had, on 4th July 1480, an action against David Hepburn of Wachtoun "for the eting and destroying of a medow and gerss thereof pertaining to the said Robert." On 5th May 1489, another "Robert Lauder of Merclouch," together with him of the Bass, was in court about the ward of the lands of "umquhile Oliver Lauder of that Ilk," and obtained a decision in their favour against "James Hoppringill (Pringle)." Robert Lauder of the Bass was alive on 5th March 1491.

About this time the Church of the Bass, whose ruins still exist, was most probably built, for in connection with it two Papal bulls were issued ; the first of these is dated "quinto Id: Maij 1493." By this, commission was granted by Pope Alexander VI. to the Prior and Archdeacon of St Andrews to inquire and decide in certain disputes between Sir Robert Lauder of the Bass and the Prioress of North Berwick, who complained that Sir Robert had been making an attempt to divert certain revenues of the Church of St Andrew at North Berwick, itself a dependency of the convent, "quosdam parrochianos et decimas ejusdem ecclesie Sancti Andree applicare nititur, minus juste," for the benefit of his own parish church on the Bass, which is referred to as "quandam

parrochiale ecclesiam infra limites parrochialis ecclesie Sancti Andree de Norberuic dicte dioceseos eidem Monasterio canonicè unite." The Pope, however, while granting full powers to his Commissioners, provided that the island of the Bass, and the lands attached to it, were not to be laid under interdict unless by his own special mandate to that effect, "nisi super hoc a nobis mandatum receperitis speciale." The second bull, which is in the Register House, but has never I believe been printed, bears date 10th May 1493, the following day, and is addressed to the same persons, granting them authority to inquire into a claim made by the Prioress of North Berwick against Robert Lauder of the Bass, lay rector of the parish church of that island, for certain barrels of the grease of sea fowl. The bull refers to the matter at issue in these terms :—"Alexander Episcopus, servus servorum Dei, dilectis filiis Priori et Archidiacono ecclesie Sanctiandree salutem et apostolicam benedictionem. Conqueste sunt nobis Priorissa et conventus monasterii de Northberuyk per priorissam soliti gubernari, Cisterciensis ordinis, Sanctiandree dioceseos, quod nobilis vir Robertus Lauder, dominus insule de Bas, et modernus rector parrochialis ecclesie dicte insule, noviter erecte, dicte dioceseos, super quibusdam barilibus pinguedinis avium silvestrium, decimis, juri-bus et rebus aliis ad monasterium predictum spectantibus injuriatur eisdem," &c. The Lauders from this appear to have been lay-rectors and patrons of the church on the Bass, described, moreover, as "noviter erecta;" and though this may possibly refer not to the actual building, but to ecclesiastical severance, yet I am disposed to think the fabric was actually built somewhere about this time. If this was that Lauder who bore the significant soubriquet of "Robert with the borit quhyngar," he would, no doubt, prove in his disputes with the Prioress that he was no feeble representative of the Church militant.

In 1497 King James IV. of Scotland visited the Bass, and it has been surmised that his object was sport, to which he was much addicted. Witness his expedition in 1488, shortly after the murder of his father, to Bathgate Bog in pursuit of bitterns—"to seik bwtoris in Baythcatbog." As to the visit to the Bass, I find in the Lord High Treasurer's Accounts the entry in these words—"Item to the bote men that brocht the king furth of the Bas xvij s," the sum paid being, curiously enough,

exactly the same as that for the hire of a boat from the Bass in 1337, already mentioned.

The same King James IV., on 1st February 1507-8, granted at Edinburgh a confirmation under the Great Seal to Robert Lauder of one half of the Bass, "terras dimedie partis de Basse," the reddendo being a silver penny—"unum denarium argenti." The reasons I have suggested already may possibly account for what seems like divided ownership, where the circumstances absolutely precluded the possibility of a real division; but, if that be not so, other causes might perhaps be sought in the value of the sea-fowl, or in State reasons for not giving the entire control to one family. Two notices of some interest regarding Sir Robert Lauder may be found in the Justiciary Records; the first of these (February 25, 1510) narrates how "Thomas Dicsoune at the Monastery of Hethingtoun (Haddington) and others, came in the King's will for oppression done to Robert Lauder of Basse coming under silence of night to the lands of Quhitcastell, and casting down the house built there by the said Robert." The offender was fined 15 merks. In the second notice Sir Robert Lauder of the Bass, Knight, is named (on 24th September 1512) among the assize assembled at Edinburgh, in presence of the king, to try William Douglas of Drumlanrig, for the slaughter of "umquhill Robert Crechtoun of Kirkpatrick." Pitcairn, in a note, conjectures "Alexander Lauder de [Bass] miles" in 1509, but he is evidently wrong from these notices of Sir Robert. An Alexander Lauder, however, fell at Flodden. A few years after this, I find in the testamentary inventory of Catherine Lauder, wife of John Swinton of that Ilk, dated 8th October 1515, a reference to the Laird of Bass, who was evidently her brother. Among the list of "debita que debet aliis" is included the following item—"Domino de Bas, xx lib." (*The Swintons of that Ilk*). The rock itself, so aptly described by Alcuin—

" Est locus undoso circumdatus undique ponto
Rupibus horrendis prærupto et margine septus"—

was regarded rather as a fortress than as an estate, if we may judge from the description of it by Boece in 1526, as a "Castle in Lothian."

The church on the Bass, built at least fifty years before, according to

my view as already explained, was at length consecrated on 5th June 1542, by "M. Villiem Gybsons byschop of Libariensis and suffrageneus to David Beton Cardynall and Archebysschop of Santandros." The dedication was to St Baldred, the church being described as "the paris kyrk in the craig of the Bass," while it is significant to find amongst those present John Lauder as "noter public," no doubt one of the Bass family (*Extracta ex Cronicis Scoticis*). The island, however, still maintained its special character as a fortress; for in 1548 the Bass was included among the "strengthis of Scotland," and Father Dalrymple, in his translation of Bishop Leslie's History, says:—"The Basse mairouer is sik a strenth that nathir be force or fraud is it thoct winnable, for the craig is a myl within the sey, and that maist deip round about sa distant frome the land that quha cumis in wt gret difficultie mon cum: Thairfor with lang towis and Lathiris lattin doune thay are towit vpe quha cumis in; and thair can not be admitted bot be this ingine and helpe of thame that ar within."

The sources of information as to the Bass Rock and its early owners are of course to a large extent ecclesiastical; and it is a remarkable indication of the power of the Lauders and their influence, to find the name constantly amongst local ecclesiastics about this time. Thus John Lauder, in 1540, was Archdeacon of Teviotdale, "Archidiaconus Tevidalie;" and again on 12th August 1544, in a charter granted by Isabella Hume, prioress of North Berwick, one of the witnesses was "dominus Robert Lauder," notary public and chaplain "capellanus." He must have been an ecclesiastic, of which indeed the use of the prefix "dominus" itself is an indication, for the arrogance of the priesthood at this time had insisted on their right to be thus styled. Of this practice Sir David Lyndsay says pungently—

"The pure Preist thynkis he gettis no rycht
Be he nocht stylit lyke ane knycht,
And callit Schir afore his name,
As Schir Thomas and Schir Willyame."

Robert Lauder, younger of the Bass, is mentioned on the 29th April 1553; and on 24th July 1556 a narrative is given of his "handfasting" with Jane Hepburn, daughter of Patrick, Earl of Bothwell.

It appears, however, that on 1st September 1567, the Regent Murray and the Privy Council, having grounds for mistrusting the Laird, caused letters to be sent charging "Robert Lauder of Bass to deliver the hous fortalice and Ile of Bass to the officiaris executionouris heirof within xlviii houris nixt eftir the charge." This may have been one of those occasions when the Bass for a time passed into other hands, and I am inclined to find in the recent connection between the Lauders and the Earl of Bothwell's house some good reasons for the action of the Regent. In a letter, dated from Edinburgh on 31st May 1568, and written by John Willock to "Sir William Cecill," reference is made to the capture of the Bass. Perhaps it may conveniently be mentioned here that the town house of the Lauders was in the now demolished "Byar's Close," opening off the High Street, nearly opposite St Giles' Cathedral.

In one of the last deeds of the expiring convent of North Berwick in 1580, the notary bears the name of Mr Robert Lauder, for the Reformation had demolished the priestly "dominus"; and a year later the Protestant king James VI. visited the Bass, and appears to have been impressed by the vast numbers of curious sea-fowl, and to have resolved upon taking measures for their protection, since the *Register of the Privy Council* shows that upon 21st January 1583-84, the king and his council understanding that "be the special benefite and provisoun of God, solan geese and other profitable fouls frequent the Ile of the Bas," bringing forth their young there in great quantity, "and almaist in na uthir pairt of this cuntrie," greatly to the "commoditie of the hail subjects of this realm dwelland nixt adjacent thairto," granted commission to Mr George Lauder of Bas and his successors, lairds of Bas, aided by the bailies of Dunbar and other judges appointed by the said lairds, to prevent the slaughter of these wild fowl. It may be that King James was prompted by feelings, partly of friendship for Lauder of the Bass, who had received him as a guest not long before, for the gift was at that time one of considerable value; "this foul," says Leslie, "of whome we speike only bigis in the Basse nathir in ony place with us is funde excepte in Elissa or Elza a craig in the sey foranent Galloway, ffarther sche is a sey guse, as we use to speik, or that foul rather quhilke Plinius calles ane Picarine commonlie now ane solande guse. In the Basse thay abund maist, in Elissa nocht sa mekle."

The action of King James VI. and his council, whether it was conceived in the interests of the geese or of the Lauders, received Parliamentary confirmation, for nine years afterwards, in 1592, an Act was passed creating the Lairds of Bass commissioners to prevent and punish the destruction of these birds; and in the following year Parliament ratified the island to George Lauder, who was probably the last of that ancient family in possession of the Bass, which soon after became the property of Sir Patrick Hepburn of Wachtoune.

When the death of Queen Elizabeth caused the Union of the Crowns of Scotland and England in 1603, Calderwood, describing the rejoicings, says quaintly—"Upon the Lords day before (the proclamation) fires of joy shynned upon the Basse and other eminent parts."

After this there is a hiatus in our history until 1645, when the Acts of Parliament narrate how James Ogilvie, on account of the pestilence then raging in Edinburgh, was removed from the Tolbooth to the Bass, showing that the rock was still partly used for the confinement of the prisoners. On 9th November 1649, John Hepburn of Wachtoune, son and heir of Sir Patrick, was served heir to the Barony of Bass, including "*insula in mari vocata Bass tam boreali quam australi latere ejusdem,*" but he appears to have disposed of Wachtoune to Sir Andrew Ramsay, "*miles baronettus,*" who also apparently acquired the Bass about the same time. It is said that he had been an Episcopal minister deposed by the Presbyterians. Two years later, in 1651, for greater security, the public records of the yet youthful Church of Scotland were deposited in the castle of the Bass, whence they too, like Prince James two centuries and a half before, started on an ill-fated voyage to England, destined, however, unlike him, never to return. In the following year, 1652, General Deane announced to the English Parliament the surrender of the Bass, and thereupon the order was issued to send the Kirk records to London.

As a fortress at this time the Bass cannot have been in any sense important, seeing that in 1657 the garrison is known to have consisted of but eighteen foot soldiers. A change, however, was soon to come over the scene. Lauderdale was looking about for a suitable and secure prison for his victims, and he bethought himself of the Bass Rock, where Sir Andrew Ramsay of Abbotshall, Provost of Edinburgh, had,

according to the Retours, succeeded his father. He was himself a trader in Edinburgh, and, according to one authority, in serious pecuniary straits. But in various ways he had managed to extort gifts from the city to the king, amounting to £17,000, and accordingly he was in high favour with Lauderdale, who purchased the Bass from him for the Crown, in October 1671, at the extravagant price of £4000 sterling; and about the same time made him, though no lawyer, a "Lord of Session," on 23rd November 1671; but he was forced within two years to resign his chair both in Council and in Court. In a contemporary pamphlet it is recorded of this sale of the Bass, that "My Lord Lauderdale, to gratify Sir Andrew, moves the king upon the pretence that the Bass was a place of strength, like to a castle in the moon, and of great importance, the only nest of solan geese in these parts, to buy the rock from Sir Andrew at the rate of £4000 sterling, and then obtains the command and profits of it, amounting to more than £100 sterling yearly, to be bestowed upon himself."

John, Earl (afterwards Duke) of Lauderdale, very rapidly turned the new possession of the Crown to good purpose, for on 3rd March 1671 he obtained the captaincy of the Bass, on 21st August following he was made keeper, and finally he became, on 7th September of the same year, governor of the castle. It may be interesting to show of what in some measure the noble Duke's perquisites were composed. In 1674 there were got 1118 solan geese, realising £79, 3s. 10d. sterling, less the "fee waige and allowance" of the "climber of the Bass" and other charges, in all amounting to £11, 12s. 2d. sterling. In 1675, 1060 solans brought £75, 5s. 10d.; and from a charge of £20, for Charles Maitland's going to London "with sollen geese," it seems that they were specially sent there for His Grace. In 1676, £83, 17s. 1d. was paid for 1160 birds; and £71, 16s. 5½d. for 985 in 1677. The geese in 1678 formed the subject of a special contract, dated 10th May at Edinburgh, between Sir William Sharp of Stonyhill, who had a "great tack" of nearly all the duke's property, and Charles, son of Robert Maitland, keeper of the Bass, and no doubt a relative of Lauderdale's. The rent was £75 and "two dozen good sollen geese free."

Between the year of the purchase and the Revolution of 1688, the prison cells of this lonely rock were often occupied by men who, perse-

cuted on account of their religion, have accordingly been styled the "Martyrs of the Bass." I think the first of these, Robert Gillespie, was incarcerated by an order of the Privy Council, dated 2nd April 1673, and directing that he should "be carried to and kept prisoner in the Isle of the Bass." He was released 8th January 1674. Without enumerating names, of which the list is only too long, it is sufficient to say that, in greater or less number, persons were imprisoned in the castle for conscience' sake from 1673 steadily onwards until the accession of William of Orange in 1688.

Parliament, however, even after that happy event, was still exercised by the activity of the garrison who held out for James VII., and in 1689 a commission was given to Captain Archibald Dunbar to protect the Lothian coast from attacks from the Bass; it was further provided that this officer was to have the command given up to him, and an offer of indemnity was made to Charles Maitland, who commanded the garrison, if he would surrender the rock and the prisoners confined there. When this offer failed, a bribe of three months' pay was tried, on condition of a surrender to the Estates. But nothing would move the stout governor or tempt his little garrison, and he was then formally denounced for his refusal to yield. Probably this governor was the same Charles Maitland who, eleven years before, had been quietly bargaining about the solan geese, perhaps little thinking of any military duties in relation to the rock of which his father before him had been keeper and commandant. He was evidently, however, not content to rest on the defensive, and fresh raids were made from the island upon the adjoining coasts with such effect that in the same year 1689 appeared an order to the Commissioners for Anstruther, to secure the east coast of Fife against attacks from the Bass. In 1690, however, the fortress was compelled to surrender, and it was garrisoned for King William III.; but, according to Hill Burton, four young prisoners in 1691, taking advantage of the whole garrison, to the number of fifty, being engaged in coaling outside the walls, shut the gates upon them, and afterwards aided by reinforcements and provisions from France, succeeded in holding out until 1694, when the fortress of the Bass Rock surrendered, being the last place in the United Kingdom to yield to the arms of William III. The romantic Grose has it in this wise:—"After the Revolution a desperate crew of people got

possession of it ; and having a large boat, which they hoisted up on the rock, or let down at pleasure, committed several piracies, took a great many vessels, and held out to the last of any place in Great Britain for King James; but their boat being at length seized or lost, and not receiving their accustomed supply of provisions from France, they were obliged to surrender."

The condition of the fortifications between 1675 and 1695 seems to have called for various repairs, presumably nothing beyond the maintenance of the existing defences ; but in 1701, with the demolition of the castle, I approach the end of my narrative. Beyond an incidental reference in 1704 to certain repairs formerly ordered in the time of Charles II., there is nothing left to record of the Bass, save its final alienation from the Crown, when in 1706 it was granted to Sir Hew Dalrymple of North Berwick, by whose descendant it is still possessed.¹ The grant was ratified by Parliament in 1707, with the reservation of Lord Alexander Hay's right to the solan geese, and the Queen's right to fortify. What Lord Alexander Hay's right precisely was, I have not been able to ascertain, but it was in all probability a lease for a fixed term of years.

During the eleven centuries in which the Bass Rock had an individual

¹ Walker, in his *Essays on Natural History*, p. 287 (Edin. 1808), gives the rent of the Bass between 1764 and 1767 thus :—

		<i>Produce.</i>
Rent to proprietor, 840		They take solan geese 36
merks,	£46 13 4	times in the season, and
To the climber, 100 merks,	5 11 1½	at a medium 36 each
To 7 men employed in		time, which, at 1s. 8d.
catching the fowls, each		sterling each, is . . .
£16 Scots,	9 6 8	£118 0 0
To the carrier, 36 times to		Sheep's grass,
Edinburgh, 2s. sterling		5 0 0
each time,	3 12 0	Ten Scots gallons of oil
	<hr/>	drawn from the fat of
	£65 3 1½	the fowls, at 8d. sterling
		each pint,
		2 13 0
		Ten stone weight of
		feathers, at 10s. sterling
		per stone,
		5 0 0
		<hr/>
		£130 13 5

Probably the present owner would rejoice if his rent-roll could give as good an account of the Rock.

history, it figured somewhat conspicuously in the annals of Scotland. As a hermitage, it had its sacred period ; as a prison and a fortress alternately, it vindicated the law's majesty, or afforded a secure base for semi-piratical forays ; yet all the time ever and anon it seems to have been visited for sporting purposes, until at last it obtained special Acts to protect those feathered inhabitants, who, surviving all human occupation, have now for nigh 200 years enjoyed sole possession of the Rock.
