

II.

NOTES ON THE OLD EARLDOMS OF DUNBAR, MARCH, AND MORAY.

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SCOT.

Scottish peerage writers and genealogists¹ have hitherto asserted that the Earldom of Dunbar and March passed from father to son in regular succession for upwards of 300 years until the attainder of George, the eleventh Earl, in 1435. It has also been held that George Dunbar, Earl of March, tenth Earl, Lord of Annandale and Man, was son and heir of Patric, ninth earl, by his wife the celebrated "Black Agnes of Dunbar." These views have been accepted in more than one peerage case, possibly because it was inferred from Earl George's letter to Henry IV., that he was *grandson* of the eighth Earl, and could only have succeeded to the lordship of Annandale and Man, through his supposed mother Black Agnes.

This theory, however, that George, tenth Earl, was son of Patric, ninth Earl, appears to be open to several serious and reasonable doubts, which may be stated as follows:—It is improbable

1. That a father and son should have held the earldom for 108 years.
2. That Earl Patric should have resigned his earldom into the hands

¹ Lindsay, Crawford, Nisbet, Douglas, Wood, Chalmers, Riddell, Sinclair, and others.

of David II. for the purpose of having it confirmed to George, tenth Earl, inasmuch as George would have succeeded in due course without the resignation, had he been son and heir of Earl Patric.

3. That if George had been son of Earl Patric, the relationship would not have been mentioned in the charter of confirmation.

4. That Earl George should have had two elder brothers, Patric and John, and two younger brothers, John and Patric. The two former were sons of Patric, ninth Earl; the two latter were John Dunbar, Earl of Moray, and Patric of Bele. The two Johns were certainly alive at the same time.

5. That one of Earl George's younger brothers would have styled himself in 1431: "Patrike off Dunbarr lorde of bele, and brothir vmquhile of a hee and mychti lorde Sir George of Dunbarr Erle of the marche,"¹ if he had been *son* of Earl Patric.

So much for some of the doubts, and now for some facts and notes bearing on the subject.

Two of the MSS. of Fordun's *Scotichronicon*² give some circumstantial details about several of the Scottish knights present at the battle of Poitiers on the 19th September 1356. Both these MSS. record that "Sir Patric of Dunbar, father of Sir George afterwards Earl of March, went after the battle towards Jerusalem, in which journey he died in the island of Candy, and was buried there."

Here we have a distinct statement that the father of Earl George was Sir Patric Dunbar, who died in Candia in 1356; and be it observed that at that time Earl Patric was negotiating for the release of David II., and did not resign his earldom until upwards of ten years after the death of Earl George's father.

But, it may be asked, How did Earl George succeed to the lordships of Annandale and Man? This appears from a charter in my possession, in which "*Patricius de Dunbar miles et Isobella sponsa ejusdem,*" confirm a grant of Wester Pitcorthy made by "*Ricardus de Ainstrother de eodem*" to John Strang and Cecilia, sister of the said Richard. The charter is

¹ *Munimenta de Melros*, No. 526.

² *British Museum MS.*, Cott. Vit. E. xi. chap. 138, fol. 165; and *Trin. Col. Dublin MS.*, E. 2, 28.

dated at Wester Spot, 2nd January 1351-2, five years before the battle of Poitiers. The impressions of the seals of Sir Patric and of his wife appended to the charter are in good preservation.

The Lady's seal has for legend—

SIGILLVM . ISABELLE . DE . DVNBAR .

And on the shield are the arms of Sir Patric, impaling the arms of his wife, which last are: three cushions within a tressure flory and counter flory for Ranulph. From this it seems reasonable to conclude that Isabella was younger sister of "Black Agnes," and daughter of Thomas Ranulph, first Earl of Moray, Regent of Scotland, Lord of Annandale and Man, and that Earl George's right to Annandale and Man must have been through his mother, the above Isabella, after the death of her sister "Black Agnes."

This seal appears to be the earliest known instance of impalement on any seal connected with Scotland, and the tressure is *not* cut by the impalement. In a communication made by me to the late Mr Stodart in 1881,¹ it was taken for granted that the impaled arms on the indenture between Florence count of Holland and Robert Brus, dated 14th June 1292,² were contemporary with that document, but my friend Mr Joseph Bain examined the original indenture in the British Museum, and satisfied himself that the arms had been added after the execution of the deed, and the drawing and style of the lions seem to indicate a much later date than 1292.

Lindesay, who compiled his *History of Scotland* about 1565, in writing of Thomas Ranulph, Earl of Moray, states:—"He also had two Daughters; of whom the eldest was called Black Annes, by reason she was black-skinned. This Annes was a Woman of greater Spirit than it became a Woman to be, who was married upon Patrick, Earl of March. The Second was called Geiles, and was married upon John, Brother to the Earl of March; and bore to him George, who succeeded to his Father-Brother heritably in the Earldom of March."³

This statement, that there were two daughters, though it is ignored

¹ *Scottish Arms*, vol. ii. p. 10.

² *National MSS. of Scotland*, part ii. No. vi.

³ *History of Scotland*, by Robert Lindesay of Pitscottie. Edinburgh, 1728, p. 25.

by later writers, appears to be correct, but the chronicler has left out a generation, and would have been more accurate had he said that Geiles, as he calls her, was married to *Sir Patric, son of John*, brother of the Earl of March.

There is a charter in duplicate at Durham,¹ granted by Patric of Dunbar,² Earl of March and Moray, to which he ordered "our great seal" to be appended "at our Castle of Dunbar" on the 24th of May 1367. And his wife Agnes, Countess of March and Moray, approves. Impressions of the seal and secretum of the Earl,³ and of the seal of the Countess are still attached to the charter. The second witness to the charter is "*Georgio de Dunbar consanguineo nostro*," who was almost certainly the man in whose favour Earl Patric soon afterwards resigned the Earldom of March.

In the Register of the Great Seal, there is a charter,⁴ granted by David II., confirming to his dear cousin George of Dunbar the whole Earldom of March, which belonged to Sir Patric of Dunbar, last Earl thereof, and which the same earl resigned: to hold to the said George, and his heirs in fee and heritage, and in all respects as the said Patric held it before his resignation thereof to the king. This charter is dated at Stirling 25th July, 39th year of reign (1368).

George Dunbar, Earl of March,⁵ in his letter to Henry IV., king of England, claiming his assistance as a relation,⁶ writes: "dame Mariory Comyne was my graunde dame," and finishes his letter thus: "And noble Prynce mervaile yhe nocht that I write my lettres in englis, fore that ys mare clere to myne vnderstandyng than latyne ore Fraunche, . . . Writyn at my castell of Dunbarr the xvij day of Feurer" (1400).

By "englis," Earl George meant the language then spoken in Lothian, consequently by "graunde dame" he must have meant *great-grand-*

¹ Durham Charters, Nos. 792 and 793. Printed in Raine's *North Durham*, Appendix, p. 33, No. cxlii.

² Ninth Earl.

³ Both are engraved in Laing's *Supplemental Descriptive Catalogue of Ancient Scottish Seals*, plate i. Nos. 1 and 2.

⁴ Reg. Mag. Sig., lib. i. No. 196.

⁵ Tenth Earl.

⁶ *National MSS. of Scotland*, part ii. No. liii.

mother,¹ for he would have used the word "gudame" had he meant grandmother.

Here then we have it under Earl George's own hand that he was *great-grandson* of Mariory Comyne, who was wife of the eighth Earl, and therefore he could not possibly have been son of Patric, ninth Earl, and his wife "Black Agnes," as has hitherto been erroneously supposed.

Many persons have prided themselves on being descended from the heroic Black Agnes, who successfully defended her husband's castle of Dunbar against the English for nineteen weeks in 1338,² but, unfortunately for them, Black Agnes does not seem to have had any children, and in any case did not leave any surviving issue or descendants.³

It will not be out of place here to remark that in a book recently published,⁴ where the names of Earl George and his wife and their family are given, the word *Colūm* in the Record,⁵ contraction for Columba, has been incorrectly translated Colin; and what makes matters worse, it is added in a note: "There was also a daughter named Columba, who subsequently came in for some clerical patronage," &c.

Now the career of the Columba above alluded to is pretty well known, as is shown in the following notes:—

"Columba, son of George of Dunbarre, Earl of March of Scotland," had a grant from Henry IV. of the deanery of St Mary Magdalene of Bridgenorth, 26th Feb. 1402–3.⁶ Columba of Dunbar, dean of the Collegiate Church of Dunbar, was one of the witnesses to the foundation charter of the University of St Andrews on the 28th Feb. 1411–12.⁷

¹ It is interesting to find that this conclusion has been already propounded on independent grounds in "Extracts from Notes on Chaloner's description of the Isle of Man, edited for the Manx Society, by the Rev. J. G. Cumming, M.A., Rector of Mellis, Suffolk," p. 19, and Appendix D, Note]].

² *Chronicon de Lanercost*, *British Museum MS.*, Cott. Claud. vii. fol. 230.

³ Notwithstanding the assertion in *Maitland of Lethington*, by John Skelton, Advocate, LL.D., Edinburgh, 1887, vol. i. p. 14.

⁴ *History of England under Henry IV.*, 2 vols., by James Hamilton Wylie, M.A., one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools, vol. i. p. 136, also Note 4.

⁵ *Patent Roll*, 1 to 11 Henry IV., Membrane 35.

⁶ *Privy Seal (Tower)*, 4 Henry IV. File 1; and Eyton's *Shropshire*, vol. i. p. 338.

⁷ *National MSS. of Scotland*, part ii. No. lxiii.

Columba of Dunbar was appointed Bishop of Moray, 3rd April 1422.¹ He had safe conducts from Henry VI. in 1433² and 1434,³ to pass through England on his way to Rome and Basle. He rebuilt the great window over the west door of the cathedral at Elgin.⁴ He died in his Palace of Spynie in 1435,⁵ and was buried in the Dunbar aisle in the cathedral at Elgin, where his effigy may be seen on his tomb.

The foregoing notes are a contribution towards a revision of the early historic Peerage of Scotland, and the subjoined pedigree is intended to illustrate the notes.