

## II.

NOTICES OF ETHELRED, EARL OF FIFE, AND ABBOT OF DUNKELD,  
AND HIS PLACE IN THE ROYAL FAMILY OF SCOTLAND IN THE  
ELEVENTH CENTURY. BY THE REV. WILLIAM LOCKHART, A.M.,  
F.S.A. SCOT., MINISTER OF COLINTON PARISH, MIDLOTHIAN.

Writers on Scottish history and antiquities seem to give little or no attention to Ethelred, one of the sons of Malcolm (III.) Canmore and Queen Margaret, and brother to Edgar, Alexander I. and David, kings of Scotland. And neither do these same writers altogether agree as to the exact place which he held in the Royal Family of Scotland in the latter half of the eleventh century. Probably this is in some measure to be accounted for by the fact that the period in question is comparatively barren in historical records, and, moreover, from the circumstance that, like Prince Leopold (Duke of Albany), belonging to the present Royal House, and the late lamented Duke of Clarence and Avondale, Ethelred died in youth, or at all events in early manhood, and before he had had time to make for himself such a mark in the history of Scotland as his father and three illustrious brothers have done. At the same time, there are certain circumstances connected with the life of this young Scottish prince that ought not to be overlooked, and that entitle him to some

degree of notice among the other historical characters of the period, whilst for the sake of truth and accuracy, his exact place in the family of Malcolm III. ought, if possible, to be more clearly ascertained and determined.

The first thing, then, that calls for notice, in connection with Ethelred, is the fact that he was the only one of all the six sons of Malcolm and Margaret that had a title of nobility conferred upon him by his father—as monarch of Scotland—namely, Earl of Fife. And this title of “Earl,” which probably<sup>1</sup> came into existence about this time both in Scotland and England, or shortly before this in England, was the highest title of nobility then existing, and in the case of England continued to be so for nearly three centuries, until, indeed, in 1337, Edward III. conferred the title of “Duke of Cornwall” upon his son, the Black Prince.<sup>2</sup>

The Earl or *Comes* of the present day is the third in the order of the British Peerage, coming after a Marquis, which is second, and before a Viscount, which is fourth. But although it is a title of nobility, and descends in regular succession to the male heirs of its possessor, yet it confers no official authority or power upon the person possessing it. It was different, however, with the earldoms of England, and no doubt also with those of Scotland in the eleventh, and probably also in the three following centuries. “In early feudal times, titles independent of office did not exist. The Earls or *Comites* of those days, therefore, were actual officers, each having supreme authority in his own earldom or ‘county’ under the crown, each one of them also deriving from his earldom a certain fixed revenue, the possession of which was at once an apanage of his official dignity as Earl and the evidence of his lawful and recognised title to it” (*Encyc. Brit.*, vol. vii. p. 595). This being the case, Ethelred, as Earl of Fife, would, in all probability, exercise a certain official authority over the

<sup>1</sup> Lord Kames, in his essay on the *Introduction of the Feudal Law into Scotland*, observes that—“It is uncontroverted that it was Malcolm Canmore who introduced the titles of Earl and Baron.”

<sup>2</sup> “The ‘Earl’ of England was identical with the ‘Comte’ or ‘Compte’ of France, and so long as Norman French continued to be spoken in the country, the English ‘Earls’ were styled Counts as well in England as on the Continent. These powerful barons represented and succeeded the Saxon Thanes, who were earldormen, their own title evidently having been derived from the Earl of Scandinavia” (*Encyc. Brit.*, vol. vii. p. 595).

whole county of Fife, and would, moreover, derive certain revenues from it. And since Dunfermline, the then royal residence of Malcolm and his family, was situated within this district of Scotland, the earldom which Ethelred possessed must be regarded as in all probability the earliest of the kind, and one of the most important, if not the most important, of Scottish titles in the eleventh century. It is quite possible that there may have been a Macduff Earl of Fife also for some time in this or the following century—although Mr Robertson, in his *Scotland under her Early Kings*, speaks of such as “Macduff, Earl of Fife, of the fabulists,” and sets it down as a “myth” (vol. i. p. 124, note)—because titles at that time were often bestowed and probably sometimes withdrawn in the most arbitrary manner. And, indeed, in a Charter in the *Register of the Priory of St Andrews* (p. 115), which will be subsequently referred to, there is mention made of “Constantine, Earl of Fife, a most discreet man.” Nevertheless, there can be no doubt of Ethelred’s possession of the title, however short the period may have been in which it was held by him, and the very fact that he was thus honoured by his father above all his brothers—two of whom were probably older than himself—not only shows the esteem and regard in which he must have been held by his parents, but proves him to have been a person of considerable ability and of marked importance in the country at that time.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Fife appears to have been the latest earldom held by the old Scottish tenure, and its earls, like the earls of Atholl—a branch of the reigning family—never appear in the ranks of the King’s enemies. Indeed, they may be looked upon in early times as premier Earls of Scotland, with certain privileges attaching to their dignity, to account for which the legend of Macduff was probably framed; though it is not impossible that the earldom, with its prominent position and privileges, was granted to the *historical* Duff or Dufagan as a reward for his assistance in restoring the sons of Malcolm to the throne” (Robertson, *Early Kings*, vol. i. p. 124). Dufagan, or Duff, Earl of Fife, is “a witness of the foundation charter of Scone in the time of Alexander the First (1107–1124 A.D.), his immediate successors being Constantine and Gillemichael Macduff” (*ibid.*, p. 124). There is a Duncan who is Earl of Fife in the reign of David (1124–1153 A.D.) (*ibid.*, 226), and an Earl Malcolm of Fife during the reign of William the Lion (1165–1214 A.D.) (*ibid.*, p. 427 and 430), and the title was still in existence in the reign of Alexander III. (1249–1286 A.D.) (*ibid.*, vol. ii. p. 66). Duff, or Dufagan, is both an ancient and honourable Scottish name. There was a Duff, son of Malcolm I., King of Scotland, who occupied the throne of that country from 962–967 A.D. The present family of Duff, however, now united

But there was another important office held by Ethelred of an ancestral description, and implying in it the possession of large territories in the centre of Scotland, and that was the Abbacy of Dunkeld. This did not necessarily constitute Ethelred "a churchman," as is alleged by Lord Hailes, because at that time and afterwards, in consequence of the decaying state of the Celtic Church, or from some other cause, abbacies were often held by laymen, who drew the revenues and appointed churchmen to perform the ecclesiastical offices.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the abbacy of the Monastery of St Andrews was many years before this held by Constantine II., one of the early and most celebrated kings of Scotland, who in old age (943 A.D.) laid down the sceptre which he had vigorously grasped for forty years, and retired into this Monastery, where, in all probability, he ended his days; not, however, before the veteran leader had once more unsheathed the sword, and, in company with Olave Sitricson, the Dane, "swept the patrimony of St. Cuthbert to the distant borders of the Tees" (Robertson, *Early Kings*, vol. i. p. 73).<sup>2</sup> Moreover, in the eleventh century the Abbacy of Dunkeld was held by Crinan, who married Bethoc or Beatrice, an elder daughter of Malcolm II., King of Scotland, and thereby became the founder of the Atholl line of kings and the father of that Duncan who was murdered by Macbeth, of the house of Moray, and whom Shakespeare by his genius has immortalized. Malcolm III. (Canmore) was one of the sons of this Duncan, so that Ethelred had had conferred upon him, in all probability by his royal father, an office which his own grandfather had held, and held until he was killed in battle, fighting against Macbeth in the interest of his young grandchildren, Duncan's sons. And thus this young Scottish prince, Ethelred, stands prominently before us, not merely as through its chief—the Duke of Fife—with the Royal Family of Great Britain, does not seem to trace its lineage further back than 1404, whilst the former title of Earl of Fife appears only to have been acquired in the year 1759.

<sup>1</sup> Innes, Ap. 3. An Abbot was not at this time (943 A.D.) strictly an ecclesiastical dignitary. The office appears to have been held by the next in consideration to the head of the family in whose province or kingdom the monastery was situated.

<sup>2</sup> There were three Constantines among the ancient kings of this country. First, Constantine, a *Pictish* king, who reigned from 789 to 820 A.D. Then Constantine I., who reigned from 863–867 A.D. over what became the kingdom of Scotland in 843. Then Constantine II., who reigned from 900–943 A.D.

Abbot of Dunkeld, but as enjoying one of the earliest of Scottish earldoms, if indeed not the very earliest, and possessing extensive territories and a rank of nobility of which that age knew nothing higher.

But although it would probably be wrong to designate Ethelred as "a Churchman," there can be no doubt that he was piously inclined, and that he possessed in a very marked degree those devout and reverential feelings which formed so conspicuous a feature in the character of his sainted mother, as well as in that of some of his royal brothers. According to a record in the Register of the Priory of St Andrews (*Regist., Prioratus S. Andreae*, p. 115, 1093-1107 A.D.), Ethelred gives a grant of certain lands to the Keledei of Loch Leven in the following terms, viz. :—

"Edelradus, a man of venerated memory, son of Malcolm, King of Scotia, Abbot of Dunkeld and likewise Earl of Fyf, gave to God the Omnipotent, and St Servanus and the Keledei of the island of Louchleven, with the utmost reverence and honour, and with every freedom, and without any exaction or demand whatever in the world from bishop, king, or earl, Ardmore, with its rightful boundaries and divisions ; and seeing that this possession was given him by his parents while he was yet in boyhood, he with the more affection and love immolates it to God and St Servanus and those men serving God there ; and this collation and donation, when first made, was confirmed by the two brothers of Edelradus, David and Alexander, in the presence of several men worthy of credit, such as Constantine, Earl of Fyf, a most discreet man,<sup>1</sup> and Nesse ; and Cormac, son of Macbeath, and Malnethte, son of Beollan, priests of Abernethy ; and Mallebride, another priest ; and Thuadhel and Augustinus, a priest, who were Keledei, and Berbeadh, rector of the schools of Abernethy ; and before the rest of the whole community of Abernethy then living there, and before God the Omnipotent and all saints."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mr Skene (*Celtic Scotland*, vol. iii. p. 62) explains the circumstance of two Earls of Fife being mentioned in this deed, by supposing that Ethelred was Earl of Fothrif and Constantine Earl of Fyfe, the two divisions of ancient Fife.

<sup>2</sup> The witnesses here mentioned, in addition to Constantine and Nesse, seem to consist of two secular priests, and three out of a body of Keledei who are named, two of whom are priests, and the lector, Ferleighin, or man of learning of the Irish and Celtic churches.

But not only did Ethelred give this grant of lands to a religious house in Kinross-shire, but, according to a clause in the first and more subsequent charters in the Chartulary of Dunfermline Abbey, he was the founder of the church and parish of Hales, now Colinton, in the county of Midlothian, a district of country which some years before this formed part of the ancient Saxon kingdom of Northumbria, and subsequently of a united England, for Ethelred gave the lands of Hales to the Church of the Holy Trinity at Dunfermline; and this grant, which ultimately merged in the Abbot and Convent of that place, was held by them as superiors until about the year 1560. And thus this young Scottish prince seems not only to have held high offices in his father's kingdom, but to have been the possessor of extensive territories on both sides of the Firth of Forth, and more especially on the north side of it.

Ethelred appears also as taking an active part during the last and touching scenes of his mother's life, and especially after she was dead. He was evidently with her in the Castle of Edinburgh when she was dying, and when his father and eldest brother Edward were slain in Northumberland. For it was Edgar, and not as some say Ethelred, who brought the sad tidings of his father's defeat and death, and the death of his eldest brother Edward, to the sick-chamber of his mother, and therefore he must either have been with the army, or in some situation not far off where he could learn tidings of the result of the battle. Ethelred, on the other hand, must have been with his mother all the time in the sick-chamber of Edinburgh Castle, and, according to Wynton, after her death, and during the so-called usurpation of Donald Bane, he conveyed her lifeless body secretly out of the western gate of the castle, taking, as is said, the advantage of a fog, on to Dunfermline, and in all probability he died soon afterwards, and was buried not at St Andrews, as some seem to say, but at Dunfermline, in the same resting-place where the bodies of his father and mother and eldest brother were laid. The following are Wynton's lines in regard to the hurried removal of the remains of Queen Margaret by her son Ethelred, from Edinburgh Castle to Dunfermline :—

“ Hyr swne Ethelrede, quene thys felle  
 That wes hys modyr nere than by  
 Gert at the west yhet prewaly  
 Have the cors furth in a myst  
 Or mony of hyr endying wyst ;  
 And wyth that body thai past syne  
 But ony lat til Dwnfermelyne.  
 Before the Rwde Awtare wyth honoure  
 She was laid in Haly Sepulture.”

—Wynton's *Oryg. Cron. of Scot.*, vol. ii. pp. 271–2.

But now the question naturally arises, what was the exact place of Ethelred in the family of Malcolm Canmore? Was he second, third, or youngest son? John of Fordun, who wrote in the fourteenth century, places Ethelred *third* in the list of Malcolm's sons (*Skene's Fordun*, vol. i. p. 214), and says, referring to the time when Edgar ascended the throne of Scotland, that Malcolm's three elder sons, among whom was Ethelred, were not then living, and that (vol. i. p. 223) “ he finds nothing written where Ethelred died or was buried, except that some assert he was buried in St Andrews Church at Kilrimont ” (St Andrews). Sir James Balfour, Lord Lyon King of Arms in Scotland to Charles I. and Charles II., says of Ethelred (*Historical Works*, vol. i. p. 2):—“ This year also (1093) died the *second* son of K. Malcolm, Ethelred, Earle of Fyffe, and was interred in the Old Church of St Andrews in Kilrimont, because he was a great benefactor to that *Monastery*.” Lord Hailes (Sir David Dalrymple), in his *Annals of Scotland*, vol. i. p. 49, places Ethelred second in the list of Malcolm's sons, although in a note (page 50), accounting for the names of the children, he places him *third*. Mr E. W. Robertson in his *Scotland under her Early Kings*, vol. i. p. 151, classifies Ethelred as *second* among the sons of Malcolm and Margaret, giving him his titles of Abbot of Dunkeld and Earl of Fife, and in a note at page 124 of the same volume, he sets down, as already mentioned, the Macduff, Earl of Fife, of the fabulists, as a *myth*, whilst at page 156 he acknowledges that it was Ethelred who removed the lifeless body of his mother from Edinburgh Castle to her last resting-place in the Church of the Holy Trinity at Dunfermline.<sup>1</sup> Then, again, Hen-

<sup>1</sup> In Appendix A, vol. ii. p. 186, Mr Robertson places Ethelred *third* in the list of Malcolm's sons.

derson, in his *Annals of Dunfermline*, page 20, classifies Ethelred as the *youngest* son of Malcolm and Margaret, and at page 37 he states that Ethelred seems to have died about the year 1117 (!) in England while on a visit to his sister Matilda, Queen of England. The same annalist, who at page 38 of his work declares that "Ethelrede was married," and "had at least three sons named Edwy, Alfred, and Edward," confounds the son of Malcolm with a king of England of the same name, and an ancestor of his mother's; and the same writer who, as above mentioned, had said that Ethelred died in the year 1117, at page 720 of his work, inconsistently indicates that Ethelred was buried at Dunfermline about 1096.<sup>1</sup> This last statement, however, is probably not far from the truth.

Mr Tytler's *History of Scotland* does not go back to the period when Ethelred lived, for it commences with the reign of Alexander III. Mr Skene<sup>2</sup> says little of Ethelred, and indicates that he is not heard of more after his brother Edgar ascended the throne of Scotland, whilst Mr Hill Burton, the latest of Scottish historians, does not seem to notice Ethelred at all.

It is necessary, therefore, in the interests of truth and accuracy, to correct as far as possible these and probably other conflicting statements, and to indicate what seem to be the facts concerning the place which this young and interesting Scottish prince occupied in the family of Malcolm (III.) Canmore.

There can be no doubt that Malcolm and Margaret had six sons and two daughters as a result of their marriage. The eldest, EDWARD, who according to the *Saxon Chronicle* (p. 199), and Simeon of Durham (p. 218), fell dead on the battlefield on the 13th November 1093, in the twenty-second year of his age, in that battle on the Alne in Northumberland, where the King, his father, was slain, although, according to Fordun (iv. c. 25), he was mortally wounded in the retreat of the Scottish army on that occasion, and died at Edward-Isle in the forest of Jedwood (Jedburgh), on the 15th November 1093, and was buried at Dunfermline before the altar in the Church of the Holy

<sup>1</sup> "Before this altar (THE HOLY CROSS ALTAR), the remains of St Margaret were interred, and near to it one of her sons (Ethelrede), whose remains were discovered in 1847, when the flooring of the Auld Kirk was being levelled and repaired" (Henderson, *Annals of Dunfermline*, p. 761).

<sup>2</sup> *Celtic Scotland*, vol. ii. p. 370.

Trinity there. Another son, EDMUND, is said to have died as a penitent recluse at Montague, a Clugniac Priory in Somersetshire in England, whither he had gone in disgrace for the part he is supposed to have taken in the so-called usurpation of Donald Bane, his father's brother.<sup>1</sup> The other sons were ETHELRED, Earl of Fife and Abbot of Dunkeld, EDGAR, ALEXANDER, and DAVID, the last three of whom occupied in succession the Scottish throne. The daughters were EDITHA, the elder, who married Henry I, King of England, and who, out of compliment to her husband's mother, subsequently changed her name to MATILDA, and whose memory was long revered by the English people as "the good Queen Maud." The other daughter, MARY, after the marriage of Matilda, became the wife of Eustace, Count of Boulogne, "by whom she left an only child, also named Matilda, the heiress of her father's earldom, which she brought as her dowry to Stephen of Blois, afterwards King of England" (Robertson, *Early Kings*, vol. i. p. 153).

Now, it will be observed that none of all the six sons of Malcolm and Margaret were named after any of the ancestors of their father, the Scottish King. None of them had Celtic or Pictish names given to them, and, indeed, from this time forth, an entirely new set of names was to appear on the roll of Scottish monarchs, indicating another of the many changes which Malcolm and Margaret introduced into the civil and ecclesiastical state of Scotland. Whether in this, as in other matters, Malcolm yielded to the powerful influence of his wife, or whether Saxon and Southern influences swayed the mind of the monarch, at all events it is the fact that none of all his children by Margaret were named after any of Scotland's ancient kings, but most of them after the names of ancestors of their illustrious and Saxon mother. Going back, then, in regular order on the ancestors of Margaret, we see a principle, evidently laid

<sup>1</sup> Duncan II., who lived for a considerable time at the English Court after the death of William the Conqueror, and who reigned over Scotland for a short time in the year 1094, was the son of Malcolm (III.) Canmore by Ingebiorg, widow of Thorfin Sigurdson, and he (Duncan) was treacherously slaughtered at Monachedin on the banks of the Bervie, where a rude stone is said to mark the supposed place of his death (Robertson, *Early Kings*, vol. i. p. 158). Lord Hailes (*Annals*, vol. i. p. 53) states that Duncan was assassinated by Malpedir, Earl of Mernes, or rather Malpeter Machoen, Mormaor of Maerne.

down and followed by the parents, which enables us to determine at once the exact place of Ethelred in the family of Malcolm Canmore, and to corroborate the places of the others in the same family. EDWARD, who was undoubtedly the eldest, was evidently named after Margaret's own father, who, in the year 1017, became an exile, first in Sweden and afterwards in Hungary, from whence he returned at the call of Edward the Confessor, with Agatha, his wife, and his three children, Edgar (Atheling), Margaret, and Christina, in 1057, and died soon afterwards.<sup>1</sup> EDMUND, the second child, was evidently named after Margaret's grandfather, Edmund (II.) Ironside, who was King of England in the year 1016. And so, upon the principle already alluded to, Ethelred would come next, as third in order of the sons, and would accordingly fall to be named after Margaret's great-grandfather, Ethelred II., King of England from the year 978 to 1016, and who was nicknamed "the unready."<sup>2</sup> Edgar naturally follows as the fourth son, being named after Margaret's great-great-grandfather, Edgar, King of England, born in the year 943, and king from 959 to about 975. Here, however, the principle stops, for the fifth son, Alexander, was named, it is supposed, after Pope Alexander II. (1061-1073 A.D.), whilst David, the youngest son, it is said, had his name given him after the Royal Psalmist.

We may reasonably, therefore, come to the conclusion that ETHELRED, Earl of Fife and Abbot of Dunkeld, was the *third* son of Malcolm (III.) Canmore and his Queen, Margaret, thus agreeing with what is said by Fordun, and what is indicated by Lord Hailes, and also by Mr E. W. Robertson.

<sup>1</sup> It is said that Margaret's father, Edward, and his brother, Edmund, were sent as infants to Stephen, King of Hungary, in the year 1017, where Edmund died in youth; and therefore, since Edward returned in the year 1057, he must have lived for forty years in Hungary, where, no doubt, he would be married, and where Margaret, Queen of Scotland, would be born and brought up. This seems to indicate that Margaret, although a Saxon by race, was yet a Hungarian by birth, and that she must have seen and known little of England and its people.

<sup>2</sup> There were several monarchs among the ancient kings of England named ETHELRED. First, the son of Rollo, King of Northumbria, 774-778 and 790-793 A.D.; ETHELRED, King of East Anglia, 749-757 A.D.; and another ETHELRED, from 761-789 A.D.; whilst ruling over the united Saxon kingdom there was, in 866, an Ethelred (I.), brother of Alfred the Great, and in 978 Ethelred (II.), "the unready."