

II.

SOME NOTES ON ST BALDRED'S COUNTRY. By J. M. MACKINLAY, M.A.,
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There is much to interest us in connection with the missionaries who evangelised ancient Alban. The marvels associated with them deserve careful study for the light they shed on the beliefs of a past age ; but the main duty of the hagiological student is to try to interpret these marvels after the manner pursued by the late Dr Skene. Various glimpses of the marvellous are to be had in connection with the life of St Baldred of the Bass, otherwise known as St Balthere. We know very little about his biography. When we discount the miraculous element, what is left is somewhat meagre. Nevertheless, enough of evidence, documentary and topographical, remains to convince us that he worked in the neighbourhood of the river Tyne, in Haddingtonshire.

According to Simeon of Durham, he evangelised the district, extending "a Lanbermore usque ad Escemuthe," *i.e.*, Inveresk. St Kentigern, otherwise St Mungo of Strathclyde, seems to have had some link with St Baldred; but what the link was is not very clear. Traprain Law and Aberlady are traditionally connected with Thenew, Kentigern's mother, and close to Garleton, to the north-west of Haddington, once stood St Mungo's Chapel. About a mile and a half from its site is a place called Mungo's-Wells. There is reason to believe that St Baldred survived St Kentigern some few years. He is said to have died about A.D. 606 or 608. In the Scottish Calendar he is commemorated on the 6th of March.

Islands were often selected by early Christian missionaries as their places of abode. St Baldred chose the Bass Rock as his retreat, and thence crossed to preach to the dwellers on the adjoining mainland. Some remains of his cell may have been incorporated in the church built, or more probably rebuilt, in 1542. At any rate this church was reared on the traditional site of the cell, and at the date mentioned was dedicated to St Baldred. Time must have lessened the odour of its sanctity, for in the seventeenth century the ammunition of the garrison was stored within its walls. In a poem, entitled *St Baldred of the Bass*, published in 1824, by James Millar of Haddington, the following lines occur:—

"The pious Baldred scoop'd his hermit cell
Upon the sunny summit of the rock,
Whence issued forth a fountain's crystal well,
Which o'er the cliffs in showery spangles broke."

This may represent a tradition, or may be simply an imaginative embellishment. Such an incident is not uncommon in the annals of hagiology. As a matter of fact, there never was any real spring on the Bass. What is known as the well is merely an accumulation of rain water.

According to Boece, St Baldred died on the Bass; but according to the Aberdeen Breviary, he breathed his last at Aldham. He was so much esteemed during his lifetime that, after his death, there was a rivalry among his converts for the possession of his body. His relics were sought for, in order to hallow the churches of Aldham, Prestonkirk, and

Tynninghame respectively. It is not surprising to learn that a miracle was wrought to satisfy the various claimants. Legends, like snowballs, gather as they go. The shape that the legend concerning the saint's body had assumed in the first half of the sixteenth century is thus given by Bellenden in his *Croniklis*.—"At this time wes in Scotland thre haly men of oure natioune, Baldreid, Dunstane, and Connall. The first was ane excellent doctour, and deceissit in the Basse, ane strang castall within the see. The parochinaris of Auldham, Tynningham, and Prestoun, contendit quhilk of thaim thre suld have his body to decore thair kirk. Finalie, thay wer content to superseid thair debait, quhil the nixt morow, to be consultit be the bischop. On the morow thay fand, be mirakill of God, thre beris, with thre bodyis na thing discrepant fra otheris in quantitie, coulleur, nor arrayment. Than, be command of the bischop, ilk parochin tuke ane of thir bodyis to thair kirk: and sa the body of this haly man lye, be mirakill, in all the thre kirks." This story is quite in keeping with what is told about certain other saints, though, as far as we know, St Baldred stands alone among Scottish saints as regards the triplication of his body.¹ The biography of St Fillan supplies a case in point. After his death, which is said to have occurred in the neighbourhood of Lochearn, his body was carried to Glendochart through Glenogle. When the bearers arrived at the point where Glendochart opens upwards and downwards, a dispute arose as to their destination. Some wished the saint's body to be buried at Killin, and others at Strathfillan. The end of the matter was that two coffins, instead of one, were to be seen, and thus each party was satisfied. About 1521, John Major or Mair, a native of Haddingtonshire, wrote his *History of Greater Britain*. He was a firm believer in the triplication of St Baldred's body. He says:—"It is related of him that his body was laid entire in three churches, not far distant one from the other: Aldhame, namely, Tynninghame, and Preston. . . . The same body was found numerically in different parts of the house, and thus each of these villages rejoices at this day in the possession of Saint Baldred's body. I know that there are not wanting theo-

¹ A similar legend as to the triplication of his body is narrated of the great Welsh saint Thelias (see Capgrave's *Legenda Aurea*, fol. cclxxxi).

logians who deny that such a thing as this is possible to God, namely, that the same body can be placed circumscriptive in different places : but their proof of this I cannot allow."

The *quondam* parish of Aldham was united to Tynninghame in 1619. Its church, the successor of the building that received one of the three bodies, was demolished in 1770. Ten years before that date, Tynninghame parish was united to that of Whitekirk, the entire area being thus made to form one parish.

Last summer, when in East Lothian, it occurred to me to visit certain sites associated with St Baldred. In the parish of Prestonkirk is the tidy little town of East Linton, *i.e.*, the town on the linn or pool in the Tyne. Somewhere in the river is St Baldred's Whirl, probably just below the rapids close to the town. I was unable, however, to discover its exact position. Prestonkirk is otherwise styled Prestonhaugh, both names indicating its connection with priests. The parish church, a little out of the town, is believed to occupy the site of the place of worship built by St Baldred. The present structure dates from 1770. Till that date a figure, supposed to represent the saint, lay in the churchyard ; but was then broken in pieces by a mason. Across the highway from the graveyard is St Baldred's Well, on the slope, two or three yards above the Tyne. The water trickles out from the bank and falls into a trough, formed of four stones. The enclosed space measures about 2 feet by 15 inches, and the depth is over a foot. The bottom is covered with sand and gravel. The water is beautifully clear and cold. The spring has every appearance of having belonged to the class of consecrated wells, to be found over the length and breadth of our land. Such wells are commonly associated with the names of Christian saints ; but their fame usually began in the days of paganism. I do not know whether offerings have ever been found at St Baldred's Well ; but it is likely that small objects, such as pebbles or pins, were at one time thrown into it, to secure the favour of the saint.

Fully a mile beyond St Baldred's Well is the village of Tynninghame, close by the grounds of Tynninghame House, the beautifully wooded seat of the Earls of Haddington. The old village of Tynninghame stood

within the policies of the mansion ; but it is now a thing of the past. In 941 the church was ravaged and the hamlet burned by the Danes under Anlaf. A later structure took the place of the one thus pillaged. Like the churches of Innerleithen and Stow, it was held in peculiar regard as a sanctuary in the Middle Ages. Its only remains are two fine Norman arches, one of which is pictured at the beginning of Sir William Fraser's *Memorials of the Earls of Haddington*. The ruins are situated about 300 yards from the Tyne, between it and the mansion house, and are used as the burial-place of the noble family. "Within the church there is a small niche where three shields are sculptured in relievo. Below its arch a detached figure reclines, habited in a close gown, with hands clasped in the attitude of prayer. At the feet of this figure lies the symbolical lamb, originally holding the cross, which is broken away."¹ This figure is that of a female, and, therefore, cannot represent St Baldred. Nothing definite is known of its history.

Passing through the grounds of Tynninghame House, we soon reach the margin of the sea, and, going northward, we come to Whitberry Point. A fissure in the cliff there goes by the name of "St Baldred's Cradle." One can scramble down into it from the landward side. At its mouth toward the sea it is about a couple of yards wide. On either side the rock rises to a height of some 13 or 14 feet. In stormy weather, when the tide is high, the sea bursts in with terrific force into the cleft. If St Baldred used it as a place of slumber, his repose must sometimes have been rudely interrupted. A local tradition, referred to by Chalmers in his *Caledonia*, says that the Cradle was rocked by the winds and the waves. The stormy character of the place was expressively indicated to me by a man belonging to the neighbourhood, who said that while passing the Cradle he had many a time got a whip on his head from a lump of foam. There was nothing in the appearance of the place to show that it had been the retreat of an anchorite ; but the name is interesting, and is doubtless very old.

If we follow the coast for nearly four miles to the north-west, we come to St. Baldred's House, situated close to Tantallon Castle, within

¹ Notes to Millar's *St Baldred of the Bass*, already referred to.

the grounds of Seacliff House. This building is so called in the reduced Ordnance Map. In the district it is known as St Baldred's Chapel. One may describe it as a ruin in fairly good preservation. It is quite unroofed, with the exception of a small dome-shaped chamber, which one enters by a narrow, short passage. It is beautifully situated on rising ground above the sea, and looks down upon an object, traditionally associated with the history of the saint, viz., a rock not far from the shore, familiarly known as "Baudron's Boat." At high tide the rock is covered by the sea. A local proverb says, "Ding doun Tantallon, and mak a brig to the Bass." St Baldred did something still more wonderful. He used the rock in question as his boat, when crossing the sea between the Bass and the land, though why he required to do so is not clear, for he is said to have been able to walk on the water like St Peter. According to another legend, the rock in question was at one time in the middle of the channel, and was a frequent cause of shipwrecks. The saint ordered himself to be placed upon it. At his nod it began to move, and skimmed along the sea, and finally became fixed beside the shore. St Baldred was not the only saint who had a stone boat. St Conval, the patron of the church at Inchinnan, in Renfrewshire, used one when crossing from Ireland to Scotland in the seventh century. It found a resting-place beside the river Cart, and by its means miraculous cures were wrought on man and beast. Martin, in connection with his visit to Orkney, describes a stone in the chapel of Ladykirk in South Ronaldshay, locally known as "St Magnus's Boat." In length it was fully four feet, and tapered away at both ends. On the upper surface it had the impress of two human feet. A tradition says that St Magnus used it to convey him across the Pentland Firth.

Besides the well alluded to above, there is one, dedicated to St Baldred, about half a mile to the south-west of Tantallon Castle. From the *New Statistical Account of Scotland* we learn that "it is held in high modern estimation for its qualifications to make tea," a beverage which, we need hardly remark, did not cheer the anchorite of the Bass.