

## CHAPTER VI.

*Of the principal Seats of the Culdees.—Of Abernethy.—Antiquity of this Foundation.—Of St Bridget.—Whether Abernethy was a Bishopric?—Of the University here.—Of the Collegiate Church.—Property of the Abbey given to that of Aberbrothoc.—Controversy on this head.—Temporal Lords of Abernethy.*

THE seats of the Culdees now claim our attention. They had monasteries, or cells, in a variety of places in Scotland; some of which afterwards became episcopal sees. Lloyd, indeed, and other writers on the same side of the question, wish it to be believed, that, wherever there was a bishopric, the Culdee Abbot, and his monks, can only be viewed as the dean and chapter of the diocese. With this view, it is asserted, that we do not find them at St Andrews, “till it had been many years the see of a diocesan bishop.”<sup>1</sup> But it is certain

<sup>1</sup> Histor. Account, p. 140.

that, before the name of St Andrews was known, and before the erection of any place of worship there, Abernethy was a principal seat of the Culdees.

High antiquity has been ascribed to this religious foundation. The Pictish Chronicle carries it back to the third year of Nethan I., or A. 458.<sup>1</sup> But, as this erection is made coeval with the time when St Bridget flourished, it is evidently antedated when ascribed to Nethan I., King of the Picts. For, it would appear, that she died about the year 520.<sup>2</sup> That a monastery had been erected here about the year 600, there seems to be no good reason to doubt. Fordun says, that it was founded by Garnard, the son of Dompnach, who began to reign A. 587. But, according to the Register of St Andrews, the honour of this foundation belongs to Nethan, Naitan, or Nectan, II. who succeeded Garnard A. 598. The last account seems preferable to that of Fordun; on this ground, that it may easily be conceived that, in the Pictish Chronicle, the one

<sup>1</sup> Necton morbet filius Erp xxiiii. reg. Tertio anno regni ejus Darlugdach, abbatissa cillae Daradae, Hibernia exulat proxime ad Britanniam. Secundo anno adventus sui immolavit Nectonius Aburnethige Deo et Sanctae Brigidae, praesente Dairlngtach, quae cantavit Alleluia super istam hostiam. Optulit igitur Nectonius magnus filius Wirp, rex omnium provinciarum Pictorum, Apurnethige sanctae Brigidae, usque ad diem judicii; cum suis finibus, quae positae sunt a lapide in Apurfeirt, usque ad lapidem juxta Carfuill, id est, Lethfoss; et inde in altum usque ad Athan. Causa autem oblationis haec est. Nectonius in Vita Juliae manens, fratre suo Drusto expulsante se ad Hiberniam, Brigidam sanctam petivit, ut postulasset Deum pro se. Orans autem pro illo dixit: "Si pervenies ad patriam tuam Dominus miserabitur tui: regnum Pictorum in pace possidebis." Chron. Pict. V. Pinkerton's Enquiry, i. 490, 491.

<sup>2</sup> V. Pinkerton's Enquiry, i. 297.

Nethan might be substituted for the other. As it seems probable, that the place was denominated from a prince of this name, especially as *Abernethyn* occurs in ancient writings; may it not be supposed, that, in later times, without any intentional fraud, the Pictish sovereign, who first erected a religious house here, might be confounded with his predecessor of the same name, who had founded the town, or honoured it as a royal residence?

As we learn from Bede, that Nethan, the third Pictish prince of this name, desired architects from the Angles of Northumberland for building a church of stone, Mr Pinkerton hesitates whether this ought not to be accounted the epoch of the foundation of Abernethy. He adds, however: "But perhaps a wooden fabric might have been reared by Nethan II." The latter is certainly the most plausible idea: for we can scarcely suppose, that, in so rude a period, a Pictish king would propose to build a church of stone in a place which had not previously acquired great celebrity as a religious foundation.

After giving an account of the foundation here, Fordun says; "Afterwards St Patrick there introduced St Bridget, with her nine virgins, into Scotland, as we learn from a certain chronicle of the church of Abernethy: and he gave to God, and to the blessed Mary, and to St Bridget and her virgins, all the lands and tithes, which the prior and canons have enjoyed from an early period. These nine virgins died

\* Enquiry, *ibid.*

within five years, and were interred on the north side of the said church.”<sup>1</sup>

Our historian, Leslie, seems to think that it was the same Bridget, who has been so much celebrated both by the Irish and by the Scots. “St Bridget,” he says, “was held in such

<sup>1</sup> Postquam illic introduxit beatus Patricius Sanctam Brigidam, sicut in quadam chronica ecclesiae de Abirnetby reperimus, cum suis novem virginibus in Scotiam: et obtulit Deo et beatæ Mariæ, et beatæ Brigidæ, et virginibus suis, omnes terras et decimas quas Prior et canonici habent ex antiquo. Istæ vero novem virgines infra quinque annos decesserunt, et ex parte boreali dictæ ecclesiae sunt sepultæ. Scotichron. lib. iv. c. 12.

Boece, who generally knew early events much better than those who lived before him, gives a more particular account of these virgins. “During the life of Eugene VII.” he says, “the holiness of a Scotsman, named Donald, had great influence in exciting men to piety. He lived among the Picts, in the solitude of Owgillvy [apparently, what is now called *the Glen of Ogilvy*], about six miles from Dundee, distinguished for the sanctity of his life. He had nine daughters, the eldest named Mazota, another Fiucana: the names of the rest have perished in the lapse of time. Living a very abstemious life, they had no other food than barley-bread and water; and they took a slender repast only once a day, devoting themselves almost constantly to prayer, and to the rustic labour by means of which they procured their sustenance. It is related, that Mazota, who surpassed the rest in virtue as in age, observing that a great flock of wild geese was wont to assemble in that place, and greatly waste her father’s corns, forbade them to return thither from that time forth; and the winged troop were obedient to the comminations of the most holy virgin. General credit has been given to this narration, for the following reason, that, even to the days of our fathers, *no geese of this kind were ever henceforth seen in that field.*

“These virgins, after the death of their father, (for by a fatal end they had long before been deprived of their mother,) not deeming it safe to continue in this solitude, without a guardian of their chastity, applied to Garnard, king of the Picts, for a place of residence; that, removed from the society of men, they might with greater liberty serve Christ, to whom they had devoted themselves from their early years. The king, consenting to the pious request of these virgins, readily gave them some buildings erected at Abernethy, and al-

eneration by Scots, Picts, Britons, English, and Irish, that you may see more temples erected to *God in memory of her*, among all these nations, than to any other saint. The Irish contend that they have her *holy body* at Down, where that of St Patrick their apostle is also preserved. Our countrymen claim the same honour to themselves; believing that they rightly worship it in the college of Canons at Abernethy.”<sup>1</sup> His language is materially the same with that of Boece.<sup>2</sup>

Camerarius is at great pains to shew that the Bridget, who was contemporary with St Patrick, was a native of North Britain. His principal proof is, that by so many writers she is designed *Scota*, or a Scottish woman.<sup>3</sup> This, however, from the period in which they wrote, is of no weight; as no candid person can doubt that, by foreign writers, the term was, in the middle ages, most generally applied to the inhabitants of Ireland. The idea of St Patrick introducing St Bridget at Abernethy, must therefore be rejected as a fable.

It is not quite improbable, however, that our aucestors

lotted to them, for their sustenance, the produce of the adjacent fields. Here, after a life of great strictness and devotion, and most acceptable to God, having attained a blessed rest, they were buried at the root of an immense oak. The place is shewn even in our time, the christian people flocking thither, with a religious intention, and with great veneration.” Hist. lib. ix. Fol. 187, a.

<sup>1</sup> Tanta veneratione Scoti, Picti, Britanni, Angli et Hibernenses D. Brigidam sunt ubique prosecuti, ut plura templa Deo in illius memoriam apud illos erecta videas, quam ullius caeterorum divorum omnium. Illius sanctum corpus Hibernici Duni, quo loco S. Patricii illorum Apostoli corpus servatur, se habere contendunt. Nostri eandem gloriam sibi vindicant, qui id ipsum in canonicorum Collegio Abrenethi recte se colere hactenus putarunt. De Reb. Gest. Scot. lib. iv. p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> Hist. lib. ix. Fol. 164, a.

<sup>3</sup> De Scot. Pietate, p. 93, 94.

might have a St Bridget of their own. The Irish, indeed, not without reason, charge our historians with such a want of moral honesty, that they could not secure their very saints against depredation. But the learned and candid Usher seems to think that our writers had confounded the Irish Bridget with another of the same name, of a later age, who, it is said, was educated at Dunkeld. Speaking of the account, given by Boece, of Kentigern and Columba having resided for some time there, he shews that here there is evidently a gross anachronism; and that the story must regard another Columba, of whom we read in the life of St Cuthbert, Bishop of Lindisfarne, borrowed from what he calls the *Histories of the Irish*. There it is said, “St Columba, first bishop in Dunkeld, took Cuthbert when a boy, and kept and educated him for some time, together with a certain girl of the name of Bridget, of Irish extract. The age of Cuthbert,” he adds, “indicates that this must have taken place soon after the year 640; and this Bridget apparently was that companion of St Monenna; and this Columba, the bishop, who, as we read, became celebrated in Scotland after the death of Monenna.”<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Neque etiam nostri hujus Columbae nomini, Dunkeldense illam ecclesiam dicatum fuisse existimaverim, sed alterius potius eo posterioris, de quo in Vita S. Cuthberti Lindisfarnensis episcopi, ex *historiis Hiberniensium* translata, scriptum invenimus. *Sauctus Columba, primus Episcopus in Dunkeld, Cuthbertum puerum suscepit; unaque cum puella quadam nomine Brigida ex Hibernia orivunda retinuit, et aliquandiu educavit.* Quod paulo post annum DCXL. contigisse, Cuthberti aetas dat indicium. Atque haec Brigida fortasse illa fuerit S. Monennae socia, et hic Columba episcopus quem Monenna moriente in Albania celebrem fuisse legimus. Primord. p. 705. V. etiam p. 713.

A ray of light, however faint, is thrown on this story, by what Bede relates concerning Cuthbert. He resided for some time, he says, with Trumwine, designed Bishop of Abercorn.<sup>1</sup> Now, as we know that, in consequence of the inroads of the Picts, Trumwine found himself under the necessity of removing to Whitby, in England;<sup>2</sup> if we can credit the history referred to by Usher, it may be supposed that Cuthbert found a retreat at Dunkeld.

It has been said, that “at Abernethy there is a very ancient church, which was built in an age that is beyond memory;” and that, while “its origin defies conjecture, it was certainly dedicated to St Bridget, by the command of the zealous Nectan.”<sup>3</sup>

That a saint of this name, whoever she was, had the honour of this dedication, can hardly be doubted; this being asserted in the Pictish Chronicle, formerly quoted,—a monument of antiquity, the credibility of which has scarcely been called in question. Although, as we have seen, the foundation of the church is antedated, by the substitution of one Nethan for another, this does not seem to be a sufficient ground for rejecting the evidence of this record with respect to the patroness, any more than for totally disregarding what is said as to the foundation.

It is evidently to this valuable chronicle that Camden refers, in what he says of Abernethy. I shall give his words

<sup>1</sup> Et quidem divina dispensatio primitus elationem animi puerilis digno paedagogo compescere dignata est. Nam sicut beatae memoriae Trumuine Episcopus ab ipso Cudberto sibi dictum perhibebat, &c. Vit. S. Cudb. lib. i. c. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Hist. lib. iv. c. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Caledonia, i. 328.

as quoted by Sir James Balfour: "Or ever the river Ern hath joyned his waters with Tay in one streame, so that now Tay is become more spacious, he looketh upe a litle to Aberneth, seatted at the feete of the Ocellian montanis, anciently the royall seate of the Picts, and a weill peopled citey, which, as we read in ane *ancient fragment*, Nectane King of the Picts gaue unto God and St Brigide, vntill the day of doome, togider with the bounds thereof, which lay from a stone in Abertrent to a stone neigh to Carfull (I wold rather reid Carpull), and from thence als far as to Ethan." \*

*Carpull* is now written and pronounced *Carpow*, the name still given to a gentleman's seat here. Hence we may have some notion of the former extent of Abernethy, now reduced to a poor village. *Carpow* is about a mile east from the present town. The situation of Ethan, called Athan in the Pictish Chronicle, seems to be now unknown. The limits mentioned in this extract, may indeed denote only the extent of the territory annexed to Abernethy. But, according to tradition, the vestiges of streets and buildings have been discovered a great way to the east of the present town.

We have seen, that Fordun refers to the Chronicle of Abernethy. Innes also quotes the book of Paisley, as attesting the existence of the same chronicle. But it has not been seen for several centuries. We are, therefore, as much at a loss as to the age of the celebrated round tower, still standing at Abernethy, as we are with respect to its use. It seems most probable, that it had been built at the same time with

\* MS. Collections, *Stratherne*.



the church, by those architects who were employed by Nethan, when he resolved to erect a fabric of stone. The conjecture, now pretty generally adopted, is, that these singular structures were meant for penitentiaries, though others view them as belfries. <sup>1</sup>

Boece pretends that Abernethy was a bishopric, and indeed a sort of metropolitan see. For he says, that Kenneth, the son of Alpin, “ transferred to Kilrymont the pontifical seat of the Picts, which had been long at Abernethy; the latter being destroyed by fire and sword.” <sup>2</sup> The learned and ingenious editor of the last edition of Sibbald’s History of Fife has made some remarks on this subject, which deserve to be transcribed.

“ Of the pretended bishopric of Abernethy,” he says, “ no traces are to be found in the registers of monasteries, or the earlier annalists; nor does there appear to have been any episcopal see, properly so called, north of the Forth, before the erection of the bishopric of St Andrews, in the 9th century. It may be supposed, that when the Culdees were accustomed to elect bishops, who had no fixed diocese, but exercised their functions wherever they came, Abernethy may have been the favourite residence of some of them. It was an ecclesiastical establishment, perhaps as early as the beginning of the 7th century, and appears to have been a

<sup>1</sup> V. Ledwich’s *Antiq. Irel.* pp. 155, 170.

<sup>2</sup> Pontificiam sedem dudum Pictorum ab Abbernethi oppido, eo ferro et igni delcto, ad templum Reguli transtulit. *Hist. Fol.* 208, a.

school for such learning as then obtained among the clergy. These circumstances might induce some of the bishops to reside there, and give them an influence over the clergy educated under their inspection, which tradition has magnified into a supremacy over all the churches of Pictland. That there were bishops among the Culdees in Pictland, we cannot doubt, though they were certainly (except in what immediately regarded the episcopal function) inferior in influence and power to the Abbot of Iona." <sup>1</sup>

Such was the strength of the Culdean establishment at Abernethy, and so independent was it of any episcopal authority, that it subsisted long at this place after St Andrews became the seat of a bishopric. "It appears," as Sir James Dalrymple remarks, "that it still subsisted as a religious house in the reign of King Malcolm the third, from a charter of Ethelradus his son, of the church of Ardmore to the Keldees, where amongst the witnesses is *Berbeadh Rector Scholarum de Abernethy et eorum coetibus totius universitatis tunc de Abernethy*; and, even after the establishment of the popish orders, there was a collegiate church here." <sup>2</sup>

We learn from Fordun, that Abernethy was converted into a priory of canons regular, A. 1273. <sup>3</sup> Forbes, in his Treatise on Tithes, says that "a collegiate church was founded here

<sup>1</sup> P. 241, Note.

<sup>2</sup> Collections, p. 270. This passage is given more correctly, Appendix, No. V. *De Donatione de Ardmore*.

<sup>3</sup> Hoc anno factus est prioratus de Abirnethy in canonicos regulares, qui prius fuerunt Keldei. Lib. x. c. 33.

by the Earl of Angus." It has been supposed, that this assertion regards Archibald Earl of Angus, Lord of Abernethy, who gave the town a charter of privileges, Aug. 13th, A. 1476; and justly remarked, that this "Earl might be a benefactor to the collegiate church, or restore it to a better state than it had been in for some time before; and, on that account, might be said to have founded it."<sup>1</sup> But the collegiate church was undoubtedly erected long before. Sir James Balfour, though he has not mentioned his authority, has the following notice in his MS. Collections: "Abernethy, a collegiate church, wherein eight prebends, foundit by Hen. Lord Abernethy." This seems to be the same person, who is designed *Henricus de Abernyti miles*, as witness to a charter granted by Henry Bald, goldsmith in Perth, to the abbey of Scone. He lived in the reign of William the Lion: for this prince gives a confirmation of the charter referred to.<sup>2</sup>

Fordun, who wrote about the year 1377, as he dedicates his Chronicle to Cardinal Wardlaw, then Bishop of Glasgow, calls Abernethy a "collegiate church."<sup>3</sup> Did we understand his language in its strictest sense, it might seem to signify that it was so from the first. But most probably he meant nothing more, than that Garnard "founded and built" the house which, at the time when he wrote, was commonly designed "the collegiate church of Abernethy." Forbes indeed has said, that collegiate churches began to be built

<sup>1</sup> Statist. Acc. xi 446.

<sup>2</sup> Regist Scon. p 196, 197. Macfarl. MS.

<sup>3</sup> Isti quoque regi successit Garnard filius Demptach, sive Makdompnach, qui fundavit et aedificavit ecclesiam collegiatam de Abirnethy. Scotichron. Lib. iv. c. 12.

after King Alexander the Third's time, when the erecting of monasteries was discouraged by the Popes usurping the right of patronage. <sup>1</sup> But, from what we have already seen, it must be evident, that this remark can apply only to their more frequent erection.

The Culdees, it would appear, manifested the same assiduity in the instruction of youth at Abernethy, as at Iona. They had most probably been engaged in this arduous and important work from the very foundation of the church there. From what has been already quoted, with respect to Berbeadh, the rector of the schools at this place, it is evident that they had been in a flourishing state in the time of Malcolm Canmore. They were then entitled to the honourable designation of an university. We may reasonably suppose, that the members of this society continued to teach here, till the time of the erection of the priory of canons regular; when this office would, in all probability, be claimed by them, for the increase of their own influence, and the diminution of that of the Culdees.

William the Lion, having built the noble abbey of Aberbrothoc, manifested his peculiar attachment to this erection by very liberal endowments. Among other donations, he gave to this abbey the church of Abernethy, with its chapels, lands, tithes, and oblations of every kind. This is evident from the very charter of erection. <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Treatise of Church-lands, &c. p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> Et ecclesiam de Abirmythy cum capellis, terris, decimis, et oblationibus omnimodis. These words occur in what is denominated *Vera copia Funda-*

While “ the church of Abernethy, with its pertinents, viz. the chapels of Dron, Dunbulc, and Errol, with the land of Belach, and of Petinloucr, and the half of all the tithes proceeding from the property of the Abbot of Abernethy,” are conferred as “ a free, pure, and perpetual almsgift,” on the abbot and monks of Aberbrothoc ; the other moiety of these tithes, it is said, *habebunt Keledei*, the Culdees shall possess. \* The tithes also, from the lands subject to the authority of the

*tionis Abbatiae de Aberbrothoc in Angus per Willielmum Scottorum Regem, ab autographo copiat. et cum originali collationat.*

[Subscribitur.]

James Balfour Lyone.

Copies of Charters, MS. Adv. Libr. This MS. belonged to Colonel Charles Fairfax, son to the first Lord Fairfax ; and was presented by his great granddaughter to Bishop Keith.

\* The passage, here referred to, in the charter of King William, has lately been given to the public in the following form : Cum *medietatem* omnium decimarum *pervenientium* ex propria abbatis de *Abernethy*, quarum alteram *medietatem habuerunt* Keledei de *Abernethy*, et preter *decimas* de dominio ipsius abbatis quas Keledei de *Abernethy* habere *solebant*. Caledonia, i. 435, N. It might be expected, that a writer, who never does any injustice to his own deserts by too much diffidence, nor weakly suffers himself to be blinded, by an extreme of candour, in judging of the errors of others who presume to differ from him, would, at least for his own sake, pay a little more attention to accuracy. Monkish Latin is bad enough of itself; there can be no occasion for making it worse. According to this quotation, the sense of the passage is totally altered; if it can be said, that any sense is left to it at all. One could form no other conjecture from it, than that both the moieties referred to were henceforth appropriated to the monks of Aberbrothoc.

The passage stands thus in the Register :—Cum *medietate* omnium decimarum *provenientium* ex propria abbatis de *Abirnythy*, quarum alteram *medietatem habebunt* Keledei de *Abirnythy*; et cum omnibus decimis territorii de *Abirnythy*, et cum omnibus justis pertinenciis ejusdem ecclesiae, preter illas decimas que spectant ad ecclesiam de Flisk, et ad ecclesiam de Cultrum, et preter decimas de dominio ipsius Abbatis quas Keledei de *Abirnythin* habere *solebant*, scilicet de Mukedrum, de Kerpul, et de Balehirewel, et de Baletolly, et de Inernnyth ex orientali parte rivuli. Fol. 49.

Abbot, as Mugdrum, &c. which they were wont to enjoy, are reserved for them. Although, in the charter of renunciation, Laurence *de Abernethy* calls this *dominium* his, he admits that these tithes presently “do belong, and always had belonged, to the Culdees.”

William must have granted this charter of donation between the years 1189 and 1199; for one of the witnesses is Hugh, the King's Chancellor. This was Hugh of Roxburgh, who died A. 1199, a year after he had been advanced to the Bishopric of Glasgow. <sup>1</sup>

Simon, Bishop of Dunblane, granted a charter confirming this gift to the Abbey of Aberbrothoc, “at the *petition* of King William.” In this, he mentions only one “moiety of the tithes arising from the money belonging to the Abbot of Abernethy.” A similar confirmation, and in the same terms, was given by Jonathan his successor; and also by Abraham, Bishop of Dunblane, who was elected about the year 1220. As Jonathan was bishop before 1198, and this gift is confirmed by Simon his predecessor; perhaps we may venture to date it as early as 1190. <sup>2</sup>

This donation, as might well be imagined, was keenly opposed by the suffering party. The controversy was carried on for a long time, perhaps nearly thirty years, by the Prior and Culdees, both before King William, and in the ecclesias-

As this is an important document, I shall give it entire in the Appendix; together with the deed of renunciation, on the part of Laurence *de Abernethy*, of any claims that he might have as to the patronage of this church. V. Appendix, No. I.

<sup>1</sup> Crawford's Officers of State, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> V. Appendix, No. II.

tical court at Dunblane. One determination of the Bishop was not sufficient to quash it. The Register of Aberbrothoc contains two different decisions in this cause. As it appears that the first decision of Abraham was resisted by the Culdees, he entered on the second with more solemnity. For the sentence bears, that this controversy, which had been long agitated, both in the king's court, and in that of the bishop, was now finally settled "in his presence, and in his court, many noblemen having been appointed on the part of his Lord the King, for the purpose of hearing the cause." Among these was Brice, his majesty's chief justice, who affixes his name as a witness. Both parties agreed to submit to this sentence, and swore that they should never do any thing to contravene it. <sup>1</sup>

A few years, as would seem, after this decision, a different system was adopted with respect to the church of Abernethy. There was a partial restoration of the possessions, which had been alienated in favour of the convent of Aberbrothoc. This appears from the deed, in the register of this convent, entitled, *Ordinacio Judicum delegatorum super ecclesia de Abernethy*. It contains a good deal of curious information with respect to the ecclesiastical state of that age.

From this valuable paper we learn, that letters had been addressed by Pope Gregory to W. and G. Bishops of Glasgow and Dunkeld; in consequence of a representation made to him, by the Bishop of Dunblane, of the deplorable state of his see. The name corresponding to these initials, are Wil-

<sup>1</sup> V. Appendix, No. III.

liam, consecrated Bishop of Glasgow, A. 1233, and Galfrid, of Dunkeld. They were contemporary with Gregory IX., who was elected to the papacy in the year 1227. His rescript is dated in the eleventh year of his pontificate, or A. 1238 ; as near as we can infer from other dates, about forty years after the donation, made by King William, of the church of Abernethy, to the Abbey of Aberbrothoc.

In this rescript, the Pope narrates the information which he had received from the Bishop of Dunblane ; that his bishopric, in consequence of its having been, *olim*, some considerable time ago, vacant for more than a century, its property had been greatly dilapidated by secular persons ; and that, though in process of time several bishops had been successively appointed, yet, from their simplicity or inattention, not only that part of the episcopal domains had not been reclaimed, but the remainder had been almost entirely alienated and wasted ; whence, no fit person could be induced to take the charge of this diocese, so that, for ten years, it had been destitute of a pastor.

The Pope, therefore, appoints the two bishops, to whom his rescript is addressed, in conjunction with their brethren of St Andrews and Brechin, to make the necessary provision for that bishop who had been appointed, in consequence of their expectation that by this means the diocese might “ be able to respire from the lake of misery.” It is added, that the bishop, who had been nominated, found the see so desolate, that “ he had not a place in the cathedral church where he might lay his head ; that there was no college [of canons] there ; but that in the church itself, which was unroofed, a



certain rural chaplain celebrated divine service; and that the rents of the bishop were so slender, as scarcely to suffice for his maintenance for one half of the year."

Gregory therefore requires them "to repair to the cathedral itself; and, if they found matters to be as they had been represented to him, to assign to the bishop the fourth part of the tithes of all the parish churches in the diocese, if this could be done without causing great offence; that at their determination, and that of other upright men, he might receive a competency for his own sustenance, and appropriate a sufficient portion for the dean and canons, whom the Pope willed and commanded them to appoint." He adds, that, "if this could not be done, the fourth part of the tithes of all the churches, which were detained by secular persons, being assigned to the bishop, they should transfer the episcopal seat to the monastery of canons regular of St John, in the same diocese; \* power being granted to the canons of said monastery to elect bishops in future, when the see should fall vacant."

In consequence of this papal rescript, these delegates, "having frequently convened all who had the right of patronage within the diocese of Dunblane, and the charge of attending to the increase of divine service there," at length concluded, that a partial restoration of the possessions, attached to the church of Abernethy, was necessary to the sup-

\* This must be meant of Inchaffray, where there was a monastery of canons regular dedicated to the memory of *St John the Evangelist*. Keith's Catalogue, p. 240. Perth, formerly called *St Johnstoun*, cannot be meant. For it had no monks of this order; and, besides, belonged to the diocese of St Andrews.

port of this see. Therefore, “ with the advice of prudent men, they determined, between the Bishop of Dunblane on the one part, and the abbot and convent of Arbroath on the other, that the whole right, which the said abbot and convent had to the *altarage* of Abernethy, with the lands of Penlouer, and of Belach, and with all their other just pertinents, should be ceded by them to the jurisdiction and disposal of the Bishop of Dunblane, and his successors; the monks of Arbroath retaining the moiety of the land of Belach, with all its pertinents, and all the *tiend-sheaves*, which pertain to the said church of Abernethy; and, in like manner, all the rights and emoluments arising to them from the chapels of that church. The Bishop of Dunblane, and his successors, are laid under an obligation to provide, from the profits of the foresaid altarage, that the said church of Abernethy be honourably served; that they shall take the charge of all burdens in relation to the bishop and his officials; and that he shall provide, from the profits of said altarage, a vicar in the cathedral church of Dunblane, in name of the abbot and convent of Aberbrothoc, who, by his ministry, shall supply their place in this church, so that the church of Abernethy, for his [the bishop’s] greater liberty, and for the protection of its liberty, shall be for ever held as a prebend and canonry of the church of Dunblane; and that the Abbot of Aberbrothoc shall be installed as canon in the same church, a proper place of residence being allotted to him among the canons of said church.”

• V. Appendix, No. IV.

It thus appears, that the means formerly used, for the depression of the Culdees at Abernethy, had, in co-operation with other circumstances, threatened the dissolution of that diocese to which it belonged. Their adversaries were, therefore, in so far reduced to the necessity of retracing their steps.

As in the charter of donation, by King William, and also in that of Laurence *de Abernethy*, the abbot of this place is still mentioned in such a way as to suggest the idea, that the old frame of the monastery was not as yet completely dissolved; it does not appear that even the last decision of Bishop Abraham had this effect. There is no evidence that the Culdees were, in consequence of this determination, deprived of the moiety of tithes, reserved to them by King William, as arising from the property of the abbot; nor perhaps of those which they received from Mugdrum, &c.—For the tithes mentioned, as contested in the bishop's court, were due from Petkarry, Petyman, Malcarny, Pethorny, Pethwneagus, and Galthanim.

There seems to have been, at Abernethy, at least the form of a Culdean monastery, till it completely merged in the regular canonry, in the year 1273, or about eighty years after the dilapidation of its revenues. I am inclined to think, that a considerable time before the Culdees were obliged to give place to the canons, and probably some time during the reign of William, after the alienation of great part of their revenues, their religious establishment had been subjected to a nominal degradation, from an abbey to a priory. For,

whereas in the charter of King William, and in the confirmations by Bishops Simon, Jonathan, and Abraham, the superior of the Culdees is called an *Abbot*; in the two sentences of the latter he is only termed *Prior*.

Alexander II., who died A. 1249, confirms to the abbey of Aberbrothoc, the church of Moniekyn [now Monikie], the church of Gutheryn [Guthrie], and the church of *Abirnethyn*; with the chapels, lands, tithes, and offerings of every kind.<sup>1</sup> This must be understood, it would seem, according to the limitations fixed by the delegates appointed by Pope Gregory.

During the same reign, Matildis, Countess of Angus, gave, as an almsgift, to the abbey of Arbroath, the whole land lying on the south side of the church of Monifod, i. e. Monifieth, which the Culdees held during the life of her father.<sup>2</sup>

When we consider the high rank of Abernethy, as a seat of learning, it may seem surprising that, in this respect, so little notice is taken of it, in our ancient records, after the reign of Malcolm Canmore. In how different a light must its religious have been viewed in that early period, when we find not only Berbeadh the rector of the university, but “Nesse and Cormac, the sons of Makbeath, and Malnechte, the son of Beelham, priests of Abernethy, and Malbryde another

<sup>1</sup> Regist. Aberbroth. 1. Fol. 70. Macfarl. p. 169, 170.

<sup>2</sup> — Totam terram ex australi parte ecclīæ de Monifod quam Kelledei tenuerunt in vita patris mei, &c. Ibid. Fol. 76. Macfarl. p. 180.

priest, <sup>1</sup> and Thuadel, and Augustine a priest of the Culdees," called to attest a charter of Edred, the son of Malcolm, along with his brothers Alexander and David, afterwards kings of Scotland, and Constantine Earl of Fife; a charter granted, not to their own monastery, but to that of Lochleven! One might naturally suppose, that their rector, at least, would frequently appear as a witness in the deeds of succeeding ages. But neither from the Register of Scone, though this place was in the vicinity, nor in that of St Andrews, though the metropolitan seat, does it appear that one of the priests of Abernethy was accounted worthy to be enrolled as attesting a single deed. As Abernethy belonged to the diocese of Dunblane, had we the records of this bishopric, we might find some further vestiges of its ecclesiastical history. But Keith has observed; "The writs of this see have been so neglected, or perhaps wilfully destroyed, that no light can be got from thence to guide us aright in making up" even "the list of its ancient bishops." It was, however, undoubtedly the wish of the canons regular, who had obtained the superiority at the episcopal seats, and in the monasteries, to keep the Culdees in the shade as much as possible. I am,

<sup>2</sup> This must have been a different person from one of the same name, who was Prior of the Culdees at Brechin in the time of William the Lion. It was probably a common name. *Mal* is said to be synonymous, in its general sense, with *Gille*, as denoting a servant; Gaelic *maol*, explained by Shaw, "a servant, a shaved person devoted to some religious order." Hence Malcolm, in Gaelic, *Maol Cholum*, the servant of Columba. *Malbryde* must therefore denote the servant of Bride, or Bridget. The term *maol*, in its primary sense, signifies, bald, blunt, or without horns.

therefore, inclined to think, that they would not be acceptable visitors to those who had strained every nerve to eject them from their ancient possessions; while we may also suppose, that they would themselves have little pleasure in the society of men, whom they must of necessity have viewed as successful rivals.

In the first sentence of Abraham, Bishop of Dunblane, *Michael persona de Abirnythy*, and *Magister Willielmus de Abirnythy*, are named as witnesses. <sup>1</sup>

The provost of the collegiate church of Abernethy is mentioned with respect, in a charter granted by Archibald Earl of Angus, A. 1476, to the burgh of Abernethy, which was to be held of him as superior, agreeably to a charter which had been granted to him and his successors by "James King of Scots of recent memory." He, who was at this time *Praepositus ecclesiae collegiatæ de Abernethia*, is designed, *Venerabilis Vir Johannes Frizell*, i. e. Frazer. <sup>2</sup> But we must certainly view him as one of the canons regular.

From the larger Register of Aberbrothoc, or that containing the *Assedations*, which in Macfarlane's MSS. is given as the second volume, we find that, A. 1328, William, Bishop of St Andrews, in consequence of a visitation held at that abbey, grants, with the consent of the monks there, to their abbot Bernard, who had been elected to the bishopric of Sodor, the use of all, *fructus garbales*, the *tiend-sheaves* of the church of Abernethy, with the chapel of Dron; for seven

<sup>1</sup> V. Appendix, No. III.

<sup>2</sup> V. Statist. Acc. xi, 446, N.

years, in order to indemnify him for his expences in the support of the monastery during his incumbency there. <sup>1</sup>

It also contains a protestation, in name of the abbot and convent of Aberbrothoc, against James Bonar of Rossy, before the lords of council, A. 1483, for claiming the tithes of Dumbolg of Abernethy, as if they had been heritable property. <sup>2</sup>

David, Abbot of Arbroath, A. 1490, grants to John Ramsay of Kilgour, to his spouse, and to his sons James and Colin, “ for the term of eleven years, the *tiend-sheaves* of the church of Abernethy, in the diocese of Dunblane, of the chapel of Dron, and of that piece of land commonly called *the Bellauth*, [f. *Bellauch*] on condition of the payment of 213*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.* Scots money, annually, to him and his successors.” <sup>3</sup>

The same tithes were afterwards given, A. 1501, to Robert Arnot and Peter Carmichael, for the term of thirteen years, for 360 marks Scots, to be paid annually. <sup>4</sup>

History has not been equally silent with respect to the temporal superiors of this place. Besides Henry of Abernethy, already mentioned, we meet with different persons, who have a similar designation, and who seem to have been of the same family. *Orme de Abernethi* is one of the witnesses to a charter of William the Lion, concerning a resignation, on the part of the king, of Nar, one of the vassals of the Abbot of Scone. <sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Fol. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Fol. 102. Macfarl. MS. p. 342, 3.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Fol. 129.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Fol. 160.

<sup>5</sup> Regist. Sconens. p. 19. As one of the witnesses is Nicol. Cancellar., this must have been previous to the year 1171, when Nicol the Chancellor died. V. Crawford's Officers of State, p. 9.

By the way, it may be observed, that, as many of the old Pictish race may be supposed to have settled about Abernethy, their ancient capital, it is highly probable that this family was Pictish. *Orm* was a designation common among the ancient Goths, whether Norwegians, Danes, or Angles, which at length passed into a surname. This, the learned Worm informs us, was the origin of his family name. <sup>1</sup>

“*Laurentius de Abernethie*, son of *Orm*,” says Keith, “gave Corbie, called also Birkhill, from a park of birks [birches] surrounding the house, to this monastery [of Balmerinach;] and in his charter is expressed the reason of his donation, viz. Because Queen Emergarda dying 3tio. Id. Februarij, anno 1233, and being buried in the church of Balmerinach, *ante magnum altare*, had by her testament left him 200 merks sterling.” <sup>2</sup>

The same Laurence *de Abirnet* attests a charter of Alexander II., granting to the Abbot of Scone the wood of Kelcansy for a forest. <sup>3</sup> He is also one of the witnesses to a charter granted by Roger de Quenci, Earl of Winchester, constable of Scotland, confirming the donation of William *de Len*, also called *de Lyn*, to the Abbot and Canons of Scone. <sup>4</sup> This may have been about the year 1231. The name of *Reginald de Abernethy* also occurs.

“I have seen,” says Nisbet, “a charter of *Hugh de Abernethy*, of the lands of Owrebenchery to *William de Federeth*,

<sup>1</sup> Monumenta Danica, p. 195.

<sup>2</sup> Catalogue, p. 259.

<sup>3</sup> Regist. Scon. p. 32.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p. 193, 194.



exonerating him and his heirs from making any appearance in his court for these lands. This charter was granted in the reign of Alexander III. and the seal thereto appended was entire, having a lion rampant bruised with a ribbon.' In the reign of Robert I. *Alexander de Abernethy, Dominus de eodem*, (Sir Robert Sibbald's History of Fife) left behind him three daughters, coheirs; Margaret, married to John Stewart, Earl of Angus, who got with her the barony of Abernethy; Helen to Norman de Lindsay of Crawford, who got with her the barony of Balinbreich; and the third daughter, Mary, was wife to Andrew Leslie of Rothies, who with her got the barony of Downy in Angus. These three daughters were the mothers of three great families, Earls of Angus, Rothies, and Crawford, who have been in use to marshal the arms of Abernethy, as before blazoned, with their own."<sup>2</sup>

But though Nisbet quotes Sibbald as his authority, he differs from him. For, according to Sibbald, Mary was the second daughter, heiress of *Balmbrich*, and married to *Norman de Lesly*. The *third*, he says, "was married to *Lindesay de Craufurd*, who got with her the baronie of *Downie*."<sup>3</sup> It may be added, that *William de Abernethy* is mentioned by Prynne, vol. iii. p. 663.

The ancient seal of the College of Abernethy has been found within these few years. I have been favoured with the

<sup>2</sup> This *Hugh de Abernethy* appears as witness in a charter of Alexander III. confirming the church of Obeyne to the Knights Templars, Reg. Aberdon. p. 170, 171. Macfarl. MS.

<sup>2</sup> Heraldry, i. 282.

<sup>3</sup> Hist. Fife, p. 407.

following account of it, from the records of the *Literary and Antiquarian Society of Perth*.

“The matrix in brass, or instrument for making casts of the common seal of the old collegiate church of Abermethy, was found in the year 1789, in a garden in Enniskillen, in the county of Fermanagh, in Ireland. It is now in the possession of the Honourable James Drummond of Perth.

“Obverse. A shield of arms. In a shield, Gules; a lion rampant, surmounted with bend dexter, argent. Legend, *S. Commune Collegii De Abernethe*.

“Reverse. An abbess (probably representing St Bridget) in a veil, holding a crosier in her right hand; and at her right side is a small figure of a bull, deer, or such other animal. Legend, *In Domo Dei Ambulavimus Cum Concencu.*”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These words are taken from the vulgate translation of Psal. LV. 14. An impression of this curious seal is given.