

## THE EXPLOITS OF WIMUND.\*

A.D. 1141.

THE adventures of Wimund, “ a flagitious impostor,” as Lord Hales designates him, “ who disturbed the tranquil-

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\* Sir David Dalrymple's Annals of Scotland; Chalmers' Caledonia.

lity of a nation happy and contented under the government of a virtuous prince," are little known to many readers of Scottish history. This Wimund was an Englishman of obscure birth, who in his youth had attained some proficiency in penmanship by transcribing old writings in monasteries. He afterwards became a monk in the Abbey of Furness, situated on the borders of Lancashire, where he applied himself to his studies with great diligence. Possessed of a lively genius, capable of expressing himself in eloquent language, and having a tenacious memory, Wimund soon became distinguished among his brethren of the Abbey. He was considered the most able member of the community, and held in respect for his great acquirements in that rude and uncivilized age.

In 1134, Olave, King of the island of Man, gave certain lands to Ivo or Evan, Abbot of Furness, for endowing an Abbey at a place in the island called Russin, and Wimund was sent with some of his Cistercian brethren to Man, probably to take possession of this new foundation. His persuasive eloquence, his commanding appearance, and it is said his *portly figure*, so charmed the semi-barbarous Manx, that they requested him to be consecrated their bishop. But Wimund had other projects in view than the episcopal dignity. He pretended that he was the son of Angus Earl of Moray, who had been killed with a great number of his followers at Strickathrow in 1133. This Earl of Moray claimed a title to the throne as the heir of Lulach, King of Scotland, the successor of the celebrated Macbeth, and the descendant of a long line of princes, who as Maormors of Moray ruled that district with an independent sway, and were often opposed in civil conflict to the Scottish kings. The Earl had disputed the right of David I. to the crown, nor were his claims ill founded, as he was lineally descended from Kenneth IV. the son of Duff, the *eldest* son of Malcolm I.; while David was descended from

Kenneth III., the *youngest* son of Malcolm I. It was in a contest with David I. in support of his claims that he was killed at Strickathrow, and the King was freed from a troublesome rival, who could at all times annoy him by his pretensions.

As Wimund was a stranger in the island of Man, the inhabitants of which had little intercourse with Scotland, there was no one who could refute the impostor. He declared his resolution to avenge his alleged father's death, and to vindicate his own claims and right to the estates of his ancestors, delineating in eloquent and persuasive language the glory and advantages which would result from the enterprise. Many bold men of desperate fortune espoused his cause, and having collected some vessels he began to make piratical excursions into the neighbouring islands. He even obtained in marriage a daughter of Somerled, Thane of Argyle, and assumed the name of Malcolm, or, as he is designated by Buchanan, Malcolm Macbeth. It is doubtful whether Somerled really believed him to be the son of the Maormor of Moray, or permitted this marriage merely from policy to favour an enterprise against Scotland. In 1152 this powerful Hebridean Thane invaded the kingdom to vindicate the pretended rights of the children of Wimund, and eleven years afterwards he was slain with his son near Renfrew in another hostile expedition. From these invasions it rather appears that Somerled believed Wimund to be the son of the Maormor of Moray, though he might have undertaken these expeditions also to satisfy his desire of adventure.

Wimund, under the assumed name of Malcolm, next invaded Scotland, probably the county of Ross, killing many of the inhabitants, and pillaging the district. David sent forces to repress these outrages, but Wimund constantly eluded the royal troops, sometimes concealing himself and his followers amid forests, and at other times retreating to his ships.

As soon as the Scottish army was withdrawn he came from his coverts, and renewed his depredations.

The successes of this adventurer began to render him formidable to the Scottish government. He attempted to levy contributions in the diocese either of Ross, Caithness, or Moray, but this was resisted by the bishop, who declared, in allusion to Wimund's ecclesiastical function—"I never will establish a precedent for one bishop paying tribute to another." This bishop assembled his retainers, and though his force was very unequal he marched out to oppose Wimund. The intrepid prelate soon came in sight of the impostor and his forces, and to animate his followers he began the onset by throwing a small hatchet. Wimund, who was advancing at the head of his band, received the blow, and was struck to the ground. Encouraged by this prosperous omen the Scots attacked and routed the enemy with great slaughter.

Wimund effected his escape with difficulty, but his defeat neither repressed his energies nor disheartened his followers. He collected more forces, and continued the predatory war. It is remarkable that David was at length compelled to enter into terms with this bold adventurer, and actually bestowed a certain territory on him, and he was advanced to be superior of the Abbey of Furness, in which he had passed his earlier days. The precise right of the Scottish King to the territory of Furness is not apparent, but it is conjectured that he held it with Westmoreland, to which it is more intimately joined by its situation than to Lancashire.

At length the insolence of Wimund excited a conspiracy against him, and a chosen party surprised him, put out his eyes, and made him an eunuch. He was delivered to David, who imprisoned him in the castle of Roxburgh. After a tedious captivity he was pardoned, and set at liberty, and he retired to the Abbey of Byland in Yorkshire,

where he spent the remainder of his days. But his spirit was neither depressed nor humbled by his calamities. It is said that he delighted to relate his adventures to the monks of Byland, and an ancient English historian observes that "he was wont to boast merrily that he was never overcome in battle except by the stroke of a silly bishop." He is also reported to have said, "If they had left me only the smallest glimmering of sight, my enemies should have had no cause to boast of what they did."

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