



Robert Seton, D.D.
A

AN OLD FAMILY

OR

THE SETONS OF SCOTLAND AND AMERICA

BY

MONSIGNOR SETON

(MEMBER OF THE NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY)



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TO
A DEAR AND HONORED KINSMAN
SIR BRUCE-MAXWELL SETON OF ABERCORN, BARONET
THIS RECORD OF SCOTTISH ANCESTORS AND
AMERICAN COUSINS
IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED
BY THE AUTHOR

Preface.

The glories of our blood and state
Are shadows, not substantial things.

—SHIRLEY.

GIBBON says in his *Autobiography*: "A lively desire of knowing and recording our ancestors so generally prevails that it must depend on the influence of some common principle in the minds of men"; and I am strongly persuaded that a long line of distinguished and patriotic forefathers usually engenders a poised self-respect which is neither pride nor arrogance, nor a bit of mediævalism, nor a superstition of dead ages. It is founded on the words of Scripture: *Take care of a good name; for this shall continue with thee more than a thousand treasures precious and great* (Ecclesiasticus xli. 15).

There is no civilized people, whether living under republican or monarchical institutions, but has some kind of aristocracy. It may take the form of birth, of intellect, or of wealth; but it is there. Of these manifestations of inequality among men, the noblest is that of Mind, the most romantic that of Blood, the meanest that of Money. Therefore, while a man may have a decent regard for his lineage, he should avoid whatever implies a contempt for others not so well born. "Who were thine ancestors?" was put by Dante into the mouth of a reprobate—*Farinata degli Uberti*—lifting his haughty and tranquil brow from a couch of everlasting fire:

"E'en as if Hell he had in great despite."

It is a little embarrassing to write about Family in America. The insolence of wealth, the crushing ostentation, the impudent assumption of crests and coats-of-arms, ought, perhaps, to be left unnoticed, because, as Selden says in his *Table Talk*, "Honesty sometimes keeps a man from growing rich and civility from being witty." It now seems incongruous and out of harmony with the right ideas for an old family to have Money, for Money is the chief distinction in our sordid age; although to a reflective and imaginative mind there is nothing grand in a House founded on gold, whose heirlooms are shares and bonds and city lots—a House without traditions of self-sacrifice and chivalry to hand down to later generations.

The early emigration to this country was not drawn to any considerable extent from the ignorant and poorer part of the population; but was largely composed of those who were not merely of an adventurous disposition and energetic character, but were also possessed of some pecuniary means and some advantages of education. Yet few of the Colonial families were scions of old stock. Recently, however, claims are advanced in every direction, and Americans who aspire to Society, at home or abroad—earlier, perhaps, abroad than at home—pretend to be connected with British families on similarity of name or other flimsy foundation in a manner that makes them ridiculous—to the Sphinx from whom they would learn the secret of their transmarine descent. Yet any reasonable member of the Forty Families in America whose aristocratic origin is "well ratified by law and heraldry" will have the good sense to say with the wise and eloquent Ulysses, when resting his claim to leadership on personal merits and not on the divinity of his ancestors:

Nam genus, et proavos, et quae non fecimus ipsi,
Vix ea nostra voco.

—*Metamorphoses*, XIII., 140.

With us every honest man can become his own ancestor.

The following extract from an article by the late General E. P. Scammon on "The South Before, During, and After the War," which appeared in the *Catholic World* for March, 1892, is quoted because it speaks the truth about a matter on which there has been a certain confusion of ideas: "That there was little difference of social rank or condition between the colonists of North and South is proved beyond question by colonial records. There is no escape from their evidence; and they tell us not only who but what the colonists were. Generally they were people who sought to improve their worldly fortunes; they were neither the rich nor the powerful. The more numerous exceptions to this rule would naturally be expected, where, in fact, they were, among those who came to the New World to secure that religious liberty for themselves which was denied them in the Old. They were notably among the Puritans of New England, the Friends, or Quakers, of Pennsylvania, and the Catholics of Maryland. Doubtless there were many others—adventurous younger sons with little fortune or prospect of preferment at home, and some whom adversity had so reduced in fortune that they were unable to maintain their accustomed stations in the Old World, but yet were left with what was comparative wealth for a new country where poverty was the rule. To this class some of the leading colonists of Maryland, Virginia, Carolina, and Georgia belonged. But their numbers were relatively small. The pretence of gentle birth, as a characteristic difference between colonists of different States, is alike silly and unfounded. There were Washingtons, Fairfaxes, Masons, Lees, and Johnstones in the array of old names in Virginia; Tudors, Vaughans, Waldrons, Wentworths, and Dudleys in New England; as later there were Van Cortlandts, Van Rensselaers, Livingstons, and Setons in New York, and in these and other colonies a list of less familiar names which might challenge their claims to precedence."

It is more than forty years since I began to study the history of my family and to gather notes on every subject concerning it—since I commenced to talk to venerable men about it and to take from their lips the lore of earlier times: *Remember the days of old; think upon every generation; ask thy father, and he will declare to thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee* (Deut. xxxii. 7).

Some of my friends and acquaintances may feel surprised that I should pay attention to a subject of no general or public interest, and which seems especially reprehensible in view of the Apostle's admonition to Timothy and Titus to "avoid foolish questions" and "endless genealogies." In extenuation, I will say that I have neglected no ecclesiastical duty in compiling the records of my family, to which I have devoted only "those interstitial vacancies" that may intervene even in the most crowded variety of occupation, and that they have little in common with the tables of descent such as the Jews paraded, giving rise to trivial disputes and unreasonable expectations reproved by St. Paul. Not alone have Clerics, in the past, been often the only preservers of their family history, but every family of mediæval antiquity must go to monastic chronicles and religious charters for the earlier links of its pedigree. To mention only Scotchmen: Father Aloysius Leslie, S.J., wrote the history of the Leslies, published in a large and sumptuous folio at Grätz in 1692, with the title *Laurus Lesliana Explicata*; and about the same time Father Hay gave out his *Genealogie of the Hays of Tweeddale*. I might also add that my learned correspondent the late Henry Foley, S.J., has collected in his *Records of the English Province* an immense amount of genealogical information about old families in Great Britain.

Acknowledgments.

I AM indebted for assistance to the following gentlemen, to whom I return thanks if living, and of whom I am mindful if dead: Sir William Fraser, the Peerage Lawyer; Sir John Hope of Pinkie, Bart.; Edward Stillingfleet Cayley, Esq., of Wydale; Reginald Stuart Poole, Esq., of the British Museum; Rev. Dr. Struthers, Minister of Prestonpans; Colonel the Hon. Robert Boyle, brother to the Earl of Glasgow; Mark Seton Synnot, Esq., of Ballymoyer; William Dunlop, Esq., of Edinburgh; Charles Olney, Esq., of the Bank of New York; ex-Governor Francis Philip Fleming, of Florida; Henry Vining Ogden, Esq.; Bergwyne Maitland, Esq.; William Seton Gordon, Esq.; Henry Ogden, Esq.



Bibliography.

- I. The History of the House of Seytoun to the Year MDLIX. By Sir Richard Maitland of Lethington, Knight, with the Continuation, by Alexander Viscount Kingston, to MDCLXXXVII. Printed at Glasgow, MDCCCXXIX.

The author belonged to an old Scotch family celebrated in the political history of their country, and it has been said of him that "in the literary world he was known by his history of the family of Seton, and Poems on several subjects." His mother's father was Lord Seton; and he piqued himself on being "a daughter's son of the said house," whose history and chronicle he wrote at the personal request of his cousin George, Lord Seton. Maitland was the first in that long list of family historians who have done so much to illustrate the antiquity and importance of the great houses of Scotland. This edition was privately printed for the members of the Maitland Club, for whom it was edited by Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, the celebrated antiquary. A lady of high rank—descended, as he also was, from the Setons—writing to him, February 18, 1821, before he had undertaken to edit Maitland's History, says: "It has occurred to me that if . . . you were to publish their memoirs with notes, and with such prints, the book would sell well, and might be made a curious one as to Scotch domestic history and anecdotes relating to remarkable persons"; and she offers to make sketches for him. I have also another edition of the same work, with some differences and additions, printed at Edinburgh in 1830. These copies were given to my father by kinsmen when he

visited Scotland in 1855, being the first of our branch of the family to return there in over a century.

- II. A History of the Family of Seton during Eight Centuries. By George Seton, Advocate, M.A. Oxon., etc. Two vols. Edinburgh, 1896.

The author of this copious record of the family is an old friend, the representative of the Cariston branch. It is a very large and profusely illustrated work of over one thousand pages. It has been a labor of love and of profound research; but as one who is honorably mentioned therein, I will say (without malice) that it contains some things that are important, many things that are useful, and everything that is superfluous.

- III. Seton of Parbroath in Scotland and America. Printed for private circulation. 12mo, pp. 28, 1890.

A little monograph rather hastily prepared. More time and study have enabled me to modify some of my views and correct some of my statements.

- IV. The Olivestob Hamiltons. By Rev. Arthur Wentworth Hamilton Eaton, B.A., New York. Privately printed, 1893.

A very interesting and well-written account of one branch of a princely family connected with the Setons.

- V. Chart of the Descendants of John and Elizabeth Seton.

It is carefully compiled by a member of the family and enriched with a large number of notes.

- VI. Record of the Bayley Family in America. By Guy Carleton Bayley, M.D., Poughkeepsie, N. Y.

- VII. Descendants of John Ogden. 1640. By Henry Ogden, Esq., of New York.

VIII. Descendants of Martinus Hoffman. B. 1640. D. 1671. With Notes. By Lindley Murray Hoffman, Esq., of New York.

IX. Some Account of the Family of Prime of Rowley, Mass., with Notes on the Families of Platts and Jewett. By Temple Prime. Second edition (illustrated), New York, 1897.

X. Descent of Comfort Sands and of his Children, with Notes on the Families of Ray, Thomas, Guthrie, Alcock, Palgrave, Cornell, Dodge, Hunt, and Jessup. By Temple Prime. Second edition, New York, 1897.

The author of these interesting, carefully compiled, and exquisitely printed family histories, Temple Prime, Esq., of Huntington, L. I., is my cousin, and a great-grandson, maternally, of Sir John Temple, Bart. He is a member of several learned societies, and an authority on genealogy, European and American. He has written a number of other works on his family connections with a modesty rare in one so well descended.

XI. The Green Book.

It is so called from the color of its binding, and contains Notes, Recollections, and Memoranda of the Seton Family, particularly in America. The earliest entry is 1797. Manuscript in my possession.

XII. The Brown Book.

Same reason as above; contains Notes and Memoranda made by me while visiting Scotland in 1855, 1861, 1889, and 1896. Manuscript in my possession.



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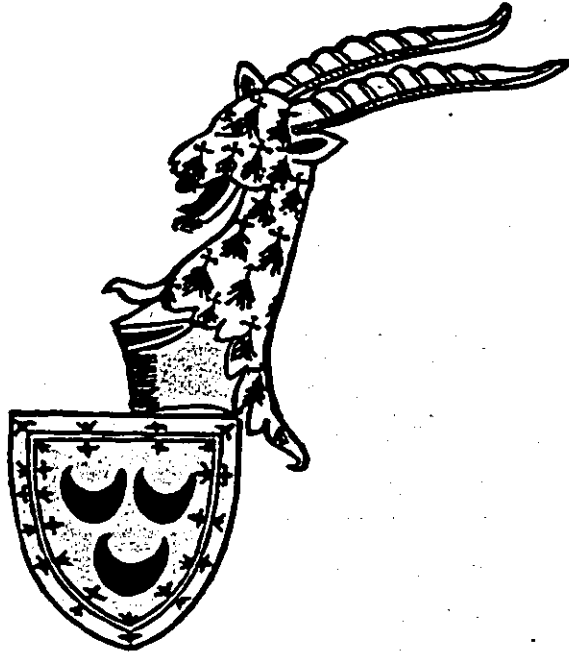
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ARMS OF WILLIAM, FIRST LORD SETON.

(From the *Armorial de Gelre*, composed about 1369.)

This lord visited Jerusalem, and took an-antelope's head for a crest, as a memorial of his travels and sport in the East.

Introduction.

'Tis opportune to look back upon old times and contemplate our forefathers.
—BROWNE: *Urn Burial*.

CHAPTER I.

THE Setons are essentially a Scottish family, and, like all the historical families of Scotland, are of Norman origin. It is, moreover, one of the few families in Great Britain which can be traced back to Normandy, and found established there before the Conquest of England; consequently it is one of the oldest families in Europe. The Normans derived their remote origin from that family of nations, the *Getae*, or Goths, which was spread out from the steppes of Central Asia to the shores of the Baltic. When Rollo, in the first quarter of the tenth century, entered into full possession of his dukedom, which henceforth proclaimed the origin of its conquerors and settlers in the name itself of Normandy, "a formal repartition of the ceded territory ensued," says Palgrave, "chieftains and soldiers taking or retaining their shares." It should be observed that nearly all the Norman nobility was of the same family stock as Duke Rollo, and, like him, descended from the Royal House of Norway, or Scandinavia. During the thirty years' reign of Richard the Good, A.D. 996–1026, a new combination of social elements was formed. "Henceforth," says Palgrave, "the Norman annals abound with those historical names rendered illustrious by the illusions of time and the blazonry

which imagination imparts. With few exceptions the principal baronial families of Normandy appeared during this reign." (*Hist. of Eng. and Norm.*, III., 28.) Thus Feudalism arose, an institution which is ignorantly associated in the modern mind with whatever was oppressive and degrading during the Middle Ages. Yet it found a certain class slaves, and it made them serfs; which means that, not being any longer attached to the person of a proprietor but to the soil, they were raised a degree in the social scale. Feudalism fostered courage, attachment to home, the spirit of disciplined subordination, and love of country. Montalembert, in the sixth volume of *Les Moines d'Occident*, touches on the advantages of this system from the standpoint of Religion, and consequently of Civilization. Writing the history of a family which belonged to the earliest feudal hierarchy, I consider the matter only from the side of genealogy and the personal positions arising out of it which thus became important to the destiny of families and even of nations, wars in those ages having almost always a dynastic origin. "As everything," says Hallam (*Middle Ages*, I., 189), "in the habits of society conspired with that prejudice which, in spite of moral philosophers, will constantly raise the profession of arms above all others, it was a natural consequence that a new species of aristocracy, founded upon the mixed considerations of birth, tenure, and occupation, sprung out of the feudal system. Every possessor of a fief was a gentleman, though he owned but a few acres of land, and furnished his slender contribution towards the equipment of a knight. . . . There still, however, wanted something to ascertain gentility of blood where it was not marked by the actual tenure of land. This was supplied by two innovations devised in the eleventh and twelfth centuries: the adoption of surnames and of armorial bearings. The first are commonly referred to the former age, when the nobility began to add the names of their estates to their own, or, hav-

ing in any way acquired a distinctive appellation, transmitted it to their posterity." For a family, therefore, to have a peculiar and a territorial designation in the eleventh century was proof of high rank. At an earlier period even the noblest had only personal surnames, which were generally descriptive of an individual quality, good or bad. Yet these were not surnames at all in our usual sense, although at a later age they were transmitted to descendants when surnames became common to all classes, and can generally be distinguished from those other names whose origin is essentially noble because it springs from the freehold of land, "the patent and passport of self-respect" among all races. It was, probably, first in Normandy and with the introduction of the feudal system that the use of transmissible surnames was established among the nobility. From there they were introduced into England and Scotland, and parts of Ireland, after the Conquest. Many of the followers of William had taken names from their castles or villages, which they used with the French prefix *de* before them. This *particule nobiliaire* was discarded in Great Britain with the disappearance of the Norman-French language, and it is in bad taste to try to revive it now. When the native Norse names of the earlier settlers in Normandy were modified to suit their new language—the language of civilization, which at that time was French, with a predominant Latin element—descriptive or incidental names were given or assumed. It was only later that, under the influence, as has been said, of chivalry and other feudal institutions, we find these hereditary and territorial surnames, indicative of landed property and patrician descent, which became so great a source of pride to men of Norman blood. It was once the fashion to speak of the Norman barons who fought at Hastings—Pevensey Beach, 1066—as adventurers from every part of France who, from a condition of homeless vagabonds, became suddenly possessed of lands and castles in England; but it is false,

although insisted upon by a distinguished English and an equally distinguished French historian, belonging both, however, to the School of Preconceived Notions. The learned author of the *Norman People* says: "As a whole, the native Norman nobility who were transferred in a body to England were not inferior in birth to those of any country in Europe." The followers of the Conqueror were the flower of the Norman nobility, and Normandy was the crown and glory of France and of Europe. Norman nobles had already left their impress on Naples, Sicily, Spain, and Russia. Then, again, it has been objected that their origin was recent and piratical, and the Vikings have been assailed by many vituperative names. They were not originally pirates from inclination and lust of gain, but from the political usurpation of the more powerful chieftains, which worked such a change in the life and character of the Northern people toward the end of the eighth century that the less fortunate but braver ones, scorning to endure oppression at home, naturally took to the sea, not as mere corsairs, but as men despoiled of their patrimony, and striving to find a resting-place and make a settlement in some other part of the world.* When these hardy Normans settled down in any country, they showed themselves as well adapted to the pursuits of peaceful industry as to those of war and rapine. They had a wonderful capacity for assimilation to the conditions of a higher culture than their own, and wherever they remained they soon became the most influential inhabitants. France, England, and Scotland are examples of this process on a great scale. Hence we agree with Burton, who says (*Hist. of Scot.*, II., 14): "In looking at the success

* We may recall as an extenuating circumstance what that grave judge, Lord Stowell, observed of the Buccaneers, whose spirit at one time approached to that of chivalry in point of adventure, and whose manner of life was thought to reflect no disgrace upon distinguished Englishmen who engaged in it.—SETON: *Essays*—"Italian Commerce in the Middle Ages," p. 41.

of the Normans, both social and political, as a historical problem, it has to be noted that we have no social phenomena in later times with which this one could be measured and compared. Coming from the rude North into the centre of Latin civilization, they at once took up all the civilization that was around them, and then carried it into higher stages of development.”

CHAPTER II.

THE sword and spear, or lance, were the offensive weapons of the early Normans. They were called Free Arms, as being peculiarly appropriate to men of valor and high degree. The first of our family of whom there is any record bore the warrior-like name of PICOT, the Pikeman. We next find Picot, which is a name of profession, a descriptive name, associated with a place-name, Avenel—as though to say Oatlands—because the portion allotted to him in the distribution of territory among the followers of Rollo was rich agricultural land producing oats (*avena*, Lat.; *avoine*, Fr.), the strengthening food of that fine breed of horses for which Normandy was famous.* Avenelle is in the immediate neighborhood of the *Pays de Perche*, which has given a name to those magnificent draught horses called Percherons, which have been so largely imported into the United States; and it is interesting to note, in this connection, that my father was the first American to introduce them for breeding purposes, sending two brood-mares and a stallion from near Chartres, in Eure et Loire, in August, 1856, to my brother William, who then owned property at Dixon, Lee County, Illinois.

* Thus, also, we find such place-names in Normandy as *Faverolles*, *Fazard*, *Favary* (Jules Janin: *La Normandie*), derived from *faba*, Lat. *fève*, Fr., a bean, the *b* and *v* being—as in Spanish—interchangeable.

Afterward we come, in the early Norman records, to another local name attributed to Picot and to Avenel, which is *de Say*.

The family even at this early period branched out into two lines, that of Avenel and that of Say, both of which became baronial families in Normandy, in England, and in Scotland; but although the former was the senior branch, its fortunes were not equal to the junior, and in a little more than a couple of centuries it became extinct or so reduced as to be practically unknown. Duncan (*Hist. of the Dukes of Norm.*, published in 1839) tells us that "Say is near Argentan. The lords of this district took the name of Picot, and they are indifferently spoken of by the old chronicles as Picot simply, and Picot de Say." This, as regards the *name*, is an ætiological error. The lords of Say—which is a feudal designation—did not take the name of Picot, but quite the reverse; the Picots took the name of de Say, although their original name or sobriquet continued for some generations in the family, coupled with its later territorial one, until cast off altogether. As descriptive are less noble than territorial names, they are also less rare, because while only *one* family could have the name of a fief which was their estate, many families in no way related in blood might have the same name when it was one that of its nature could be common to many individuals. Say survives in only two peerage families in Great Britain; whereas Picot is represented in such ordinary names as Pigot; Pigott, Pike, Pick, Picket, Pigou, and other variations. An inspection of Burke's *General Armory* will show that the arms granted to or assumed by these people are generally "pickaxes," or "pike heads," or "pike staves," or simply "pikes"; and even when *fusils* are assigned to them there is no doubt that they were originally *lance heads*, a certain kind of which, lozenge-shaped, exactly resembles the figure called a "fusil" in heraldry. These are what the French call "Armes Par-

lantes," or canting arms, and are considered vulgar, although they are sometimes very old.

As our family was originally sprung from the House of Avenel, I will say something of this house before proceeding to the de SAYS and the de SAY-tunes, de SEY-tounes, de SETONS, Setons. Avenel was one of the great names of Normandy. The Avenels were lords of Biard, or Es-Biard, now *Les Biards*, on the River Sélune, in the Canton of Isigny, and the Arrondissement of Mortaine, of whose counts they were the hereditary seneschals. According to Vincent of Beauvais, a thirteenth-century author, they descended from Harold the Dane, a kinsman and companion-in-arms of Rollo, first Duke of Normandy. Hervé Avenel, Baron of Biars, confirmed a grant to Marmoutiers Abbey in 1035, and was probably brother of Osmeline Avenel, Lord of Say, who made grants to Saint Martin's, at Sééz, about 1030, which were confirmed by Picot Avenel, his son. In 1067 his sons Herveius (Hervé) de Biars and Sigebert are mentioned. William Avenel de Biars, seneschal to Robert, Count of Mortaine, was present at the battle of Hastings in 1066, along with others of his more immediate name and family. They figure on the Roll as:

Le Sieur Desbiars.

Avenel Desbiars.

Le Sieur Avenel de Viars.

Although he was poorly rewarded by the Conqueror and returned to Normandy, the family was numerous and eventually held great estates in England and Scotland. This William Avenel is probably the same who, in 1082, was a benefactor to the Abbey of Saint Pierre-de-la-Couture, at Mans, giving to it the patronage of a church. There was a "Church of Avenelles" in the viscounty of Exmes, an old town on the River Dives in the modern Department of Orne. In 1186 we find that Richard, brother of William Avenel, gave "tres acras terrae in Herrevillâ et aliam villam" to the Monastery

of Lessay, as appears in the Charter of King Henry II. and from the Bull of confirmation of Pope Urban III. Herrevilla was presumably a village founded by Hervé (Latinized *Herveius*) Avenel, and called for himself Hervéville—in Latin *Herveii villa*—and by corruption *Herrevilla*, as in the text. In 1191 William Avenel, lord of Les Biards and seneschal to the Count of Mortaine, is found father to Roland, Nicholas, and Oliver. A Ralph is also mentioned. The elder line of Avenel held Les Biards until the extinction of that branch, or perhaps main trunk, of the family in Normandy in 1258. There are Counts of Avenel among the French *noblesse* to-day; but although they bear the name—taken from the lands they have in some way acquired—they are a comparatively modern family. Sir Francis Turner Palgrave, treating of baronial castles in Normandy, gives Amfreville as the seat of the “Umfreviles, the Avenels, and many more” (Appendix III., 651), and also “BIARS: hence the Avenels and the Vernons. This family became very illustrious in England, and still more in Scotland.” In the thirteenth century Alice, heiress of Sir William Avenel, brought to the Vernons the vast estate of Haddon, in Derbyshire. Another branch, seated at Blackpool, in Devonshire, ended about 1450 in three co-heiresses.

In Scotland the Avenels held one of the most important baronies of the March, or Border. Robert Avenel, the first Lord of Eskdale, received his lands from King David I., whom he accompanied back from England to Scotland, like many other Anglo-Norman nobles, who there founded new families, which in some cases rose to greater eminence and lasted longer than the older ones of their kin who remained in the South. Robert de Avenel, in the reign of King Malcolm IV., gave the monks of Saint Mary's Abbey, at Melrose, parcels of land in Eskdale, reserving to himself the right of hunting the wild boar, deer, or stag, also a yearly rent of

five marks. One of these marks he remitted for maintaining a light to burn perpetually before the altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary. On the death of his wife Sybilla he remitted the other four marks, to be expended upon four pittances for the monks, yearly, and at fixed seasons. He entered this same monastery in his old age, and died in 1185. His son, Ger-



SEAL OF SIR ROBERT AVENEL.

(From a Melrose charter.)

Supplying the words effaced, the inscription would read, *Sigillum Roberti de Avenel.*

vaise, confirmed his father's grant; but Roger, the grandson, disputed about it with the monks, sent his cattle into their grounds, pulled down their houses, and broke their fences. Both parties met at Linton, in 1235, before King Alexander II., when it was decided that the pastures belonged to the monks, but that they were not to hunt there with hounds nor allow others to do so, nor were they to cut down trees in which hawks and falcons built their nests. Like all the great

nobles of that warlike age, the lord of Eskdale paid much attention to the breeding of horses, and had an extensive stud in that valley. Some time between 1236 and 1249 John, the son of Gervaise Avenel, made over to the Monastery of Inchcolme twenty-six acres of land in his territory of Dud-dinston, within the barony of Abercorn; and in King Alexander II.'s Charter for the foundation of Pluscardyn Priory in 1236, Roger Avenel is a witness. The principal line finished in an heiress in 1243, when Roger's great domain passed to his son-in-law Henry de Graham of Dalkeith. Thus ended the name of "Avenel, remembered only in tradition, or embalmed by one who could control and direct even the current of popular tradition" (Innes, *Scotland in the Middle Ages*, p. 128, in allusion to Scott's novel of "The Monastery"). The Duke of Montrose, head of the House of Graham, is the representative of the senior line of the Avenels.

CHAPTER III.

SAY was a fief in Normandy which came to the Picots and the Avenels, and gave a name to a distinguished baronial family sprung from them. In Stapleton's *Magni Rotuli Scaccarii Normanniae sub Regibus Anglorum*, with Observations on the Rolls of the Norman Exchequer, published in 1844, the fief is designated Say, Sai, and Seye. It is elsewhere found written Saie. The Honour of Say was on the River Orne, near Argentan, about twenty-six miles northwest of Alençon. The learned authors of *Gallia Christiana* tell us, in describing the Diocese of Séez, that its earliest Latin name, like that of the Gallic tribe which inhabited the territory, was *Saii*, and it is so set down in Sprüner's *Hand Atlas . . . des Mittelalters*, 1854. I would naturally suppose that the little village or

castle which forms our root-name had some connection, now unknown, with the mother-town, or with the ancient tribe which gave its name to the metropolis. On the map of old Normandy prefixed to Taylor's *Wace*, Say is located in the district of Exmois, now represented by the city of Exmes, *chef-lieu de canton*, between Argentan and Sées. Say, in Normandy, is what the Germans would call the *Schloss-stamm* of our race. The earliest mention of any of the family with this appellation is that of Picot Avenel de Say, living A.D. 1030 under Robert, sixth Duke of Normandy. His son, Robert Fitz-Picot (*i.e.*, the son—*filis* corrupted to *fitz*—of Picot), Lord of Aunay, was co-founder of Saint Martin of Sées, in 1060. The original donation from the Chartulary of the Diocese of Sées is given in *Gallia Christiana*, XI., pp. 152, 153, Ed. Palmé, 1874, as follows:

“ Notum sit omnibus quia dominus Abbas Robertus, faventibus omnibus fratribus coenobii Sancti Martini Sagiï, in capitulo ejusdem coenobii dedit Roberto de Sayo qui cognominabatur *Picot*, et Adeloyae uxori suae, cum summa devotione petentibus societatem et beneficium totius congregationis sicut uni monachorum ipsius coenobii, et similiter Roberto atque Henrico filiis suis: Ita quidem ut si aliquis ipsorum monachus voluerit effici, efficietur in monasterio Sancti Martini Sagiensis. Qui vero ex illis omnibus in saeculari habitu morietur, in coemeterio Sancti Martini, ut monachus per omnia susceptus sepeliatur. Ipsi vero in eodem capitulo pro hac largissima concessione et pro animarum tam suarum quam parentum suorum, perpetua salvatione dederunt et perpetuo concesserunt praedicto sancto et fratribus suis praedicti coenobii monachis, aedificium matris Picot cum virgulto quod habebat juxta ecclesiam Sanctae Mariae *de Vrou* et decem acras terrae in parochia ejusdem ecclesiae, et terram ad hortum unum sufficientem, quae terra erat in pratis, et decimam duorum molendinorum, quorum unum est supra Olnam et alterum supra Uram; dederunt etiam prata totius insulae de Atheis, et unam piscatoriam quae dicitur *de Louis*, et unam acram prati in pratis de Juvigneio, et duas acras terrae in ipsa villula quae erat de dote Adeloyae uxoris suae, et cum his datis de propriis rebus concesserunt quod Osmelinus de Sayo dedit Sancto Martino in eodem capitulo et eodem die, tertiam partem totius ecclesiae de Sayo in omnibus redditibus altaris et decima cum duabus acris terrae: et ipse Osmelinus et uxor ejus Avitia et omnes antecessores sui recepti sunt in praedicti monasterii fraternâ societate. Hoc totum viderunt et audierunt Guaschelinus *de Vrou* et Robertus filius

Garini *Pillepot*, et Radulphus presbyter *de Vrou*; cum his quoque concesserunt ecclesias *de Vrou* cum decimis et quatuor acris terrae et dimidia cum terra sacerdotis, quod totum dederat Osmelinus qui cognominabatur Avenellus, Sancto Martino, pro salute animae suae et antecessorum suorum; concesserunt etiam quod Gaufredus filius Oderelli dederat Sancto Martino quicquid decimae habebat in parochia *de Vrou*, pro qua fundatione habuit ipse Gaufredus cum beneficio concesso monasterii triginta solidos cenomannenses; adhuc quoque concesserunt quod Guaschelinus *de Vrou* dederat Sancto Martino quicquid decimae habebat in parochia *de Vrou* et de Sayo, nihil sibi reservans, cum duabus acris terrae; et pro hac donatione cum concesso monasterii beneficio habuit quatuordecim solid. cenomannenses et unum pullum equorum pro decem et octo solidis cenomannensibus, teste ipso et Radulpho presbytero, et fratre ejusdem Roberti, et Christiano de Furcis etiam concedentibus: Dedit Hugo de Juvigneyo Sancto Martino medietatem ipsius ecclesiae, cujus alteram medietatem nos habemus de dono *Picot* et uxoris ejus Adeloyae, et unam acram prati pro concesso sibi beneficio monasterii, cum viginti solidis census. Signum Rogerii comitis, signum *Picot*, signum Roberti filii ejus, signum Henrici filii *Picot*, signum Adeloyae uxoris *Picot*, signum Ricardi Capellani."

The italics are those of *Gal. Chr.*

We now come to that great enterprise which brought de Says and many other barons across the Narrow Sea. The Conquest of England by the Normans is the most important event in history since the fall of Rome. Nothing in the Middle Ages can be compared to it for grandeur of conception, completeness of result, and abiding influence on the world. The Rolls, as they are called, of the knights who fought at Hastings have an antiquarian and genealogical interest unequalled by anything similar commemorating success in arms. There are variations, omissions, and probably repetitions in these famous lists of names. Say is found in Holinshed but not in Duchesne, in Leland but not at Dives, although "Roger Picot" figures there. Dives is a little town, once a seaport of Normandy, in whose harbor William first assembled his fleet for the invasion of England; and on a wall in the old Church of Notre Dame are inscribed the names of the knights who gathered there at his summons. More reliable, however, than any of these is the metrical poem on Rollo and the

Dukes of Normandy, called the *Roman du Rou*, by Master Robert Wace, a Norman cleric, who wrote within a century after the Conquest. There are two good editions of Wace. The first is in French, with "very valuable notes" by Frederic Pluquet, published at Rouen in 1827. The second is in English, and is called *Chronicle of the Norman Conquest, translated with Notes and Illustrations*, by Edgar Taylor, F.S.A., London, 1837. The following is the original passage, as it appears in Wace's Norman-French, in which he describes the engagement between the two armies and introduces de Say:

" Cil de Vitrie et d'Urinie
 Cil de Moubrai è de Saie
 E li Sire de la Ferté
 Maint Engleiz unt acraventé [assommé]
 Grant mal i firent li plusor [la plupart]
 E mult i perdirent des lor."

Taylor translated the passage in prose:

"The Lords of Vitrie and Urinie, de Moubrai and Saie, and the sire de la Ferté, smote down many of the English, most of whom suffered grievously and many of them were killed."

Pluquet's note on Saie is: "Say près Argentan. Les seigneurs de ce lieu prenaient le surnom ou nom de famille de Picot, sous lequel ils sont quelquefois cités sans autre désignation." Of all the lists of barons who shared in the glory of that day, the most renowned in succeeding ages was the one with some six hundred names of Normans attached, long preserved in the Monastery of Saint Martin, which the Conqueror founded on the field of Hastings, and which was completed during the reign of his son, William Rufus, in 1094. It is called from this circumstance the Roll of Battle Abbey; and here in after ages the monks displayed before the nobles of England and Scotland that long and famous register of companions of the Conqueror from whom they deduced their lineage:

“There is no pride like the pride of ancestry, for it is a blending of all emotions” (Disraeli).

The late Duchess of Cleveland, inheriting the literary taste of the Stanhopes, published in three volumes, in 1889, a magnificent work on *Battle Abbey Roll*, in which the families and descendants of all the great Norman barons are described.

CHAPTER IV.

DUGDALE tells us, in his *English Baronage*, that there were of old two considerable families named Say which derived from the same Norman original. One remained in England, and the other, as we shall see, settled in Scotland. The first time the name occurs in any public document in England after the Conquest is in 1083, when Picot de Say, whose real fore-name was Robert (for he was one of the two sons of Robert de Say and his wife Adelaide, of the Charter of Saint Martin of Sééz), is mentioned as one of the principal persons in Shropshire, where he held no less than twenty-nine lordships. He is the ancestor of all the Says in England and Scotland, and was a baron of England during the Conqueror's reign. He also held the Castle of Marigny with other possessions in Normandy, and continued, like many others, to be represented in both countries. Clun was the largest of his manors in Shropshire, and gave its name to his barony. In 1083 he was summoned, with other chief men of the county, to attend the dedication of Shrewsbury Abbey. His son Henry succeeded him, and was followed by Helias. Helias left an only daughter Isabel, Lady of Clun, who married William Fitz-Alan, Governor of Shrewsbury and Sheriff of the County. She died in 1199. By descent from her the Dukes of Norfolk inherit this very ancient barony. Other branches of the family became numerous. Those described by Eyton in Shropshire

alone form no inconsiderable list. Within thirty years of Domesday, Theodoric de Say, a cadet of the Baron of Clun, was enfeoffed by Roger de Lacy of Stoke, afterward called Stoke-Say, which preserves in its Anglo-Saxon prefix—a not uncommon one before old English place-names—the idea of ground selected for defensive purposes: *stoc* being the root-word for a palisade of wood, a stockade, and carries the mind back to those troubled years immediately succeeding the Conquest, when a terrible cry went through the land:

“*Haec mea sunt; veteres migrate coloni.*”

Then the Normans, detested by the natives, had to throw up hasty breastworks and timber fortifications around their dwellings, veritable hill forts mostly, until they had leisure to erect towers and castles of stone. I visited the grand old ruins of Stoke-Say with Charles Compton Seton, Esq., of Heath House, Shropshire, with whom I was staying, in 1896. A history of it has been published by the Rev. J. D. Latouche. This Theodoric de Say was a good man (for a Norman), and gave certain lands in Shropshire to the Abbey of Saints Peter and Paul, at Shrewsbury; and even Picot de Say, who cruelly oppressed the Saxons, appears as an ecclesiastical benefactor in 1092. He erected a church and monastery in honor of Saint Giles within the bounds of Camboritum; and strangely as the building has been disfigured in later times, some small relics of the work of the rapacious sheriff still survive. (Freeman, *Norm. Cong.*, IV., 149.) This was, doubtless, an act of reparation and a sign of repentance for his iniquities, made, perhaps, at the suggestion of his pious wife, the Lady Hugolina.

Hugh de Say, son of Hugh Fitz-Osbern and Eustachia de Say, took his mother's name, being a younger son—his brother was Osbert Fitz-Hugh—and eventually succeeded to the great inheritance of Ricard's Castle, in Herefordshire, which derived its name from Richard Scrope, a baron in the reign

of Edward the Confessor and Hugh's paternal grandfather. Many other notices of de Sais are found scattered about in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in England. Thus we come across a William de Say who married Agnes, daughter of Hugh de Grentemesnil; a Gervasia de Say; a Margaret, daughter of Hugh de Say, and wife of Hugh de Ferrières, who died in 1205; a Robert de Say, who received from King Henry III. a grant of the manor of Stratfield, in Hampshire, which then became known as Stratfield-Saye. It eventually came to the Dabridgecourts, and was purchased in this century by the British Parliament for the Duke of Wellington and his heirs. In Normandy the family continued to flourish while maintaining its English connection. There we find that Godfrey de Say, in 1083, witnessed a charter to the Church of the Blessed Trinity, at Séez; that on July 15, 1131, Jordan de Say and Lucy his wife founded an abbey at Aunay or Aulnay, near Caen, which was one of his lordships; that his heiress, named Agnes de Say, carried the estates into the family of Hommet, by her marriage with the Constable Richard de Hommet. Jordan, eighteenth Bishop of Lisieux (now a suppressed see), and a member of the powerful family of the Lords of Hommet, witnessed in 1194, when Archdeacon of the Cathedral, a charter of his brother William de Sai, a benefactor of the Abbey of Aunay-sur-Odon (in the present Department of Calvados), twenty-one miles from Bayeux, which Jordan and Lucy de Say had founded over sixty years before. The site of this Benedictine monastery was changed, and its possessions increased by Richard de Hommet, Constable of the English king, as Duke of Normandy, who enumerates in his charter the earlier donations of his kinsman de Say before setting forth his own. The document, printed entire in *Gallia Christiana*, Vol. XI., p. 443, is interesting as showing what were some of the possessions of the de Sais in the twelfth century.

Ingelram de Say and other adherents of King Stephen, in his dispute for the crown with the Empress Maud, encountered in Lent, A.D. 1138, Reginald de Dunstanville and Baldwin de Redvers with their followers outside of the Castle of Homme, and quickly coming to close quarters defeated them and took many prisoners. He was himself taken prisoner at the battle of Lincoln in 1141, an episode that directs us back to England; but as the Scottish branch had been already some years planted in the northern kingdom, I will note but few things more about the English Says. Geoffrey de Say was in arms against King John, and was one of the twenty-five barons appointed to enforce the observance of *Magna Charta*. In 1382 Elizabeth de Say became the heiress of this ancient barony; but dying childless a few years later, it fell into abeyance—as it still continues—between the descendants of her aunts Idonea de Say, Lady Clinton, and Joan de Say, Lady Fiennes, who carry on the family in the female line. The Setons of Scotland, and specifically the Setons of *Parbroath*, are the only representatives of the once great House of Say in unbroken male descent. One of the Fiennes was created Lord Saye and Sele in 1447, and is that unfortunate nobleman, “Lord Say,” who degraded himself, it seems to me, by “pleading so well for his life,” as in Shakespeare’s *Henry VI.*, Pt. 2. His descendant was advanced to be Viscount Saye and Sele. He is badly spoken of by Lord Clarendon, in his *History of the Rebellion*, who, with the instincts of a man of recent origin suddenly raised to affluence and rank, refers to his poverty and sneers at his claim of ancient lineage in these words: “The Lord Viscount Say, a man of a close and reserved nature, of a mean and narrow fortune, of great parts, and of the highest ambition.” Again: “Lord Say . . . no man valued himself more upon his title, or had more ambition to make it greater and to raise his fortune, which was but moderate for his title. He was of a proud,

morose, and sullen nature; conversed much with books, having been bred a scholar, and (though nobly born) a fellow of New College in Oxford; to which he claimed a right by the alliance he pretended to have from William of Wickham, the founder; which he made good by such an unreasonable pedigree, through so many hundred years, half the time whereof extinguishes all relation of kindred." The Viscount is remembered, after a fashion, in the little town of Saybrook, Conn., which was originated in 1635, and named in compliment "to its two noble patrons," Lords Say and Brook, who both figured ridiculously in a "proposition that an hereditary order of nobility be established in the province."

An Old Family.

CHAPTER I.

SAY-TONS, 1107-1124.

LET us now consider the Says and their descendants in North Britain. Scotland, so justly proud of her aristocracy, claims the proudest ancestry from the stranger. The Gael has furnished little to the Scottish peerage. Its noblest names—Bruce, Stewart, Sinclair, Hamilton, Montgomerie, Gordon, Lindsay, Campbell, and Seton, to mention only some of the many that give poetry to Scotland's streams, dignity to her towers, honor to her annals; whose cry has resounded in battle from Bannockburn to Flodden, whose knightly banners have led on to victory with "fierce native daring" or have succumbed to defeat with heroic resignation—all belong to families which spring from the settlers in Normandy and the conquerors of England. Several, perhaps many, Norman adventurers in Scotland continued to hold, or later inherited, estates in England. This explains how they sometimes gave their allegiance to one side and sometimes to the other, in the disputes between the two kingdoms, as, from the standpoint of feudal law, both sides had claims upon them. Such a state of affairs bred serious consequences to the fortunes and persons of nobles of Norman descent holding lands in either kingdom.

The first appearance of a de Say in Scotland was in the reign of King Alexander I. (1107-1124), and it antedated by

some years the peaceful invasion of Anglo-Normans under his brother and successor, David I. Then they came to the number of at least a thousand, to whom the king distributed lands which they settled with their followers. The particular cause of de Say's establishing himself in Scotland thus early was a dispute between a baron and his suzerain, something quite common in that turbulent age. Robert Fitz-Picot was Baron of Brunne, in Cambridgeshire, in 1086, where "the moat of his castle and a few other traces of the building yet remain." His oldest son, Robert Fitz-Picot, the viscount, forfeited the barony for rebellion against King Henry I., who granted it to Pain Peverell, said to be the husband of Robert's sister. "A younger brother of Robert, Saher de Say, took refuge in Scotland and obtained grants from Alexander I., named after him Say-ton. From him descended the Lords Sey-ton or Seton, Earls of Winton," etc. (Cleveiland, *Battle Abbey Roll*.) The same account is given in Chalmers's *Caledonia*; and the Irish genealogist and writer, Sir Bernard Burke, says: "The first of the great house of Seton established in North Britain was Secher de Say, who had a grant of lands in East Lothian, which being called 'Saytun' (the dwelling of Say), gave rise to a name and family which became pre-eminently distinguished in the annals of Scotland." In Francisque Michel's *Écossais en France et Français en Écosse*, "the Setons who derive from the Norman family of Say" are mentioned among the most important Scotch families of Anglo-Norman origin. Saher de Say would probably travel north with the usual retinue of a knight at that period, which consisted of one or two men-at-arms, clad in mail like their leader, and mounted, and several archers on foot. The Scottish Court had favored men of Norman race ever since the reign of Malcolm III., or *Cannmore*, when their influence first began to spread through Scotland the feudal usages and civilization of the Continent. The knight or baron, having got his grant

of land, proceeded forthwith to build a castle and a church—both of rude materials and of ruder architecture—a mill, and a brew-house, and huts for the serfs; and thereby formed about himself a hamlet which in the practice of the age was called the *TON* of the lord. Hence such old Scotch names, besides our own, as *Hamil-ton*, *Livings-ton*, *Johns-ton*, *Edmons-ton*. “They have called their lands by their names” (Ps. *xlvi*. 12), marking them as their own.

The place where *Saher de Say* rested is between *Tranent* and the sea, some ten miles below *Edinburgh*; and it continued to be the principal habitation of his family for over six hundred years.

It were great pleasure to a man to know the origin and beginning of his house and surname, and how long it has stood, with good actions and virtue of his predecessors; and it were right profitable, because when a man remembers the good beginning of his house and surname, the long standing thereof, the honorable and virtuous actions of his predecessors, it will give occasion to every man to preserve and maintain the house that his forefathers have acquired, and he will be the more loath to do anything that may be to the hurt or decay of the same.—*MAITLAND'S Prologue.*

CHAPTER II.

A.D. 1100-1258.

I. THE founder of the long line of Scotch Setons was, as has been said, a Norman refugee, Saher de Say. His peculiar fore-name, which is found written Secher, Seyer, Saier, and Sair, is only a corruption or vulgar rendering of *Saire*, a hermit-saint in the Diocese of Rouen, whose cult was popular among the Norman nobility. In those times proper names were all written phonetically and just as the ear caught them, which accounts for the numerous forms under which the same name will appear, and sometimes in the very same document. The village and church of Saint Saire, with fourteenth-century glass windows and an ancient crypt containing a well, is about five miles from the town of Neuchâtel-en-Bray. Saint Saire is perpetuated as a patronymic in Sayers, Sears, and cognate forms which are common family names in England and America, and are of Norman, although not of baronial origin; unless, perhaps, Sears be a corruption not of the Norman, but of the Scoto-Celtic Saint *Serf* (Lat. *Servanus*), popularly called "Saint Sear," who did so much for the early religious culture of the western districts of Fife.

II. The son of Saher de Say is known in our family history as Dougall de Say-toun. His Christian name is unknown, as he was usually described by a familiar appellation in the language of the people around him. The Normans wore a strong coat of mail, which made them objects of dread and wonder to the Britons, Saxons, Picts, and Celts, in whose ancient songs they were called Du-gall, the "Black Strangers," from the appearance they made when encased in armor. Dougall

de Saytoun, then, literally means "The Black Stranger (lord) of the town of Say." He flourished in the reign of Alexander I., A.D. 1107-1124, and married Janet, daughter of Robert de Quincy, and not of Roger, who lived nearly a century later. The baronial family of Quincy, which derives from *Quincé* in Maine, rose almost suddenly to great importance both in England and Scotland, and in two centuries more was only a memory and extinct. Richard de Quincy came in at the Conquest. His son Robert, of whom above, married Maud de St. Liz, daughter of Simon de St. Liz, Earl of Huntingdon and Northampton, and of Maud, or Matilda, elder of the two daughters of Waltheof, son of Syward the Saxon Earl of Northumberland, and of Judith, niece to the Conqueror on his mother's side. Simon was a Crusader, and died in France in 1115, on his return from the Holy Land, leaving besides this daughter two sons, of whom one, named Waltheof or Waldeve, was Abbot of Melrose. He is honored as a saint on August 3d.*



DOUGALL DE SAY-TOUN.
(From the Touch Armorial Tree.)

III. Seher de Setoune succeeded to Dougall, his father. "Whom he married I find not certainly in any register of the house," says honest Maitland. He lived in the time of King David I. (1124-1153).

IV. Philip de Setoune succeeded to Seher, his father. He also made a strong alliance by marrying Helen (sometimes called Alice—she probably had both names: one given in baptism and the other at confirmation), only daughter of Waldeve or Waltheof, fifth Earl of Dunbar and March, by

* See his Life in Alban Butler, who calls him Saint Walthen or Waltheof.

Aelina, his wife. This great family, once the most powerful in Scotland, is now represented by the Marquess of Bute. Philip got a charter from King William the Lion, in 1169, confirming to him certain lands, which remained in possession of his descendants for more than five hundred years. It is one of the oldest Scottish charters in existence, and is mentioned with enthusiasm by the learned Cosmo Innes (*Scotland in the Middle Ages*, p. 20), who says: "I could not give you a better specimen of one of those ancient simple conveyances than a charter of William the Lion, a grant to the ancient family of Seton. It conveys three great baronies, confers all baronial privileges, fixes the *reddendo* at one knight's service, expresses the formal authentication of a goodly array of witnesses, and is comprised in seven short lines. The original is in possession of the Earl of Eglinton and Winton." Here follows a copy:

"Willielmus Dei grat. Rex Scotorum, episcopis, abbatibus, comitibus, baronibus, justiciariis, vice comitibus, ministris et omnibus probis (hominibus) totius terrae nostrae, clericis et laicis, salutem. Sciatis praesentes et futuri me concessisse, et hac carta mea confirmasse, Phillipò de Seytune terram quae fuit patris sui, scilicet Seytune, et Wintune, et Winchelburgh, tenendam sibi et heredibus suis de me et heredibus meis in feodo et haereditate; in bosco et plano, in terris et aquis, in pratis et pascuis et in omnibus earundem terrarum justis pertinentiis: cum sacca et socca, tholl et them, et infangthief, cum furca et fossa: libere, quiete, plenarie, et honorifice, per servitium unius militis. Testibus D. Davide fratre meo, comite Dunecano justiciario, Ricardo de Morvill constabulario, Waltero Olefer justiciario, Alano dapifero, Waltero de Bercly camerario, Willielmo de Lind., Ricardo de Humphrville, Joanne de London; Apud Striviling."

Some of the barbarously Latinized words used in this charter are derived from the Saxon, and are common terms of feudal law. They should be explained. *Sacca et socca* signify the full right of holding court and administering justice in one's own lordship or barony; *tholl et them*, the privilege of holding a market and exercising jurisdiction over villeins attending it; *infangthief*, the right of summary judgment on

thieves taken in the seigniorship of the lord; *furca et fossa*, execution by gibbet and pit, male criminals being hung, and females drowned in a well or pit filled with water.*

V. Alexander (1) de Setoun succeeded his father Philip, who died in 1179. He married Jean, daughter of Walter Berkeley or Barclay, the same who had witnessed his father's charter—chamberlain to the king—an office of great influence and dignity. He subscribed a charter given by Secher de Quincy, Earl of Winchester, in England, his kinsman, to the Church of Saint Mary of Newbattle in the thirteenth century, which is interesting because it contains the earliest mention of coal-mining in Scotland, an industry since so largely developed in the Lothians. The monks were the pioneers in this, as in many other discoveries and improvements of benefit to mankind. The use of coal, long unknown in Italy, is mentioned as something wonderful by Æneas Sylvius, afterward Pope Pius II., who visited Scotland in the fifteenth century. He says in his *Commentaries*: "A sulphurous stone dug from the earth is used by the people for fuel." Sir Alexander died in 1211.

VI. Bertrand or Bertram de Setoun succeeded to Alexander, his father, and married Margaret, daughter of William Comyn, Earl of Buchan, Great Justiciar of Scotland. Robert de Commines, whose patronymic became corrupted, like so many other grand old Norman names, and was finally turned into Comyn, Cumin, and Cumming, received the Earldom of Northumberland from William the Conqueror in 1068, and was the founder of a family at once unfortunate and renowned in Scottish history; for, while having great possessions in England, it forfeited lands and title and fell from its high estate in Scotland. Buchan was one of the old Celtic maormordoms, made earldoms at a later and more civilized period, and was, early in the thirteenth century, brought into

* See Ducange, *Glossarium ad Scriptores Mediae et Infimae Latinitatis*.

this family by an heiress, Marjory, only child of Fergus. After passing successively to several branches of the royal Stewarts, and by heiresses into the families of Douglas and Erskine, it is now held by the last—Earl of Buchan and Lord Cardross—who carries in his shield the feudal arms of the earldom; but, as we shall see later on, when we come to the Heraldry of the Setons, the same were used with far more reason by the Earls of Winton, and are still borne as “arms of pretence” by the Earls of Winton of the second creation, who are also Earls of Eglinton. The only family in which the name as well as the arms continue, is Gordon-Cumming of Altyre, Bart. The present Lady Gordon-Cumming is an American.

Bertrand received from his kinsman Patrick de Dunbar, Earl of March, a grant of the lands of Ruchlaw, which was confirmed by the king at Stirling on February 22, 1172. He died about 1230, leaving two sons: Adam, of whom below, and Alexander, who witnessed the confirmation of a charter to the burgh of Glasgow by King Alexander II., dated November 22, 1225. He is probably the same who, as witness to another and later charter, is styled “Dominus Alexander de Settone, Miles.”

VII. ADAM DE SETOUNE. He succeeded his father Bertram, and is described by Maitland as “ane maister clerk”; *i. e.*, a well-read man. In that age, when war and the chase occupied almost all the time of nobles, it was an exception, and reckoned a great accomplishment for one of them to be a scholar; and when this happened, the family chronicles always mention it as something to be proud of. We know that King Henry I. of England was surnamed “Beauclerk” for this reason. A charter is extant of Roger de Quincy, Earl of Winchester, “Adamo de Seton,” in 1246, anent the marriage of the heiress of Alan de Fausyde—*de maritagio haeredis Alani de Faside*—which is quoted by Sir Robert Sibbald in his

History of Fife. Adam de Setoune married Margaret Gifford, daughter to Hugh de Gifford, Lord Yester, a neighboring baron, sprung from an ancient and famous Anglo-Norman family whose title and estate now belong to the Marquess of Tweeddale, his descendant, through the marriage of Sir Thomas Hay of Locherwort with Johanna, eldest daughter and co-heir of Sir Hugh Gifford of Yester. The original "Goblin Hall," described in *Marmion*, is still a part of this old, ivy-clad castle, now in ruins and but a few miles from Seton. Adam died in the reign of King Alexander III. (1249-1292), but the year is not known. He left, besides a son and successor, a daughter, who married Sir William de Keith, ancestor of the great family of the Keiths, Earls Marischal of Scotland. This lady, "who was," says Chalmers in his *Caledonia*, "of a gallant race, seems to have infused a new spirit into the Keiths." Her husband died before 1290. By him she had three sons, one of whom, Philip, was a priest and rector of Biggar, in Lanarkshire.

VIII. SIR CHRYSTELL or CHRISTOPHER DE SETON (I). He succeeded his father Adam, and married Maud, daughter of Ingelram Percy, Lord Topcliff in Yorkshire. The illustrious family of Percy derived its descent from one of the Norman chieftains (William de Percy) who accompanied the Conqueror to England in 1066. The line of Percy is traced back in Normandy to the time of Rollo, first duke, in 912. Alexander Sinclair, in his *Remarks on the Far Descended and Renowned Title of Lord Percy*, tells us that: "Topcliff, in Yorkshire, came into the family at the Conquest." Sir Christopher was a very pious man, "more given to devotion than to worldliness," says Maitland; and another family chronicler tells us that he was a man who loved neither strife nor wrong, but rather to read and to pray. He was a considerable benefactor of the Church, particularly out of the estates in England, which he administered during his father's lifetime. His

brother settled also in that part of England in which many Scoto-Normans (originally Anglo-Normans) were large land-owners, and is described as "Sir John Seton of Seton, in Yorkshire." Dugdale mentions in those northeastern parts of England an Ivo de Seton and a "Capella de Seton," and the *villa et territorium de Seton*. Camden (*Britannia*) names Seton, in Northumberland, as part of the barony of De-la-Vall in the thirteenth century; and "Seton Delavell," as also "Monk-Seton," is plainly marked in the superb collection of maps in the *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* of William and John Blaeu, published at Amsterdam in 1648. These names of places are now mostly written Seaton, but it was not so formerly; and the old feudal barons Delaval—"of the Vale"—were originally Setons-Delaval and an early offshoot of our ancient family. It was probably from one of Chrystell de Seton's donations that Pope Innocent IV. confirmed (as in Dugdale's *Monasticon*) at Lyons, in 1245, to the Prior of the Monastery of Saint James of Wartry *Grangiam de Seton cum terris, pratis, pascuis, nemoribus, piscariis, et omnibus pertinentiis suis*. He died in old age, before 1270:

"The knight's bones are dust,
And his good sword rust;
His soul is with the Saints, I trust."

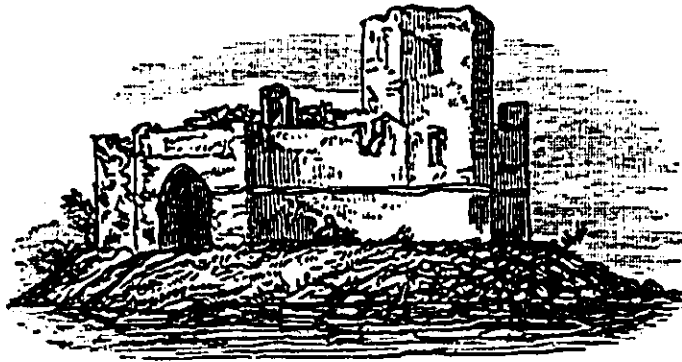
IX. SIR CHRISTOPHER SETON (2). Sir Christopher Seton succeeded his pious father, and married Agnes, daughter of Patrick, Earl of March. He was a valiant knight, and did many brave deeds against the English when the crown of Scotland was in dispute between Bruce and Balliol. He was a friend and companion of the national hero, Sir William Wallace, and when driven off his own lands by the enemy, took refuge with forty followers in Jedburgh Forest, "ay awaiting his tyme contrare the Englishmen," says Maitland. He was finally killed at the battle of Dillicarew, on the 12th of June, 1298, leaving two sons, Christopher and John.

X. SIR CHRISTOPHER SETON (3). Sir Christopher Seton III. succeeded his unfortunate but gallant father in these troublous times of the War of Independence. He was knighted by King Robert Bruce, and for his courtesy and valor was called by the common people, with whom he was a favorite, *Good Sir Chrystell*. He is mentioned by Lord Hailes (*Annals*, II., 2) as one of the twenty "chief associates of Bruce in his arduous attempts to restore the liberties of Scotland." He is there styled Christopher Seton *of Seton*; for with the more perfect amalgamation of races in that kingdom, and the consequent decline of Norman influence with the Norman language, the French *de*—the *particule nobiliare* of feudal possession—fell into disuse, and a new mode of appellation arose. When a family and the estate bore the same name, and, as was usually the case, the place gave its name to the owner, the Scottish manner of expression is *of that ilk*; as, for instance, "Fawside of that Ilk," *i.e.*, of that same place; but when the estate, on the contrary, derived its name from the surname of the owner—a more unusual case—the Scottish manner was to use both names together, as "Seton of Seton." This was more distinguished; and Lord Hailes, as above, shows his perfect acquaintance with these little points of Scotch etiquette and pride. In 1301, when Sir Christopher was twenty-three years old, he married Lady Christian Bruce, sister of the heroic Robert. She was the daughter of Robert Bruce, Lord of Annandale, and of Margaret, heiress of Niel, Earl of Carrick. At the disastrous battle of



SIR CHRISTOPHER
SETON'S TWO-
HANDED SWORD.

Methven, near Perth, on June 19, 1306, soon after Bruce's coronation, the Scottish chiefs were defeated by Aylmer de Valence, Earl of Pembroke, and "the king was thrice unhorsed, and once so nearly taken, that the captor, Sir Philip De Mowbray, called aloud that he had the new-made king, when Sir Christopher Seton felled Mowbray to the earth and rescued his master." * The large two-handed sword, wielded on this occasion by our common ancestor, is now in the possession of George Seton, Esq., of Edinburgh, Representative of the



RUINS OF LOCH DOON CASTLE, AYRSHIRE.

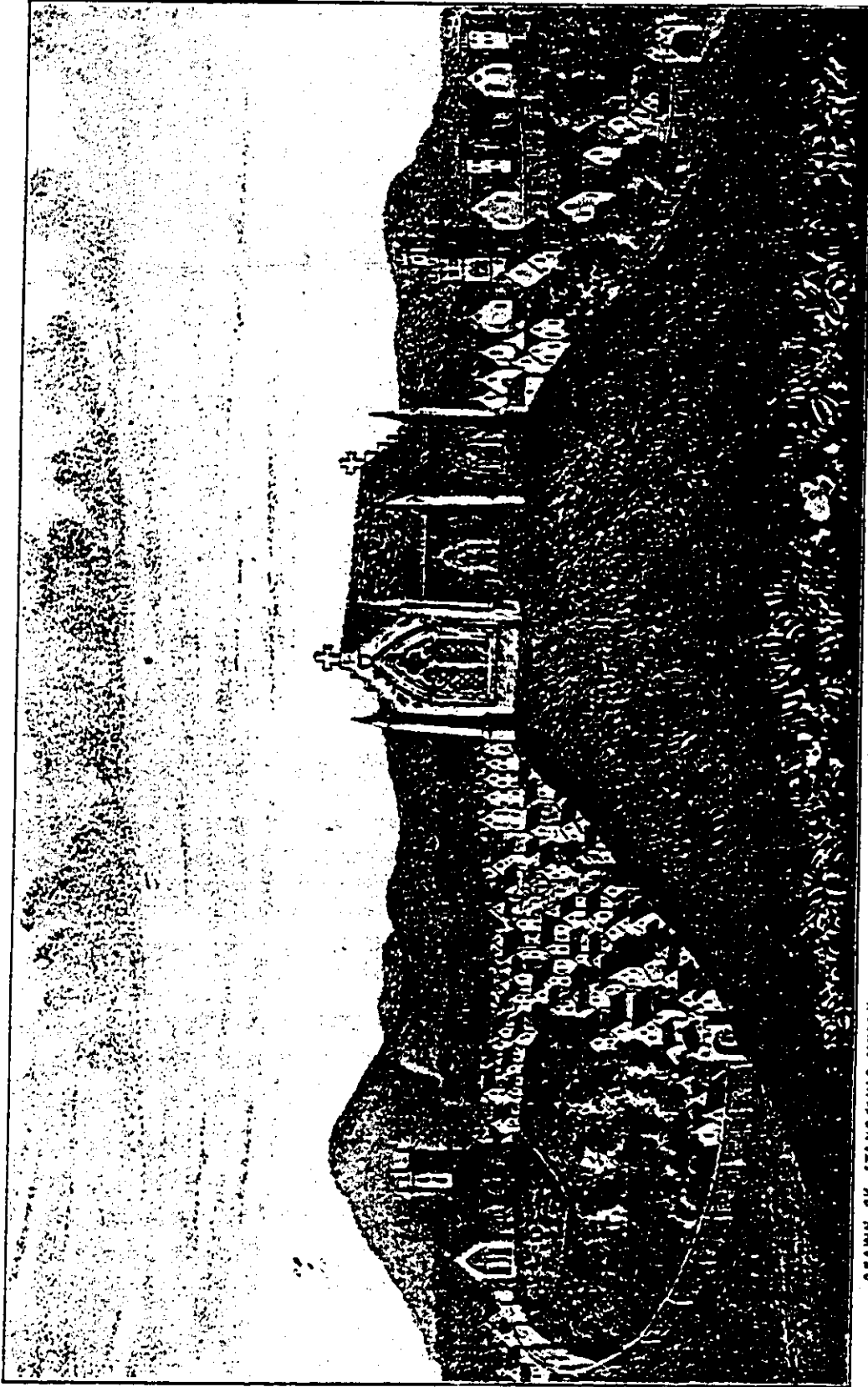
Setons of Cariston. It has been several times engraved and publicly exhibited. After many and notable acts against the English, Chrystell was taken prisoner at last, in the Castle of Loch Doon, near Dalmellington, in Ayrshire, through the treachery of one of his retainers named MacNab. Barbour says, in his antiquated style of English :

And worthy Christoll of Seytoun
 In to London betresyt was
 Throw a discipill of Judas,
 Maknab, a fals tratour that ay
 Was off his duelling nycht and day.

—*The Bruce.*

This account is confirmed by a tradition current in the neighborhood of Loch Doon that a portion of land, at the

* Tytler : *History*, I., 207.



DRAWN BY STONE BRACKEN

DUMFRIES IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY, WITH SETON'S MEMORIAL CHAPEL IN THE FOREGROUND.

(From an old print)

SHAYPHEYS, 1881



lower end of the lake, which is still known by the name of Macnabston, was given to the traitor as the price of his crime. (Paterson, *Ayrshire*, III., 9.) The ruins of the ancient Castle of Loch Doon are on a rocky islet, at the head of the lake whose waters, still famous for fish, are embosomed in hills that are now bare and bleak, but were once covered with primeval trees forming part of the Forest of Buchan. Sir Christopher was immediately conveyed to London to be exhibited to the king, and then brought back to Dumfries and executed there, because he had been present and consenting (?) to Bruce's killing of the Red Comyn in a sudden quarrel in the Greyfriars' Church in that town on February 10, 1305. In a quaint *Life of Robert Bruce*, published in the early part of the eighteenth century, our own Sir Christopher is thus enshrined in verse:

" The noble Seton, ever dear to Fame,
A god-like Patriot, and a spotless Name,
By factious Treason in Lochdown betrayed,
And to Augusta's hostile towers conveyed ;
For Scotia's sake resigned his gallant Breath,
Great in his Life, and glorious in his Death."

The historian Tytler says: " So dear to King Robert was the memory of his faithful friend and fellow warrior, that he afterwards erected on the spot where he was executed a little chapel, where mass was said for his soul." The widow of Sir Christopher was really the one who built this chapel for her husband, in honor of the Holy Cross; but her royal brother so generously endowed it by a charter dated at Berwick-on-Tweed, the last day of November, 1323, that he is sometimes called the founder. This memorial chapel stood on a natural eminence just outside of the town walls, which was ever after called " Chrystell's Mount," and, by corruption, " Kerstie's Mount." It was a beautiful little Gothic building of oblong shape, cornered by pointed buttresses, and having a richly decorated oriel window. It was further endowed with a small

portion of the surrounding land. Sir Richard Maitland, our earliest family historian, who lived before the downfall of the Old Religion in Scotland, tells us that he had sundry times held in his hand and read the king's charter endowing the chapel, that he had heard mass there, and that it was standing whole and entire in the year 1552. The chapel was closed after the establishment of the New Religion in Scotland, and its endowments were secularized. It remained standing for nearly two centuries, a forlorn protest against the spoliation, until it was torn down in a panic by the townspeople in 1715, to build a wall and rampart against an expected attack of the Jacobite insurgents. A Presbyterian church was raised in 1838 on what is still called "The Chrystal Mount"; and when the excavations were being made, traces of the foundation of the chapel were discovered, and "many of the stones, but all without ornaments, are still to be discerned in the neighboring dykes." A few of these were collected and set up, with a well-meaning but inelegant inscription, within his private burial ground by the late Major James Adair in 1840. Sir Christopher's widow was confined for a time in a nunnery in England, but was liberated in a few years, and died in peace. About the same time that all this happened, Sir John Seton, Christopher's brother, was executed at Newcastle. Burton, writing in his *History of Scotland* (II., 245) of the many and cruel executions among the Norman nobility, observes that "these are the acts that break the spirit of servile races, but only nerve those of higher mettle to defiance." Even the plain people were shocked at the shedding of so much noble blood, and regretted the death of their leaders, although of an alien race:

Where's Nigel Bruce, and De la Haye,
And valiant Seton—where are they?
Where Somerville, the kind and free?
And Fraser, flower of chivalry?

—SCOTT: *Lord of the Isles*.

The large hereditary estates of the family in England were now confiscated. The manor of Seton at Whitby Strand, in Yorkshire, was conferred upon Edmund de Manley, a very eminent person in the reigns of Edward I. and II., and distinguished in the Scottish wars. He subsequently fell at Bannockburn. The more extensive domain in Northumberland was granted to William, Lord Latimer. He also came to grief, being made prisoner at Bannockburn.

XI. SIR ALEXANDER SETON OF SETON (2). He succeeded his good father, and was knighted by King Robert Bruce. He was employed both in civil and in military affairs, for in January, 1302, he had a safe conduct into England, and three years later the Scottish king applied for another one for him to treat of a peace with the English. In 1306 there was a mutual indenture made between Sir Gilbert Hay of Erroll, Sir Niel Campbell of Lochaw, and Sir Alexander Seton of Seton, knights, at the Abbey of Lindores, to defend King Robert Bruce and his crown to the last of their blood and fortune. "Upon sealing the said indenture they solemnly took the Sacrament at Saint Mary's altar in the said abbey church" (Balfour, *Annals*). "Seton," says Alexander Laing (*History of Lindores Abbey*, p. 93), "came of a race that fought bravely and suffered much for the independence of Scotland."

On the 9th of September, 1308, he again bound himself in the most public manner, in the same company, on the high altar of the Abbey Church of Cambuskenneth, near Stirling, "to defend till the last period of their lives the liberties of their country and right of Robert Bruce, their king, against all mortals, French, English, and Scots."* Sir Alexander Seton shared in the glorious victory of Bannockburn, June 24, 1314. Sir Thomas Gray, on the testimony of his father, who was then a prisoner in the Scotch camp, tells us that Sir Alexander Seton rode to Bruce's tent in the wood the even-

* Collins's *Peerage*, VII., 419.

ing before the battle with important information, and advised him to take the offensive, and attack the English next morning with vigor. A rare and curious little book, an English poem on King Robert, by Patrick Gordon, first published at Dort, in Holland, in 1615, and reprinted at Edinburgh in 1718, in describing the gathering of the Scottish hosts from every quarter of the kingdom for the crowning effort of Bannockburn, exclaims:

Three thousand more came forth of Lothian fair,
 All Princes, Lords, and Knights, and men of Fame,
 Where Seton's Lord, e'en Winton's Earl, did bear
 Not meanest Rule, with others of great Name.

—*Ch.* XV., 172.

Sir Alexander got from his royal uncle important grants of land for services rendered by his father, and also certain honorable and uncommon additions to his paternal coat-of-arms. A little later he received another grant—this time of the Barony of Barnes, in East Lothian, for his own services, particularly in Ireland, whither he had accompanied the king's brother, Edward Bruce. The appeal of the Irish chieftains for deliverance from their English conquerors, the Scottish expedition to Ireland, the crowning of Edward Bruce as King of Ireland (1316), his victorious march at the head of a small army of Scotchmen, with very little native assistance, from Carrickfergus to Limerick, his unsuccessful siege of Dublin, his retreat northward, and his final defeat and death with nearly all his followers at the battle of Dundalk, on October 5, 1318, is one of the most chivalrous episodes, as it was one of the most ill-advised measures, in the history of Scotland.

The best of these grants was that of Tranent, on the high-road between Edinburgh and Berwick-on-Tweed, because it was one of the oldest towns in East Lothian. It remained for four hundred years in the family and gave it a secondary title—Lord Tranent—which even now figures among

those of the Earl of Eglinton and Winton. There were many barons attached to the English Court who had possessed vast estates in Scotland, a state of affairs causing oscillations in allegiance sadly calamitous to the weaker kingdom; but Scottish independence being now an assured fact,

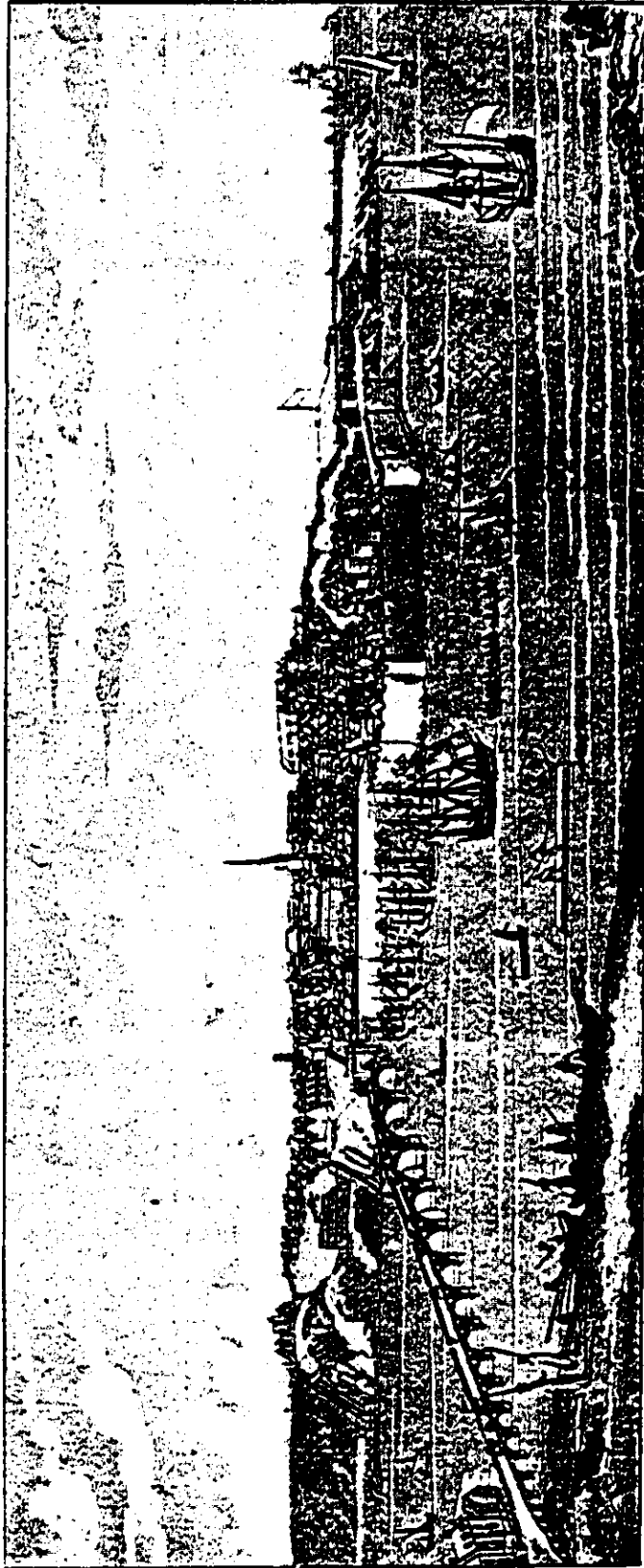


SEAL OF ROGER DE QUINCY, 1250.

Showing Dragon-crest which passed to the Setons.

there was, fortunately, at the crown's disposal the property of these disinherited barons to equalize things in some measure, and compensate loyal Scots for the losses of their own English estates. Robert de Quincy, a Northamptonshire baron, acquired Tranent in 1165 from William the Lion. His oldest son, Sayher, Lord of Tranent, was created Earl of Winchester in England, and set out, in 1218, with other English knights for the Crusade. He died at the siege of

Damietta, in Egypt. His brother, Roger de Quincy, succeeded him, and left at his death, in 1264, three daughters, co-heiresses, each of whom received some portion of the great Tranent estate. These ladies were closely related to John Balliol, and the husbands of two of them were Englishmen: Sir Alan de la Zouche and William de Ferrers, Earl of Derby. The other sister was married to Alexander Comyn, Earl of Buchan. Their husbands sided with England in the contest for the crown; and when it was finally decided in favor of Bruce, their property in Scotland was given to his nephew and companion-in-arms, whose family had for several generations possessed the neighboring lands of Seton and Winton, while he himself was of the blood of the de Quincys. Sir Alexander Seton was one of the thirty-nine nobles and others who assembled in Parliament at the Abbey of Arbroath on April 6, 1320, and addressed that famous letter to Pope John XXII. at Avignon, which is one of the most spirited and patriotic documents in history. It induced the Holy See to recognize the independence of Scotland and the title of King Robert Bruce. The following passage will give some idea of the energy and determination of the signers: "It is not glory, it is not riches, neither is it honor; but it is LIBERTY alone that we fight and contend for, which no honest man will lose but with his life." As Burton says, much of the power and terseness of this memorable manifesto is lost in translating from the Latin. Sir Alexander was a benefactor of the monastery at Haddington, and looked only to pass his remaining years in piety and repose; but the peace of the kingdom was violently broken by the attempt of Edward Balliol to seize the crown after the death of Bruce, and during the minority of his son David II. Balliol and his party came by sea and made a sudden landing at Wester Kinghorn, on the coast of Fife, in August, 1332. The Scottish army, feebly commanded, kept at a distance; but "Sir Alexander Seton threw



VIEW OF BERWICK-ON-TWEED IN 1745.
On the left are seen the ruins of the old castle.

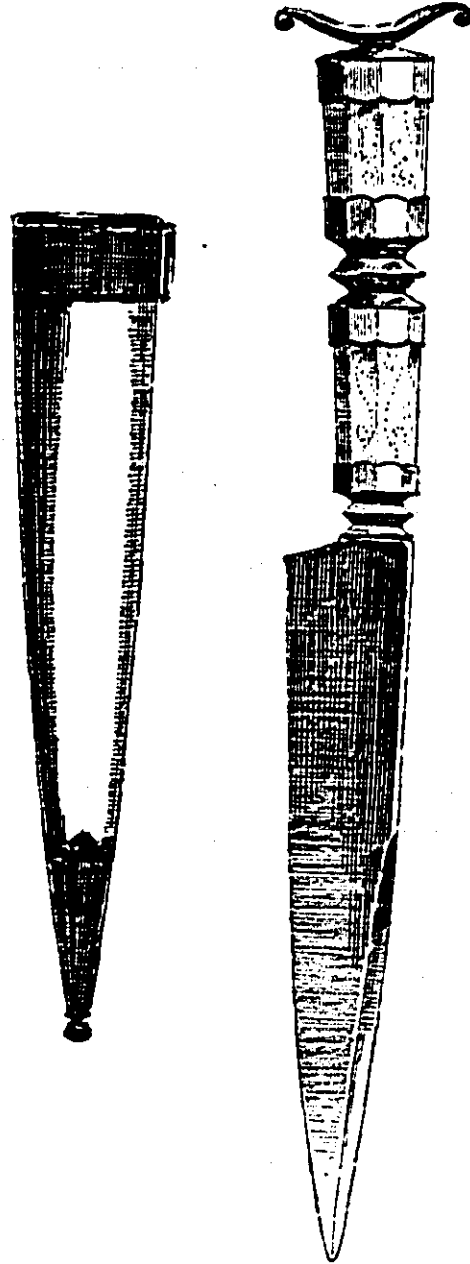


himself with a handful of soldiers upon the English, and was instantly overpowered and cut to pieces" (Tytler, *Hist. of Scot.*, II., 10), yet not, says Maitland, until he had hurt and slain divers of the enemy. This perfect knight continued the succession of fortunate marriages by which his House had been consolidated, and which was to become a sort of tradition among his descendants; for there is not, up to the eighteenth century, another family in Scotland which made so many advantageous marriages and gave so many younger sons to heiresses. He married Isabel, daughter of Duncan, tenth Earl of Fife. Her origin was from the ancient Thanes or Maormors, whose line ended in the middle of the fourteenth century, when the title reverted to the crown, and was conferred on Robert Stuart, Earl of Menteith and Duke of Albany, younger son of King Robert II. The wealthy Duffs—late Earls, now Dukes of Fife—are comparatively modern people, having no connection of blood or descent with Sir Alexander's wife.

XII. SIR ALEXANDER SETON (3). He succeeded to Sir Alexander II., his father, and was truly a noble knight and renowned in Scottish prose and verse. He was made captain and keeper of Berwick in April, 1333, bringing, as his contribution to the defence of this important town, one hundred men-at-arms and five gallant sons. Berwick was closely besieged and blockaded by Edward III., but made a stout resistance. In one of the sorties William Seton advanced so impetuously that he was taken prisoner by the enemy; and another time, in a boat-attack at night on the English ships, an illegitimate son of the governor, name unknown, but described by Maitland as "a young and valiant man," was drowned through falling short in a leap he made from one vessel to another. Soon afterward Thomas Seton, a comely and noble-looking youth, eldest son and heir of the governor, was delivered a hostage to the king for the faithful carrying out of

an agreement to surrender the city unless relief arrived before a certain day. This was in July; but a misunderstanding having arisen, King Edward, who conducted the siege in person, put both the governor's sons to death in a public manner and in a conspicuous place, hoping to influence the governor to save his children by agreeing to the English terms of surrender. Sir Alexander was unmoved by any such appeal, and Scotch poets and historians have invested this episode with a tragic interest. His wife was Christian Cheyne of Straloch. She belonged to a Norman-Scotch family, long settled in Aberdeenshire, and which had come into England at the Conquest, in the person of Ralph de Caineto, one of whose descendants was created Baron Cheyne, in the English peerage, in 1487, and another Viscount of Newhaven, in the Scottish peerage, in 1681. The Cheynes, singular as it may appear now that they are so utterly forgotten, were once a very eminent family. They were heritable Sheriffs of Banff. Sir Reginald Cheyne of Inverugie founded the Carmelite Monastery in Aberdeen, bestowing large revenues on it. By his wife, a daughter of Comyn, Lord of Badenoch, he had two sons: Sir Reginald Cheyne, Lord Chamberlain of Scotland in 1267, and Henry Cheyne, Bishop of Aberdeen, who sided with his uncle's party, and was obliged to take refuge in England. The chief seat of the family was Inverugie Castle, now in ruins, but remarkable as containing the *oldest icehouse in Scotland*. Straloch was an estate of the Cheynes in what is now New Machar Parish, district of Buchan, Aberdeenshire. The last mention that I can find of this ancient and once powerful family is in Bellesheim's *History of the Catholic Church of Scotland*, III., 388, who writes that: "As early as 1576 Dr. James Cheyne, formerly parish priest of Aboyne, and afterward canon of Tournai and professor of theology at Douai, founded at Tournai a small seminary for his countrymen." He was of good stock and brother to the Laird of

Arnage, in Buchan. Sir Alexander Seton was one of the witnesses with the Bishop of Saint Andrew's, the Abbot of Lindores, and others, on June 27, 1331, to a charter of Sir John Dundemore—now Dunmore—conveying in free gift to the monks of Balmerino the right to the water running through his land of Dunderauch for the use of their mill at Pitgornoch. The bestowal of this gift was apparently made by the hospitable Fathers occasion of a festive gathering at Dunmore, at which most of the guests were men "who had borne their part in the great struggle for Independence." Sir Alexander had a safe conduct to pass into England in October, 1337. His curious old dagger, with a silver-mounted handle capped by a crescent, which, besides indicating ownership, formed a rest for the thumb in giving a thrust, is now in the possession of his descendant, William Seton of New York. He died at a good age, and was buried in his parish church of Seton, leaving two sons: Alexander, who succeeded him, and John, founder of the line of Parbroath.



SIR ALEXANDER SETON'S DAGGER.