

I.

NOTICES OF THE QUIGRICH OR CROZIER OF ST FILLAN AND OF ITS HEREDITARY KEEPERS, IN A LETTER TO JOHN STUART, LL.D., SECRETARY. BY DANIEL WILSON, LL.D., HON. MEM. S.A. SCOT., TORONTO.

MY DEAR DR STUART,—It is with feelings of peculiar gratification that I am now able to report to you the successful negotiation for the transfer of the Quigrich or Crozier of St Fillan, to the permanent custody of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. This venerable relic of one of the primitive missionary bishops of Scotland, to which fresh interest is added by its association with Robert the Bruce and the achievement of national independence, is now in my hands, and I transmit to you the duly executed deed by which Alexander Dewar, the lineal representative of “Malice Doire and his forbearis sen the tyme of King Robert the Bruys, and of before,” surrenders unto the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland the said Quigrich, “on trust to deposit the same in the National Museum of Antiquities at Edinburgh, there to remain in all time to come for the use, benefit, and enjoyment of the Scottish nation.” For years, as you are well aware, it has been an object aimed at by me in various ways to affect the restoration of this most interesting national relic to Scotland. When in 1858 my negotiations for its deposition with the Society of Antiquaries failed, I entertained the idea of communicating with my old correspondent, Mr Augustus W. Franks, with a view to its acquisition by the British Museum. But acceptable as such safe keeping would have been, in comparison with its inevitable fate if much longer abandoned to the contingencies of a Canadian clearing, I could not overcome the feeling that a relic thoroughly Scottish in all its associations would be robbed of much of its genuine interest if transferred to the custody of strangers. My only anxiety now is for its conveyance across the Atlantic. Once it is safe in your hands, I shall rejoice to believe that it is in the custody of those by whom its archaeological and historical value cannot fail to be estimated at their true worth.

In the brief notice of the Quigrich introduced by me into the “Prehistoric Annals of Scotland,” I quoted a letter from the Rev. Æneas

M'Donell Dawson, whose ancestors were for a time its guardians; and to whom I was indebted for the information which enabled me to recover the lost traces of the relic. "The celebrated crook of St Fillan," he then wrote to me, "is still in Canada, and in the keeping of the very family to whose ancestor it was confided.¹ This family, it appears, lost possession of the crozier for a time, having disposed of it for a sum of money to an ancestor of my mother's family, who adhered to the ancient faith. Soon after this transaction, however, ceasing to prosper, and attributing their change of circumstances to their indifference to a sacred object that had been solemnly entrusted to them, they persuaded the purchaser, or rather the person who inherited the crozier from him, to part with it in their favour."

The Dewars, however, I may add, discredit the idea that their ancestors ever parted with it for money, but believe that it was only deposited in security for a loan of money, and recovered on its repayment. But this is not inconsistent with the belief that the repayment of the money was hastened by the conviction that they ceased to prosper so soon as they resigned their sacred trust.

The idea, alike of the Dewars and of the Rev. Æ. M. Dawson, it will be seen, is that the beautiful ancient relic, now restored to Scotland,

¹ The letter in which the Rev. Æ. M. Dawson conveyed to me the above information was addressed to me from Dunfermline, at a time when I occupied the post of Secretary of the Society of Antiquaries, with no anticipation of wandering beyond my native shores. Curiously enough, the Rev. Æ. M. Dawson is now, like myself, settled in Canada, being rector of the R. C. Parish of St John, Osgoode, Co. of Russell. I have accordingly applied to him for more detailed information about the alleged transfer of St Fillan's crook from the direct line of its custodians. He thus writes to me in reply:—"It was one of the Glengarries—I believe Lord M'Donell and Arrass, temp. Charles II., the same who also rescued the chalice of Iona (*vide* "Prehist. Annals of Scotland," 2d. ed. vol. ii. p. 482)—who acquired St Fillan's crozier from the family to whom it was entrusted on the field of Bannockburn by King Robert Bruce, in consideration of a sum of money. From the family of Glengarry the Doires received again the crozier, when they believed that they could not prosper without the possession of what was indeed a sacred trust. There is now, I believe, no one living to whom I could apply for names and dates. But you may rely on the fact that the Quigrich was for some time in the possession of the Glengarry family, and only surrendered by them in consideration for the people who were constituted its guardians by the greatest of our kings."

is the actual silver case, or fertory, referred to by Boece, which the Bruce had in his tent the night before the battle of Bannockburn, to which the arm-bone of the saint was miraculously restored, in token of the divine favour to the royal cause, when the faithless or disloyal priest had, as Bellenden expresses it, "brought the tume cais in the field, dredoned that the rellik sold be tint in the field, quhere sae greit jeoparddeis apperit." It is manifest, at any rate, from the royal letter of James III., that, so early as the year 1487, the Quigrich was acknowledged to have been in the keeping of the Doires "sen the tyme of King Robert the Bruys," and the belief of Alexander Dewar, the last of its hereditary custodians is that his ancestor was selected as its keeper at the close of the battle because of special military services rendered to his royal master on that eventful day. It is creditable to the race that they have so faithfully maintained their trust in poverty and exile; have more than once, since their arrival in Canada, rejected pecuniary offers sufficiently large to strongly test their fidelity, and only now resign the custody of the sacred relic in order to secure its restoration to Scotland.

The vague dread of evil befalling the faithless custodian of so sacred a trust has not been without its influence on the retention of the crook of St Fillan, through good and evil fortune, in the keeping of its hereditary guardians. This, along with the genuine spirit of veneration of the last of the Scottish Dewars of Strathfillan, afforded some guarantee for its safety. But the old man is now in his eighty-seventh year; and such sentiments are not likely to form any portion of the inheritance of his Canadian heirs. His son smiled when I asked how far such feelings were reciprocated by the younger generation. It is vain, indeed, to imagine that their New World training could foster such ideas. The charm was broken when the Quigrich and its custodian were expatriated; and the only stimulus to the revival of such obsolete sentiments depended on their influence in enhancing the marketable value of this singular family inheritance. I have accordingly looked forward with anxiety to the transfer of its custody to a younger generation as the mere transitional stage to its acquisition by Barnum, or some other American curiosity hunter; and so its last stage of degradation would be as a showman's prize, before its final passing to the melting pot. Once it is safely restored to Scotland, very different fortunes may now be anticipated for the Quigrich; for I venture to think

that you possess very few national relics of greater antiquity or more genuine interest. Its associations with the Scottish monarchy are older than the Regalia, so sacredly guarded in the Castle of Edinburgh; while more sacred memories carry back the fancy to the primitive missionaries of the Christian faith, when the son of St Kentigerna, of the royal race of Leinster, withdrew to the wilderness of Glendochart, and there initiated the good work which has ever since made Strathfillan, with its ruined cell, its miraculous pool, and its no less potent bell, famous in the legendary history of the early Scottish Church.

It is now not far short of a century since, in the year 1782, Mr William Thompson, an Oxford undergraduate, was shown, in the house of Malice Doire, at the village of Killin, on the banks of Loch Tay, the Quigrich, or crozier of St Fillan, from whom the neighbouring strath received its name. The official transcript of the letters of gift by James III., produced for registration by Malice Doire in 1734, as a probative writ, and shown to Mr Thompson along with the relic, has ever since been preserved; and is now in my possession, for the purpose of restoring it to Scottish custody, along with the national relic to which it refers. Doubtless you will take due care to secure thereby recognition of all the rights, privileges, and immunities of the hereditary custodiers for their successors, so that you, and the venerable fraternity of Scottish Antiquaries, to which I have the honour to belong, shall make "nane obedience nor ansuere to na persoun spirituale nor temporale in ony thing concernyng the said haly Relik, uthir wayis than is contenit in the auld infestmentis thereof." Also it will be for that same venerable body, as the corporate "lator," or custodian of the said relic, to determine how far it may be wise to reclaim the ancient awmous, or annual dole of meal due to you from every inhabiter of Glendochart; and whether, in consideration of pennies Scots, or a pair of shoes, as set furth in the inquisition of 1428, in the Black Book of Taymouth, you will undertake the oversight of all the reevers of Strathfillan; and make pursuit for the recovery of pilfered chattels throughout the realm of Scotland. I need only remark here that you will find that the old parchment which I send to you, though fairly copied as a whole in the version printed in the 3d vol. of the Society's Transactions, differs in some of its details, especially in orthography and abbreviations.

It is altogether unnecessary for me to trouble you with a description of

the Quigrich, or to enter into any discussion as to its probable age as a specimen of Celtic art, since I hope that, before this is perused by you, the prized relic itself will be in your possession. The only fact worthy of note is, that in the zeal of its late custodiers to make it look at its best, it appears to have been rubbed, or rather scoured, till the traces of gilding which I remember to have noted when I first saw it eighteen years ago, are now very slightly traceable. It would be still more superfluous for me to aim at any illustration of the history of the venerated abbot, and his bachul or crook, by references to Boetius, Bellenden, or Camerarius; to the Aberdeen Breviary, or the Black Book of Taymouth. The subject has already been made your own in the Spalding Miscellany, and will doubtless receive ample illustration, when the crozier of the saint has followed his bell, in evidence of their fidelity to the sacred soil of Scotland.

But there remains one branch of illustration of the subject which you will naturally look for from me. The Dewars, from the eldest of the line of Finlay Jore, the lator or custodian in 1428, or of Malise Doire, King James's servitour in 1487, to Alexander Dewar, the last of the hereditary keepers of the Quigrich, by whom it is now transferred to the custody of the Scottish Antiquaries, are a just subject of interest in connection with this national relic.

The Dewars of Glendochart, though retaining their charge of the crozier of St Fillan, had belonged for generations to the Presbyterian Church; and when the chief perquisites and responsibilities of the custodiers had alike ceased to accompany their tenure, the Dewars, as already noted, were tempted to alienate their charge in favour of others, who, as adherents of the ancient faith, doubtless cherished a stronger belief in the virtues of the saint's relics. But prosperity vanished with that act of the unfaithful steward; until, attributing their evil fortunes to their neglect of the sacred trust, they succeeded in recovering its possession.

But the good-will of the saint, to which Scotland owes so much, was more easily forfeited than restored. Malice Doire, the hereditary keeper, in whose custody the Quigrich was found in 1782, though then described as "the envied possessor of the relic," had sunk to the condition of a mere day labourer; and the presumptive heir, then a youth of nineteen, lay drooping in the last stage of consumption. Occasional gleams of

better fortune followed, but they were transient; and the sole inheritance the Doires were able to transmit to younger generations was a pedigree richer in historical interest than many of those whose ancestors figure in the Ragman Roll, and a test of fidelity, which they have faithfully sustained, in prosperity and adversity, for upwards of five centuries and a half. At length, in 1818, the Doires of Glendochart, driven forth by poverty from the glen where they had seemed in so peculiar a sense *gleba adscripti*, turning their backs on Strathfillan and on Scotland, carried with them to the New World the curious memorial of obsolete rites and venerable superstitions.

The following narrative embodies the accounts which I have received from time to time from Mr Alexander Dewar, the last hereditary custodier of the Quigrich:—Alexander Doire, or Dewar, of Killin, the younger brother apparently of Malice Doire, succeeded to the hereditary keepership on the failure of the elder line. His son, Archibald, born at Killin in 1756, and the only survivor in the direct line, removed from Killin to Comrie while still a young man. There he was employed by Campbell of Edinchip as manager of a sheep-farm, and retained this charge for twenty years. Thereafter he rented two small farms on the Edinchip property, in the valley of Balquhidder.

This inland pastoral parish, lying up among the Grampians, in the western extremity of Perthshire, beautiful for its diversified mountains, declivities, and lakes, and famous in Scottish song as the Braes of Balquhidder, seems better fitted for the minstrel or the artist than the farmer.

But the experience of Archibald Dewar well fitted him for sheep-farming, and he made money there. But on the death of his old master in 1808 he lost his holding, and had to quit Balquhidder. He thereupon rented another farm in Glenartney, in Strathearn, where he remained for the next ten years. “But,” as his son writes to me, “after the close of the French war in the year 1815, times got very bad, the price of cattle got very low, and thousands of farmers were ruined. For three years my father had to add £100 to the rent; and at the end of the lease we were all tired of it. A number petitioned the Government for a free passage and a free grant of land in Canada, which was granted on condition of every male over eighteen years of age

depositing £10 in the hands of Government, which was to be returned after they settled on the land. This was faithfully done. My mother and he settled in the township of Beckwith, where he died at the age of seventy-five. He was considered a smart, clever man, and a good judge of cattle, for which he was oftentimes called out as judge. I being the eldest son, was left at home to settle up everything, and dispose of the crop, which belonged to the outgoing tenant. When everything was sold, I left my native country on the 14th of April 1819, and on the 1st of June arrived at Quebec. I pushed on to my father's place, where I arrived on the 20th. I secured one hundred acres of land, which I got from the Government; but for some time I made no improvements on it, for I did not like the country nor the work."

A greater contrast, indeed, cannot well be conceived than the transfer from a pastoral farm on the Braes of Balquhider, or in the vale of Strathearn, to an uncleared farm in one of the flattest regions of Western Canada. All his own or his father's experience in Scottish farming was unavailing; and like many another emigrant, he pined for his native land, and only tarried in his new home because it was no longer possible to return.

But a brief experience inures to the novel life of a bush farm; and so Mr Dewar states:—"At last I married a girl from my own country, settled, and cleared my lot, so far as it could be done; that is about fifty acres, the rest of it being swamp. By this time my family was very large, being seven sons and four daughters, all of whom still survive, except my eldest daughter."

But in Canada a large family is a blessing. Mr Dewar prospered. In 1850 he bought his present farm of two hundred acres in the township of Plympton; and when he had cleared and brought into cultivation one hundred acres, he was able to pay \$2000 for a neighbour's farm, who had fallen into arrears with the Trust and Loan Company. On this he settled one of his sons, who is now its successful owner. At a later date he purchased a hundred acres adjoining, and settled another of his sons there. "All of my family," he adds, "except one son who is living with me, have married and are doing well. Four sons are settled in Ontario, one is in British Columbia, and two are in the State of Michigan. I have thirty-one grandchildren.

Of these eighteen are males and thirteen females. I have one brother living in Plympton, the only other survivor of my father's family of four sons and one daughter, all of whom had large families. Of nephews and nieces I cannot tell the number. We have done well in coming out West." All the sons are farmers except the eldest, Archibald, who unites with his father in the resignation of the custodiership of the Quigrich. He met with an accident in farming, which ultimately involved the amputation of his right leg: and so compelled him to choose another occupation. Availing himself of the educational advantages of Canada, he for the first time acquired the power to speak the English language, and having acquired the requisite training for a school teacher, he now occupies the honourable position of Provincial Public School Inspector for East Huron.

Alexander Dewar, the last of the hereditary custodians of St Fillan's crook, as already stated, is now in his eighty-seventh year. But he is still hale and hearty, with full command of his faculties; and even taking pleasure in bearing a share in the work of the farm. At my request he has promised to have his photograph taken; in which case I shall forward it to you as an appropriate accompaniment of his resignation of his "latorship" into your hands. His son remarked to me that in his earlier days they lived out of the world, and beyond the range of newspapers. Their books were those that had formed the little library at Strathearn; the whole home talk, entirely in Gaelic, was of old Scottish memories and traditions; and so, though himself a native of Canada, he was more familiar with Glendochart and Balquhiddel, than with anything transpiring in the New World. But while the general impression survives in the Canadian Scot, he has too vague a recollection of the old tales and legends of St Fillan, and his bell and crozier, to be able now to reproduce them in detail. Such recollections, however, as I have been able to glean, I shall note here, at the risk of tedium.

The virtues ascribed to the bell are familiar to you; and have received renewed attention owing to the unlooked for recovery of the long lost relic. Those ascribed to the Quigrich appear to have been of a very varied description. The water in which it had been dipped was regarded as an effectual remedy for fever, either when sprinkled on the patient, or administered as a draught. In cases of scrofula, or the King's Evil, it

was reputed to be no less efficacious in its curative powers when rubbed on the affected parts. It was even more in repute for diseases of cattle; and the tradition of the ancient obligation of its custodians to make pursuit after the stolen cattle of the dwellers in Glendochart, survived in the form of a belief in its virtues as a charm for their discovery and restoration. On this point Mr Dewar writes to me:—"It is quite true that the relic was looked on as a charm; but since it came into my possession I have not been much troubled with it in that way, except for diseases of cattle. Two men,"—Canadian Highlanders it may be presumed,—“who had sick cattle, came to get water of it for them; but I never inquired whether it cured them or not.” There are also vaguer recollections of tales of the relic being resorted to, to give binding sanctity to an oath. The tradition is that any one who swore an oath on the crook of St Fillan and proved false, lost the power of speech on each returning anniversary of the day on which he had forsworn himself.

Mr Dewar also refers to another class of cures more correctly associated with the bell of St Fillan, which I may as well note here. “St Fillan,” he says, “had been through Perthshire; and there are several places there named after him, such as Dun-fhaolin: the hill of St Fillan, at the east end of Loch Earn, where women with sickly children used to attend on the morning of the 1st of August, and bathe them in a spring that rose at the foot of the hill, believing that there was some virtue in the water, and there they left some of the clothes that they had had on the child. On the top of the hill there is the form of a large arm-chair cut out of the rock, where St Fillan sat and preached to the people. There is likewise, in Strathfillan, still standing, or at least was when I left Scotland, the walls of an old chapel where people used to go with those who were out of their mind, and after dipping them two or three times in a deep pool of water that is in Uisge-fhaolin, they would leave them tied for the night in the old chapel, and such as got loose through the night they believed would get better, but those that remained bound were concluded incurable.”

The name of Jore, Deor, Doire, or Dewar,—originally signifying a wanderer, or pilgrim,—has been borne by various hereditary custodiers of ecclesiastical relics, as by the Dewars of Monivaird, the keepers

of St Rowan's bell; and was no doubt applied in reference to the official duties of the lator of such venerated relics of primitive Scottish saints. The terms applied to the crozier itself, in the official copy of 1734 of the royal letters of 1487, is Quegrich—not Quigrith, as latterly printed. Looking to its connection in that and other early notices with the great king, I was led to look for the significance of the name, as a descriptive memorial of such historical associations, in a compound of *Cuag-Righ*, or "The King's Crook." But the learned Celtic antiquary, the Rev. W. Reeves, D.D., recognises in it no more than a modification of the Erse "coigreach," "stranger." However inapplicable such a name may have appeared to the Quigrich during all the long centuries during which it tarried in Strathfillan, it has well merited the title for the last fifty-nine years, during which it has proved a stranger to its native strath and to the Land of the Bruce. But since the bell of the venerable saint, after a still longer exile, has at length found its way back to Scotland, and the Quigrich is now following its example, your next quest must be for the famous Black Rood of St Margaret, long regarded as our Scottish palladium. Meanwhile, if I were only fully assured of the restoration of the Quigrich to the sacred soil as an accomplished fact, I might be allowed to indulge in the pleasant fancy that it is an omen of good hope for other exiles from Scotland. I shall, at any rate, comfort myself with the feeling that my long absence from my native shore has not been wholly purposeless, since it has been the means of securing the restoration to Scotland of an historical relic of such interest and value.—Believe me, my dear Dr Stuart, yours faithfully,

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