SIR ALEXANDER BALLIOL OF CAVERS (CHAMBERLAIN OF SCOTLAND).

SOME ADDITIONAL NOTES ON HIM AND HIS SONS.

By JOSEPH BAIN, F.S.A. Scot.

Some years ago, in an exhaustive article,[1] Mr. John A. C. Vincent shewed conclusively how the parentage and connections of this baron have been systematically mis-stated ever since the time of Dugdale, by a succession of writers of varying degrees of authority, all following, as he says, in the wake of that eminent antiquary, who was the first to call him the brother of King John Balliol, which Mr. Vincent shews he was not.[2] He was, in fact, son and eventually heir of a man of some distinction, Henry de Balliol, chamberlain of Scotland, by his wife Lora de Valoines, grand-daughter and daughter respectively of two earlier chamberlains, Philip and William de Valoines. Through his mother, Sir Alexander was a coheir of the barony of Valoines. In right of his wife Isabella countess of Athol, (whom he married *c.* 1270-1, and who died in 1292,) he had the liferent of Chilham castle and extensive properties in Kent, and after a long and on the whole distinguished career under Edward I., whose side he took throughout the war of succession, he disappears from record in 1310 or thereabouts.

Being fully impressed with the value of the *Complete Peerage* of "G.E.C.," I regret to notice that there, under "BALLIOL, or BALIOL (of Cavers), Baron by writ," that learned writer gives Sir Alexander an unsatisfactory exit from public life. "He appears," (says "G.E.C.") "to have been imprisoned and *attainted* by Edward II., whereby his honours became *forfeited*." And in a note is added, "the history of his descendants is obscure." Some account of them follows, and how the lordship of Cavers passed into the hands of the Douglases in 1368. Though I cannot give the precise date of his death, it can be shown that to the very last days of his life he was in possession of his property in England, and in Scotland (in that part then under English rule) he was succeeded quietly by his son Sir Thomas. In the *Calendar of Documents* (Scotland) volume ii., there are full means of following Sir Alexander's career during the whole reign

[1] *Genealogist* (old series), volume v., p. 1 (January, 1882).

[2] John Riddell challenged this inaccuracy, 50 years ago, shewing that Sir Alexander was brother of a Guy de Balliol, and was a collateral relation, not a brother of the King of Scotland. (*Tracts, Legal and Historical*, 1835, p. 217). But some writers prefer repeating error to correcting it.

of Edward I. The only occasion on which he seems to have been out of favour was when he lost the pele of Selkirk, probably captured by surprise by the Scots patriots in 1302 or beginning of 1303. Though he got his lands back soon after, he appears not to have been formally forgiven for this misdemeanour till 1305.

His sons Alexander and Thomas are found on several occasions between the years 1301 and 1304, as being in prison at Dover, Berkhampstead and the Tower of London, the former indeed continuously till 1310, as will appear. The reason for Alexander *junior*, being in prison does not appear, but Thomas, who was probably the eldest son, was a hostage for his father soon after the loss of Selkirk castle. This seems to have been the only reason for his confinement. It is probable, though not so stated in any record that I have seen, that these sons were by Sir Alexander's wife, the countess of Athol. There is no evidence that he had any other wife, and from the era at which they occur in public, they were not likely to have been the children of a marriage *after* 1292, when the Countess died. The last transactions in which Sir Alexander appears, seem to be these. On 18th March, 1309-10, he resigned all his right of courtesy in the Honour of Chilham, and all the other lands of his late wife Isabella Countess of Athol, to Sir Bartholomew de Badlesmere and his wife Margaret, to whom Edward II. had granted the fee of all those lands on Sir Alexander's death; as Chilham was escheated to the Crown by the treason of his stepson, John earl of Athol, in 1306. But Sir Alexander was *sui juris*, for he sold his liferent to Sir Bartholomew and his wife for 100 marks down, and an annuity of 230 marks. This implies that there was no attainder or forfeiture. Ten days later, his son Alexander was released from the Tower of London, on a bond by his father, Sir Alexander de Abernethy, and Philip and John de Lyndsaye, guaranteeing his loyal conduct to the King thenceforth. Sir Alexander's last public act, so far as I see, occurs on 19th April, 1310, when he received 20*l.* on account of his life interest in Chingelford, Essex.[1] He then disappears from record; and in June 1310, or perhaps 1311, "Monsire Thomas de Bayllol" was in possession of the castle and lordship of Cavers. He, too, was an adherent of the English King. The name of his wife was Isolde, and she appears on one occasion receiving 20*l.* of his pay for service in Scotland, on 7th February, 1312-13.[2]

This is all at present positively known about Sir Alexander's immediate successors. But I think the point is sufficiently established that he laboured under no forfeiture or attainder, but transmitted his property quietly to his son. Perhaps the

[1] Templars' Roll of that date. [2] Exchequer Records.

imprisonment of Alexander *junior*, who certainly was in trouble for some years, may have given rise to the belief that his father was attainted. Alexander *junior* was a prisoner for eight or nine years, and *not* as a hostage. That is clear from the way in which he is named in the writs.

Sir Thomas de Balliol soon disappears from record. But a Sir Henry de Balliol is named in a letter from the Mayor of Berwick-on-Tweed on 18th February, 1315-16, telling how part of the garrison had made a foray into Roxburghshire on St. Valentine's day, and were surprised by the Scots at a ford eight leagues from the town, losing eighty men and all their booty.

One of the leaders of this band of Scots was Sir Henry de Balliol. Mr. Burnett (Lyon King of Arms) thinks he may be the same as the sheriff of Roxburgh of that name in 1329 (Exch. Rolls), who had a charter of Branxholm from Robert I (Robertson's Index, 5, 24). But though probably of the Cavers family, his relationship is not yet known.