



ORKNEY ISLANDS

ENGLAND

0 10 20 30 40 50  
Miles

Wick  
Thurso  
CAITHNESS

SUTHERLAND

ROSS and CROMARTY

SKYE

NORTH UIST

SOUTH UIST

RHUM

Eigg

Coll

Iona

Tiree

Dornoch  
Loch Shin  
Dornoch Firth

Moray Firth

Spey

Elgin

Fort George  
Auldearn 1645

Inverness  
Callahan 1746

Loch Ness

Urquhart

Inverness

Fort Augustus

Glenelg

Applecross

Loch Aish

Loch Alsh

ABERDEEN

Aberdeen

Don

Dee

ANGUS

Brechin

Arbroath

Dundee

Firth of Tay

St. Andrew's

Firth of Forth

GRAHAMPSHIRE

Perth

Methven

Forteviot

Aberfeldy

Dunkeld

Perth

Methven

Forteviot

Aberfeldy

Dunkeld

Perth

ARGYLL

Inveraray

Loch Awe

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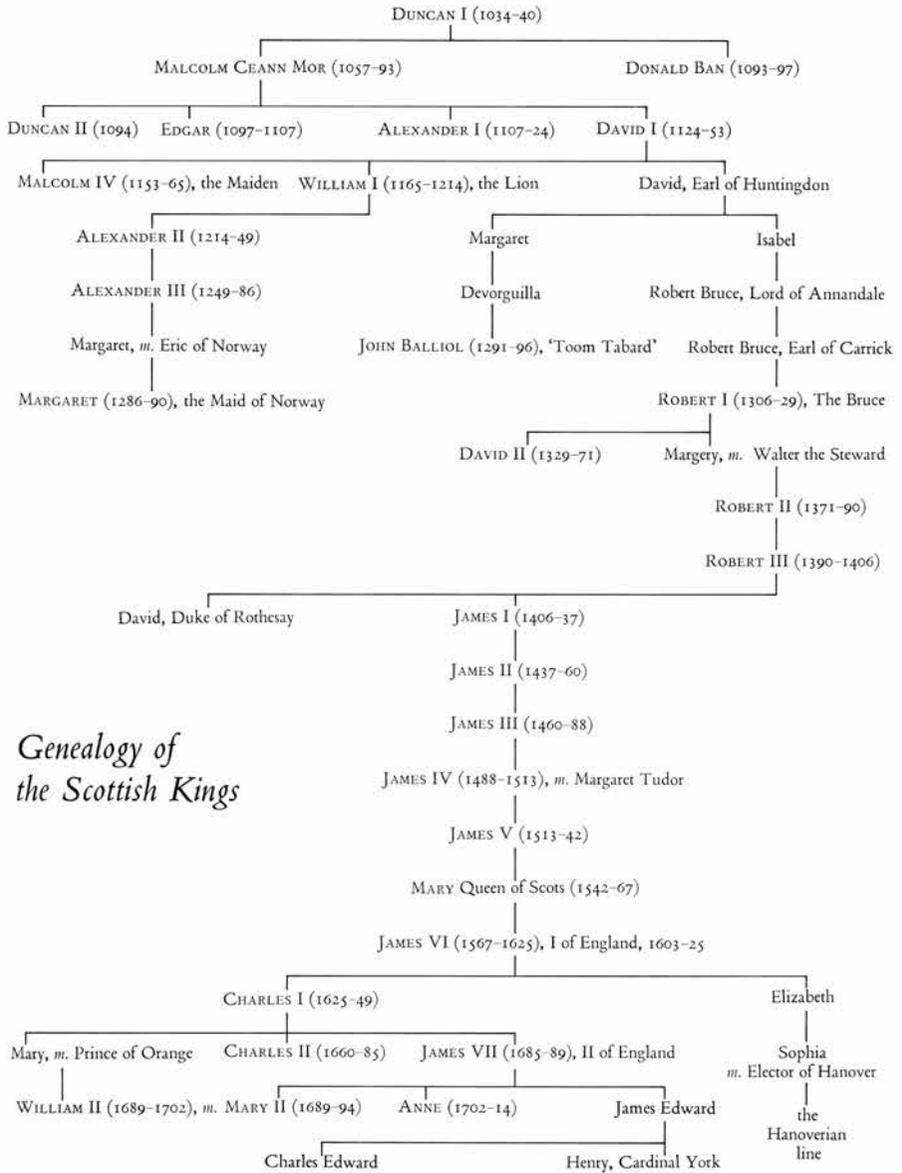
ARGYLL

Inveraray

Loch Awe

Dunstaffnage

Loch Awe



*Genealogy of the Scottish Kings*

CHAPTER ONE

‘POLISHED FROM THE RUST OF SCOTTISH BARBARITY’



First Written Records

The early history of Scotland, like that of most countries, is largely veiled by what are known as the mists of antiquity, in this case a more than usually felicitous phrase. From piles of discarded sea-shells and implements of bone and stone, from monoliths and megaliths and mounds of grass-grown turf, from *crannogs* and *brochs* and vitrified forts, painstaking archaeologists have pieced together a handful of basic facts about the Stone and Bronze Age inhabitants of our country and about the first Celtic invaders who followed them in successive waves a good many centuries later. But it is not until the beginning of our own era that we come upon the first written records of Scottish history. These are to be found in the works of the Roman historian Tacitus, whose father-in-law, Cnaeus Julius Agricola, then Governor of the Roman Province of Britain, invaded what is now southern Scotland with the Ninth Legion in the year ad 81.

From Tacitus we learn that, having advanced from a base in northern England as far as the Forth-Clyde line, which it was his intention to hold by means of a chain of forts, Agricola established his headquarters at Stirling. Keeping in touch with his fleet as he pushed northwards, he

encountered and heavily defeated the native Caledonians under their chieftain Calgacus in a pitched battle at Mons Graupius in eastern Scotland, which some identify as the Hill of Moncreiffe.

This was in the late summer of 83. After wintering on the banks of the Tay, Agricola was proposing to continue his advance northwards when early in 84 he suddenly received orders from Rome to withdraw. *'Perdomita Britannia et statim omissa'*, wrote Tacitus sourly, 'Britain conquered and then at once thrown away.' Subsequent Roman strategy towards Scotland seems to have been mainly defensive rather than offensive in intention. In 121 the Emperor Hadrian himself visited Britain and built his wall from Solway to Tyne. And twenty years after this we find the then Governor of Britain, Lollius Urbicus, building in his turn the Antonine Wall from Forth to Clyde.

Later again, in 208, the old Emperor Severus, no doubt encouraged by the series of spectacular victories he had won from Illyria to the Euphrates, tried a new approach to the problem, building himself a naval base at Cramond and then pushing northwards as far as the Moray Firth. But his Caledonian adversaries, wiser than their forefathers, avoided a pitched battle, and after three years of inconclusive skirmishing old Severus was back at Eboracum or York, dying from his exertions.

The tangled mountain mass of the Grampians and the dense forest which at that time covered much of central Scotland favoured guerrilla warfare and the Caledonians took full advantage of them. Not long after Severus' campaign the Romans abandoned the Antonine Wall and evacuated their northerly bases. For a hundred years or more Hadrian's Wall remained the Roman frontier and Britain to the south of it enjoyed a period of relative peace. Then, in the second half of the fourth century the tribes began to break through from the north in a series of ever bolder and more successful raids. At the same time Saxon pirates started to attack from across the North Sea. Had the Romans not had their hands full elsewhere, they might have returned to their original project of trying to conquer Scotland. As it was, trouble nearer home made it necessary for the Legions to be recalled and by the end of the fourth century the last remaining Roman outposts in Scotland had been abandoned. Thus Scotland only encountered the might of Rome spasmodically and never

became a true part of the Roman Empire or enjoyed save at second hand the benefits or otherwise of Roman civilization.

By about 430 the Romans had also evacuated Britain south of Hadrian's Wall, leaving the inhabitants to their own devices and to the mercy of their more warlike and less civilized neighbours. Soon barbaric Teuton invaders from across the North Sea, the Angles and Saxons, had taken over most of what is now England, driving the native Britons westwards into Wales and Cornwall and northwards into Cumbria and Strathclyde.

### Picts and Scots

Scotland was at this time divided between four different races. Of these the most powerful were the Picts, who were supreme from Caithness in the north to the Forth in the south. Of Celtic stock, they had, according to some authorities, originally arrived from the continent of Europe as part of the Celtic migrations which reached the British Isles at different times during the first millennium before Christ. Some said they were of Scythian origin.

The neighbouring Britons of Strathclyde, another Celtic race, speaking a kindred tongue, controlled the area stretching from the Clyde to the Solway and beyond into Cumbria. To the east, the country south of the Forth was now occupied by the Teutonic Anglo-Saxons who held sway over an area stretching southwards into Northumbria. Like their Anglo-Saxon kinsmen further south, they came from the lands lying between the mouth of the Rhine and the Baltic.

Finally, to the west, embracing what is now Argyll, Kintyre and the neighbouring islands, lay the Kingdom of Dalriada. This had been colonized in the third and fourth centuries of our era by the Scots, a warlike Celtic race from Northern Ireland, who, though at first overshadowed by the Picts, were eventually to give their name to all Scotland, which at this time was still known as Alba or Alban. Although Picts and Scots periodically combined to harass the Romans, the Scots, who spoke a different Celtic language and whose first loyalties were to their fellow Scots across the sea in Irish Dalriada, had from the start been in conflict with their Pictish neighbours. It was a conflict that was to take much bloodshed and several hundred years to resolve.

### Christian Missionaries

In the course of the three centuries that followed the departure of the Romans, the Picts, the Scots, the Britons and finally even the Angles were all, nominally at any rate, converted to Christianity. The task that confronted the early Christian missionaries was not an easy one. Pagan prejudices and traditions were deeply rooted; the tribes they went among were warlike and at odds with each other; the country was mountainous and wild. But the age was one that threw up a whole sequence of men remarkable for their toughness, their strength of character and their devotion to their faith.

There are indications that already in Roman days little Christian communities existed north of Hadrian's Wall. There were no doubt Christians amongst the legionaries and from them the new faith spread to the native population. 'Places among the Britons unpenetrated by the Romans have come under the rule of Christ,' wrote Tertullian in 208, '*Britannorum inaccessa Romanis loca, Christo vero subdita.*' St Ninian, the first of the great Christian missionaries to Alban, was himself the son of Christian parents. After visiting Rome and being consecrated a bishop there, he returned in 397 or 398 to his native Strathclyde and there established a monastery, known as Candida Casa, at Whithorn near the Solway. This was soon to serve as a seminary and starting point for Christian missions, not only to the Britons, but also to the Picts. But, though St Ninian's missionaries pushed northwards up the Great Glen towards Caithness and Sutherland and, according to some accounts, even reached the Orkneys and Shetland, they seem, partly no doubt for linguistic reasons and partly for reasons of geography, to have had but little contact with Dalriada.

Through the centuries, the first Scottish settlers in Dalriada, while consolidating their hold on the territories they had conquered, had remained in close touch with their parent kingdom in Ireland. Then in about the year 500, Fergus MacErc and his two brothers, Angus and Lome, led a fresh Scottish invasion from Ireland and established a new dynasty with its stronghold at Dunadd near Crinan, which now became the capital of Scottish Dalriada. But Fergus and his successors continued to pay tribute to Ireland and to accept Irish suzerainty and

it was from Ireland that towards the middle of the sixth century the first Christian missionaries reached Dalriada. The earliest of these was St Oran, who died of the plague in 548, after establishing Christian churches in Iona, Mull and Tiree, though not as yet on the mainland. Then in 563 St Columba arrived from Ireland and, having established himself on Iona, at once made it a base for his missions to the mainland and to the other islands.

Columba was by any standards a remarkable man. Of royal birth and powerful intellect and physique, he seems to have left Ireland under some kind of a cloud. In Scottish Dalriada his impact was to a high degree political as well as spiritual. Arriving on the scene at a moment when the Scots had suffered a crushing military defeat at the hands of the Picts, when their king had been killed, their morale was low and their very independence was threatened, he not only preached the Gospel, but at once took active measures to re-establish and consolidate the monarchy. Aidan the False, whom he now made king in place of the rightful heir to the throne, proved an astute and resourceful monarch. The good work which he began was carried on by his descendants, especially Eochaid the Venomous, who successfully infiltrated the enemy camp by marrying a Pictish princess. It was not long before the Scots were once again more than holding their own against the Picts.

From Dalriada, Columba penetrated far into northern Pictland, quelling a monster which he encountered in Loch Ness and easily getting the best of the pagan priests he found at the court of the local king. By his death in 579 Dunadd had become an established political capital, while Iona was the nucleus of a fast-expanding Church, organized, it may be observed, on lines that were not as yet episcopal.

From Ireland, too, came St Moluag, who founded a monastery in 562 on the Island of Lismore, and St Maelrubba, who established himself at Applecross a century later. From the west both travelled up and down Dalriada and far into Pictish territory, founding missions and monasteries as they went. Soon after St Columba's death St Aidan had gone out from Iona to convert the Angles of Northumbria, establishing himself on Holy Island near Bamburgh, while St Cuthbert, the apostle of the Anglo-Saxon Lothians, likewise drew his inspiration from the same source.

Though by the end of the seventh century all four of the kingdoms of Alban had been converted to Christianity, they were still far from being united among themselves politically. Nor were they in unison theologically with the rest of Christendom. Out of touch with Rome, the Celtic clergy had developed views on such subjects as the style of the tonsure and the date of Easter which struck the Vatican and their fellow Christians further south as deplorable. 'Wicked', 'lewd' and 'wrongful', were some of the phrases used in this connection by no less an authority than the Venerable Bede. In the end the Celts were to yield before superior wealth and organization. But they had made a notable contribution to the Christian heritage. 'The Celtic Church gave love', ran the saying, 'the Roman Church gave law.' It was the law that in the end prevailed.

Trouble, meanwhile, threatened from another quarter. From the end of the eighth century onwards the Norsemen began their attacks on Scotland, gradually gaining a foothold, and then more than a foothold, on the islands and coastal areas. By the end of the ninth century, they had conquered Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles and these were followed by Caithness and Sutherland.

The divisions and disagreements of the four kingdoms weakened their resistance to the common enemy. Hostility still persisted between Picts and Scots, while the Britons of Strathclyde would have no truck with the Angles of Lothian and Northumbria. For a time it had seemed possible that the Angles would achieve ascendancy over their neighbours, but the decisive defeat of their King Ecgrith by the Picts at the battle of Nectansmere in 685 effectively ruled this out.

### **Kenneth MacAlpin**

It was not until the ninth century that some measure of unity was at last achieved. In the year 843 Kenneth MacAlpin, King of the Scots of Dalriada and at the same time a claimant to the Pictish throne, a man, we are told, 'of marvellous astuteness', fell upon the Picts, to whose ruling dynasty he was related, after they had been weakened by the raids of the Norsemen, and, having disposed of all rival claimants, made himself King of everything north of the Forth. From Dunadd he moved his capital to Forteviot in the heart of Pictish territory while the religious centre of his

kingdom was shifted to Dunkeld. Thither he now transferred St Columba's remains from Iona. 'And so', says the Huntingdon Chronicle, 'he was the first of the Scots to obtain the monarchy of the whole of Albania, which is now called Scotia.'

Of the Picts, who had ruled over most of Scotland for more than a thousand years, little or nothing more was heard. They were, in the modern phrase, *gleichgeschaltet* and so have gone down to history as a shadowy, ill-documented race of people of uncertain antecedents, possibly tattooed or 'painted', for that, after all, is the Latin meaning of their name.\*

Right up to his death in 858, Kenneth MacAlpin sought repeatedly to conquer the Angles of Lothian. But in this he was unsuccessful. His successors, involved as they were in continuous warfare with the Norsemen, fared no better, and it was not until more than a century and a half later, in 1018, that his descendant Malcolm II's victory over the Angles at Carham finally brought the Lothians under Scottish rule. In the same year the King of the Britons of Strathclyde died without issue and was succeeded by Malcolm's grandson and heir Duncan, who had managed to establish some kind of claim to the throne of Strathclyde through the female line. Sixteen years later, in 1034, Duncan succeeded his grandfather as King of Scotland. In this way the frontiers of the Scottish kingdom were still further extended, reaching far down into what is now English territory.

In 1040, after a short, rather unhappy reign, Duncan was killed in battle by Maelbeatha or Macbeth, the Mormaer of Moray, who claimed the throne both on his own behalf and on that of his wife, and now made himself king in Duncan's place. Macbeth appears, contrary to popular belief, to have been a wise monarch and to have ruled Scotland successfully and well for seventeen prosperous years. In 1050 we hear that he went on a pilgrimage to Rome and there 'scattered money among the poor like seed'. But seven years later he was defeated and killed by Duncan's elder son, Malcolm, who thus regained for his family his father's throne to which he had never abandoned his claim.

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\* With all due respect to W. C. Mackenzie, who dismisses it as 'an interpretation that leads nowhere'.

### Malcolm and Margaret

Malcolm III, known to his contemporaries as Ceann Mor or Bighead, had been brought up in England from the age of nine. In 1069, twelve years after his return to Scotland, he married, as his second wife, the English Princess Margaret, who had taken refuge in Scotland with her brother Edgar the Atheling after the Norman Conquest of England in 1066.

The Norman Conquest was to prove almost as important for Scotland as it was for England. Henceforth England and her rulers were in one way or another to play an ever greater part in Scottish affairs. English and Norman influences were to make themselves increasingly felt in the Lowlands, while under Malcolm and his successors the foundations of feudalism were laid, at any rate in southern Scotland. Margaret, a saintly and determined young woman, set herself to introduce at her husband's Court English fashions and English customs. She also took the Scottish clergy in hand and, to their dismay, sought to impose on them the religious practices prevalent in England, celibacy, poverty, and so on. Soon, under her guidance, life at Court assumed a more civilized tinge, while in the Church a system of regular diocesan episcopacy gradually began to take shape. Malcolm, being himself English-educated, was inclined to share his wife's views and during his reign shifted the cultural centre of his kingdom southwards into Anglo-Saxon Lothian, thereby seriously offending the Celtic North.

But Malcolm's interest in his southern neighbour was strategic as well as cultural. The northern counties of England seemed to him to offer possibilities for expansion and in his brother-in-law Edgar the Atheling he had at his Court a ready-made claimant to the English throne. He accordingly launched a series of border-raids into Northumberland and Cumberland. These provoked retaliatory expeditions on the part of the Normans and in 1071 William the Conqueror finally invaded Scotland and forced Malcolm to pay homage to him at Abernethy. In the intervals of the fighting amicable relations were maintained between the two countries, for Malcolm had remained a popular figure at the English Court. In 1093, however, in the course of an attack on Alnwick in Northumberland (intended, it was said, to forestall a Norman invasion), he was killed in an ambush by one of his Norman friends named Morel. Queen Margaret,

for her part, died three days later, piously uttering a prayer of thanks that such sadness should have been sent to purify her last moments. She was in due course canonized.

For thirty years after Malcolm's death, Scotland was in turmoil, ruled over by a succession of weak, insecure kings. The first of these was Malcolm's sixty-year-old brother, Donald Ban, who after his father's death, while Malcolm was in England, had been sent off to the Hebrides. He had thus fallen under Norse and Celtic rather than English or Norman influence and on his brother's death, having seized the throne, at once reversed Malcolm's Anglo-Norman attitudes and policies.

This did not endear the new king to William Rufus, who had succeeded to the English throne on the death of his father, William the Conqueror. In 1094 he sent Duncan, Malcolm's son by his first marriage, whom he had been holding in England as a hostage, to dethrone his uncle by force. Duncan succeeded in this. He was, however, almost immediately murdered and old Donald Ban restored to the throne. But not for long. In 1097 an Anglo-Norman force chased Donald out again and made Duncan's half-brother Edgar king in his place. Edgar believed in helping those who helped him, and during his reign more Normans than ever were settled in southern Scotland. He came to terms, too, with Magnus Barelegs, the King of Norway, formally ceding to him the Hebrides and Kintyre, of which the Norwegians had in fact long been in possession. Thus St Columba's sanctuary of Iona, for so long the burial-place of the Scottish kings, became Norse territory and old Donald Ban was the last of his dynasty to be buried there.

On Edgar's death in 1107 he was succeeded by yet another brother, Alexander, like him the son of Malcolm and Margaret. Alexander, however, only ruled over the land between Forth and Spey, leaving Argyll, Ross and even Moray to their own devices, while responsibility for Scotland south of the Forth was entrusted to his younger brother David. Alexander's sister Maud had become the wife of King Henry I of England, while he himself had married Henry's beautiful, luxury-loving natural daughter Sibylla. He was thus at one and the same time Henry's brother-in-law and son-in-law and in his reign the connection with England grew still closer and English and Norman influence greater than ever.

## David I

In 1124 Alexander died and was succeeded by his brother David, the ninth son of Malcolm III and already the ruler of most of southern Scotland. David, by a long way the most remarkable of Malcolm and Margaret's children, was to rule Scotland for close on thirty years. They were to be eventful years for Scotland. Like his brothers, David had been brought up in England, where he had received a Norman education and made many Norman friends and where, we learn from the patronizing William of Malmesbury, his manners 'were polished from the rust of Scottish barbarity'. In addition to being King of Scotland, he was in his own right Prince of Cumbria, and, by his marriage to a rich Norman heiress, Earl of Northampton and Huntingdon. He was thus one of the most powerful barons in England as well as being the English King's brother-in-law.

On returning to Scotland, he proceeded to distribute large estates there amongst his Anglo-Norman friends and associates, such as de Brus, Walter fitzAlan, a Breton who became his High Steward, de Bailleul, de Comines and many others, who thus became landowners on both sides of the Border. The Church, too, became the preserve of Norman prelates. Simultaneously David introduced into the Lowlands of Scotland something more closely resembling a feudal system of ownership, founded on a new, French-speaking, Anglo-Norman aristocracy, who, although they intermarried and eventually merged with the old Celtic aristocracy, remained for a time separate and distinct from the native population, many of whom still spoke Gaelic, save in the south and east where they spoke a primitive form of English. In the Highlands, meanwhile, a different, more patriarchal system prevailed and the King's writ counted for very little, while the Islands and parts of the mainland gave a loose allegiance to Norway.

In the course of his reign David sought, in so far as he could, to establish a national system of justice and administration under his own over-all control. Alexander had already appointed a number of Court officials, such as Chamberlain, Constable, Chancellor, Steward and Marshal. From these and from the bishops David selected a central governing body to advise him, to carry out his commands and to deal with major administrative and judicial problems. He further appointed justiciars and

sheriffs to administer justice. In the economic field he encouraged trade with foreign countries and established two royal mints and a standard system of weights and measures. He also granted the status of burgh to a number of towns, together with freedom from tolls, the right to hold markets and fairs and also monopolies in respect of certain products. In order to keep in touch with his subjects, though also on sanitary grounds, he and his advisers moved constantly about the country from one royal castle to another.

Being a devout man, David also turned his attention to ecclesiastical matters, founding more bishoprics (under Anglo-Norman bishops) at Glasgow, Brechin, Dunblane, Caithness, Ross and Aberdeen, establishing more parishes, building more churches and endowing more monasteries, among them Kelso, Dryburgh and Melrose. But, while he accepted in general the universal claims of Rome, David wished the Scottish Church to retain a certain autonomy. Though ordered by Pope Innocent III, under threat of excommunication, to acknowledge the supremacy of the Archbishop of York, the Scottish Bishops, with the King's encouragement, rejected this proposition out of hand and so started a dispute which was to drag on for the remainder of the century.

David's long reign was for the most part peaceful. In 1135, however, he chose to intervene in the dynastic disputes which developed in England, on the death of King Henry I, between his daughter Maud and her cousin Stephen. These he turned to his own advantage, successfully playing one side off against the other and, though defeated in 1138 at the Battle of the Standard near Northallerton, emerged, thanks to skilful negotiation, with precisely what he wanted, namely the greater part of Northumbria.

When David came to the throne in 1124, Scotland had, even by the standards of the day, been a primitive country with practically no towns and scarcely any industry or commerce. People lived in wooden houses and such trade as existed was conducted by barter. The different parts of the country were cut off from each other by barren stretches of uninhabited moorland and hill. It could hardly even be said that there was a common language. Latin, French, English and a number of Gaelic dialects were all spoken in different areas and by different

classes of the population. In the absence of any established feudal system, local chieftains felt free to disregard the authority of the King and of the central government. The Church, with only three bishops and no properly organized system of parishes, had very little influence one way or the other. When David died in 1153 much had changed. In the Lowlands, at any rate, what remained of the old Celtic way of life had been swept away and a new, relatively efficient, Anglo-Norman order of things established in its place.

On David's death, the throne passed to his eldest grandson, Malcolm IV, a boy of eleven, known to history as the Maiden. At once, the King of Norway sacked Aberdeen; there was unrest in Moray, while Somerled, Lord of Argyll, sailed up the Clyde and sacked Glasgow. King Henry II Plantagenet, who had finally come to the English throne in 1154, seized the opportunity to send for little Malcolm and force him to return Northumbria to England.

### **The Auld Alliance**

Malcolm did not live long. On his death in 1165 he was succeeded by his more enterprising brother William the Lion. Resenting the loss of Northumbria, William, after first concluding in 1165 a formal alliance with France, to be known to succeeding generations as the Auld Alliance, launched in 1174 a grand invasion of England at a moment when he had reason to hope that Henry II's attention was engaged elsewhere. But the enterprise misfired. Thanks to their own rashness and to an East Coast mist, attributed by both sides to divine intervention, the Scots were heavily defeated at Alnwick and William himself taken prisoner and sent by the English to Normandy. There he was forced to sign the Treaty of Falaise. By this humiliating document Scotland was placed under feudal subjection to England, the Scottish Church put under the jurisdiction of the English Primate, Northumbria confirmed as English territory and the main castles of southern Scotland garrisoned by English troops.

Fifteen years were to pass before William was able to redress the balance. In 1189 Richard Cœur de Lion of England, needing money for a crusade, agreed to hand back the castles occupied in 1174 and to renounce his feudal superiority over Scotland in return for 10,000 marks. Three

years later, Pope Celestine III released the Scottish Church from English supremacy and decreed that thenceforth it should be under the direct jurisdiction of Rome. It was the beginning of more than a hundred years of peace between Scotland and England.

### **The King and the Chieftains**

But the Scottish kings did not only have their English neighbours to contend with. The Celtic chieftains of the west, who still enjoyed a great measure of independence, were in a state of more or less permanent insurrection against the central monarchy. Fergus, Prince of Galloway, had rebelled no less than three times against Malcolm the Maiden before retiring to a monastery, and in the reign of William the Lion his sons rose again, massacring, with particular gusto, the Anglo-Norman garrisons which had been stationed in southern Scotland under the Treaty of Falaise. It was to be a long time before this last Celtic stronghold of the south-west was finally pacified.

Further north, in what is now Argyllshire, were the dominions of the Lords of Lome and the Lords of the Isles. These regarded themselves with reason as independent rulers with no particular loyalty or obligations to the royal house of Scotland, their allegiance being rather to the kings of Norway. Already in the reign of Malcolm the Maiden, as we have seen, the part-Norse Somerled, King of Morvern, Lochaber, Argyll and the southern Hebrides and uncle by marriage to the Norwegian King of the Isles, had, as we have seen, shown his contempt for the Scottish kings by sailing up the Clyde and sacking Glasgow. An unlucky spear-thrust had laid him low and his followers had been beaten off by Malcolm's High Steward, Walter fitzAlan, Lord of Renfrew. But Somerled's descendants, the Macdougall Lords of Lome and the Macdonald Lords of the Isles, were, in their turn, to carry on the tradition of independence.

When William the Lion died in 1214, he was succeeded by his son Alexander II, a capable ruler who put to good use the administrative machine created by David I. Alexander seems in his turn to have hankered after Northumbria, but in the end abandoned his claims and accepted a number of estates in northern England in settlement of the dispute. He was now free to turn to his own domestic problems. In his reign, as in

those of his predecessors, there were insurrections in Galloway, Argyll, Moray and Caithness, and when he died in 1249, he was on his way to attempt the conquest of the Western Isles whose Lords still chose to give their allegiance to the kings of Norway.

This task, interrupted by his death, was resumed by his son Alexander III who, when scarcely more than a boy, launched his first raids against the Hebrides. Disturbed at these encroachments on his domains, old King Hakon of Norway decided to retaliate and in the summer of 1263 assembled a great fleet with which he sailed for Scotland. By opening negotiations with the Norwegians, Alexander managed to delay giving battle until October. This was the season of autumn gales and these, as he had hoped, played havoc with Hakon's fleet as it lay in the Firth of Clyde. In the end the Norwegians fought their way ashore at Largs in Ayrshire, where, in the course of a rather confused engagement, they were defeated on land as well as at sea and withdrew in disorder. Old Hakon himself died at Kirkwall on his way home to Norway and his successor Magnus signed a peace under which the Hebrides now became part of Scotland, though remaining in practice an independent kingdom under the Lords of the Isles, who for their part paid no more heed to their Scottish than they had to their Norwegian overlords. Orkney and Shetland were left for the time being in Norwegian hands.

The remainder of Alexander's reign was both peaceful and prosperous. His marriage to Margaret, the daughter of the English King Henry III, secured peace with England, while in 1283 the marriage of their daughter Margaret to King Eric of Norway set the seal on the Peace Treaty of twenty years before between Scotland and Norway and established, after four centuries of strife, a friendly relationship between the two countries which has lasted ever since. Meanwhile, at home trade improved, the revenue increased, law and order were maintained, education, within its limits, prospered, more building was done, both domestic and ecclesiastical, and for most people life became less disagreeable than it had been.

Had Alexander III lived longer, Scotland might have been spared many misfortunes. But in 1286, while he was on his way from Edinburgh to Kinghorn, his horse came down with him in the darkness and he was

killed. His first wife, Margaret, both his sons and his daughter, the Queen of Norway, had died before him. A second wife, Yolette de Dreux, whom he had married the year before his death and to whom he was hurrying home when he was killed, had as yet borne him no children. The heir to the throne of Scotland was his grandchild Margaret, the infant daughter of the King of Norway.

Alexander had not long been dead and the little Queen was still in Norway when Edward I Plantagenet of England, a formidable, ruthless man, who had been King since 1272, came forward with the proposal that Margaret should marry his son. In 1290 a treaty of marriage was signed at Birgham and a ship sent to fetch little Margaret, with a consignment of sweetmeats and raisins on board as a present from the English King.

The Treaty of Birgham provided that Scotland should remain a separate and independent kingdom and when Edward proposed that English troops should garrison a number of castles in southern Scotland, the Scots indignantly rejected his suggestion. But it was already clear enough what he had in mind.

The plans of all concerned were, however, now thrown out by the news that the little Queen had died in the Orkneys on her way over from Norway. This laid the succession open to more than a dozen claimants. Of these the two strongest were Robert de Brus or Bruce and John de Bailleul or Balliol. Both were nobles of Anglo-Norman origin with estates in England as well as Scotland. Both were descended on the distaff side from David I's youngest son. And both were personally well known to King Edward I, in whose army they had fought. With so many and such formidable candidates in the field, trouble seemed certain.

Already in October, at the first rumours of the little Queen's death, William Fraser, the Norman-descended Bishop of St Andrews, foreseeing difficulties, had written privately to Edward suggesting that he should come to Scotland to keep the peace and to judge who had the strongest claim to the throne. He also took the opportunity of hinting that John Balliol was likely to prove a docile and amenable neighbour. Edward came and in November 1291, in the Great Hall of Berwick Castle, after much apparent deliberation with eighty Scottish and twenty-four English auditors, announced that the crown had been awarded to Balliol.

The reasons for this choice were clear. Balliol, it is true, had a strong claim to the throne. But Edward also had reason to believe that he would do as he was told. Nor did the English King lose any time in making his demands known. They were that Edward himself should have feudal superiority over Scotland and that Balliol should pay homage to him; that Balliol should, when necessary, come to London to answer any charges brought against him by his own subjects; and finally that Balliol should contribute to English defence costs and join him in his forthcoming invasion of France.

Balliol, not a strong personality, was to go down to history as a non-entity – the Toom Tabard or Empty Coat. But Edward's terms proved too much even for him. Repudiating his allegiance to Edward, he concluded an alliance with France and early in 1296 prepared to invade the north of England.

Edward was waiting for this. His plans were made. Two days after Balliol entered England, he crossed the Border into Scotland. He was met by large numbers of Scottish nobles, many of whom owned estates in England and were therefore his vassals. They had come to do homage to him. Amongst them were Balliol's rival, Robert Bruce, and the latter's old father. On hearing this, Balliol seized all Bruce's lands in Scotland and gave them to his own brother-in-law, Red John de Comines or Comyn. The Scots, as so often, were deeply divided among themselves.

Edward next marched on Berwick, at this time the most prosperous city in Scotland, and sacked it, at the same time massacring large numbers of the inhabitants. He then moved on to Dunbar, where, supported by Robert Bruce and other Scottish nobles, he met and utterly defeated Balliol, inflicting terrible slaughter on the Scottish force. Balliol now renounced his crown and after spending three years in the Tower of London withdrew to his estates in France, where he died in 1313.

Edward, meanwhile, continued his relentless progress through Scotland, taking possession of Edinburgh, Stirling, Perth, Elgin and numerous other castles as he went. In August 1296 he returned to Berwick. Here some two thousand Scottish nobles and landholders were compelled to do homage to him and to add their names to the 'Ragman's Roll', a document recognizing him as King. He then left for London, carrying off with

him the ancient Crowning Stone of the Scottish kings which Fergus of Dalriada had brought from Ireland seven centuries earlier, and leaving an English Viceroy and English officials to take charge of the administration and English garrisons to occupy the chief strong points. *Bon hosoigne fait qy de merde se deliver*, was his rude, soldierly comment. The conquest of Scotland was complete. Or so it seemed.