

History of the House and Race of Douglas and Angus,

By David Hume

1820

*Of WILLIAM DOUGLAS Father of the Honourable  
Family of the SCOTI in Italy.*

THIS William was son to the first Hugh and grandchild to Sholto, younger brother to the second Hugh: he it is that was father to the noble family of the *Scoti* in Placenza in Italy, which fell out thus, as it is related by the Italian historians, agreeing with ours.

Achais king of Scotland, having succeeded to Solvathius, did enter into a league with Charlemaigne, which league hath continued betwixt the Scots and French without breach on either side ever since until these our days; whereupon when the emperor Charles went into Italy to repress the insolencies of Desiderius king of the Lombards, committed against the See of Rome, Achais as his confederate did send him four thousand choice men, under the conduct of his brother William, a pious and valorous young prince.

Amongst other of his captains that went with him, this William Douglas was one of the chief, and had the leading of the men of arms. The emperor having restored Pope Leo III. to the dignity of his seat, as he returned through Tuscany, amongst other his notable acts, he restored also the commonwealth of Florence to their former liberty; in which exploit the valour and actions of the Scottish prince William were much remarked: the Florentines, to show their thankfulness to the emperor, took to their arms the Red-lillie, a part of the French arms, the colour only being changed: and in memory of the valour of prince William, they did institute public plays yearly, in which they crowned a lion with great ceremony and pomp, ordaining also that certain lions should be kept upon

the charges of the common treasury, because William had a lion for his arms, which is also the arms of the kings of Scotland. They have also a prophecy in Florence, which saith.

While crowned lions live in Florence field,  
To foreign arms their state shall never yield.

This prince William brother to Achais king of Scotland passed into Germany, and gave himself wholly to the wars, where, for his service by his sword, having obtained large territories, he led a single life all his days; and, thinking to make Christ his heir, he founded and doted fifteen abbacies for those of the Scottish nation. It is he saith Major, who is named in songs made of him, Scottish Gilmore. Now while as the emperor and prince William were in their return from Italy towards France, William Douglas, in his voyage through Plaisance, did fall into a heavy disease and not being able to go along with the emperor, staid at Plaisance till he recovered his health. And then considering the toil and danger of so long a journey, as it would be into his own country, he resolved rather to remain there, than to hazard his person any more, which such travel would have greatly endangered; wherefore, to gain the good-will of the citizens of Plaisance, and to strengthen himself (being a stranger) by a good alliance, he took to wife a daughter of Antonio Spettino, one of the most eminent and honourable houses in that city. By her he had many children, of whom are descended those of the most noble family of the *Scoti*, who are so called by reason of this William their ancestor, who was a Scotchman, the name of his country being better known, and more remarkable, than either his own proper name, or the name of his family. This original of the *Scoti* in Plaisance is collected and confirmed; 1. By the testimony of the Italian writers. 2. By the tree and genealogy of that family. 3. And by their coat of arms which they give, being the same with the ancient coat of the Douglases, with some difference.

1. Touching our authors, they are such as have written the history of Plaisance, which is followed forth by Umbertus

Locatus, and Francisus Sansovinus. This last (Sansovinus) in the first book of his history, *de primo origine delle case illustri d' Italia*, writteth thus, *Quando Carolo Magno fece l' impresa in Italia contra desiderio re de Longobardi (l' anno 779) hebbe per suo Conduchiere di huomini di armi un Guilielmo Scozzese della Familia di Conti Duglasi, &c.* as we have set down before; only he calls it the 779 year, which our writers call 800 or 801. There he shows how this house was illustrious from the very first beginning thereof: and for their rank they held in that city, he declares that it was one of the four families which did distribute the offices of the city, which were these, *Scotta, Landra, Anguiscola, Fontona*. And they grew at last so numerous, and so famous both for letters and arms, that having purchased many rents and great lands and territories, together with many friends and alliance, they acquired the sovereignty of that city, and became absolute lords and princes thereof: so that from them, when they were princes of Plaisance, did spring the counts or earls of, 1. Vegelino, 2. Agazano, and 3. Sarmetti. They have been allied with the chief families in those provinces; viz. 1. Rangoni, 2. Fieshi, 3. Ressi, 4. Pallavicini, 5. Lodroni, 6. Strozzi, 7. Conti d'Arco, and they like. Then he reckons divers particular persons, and namely (which doth serve to confirm this deduction) Donatus Scotio bishop of Bobio, who lived in the year 846, or 848, who built a monastery without the walls of Plaisance, which he dedicated to the memory and honour of St. Bride, patroness of Douglas, in remembrance that he was a Douglas, as is probable. He built also a church within the walls, which he gave to the friars of the monastery of Bobio, who were of St. Coline, or Columbanus's order, who was abbot of Icolmkill, an island among the Scottish Hebrides. And this he did, saith Sansovino, *Non solamente per l' amor de Dio, ma anchora perche San Columbano fu di Hibernia Isola de Scotia*: not only for the love of God, but because St. Colm, or Columbanus was of Ireland, an island of Scots land, so he thought, being a foreigner, that the Scots and Irish are mutually descended of each other. Then coming to

speak of their worth and valour, he reckons up above six and twenty persons who were ever valorous in whatsoever fortune good or bad, and had been in great employments continually, for the space of 285 years together, under the emperor Henry IV. Charles IV. and Sigismund: also under John king of Bohemia, and Duke John Maria, in divers places, at Pavia, Candia, in Cyprus, in Albania, Famagusta, at the isle of Tinos against the Turks; in all which services they behaved themselves valorously, and discharged their places with credit and honour. There were some also famous for learning, as Christophero Doctor of the Laws, and bishop of Cavaillon, in Provence of France, and Fiderico, an excellent juriconsult, and who hath written learnedly. At last he relates how they were overthrown by the duke of Milan, who besieged Alberto Vecchio the elder, and forced him to render upon composition, by which he gave divers castles, lands, and territories, and divers jurisdictions, with a competent estate and means. And here he reckons up above ten or twelve castles which they still possess, all famous and honourable, with the greatest privileges that can be.

II. As for the tree and genealogy of these Scoti, in it we have first, this our 1. William Douglas. 2. then David. 3. Lanfrancus, who had four sons, 1. Johannes, 2. Raynaldus, 3. Ruffinus, 4. Rollandus. Johannes had Albertus, who begat four sons; 1. Petrus, of whom we find no succession; 2. Nicholaus, of whom are descended the houses of Fombii, Guardamillii, and Cassaligii; 3. Francisus, or Francus, of whom are the counts of Volgolino, Agazano and Sarmetto, and those of Gragnani; 4. Jacobus, father of the family of the Castri sti Johannis. Lanfrancus second son, Raynaldus was progenitor to the Gravahi and Varsii. 3. Ruffinus his third son was author of the *Momaghi, Magnani, et domorum del Boscho*. 4. Of Rollandus his fourth son are descended the Passano and Aygverize. These, with their offspring, have multiplied and spread themselves into divers parts of Italy. Also they are found in the Marquisate of Salluce, in France in Guienne, and about Bourdeaux, where they are known by

the name of Houglas, having corrupted the original name, as strangers are wont to do. There are also of these Scoti in the town of Antwerp in Brabant, amongst which Petrus and Cornelius Scoti, inhabitants and merchants there of the best sort, who being lately challenged and interrupted by the magistrates thereof, for presuming to set up the Douglas's arms upon the tombs of their fathers, did send over into Scotland, in the year 1619, a messenger on purpose (Alexander Seton by name) with their several letters signed with the names of Scoti alias Douglassi, directed unto the Right Honourable William Earl of Angus, Lord Douglas, &c. acknowledging their descent from his house, and intreating his honour's testimonial thereupon. Upon which request, the said Earl having examined the matter by his evidences, and other records, found their claim to be just and right, was moved to send them by the same messenger an authentic patent of their pedigree under the broad seal of Scotland, as likewise under the hands and several seals of William Earl of Angus, William Earl of Morton, dated the 16th day of March, 1621. In which patent the said Petrus and Cornelius's extraction from this William father of the Scoti, and grandchild to Sholto, is deduced particularly, as may be seen in the public register of Scotland. 3. As for the ancient arms of the house of Douglas, they were three mullets, or stars, only in a field azure, until good Sir James did add the crowned heart, because king Robert Bruce did concredit to him the carrying of his heart and burying of it at Jerusalem. The Italian Douglasses, or Scoti, having come off before him, kept the field coat unaltered, as may be seen in their tombs and other monuments: for in Plaisance, in St. Lawrence church, where there are above twelve several monuments and tombs of that family, (it being their burial place,) whereof some are of marble, surrounded with iron-grates, there is an ancient monument of a noble lady near unto the high altar, bearing these three mullets, with this inscription, *Margarcta Scota Contessa de Burla*: but now the Italian Douglasses, or Scoti, give but two mullets, and between two they have drawn a

beam argent, which begins at the right hand, and ends at the left. The reason of this difference is given in this letter sent by the Conte de Agazano to this present Earl of Angus; which we will set down in his own words as he sent it written, and signed with his own hand, and sealed with his seal.

*My honourable Lord, William Douglas,*

WHEN I had the honour to see you at Orleans, I promised to send you the tree of the family of the Scoti of Plaisance, which is descended of the illustrious house of Douglas: but because I have not hitherto had a convenient opportunity of sending it safely, I have not yet paid this debt. Now therefore having found the occasion of this gentleman, my friend, who was to go into England, I would delay no longer to send the tree or genealogy; which I have done, beseeching your Lordship, as you promised me, to honour me with the tree of the house of Douglas in Scotland, at least, so much of it as the iniquity of times past, and the wars in that kingdom have suffered to remain undefaced and undestroyed, and I shall rest your Lordship's obliged for this favour.

The old arms of the Scoti in Plaisance, were conformed to the old arms of the Douglas, as may be seen in the foresaid city, in the church of Saint Lawrence. But when the Ghelfs and Ghibellines did war one against another in Italy, the Scoti, as partners of the French, were chosen to be heads of the Ghelfs in Plaisance. And because all things of an odd or unequal number were taken for Ghibelline, they were constrained to change the number of three stars, into either four or two. But esteeming that it was not fit to increase the number, they resolved to take one from them; in the place of which (in memory of it) they put a white or argent bar, which beginning at the right hand, is drawn along, and ends at the left: for if it had begun at the left, and ended at the right hand, it had been Ghibelline. The field which was given by the emperor Henry IV. together with a pelican for the crest, which is the crest of the Scoti only, who

carry it at this hour, and the field of the whole family generally.

I have thought good to make this short digression, that your Lordship might have some knowledge wherefore this change was made in our coat: your Lordship should do me a singular favour, if you would be pleased to write unto me of the receipt of this tree, in the arms of which the coronet is wanting, because the crest is the place where it should be, and to honour me with your letters, which you may send to my noble captain the Duke of Nevers, and so they shall come safe to me; for which favour I shall be particularly obliged to your Lordship. So kissing your Lordship's hands, together with these of your brethren and children, I pray the Lord to bless you with all happiness and prosperity.

Your Lordship's humble Servant and Cousin,

MARK ANTONIA SCOTO, Count d' Agazano.

*Paris, 8th May, 1622.*

This tree was received by the Earl of Angus, who did also send to him the tree of the house of Douglas.

Now, besides all this which we have said, the evidences and monuments, charters and writs of privilege of their house do witness the same; for in the privileges granted to them by the emperor Henry IV. and Sigismund, as also by Giovanni Maria Duke of Milan, the surname of Douglas is expressly inserted with the titles of Earls given to three several persons of that house, first Francisco, created Conte de Vigolino, Giovanni, his brother, Conte d' Agazano, by the said Duke, and to Alberto, expressly intituled, Conte de Douglas et Vigolino, by Sigismund the emperor.

Now, after all this, I hope we may justly say with John Lesly, Bishop of Ross, that the Scoti in Plaisance are come of the Douglasses in Scotland. And thus much for William the second, son to Hugh the first, and grandchild to Sholto.