Jane Seton; or, The King's Advocate: A Scottish Historical Romance

James Grant

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JANE SETON:

OR,

THE KING'S ADVOCATE.

A Scottish Historical Romance.

BY JAMES GRANT,

AUTHOR OF "THE ROMANCE OF WAR," "THE AIDE-DE-CAMP," ETC. ETC.

NEW EDITION.

LONDON:
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS,
BROADWAY, LUDGATE HILL.
NEW YORK: 129, GRAND STREET.
1865.

LONDON:
SAVILL AND EDWARDS, PRINTERS,
CHANDOS-STREET.

PREFACE.

The genius of a monarch is said to stamp a character upon his time; but this can scarcely be said to have been the good fortune of the sovereign in whose reign I have laid the following romance.

Like all the princes of his house, James V. was far in advance of the age in which he lived; for to all his forefathers' valour and passionate love of their native Scotland (for whose soil so many of them had shed their blood in battle), to their elegant taste in all the arts, their patronage of science and commerce, he united a love for romantic adventure, which, like James IV., made him the idol of the people. But the Scottish nobles, though affording us many bright and glorious examples of high valour and pure patriotism, have generally been a race of men too ready to sacrifice the dearest interests of their country for lucre or ambition; and were really, in all ages, a curse alike to our kings and the nation.

In the following pages I have endeavoured to portray something of their savage pride and unscrupulous spirit; and to give a picture of those dark days of violence when danger was the pastime and arms the occupation of our people; when it was sadly but truly said, that grey hairs were seldom seen under a Scotsman's bonnet, and that a Scottish mother had seldom a son left to lay her head in the grave, for in civil strife or foreign war they had all gone before her to the land of the leal.

There is much that is veritable history, and much that is old tradition, woven up with my fiction; and though the reader may be able to distinguish these passages, I shall mention, that the king's adventure in the cavern, the three trees of Dysart, and John of Clatto, are ancient legends of Fife; while the point on which the whole story turns--the

strange and frantic love of Otterburn--is taken partly from an incident which is mentioned in the annals of the House of Angus, and bears a conspicuous place in the early criminal records of Scotland. It will be found related at further length in the notes.

The King's Advocate was so named, to distinguish him from the Crown Prince's Advocate, an office which existed before the abolition of many of those more important public institutions of which Scotland has permitted herself to be deprived.

The King's Advocate, with whose name I have made so free in these volumes, was the son of Thomas Otterburn of Edinburgh, who was slain at the battle of Flodden, and of Katharine Brown. He was Lord Provost of Edinburgh from 1524 to 1535, and was our ambassador to England between the same years. He was knighted in 1534, but was imprisoned in the castle of Dumbarton for being too partial to Englishmen. He was highly esteemed by Buchanan, who has embalmed his memory in beautiful Latin verse.

Vipont, the hero, bears an old Scottish surname, which was famous in the middle ages, though it has now almost disappeared. Andro Wyntown, the Prior of St. Serf, mentions that _Alan ye Vipownt_ was keeper of Lochlevin, and defended that fortress valiantly in the wars of the Scottish succession. Another, Sir William Vipont, was one of the two Scottish knights slain on the glorious 24th of June, 1314. They were barons of Aberdour on the northern shore of the Forth, where their ruined castle, a massive pile indicative of great strength and ancient grandeur, is yet to be seen. Roland Vipont is meant to represent the last of that old race, whose arms are still recorded to have been six annulets _or_, with a swan's head rising

from a coronet.

Let it not be thought that I have made James V. or his minister speak too harshly of Henry VIII.'s moral character, when we bear in mind that Dr. Bayley, in his "Life of Bishop Fisher," has plainly asserted and proved, that the English king married Anne Boleyn, knowing her to be his own daughter. So much for the "Bluff King Hal" of romance.

If, on one hand, I have omitted to portray the Cardinal Primate as the monster we have been taught to believe him, I do not, on the other, wish it to be thought that I consider the good Father St. Bernard as a type of the Scottish clergy in 1537. Very far from it; they were the reverse of all I have made that meek old priest. But, doubtless, there must have been exceptions; and it must be remembered, that all our accounts of them and the Cardinal have come down to us from their enemies.

A Scottish novelist labours under a great disadvantage, when endeavouring to introduce effectively for English readers old national characters who speak their own language, which, to a modern Englishman, would be as unintelligible as Choctaw; hence the conventional half-dialect usually adopted. It is a curious fact, that in the days of Alexander I. or Robert I., the dialects of the two nations were more alike than they are to-day. Since then, the language of South Britain has gradually been changing, and becoming what is strictly termed English; while the Gothic dialect of the North has remained pretty much the same; hence the Scot can read with ease, and fully understand, the obsolete phrases and idioms of Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, &c., many parts of the old editions of whose

works are now almost unintelligible to the mass of their own countrymen.

EDINBURGH, 1st January, 1853.

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JANE SETON:

OR,

THE KING'S ADVOCATE.

CHAPTER I.

JANE SETON.

"I prithee mark
His countenance; unlike bold calumny,

Which sometime dare not speak the thing it looks,
He dare not look the thing he speaks, but bends
His gaze on the blind earth."--_The Cenci_.

On the 19th of May, 1537, the bells of Edinburgh rang joyously. It was a day of loyalty and merriment such as never more may gladden Scotland's ancient capital.

After a nine months' absence, James V.--"the good king James, the commons' king, the father of the poor," the patron of the infant arts and sciences, the mirror of chivalry and romance, as he was affectionately named by a people who idolized him--had arrived in the Firth of Forth with his young queen Magdalene of Valois, whom for her dazzling beauty he had chosen from among three princesses, all possessed of unusual charms, and whom he had espoused in the great cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris, in presence of her father, the magnificent and magnanimous Francis I., seven cardinals, and all the noblesse and beauty of France. After spending the honeymoon at the Hôtel de Cluny, a beautiful old gothic house belonging to the family of Lorraine, they had sailed for Scotland.

All the capital was on tiptoe, and its streets were crowded to excess by the retinues of the nobles and lesser barons, who had come thither to gratify their curiosity and evince their loyalty on the auspicious occasion.

The day was one of the most beautiful of all that sunny month; and the summer air was laden with the perfume of flowers, for garlands and bouquets were festooned from window to window across the main street leading to the palace, a thoroughfare six-and-twenty yards in breadth; while the stone columns of the girth-cross of the holy

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