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## *SIR WILLIAM ALEXANDER.*

*Condensed from a paper read by Mr. W. W. L. Chipman, before the Society for Historical Studies, Montreal, 16th November, 1887.*

Sir William Alexander, born about 1567, at Menstry, a village in the parish of Logie, Clackmannanshire. Son of Alexander Alexander and his wife, Marian, daughter of Allan Couttie. His sisters were Janet and Christian; he had no brothers. Family originally named MacAlexander, and, like the Argylls, claimed descent from the Viking Conn Chath. His father died in 1580 and he went to live with his granduncle, who sent him to Stirling Grammar School at the age of thirteen. His personal appearance at the age of fifty-seven, as represented in a wood-cut by Marshall, resembled that of his contemporary Shakespeare. His forehead was high, his eyes large, his nose long and straight, and his well shaped head covered with a profusion of curly hair. He wore a moustache and well trimmed beard of medium length—the whole a pleasing and intelligent countenance set off by a huge Elizabethian ruff. He was educated at Stirling, and afterwards travelled with the Earl of Argyll, whose favorable mention of him to King James

led to his appointment as tutor to Prince Henry. He thus acquired an influence at Court which he maintained. His career extended over thirty-six years of Elizabeth's reign, all of James' reign and fifteen years into the reign of Charles I. The facts recorded of the first thirty years of his life are very meagre, which renders the painstaking researches of such men as Slafter and Rogers the more valuable. His leisure at this time appears to have been devoted to literature. In 1597 A. occupied the manor home and lands at Menstry and annually visited them in the autumn, even when his residence was a Covent Garden, London, whither he removed in 1603 on the accession of James to the English throne. At about this time he married the daughter of Sir William Erskine, by whom he had issue eight sons and three daughters.

He was attached to Prince Henry's household and received several lucrative marks of royal favor, and also the knighthood, which was conferred about this time. Upon the death of Prince Henry, in 1612, A. received a position in the household of Prince Charles and in 1614 was made Master of Requests to the King.

A.'s attention was shortly after this drawn to America and he obtained a surrender of the charter of the Plymouth Company, and on the 10th September, 1621, a grant to himself of a tract including the present Provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, with the Counties of Rimouski, Gaspe and Bonaventure, in the Province of Quebec; the whole then called New Scotland, and by A. sub-divided into New Alexandria and New Caledonia. He was appointed hereditary lieutenant, with power to use the mines and forests, erect cities, hold courts, grant lands, coin money, etc. The consideration of this grant was one penny Scots, payable each Christmas Day.

A. next obtained the co-operation of Sir Robert Gordon of Lochinvar, to whom he gave the territory at Cape Breton, thenceforth to be known as the Barony of New

Galloway, which grant was confirmed by Royal charter on the 8th November, 1621. The following August, a small party of emigrants sailed for New Scotland, but was compelled, by stress of weather, to winter at St. Johns, Newfoundland. Nine months later, a second ship reached St. Johns with more emigrants and supplies, only to find the first ship's passengers discouraged and separated. A few of the newly arrived party sailed at the close of June to examine the coasts of New Scotland as far as Port Negro and to select their place of settlement. Returning to their fellow voyagers, after a short survey, they decided to re-embark for England.

The accounts which they gave to Sir William Alexander on their arrival seem to have inspired him to renewed efforts, though his two expeditions had involved him in a loss of six thousand pounds. Through his influence with King James, he procured a warrant upon the Scottish treasury for the re-imbusement of his loss, but from lack of resources, or other reasons, it was not responded to.

The next plan hit upon by Alexander to recoup himself for this loss, was to induce the King to create one hundred baronets, limited to sons of Scottish land-owners and younger sons of the nobility, who should purchase lands in the new colony. It was intended to divide each province of New Scotland into several dioceses, each diocese into three counties, each county into three baronies, and each barony into six parishes. The baronies were to reach three miles along the coast and ten miles inland, and the parish divisions were to contain six thousand acres each. On the 23rd of November, 1624, the Scottish Council adopted this plan, it being understood that each baronet was to be a baronet of some one or others of these baronies, and to have ten thousand acres of land besides the six thousand acres belonging to his barony. For all this had to be paid one thousand merkis Scottish money, and each baronet was to send out to the colony six men, armed, apparelled and provided for two years.



The proclamation, 30th November, 1624, provided that these provisions should be complied with under a penalty of two thousand merkis, equivalent to £110 8s. 4d sterling, or \$537.29 which was regarded and accepted as a commutation price for the title which came direct from the Crown. Amongst the baronets thus created were Sir Robert Gordon, Earl Marischal, Alexander Strachan, Sir Duncan Campbell, Robert Innes, Sir John Wemyss, David Livingstone and Sir Robert Douglass. On the 12th July, 1625, a further charter was issued by King Charles respecting these titles and re-conveying the unsold lands to Alexander who had surrendered them to the Crown for the purposes of the Act. This proclamation also increased the number to one hundred and fifty.

A pamphlet entitled "Encouragement to Colonists," was published by Alexander in 1624, illustrated by a map. In 1626 Alexander was appointed Secretary of State for Scotland and secured the lands and barony of Menstry. He rapidly increased his influence in this position and acquired several perquisites, and in the spring of 1629 sent another expedition to New Scotland under command of Capt. David Kertch as Deputy Admiral, Sir William himself having been created Admiral of New Scotland by letters patent dated 3rd May, 1627. This expedition was intended to check the power of Cardinal Richelieu's French company of a hundred associates, and also to cope with the Spanish and French traders. Kertch captured eighteen French transports, with one hundred and thirty-three pieces of ordnance destined for the fortifications of Port Royal and Quebec, a success which he followed up by the capture of Port Royal.

On the 2nd of February, 1628, Alexander obtained a further grant, including the Island of Anticosti, and all other islands in the Gulf between New Scotland and Newfoundland, and all the islands of the River of Canada up to its source, then thought to be the Gulf of California, together with fifty leagues (that is one hundred and fifty miles) on

either side of the river. The following spring (1628) fourteen new patents of baronetcy were issued, and the avails invested in further ships, and in May, Alexander's oldest son William, who had been created Knight Admiral of New Scotland, sailed with a fleet of four vessels with seventy-two colonists and a year's provisions. He arrived at Port Royal, but soon returned to England, eager to procure, as he did, a commission covering a charter for a company having the sole trading rights of the Gulf and River of Canada, to frustrate the intentions in the same direction, of certain English adventurers.

At this time, Sir William Alexander, the elder, found an adventurer without means in Lord Ochiltree, who provided by King Charles with the loan of five hundred pounds, joined Sir William Alexander, the younger, on his second expedition. In June 1629, Capt. Kertch reported from Port Royal that his colony was in an impoverished condition, and it was found that thirty of the colonists had died.

Special efforts were made at home to force reception of baronetcies, and the King plainly hinted that higher honours would ultimately await the acceptors, and that all holding heritable offices would find their promotion in danger if they did not help the colonial scheme. On the 23rd of April, 1629, a treaty of peace between France and England had been signed, and under this Lord Ochiltree and his settlers were dispossessed at Cape Breton, some being transported to France as prisoners. In this year, Sir William Alexander obtained the lands and barony of Tullibody. In the same year, Claude de la Tour, the former Governor of Port Royal, who had gone to England after his capture by Kertch in 1628, returned to New Scotland a faithful subject of England, with two ships of war. He had been created a Baronet of New Scotland, and had acquired by purchase from Sir William Alexander an immense tract of land extending from the sea inland, some thirty or forty miles, and reaching from the present Yarmouth to Lunenburg,

comprising the present county of Shelburne and Queens and half of Lunenburg.\*

Sir William Alexander's claims to New Scotland were now in danger by the counter claims of the French Government, through the persistent efforts of Cardinal Richelieu. Six baronies were however created in 1629, and thirteen in the following year. It is apparent that notwithstanding the treaty of peace, England had not looked forward to restoring Port Royal or the territory of New Scotland, though she had intended to restore Quebec, which had been wrested from Champlain by Kertch after the treaty of peace had been signed.

Some anxiety seems to have been felt by the newly created baronets as to their possessions and titles in the colony, and Sir William Alexander was ordered to attend a meeting of the Scottish estates, at which he maintained the legality of the English claim to New Scotland and the greater part of Canada, basing his argument upon the priority of discovery, possession and the removal of the French from Port Royal. For services rendered at this time, he received the titles of Viscount Stirling and Lord Alexander of Tullibody, and was renominated Master of Requests for Scotland, at a salary of two hundred pounds, and in 1631 received further honours.

The colony at Port Royal still remained under command of his eldest son, Sir William Alexander, who returned to England in July 1631, when Port Royal was ceded to the French. Viscount Stirling, the Privy Council and the baronets vainly struggled to retain the territory, but its surrender was formally concluded under the treaty of St. Germain-en-Laye on the 28th March, 1632. Viscount Stirling

\* The statement of Haliburton that he acquired the whole of Nova Scotia except Port Royal is incorrect, as appears by Le Tour's deed which was registered in 1656 at Suffolk Mass. Haliburton may have followed the statement of Sir John Scott of Scots Tarret to the effect that Sir William got a great sum of money from the King of France to quit his interest in Nova Scotia. He was at any rate aware of the random statement of Sir Thomas Urquhart that he disposed "totally to the French for a matter of five or six thousand pounds English money both the dominion and property of the whole country of that kingdom of Nova Scotia."