

concerning him is that, having gained reputation as a scholar, he was selected as travelling companion to Archibald, seventh Earl of Argyle, whom he accompanied to France, Spain, and Italy.¹ Now the seventh Earl of Argyle was son of Colin, the sixth Earl, by his second wife, Anne Keith, relict of the Regent, Earl of Murray. The Regent was murdered in 1570, and though the date of his widow's marriage to the Earl of Argyle is unrecorded, it may be assumed that it did not occur before the following year. Further, Archibald, the seventh Earl, commanded the royal troops at the battle of Glenlivet in 1594, which would imply that he had then attained his majority. We may thus assign his birth to the year 1572, and it may certainly be assumed that his guardians would select as his companion in continental travel one who was older and more experienced than himself. Assuming that Alexander was four years older than the Earl, we may therefore name the year 1568 as that of his birth. By the death of his father, about his thirteenth year, his upbringing devolved on his paternal uncle, James Alexander of Longcarse, who was by his father in his will nominated "tutor to his barnes."² Not improbably he was by James Alexander entrusted to the educational care of Dr. Thomas Buchanan, nephew of the celebrated George, who, prior to 1578, was rector of the Grammar School of Stirling, and was subsequently minister of Ceres, in Fife. According to William Drummond of Hawthornden, the Earl's education was completed at the University of Leyden, but this statement is unconfirmed.³

On the 4th March 1598 William Alexander was infeft by Archibald, Earl of Argyle, in "the five pund land" of the Mains of Menstry.⁴ From the Earl of Argyle he subsequently received the lands and barony of Menstry. In a contract, dated 4th May 1605, he resigned to the Earl of Argyle, and to Dame Agnes Douglas, his spouse, the lands of Menstry, wherein he stood infeft; whereupon, in consideration of 6000 merks paid by him, and of services rendered to the Earl "in foreign nations and at home," he obtained new infeftment to himself and his heirs-male in the whole lands and barony of Menstry, extending to a twenty pound land, for the yearly payment of 24 bolls of wheat, 6 score bolls malt, 52 bolls oatmeal, and 23 bolls oats, together with four dozen "sufficient capons, and two dozen hens, and 30 unclipped lambs, with 100 merks of money, and 40 merks at the entry of an heir, in place of the duplication of the feu-duty."⁵

Introduced at court by the Earl of Argyle, William Alexander was appointed tutor to the Prince Henry. By James VI. he was received with high favour, and he continued to retain an ascendancy over the vacillating humours of that pedantic sovereign. When James, in 1603, succeeded to the English throne, Alexander followed in his train. Soon afterwards

¹ Argyle Papers, Edin. 1834, 4to.

² Edin. Com. Reg., vol. ix.

³ Hawthornden MSS., Advocates' Library. An examination of the registers of the University of Leyden has been obligingly made by Dr. du Rien, Conservator of the Library, who has failed to discover any reference to William Alexander as *civis academicus*. It was a conjecture of Dr. David Laing that he may have studied at St. Andrews University, and quitted it before graduation. The conjecture is without support. His name does not appear among the matriculated students of any Scottish college.

⁴ Writs in the Menstry Charter-Chest.

⁵ Reg. Mag. Sig., lib. xlv., 84.