

# Nova-Scotia Magazine;

For July, 1789.

*The Life of WILLIAM ALEXANDER, afterwards Earl STIRLING, the first Proprietor of this Province, including an account of the Knights Baronets of Nova-Scotia.*

[From the first volume of the BIOGRAPHIA BRITANNICA.]

ALEXANDER (WILLIAM) an eminent nobleman, statesman, and poet of Scotland, in the reigns of King James, and King Charles I. His surname is said by the historians of his own country to have been taken from the proper name of his predecessor, Alexander Macdonald; who holding, under the family of Argyle, the lands of Menstrie, this became the place of his residence. Andrew Alexander, in the reign of James V. is observed to be the first who is mentioned in the records of Scotland. He, by Catharine Graham his wife, had Alexander his son and heir; who obtained a grant from Archibald, master of Argyle, of the said lands of Menstrie, to himself and Elizabeth Douglas his wife, in life-rent, and to Andrew Alexander his son, in fee; which was ratified under the great seal in 1529; whose heir and successor, was this William Alexander. — He was born in 1580, as we compute from an inscription quoted towards the end of of this narrative. He soon appeared such a promising youth, that the beams of these bright endowments of nature, which shone out and gilded his dawning years, made his friends desirous of improving them to the height of excellence, by a liberal education; and so much was he distinguished for both, that they recommended him, in the quality of a tutor, or rather companion to the Earl of Argyll in his travels. After some time spent in foreign parts, he re-

turned to Scotland, and betook himself awhile, it seems, to rural retirement. There he finished his poetical complaint, of the unsuccessful address he had made to his first mistress; which he entitled *Aurora*. For he had, before he went abroad, and three lustres were expired, as he expresses it himself, <sup>b</sup> or was fifteen years of age, seen some rare beauty, who had smitten him so deeply, that neither the diversion of travel, nor the sight of so many fair foreigners, as he calls the river of wit-ness he had there met with, could remove his affection. Wherefore now, after his return, this courtship was revived, and he wrote above an hundred sonnets, &c. upon it; till matrimony disposing of her to another person, he also had recourse to the same, as a remedy to wean his passion for the former object. For he tells us, that the lady so unrelenting to him, had matched her morning to one in the evening of his age: That himself should now change the myrtle-tree for the laurel, and the bird of Venus for that of Juno: That he was at last bound to one, whereby he should escape bondage from all others: That the torch of Hyacinth had burned out the darts of Cupid; and that he had thus spent the spring of his age, which now his summer must redeem. Now, therefore, it was that he removed to the court of King James VI. and lived there in the capacity only of a

<sup>a</sup> *The peerage of Scotland, by Geo. Crawford, Esq; fol. 1716; p. 462.*

<sup>b</sup> *Aurora: containing the first fancies of the author's youth; by W. Alexander, of Menstrie, — Lond. 4to. 1604. Sonnet 2.*