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FRENCH RIVER.

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**CORONATION CHAIR
AND ITS HISTORY**

STRANGELY INTERESTING STORY OF "THE STONE OF DESTINY" FROM ANCIENT TIMES TO THE PRESENT

It is a strangely interesting story, the story of the chair in which King George V. will be crowned at Westminster Abbey in June next. Its authentic history carries us back to the time when Scotland had her own kings, and Scone was at once the Windsor and Coronation of Westminster Abbey of the country. The palace remains one of the most interesting places in the neighborhood of Perth; but no permission is granted to visit the house or grounds, and one must be content with the views from the banks of the Tay above the North Inch and the higher grounds on the west side of the river.

Among other relics which it contains is a bed used by James VI, and another with hangings of flowered crimson velvet, said to have been worked by Mary Stuart during her imprisonment in Lochleven Castle. The gallery, 160 feet long, occupies the place of the old Coronation Hall, where Charles II. was crowned in 1651. With the ancient Abbey of Scone are bound up some of the most interesting events in Scottish history; but to-day we think of it specially as the shrine where was long preserved the famous so-called "Stone of Destiny," which forms a part of the British Coronation Chair. It is this curiously unique treasure, chiefly, which gives a sort of uncanny romance to the chair.

The really authentic history of the stone could not be admitted by scribes and questioning antiquaries to go back further than the date, about 834 A.D., when it was first found at Scone. But a long persisting legend or tradition brings it down from early Biblical times. According to this view, it was the veritable pillow upon which the patriarch Jacob rested his head at Lux when he had his beautiful vision of the ladder of which Jacob dreamed. In this mythical account the stone is next traced to the possession of Gathelus, the son of Cepheus, King of Athens, who entered into the service of one of the Pharaohs, and married his daughter Scota, from whom Scotland is said to derive its name. Gathelus brought it from Syria to Egypt; and, to escape an impending plague, he is said to have sailed from the Nile, by the advice of Moses, with his wife and their young son, and landed on the coast of Spain. Afterwards he sent the stone to Ireland under the care of his son, who invaded the island, and by whom it was set up on Tara Hill. There it was used as the Irish Coronation Stone for many ages.

This brings us to at least the fringes of recorded history, which is very thin and confused, with legend. It seems tolerably clear that the stone was really used as a sort of royal chair in Ireland, where, we are told, it was known as "Lia Fáil," or the Stone of Fate. From Ireland it is supposed to have been once more carried to Spain by Gathelus, King of the Scots, it is said; but the tradition is that it was brought back to Ireland by Simon Breach, leader of a band of Scots, somewhere about 700 B.C. It remained undisturbed until Fergus Mor, probably a descendant of Simon Breach, was driven out of Ireland in 503 B.C. Fergus led the Dalriadic Scots to the shores of Argyll, and having brought the stone with him it was used for his coronation at Dunstaffnage. Here it remained until about 834 A.D., when Kenneth Macalpine brought it to "the royal city of Scone," having fixed on Scone as his capital, because in the neighborhood he had just fought and won the last decisive battle with the ancient Picts.

All this is open to more or less doubt. But the stone was at least found at Scone, and it gave a sort of royal character to Scone, and to the Scottish prince to repair thither to be crowned on it. This is actual, sober fact. However, we may explain the circumstance, it had acquired a sacred character as influencing the destinies of the Scottish nation. One rhyme ran:

Unless the fates are faithless grown,
And prophet's voice be vain,
Where'er I find this ancient stone,
The Scottish Prince to repair thither
To be crowned on it.

It was believed by the ancient Scots that the stone gave forth musical sounds when the rightful ruler seated himself on it, but remained mute when a usurper was crowned. Much later, this prediction was regarded as being fulfilled when James VI of Scotland ascended the throne as James I. of England. At the Abbey of Scone the stone is understood to have been placed in front of the high altar.

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