

XXII.—*Notices regarding Scottish Archery, particularly that of the Highlanders ; together with some Original Documents relating to a levy of Highland Bowmen to serve in the war against France, in the year 1627.*

COMMUNICATED BY DONALD GREGORY, ESQ. F.S.A. SCOT.

It may not be generally known, that a levy of Highland Bowmen was made, under the authority of government, for the avowed purpose of serving in that expedition, under the celebrated Duke of Buckingham, which ended in the disastrous retreat from the isle of Rhe in the year 1627. This fact appears so singular, when we consider for how great a length of time the powerful long bow of the English yeomanry had been disused, and the improvements that had been made in fire-arms since the first introduction of gunpowder into the art of war, that I have been induced to throw together the following notices connected with this subject, as they may perhaps be the means of procuring more full information regarding the Archery of the Highlanders, and of enabling us hereafter to ascertain whether their bows, in the times of which I speak, were equal in power to those of the English archers.

The history of Scotland sufficiently shews that in this arm the Scots generally were inferior to the English ; indeed so much so, that all the great battles lost by the Scots were decided by the English bowmen. The battle of Bannockburn, indeed, clearly proved the great importance to the Scots, both of having themselves a strong force of archers, and of disabling this part of the English

wicke house in Holborn, London.—Let it be put in a cover thus directed, *for Mr Ambrose Barnes at his house in Newcastle.*—Give the cover a line desiring Mr Barnes to give it in to the post at Newcastle.

army, by an attack of cavalry, before they could have time to give many volleys of their deadly missiles. Yet, strange to say, this lesson was lost upon the Scottish warriors, who, with the exception of a few of the Borderers, never learnt to handle the bow with sufficient skill to oppose the English, and never appear to have repeated the manoeuvre which had proved so successful at Bannockburn.

James I. of Scotland, being sensible, from his English education, of the paramount importance of Archery, endeavoured, by every means in his power, to encourage the practice of it among his subjects. It was enacted in his first Parliament, anno 1424, ‘ That all men busk themselves to be archers, from the age of 12 years ; and that in each ten pound worth of land there be made bow-marks, and specially near parish churches, where, upon holydays, men may come, and at the least shoot thrice about, and have usage of archery ; and whosoever uses not the said archery, the lord of the land shall raise from him a wedder ; and if the lord raises not the said penalty, the king’s sheriff or his ministers shall raise it to the king.’ (a) By another Statute in 1425, it was ordained, *inter alia*, ‘ That honest yeomen, having sufficient means, and who choose to be men at arms, shall be harnessed sufficiently at the discretion of the sheriffs ; but all other yeomen of the realm betwixt sixty and sixteen years shall be sufficiently provided with bows and sheafs of arrows, with swords, bucklers, and knives.’ (b)

It is unnecessary to quote farther from the Acts of Parliament, on this head, in this and the succeeding reigns, as their terms are nearly alike, and all concur in making it too plain that the Scots preferred the games of golf and foot-ball to acquiring dexterity in the use of the long bow by shooting at the butts (c). Some of the Acts direct the yeomen who cannot handle the bow to be well furnished with targes of hide or wood (a poor defence) ‘ to resist the shot of England.’ (d)

(a) Scots Acts, edited by Thomas Thomson, Esq. vol. ii. p. 6.

(b) Ibid. p. 10.

(c) Ibid. pp. 49, 100, 132, &c.

(d) Ibid. pp. 100, 132.

In the reign of James V. in the year 1535, an Act was passed making it imperative on the lieges having land to the extent of L.40 and upwards, to appear at weaponshawings, with hagbutts and culverings, and the proper furniture of this rude artillery, according to their respective means (*a*). The bow is merely mentioned in the preamble of this Act; whence we may infer that it was now falling into total disuse, at least in the Lowlands. Bows and arrows, and likewise cross-bows, are among the arms admitted at weaponshawings in the year 1540 (*b*); but there does not appear on this occasion the same anxiety, as in former reigns, to establish a large force of archers; and this appears to be the latest notice of the bow as a national weapon recognized and authorized by Parliament.

I am further confirmed in this view by the provisions of an Act of Council, dated 13th December 1552, ordering a levy of two Ensigncies of Highland soldiers, within the bounds of the Earl of Huntly's lieutenandry, to go to France with other Scottish troops, for the support of his Most Christian Majesty in his wars. The Highlanders are directed to be accoutred as follows, viz. 'with jak and plait, steilbonett, suord, bouckclair, new hose, and 'new doublett of canvass at the least, and slevs of plait or 'splents, and ane speir of sax elne lang or thairby;' (*c*) but no mention is made of the bow.

King James V. as will appear by the subjoined curious notices from the accounts of the Lord High Treasurer, seems to have encouraged archery in the Highlands, by introducing among the Highlanders both English and Flemish bows, which, as the prices testify, were then considered much superior to those manufactured in Scotland (*d*).

(*a*) Thomson's Scots Acts, vol. ii. p. 345.

(*b*) Ibid p. 362.

(*c*) Record of Privy Council of Scotland.

(*d*) Item, the 2d day of December 1532, paid to the English bowar for a dozen of bows and six dozen of arrows, delivered at the King's command to Alexander Canochson, (*a*) and for four dozen of arrows delivered to the King's grace for his own shooting, L.20.

Item, [in August 1538 or 1539] given for a dozen of hand bows, sent at the King's

(*a*) Alexander MacConnell of Dunyveg and the Glens, chief of a very powerful tribe of the Clan-Donald, inhabiting Kintyre and Ilay.

Whatever may have been the cause, it is certain that the bow continued to be made use of in the Highlands long after it had been forgotten in England and the Lowlands. This appears from innumerable passages in the Criminal records, and the record of the Privy Council of Scotland. The last time archers appeared in a battle in the Highlands is said to have been at a great Clan-battle fought in the year 1688, between the Laird of Macintosh and Macdonald of Keppoch.

The following documents, illustrative of the levy of bowmen in 1627, which has been already mentioned, will be found to possess considerable interest, particularly the Letter of the Laird of Macnaughtane. This gentleman and his company of archers seem, owing to contrary winds, to have come too late to join the Duke of Buckingham's army in the invasion of France; and we are thus left in ignorance of the effect that might have been produced by the revival of this almost forgotten weapon in a continental battle. If, as is most probable, this handful of men were destined to act against cavalry, and if they were to have been well supported by other troops, they might have proved useful; but otherwise they could hardly have failed to be an incumbrance to a modern army.

On the whole, the natural impression after reading these papers is, that the Highland bow must have been a weapon of greater power than is generally supposed. I have discovered no trace of the subsequent fate of Macnaughtane's Highland Archers as a body; but it is very probable that they joined some of their countrymen in the German wars, and distinguished themselves under the banner of the heroic Gustavus Adolphus.

Grace's command to James Canochson, (*a*) of the which the one half were Scottish bows, and the other half English. The price of each English bow 16 sh. and of each Scottish bow 9 sh. In all L.7. 10.

Item, the 13th day of October 1539, sent to Allan Sop, (*b*) at the King's command, eight Flanders bows, price of each 16 sh. and four Scottish bows, price of each 8 sh. In all L.8.

(*a*) James MacConnell of Dunyveg and the Glens, son and successor to Alexander.

(*b*) Allan ni Sop was a celebrated warrior of the Clan-Gillean, and brother to MacLean of Dowart.

## No. I.

LETTER from KING CHARLES I. to the Privy Council of Scotland, dated Windsor, 12th August 1627 (a).

CHARLES R.

Right trustie, &c. &c. &c.—Being willing, amongst other forces intended to be sent by us, for better secunding the warres whairin we ar justlie ingadgit with France, to send thither two hundrethe highland bowmen: Our pleasure is, that you grant unto Alexander M'Naughtan, our servant, ane commissioun, with ane sufficient warrant to levie and transport the said twa hundrethe bowmen, with als large priviledges as anie vther hes had heeretofore in the lyke kinde, he alwayes giving such satisfaction to everie one of the said number as sall be agreed upon betwixt him and thame, according to the custome in the like caises; for doing whairof, these presents sall be unto yow a sufficient warrant.

And for the better furthering to levie the said number of men in dew tyme, we ar willing, upoun ane motioun made unto ws, for causing grant remissionis to suche highland personis as ar fugitive from our lawes for criminall causes, to referre the same to your consideratioun, being willing that thairin yow grant vnto our said servant all the favour and furtherance that can lawfully be granted. So we bid yow fareweill. From our Court at Windsore, the 12 of August 1627.

Quhilk letter being heard and considerit be the said Lords, thay ordaine a commissioun to be past and exped to the said Laird of M'Naughtan, conforme to the tennour of the said missive.

## No. II.

LETTER from KING CHARLES I. to the EARL of MORTON, dated Windsor, 12th August 1627 (b).

CHARLES R.—Right trusty and welbeloued cousin & counsellour, wee greete yow well: Whereas wee haue been pleased to giue order to our counsell for granting a warrant vnto Alexander M'Naughtan, our Serwant, for levying Two hundreth highland bowmen, which wee conceave to be necessarie vpon some ocasionis in that warr wherein wee are engaged with France. And hauing for that effect made choise of the said Alexander for levying of them to be wnder your conduct, if yow do imbrace that charge concerning which wee did of late wreitt vnto yow: Wee have therfor thought good to recomend him vnto yow, being willing that yow giue vnto him for this purpose your best and readiest assistance and favour, which wee will tak as a speciall pleasure done vnto Us. So wee bid yow heartily farewell. From our court at Windsore, the 12 of August 1627.

Addressed—*To our right trustie and wellbeloued  
Cousin & counsellour, the Earle of Morton.*

(a) Record of the Privy Council of Scotland, 1627. (b) From the original among the Morton papers.

## No. III.

LETTER from ALEXANDER MACNAUGHTAN, (of that Ilk) to the EARL of MORTON, dated Falmouth, 15th January 1628 (a).

Right honorabill,

And my werie Guid L. your L. sall knaw that I wes cassin in heir be ane Tempest of weather coming frome Scotland, quhear I Did wrett to your L. of befor, and being doung back again, efter I wes within threescoir of mylles to the Ile of Wicht, I wes baitin back again be storme to the said herbrie, & fearing that my former lettir come not to your L. handis, I gott the fawour of the liwetennent of the castell of falmouth To send this lettir to your Ip. hawing ordour frome my L. chanchlier of Scotland to mack for the Isle of Wicht, quhair your L. regiment lyes, quhiche I mein, God willing, to continow my course on; God knowis quhow we haue bein Tossit wp and Doun be seis and storme of weather & chasset be men of warr; quhat Truble & chargis it hes bein taine in making wp of my companie, I leiwe that to your L. to Juge of quhen ye sie my companie (Nott fearing that thir contrair windis and frostis will hinder us long heir), & fearing the scarcitie of victuallis, it maid me wrett to your L. quhat course your L. will taik with thir soiouris, Incais the Wind Continow (and withall) That your L. wald haue clothis for them, quhen it sall pleise god that they come to the Ile of Wicht, for your L. knowis, althow they be men of personagis, They can not muster befor your L. with thair Trewis & blew cappis: So intretting your L. To haive one thair to receive them, all this I leiwe to your L. wisdom & consideration to haue ane cair of these puir soiouris quho ar far frome thair owin countrie. I rest & sall ever remain,

from Falmouth, the 15  
of Januar 1628.

Your L. most affectionat  
To serwe you,  
ALEX. MACNAUGHTAN.

*Post scriptum.*—Your L. sall know I mett ane man of Warr that come from burdeous, ane staitis man of Warr, quho assurit me that thair ar twentie six saill come frome the king of Spain, To assist the king of france againis the Rochelleris, & sayis he did sie them him self, of the quhilk thair ar eicht schippis that he reportis he Did Newer sie the greater, as he reportis of trewth. Moirour, the captain of the staitis schip, as also the rest of the fleit that ar come frome burdeous, assuritlie affirmis that thair is ane number of schippis coming frome thence to be sownkin befor the Rochell. My L. as for newis frome our selfis, our bagg pypperis & Marlit Plaidis serwitt us to guid wise in the persuit of ane man of warr that hetlie followit us.

Addressed on the back.—*To the most honorabill and my werie Guid Lord, My lord erle of Morton, one of his Maiesties Priwie counsellours of both the kingdomis—These.*

(a) From the original among the Morton papers.

## No. IV.

ROLL of M'Nachtane's Soldieris schipped at Lochkerran, 11th December 1627—fra then to the 28th of December inclusive (a).

The names of the Soldieris Schipped be the laird of m'nachtane in george massones Schip at Lochkilcherane, begining the 11th day of december 1627.

11 Dec. 1627.	gillere m'nicoll.	<i>Enterit ye 22 dec.</i>
Alexander M'nachtane, Cap.	Patrik m'veane.	donald roy m'orew.
Hector M'allester, Leiutennent.	<i>Enterit ye 20 dec.</i>	Donald m'neill.
Malcolme M'neill, ensyne.	Cathell m'quborie.	Johne m'neill.
Mr Dougall Campbell, scriver.	Donald m'vadder.	<i>Enterit ye 28 dec.</i>
William Don.	Duncane m'plader.	Duncane m'kintyre.
Johne m'phale.	Gillespik m'kan.	Johne m'kilven.
William fraser.	<i>Enterit ye 21 dec.</i>	Ovan m'kay.
thomas sutherland.	Neill m'viker.	Johne mackalman.
Donald m'maller.	William steill, pyper.	Archibald makeller.
William sutherland.	Johne colhoun of camstradane,	lachlane m'neill, ye ensyne's
Donald murray.	& a boy.	broyer.
John campbell.	Walter colhoun, his sone.	Duncane m'sparren.
Owen forbes.	Archibald campbell, serjand.	Duncane m'gillespy.
allester m'Donald.	Mildonich m'callum.	gillechrist m'gillespik.
William campbell.	Johne m'finlay.	gillechrist m'baxter.
Andrew roy alias reid.	Donald Germoch m'Donald.	Johne M'Donald vic kay.
Johne chisholme.	Jon. m'condoquhy vic callum.	Neill m'kay, his sone.
Donald sunelache.	Jon. reoch m'neill.	Johne m'gillimertine.
William reid.	Vmphra m'indullam.	Johne m'kinquorcher.
Rorie gow.	Patrik Dennestoun.	Johne m'kilvane.
Angus gun.	hector m'cleane.	Allester m'nachtane.
Allester howstoun.	hector m'cartane.	Robert naper, gentleman.
Malcolme m'gilliwie.	Archibald m'clartie.	Rorie gun, alias makmachane.
Johne camron.	61 Harie m'gra, harper fra Larg.	Lachland m'kachen.
26 Allester caddell, pyper, & a boy.	Angus m'allaster.	———— m'andro alias saymen.
<i>Enterit ye 12 dec.</i>	Duncane m'allester bane.	
Johne dow m'gillie michell.	Johne dow m'allaster.	<i>The names of the foure soldieris</i>
Johne m'clarglane.	Duncane m'allester.	<i>sent be m'kynnnon, schipped at</i>
Donald m'condoquhy.	Donald m'michael.	<i>tarbert, 17 Octo. 1627.</i>
Hutcheon murray.	Malcolme m'kiltosche.	John m'william.
Johne m'callum.	Neill dow.	Murdo m'korren.
Robert gordoun, gentleman.	Lachlane m'staker.	Neill m'spynner.
Philip m'neill.	Johne m'michell, neill oges sone.	Donald m'gillichallum.
Patrik multhallen.	Johne m'michael.	
Weir m'arthour.	Malcolme m'millan.	<i>To be Disposed of be the erle of</i>
William colhoune.	Johne m'vane.	<i>morton. They have bene deir</i>
37 Johne Dunlop.	Archibald m'quhoire.	<i>guests.</i>
<i>Enterit ye 13 dec.</i>	75 hew m'millan.	
Patrik M'Lachie. <i>Stole away</i>	<i>Thir (fourteen) ar the Lieutennent's</i>	
<i>be nycht out of ye Ship.</i>	<i>men &amp; sex in ye first roll. (b)</i>	

(a) From the original among the Morton Papers. (b) In the original Roll the names are arranged in two columns. The first ends with No. 61; the second includes the rest.