

II.

NOTICE OF AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER FROM GENERAL MACKAY TO THE LAIRD OF GRANT, DATED AT LONDON, 4TH DECEMBER 1690, ON THE COMPARATIVE STRENGTH OF ECCLESIASTICAL PARTIES IN SCOTLAND AT THE REVOLUTION. BY JOSEPH ROBERTSON, Esq., F.S.A. Scot.

The comparative strength of ecclesiastical parties in Scotland at the Revolution in 1688 was matter of dispute at the time, and has continued so ever since. I am not about to enter into the controversy; but having lately, while arranging some papers in the General Register House, fallen upon an unpublished letter bearing on the subject, I have thought that it might not be without interest to some members of the Society of Antiquaries.

The writer is the well-known Major-General Hugh Mackay, the Commander of the Forces in Scotland under King William III., a man described by Bishop

Burnet as the most pious soldier that he ever knew. The letter is addressed to Ludovick Grant of that Ilk, a member of the Scottish Privy Council, and one of the most powerful and most zealous supporters of the Presbyterian interest in the north. Very few words will suffice to explain all that is necessary to understand the circumstances under which the communication was written. In the beginning of November 1690, Mackay left Scotland to wait upon the King at London. He had not arrived there when an order was issued for disbanding three Scottish regiments, one of which was commanded by the Laird of Grant. To this event the first sentences of the letter refer. The club alluded to immediately afterwards was the short-lived association in which Sir James Montgomery was the busiest actor. The Commission spoken of in the concluding paragraphs was one appointed by the General Assembly on the 13th of November 1690, "for visiting the whole presbyteries of the north side of the water of Tay, planting vacant churches, constituting elderships in congregations, trying and purging out insufficient, negligent, scandalous, and erroneous ministers, by due course of ecclesiastical process and censures, according to the particular instructions given them thereanent."

*"For the Laird of Grant one of their Majesties most honorable Privy
Counsell at Balchastel Strathspay*

"SIR Notwithstanding of the misbehaviour of the compnies of your regement which lay at Fort William if the order for the break of your regement had not prevented my arryvall here I had opposed it as I beleeve with succes, but I assured the King though you hapned to be vpon a club with persons who drove secretely a damnable designe, so contrarie to that whereof latly they made appeare so much zeale, that you are downright in the buleke for the Protestant religion and their Majesties government those two humanly seeming to have an vnsepparable relation to each other. To which his Majestic reply'd that he designes to make you nothing the wors of the losse of your regement, which he doth not judge so fit for you as somewhat els, if I had known of the Kings so long stay I had counselled your vp cumming, however I have represented your circumstances such that when you cum after the Kings return from Holland I make no question but you shall be well received, whatever men might have said of you, whereof never the lesse I know nothing, meantyme continu in your zeale for the Government, and I exhort you to study moderation in your present Commission, which will do the Presbyterian intrest more good then men

generally there are awar of, the Kings intentions are certainly to mantaine that Government as the fittest for that nation but it is also his earnest desire that it may be made as supertable to those who seem to dissent from it, that even they may fall in lykng with it, and so the Kingdom becum one body, which surely is the lyklyest way for the subsistance of that which is so newly established, many are of oppinion that you, Brody, Foulis and Grange being vpon that northern commission, nothing is to be expected but severity, but I am sure that no man who will duely weigh all circumstances but will confesse with me that humanely the standing of that government doth consist in the making it supertable to the King and Kingdom, for let men flater themselves as they will I tell you who know Scotland and where the strength and waiknesse of it doth lye, that if I were as much an enemy to that intrest as I am a friend, I wold without difficulty ingadge to forme in Scotland a more formidable party against it even for their Majesties Government then can be formed for it, therefor pray you Gentlemen take a friendly advertisement, and let your zeale be temperd with prudence, for no man in England or Scotland can judge of your circumstances beter then myself, therefor my serious advice is that you make not your Government heavie and vneasie to a King who hath given you so large concessions as he hath been the instrument of your so oppertune delivrance, when you expected it least pray you communicat these my thoughts to your fellow Commissioners, to whom you shall be pleased to present my service which is all at present from

“ Your very affectioned humble servant

“ H MACKAY.

“ *London the
4th Decr. 90.*”

I have said that I will not go into the controversy which has been raised upon this subject. But if any member of the Society should be desirous of understanding the significance of Mackay's language, let him compare it with what is said by Mr Macaulay in the thirteenth chapter of his "History of England," and by my friend Mr Burton in the fifth and sixth chapters of his "History of Scotland." I have only one word more to add. It has been objected to Claverhouse, that he spelt like a washerwoman: the letter which I have read might be held to prove that Mackay was not much more proficient. But, in truth, the orthography of that age was so unsettled, that it would be unfair alike to the victor and to the vanquished of Killiecrankie to censure them for neglect of laws which had not yet been established.