

## II.

NOTES ON A FEUD BETWEEN THE ELLIOTS AND THE SCOTTS, DURING THE YEARS 1564, 1565, and 1566. BY ROBERT BRUCE ARMSTRONG, F.S.A. Scot.

During the spring of 1875 the writer spent a considerable time in examining a number of documents preserved in the Record Office, London, at which period notes or transcripts were made by him from the letters and papers relating to the feud between the Elliots and Scotts. From the transcripts then made the following account of Martin Elliot and the feud between his clan and the Scotts was shortly after compiled.

The clan of Elliot occupied a considerable portion of Upper Liddesdale, and also lands in Ewesdale and Teviotdale. Their chief was of Redheuch, on the Hermitage Water; during a portion of the sixteenth century, however, they were under the leadership of Martin Elliot of Braidley, perhaps the most important person of the name who figured during that period. He is frequently referred to in the letters preserved in London,<sup>1</sup> and also in the Records of the Privy Council of Scotland. In January 1566-67 he defeated the Earl of Bothwell, who had invaded Liddesdale with the intention of subduing his clan.<sup>2</sup> There is every reason to suppose that he was the Elliot mentioned as having been chosen chieftain of the rebels of both England and Scotland, and whom all those of Tyndale, Ryddsdale, Tyeydale, and Lyddesdale had "with one consent promised to obey."<sup>3</sup> His influence at this period (1567) was so great that he was able to offer to the English warden, to bind himself to that country, not only for his friends but also for the Armstrongs and the rest of Liddesdale,

<sup>1</sup> Forster to Bedford, January 17, 1565-1566, MS. Record Office; Scrope to Cecil, May 10th 1567, MS. Record Office; Forster to Bedford, July 18th 1567, MS. Record Office; Regent Murray to Forster, July 8, 1568, MS. Record Office; Randolph to Forster, March 6, 1870, MS. Record Office.

<sup>2</sup> Scrope to Cecil, January 28, 1566-1567, MS. Record Office.

<sup>3</sup> Drury to Cecil, February 12, 1566-1567, MS. Record Office.

who we are told were at least 800 or 1000 men.<sup>1</sup> We also learn from a letter of the 25th July that he was the chief of the surname of Elwoods,<sup>2</sup> and had 600 men under his command, and that it was the opinion of the writer and of the warden also "that £200 then bestowed upon him and his might do Elizabeth more service than £1000 bestowed at some other time to other purpose."<sup>3</sup>

On the 29th of July, Queen Elizabeth wrote to the Earl of Bedford directing him to give the Elliots £100.<sup>4</sup> In October, Elliot presented himself at Edinburgh and received a pardon for his former offences, and a gift of 300 marks Scottish for entertainment, for which he undertook to keep and cause to be kept good order from Berwick to Hermitage Castle.<sup>5</sup> He was one of the principal men who gave hostages to the Regent Murray when he marched through Liddesdale in 1569, and on the breaking out of the rebellion in the north of England in that year, he assembled his clan and forced the rebel Earls of Northumberland and Westmoreland to leave Liddesdale.<sup>6</sup> An interesting letter from this person written at the Redheuch on the 16th March 1569-1570 to Sir John Forster is still preserved in the Record Office, London. And a petition from him, dated November 1582, in which he is styled Martine Elliot of Braidley, is also to be found in the same collection.

It was when under the leadership of this remarkable man<sup>7</sup> that in the

<sup>1</sup> Forster to Cecil, April 9, 1567, MS. Record Office.

<sup>2</sup> One of the many forms the name Elliot assumes. There are upwards of fifty others.

<sup>3</sup> Bedford to Cecil, July 25, 1567, MS. Record Office.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, August 7, 1567, MS. Record Office.

<sup>5</sup> James Melville to Thockmorton, October 18, 1567, MS. Record Office.

<sup>6</sup> Advertisement from Hexham, December 22, 1569, MS. Record Office.

<sup>7</sup> I take this opportunity of acknowledging the obligation I am under to the Marquis of Lothian, president of this Society, for the liberal manner in which he has allowed me to examine the collection of Border Papers preserved at Newbattle. In that collection there are documents clearly proving that Martin Elliot was a son of Robert Elliot of Redheuch, chief of his clan. As I have not met with any notice of an Elliot of Redheuch between the years 1563 and 1573, I conclude that Martin assumed the leadership of his clan during the minority of his nephew, the young chief. Those interested in the pedigree of the Elliots during the 16th century will find brief genealogical notices of the Redheuch and Braidlie branches in "Scottish Arms," by R. R. Stodart, vol. ii. pp. 274-276.

autumn of 1564 a murder was committed by some of his clan, which led to a deadly feud between his clansmen and the Scotts of Teviotdale. On the 21st of October the lords of the council were occupied in investigating the matter, and five persons belonging to these clans were condemned to death, three of whom were beheaded by torchlight on the Castle Hill, Edinburgh, the same evening.<sup>1</sup> This severe measure had not the effect of stanching the feud, for in the following spring (1565) the Elliots invaded the Scotts, carried off goods, burnt houses, and killed some men. The Scotts appeared at court, and requested permission to seek revenge,<sup>2</sup> but it cannot be stated whether this permission was granted or not. We learn, however, that the Elliots had requested at the hands of Lord Scrope, Warden of the West March of England, protection from Queen Elizabeth, and offered not only to become English with their whole surname and friends but also to deliver their sovereign's house in Liddesdale, called the Hermitage, and to lay in pledge four of the best of their name.<sup>3</sup>

The country was at this period, May 1565, completely broken, the slaughters between the Scotts and Elliots were of daily occurrence;<sup>4</sup> and at least a dozen houses were destroyed by fire.<sup>5</sup> Early in May the Elliots, 300 in a company, burnt and spoiled ten miles about the Laird of Baughclouchis land, and slew many men, some women and children.<sup>6</sup> Randolph,

<sup>1</sup> Randolph to Cecil, October 24, 1564, MS. Record Office. In the letter Saturday is referred to as the following day. As the 25th happened to fall on a Wednesday it may be concluded that the letter was commenced on the 20th and finished on the 24th. Sir Walter Elliot, K.C.S.I., of Wolfelee, has drawn my attention to the extracts from the Justiciary Record printed by Pitcairn from which it appears that David Scott of Hassindene was murdered on October 18th. Three days after, William Elliot of Horslehill, Robert, Gawane, and Arche Elliot, Williame Elliot, bastard son to unqle Robert Elliot, and James Scot son to Walter Scot in Hassindene, were tried for the offence. Of these the first was banished, but on September 24th, 1565, through the intervention of the Laird of Fernihirst, permission to return was granted by the Queen and King. The second, fifth, and sixth appear to have been executed, and the third and fourth acquitted. "Criminal Trials," vol. i. pp. 456\*-466\*.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Clerk to Randolph, April 22, 1565, MS. Record Office.

<sup>3</sup> Scrope to Cecil, April 28, 1565, MS. Record Office.

<sup>4</sup> Randolph to Cecil, May 3, 1565, MS. Record Office.

<sup>5</sup> Bedford to Cecil, May 5, 1565, MS. Record Office.

<sup>6</sup> Randolph to Cecil, May 8, 1565, MS. Record Office.

when writing to Cecil at this time, said he cared little which party had the better, that the Scotts had had the worst, and the Elliots daily burnt and spoiled; also, if Elizabeth cared to be cumbered with any such people, he could get her as many of either of them, with a strong house or two, as she pleased to have.<sup>1</sup>

No answer had been received by Lord Scrope on the 21st May as to the offer made by the Elliots,<sup>2</sup> and on the 23d of that month the Laird of Buccleuch, assisted by Tivydale, made a raid upon Liddesdale and there slew seven Crosyiers and Elwoods, and took a great booty of cattle. During the time this raid was being made, some of the Liddesdale men ran a foray in the neighbourhood of Hawick, when they slew a man and carried off some cattle.<sup>3</sup> The Teviotdale men again rode against Liddesdale, but of the effect of their raid we are left in ignorance.<sup>4</sup> These disorders could no longer be allowed to continue, and Queen Mary wrote to the master of Maxwell, Warden of her West March, directing him to communicate with Lord Scrope, Sir John Forster, and others, and to request them to join with him and the Laird of Cessford, Warden of the Middle March of Scotland, to help to suppress the disobedient people of Liddesdale; this Maxwell accordingly did, reminding them of the agreement entered into by the commissioners on September 23d 1563 to that effect, and requesting that such number as they should think sufficient to suppress the offenders might meet within eight days at an appointed place, to invade them in either of the realms they passed into until they were reduced to their obedience,<sup>5</sup> and to see that none of them were received into England. Lord Scrope was desirous of knowing how his sovereign wished him to act in this matter, as, in the event of his complying with Maxwell's demand, they would lose "the offers of the Elwoodes and their friends, which he thought were better to be received, if wars

<sup>1</sup> Randolph to Cecil, May 11, 1565, MS. Record Office.

<sup>2</sup> Scrope to Thockmorton, May 21, 1565, MS. Record Office.

<sup>3</sup> Drury to Cecil, May 28, 1565, MS. Record Office.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, June 7, 1565, MS. Record Office.

<sup>5</sup> Maxwell to Scrope (Calendared Forster incorrect) June 19, 1565, MS. Record Office.

should follow.”<sup>1</sup> Forster was as unwilling as Scrope to comply with this request without direct orders from the queen; he accordingly communicated with the council,<sup>2</sup> but before any decided steps were taken, more harm was done between Liddesdale and Teviotdale.<sup>3</sup> Queen Elizabeth approved of the conduct of her wardens, and directed them, in case Maxwell renewed his demand according to the treaty, to state that the treaty had already been broken by the Scottish Queen, through her having kept the Earl of Lennox, Lord Darnley, and others of Elizabeth’s subjects against her will.<sup>4</sup>

On the 16th July the Liddesdale men made a raid into East Tivydale, to a place called the Burnes, beside Roxburrowe, belonging to the Laird of Cessford, Warden of the Middle March, where they destroyed and burnt his house, corn, and cattle, and killed two of his servants.<sup>5</sup> The feud still raged with great violence, and the Elliots being, as we are told, the weaker party, were driven to seek aid in other quarters, and Bedford thought if they were received by England it would serve to very good purpose. We also learn from him that the Elwoods had burnt the Laird of Cessford’s corn and his houses,<sup>6</sup> but this probably refers to the raid of the 16th. On the 25th July Bedford again wrote to say that the Elwoods had done great spoil upon their own border, and being overlaid with the multitude and force of the advirsarie part, were driven to seek succour in the Middle March of England, but it was doubtful if they could be received, for if they could not they would be utterly undone. He therefore asked Her Majesty to signify to Lord Scrope how the Elwoods might be used, for if they did not hear soon there would, he thought, ensue, under colour of peace, such slaughter and spoil as in open wars had not been greater.<sup>7</sup> Again, on the same day, 25th July, he wrote to Cecil to say that the slaughters, burnings, and wastes done between these two

<sup>1</sup> Scrope to Cecil, June 19, 1565, MS. Record Office.

<sup>2</sup> Forster to Council, June 22, 1565, MS. Record Office.

<sup>3</sup> Drury to Cecil, June 21, 1565, MS. Record Office.

<sup>4</sup> Queen Elizabeth to Lord Scrope, June 27, 1565, MS. Record Office.

<sup>5</sup> Forster to Cecil, July 26, 1565, MS. Record Office.

<sup>6</sup> Bedford to Cecil, July, 24, 1565, MS. Record Office.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, July 25, 1565, MS. Record Office.

clans had been such as never was greater in any realm between so mean persons; the Elwoods he said were driven out of Scotland and had come into England although not in his march, and there was great reason why they should find favour and be received, for they might be employed to good purpose.<sup>1</sup> From a letter from Forster we gather that the Elliots had received some relief in the Middle March, and we learn from him that the Laird of Cessford was not a little grieved at the injuries done by the raid of the 16th July, and that he intended to complain to his sovereign, and ask for assistance to enable him to ride in a hostile manner upon the Elliots, which if he did, Forster thought they would not be able to withstand such a force, but must from very necessity fly within his office for refuge.<sup>2</sup> Early in August the Earl of Bedford, being informed of the queen's resolution concerning the Elwoods, held a conference with the English wardens touching some secret succours to be given them, and some way to be devised for the annoyance of Lord Hume and the Laird of Cessford.<sup>3</sup>

In the meantime the Elliots rallied and gained an important advantage over the Scottis, which is thus mentioned in a letter from Rowland Forster to Bedford of the 5th August: "Upone Friday last the Elwarths hathe been amangg the Scottis, and tain certain gudis, and the Scottis rais and followed it to ane place called Ewis dores, and ther (*i.e.*, the Elliots) havving ane bushment to the number of four hundret men and hathe overthrowen the Scottis, and slane sex of the Scottis, of the principall men by the Laird of Beckeist self, and two of the Daglessis, and ane other called Short, and ane of the Theffinmis, thir (*i.e.*, these) wes broght on Friday at nyght to Selkrig and buried ther, and they takked besyd they three xx (60) of ther number."<sup>4</sup> In the following month

<sup>1</sup> Bedford to Cecil, July 25, 1565, MS. Record Office.

<sup>2</sup> Forster to Cecil, July 26, 1565, MS. Record Office.

<sup>3</sup> Bedford to Queen Elizabeth, August 5, 1565, MS. Record Office.

<sup>4</sup> MS. Record Office. The "Ewis-dores" is a pass leading from Teviotdale to that portion of Ewesdale known as Eweslees. The latter was in the possession or occupation of a branch of the Elliots during the sixteenth century. On account of the formation of the ground the Scotts could not have been aware of their danger before they crossed the pass and entered the country of the hostile tribe.

Bedford ordered £50 to be given to the Elliots in a secret manner. And should they continue as they had begun, for such countenance of their service they were to receive another £50.<sup>1</sup> They remained in the service of England,<sup>2</sup> and worked well in the interest of that country, being kept together by the English warden at the Hermitage,<sup>3</sup> it being the object of the government of that country to try and induce them to side with Murray and the other rebel lords, and if possible to keep them from the influence of Bothwell. The favour that had been shown them by the English warden had procured them much hatred in Scotland; Martin Elliot and others of the best of Liddesdale were earnest suitors to Forster that they might have the same oversight in England as they before had; in Scotland they stated they dared not remain, their being eleven of them already in hold. Bothwell was also so incensed against them that nothing would satisfy him but Martin Elliot's head.<sup>4</sup> Martin also applied to Lord Scrope, for assurance and oversight within his office, as Bothwell had burnt their possessions.<sup>5</sup>

The feud which had raged between the Scotts and Elliots had terminated some time previously, but before April 16, 1566, these clans again broke their assurance,<sup>6</sup> and a gentleman of the Scotts was killed by the Elliots,<sup>7</sup> who are also accused of having slain two friends of the Laird of Buccleuch.<sup>8</sup> In June 1566, the quarrels and slaughters between these clans are again mentioned, the Scotts having again had the worst.<sup>9</sup> We learn however from a letter from Forster of the 26th July that Martin Elliot had told him that the Liddesdales were agreed with the Scotts contrary to the Earl of Bothwell's will, and without his consent. They announced their intention of giving up their assurance with England, and

<sup>1</sup> Bedford to Queen Elizabeth, September 5, 1565, MS. Record Office.

<sup>2</sup> Bedford to Cecil, September 28, 1565, MS. Record Office.

<sup>3</sup> Bedford to Cecil, October 5, 1565, MS. Record Office.

<sup>4</sup> Forster to Bedford, January 17, 1565, 1566, MS. Record Office.

<sup>5</sup> Scrope to Cecil, January 19, 1565-1566, MS. Record Office.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, April 16, 1566, MS. Record Office.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, May 14, 1566, MS. Record Office.

<sup>8</sup> Forster to Cecil, May 23, 1566, MS. Record Office.

<sup>9</sup> Drury to Cecil, June 20, 1566, MS. Record Office.

declared they would keep it no longer; Forster therefore supposed they were determined to ride and spoil in that country.<sup>1</sup> In the following month (August) they committed divers attempts on the Water of Tyne, and with the Crosiers and Nixons to the number of fifty, they in open foray on the 15th of that month harried Balyffe head in Bewcastledale, and drove away twenty-four kye and oxen, and took ten prisoners.<sup>2</sup> These forays into England were of constant occurrence during the autumn, but for several years after we do yet hear of a revival of the feud between the Elliots and Scotts.

There is no reason for supposing that the Armstrongs of Liddesdale assisted the Elliots in the before-mentioned feuds with the Scotts; but the Crosiers, and probably the Nixons, small clans occupying lands in the upper part of Liddesdale, joined them, and it is not unlikely they received assistance from the clans of Ewesdale.

The riding clans of the border were always ready to assemble under a leader of recognized ability. Fortunately for the Elliots, they possessed at this period such a leader, and were able under his direction successfully to oppose, not only the far more numerous and powerful clan of Scott, but also the Wardens of the west and middle marches, and the Earl of Bothwell the queen's Lieutenant on the border.

I am not aware of any reference in the Scottish records to the above-mentioned feuds, the knowledge we have of them being solely derived from the documents preserved in the Record Office, London, from upwards of forty of which these notes have been compiled.

<sup>1</sup> Foster to Bedford, July 26, 1566, MS. Record Office.

<sup>2</sup> Scrope to Cecil, August 17, 1566, MS. Record Office.