

III.

THE BATTLE OF GLENSHIEL, 10TH JUNE 1719. NOTE UPON AN UNPUBLISHED DOCUMENT IN THE POSSESSION OF HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH. BY A. H. MILLAR, F.S.A. Scot.

Considerable mystery has hitherto surrounded that incident in Scottish history known as the Battle of Glenshiel. This has been caused principally through the limited materials placed at the disposal of the historian; and probably also from the desire of the Hanoverian Government to destroy the last remnants of the rebellion of 1715, by suppressing all records of this episode. It was the final attempt of the Jacobites to retrieve the disgrace of their retreat after Sheriffmuir; and as little glory could accrue to the victors, the annalists of the time have passed the conflict lightly over. Hence some historians entirely omit all mention of this affair, whilst the most recent of them—the late Dr J. Hill Burton,—disposes of it very briefly, having, apparently, no secure *data* to guide him in the matter.

Whilst collecting the materials for my "History of Rob Roy," I was fortunate enough to discover that amongst the MSS. of His Grace the Duke of Marlborough there was a "Plan of the Battle," surveyed and drawn by Lieutenant John Bastide,¹ which gave not only the disposition of the Jacobite and Hanoverian forces, but also detailed with great fulness the different motions of the troops upon both sides. The application which I made for an inspection of this plan was promptly responded to; and His Grace courteously forwarded a certified copy of the original drawing, which forms the basis of the present paper. To make my remarks upon this important historical document thoroughly intelligible, it may be judicious to rehearse briefly the history of the time, that the state of parties may be thoroughly understood.

There were few amongst the warrior-politicians of the period who figured more prominently at the courts of James II., of William III., and

¹ Eighth Report of Hist. Manuscripts Commission, p. 22.

of Queen Anne, than the warlike Duke of Ormonde. His grandfather, the first Duke of Ormonde, whom he succeeded, had taken a prominent position in Irish affairs; and when he died, his successor had already been received into favour at the court of James II. His blood-relationship to the House of Nassau prompted him to adhere to the Prince of Orange at the time of the Revolution of 1688, and his vast influence in Ireland made him a powerful auxiliary in these unsettled times. He was thus raised to successive dignities during the reigns of William and of Anne, until his gallant services against the French and Spaniards induced the latter sovereign to make him commander-in-chief of the forces in Great Britain. This honourable post he held until the Treaty of Utrecht was concluded, when he was made Warden of the Cinque Ports, and Constable of Dover Castle.

Two years afterwards Queen Anne died, and the Elector of Hanover ascended the throne of Great Britain as George I. One of his first acts was to dismiss the leading politicians of the previous reign, who were likely to differ from him; and amongst these were numbered Bolingbroke and the Duke of Ormonde. The former at once joined the Jacobite court, but the latter retired to Avignon to bide his time. George I. had indiscreetly put himself into the hands of the Whigs, and under their advice the Duke of Ormonde was impeached of high treason, his estates declared forfeit, and a reward of £10,000 offered for his apprehension. The new king thus wilfully turned into an enemy one whom he might easily have secured as a friend.

It is not wonderful, in these circumstances, that Ormonde was willing to lend his aid when the Earl of Mar's rebellion broke out in Scotland in 1715. At that time he relied upon assistance from the French court, and he was grievously disappointed in his expectations. He landed upon the shores of Scotland, but his promised support was not forthcoming, and he was forced to flee to the Continent for protection. His next offer of aid came from a different quarter, and took a more practical shape.

Mar's rebellion had proved a fiasco. After the dubious conflict of Sheriffmuir he had withdrawn his troops northwards, devastating the

country through which he passed, as though he had expected a hostile pursuit; and when he reached Montrose the craven earl basely abandoned the chiefs who had perilled all in supporting him, and fled with his timorous king, James VIII., to more friendly shores. The Earl Marischall had thus the ungracious task committed to him of leading the discomfited Highlanders to Aberdeen, and there dismissing them to their several homes, the disappointed supporters of a forlorn cause. The earl himself found refuge and protection within the realm of France, and waited the dawning of a more propitious day.

France had made a feint of supporting the Jacobites solely upon *political* grounds, but Spain now proffered her aid as a religious ally, having the welfare of the Holy Catholic Church in view. Philip of Anjou had ascended the throne of Spain, and one of his prime advisers, the astute Cardinal Alberoni, saw that the first project to make him popular with his new subjects would be a Holy War for the re-establishment of Romanism in Scotland. Knowing the disgrace that had been put upon the Duke of Ormonde by the Hanoverians, the cardinal expected him to lead this projected expedition, and found him a willing pupil. The duke put himself in communication with the Earl Marischall and others of the Jacobites, and a descent upon Scotland was speedily arranged. Ormonde, who had won his laurels by defeating the Spaniards in Vigo Bay, was now to lead a new Spanish Armada against the country which gave him birth.

The Jacobite leaders who had taken refuge in France soon rallied at the call of the Earl Marischall. The Earl of Seaforth, the Marquess of Tullibardine, Atholl's valiant son, and Campbell of Glendaruel, the representative of Breadalbane, flocked to his assistance, and everything seemed to favour this new invasion of Great Britain. It was arranged that Seaforth and his comrades should make a diversion in the extreme north-west of the British Isles, whilst Ormonde and his foreign army landed on the southern coast; thus making a curious involuntary parody of Monmouth's plan of rebellion, which Ormonde had ruthlessly opposed in person.

The flame of Jacobite revolt had been maintained in Scotland principally through the agency of the marauding Highland clans; and several of the Lowland Whig strongholds were captured by them long after the Hanoverian Government had concluded that the rebellion had been crushed. The chief leader in these Jacobite raids was Robert Macgregor Campbell,—better known as Rob Roy,—a man whose fearless courage had led him into many a scrape, from which his wit and ingenuity delivered him. The projectors of this new invasion believed that no plan which they could entertain would be available without his aid; and he was at once taken into their confidence. The Marquess of Tullibardine and Campbell of Glendaruel put themselves in communication with him, and it was arranged that he should assemble the Highland malcontents at a given point upon the west coast, where they might co-operate with the foreign auxiliaries from Spain.

The campaign proposed was carefully planned, and gave every promise of success. The Earls of Marischall and Seaforth were to land upon the north-west coast and join the rebels under Rob Roy, and their united forces were to advance upon Inverness, then the most important Hanoverian station in the north, and expel the Dutch and English intruders. Whilst the news of this northern rebellion was distracting the court at London, the Duke of Ormonde was to land his Spanish Armada upon the southern shores of England, and march at once upon the capital, trusting to the influence of Jacobite feeling in Oxford and Northumberland to effect a victorious entry. This plan, as has been remarked, was identical with that which Monmouth and Argyll had vainly attempted to carry out in 1689; but the unsettled state of the country made its success more probable at this time. As the island of Lewis had long been in the possession of the Mackenzies, whose chief was the Earl of Seaforth, it was arranged that the landing of the Spanish contingent under the Earl Marischall should be made there, until the land-forces had mustered to their aid upon the mainland of Scotland. Alberoni furnished six companies of Spanish infantry-soldiers, two thousand stand of arms, and five thousand pistols, together with the transports necessary for their convey-

ance to Scotland; and with these Earl Marischall and his comrades set forth, shaping their course for Stornoway. The new Spanish Armada under the Duke of Ormonde was to set sail shortly after them, and strike terror into the hearts of the Southern Whigs, whilst the north of Scotland was in an uproar.

Despite the perils of his passage, Marischall arrived safely at Stornoway, and anchored within the bay, beneath the protection of the "ancestral towers" of the Mackenzies of Seaforth. Shortly afterwards he was joined by his younger brother, in company with the Marquess of Tullibardine and others of the Jacobites who had sought refuge in France. The meeting was not an auspicious one. Marischall believed that the whole conducting of this expedition had been committed to him, but Tullibardine produced a commission, under the hand of James VIII., constituting him commander of *any* expedition made in Scotland in the Jacobite interest. There is now no doubt that this commission had been granted in the anticipation that Charles XII. of Sweden would invade Scotland, but the death of that monarch should have cancelled this appointment. Tullibardine, however, was strenuous in his demand that the control of the expedition should be committed to him, and Marischall was forced to submit. He only claimed that the Spanish ships, which Alberoni had placed under his command, should be returned to Spain after their troops were landed.

This dispute at the very beginning of the campaign had an evil effect upon its subsequent history. Time slipped away whilst the chiefs were debating upon a trivial question of precedence, and when at length the Spaniards reached the shores of Kintail, their leaders received intelligence that Ormonde's Armada had met with evil weather off Cape Finisterre, and had been forced to return to port. What was to be done in these circumstances? Marischall only felt himself now responsible for the Spanish *ships*, as Tullibardine had assumed control of the *men*, and whenever a landing had been effected he sent back the transports which had brought him aid with all speed to Spain. The Spanish soldiers were thus in a manner entrapped in a foreign country, where they would be forced

to fight or surrender, cut off, as they were, from all communication with their native land.

The place chosen for their disembarkation was the Castle of Eilean Donan, which stood upon the peninsula betwixt Lochs Duich and Ling, and commanded the entrance to Loch Alsh from Kyleakin. The castle had been founded by Alexander III., and was the first seat of the Mackenzies who descended from Colin Fitzgerald, its constable in 1263.¹ Here the Spaniards effected a landing, established a magazine behind the manse, and awaited the Highland troops whom they expected.

Lord George Murray, the younger brother of Tullibardine, had joined the forces he could muster from Perthshire with those which Rob Roy had collected in Stirlingshire and the north part of Argyllshire, and these marched to Eilean Donan to meet the foreigners. The castle had suffered at the hands of General Cadogan after the battle of Sheriffmuir, but a few trifling repairs made it suitable as a temporary fort. It was the intention of the insurgents to push rapidly across the intervening country and seize upon Inverness, as they had assurances of support from the Macraes and Macleonnans of Kintail, and counted upon aid from the Campbells, whose chief, the Duke of Argyll, had been disgraced by George I. Their move was unexpectedly checkmated.

The command of the garrison of Inverness had been committed to General Wightman, who had distinguished himself at Sheriffmuir, and he soon received intelligence of this expedition from the Frasers, Munroes, and other clans friendly to the Hanoverian dynasty. He determined to proceed at once against the rebels, without waiting for special instructions from the Duke of Marlborough, then commander-in-chief of the British forces. Moving his troops hastily by the Strath-Affarick road, he took up the clans of Fraser and Munro on his way, and pushed on towards Eilean Donan, the ancient gathering-place of the Mackenzies, where he expected to meet the foe.

Meanwhile intelligence had reached the Government of the projected

¹ *Old Statistical Account*, vol. vi. p. 253, note.

expedition, and they caused the channel to be closely guarded, and ordered a search to be made for the insurgents amongst the numerous islets of the west coast. Fortune led the Hanoverian vessels into Loch Alsh, probably because the commanders shrewdly suspected that Seaforth would seek to land upon his own territory; and the rebels were attacked at their headquarters in Eilean Donan ere they had begun their march upon Inverness. The conflict was brief, for the castle had not been built to resist a siege with artillery, and the Highlanders and Spaniards were compelled to leave its shelter, and take the dangerous road which led towards Inverness by the Pass of Glenshiel. General Wightman had lost no time in advancing towards the coast of Kintail, and the rebels were thus placed in a dilemma, with a naval force threatening them upon one hand, the victors of Sheriffmuir confronting them on the other. There was considerable skill shown in the selection of the Pass of Glenshiel as the scene of conflict betwixt unequal forces; and had the Spaniards been native patriots instead of mercenaries, greater consequences would have ensued. It is at this point that the "Plan of the Battle" becomes of value.

The numbers engaged upon both sides in this affair have been variously stated; and it is difficult to arrive at an accurate estimate. Probably the Government troops amounted to 1600 men, whilst the rebels only mustered 1500. The latter force consisted of the Mackenzies, under their chief, the Earl of Seaforth, and his tenants of Kintail, the Macraes and Macleonnans; the Macgregors under Rob Roy; a small band of Murrays from Atholl, under Lord George Murray; and foreign auxiliaries, "300 (some say 400) Spaniards,"¹ commanded by Don Alonzo de Santarem. From Lieutenant Bastide's plan we find that Major-General Wightman's forces were composed of 146 grenadiers, 4 companies of dragoons, Colonel Montagu's regiment, Colonel Clayton's regiment, a detached battalion of Colonel Harrison's, the Clan Munro, the Sutherlands, including the Frasers, and Hussel's Dutch auxiliaries.

¹ *Old Statistical Account*, vol. vii. p. 132

After a hasty march from Inverness, the general arrived at the Pass of Glenshiel on the 10th of June 1719.¹

Wightman found the rebels so strongly posted, that though their numbers were inferior to his own he hesitated to attack. The river Shiel runs through a deep glen formed by the highlands of Kintail on the one side, and the lofty peak of Scuir-Curan on the other, regarding which Bastide notes that "the mount called Skururan is the highest in Scotland, except Ben Nevis." This statement is not absolutely correct, but the Ordnance Survey map gives its height as 3113 feet. The road from Inverness and Fort-William passes by the north side of the river through the glen, and the rocks rise so precipitously that a small force might hold the pass, if skilfully commanded, against excessive odds. At the

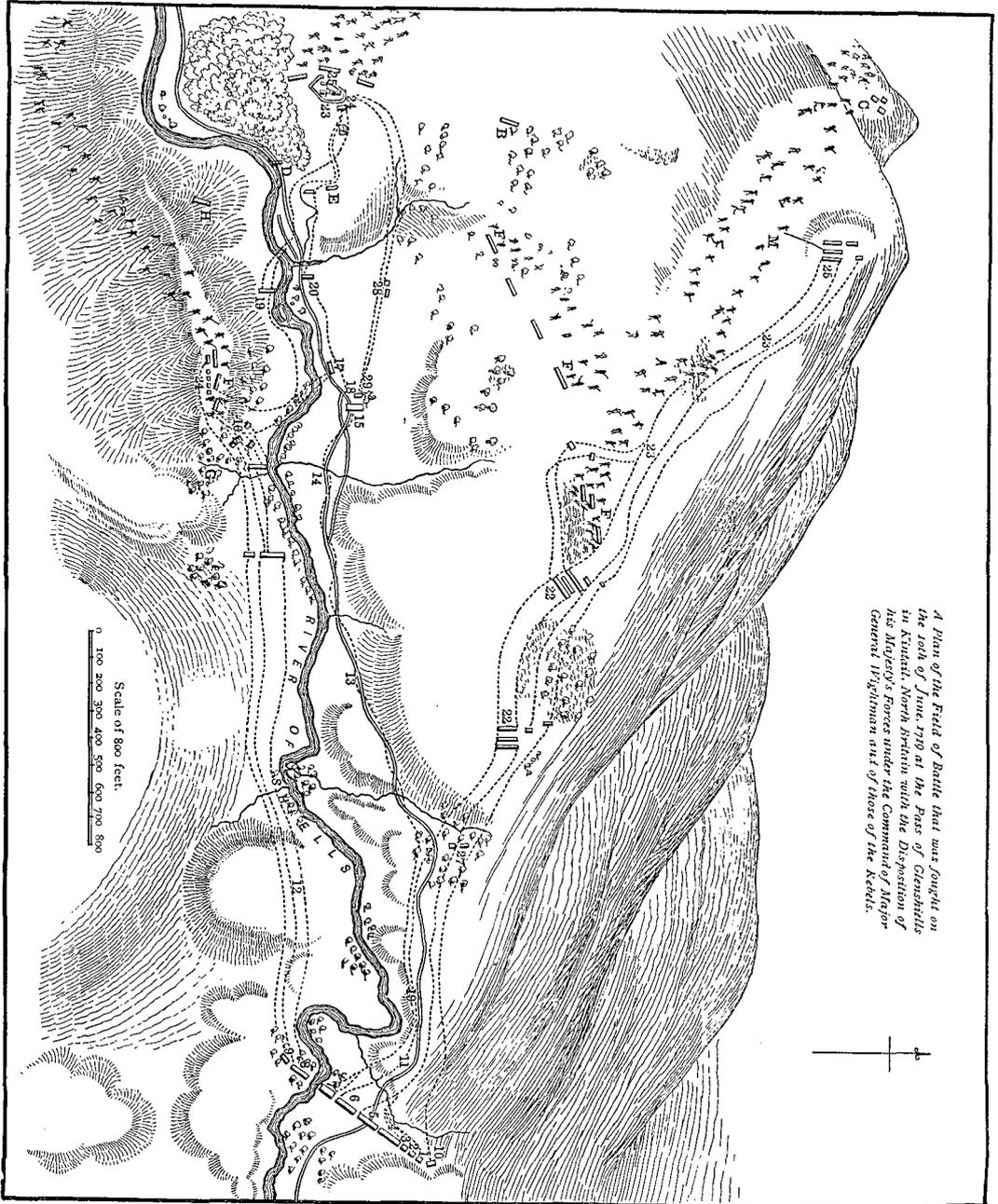
REFERENCES TO THE PLAN.

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Sergt. and 12 Grenadiers. 2. An Officer and 24 do. 3. Main Body of Grenadiers, 120 in Num. 4. Col. Montagu's Regmt. 5. Col. Harrison's Detacht. Battalion. 6. Hussel's Regmt. & 4 Companies of 7. Dragoons. 8. Col. Clayton's Regiment. 9. The Monro's Highlanders. 10. The Sutherland's Right. 11. The first march by ye Right. 12. Clayton's march by the Left. 13. The Dragoons march to the Plain. 14. The Dragoons Halt. 15. The Dragoons advance to the middle of the Plain. 16. Clayton's four Plottoons and the Monro's making ye First Attack on ye Rebels' Right. 17. Cohorn Mortars throwing Granades at the Rebels where ye First Attack was Ordered. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 18. Cohorn Mortars throwing Granades at ye Spaniards in their Entrenchments. 19. Part of Clayton's attacks the Barricade of the Pass. 20. 35 Dragoons on Foot attack the Spaniard's Breast Works. 21. The Dragoons mount the hill. 22. Our March in line of Battle to the Rock* where the Attack began under ye command of Col. Clayton. 23. Our Right pursue the Rebels. 24. The Plottoons and the Monro's halt upon the Hill, having putt the Enemy to the Flight. 25. Our Right halts upon ye Mountain. 26. Part of Clayton's takes possession of ye Hill that commanded the Pass. 27. Guard for the Baggage and place for the Hospital. 28. The Bagage advanced with the wounded men for their security. 29. Majr-Genl. Whightman giving his directions during the Action. |
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REFERENCES TO THE ENEMY.

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. A Spanish Regiment posted on the Hill that commanded the Plain and the Pass. B. Spaniards march to ye Mount & Halt. C. The Spaniards retire to the Top of the mountain. D. The Barricade that defended the Pass on the River Side. E. The Breastworks on the Side of the Hill. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> F. The Highlanders drawn up before the attack. G. A straggling number of Higilanders fire upon the Plottoons of Clayton's and the Monro's behind them in the time of the attack. H. A body of Highlanders going to sustain their Right. The Flight of the Rebels. The Mount call'd Skururan the highest in Scotland except Benevis. |
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¹ The date given by Dr Hill Burton (vol. viii. p. 342, ed. 1874), and by Dr Taylor, following him (*Pictorial History*, vol. ii. p. 879), is 11th June; but Bastide's plan, apparently drawn upon the spot, should settle this matter.



A Plan of the Field of Battle that was fought on the south of June 1799 at the Pass of Glenashilly in Kildare. North is shown with the Disposition of his Majesty's Forces under the Command of Major-General M'Pherson and of those of the Rebels.

western end of the pass, where the road came close to the river side, the rebels had erected a barricade (see plan, D), and a short distance from it, upon the rising ground to the north, they had thrown up breastworks in a position which commanded both the plain and the pass (A and E). These were occupied by the Spaniards, and formed the rebels' centre. The Highlanders were divided into nine companies, seven of them extended further up the side of Scuir-Curan to form the left wing, whilst two were posted on the south bank of the river, and became, by their situation, both the right wing and advance-guard of the rebels.

To oppose this powerful disposition of the enemies' forces, Wightman drew up his line about twelve hundred yards—as the crow flies—from the Spaniards' breastworks, and extended his front in ten divisions. The dragoons were posted on the right (north) bank of the river, to form his centre (see plan, fig. 7), and the regiments of Hüssel, Harrison, and Montagu (figs. 6, 5, 4), supported by three companies of grenadiers, formed his right wing; whilst a band of Sutherlands and Frasers were placed at the extreme right. Colonel Clayton's regiment and the Munro Highlanders formed his left wing, and were posted on the left (south) bank of the river. His whole front did not extend over 700 feet, and was much more manageable in motion than the scattered companies of the rebels.

A careful study of Bastide's diagram will show that Wightman's plan of attack was to break the rebels' line by throwing his chief force against their left; to take the Spaniards' position by assault with his dragoons, and to let Clayton's regiment and the Munroes disperse the rebels' right, separated as it was from their main body by the river. Scottish historians agree in stating that he was unsuccessful, and had to recall his troops after three hours' ineffectual fighting; and they lead you to believe that it was with surprise that he found himself victor after an indefinite engagement. But if Bastide's plan is to be accepted, this statement cannot be safely repeated; and the following description of the order of battle is strictly according to his references.

The Hanoverian right (Nos. 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1) made the first advance up the side of Scuir-Curan, under the command of Colonel Clayton, and

attacked three companies, forming the enemies' extreme left, at the rock where they were posted (22, F). As the rebels were somewhat isolated here, a detachment of Hussel's and another of Montagu's broke their line by passing to the south of them, whilst the Sutherlands poured in their fire from the north. Assailed thus on three sides the rebels gave way, and fled up the mountain, closely pursued by their opponents (23), who finally halted near the summit of the lofty peak (25).

In the meantime Clayton's regiment and the Munroes (8, 9) advanced rapidly (12) against the rebels' right on the south bank of the river (F. 24), and Wightman led his dragoons and grenadiers with mortars by the road on the north bank, until they were opposite (17) the rebels' position on the other side of the river. From this spot grenades were thrown into the midst of the rebels before the Hanoverian left had reached them; and when Clayton's regiment was divided into four platoons (16), attacking them from different points, the rebels gave way and retreated towards their breastworks (A, E) by fording the river. A body of Highlanders (H), who had advanced to support the right, were too late to be of assistance, and (probably) fell back also. Clayton's regiment and the Munroes now occupied the post vacated by the rebels, and sent forward a detachment (19) to storm the barricade (D) on the river side.

The grenade-mortars (18) were next turned against the Spaniards' entrenchment (A), whilst a company of thirty-five dragoons dismounted (20) and attacked the breastworks (E) on foot. Alarmed by these combined movements, the Spaniards abandoned their position (A), and retreated up the mountain (B), and the main body of the dragoons (15), with General Wightman at their head (29), advanced and took possession of the deserted fort. The baggage and the hospital had been planted in the rear of the right after its first advance (27); but after the capture of the entrenchment they were brought forward to a place of greater security (28). The engagement had begun at five o'clock in the afternoon of a midsummer day, and had lasted for three hours; so that it was not easy to tell, as night overtook the combatants, to whom the victory

belonged. When Wightman reckoned his losses he found that he had 21 men killed and 121 men wounded, but he could form no idea of the loss on the other side.

Their loss, however, had been severe enough. Whatever the Spaniards had done, at least the Highlanders had fought bravely, whilst courage could avail, and three of their leaders—Seaforth, Tullibardine, and Lord George Murray,—had been borne wounded from the field. It is probable that, seeing their position to be hopeless, Marischall advised the Spaniards to surrender as prisoners of war; whilst Rob Roy counselled the Highlanders to disperse quietly to their homes ere the morning dawned. Ormonde's last attempt to overthrow the Hanoverian dynasty had proved a conspicuous failure. A party of the fugitives retired by Eilean Donan and destroyed all hope of further resistance by demolishing the magazine which the Spaniards had formed there.

A slight consideration of their situation when the following day broke upon them, convinced the Spaniards that all hope of escape for them was vain. They had fled for refuge to one of the peaks of Scur-Curan (C), and upon an eminence confronting them they saw the whole of the enemies' right wing arranged in order of battle. The natives whom they had come to aid had deserted them; their retreat by water had been effectually prevented by the return of their transports to Spain; and nothing remained for them but to surrender. Their leader, Don Alonzo de Santarem, resigned his sword to General Wightman, and 274 of his compatriots laid down their arms, and were carried to Edinburgh as prisoners of war. Seaforth escaped to France, and after some years resigned himself and his clan to General Wade. Tullibardine and Lord George Murray joined the court of the Pretender, and afterwards took a prominent share in the rebellion of 1745. Marischall and his brother escaped to the Continent, where the latter became famous as Marshal Keith; and within ten years the Highland clans had submitted,—for the time, at least,—to Hanoverian rule.

Thus ended the battle of Glenshiel, memorable as an episode in the revolution of 1715, and important as showing that regular troops could

be effectively manœuvred against the Highlanders, even in their most difficult fastnesses. That lesson bore bitter fruit afterwards on Culloden Moor.