

II.

NOTICE OF AN ORIGINAL LETTER OF INSTRUCTIONS FOR SIR WILLIAM FLEMING, BY KING CHARLES II., DATED AT BRED A, 22ND MAY 1650. BY A. G. REID, F.S.A. SCOT.

I lately purchased, at an auction sale in Edinburgh, an odd volume, being the 2nd of the *Miscellany of the Maitland Club*. In going over the Wigton Papers in that volume, I discovered an original paper bearing the superscription of King Charles II., entitled "Instruction for Sr William Fleming, Kn^t." "Given at Breda, $\frac{22}{5}$ th day of May 1650." It is of considerable historical interest. His Majesty states that he had heard a report of a fight between Lieutenant-General David Lesley and the Marquis of Montrose, wherein the forces of the Marquis were totally routed and defeated; and that on Sir William Fleming's arrival in Scotland, if he should find this to be the case, he should carefully conceal the letter directed to the Committee of Estates; but in the event of the news being untrue, the letter should be delivered. These instructions do not form part of the Wigton Papers published in the *Miscellany*, and so far as known have not been printed.

Sir James Balfour states¹: "Saturday, 25th May 1650: A letter from the King's Majesty to Parliament, dated from Breda, 12th May 1650, showing that he was heartily sorry that James Graham had invaded this Kingdom, and how he had discharged him from doing the same, and earnestly desired the Estates of Parliament to do himself that Justice as not to believe that he was accessory to the said invasion in the least degree,—read.

"Also a double of His Majesty's letter to James Graham, dated 15th of May 1650, commanding him to lay down arms and secure all the ammunition under his charge,—read in the house.

"The House remits to the Committee of Despatches to answer His Majesty's letter to the Parliament."

¹ Balfour's *Annals*, vol. iv. p. 24.

The terms of the letter from the King to the Parliament,¹ dated 18th May 1650, are quite different from those in the letter of the 12th as given by Sir James Balfour. He expresses no regret that Montrose has invaded the Kingdom, and he does not disclaim his having been accessory thereto. He merely states that he had given satisfaction to the Commissioners, and laid the foundation of a happy agreement and perfect understanding between them and him "for the time to come, being resolved to cast ourself on the affections of that our ancient Kingdom of Scotland, and to endeavour the good and peace thereof in all things to the uttermost of our power," and that he had accordingly given orders for the disbanding of the Forces, and for their withdrawing out of the Kingdom.

Private instructions² were given to Sir William Fleming, dated 19th May 1650, to see Montrose, and if the prevailing party in Scotland were not satisfied with the concessions he had granted to them, that Montrose should not lay down arms; that if His Majesty's friends in Scotland did not think fit that Montrose should lay down arms, "then as many as can may repair to him, and if Sir William Fleming should see if the Marquis have a considerable number of men, and if he have, you must use your best indevor to get them not to be disbanded, but if Montrose be weke then he should disband."

From these documents it is clear that Sir William Fleming's instructions were, if he found Montrose still in strength, His Majesty's letter should not be producéd to Parliament, but, if otherwise, that the letter should be produced.

These instructions were given before hearing of the discomfiture of Montrose at Corbiesdale, and there is no dubiety about their import. Those now exhibited were written after his disastrous defeat, and by them Sir William Fleming was carefully instructed, in the event of his finding the news to be true, or that the Marquis should not be within the Kingdom of Scotland, the letter to Parliament should not be delivered and be carefully concealed; but that if he found the news

¹ "Wigton Papers," *Miscellany of the Maitland Club*, vol. ii. p. 478.

² "Wigton Papers," xli.

untrue, and the Marquis in considerable force, the letter should be delivered to the Parliament, to the end that by their direction Montrose might be induced to lay down arms, according to his express order on that behalf.

The tenor of these secret instructions appears contradictory. According to the instructions given previous to the news of Montrose's defeat, the letter to Parliament was not to be delivered in the event of Montrose being able to hold his own, while the instructions given after his discomfiture were that it should be delivered on no account if the tidings of his defeat should prove to be true.

It is difficult to reconcile the two sets of instructions, but the letter now exhibited proves that Sir William Fleming disobeyed his ultimate orders, and, notwithstanding of the instructions to conceal the letter, on finding that Montrose was routed, it was produced to Parliament.

It seems to be matter of inquiry if Sir William Fleming, on finding Montrose utterly defeated, and subsequently condemned and executed, did not think it a matter of worldly prudence, in conjunction with His Majesty's supporters in Scotland, to disregard His Majesty's ultimate orders to produce the letter, and with the view of conciliating the party in power, disingenuously to disavow the authority given to Montrose.

The following is a copy of the letter :—

CHARLES R.—Instruction for S^r William Fleming, Kn^t.

As soone as you arrive in Scotland you shall carefully informe yo^r self concerning the Report that is lately come hither of a fight betweene L^t G^rall David Lesley and the Marquis of Montrose, wherein (as it is said) the forces of the said Marquis were totally routed and defeated, and if you find the same to be true, or that he be not in the Kingdome of Scotland, then our pleasure is that you doe not deliver our Letter directed to the Parliam^t or Committee of Estates, but that you carefully conceale the same, and do not communicate it to any person whatsoever. But if upon enquiry you find that either there hath been no such fight, or that notwithstanding the same, the forces of the said Marquis of Montrose are still in a considerable body, you are then to deliver the said Letter to the Parliam^t to the end that by their direction therein, the said Marquis of Montrose may be induced to lay downe armes immediatly, according to our expresse order in that beholfe. Given at Breda, the 1st day of May 1650.

The document is in the handwriting of an amanuensis, with the excep-

tion of an interlineation, "or that he be not in the Kingdome of Scotland," which is holograph of the King.