

## CHAPTER XXVII.

Scotland.—Affairs of Religion.—Plots.—The Highland Clans dispersed.—State of the Highlands in 1691.—Breadalbane.—Proclamation of the Government.—The Master of Stair.—Tardy submission of MacIan.—Order as to rebels not submitted.—Order for MacIan of Glencoe, and his tribe.—Letters of the Master of Stair.—Highland troops arrive in Glencoe.—The Massacre of the MacDonalds.—Inquiry into the Massacre in 1695.—Resolutions of the Scottish Parliament.—Master of Stair dismissed.—The other persons implicated.—Breadalbane.—Misconceptions connected with the Massacre.—Character of William unjustly assailed.

THE politics of Scotland in the first two years after the Revolution were more complicated than those of England. The ascendancy of the Presbyterians had been established; but the Episcopalians were still a formidable body. In 1689, although episcopacy had been abolished, the church-government had not been defined. There was no supreme directing power in affairs of religion. In 1690, the Parliament of Scotland established the synodical authority; made the signature to the Confession of Faith the test of orthodoxy; and Patronage was abolished, under certain small compensations to the patrons. The dissensions connected with these arrangements gave courage to those who looked to discord as the means for restoring the Stuart king. A knot of turbulent and discontented men, known as The Club, entered into schemes for reversing all that had been accomplished by the Revolution. Their leaders were frightened, and informed against each other. Lord Annandale implicated the unhappy Jacobite scribbler, Nevil Payne. He thought himself safer in Scotland than in London—a fatal mistake. We extract a passage in a letter from the earl of Crauford to the earl of Melville, the king's high-commissioner, to show how the ancient ferocity still lingered amongst the politicians of Scotland. The letter is dated December 11th, 1690: "Yesterday in the afternoon, Nevil Penn (after near an hour's discourse with him, in name of the council, and in their presence, though at several times, by turning him out and then calling him in again) was questioned upon some things that were not of the deepest concern, and had but gentle torture given him, being resolved to repeat it

this day. Which accordingly about six this evening we inflicted on both thumbs and one of his legs, with all the severity that was consistent with humanity, even unto that pitch that we could not preserve life and have gone further; but without the least success.\* This was the last occasion on which Scottish statesmen were disgraced by endeavouring to extort evidence against political malcontents, by "all the severity that was consistent with humanity."† The noble actors in this plot offered up the obscure Nevil Payne as a sacrifice; secured their own safety; and suffered the Lowlands to settle down into peace.

After the victory of Killiecrankie, there was a new gathering of Highland clans. The command was taken by general Cannon, who had come over from Ireland with the three hundred troops sent by James to the aid of Dundee. The chieftains soon began to manifest their repugnance to be under the control of a stranger, although he had served in the Netherlands, and brought his military experience to aid their national mode of warfare. The comparative value of regular troops and mountaineers, who if they failed in the first rush were quickly disorganised, was again to be tried. The Cameronian regiment at Dunkeld was attacked by four or five thousand Highlanders. The place was obstinately defended by the successors of the old Puritans, and after four hours' fighting, the clans drew off; the chiefs signed a pledge to support king James; and their followers dispersed. The victorious army of Dundee melted away like a snow-drift. During 1690 there were various outbreaks of detached clans. But Mackay collected an overpowering force at Inverlochy; and there hastily built Fort William, and fixed a garrison there under the command of colonel Hill.

King William, as early as March 1690, manifested a wise disposition to tranquillize the Highlands by gentle measures. His warrant to George viscount Tarbet to treat with the Highland chiefs, authorizes him to offer the leaders of the clans indemnity, with money and honours, upon their "return to their duty." Early in 1691, a message had been sent to James "by the loyal Highlanders who had continued in arms for him in Scotland, that unless those of the South joined them, or that his majesty sent speedy succours, it would be impossible to hold out any longer."

\* "Leven and Melville Papers," p. 582.

† "The law of England was the only code in Europe which dispensed with judicial torture."—Burton, "History of Scotland," vol. i. p. 85.



His majesty returned for answer that his abilities to assist were exhausted by the pressing necessities of Ireland; but that "he had made a shift to send them some present relief of flour, salt, brandy, tobacco, medicinal drugs, flints, &c.," and that if they could stand out no longer, he recommended "an outward compliance." \* In 1690 a negotiation had been opened with lord Breadalbane, to win him over to the government, and to employ his influence to conciliate the rebel chiefs. This negotiation failed. But in the autumn of 1691, Breadalbane, having made his submission to the government, was again authorized to treat with the heads of clans, and to expend twelve or fifteen thousand pounds in this work of pacification. It may well be doubted whether this Highland earl went about his trust in perfect good faith. He is described by his contemporary, John Macky, "cunning as a fox; wise as a serpent; but as slippery as an eel." † At any rate, those who had the most intimate knowledge of the rivalries and petty interests of the chiefs doubted the practicability of the plan, as they doubted the honesty of the man employed to work it. Colonel Hill, in May, 1691, had received an order from the Council, as he writes to the earl of Melville, "to fall upon those Highlanders within my reach that do not presently come in and take the oath of allegiance, and deliver up their arms." In a previous letter he says, "I could wish, if they rise again, that all the West country, and all the clans whom they have injured, may be let loose upon them *till they be utterly rooted out.*" ‡ Utterly to root out a rebellious clan was the ready method that presented itself to the military mind. At this time Hill says, "I expect several of them in, and the M'Intoshes men in the Brae, and Glencoe men, if they fail, I'll put my orders in execution against them." On the 15th of May, he writes to Melville, "I have last night received an order to delay the severity prepared by the former order, till I hear further." § He took wiser measures than the plan of rooting out. He sent the clans the form of an oath, to which many chiefs subscribed. "The Appin and Glencoe men have desired they may go in to my lord of Argyle, because he is their superior, and I have set them a short day to do it in." ¶ By a letter of sir Thomas Livingstone, who was chief in command of the king's forces, it appears that he "had

\* "Life of James II." vol. ii. p. 468.

† Quoted in Burton's "Scotland," vol. i. p. 156.

‡ "Leven and Melville Papers," pp. 610, 611.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 618.

¶ *Ibid.*, p. 613.

been commanded by the Master of Stair, to order Hill not to act as yet any way vigorously on his side." \* The Master of Stair, sir John Dalrymple, was secretary of state for Scotland, and was then in attendance upon king William in Holland and the Netherlands. The scheme of lord Breadalbane for bribing the chiefs to submission and loyalty was the cause of the direction to Hill not to act vigorously. Colonel Hill by no means approved of Breadalbane or his plan. He would, he writes, have had "much more of the people under oath had not my lord Breadalbane's design hindered; which I wish may do good, but suspect more hurt than good from it: for my part, hereafter if I live to have geese, I'll set the fox to keep them." † Breadalbane came into the Highlands, and made his overtures to certain chiefs. "He tells them the money he has for them is locked up in a chest at London; but they believe, if he say true in this, he will find a way to keep a good part of it to himself." ‡ On the 23rd of July, Dalrymple wrote to Livingstone from the camp at Gerpines, in the name of the king, to direct him to keep his troops on the Highland borders, but not to commit any acts of hostility against the Highlanders. § On the 29th of July, the Privy Council of Scotland expressed their opinion to the queen, that if the army had marched against those who held out when Hill was tendering the oath, "they would have submitted themselves, or been easily forced to it." ¶

The plans of Breadalbane did not produce the effect that was contemplated. Hill writes on the 23rd of August, that the country was peaceable; but that there were impediments to a general submission, through the oath of confederation amongst clans, "by which they are obliged to do nothing without the consent of each other." ¶ There was a strong suspicion that Breadalbane did get the lion's share of the money which he pretended to be in the chest at London, but which was really in his own coffers. According to a tradition preserved by Dalrymple, he refused to give any account of how it was applied, saying, "the money is spent—the Highlands are quiet—and this is the only way of accompting among friends." In the distribution of his gratuities he brought his own interests and passions into play. He was a great Highland lord, with large domains and hundreds of vassals; but his territories were often exposed to the depredations of the clans with whom he was at

\* "Leven and Melville Papers," p. 622.

† *Ibid.*, p. 623.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 625.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 631.

¶ *Ibid.*, p. 634.

¶ *Ibid.*, p. 641.



feud. The small clan, MacDonald of Glencoe, were bad neighbours to Breadalbane; and he took this occasion to require that the gratuity which he had to offer for their allegiance should be a set-off for certain claims of the Campbells for injuries committed by the MacDonalds. MacIan, their chief, as proud if not so great as Breadalbane, was wholly impracticable upon such terms. Others followed his example; and many clans remained in a state of inert rebellion. In August, the government determined to bring the submission of the Highland chiefs to a decisive issue, by a Proclamation offering indemnity to all who should take the oaths, on or before the last day of December, 1691, and threatening the extremities of military execution,—in the old form of threatening the vengeance of fire and sword,—against all and each who should not submit to the government, and swear to live in peace. “Letters of fire and sword had been so ceaselessly issued against the Highlanders, that in the time of the Stuarts it was a usual and little noticeable form.”\*

It would appear by a letter of the duke of Hamilton, dated as late as the 26th of December, that he regretted that sir Thomas Livingstone, who had that night returned from London, had not seen the king, which “would have contributed more to his service than commanding him back; for he could have advised better measures than is taken, to have reduced the Highlanders, of which there is not one word signified to the Council.”† Some of the chiefs had held out to the very last. But on the 31st of December, all the clans had given their submission, with one exception—the MacDonalds of Glencoe. The submission of all the other chiefs who had been in arms against the government was an event which was not contemplated with satisfaction by the Master of Stair. Burnet says, “a black design was laid, not only to cut off the men of Glencoe, but a great many more clans, reckoned to be in all above six thousand persons.”‡ This may be a very loose assertion; but letters of Dalrymple, written to lieutenant-colonel Hamilton early in December, prove that he had an especial grudge against the MacDonalds. “for marring the bargain which the earl of Breadalbane was doing with the Highlanders;” and that he entertained a hope that the MacDonalds would “fall into the net”—that is, not comply with the Proclamation. He further intimates that the government is obliged to ruin some of the clans, “in order to weaken and frighten the rest.” That Dalrymple contemplated

\* Burnet’s “History of Scotland,” vol. i. p. 156.

† “Leven and Melville Papers,” p. 652.

‡ “Own Time,” vol. iv. p. 274.

something like “the black design” mentioned by Burnet, is evident from his letter of instructions to the commander of the troops for his guidance, if the obnoxious clans should not have submitted by the prescribed day. He is directed to destroy entirely the country of Lochaber, Lochiel’s lands, Keppoch’s, Glengarry’s, and Glencoe’s. “Your power shall be large enough. I hope the soldiers will not trouble the government with prisoners.” Mr. Burton considers that Dalrymple, from whose letters of this nature we now turn with such loathing, “only pursued the old policy of Scottish governments towards the Highlanders. . . . The rule had always been to show no more consideration to Highlanders than to wild beasts.”\*

The clan of the MacDonalds dwelt in the valley of Glencoe, under their venerable chief MacIan. Their huts were scattered in several hamlets around his house—a small population of not two hundred adult males.† He had fought with his few hardy followers in the ranks of Dundee at Killiecrankie; he had the reputation of being one of the most daring of the Highland marauders; he had driven off cattle in the territories of Argyle and Breadalbane. He was therefore an object of especial hatred to those proud nobles, who regarded him as a paltry robber to be crushed when the opportunity came. MacIan had his own pride, and deferred his obedience to the Proclamation till the last moment. On the 31st of December he presented himself, with some of his clan, at Fort William, and offered to take the oaths before colonel Hill. The commander of the garrison had no legal power to receive them; he was not a magistrate. Hill gave him a letter to the sheriff of Argyleshire, stating the application that had been made to him, and expressing a hope that the submission of the “lost sheep recovered” would be received. It was six days before he reached Inverary, over mountain paths covered with snow. The sheriff yielded to the old man’s prayers and tears; administered the oath, and sent to the Sheriff-Clerk of Argyle, then at Edinburgh, a certificate to be laid before the Council of the circumstances which had led him to do what was a departure from the letter of the Proclamation, but which was within its spirit. The Sheriff-Clerk first tendered the certificate, with a copy of Hill’s letter, to the Clerks of the Council, who refused to receive it. He then applied to individual Privy Counsellors, who would not interfere in the

\* “History of Scotland,” vol. i. p. 170.

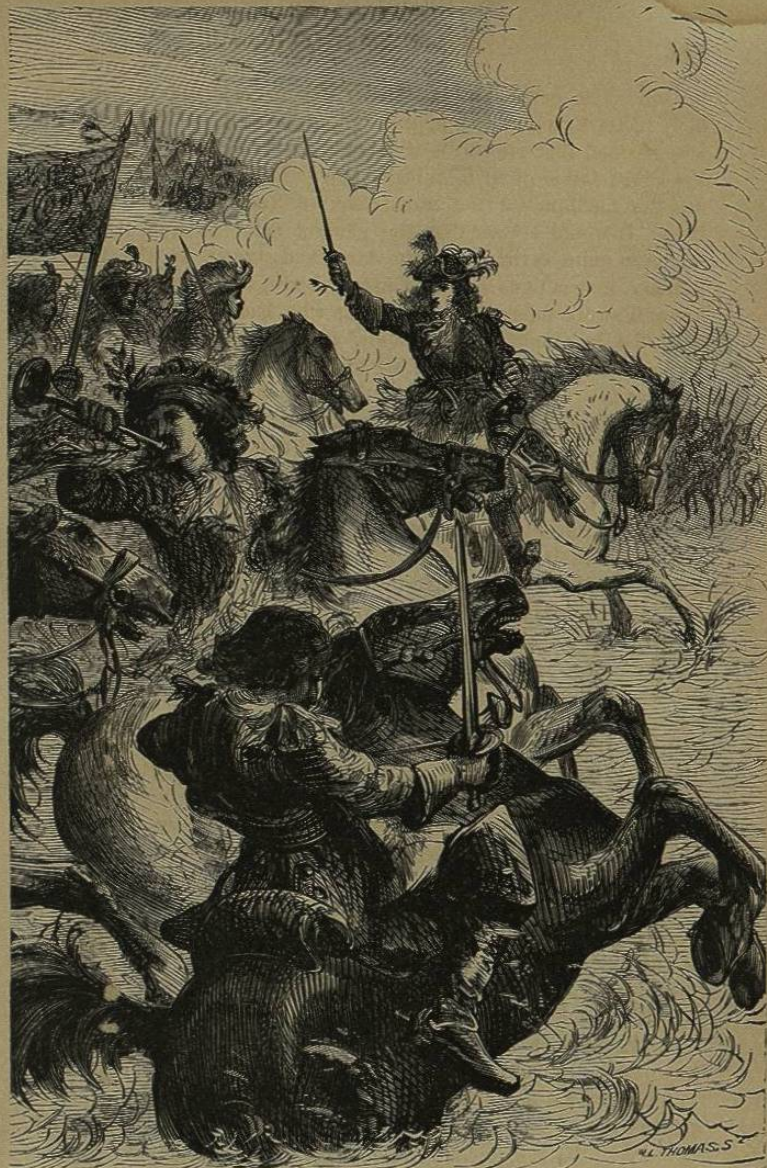
† Macaulay says “two hundred persons;” certainly an error.



matter. The certificate was finally suppressed, and the general body of the Council were kept in ignorance of it. Amongst those who advised that the certificate should not be sent in, was the Lord President, father of sir John Dalrymple. Dalrymple, the Secretary, was the medium for the transaction of Scottish affairs with the king. It would appear that the general submission of the clans was not quite certain; for the king had signed, on the 11th of January, instructions to sir Thomas Livingstone, to pursue with fire and sword those Highland rebels who had not taken the benefit of the indemnity; but to allow them to surrender on mercy. Objections were taken to the use of the old term "fire and sword" in these instructions. On the 16th of January the instructions of the 11th were repeated, with verbal alterations, and with this addition: "As for Maclan of Glencoe and that tribe, if they can be well distinguished from the rest of the Highlanders, it will be proper for the vindication of public justice to extirpate that sect of thieves." Burnet alleges that "the king signed this, without any inquiry about it; for he was too apt to sign papers in a hurry." Those who doubt this, allege that it was not only signed but superscribed by the king. The Hon. William Leslie Melville says "that the king's having both superscribed and subscribed 'one unfortunate sentence,' should not be received by all our historians and poets as a conclusive proof of his being cognisant of their contents. I find numerous warrants and orders from him, some superscribed and subscribed, some only superscribed, some only subscribed, as a man in haste would dispatch business of form."\* It is of some importance to bear in mind that what William superscribed and subscribed was a long letter of instructions containing several clauses. It was a duplicate, with alterations, of what he had signed five days before. In this duplicate the "one unfortunate sentence" was added. In a little book, very useful as a summary of events, the compiler prints the words beginning, "As for Maclan," and ending, "sect of thieves," with "William R." as the superscription of these four lines only, subscribed "W. R." He then rejects the notion that William signed without reading the document, because it consisted "of so few words."† We attach no importance to Burnet's defence. In our view the character of William is best defended by assuming that he did read the order; that he signed without knowing that Maclan had irregularly taken

\* Preface to "Leven and Melville Papers," p. xxxv.

† Annals of England, vol. iii. p. 371.



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the oaths; and that the words, "to *extirpate* that sect of thieves," who were represented in a state of rebellious warfare, was not to direct their butchery with circumstances of treachery and cruelty. We are inclined to believe that William not only signed the order with a complete knowledge; but that the attempt to prevent any indiscriminate slaughter, by the words "if they can well be distinguished from the rest of the Highlanders," looks like an emanation from his mind. The Master of Stair would have little cared how many were slaughtered in a loose construction of the exceptional case of the MacDonalds. Whether the argument that the word *extirpate* "would naturally bear a sense perfectly innocent, and would, but for the horrible event which followed, have been universally understood in that sense," \* may admit of a difference of opinion. The word meant, no doubt, a complete suppression of a community not conforming to the laws of civilised society; but, as it appears to us, it did not mean their indiscriminate slaughter. Hill, who appears to have been no cruel oppressor, desires that the rebellious clans "may be utterly rooted out." To *extirpate*, and to root out, are synonymous terms. We believe that William knew what the word implied. He had probably never read "The Tempest;" but used the word as Shakspeare used it when he makes the king of Naples hearken to the suit of Prospero's brother, that he

"Should presently *extirpate* me and mine  
Out of the dukedom."

If the long letter of instructions, concluding with the short sentence relating to the MacDonalds, had run in the ancient form for the destruction of Highlanders, he might have hesitated: "To invade them to their utter destruction, by slaughter, burning, drowning, and other ways, and leave no creature living of that clan, except priests, women, and bairns." † At any rate we may affirm, that it is a falsehood in the compiler of the Life of James II. to say, "By an order, which Nero himself would have had a horror of, the prince of Orange commanded one colonel Hill and lieutenant-colonel Hamilton, to put Glencoe to death, and all the males of his line, [in age] not exceeding seventy." ‡ It is observed by Walter Wilson, in his Life of Defoe, that "the inveteracy that marked the language of the Jacobites when speaking of king William, and with

\* Macaulay, vol. iv. p. 205.

† "Spalding Club Miscellany." Quoted by Mr. Burton.

‡ "Life of James II." vol. ii. p. 470.



which their works are so highly seasoned, has descended in full force to our own day." We have an example of this temper in the valuable but somewhat prejudiced "Annals" issued from Oxford, in which it is inferred "that Stair did not really go beyond William's instructions in planning the massacre of Glencoe, although the Parliament of Scotland had the complaisance to lay the greater blame on the minister." The Parliament of Scotland expressly said, as the first result of their investigation in 1695, "We found, in the first place, that the Master of Stair's letters had exceeded your majesty's instructions." William was, indeed, justly indignant at this resolution; "frequently repeating that he thanked the Parliament of Scotland; they had used him better than England had done his grandfather, for they had tried him for his life, and brought him in not guilty."\* His pride was wounded that any investigation at all should have taken place as to his concurrence in the act of his minister. The Parliament had voted the Glencoe slaughter to be a murder; and he thought it no compliment to be formally acquitted as an accessory before the fact.

In transmitting from London the instructions signed by the king on the 11th of January, the Secretary of State for Scotland wrote to sir Thomas Livingstone, "I have no great kindness to Keppoch nor Glencoe; and it is well that people are in mercy. Just now, my lord Argyle tells me, that Glencoe hath not taken the oath, at which I rejoice. It is a great work of charity to be exact in rooting out that damnable sept, the worst of the Highlanders." When Dalrymple sent the instructions of the 16th, he wrote to Livingstone, "For a just example of vengeance, I entreat the thieving tribe of Glencoe may be rooted out to purpose." To colonel Hill he wrote on the same date, "That such as render on mercy might be saved;" but entreats that "for a just vengeance and public example the tribe of Glencoe may be rooted out to purpose. The earls of Argyle and Breadalbane have promised that they shall have no retreat in their bounds." During another fortnight nothing was done towards accomplishing Dalrymple's entreaties. On the 30th he wrote again to Livingstone: "I am glad that Glencoe did not come within the time prefixed. I hope what is done there may be in earnest, since the rest are not in a condition to draw together to help. I think to harry their cattle, and burn their houses, is but to render them desperate, lawless men; but I believe you will be satisfied it were a great advantage to the na-

\* Defoe, "History of the Union," p. 72.

tion, that thieving tribe were rooted out and cut off." To Hill he writes, on the same day, "Pray, when the thing concerning Glencoe is resolved, let it be secret and sudden." Colonel Hill sent his orders to lieutenant-colonel Hamilton, to march with eight hundred men straight to Glencoe; "and there put in execution the orders you have received from the commander-in-chief." Hamilton addressed his orders to major Duncanson, his second in command; concluding his letter by directing that the avenues be so secured, "that the old fox, nor none of his cubs get away: The orders are that none be spared, nor the government troubled with prisoners." Major Duncanson then despatched captain Robert Campbell of Glenlyon, to proceed to Glencoe, in advance of the other troops, with a detachment of a hundred and twenty men of Argyle's regiment. He arrived there on the 1st of February.

The valley of Glencoe has been variously described, according to the associations of those who have visited it. In the eyes of the picturesque historian of this period,—who regards it as a rugged desert, "valued on account of the shelter which it afforded to the plunderer and his plunder,"—it is "the most dreary and melancholy of all the Scottish passes, the very Valley of the Shadow of Death."\* To the equal minded tourist, "the scenery of this valley is far the most picturesque of any in the Highlands."† To the enthusiastic believer in Ossian, it is the valley of Fingal,—having a name, indeed, signifying in the Celtic tongue, the Valley of Tears—"the most peaceful and secluded of narrow vales." "Here the matchless melody of the sweet voice of Cona first awaked the joy of grief." The blue stream of Ossian's Cona here bends its course to Lochleven. The glen, "so warm, so fertile, so overhung by mountains which seem to meet above you," is described as "a place of great plenty and security."‡ The admirable historian of Scotland from the Revolution, tells us of the narrow slip of grazing ground between the Alpine walls of Glencoe; and a few, still narrower, on the upper levels. If the Macdonalds had not lived, he says, by plunder, their arid glen could not have supported the population.§ Whether barren or fertile, whether filled by robbers, or by "born poets," who treasured up "the songs of Selma,"—here dwelt the Macclans in patriarchal

\* Macaulay, vol. iv. p. 191.

† Pennant.

‡ See Mrs. Grant's "Letters from the Mountains," Letter xi. 1773.

§ Burton, vol. i. p. 162.



simplicity. Campbell of Glenlyon, who came with his hundred and twenty Highlanders of the Argyle regiment on the 1st of February, 1692, spent twelve days with his men amidst the somewhat unpoetical hospitalities of the clan. The MacLans had no affection for the Campbells; but Glenlyon's niece was married to the second son of their chief; and when he and his lieutenant, Lindsay, said they came as friends, and asked for quarters, being sent to relieve the garrison of Fort William, who were overcrowded, they were received with cordiality. Undoubtedly the chief and his clansmen trusted to the indemnity of the government which they thought had been secured by the oath which MacLan had taken before the Sheriff of Argyle. Here they lived for twelve days as Highlander with Highlander. They had beef and spirits without payment. They were sheltered from the snow storms in the huts of the poor people. Glenlyon became affectionate over his usquebaugh with the husband of his niece; played at cards with the old chief; and entertained two of MacLan's sons at supper on the night of the 12th. At that time he had the following letter in his pocket, from major Duncanson, dated on the 12th from Balacholis, in the immediate neighbourhood: "You are hereby ordered to fall upon the rebels, the MacDonalds of Glencoe, and put all to the sword under seventy. You are to have especial care that the old fox and his sons do on no account escape your hands. You are to secure all the avenues, that no man escape. This you are to put in execution at five o'clock in the morning precisely, and by that time, or very shortly after it, I'll strive to be at you with a stronger party; if I do not come to you at five, you are not to tarry for me, but to fall on. This is by the king's special command, for the good and safety of the country, that these miscreants may be cut off, root and branch. See that this be put in execution without fear or favour, else you may expect to be treated as not true to the king and government, nor a man fit to carry commission in the king's service. Expecting you will not fail in the fulfilling hereof, as you love yourself, I subscribe these with my hand." Captain Campbell did not tarry for his superior officer. He was strong enough to do his murderous bidding without his aid. Sir Walter Scott thinks that the purposed crime was more foul, through its perpetration being "committed to soldiers, who were not only the countrymen of the proscribed, but the near neighbours, and some of them the close connexions of the MacDonalds of Glencoe." He adds that, "the massacre has been un-

justly attributed to English troops.\* We venture to believe that English troops had not the qualities which would have recommended their employ. It is impossible not to see that the revenges of the Campbells had as much to do with this act, as "the king's special command." Argyle and Breadalbane were not promising that the clan MacDonald should have "no retreat in their bounds," without making known their desire to their people that "the old fox and his cubs" should be wholly "cut off." The cunning of the affair was characteristic of the mountain tribes: "Highland history is crowded with incidents, which, in modern phraseology, would be stamped as treachery, but in the social system of the actors passed as dexterity."† Some agitation amongst the Argyle soldiers—whisperings and murmurs—had roused the fears of John MacLan. He went at midnight to the house of Inverriggen, in the hamlet where Glenlyon was quartered. The captain was up and his men about him. He was ordered, he said, to march against Glengarry's people. Could he be likely to harm his friends, and especially those amongst whom his niece had married! Would he not have given a hint to Alaster? The man was satisfied. The night was stormy. The valley lay quiet in mists and thick darkness. At five in the morning Glenlyon and his men slaughtered Inverriggen and nine other men. A child of twelve was stabbed by an officer bearing the name of Drummond. Lindsay and his party went to the house of the old chief, and killed him as he was dressing himself, roused by his faithful servants. His two sons escaped amongst the rocks. His wife was stripped of her trinkets by the savages, and died the following day from her ill-usage. In another hamlet, Auchnaion a serjeant of the name of Barbour, with his detachment, shot Auchentriater, and seven others, as they sat round the fire in the dark morning. It is reckoned that the number of the slaughtered was thirty-eight. Happily, the order that the avenues should be secured was not effectually carried out. Duncanson did not arrive in time. The reports of the murderous guns had alarmed the sleeping families, and three-fourths of the adults, with their wives and children, escaped by the passes before the troops of Hamilton had barred their way. No deed of blood remained for those who came to Glencoe, when the sun was high in the heavens, but to slay an old man of eighty. Their work was to burn the huts of the tribe, and drive off their cattle. But the unhappy fugitives who had escaped the slaughter had to endure all

\* "Tales of a Grandfather," chapter lviii.

† Burton, vol. i. p. 165.