

For

Atkott

Miss Ann Forbes  
from her friend  
the Author

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SKETCHES OF THE EARLY HISTORY,  
LEGENDS, AND TRADITIONS  
OF  
STRATHARDLE AND ITS GLENS

PART IV.

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BY  
CHARLES FERGUSSON, FAIRBURN.

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1897.

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PART IV.

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1560.—I ended my last paper at the troublous times of the Reformation, when all Scotland, and more particularly the Highlands, was in a very disturbed unsettled state; and to add to all the other troubles and hardships of the poor people, there came a succession of very bad seasons, and consequently very poor crops. The summers were either very cold and wet, or else so extremely hot and dry, as to burn up the crops; harvests, late and bad, followed by winters of extreme severity, with very deep snows and extra hard frost; so that the poor people of the Highlands were reduced to great straits by want and famine. This will be seen from the following extracts from the good old Dean of Lismore's "Chronicles of Fortingall":—

"1559.—Eவில் symmyr, hairst, and vynty.

"1560.—The symmyr richt deyr, evyll haryst that evyr was seyn, mekil hungry and darth.

"1561.—Mekill snaw, frost, and storms; the begynnyn of April evill frosts, snaw, and gret windis, in May ryght dry and het, and frosts, and vind.

"1562.—Mekill snaw in all partis, mony deyr and ray slain that yer (many deer and roe starved that year).  
 "1567.—The symnyy rycht dry and het, that brynt and did kill come, and grys, evyl haryst."

To anyone who really knows the state of the country at that time, when the people had to rely almost entirely upon the crops of their own respective districts, what a tale of hunger and starvation is revealed by these short accounts of so many bad harvests, especially as the whole country was likewise then in a state of war and turmoil.

1563.—All over Perthshire and eastern Argyre there raged at this time fierce war and persecution against the gallant but unfortunate Clan Gregor, who were harried and hunted all over the country. I find the following quaint entry at this date in the Chronicle of Fortingall:—"The Lard of Glenvrquhay wryrth (wareth) against Clangregor." The Earl of Athole was also ordered by the Privy Council to hunt the Clan Gregor out of Athole, Strathardle, and Glenshee, where many of them had found a refuge, particularly with the Robertsons of Straloch and the Clan Fergusson, who often were in trouble, and fined for resetting and harbouring the Clan Gregor.

The following is a copy of the Order of the Privy Council to the Earl of Athole to hunt the Macgregors out of his bounds:—

"22 Sept. 1563.—At Stirling. The Queene's Majestie understanding that the Clangregor, being Her Hienes rebellis, and at her home for divers horrible attemptis committat by thame selfis in greit companyis, bot also bes drawn to thame the maist part of the broken men of the hale countrie quihlks at their at their pleasour, birnis and slays the pour leiges of this relme, revis, and taks their gudis, &c. . . . And knawing that the saidis malefactours for the maist part hantis and reparis within the bounds following and that the nobleman underspecifit quhs is principal of the bounds under mentioned, is maist able to expell the said evill doers, furth of his boundis. Thairfor ordains the said Nobleman, John, Earl of Athole, to expell and hold the said broken men furth of his boundis of Athole, Strathardoll, Glensche and Dunkeld."

However, in spite of all the strict laws passed by the Government, and of the cruel way in which these were carried out by their enemies, the unfortunate Macgregors always found a refuge

in Strathardle, and though most of the proprietors were very often very heavily fined for doing so, they still continued to shelter Clan Gregor down to the end of the persecution in the days of Rob Roy, who often took refuge in Strathardle when hardest pressed, especially in Ashintully Castle, where the room which he used to occupy is still called Rob Roy's Room to this day.

The enemies of Clan Gregor carried their persecution to such an extreme length that they specially trained a fierce breed of dogs to hunt them to their hiding places amongst the hills and woods. This they did by bringing up the young puppies on the milk of Macgregor women, so that when they grew up they would know the scent of a Macgregor amongst crowds of other people, and follow them anywhere. These were the notorious "Coin Dhubh," or Black Dogs, about which so many traditions still linger in Perthshire. Only once did the Black Dogs come to Strathardle to hunt Clan Gregors, and the result of that hunting was so unsatisfactory that they never repeated the visit.

Campbell of Persie, knowing that there were many Macgregors then taking refuge in Strathardle, sent word to his relation Argyre, who at once sent a strong force of Campbells, under command of one of his chieftains, and with two of the Black Dogs; and with orders to go to Campbell of Persie, who was to organize a grand hunt against all the Macgregors lurking in the district. The Argylemen came by Breadalbane and Moulin, and across the hill to Glen Brierachan, where the weather got so very stormy and bad that when they reached the Garaidh-riabhach, a quarter of a mile west from Kindrogan House, the Campbell chieftain decided not to go on to Persie that day, but to take up his quarters there for the night, as there were plenty houses there then to shelter his large force, though there are no houses there now, since my grandfather and granduncle left there over sixty years ago. The Strathardle people had received warning that "the Campbells were coming" from Fergusson of Balyoukan, a great friend of the Macgregors, and who was soon after very heavily fined, along with other five gentlemen of the Clan Fergusson, for harbouring Clan Gregors. The Campbells had stopped at the village of Moulin for refreshments, and Balyoukan, being in the neighbourhood, seeing such a large force, and the much-dreaded Black Dogs, knew they were on some evil errand bent; so, to try and find out their destination, he joined their officers, and, by supplying them with plenty drink, soon got on such friendly terms with them that the

leader confided to him where they were going and their purpose there. As quickly, and as quietly as possible, Balyoukan managed to get a word with his servant, who at once slipped off unnoticed, and by the quickest route made his way to Strathardle, and warned the people of the approaching danger. The alarm soon spread, so that, shortly before the Argylemen reached the Garaidh-riabhach, the good people of that hamlet might be seen carrying several Macgregors, who were then living with them, on their backs, so as to leave no scent on the ground for the much-dreaded Black Dogs up the steep face of Kindrogan Rock, whose gigantic cliffs tower seven hundred feet overhead, and where from a snug retreat, always ready for such sudden emergencies, they could in safety look down on their foes passing below, secure even from the keen scent of the Black Dogs.

When, owing to the severity of the storm, the Argylemen decided to remain overnight at Garaidh-riabhach, the good folk there were much alarmed and annoyed, but dare not show it. The leader and his officers took possession of the largest and best house, and safely kennelled the Black Dogs in an outhouse near the door, placing a sentry over them. The goodman of the house, a Robertson of the family of Straloch, was a very shrewd man, so, judging it best to keep the fair side of his dangerous guests, after he had first dispatched his wife and family to a neighbouring house, to be out of barn's way, he proceeded to entertain them as hospitably as he could, and so well did he succeed, that, with the aid of plenty good liquor, he had them all before midnight in a rather elevated condition, when the leader drank to his health, and complimented him on his hospitality, adding that if all the Strathardle men were as hospitable, he did not wonder at the hungry Macgregors choosing it as their place of refuge. Old Robertson thanked him, and said that the only thing he regretted was, that he was very short of bed-clothes, but, to make up for that want, he had just sent a messenger round all his neighbours to collect all the plaids he could get, so that if they now retired he would cover them up with these plaids when his messenger returned, to which they willingly agreed, and they lay down to rest in high glee.

Now old Robertson, besides being a very shrewd man, was also a bit of a wag, and having a bitter hatred against the Argylemen, his hereditary foes, which he dared not then show openly, he had devised a round-about scheme of revenge, which he now proceeded to carry out. So, instead of sending his messenger to his neighbours for plaids to cover his guests, he sent him up Kindrogan Rock, to the hiding-place of the Macgregors, and got all their

plaids from them. On his return, the Argylemen, overcome with fatigue and drink, were all sound asleep, so old Robertson took the Macgregor plaids and wrapt them tightly and snugly round the sleepers, then gathering all the bones and scraps of meat left, he made a heap of them behind the outer door, and extinguishing the light, went out to the sentry at the door, with whom he began a friendly chat about the dogs, pretending that he thought they were for hunting deer. After he had praised the dogs very highly, he then suggested that as the night was so cold, he thought the "bonnie beasties" would be more comfortable in the house beside the fire, adding that he had left a big supper for them on the floor. The unsuspecting sentry at once agreed, and letting the dogs out of the outhouse where they were confined, he opened the house door and let them in. Old Robertson now thought it prudent to get out of the way, so he told the man that he must now go to his family, but would return at daybreak, and departed. On entering the house the dogs smelt the bones left for them, and at once proceeded to devour them; then they began a tour of inspection, and coming near the sleepers they scented the Macgregor plaids, which at once aroused their most ferocious instincts, and with fearful howls they sprang on the slumbering Campbells, and began biting and tearing them savagely. Then began a scene of wild confusion, the ferocious dogs howling and barking, and the half-asleep, half-drunken Campbells cursing and swearing, and as they thought that old Satan himself was let loose upon them, they drew their dirks and stabbed and slashed right and left in the dark, with the result that when the alarmed sentry and guard rushed in with lights, they found the two dogs cut to pieces, and all the men more or less severely wounded. They never suspected the trick played on them, but put the blame of the whole affair on some of the famous Athole witches, whom they thought had by their spells set their dogs mad.

When old Robertson appeared before daybreak, he appeared very much surprised at what had happened, quite agreed with the witchcraft theory, and lamented very much the loss of the "bonnie black beasties" of dogs; however, he took very good care that he very quietly gathered the Macgregor plaids, and slipped them into a dark corner, for fear that the Robertson and Macgregor tartans are both very red, and somewhat similar in sett. After some breakfast, the Argylemen prepared to begin their onward march to Persie, but, before starting, the leader, who was sorely wounded, and in very bad humour, said that he must first

see his favourite dogs get "Christian" burial before he went, and he ordered old Robertson at once to dig a grave for them. Now, that worthy did not believe in giving "Christian" burial to any dogs, let alone the hated Black Dogs, but, as the Campbell chieftain was not in a humour to be trifled with, he had to be very careful. He made several excuses, which only irritated the other, who, drawing his sword, swore if he did not instantly bury his dogs he would cut him down where he stood. Upon this Robertson replied that he thought it needless to make a special grave for the dogs, as "there would be plenty of room for them in the 'Big Grave,' and per haps the bonnie beasties would be quieter if they were laid beside somebody they kent." This rather astonished the other, who asked what he meant by the "Big Grave," to which Robertson coolly replied, "that when coming along in the morning a neighbour had told him that Baron Robertson of Straloch, with a strong force of Strathardle men, were waiting for them beyond Kindrogan, and that Baron Fergusson of Dunfallandy, with his clan, had followed them from Athole, and were close at hand, to protect their lands in Strathardle and Glenshee, and that if these two Barons fought that day as they were wont to do, there would be a big, big grave required before night, in which there would be plenty room for the dogs." Upon hearing that there was a large force both before and behind them, the Campbell officers got alarmed, and their leader asked Robertson if he could not yet lead them by some quiet way out of the fix they were in, and offered him a large reward if he would do so. Robertson told him that the only way now was to go up Kindrogan Rock, where men could climb, but not horses, so the leaders agreed to leave their steeds behind, and they set off at once. Robertson led them up the face of the Rock, within sight of the hidden Macgregors, and over the Kindrogan hills, and by the head of Glenderby, to the Pass of Atholeford, where they could see Ben Lawers and the Campbell country, so he there bid them adieu, and returned, the richer by a purse of gold and several good horses, and so he got that large hostile force out of the district without bloodshed. The two Barons really were close at hand, as Robertson had said, but with only a very small force, with which they had hastened to watch the invaders, leaving orders for gathering their full forces as quickly as possible, which they did, only to find the Argylemen "over the hills an' far awa," by "the Birks o' Aberfeldy," on the way back to their own country, and it was thirteen years after that before they ventured back on another raid to Strathardle.

1564.—Last year we were with the foes of Clan Gregors, and their cursed black dogs, following the gruesome sport of hunting that outlawed race on the hills of Athole; it is therefore with the more pleasure that we turn this year to the more congenial sport of hunting the deer with "Bonny Queen Mary" in the Athole Forest.

In August of this year Queen Mary visited the Perthshire Highlands as the guest of the Earl of Athole at Blair Castle, when another of those grand royal hunts took place in which the Stuart monarchs took such a delight. Mary had her full Court with her, all the principal nobility of the kingdom. She came by Perth to Cupar-Angus Abbey, where she stayed some days, then rode up Strathardle and Glenbrierachan, past Ben Veachie by the Leacainn-Mhor, and down by Glengirnaig to Blair Castle. After the hunt she went on by Drumnachdar to Inverness. Cupar Abbey had to pay £124 10s 8d of her travelling expenses out of its revenue for this journey, as I find the following entry in "The Register of Cupar Abbey," vol. ii., page 281:—"For the Queimis Majesteis expensis in passage throucht Athoill from the huntis, to Inuerness, as the particularis subscriit be Alexander Durhame beris, extending to j<sup>c</sup> xxiii. 10<sup>s</sup> viii. 4"

The grand hunt was arranged to take place in Glen Tilt, and the Earl sent two thousand Athole men, for two months, to gather all the deer from Dunkeld to Argyle, and from there to Inverness and Aberdeen, and all the country between, and to drive them all to Glen Tilt. To the Strathardle men, under the Baron Rnadh of Straloch, the difficult duty was given of blocking Glen Loch, the Pass of Bealach-na-leum, and other passes leading eastward from Glen Tilt, from the top of Ben-y-gloe to the marches of Mar, where they were on sentry night and day for two months.

Pennant (Part II. page 64) gives the following translation of the account given of this great hunt, by Professor Barclay, who was present at it when a young man:—"The Earl of Athole, a prince of the royal blood, had, with much trouble and vast expense, a hunting match for the entertainment of our most illustrious and most gracious Queen. Our people call this a royal hunting. I was then a young man, and was present on the occasion. Two thousand Highlanders, or wild Scotch, as you call them here, were employed to drive to the hunting ground all the deer from the woods and hills of Athole, Badenoch, Mar, Murray, and the counties about. As these Highlanders use a light dress, and are very swift of foot, they went up and down so nimbly that in less than two months' time they brought together 2000 red

deer, besides roes and fallow deer. The Queen, the great men, and others, were in a glen when all the deer were brought before them. Believe me, the whole body of them moved forward in something like battle order. This sight still strikes me, and ever will, for they had a leader whom they followed close wherever he moved. This leader was a very fine stag, with a very high head. The sight delighted the Queen very much; but she soon had occasion to fear, upon the Earl's (who had been accustomed to such sights) addressing her thus:—"Do you observe that stag who is foremost of the herd? There is danger from that stag; for if either fear or rage should force him from the ridge of that hill, let everyone look to himself, for none of us will be out of the way of harm; for the rest will follow this one, and having thrown us under foot, they will open a passage to this hill behind us." What happened a moment after confirmed this opinion, for the Queen ordered one of the best dogs to be let loose upon a wolf; this the dog pursues, the leading stag was frightened, and he flies by the same way he had come there, the rest rush after him, and break out where the thickest body of Highlanders was. They had nothing for it but to throw themselves flat upon the ground and allow the deer to pass over them. It was told the Queen that several of the Highlanders had been wounded, and that two or three had been killed outright, and the whole body had got off had not the Highlanders, by their superior skill in hunting, fallen upon a stratagem to cut off the rear from the main body. It was of those that had been separated that the Queen's dogs and those of the nobility made slaughter. There were killed that day 360 deer, with five wolves and some roes."

Such is the short account left us of this great royal hunt by one of the greatest scholars of the day, who was present and enjoyed the sport like his royal mistress. It was one of the few bright and happy incidents in the troubled life of poor unfortunate Queen Mary.

1565.—Under this date we find the following entry in the chronicle of Forthingall:—"Great hayrschypiss in many partis of Scotland, in Strathorne, in Lennox, in Glenalmond, in Braydalbin, bayth slattery and oppression beant mayed in syndry udry partis by the erll of Ergill and M'Gregor, and their complices. Siclyk in Strathardil many men slayn be the men of Atholl and the Stuarts of Lorn."

Now, to explain why the men of Athole and the Stuarts of Lorn made this great "slattery" of the Strathardle men, we must go back to 1488, when we saw that Neil Stewart of Garth and

Forthingall was superior of the Kirk of Strathardle, and held all the land of that Kirk. This Neil was succeeded by his son, grandson, and great-grandson—all Neils—and a wild, warlike race they were these Neils, worthy descendants of the ferocious Wolf of Badenoch. By their wild extravagance they reduced their estates so much that in the time of the third Neil we read in the "Book of Garth and Forthingall," page 183—"The then Earl of Athole is found in full possession of his whole patrimonial barony. Neil, however, sought and found a protector who could defend him against the Earl of Athole. He resigned his barony of Forthingall (including Strathardle) into the hands of the Earl of Huntly in 1509, and was that nobleman's tenant and vassal ever afterwards."

Again, at page 189—"It would seem that from 1509 down to the rebellion and forfeiture of George, Earl of Huntly, in 1563, Forthingall (and Strathardle) was an outlying possession of the Gordon chiefs. The fourth Earl, John of Athole, of the Stuarts of Lorn was the ablest of his race. He adroitly availed himself of Huntly's forfeiture in 1563, and of the favour he had gained in Queen Mary's eyes, by his vote against the Reformation in Parliament in 1560, to get hold of Forthingall, and obtained other advantages from Huntly's fall. In his days of favour he persuaded Queen Mary to exempt his lands from the jurisdiction of the Justice General, and to give him a commission for life to be chief judge within his own lands and the lands of some of his neighbours, who very much disliked to be placed under him."

This commission, dated April, 1564, is:—"Given and granted to John, Earl of Athole, a Commission of Justiciary for all the days of his life time, within all and sundry the bounds and lands afterwards specified:—To wit, all and hail his lands lying within his Earldom of Atholl, with lands and tenandries thereof, and all and sundry lands pertaining to the Abbot and Convent of Cupar, lying within the said Earldom. The lands of Forthingall, and Fosses, the lands of the Forest of Cluny, and Baronies of Strowaul, Apmachull, Grantully, lands of Weene, the lands of Rannoeh, and Strathardill, Glensche, and the lands and Barony of Rattray lying within the Sheriffdom of Perth."

I find this commission confirmed again at Edinburgh, 16th May, 1578, Records Privy Council, page 698. Again, I find it confirmed in 1672, in the Acts of the Scots Parliament, Vol. VIII., page 103, where the names of the different lands in question in Strathardle and Glenshee are given:—"Ratification in favour of John, Earl of Atholl, of lands in Strathardill. In lyke manner

the towne and lands of Wester Callies . . . the towne and lands of Blackeraige and Mylnelands thereof . . . the lands of Blackghines and Drumfrog. All and hail the lands of Bletoun, Haly<sup>4</sup>, with tenants, tenandries, service of free tenants, pairs and pendicles thereof . . . and syclyke all and hail the lands and baronie of Downy, viz., Over Downie, Middle Downie, Boreland, Edarnachtie, Cuttelony, Stronamuck, Flenze, and Inveraddrie, with the Mylne, Bennammore, Bennanbeg, Randanoyak, Kerrache, Cuthill, Ballinbeg, Dalmunge, with the pairs of Pitrabine, Glegainsnett, and Glenbeg, with the pertinents of the samen whatsoever." Most of these lands belonged to Baron Fergusson, of Dunfallandy, as we have already seen, in 1510, and we have also seen that in 1521, through some quirk of the law, the chief, John Fergusson, was declared a bastard, and these lands taken from his son Robert, which act of injustice was very much resented by the members of the Clan Fergusson residing on the lands of Downie, &c., in Strathardle, and on the lands of Finne-gand, Dalmunzie, and others in Glenshee, so that these Fergussons became "broken men," lawless and turbulent, and as such, are found in the roll of "broken men," against whom an Act of Parliament was passed afterwards in 1587, in which "Black List," the rest of the Clan, the Athole Fergussons, are not found.

These Strathardle and Glenshee Fergussons, with Spalding of Ashintully, and Rattray of Dalnuzion, and other lairds of the district, aided by their outlawed friends the Macgregors, taking advantage of the troubled times, became so lawless and so powerful, that though the Queen had given the Earl of Athole the commission to be chief judge of Strathardle, yet even that powerful noble was quite powerless to quell them and restore order with his own followers, so Queen Mary had to issue a proclamation to the Sheriffs of Perth and Forfar, Strathern and Menteith, to raise all men within their bounds between the ages of sixteen and sixty, "to be redly to pass with the Earl of Athole to suppress the mony herschippis, slaughteris, and depredationis committit in Athole and Strathardle."

This proclamation is given in the "Records of the Privy Council," Vol I, page 383, and is as follows:—"26th Oct., 1565. Proclamation to be redly to pass with the Earl of Athole, &c. The quhilk day the King and Queen's Majesties, understanding the mony herschippis, slaughteris, and depredationis committit to diverse wicket and mischevous personis upon the trow and faythful subjectis inhabitants of Athole and boundis adjacent thereto, quhilkis intends to lay the samyn euntre and boundis all

waste and desolat, to evert so far in thame lysis the hail state of this common weill, gif their mischevous attempattis be nocht repressit; thairfair ordains letters to be direct to officers of armes, Sheriffs in that part, charging them to pass to the merat croces of the borrowes of Perth and Forfar and other places, neidful and their be oppan proclamation, in their Heiness' name and authority, command and charge all and sundrie their Majesties' leiges betwix sextie and sextene yeris, and others fensible personis alsweil dwelland to burgh, as to land within Regallie as Rialte within the boundis of the Sherifdoms of Perth and Forfar, Stewartries of Stratherne and Menteith, that they and ilk one of them weill bodden in feir of weir prepare thaimsesselfis and mak them in reddness as they shall receive advertisement and commandment by their traiste cousing and counselor, Johnne, Erll of Athole, Lord of Balvany, Lieutenant of the north parts of this realme, with eight days vitoul and provisions, upon two days' warning to meit the said Erle at sic pairt and place as he sal appoint till thame, and frathyne to pas furthwart for defenee, on invasion of the saidis wicket personis and rebellis according to the commandment and direction of the said Lieutenant upon the pain of tinsall, of lyff, landis, and guidis."

With this strong force, placed at his disposal by the Queen, and also assisted by his own kinsmen, the Stuarts of Lorn, the Earl of Athole came to Strathardle, with the result that there were "mony men slayn," as we have already seen from the quotation from the "Chronicle of Eoringall," with which I began the notice of this year—"Great hayschypis in mony partis. Licylk in Strathardill, mony men slayn be the men of Athole and the Stuarts of Lorn."

1570.—In following the history of Athole, as we have done from the earliest period, we find the natives of that beautiful and romantic district famous in many different ways. We find Diarmid and the prehistoric Ossianic warriors hunting in lone Glenshee; we find Athole giving a royal race to reign over Scotland for ages; we find his sons great Churchmen, statesmen, warriors, and huntsmen; we find it a land of brave men and bonnie lasses; but now we find it famous for still another class, and that rather an uncanny lot, viz., witches, for which Athole was famed from the earliest times.

Old George Buchanan, writing of the murder of King James I., by Walter, Earl of Athole, details the different tortures to which the Earl was put for two days, and on the third day:—"Then he was set on a pillory, that all might see him, and a red-hot iron crown set on his head, with this inscription, that he should be called *King of all Traitors*. They say the cause of this punish-

ment was, that Walter had been sometimes told by some female witches, as Athole was always noted to have such, that he should be crowned king in a mighty concourse of people; for, by this means, that prophecy was either fulfilled or eluded." Book X., page 357.

Dr Marshall, also, in his "Historic Scenes in Perthshire," Blair-Athole parish, says:—"In the latter part of the sixteenth century, and the first part of the seventeenth, Athole was greatly infested with witches." This seems to have been the golden age of witchcraft in Athole, witches were very numerous, and their power over the people was very great, and they regularly held grand gatherings or councils, to discuss all the important topics of the day. We now find at this time all the witches of Athole holding a great meeting in favour of Queen Mary, and presenting her, as a token of their friendship, with a deer's horn covered with gold. We are not told how many of the unhallowed sisterhood were present on this occasion, but we know that at another of their great meetings in 1597, when they met on a hill in Athole, there were 2300 of these bags present. We have several accounts of this great meeting in support of Queen Mary preserved. The following is from Dr Marshall's "Historic Scenes in Perthshire":—"The King's party and the Queen's then divided the country, each struggling for the ascendancy. The Earl of Athole took the Queen's side, and the witches of Athole did the same. In 1570 they sent the Queen a present of a pretty hart horn, not exceeding in quantity the palm of a man's hand, covered with gold, and artificially wrought. The emblems graven on it, and the inscriptions, were all prophetic of the sure triumph that awaited Mary over her enemies. In the head of it were curiously engraven the arms of Scotland; in the nether part of it a throne, and a gentlewoman sitting in the same, in a robe royal, with a crown upon her head. Under her feet was a rose environed with a thistle. Under that were two lions, the bigger one and the lesser. The bigger lion held its paw on the face of the other, as his lord and commander. Beneath all were written these words:—

'Fall what may fall,  
The lion shall be lord of all.'

This was evidently designed to convey a hope and a wish, that Mary should ere long, in spite of all contrarious circumstances, be in possession of England, as well as of her native dominions. Unhappily for Mary, and for the credit of the witches, the prophecy did not come to pass. The event falsified it."

1571.—Whether the Athole witches themselves had any power for evil over the weather or not, or whether it was a judgment on the district for such uncanny gatherings and doings, I know not; but the winter of this year was the most severe and calamitous on record in the annals of Athole.

In the "Chronicle of Fortingall" we read:—"Samyn yer, viz. ane M V<sup>o</sup> sexte lewn yeris (one thousand five hundred and sixty-eleven years) the xxii. day of Februar, ther com effyr nown ane gret storm and snow and hayll and wind that na man nor best might tak up ther heddis nor gang nor ryd, and mony bestis war parcsit furth in the storm, and mony men and wemen war parcsit in syndry partis, and al kynd of vyttellis ryocht deyr, and that becaus na millis mycht gryn (no mill might grind), for the frost. All cornis com till the mill of Dunkell out of Sanc Johnistoun (St Johnston, old name of Perth) betwyx that and Dunkell, and all udyr boundis about far and neyr. The mail that tyme in Sanc Johnistoun was xliiii.<sup>s</sup>

Amongst the other mills that "mychtint gryn" (mightent grind) for frost was the famous Black Mill of Tullochcurran—the "Muillonn-dubh," Black Mill, of song and story, and it was on the first starting of the mill-wheel and machinery—well on in the following summer, after the long enforced idleness caused by this great storm, when the country people were starving for meal—that the words and music of this famous reel were first composed.

Angus Mackay, in his pipe music book, and some others who knew only the name and music without the real origin of the tune, have fallen into the mistake of supposing that it is the "Black Snuff Mill," which almost every Highlander then carried in his pocket, which was referred to, and so the English name often found in books for this grand old reel is "The Black Snuff Mill"—a most absurd mistake, as the old Gaelic words clearly prove.

According to tradition, the miller, who was a bard, composed the music when he first got the mill started after this long enforced idleness. The big water wheel thundered round once more, and all the little wheels whirled about so merrily that the old miller felt so happy he was inclined to dance for joy:—

'Tha 'm Muillonn-dubh air bhogadan' &c.  
'S e 'togairt dol a dhannsa.'

He tells how the "snow and drift and wind" came on so fierce as to block up the mill:—

'Bha cur 's cathadh 's gaoth,  
Ams a' Mhuillonn-dubh,' &c.

He thought there was a little barley meal left in the mill, but not a grain—

“Shaoil lean gun robh min-corna,  
‘S a’ Mhuilinn-dubb, ‘s gun deann an.”

Instead of barley meal, there were many things in the Black Mill not dreamt of in their philosophy:—

“Tha ioma rud nach saoil sibh,  
‘S a’ Mhuilinn-dubb,” &c.

From the uncanny noises heard about it at nights, he thought the great muckle Deil himself was there by the horns:—

“Tha ‘n Diabull-dubb air adhaircean  
‘S a’ Mhuilinn-dubb,” &c.

If Great Hornie himself was not there, there certainly were smaller hornies, as the cows and goats had taken possession of the deserted mill, in which calves and kids were born.

“Tha ‘n crodh a breth nan laogh,  
Anns a’ Mhuilinn-dubb, ‘s a’ Mhuilinn-dubb,  
Tha gobhair, ‘s crodh-laogh,  
‘S a’ Mhuilinn-dubb o Shamhradh.”

Such a forsaken spot had the Black Mill become for so long, that the very grouse had selected it as their nesting place:—

“Tha nead na circe-fraoiche,  
‘S a’ Mhuilinn-dubb,” &c.

After such a desolate state of affairs, who can wonder at the old poet-miller singing and dancing for joy when he once more got his beloved mill—“Air bhogadan,” so that it “mycht gryn.”

“Tha ‘n Muilinn-dubb air bhogadan,  
Tha ‘n Muilinn-dubb air bhogadan,  
Tha ‘n Muilinn-dubb air bhogadan,  
‘S e togairt dol a dhansa.”

And from that day to the present, the mill, occasionally renewed, has continued to “gryn” good meal; and from that day to “very near” the present, the Black Mill was always reckoned an uncanny place to go near after dark, being haunted by everything evil, more especially by the largest and most dangerous water kelpie on the Arde, which haunted its mill-lade and croy when the Arde was

in flood. This great kelpie was last seen shortly after the fall of Sebastopol by an Ennchodhu worthy, long since dead, who had been along at Kirkmichael Hotel to drink, like a loyal subject, to our great victory over the Russians. No doubt he did his duty in that line, and all went well till when on his homeward journey he was passing the Black Mill croy. The Arde was in very high flood, almost washing over the road, when, lo! there came the great kelpie swimming almost to his feet. As our friend did not wait to make a scientific examination of the kelpie, he could not afterwards tell exactly what he was like, but he solemnly declared ever after that if the British Government could have only captured that kelpie in time, and let it loose in the harbour of Sebastopol, the Russians would have cleared out in a few hours! The idea of enlisting our old kelpies, &c., once such mighty powers for evil, but now seemingly so useless at home, and sending them abroad to fight our battles for us, was one of the brightest ideas of one of our brightest worthies; may he rest in peace.

1576.—This was another year of war and want in Strathardle; bad harvest, very severe winter and spring, and great war between the Earls of Athole and Argyle and fierce raids by the Lochaber men. Well might the poor people join in the prayer of the worthy Dean of Lismore, at the end of his notice of these calamities in his “Chronicles of Fortingall”:—“Evyll haryst, evyll wyntyr, evyll Merche, contynual wet; ther wes wyer betwyxt my Lord of Argyll and my Lord of Atholl, and great spwytyon mayd by the men of Lochabyr on pwyr men. God see til that.”

The Strathardle men being very bitter against Argyle, joined Athole in great force, and so fierce did the war rage that the Regent Morton had to issue the following order to stop hostilities. Privy Council Records, Appendix, Vol. II., page 533:—“Edinburgh, 26 June, 1576. Charge to the Erlis of Ergyle and Atholl, to keip gude rewle. Forsamekill as it is understood to the Regent’s Grace and Lordis of Secrit Counsaile that there is of late slaughter and utheris enormities happynit betwex the friendis, servandis, and dependaries of the Erlis of Ergyle and Atholl, quhair upon there is appearance of great convocacions and further inconveniencis to follow gif tymous remede be not providit. . . . His Grace directis and orders all further trouble and misrule to rest and to observe our Sovereign Lord’s peace and quietness in the cuntre . . . at their heichast charge and perrell.” &c.

1577.—From the almost continual wars, raids, forays, and slaughters which we have seen taking place in Strathardle for

many years back, we would have thought that the Strathardle men would have had enough fighting; but no, their martial spirit was so strong that not content with all the hard fighting at home in Scotland, they must needs go abroad for more, as we find in this year Captain David Spalding of Ashintully raising a body of Strathardle Highlanders to go to Flanders to fight for the King of Spain, who had granted a colonel’s commission to the chief of the Spaldings on condition that he recruited a regiment amongst his clan and countrymen, “certane companyis of futemen,” and he was to choose his own officers. Spalding had to apply to the Regent Lennox and the Privy Council for a license to raise these men for foreign service. It was granted, and the Privy Council passed a special Act authorising Ashintully to:—“Stryke drummis, display ensigns, and lift and collect the saidis companyis of futemen and to depart to the wars of Flanders.” So successful was Spalding in recruiting that he very soon raised his full complement of officers and men, and many a brave strapping Strathardle lad left for Flanders that never returned. The Act of license to Spalding is preserved in the “Records of the Privy Council,” Vol. II., pages 641 and 736, and is as follows:—“Holyrood House, October 10th, 1577. Act anent the departing of the men of war to Flanderis anent the supplication presented to my Lord Regent’s Grace, and Lords of Secret Counsaile, by Captain David Spalding. That quhair thair is certain commissions laithie brocht in this realme in name of the King of Spayne, and the Estates of his Low Countries appointand the said Captain David Spalding as Cunnell over certane companyis of futemen of this nation under his regiment to be levied and transported to the said Low Countries for the service of the said Estaittis humlie desyring thairfor license to stryke drummis, display hand-ensignes, and lift and collect the said companies of futemen, and at first commodite to transport them. . . . The Regent’s Grace therefore with advice of the Lords of the Secrete Counsaile grants and gives license to the said Captain David Spalding and the Captains elected and chosen by him under his regiment, to stryke drummis, display ensignes and lift and collect the saidis companyis of futemen at at the first commodite to transport thame at their pleasour.”

1582.—In August of this year King James VI. held another grand royal hunt amongst the hills of Athole and Strathardle. There was a great gathering of clansmen beforehand, as usual, to gather in the deer, &c., from the surrounding districts. The great meeting-place, to which all the deer were driven to, was at the hill

of Elrick, on Dimanean Moor, which hill, as its name indicates, had been for ages before one of the noted hunting-places of Athole. An elrig was an enclosure of trees, posts intertwined with brushwood, &c., specially constructed by the old Highlanders, in suitable situations, to enclose the hunted deer they had collected from a distance on all sides except that on which they entered. This enclosure was always overlooked by an overhanging rock or hill, called Craggan-an-Elrig, from which ladies could see the sport in safety. As a proof of what a hunting country Strathardle must have been in olden times, I may mention that my late uncle, Robert Forbes (than whom none better knew these hills), told me that he knew twelve elrigs in the district above Kirkmichael.

Dr Robertson of Callander, in his valuable work on the “Agriculture of the County of Perth, 1799,” page 328, describes an elrig as follows:—“While the deer were permitted to inhabit the valleys, and the country was under wood, the natives hunted them by surrounding them with men, or by making large enclosures of such a height as the deer could not overleap, fenced with stakes and intertwined with brushwood. Vast multitudes of men were collected on hunting days, who, forming a ring round the deer, drove them into these enclosures, which were open on one side. From some eminence, which overlooked the enclosure, the principal personages and others, who did not choose to engage in the chase, were spectators of the whole diversion. The enclosures were called in the language of the country *clerig*, which is derived from another word that signifies *contest* or *strife*. One of the farms in Glenloch of Breadalbane is called ‘Craggan-an-Elrig,’ a small rock which overhangs a beautiful field resembling the arena of an amphitheatre, probably the first that was cleared of wood in that district, and admirably adapted for this purpose by the natural situation of the adjacent ground. There are clerigs in various parts of the country.”

King James enjoyed the hunting very much, and it was on his way south from it that he was made prisoner at Ruthven Castle, an incident which is known in Scotch history as “The Raid of Ruthven.”

1583.—Going to the war in Flanders, in 1577, with his Strathardle lads had proved a paying venture to Colonel Spalding, who out of the pay and plunder got there now built Ashintully Castle, on the plan of the neighbouring ancient Castle of Morcloich, on Whitefield. Above the door is the date, 1583, and the words—“The Lord defend this house.”

We have already seen a century ago that the Stewarts held a lease of the Kirklands of Strathardle and Moulis, from the Abbey

of Dunfermline, and I now find in the Records of the Priory Council a complaint by Sir John Stewart of Tullypouries and his wife against the Commendators and Brethren of Dunfermline because they would not sign a renewal lease of these Kirklands. This complaint is as follows (Records Privy Council, Vol. III., page 642):—

"Holyrood House, 17th March, 1583-4. Complaint of Johnne Stewart of Tullypouries and Margaret Carwood, his spouse, as follows:—They have been kindle tementis and takismen to the Commendators and Convent of Dunfermling of all and sundrie the teind schaves (teind-sheaf) small teinds and utheris teinds quhatsumever of the parochie Kirkis of Strathardill and Muling, alswele personage as vicarage, with mannsis, glebis and kirklund thereof and all pendiclis and pertinentis of the same, thir divers years bygone, and hes presentlie tacks thereof for years yet to run lyke as they have lailie cansit mak ane new tak of the said teind schaves, &c., of the said Kirks, to be subscriv't be the saidis Commendators and Convent to the saidis complainers for their lyftimes, and efter thair decisis to the saidis complainers and sub-tenentis of the said John quhatsoever, not hurtand nor deminishing the said rentall for the space of twigis nyntene years. But though the same tak is already subscrit by Robert, Commendator of Dunfermline, yet the conventual brethern planeilie refusis to subscribe, though the complainers hes offerit thame reasonable composition and enters sylver for the same."

Orders were at once given to these stubborn brethren to sign the tack, but they took no notice, and John Stewart and his spouse again applied to the Privy Council, and "the defenders not appearing, the Lords decree that they shall be ordered ane mair to subscribe the tak within three days under pain of rebellion." The fear of being declared rebels frightened the brethren, and they signed the tack.

1584.—The Abbey of Dunfermline having become vacant through the death of Robert, "last Commendator thereof," it had pleased the King, with advice of his Council, "to reserve and retain the fruitis and rentis of the saidis Abbey to his ain proper use for the support of the chairgis of his Hienes house and estate."

The Act closes with—"Reservand always the thingis exceptit in his Hienes lait revocation, as alsua the tak sett be the said unquihile Commendaton and Convent to John Stewart of Tullypoures and his spouse of the Kirks of Strathargill and Muling."

Holyrood House, March 22, 1584-5. Records P. Council, Vol. III., p. 730.

1587.—In this year the Scots Parliament passed an important Act for the quieting of the Highlands and Islands. To this Act is appended:—"A roll of the names of the landloris and baillies of landis in the Hielandis and Iles, qubair broken men, hes duelt and presentlie duellis, 1587." Maxwell of Teling, who at this time held the third part of the parish of Kirkuncbael (family of Robertson of Straloch, page 22), is named in this roll. There is also another roll added to this Act:—"The roll of the clannis in the Hielandis and Iles, that hes capitanes, cheiffis, and chiftanes quhome on they depend, oft tymes agains the willis of thair landisloris, and of sum speciale personis of branchis of the saidis clannis, 1587." There are four Strathardle clans named in this black list:—"Clandonoghuy, in Athoill, and pairtis adjacent"—the Robertsons of Struan and Straloch; then in Glenshee we have three clans named:—"The Clan M'Thomas or M'Combies, the Fergussonis, and the Spaldingis." These clans kept Glenshee in a very disturbed state, principally because the Fergusson lands there had been taken from their chief, Baron Fergusson of Dunfallandy, on a charge of bastardy, and had not yet been returned, and also because they objected to pay taxes, or "cain," to their new lord superior, the Earl of Athole. When the Earl of Huntly was superior, he was very easy with them, as the district lay so far from his castle; but now Athole sent regular collectors to gather in all his dues, and a good deal more generally, which raised discontent. Spalding of Ashintully also, since he had built his new castle, had become very turbulent, and ruled with a high hand, so much so, that we read that the Baron Ruadh of Straloch had to go to church on Sundays with a piper playing and a large body of armed men to "prevent or quell tumults occasioned by Rattray of Dalruzean and Spalding of Ashintully."

1590.—In an Act of Caution for good behaviour of this year, I find Sir John Murray of Tullybardine becoming surety in 1000 merks each for the following Strathardle lairds:—"Johnne Robertson of Straloch *alias* Barroun Reid; Andro Spalding of Ashintully; Walter Robertson of Dewny; Walter Leslie of Morecloich; Johnne Rattray of Dalruyan; Alister Stewart of Cullaltonies; James Wemyss at Mylne of Werie; and Barroun Fergusson."

1591.—Strathardle, Lower Glenshee, and Glenisla were all badly harried in August of this year by the Campbells of Argyle, brought, as usual, by their relative, Archibald Campbell of Persie, to revenge his own private quarrels with his neighbours. A

Glenshee man was getting married to a Glenisla woman, and, as usual, a large body of Glenshee folk accompanied the bridegroom to Glenisla to the wedding, and amongst them Campbell of Persie. During the evening Persie made some insulting remarks to the bride about her clan, the Ogilvies. Her father heard him, and resented the insult, and a quarrel ensued, and Persie stabbed the old man badly with his dirk. Lord Ogilvie then came upon the scene, who, drawing his claymore, called upon Persie to defend himself. Ogilvie quickly disarmed Campbell, and the enraged Glenisla men were for hanging him there and then to the nearest tree, but Lord Ogilvie would not allow that, as he had been their guest on this festive occasion, so he made them tie a halter round Persie's neck, and then ordered a band of young men to lead him by the halter beyond the bounds of the glen, and, "if he did not go quietly, they might hang him." He *did* go quietly, even though it is said that these frolicsome young men dragged him by the rope through various peat holes, and scourged him with nettles and thorns to try and make him "not to go quietly." But he went silent and sullen, so they kicked him beyond the bounds of Glenisla, and then returned to their interrupted festivities. Campbell came to Persie, but he staid not there, but went straight on to the Earl of Argyle, and told him the rich booty he could get so easily in these eastern glens, with the result that Argyle sent a force of 500 men, under John Campbell, brother to Lechnell, who was accompanied by Campbell of Glenlyon, Macdonnell of Keppoch, young Macdonald of Glencoe, and other powerful leaders, with Campbell of Persie as guide. They raided Glenisla first, and then cleared Strathardle on their westward journey. Such a powerful force, coming so suddenly, Lord Ogilvie could not resist them, as he complains to the King:—"Sie suddantie, I was nocht able to resist thame, but with grite difficultie, and short advertismet, he, his wyffe, and bairnis eschaiped."

Lord Ogilvie complained to the King, and the Privy Council ordered Argyle to keep all his "brokin men" in his own country. Instead of doing so, Argyle was so pleased with the large quantity of plunder brought him, and hearing that a number of Glenisla men had escaped eastwards into Glenclova with their cattle, he sent the whole force back again in September to gather up all that had escaped them in August, and also to raid Glenclova and other parts adjacent. Again Lord Ogilvie complains to the King "that they hee murdered and slain 3 or 4 innocent men and women, and reft and taken away ane grit pray of guidis." These complaints of Lord Ogilvie's are preserved in Pitcairns' Criminal Trials, Vol. I., page 263.

"Oct. 28th, 1591.—On the complaint of James, Lord Ogilvie of Airlie . . . Archibald, Earl of Ergyle, and his friends upon what motive or occasion the said Lord knows not, without any deserving on his part having concludit the wrack of his hous, and being informit that he had retir'd himself in sobir manner to dwell and mak his residence in Glen Elay. Finding the place convenient for their interprise the said Earle and his friends set out certain brokin Hielandmen, they are to say:—John Campbell, brother to Lochnyell; John Dow McCondoquhy in Inneraw; Neil Leich in Lochquhaber; Donald McCarlich in Laird of Glencuquahay's land; Allan Roy McMolz, son to the Laird of Glencoe; Archibald Campbell of Persie; Colin Campbell of Glenlyon; Archibald Campbell his brother; John McRannald (Keppoch) in Lochquhaber; quha in the month of August lastly past to the number of 500 men of the cuntre of Ergyle, off sett purpois and deleberation to have slain the said Lord, and to have wrackit and spulzied the cuntre. Like as upon the xxi. day of August last bypast they enterit Glen Elay under silence of night, with sic force and violence that the said Lord bydan for frome his friends, upon sic suddantie wes nocht able to resist thame, bot with grite difficultie and schorte advertismet, he, his wyffe and bairnis having eschaiped, they enter the cuntre with sic barbarous crultie not sparing wyffs nor bairnis, but murthowrit and slew all quhame they fand therein to the nowmor of xviii. on xx. personnis, and spulziet and awa tuke ane grit nowmor of nolt, scheip, and pleness to the uttar wrack and undoing of the haill peur inhabitants of the cuntre. Whilk being made known to his Majesty, he orderit the Earll and his friends to retain the broken men in their ain cuntre. Nevertheless—the upon . . . (date not legible) day of September last bypast within the time of the assurance; under silence of night invadit the inhabitants of Glen Elay and Glen Clova, ane hes murdered and slain 3 or 4 innocent men and women, and reft and taken away ane grit pray of guidis, so that the peur men that dwelled in Glen Elay and Glen Clova and uther partis adjacent to the Mounth quha are nocht able to mak resistance are so oppressit be the broken men, and for somers boundit out by the Earll of Ergyle and his friends and maintained and resettit be thame, that neither be his Majesties protection nor assistance of the partey can their lives and guidis be in surtie." The above-named persons are accordingly charged to appear before the King and Privy Council under the pain of rebellion, &c.

Lord Ogilvie appeared on the day appointed to call them to account for these barbarities, but none of them having come forward, they were ordered to be pronounced rebels, &c.

1597.—This was a very stirring year in Strathardle—wars and sieges and great feuds between the Strathardle lairds and the Earl of Athole. Both the castles of Ashintully and Morecloich, on Whitefield, were besieged and taken, and their masters carried away captive; and as most of the principal men in Strathardle had refused to pay teind-sheaves, they were declared guilty of treason, and condemned to be confined in the Castle of Blackness. And during these unsettled times the district was also very much overrun with witches, who held a high time of it. We have already noticed a great meeting of Athole witches in 1570, and now we come to another of these great gatherings of the uncanny sisterhood, for which Athole was always so famous, though the whole of Scotland was at this time swarming with them; and witch-hunting was a favourite pursuit of King James VI., as we read in Tytler's History of Scotland, Vol. IV., page 261:—"During the summer and autumn (1597) James was busily occupied with the trial of witches." And, again, at page 266:—"These constant cares were only interrupted by the alarming increase of witches and sorcerers, who were said to be swarming in thousands in the Kingdom; and for a moment all other cares were forgotten in the intensity with which the monarch threw himself once more into his favourite subject"—witch-hunting. Had he come to Athole he would have found plenty of witches to hunt, as we read that, in this year, at one of their great gatherings on a hill in Athole, no fewer than 2300 witches were present, and the devil himself, of course, was chairman of the meeting.

In Dr Marshall's "Historic Scenes in Perthshire," parish of Blair Athole, we read:—"The year 1597 was noted for the trial of a great number of witches, both male and female, in Scotland, more especially in Athole. That year the uncanny sisters held a great convention on a hill in Athole. So Patrick Anderson relates in his MS. History of Scotland; but he does not name the hill, so that we are not able to point it out. No fewer than 2300 of the hags were present on that occasion, and, of course, the devil was among them. A famous witch of Balweary, named Margaret Aitken, told this; and said that she knew them all well enough, and what mark his Satanic Majesty had put on each of them.

Many of them were tried by the water ordeal. Their two thumbs and their two great toes were bound together, and in this state they were thrown into a loch or into some deep pool. If they sunk they were innocent of witchcraft, which, however, did not keep the water from drowning them. If they floated they

were guilty. Many subjected to this ordeal, at the time to which we are referring, "floated aye aboon;" and as they would not drown there was no alternative but to burn them.

The Balweary witch was put to the torture, and confessed her own guilt; but to save her life she informed against others, whom, she said, she knew infallibly by a secret mark in their eyes. For three or four months she was carried about the country for the purpose of detecting witches. Margaret was at length found to be an impostor. Persons whom she pronounced witches one day were brought before her the next day in a different dress, and she pronounced them innocent. She was tried for her imposture, and Spottiswood says that on her trial she declared all that she had confessed either of herself or of others to have been utterly false. This put all who had believed in her in an awkward plight. It loosed on them the tongues of unbelievers, who did not even spare the ministers. But the brethren considerably threw a shield over themselves. In November the Presbytery of Glasgow took notice of "divers persons who traduces and slanders the ministry of the city as the authors of putting to death the persons lately executed for witchcraft," and it ordained any person hereafter uttering this slander "shall be put in the branks at the judge's will."

So it was a dangerous game at this time to meddle with the clergy—it did not matter how many innocent old women they burnt for witchcraft—for fear of being put in the branks. To refuse to pay the ministers' tiends (which then were collected by so many sheaves of corn being taken out of every field in a parish) was even a more heinous crime, and such defaulters "were to be punished in their personis, lands, and guidis," as most of the Strathardle lairds found out this year to their cost. John MacLagane was the then minister of Kirkmichael, and as the Strathardle and Glenshee lairds refused to pay the tiends, the Privy Council brought them to trial, and being found guilty they were imprisoned in Blackness Castle, as we read in the Records of the Privy Council, Vol. V., page 416.

"Linlithgow, October 11th, 1597.—Charge having been given to James, Master of Ogilvie; Walter Leslie of Morecloich (Whitefield); Andro Spalding of Essintullie; John Rattray of Dalrilyeane; Lauchlane Ferquharsoe of Broichdarg; Duncan McRitchie in Dalvungy; James Wemyss of the Mill of Werie; John Robertson *alias* Reid of Straloch, elder; John Robertson *alias* Reid of Cray, his son and apparent heir; David Murray of Soilerie; Robert McComie in Thome; John

Rattray in Wester Bleaton; John Reid of Douny; Alexander Rattray, apparent of Dalrilyeane; and Donald McEan Molich McComie in Werie, to appear and answer for disobeying Andro Murray of Balward in the matter of the tiend-sheaves of Strathardle and Glenshie of the present year. John Robertson, younger, appearing for his said father, and the remnant persons appearing all personally, His Majesty 'declairit his Heynes mynd and intencion was onlie to have intertenytit peace and quietness in the cuntry liklie at that time to be desolvit by the leading of the said teyndis; for the whilk cause his Majesty directit uthiris lettres discharging all parties to mell on leid the same teyndis hot to suffer and permit the said Andro Murray to have collectit, led, and stakit the same in sic neutrall and indifferent places as he should think gude, with a charge therein to the foresaidis personis to assist him to that effect.' Further, the said persons for their disobedience, and for not rendering to the said Andro the fortalice of . . . (word missing, unfortunately), had been lately denounced rebels, and they had also disobeyed 'uthiris letters of tressoun direct lykewise agains them for rendering of the same place and fortalice.'

Of these facts there is proof in the said letters of horning and treason registered in the Sheriff books of Perth, and produced by Sir James Stewart. All which, being considered, together with all the circumstances of His Majesty's proceedings in the case, "and chiefie of the doings and behaviour of Johnne Ogilvie of the Craig (being als wa present personallie), affermit be his Heyness to have been the chief author of all the disobedience professit agains his Heynes, and of the particular answers of him, and of the foresaidis personis gevin thairto," the Lords approve of His Majesty's proceedings, and the King, with the advice of the said Lords, finds and declares that the foresaid letters of treason, commission and horning were orderly directed, and lawfully executed, and that the foresaid persons are to be punished in their "personis, lands, and guidis, quhilk kynd of punishment is reservit in his Heyness self." He, therefore, ordains James, Master of Ogilvie, and John Ogilvie of Craig to be committed to ward within the Castle of Edinburgh, and the other persons within the Castle of Blackness, therein to remain till relieved by His Majesty. They soon made peace with the King and Council, and returned home to Strathardle, as within six weeks of their trial at Linlithgow we find both Andrew Spalding of Ashintully and Walter Leslie of Morecloich besieged and taken captive from their castles there.

The Earl of Athole and his Countess, Mary Ruthven, with the Captain of Blair-Athole Castle, with a large force, on the 11th

Nov., besieged and took Morecloich Castle (now Whitefield). The following account of the raid is given in the "Records of the Privy Council," Vol. V., page 440:—

"Edinburgh, 9th Feb., 1598. Complaint by Walter Leslie of Moireleuch as follows:—Upon 11 Nov. last (1597) Johnne, Earl of Atholl, and Dame Marie Ruthven, his spouse, with a convocation of a great many leiges, in arms, came to the complainers' house of Moreleuch, which was then in the hands of His Majesty's Commissioners, "and thair asseiget his said house and lang space, intendit treassounable to have rissen fyre, and to have brint and destroyt the sam, wer not the said Walter randertit himself and the said house in his will, and having the said complainer in his hands, he causit cary, and transporte him to the castell and fortalice of the Blair of Athoill, quhair he detains him in strait firmance and captivitie, without cause or commission. The complainer appearing by James, Master of Ogilvie, his procurator, but the said Earl, his spouse, and George Leslie, Captain of Blair, having failed to appear, or to present the said Walter conform to the charge given them, the Lords ordain them to be denounced rebels."

At the same time Sir James Stewart of Auchmaddies, and Sir James Stewart of Ballechin, assisted by twenty-seven other Athole and Strathardle lairds and their followers, besieged Ashintully Castle, and took Andrew Spalding prisoner. For this the Earl of Atholl was at once called upon to become cautioner in 500 merks for each of them, to appear for trial before the Privy Council. As Athole did not produce them for trial, though often called upon to do so, for over a year, he was outlawed, and the whole twenty-nine principals denounced rebels, and all their goods forfeited, as we are told in "Piteairn's Criminal Trials," Vol. II., page 63:—

"Nov. 24th, 1598. Beseiging the Place of Ashintullie.—Sir James Stewart of Auchmaddies; Sir James Stewart of Ballieachan; James Stewart of Bodinschawis; Robert Stewart of Facastle; James Stewart of Force (Foss); Alex. Robertson of Fascallie; Alex. Stewart of Cueltony; John Falow younger in Balbrogie; George Cuneistown of Etradour (these nine did not "compear" at the trial); Patrick Buttart fiar of Gormack; David Donald of the Grange; Patrick Blair of Ardblair; William Chalmer of Drumloch; James Ramsay of Ardbkie; George Campbell of Crownan; William Wood sometime of Latoume; David Campbell of Easter Denhead; Robert Alexander in Cuper; Colene Falow in Grange; Patrick Campbell of Keithick; John Sowler in Cupar Grange; James Blair in Brunstounne; Sir Walter



Rollock Sutor of Dunerub; Henrie Durhame in Falow; John Pitcairns at the Mylne of Kilour; David Arnot of Incheok; Lawrence Narue of Alliefargie; Archibald Herring of Drimmie; and Archibald Campbell of Persar (Persie). Dilatit for Assaging of the Place of Assintullie, and taking of Andro Spalding of Assintullie committit in the month of November in the year of God 1597. Perserwar M<sup>r</sup> Thomas Hammiltoun advocat.

"The advocat producet his Maiesties Warrant for continewation of the dyett, to the XV. of December nixtoeum. The Laird Arbokie and William Wodsumtyme of Latoune, now of Banblane, David Campbell of Denheid, William Chalmer of Drumloch, Archibald Herring of Drimmig, offerit them to assyse, and disassentit to the continewatione; qthair upoune they askit instrumentis, John Pitcarne at the Mylne of Inver Kelour askit instrumentis. The samin day John, Earl of Atholl, oft times callit as cautioner and sourtee for Sir James Stewart of Auchmaddies, &c., to haif enterit and presentit thame, &c., was unlawit for nocht entrie of the said Sir James, &c., for ilk ane of thame in the pane of 500 merks; lykeas the said persons principall wer adjudget to be denuncit rebellis, and put to the horne, and all their moveable guidis escheit as fugitives."

The Robertsons of Struan made a raid this year on Glenbrierachan, and carried off a lot of spoil, for which damage one of the tenants complained to the Privy Council five years afterwards, viz.:—"At Perth, 7th August, 1602. Complaint by William M'Gillecyle, in Glenbarrachan . . . that five years ago Duncan M'Ewane Bayne, in Camvoran, with his accomplices, tenants of the Laird of Struan, reft from him five mares worth twenty pounds each. The pursuer, appearing by Finlay Fergusson, in Baledmund, and the Laird of Struan being himself present, the said procurator having offered that if Struan would hold Duncan off his lands, the complainant would never crave Struan for the goods libelled. Struan accepts this condition.—"Privy Council Records, Vol. VI., page 447."

1598.—Whatever the market price of horses was at this time in Strathardle, I find the tenants could always put a good value on them when stolen by raiders from the neighbouring clans. We have just seen that in the previous year a Glenbrierachan tenant claimed £20 each for his horses from Struan. Now we find in this year a Straloch tenant claiming double—£40—for a "red pyat mare," eight years old, from the Campbells of Breadalbane, as will be seen from the following extract from the Privy

Council Records (Vol. VI., p. 462):—"Perth, 9th Sept., 1602. Charge had been given to Sir Duncan Campbell of Glenorchy to enter John M'Gillevorich at the Beate of Finlarig, his man to answer a complaint by Fergus M'Coull in Straloch of reif, from him, furth of his lands of Straloch four years ago, of a black mare four years old worth thirty pounds; a red pyat mare eight years old worth forty pounds; a brown horse two years old worth twenty; and a black mare worth twenty merks. The pursuer appearing personally, and Sir Duncan Campbell, by Robert Campbell, his son, and procurator, the order is to denounce Sir Duncan for not entering his said man."

At this time the feud between the Robertsons of Straloch and the Spaldings of Ashintullie was at its height, so that when these two powerful barons—the natural leaders and defenders of the district—were at feud with each other their outside enemies had a better chance of raiding and plundering the country, an opportunity of which their warlike and restless neighbours took full advantage, as we have already seen from the number of forays made from all quarters on Strathardle about this time.

So bitter did this feud become now, and so great the slaughtering and plundering that the Privy Council had to interfere, and by an Act of Caution, dated Edinburgh, 17th Feb., 1598, John Robertson of Straloch became surety for £500 for his three leaders—John M'Concill, alias Duncanson, in Larig; John Adamson (M'Adie or Fergusson), younger in Larig; and John Reid, alias Fleming, in Minoch, not to harm Andro Spalding of Ashintullie or David Spalding—P.C. Records, Vol. V., p. 714. And on 10th March, Henry Balfour, procurator, registered at Edinburgh a bond by James Wemyss of Weriemyln for Andrew Spalding of Ashintullie, £1000, not to harm John Robertson of Straloch, John Robertson, his son, John Fleming in Menoch, John M'Intoshe in Lair, and John Adamson there; whilst Spalding himself gave a bond to same effect, in 300 merks each, for Edwin Cumnyson, Robert Malcolm, Donald M'Wattie, — Gillandreis, and John Mitchell—all in Ashintullie; John M'Indewar in Dallwoid; Patrick Grant, John M'Allane, Andrew Spalding, Donald M'Condoquy, and John M'Cairtney—in Dalhaugan; and John M'Concill Grassick, in Spittal, not to hurt John Robertson or his men.