

XIX.—*Letter from the Honourable Baron CLERK RATTRAY, to E. W. A. HAY, Esq. with an interesting Anecdote of General Monk.*

[Read, 10th December 1827.]

DEAR SIR,

105 Princes Street, 17th June 1827.

IN compliance with your request that I would commit to paper the anecdote respecting General Monk which I verbally communicated at the last Meeting of the Antiquarian Society, and which had been brought to my recollection at the moment by the exhibition of some original passports granted by that General to the family of Newton of Newton, and it being interesting in itself, and relating to the object then before the Meeting, I offer it as being illustrative of the important consequences that often follow from trivial incidents.

General Monk, it is known, resided chiefly at Dalkeith House, when he commanded the army of Oliver Cromwell in Scotland. He had occasion to receive frequent dispatches from Oliver Cromwell, and from his Council. These dispatches were forwarded by special messengers; and there was one person in particular who was commonly sent with them to Scotland. This person was, of course, in habits of intimacy with the chief servants in General Monk's household.

Soon after Cromwell's death, the Council of State, having suspicions of General Monk's fidelity, sent down an order to have him removed from the command of the forces. This dispatch was addressed to the Governor of Edinburgh Castle—the ordinary messenger of government was entrusted with it, and had directions to proceed to the Castle without communicating with General Monk.

However, it happened that General Monk's principal servant was walking down the High Street; and near the top of the Canongate he met his friend the government messenger, and immediately accosted him in the usual cordial manner of friends arriving from a distance, and then said, 'How comes it that you are going in this direction? are you not going out to the General at Dalkeith?' 'No,' said he, 'I am ordered to carry my dispatches to the Castle.' Monk's servant, with much readiness of thought, immediately saw that something was not right; so he instantly proposed to his friend to have a bottle of wine together, as he was not to go to Dalkeith. They accordingly went into a tavern, where the messenger partook freely of the liquor, and General Monk's servant contrived to get possession of the dispatch, and persuaded his friend to go out to Dalkeith. It was given to General Monk, who opened it, and found it to contain an order to remove him from the command. He concealed the nature of the dispatch, and took immediate measures to secure the army to his own interest, by which he ultimately effected the restoration of Charles II.

Dear Sir, I am ever your's faithfully,

J. CLERK RATTRAY.

*E. W. A. Hay, Esq. Sec. Ant. Soc.*