NOTICES REGARDING SCOTISH ARCHERY.

XXII.—Notices regarding Scottish Archery, particularly that of the Highlanders; together with some Original Documents relating to a levy of Highland Bowmen to serve in the war against France, in the year 1627.

Communicated by Donald Gregory, Esq. F.S.A. Scot.

It may not be generally known, that a levy of Highland Bowmen was made, under the authority of government, for the avowed purpose of serving in that expedition, under the celebrated Duke of Buckingham, which ended in the disastrous retreat from the isle of Rye in the year 1627. This fact appears so singular, when we consider for how great a length of time the powerful long bow of the English yeomanry had been disused, and the improvements that had been made in fire-arms since the first introduction of gunpowder into the art of war, that I have been induced to throw together the following notices connected with this subject, as they may perhaps be the means of procuring more full information regarding the Archery of the Highlanders, and of enabling us hereafter to ascertain whether their bows, in the times of which I speak, were equal in power to those of the English archers.

The history of Scotland sufficiently shews that in this arm the Scots generally were inferior to the English; indeed so much so, that all the great battles lost by the Scots were decided by the English bowmen. The battle of Bannockburn, indeed, clearly proved the great importance to the Scots, both of having themselves a strong force of archers, and of disabling this part of the English army, by an attack of cavalry, before they could have time to give many volleys of their deadly missiles. Yet, strange to say, this lesson was lost upon the Scottish warriors, who, with the exception of a few of the Borderers, never learnt to handle the bow with sufficient skill to oppose the English, and never appear to have repeated the manoeuvre which had proved so successful at Bannockburn.

James I. of Scotland, being sensible, from his English education, of the paramount importance of Archery, endeavoured, by every means in his power, to encourage the practice of it among his subjects. It was enacted in his first Parliament, anno 1424, 'That all men busk themselves to be archers, from the age of 12 years; and that in each ten pound worth of land there be made bow-marks, and specially near parish churches, where, upon holydays, men may come, and at the least shoot thrice about, and have usage of archery; and whosoever uses not the said archery, the lord of the land shall raise from him a wedder; and if the lord raises not the said penalty, the king's sheriff or his ministers shall raise it to the king.' (a) By another Statute in 1425, it was ordained, inter alia, 'That honest yeomen, having sufficient means, and who choose to be men at arms, shall be harnessed sufficiently at the discretion of the sheriffs; but all other yeomen of the realm betwixt sixty and sixteen years shall be sufficiently provided with bows and shafts of arrows, with swords, bucklers, and knives.' (b)

It is unnecessary to quote farther from the Acts of Parliament, on this head, in this and the succeeding reigns, as their terms are nearly alike, and all concur in making it too plain that the Scots preferred the games of golf and foot-ball to acquiring dexterity in the use of the long bow by shooting at the butts (c). Some of the Acts direct the yeomen who cannot handle the bow to be well furnished with targes of hide or wood (a poor defence) to resist the shot of England.' (d)

NOTICES REGARDING SCOTISH ARCHERY.

In the reign of James V. in the year 1535, an Act was passed making it imperative on the lieges having land to the extent of L.40 and upwards, to appear at weapon shavings, with hagbuts and culverings, and the proper furniture of this rude artillery, according to their respective means (a). The bow is merely mentioned in the preamble of this Act; whence we may infer that it was now falling into total disuse, at least in the Lowlands. Bows and arrows, and likewise cross-bows, are among the arms admitted at weapon shavings in the year 1540 (b); but there does not appear on this occasion the same anxiety, as in former reigns, to establish a large force of archers; and this appears to be the latest notice of the bow as a national weapon recognized and authorized by Parliament.

I am further confirmed in this view by the provisions of an Act of Council, dated 13th December 1552, ordering a levy of two Ensigncies of Highland soldiers, within the bounds of the Earl of Huntly's lieutenandry, to go to France with other Scottish troops, for the support of his Most Christian Majesty in his wars. The Highlanders are directed to be accoutred as follows, viz. 1 with jak and plait, steilbonett, suord, boucklair, new hose, and 4 new doublett of canvass at the least, and sleeves of plait or 4 splents, and ane speir of sax elne lang or thairby; (c) but no mention is made of the bow.

King James V. as will appear by the subjoined curious notices from the accounts of the Lord High Treasurer, seems to have encouraged archery in the Highlands, by introducing among the Highlanders both English and Flemish bows, which, as the prices testify, were then considered much superior to those manufactured in Scotland (d).

(b) Ibid p. 362.  
(c) Record of Privy Council of Scotland.  
(d) Item, the 2d day of December 1532, paid to the English bowar for a dozen of bows and six dozen of arrows, delivered at the King's command to Alexander Canochson, (a) and for four dozen of arrows delivered to the King's grace for his own shooting, L.20.

Item, [in August 1528 or 1539] given for a dozen of hand bows, sent at the King's Grace's command to James Canochson, (a) of the which the one half were Scotish bows, and the other half English. The price of each English bow 16 sh. and of each Scottish bow 9 sh. In all L.7. 10.

Item, the 13th day of October 1539, sent to Allan Sop, (b) at the King's command, eight Flanders bows, price of each 16 sh. and four Scotish bows, price of each 8 sh. In all L.8.

(a) Alexander MacConnell of Dunyveg and the Glens, chief of a very powerful tribe of the Clan Donald, inhabiting Kintyre and Islay.  
(b) Allan ni Sop was a celebrated warrior of the Clan-Gillies, and brother to MacLean of Dowart.

Whatever may have been the cause, it is certain that the bow continued to be made use of in the Highlands long after it had been forgotten in England and the Lowlands. This appears from innumerable passages in the Criminal records, and the record of the Privy Council of Scotland. The last time archers appeared in a battle in the Highlands is said to have been at a great Clan battle fought in the year 1688, between the Laird of Macintosh and Maclachlan of Keppoch.

The following documents, illustrative of the levy of bowmen in 1627, which has been already mentioned, will be found to possess considerable interest, particularly the Letter of the Laird of Maenaughtane. This gentleman and his company of archers seem, owing to contrary winds, to have come too late to join the Duke of Buckingham's army in the invasion of France; and we are thus left in ignorance of the effect that might have been produced by the revival of this almost forgotten weapon in a continental battle. If, as is most probable, this handful of men were destined to act against cavalry, and if they were to have been well supported by other troops, they might have proved useful; but otherwise they could hardly have failed to be an incumbrance to a modern army.

On the whole, the natural impression after reading these papers is, that the Highland bow must have been a weapon of greater power than is generally supposed. I have discovered no trace of the subsequent fate of Maenaughtane's Highland Archers as a body; but it is very probable that they joined some of their countrymen in the German wars, and distinguished themselves under the banner of the heroic Gustavus Adolphus.
LETTER from King Charles I. to the Privy Council of Scotland, dated Windsor, 12th August 1627 (a).

CHARLES R.—Right trustie, &c. &c. &c.—Being willing, amongst other forces intended to be sent by us, for better secunding the warres whairin we ar justifie ingadgit with France, to send thither two hundredth highland bowmen: Our pleasure is, that you grant unto Alexander M'Naughtan, our servant, ane comission, with ane sufficient warrant to levie and transport the said two hundredth bowmen, with as large priviledges as anie other heis had herefore in the lyke kinde, he alwayes giving such satisfaction to erowie one of the said number as shall be agreed upon betwixt him and thame, according to the custome in the lyke caiies; for doing whairof, these presents sail be unto yow a sufficient warrant.

And for the better furthering to levie the said number of men in dew tyme, we ar willing, upon ane motioun made unsto ws, for causing grant remissionis to suche highland personis as ar fugitive from our lawes for criminall causes, to revere the same to your consideration, being willing that thairin yow grant unto our said servant all the favoure and furtherance that can lawfully be granted. So we bid yow farewell. From our Court at Windsore, the 12 of August 1627.

Qbalik letter being heard and considderit be the said Lords, thay ordaine a commissioun, with ane sufficient warrant to levie Alexander M'Naughtan, our servant, ane commissioun, with ane sufficient warrant to levie Two hundred bowmen, which we conceve to be necessarie vpon some occasiouns in that warr wherein we are well: Whereas wee haue been pleased to giue order to our counsell for granting a warrant to Alexander M'Naughtan, our Servant, for levying Two hundred highland bowmen, which wee conceve to be necessarie vpon some occasiouns in that warr wherein wee ar engaged with France. And hauing for that effect made choice of the said Alexander for levying of them to be under your condicte, if your judgement ar concerneing which wee did of late writte vnto yow: Wee haue therefor thought good to recommed him vnto yow, being willing that yow giue vnto him for this purpose your best and readiest assis-tanz and favour, which wee will tak as a special pleasure done vnto Us. So wee bid yow a heartily farewell. From our Court at Windsore, the 12 of August 1627.

Addressed—To our right trustie and wellbeloued Cousin & counsellour, the Earle of Morton.

(a) Record of the Privy Council of Scotland, 1627. (b) From the original among the Morton papers.

LETTER from Alexander MacNaughtan, (of that Ilk) to the Earl of Morton, dated Falmouth, 15th January 1628 (a).

Right honorabill,

And my werie Guid Lord, your L. sail know that I wes camin in heir be ane Tempest of weather coming from Scotland, quhan I did writte to your L. of befur, and being doung back again, after I wes within threehree mileis of the Ile of Wicht, I was baithen back again to storme to the said herribie, & fearing that my former letter come not to your L. hande, I gott the favoure of the liventement of the castell of falmouth To send this letter to your Lp. hawing onderour from my L. chancellor of Scotland to mack for the Ile of Wicht, quhich your L. regiment lyes, quhich I meyn, God willing, to continowe my course on; God knowis quhow we bein haein Tossit wp and Douw be seas and storms of weather & chaset be men of warr : quhat Truble & chargis it hes been taine in making wp of my company, I leive that to your L. to Juge of quhen ye aie my compaine (Nott fearing that thair contrair winds and freidis will hinder us long hirr), & fearing the scarris of victuallis, it maid me writte to your L. quhat course your L. will think with thair scouris, Incais the Wind Continow (and withall) That your L. wald haue ane cair of these puir soiouris quho ar far frome their owin countrie. I rest & sail ever remain,

from Falmouth, the 15

Your L. most affectionat

To serwe you,

ALEX. MACNAUGHTAN.

Post scriptum.—Your L. sail know I mett ane man of Warr that come from burdeous, ane statich man of Warr, quho assurit me that thair ar twentie six saill come from the king of Spain, To assist the king of france againis the Rochelleris, & sayis he diid sie them him self, of the quhilk thair ar eicht schippis that he reportis he Did Newer sie the greater, as he reportis of trethewe. Mouiroir, the captain of the statich schip, as also the rest of the fleet that ar come frome burdeous, assuritlie assuris that thair is ane number of schippis coming from thence to be sowkis befir the Rochell. My L. as for newsi frome our selfis, our bagg pypperis & Marlit Flaidis serwitt us to guid wis in the permise of ane man of warr that heltie followit us.

Addressed on the back.—To the most honorabill and my werie Guid Lord, My lord erle of Morton, one of his Maiesties Privie counsellours of both the king-doms—These.

(a) From the original among the Morton papers.
NOTICES REGARDING SCOTISH ARCHERY.

No. IV.

ROLL of M'Nachtane's Soldieris schipped at Lochkerran, 11th December 1627—fra then to the 28th of December inclusive (a).

The names of the Soldieris Schipped be the laird of m'nachtane in george massones Schip at Lochkilcherane, beginning the 11th day of december 1627.

11 Dec. 1627.
Alexander M'Nachtane, Cap.
Hector M'Allister, Lieutenant.
Malcolm M'Neill, ensyne.
Mr Dougall Campbell, scriver.
William Don.
Johane araphile.
William Fraser.
Thomas Rutherford.
Donald m'来临.
William isberman.
Donald m'ryle.
John campbell.
Owen Forbes.
Allister m'Donald.
William campbell.
Andrew roy alias reid.
Johane chisholme.
Donald m'jaldach.
William m'rie.
Rorie m'gillere.
Angus m'gas.
Allister hewstoun.
Malcolm m'gillies.
John m'carron.

26 Allister caddell, pyper, & a boy.

Johane m'william.
Angus m'charis.
Malcolm m'Kelly.
John m'gillere.

27 Johane Dunlop.
Patrick M'Lochlin. State away be night out of ye Ship.

Entries for 26 Dec.
donald m'arow.
Donald m'来临.
Johane m'来临.

Entries for 27 Dec.
Donald m'来临.
Johane m'来临.
Johane m'来临.
Johane m'来临.
Johane m'来临.
Johane m'来临.
Johane m'来临.
Johane m'来临.
Johane m'来临.

The names of the fourteenn soldieris sent be m' &nnon, schipped at Tarbert, 17 Oct. 1627.

To be Disposed of be the erlt of m'orion. They have bene deir guests.

(a) From the original among the Morton Papers.
(b) In the original Roll the names are arranged in two columns. The first ends with No. 61; the second includes the rest.