

XV.—*Particulars relative to the Conduct of the great MARQUIS OF MONTROSE after his Apprehension.*

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THE ensuing narrative, relative to the Marquis of Montrose after his apprehension, contains much new and interesting matter : of its authenticity there can be no reasonable doubt. The industrious Wodrow took it down from the mouth of Mr Patrick Simson, minister of Renfrew, who was present “at what passed ’twixt the Commission and the Marquise.”

“What followes (he says) as to the late Marquise of Montrose, I wrote from Mr Simson’s own mouth, and read it over to him, and he made some additions and amendments : and after reading it over a second time, being write, amonge the rest of thir short narratives, he desired me to transcribe it *in mundo*, and he would signe it, being the only person now living for many years present at what passed ’twixt the Commission and the Marquise. This I delayed a little, and then the papers where this account is, wer mislaid till Mr Simson’s death. I now transcribe this from the scroll I wrote, and [which], after reading, Mr Simson approved of.

ROBERT WODROW.”

Of his informant, Wodrow has preserved the following notice : “Mr Patrick Simson, minister of Renfrew, who was ordained minister there November 11, 1653; he was born at New Abby, in the presbyterie of Dumfries, on October 2, 1628, and he died at Renfrew October 4, 1715. He was a man of very good parts, and acute; he had a great insight and knowledge of the Scriptures; he would have prayed very well; he was really a godly man, and was a man well seen in the discipline of the Church; he had a peculiar talent for the exercise of discipline, so that he was once Moderator of the General Assembly since the Revolution 1688; and, before that he was Moderator of a General Assembly, I heard him say, that he was an eye-witness to six Generall Assemblies before he was a minister himself. He was bred up with his cousen german, the famous and renowned Mr George Gillespie, late minister of Edinburgh. He was grandchild to that excellent man of God Mr Patrick Simson,

minister of Stirling; and that Mr Simson was the son of Mr Andrew Simson, who was at the beginning of the Reformation minister of Dunbar, and had been a schoolmaster at Perth before that, and was a Papist till one of the schollars brought to the school the story of David Lindsay; and Mr Andrew took that book out of his schollar’s hand and read it, and it really turned him a Protestant. He brought the book back again to the child, and said, My child, take home that book, and let it not be too much seen, lest it bring your parents to suffer; for popery was then prevailing much in this land.”

“ANNO 1650 about May 20, being Munday, in the morning before the Marquise of Montrose had his sentence from the Parliament, some Ministers, Mr James Guthrie, Mr Robert Trail, Mr James Durham, and Mr Mungo Law, appointed by the Commission, went into the Tolbooth of Edinburgh, to the room where Montrose was kept by Lieutenant Colonel Wallace.

“Mr James Guthrie began, and told the Marquise there wer severall things might marr his light in this affair, that he thought he would do well to lay to heart, and he would hint at them before he came to the main point; As, 1st, Somewhat of his naturall temper, which was aspiring and lofty, or to that purpose; 2dly, His personall vices, which wer too notoriouse (my relator told me this was meened of his being too much given to woomen); 3dly, The taking a commission from the King to fight against his country, and raise warr within our bouells. His answer to this my informer has forgot. 4thly, His taking Irish and Popish rebels and cut throats by the hand to make use of against his own countrymen; 5thly, The spoil and ravage his men made throw the country; 6thly, The much blood shed by his cruel followers.

“He heard Mr Guthrie’s discourse till he had done, patiently, and then resumed all the particulars, and discoursed prettily, as he could well do, and mixed in severall Latine sentences (my informer adds, that he thought his way a little too airy for a nobleman). He granted God had made men of severall tempers and dispositions, some slow and dull, others more sprightfull and active; and if the Lord should withhold light on that account, he confessed he was one of those that loved to have praise from virtouse actions. As to his personall vices he did not deny but he had many, for which he desired to find mercy; but if God should withhold light on that account, it might reach unto the greatest of saints, who wanted not their faults and failings. Then one of the Ministers interrupt-

ed him, and said, 'He was not to compare himself with the Scripture saints.' He said, 'I make no comparison of my self to them, I only speak as to the argument.' As to the taking of these men to be his followers that wer Irish Papists, &c. he said, 'It was no wonder the King should take any of his subjects who would help him, when those who should have been his best subjects deserted and opposed him. We see,' said he, 'what a company David took to defend him in the time of his strait.' There was some volitation to and fro upon that practice of David, which my informer has forgote. As to his men's spoiling the country, he said, They knew that souldiers who wanted pay could not be restrained from spoiling, nor kept under discipline as other regular forces, but he did all that lay in him to keep them back from it: and for bloodshed, if it could have been prevented, he had rather it had come out of his own veins.

"Then falling upon the main bussiness, they charged him with Breach of Covenant. To which he answered, 'The Covenant that I took, I own it, and adhere to it. Bishops I care not for them, I never intended to advance their interest: But when the King had granted you all your desires, and you were sitting every one under his vine and fig-tree, that then you should have taken a party in England by the hand, and entered into a league and covenant with them against the King, was the thing I judged it my duty to oppose to the yondermost.' In the progress of their discourses (which my informer cannot now fully remember), he said, that course of theirs ended not but in the King's death, and overturning the whole of the Government; and when it was said, that was a sectarian party rose up, he said only in reply, 'Error is infinite.'

"After other discourses, when they were risen and on their foot to go away, Mr Guthrie said, 'As we wer appointed by the Commission of the General Assembly to conferr with you, and bring you, if it could be attained, to some sense of your guilt, so we had, if we had found you penitent, power from the same Commission to relax you from the sentence of excommunication under which you lye; but now, since we find it far otherwise with you, and that you maintain your former course, and all things for which that sentence is passed upon you, we must, with sad hearts, leave you under the same, unto the Judgment of the Great God, under the fear [and] apprehension, of that which is bounden on earth, God will bind in heaven.'

"To which he replied, 'I am very sorry that any actions of mine have been offensive to the Church of Scotland, and I would with all my heart be reconciled with the same; but since I cannot obtain it upon any other termes unles

I call that my sin which I account to have been my duty, I cannot do this for all the reason and conscience in the world.' My informer tells me, Mr David Dickson had been with him some days before, but in vain.

"When they would not allow him any knife nor weapon, least he should have done himself hurt thereby, he said, 'You need not be at so much pains, for before I was taken I had a prospect of this cruel treatment, and if my conscience would have allowed me I could have dispatched myself.'

"This same day (Munday) he desired leave to call for a barber to shave him: this was refused him for the same reason. When Colonell Wallace told him that he could not have that favour, 'I could not think but they would have allowed that to a dog.' My relator heard this.

"That same day about 11 of the clock he was called to the Barr, and got his sentence, to be hanged, and one leg sent to Glasgow, another to Aberdeen, &c. He said angrily, either in the prison when he heard what was to be his sentence, or after it was passed, 'It becomes them rather to be Hangmen, than me to be hanged.' He expected to be beheaded. But, Tuesday May 21, he was hanged."¹

As the following extract from the Diary of Mr Robert Trail, one of the Ministers of Edinburgh, is a fitting sequel to Wodrow's narrative, it has been added, from the *Edinburgh Magazine*, 1773, vol. i. p. 119, where it is signed L. L.

"When the Marquis of Montrose was brought into the Parliament-hall to receive his sentence, I was present, with some others of the ministers of the town, and heard his sentence read unto him; he being in the pannel, and commanded to kneel on his knees while it was a reading, which he did, but very unwillingly. After it had been fully read, he answered, 'That, according to our

¹ The following anecdote relative to the exposure of the head of the Marquis, occurs in a work of rare occurrence entitled *Binning's Light to the Art of Gunnery*, London, 1676, 4to, pages 117, 118.

"In the year 1650 I was in the Castle of Edinburgh when that army of Rebels to our King did beleaguer our Castle.—One remarkable instance I had, in shooting at that mirror of his time for loyalty and gallantry, James Marquess of Montross his head, standing on the pinnacle of the Tolbooth of Edinburgh;—but that Providence had ordered that Head to be taken down with more honour. I admired of its abiding, for the ball took the stone joining to the stone whereon it stood, which stone fell down and killed a drummer and a souldier or two on their march between the Luckenbooths and the Church, and the Head remained, till, by his Majesty, it was ordered to be taken down and buried with such honour as was due to it."

Scots proverb, *A messenger should neither be headed nor hanged.* My Lord Loudon, being then President of the Parliament, replied very well, ‘ That it was he, and such as he, that were a great snare to princes, and drew them to give such bloody commissions.’ After that he was carried back to prison : The Commission of the Kirk then sitting did appoint Mr James Hamilton, Mr Robert Baillie, Mr Mungo Law, and me, to go and visit him in the prison ; for he being some years before excommunicated, none except his nearest relations might converse with him. But, by a warrant from the Kirk, we staid a while with him in conference about his soul’s condition : but we found him continuing in his old pride, and taking very ill what was spoken to him ; saying, ‘ I pray you, Gentlemen, let me die in peace.’ It was answered to him, that our errand to him was ‘ That he might die in true peace, being reconciled to the Lord and to his Kirk.’ He went aside to a corner of the chamber, and there spoke a little time with Mr Robert Baillie alone ; and thereafter we left him. Mr Baillie, at our going out of the Tolbooth, told us, that what he spoke to him was only concerning some of his personal sins in his conversation, but nothing concerning the things for which he was condemned. We returned to the Commission, and did show unto them what had passed among us. They seeing that for the present he was not desiring relaxation from his censure of excommunication, did appoint Mr Mungo Law and me to attend on the morrow upon the scaffold, at the time of his execution, that, in case he should desire to be relaxed from his excommunication, we should be allowed to give it unto him in the name of the Kirk, and to pray with him and for him, *that what is loosed in earth might be loosed in heaven.*²

“ But he did not at all desire it, yea, did not look towards that place of the scaffold where we stood ; only he drew apart some of the magistrates, and spake a while with them ; and then went up the ladder, in his red scarlet cassock, in a very stately manner, and never spoke a word. But, when the executioner was putting the cord about his neck, he looked down to the people upon the scaffold, and asked, ‘ How long should I hang here?’ When my colleague and I *saw him casten over the ladder*, we returned to the Commission and related to them the matter as it was.”

² It appears from Wodrow’s Narrative that the attempt had been previously unsuccessfully made to get Montrose to submit to the Assembly and confess his guilt,—and the inducement held out was a relaxation of the sentence of excommunication.