

III.

ORIGINAL LETTER (HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED) FROM COLONEL JOHN GRAHAME OF CLAVERHOUSE (AFTERWARDS VISCOUNT OF DUNDEE), DESCRIBING THE MILITARY EXECUTION OF JOHN BROWN OF PRIESTHILL, COMMONLY CALLED "THE CHRISTIAN CARRIER," ON THE 1st OF MAY 1685. BY MARK NAPIER, Esq., ADVOCATE, SHERIFF OF DUMFRIESHIRE.

Mr Napier, in connection with the following letter, read an elaborate statement regarding the account given by Mr Macaulay of the death of Brown of Priesthill, founded upon Wodrow's narrative, and tracing the source from which Wodrow had evidently derived his information. In opposition to such accounts, which assert that Brown was shot by Claverhouse with his own hand, and without due deliberation or just and legal cause, Mr Napier read an original letter from Claverhouse himself to the Duke of Queensberry, reporting officially what had occurred, and proving that Brown was shot in military form by the troopers under his orders; and that he might have saved his life had he, like his nephew who was captured along with him, taken the oath of abjuration which had then been recently prescribed by government for persons suspected of high treason. The letter, which was recently discovered by Mr Napier among the Queensberry Papers, in possession of his Grace the preservation of the Round Tower in this and in numerous instances in Ireland, amidst the general ruin and devastation which usually surround them, is owing to the simple circumstance, that these Towers—whatever were their uses and objects—were structures which, in consequence of their remarkable combination of extreme tallness and slenderness, required to be constructed from the first of the very best and strongest, and consequently of the most durable building materials which could be procured; while the one-storied or two-storied wood-roofed churches, and other low and lighter ecclesiastical edifices with which they were associated, demanded far less strength in the original construction of their walls, and consequently have, under the dilapidating effects of centuries, much more speedily crumbled down and perished.

Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry, will be included in Mr Napier's forthcoming "Memorials and Letters illustrative of the Life and Times of John Grahame of Claverhouse, Viscount of Dundee." An accurate transcript of it is here given in its original orthography.

"GASTON, *May the 3, 1685.*

"May it Please your Grace.

"On Frayday last, amongst the hilles, betwixt Douglas and the Plelands, we purseued tuo fellous a great way throu the mosses, and in end seised them. They had no armes about them, and denayed they had any; but being asked if they would take the abguration, the eldest of tuo, called John Broun, refused it, nor would he swear not to ryse in armes against the King, but said he kneu no King. Upon which, and there being found bullets and match in his house, and treasonable peapers, I caused shoot him dead; which he suffered very unconcernedly. The other, a young fellou and his nephew, called John Brounen, offered to take the oath, but would not swear that he had not been at Neumilles in armes, at the rescuing the prisoners. So I did not knou what to doe with him. I was convinced that he was guilty, but sawe not hou to proceed against him. Wherfor, after he had said his prayers, and carabins presented to shoot him, I offered to him, that if he would make ane ingenious confession, and make a discoverie that might be of any importance for the Kings service, I should delay puting him to death, and plead for him; upon which he confessed that he was at that attake of Neumilles, and that he had com straight to this house of his uncles on Sunday morning. In the time he was making this confession, the souldiers found out a house in the hille, under ground, that could hold a dusen of men, and there were swords and pistolles in it; and this fellou declared that they belonged to his uncle, and that he had lurked in that place ever since Bothwell, where he was in armes. He confessed that he had a halbart, and told who gave it him about a month agoe, and we have the fellou prisoner. He gave account of the names of the most pairt of those that wer there; they were not above sixty, and they were all Gaston and Neumilles men, saive a feu out of Streven parish. He gave also account of a conventicle kept by Renik at the bak of Carantable, where there were threttin scor of men in armes, mustered and exersised, of which number he was, with his halbart. He tells of ane other Conventicle about three monthes agoe kept neer Loudon hille, and gives account of the persons wer at both, and what childring wer baptised; particularly that at Carntable, which was about the time that Lieu: Muray, and Crichton, should have laiten them eskeep. He also gives account of those who gave any assistance to his uncle, and we have seised thereupon the goodman of the upmost Plelands; and ane other tenent,

about a myle belou that, is flaid upon it. I doubt not but, if we had time to stay, good use might be made of his confession. I have acquyted myself when I have told your Grace the caise. He has been but a moneth or tuo with his halbart; and if your Grace thinks he deserves no marcy, justice will pass on him; for I, having no commission of Justiciary myself, have delyvered him up to the Lieutenent Generall to be disposed of as he pleases.

“I am

“My LORD

“Your Graces most

“humble servant

“J. GRAHAME.

*“To His Grace the Duke of Queensberry
Lord High Thesaurer of Scotland.”*