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[Pg 1]

CLAVERHOUSE.

CHAPTER I.

John Graham, Viscount of Dundee, best known, perhaps, in history by his territorial title of Claverhouse, was born in the year 1643. No record, indeed, exists either of the time or place of his birth, but a decision of the Court of Session seems to fix the former in that year—the year, as lovers of historical coincidences will not fail to remark, of the Solemn League and Covenant.[1]

He came of an ancient and noble stock. The family of Graham can be traced back in unbroken succession to the beginning of the twelfth century; and indeed there have been attempts to encumber its scutcheon with the quarterings of a fabulous antiquity. Gram, we are told, was in some primeval time the generic name for all independent leaders of men, and was borne by one of the [Pg 2] earliest kings of Denmark. Another has surmised that if Graham be the proper spelling of the name, it may be compounded of Gray and Ham, the dwelling, or home, of Gray; but if Grame, or Græme, be the correct form, then we must regard it as a genuine Saxon word, signifying fierce, or grim. Such exercises are ingenious, and to some minds, possibly, interesting; but they are surely in this case superfluous. A pedigree, says Scott laughingly as he sits down to trace his own, is the national prerogative of every Scottishman, as unalienable as his pride and poverty; but he must be very poor or very proud who cannot find his account in the legitimate pedigree of the House of Montrose.

The first of the branch of Claverhouse, which took its name from a small town in Forfarshire a few miles to the north of Dundee, was John, son of John Graham of Balargus in the same shire. Graham of Balargus was the son of another John, who was the second son of Sir Robert Graham of Fintrey, the eldest son of Robert Graham of Strathcanon, son and heir of Sir William Graham of Kincardine, by his wife the Lady Mary Stuart, widow of George first Earl of Angus and daughter of King Robert the Third—the unhappy king of "The Fair Maid of Perth." The grandson of John Graham was Sir William

Graham of Claverhouse, the chosen friend of his cousin, the gallant and unfortunate Marquis of Montrose. By his wife Marion, daughter of Thomas Fotheringham of Powrie, Sir William had two sons, George and Walter, of whom the latter was the ancestor of those Grahams of Duntroon who at a later period assumed the title of Dundee. George[Pg 3] left one son, another Sir William, who married Lady Jean Carnegie, daughter of the first Earl of Northesk, and by her had four children—two daughters, Margaret and Anne, and two sons, John and David. David is, as will be seen, not unrecorded in the annals of his country; but his name has been completely eclipsed by that of his elder brother, the "bloody Claver'se" of the Whigs, the "bonnie Dundee" of the Jacobites, one of the most execrated or one of the most idolised characters in the history of this kingdom, according to the temper and the taste of the writers and readers of history.

The register of that year shows that the two brothers matriculated at Saint Leonard's College in the University of Saint Andrews, on February 13th, 1665. Before this date all is a blank. Of John's boyish years history and tradition are equally silent. Long after his death, indeed, some idle stories became current, as their fashion is, of prophecies and prodigies in that early time. His nurse is said to have foretold that a river taking its name from a goose would prove fatal to him, and to have lamented that her child's career of glory had been frustrated because he had been checked in the act of devouring a live toad. This last story sounds much like a popular version of the Grecian fable of Demophoön, as told in the Homeric hymn to Demeter. But, as a matter of fact, it was a legend current of the infancy both of the Regent Morton and of Montrose himself before it was given to Claverhouse; and possibly of many other youthful members of the Scottish aristocracy, who happened to make themselves obnoxious to a class of their countrymen whose piety[Pg 4] seems to have added no holy point to their powers of invective. There is an ingenious fancy, and, at least, as much reason as is generally displayed in mythological researches, in the surmise that this particular legend may have owed its origin to the French connection with Scotland, a connection which would naturally have found little favour in the eyes of the followers of John Knox.

Claverhouse seems to have neglected neither the studies nor the discipline of the University. He has, indeed, in our own time been denied enough even of the common intellectual culture of his day to save him from ridicule as a blockhead. But there is no reason for this contemptuous statement. His own contemporaries, and others, who if not exactly contemporaries have at least as good right to be heard as a writer of our own time, have left very different testimony. Burnet, who, though connected by marriage with Claverhouse and at one time much in his confidence, was the last of men to praise him unduly, has vouched both for his abilities and virtues. Dalrymple, who was certainly no Jacobite, though censured by the Whigs for his indulgence to James, has described him as from his earliest youth an earnest reader of the great actions recorded by the poets and historians of antiquity. More particular testimony still is offered by a writer whose work was not, indeed, undertaken till nearly fifty years after the battle of Killiecrankie, but whose pictures of those men and times have all the freshness and colour of a contemporary. The author of those memoirs of Lochiel of which Macaulay has made such brilliant use, has credited Claverhouse with a considerable knowledge of mathematics[Pg 5] and general literature, especially such branches of those studies as were likely to be of most use to a soldier. Lastly, Doctor Munro, Principal of the College of Edinburgh, when charged before a Parliamentary Commission with rejoicing at the news of Killiecrankie, denied at least that he had rejoiced at the death of the conqueror, for whom he owned "an extraordinary value," such as, in his own words, "no gentleman, soldier, scholar, or civilised citizen will find fault with me for." [2]

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It would be as foolish to take these witnesses too literally, as it is foolish to call Claverhouse a blockhead because he could not spell correctly. For many years after his death men of position and abilities far more distinguished and acknowledged than his, were not ashamed to spell with a recklessness that would inevitably now entail on any fourth-form boy the last penalty of academic law. Scott says that Claverhouse spelled like a chambermaid; and Macaulay has compared the handwriting of the period to the handwriting of washerwomen. The relative force of these comparisons others may determine, but it is certain that in this respect at least Claver-

house sinned in good company. The letters of even such men as the Lord Advocate, Sir George Mackenzie, and the Dalrymples, — letters written in circumstances more favourable to composition than the despatches of a soldier are ever likely to be — are every whit as capricious and startling in their variations from the received standard of orthography. If it is impossible quite to agree with his staunch eulogist, Drummond of Bahaldy, that Claverhouse was "much master in the epistolary way of writing," at least his letters are plain and to the purpose; and the letters of a soldier have need to be no more.

It is, of course, unlikely that he could have been, even for those days, a cultivated man. The studies of youth are but the preparation for the culture of manhood; and after his three quiet years at Saint Andrews were done, his leisure for study must have been scant indeed. But all we know of his character, temperament, and habits of life forbid the supposition that he wasted that precious time either in idleness or [Pg 7] indulgence. His bitterest enemies have borne witness to his singular freedom from those vices which his age regarded more as the characteristics than the failings of a gentleman. The most scurrilous of the many scurrilous chroniclers of the Covenanters' wrongs has owned in a characteristic passage that his life was uniformly clean.[3] Gifted by nature with quick parts, of dauntless ambition and untiring energy both of mind and body, he was not the man to have let slip in idleness any chance of fortifying himself for the great struggle of life, or to have neglected studies which might be useful to him in the future because they happened to be irksome in the present. It is only, therefore, in reason to suppose that he managed his time at the University prudently and well, and this may easily be done without assuming for him any special intellectual gifts or graces.

But, as a matter of strict fact, from the date of his matriculation to the year 1672 nothing is really known of Claverhouse or his affairs. It has, however, been generally assumed that, after the usual residence of three years at the University, he crossed over into France to study the art of war under the famous Turenne. As the practice was common then among young men of good birth and slender fortune, it is not unlikely that Claverhouse followed it. A large body of English troops was a few years later serving under the French standard. In 1672 the Duke of Monmouth, then in the prime of his fortune,

joined Turenne with a force of six thousand English and Scottish troops, amongst whom marched [Pg 8] John Churchill, a captain of the Grenadier company of Monmouth's own regiment. But the military glory Claverhouse is said to have won in the French service cannot have been great: his studies in the art of war must have been mainly theoretical. In the year 1668, the year in which Claverhouse is said to have left Scotland for France, Lewis had been compelled to pause in his career of conquest. The Triple Alliance had in that year forced upon him the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle. He had been compelled to restore Franche Comté, though he still kept hold of the towns he had won in the Low Countries. But the joy with which all parties in England welcomed this alliance had scarcely found expression when Charles, impatient of the economy of his Parliament and indifferent to its approval, opened those negotiations which, with the help of his sister the Duchess of Orleans, and that other Duchess, Louisa of Portsmouth, resulted in the secret treaty of Dover. We are not now concerned to examine the particulars of a transaction which even Charles himself did not dare to confide entirely to his ministers, familiar as the Cabal was with shameless deeds. It is enough for our present purpose to remember that, in return for a large annual subsidy and the promise of help should England again take up arms against her king, Charles bound himself to aid Lewis in crushing the rising power of Holland and to support the claims of the House of Bourbon to the throne of Spain. Supplies were obtained for immediate purposes by closing the Exchequer, an act which ruined half the goldsmiths in London. As a set-off against this, a royal proclamation, arrogating to itself powers only Parliament could rightly exercise, [Pg 9] suspended the laws against Nonconformists and Catholics. The latter were, indeed, allowed to say Mass only within their private houses, but to dissenters of every other class was granted the freest liberty of public worship.

The declaration of war followed close on the declaration of indulgence. The immediate result of the latter was the release of John Bunyan from an imprisonment of twelve years, and the publication of the "Pilgrim's Progress." A more important and lasting result was the Revolution of 1688. Both declarations were unpopular, but the Declaration of Indulgence was the most unpopular of the two. It

was unpopular with the zealous Churchman for the concessions it made both to Papist and Puritan. It was unpopular with the Puritan because he was compelled to share it with the Papist. It was unpopular with the Papist because it was less liberal to him than to the Puritan. It was unpopular with all classes of patriotic Englishmen alike, because it directly violated that prerogative of the Legislature for which so much English blood had been already shed. It was soon, indeed, repealed, and its repeal was soon followed by the dissolution of the Cabal, the passing of the Test Act, and peace with Holland. But though the fears of the nation were thus laid to rest for a time, it now first became clear to those who could look beyond the passing day, and whose vision was sharpened by the memory of what had been, how surely England was moving under the son back again to a state of things which had cost the father his crown and his life.

But to return to the declaration of war. Lewis received, and probably expected to receive, but little[Pg 10] support from his English allies, and in a furious action fought off the coast of Suffolk De Ruyter more than held his own against the combined fleets of France and England. But on land the French King carried all before him. Led by Condé and Turenne, the ablest captains of the age, a vast host poured across the Rhine. The Dutch were waked from the vain dreams of a French alliance, into which they had been lulled by the chiefs of the great merchant class which had risen to power on the fall of the House of Orange, only to find themselves helpless. Town after town opened its gates to the invader: three out of the seven provinces of the Federation were already in his hands: his watch-fires were seen from the walls of Amsterdam. In the first mad paroxysm of their despair the people rose against their leaders. De Ruyter, who had borne their flag to victory on many a hard fought day, was insulted in the public streets: the Grand Pensionary, John De Witt, and his brother Cornelius were brutally murdered before the palace of the States-General at the Hague. The office of Stadtholder was re-established; and the common voice called back to it a prince of that House which twenty years ago had been excluded for ever from the affairs of a State which had never existed without it.

William Henry, great-grandson of the founder of the Dutch Republic, hereafter to be known as William the Third of England, was

then in his twenty-second year. The heroic spirit of William the Silent lived again in the frail body of his descendant. Without a moment's hesitation he accepted the hard and thankless task imposed upon him. With wise counsel and [Pg 11] brave words he calmed and revived the drooping hearts of his countrymen. He rejected with scorn the offers both of Charles and Lewis to seduce him from his allegiance. He replied to Buckingham's remonstrances on the folly of a struggle which could only mean ruin to the Commonwealth, that he would fight while there was a ditch left for him to die in. His courage spread. The Dutch flew to arms: without a regretful voice they summoned to their aid their last irresistible ally: the dykes were cut, and soon the waters, destroying to save, spread over all that trim and fertile land. The tide of invasion was checked, and with the next spring it began to roll slowly backward. The great princes of the Continent became alarmed at this new prospect of French ambition. The sluggish Emperor began to bestir himself. Spain, fast dwindling to the shadow of that mighty figure which had once bestrode two worlds, sent some troops to aid a cause which was, indeed, half her own. By sea the Dutch could do no more than keep their flag flying, but it says much for their sailors that they could do that against a foe their equal in skill and courage, and almost always their superior in numbers. On land they were more successful. The Bishop of Munster was driven back from the walls of Groningen: Naerden and Bonne were retaken: before the summer was over the whole electorate of Cologne was in the hands of William and his allies. The campaign of 1674 was less fortunate to the young general. Charles had, it is true, been compelled by his Parliament to make a peace more favourable than the Dutch could have hoped for; but in almost every direction Lewis made good again the ground he had lost [Pg 12] in the previous year. William, indeed, took Grave, but he was compelled to raise the siege of Oudenarde. A large force of Germans under the Elector of Brandenburg was driven out of Alsace across the Rhine by Turenne, who had a short while before completely routed the Imperial troops under the Duke of Lorraine at Sintzheim. Franche Comté was reconquered in a few weeks. But the most notable action of the year was the battle of Seneff, fought near Mons on August 11th between William and Condé. It was long, bloody, and indecisive; but it raised William's reputation for courage and ability to the highest

pitch, and drew from his veteran opponent one of those compliments a brave soldier is always glad to pay a foeman worthy of his steel. "The Prince of Orange," said Condé, "has acted in everything like an old captain, except in venturing his life too like a young soldier."

The battle of Seneff has for us, too, a particular importance. It gives us, according to some of his biographers, the first glimpse of Claverhouse as a soldier. The story goes that, at an early period of the fight, William with a handful of his men was closely beset by a large body of French troops. In making his way back to his own lines the Prince's horse foundered in some marshy ground, and he would inevitably have been either killed or made prisoner had not Claverhouse, who was of the party, mounted him on his own charger and brought him safe out of the press. For this service William gave the young soldier (who was, however, the Prince's senior by seven years) a captain's commission in his own regiment of Horse Guards, commanded by the Count de Solmes who led the English[Pg 13] van on the day of the Boyne. This story has been contemptuously rejected by Macaulay as a Jacobite fable composed many years after both actors in the scene were dead. The story may not be true, but Macaulay's reasons for rejecting it are not quite exact. Reports of Claverhouse's gallantry at Seneff were certainly current during his lifetime. It is mentioned, for example, in a copy of doggerel verses addressed to Claverhouse by some nameless admirer on New Year's Day 1683.[4] And there is yet more particular testimony, though, like the former, it is of that nature which a historian will always feel himself at liberty to reject if it does not match with the rest of his case, and which counsel on the opposite side are accordingly at equal liberty to make use of. In the memoirs of Lochiel mention is made of a Latin poem written by a certain Mr. James Philip of Amryclos, in Forfarshire, who bore Dundee's standard at Killiecrankie. Lochiel's biographer does not quote the Latin text, but gives translations of certain passages. The original manuscript, bearing the date 1691, is now in the Advocates' Library at Edinburgh. Napier had seen this "Grameis," as the work is called, and compared it with the translations, which he declares to be very imperfect, as, from the specimens he gives, they undoubtedly are. Macaulay, who never saw the Latin text, owns to have taken a[Pg

14] few touches from the passages quoted in the memoirs for his inimitable picture of affairs in the Highlands during the days immediately preceding Killiecrankie; but the passage recording the early gallantry of the conqueror at Killiecrankie he did not take.[5]

It is unfortunate that the tale of these early years should assume so controversial a tone. But where all, or almost all, is sheer conjecture, it is inevitable that the narrative must rest rather on argument than fact. The precise moment when Claverhouse transferred his services from the French to the Dutch flag[Pg 15] is, in truth, no more certain than the date of his birth is certain, or his conduct at Saint Andrews, or, indeed, than it is certain that he ever at any time served under Lewis. The tale of those English services under the French King is in the last degree confused and doubtful. If it is so in the case of such a man as Marlborough, small wonder that it is so in the case of such a man as Claverhouse, whose name was practically unknown till ten years before his death. That he did, however, at one time bear arms in the Dutch ranks seems as indisputable as any part of the scanty story of the first two-and-thirty years of his life can be said to be. But beyond this it is impossible to go.

In 1677 he left William's service and returned to Scotland. An idle story was circulated some years afterwards of a brawl with one of William's officers who had received the regiment promised to Claverhouse, of a reprimand from William, and an indignant vow never to serve again under a prince who had broken his word. The judicial weight that has been brought to demolish this slender fabric is unnecessary. The story itself is not consistent with the characters of either men. It is very possible that the young soldier, like another young man of those days, may have grown "tired with knocking at preferment's door;" but, in truth, a reason to account for their parting is very easily found. With the campaign of 1677 all fighting on the Continent was stayed for a time. Claverhouse's profession was fighting. After the peace of Nimeguen in 1678 Scotland was the only European country then offering a chance of employment to a soldier of fortune. In 1677, accordingly, he resigned his commission in[Pg 16] the Dutch service and crossed over into England, taking with him a reputation for courage and ability that at once recommended him to the King and Duke of York for a man likely to be useful in such affairs as they had then on hand. Indeed, the character that it is

clear he brought back with him from Holland is alone sufficient to disprove the story of the quarrel in the courtyard at Loo.[6]

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FOOTNOTES:

[1] Fountainhall's "Historical Notices:" Napier's "Memorials of Dundee," i. 183. The decision in question is dated July 24th, 1687, and certainly appears to prove that Claverhouse did not attain his majority till 1664, which would fix his birth in the year above given.

[2] The "Memoirs of the Life of Sir Ewan Cameron of Lochiel" were printed for the Abbotsford Club in 1842. They are believed to have been written between 1730 and 1740 by John Drummond of Bahaldy, a grandson, or great-grandson, of Lochiel. Several copies of the manuscript are in existence, of which the best is said by the editor to be the one then in the possession of Mr. Crawford of Cartsburn. It is written in a clear hand upon small quarto paper, and bound in two volumes. On the fly-leaf of the first volume is written "Aug. 7. 1732, Jo. Drummond." See also Burnet's "History of My Own Time," ii. 553; Dalrymple's "Memoirs of Great Britain and Ireland," i. 344; Burton's "History of Scotland," vii. 360; Napier's "Memorials of Viscount Dundee," i. 16-32, and 178-9. Burnet married Lady Margaret Kennedy, daughter of the Earl of Cassilis and aunt of Lady Dundee. In point of style and arrangement, of taste and temper—in everything, in short, which helps to make literature, Napier's book is perhaps as bad as it is possible for a book to be. But his industry is unimpeachable; and, through the kindness of the late Duke of Buccleuch, he was able to publish no less than thirty-seven letters written in Claverhouse's own hand to the first Duke of Queensberry, not one of which had been included in the collection printed for the Bannatyne Club in 1826, nor was, in fact, known to be in existence by anyone outside the family of Buccleuch. His book includes also the fragment of a memoir of Dundee and his times, left in manuscript by Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, of Hoddam, Walter Scott's friend. The memoir was thrown up, it is said, in despair on the appearance of "Old Mortality." Some idea of the extent to which Napier suffered from the *Lues Boswelliana* may be gathered