

CONFLICT AT LOCH LOCHY. •

A. D. 1544.

IN the year 1544 several of the Highland clans, taking advantage of the distracted state of the kingdom, committed great excesses. The Earl of Huntly was sent into the Highlands at the head of a considerable force to restrain their disorders, and to punish the aggressors. There was an ancient feud between the Frasers and the Clan Ranalds, which had often caused much bloodshed on former occasions. Huntly is accused by Buchanan of fomenting the feud, because "of all the adjacent tribes the Frasers alone refused to acknowledge his authority," but Sir Robert Gordon has exculpated his memory from this odious charge. It appears that by the Earl's exertions he restored to Hugh, fifth Lord Lovat, who at Queen Mary's accession to the crown in 1531 had been appointed her Justiciar in the North, and also to the chief of the Grants, sundry lands of which they had been deprived by the Camerons and the Macdonalds of Glencoe, but the inaccessible fastnesses to which those marauders retreated prevented Huntly from chastising them, and he was compelled to return.

• Anderson's Historical Account of the Family of Fraser; Sir Robert Gordon's History of the Family of Sutherland; Buchanan's History.

Lord Lovat, on the 15th of July 1544, resolved to take possession of the property recovered for him by Huntly, and mustering all his clan, he proceeded at their head to the locality. His Lordship encountered no molestation in his progress, but on his return he was waylaid by a mixed party of the MacDonalds and other clansmen. After loud execrations, yells, and gesticulations against each other, in the peculiar manner of the Highland clans when bidding mortal defiance, a desperate conflict ensued. The Frasers stripped themselves to their shirts, which procured for the fight the designation of *Blaranlein*. After each party had exhausted all their arrows they drew their swords, and commenced a mortal combat in the wild and desolate region of Loch Lochy. The battle lasted twelve hours, the victory inclining to neither party at night-fall. On the following morning the carnage too faithfully distinguished the vanquished in this savage conflict. The loss sustained by the Frasers was such as to cause almost a total extinction of the name. Lord Lovat, the Master of Lovat his eldest son, and eighty gentlemen and retainers, lay dead on the field of strife. Four only escaped, and Fraser of Foyers, the only gentleman who survived, owed his recovery to the care and attention of his foster brother. Seven of the Clan Ranald were all who left the field alive, and every one was wounded.

The dead bodies of Lord Lovat and the Master were carried from the field on the following day by his vassals, who resorted in crowds to the spot, and were interred at Beauly. The Latin inscription over his Lordship's tomb was visible till the year 1746. It is asserted that the defeat of the Frasers was caused by the cowardice of a party of Lord Lovat's retainers who basely fled, but for this statement there is no clear proof. There is also a tradition which affords a striking illustration of the attachment of the Highland clans to their chief. Lord Lovat, it is

said, having stooped to lift some water in the hollow of his hand to quench his thirst, a cry was raised by his followers that he was killed. They immediately surrounded his body, and each man fell where he stood. The Master of Lovat is also traditionally said to have lost his life by the taunts of his stepmother, a daughter of Walter Ross of Balnagowan. He did not at first accompany his father in the expedition, but Lady Lovat's insinuations of cowardice prompted him to follow, and he unhappily joined his friends in time to share their fate. Whatever were Lady Lovat's motives, the death of the Master, who was Lord Lovat's only son by his first marriage, opened the succession to the title and estate to her own eldest son Alexander, who succeeded his father as sixth Lord.

Buchanan observes, in reference to the result of the conflict—"The Frasers were all cut off to a man, and thus would have perished one of the most numerous and deserving of the Scottish clans, but, by Divine Providence, as we may believe, eighty of the principal men of the clan had left their wives pregnant, who in due time brought forth males, all of whom arrived safely at man's estate." Sir Robert Gordon seems to imply the pregnancy of *three hundred*. Such are the foolish speculations of a love for the marvellous, as connected with the restoration of the Clan Fraser. The gallant clan, which has produced many distinguished individuals, was not destined to be extinguished by the broadswords of the Clan Ranald and their allies.