

## THE LOCHLOMOND EXPEDITION •

A.D. 1715.

THE exploits of Rob Roy Macgregor, and of the clan Gregor, who are characterized by their enemies as “a race of men utterly infamous for thieving, depredation, and murder,” are celebrated in the local history of Scotland. Amongst his other characteristics Rob Roy was a Jacobite in politics, and affected a zealous regard for the exiled dynasty of Stuart, though he is severely censured for his conduct at the battle of Sheriffmuir, where he stood at a distance with his men, and refused to sustain any part in the action, or to render any assistance to the Earl of Mar and the Jacobite leaders. Nevertheless Rob Roy did not recognise the House of Hanover, and he and his men appeared as openly engaged in the insurrection in October 1715. The Macgregors, under Macgregor of Glengyle, nephew of Rob Roy, resolved to undertake a marauding excursion against their neighbours in Buchanan and the district of Menteith, and an account of it is preserved in a curious pamphlet printed at Glasgow in 1715, now preserved in the Advocates' Library at Edinburgh, and reprinted in 1834, with some selections from the papers of

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• The Lochlomonnd Expedition ; Wodrow's Correspondence, MS.

Wodrow preserved in the same Library. "These selections," observes the editor, "enable the reader to trace the Macgregors, against whom the Lochlomond expedition was designed, from their first rising in arms through a campaign in which they evidently engaged less from loyalty than from a love of plunder. Their repeated menaces and descents upon the Lennox, their rambling attack upon Inverary, and their predatory incursions upon the counties of Fife and Perth, are narrated by eye-witnesses, and are occasionally exhibited in amusing colours. In these transactions Rob Roy bears a conspicuous part. That his objects were selfish, and his conduct faithless throughout the insurrection, is proved by his own infamous confession volunteered to General Wade."

Upon Michaelmas day 1715, having made themselves masters of the boats on Lochlomond and the stream called the Enrich, about seventy Macgregors took possession of a considerable island in that magnificent lake called Inchmurrin, and about midnight they landed in the parish of Bonhill, about three miles from Dumbarton. The inhabitants, however, who knew from experience their predatory habits, and had been alarmed by the intelligence of marauding parties of them appearing for plunder in various places, commenced ringing the bells of the several parish churches. The discharge also of two guns from Dumbarton Castle intimated to the Macgregors that the authorities were prepared for their reception, and they thought proper to betake themselves to their boats. Having returned to the island, which is the property of the Duke of Montrose, and is used as a deer park, they killed many of the deer, upon which they regaled themselves, and rowed off with others towards the head of Lochlomond, taking with them all the boats they could find on the banks. They drew up the boats on the shore at Inversnaid, a considerable distance from the mouth of the Loch, and shortly afterwards

marched off in a body, with their associates, to the camp of the Earl of Mar.

But in the beginning of October, having returned to their former residences at Crag Royston and the north-eastern side of Lochlomond, the Macgregors again mustered their forces, to the great terror and annoyance of the surrounding country. To restrain them in their incursions a guard of one hundred and twenty volunteers was procured from Paisley, and about four hundred volunteers, partly retainers of the Earl of Kilmarnock, and partly from the towns of Ayr, Kilwinning, Stevenson, and other places, having garrisoned the mansion-houses of Drummakill, Cardross, and Gartartan, it was resolved to attempt the recovery of the boats seized by the Macgregors, by which they kept the district in alarm, as none knew where they might land.

On the evening of the 11th of October four pinnaces and three long boats, with four *pateraroes*, came alongside the quay of Dumbarton, manned by about one hundred seamen from the ships of war lying in the Frith of Clyde. These seamen were accompanied by two gunners, and were commanded by Captains Charlton, Field, and Parker, with four lieutenants. During the same night, they were reinforced by a large boat under the command of Captain Clark from Port-Glasgow, with two large screw guns, and all these were joined by three large boats belonging to Dumbarton. In the morning this fleet set sail up the river Leven, by which Lochlomond discharges itself into the Clyde at Dumbarton. They were drawn three miles by horses on account of the rapidity of the current. When they reached the outlet of the lake, the Paisley volunteers went on board, and at the same time the men belonging to Dumbarton, Cardross, East and West Kilpatrick, Row, and Roseneath, marched on foot along the north-west side of the lake, followed by Campbell of

Mamore, uncle of the Duke of Argyle, and attended by a number of the gentlemen of the country, well armed and mounted, many of whom had often been seriously plundered by the Macgregors.

The contemporary account informs us that when "the pinnaces and boats, being once got in within the mouth of the Loch, had spread their sails, and the men on the shore had ranged themselves in order, marching along the side of the Loch for scouring the coast, they made altogether so very fine an appearance as had never been seen in that place before, and might have gratified even a curious person. The men on the shore marched with the greatest ardour and alacrity. The pinnaces on the water discharging their pateraroes, and the men their small arms, made so very dreadful a noise through the multiplied rebounding echoes of the vast mountains on both sides of the Loch, that perhaps there never was a more lively resemblance of thunder." On the evening of that day the crews in the pinnaces came on shore at Luss, where they were joined by Sir Humphrey Colquhoun, and his son-in-law Grant of Pluscardine, "followed by forty or fifty stately fellows in their short hose and belted plaids, armed each of them with a well-fixed gun on his shoulder, a strong handsome target, with a sharp-pointed steel, of above half an ell in length, screwed into the navel of it, on his left arm, a sturdy claymore by his side, and a pistol or two, with a dirk and knife by his side."

The expedition rested all night at Luss, and it is said that attempts were made to frighten the volunteers by the Jacobites, who circulated a report that Macdonald of Glengarry, then lying with his men at Strathfillan, about twenty miles above the head of Lochlomond, had reinforced the Macgregors, and that they now amounted to 1500 men. It was also suggested that, as the lake is narrow at Inver-snaid, where the Macgregors were stationed, they could

fire on the boats without any danger, as they were well protected by the rocks and woods. The volunteers, however, were not disheartened. "They knew," says the contemporary writer quaintly, "that the Macgregors and the devil are to be dealt with after the same manner, and that if they be resisted they will flee." On the following morning they set sail and came to Inversnaid, where Captain Clark, to rouse the Macgregors from their concealment, fired one of his cannon. The shot went through the roof of a house on the face of the mountain, and some old women came crawling out and scrambled up the hill, but there was no appearance of any men, except a few who stood on some rocks out of reach quietly looking at them.

The Paisley and Dumbarton volunteers, with some other companies, now ascended the mountains in military order, and stood about an hour, beating their drums all the time. Still none of the Macgregors appeared, and it was resolved to make a search for the captured boats, which they at length found drawn up among trees and bushes. They soon launched them on the lake; such of them as were damaged they sank, and the others they carried off with them. Next day this *valiant* expedition returned to Dumbarton, seizing every boat they found on either side of the Loch or in the creeks of the islands, and moored them under the cannon of the Castle. It is said that the Macgregors were *cowed* by this burghal array against them, and "a way pointed out how the Government might easily keep them in awe." The contemporary writer proffers the following fanatical reflection. "The Providence of God was very observable on that occasion, though for three days before it had blown a prodigious storm, yet in the morning, when our men were to go on board from Dumbarton, it calmed, and they got a fair wind in their poop the whole way up the Loch. When they had done their business it kindly

veered about, and brought them safely and speedily down the Loch, immediately after which it began to blow boisterously as before." With this insinuation, that an interposition of Providence was manifested by rendering the elements favourable to the bold volunteers of Paisley and Dumbarton, terminated the Lochlomond expedition against the Macgregors, who gave the burghers no trouble in the matter. The Macgregors joined the rendezvous of the clans in Strathfillan, and the united force immediately marched upon Inverary.

Whatever opinion Rob Roy may have adopted of the valour of the volunteers in scouring Lochlomond, and making a hostile display on its shores, it did not prevent him and his followers from continuing their plundering career. During Rob Roy's marauding excursion in the counties of Perth and Fife, which succeeded the Lochlomond expedition, the Highlanders are accused of "breaking up doors, and taking from honest people what of body or bed clothes, belonging either to men, women, or children, they got their rapacious claws upon; or whatever cloth, made or unmade, linen, yarn, or woollen; yea, taking the clothes off the people's very backs, plaids from women, and setting men down and taking their shoes off their feet and their cravats from their necks." An amusing anecdote is told of their proceedings at Arngask, when marching from Perth towards Dunfermline or Inverkeithing. It happened to be Sunday, and the minister was occupied in preaching the sermon, when the tidings were conveyed to the congregation that the Macgregors were within a short distance of the church. Consternation was visible in every countenance, and the parishioners remained in the church in the hope that the Macgregors would quietly march past; but when they saw a detachment sent off to surround the building, they made to the door as fast as possible. The Highlanders met them, and immediately commenced to rob

them of their plaids, shoes, and money. They scrupled not to enter the church, and strip those within in a similar manner, not excepting the minister, who escaped with only a bonnet on his head. One of their commanders rode round the church, calling to the people to stand. When asked what he wanted, he replied that he must have shoes for his men—"For," said he, "I see many good shoes here, and my men are going barefoot." After reducing the congregation almost to a state of nudity, those modern Robin Hoods quietly departed with their booty.