

# THE LADIES OF THE COVENANT

## LADY ANNE CUNNINGHAM

### MARCHIONESS OF HAMILTON

Lady Anne Cunningham was the fourth daughter of James, seventh earl of Glencairn, by his first wife Margaret, second daughter of Sir Colin Campbell of Glenurchy. [*Douglas's Peerage of Scotland*, vol. i. p. 636.] Her ancestors on the father's side were among the first of the Scottish peers who embraced the Reformed doctrine. In 1640, her great-great-grandfather William, fourth earl of Glencairn, and her great-grandfather, then Lord Kilmaurs, afterwards fifth earl of Glencairn, appear among the converts of the reformed faith. Her great-grandfather in particular, whose piety and benevolence procured him the honourable appellation of "the good earl," [*There is a portrait of this nobleman in Pinkerton's Scottish Gallery of Portraits*, vol. ii.] was an ardent and steady promoter of the reformation, for which he was eminently qualified by his superior learning and abilities, as well as by the influence of his high station; and he carefully instructed his children in its principles. He regularly attended the sermons of John Knox, on the Reformer's returning to Scotland in 1554; and in 1556 he invited him to administer the sacrament or the Lord's Supper after the manner of the reformed church, in his baronial mansion of Finlayston, in the parish of Kilmalcolm, when he himself, his countess, and two of their sons, with a number of their friends, partook of that solemn ordinance. [*McCrie's Life of Knox*, vol. i. p. 178. *Knox's History*, Wodrow Society edition, vol. i. p. 250. "The silver cups which were used by Knox on this occasion are still carefully preserved; and the use of them was given at the time of dispensing the sacrament in the parish church of Kilmalcolm, so long as the Glencairn family resided at Finlayston."] He also assisted the reformers by his pen, being the author of a satirical poem upon the Roman Catholic monks, entitled, "An Epistle Direct from the Holy Hermit of Allarit to his Brethren the Grey Friars." [*Thomas Douchtie of Allarit or Loretto*, near Musselburgh. This person was the founder of the Chapel of our Lady of Loretto in 1533. *Knox's History*, Wodrow Society edition, vol. i. pp. 72,75.] Nor did he shrink from drawing the sword for their protection. In 1559, when the Reformers took up arms at Perth to defend themselves from the Queen Regent, who had collected an army and had advanced to Perth, to avenge the destruction of the popish images by the populace of that town, he raised 1200 horse and 1300 foot in the West, and the passes being occupied, conducted them through the mountains, travelling night and day, till they reached Perth; which proved a seasonable aid to the Reformers, and by the consternation with which it inspired the Queen Regent, prevented the effusion of blood. This nobleman often visited Knox on his death bed; and he died in 1574.

Lady Anne's father, James, seventh earl of Glencairn, was also a friend of the liberties and religion of his country. He was one of those noblemen, who, when the Duke of Lennox, an emissary of the court of France, had acquired a complete influence over James VI soon after his assuming the reigns of government, and had effected an entire change in court, filling it with persons devoted to popery and arbitrary power, resolved to take possession of the king's person, and, removing Lennox and another favourite, the Earl of Arran, from him, to take upon themselves the direction of public affairs. With this view, on meeting with the king returning from hunting in Athol, several of them invited him to Ruthven castle, where they effected their purpose; and hence this enterprise was called the Raid of Ruthven.

Of the early life of Lady Anne we possess no information. In the beginning of the year 1603, she was married to Lord James, the son and heir presumptive of John, first Marquis of Hamilton. By her marriage contract, dated 30th January 1603, which received the consent of both their fathers, the marriage portion is forty thousand merks, and a yearly jointure fifty-six chalders of victual, and five hundred pounds of money rent. [*Descriptive Catalogue of the Hamilton Papers in the Miscellany of the Maitland Club*, vol. iv. p. 201.]

Lady Hamilton inherited from her father's family an ardent zeal for Presbytery. During the first part of her life an almost continued contest existed between James VI and the Church of Scotland, in reference to that form of

church government. As has been said in the Introduction, James commenced that struggle for absolute power, which was resolutely persevered in by his son and two grandsons; and to reach his purpose he deemed it necessary to undermine the Presbyterian government of the Church of Scotland. With his usual profanity, he asserted that Monarchy and Presbytery agreed as well as God and the devil. No assertion could be more unfounded. It cannot indeed be denied that the republicanism of Presbyterian Church government is unfriendly to absolute or despotic monarchy. The fundamental principle of Presbytery - that spiritual power is lodged exclusively in the church courts, uncontrolled by the civil magistrate - greatly limits the power of monarchs, saying to them, when they reach the borders of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther," and naturally leads men to conclude that, by parity of reason, temporal power should be lodged in a parliament. But that Presbytery is hostile to limited monarchy, is disproved by the whole of its history in Scotland; for no body of people was ever more devoted to the throne than the Presbyterians; and indeed they often carried their loyalty to a reprehensible and extravagant excess. It was not, however, a limited but an absolute monarchy on the erection of which James' heart was set; and seeing clearly enough that Presbytery was the enemy of such a monarchy, he made every effort to overthrow it, and to introduce Prelacy, which he well knew would be a more effectual instrument in advancing his design. These efforts he was not permitted to make without opposition. A body of ministers, respectable of number, and still more respectable for their talents, piety, and zeal, resolutely and perseveringly resisted him to the close of his life. They maintained, that by attempting to impose upon the church the form of government and mode of worship which were most accordant with his inclinations, and by endeavouring to control her in her administration, he was invading the prerogative of Christ, the sole king and head of the church, who alone had the right to settle the form of government, and by whose authority alone she was to be guided in her administration. By threats, bribes, imprisonment, and banishment, James laboured hard to get them to yield to his wishes; but animated by a high sense of duty, they were not to be overborne, and, largely imbued with the spirit of martyrs, they preferred enduring the utmost effects of his royal wrath rather than make the unhallowed surrender. So much importance did they attach to the principles, as to deem them worthy even of the sacrifice of their lives. "We have been even waiting with joyfulness," said one of them, "to give the last testimony of our blood in conformation thereof, if it should please our God to be so favourable as to honour us with that dignity." [*These are the words of Mr. John Welsh, when a prisoner in Blackness Castle, in reference to himself and his brethren who were proceeded against by the government for holding a General Assembly at Aberdeen in July, 1605, in opposition to the wishes of the monarch. - Select Biographies printed for the Wodrow Society, vol. i. p. 23.*] It is the courage, zeal, and self-sacrifice with which this party contended for the rights and liberties of the church, during the reigns of James VI and Charles I, that imparts to this portion of our ecclesiastical history its principal charm.

To this party the Marchioness of Hamilton adhered with great zeal, actuated by sympathy with the character of the men themselves, who, besides being the most gifted, were the most pious, and faithful ministers of the Church of Scotland in their day.

Her husband, the Marquis of Hamilton, was not equally steadfast with herself in maintaining the liberties of the church. Facile and ambitious, he was induced, from a desire to please his sovereign, to become an advocate for conformity to the five articles of Perth, and to exert his influence to obtain their ratification in the Scottish parliament of 1621, where he was his majesty's high commissioner. This nobleman was cut off in the prime of life, having died at London on the 2d of March, 1625, in the 36th year of his age. [*Calderwood's History, vol. vii. pp. 469, 489, 630.*] "Small regret," says Calderwood, "was made for his death, for the service he made at the last parliament."

The marchioness survived the marquis many years, during which time she was eminently useful as an encourager of the faithful ministers of the gospel, whom she was ever ready to shield from persecution, and to countenance in every way competent to her. When Mr. Robert Boyd of Trochrig had, a few months after his being admitted minister of Paisley, had been driven out of that town by the mob, who showered upon him "stones and dirt," Paisley being then, as Row describes it, "a nest of papists," [*Row's History of the Kirk of Scotland, p. 438.*] she was earnestly desirous to take that great and good man under her protection, and invited him to accept of the

charge of the parish of Cambuslang, which was at that time vacant. Mr. James Bruce, writing to him from Glasgow, in October, 1626, says, "The parish of Cambuslang is now vacant, and the Lady Marchioness is earnestly desirous to have you there. Her jointure lies there: it is within three miles of Glasgow, has a reasonable stipend, beside the lady's pension, which she will rather augment than diminish. You will live easier, and at more peace there than at Paisley; you will have the Lady Marchioness's company, which is very desirable. This I leave to your consideration, and the Lord's direction." An end, however, was put to this matter by the growing illness of Boyd, which took him to Edinburgh, to consult with physicians, and on reaching the capital his sickness increased, till it terminated in his death, on the 5th January, 1627. [*Wodrow's Life of Robert Boyd*, pp. 239, 240.]

The name of the marchioness stands favourably connected with that memorable revival of religion which took place at the kirk of Shotts, on the 21st of June, 1630, the Monday after the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Indeed, that revival may be said to be directly traceable to the piety of this lady, who was forward to embrace every opportunity of bringing within the reach of others the blessed gospel, which she herself so highly prized; and it originated in a circumstance apparently incidental - the breaking down of her carriage on the road, at Shotts. How important the results either for good or evil to mankind, which, under the government of infinite wisdom, have been produced by the most trivial events! The sight of the spider's web and the pigeon's nest at the entrance of the cave in which Mahomet concealed himself diverted his pursuers from searching it, and saving the life of the false prophet, contributed to entail for ages upon a large part of the world the curse of the Mahometan superstition; and in the Reformation throughout Europe, incidents equally insignificant have, on the other hand, been big with consequences the most beneficial to mankind. The circumstance of the breaking down of the marchioness's carriage, seemingly casual as it was, resulted in some hundreds of immortal beings experiencing that blessed change of heart which unites the soul to God, and which issues in everlasting salvation. The particulars, in so far as she was concerned, were these:- As the road to Edinburgh from the west lay by the kirk of Shotts, she frequently passed that way in travelling from the place of her residence to the capital, and on such occasions she received, in different instances, civilities from Mr. Home, minister of the parish. [*Gillies, in his Historical Collections*, calls him Mr. Hance, but this is a mistake. Both Livingstone and Wodrow give his name as in the text.] At one time, in particular, when on her passing through Shotts, accompanied with some other ladies, the carriage in which they were riding broke down, in the neighbourhood of the manse. Mr. Home, on learning the accident, kindly invited them to alight and remain all night in his house, as they were at a considerable distance from any convenient place of entertainment. Having accepted his invitation, they observed during their stay that besides its inconvenient situation, the manse stood much in need of being repaired; and the marchioness, in return for his attentions, erected for him a new manse, in a more agreeable situation, and with superior accommodations. On receiving so substantial a favour, Mr. Home waited upon her to express his obligations, and desired to know if there was anything he could do by which to testify his gratitude. All she asked was that he would be kind enough to allow her to name the ministers he should have with him as his assistants at the celebration of the Lord's Supper. This request he cordially granted. She accordingly named some of the most distinguished ministers of the day, Mr. Robert Bruce, Mr. David Dickson, and some others who had been remarkably successful as instruments in bringing many to the saving knowledge of truth. The report that such celebrated men were to assist at the communion at that place soon circulated extensively through the country; and a vast multitude, attracted by their fame, assembled from all quarters, many of them of eminent piety, among whom were the marchioness herself, and other ladies of rank, who attended at her invitation. [*Wodrow's Analecta*, vol. i. p. 271; *Gillies's Historical Collections*, vol. i. pp. 309, 310.]

The solemnity to which she was the means of bringing these ministers, and of gathering together so great a crowd of people, was accompanied in a very signal manner with the divine blessing. For several days before, much time was spent in social prayer. During all the days of the solemn occasion the ministers were remarkably assisted. The devout who attended were in a more than ordinary degree refreshed and edified, and so largely was the spirit of grace and supplication poured out upon them, that, after being dismissed on the Sabbath, they spent the whole night, in different companies, in prayer. On the Monday morning, the ministers, understanding how they had been engaged, and perceiving them, instead of returning to their homes, still lingering at the place, as if



Livingstone preaching at the kirk of Shotts

unwilling to depart from a spot which they had found in their experience to be as it were the gate of heaven, agreed to have sermon on that day, though it was not usual, at that time, to preach on the Monday after the dispensation of the Lord's Supper. The minister whose turn it was to officiate having become unwell, the work of addressing the people was, at the suggestion of Lady Culross, laid upon Mr. John Livingstone, then a young man, and chaplain to the Countess of Wigton. Livingstone had before preached at Shotts, and had found more liberty in preaching there than at other places; but from the great multitude of all ranks assembled on that occasion he became so diffident that when alone, in the fields in the morning, he began to think of stealing away rather than address the people. "But," says he, "I durst not so far distrust God, and so went to sermon and got good assistance. I had about an hour and a half upon the points I had meditated on, Ezekiel xxxvi. 25, 26, 'Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh;' and in end, offering to close with some words of exhortation, I was led on about an hour's time in a strain of exhortation and warning with such liberty and melting of heart as I never had the like in public all my life." [*Life of Mr. John Livingstone in Select Biographies printed for the Wodrow Society, vol. i. p. 138.*] And such was the effect, that, as Mr. Fleming observes, in his *Fulfilling of the Scriptures*, "near five hundred had at that time a discernible change wrought on them, of whom most proved lively Christians afterward. It was the sowing of a seed through Clydesdale, so as many of the most eminent Christians in that country could date either their conversion or some remarkable confirmation in their case from that day." [*"April 24, 1710. This day being at the Shotts, and discoursing with Mr. Law, the minister; he tells me that the sermon was in the west end of the churchyard. He let me see the end of the Craigs to which, it is said, Mr. Livingstone went up to study, the morning before he preached, as the tradition is. Another should have preached on Monday, but he fell indisposed. It was the Lady Culross who was there, and had special intimacy with Mr. Livingstone, that put the ministers upon employing him. The minister's name, at that time, was Mr. Home, a man of easy temper, and no persecutor." And, after stating that the Marchioness of Hamilton had conferred some particular favour on Mr. Home; that Mr. Home allowed her to name the ministers he should have with him at the communion. Mr. Dickson, Mr. Bruce, and others, who all came, with a great many Christians, at the Lady's invitation, who was herself an excellent*

woman, Wodrow adds, "That he (Mr. Law) hears the particular occasion of the first sensible motion among the people was this - in the time of Mr. Livingstone's sermon there was a soft shower of rain, and when the people began to stickle about, he said to this purpose, 'What a mercy it is that the Lord sifts that rain through these heavens on us, and does not rain down fire and brimstone, as he did upon Sodom and Gomorrah.'" He farther adds, "This night Mr. George Barclay tells me that he discoursed Mr. Livingstone himself in Holland upon this communion, and he told him that he was such a stranger to all the ministers there, that the Lady Culross was the person that put the ministers upon him, the minister that should have preached having fallen sick; that it was somewhat that incidentally he spoke that gave occasion to the motion among the people, and Mr. Barclay repeated the words above; and Mr. Livingstone added, 'Brother, when you are strongly pressed to say any thing you have not premeditated, do not offer to stop it; you know not what God has to do with it.'" *Analecta*, vol. i., p. 271. There is one point in these two accounts as to which there seems to be some discrepancy. According to Mr. Law, Messrs. Dickson and Bruce were among the ministers present; and, according to Mr. Barclay, Livingstone was "a stranger to all the ministers there." But Livingstone, before he was licensed to preach, knew at least Mr. Bruce, who, as he informs us in his *Life*, had been in the habit of assisting his father at Lanark at the celebration of the Lord's Supper.] After this the practice of preaching on the Monday following the sacrament became general.

The Marchioness of Hamilton was personally known to Mr. John Livingstone; and in his *Memorable Characteristics* he has given her a place among "some of the professors in the Church of Scotland of his acquaintance who were eminent for grace and gifts." [*Select Biographies printed for the Wodrow Society*, vol. i. p. 348.] From his *Life* we also learn that whatever influence she had with the court at London, she was well inclined to use it for the protection of the persecuted nonconformists. He informs us that, after he himself, Mr. Robert Blair, and others of his brethren in Ireland, had been deposed, in May, 1632, by the Bishop of Down, and when Mr. Blair went to London to represent their cause to the government, he himself, who was to follow Mr. Blair, went previously to Scotland, with the design of procuring letters from the Lady Marchioness of Hamilton, and other persons of rank, to some of their friends at court, vindicating him and his brethren from the charge of stirring up the people to ecstasies and enthusiasm, and requesting for them toleration to preach the gospel notwithstanding their nonconformity. [*Select Biographies printed for the Wodrow Society*, vol. i., p. 146.]

During the stirring period when the Scottish people renewed the National Covenant, and successfully resisted the attempts of Charles I to impose upon them a book of canons and a liturgy, [*The book of canons received the royal sanction, and became law in 1635. The service-book, or liturgy, was enjoined to be used by act of Privy Council, 20th December, 1636, and the act was the following day proclaimed at the Cross of Edinburgh; but the liturgy itself was not published till towards the end of May, 1627. These two books were extremely unpopular in Scotland, both because they were forced upon the church solely by royal authority, without the consent of the church herself, or without her having been even consulted, and because of the matter contained in them. The book of canons, among other things objected to, asserted the king's supremacy in all causes, ecclesiastical as well as civil, enjoined various unwarranted and superstitious rites in the observance of baptism and the Lord's Supper, proscribed sessions and presbyteries, and invested the bishops with uncontrollable power. The service-book was just the English liturgy with numerous alterations, by which it approached nearer the Roman missal.*] the marchioness warmly espoused the cause of the Covenant. Possessed of a strong and masculine spirit, she displayed an undaunted heroism in the cause, which neither the sight of personal danger nor the partiality of maternal affection could subdue. When her son James, Marquis, afterwards Duke of Hamilton, who sided with Charles I against the Covenanters, conducted an English fleet to the Forth, in 1639, to overawe them, she appeared on horseback, with two pistols by her side, at the head of a troop of horse, among the intrepid thousands who line the shores of Leith on that occasion, to resist his landing, and, drawing one of her pistols from her saddle-bow, declared she would be the first to shoot him should he presume to land and attack the troops of the covenant. [*Douglas's Peerage*, vol. i., p. 704.] It is said she had even loaded her pistols with balls of gold; but this rests on very doubtful authority. [*"The story about the 'balls of gold,' rests on the authority of Gordon of Straloch's MS. (none of the purest to be sure); but the manly heroism of the old marchioness is noticed by Spang, Hist. Motuum, p. 357."* - *McCrie's Sketches of Scottish Church History*, 2d edition, p. 255.] It is certain, however, that when the Marquis cast anchor in the Forth, near Leith, loitering for the king, whose army was marching into Scotland to his assistance, she paid him a visit on board his vessel. The particulars of this interview have not been recorded; but the people anticipated from it the most favourable results. "The son of such a mother," they said, "will do us no harm." [*Whitelocke's Memorials*, p. 29. *Whitelocke* terms her "a rigid Covenanter."] Nor did they suffer any harm. the spirited conduct and intercession of his mother, it is supposed, was one cause which prevented the Marquis's debarkation of his troops. Other causes, however, seem to have contributed to this. The number of his troops, which amounted only to about three or four thousand, was too small for the occasion. Besides, hearing that a part

of the English army, being encountered by the Scots at Kelso, were defeated, with a loss of three hundred men, and put to flight, he was not in a disposition to engage with the Covenanters, who gave such decided proofs of earnestness; and soon after a pacification was concluded between them and the king, at the Birks of Berwick.

Respecting this lady, we meet with no additional facts, except that her last will is dated 4th November, 1644; and that she died in 1647. [*Descriptive Catalogue of the Hamilton Papers in the Miscellany of the Maitland Club, vol. iv., p. 207; Douglas's Peerage, vol. i., p. 704.*]

It may be added, that there is a portrait of the marchioness in Pinkerton's Scottish Gallery of Portraits, vol. ii "The Portrait," says Pinkerton, "corresponds with the masculine character of the marchioness." He adds, "Johnson, the ingenious limner, died before he had finished the drapery of this drawing, which is from a painting by Jameson, at Taymouth."