# BATTLE OF KILSYTH.*

## A.D. 1645.

THERE are few names more illustrious in Scotish history than that of James Graham, fifth Earl and first Marquis of

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* Bishop Wishart's Memoirs of the most renowned James Graham, Marquis of Montrose, translated from the Latin; and the Compleat History of the Wars in Scotland, under the conduct of

Montrose. Besides being intimately conversant with all the literature, learning, and manly accomplishments of his time, he is yet remembered as one of the first commanders whom the great Civil War produced, and in the opinion of Cardinal Retz, his genius was so great and romantic that he approached the nearest to the ancient heroes of Greece and Rome. In the year 1637, when in the twenty-sixth year of his age, he joined the supporters of the famous Covenant with great zeal—a procedure which was caused by a cold and forbidding reception at court by Charles I., and which he afterwards not only repented, but made his name celebrated throughout Europe for his opposition to the supporters of the Parliamentary party, and for the successes he gained over them. One of those victories is the subject of the present narrative.

The victory of the English Parliamentary forces over King Charles I. at Naseby afforded some consolation to the Scotish Covenanting Government, after sustaining five defeats from Montrose and the Royalists, and though an epidemic was ravaging Edinburgh with relentless and mortal fury, the leaders of the Covenanters still resolved to oppose the indomitable commander who had threatened by his successes to overwhelm them. The Scotish Parliament met in Stirling instead of Edinburgh, on account of the pestilence which raged in that capital, and confirmed General Baillie in the command of their army, although some were by no means satisfied with his conduct on several occasions. With his commission thus renewed, he

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James Marquess of Montrose, by the same Prelate; Principal Baillie's Letters, and General Baillie's Narrative; Chambers' History of the Rebellions in Scotland under the Marquis of Montrose and Others, from 1638 till 1660, in Constable's Miscellany; Nimmo's History of Stirlingshire; Bishop Guthrie's Memoirs; Monteith's Troubles; Sir John Sinclair's Statistical Account of Scotland; Traditions of Perth; Major-General Stewart's Sketches of the Character and Present State of the Highlanders.

was sent off to assume his duty at Perth, the head-quarters of the military Covenanters.

The citizens of the "Fair City" of St Johnston, as Perth often was and occasionally still is called, after its tutelary saint, were by no means particularly obliged to the Covenanting Government for making their city a rendezvous on this occasion, and for such a cause. The fact is, the great mass of the inhabitants were then, as it is hoped they still are, devoted royalists, and the attachment of the fair portion of their community to the Cavalier cause was quite enthusiastic. Both the ladies and gentlemen of Perth had a supreme dislike of the *sour-looking saints*, as the Covenanters were called, and which from their austere opinions and lugubrious visages very appropriately described them; whereas the Cavaliers were just the very men sure to gain the affections and the good wishes of the ladies wherever they went, being handsome, rattling, roving, frolicksome, laughing fellows, full of fun, wit, romance, and gallantry, devoted to the royal cause, and setting social parties in a roar of laughter by their successful mimicry, cutting satire, and unsparing *showing-up* and ridicule of the Covenanting leaders and their opinions and practices. Montrose was the very idol of the Cavalier gentry, while he was equally feared and hated by his Parliamentary enemies. It will be readily admitted, therefore, if the citizens of Perth had been consulted on the present occasion, they would have infinitely preferred the rendezvous of the great Marquis and his forces to the presence of General Baillie and his Covenanters.

To increase their army to ten thousand men, a force which they calculated as at least necessary to reduce Montrose, the Covenanting Government issued edicts to all the Lowland counties to raise every fourth man capable of bearing arms to Perth, on or before the 24th of July 1645. The pestilence having now made its appearance at Stirling, for it seems to have followed as a faithful attendant wher-

ever those at the helm of affairs against the King migrated, they adjourned to Perth, to the secret annoyance of the citizens, who were little ambitious of this farther honour, after having ordered the General Assembly to appoint a fast for the sins and misfortunes of the land throughout the kingdom, which was to continue no fewer than *four days*. Now, when it is considered how these most unnecessary fasts were then kept—with all the rigidity of a Jewish Sabbath, and the people allowed to do nothing from morning to night but listen to long homilies, sermons, and exhortations, delivered by one preacher after another in quick succession, it is obvious that in the circumstances of the Covenanting leaders these were just so many precious days utterly lost, while they were reducing the whole country to a state of absolute idleness, rendered more so by the influence of religious zeal.

The raising of soldiers was attended with considerable success in some counties, and especially in Fife, the common people of which, known as the *Whigs of Fife*, were then zealously attached to the Covenanting cause, particularly in the east of the county, while their superiors the lairds and gentry were very generally Cavaliers. The Fifans paid dearly for their zeal, a tremendous havoc having been made of them in the battle of Kilsyth, the remembrance of which long continued. In the parish of Anstruther, for example, so great an antipathy did the people conceive and retain for the military life, in consequence of the loss of their friends at Kilsyth, that during the space of twenty years, from 1770 to 1790, when nearly a century and a half had elapsed since the day of carnage, *only one man* had been known to become a soldier. The recollection of the wars of Charles I. and the Covenanters still exists in Fife, and it is remarkable that even at the present day the British army gets fewer recruits from that county

in proportion to its population, than almost any other in Scotland.

The Marquis of Montrose, after gaining the battles of Auldearn and Alford, had marched to Aberdeen to bury his lamented friend Lord Gordon, who had fallen in the latter encounter. While lying in that city he despatched a party to the district of Buchan, which had never yet been inspected or passed through on account of its good fortune in lying far out of the way, and it was now despoiled of every horse worth carrying off, as the Marquis was anxious to form a body of cavalry. An expedition was also planned against the Covenanting garrison of Inverness, but the tidings of the preparations making against him at Perth induced him to give up for the time all thoughts of that enterprise. Leaving Aberdeen he marched to the small town of Fordoun in the county of Kincardine, where he encamped till his zealous friend and lieutenant-general MacCol, who had been absent on a recruiting employment nearly two months, should arrive with his newly raised supplies. This MacCol was, properly speaking, Allaster Macdonald, of the family of Colonsay—a branch of that numerous and powerful sept, and he had received from the Marquis, as representing the sovereign, the honour of knighthood. Although brave and well qualified to lead irregular troops like the Highlanders, Sir Allaster allowed his desire of revenging the wrongs of his family upon the Campbells to divert him from the proper objects of the war. Unfortunately, he was thus a principal cause of the disaster which immediately after the battle of Kilsyth attended the royal arms at Philiphaugh, having previously withdrawn many of the Highlanders from Montrose's camp to assist him in his private feuds in Argyleshire, in which service the Western clans were at all times very willing to engage. "It is a fact," observes a recent writer on the Highlands and Isles of Scotland, "which may appear

startling to many, but it is not the less evident on that account, that the first traces of that overflowing loyalty to the House of Stuart for which the Highlanders have been so highly lauded, are to be found in that generation of their chiefs whose education was conducted on the high church and state principles of the British Solomon. There is no room to doubt that the chiefs who followed Montrose in the great Civil War were actuated by a very different spirit from their fathers. And it is well worthy of notice, that this difference was produced in the course of a single generation, by the operation of measures which first began to take effect after the year 1609."

The late lamented General Stewart of Garth, in his admirable work on the Character and Manners of the Highlanders, assigns another and a very powerful motive which influenced that singular people. "The last great cause," says the gallant writer, "which I shall mention of the attachment of the Highlanders to the House of Stuart, was the difference of religious feelings and prejudices that distinguished them from their brethren of the South. This difference became striking at the Reformation, and continued during the whole of the subsequent century. While many Lowlanders were engaged in angry theological controversies, or adopted a more sour and forbidding demeanour, the Highlanders retained much of their ancient superstitions, and from their cheerful and poetical spirit were averse to long faces and wordy disputes. They were, therefore, more inclined to join the Cavaliers than the Roundheads, and were on one occasion employed by the ministry of Charles II. to keep down the republican spirit in the west of Scotland. The same cause, among others, had previously induced them to join the standard of Montrose."

But be all this as it may, on the present occasion Sir Allaster Macdonald brought such an accession of force as

amply compensated him for all the time and trouble the raising of it had cost him, in the persons of no fewer than seven hundred *Macleans* from Argyleshire and the Western Isles—men who made up for their inexperience in military operations by the ferocious hatred they bore to the Campbells, who were strong supporters of the Covenanting interest, and this bitter hatred of the Campbells was as usual kindly extended to all those clans and parties with whom they were in political alliance. Sir Allaster also again mustered the whole of Clanranald, to the number of five hundred men, under the command of a renowned warrior, named John Muidartach, who is still remembered in the Highlands. The Athole Highlanders came in strong force under Colonel Graham of Inchbrakie, the cousin of Montrose, as also the Macnabs, Macgregors, the Stewarts of Appin, the Farquharsons of Braemar, and others, who on their arrival at the camp were heartily welcomed by the Marquis, who disposed each clan by itself.

Montrose's army was now between five and six thousand strong, but he was greatly deficient in cavalry to protect his infantry when they marched into the plain country. Leaving Lord Aboyne in Aberdeenshire, and Lord Airlie in Forfarshire, to negotiate with the loyal gentlemen of these districts for a supply of horses, he marched from Fordoun through Blairgowrie to the ancient episcopal city of Dunkeld, where he crossed the Tay and encamped at Amulree. He at first intended to march direct upon Perth, and either disperse the army of the Covenanters before it was fully collected, or surround and cut off the members of the insurgent government while sitting in deliberation, but the want of cavalry compelled him to abandon this bold project, which otherwise might have succeeded, and he found the Covenanting army assembled in considerable force on the south side of the Earn, while four hundred horse lay close to the town of Perth. The Marquis adopted various schemes to try their

spirit and make observations on their numbers, often exposing himself to great hazard of being taken prisoner. One day he advanced from Amulree to the Wood of Methven, where he was within six miles of Perth, and the Covenanters becoming alarmed that he intended to attack the city, drew their army more closely around them. On the following day he appeared almost at the gates with his slender force of cavalry, which consisted of only about a hundred Cavalier gentlemen, all the others being merely mounted domestics, but the Covenanters offered no molestation. He even crossed the Earn at Dupplin, and took a leisure survey of their foot, yet they sent no party against him, though, if they had been aware of his real situation, they could have easily cut off his retreat to his camp.

The denizens of Perth, especially the fair maids, would have gladly seen the long-visaged and solemn-looking Covenanters superseded by Montrose and his Cavaliers. They were kept in sore restraint by a phalanx of ministers who held forth several times every day on the subject of the Covenant, the alleged tyranny of the King, the malignancy of Montrose, as they termed his loyalty, and other favourite topics of vituperation. The citizens thought that this was really too much of any thing, whether good or bad, to be continually dozed with it in this manner, and many of them heartily wished General Baillie, Argyle, the Covenant, and all the other concomitants, on the top of Schihallion, if the feelings of some of them were even so charitable. People soon get as tired of one particular subject as they do of one particular dish, when it is constantly set before them. The fact is, that the Covenanters, by continually dwelling on certain theological subjects, and mixing them up with politics, did themselves and their cause very considerable injury, and not a little contributed to the successes of Montrose, although the great Marquis was not the man by whose genius and valour the royal cause was to triumph.

The zealots among them did not view it in this light, but the reflecting portion of the community took the liberty to be of a different opinion, although many of them from prudential considerations chose to be cautious in expressing themselves, for the tender mercies of those enthusiastic personages were by no means desirable to be experienced. They *did* as well as *said* many things on their own responsibility, or on an authority to which it was as absurd as it was questionable and daring to refer, and as they happened to be lords paramount of the country at the time, it was thought advisable by not a few to keep, as the saying is, a *calm sough*.

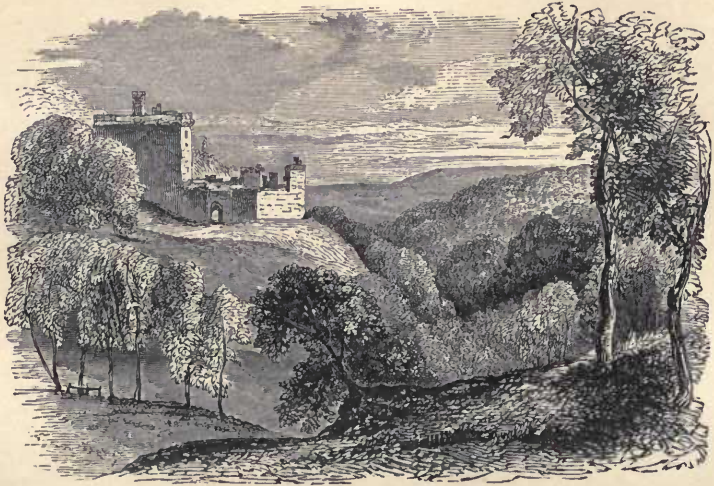
While Montrose was waiting for the cavalry he had empowered Lords Aboyne and Airlie to raise, the Covenanters also considered it prudent to delay till the arrival of certain regiments they were expecting from the southern and western counties. Being reinforced by three regiments from Fife, they now thought themselves strong enough to offer the Marquis battle, especially when they had ascertained that he was not so strong in cavalry as they at first supposed. For this purpose they left Perth, to the great joy of the citizens, who now *got out their horns* a little, when they found themselves relieved from the sombre gloom and sourness with which they had been visited some weeks. But the Marquis withdrew into the mountainous country behind him, where he could easily set them at defiance. They attempted a fruitless pursuit, during which there was some skirmishing between the rear and the advance of both armies, and the Covenanters at length took possession of the camp which Montrose had vacated at Methven, where they are accused of revenging their fatigue and disappointment by putting to the sword a few women and children whom the Irish royalists in the Cavalier army had left behind them.

The Covenanters were now in a deplorable condition.

Their commander, General Baillie, was disgusted by their mean suspicions, and prevented by their conflicting advices, and the ridiculous interference of the ministers, from taking any decisive military step. He was so enraged that it was with the utmost difficulty he was induced to retain his office, while not a few of the reinforcements, and especially those recently from Fife, being very reluctantly embarked in the service, took the opportunity to decamp from Methven and return home. The terror of Montrose and of his *Highland Host*, whom the rustic peasantry of the Lowlands believed were in reality cannibals, and would literally *eat them*, completely enervated their valorous and zealous aspirations, and nothing could have kept this most extraordinary medley of an army together but the indefatigable exertions of the ministers, who unceasingly plied them with advices, promises, and threatenings not to desert the cause.

Montrose had retired to Little Dunkeld, and here he was joined by Lords Aboyne and Airlie, who brought with them what cavalry they could muster. The Marquis was somewhat disappointed at their numbers, Aboyne bringing only two hundred regular cavalry, with sixty footmen mounted on carriage horses, while Airlie was attended by no more than eighty followers. But though this reinforcement was deficient in numbers, the persons composing it were of the most trust-worthy description. Those brought by Aboyne were Montrose's former campaigners at Auldearn and Alford, and the horsemen headed by Airlie were all Cavalier gentlemen of his own name and family, some of them of considerable experience, and all of them well known for their ardent attachment to the royal cause.

When Montrose was joined by this body of cavalry, he resolved to march into the Lowlands and give battle to the Covenanters, trusting much to the disaffection which existed among them, as he understood their men were daily deserting. After various movements and marches,



CASTLE CAMPBELL.

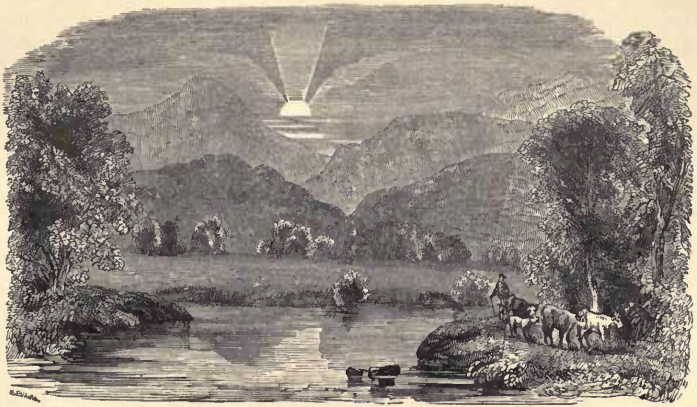
in which he saw that the enemy were not disposed to fight, he proceeded southward to Kinross. General Baillie was authorized to follow him, and the three Fife regiments again joined the Covenanting army. Montrose marched from Kinross to Stirling Bridge, in order to cross the Forth, and enter the southern counties. As he proceeded through the vale of the Devon, the MacLeans burnt Castle Campbell, then a seat of the Argyle family, and all the houses and mansions of whatever description in the parishes of Dollar and Muckhart, which were the property or residence of the vassals of Argyle. This was to revenge similar outrages which Argyle and his chieftains had recently perpetrated in the country of the MacLeans, who had always been a hostile clan of the Campbells, and whose territorial district lies adjacent. There were, however, two exceptions to this conflagration. The MacLeans, with all their violence, had a strong veneration for the Church, and a house in the village of Dollar was spared because they took it into their heads that it belonged to the Abbey of Dunfermline; and another in the extremity of the parish of Muckhart escaped, from a supposition that it stood in the adjacent parish of Fossaway. On the evening of Montrose's march from Kinross he quartered his men in the wood of Tullibody, in the neighbourhood of Alloa, a town which his Irish auxiliaries are accused of *barbarously plundering*. This violence, however, did not prevent the Earl of Mar and his son Lord Erskine from sumptuously entertaining at dinner the Marquis and his chief officers, and doubtless the Earl was as much disposed by fear as by loyalty.

As a set-off to this procedure, the Marquis of Argyle, who was with the Covenanting army a day's march behind that of Montrose, took upon him to burn Menstrie House, the seat of the Earl of Stirling, secretary to Charles I., and a mansion belonging to Graham of Braco, the uncle of

Montrose. He also sent an intimation to the Earl of Mar announcing that Alloa House would share the same fate when the army returned from encountering Montrose, which would teach his Lordship what kind of dinner parties he should in future entertain—a very idle threat on the part of Argyle, as the issue proved.

It was resolved by the Highlanders to make a regular foray of Stirling, which had shown itself a zealous Covenanting town, but they were kept out of it by a much more powerful enemy than the inhabitants, Baillie's army, and all the Covenanters to boot, although every one of them had been as powerful as Hercules and as invulnerable as Achilles, namely, the pestilence, which continued to rage among the people, and which had followed in the traces of the Covenanters from Edinburgh. The hazard of death by disease had a more powerful effect on the Highlanders than the chance of death on the field of battle. Afraid, therefore, to approach Stirling, Montrose did not cross the Forth by the Bridge, but made his transit over the river eight miles farther up by the Fords of Frew. He then moved as if he had some intention of falling down upon Glasgow, which was free from disease, and presenting peculiar attractions and temptations, but whatever were his purposes he was overtaken by General Baillie at Kilsyth, and compelled to come to an engagement.

Shortly before the Covenanters had advanced to Stirling Bridge, by which nothing daunted on account of the pestilence they crossed the Forth, they were reinforced by twelve hundred of the Marquis of Argyle's retainers. But, notwithstanding this important acquisition, they were threatened with a serious defection, which is well described by a recent writer. "The three Fife regiments, which had already once deserted, and which had only been brought back by a fear that Montrose was about to descend upon their own district, now seeing him clear over the Forth,



ABERFOYLE. (SCENE ON THE FORTH.)

and far away from their property, stopped short at the bridge, and could on no account be prevailed upon by their officers to proceed farther. These men, according to Bishop Wishart, were well enough inclined to the cause, there being perhaps no district in Scotland which had acted with such uniform zeal for the Covenant as Fife; but they were men of peaceful habits—generally shop-keepers or artizans, and many of them fishermen and sailors who had scarcely ever done duty or business of any kind on shore. They had also an ominous recollection of the slaughter which Montrose had less than a twelvemonth before committed at Tippermuir upon their friends and countrymen. Every thing considered, it is scarcely to be wondered at that three thousand men, who had been called to form the third of an army for the defence of all Scotland, though only themselves having a minute fractional interest in it, should pause before venturing themselves upon an expedition at once so pregnant with danger, and in the object of which they had so little concern. But whatever might be the prudential sentiments of these poor men, they were not destined to stand proof against a sentiment of a different nature, which was now put in operation. The leaders of the three regiments, the Lairds of Cambo, Fernie, and Fordell, perceiving that, in the extremity to which things had arrived, nothing could prevail with them but the fervour of religion, thought proper to command the ministers who had accompanied them from their respective parishes to go through their ranks, and by preaching, praying, and the use of their great personal influence, oblige them *to go out to the help of the Lord against the mighty*. It might truly be said in the present case that *arma cesserunt togæ*, for what the military word of command had altogether failed to do, was effectually performed by these persons. Fairly overcome by the *jolly tales*, as Guthry calls them, of their clergy, and assured, moreover,

that they would be discharged in a day or two, on the westland army coming up under the Earl of Lanark and his coadjutors, the unhappy Fifemen went devotedly on to the fatal field from which so few of them were to return."

There is the most undoubted proof, for it is recorded by himself, that General Baillie, the commander of the Covenanting army, was inclined to desert the cause. He tells us that he halted a little above the King's Park at Stirling, when informed that the *rebels*, as he designates Montrose's soldiers, had marched to Kilsyth, until the unfortunate Fife regiments were induced to continue in the army. The Marquis of Argyle, the Earl of Crawford, and several noblemen and gentlemen in the Covenanting interest, came up with the army, and the General was asked by Argyle what was to be done. Baillie answered that his Lordship and the committee ought to give him instructions. Argyle asked the reason for that statement. "I answered," says the General, "that I found myself so slighted in every thing belonging to a commander-in-chief, that for the short time I was to remain with them, I would absolutely submit to their direction, and follow it." It ought to be stated, that General Baillie had become so disgusted with his party on account of their foolish suspicions and aspersions, that he had on a particular day sent his resignation to the Scotish Parliament, and that it was with the utmost difficulty he had been induced to continue a fortnight longer, the last day of which was now arrived—"having been deprived of the most common privileges of a commander, by the impertinent superiors with whom he was saddled, and his honourable soldierly mind shocked by the private revenge which one of those personages (Argyle) conceived himself at liberty to wreak out by the assistance of the army upon his own account." The Marquis desired him to explain what he meant by stating, that, during the short time he was to be with them, he would do nothing on

his own responsibility, but act solely under the directions of what was called the *Field Committee*. He assigned three reasons to his Lordship, in the presence of the other noblemen and gentlemen, the last of which, it will be perceived, is a bitter invective against his Lordship's own personal act of burning the mansions of the Earl of Stirling and of Montrose's uncle. He says—"I told his Lordship, 1. Prisoners of all sorts were exchanged without my knowledge; the traffickers therein received passes from others, and sometimes passing within two miles of me, did neither acquaint me with their business, nor at their return where or in what position they had left the enemy. 2. While I was present, others did sometimes undertake the command of the army. 3. Without either my order or knowledge, *fire was raised*, and *that* destroyed which might have been a recompence to some good deserver, for which I would not be answerable to the public." He concluded by stating that he was in consequence resolved to follow the judgment of the Committee—"and the rather," he adds, "because that was the last day of my undertaking."

This singular collision with the General, by men who were totally incapable of planning a single military movement, was not to be endured by any soldier, and Baillie seems to have endured it solely because his engagement was soon to cease, and then he would leave them in disgust to their own meditations. The Marquis of Argyle had gratified his private revenge by burning the mansions of a nobleman and a gentleman—the one because he was faithful to the cause of his unfortunate sovereign, and the other because he was the uncle of Montrose, and simply because the MacLeans, the ancient enemies of the Argyle family, had thought proper to burn Castle Campbell, but beyond mean acts of this description he was incapable of being of any service in a military campaign, and his personal courage

was justly doubted after his conduct both at Inverlochy and Kilsyth. The presence of the Covenanting ministers, too, was a constant source of annoyance, as they were always proffering their opinions, however inexperienced and absurd, and insisting that their opinions should be adopted. There were, in short, too many masters in this unlucky army, every one of whom was self-confident, dogmatic, and wise in his own conceit.

The *Field Committee* at the King's Park of Stirling resolved to march against Montrose, and General Baillie led the army on the 14th of August to the village of Denny, near which they crossed the Carron, and pushed forward to a place called Hollanbush, about four miles east of Kilsyth, where they encamped for the night. On the following morning Argyle, who had remained during the night at Stirling, crossed the Carron at a ford near Buckieburn, still called *Argyle's Ford*, and arriving at the camp, he immediately proceeded to the General's tent. His first inquiry was—"What of the rebels?" General Baillie informed him that they were lying at Kilsyth. "May we not," asked his Lordship, "advance nearer them?" The General said that in his opinion the army was near enough to them if it was not intended to fight them, and stated the difficulties connected with the ground and other matters. Argyle nevertheless determined, against the will of the General, to come to an engagement, and had sufficient influence to carry his resolution in the Field Committee, being cordially supported by the ministers, who were certainly as a body the evil genius of the army. An order was issued to march directly to battle, and the army was accordingly dragged through the corn-fields and over the heights to Kilsyth, on the braes or hills above which Montrose was supposed to have encamped.

A reluctant army led by an equally reluctant commander, who was in reality only nominally so, over bogs, braes, and

fields, would march with no very pleasurable feelings, and after a wearisome and most disorderly route the Covenanting force arrived near Auchincleugh, about two miles east from Kilsyth. It seemed impossible to proceed any farther on account of the morasses, and General Baillie formed his men in order of battle, with the intention of waiting for Montrose. While engaged in this duty he was interrupted by the Field Committee, who came up and pointing to a hill on the right, very near that on which Montrose was encamped, they asked if that would not be a more advantageous position. To this the General replied, that he not only considered the ground very objectionable, but that the enemy could easily anticipate them in the possession. Some persons were sent to view and report, and on their statement it was resolved, in opposition to the remonstrances of General Baillie and Lord Balcarras, to take possession of the hill.

The orders of the Field Committee were obeyed by the General, and the Covenanters received no opposition from Montrose, who beheld their movements with the most enthusiastic joy, and prepared his men for the encounter by encouraging speeches, and suitable refreshments. But when the Covenanters reached the hill, they were in a state of great confusion, some regiments occupying positions at the command of Argyle unknown to the General, and bodies of soldiers moving through the field at their own pleasure in defiance of positive orders. Never was there such a motley group marching onwards to certain destruction at a time when every thing depended on regularity—such a *hodge-podge* of peasant soldiers, country clodpoles, and obstinate madmen.

Montrose had taken possession of a cluster of cottages and gardens in front of his position, in which he stationed a chosen body of his musqueteers, but, on the whole, the field of battle was very disadvantageous to him, and a sur-

vey of the ground will at once convince the spectator that, were it not proved by history and tradition, it could hardly be believed that it had ever been the scene of military operations. The fact, however, is too well established, and the bodies of both men and horses have been repeatedly dug up in the large morass called Dullater Bog, through the midst of which the Frith and Clyde Canal stretches. While the Covenanters were taking up their position, Montrose sent a trumpeter to inform that he was ready to give them battle, and this messenger was answered by a yell of defiance. Both armies now prepared for the mortal contest, animated by the fiercest hatred to each other, but when Montrose's cavalry perceived that they were to charge the Covenanting cuirassiers, who were clad in armour, while they were divested of such defences, they expressed their reluctance to fight men encased in iron, on whom swords would have little effect. The Marquis, when informed of this objection, addressed them in his characteristic manner:—"Gentlemen," he exclaimed to his cavalry, "do you see these cowardly rascals, whom you beat at Tippermuir, Auldearn, and Alford? I declare that their officers have at last found it impossible to bring them again before you without first securing them against your blows with coats of mail. To show our contempt of them, we will fight them, if you please, *in our shirts!*" Suiting the action to the word, the brave and illustrious nobleman divested his uncommonly handsome person of his coat and waistcoat, deliberately buckled up his shirt-sleeves, and drawing his sword, stood in this romantic position before his army. The cavalry could not resist this example, and the enthusiasm soon spread to the Highlanders and the Irish auxiliaries. The horsemen merely took off their coats and upper garments, and buckled up their shirt-sleeves, which, in addition to the example of their chivalrous leader, they were now the

more disposed to do on account of the heat of the day; but the foot-soldiers literally stripped themselves, taking off every article of dress, retaining only their shirts, the skirts of which they contrived to tie between their legs, while they bared their arms to the shoulder. It is said that the inhabitants of the district of Kilsyth long retained a terrible remembrance of Montrose's *naked soldiers*, who fought, they said, more like butchers than like ordinary troops.

The battle commenced by a charge of the Covenanting cavalry on the cottages and gardens in which Montrose had stationed his select musqueteers, and here another egregious blunder was committed by this unfortunate attack. These cavalry regiments in their zeal charged before the foot regiments in their rear had come up to their assigned places, and positively without any order from General Baillie, who expressly states that he did not yet think it the proper time to give the word or sign of battle. Argyle must have been at the bottom of this, and really his conduct throughout the whole march makes one boil with indignation against him, at the needless loss of life which his obstinacy and incapacity occasioned. He was perpetually interfering with General Baillie, issuing orders unknown to that gallant gentleman, and often directly contrary to his arrangements; and it is also melancholy to find that he was aided in his foolish and fatal instructions, which he had no right or title to give, by the phalanx of ministers who perpetually obtruded their advice, and bolstered him in all his schemes. It appears that this charge was occasioned by an absurd notion that Montrose's men were retiring along a concealed valley which lies to the west of the point of attack, but to their cost they soon discovered their mistake. A tremendous and well directed fire was opened upon the Covenanting cavalry by the musqueteers within the cottages and behind the walls of the gardens, which compelled

them almost instantly to turn in great disorder, and completely discomfited.

While this was going on, the Highlanders who stood nearest to the musqueteers stationed in the cottages impetuously rushed up the hill with the intention of assisting an advanced party, when they saw the Covenanting cavalry discomfited; and by this movement they made a mistake similar to that of their enemies, which would have been as disastrous if it had not been retrieved by their gallant conduct. They were charged by three troops of horsemen and by about two thousand infantry, said to be the very flower of Baillie's army, who boldly leaped over a wall which intervened between them and the Highlanders. The latter, though taken somewhat by surprise, and aware of their rashness, were by no means discouraged. They rushed forward against the Covenanting troops in a cowering posture, to avoid the fire of the enemy, and met them sword in hand, appearing as if they were determined to take the whole duty of fighting the enemy, and to make Montrose and their companions mere spectators of the battle. The principal or foremost of this band was Donald, son of the renowned John Muidartach, captain of Clanranald, who, though stationed with his clan behind the Macleans, broke through their ranks with his men, leaped a deep ditch, and boldly encountered the Covenanting phalanx. He was followed by the chief of the Macgregors, known by the soubriquet of *Caock*, on account of his daring valour, and whose clan on that day formed a regiment united with the Clanranalds. The Macleans next rushed to the assistance of their companions in the unequal and apparently hopeless conflict, followed by a party under Sir Allaster MacCol, who rushed forward to their assistance when he saw the Clanranalds and Macgregors likely to be overpowered by numbers. Nevertheless they would all have been cut to pieces by the Covenanters if Montrose

had not taken measures to support and relieve them. Riding up to his friend the veteran Lord Airlie, who was quietly seated on horseback at the head of his own family troop, the Marquis exclaimed—"You see, my Lord, into what hose net these poor fellows have got themselves by their ill-advised daring. They must certainly be utterly trod down by the enemy's horse, if they are not speedily relieved. I venture to apply to your Lordship for this purpose, because the eyes of all the officers are fixed upon you as alone worthy of the honour of such precedency, and because it is proper that an error committed by rashness of youth should be corrected by the veteran discretion and considerate valour of such a warrior as your Lordship. Forward, then, in the name of God, and show these mad lads, clever as they think themselves, that they must be indebted occasionally to older men than themselves." Lord Airlie instantly galloped off with his squadron, and he charged the Covenanters with such vigour that he completely relieved the overmatched Highlanders, and compelled the enemy to retire.

General Baillie, when he saw the fortune of the day inclining to Montrose, rode to his rear where the three Fife and other regiments were placed as a reserve, and intended to bring into action, but to his astonishment those soldiers, perceiving their cavalry discomfited, immediately fled. At this very moment the main body of Montrose's army, encouraged by the success of Lord Airlie and the Highlanders, raised an insulting shout, and furiously charged the remaining troops of the Covenanters. The latter, panic-struck and terrified at the savage-like appearance of these almost naked assailants, fled in all directions, followed by the Highlanders in full chase. As they were more active, and more accustomed to pedestrian exercise than their Lowland opponents, and also in fresher condition, they easily overtook them, and cut them down in great

numbers. Few comparatively fell in the battle on either side, but the loss of the Covenanters in the flight was dreadful, almost the whole six thousand falling under the claymore. Their cavalry alone escaped in any considerable numbers, and all their nobility and officers saved themselves, with the exception of Sir William Murray of Blebo, a gentleman named Arnot, and Colonels Dyce and Wallace, all of whom received quarter, and were hospitably entertained by Montrose. We are told that the Marquis of Argyle, who behaved cowardly in the extreme on the occasion, did not stop till he reached South Queensferry, nearly twenty miles from the scene of action, where he got on board a vessel lying in the Frith of Forth, and immediately stood out to sea. It is carefully recorded by the royalist writers that this was the third time he had been indebted to a boat for protection from Montrose.

Bishops Wishart and Guthrie, who were both contemporaries, make the number of the slain amount to seven thousand, and they are probably correct. It is said that the Highlanders had the *killing* of the defeated Covenanters for fourteen Scotish miles, equal to twenty-five English. The Fife regiments, though placed in the rear, and the first to retreat, suffered most on this fatal day. Very few of them returned to their own county alive, and their fate completely cured the Fifans of any military propensities for many a day. Montrose is very questionably accused of exclaiming—"They had no need of prisoners," and consequently of sparing none. There is a tradition that during the battle a Covenanter rushed towards Lord Airlie, and earnestly implored mercy. The veteran nobleman readily acceded to his request, and told him for his own security to attach himself to his stirrup, and pass for his servant; but one of his Lordship's troops, who immediately came up, detected the quality of the pretended servant, and merely remarking that it was too soon to take prisoners,

cut him down with one blow of his sword. It is certain that the Highlanders long remembered with delight the victory of Kilsyth, the most decisive as it was the last of Montrose's triumphs. Seventy years afterwards, a certain aged Highlander, who had been present as a mere youth, whenever the battle was mentioned, would exclaim, "It was a braw day, Kilsyth. At every stroke I gave with my broad-sword that day, I cut an ell o' breeks." The *breeks* alluded to the breeches or dress of the Covenanting Lowlanders, and especially the unfortunate Fifans, who paid dear for their support of the Covenant.

The writer of the Statistical Account of the parish of Kilsyth, published in Sir John Sinclair's well known work in 1796, states a variety of interesting particulars connected with the battle and the localities. "Every hill and valley," he says, "bears the name or records the deeds of that day, so that the situation of each army can be distinctly traced, such as the *Bullet* and *Baggage-Knoll*, the *Drum Burn*, the *Slaughter-How*, *Kill-the-Many Butts*, &c. In the *Bullet-Knoll* and neighbourhood, bullets are found every year, and in some places so thick that three or four of them may be picked up without moving a step. In the *Slaughter-How* or hollow, and other places, bones and skeletons may be dug up every where, and in every little bog or marsh for three miles, especially in the *Dullater Bog*, these have been discovered in every ditch. The places where the bodies lie in any number may be easily known, as the grass is always of more luxuriant growth in summer, and of a yellowish tinge in spring and harvest. The little hill where the gallant Graham (Montrose) encamped the night before the engagement is somewhat remarkable. The tents have been raised with sod, and it is easy at this day (1796) to distinguish the places where they stood, and the form and size of each. The carnage must have been dreadful, and the consequences were fatal, and

'ong felt by the defenceless inhabitants. Like every other civil war, it was carried on with the keenest contention and the most unrelenting cruelty. Many of the peasantry were butchered, and many were plundered. To this day numerous scenes of blood and cruelty are recorded. One in particular is mentioned. A poor countryman having fled with his four sons, was overtaken by a retreating party. Being suspected by them, they instantly fell upon the old man, though feeble and unarmed. The generous youths clung around their aged sire, either to plead for or defend him. In this posture, it is said, they were all cut to pieces, and now lie in one grave."

The victory of Kilsyth gave Montrose possession for the time of the whole of Scotland. He remained two days after the battle at Kilsyth, and on the third he marched to Glasgow, where he was presented with 10,000 merks, and treated with the most respectful politeness. He sent Sir Allaster MacCol into Ayrshire with a strong party, to disperse the levies raised against him by the Earls of Cassillis and Glencairn, which Sir Allaster effectually did, and those two noblemen betook themselves to Ireland. The Highland soldier was everywhere received with congratulations, and especially by the Countess of Loudoun at Loudoun Castle, whose husband, the Earl, was one of the most resolute Covenanters. It is said that this lady took Sir Allaster in her arms, embraced him, entertained him sumptuously, and sent a servant with his party to pay her respects to Montrose. The county of Ayr even agreed to raise four thousand men for his service, and the shires of Lanark, Linlithgow, and Renfrew, were zealous in their demonstrations and professions of loyalty. But the sun of the great Marquis set at Kilsyth, and the Covenanters were destined to triumph for a season, till they were frustrated by another extraordinary military genius of a different description and of very opposite principles—Oliver Cromwell.