

## CONFLICT OF KNOCK-MARY.\*

ABOUT A.D. 1490.

THE parish of Monievard, in the upper part of Strathearn in Perthshire, was the scene of a conflict, about the year 1490, between the Murrays and the Drummonds, two potent families in that district. George Murray, Abbot of Inchaffray, had ordered a *riding* or valuation of the teinds paid by the Drummonds for their property in the parish of Monievard, of which, in virtue of his office as Abbot, he was ecclesiastical titular. "This rydeing of teinds," says Lord Viscount Strathallan, "is a kind of severe way to consider and estimate the value of the tenth sheaffe in the time of harvest standing on the ground, and from thence to establish the number of rentalled teynd bolls accordingly to be payed by the heritor to the titular yearly." It appears that the Abbot's men, who were chiefly of his own name, conducted themselves with great insolence towards the Drummonds, threatening to *dirk* the latter if they offered the slightest opposition, and boasting that the Murrays had ever been, and would ever be, the lords and masters of the Drummonds. On the other hand, the Drummonds were not slow in retorting the insolence of the Murrays in the most uncourteous manner, and both parties at length became so exasperated that they raked up all the odious things done by persons of their name, and designated each

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\* Pitcairn's Criminal Trials; The Genealogy of the Most Noble and Ancient House of Drummond, by the Hon. William Drummond, afterwards first Viscount of Strathallan, 1681, (Reprinted 1831 for the Bannatyne Club, and only one hundred copies printed;) Freebairn's MS. quoted in the Appendix.

other by the most irritating epithets. The women, and even the children of the Drummonds, took part in the affair, and assailed the Murrays with a torrent of execrations.

Some one in the midst of this altercation thought proper to proceed secretly to the baronial residence of Lord Drummond, chief of the name, to acquaint his Lordship with the outrage committed by the Murrays on his friends and dependants. Lord Drummond was absent, but his second son, David Drummond, and his brother, designated from his property Drummond-Ernock, were made acquainted with the affair, and collecting their retainers they proceeded to Monievard. When the Murrays heard of the approach of Drummond with a party to drive them off by force, they marched up to the east side of an eminence called Knock-Mary, where they had the advantage of the rising ground, and awaited the arrival of their assailants.

Drummond soon appeared, and marched forward to the attack, nothing discouraged by the advantageous position occupied by the Murrays. A conflict began with great determination on both sides, but the Drummonds could not resist the superior force of the Murrays even at the first onset, and after contending for a short time they gave way. At this crisis a party of Macrobie's, then residing in Balloch, came up, chiefly from curiosity, and stationed themselves conspicuously on Knock-Mary to witness the conflict. When they saw that Drummond was likely to be defeated, they ran to his assistance, and altogether turned the result of the encounter. The Murrays immediately commenced a retreat northward until they came to a spot where they made a desperate but unsuccessful effort to retrieve themselves. They were driven off the field with great loss, and the place where the dead were interred is still marked by a mound of earth and stones, about sixty yards long and thirteen broad, known by the name of *Rotten-reoch*. From

the appearance of the mound, and of several other places in the neighbourhood, it is evident that the earth was simply dug out, the dead bodies thrown in, and covered with earth and stones. A number of the Drummonds fell in this feudal engagement, and eighteen of their allies the Macrobie were slain. Twelve of the latter were interred in the parish church of Muthil, and six in the churchyard.

After the Murrays were driven from the field they took refuge in the parish church of Monievard. The Master of Drummond, satisfied with his victory, was quietly returning home, when Campbell of Dunstaffnage in Argyllshire appeared at the head of a band of Highlanders. It happened that, in the spring of the year, a gentleman named Alexander Murray, an illegitimate son of Murray of Tullibardine, had killed Walter Drummond of Mewie and his two sons, leaving as the heir of Mewie a very young child. Campbell of Dunstaffnage had married Isabella Drummond, a daughter of the Laird of Mewie, and as he was in Ireland at the time of the slaughter of this lady's father and brothers, he had no opportunity until he returned to inquire into the affair and revenge the murder. At the very time of the conflict of Knock-Mary he arrived from Argyllshire, for the double purpose of revenging the slaughter of his father-in-law and brother-in-law, and he embraced the opportunity of accompanying David Drummond on his expedition against the Murrays, but Dunstaffnage does not appear to have taken any part in the conflict. While Drummond and his friends were passing the church at Monievard, within which the Murrays had taken refuge, one of the latter discharged an arrow, and either killed or wounded one of the Campbells. This so greatly enraged the Highlanders that they rushed to the church, and set the building, which was covered with a thatched or heather roof, on fire. They also surrounded it to prevent the pos-

sibility of escape, and all within were consumed to ashes. According to Lindsay of Pitscottie only one individual escaped, named David Murray. This author farther states that the Murrays were in number "six score, with their wives and children;" but another authority mentions the names of only nineteen, of whom five were of the name of Murray, as appended to the complaint presented to the Archbishop of St Andrews by the Abbot of Inchaffray. In that list David Murray is mentioned among those who were burnt.

This barbarous action was soon communicated to James IV., who was then at the castle of Stirling. The chief prosecutor in the matter appears to have been the Abbot of Inchaffray, who exhibited a complaint to William Shevez, Archbishop of St Andrews, setting forth that some of the Drummonds, whom the Abbot designates "*Satan's soldiers and rotten members,*" had most inhumanly slaughtered and burned a number of his kinsmen, friends, and followers, in the church of Monievard, without "regard to God, or the place to which they had betaken themselves as a sanctuary and safe house of refuge," and he made "supplication for justice and severe proceedings against such outrages."

The Archbishop recommended John Hepburn, Bishop of Dunblane, within whose diocese the crime had been committed, to anathematize the offenders, in other words to excommunicate them with all the solemnities enjoined by the Roman Catholic ritual, and the Bishop of Dunblane was ordered to intimate this excommunication in all the churches and chapels of his diocese. In those times this sentence of the Roman Catholic Church was almost equivalent to that of death, as it precluded the party or parties who were involved in it from any kind of intercourse or protection; but it is said that on this occasion the Bishop, probably either from motives of friendship, or not wishing to involve himself in a quarrel with the Drummonds, who

were numerous and powerful in his diocese, was in no haste to put it in force.

The proceedings of King James in reference to the affair in some degree counterbalanced the tardiness of the Church. Exasperated at the deed he immediately repaired from Stirling to Drummond Castle, whither David Drummond and his followers had retired. There was at first some show of resistance to the King's summons to surrender, but seeing that any opposition to the royal authority was hopeless, and would only aggravate the crime, the baronial castle was given up to the King, and David Drummond was carried a prisoner to Stirling. He was publicly beheaded in that town, notwithstanding the earnest intercession of his mother Lady Drummond, and of his sister Margaret, the favourite mistress of the King. It is said that a pardon "would have been certainly granted, if the mother, a bold, proud, unadvised woman, had not in her passion uttered some bitter and unseasonable words, wherewith the King was so irritated that he commanded justice forthwith to be done upon Drummond and many others of his friends, who were his accomplices in that ill turn, and appointed also an assessment to be given to the wives and children of such as died at Monievard."

These proceedings tended to increase the feud between the Drummonds and the Murrays, and whenever the least offence was given by either party the old quarrel was renewed. This sad outrage was at last compromised, and on the 14th of January 1500-1, a letter was issued under the Privy Seal to "the Lord Drummond, and Sir William Murray of Tullybardine, knight, their kin, men, friends, and servants, for *heartliness* to be preserved among them in time to come; renouncing and forgiving to the said kin and friends of both the said parties, all actions and crimes of the burning of the kirk of Monievard, and slaughter of the King's lieges at that time."

It has been commonly asserted that William, Master of Drummond, eldest son of Lord Drummond, was the individual apprehended and sent to Stirling, where he was tried, convicted, and executed in the year 1511, according to Douglas' Peerage, for the burning of the Murrays in the church of Monievard. Both the person and the date are erroneous, as the individual who suffered this punishment was David Drummond the second son, and the brother of the Master.

Thomas Drummond of Drummond-Ernock was in the castle of Drummond with his nephew when it was surrendered to James IV. He would probably have shared the same fate, and having refused to submit to the King without a positive assurance that his life would be spared, he got over the castle wall, and succeeded in escaping to an adjoining forest. This and some other bold *pranks* obtained for him the soubriquet of *Tom-unsained*. He fled first to Ireland and afterwards to London, where he secured the favour of Henry VII., by whose influence with James IV. he procured a pardon.