

THE  
MASSACRE OF GLENCO.

In a Letter from a Gentleman in Edinburgh  
to his Friend in London.

Giving a particular account of that unprecedented transaction, wherein orders were given that all the Males of the M'Donalds in that district under 70 should be put to the Sword, in which 38 persons were killed in cold blood, most of them in their bed, 900 Cows, 200 Horses, and a great many Sheep and Goats were carried off to the Garrison at Iverlochy, together with the extreme misery, and death, of many of the women and children, in being deprived of their fathers and husbands, and driven from their homes in the most inclement and severe season of the year.

“William R. As for MackIan of Glenco, and that tribe, if they can be distinguished from the rest of the Highlanders, it will be proper, for the vindication of public justice, to extirpate that set of thieves.”

W. R.

14th Article of instructions, Jan. 16. 1692.

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# The MASSACRE of

G L E N C O, &c.

SIR,

**T**HE Account you desired of the strange and surprising Massacre of Glenco, take as follows :

Mackian Mackdonald, Laird of Glenco, a branch of the Mackdonalds, one of the greatest Clans, or Tribes in the north of Scotland, came with the most considerable men of his Clan to Colonel Hill, Governor of Fort-William at Inverlochry, some few days before the expiring of the time for receiving the Indemnity appointed by proclamation, which, as I take it, was the 1<sup>st</sup> of January last, intreating he would administer unto him the oaths which the foresaid proclamation required to be taken ; that so submitting himself to the government, he might have its protection. The Colonel received him with all expressions of kindness ; nevertheless shifting the administering the oaths to him ; alledging, that by the proclamation it did not belong to him, but to the Sheriffs, Balties of Regalities, and Magistrates of burghs, to administer them. Mackian complained that by this disappointment he might be wronged, the time being now near the expiring, and the weather so extreme, and the ways so very bad, that it was not possible for him so soon to reach any Sheriff, &c. got from Colonel Hill, under his hand, his protection ; and withal he was assured, that no orders from the government against him should be put in execution until he first was advertised and had time allowed him to apply himself to King or council for his own safety. But the better to make all sure (tho' this might have seemed security enough for that time) with all dispatch imaginable he posted to Inverary, the chief town of Argyleshire where he found Sir Colin Campbell of Ard-

kinlis, Sheriff of that shire, and craved of him the benefit of the Indemnity, according to the proclamation, he being willing to perform all the conditions required. Sir Colin at first scrupled to admit him to the oaths, the time which the proclamation did appoint being elapsed by one day, alledging it would be of no use to him then to take them: but Mackian represented that it was not his fault, he having come in time enough to Colonel Hill, not doubting but he could have administered the oaths to him, and that upon his refusal he had made such haste to Inverary, that he might have come in time enough, had not the extremity of the weather hindered him; and even as it was, he was but one day after the time appointed; and that it would be very unbecoming the Government to take the advantage of a man's coming late by one day, especially when he had done his utmost to have come in time. Upon this and his threatening to protest against the Sheriff for the severity of this usage, he administered to him and his attendants the oaths, Mackian depending upon the Indemnity granted to those who should take them; he having so done he went home and lived quietly and peaceable under the government till the day of his untimely death.

In January last, a party of the Earl of Argyle's Regiment came to that country; the design of their coming was then suspected to be, to take course with those who should stand out, and not submit, and take the oaths. The Garrison of Glenco being thronged, and Glenco being commodious for quartering, as being near that Garrison, those soldiers were sent thither to quarter, they pretended they came to exact arrears of Cels and Hearth Money (a tax never known in Scotland until laid on by the parliament 1690, after the parliament of England had eased themselves of it.) Before they entered Glenco, the Laird or sons came out to meet them, and asked them if they came as friends or enemies? The officers answered, As friends, and gave their parole of honour that they would do neither him nor his concerns any harm; upon which he welcom'd them, promising them the best entertainment the place could afford. This he really performed, as all the soldiers confess. He and

they lived together in mutual kindness and friendship fifteen days, or thereabouts; so far was he from fearing any hurt from them. And the very last day of his life he spent in keeping company with the commander of that party, Captain Campbell of Glenlyon, playing at Cards with him till six or seven at night, and at their parting mutual protestations of kindness were renewed. Some time that very day, but whether before, or after their parting, I know not, Captain Campbell had these orders sent him from Major Duncanson, a copy whereof I here send you.

Ballacholis, Feb. 12. 1692.

SIR,

**Y**OU are hereby ordered to fall upon the Rebels, the Mackdonalds of Glenco, and put all to the Sword under seventy. You are to have special care that the Old Fox and his Sons do upon no account escape your hands. You are to secure all the avenues, that no man escape. This you are to put in execution at five o'Clock in the Morning precisely, and by that time, or very shortly after it, I'll strive to be at you with a stronger party: If I do not come to you at five you are not to tarry for me, but to fall on. This is by the King's SPECIAL COMMAND, for the good and safety of the country, that these miscreants may be cut off root and branch. See that this be put in execution, without feud or favour, else you may expect to be treated as not true to the King or government, nor a man fit to carry a commission in the King's service. Expecting you will not fail in the fulfilling hereof, as you love yourself, I subscribe these with my hand,

ROBERT DUNCANSON.

For their Majesty's service to Captain

ROBERT CAMPBELL of GLENLYON.

SIR,

Ballacholis, Feb. 12. 1692.

**P**ER Second to the Commander in Chief, and my Colonel's orders to me, for putting in execution the service commanded against the Rebels in Glenco, wherein you, with the party of the Earl of Argyle's regiment under your command, are to be concerned;

you are therefore forthwith to order your affairs so as that the several posts already assigned by you, be by you and your several detachments fallen in action with precisely by five o'Clock to-morrow morning, being Saturday; at which time I will endeavour the same with those appointed from this Regiment for the other places. It will be most necessary you secure those avenues on the south side, that the Old Fox nor none of his Cubs get away. The orders are, that none be spared of the sword from 70, nor the Government troubled with Prisoners. This is all, until I see you, from

Your humble Servant,

JAMES HAMILTON.

Please to order a guard to secure the Ferry, and the Boats there; and the boats must be all on this side the Ferry after your men are over.

For their Majesties Service, for Major Robert Duncanson of the Earl of Argyle's Regiment.

**T**HE Soldiers being disposed five or three in a house, according to the number of the family they were to assassinate, had their orders given them secretly. They had been all received as friends by those poor people, who intended no evil themselves, little suspected that their guests were designed to be their murderers. At five o'Clock in the morning they began their bloody work, surpris'd and butchered thirty eight persons who had kindly received them under their roofs. Mackian himself was murdered, and is much bemoan'd; he was a stately well-favoured man, and of good courage and sense; As also the Laird of Archintrikin, a gentleman of more than ordinary judgement and understanding, who had submitted to the government, and had Col. Hill's protection in his pocket, which he had got three months before. I cannot without horror represent how that a boy about eight years of age was murdered; he seeing what was done to others in the house with him, in a terrible fright ran out of the house, and espying Capt. Campbell, grasped him about the legs, crying for mercy, and offering to be his servant all his life. I am inform'd Capt.

Campbell inclined to spare him ; but one Drummond, an officer, barbarously ran his dagger through him, whereof he died immediately. The rehearsal of several particulars and circumstances of this tragical story, makes it appear most doleful ; as that Mackian was killed as he was drawing on his breeches, standing before his bed, and giving orders to his servants for the good entertainment of those who murdered him ; while he was speaking the words, he was shot through the head, and fell dead in his lady's arms, who through the grief of this and other bad usages she met with, died next day. It is not to be omitted that most of those poor people were killed when they were asleep, and none were allowed to pray to God for mercy. Providence ordered it so that that night was most boisterous ; so as a party of four hundred men, who should have come to the other end of the glen, and begun the like work there at the same hour (intending that the poor inhabitants should be enclosed, and none of them escape) could not march that length, until it was nine o'Clock, and this afforded to many an opportunity of escaping, and none were killed but those in whose houses Campbell of Glenlyon's men were quartered, otherwise all the males under seventy years of age, to the number of two hundred, had been cut off, for that was the order ; and it might have been easily executed, especially considering that the inhabitants had no arms at that time ; for upon the first hearing that the soldiers were coming to the glen, they had conveyed them all out of the way. For tho' they relied on the promises which were made them for their safety ; yet they thought it not improbable that they might be disarmed. I know not whether to impute it to difficulty in distinguishing the difference of a few years, or to the fury of the soldiers, who being once glutted with blood, stand at nothing, that even some about Seventy years of age were destroyed. They set all the houses on fire, drove off all the cattle to the Garrison of Inverlochry, viz. 900 Cows, 200 Horses, and a great many Sheep and Goats, and there they were divided amongst the officers. And how dismal may you imagine the case of the poor women and children was.

then! It was lamentable past expression; their husbands and fathers and near relations were forced to flee for their lives; they themselves almost stript and nothing left them, and their houses being burnt, and not one house nearer than six miles; and to get thither they were to pass over mountains, and wreaths of snow, in a vehement storm, wherein the most part of them perished through hunger and cold. It fills me with horror to think of poor stript children and women, some with child and some giving suck, wrestling against a storm, in mountains and heaps of snow, and at length to be overcome, and give over, and fall down, and die miserable.

You see in Hamilton's order to Duncanson, there is a special caution, That the Old Fox nor none of his Cubs should escape; and in Duncanson's order to Capt. Campbell of Glenlyon, That the old Fox nor none of his sons escape; but notwithstanding all this wicked caution, it pleased God that the two young gentlemen, Mackian's sons escaped. For it happened that the younger of these gentlemen trusted little to the fair promises of Campbell and had a more watchful eye over him than his father or brother, who suffered themselves, by his reiterated oaths, to be deluded into a belief of his integrity: he having a strong impresson on his spirit that some mischievous design was hidden under Campbell's specious pretences, it made him, after the rest were in bed, remain in a retired corner, where he had an advantageous prospect into their guard. About midnight perceiving several soldiers to enter it, this increased his jealousy; so he went and communicated his fears to his brother, who could not for a long time be persuaded there was any bad design against them, and asserted, That what he had seen was not a doubling their guards in order to any ill design, but that being in a strange place, and at a distance from the Garrison, they were to send out Centinels far from the guard, and because of the extremity of the weather relieved them often, and that the men he saw could be no more than these. Yet he persisting to say, That they were not so secure, but that it was fit to acquaint their father with what he had seen, he prevailed with his brother to rise, and go with him to

his father who lay in a room contiguous to that they were in. Tho' what the younger son alledged made no great impressi on his father, yet he allowed his sons to try what they could discover. They well knowing all skulking places there, went and hid themselves near to a centinel's post, where instead of one, they discovered eight or ten men, this made them more inquisitive, so they crept as near as they could without being discovered, so near that they could hear one say to his fellows, that he liked not this work, and that had he known of it, he would have been very unwilling to have come there; but that none except their commanders knew of it till within a quarter of an hour. The soldier added, that he was willing to fight against the men of the Glen, but it was base to murder them. But to all this was answered, All the blame be on such as give the orders; we are free, being bound to obey our officers. Upon hearing of these words the young gentlemen retired as quickly and as quietly as they could towards the house to inform their father of what they had heard; but as they came nigh to it they perceived it surrounded, and heard guns discharged, and the people shrieking; whereupon being unarmed and totally unable to rescue their father, they preserved their own lives in hopes yet to serve their king and country, and to see justice done upon those hell hounds, treacherous murderers, the shame of their country, and disgrace to mankind.

I must not forget to tell you, That there were two of these Officers who had given their Parole of honour to Macklan, who refused to be concerned in that brutal tragedy, for which they were sent prisoners to Glasgow, where, if they remain not still, I am sure they were some weeks ago, but as yet I have not learned their fate.

S I R,

Your humble Servant, &c.

FINIS.

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