"THE CHIEFS OF GRANT."[1]

There is a popular estimate of the national character of Scotland which represents the Scottish gentleman as boasting a long descent, with very scanty possessions. This estimate is about as correct as most popular opinions, but perhaps it is true that genealogy receives somewhat more than its due share of consideration in Scotland. It would, however, be a great mistake to look down upon genealogy as merely ministering to family pride. Both it and its sister science heraldry, which is often ignorantly despised, are valuable helps to the study of history. The doings of a great family throw important light on the public events of its times. The thread of its genealogy is interwoven with the history of the country, and is a clue to many an otherwise perplexing question. The history of Scotland is strongly coloured by such threads. For good or for evil, the great families have largely influenced the course of events, and their archives contain a vast amount of the materials of history, in the shape of charters and other public documents, besides private papers and correspondence.

This material, in the mass, however valuable, is too tough intellectual food for the digestion of any but professed historians; but when that part which belongs to a particular family is selected from the mass and made to interpret and illustrate the family history, it straightway assumes a special interest.

The work of selection must necessarily be one of great labour and expense, requiring extensive knowledge and untiring industry, therefore we cannot expect that it should be often undertaken. It has, however, not only been undertaken, but accomplished, in a remarkably complete manner, in a book which has just been printed though not published, entitled "The Chiefs of Grant," by William Fraser, LL.D., under the direction of the two late Chiefs—the seventh and eighth Earls of Seafield. This book, which is in three large quarto volumes, contains the history of the successive Chiefs, extending through six centuries, as far as it can be ascertained from authentic sources, with genealogical tables of the many branches of the family. It also contains a great number of public documents and private letters, and a valuable series of plates, consisting of portraits of many of the Chiefs and their wives, facsimiles of important documents and letters, autographs of many sovereigns and distinguished persons. It is difficult to speak too highly of the munificence of the Patron, the industry, care and accuracy of the Editor, and the excellence and beauty of the printing and illustrations. The

[1] THE CHIEFS OF GRANT. By William Fraser, LL.D. Edinburgh, 1883.

book may, without exaggeration, be called splendid, and is a worthy contribution to the literature of Scotland.

The family of Grant, though not among the first in historical importance, has yet long occupied a considerable position. Its head is chief of one of the largest Highland clans, and the landed estate is a princely territory. The family has not been noted for great exploits, nor, on the other hand, for great disasters. It has flowed on, in a gradually increasing stream, receiving many rich tributaries and throwing out numerous branches. Its heads have been, for the most part, what are called safe men, who have had the sagacity to keep out of troubles by which other and greater families have been ruined. Loyal to the 'powers that be,' they gained many a broad acre from royal favour, and never lost any by joining in enterprises to which loyalty, differently understood, impelled many of their brother chiefs. They passed unscathed through the '15 and the '45, and never suffered a confiscation or attainder. By a fortunate marriage, in the middle of the last century, they gained immense estates and an earldom—estates so happily situated that they carry on the territory of the Chief, with no very great break, from the upper part of the Spey to the sea at Cullen.

The traveller by the Highland railway to Inverness,—a designation now applicable to a large proportion of the inhabitants of Great Britain—having slowly and painfully climbed the course of the Garry, through a wild and desolate region, finds a most agreeable change of scene and motion as he descends the upper part of the course of the Spey. After following, for an hour or so, the growing river, among grand views of the Grampians, he comes to Grantown, the capital of the Grant country. A mile or two farther on, he sees, on his right, a large and somewhat heavy building, surmounted by a flagstaff, and with an approach decorated by a coat of arms. That is Castle Grant. It has not, however, always been the residence of the chiefs of the name. Their first possessions were in Stratherrick, on the south-eastern side of Loch Ness. These were held by them for a century or more, and then passed into the possession of the Frasers of Lovat, to whom they now belong. How or why this transfer took place cannot now be ascertained, as all documents which might have thrown light on the subject have perished. The Grants afterwards acquired the lordship of Freuchie in Strathspey, and were called Grants of Freuchie for several generations.

In 1694, all the possessions of the family were consolidated by royal charter, into one holding, called the Regality of Grant. The castle of Freuchie became Castle Grant, and the head of the family Grant of Grant.

The origin of the family cannot be exactly ascertained, and is the subject of dispute. Its earliest known progenitor is Sir

Laurence de Grant, who, in the thirteenth century, was Sheriff of Invernessshire. The opinion of Dr. Fraser is that he was of Anglo-Norman origin, and he connects him with a family of the same name in Lincolnshire, which came from Normandy with William the Conqueror. Many members of the Grant family, however, scout the idea of Norman descent, and insist upon being a branch of the Macgregors—the name being, according to them derived from a Gaelic word of a signification much less flattering than that of the French 'le Grand.' I have also seen an absurd pedigree, actually in print, in which the family is gravely traced to Norway in the 5th century, and to no less distinguished an ancestor than Woden!

The hypothesis adopted by Dr. Fraser is indirectly confirmed by the fact that the Lincolnshire le Grants were connected by marriage with the family of Byset, or Bisset, who, besides a high position in England, had large property in Scotland, and were certainly Lords of Stratherrick before the Grants. Here also the science of heraldry comes in with a side light. The Frasers of Lovat now possess most of the property of the Bysets, who have been long extinct. They bear in their arms, quarterly, three eastern crowns on a red field, which are the arms also of the Grants. Were not these derived by both families from the Bysets?

From Sir Laurence le Grant to the Earl of Seafield, there have been twenty-three chiefs, of each of whom Dr. Fraser has given a biography. It cannot be said that any one of them attained eminence, but several of them took an important part in public affairs, and their history goes far to dissipate a popular notion, fostered by some eminent writers, that the Highland Chiefs were in the habit of dividing their time between coarse festivities at home and predatory incursions on their neighbours.

Of the part which the family took in public affairs we have an early example in Robert le Grant, brother of the fourth chief and father of the fifth, who appears in two curiously distinct characters: first, as the champion of Scotland in a single combat on the Border, arranged with all due formality under instructions from the King of England to John, Duke of Lancaster, Lieutenant of the Marches; secondly, as ambassador to France, accompanying the Bishop of St. Andrew's. His name appears as witness to a treaty signed by the French King Charles VI. in 1391.

The eighth chief, John Grant, seems to have been a very able and efficient as well as loyal supporter of the government, for, having materially assisted the Earl of Huntly in the repression of disorder, he and two of his sons were put in possession of a large territory for the purpose of maintaining order and good government in it. Every one who has passed through the Caledonian Canal knows the ruined castle of Urquhart, the most picturesque

object on the somewhat uniform shores of Loch Ness. Numbers also of tourists and sportsmen know the beautiful glen of the same name which extends about ten miles from Temple Pier to Corrimony. About eleven miles beyond Urquhart Castle, on the same side of Loch Ness, is the opening of Glenmoriston, through which the river Moriston descends by a fine fall into the Loch, and at its mouth stands the square tower of Invermoriston House, well known in the first half of this century for its Highland hospitality. In these days, many questions arise as to the ownership of land, in whom it is ultimately vested. King James IV had no doubt at all on the subject, for, in the year 1509, he bestowed the whole of Glen Urquhart and Glenmoriston, with all the space between, on John Grant of Freuchie and his two sons. This splendid gift, amounting to about a hundred and fifty square miles, was divided into three baronies, Urquhart, Corrimony and Glenmoriston. The first was assigned to the chief, the second to his second son John, and the third to an illegitimate son of his, also named John. From these two sons sprang three branches of the family: Corrimony, Shewglie and Glenmoriston; and these, though retaining a professed allegiance to the chief, yet from being at a distance from Strathspey and surrounded by powerful neighbours, were often almost compelled to join with them; and so, in many of the contests by which the country was distracted, they took the opposite side to the chief. In fact, most of them espoused the cause of the Stuarts until its final collapse at Culloden, while the chief was uniformly on the other side.

James Grant, the ninth chief, had a good deal of trouble in keeping possession of his lands in Urquhart. After the death of James V., leaving the crown to an infant daughter, the Highlands became the scene of much confusion. A raid was made on Glen Urquhart by the Camerons of Lochiel and Macdonnells of Glengarry, and large booty was carried off, but the marauders were attacked and defeated by the Earl of Huntly, and a considerable part of their lands was bestowed on the Laird of Freuchie, as a compensation for the injury done to him. These additional lands, including Glengarry and Lochalsh and extending to the castle of Strome, carried the Grant territory to the western coast of Rossshire; which, however gratifying to the Laird's ambition, increased the difficulty, already great, of maintaining his authority over possessions so remote from his residence. His son John dealt with this difficulty with great worldly wisdom. He bestowed these last acquired lands in marriage portions with his daughters, thus securing the aid of powerful sons-in-law in the defence of his possessions in Urquhart.

This same chief was an adherent of Queen Mary in the earlier part of her reign, and was present at Holyrood, in the train of the Earl of Huntly, when Rizzio was murdered. He continued

on the Queen's side until after the fatal battle of Langside, when, with Huntly and others, he submitted to the Regent Murray.

James Grant, the fourteenth chief, had very difficult cards to play, and it must be owned that he played them with great skill. His lot was cast in the troublous times of King Charles I. and the Commonwealth, and, his territory of Strathspey being one of the main outlets from the Highlands to the South, he became perforce much involved in the wars of that distracted period. He first took part with the Covenanters; but when Montrose, after his victory at Inverlochy, proceeded to enforce submission on several barons and lairds by burning down their houses, the Laird of Freuchie judged it wise to change sides, and sent Montrose three hundred men. These men, however, did not do him much credit, being more distinguished for plundering than valour. Montrose complains in a letter that not only were they "bade and feu like to Jacob's dayes," but that they ended by running away. After the battle of Naseby, Montrose, by the King's desire, but sorely against his own will, disbanded his forces in Scotland; whereupon the Laird of Freuchie hastened to make his peace with General Middleton, commander for the Estates, craving pardon for his offences and offering service. He seems, at the same time, to have sent professions of loyalty and offers of service to Queen Henrietta Maria and Prince Charles, from whom he received gracious answers. During the remainder of the unhappy reign of Charles I., he discreetly kept clear of the efforts that were made in the King's behalf, and, during the Commonwealth, he remained as quiet as he could. At the Restoration, however, he again appeared in the rôle of a Royalist, and with such success that he was actually about to be made Earl of Strathspey, in consideration of his loyal aid to Montrose, when the royal intention was frustrated by his death!

This accomplished observer of the signs of the times left his eldest son a minor, under the guardianship, among others, of the ill-fated James Sharp, Archbishop of St. Andrew's, and the young man studied at the University, under the superintendence of that prelate. He did not, however, take the side which might have been expected from such training. In 1684 he was summoned before a Committee of the Privy Council for Nonconformity. In 1689 he was one of those who signed a congratulatory address to William III., and was chosen by vote as one of a Committee which offered the Crown to William and Mary. He joined General Mackay in his campaign against Dundee, but being left with others to defend the North, he was not present at Killiecrankie. After the death of Dundee, the remnant of his forces under General Buchan came into Strathspey, and, being encountered by a force of which the Grants formed part, suffered a severe defeat, commemorated in a well-known song, "The Haughs of Cromdale." After this the laird gave up military

proceedings, and devoted himself to civil duties. He was a member of Parliament, and also Sheriff Principal of Inverness-shire, in which capacity he showed great firmness in dealing with powerful offenders against the law. Under him the possessions of the family were constituted the Regality of Grant, and henceforth the title of Freuchie disappears. His youngest daughter married Simon, Lord Lovat, to which connexion we owe a very remarkable collection of letters of that extraordinary man. This marriage, however, did not take place till after the Laird's death.

His son and successor Alexander was distinguished both in civil and military capacities. During the lifetime of his father he was member for the county of Inverness, and was one of the Commissioners appointed for Scotland to treat for the union with England. After this he entered the army, and attained the rank of Brigadier. He joined the Duke of Marlborough in Flanders in 1708, and was engaged in the siege of Mons. In 1713 he was elected member for Elgin and Forres. In the next year Lord Lovat first appears in connexion with the Grant history. Ten years before, Simon of Beaufort, as he was then called, had been sent from France to Scotland on a mission in the Jacobite interest to the Highland Chiefs. A hunting party was to be held at the Duke of Gordon's at which proposals for a rising were to be made. But the Chiefs distrusted Simon, and would none of his projects. He returned to France, and remained there till 1714. Meanwhile, it appears that an attempt had been made to set aside his claim as Chief of the Frasers, in favour of the husband of the daughter and heiress of his cousin Hugh, eleventh Lord Lovat; but, his clan having heard that he was alive, sent to him to return. On this he presented a petition for reinstatement to the King, in which Brigadier Grant and others joined. He represented that his services would be valuable in keeping his clan from any treasonable proceedings. It is evident, from his letters, that, though professing to be a Hanoverian, he was intimately acquainted with the Jacobite plans, and that the impending attempt of 1715 was perfectly well known to him. His return at this time was celebrated by a beautiful Gaelic song, 'Morfhear Shimm' 'Lord Lovat's welcome.' The adherence of Lord Lovat to the Government was considered so important that his marriage with Brigadier Grant's sister was strongly urged, as a matter of policy, by the Duke of Argyll. Another suitor, who had been first in the field, was contemptuously set aside by the Brigadier, who, in a letter to Lady Grant of Ballindalloch, calls him a "meer young laird," and expresses himself "shure that with Lord Lovat his sister will be happy in a good man and a better esteat by much than the former." As to the goodness, the Brigadier, if he had lived, might have changed his opinion, but in regard of the happiness, his prognostications were right, for Lord Lovat was devotedly attached to his wife, and was inconsolable at her death.

Brigadier Grant was employed in military duty during the whole time of the rising of 1715, and the disorders consequent on it. He died in 1719, without children, and was succeeded by his brother James, who had taken the name of Colquhoun on his marriage with the heiress of Luss, and had been created a baronet in succession to his father-in-law. He now, however, resumed the name of Grant, and the Colquhoun name and property devolved on his son. Sir James lived till 1747, and therefore was chief during the last rising on behalf of the Stuarts. He was, however, a great deal occupied in Parliamentary duties, which called him to London, and left the administration of his affairs in the north very much to his son Ludovick. The latter, in fact, acted as chief all through the troubles of 1745; though, apparently a good deal under his father's directions—Sir James remaining quietly in London during a period of unexampled difficulty to his country and clan. Neither he nor his son appears to have thought for a moment of espousing the cause of romance and sentiment, of which not a particle appears in either of them. A letter was addressed by Prince Charles to Sir James, which was forwarded to him in London. He did not even open it, but handed it still sealed to the Marquis of Tweeddale, Secretary of State! The letter, however, might have been safely read, as far as any danger of exciting enthusiasm was concerned, for it is an extremely tame production, as matter-of-fact in style as a State paper. There is not a single appeal to that noble and touching loyalty which induced many to join in what they felt to be a desperate enterprise. Dr. Fraser has obtained the letter from the present Marquis of Tweeddale, and has given a facsimile of it. "You cannot be ignorant," writes the Prince, "of my being arrived in this country and of my having set up the Royal Standard, and of my firm resolution to stand by those who will stand by me. I refer you to my printed declaration for the rest. On such an occasion, I cannot but expect the concurrence of all who have the true interest of the country at heart. And I have heard such a character of you as makes me hope to see you among the most forward. By answering these expectations, you will entitle yourself to the favour and friendship of which I shall ever be ready to give you proofs."

Where the Prince can have heard such a character of Sir James as to expect him to be among the most forward in his cause, it is difficult to imagine, for nothing could have been more improbable, as every one who knew Sir James must have been aware. Possibly, however, the letter was of the nature of a circular to all the Chiefs. Sir James never answered it. He washed his hands of the Pretender and all his doings. He was an eminently safe man. The only overt part which he seems to have taken in regard to the rebellion was the expression of a strong opinion adverse to the proposal of Lord President Forbes to form what

were called independent companies from the Highland clans, for the defence of the country. Sir James considered that the best way to secure the co-operation of the loyal clans was to call out each clan under its Chief, after the usual Highland custom. Whether clans so assembled might not have caught the enthusiasm of their 'fellows' and joined the insurgents, may well be doubted. Probably the Lord President thought so. However, Sir James not only memorialised the Secretary of State on the subject, but offered himself to raise a regiment from his own clan,—an offer which was declined.

It is to Ludovick Grant, from this time, that we must look for the administration of the clan, and the part taken by it in the civil war. According to Dr. Fraser, "Mr. Grant patriotically exerted himself in support of the House of Hanover, in opposition to Prince Charles Edward. He was ready zealously to aid King George and his Government with the whole of his clan, who were brave, loyal, united under their Chief and among themselves, and attached to the then established Government."

The Government, however, appear to have been somewhat dissatisfied with the action of the Laird of Grant. They expected him to join the royal forces with his men, instead of which he contented himself for the most part with defending his own country, and engaging the insurgents when they came into his neighbourhood. In a letter from Brodie of Brodie, Lyon King of Arms, the Laird is blamed for not assisting Sir John Cope when he passed through Strathspey, as he was in need of a body of Highlanders to act against the enemy in the hills. Brodie says, "never give yourself any airs of haveing a clan that can support and serve the Government, if, when it comes to the push, they tell you they will not go alongst with you." The Laird was afterwards engaged, in concert with another loyal clan, the Macleods, in encounters with Lord Lewis Gordon, but all near his own country. He also acted in defence of Cullen House, belonging to his father-in-law, Lord Findlater. When the Duke of Cumberland came north, he joined him at Aberdeen. He did not, however, go on with him in his westward march, but returned home to gather his clan, as a reinforcement to the royal forces. This gathering took place on the very day of the battle of Culloden, and the clan did not reach the Duke of Cumberland's head-quarters at Inverness till four days afterwards; consequently they had no share in the victory of the King's troops. Possibly the loss of the somewhat doubtful glory of that victory was not the only unfavourable result to the Laird of his arrival four days too late, and the Duke may have set his own value on so tardy a reinforcement. Be that as it may, he turned the reinforcement to account by setting the clan to hunt down fugitives on whom to wreak the vengeance which has made his name infamous. In this inglorious service the Laird persuaded a number of the

Urquhart and Glenmoriston men to lay down their arms, which they had refused to do to any one but their own chief. He unfortunately made no terms for them with the Government at the time, and an application which he made afterwards on their behalf, in a letter to the Duke of Newcastle, was disregarded. The unhappy men, after a cruel imprisonment, were sent to the plantations, whence very few ever returned. About the same time, Alexander Grant of Shewglie in Glen Urquhart, was made prisoner, accused of being the chief mover in the proceedings of the Urquhart men, though he himself, being an old man, did not actually join the Prince's army. He was taken to London and confined in Tilbury Fort, where he died of a fever, just as he was about to be brought to trial. The letter of the Laird of Grant to the Duke of Newcastle, above referred to, was written chiefly, as he says, to defend himself against charges brought against him in a petition on behalf of Shewglie. He does not say what those charges were, but vindicates himself by stating the reasons why Shewglie was made prisoner.

There is a curious passage in this letter. "If His Majesty shall pardon and dismiss Shewglie at the request of any great man, I wish he may prove more faithful to his King and country than I have reason to believe he has hitherto done."

This about the great man fits in with a story which is told that a Scottish gentleman of influence went to the Duke of Newcastle to intercede for Shewglie, assuring the Duke that he was an old man, who had stayed quietly at home during the troubles. "But," said the Duke, "the Laird of Grant has twenty witnesses to swear that he was concerned in the rebellion." "The Laird of Grant," rejoined the other, "could get twenty witnesses to swear that your Grace was concerned in the rebellion."

The plan of the Government, as has already appeared, was to form independent companies out of the loyal clans. They formed twenty such companies, and offered one to the Grants. But the clan were deeply offended at having only one. They were assured that no more could be given to one clan, but they discovered that no less than five had been assigned to the Macleods. It became apparent, as things went on, that what the Government wanted was to pay only as many Highlanders as they could not get without pay, and to obtain the services of the rest on the old clan system for nothing. That they were scandalously niggardly appears from the almost incredible fact that Sir John Cope was hindered in his march northwards by want of money. Having assigned one company to the Grants, the authorities wanted the Laird to bring the rest of the clan to the standard without pay, leaving his lands to be ravaged by the insurgents. The Lairds of Grant had suffered severely in this way during former wars, and there was a large amount acknowledged to be due to them as compensation since 1689, which the Government never could be

induced to pay, and in fact did not pay till many years afterwards, and then only by a "place." No man could be blamed for want of zeal in behalf of a Government so mean and shabby or for coolness of loyalty to a Sovereign like George II.; and it is tolerably clear that they got from the Laird of Grant quite as much as they had any right to expect.

No reader needs to be informed that the battle of Culloden sounded the knell of the clan system, and that a chief would now no more lead his clan to battle than he would go out shooting with a matchlock instead of a breech-loader. The old attachment, however, of the clan to the chief survived long in many parts of Scotland, and in Strathspey as much as any. There was a curious revival of the old spirit as late as the year 1820, when Lady Anne Grant, sister of the Chief, was in some danger from the violence of an election mob in Elgin. A messenger was sent to Strathspey, the fiery cross was sent round, and a large body of Highlanders drove the mob out of the town. This was probably the last occasion of a clan gathering for anything but festivity and athletic sports.

Sir Ludovick Grant was the last chief, not only who led his men to battle, but who took any important part in public affairs. His successors have been men of quiet habits and tastes, respected and beloved as kind and indulgent landlords, but unknown in the world of politics. One, indeed, gave early promise of a distinguished if not eminent career. His debût at the Scottish Bar was such as to delight judges and advocates of high reputation, and he was heard with encouraging attention in the House of Commons. But, at the early age of twenty-four, a cloud came over his reason, from which it never emerged, and till his death, half a century afterwards, he was dead to the world. The splendid inheritance of his grandmother Lady Margaret Ogilvy came to him through the failure of the male line of the Earls of Findlater; but it was his only in name. He bore the title of Earl of Seafield, but the management of the estates and headship of the clan devolved on his brother.

There is one point on which great credit is due to the chiefs of Grant, as landlords, especially at the present time,—that they, as a rule, never disturb the crofters on their estates; and it is said that they find them some of the most satisfactory of their tenants. One result of this policy is worth remarking and commending to other landlords, namely, that in several cases, members of the crofters' families have made their way in the world, and, coming back to the old place as a home, have built there substantial houses, to the improvement of the property, and advantage of the neighbourhood.

On the whole, as we look through the history of the Chiefs of Grant—if we miss any great brilliancy of exploit or talent—we find much steady and useful service to the State, and many

private virtues: and considering the long period and the turbulent times through which these annals extend, we must own that they are remarkably free from records of vice and crime.

When, in consequence of the change in the Highlands after Culloden, the chiefs settled quietly into county magnates, the members of the many branches of the family were impelled to seek their fortune in other countries, where many achieved distinction. Several went to America and settled there. It is a question which it would be very interesting to have answered, whether their illustrious namesake, General Grant, is descended from any of these; and if so, which branch has had the honour of giving a chief—not to a clan but to a nation.

A. R. GRANT.