

CURIOUS DOCUMENTS FROM LORD MACDONALD'S CHARTER CHEST.

ON the 7th of December, a most interesting paper by Mr. Lachlan Macdonald of Skaebost, entitled "Gleanings from Lord Macdonald's Charter Chest," was read before the Gaelic Society of Inverness. We extract the following documents. They throw a curious light on the events and customs of those days. Mr. Macdonald says :—

The following resolutions taken by the Skye lairds at a meeting held at Portree in 1744 show the state of matters at that time, and the extent to which the luxuries had advanced even in those days, and how the proprietor viewed the same, and the steps they took in order to draw the inhabitants back to the old economical way of living. The paper is dated,

Portree, 15th August, 1744.

"At a meeting held here by Sir Alexander Macdonald of Macdonald, Norman Macleod of Macleod, John Mackinnon of Mackinnon, and Malcolm Macleod of Raasay, with the principal tacksmen living upon their estates, the following resolutions were unanimously entered into :—

"1st. That we shall not in our own houses henceforth use any brandy, nor in public-houses, except what at present is upon hand, and that we will inform and assist the proper officers in order to prevent its being run upon any part of our coasts, and that we shall likewise assist the proper officers to sieze any *aqua vite* without regular permits.

"2nd. That we shall henceforth use no tobaccos, but such as come in a regular and legal way, and that we shall inform and assist the proper officer against tobaccos that are entered for exportation, and intended to be re-landed. That none of us shall purchase above one roll of tobacco at a time for his own proper use, and that we shall use our utmost endeavours to prevent the immoderate use of it for the future amongst the vulgar.

"3rd. That we ourselves shall henceforth drink no tea, and that we will contribute what we can to lessen the use of it in our families.

"4th. That we shall purchase no meal from any vessel coming upon our coasts, except from such as are commissioned by the heritors, they having undertaken to provide us in what is necessary, except upon extraordinary emergency, after application made to the heritor, or his factor.

"5th. That henceforth we shall not give the smallest encouragement, either in money or effects, to any thigsters or beggars, but such as are inhabitants upon our respective properties.

"6th. That fox money shall be continued in the method now laid on in the Island of Skye, until a general meeting of the heritors and tacksmen think proper to take it off.

“That who kills a deer without permission from the heritor, shall be fined in twenty pounds Scots money.

“Dunvegan, 1st October, 1744.

“The above is a just copy of the resolutions taken at Portree, and, by order of the heritors, extracted from the principal by

WILLIAM TOLMIE.

The two following papers point to questions interesting to all Macdonalds, viz., the crest and chieftainship of the clan. The first is a bond from Glengarry to Oliver Cromwell for £2000, for which The Macleod of Macleod of that day, and Sir James Macdonald and others were security. It runs thus—

“Know all men by these presents, that we, Angus Macdonnold, Laird of Glengarry, as principal, Sir James Macdonnold of Sleat, and Rorie Macleod of Dunvegan, Donald Macdonnold of Mundart, Allan Macdonnold of Maror, Ranald Macdonnold, Benbequla, John Macdonnold of Strockwake, do acknowledge ourselves to be tied and firmly bound unto his Highness, Oliver, Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and the dominion thereof, in the sum of two thousand pound sterling, to be paid unto his Highness, his successors, or assigns, upon demand, for the true and perfect payment of which sum we bind ourselves, jointly and severally, our heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns, and every of them, firmly by these presents. Sealed with our seals, and subscribed by us, at the Sconce, near Inverness, the 12th day of March, 1655.

“The condition of this obligation is such that whereas, by articles bearing date the 5th and 10th of June, 1655, made, concluded, and agreed upon (by order from the Right Honourable General Moncke, Commander-in-Chief of all the forces in Scotland), between the late Lieut.-Colonel Blunt, then Deputy-Governor of Inverness, in behalf of his Highness, Oliver, Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland, on the one part, and Angus Macdonald, laird of Glengarry, on the other part, it was agreed that the said laird of Glengarry shall give good security, bound in the sum of two thousand pounds sterling, to the said late Lieutenant-Colonel Blunt (the said late Lieutenant-Colonel Blunt being deceased); it is hereby further agreed that the said laird of Glengarry shall give the said security to Major Miles Man, Deputy-Governor of Inverness, for performance of several particulars hereafter expressed and mentioned in the said articles; if, therefore, the laird of Glengarry, his clan, vassals, tenants, servants, now dwelling, or that shall hereafter dwell, upon his lands, shall, from time to time, and at all times hereafter, deport themselves peaceably and quietly under the present Government, and give all due obedience to his Highness, Oliver, Lord Protector of the Commonwealth aforesaid, or his successors, and to all others duly requiring anything for the service or interest of the Commonwealth of England, etc., and neither directly nor indirectly act anything that may be, or prove prejudicial to the peace or interest thereof, and that the laird of Glengarry shall not build any house of strength within his bounds without leave from his Highness, Oliver, Lord Protector of the Commonwealth aforesaid; and, further, that he shall not suffer any of the enemies of the said Commonwealth to reside or remain within his bounds, unless they come with greater strength than his clan is able to oppose, and likewise the said laird of Glengarry is to perform any other acticle (not here mentioned) included within the capitulation; that

then, upon performance of the premises, the bond is void, otherwise to stand in full force, virtue, and power.

"Signed, sealed, and delivered by Angus Macdonald, laird of Glengarry, Sir James Macdonald of Sleat, and Rorie M'Cloud of Dunvegan.

"Geo. Bateman.

"A. Macdonald of Glengarie.

"Antho. Langrish.

"J. Macdonald of Sleat.

"Will. Wilkes.

"R. Macleoid."

The next paper is a minute of agreement between Lochiel, Glengarry, and Keppoch, showing the state of matters in Lochaber in 1744:—

We, Donald Cameron of Lochiel, John McDonnell of Glengarry, and Alexander McDonnell of Keopoch, taking to consideration that severals of our Dependents and followers are too guilty of theft, and depredations, and being sensible of the bad effects and consequences of such promiscuous practices, and in order to put an entire stop to such villainy, as far as lies in our power, Have jointly agreed, and resolved, upon the following articles, which we faithfully promise upon honour to observe and fulfil.

"1mo. That any of our Dependents, Tenants, or followers, guilty of such thefts as by law may be capitally punished, we hereby oblige ourselves jointly, to contribute a sum of money necessary to prosecute such person, or persons, and to convey him, or them, to the next and most convenient county gaol within whose jurisdiction he resides, and there adduce such evidence against him as may legally convict him, or be assozied in course of process.

"2do. That any of our Dependents, Tenants, or followers, guilty of theft, receipting, or outbouding, so far as we judge the same may infer a corporal punishment, are to be confined, and incarcerated by us respectively within lockfast and secure ward, where we think most convenient to appoint, and such a criminal be publicly scourged at a sight of a number of the neighbouring tenants, so often as is thought sufficient to punish him for his crime.

"3tio. That we appoint sufficient and *sponsall* persons, or men of authority within proper districts of our estates (or where our authority among our followers and Dependents will extend and reach) to apprehend and incarcerate any person or persons guilty of the above crimes, and empowering our respective Deputies, to use such criminals by scourging, jaggung, stocks, and other punishments in as rigorous a manner as any of us their constituents might have done ourselves, and this power to continue no longer with any of those our Deputies than he duly puts to execution this our authority committed to him.

"4to. That any notorious or infamous villain guilty of the above crimes, flying from, and deserting any of us, to the protection of any of the other two of us, or privately lurking within any part of our estates, any one of us in whose estate such a fugitive resides, is hereby obliged, upon proper application, to deliver him up to the one of us who has a right and title to punish him.

"5to. and lastly. We hereby consent and agree that these, our articles and resolutions, are to be lodged in the custody of Sir Alexander Macdonald of Macdonald, Baronet, with powers to him severly to reprimand upon the most public occasion, one and all of us failing n the strict observance of all and every the above articles ;

in witness thereof, we subscribe these presents at Keapoche, the thirteenth day of October, one thousand seven hundred and forty-four years.

“ Donald Cameron.

“ John McDonell of Glengarry.

“ Alex. McDonell.

“ Follows a list of deputies appointed in the following districts :—

“ By Lochiel :—John Cameron of Fasfern, for the lands of Lochiel ; D. Archibald Cameron, for Locharkaig, Glenloy, and Stratochy ; Glenevis and Callart, for Mamore, Glenevis, and Garohaich ; Dungallon, for Suinart and Ardnamurchan ; John McEvan-ic-Allan, and John Ban McLan ic Ian, for Morven ; John Cameron, younger of Kinlochliven, and Donald Cameron of Clunis, for Dachinassie ; Torcastle, for Ardgour.

“ Donald Cameron.

“ By Glengarry :—Donald McDonnell of Scothouse, and Coll Macdonnell of Barrisdale, for Knoydart, equally betwixt them ; Allan and John McDonnells, sons of Scothouse, for Moror ; Donald McDonnell of Lochgarry, John McDonnell of Arnaber, Angus McDonell of Leeck, and Angus McDonell of Greenfield, for Glengarry and Abertarf.

“ John McDonell of Glengarry.

“ By Keppoch :—Donald McDonnell, brother to Keoppeche, Donald McDonell of Tirnadrich, Donald McDonnell of Orainichan, and Alexander McDonell of Tullach, for the Braes of Lochaber ; Ronald McDonell of Aberarder, for the Braes of Badenoch.

“ Alexander McDonell.”

Though the two foregoing papers explain themselves, it must be mentioned that *seals* are appended to the signatures of the three chiefly responsible parties to the deed to his Highness Oliver. Glengarry's seal is merely a large deer covering the whole of a circular shield. Sir James Macdonald used what was evidently an ancient seal ; it has a ground, or, quartered per cross. In the dexter chief, an open hand (the *lamh dearg*), in the sinister chief a lion rampant, and a fish and a ship in the bases dexter and sinister. Initials J. M'D. on the scroll above the shield, but neither motto nor crest. This seal does not correspond with any I have seen in Heraldry Books. Perhaps, for all we know, it may have once belonged to one of the ancient Lords of the Isles. It is particularly to be noticed it does not show the croset so conspicuous on the present arms of mostly all the Highland Macdonalds. The seal used by Macleod of Macleod was a classical-looking head of a Roman type.