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The Raising of the Highland Regiments in 1757

IN his eloquent survey of the career of the elder Pitt Lord Stanhope says—

Was it not he who devised that lofty and generous scheme for removing the disaffection of the Highlanders by enlisting them in regiments for the service of the crown? Those minds which Culloden could not subdue at once yielded to his confidence; by trusting he reclaimed them; by putting arms into their hands he converted mutinous subjects into loyal soldiers.¹

And he afterwards quotes Pitt's own words, spoken a few months before his death.

I remember how I employed the very rebels in the service and defence of their country. They were reclaimed by this means; they fought our battles; they cheerfully bled in defence of those liberties which they had attempted to overthrow but a few years before.²

Whether the final pacification of the Highlands was mainly due to this policy of trust, or to that harsher policy which, by exiling the chiefs, gradually loosened the tie between them and their clans, is perhaps open to question. At any rate the raising of the Highland regiments was a bold and wise measure, for which Pitt deserves credit. But the credit is not due to him exclusively, nor did the idea originate with him. The needs of America, not of Scotland, gave birth to it.

Eight years before, the duke of Bedford had proposed to send out Highlanders to Nova Scotia as settlers, and the duke of Cumberland had promised his support to the scheme, 'as it is much to be wished that these people may be disposed of in such a manner as to be of service to the government, instead of a detriment to it.'³ And in 1751 Wolfe, who was at that time commanding a regiment in Scotland, wrote to a brother officer in Nova Scotia that he should imagine two or three independent companies of Highlanders would be found useful in the desultory frontier warfare

¹ *History of England*, iii. 18.

² *Ibid.* iv. 89.

³ *Bedford Correspondence*, i. 564.

which was then going on: 'they are hardy, intrepid, accustomed to a rough country, and no great mischief if they fall.'⁴

Braddock's disaster in 1755, and the French reinforcements sent to Canada in the early part of the following year, made it an urgent matter to send out British reinforcements. But it was not easy to find them. The standing army of Great Britain, normally 19,000, had been raised to 34,000 men; but this was little more than one-fifth of that of France. England was threatened with invasion, and when Hessians and Hanoverians to the number of 19,000 were brought over to guard it they had to be sent back to Germany because of the popular outcry, of which Pitt took the lead. The Mediterranean garrisons were under 3,000 each; so that when Mahon was besieged Gibraltar could not spare men to reinforce it, and it was driven to capitulate.

Lord Loudoun, who had been very useful in the Highlands in the time of the rebellion, was sent to America to take the chief command; but only two weak battalions accompanied him. One of these was the Black Watch, the earliest Highland regiment, which had been formed out of independent companies in 1739. So many Highland recruits were sent out to join it that in a few months' time it numbered 1,300 men. In spite of the opposition of Pitt and his friends, money was voted for a regiment of four battalions to be raised in America from Swiss and German protestants settled in Pennsylvania and New York. One-third of the commissions were given to officers of those nationalities. This regiment, at first known as the Royal American, is now the King's Royal Rifle Corps, or 60th Rifles.

After various acts of hostility on both sides, war was declared between France and England in May 1756. In the course of that month a plan for carrying on the war was submitted to the duke of Cumberland. It proposed an increase in the establishment of British regiments, and the procuring of some German regiments for service in America, and added, 'Two regiments, a thousand men in a corps, may be raised in the north of Scotland for the said service and on the same terms. No men in this island are better qualified for the American war than the Scots Highlanders.' It further suggested that the Scots regiments in the Dutch service should be recalled, and 2,000 protestants raised in the north of Ireland.

Pitt was sworn as principal secretary of state on 4 Dec., and the duke soon afterwards sent him by Lord Albemarle the plan described above.⁵ As regards the Highlanders, the matter was quickly settled, for in the course of that month the duke wrote the following letter, marked 'Most private,' to Lord Loudoun:—

⁴ Wright, *Life of Wolfe*, p. 168.

⁵ Almon, *Anecdotes of the Earl of Chatham*, i. 261.

St. James De 23^d 1756.

My Lord Loudoun,—I write this *private* letter to you to assure you of the thorough satisfaction your conduct has given me, and will not fail to support you to the utmost of my power through the many difficulties you find in the executing of your orders, and in opposition to the public service. Nothing can be worse than our situation here at home, without any plan, or even a desire to have one, great numbers talked of to be sent you, but without any consideration of how, and from whence, without considering what they should carry with them. But that you may know what can be done for you, I write in my own Hand, trusting to your Honour, that you will burn this as soon as read.

The King will spare you *five* old Battalions from *Europe* and *two thousand* new raised Highlanders, which will make 6,000 men, officers included: and I will send a proper train of artillery with them. Prepare your own plan for one army up the *S^t Lawrence* river, and for the other to keep the enemy in check from where your army now is. I will send you my thoughts more fully with a plan of mine for your operations, which you shall be left at liberty, either to adopt, in part, or not at all, as you shall find it proper from your better information. I don't doubt a moment of your burning this letter, so don't answer it, but send your plan and thoughts without taking any notice of this most *private* letter. I remain very sincerely your most affectionate Friend.⁶

The 2,000 Highlanders here referred to were to form two battalions, to be raised respectively by Archibald Montgomery, afterwards earl of Eglinton, and Simon Fraser, master of Lovat. Montgomery was a major of Lord Robert Manners's regiment (36th Foot), but Fraser was in a different position and had never held the king's commission. His father, Lord Lovat, had made him join the Jacobite army in 1746 at the head of his clan. He had afterwards received a pardon, and become an advocate (as readers of 'Catriona' may remember). He now applied to be allowed to raise a regiment, and was supported by the duke of Argyle, who told the government that under no other person would the clan of Frasers enlist.⁷

Among the Cumberland Papers at Windsor there is a list of officers for Fraser's regiment, endorsed, 'These papers delivered to me by the Duke of Argyle on the 2^d Jan. 1757, and approved the next day by the King. [Initialed] W.' Out of a total of thirty-nine officers thirteen are Frasers, and there is a note that

Mr Fraser being to raise so great a number of men, it is necessary to recommend many gentlemen of the name of Fraser who have not been in the service before, but who from their connections and interest in the country can raise most men.

The two majors in this list are Campbells, but one of them was afterwards appointed to Montgomery's regiment.

The duke of Newcastle, whom Pitt had driven out of office,

⁶ Copy in Cumberland Papers, endorsed, 'Written with H.R.H.'s own Hand.'

⁷ Walpole, *Memoirs of the Last Ten Years of George II*, ii. 131.

watched the measures of the new ministry with the disapproval which was to be expected. On 4 Jan. 1757 he wrote to Lord Hardwicke about the reinforcements for America—

The Duke will not part with more than 4 regiments from hence, the new lord-lieutenant will spare only 1,000 from thence, and the *old governor* of Scotland cannot muster up above 2,000 of his Highland friends, which altogether will not amount to much above 6,000 men. Mr Pitt insists upon 8,000.

Hardwicke replied on the 7th—

I find the measure of raising 2,000 Highlanders alarms many of the best affected, particularly the making councillor Fraser colonel of one of the Battalions. . . . Nothing could more effectually break in upon the plan which has been pursuing for that country, ever since the last Rebellion, and I dare say the scheme is to put an end to it.

Two days later Newcastle wrote again—

I most entirely disapprove the method of their Highland regiments. The Duke, I hear, disapproves and submits. It is wholly the duke of Argyle.⁸

There seems to be nothing to bear out the statement that the duke of Cumberland disapproved the raising of these regiments. The fact that Henry Fox supported the measure in the house of commons is an indication to the contrary. The situation is pretty clear. Pitt was bent on vigorous action in America, but his hands were to some extent tied by his opposition to the employment of foreign soldiers. Whether or not he welcomed the scheme at that time as a message of peace to Scotland, it was practically indispensable for waging successful war in America. The king and the duke, as captain-general, were unwilling to denude the country of troops, especially as they cherished a hope that some British regiments would join the army which was to be formed for the defence of Hanover. Highlanders had fought under the duke at Fontenoy, and against him at Culloden, and he knew their value. As already mentioned, the Black Watch had been sent to America before Pitt became a minister. The opinions of Argyle and Loudoun, Campbells both, would be likely to weigh with him, especially when they furnished a means of reconciling his views with those of the imperious minister.

Recruits came in so freely that the establishment of the two regiments was increased. They were sent to America in a few months. Montgomery's regiment served under Forbes in the successful expedition against Fort Duquesne (where Braddock had met with his disaster), while Fraser's took part in the capture of Louisbourg and Quebec, and won the praise of Wolfe. The regiments were brought into the line as the 77th and 78th respectively, but were disbanded at the peace of 1763, the men receiving grants of land in America.

E. M. LLOYD.

⁸ Add. MS. 32870.