

which James V. had begun with the hanging of Johnnie Armstrong was carried to an effective conclusion. In Stevenson's words "the rusty blunderbuss of Scots criminal justice, which usually hurt nobody but jurymen, became a weapon of precision for the Nicksons, the Ellwalds, and the Croziers."<sup>1</sup> The lairds were compelled to give security for good behaviour, the old merry days of hunting in the Cheviots and raiding Northumberland were over, and, since their occupation was gone, poverty closed in on them. Men drifted to other parts of Scotland or went abroad to the wars; in the sixteenth century the Elliots had been able to muster 450 mounted men, which meant a clan numbering at least 1500; by the middle of the eighteenth century the latter figure represented the total population of Liddesdale. Soon, as Nicol Burne the Violer sang, "many a place stood in hard case where blithe folk kent nae sorrow," and Scot of Satchels in the seventeenth century thus deplored in his rough doggerel the Elliot fortunes:—

"For the Elliots, brave and worthy men,  
Have been as much oppressed as any name I ken,  
For in my own time I have known so much odds,  
No Elliot enjoyed any heritage but Dunlibyre, Fanash, and Stobs."

It is with the last-named remaining heritage that we are now concerned. As Mangerton had the headship of the Armstrongs, so the chief of the Elliots was the laird of Redheugh, which stood near the foot of the Hermitage Water. But as time went on the Redheugh family became more identified with the peel of Lariston, higher up the Liddel valley. Stobs, across the hills on the Slitrig Water, a tributary of Teviot, became an Elliot property in 1580,<sup>2</sup> and in the second decade of the seventeenth century passed into the hands of one Gilbert Elliot, a cadet of Lariston, whose mother was a Scott of Buccleuch. This Gilbert, known as "Gibbie wi' the Gowden Garters," married another Scott, the "Flower of Yarrow," a daughter of "Auld Wat of Harden," and, judging from his place in ballad literature, must have been of a character to impress the imagination of the countryside. Of the Stobs family several represented the county of Roxburgh in

<sup>1</sup> *Weir of Hermiston.*