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THE COMBATANTS ON THE NORTH INCH OF PERTH

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IN 1833 the late W. F. Skene discovered a genealogical manuscript in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh, and published it in the *Collectanea De Rebus Albanicis*. Whoever the writer of it may have been, it is an exceedingly valuable work, and has been of great service in promoting an interest in the genealogy and history of the Highland clans. It is not free from small errors, which may have arisen from mis-readings or pen-slips. Neither is it free from mistakes in the names of some of the ancestors given in it. As a general rule, however, it is substantially correct to the year 1080. Back of that date, it is utterly untrustworthy. It contains almost nothing except the lively fancies of some interested persons who had been licking the blarney stone as a means of preparing themselves for relating and writing tales of family ostentation in a pleasing manner.

The Skene MS. begins the genealogy of the Macleans with Lachlan Lùbanach of Duart; the genealogy of the Campbells with Cailein Iongantach or Wonderful Colin; the genealogy of the Mackenzies with Murdoch Dubh; and the genealogy of the Mackinnons with Neil, son of Gillebride. Lachlan Lùbanach of Duart was born about 1330 and died

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about 1404. Hector Roy, his son, was born about 1370, and was killed at the battle of Harlaw in 1411. Colin Campbell of Lochow succeeded his father, Gillespie, in 1372, and died in 1413. Murdoch Dubh of Kintail died in 1375, and was succeeded by his son, Murdoch of the Bridge. We do not know in what year Neil Mackinnon died, but we know that Lachlan, his son, was chief of the Clan Fingon in 1409. The genealogies of the Macdonalds and the Macdougalls were copied from the Book of Ballimote, which was compiled in 1383.

The foregoing facts render it fairly certain that the genealogies in the Skene MS. were originally written at least as early as the year 1385. It is no doubt true that there were a few names—but they are very few indeed—inserted in it at a later date. We should therefore call it either the Skene MS. or the MS. of 1385. But surely the discoverer and publisher of it deserves the name, especially as we do not know who the writer of it was, or by whom or where it was preserved.

Some persons tell us that the Skene MS. was written by Irish scribes, and that, as a consequence, its genealogies cannot be correct. It is possible, but not at all probable, that it was originally written by Irish scribes. But the Irish scribes were neither fools nor knaves. They would never dream of writing the genealogies of the Highland clans, except from information collected by or from trustworthy men in Scotland.

The accuracy of the genealogies in the Skene MS. is mainly due to the fact that there were Highlanders in all ages until very lately who could trace themselves back in regular order for nine or ten generations. John Maclean, the poet, was born in Tiree in 1787, and came to Nova Scotia in 1819. Shortly before 1848 he gave to Dugald MacEachern, who was also a poet and a native of Tiree, the names of all his ancestors back to Lachlann Fionn, son of Maclean of Treshnish. He was the ninth in descent from Lachlan Fionn, of whom I was not able to find any trace until the

late Maclean of Ardgour kindly sent me a copy of the Ardgour MS. I wrote down John Maclean's genealogy in my note-book in Dugald MacEachern's house, Pictou, Nova Scotia, in April 1863, and found it useful to me when writing the history of the Macleans in 1899. The late Alexander Macdonald, Ridge, was born in Cape Breton in 1823, and died in 1904. He could trace himself back, name after name, to John Dubh of Bohuntin, and could also give a very full account of the Macdonalds of Keppoch. It is true that John Maclean and Alexander Macdonald were born genealogists, and that men of their class were somewhat scarce in this country. It does not follow, however, that trustworthy genealogists were scarce in Scotland in 1385; it is certain that they must have been quite numerous.

At the present day, those who take a genuine and sympathetic interest in their ancestors are few and far between, unless we count the men who jump over Adam's head and land among apes or tadpoles. But we are not to judge the past by the present; our forefathers, with scarcely an exception, were anxious to know who they were and whence they came.

In studying clan genealogies we must bear in mind that genealogies and histories are two different things. Genealogies deal with ancestors, and are generally, except when manufactured to order, fairly accurate for about three hundred years back from the time at which they were compiled. Histories deal with chiefs and events, and would, if written from traditions for even one hundred years, be full of errors and absurdities. The following facts will help to bring clearly before us the ideas which I wish to convey. The genealogy and history of the Macleans of Ardgour was written about 1760. The first six lairds and chieftains are given in the following order:—Donald, Ewen, Allan, —, Allan, and Ewen. The second Allan is represented as succeeding his grandfather, the first Allan, but his father's name had been forgotten and could not be given, except by inventing a name. The correct order of descent is this:—Donald, Ewen, Allan, third son of Ewen, John, Allan, and

Ewen. John was the missing link. The lairds and chieftains were :—Donald, Ewen, Lachlan, eldest son of Ewen, John, only son of Terlach, second son of Ewen, Allan, son of John, son of Allan, third son of Ewen, and Ewen, son of Allan. It will be seen that whilst the genealogy is correct, though not full, the history is very far astray. It makes chieftains of Allan, third son of Ewen, and of John, his son. Then, it omits two very prominent chieftains, Lachlan and John MacTerlach.

The facts that I have now given regarding the genealogy and history of the Ardgour MS. teach us two things ; first, that we are not to assume that the men whose names are given in a genealogy were all chieftains ; and, secondly, that there were chieftains whose names are not in the genealogy, and could not be in it.

The term clan is employed in two distinct senses. It means, first, the children or descendants of the man whose name they use as their surname ; and, secondly, a confederacy of clans of different origins, as in the case of the Clan Chattan and the Clan Cameron. In the latter sense each clan had its own chief, whilst the chief of one of the clans was captain or leader of the whole. The captain might call himself chief of all the clans under him, but he could not possibly be chief in the Highland sense of the term Ken-Kinnie of any persons except those who had the same origin as himself and bore his surname. Certainly, he would be land chief, or chief in the feudal sense of the term, of all the men who lived on his estates, no matter what their origin might have been.

The original Clan Chattan, or the Clan Chattan by blood, included at least the Macphersons and the Davidsons. The Clan Chattan Confederacy embraced the Macphersons, the Davidsons, the Mackintoshes, the Shaws, and other clans. The Clan Millony consisted of the Macgillories and the Camerons. To the Clan Millony or Clan Cameron Confederacy belonged the Macgillories, the Camerons, the Macmartins, and the Macsorlies. The Macgillories, the Camerons, and the Macmartins had a common origin.

Among the genealogies in the Skene MS. are the following :—

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1	William and Donald	Lachlan	Ewen	1350
2	William	Suibhne	Donald Dubh	1320
3	Ferchar	Seth	Allan	1290
4	William	Leod	Millony	1260
5	Gille michael	Seth	Paul	1230
6	Ferchar	Ferchar	Gillepatrick	1200
7	Seth	Gilchrist	Gillemartan	1170
8	Aigcol	Malcolm	Paul	1140
9	—	Donald	Millony	1110
10	—	Muireach	Gilleroth	1080
11	Neil	Suibhne	Gillemartan Og.	1050
12	—	Seth	Gillemorgan	1020
13	—	Nechtán	Gillemartan Mor.	990
14	—	Gillecattan	Gille-ewen	960

The dates given are the dates of birth. Of course, they are only approximations. At the same time they can scarcely be over five or ten years astray in any case.

The first genealogy is the genealogy of the Mackintoshes. It is clearly an old and genuine genealogy. If it were a manufactured article, there would be no blanks between Aigcol and Neil. It will be noticed that the Mackintoshes are not derived from Gillecattan. There is thus, then, no historic ground for concluding that they were of Clan Chattan origin. It is impossible to trace them back farther than Neil, of whose origin we know nothing. Ferchar, son of Seth, appears as a witness in 1234. He was steward or *tòiseach* of Badenoch, and would be known among the people as Fearchar *Tòiseach* or *an Tòiseach*. It is possible, then, that some Mackintoshes have derived their name from him. Malcolm Mackintosh, Callum Beg, must have been born about 1380, and could not appear in a genealogy written in 1385, if his father were living. He was a son of William, son of William,

son of Ferchar. Duncan, his son, was captain of the Clan Chattan in 1467, and died in 1496.

Lachlan, the chief who stands at the head of the second genealogy, was chief by blood of the whole of the descendants of Gillecattan. He was succeeded apparently by Kenneth, father of Duncan the Parson. In the trouble between King James I. and the third Lord of the Isles, Malcolm Beg and the Mackintoshes supported the King, whilst Duncan and his followers stood loyally by the Lord of the Isles. We are told in the genealogy that Donald, son of Muireach, was called an Caimgilla. It is pretty certain that there must have been some special reason for giving this apparently insignificant item of information regarding Donald. It is probable then that, like Dugall Cambel and Gilla-Camsroin, he had a clan named after him. Leod is probably a misreading for Ferchar.

Gilleroth had two sons, Maelanfaid or Maolonfhaidh and Gillacamsroin or Gillecamsbroin. Ewen — Eoghan Mac-Dhōnaill Duibh—was succeeded by his son Donald, who, in order to distinguish him from his grandfather, was invariably called Dónall Dubh MacEōghain. The second Donald Dubh was born probably about 1380. He fought under Donald of the Isles at Harlaw in 1411. He fought against Alexander of the Isles in Lochaber in 1429, and against Donald Balloch at Inverlochy in 1431. He was succeeded by his son Allan, who appears as captain of the Clan Cameron in 1472. Allan slew John, second Maclean of Coll, at Corpach, Lochaber, in or about 1472, and burnt the Coll Charters. The Gilleroth who appears as a witness in 1222 was a brother of Gillepatrick, son of Gillemartan. He was chief of the clan, but died without issue, and consequently could not appear in the genealogy.

In March 1390 King Robert III. directed the sheriff and bailiffs of Aberdeen to put the following persons to the horn as outlaws for the slaughter of Walter de Ogilvy, Walter de Lichten, and others: Duncan and Robert Stewart, Patrick and Thomas Duncanson, Robert de Athole, Andrew Macnair, Duncan Bryceson, Angus Macnair, and John Ayson, junior, and all their adherents; and also as taking part with them in the slaughter, Slurach and his brothers with the whole Clan-

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qwehvil, William Mowat, John and Donald de Cowts, with their adherents ; David de Rose, Alexander and John Macintalyur, Adam and John Robson, with their adherents ; Duncan Neteraulde, John Mathyson, with their adherents ; and Morgownde Ruryson, and Michael Mathowson, with their adherents. The Stewarts and the Duncansons belonged to Athole. Robert de Athole was the chief of the Duncansons or Robertsons of Struan. The Macnairs held the lands of Foss in Strathummel, and the Aysons the lands of Tullimet in Strath-tay. The Mowatts and Cowts belonged to Buchan. David de Rose, or as the name would be written to-day David Rose, was chief of the Roses of Strathnairn. Slurach may possibly be an English form of Sgor-fhiachlach, the man with the buckteeth.

In 1396 two clans that had been at variance for some time agreed to settle the points in dispute by a combat between thirty men on each side. The fight took place on the North Inch of Perth, September 28, 1396, before King Robert III. and his nobles. The men on the one side were evidently as strong, ferocious, and determined as the men on the other side. The result of their fierce contest was that forty-eight of them were killed and ten or eleven severely wounded.

Traditional history renders it certain that the combat must have taken place between the Clan Chattan and the Clan Cameron, between two branches of the Clan Chattan, or between two branches of the Clan Cameron. There are no other clans that claim a connection with it. According to Skene and A. M. Mackintosh, it was between the Clan Chattan and the Clan Cameron, whilst according to Charles Fraser-Mackintosh it was between the Davidsons and the Macphersons. In an Act of the Parliament of Scotland in 1594, we find the Clandonnachie, Clanchattan, Clanchevill, Clanchamron, and other clans mentioned. We find no further reference to the Clanchevill. They must then have adopted another surname. I suspect that if a diligent search were made for them a large number of them would be found hidden in the midst of the Clan Vuirich tent.

When we take into consideration all the circumstances connected with the combat of 1396, it becomes extremely

difficult to believe that the clans that took part in it were two small clans, or two branches of a large clan. They seem to have been large and powerful clans, which could not be easily brought into a state of proper subjection to the laws of the country. It is tolerably certain that the king would never have taken the heroic measures employed by him in dealing with two comparatively small clans. He would have squelched two small clans without any parade or noise.

Wyntoun's *Chronicle*, which was written about 1420, gives an account of the combat of 1396. It will be sufficient to quote the following lines:—

‘Tha three score were clannys twa,
Clahynne Qwhewyl and Clachinyha.’

Clannys stands for clan-nis. The second *n* is simply the first *n* repeated before *is*. The old plural termination was *as*, *es*, or *is*, now *s*. In the singular number Wyntoun would write *clan*, not *clann*. For gods he writes *goddis*, but he always writes the word God or god in the singular number just as we do. *Clah* is clearly an error for *clan*. *Y* before *n* stands for *i*, and *qwh* for *ch*. In 1396 we find *ewil* written *evil*. *Ynn* evidently stands for *in*, now *an* or *a'*, ‘the.’ Thus then the name we have to deal with is Clan anh-chevil. Clachinyha is an error for Clan Lunyha or Clan Hinyha.

In the name *In Caimgilla*, *in* is simply the old form of the article *an* or *a'*. *Caim* may be for *cam*, originally *cam*, one-eyed, crooked, or twisty. But it may also stand for *coim* or *caem*, now *caomh*, gentle, kind, noble, handsome; or for *camh*, strong, stout, mighty. Probably the idea intended to be conveyed by the epithet applied to Donald, son of Muir-each—Dōnall MacMhuirich—was that he was a handsome and noble man. He was undoubtedly a *caomhan*, or beloved person, among his people. A clan named after Donald the Caemhghille would be first *Clann a' Chaimehghille* and afterwards *Clann a' Chaemhill* or simply *Clann Chaemhill*. As *mh* is just *v* in Gaelic, *Clann Chaemhill* would become in English Clan Kevill. The *e* in Kevill is long in Gaelic, but would become short in the English form of the word.

Maelanfaid, now Maol-ōn-ai, means servant of the blast,

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storm, or raging sea. Clann Maelanfaid would, in the course of time, become Clann Vulonai or Clann 'Lon-ai.

The meaning of Wyntoun's lines seems to be this:—

‘The three score were of clan-nis twa,
Clan-in-chèvil and Clan-in-ha.’

The fact that *ha* is a short syllable in Gaelic does not prove that Wyntoun would not have put the accent on it. We find him elsewhere making *dreaming* rhyme with *the king* and *collation* with *this question*. These rhymes are perfect when we make *ing* and *on* long or accented syllables.

Wyntoun states that the chieftains of the men who had fought on the North Inch of Perth were Shaw, the son of Ferchar, and Christy, the son of John. We have no ground for believing, or even supposing, that these men were the Keninnies or hereditary chiefs of their respective clans. It may, indeed, be regarded as absolutely certain that they were not. They were simply the chieftains or commanders of the men that took part in the combat. Shaw is the personal name which I have given in the genealogies as Seth. Christy is a shortened form of Gilchrist. Seth, son of Ferchar, was the captain of the Clan Kevill champions, whilst Gilchrist, son of John, was the captain of the Clan Millony champions. Of course, it is probable in the highest degree that the two clan chiefs, Lachlan Mackevill and Ewen Macmillony were present as spectators.

Tradition affirms that Seth, the son of Ferchar, was known as Seagh Sgor-fhiachlach, or Shaw of the buckteeth. Who he was we do not know as a matter beyond doubt. It is possible, however, that he was a son of the Ferchar Mac Toschy who was disturbing the mental repose of the Bishop of Aberdeen in 1382.

I can see no valid reason for thinking that the Clan Chattan and the Clan Millony had a common origin. They seem to have been all along two distinct tribes. So far as fighting qualities were concerned, both could fight like Highlanders, and like the Kelts that crossed the Alps long before the days of Napoleon, and helped themselves to the best things they could find in the City of Rome.