A Noble Trait in the Character of Marshal Macdonald, Duke of Tarentum

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He to man's hunger gives
 Bread from on high,
 Here are for all athirst
 Wells never dry.

Alpha and Omega,
 Jesus, the Lord,
 Lo ! He comes who shall come
 Doom to award.

A NOBLE TRAIT IN THE CHARACTER OF MARSHAL MACDONALD, DUKE OF TARENTUM

K. N. MACDONALD, M.D.

THE following unpublished letter, copied from the original of one written by John M'Eachin, Greenock, one of the Houghbeag family, to his sister Isabel in South Uist in 1825, illustrates the noble character of the Marshal towards his poorer relations, and his love of his kindred.

The letter was preserved by the late Alexander Cameron, at one time Procurator-Fiscal at Lochmaddy, North Uist, and afterwards at Portree, Isle of Skye, better known as the author of *The History and Traditions of the Isle of Skye*. It was found among his papers by his daughter, Miss C. R. Cameron, Portree, who lent it to Mr. Ronald MacDonald, of the National Bank, who in turn lent it to the writer of these notes. The history of these MacEachins of Howbeg, or Houghbeag, and Glenuig shows that they were MacDonalds, and descended from Ranald, son of Hector v. of Kilmaleu, and probably a first cousin of the Marshal's. The present writer's father was also of the MacEachin MacDonalds, whose progenitor was Hector, the second son of Roderick III. of Clanranald—on record as of Kilmaleu—a large estate bestowed upon him by John, Lord of the Isles. He also claimed relationship with the Marshal, and called on him at Armadale,

on board the revenue cruiser, which was placed at his disposal by the British Government in 1825, and had a long conversation with him, in which he gave him some advice about matrimony.

In the *Recollections of Marshal MacDonald, Duke of Tarentum*, edited by Camille Rousset, a member of the French Academy, there is a long note by our veteran folklorist Mr. Alexander Carmichael, which corroborates in a singular manner John MacEachin's estimate of his character. On his arrival in South Uist, accompanied by Mr. Ranald MacDonald, W.S., Edinburgh (with whom the present writer was intimately acquainted, having been frequently entertained in his house in 1854-55—a fine, genial, clever, and witty gentleman), he walked from the ford at Iochdar to Houghbeag, a distance of ten miles. 'On coming in sight of the river he exclaimed, "That is the river Hough. I know it from my father's description; many a salmon has he caught there." He sent for all his relations in the neighbourhood. When his blind old uncle was brought to him, he embraced him affectionately, saying, "You dear old man, how like you are to my own father!" He addressed his relations in French and broken Gaelic, they answering him in Gaelic, for few of them could speak English. He distributed sums of money varying in value among them, giving to some £20, and to others larger amounts, or fixed annuities. He took earth from the floor of the house where his father was born, and potatoes from the garden, and these he placed in a bag and carried home with him to France. He planted the potatoes in his garden, and gave orders that the earth should be placed in his coffin after his death.'

The British people are changing, and the Highlanders are changing too. Fifty, and one hundred years ago, there were a great many of what one would term a good sort of honest, religious, and straightforward people in this country. Now there are, alas! but few indeed, and none at all like Marshal MacDonald.

Copy Letter from John M'Eachin to Isabel M'Eachin,
South Uist.

Greenock, 20th July 1825.

DEAR SISTER,—I intended to have met Marshal MacDonald in Uist when he was there, But the machinery of the steam-Boat in which I took my passage getting deranged and after losing two days could proceed no farther than Tobermory. On Monday the 4th I returned to Lismore knowing that he was to visit the Bishop. I arrived there about nine o'clock at night. But to my great astonishment and disappointment he left that place about three hours before my arrival for the north of Ireland not having stopped above two or three hours.

The next morning early I returned to Oban accompanied by the Bishop and his niece when I was fortunate enough to find a steam-boat ready for Greenock in which I returned home.

On Monday the 11th I received a letter from Count Coursen in the Marshal's name desiring me to meet him in the Star Inn of Glasgow, on that day, where I proceeded immediately accompanied by my five daughters, my three sons in law and one granddaughter, a child of five years of age (those of them who lived in Glasgow happening to be in Greenock at the time), and after making a little necessary arrangements in dresses, etc., in my daughter Margaret's house, we all walked to the Inn, taking my wife who happened to be then in Margaret's house along with us. After sending a card to the Marshal announcing our arrival, the Count immediately made his appearance in the room where we were and cordially saluted us all by a hearty shake of the hand, etc., then ushered us into where the Duke was sitting along with Hector MacDonald Buchanan and his brother Staffa. The Duke received us in the most friendly polite and handsomest manner possible.

Being the Marshal's dinner hour we were placed round him the same as a family round their father. He placed my

wife on his right hand, myself on his left, and my daughters down from their mother according to their ages; the men were on the opposite side of table, along with MacDonald Buchanan Staffa, etc. After taking a hearty dinner and some wine after it, the Marshal took the Count and me into an adjacent room, where we remained for half an hour, asking me many questions and arranging some matters which is to take place at a future period. After we returned to the dining room tea was upon the table, and my daughter Marion doing the duty at the head and Margaret the foot. After tea we stopped till half past 10 o'clock (the Marshal's usual time to go to bed), after promising to return to Breakfast next morning at ten. At Breakfast we were placed the same as the preceding evening, and after taking a Breakfast which might well be termed a Highland one, he remained with us alone (the Count and Staffa having gone out upon some business), conversing in the best way we could with his bad English, and taking a snuff round occasionally out of his fine massy gold box, till about 1 o'clock when the Count and Staffa returned, and the carriage drawn up to the door. At parting he took leave of us all in the kindest and tenderest manner imaginable, with a promise of returning our visit to us in Greenock in the course of two or three years.

The Count is a compleat Gentleman. At parting he kissed the cheeks of my wife and each of the daughters, as for the little Cumming the Duke kissed her frequently, and at departing gave her a £5 stg. to purchase toys, and one of the silver medals which were distributed at the Coronation of the King of France. He drove off from the Hotel where there was a great multitude waiting to have a sight of him.

The Duke is to place a sum of money in the hands of Bishop MacDonald for John, he proposed that he should go to America, but I advised that it would be better that he should rather begin something in the country for himself, and to draw the money from the Bishop as he required, to which he agreed. However he may chuse for himself with the advice

of his friends. Offer my compliments to my brother and his family, and I am, Dear Sister, yours etc.,

(Signed) JOHN MACEachin.

P.S.—I have a letter from son from Quebec, dated 15th of June last, when he was in good health as also his wife and child. The Duke is to provide a better situation for him, although his present one is not bad, £110 stg. p. annum.

J. Mc E.

Fav'd. by Mr. MacLelan.

UNPUBLISHED POEMS BY ALEXANDER MAC-DONALD (MAC MHAIGHSTIR ALASTAIR)

PROFESSOR MACKINNON

III. *Poems hitherto unpublished.*

(*Continued from* vol. v., p. 30)

IN the following long composition (pp. 151-55), the Campbells, and especially Captain Duncan and the poetess, are severely handled :—

Na h-abair, na h-abair,
 Na h-abair na's mò ;
 Gabh mo chomhairle, stad ort,
 'S tuilleadh spagluinn na ròp ;
 Chaidh tu moran is fada
 Ann an saltrachdainn òirnnean
 Gun *respect* thoirt do phearsainnean
 Beaga no mòr :
 Tha thu nis air do phabadh,
 An eangaich glacta o d' dheòin ;
 Cha toir eanglann no casbhardachd ¹
 Aist' thu ri d' bheò :
 Gu meal thu chrabhata
 Thoill ascaoin do bheòil,
 'S e aoir a' Phrionnsa 's a ghaisgeach,
 Ni do thachdadh le còrd.

¹ Is this the *Englyn* of Welsh, with which Sir John Rhys would identify the *Retorics* of old Gaelic editors, and the *runs* of modern reciters? In old Gaelic *cass-bairdne* was a certain class of metre. In modern Scottish Gaelic *casbhardachd* is usually restricted to 'satire,' 'invective.'