

THE BATTLE OF INVERNAHAVEN IN 1386, AND THE CONFLICT ON THE NORTH INCH OF PERTH IN 1396.

*From Lays of the Deer Forest and Traditions of the Clans by the
Sobieski Stuarts.*

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[A biographical note taken from *The Collin's Encyclopedia of Scotland* (edited by John and Julia Keay, 1994): "Two brothers, John Sobieski Stolberg Stuart (1795-1872) and Charles Edward Stuart (c1799-1880) revived the unsubstantiated claim of their father, a Lieutenant Thomas Allan RN, to be the legitimate son of Prince Charles Edward Stewart by Louise of Stolberg. The Prince styled himself 'Count of Albany', and hence the title which the Sobieski Stewarts successively assumed. Both are said to have fought at Waterloo and subsequently to have come to Scotland. Amongst those who listened sympathetically to their tale and indulged their pretensions was Lord Lovat who installed them at Aigas on an island in the Beaulieu River. Together they produced several collections of verse and the *Vestarium Scoticum*, an 'ancient' work on clan tartans whose authenticity is as bogus as the authors' descent."

The bogus nature of the *Vestarium* was demonstrated many times in later years but in their heyday the authority of the brothers was widely accepted. The piece that follows exhibits an appreciation of the Gaelic language and the lore of the Highlands that is far more authentic than many similar articles and is highly unlikely to have been 'manufactured' by the brothers who were quite adept at manufacturing other things. To me it suggests that the brothers were the conduit for authorities on the subject they address who chose not to write the material themselves. It casts the feud between the Macphersons, Davidsons and the Mackintoshes in much more bitter terms than anything that I have come across elsewhere and thus, to my mind, makes the Clan Battle on the North Inch of Perth more understandable. Rory Mor, Editor]

The rout of the Camerons through the hills of Loch Laggan followed that action of the clans which gave origin to the desperate and

mortal feud decided by the ordeal of battle on the Inch of Perth in the year 1396. The chroniclers who have recorded this event, though they have amplified the horrors of the civil war by which it was preceded, have given no hint of its cause; and by their barbarous orthography have so far disguised even the names of the conflicting clans, that to those otherwise unacquainted with their identity they are entirely equivocal, or wholly unintelligible. By Wyntoun they are named the "Clahynnhe-Qwhewyl," and the "Clachinyha." These words are confused compounds, in which the appellations of the tribes are blended with their general designation, "Clann," and should be thus divided - "Clahynn-he-Qwhewyl," and "Clachin-y-ha " - meaning those names pronounced by the Highlanders, "Clann-'ie-K~l," and "Clann-'ic-Kai," but written in Gaelic "Clann-'ic-Dhughail," and "Clann-'ic-Dhaidh" - "The Clan-Dugaldson," and the "Clan-Davidson." The transition in the false orthography is sufficiently natural to an ear ignorant of Gaelic; for the final "c" of " 'ic" in both patronymics being blended with the aspirated sound of the same letter in the initials of the succeeding names pronounced almost as "K~l," and "K"i"- according to the Gaelic articulation, and the value of letters in the days of Wyntoun, should leave to the preceding vowel " i " a sound nearly expressed either by the synonymous letter "y" or the aspirated vowel "h-e," irregularly used by Wyntoun.

This reading is corroborated by the universal tradition of the mid Highlands, according to which the belligerent tribes were the "Clann-'ic-Dhaidh," or Davidsons of Badenoch, and the neighbouring "Clann-a-Pherson," or male and chief branch of the "Clann-Chattan." This is confirmed by the history of Boethius, and the Chartulary of Moray: The first of which gives the names as the "Clan-Kay" and the "Clan-Chattan," and the last the "Clan-Hay" and the "Clan-Qwhwle." In both these authorities the names for the first party are evidently the same with the "Clann-y-Ha " of Wyntoun,

and all are visibly errata from the oral communication of the Gaelic appellation pronounced "Clann-'ic-K"i " : for the letter " c " in the word " 'ic," and the similar initial sound in the name by which it is followed, are so blended, that to unfamiliar ears they would seem indifferently " 'ic-K"i " or " 'ic-Ai," which accidental modification in the organs of the hearer reconciles to an identity the different modes of expressing the sound used by Wyntoun, Boethius, and the Chartulary of Moray.

The various names given for the second clan are equally deducible from the traditionary original; for while by Boethius it is designated after the general blood-title of the race through all its branches, by the others it is given in its own local patronymic; when, at an early period, the "Clann-a-Pharsoin" bore for a time the appellation of the "Clann-'ic-Dhughail" from one of its chiefs named "Dughall."¹ The oral transmission of this title, "Clann-'ic-C,l," is-for middle-age orthography expressed rather more accurately than usual in the names "Clann-he-Qwhewy" and "Clan-Qwhwle," pronounced in the old Scots " Clan-'ich-K~il," and "Clan-K-le." The repetition of the letter "w," equivalent to "u," having been used to represent the long accent of that vowel in the Gaelic "Dhughail."

Without, however, discussing these details, in which none but Highland genealogists will take any interest, we will relate the tradition of the first event which gave origin to the celebrated and sanguinary feud so fatal to the central clans.

When the direct line of the great Clan-Chattan had terminated in the daughter of Dugald-dýll, the estate was conveyed by marriage to the Cean-tigh of the MacIntoshes, the eldest cadet of the race, and consequently the farthest removed from the succession of the

¹ Editor's note: One has to remember that Dugall Dall was son-less; his only offspring being Eva. Thus, could there have been a MacDugall in Clanchattan?

chieftainship. The clan being thus left without a head in the lineal male line, was divided into several cadet branches, of which the principals were the Macphersons, the Davidsons, and the Macgillivrays, three septs descended from three brothers, the nearest male branches from the stem antecedent to the last direct chief, and of whom, as well as of the whole race and name of the Clan-Chattan, the head of the Siol-Pherson, coming from the elder brother, by all the laws and usages of clanship was the indisputable chief. MacIntosh, however, as possessor of the great body of the clan territory, acquired by his ancestor through marriage with the heiress, being much more powerful in estate, was ambitious to be acknowledged chieftain of the blood as well as of the clan; but this assumption being wholly repugnant to the salique law of the clans, was repelled as an untenable usurpation, and appears to have lain dormant for a considerable time.

All those, however, who adhered to the just superiority of the Clan-a-Pherson, were by degrees expelled from the domains of the pretender, and upon the ruins of the Cummings in Badenoch the Macphersons and the Davidsons acquired a large portion of their territory in that lordship, where they finally established themselves. By these desertions, however, the lands of MacIntosh became so much depopulated, that to recruit his tenants he transplanted from Brae-Mar and the adjoining country a considerable number of Camerons, whom he settled on the lands of Loch-Eil, Loch-Lochie, and Loch-Arcaig, and who there laid the foundation of the present Clan-Cameron. In the course of time, however, these feudatories desired to acquire independence, and resisting the superiority of MacIntosh, refused to continue the payment of their rents and services. In the period which had followed their colonisation, they had become so numerous and powerful that their "owr-lord," deserted as he was by the male branches of the Clan-Chattan, was unable to reduce them; and in his apprehension of losing both his

tenants and their lands, he was compelled to seek assistance from the “Clann-a'-Pharsoin” and the “Clann-'ic-Dhaidh.”

These clans, prompted by the strong claims of their blood, would not refuse aid to the oldest cadet of their tribe, against a race entirely stranger, and an unjust insurrection; and, having promised the junction of their forces, a plan was formed for a united expedition into Loch-Aber. Upon intelligence of this coalition *Mac Dhomhnull-duibh* resolved to anticipate the invasion, and, assembling his clan, marched into Badenoch. Before his arrival, however, the allied tribes had united, and awaited his approach at “Inver-na-h-Amhann,” a small plain at the junction of the Truim and the Spey, and immediately in front of the residence of the chief of the Clann-'ic-Dhaidh. When the Camerons appeared, and the order of battle was forming, it was the universal understanding that the chieftain of the Clann-a'-Pharsoin should take the general command, as the undoubted male-heir and blood-chief of the whole race of the Clan-Chattan.

By an artful policy, however, MacIntosh defeated this acknowledgment of his rival. Without provoking his defection by the unseasonable advancement of his own pretensions, to compromise the supremacy of Macpherson, and maintain the appearance of an arbitrating superiority in himself, he prompted the Cenn-tigh of the Clann-'ic-Dhaidh to claim the command in the battle, not on account of personal title, for, being descended from a younger brother to the ancestor of Mac-a'-Pharsoin, that could not be proposed, but as an appointment from MacIntosh. The chieftain of the Davidsons, flattered by this precedence, without perceiving the policy of his adviser, advanced his claim, which, as might have been expected, was indignantly repelled by the Mac-a'-Pharsoins. MacIntosh endeavoured to compromise the question by citing his own concession in yielding the command of his own people to MacDhaidh, adding, that, as principal in the quarrel, it was

reasonable that he should have choice of the leader of the forces assembled for his aid.

The MacPhersons, however, penetrating his views towards the chieftainship, insisted upon the blood-right of their own head; and, upon the obstinate combination of the two “pretenders,” the Clanna'-Pharsoin abandoned the line of battle, crossed the Spey at its confluence with the Truim, and retired to a small eminence about four hundred yards from the field, where they remained during the ensuing action. The conflict was short, but very sanguinary; the MacIntoshes and Davidsons were routed with great slaughter. MacDhaidh and seven of his sons were killed within two hundred yards of his own house, and the defeated party only escaped a greater loss by crossing the Spey under command of the hill occupied by the Macphersons, where the Camerons did not think it prudent to pursue. Immediately after the battle the victors passed the Truim, advanced along the right bank of the Spey as far as Beann-Bhreachd; and, with the evident intention of invading MacIntosh's country, crossed the Spey below Ballachroan, and halted for the night, in a fine position, upon the height of Briagach.

Meanwhile, MacIntosh, having collected his broken followers, retreated by the west side of Craig-dhubh, and established his bivouac in the glen between Clunie and Dalnashalg, at a place called ever since *Reidh an TÚiseaich*, “MacIntosh's plain.” Burning with revenge both against the Macphersons and the Camerons, and perceiving, by the march of the last, their intention of invading his country, he conceived a design for embroiling them with each other, and checking the advance of the enemy into his territories. For this end he summoned a bard, and, instructing him to compose a villanous verse against the Macphersons, directed him to proceed immediately to their head-quarters, and repeat it to their chief as a message from MacDhomhnull-duibhe.

The bard departed on his mission, and, having reached the gathering of the Macphersons, and obtained access to the chief, announced that he had something to deliver from the Clan-Cameron, and claimed freedom and personal safeguard whatever he might have to repeat. Having received an assurance of full license, he pronounced the following verse -

*“Bha luchd na foille air an tÙm ”The traytors stood on the knoll
'Sam balg-shuileach do Da draip, While the dismayed were in
jeopardie -*

*Cha b'e bhur cairdeas a bha riumIt was not your friendship for me,
Ach bhur lamh bhi gu tais.” But your cowardice which restrained
you.”*

These lines had the desired effect. The chief and his clan were exasperated in the highest degree at the wanton insult and challenge thus thrown in their face, and immediately determined to pursue and attack the Camerons before daylight. According to the customary respect for the inspired order, the bard was not only protected but hospitably entertained, and dismissed with sufficient evidence that the stratagem of his master was about to take effect. The hours of darkness being short-for it was in the month of May-immediate preparations were made for pursuit, and about midnight the Macphersons set forward in silence and with great speed. They arrived at Briagach before daylight, but when they reached the position which had been occupied by the Clan-Cameron, they found it deserted, and soon obtained intelligence that they had suddenly abandoned the height and were in full retreat towards the west.

The cause of this abrupt decampment has never been understood. By some it has been supposed that the Camerons had received exaggerated intelligence of a reunion of all the septs of the Clan-Chattan, and a combined movement to surprise them; by others, that they feared to penetrate into a hostile country, leaving the

whole Clan-Chattan assembled on their rear, and that, disagreeing among themselves, they fell into discordance, and broke up for their return home.

As soon as the Macphersons ascertained the route which they had taken, they pursued them with all possible speed, marching by the south of Phoiness, Etrage, and Dalanach. They overtook their rear above the latter place, and immediately attacked them. The Camerons appear to have been seized with one of those sudden panics which sometimes accompany a night retreat, and their loss was great in the first onset.

The death of one of their remarkable leaders, named Charles, is still commemorated in the name of the place where he fell, and which is yet called *Coire-Thearlaich* - Charles' Coire. From this place a running fight was maintained for about fifteen miles through the mountains to Loch Patag, where the pursuit was discontinued from the weariness of the pursuers and the entire dispersion of the pursued. Along the whole line of the flight from Dalanach to Loch Patag there is scarcely a burn or a coire which is not distinguished by the name of some remarkable individual there killed in the chase.

The last distinguished person who fell was the chief of the Camerons himself. He was remarkable for his skill in archery, and to the last continued in the rear of his flying people, picking off the pursuers with his arrows, and protecting the retreat of the fugitives at every burn and ravine. He was thus engaged when they were overtaken by a celebrated *Ceann-tighe* of the Macphersons called *Mac Iain Ceann-dubh*, the best bowman of that clan, and perhaps, in some degree, from their common propensity for the same art, an intimate friend of *Mac Dhomhnull-duibhe*. In the pursuit he had severely harassed the fugitives, and killed several of their best men; but, when he saw his friend before him, as he drew the bow he cried - "*Tharam, 'us tharad a Thearlaich!*" - "Over me - and over you,

Charles! “ Cameron, seeing the arrow fall beyond him, immediately understood the signal, and returned his shot with the same forbearance. A few arrows were then interchanged, but with deadly effect at - indifferent persons; when *Mac-a' Pharsoin* coming up, and seeing the fatal shots of the chief, and the misdirected shafts of *Mac Iain*, cried out indignantly - “Where is your old hand, Ceann-dubh? Had you a Cameron to your mother?” Stung with that sarcasm from his chief, *Mac Iain* called to his friend - “*Umam, 'us umad a Thearlaich!* “ - “For me and for you, Charles!”- and both fell transfixed by the next arrows. Not far from Loch Patag, at Dal-an-Luncart, by Loch-Erracht side, the place where the chief of the Camerons fell, is still marked by a cairn, called *Carn-Mhic-Dhomhnuill-duibhe*. Such was the origin of the deadly and sanguinary feud, which, afterwards engaging all the neighbouring clans in its animosity, involved the central Highlands in an exterminating war. According to the traditions which we have gathered, upon the discovery of the treachery practised by MacIntosh, and executed by his bard, a reconciliation was effected between the Macphersons and the Camerons; but the insult offered to the former by the Clan-Daidh was immediately followed by hostilities of the most desperate nature, in which MacIntosh assisted the Davidsons; and the Camerons, to advance their own quarrel against their superior, joined with the Macphersons. In the deadly contest of these four clans, all their inferiors, kindred, and allies were soon associated, and a period of vindictive conflicts and fierce devastation spread desolation through the the mid Highlands, until terminated by camp-fight or ordeal of battle on the Inch of Perth.

During the progress of the feud, the Davidsons, then a very powerful race, were almost exterminated, and ever since that period they have ceased to exist as a clan; while the Macphersons were so reduced that for many generations they were unable to

make any considerable head among their neighbours. Meanwhile, the strength of the great auxiliaries having been much less impaired, MacIntosh availed himself of the reduction of the two principal male branches of the Clan-Chattan to advance his pretensions to the chieftainship, which have since been maintained by his descendants - a claim contrary to the laws, usages, and genius of the Highland clans, and never assumed but in usurpation - precisely similar to that of Edward the Third to the crown of France, and as justly repudiated by the male lines of the Clan-Chattan as the dominion of the English by the people of Philippe de Valois.