

*An Account of a Combat between the Macphersons and the
Davidsons.*

COLINTON.

IN the year 1291, Macdonald, Lord of the isles, and of part of the highlands, sent his sister's son, Angus Macintosh, chief of the Macintoshes, to inform Dugal Dall Macgillie Chattan, chief of the clan Chattan, that the Lord of the isles intended to do him the honour of a visit.

It was then expected, that when this haughty Lord made a visit, the host was to make an offer of his own wife or daughter, according to the situation of his family, as a companion for the night to his visitor. Macgillie Chattan knew that this barbarous mark of respect would be rigorously insisted on; and having an only daughter, and
desirous.

desirous of shunning the disgraceful consequences of the visit, he contrived matters so, as to clap up a marriage betwixt this daughter and Angus Macintosh, who had come as messenger from his uncle, Lord of the isles, to announce the intended visit. By this match the estate and chieftainship of the clan Chattan was transferred to Macintosh, who let the greatest part of his new acquired estate to the Camerons. But the Camerons had scarcely sooner got possession, than they refused to pay the stipulated rent; and Macintosh, endeavouring to compell them, many severe conflicts happened betwixt the two clans, of which the most remarkable was at Innernahavon, in Badenoch. About the year 1296, Macintosh having received advice that the Camerons were assembling their numerous clan and dependents, to drive off his cattle, soon collected a superior force, consisting of several smaller clans, under the general name of clan Chattan. But, when the adverse hosts were in view of one another, an unseasonable difference arose betwixt the Macphersons and Davidsons. Though both agreed that Macintosh should command the whole, Macpherson of Cluny, and Davidson of Innernahavon, contested for the next post of honour, each affirming that he was the eldest branch of the clan Chattan. This dispute being referred to Macintosh, he gave his decision in favour of Davidson, which Cluny resented so much, that he drew off his men, who stood by, idle spectators, while the Camerons overpowered the Macintoshes and Davidsons, a part of them being only saved by the coming on of night. Macintosh, taking advantage of the darkness, sent his own bard towards the camp of the Macphersons, but by a circuitous route, as if he had come from the camp of the Camerons. There the bard, speaking as if in the person of a Cameron, often repeated the following sarcastic lines:

Tha luchd na failleadh air an tom,
'San bolg-shuileach donn na dhraip ::
Cha ba bhur cairdeas ruinn a bhann,
Ach ba bhur lamhan a bhi tais.

The

The meaning of this is, the false party are on the hillock, and the man with big brown eyes (by this expression was marked out Macintosh) in distress: It was not out of friendship to us, but merely your own cowardice. This reproach nettled Macpherson so much, that he called up his men, and, attacking the Camerons that same night, when he was least expected, made a great slaughter, pursued them far, and killed their chief Charles Macalonnair, at a hollow place in the hills; which, in memory of that, has been ever since known by the name of Coire Thearlaich, *i. e.* Charles's Caldron.

Though the above conflict terminated the dispute with the Camerons, there arose another betwixt the Macphersons and Davidsons, that filled that part of the Highlands with numberless disorders for an hundred years; so that king Robert III. found it necessary to send the Earls of Crawford and Dunbar, two of the principal noblemen in Scotland, with an armed force to reconcile or subdue them. These two leaders, finding that to subdue them would be difficult, and to reconcile them impossible, brought them at last to submit to the only terms suited to their own distempered dispositions. These terms were, that their future superiority should be determined by the event of a combat of thirty of each side. They were to fight in presence of the king, with only their broad swords, on the north inch of Perth.

When the appointed day arrived, the Macphersons wanted one of their number. It was proposed to balance the difference by withdrawing one of the Davidsons: But these were so earnest for a share of the honour of the day, that none of them would consent to be the man left out. In this perplexity, one Henry Wynd, a sword-cutler, commonly called An Gobhcrom, *i. e.* the Stooping Smith, offered to supply the place of the absent man for a French crown of gold, about seven shillings and sixpence Sterling. This point being settled, the combat began with all the fury of enraged enemies; and Henry
Wynd

Wynd contributed much in making victory declare for the Macphersons; of which side, however, besides himself, there survived only ten, and these all grievously wounded. Of the Davidsons, twenty nine were killed, and only one of them being unhurt, jumped into the Tay, swam across the river, and so escaped. Henry Wynd went home with the Macphersons, and was received as one of their clan. His descendants are called Sliochd a Ghobhcruim, *i. e.* the Race of the Stooping Smith. Smith of Balhary's motto, *Caraid annam Feum*, a Friend in Time of Need, seems to allude to this piece of history.

It seems proper here to take notice of two mistakes usual to those who relate the above incident. *First*, Henry Wynd is usually said to have been a fadler; but the appellation of the Stooping Smith, still continued to his posterity, sufficiently proves what was his occupation. *Secondly*, What is here said to have been done by the Davidsons, is commonly attributed to the Mackays. This last mistake proceeds from want of knowledge in the Gaelic language, the pronunciation of Mac Dhai, Davidson, very much resembling that of Mac Cai: But the clan Cai lived at a distance from the clan Chattan, and had no connection in what is above related.