

Alkoll  
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SKETCHES  
OF THE  
EARLY HISTORY, LEGENDS, & TRADITIONS  
OF  
STRATHARDLE AND ITS GLENS

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PART III.

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PART III.

I WILL NOW begin Part III. of these papers where I left off in the last, at the beginning of the fifteenth century.

1400.—About this time, I find in Robertson's Index, 142-82, a charter by Isabel Douglas, Countess of Mar, to Walter Ogilvie of the lands of Tullochcurran. Afterwards these lands came into the possession of the Farquharsons. The first of the Farquharsons of Tullochcurran was John, fifth son of Donald of Castletown, the son of Fionnladh Mor, Big Finlay, the founder of the clan. The Farquharsons held the estate till the last laird, Charles Farquharson of Persie and Tullochcurran, sold it lately to Mr Small Keir of Kindrogan.

1403.—In this year, we begin to get a great insight into the social life and manners of the people of Strathardle, from the Register of Cupar Abbey, published in 1879 by Dr Rogers, from the old records of the Abbey. From the terms and conditions we find there laid down in the different tacks of farms in the Strath belonging to the Abbey, we have ample proof that the Highlanders of this district, at least, were not the rude, uncultivated savages they are generally represented to be by Lowland and English writers, who were as ignorant of the real state of the Highlands as the French geographer who, as late as the middle of the eighteenth century, in his map of Scotland, leaves all the country

north of the Tay a blank, with the inscription:—"Terre inculte et sauvage habitee par les Highlanders"—A land uncultivated and savage, inhabited by the Highlanders. Now, instead of the land being uncultivated, and held by a rude, barbarous people, we find by these old tacks that the land was highly cultivated by an intelligent, thriving class of tenantry, who were bound by their leases, under heavy penalties, to carry out all the conditions of their tacks. That these tenants, at this early date, had a knowledge of such matters as breeding and rearing of stock, rotation of crops, manuring, reclaiming and draining of land, the making and keeping of hedges and stone fences, planting of trees, gardening, &c., will be seen from the following quotations from Dr Rogers' "Introduction to the Register of Cupar Abbey":—"In 1470 the office of *studarius*, or keeper of bullocks and black cattle, was conferred on one M'Nicol, with a lease of the lands of Forthir in Glenisla, for a certain rental, including half a stone of fresh butter, to be used at the six annual feasts." This office became hereditary in the family of M'Nicol. In the pastoral districts (including Strathardle) there were storemasters. Their duty was to enter in a store book the number of sheep belonging to the Abbey fed on the different lands, also an account of the rent paid in kind by the tenantry. Land officers were empowered to see the tenants fulfilled the conditions of their leases; one of these officers was over Drummie, Persie, and Cally. Horticulture was actively promoted; in 1542 a tenant agrees to furnish to the Abbot and brethren, "kail and herbs for fifteen days in his turn." He undertook to cultivate parsley, beet, and lettuce, and to supply to the warden onions and bow-kail, or colewort; also half the produce of the fruit trees, and to rear "plantationes of treis, eschis, osaris, and sauchis" (ash-trees for bows and arrows, and willows for baskets, &c.) He was to prune trees and hedges, to repair the stone fences, to preserve the alleys, and to keep open and clear the pools and water-courses. He also waged war against the crows, as he "wud nocht lat ane crow big within the bundis." Hotel accommodation was not overlooked, as there was "biggin of housis, chamers, and stails for the res-aving of strangers honestlie, and providing to thame hors meit and mannis meit." Thomas Ogilvy agreed to keep in constant repair and use a malt kiln, with meat and drink to be sold to the abbot and monks, with their tenants and servants, when travelling between Glenisla and the Monastery. Contrary to an opinion generally entertained, that rotation of crops and the use of manure are modern improve-

ments, we find that both were recognised by the monks at Cupar. Corn mills, propelled by water, were established in every district, also mills for pressing or fulling cloth, styled "walk-mills." Muirland tenants were bound to keep hounds to hunt the "tod (fox) and wolf." During the fifteenth century leases were generally granted for five or seven years, and sometimes for nineteen years or a life. Towards old tenants and their representatives much favour was extended. The married tenant was in every lease associated with his wife, who was always designated by her maiden name, and it was provided that the survivor should retain the farm during the subsistence of the lease. Sometimes the eldest son was conjoined with the parents, and when there was a daughter only, the "gude-son" (son-in-law) was conjoined in the lease, and where there were no children heirs were named. For aged tenants the Convent made due provision, and orphan children were in like manner provided for, and their guardians appointed from among their nearest friends. When leases were renewed to widows, it was expressly stipulated that should they marry without permission, their leases would be forfeited; and when a lease was renewed to a widow with children, provision was made for the children. For behoof of the humbler tenantry, or others, falling into poverty, a *bursa pauperum* was kept in the Monastery. For many causes leases might be forfeited, such as, if rent was unpaid for three successive years, for failure to plant trees and sow certain kinds of grain, and destroy "guld" and other bad weeds, or keep terms of lease, for theft, reset of theft, fornication, adultery, and non-payment of tithes. The conditions, also, for good behaviour and neighbourly conduct were very strict, as, in a lease of 1466 to Dick Scott, we find:—"And if he shall not be sober and temperate, preserving more strictly a kindly intercourse with his neighbours and relatives, and be convicted for this, he shall be evicted." And in a tack of Balmyle to Robert Pullar, in 1485, we have:—"And if it shall happen that the said Robert or his sons be convicted lawfully, by assize, of forfeiting or disturbing the ground, or injuring the neighbours, they shall, without further process of law, vacate the said tenement." Tenants were thus not only responsible for themselves, but also for their families and servants; for example, in a tack to Alexander Saunders, of Nether Mureton, in 1479, we find:—"And he sal kepe gud nycheburhede bath for himself, his wyf and barnys and seruandis, under payn of tynsail of tack an he be

fund fauter." Such were the leases and conditions under which the people of Strathardle lived five and six centuries ago, and, I think, for all our boasted progress, they compare very favourably with those of to-day, especially in regard to the provision made for the poor and aged, the widows and orphans, and for a kindly good feeling amongst neighbours. Such an early training in the arts of civilisation, and such a rigid discipline to the laws of peace and order had a very beneficial effect, not only upon the inhabitants of Strathardle, but upon those of the whole district of Athole, where so much of the land, previous to the Reformation, was held by the four great Monasteries of Dunkeld, Coupar-Angus, Scone, and Dunfermline. We have ample proof that this early civilisation, and advanced state of the country and people, was permanent, and continued after these great religious houses were swept away by the Reformation, but I need only quote one, from Captain Birt's famous "Letters from Scotland," in 1730. In Letter xviii., he says:—

"But before I proceed to give you some Account of the Natives, I shall in justice say something relating to Part of the Country of Athol, which, though Highlands, claims exception from the preceding general and gloomy descriptions, as may, likewise, some other Places, not far distant from the Borders of the Lowlands, which I have not seen. The mountains, though very high, have an easy Slope a good Way up, and are cultivated in many Places, and inhabited by tenants, who, like those below, have a different air from other Highlanders in the goodness of their Dress and Cheerfulness of their Countenances. The Strath, or Vale, is wide, and beautifully adorned with Plantations of various sorts of Trees. The Ways are smooth, and in one part you ride in pleasant Glades; in another you have an agreeable vista. Here you pass through Corn Fields, there you ascend a small height, from whence you have a pleasant Variety of that wild and spacious River, Woods, Fields, and neighbouring Mountains, which altogether give a greater Pleasure than the most Romantic Description in Words, heightened by a lively imagination, can do. But the satisfaction seemed beyond expression, by comparing it in our minds with the rugged Ways and horrid Prospects of the more northern mountains when we passed southwards from them through this Vale to the low Country. But with respect to Athole in general, I must own that some parts of it are very rugged and dangerous."

As an example of the value of land in those days, I may give the rents of four well-known farms in Strathardle—Persie, Cally, Wester and Easter Drimnie—as given in tacks of this year:—  
"At the Feast of Pentecost, 1403, the fourth part of Percy to William Robertson for 40 merks and 2 fat kids. Calady, to Thomas de Camera (or Chalmers), for 40 merks and 6 fat kids. Vester Drwny, to John of Ratre and John Baxter, for 20 merks and 2 dozen hens. Easter Drwny, to Andrew Mason, for 2 merks and 1 dozen hens."

1416.—Though there are few or no salmon in the Arde now, owing to the many obstructions put in the river at Blairgowrie to turn the water into the mills, yet there were plenty in the good old times, which may be seen from the many old tacks of the salmon fishings on the Arde and Ericht. We have already seen that King Robert the Bruce, in 1326, granted a charter to Cupar Abbey to take salmon in the Ericht and Isla at times prohibited by statute. And in this year we find the fishings of Cally and Drimnie let to Thomas de Camera or Chalmers for a yearly rent of fourscore salmon. (Tack No. 42. Register, Coupar Abbey.) So plentiful were salmon in the district in olden times, that servants, when engaging, used to stipulate that they would only get salmon for dinner on four days of the week. Salmon were plentiful in the Arde till the early part of the present century, as I have heard an old man, John M'Nab, who was brought up at Tombane, Kindrogan, relate how he once speared 70 large salmon with the leister, on one night, at the ford between Kindrogan and Tulloch, when the fish were running up to spawn.

1451.—We have already seen, in 1398, that Thomas Duncanson or De Atholia, the first of the Robertsons styled of Struan, got a charter of Straloch and Glen Fernate, and now we find his daughter, Matilda, who had married her cousin, Alastair Ruadh (Alexander the Red), second son of Patrick, first of Lude, and brother of Thomas Duncanson, of these Glen Fernate lands, along with her two sons, John Ruadh and Alastair Ruadh or Red. From this John descended the famous Barons Ruadh or Reid, Robertsons of Straloch, who—from this time till the death of the fifteenth Baron, the famous General Reid, composer of "The Garb of Old Gaul," in 1807—were the principal family in Strathardle. The charter to Matilda and her son, John Ruadh, is given in Book IV., No. 226 Great Seal, and the following is an abstract:—  
"Carta Matilde Duncanson, filie quondam Thomæ Duncanson, Pro toto tempore vite sue et post ipsius decessum Joanni Alexanderson, filio Alexandri Red, Patrickson, et heredibus suis,

de corpore suo legitime procreatis, seu procreandis, quibus deficientibus Alexander Red fratri germano dicti Joannis et heredibus corpore suo legitime procreatis seu procreandis quibus deficientibus veris legitime et propinquioribus heredibus dictæ Matilde quibus-cunque-de omnibus et singulis terris Carroth, Dalcharney et de Thomcurry cum pertinentiis jacentibus in Comitatu de Atholia, et vicomitatibus de Perth super resignationem dictæ Matilde.—Teneandis de Rege—Reddendo servitia debita et consueta.—Testibus ut in aliis. Apud Edinburgum, 4 die Augusti, 1451." Which purports that these lands were granted to Matilda in liferent, and on her death to her son John, son of Alexander Red, and his lawful issue; whom failing, to John's brother, Alexander Red, and his lawful issue; whom failing, to her nearest and lawful heirs whatever. And this charter shows that Matilda was absolutely proprietrix, and could dispose of her lands as she chose. The lands named are Carrach, on Dimanean hill; Dalcharnich, now Glen Fernate Lodge; and Tom an Tuire, west of Tulloch. Matilda held these lands direct of the Crown, but afterwards the superiority came to John Stewart, Earl of Athole, in the following manner, as related in the MS. "History of the Barons Ruadh of Straloch," written in 1728 by James Robertson, minister of Glen Muick, third son of John, the 12th Baron:—

"John Ruadh, being attending the king at a hunting in the forest of Crombeg, betwixt Athole and Braemar, happened to discover a conspiracy intended against the life of the king, and being filled with zeal for the safety of his sovereign, and abhorrence of such detestable villainy, had not the patience to endure the conspirators, but fell a-quarrelling with some of them, and lost his life in the cause. This slaughter happened near the top of a mountain at the head of Falar, which, from his death, is called Carn Mhic-in-Roy to this day. Upon this inquiry was made, the murderers were apprehended, the conspiracy discovered, and due punishment inflicted upon the traitors. The king called for the defunct's son, then in the camp, and having condoled his father's death, told him that, seeing that it was in his defence he lost his life, he would take care of his family, and, accordingly, said to the boy that he would bestow upon him, as his heritage, as much ground as a falcon-hawk would fly over without alighting. The hawk was brought, and let fly from the top of Cam-Chory—where the camp or court then was—called Boallach-na-leum—Pass of the (Falcon's) Flight, and flew eastward till it was above the Dour Dhu, betwixt Inverchroskie and Kirkmichael, but before his

pursuers reached him, he was come back, and found on a little black hillock in Easter Straloch, called Tulloch Dhu, where the march for that time was fixed. (The march is still there, on the top of the wooded hill of Tulloch, between the Duke of Athole, who now holds the baron's land of Easter Straloch, and Mr Small of Dimanean). The king being willing to gratify the boy, asked him whether he would choose to hold the lands given him, of him, or of the family of Athole, to which he foolishly answered, that His Majesty would be too far from him when he might happen to want his help, and, therefore, chose to hold of the Family of Athole. The young man was immediately put in possession according to the forms then in use."

1457.—At this date the lands of Straloch were erected into a free barony, as we read in the prefatory notes, page iv. of the "Family of Straloch":—"Robert Ruadh of Straloch was a very great warrior. He did so much service for Scotland during the reign of James I. that his whole lands were erected into a free barony, dated 1457. It is further stated by the historian Skene that this same Robert Ruadh arrested the murderers of King James, and then refused any reward, excepting that Straloch, with other lands given by James II. of Scotland, should be for ever his own, and erected into a free barony."

1462.—King James III. was so incensed at the rebellion of the Lord of the Isles that he sent his uncle, John Stewart, Earl of Athole, with a strong force to capture him. Athole was at feud, at this time, with the Lord of the Isles, who, the previous year, had harried Athole, burnt the chapel of St Bride, at Blair, and taken the Earl and Countess of Athole prisoners. General Stewart of Garth, in his Sketches, says:—"The Earl of Athole would execute this commission with more zeal from the remembrance of the treatment he had received the previous year from the Lord of the Isles, and, according to the custom of the times, take ample revenge, and recompense himself for the captivity, affront, and loss he had sustained. His expedition was attended with complete success. He quickly overpowered his antagonist, and carried him and his chief councillors captive to Perth." A strong body of Strathardle men accompanied Athole in this expedition.

1463.—No sooner were the Strathardle men back from the Isles than a band of them went off to England—for once, on a peaceful errand, like the first time they ever crossed the Borders except as foemen. They went as a body-guard to one of their most renowned chiefs, Sir Sylvester Rattray of Rattray,

who, as one of the ablest statesmen of the day, was sent as an ambassador to treat with Edward IV. about the affairs of the Kingdom, and who then settled a fifteen years' peace. As an example of how the estates in Lower Strathardle were then divided, I may give the following list of Cally marches from the "Rent Roll of Cupar Abbey, Tack No. 76"—"Marches between Easter Cally, or Monks Cally, and Parsy and Myddil Cally, or Buttiris Calley :—"First beginning at Aldglew, thence ascending to Tulquhan, afterwards to the north as far as Laron, extending to that place commonly called the Cowford, ending on the hill now called Soilzare Moir." The Fergussons then held Wester Cally; the Butters Middle Cally; and Cupar Abbey, Easter Cally, and Persie. Many goats were kept then, as the rent of Persie was £10 and 20 fat kids yearly, and of Cally 21 merks and 12 sucking kids—"XII. sukklar kyddis sufficiend and markat lyk."

1473.—In all the old tacks of this period I find that the tenants were bound to plant trees on their holdings, especially ash trees, osiers, and sauchs, or willows, the latter used for wattling, mixed with clay, for partitions in their houses, also for harness, and creels for conveying their goods on horseback over their rough roads. And so well wooded was Strathardle then that we find at this date the Abbot of Cupar engaging Neil M'Keden to be his head forester :—"An he sal kep the wuddis of Stroyn Calady, an be master forester of all our wuddis in Strethardyl," for which he got the lands of Cally for life, and also the salmon fishings, for the small rent of 21 merks and 12 sucking kids. As Neil's tack of Cally throws much light on the customs and manners of these times, and on the state of agriculture, I may give most part of it in its original state :—

"Be it kend til al men, be thair present letres us David, be the permission of God, Abbot of Cupar, hafe grantit, set, and for ferm til hafe lattyn, our landis of Calady, with the tend schafe and feshynges (teind sheaf and fishings), with all uthyr profitis pertenaend to them, ar set to Neyl M'Keden for all the days of his life : thar if he pay and yerly to us XXI. markis of usuale mone at usuale termys, XII. sukklar kyddis sufficiend and markat lyk, with aucht and wont servys as he be chargit, and III. draucht in the zer for scat, lede, or tymmer, gife he be chargyt. Herafter, he sal put the sade land til al possibill polici in biggyn of housis, plantacioun of treys, eschis (ash-trees), ozaris, and sauchs, with their defensers : an he sal kepe the wuddis of Stroyncalady, and be master forster of all our wuddis in Strethardyl, he takaend his neds til his byggynng,

that Neil Stewart of Garth was summoned peremptorily to Edinburgh to give an account of his doings to King and Parliament, and that he obeyed the summons and got rather cheaply off for his wickedness. Although he was deprived of his authority over Glenlyon and Glenquoich, &c., yet his claims on Strathardle and Strathbran were not set aside."

1489.—About this time, as we read in "The Lives of the Lindsays," Alexander, Master of Lindsay, and his brother John, sons of the fifth Earl of Crawford, quarrelled and fought at Inverquheich Castle, in Lower Strathardle, and Alexander was severely wounded, but might have recovered had not his wife helped him out of this world of trouble by smothering him with a down pillow as he lay in bed weak from loss of blood. She was Lady Janet Gordon, daughter of George, second Earl of Huntly, and of his wife, Princess Annabella, daughter of King James I. No sooner had she got rid of Lindsay than she married Patrick, son of Lord Grey. Whether she took the down pillow to him or not, history sayeth not, but he departed, and she was soon after married—the third time—to Halkerston of Southwood. Though she thus escaped punishment for a time, yet justice at length overtook her, and in the year 1500 she was condemned, for the murder of the Master of Lindsay, to perpetual imprisonment on the top of Craig-an-Fhithiche, the Raven's Rock, a stupendous cliff that rises about 300 feet above the River Erriicht; and here every day, before she was allowed any food, she had to spin a thread long enough to reach from her prison down till it reached the water of the river, and there she lingered on, spinning her daily thread to an extreme old age. So far history goes, and stops, but as usual local tradition steps in, and draws aside the veil of time, and tells us how—

"Lady Lindsay sat on the Raven's Rock,  
An weary spun the lee lang day,  
Tho' her fingers were worn, they aye bore the stain  
O' the blood o' her first luv, the lycht Lindsay,"

till she was over a hundred years of age, and till at last her shrivelled fingers were worn by the constant friction of the thread to mere stumps. At last she died; but still there was no rest for the murderers, for there her ghost was seen to sit and spin, and often the keen angler, as he fished the clear waters of the Erriicht below the Raven's Rock, was startled by seeing a shadowy thread coming slowly down from above till it touched the water, when it

without byrnyng, garthin, gevin, or sellyn : and for the mair freedom that al condicions forsad be wel kept, we hafe grantyt hym lecers to bryng in tenandis, and put furth at his awin descrecioun, so that the nowermer of the tenandis be nocht dymnyshit bot thar be als mony at the leste as the ground was occupyt with in the tyme of the makyn of thair letres. And gife the land be foul of guld (full of guld weed) he sal do his pour to clenge it, with furris weedyng, reneuyng and shyftin of seeyd. Alsua he sal kep the statutis of our Courtis and of the Parlyament, and he sal be honest and wel beseyn in his clethyn, with jak and uthyr weapyns, and also the tenandis thar dweling, to kep them in thar personys, and fra scath in thar gudis. And gife it pleyts hym to lefe the grond, he sal hafe our fre lecers, he warnang us halfe a yere befor the term. His entry in forsak tak at Qubissnunday Im. IIIc. LXXIII."

1483.—In this year Robert Robertson, the "Baron Ruadh" of Straloch, married a daughter of Sir Sylvester Rattray of Rattray, thus forming a bond of union between Upper and Lower Strathardle, which was ever after observed by the two clans.

1488.—Old Neil M'Keden, the head forester of the Abbey lands in Strathardle, having died, his son Henry was appointed in his stead, getting half of the lands of Cally for a yearly rent of 8 merks and 36 salmon, and he was to keep the woods from all others under penalty. We have already seen that the Abbey of Dunfermline, in 1323, held the Kirk of Moulin and many lands in Athole, and now we find the Kirk of Strathardle and another kirk in Glenloch belonging to Dunfermline, and given in tack by that Abbey to Neil Stewart of Fortingall, who was great grandson of James, son of the Wolf of Badenoch, as we find the following bond given in "The Book of Garth and Fortingall," page 167 :—"Bond between Sir Duncan Campbell of Glenorchy and Neil Stewart of Fortingall. This endenture made at Edinburgh 15th October, 1488, betwixt honourable men, Duncan Campbell of Glenurche on the ta parte, and Neil Stewart of Fortingall on the tother parte, that the said Duncan Campbell sall nocht in tyme to cum . . . distruble the said Neil in his takis, steadings, kirkis, tyrndis, profitis . . . lands nor gudis, by ony manner of way, enduring all the days of their lifes, and in speciale thair landis and kirks pertaining to the said Neil, that is to say, Appindul, Bannauch, Glenloch, Strathardill, Strathbran, and Dull." This Neil Stewart of Garth lost most of his lands through his turbulent career, but his Strathardle lands were left him, as we read in "The Book of Garth," page 171 :—"It would seem

instantly disappeared, and the scared fisherman knew that the Lady Lindsay's task was over for that day at least. So the thread of time spun on, for over two centuries, and still the ghost of the Lady Lindsay, the misguided grandchild of a gallant Stuart King, was seen to spin on, perched on her lonely rock, till at last came the black day of Culloden, when the Stuart cause was lost forever, and many of the brave Strathardle lads, who had escaped from the royal butcher, returned to hide in their native glen. Amongst others came one of the young Fergussons of Balmochrochie—*Niall Mor nam Breac*—Big Neil of the Trouts, so called from his being a very expert angler like all his race, who were so fond of fishing that, ages before this, one of them rendered the King some great service, and when asked what reward he would like he asked for and got a charter giving him power to compel all the owners of property, on both sides of the river, to cut down all trees within casting-line length of the river along its course through the Strath above Blairgowrie, for fishing purposes; a right which this family are well known to have possessed, though, perhaps, not enforced, down till Adam Fergusson sold the estate, and went to America in 1840.

But to return to Big Neil. He chose as his hiding place a hole under some large boulders on the bank of the river, a little above the Raven's Rock, where he kept himself and some comrades, who were also in hiding close by, well supplied with his favourite trout. He was safe from the English soldiers quartered in the Strath. But another altogether unexpected danger came upon him. A severe thunder storm had passed over Upper Strathardle, followed by such a deluge of rain that it brought down the river in one breast of water. Neil of the Trouts, lay in his den, sheltering from the rain, and, no doubt, thinking how it would put the river in good fishing ply, and quite unaware of his danger, till the water poured in; and, when he got out, the rushing torrent of water was so strong that it swept him away down the stream. Just as he gave himself up for lost, the eddy swept him under the Raven's Rock, and he saw a thin thread hanging down from the cliff, and, as a drowning man will clutch at a straw, he grasped it, and, to his astonishment, it held, and he found it strong enough to bear his weight and check his onward course, and by its help he slowly drew himself to the bank. By the aid of an alder bush he got ashore, and just as he stepped ashore he heard a wild scream of joy overhead, and looking up he saw the Lady of the Rock standing on the top of the cliff, with her distaff in her hand, from which hung the thread that had saved his life.

In terror, he threw his end of the magic thread into the water, when at once she threw distaff, thread, and all into the raging river, and with frantic signs of joy disappeared from the top of the rock for ever. Her task was done, and her punishment over. She had saved the life of a gallant follower of the Stuarts, her own grandfather's royal race; and so, by saving one life, made atonement for taking away another life; and the good old people of Strathardle believed that had she not got a chance of doing so she would still have been spinning her weary thread on the Ladies' Rock to this day.

1500.—The Great Plague, or Black Death—“*An Galar Mor*”—broke out this year, and raged with great virulence all over Athole and Mar. In Strathardle it was very deadly, and it carried off a great number of the inhabitants, none recovering that took it. Many of the people took to the hills, and lived in huts of turf and heather; but it still followed them there, and cut off whole families. At length some of the tenants of the church lands, belonging to Dunkeld Cathedral at Cally, went to Bishop Brown of Dunkeld, and besought him to give them some cures for the plague. The Bishop took the bones of St Columba, the great saint of Iona, who died in 597, and whose bones were removed from Iona to Dunkeld in 840, with other relics, to save them from the plundering Danes, and dipping these bones in water, he gave it to the Strathardle men, and told them to go home, and give a drink to all who were ill of the plague, and that they would recover. He also warned them that the plague would stick to the bones of those who died of it, so that if ever their graves were reopened before the bones were decayed, the plague would break out afresh. The water was found to be a perfect cure, and all who drank of it were cured. But, alas! in human nature there always seems to be a certain amount of unbelief, and, as amongst the Israelites of old, there were those who believed not in Moses' Brazen Serpent, so also amongst the Ardillites of 1500, there were doubters who believed not in St Columba's bones, and who, therefore, refused to drink of the healing water. Chief amongst those men of little faith, was the tenant of the farm of Cuil-nan-cnaimh, or, as its modern name in English is, Stylenmouth, who, being stricken with the plague, refused to drink, and died accordingly. Though he did not believe in the good Bishop's cure, his family did, and they believed also in his warning about the plague being spread anew in future through the reopening of graves; so, for fear of future consequences, instead of burying him in the family lair in Kirkmichael Kirkyard, they

buried him in a secluded nook near his own house, where it was very unlikely his bones would ever be turned up. Some of his neighbours, whom he had influenced, refused also to drink, and died, and were buried beside him; so that the place then got the name, that it bears in Gaelic to this day, *Cuil-nan-Chnaimh*, the neuk or place of bones.

All who died of the plague previously were buried in one spot at the east end of Kirkmichael Kirkyard, and so firmly did the good folk of the strath believe in the Bishop's warning, that to this day these graves have never been re-opened. My earliest recollections of Kirkmichael Kirkyard are that when a mere boy attending a funeral there, I was taken to see this plague-infected spot, and told the history of it, though I am afraid I did not then wait to hear the whole details, as I thought the sooner I was away from the microbes of the *Galar Mor* the better.

The Guidman of Cuil-nan-cnaimh and his followers, were not the only unbelievers in the efficacy of St Columba's bones to cure the plague, as Dean Mills, in his Latin “*Lives of the Bishops of Dunkeld*,” referring to the bones of St Columba and this plague, says:—“What follows is surprising, and yet I think it must not be passed over. The Bishop had marked out and consecrated burying ground for his people, being much afraid of the pestilence. In the meantime he visited some of the Church tenants of Caputh, who had been bad of the disease, and gave them such consecrated things as might be of use to them. Next day he caused dip the bones of St Columba in consecrated water, and sent it to them to drink by the chancellor. Many did drink, and were cured. But there was one forward fellow amongst them who said to the chancellor, ‘For what does the Bishop send us water to drink? I wish he had sent us some of his best ale.’ But he and the rest, to the number of thirty, who refused to drink of the water, died of the plague, and were buried in one grave a little below the ordinary burying-ground.”

From enquiries I have recently made, I find that the plague-infected spot in Kirkmichael Kirkyard is still undisturbed, and these graves have never been re-opened for fear of renewing the plague. The same tradition is attached to the ancient Black Castle of Moulin, which was built by Sir John Campbell of Moulin, who was a son of King Robert the Bruce's sister, and who was created Earl of Athole by his cousin, David II., and who was killed at the Battle of Halidon Hill in 1333. The plague broke out amongst the garrison in the Black Castle, and for fear of its spreading, after all the soldiers were dead, nobody would enter it,

so it was battered down with cannon and made a funeral cairn over the victims of the plague, and it is still reckoned an uncanny spot. The plague was also the cause of the destruction of the old Castle of Kindrochit in Braemar, as we read in James Grant's “*Legends of the Braes of Mar*,” page 22—“Long, long ago, the *Galar Mor*—the great disease—ravaged Scotland with terrible severity. It was a dreadful affliction, which, once infesting a country, spared none. The only prevention, where it broke out, was to knock down the houses on all the inmates, infected or not, and bury it with them in the ruins. Well, the *Galar Mor* broke out in the old castle. A company of artillery was ordered from Blair Athole Castle. They came up through Athole. The road out to allow the cannon to pass is yet pointed out by the old people in Glen Fernate. They battered down the castle, and none of those within escaped, and the noble towers were levelled to the ground.” After the plague causing such a terrible loss of life, and such great destruction of property, who can wonder at the people of Moulin and Mar leaving their plague-infected old castles undisturbed, or at the good folks of Kirkmichael never re-opening the plague spot in their ancient kirkyard.

1504.—In this year, the then Baron Ruadh, John Robertson of Straloch, married a daughter of Gordon of Abergeldie, in Braemar. In these good old days, before School Boards and Free Education came in vogue, a gentleman's highest accomplishment, of course, was to be a perfect swordsman, and next, when the claymore was in the scabbard, to be a good dancer. Dancing was very much indulged in in Braemar, as the men of Mar claimed to be the best dancers in the Highlands, so the Baron Ruadh, on his courting expeditions to Abergeldie, was treated to nightly dances in the great hall of the Castle, at which old Abergeldie used to boast that his men danced so lightly that none save angels or fairies could beat them, and to tell his future son-in-law that all the tocher he would give his daughter, was to send some of his men along with her to teach the Strathardle lads how to dance. Now, Baron John was a valiant man, and a good dancer, and always ready to uphold the power and credit of his clan and country; but at this time he was more taken up with love making than dancing, and so allowed the old Laird to boast away. However, when the wedding day came, and the Baron, with a large body of picked men, marched over the hills to bring home his bride, he thought something must be done in the dancing line to try and stop the old Laird's boasting. He could do his own part well, but his best man, his cousin, was a huge giant, ill adapted for tripping the light fantastic toe, so it

was arranged that, for the time, he would resign the post of honour in favour of Donnubull Biorrach (Donald with the sharp face)—a little, smart, active follower of the Baron's, who was reckoned the best dancer in Athole, and who, though past middle age, had never married. After the knot was tied and the marriage dinner over, dancing, of course, began, and never was there such dancing the old Castle hall. Donald kept well in the back ground for a time, watching the others, on the look-out for a good partner. He soon saw that the Abergeldie dairymaid, a strong, tall, muscular woman, with a huge nose, from which she was called, “*Ceit Mhor na Srone*,” Big Kate of the Nose, was by far the best dancer present, so he selected her for his partner; and so well did they get on, that they became inseparable. When Donald warmed to his work, he danced so lightly, and went through the most difficult steps with so much ease and grace, that all present were forced to admit that they had never seen such dancing. The last to give in was the old Laird, and he did so by turning to his lady, and saying, “*F' fhearr leam na mo chro-ghobhair, gun be m' fleasgach fear na bainne*,” I would rather than all the goats in my fold, that the best man was the bridegroom. So annoyed were the Mar men at Donald's superiority, that one of them, a big, burly fellow, determined to play a trick on him; so he got up with Donald to a Reel of Tulloch, and when it came to hooking round by the arms, he whirled Donald at a great rate, and, suddenly letting go, sent poor Donald sprawling on his knees into the fire, on the great flat hearth-stone of the hall, saying, as he did so—

“*Bodaich Dhu, Stra-arduil,  
Gun crathadhinn anns an luath iad.*”

The Black Bodachs of Strathardle,  
I will shake them into the ashes.

Donald, as nimble as a weasel, sprung to his feet, and, catching the time of the music, danced round as if nothing had occurred, till it came to the next turn, when he wheeled the man round with all his strength, and giving a sudden jerk, dislocated his shoulder, and sent him, doubled up, under a table, saying:—

“*Bodaich mhors, dhog, Mharr,  
Gun crathadhinn as a ghualann iad.*”

The big, soft men of Mar,  
I will shake them out of the shoulder.

The Mar man howled with pain and anger, drew his dirk with his left hand, and rushed at Donald, and would have slain him, had

his partner, the big dairymaid, not rushed in between them, and saved him. Down came the dirk, but like Roderick Dhu's "erring blade," instead of being sheathed in Donald's breast, it slashed off the poor devoted dairymaid's great nose. Both parties drew their dirks, and there was like to be bloodshed, only Abergeddie and the baron got them quietened down, and they all gathered round the poor dairymaid and tried to console her for the loss of her nose. But she was inconsolable, and declared she would never now get a husband since her beauty was spoilt, and she refused to be comforted, till Donald tried to cheer her up with the characteristic assurance, no doubt scientifically correct—"That she would now dance the lighter for want of *such a nose*." Whether it was her hopes of now being a lighter dancer, or her hopes of Donald himself, I know not, but she calmed down, and Donald, getting a quiet word with the baron, suggested that his dairymaid of such bone and muscle might prove useful at his summer sheilings of Camcherry, "if the Caterns came the way," a suggestion to which the baron at once agreed. So, after a talk with the old laird, and an interview with Donald and the dairymaid, the result was that the priest was recalled, and he had to marry a second couple that evening, and after that the dancing and fun was fast and furious, and Donald and his noseless wife "lived happy ever after" for nine years, till poor Donald was slain at Flodden, fighting over the body of his chief, the Earl of Athole. Such incidents give us a glimpse into the social life of our hardy ancestors of four centuries ago. Baron John was a famous warrior, and had many skirmishes with raiding Caterns from Lochaber. He was afterwards killed at Dunkeld by Stewart of Fincastle, but his death was immediately revenged on Stewart by Fergusson of Balchhinduidh.

1510.—From a very early period, we have seen that the Clan Fergusson held Balmacroe and other lands in Strathardle, and now in this year we find that the Chief of the Clan, John, Baron Fergusson of Dunfallandy in Athole, purchased many lands in Strathardle and Glenshee from William Scott of Balwearie. This charter is—R.M.S., Vol. I., 347.—"Charter by William Scott of Balwearie, by which he sold to John Fergusson in Dunfallandy, his heirs, and assignees, these lands in the Barony of Downie, county Perth, viz.:—Over Downie, Middle Downie, Borland, Edmarochie, Cullalony, Stronymuck; (in Glenshee), Finnegan, Inverredrie, with its mill, Bynnammore, Bynnambeg, Ridorrach, Kerrow, Couthil, and Dalmunzie, part of Pitbrane, Glengennet (now Glenderby), and Glenbeg. To be held of the King; at Stirling, 6th May, 1510."

Elizabeth, daughter of the second Lord Kennedy, dying, her father remained a widower till he was upwards of 60 years of age. Meanwhile the Earl of Athole fondly cherished the hope that he would by-and-by add the beautiful barony of Rattray to his extensive Athole domains. At length Sir John Rattray took to himself a second wife, by whom he had two sons and a daughter. This was a great blow to Athole. He could not brook being disappointed of the Rattray barony, on which he had so much set his heart. Hence the bloody plot which formed to secure it. One night a large body of Atholemen, the Earl's retainers, came to the Castle of Rattray. A few of them ventured to claim the hospitality of the old laird as being the servants of his son-in-law. In the dead of the night, when all was quiet, they rose on the inmates of the Castle and massacred them, sparing neither age nor sex. The younger son escaped through the promptitude and decision of his nurse. Hearing some suspicious sounds she fled in the darkness, carrying her charge with her. Tradition says she heard the old laird at his devotions in the chapel of the Castle at midnight; that she heard the murderers enter the chapel, and begin their horrid work; and that she fled in dismay to the woods of Craighall, where she lay some time in concealment, till she was able to make her escape to Dundee. The Earl of Athole now claimed the lands of Rattray as the husband of Grizel Rattray, the only surviving offspring of Sir John. He actually seized on them, and held them for a number of years. The rightful heir at length appeared and claimed his own. He tried in vain to get himself served in Perth as heir to the Barony of Perthshire; the Athole family was too strong for him in Perthshire. No judge would dare to dispossess them of the estate, though they got it by the most heinous of all crimes. He then applied to the King himself, James V., and the Crown was more than a match for the Earl. His Majesty appointed a Commission under the Great Seal to adjudicate on the case at Dundee, and the claimant was served heir to his father and brother to the Barony of Rattray and Craighall, and infert therein in 1534.

1529.—This year is famous in the sporting annals of Athole as that in which King James V., accompanied by his mother, Queen Margaret, and the Pope's ambassador, held one of those gigantic hunts, in which the Stuart Kings so much delighted, amongst the mountains of Athole. The Earl of Athole gathered all his men, and forming a great circle, which gradually narrowed as they advanced, they drove all the deer and other wild animals from the Tay, the Dee, and the Spey to Glen Loch, where the

1511-12.—Following up their purchases of the previous year, the Dunfallandy Fergussons added large additions to their Strathardle estates this year, as we see by a charter—R.M.S., Vol. I., 3682.—"Where the King confirms John Fergusson of Downie and his heirs in the lands of Morcloich (Whitefield), Invercroskie, Dalrulzion, Larroch, Dalmean, Glengannet, Pitbrane, and Kinnaid in the lordship of Strathardle, etc., etc. At Edinburgh, 20th Jan., 1511-12." It will thus be seen that Baron Fergusson of Dunfallandy held a large part of Strathardle and Glenshee. The Rev. Adam Fergusson of Moulin, who wrote a M.S. history of the family, says—"Baron Fergusson, whose ancestors had extensive lands, Dunfallandy, Derculich, Dalshian, and the third of Strathardle and Glenshee, is our stem." The Fergussons of Balmacroe, of Dalnabrick, of Cally, Balintuin, and others, held most of the middle of the Strath, whilst the Fergussons of Baledmund held Tarvie, Tomchulan, Ceanghlimne, &c., in Glenbriechan, so that most of the Strath above Bridge of Cally and a third of Glenshee at this time belonged to the Clan Fergusson. However, ten years after this, the Fergussons of Dunfallandy lost their lands in the Barony of Downy for a time, as we find on "21st March, 1521, the lands of Over Downie, Finnegan, &c., pertaining to the King, on account of escheat by the death of Robert Fergusson, because that the late John Fergusson, father of the said Robert, died a bastard," were granted to another family, and again granted in 1537 to Thomas Scot.

But the bastardy of John Fergusson of Downie appears to have been contested, and successfully; but the Fergussons did not get their lands of Downy, Finnegan, &c., restored to them for over a century, till 23rd January, 1630, when Robert Fergusson of Derculich was served heir of John Fergusson of Dunfallandy, Baron of Downy, brother of his great-great-grandfather. Again, on Oct. 7th, 1668, John Fergusson of Dunfallandy was returned heir of his father, Robert Fergusson of Derculich in the lands and Barony of Downy, viz., Over Downy, Borland, Finnegan, Dalmunzie, &c.

1513.—A strong body of Strathardle men followed the Earl of Athole to the field of Flodden, where Athole fell, along with King James, and but few of his men returned.

1515.—At this time a feud broke out between the Earl of Athole and the Rattrays, of which the following account is given in Dr Marshall's "Historic Scenes in Perthshire":—"John Stewart, third Earl of Athole, of that name, married Grizel, daughter of Sir John Rattray of Rattray. Her mother, who was

Earl, at great expense and trouble, had built a temporary palace to accommodate his distinguished guests, on the north side of Benagloe, where the rivulet Lochain, from Loch Loch, flows into the Tilt. Old Lindsay of Pitsootie gives the following graphic account of this great Athole hunt in his "History of Scotland," page 225. The relation is given as described by Sir David Lindsay of the Mount, who, in all probability, assisted at it:—"The Earl of Athole, hearing of the King's coming, made great provision for him in all things pertaining to a prince, that he was as well served and eased with all things necessary to his estate as he had been in his own Castle of Edinburgh. For, I heard say, this noble Earl gart mak a curious palace to the King, his mother, and the ambassadors, where they were so honourably lodged as they had been in England, France, Italy, or Spain, concerning the time and equivalent for their hunting and pastime; which was builded in midst of a fair meadow, a palace of green timber, wound with green birks that were green both under and alwa, which was fashioned in four quarters, and in every quarter, and nuke thereof a great round, as it had been a block-house, which was lofted and geisted the space of three house height, the floors laid with green scharets and spreets, medwards, and flowers, that no man knew whereon he zied, but as he had been in a garden. Further, there were two great rounds on ilka side of the gate, and a great portoullis of trees, falling down with the manner of a barrace, with a drawbridge, and a great stank of water of sixteen foot deep and thirty foot of breadth. And also this palace within was hung with fine tapestry and arrasses of silk, and lighted with fine glass windows in all airts; that this palace was so pleasantly decorated with all necessaries pertaining to a prince as it had been his own royal palace at home. Further, this earl gart make such provision for the king and his mother that they had all manner of meats, drinks, and delicacies that were to be gotten at that time in all Scotland, either in burg or land, viz., all kind of drink, as ale, beer, or wine, &c., of meat, with fesses, &c., and also the stanks that were round about the palace were full of all delicate fishes, as salmonds, trouts, perchies, pikes, eels, and all other kinds of delicate fishes that could be gotten in fresh waters, and all ready for the banquet. Syne were there proper stewards, &c., and the halls and chambers were prepared with costly bedding, vessel, and napery, according for a king, so that he wanted none of his orders more than he had been at home. The king remained in this wilderness at the hunting the space of three days and three nights, and his company, as I have shown. I

heard men say it cost the Earl of Athole every day in expenses a thousand pounds. They killed thirty score of hart and hynd, with other small beasts, as roe and roebuck, wolf and fox, and wild cats." The Italian ambassador was greatly surprised to see amongst rocks and wildernesses, which seemed to be the very extremity of the world, such good lodgings and so magnificent an entertainment. But what surprised him most of all was to see the Highlanders set fire to the wooden castle as soon as the hunting was over and the king in the act of departing. "Such is the constant practice of our Highlanders," said King James to the ambassador; "however well they may be lodged over the night, they always burn their lodgings before they leave it."

1531.—A band of caterns from Ramoch having made several raids on Athole and Strathardle about this time, the Earl of Athole resolved to pursue and punish them, so he gathered his own men, and the Clan Donnachie, under Struan, with the Strathardle Robertsons, under the Baron Ruadh, and they harried Ramoch, and carried off a great spoil. But on the approach of the Athole men the caterns retired to the Braes of Ramoch, and hid there till all was quiet, when they returned and settled quietly for that season. But next summer in—

1532.—They again returned, and raided Strathardle and Glen Tilt, upon which Athole, Struan, and Straloch again went to Ramoch, and burned and harried the whole district from Bunramoch to the Braes, and captured the whole band of caterns, and hanged them, and beheaded their famous chief, Alastair Dubh Abrach, at Kinloch Ramoch. In the "Chronicle of Fortingall" we have the following quaint notice of these raids:—"Ramoch was hareyd the mornie eftir Sant Tennenis day, in hairst, be John Erle of Awthoel, and be Clan Donoquhy, the yer of God, MVe XXXI. And at next Beltane eftir that the quhilk was XXXII. yer, the Brae of Ramoch was hareyd be them abowin' writhn', and Alexander Dow Albrych was heddyt at Kenloch Ramoch."

In these two raids on Ramoch, the Strathardle men were so active, and slew and burned and plundered with so much zeal and energy, that the Ramoch people never forgave them, so that there was a constant feud between the two districts to the end of the fighting days, and the men of Ramoch were the very last that ever came to lift a "creach" in Strathardle and Glenshee, more than two centuries after this. So pleased was the Earl of Athole with the Baron Ruadh's conduct on this occasion that he gave him more than his due proportion of the spoil, and also soon after

gave him a confirmation charter for his lands. It was when returning with the plundered cattle from this raid that the Clan Donnachie piper composed the very beautiful piobreachd called "Struan's Salute," which has ever since been the Clan gathering—

"Pill an crodh, till an crodh,  
Pill an crodh, Dhonnachaidh,  
Pill an crodh, dhachaidh,  
'S gheibh thu bean bhoidheach."

Turn the cows, turn the cows,  
Turn the cows, Donachie,  
Turn the cows home ward  
An' you'll get a bonny bride.

1537.—Previous to this Robert, fifth Lord Maxwell, held a lot of land in the barony of Balmacrochie, of which he got a charter of confirmation at this time for service done to King James V. In Nicholson's "History of Galloway," p. 451, we read:—"The King despatched Lord Maxwell on an embassy to France, where a negotiation of marriage between the King and Mary of the House of Guise was at once concluded. Lord Maxwell espoused the lady in his royal master's name, and conducted her in safety to Scotland. His conduct gave great satisfaction to the King, who in reward of his important services confirmed him in the possession of his vast estates. . . . including the lands of Balmacruth, in Perthshire." Lord Maxwell had given his Strathardle lands to his relation, Maxwell of Tealing, in Forfarshire, who was descended from Eustace, second son of the first Lord Maxwell. The Tealing family long held these lands. The Baron Ruadh of the day, the fourth John, had married Elizabeth Maxwell, daughter of the Laird of Tealing, and she brought the Baron some of the lands of Balmacrochie as her dowry, as we read in "The Earldom of Athole," p. 59, that in the year—

1539.—"John Red, or Robertson of Straloch, got lands in the barony of Balmacrochie, from Hugo Maxwell of Tealing, &c."

1554.—In this year the Baron Ruadh still further extended his estate, as I find a charter, dated February 14th, by Thomas Scott of Pitgornay, to John Red of Straloch and Elizabeth Maxwell, his spouse, of the lands of Easter Inverchroskie, which afterwards became the principal residence of the succeeding Barons, so it came to be known as Balvarron. Previous to this the family residence was at Dalcharnich, or, as it is now called, Glen Fernate Lodge.

Several of the lairds at the lower end of Strathardle, including Patrick Blair of Ardblair, Robert Smith of Drumlochy, Buttar of Gormack, and Chalmers of Drumlochy, took a dislike to a newcomer amongst them, George Drummond of Ledcreiff, who, as we are told in the "History of the Family of Drummond," was the first of the Drummonds of Newton of Blair, which estate he had got by purchase. So they formed a conspiracy against him, and set a watch on his movements, to slay him on the first opportunity. Drummond, not suspecting any evil, went with his son William to play at bowls, on the 3rd June, on a green behind the Kirk of Blairgowrie, when they were set upon and cruelly murdered by the foresaid lairds:—"They, hearin' the said George Drummond and his son William wer alone at their pastyme play at ye row-bowls, in ye hie mervate gait behyond ye Kirk of Blair, in sober manner, traisting na trouble nor harm to haif been done to them, but to hav levit under Goddis peace and ouris, they fell upon them and crewally slew them, upon ane ald feid, forethocht felony, set purpois, and provissuim, in hie contempuon, &c." This outrageous slaughter raised the ire of the Clan Drummond, and their chief, Lord Drummond, used his influence at Court to bring the murderers to justice. Blair of Ardblair and Smith of Drumlochy were both beheaded, and Chalmers and Buttar were summoned to underlie the law, but did not appear, but fled northwards to Aberdeenshire, where they found shelter for a time with Gordon of Scheves and Gordon of Lesmore. But the Drummonds, finding out where they were, had the Gordons prosecuted for harbouring them. Getting tired of being hunted about, the murderers tried to come to terms with Lord Drummond and the family of Ledcreiff, by offering the following, what they no doubt thought very liberal terms:—

"In primis.—To gang, or to cause to gang, to the four heid pilgrmagis in Scotland. *Secundie*.—To do suffrage for the sawil of ye deid at his Parochie Kirk, or quhat other Kirk they please, for certain years to cum. *Thirdly*.—To do honour to the kyn and friendis as effairs as use is. *Furthly*.—To assayth the partye to gif to the kyn, wyf, and barnis, 1000 merks. *Fyftly*.—Gif their offers be nocht suffeycent thoct by the parte and friendis of the deid, we are content to underlie and augment on pair as resonibill friendis thinks expedyent in so far as we may lefaunlie."

Lord Drummond refused these terms, when Chalmers of Drumlochy again proposed more advantageous ones as follows:—

"In primis.—The said Chalmers to compear, and to offer until mv Lord Drummond, and the frendis of the unquihle George

Drummond, ane naket sword be ye point and sliike to do all uther honour to my Lord, his house, and frendis, that sal be thoct resonible in sliike cases. *Secundly*.—To gif my Lord and his airs, his Band of Manrent, in competent and dew form. *Thirdly*.—That the said Chalmers son be marreit upon George Drummond's daughter frelie without any Tochir, and his cousing Willame sal be in lyk manner marriet til the sister of the said George Drummond. *Furthly*.—That the said Chalmers sal had himself redy to ony uther thing quhilk is possabell to him as please my Lord and frendis to lay to his charge, except his life and heretage."

Now, however extraordinary these terms may seem to us, with our modern ideas of the punishment due to murder, yet, to the warlike Chief of the Drummonds, who got the offer of a Band of Manrent from his new allies, and to the daughter of the murdered man, who got the offer of being "marriet frelie without tochir, and to the sister, who also got an offer of marriage from "Cousing Willame," these terms seemed so advantageous that they were at once accepted; so the ladies got their husbands and Lord Drummond got his Band of Manrent, of which I may give the following copy:—"The Layrle of Drumlochie, Band of Manrent. Be it kend til al men be thir present lettris me, William Chalmers of Drumlochie, that ffor as meikle as ane noble and mighty Lord, David Drummond, and certain utheris principals of four branches, and maist speill the nerist of the kyn and friendis of unigle, George Drummond of Ledcreiff and William Drummond, his son, for them selfs and remanent kyn of the said unigle, George and William, hes remittit and forgiven to me their slaughteris, and given and deliveret to me thir letteris of Slanis thereupon, and that I am oblist by vertue of ane contract to gif the said nobil Lord, my Band of Manrent, as the said contract and letter of Slanis dcleverit to me fullie proportis. Thairfore, to be bundin and oblgt, me and my airs in trew and aufald Band of Manrent to the said noble and mighty Lord, as Chief to the unigle George and William, his son, and the said Lord, his airs, and shall take their trew and aufald pairt in all and sundry, their actions and causes, and ride and gang wi' them therein upon their expensis when they require me or my airs thereto, against all and sundry persons, our Sovereign Lady and the autoritie of this relme alane exceptit. And hereto I bind and obligis me and my airs to the said noble and mighty Lord and his airs in the straitest form and sicker style of Band of Manrent that can be devisit, na remeid nor exception to the contrary. Before thir witnesses, Andro Rolloch of Duncrab, &c. (Signed) William Chalmir of Drumlochy."

1560.—Now came the troublous times of the Reformation and the downfall of the Romish Church, with its great religious houses of Cupar, Dunkeld, Scone, and Dunfermline, which all held large tracts of land in Strathardle. In the division of the Church lands then, the only rule seems to have been that of the wrestlers—"Catch who catch can." But at Cupar there was not very much left for outsiders to catch, owing to the selfish greed of the last Abbot, who robbed his Church before her final downfall. He was Donald Campbell, youngest son of Archibald, second Earl of Argyll, and he had been thirty-four years Abbot of Cupar, and was a shrewd, clever, crafty, unscrupulous cleric, who attended far more to the advancement of his own and his friends' interests than to those of the Church. Of course, he was debarred from marriage by the laws of his Church, but he had five illegitimate sons, and as he was shrewd enough to see that the downfall of the Church was at hand he made preparations for it by dividing most of the richest lands of the Abbey amongst these sons and other relations of the House of Argyll. In this way, Persie and other lands in Strathardle came into possession of the Campbells, who were Lairds of Persie for a long time, and who proved very bad neighbours indeed, being at constant feud with all other lairds in the district, and often bringing Argyll with a strong force to ravage the country, particularly in 1590, when the Earl of Argyll and half-a-dozen of his Chieftains, with Campbell of Glenlyon, came with 500 men to assist Archibald Campbell of Persie in burning and ravaging Strathardle, Glenshee, &c., for which they were denounced rebels. In the lists of lands and churches belonging to Dunfermline at the Reformation, I find "Strathardle Chapel, Perthshire, and Moulin Chapel, do," both of which I find from the Privy Council records were held in tack by John Stewart of Tullypureis from the Abbey, and afterwards retained by him.

Though the great Reformation had now come, and the reign of the Catholic clergy was over, yet the old priest of Kirkmichael stuck to his post, and would not be evicted. His house stood where the present manse is, on the height which is still known in Gaelic as *Tom-an-t' sagairt*, the Priest's Hillock; and the famous spring, at the roadside, immediately below, is still called *Fuaran-an-t' sagairt*, the Priest's Well, the water of which of old was reckoned a cure for many diseases, and as such, was much used by the different parish priests.

The good old priest of Kirkmichael stuck to his post as long as he could, but the Baron Ruadh, Robertson of Straloch, and all his

clan, being very zealous Protestants, and very powerful in the district, raised up the people against the priest, and, a large crowd collecting round his house, they evicted him, and, when he refused to leave, they stoned him out of the parish. At first he tried to pacify them, and argue with them, but it was no use; so then he pronounced some very bitter curses against all his future successors, the ministers of the parish, and prophesied that none of them would ever live very long or very happily in the parish. Old people used to say that these bitter curses of the departing priest had—at least partly—been fulfilled. *Mar 's breag bhuan è, 's breag thugam è.*

No regular parish minister was appointed to Kirkmichael at the Reformation, but a reader—William Eviott—was appointed in 1567, and he supplied the parish till 1574. In 1576 Archibald Hering was appointed minister; Mawling and Clunie were also under his care; he had a presentation to the Vicarage of the latter from King James VI., on 7th November, 1576, and continued in 1591. I will afterwards give a full list of the ministers of Kirkmichael and Moulin, with dates, from the Reformation to the present day.

At this time John Robertson, the Baron Ruadh, held the lands of Wester Kindrogan, to which then, as now, were attached the lands of Camchroy, called *Ruidh nan Laogh*, at the head of Glen Fernate, as summer sheilings. The grazings being extra good, the Earl of Athole envied them, and claimed them as his own, sent his cattle there, and built huts. The Baron did not think it prudent to openly resist so powerful a neighbour, but his good lady, rather than lose her summer sheilings, took matters in hand herself. She was Marjory, daughter of Charles Robertson of Clunie, and we have the following notice of her in the MS. "History of the Family of Straloch":—"Marjory, the Baron's spouse, is said to have been a gentlewoman of courage and resolution. About that time the Earl of Athole began to bring in question the right of the family to the Camchory, though particularly disposed to them as the grazing of Wester Kindrogan; and it is reported of this lady that, as oft as his lordship would cause build huts, or sheals in the said corry, she would go with a staff in her hand, and cause them to be pulled down again. In her old age she was nicknamed *Cailleach-na-Luirg*, i.e., the old woman with the staff."

This famous staff, once at least, proved mightier than the sword, for with it she got the advantage of the Earl of Athole himself. One of her men brought her word that a strong body of the Earl's men had arrived in the Camchory with his cattle, and

had begun rebuilding the huts. She took a score of armed men with her, and set off up the glen with her great staff in her hand. On reaching the corry she found the huts finished, the cattle quietly grazing, and the Earl's men sitting at a well eating their dinner. She asked what right they had there, and was told they had the Earl's orders, and if she had any objection she had better go to his lordship himself, as he had just arrived, and was at his dinner alone in one of the huts. She ordered her men to sit down and refresh themselves along with the Atholemen, and she went on to the hut grasping her sturdy staff, walked in and shut the door after her. What happened no one ever knew, or whether it was the old lady's tongue, or her staff that settled matters; but the Earl soon came out looking rather crestfallen, and at once ordered his men to gather the cattle, and they marched off to Glen Tilt never to return, and the plucky old lady was left undisturbed; and to this day that sheiling of *Ruidh nan Laogh* forms part of the estate of Kindrogan, and is a little island in the very heart of the Athole estate; and one of the greatest delights of my boyish days was to go up there with the Kindrogan keepers to shoot ptarmigan, when we used to lunch among the ruins of these same old huts—*Bothan-airidh Cailleach-na-Luirg*.

The Earl of Athole coveted and wished to regain possession of the rich pasturage of *Ruidh nan Laogh*—the sheiling of calves—which once formed part of the Athole estates, but which a former generous Earl of Athole had long before granted to the then laird of Kindrogan. In the quotation just given from "The History of the Barons Robertsons of Straloch," we read:—"About that time the Earl of Athole began to bring in question the right of the family to the Camchory, though particularly disposed to them as the grazing of Wester Kindrogan." Now, the way in which this sheiling came to be particularly disposed to Kindrogan has been preserved by tradition, and is as follows:—The Earl of Athole, passing through Strathardle, had ridden far and hard, so, when he was passing Kindrogan, and saw the laird standing at his door, he dismounted, and saluting the goodman told him that he was very hungry, and had come to dine with him. Now, this was no doubt a great honour and pleasure to the worthy laird, but it put him in an exceedingly awkward fix, as he happened just then to be very short of provisions, and his goodwife had gone to Dunkeld that day to replenish her store, so, to make matters worse, the worthy laird was housekeeper alone. However, he gave the earl a hearty welcome and took him in, but all he could find in the house was some barley hampocks, and the small

heel of an exceedingly hard old cheese. Our old Gaelic proverb says—"Smath an ccoair an t-acras." "Hungar is a good cook;" so the hungry earl made the most of his frugal meal, and, by the aid of his dirk, he managed to cut off some of the softer parts of the cheese, but the hard crust defied even the keen edge of the dirk, so the earl began to grumble at its hardness. The worthy laird tried to excuse himself by saying that, like Fitz James, he was but—

"Lord of a barren heritage,  
Which his brave sires, from age to age,  
By their good swords, had held with toil."

That his grazings were poor, and all lay facing the north, away from the sun, and were all covered with long heather, instead of the rich green grass growing on his lordship's lands on the sunny slopes of Glenfermate, and ended by saying that, for making cheese, one cow in the Camchory was worth more than all his estate. "I believe you are right," said the earl, as he threw the heel of the cheese in the fire in disgust; "and it is a pity to see such a brave man as you live on such hard cheese, so, if one cow were worth so much in the Camchory to you, send all the cows you possess there, and keep them there forever, on condition that you and your heirs supply me and mine with good rich cheese every time we pass through your lands of Kindrogan." So, on these conditions, to this day (thanks to *Cailleach-na-Luirg*) the sheiling of *Ruidh nan Laogh* belongs to Kindrogan. I don't misdoubt that, at the time I write of, away back about the year 1400, the Kindrogan cheese may have been poor and hard, but, this I know, that, owing to agricultural improvements and high cultivation, by later lairds, the rich old blue "nippy" cheese made at Kindrogan in my boyish days by old Christy Macgregor was reckoned the best in all Athole.

As the Reformation made so many changes, and a new period of Scottish history begins now, I will close this paper, and trust soon to take up the next part.