CONFLICT AT DRUMDERFIT.[*]

A.D. 1372.

In or about the year 1372, the Maclennans pillaged Tain, a royal burgh on the south of the Frith of Dornoch in the county of Ross; and the Chanonry of that county, which was the residence of the bishops of Ross, near Fortrose, was also plundered by those marauding mountaineers. Marching eastward, they encamped on an eminence between Munlochy and the ferry of Kessock. Here they were encountered by the Laird of Lovat, who had raised a number of his vassals, in conjunction with those of the

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* Anderson's Historical Account of the Family of Fraser.

Earl of Ross, at a place called Drumderfit. Such havoc was made of the unfortunate Maclennans, that the hill on which the battle was fought is to this day called *Dun-a-dear*, or the *Hill of Tears*. Only one of them escaped, and it is said his life was preserved by concealing himself under a vehicle called a *loban* or *currich*, still occasionally used as a wretched substitute for a cart. The descendants of this individual inhabit the neighbourhood at the present time, and are known by the affirmed name of Loban, or Logan.

It is also stated by tradition that the victory was obtained as much by the crafty policy of the then Provost of Inverness as by the broadswords of the Frasers. The Maclennans had threatened to burn that town unless a large sum was paid to avert the calamity. The civic functionary affected to listen to the proposals, and in the meantime sent a quantity of spirituous liquors as a present to the chief. The mountaineers fell victims to the snare, and while in a state of intoxication they were put to the sword by the Frasers, assisted by the citizens of Inverness.

On the following year the M'Ivers, M'Aulays, M'Leas, and other vassals of the Earl of Ross, rose in arms against him. They intended to surprise the Earl, but his Lordship was opportunely made acquainted with their project, and seized Donald Garve M'Iver, one of their leaders, whom he imprisoned in the castle of Dingwall. This so much exasperated the revolted clans that they pursued the Earl's second son, and apprehended him at Balnagowan. The Earl, with the assistance of Fraser of Lovat, raised two hundred men of his own clan, and this force was increased by a party of Dingwalls and Monroes. The marauding vassals were pursued and overtaken at a place called *Bealach-na-broig*, between the heights of Ferrindonald and Lochbroom, where they were encamped. A bloody fight ensued, and the M'Ivers and M'Leas were

almost entirely cut off. On the side of the victors there fell William Dingwall of Kildun, chief of his family, with one hundred and forty of his name. The Monroes of Foulis also severely suffered. Besides several gentlemen, that family lost eleven who were to succeed each other, and made an infant the chief of that ancient house.

At the beginning of the ensuing year the scattered remains of the revolted tribes, in number about one hundred, lurked in a forest about eight miles above Beauly, whence they undertook a pillaging expedition to the Lowlands. Their place of concealment was discovered by the son of the Laird of Lovat, who convened a few resolute followers and fell upon them at Ardnagrask. A conflict ensued in which many of them were slain, and the rest were pursued to a place since called *Bear-na-scallag,* where their leader and six more of them were killed. The cairn under which they are buried is still called *Carna-scallag,* and the spot *Bear-na-scallag,* or the *Gap of the Servants,* because the victory was obtained by the assistance of the men-servants, called *scallag* in Gaelic.

The few survivors of this marauding band were pursued to Kilmorack. Seven of them attempted to conceal themselves amid the foliage of a tree which hung over a precipice above the river Beauly, about a quarter of a mile west of the parish church. They were discovered by one of the pursuers, who cut the tree with his battle axe, and the unfortunate fugitives were drowned in the river. The site of this transaction is still called *Beam-Erechis,* or the *Coup-de-Grace.*