



NORTH INCH OF PERTH.

**SCENE OF THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE CLANS
CHATTAN AND KAY.**

CONFLICT BETWEEN THE CLAN CHATTAN
AND THE CLAN KAY ON THE NORTH INCH
OF PERTH.*

- A.D. 1396.

PERTH, popularly and most appropriately called the *Fair City*, has been the scene of many remarkable transactions, and is one of the most celebrated, as it is one of the most beautiful, cities in Scotland. If in modern times the regu-

* Memorabilia of Perth; Adamson's Muses Threnodie; Pinkerton's History of Scotland; Buchanan's History of Scotland; Morrison's History of Perth; Notes to the Fair Maid of Perth, by Sir Walter Scott, Bart.

larity of its streets, the beauty of its buildings, the enterprising spirit of its citizens, and its delightful situation, make it the admiration of every visitor, it was no less so some centuries ago, when its appearance was widely different—when its numerous and magnificent religious establishments and many splendid baronial mansions proclaimed it the favourite residence and locality of kings, nobles, and ecclesiastics of every rank. These edifices have been long swept away, but Perth is still the “*Fair City*,” surrounded by romantic hills, with towering mountains in the backgrounds, encompassed by fine plantations, flanked on the north and south by its extensive and verdant commons called *Inches*, and watered by the noble river Tay.

In the reign of Robert III. Perth was a walled city, as it was indeed long before and after that period, and the North and South Inches were the scenes of frequent combats. It was on the former of these fine plains, laved by the Tay, that a singular conflict took place between two clans of “wild Scottes,” as Winton designates them, or two clans of “Irmen,” according to Boece, in the presence of King Robert III. and a vast assemblance of spectators. The contending parties were the Clan *Chattan* and the Clan *Kay*. The former were the Macintoshes, but it is not agreed who are indicated by the Clan Kay. Some allege that they were the Mackays, but to this opinion there are various objections. The Clan Kay were followers of the Cumins, thus distinguishing them from the Mackays, who were always a numerous and independent clan. Mr Robert Mackay, in his “History of the House and Clan of Mackay,” follows the authority of Douglas in his Baronage, and maintains that the Clan Kay were Camerons, and the names by which they are distinguished by some of the old writers of this conflict—*Clanquhele* and *Clanwehill*, or *Clanhewyll*, make it not probable that these are mere corruptions of *Clan Lochiel*, or Cameron, a name signifying *wry nose*, which

they obtained in more recent times from a blemish in the physiognomy of a heroic chief of the race of Lochiel; for about the period in question they appear to have been often designated *Macewans*. Sir Walter Scott, in his Notes to the "Fair Maid of Perth," inclines to the belief that the Mackays had no part in the Transaction. "The Mackays," he says, "were in that age seated, as they have since continued to be, in the extreme north of the island; and their chief at the time was a personage of such importance that his name and proper designation could not have been omitted in the early narratives of the occurrence. He, on one occasion, brought four thousand of his clan to the aid of the royal banner against the Lord of the Isles."

The conflict of the Clan Chattan and the Clan Kay, which was much on the principle of the Horatii and Curiatii in Roman history, is the more interesting on account of the romantic narrative interwoven with the story of the "Fair Maid of Perth." Sir Walter Scott says—"Two features of the story of this barrier battle on the Inch of Perth, the flight of one of the appointed champions, and the reckless heroism of a townsman that voluntarily offered, for a small piece of coin, to supply his place in the mortal encounter, suggested the imaginary persons on whom much of the novel is expended." The common tradition is, that the two clans had become notorious for their bitter feuds and ferocious hostility towards each other, which could neither be decided by equity nor reconciled by friends. The Earls of Crawford and Moray were sent by Robert III., at the head of a considerable force, to reduce them to obedience, or to adjust their quarrels. Aware that they would have great difficulty in subduing two fierce septs, who despised death, and who would probably unite for the time against the royal army, those noblemen resolved to accomplish by policy what might have been hazardous to attempt by force. They addressed the rival chiefs sepa-

rately, and after urging a variety of arguments, they submitted to them a method of adjusting their feuds, and putting a stop to bloodshed, neither dishonourable to themselves nor disagreeable to the King. This was that thirty combatants, selected from the Clan Chattan, otherwise Macintoshes, and thirty from the Clan Kay, armed with swords only, should decide the contention in presence of the King, the vanquished to have a free pardon for all past offences, and the victors to be suitably rewarded.

The proposal was accepted, a day was appointed for the combat, and the North Inch of Perth was named as the scene. On the day fixed, an immense number of spectators assembled at Perth, where an arena had been prepared for the contending parties, surrounded by a deep trench, and seats were constructed for the accommodation of the spectators. The specified number made their appearance under their respective chiefs, dressed in the half naked costume of their country. The scene was altogether singular, without being overcoloured or exaggerated by the florid additions of Boece and Leslie, or the speeches which Buchanan makes the contending savages to utter, after the most approved style and manner of Livy.

The gardens of the Dominicans, which at that time surrounded the monastery of that religious order, were of great extent, and part of them immediately adjoined the North Inch, covering all that space of ground now occupied by the fine buildings of Athole Place, the Crescent, and Rose Terrace. On a part of these grounds, overlooking the North Inch, and probably near the south end of Rose Terrace, stood a richly-decorated summer-house, called the *Gilten Arbour*, from the balconies of which King Robert is said to have witnessed the conflict. The judges were seated near the scene of strife. When the combatants on each side appeared and were ready to engage, it was discovered that one of the Macintoshes had withdrawn himself through

fear, or some other cause—at least one was amissing of the thirty men selected from the Clan Chattan. This accident delayed the encounter, and it was not decided in what manner to adjust the matter, when a common tradesman, belonging to Perth, named Henry Wynd, or Hal of the Wynd, still popularly called the *Gow Chrom*, or the *Bandy-legged smith of St Johnston*, offered to supply the place of the absent Mackintosh for half a French dollar of gold. The terms were accepted, and by the addition of this stranger, who had no earthly interest in the dispute, the number of the Clan Chattan was complete.

The two parties now stood, drawn up against each other, armed with swords only, when the signal was given by sound of trumpet, and they rushed impetuously to the mortal combat. The ferocious Highlanders, excited by ancient resentments, and animated by the honours and advantages proposed to the victors, assailed each other with redoubled fury; and the horror of the spectators was increased by witnessing the unsightly wounds, gashes, and torn limbs, aggravated by savage yells and exclamations of triumph and revenge, as the combatants fell on either side. In the conflict the gallant *Gow Chrom*, Henry of the Wynd, distinguished himself in a particular manner, and nothing could resist the impetuosity of his attacks, inflicting severe wounds and death among the unfortunate Clan Kay. Twenty-nine of the combatants of that clan at length lay dead on the Inch, one only remaining, and, strange to say, unhurt; of the Clan Chattan nineteen fell, leaving ten of their number and Henry Wynd alive, but most of them were severely wounded. The survivor of the combatants belonging to the Clan Kay, seeing that it was impossible for him to offer any resistance to such fearful odds, forced his way through the spectators, threw himself into the Tay, swam to the other side, and escaped—his adversaries being unable to pursue him on account of their

wounds. Henry Wynd and his surviving associates claimed the victory, to which indeed the *Gow Chrom* chiefly contributed, and originated the old proverb still extant—" *He comes in for his ain hand, as Henry Wynd fought.*"

The various designations by which Henry of the Wynd was known have called forth a host of competitors who claim to be his descendants. The ingenious historian of Perth, Mr Morrison, says—" First we have the Henry or Hendrie families, who can produce many other instances besides their own, in which a Christian name has become that of a family or tribe, from the celebrity attached to it through the great deeds of some one of their ancestors by whom it was borne. Then follow the Hals, Halls, and Halleys, among whom even some of the ancient and honourable race of the Halkets have ranged themselves. All these claims are, however, esteemed very lightly by the Wynds, who to this day pride themselves on their thews and sinews, and consider that their ancestor, being styled *Henrie Winde* by the metrical historian of the town, is of itself proof sufficient that their claim is more solid than the name would altogether imply." It appears that the Gows are also found foremost among the claimants, and that the strife should lie chiefly between them and their Saxon namesakes the *Smiths*. " It only remains," adds Mr Morrison, " to notice the pretensions of the Chroms, Crooms, Crambs, or Crombies, a name which every school-boy will associate, if not with the athletic, at least with the gymnastic exercises for which the *Gow Chrom* and the Grammar School of Perth were equally celebrated. We need scarcely add, that while the Saxon name corresponding with the word *Gow* has brought a host of competitors into the field, there has not started any claimant resting his pretensions on the quality expressed in the epithet *Chrom*, or *Bandy-legged.*"

It is observed by Pinkerton, that " the modern improve-

ments or corruptions of this tale are beneath notice, and unaccountably originate with Leslie and Buchanan. There is, however, nothing fabulous in the narratives of either of those authors, except the speeches which the latter makes the contending Clans to utter; and tradition is at all times entitled to respect, or at least to attention, when it transmits nothing repugnant to probability." When the times and the ferocious habits of the Clans are considered, even the animated account of this singular conflict, though professedly imaginary in its conversational details as given by Sir Walter Scott in the tale often mentioned, may be almost received as authentic. The chanter of one of the pibrochs which "poured its expiring notes over the Clan Chattan," is preserved in the family of a Highland chief to this day, and is much honoured under the name of the *Fcederan Dhu*, or *Black Chanter*. The name of this Highland chief is Cluny Macpherson, who is in possession of this ancient trophy of the presence of his Clan on the North Inch of Perth.
