

**“LOCHIEL” CAMERON,
STORMONT.**



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**GAMEKEEPER,
NATURALIST,
&c.**

VII.

“LOCHIEL” CAMERON, STORMONT.

Honour and fame from no condition rise,
Act well your part—there all the honour lies. —POPE.

It is not every one who has such a romantic “past” as our friend “Lochiel”—a genealogy of which any one might be proud—seeing he can trace his descent from the ill-fated chief, MacIan MacDonald of Glencoe, who, with his wife and some forty of the clan, was so treacherously done to death 210 years ago (13th February 1692). The point of chief interest to us here is the fate of MacIan’s two sons, Hugh and John. According to the most likely account, these youths were from home when the massacre began at 4 A.M., but, returning to find their father murdered and devastation and ruin on every hand, they

MADE OFF UNSEEN,

and managed to get out of the Glen by secret paths with which they were well acquainted. They kept together until they reached the Brig of Buchanty, Glenalmond, where they parted, John proceeding to Monzie and Hugh to Dowally. There each settled down for a while, assuming the patronymic “Cameron,” the name of their mother, who was a sister of Cameron of Lochiel. Hugh afterwards removed to Dalpowie, near Murthly, where he kept an inn, and there he is said to have died when about 80 years old, leaving two sons and three daughters. One of these sons was named James, who had a grandson,

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John, who was the father of James, our friend "Lochiel." This John was some 40 years parochial schoolmaster at Pittensorn, near Murthly, and known far and near for his erudition and scientific knowledge. Amongst his amusements was the translation of some of Burns' and other Scots songs into Latin. James was born at Pittensorn about the year 1846, and received his early education from his father, who, being a capital Latin scholar, initiated our young friend into the intricacies of that language. Practical jokes were common in his quarter, and on one occasion he planted the tail of a dead rat in the garden of a neighbour who was very fond of anything new in plants; duly labelled it with its correct Latin term—*Cauda rodentis* (tail of a rodent)—and informed the owner of the extremely rare and precious specimen he had brought him. The old man was delighted, rewarded him handsomely, and showed off his treasure to everybody, including the old dominie, James's father, who was the cause of a bad quarter of an hour for our young joker.

LIFE IN PERTH.

He was sent to Perth to learn the drapery trade with Messrs A. & W. Macgregor, John Street, and attended night classes, reading everything he could come across—history, biography, travels, geography, natural history, botany, &c. Amongst other acquirements he mastered Pitman's Shorthand, and obtained a prize from Mr Pitman himself for his efficiency, and has kept himself abreast of the great developments which the system has seen of recent years. After a few years of town life he obtained a situation as gamekeeper, and has served in that or similar

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capacity in many parts of the Counties of Perth and Fife, including Murthly estate, Rannoch Lodge, Drummond Castle, Abercairney, &c. He has also been several times round the West Coast of Scotland and the Hebrides on yacht cruises with gentlemen fishing and wild-fowl shooting; and was some two years in Ireland during the Fenian agitation. Wherever he went he always kept his mind and eyes open; and now with a splendid stock of reminiscences of men and things which have come in his way through life, has settled down as gamekeeper and fisher in his native district.

AMONGST HIS HOBBIES

has been collecting snake skins and other natural curiosities, Indian arrow and spear flint heads, &c. He is a keen and accurate observer of nature, and when Dr Gordon Stables some years ago offered two prizes for the best treatise on British birds of prey, our friend came in first against 1134 competitors. It took him the better part of three months to write the book. He has contributed frequently to the “Field” and “Fishing Gazette” and other sporting papers. As might be anticipated, he has many good stories to tell. On one occasion he was in attendance with the gaff for a gentleman who was playing a salmon in the Tay near Caputh Ferry, and who was every now and again stopping the line, in his nervousness, with a sudden jerk, by pressing the reel with his finger, thereby putting a dangerous strain upon both line and rod. The inevitable happened. The line snapped, but, quick as lightning, “Lochiel” caught the running cord before it finally disappeared, and, with a desperate 20-pounder tugging away for dear life at the other end, managed to mend it, and thus enable the

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delighted angler to land his fish after an hour's play. He relates a funny experience with a grilse. He played with it for about a mile down the river, not far from Caputh; managed to get it to the edge, but found he was without his gaff. In desperation he tried to land the fish with his hand, but his line broke, and, making a grab at his escaping captive, his thumb went right into its eye and gave him such a hold he was able to land it all right. It scaled 9 lb. The following incident, which was public property at the time, illustrates the manner of man our friend can be on occasions. One day, with only a stick in his possession, he was attacked on the Drummond estate by no fewer than seven poachers. He managed to throw two of them, himself on top, but suffered badly about the head and person from the sticks and kicks of the others—so much so, his head had to be stitched in several places, and he was forced to bed. The rumour got about that he had been killed outright, and next day a neighbour brought the information that five poachers were already at work in a certain field with ferrets. Nothing would hinder our friend, stitched head, sore ribs, and all, from slipping on his things, and setting after the wily poachers. By and by they "twigged" him, and bolted—"Lochiel" in full chase after them, with his shoes thrown off. He overtook and closed with the two men, and, after a struggle, secured one of them. When being examined as to his taking off his shoes, Mrs Cameron remarked that, if he did, "it would not be the first time in the family"—alluding to MacIan MacDonald of Glencoe having done the same thing before he rushed into the fray at the Battle of Killiecrankie. The story is worth telling. Just before the battle

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MacIan had a dispute with Claverhouse as to the order in which the Highlanders were to fight—the latter wanting them to act in concert with the other sections of his force, while MacIan insisted that they should fight in their own customary independent style, and pointing out how successful Montrose had been with his Highlanders so long as he adopted this method. At last the Highland chief got nettled, and demanded bluntly (in Gaelic) whether it was to be “Fight or no fight!” Claverhouse considered a second or two, then exclaimed, “In the name of God, go forward!” Thereupon MacIan threw off his plaid, slipped off his shoes, and, drawing his claymore, cried on his men to follow, and rushed forward. The rest is known; Mackay’s men could not resist the impetuous onslaught, and the fight was practically over in a quarter of an hour. It is a striking testimony to the value of “Lochiel’s” expert knowledge, and of more than personal interest, to learn that it was to this Stormont gamekeeper that

THE FISHERIES BOARD

entrusted the settlement of the long debated question whether the sprat was the young herring or a separate species. Frank Buckland, the celebrated naturalist, had decided in favour of the former theory, but his decision did not give satisfaction, and in 1878 our friend was appointed Commissioner to reinvestigate the whole matter. This he did that year at Dundee so thoroughly and conclusively that he had no hesitation in deciding for the opposite theory, viz., that the sprat is a distinct and separate species. This finding has never been seriously disputed since. In addition to his other abilities,

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“Lochiel” can use the pencil to some purpose when a sketch is required, and has written verse of commendable quality. He has a splendid memory for the men and things he has come across in his time, a conversation with him being an education in county affairs past and present; but in manners he is one of the most modest of fellows, pleasant of speech, quiet and self-contained, withal wearing a certain air of still reserve about him that somehow suggests a lone mountain tarn with the midnight stars in its heart. He is a Celt; perhaps, too, Glencoe counts for something.