Charlie's Year (3)

The Quern-Dust Calendar — Raghnall MacilleDhuibh

IN our comparison of John Mackenzie's "Eachdraidh a' Phrionnsa" (1844) with Robert Chambers's "History of the Rebellion in Scotland in 1745-6" (1840), from which Mackenzie's book was translated, we've followed Prince Charles as far as Borrodale in Moidart.

It's the last week of July, 1745, and he's had a very mixed reception so far. Next to come and see him is Cameron of Locheil. On his way from Achnacarry to dissuade the Prince from his madcap plan of starting another rising, Lochiel had dropped in on his brother at Fassiefern. "Write him a letter," said his brother.

"No," said Locheil; "although my reasons admit of no reply, I ought at least to wait upon his royal highness."

"Brother," said Fassiefern, "I know you better than you know yourself. If this Prince once sets his eyes upon you, he will make you do whatever he pleases."

He was right, as both Chambers and Mackenzie duly point out. Locheil does his best, but Charles replies: "Locheil, who my father has often told me was our firmest friend, may stay at home, and learn from the newspapers the fate of his Prince!" Mackenzie renders this last phrase as *cluinneadh e bho chàch mar dh'eireas do'n Phrionnsa.* "Let him hear the Prince's fate from others."

"No, I will share the fate of my Prince!" declares Locheil: "and so," he adds, "shall every man over whom nature or fortune has given me any power." These become in Mackenzie's Gaelic *gach aon duin eil air m' fhearann, as urrainn glas-lann a tharruinn ri sròin*: "every other man on my land who can draw grey blade to nose".

Chambers says: "Locheil immediately returned home, and proceeded to raise his clan, as did some other gentlemen, whom Charles then prevailed upon to join him." Mackenzie's Gaelic is geographically more specific. Locheil started raising the Camerons, he says, *agus a chuid eile dheth a luchd-leanmhuinn ma dha thaobh Loch-Arcaig, agus rinn iomadaidh eile de'n na Cinn-Feadhna mar an cianda*. Mackenzie seems to be conscious that there were other kindreds on both sides of Loch Arkaig – MacMillans, MacPhees, Kennedies and so on – who followed Locheil even though they were not Camerons.

This, as both authors agree, was the decisive moment. The standard would be raised at Glenfinnan on 19 August: *ann an Gleann-Fionain*, says Mackenzie, *air an naoidheamh latha-diag de mhìos deireannach an t-Sàmhraidh*. He has his months mixed up – that means 19 July. No longer a conspirator, Charles is now the liberator. As befits his new status, about 11 August (11 July, says Mackenzie) he moves from the farmhouse of Borrodale to the mansion of Kinlochmoidart. Here he begins to assemble his team: John Murray of Broughton, for example, from Chambers's native county of Peeblesshire, who becomes his secretary. Not that Mackenzie is interested. He skips this and also the exciting events at High Bridge in Lochaber, where a company of redcoats is captured.

The Prince travels by boat on the 18th to Glenaladale, and on the morning of the 19th to the head of Loch Sheil. Says Chambers: "Charles disembarked . . . at the place where the river discharges itself into the lake. It was eleven in the forenoon, and he expected to find the whole vale alive with the assembled bands which he had appointed to meet him. In this he was disappointed. Only a few natives, the inhabitants of a little village, 'were there to say, *God bless him!*'

"Some accident, it was concluded, had prevented the arrival of the clans, and he went into one of the neighbouring hovels to spend the anxious hours which should intervene before they appeared. At length, about an hour after noon, the sound of a pibroch was heard over the top of an opposite hill, and immediately after, the adventurer was cheered by the sight of a large band of Highlanders, in full march down the slope. It was the Camerons, to

the amount of 700 or 800, ‘All plaided and plumed in their tartan array,’ coming forward in two columns of three men abreast, to the spirit-stirring notes of the bagpipe, and enclosing the party of soldiers whom they had just taken prisoners.”

It’s moments of drama like these that highlight the difference between the English and Gaelic versions. Chambers describes the scene through the Prince’s brain: the oppressive silence, the curious natives, the not knowing, the hovel. Mackenzie, by contrast, sees hills quietly heaving with men in a hurry; his poor proof-reading makes Charles arrive at one, not eleven, in the morning; he has information that Charles was greeted by a hundred men; “natives” become women and children, numbering another hundred or so; there is no “hovel” or anything of the kind: *Bha nam Fineachean a nis a’ cruinneachadh gu bras as gach taobh, agus chìte prasganan dhaoine fo’armachd a tional as gach àird, a’ gearradh aithghearra-talmhainn thar mhonaidhean, a’s bhealaichean gu Gleann-Fionain, ma aon uair sa’ mhadainn rainig Tearlach féin agus a cuid uaislean an Gleann. Thuit a mhisneach gu làr, cha d’fhuair e roimhe ach ma thuaiream ceud fear-feachda agus na h-urraid de mhnathan sa’ chlann a chruinnich gu sealladh dheth a mhòrachd fhaicinn.*

Fa-dheoigh, ma uair an deigh mheadhon latha chualas creagan dà-thaobh a Ghlinne, a co-fhreagairt do sgal nam feadan, agus do thòrman nan dos; agus m’a chairteal na h-uarach chunncas a tighinn thar fàireadh, bho sheachd gu ochd ceud Cam-Shronach na’n làn àrmachd agus nan deiseachan ballabhreac, deich pìobairean fichead a’ cluich “Cruinneachadh nan Cam-Shronach” agus dà fhichead fear dheth an àrm-dhearg, a cheap iad m’an ’Chorpaich aca gan iomain rompa gu siùbhlach a nuas am bruthach gus na stad iad air réidhlean a ghlinne fa-chomhair Thearlaich.

So Chambers’s “plaided and plumed” quotation from Scott is gone, and piping-related specifics come in instead: “the cry of the chanters”, “the roar of the drones”, the number of pipers the Camerons had, the name of the tune they played. Mackenzie had been a player himself ever since he made his own set of pipes as a boy at home in Gairloch.

The standard was raised on Chambers’s “little eminence in the centre of the vale”, Mackenzie’s *uchdan beag a th’ann am meadhon a Ghlinne*. A rocky outcrop marks the spot today. There follows a spectacular misunderstanding which does Mackenzie little credit, but serves as a reminder to all of us who write for a living of the adage: if you try to be clever, your readers will misunderstand you. Chambers says of the Prince: “He then flung upon the mountain breeze that ‘meteor flag,’ which, shooting like a streamer from the north, was soon to spread such omens of woe and terror over the peaceful vales of Britain.

“It was a large banner of red silk, with a white space in the centre, but without the motto of ‘Tandem Triumphans,’ which has been so often assigned to it – as also the significant emblems of a crown and coffin, with which the terror of England at one time adorned it. The appearance of the standard was hailed by a storm of pipe-music, a cloud of skimmering bonnets, and a loud and long-enduring shout.”

Mackenzie: *Sgaoil e sin ri gaoith nam beann a “bhratach sholais” a b’ann an ùin’ ghearr gu uamhas agus truaighe a sgaoileadh feadh ghleanntaichean sìochail na h-Alba. Bha bhratach mhòr àluinn so air a deanamh de shioda dearg agus ball geal sròil na meadhon, air an robh dealbh* crùn rìgh *agus* ciste-laidhe*; chuir na Gàël fàilt’ air a bhrataich so le sgal cheud seannsair; a’s chrathadh mhìle bonaid,a’s caithream mhòr éibhneis.*

In other words he begins, “He then unfurled upon the mountain breeze the ‘banner of light’ which was soon to spread terror and woe through the peaceful glens of Scotland.” He’s obeying his remit, more or less, but it isn’t like him to let an anti-Jacobite point like that through uncensored. Is he, like many another translator, falling asleep over his work? I think so, because look what else he has said. “This large and beautiful banner was made of red silk with a spot of white satin in its centre, adorned with a *king’s crown* and a *coffin*; the Highlanders saluted this banner with the cry of a hundred chanters, the waving of a thousand bonnets and a great shout of joy.”

The man called by Chambers the marquis of Tullibardine (Hanoverian terminology) and by Mackenzie *Diùc Abhall* ("the duke of Atholl", Jacobite terminology) now makes a speech, but as if proof is required that Mackenzie's mind is wandering, he writes: *An deigh do'n Diùc an sgùilm so a labhairt; chaidh a bhratach a ghiùlain far an robh Tearlach na sheasamh, agus leth-cheud Cam-Shrònach mar ghèard oirre.* In other words, following the duke's speech the banner is carried to where Charles is standing, with a guard of fifty Camerons over it.

So what's he translating? "The standard was carried back to the Prince's quarters by a guard of fifty Camerons." Which seems a lot more likely. And as the future author of an English–Gaelic dictionary (still, incredible though it may seem, in use today), Mackenzie should have known what "quarters" meant!

The chapters of Chambers's and Mackenzie's books correspond exactly, and with the news that the subsequent arrival of the Keppoch MacDonalds and some MacLeods brings the number of men camping in Glenfinnan that night to 1,200, chapter 3 comes to an end. The rebellion, insurrection, rising, civil war, enterprise – call it what you like, all of those terms have been used – has begun.

Chambers's next chapter, "Proceedings of Government", becomes Mackenzie's "Ullachadh an Airm Dheirg" – "The Red Army's Preparations". It's curious that to the Gaelic speaker of 1745 the term *Arm Dearg* brought the same mixture of strong emotions as "Red Army" in the twentieth century. Sorley MacLean wrote with warmth of the Red Army facing Hitler on the Dnieper in 1939. The Redcoats of 1745 might be brutal occupiers or gallant defenders, depending on your point of view, but that they were a potentially large and powerful force was never in doubt.

In chapter 4 we're told how the formidable Lord President of the Court of Session, Duncan Forbes of Culloden, advises that Sir John Cope (commander-in-chief of His Majesty's forces in Scotland) march north "to crush the insurrection before it reached any height". *Shaoil leis*, says Mackenzie, *gu 'n deanadh sealladh de dh-Iain Cope agus dheth fheachd "sgapadh nan cearc breac" air na Gàëil, agus gu'n leigeadh iad a chùis ma-làr mas lasadh fraoch cumhachd na Rìoghachd nan agaidh.* ("He thought the sight of John Cope and his army would make the Highlanders 'scatter like speckled hens', and that they would abandon the cause for fear the fury of the Kingdom's power would be kindled against them.")

In Edinburgh on 19 August, the very day on which the standard is raised, Cope receives his orders to march. Mackenzie makes this *an naoidheamh latha-diag de mhìos dheireannach an t-Samhraidh* – 19 July.

Chapter 5 describes "Cope's March to the North" – "Turas Iain Chope gu Tuath". It's the most comical chapter of the two books. The comedy is made by Chambers, and lapped up by Mackenzie, who notes with obvious amusement how Cope's army is followed by a large drove of cattle with butchers to slaughter them – "as required", says Chambers, or *mar shluigeadh an fheachd*, "as the army swallowed", says Mackenzie – along with 21 days' suppies of bread (*lòn fhichead latha de dh-aran*, "20 days' supplies of bread"), which kept all the bakers of Edinburgh, Leith and Stirling toiling non-stop for a week at their ovens.

In this way Cope marches up the newly-built military road from Crieff, after waiting for a hundred horse-loads of bread to catch up with his army. His baggage-horses are stolen in the night, so he has to leave hundreds of bread-bags behind; he gets all sorts of false intelligence, till eventually he can't believe anything he is told. Nobody joins him, because nobody is so ardently loyal to the Government as actually to support it by force of arms. In the end he marches towards Corrieyairack, but he knows Charles's forces are lying in wait at the very top of the road, so after making a feint towards the pass with flags flying, he retreats to Inverness, which he reaches on 29 August, leaving the Jacobites' path to the Lowlands wide open.

He has followed orders. He was ordered to march north. And so he has!

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