

**HISTORICAL AND
TRADITIONAL SKETCHES
OF HIGHLAND FAMILIES
AND OF THE HIGHLANDS**

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Historical and Traditional Sketches of Highland Families and of the Highlands by John Maclean

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JOHN MACLEAN

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HISTORICAL AND TRADITIONAL
SKETCHES
OF
HIGHLAND FAMILIES AND
OF THE HIGHLANDS.

BY
JOHN MACLEAN.
THE "INVERNESS CENTENARIAN."

"Siomadh rud a chi am fear a bhios fada beo."

NEW EDITION,
WITH ADDENDA — INVERNESS IN THE OLDEN TIME,
AND NOTES.

INVERNESS:
JOHN NOBLE, CASTLE STREET.

1895.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

“THE Historical and Traditional Sketches” which will be found in the following pages, portions of which had occasionally appeared in the local papers and have been copied into other papers in various parts of Scotland, England, Ireland, India, Australia, and America, are now presented to the public in a more collected and extended form. This is complying with the desires which have been repeatedly expressed by many of the sons of the Gael at home and abroad.

These Sketches have no pretension to literary excellence, nor are they put forward as a full chronological or consecutive history of the families and events to which they refer. Their interest is purely local; and their merit, if they possess any, is, that they contain historical facts, traits of character, and traditional tales of stirring times and of important personages which have not been presented by any other author.

Of the author, or perhaps I should more properly say, the reciter of these tales, it would not become me, his son, to speak in terms of praise. I may, however, say, without exposing myself to censure, that from his infancy he gave a greedy ear to the recital of old stories; and when, as at was, and still is, the custom of the country, the fathers, grandfathers, and patriarchs of the town assembled together in the winter evenings and told “the tales of other times,” he would sit in the “chimney nook” in wrapt attention listening to their conversation. This predilection of his youth “grew with his growth, and strengthened with his years.”

Preface to the First Edition.

An all-merciful and bountiful Creator has been pleased to gift him with good health and a retentive memory. In the course of a life of upwards of a century, he has suffered little bodily illness or mental distress ; and, except so far as his powers are impaired by the natural debility which necessarily attends old age, he still retains the enjoyment of his mental faculties. It may not be out of place to say that one of our Scottish newspapers has lately said of him, " Although the Maitland and Spalding Clubs, and many " antiquarian individuals, have rescued the records of the " country from oblivion, yet John Maclean, the Inverness " historian, by dint of powerful recollection in his own " person, may be said to have eclipsed them." And one of our ablest and most patriotic Chiefs writes—" It is an " unusual blessing conferred on frail and feeble humanity, " that the mind should exercise its unimpaired functions, " and the memory retain its perfect power, when so many " years have worn the fleshly machine in which these work."

In placing these Sketches before the public, I avail myself of the opportunity to express for my father and myself our respectful thanks to the editors of the various newspapers and publications in the old and new worlds who have brought his case before the public, as well as our unfeigned gratitude to the numerous sons of the Gael, " noble, gentle, and simple," at home and abroad, whose benevolence has cast a parting gleam of sunshine on the shortening days of Centenarian.

To his exalted and illustrious Sovereign, who has graciously extended to him her Royal bounty, it would be presumptuous in him to attempt to express his sense of the honour and the benefit she has conferred upon him ; and while his lamp of life shall last, he will offer up his heartfelt supplications for her long, prosperous, and happy reign.

F. M'L.



Preface to the Second Edition.

vertised, a volume entitled "Memoirs and Incidents of Biography of celebrated Northern Divines of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries"—these from his father's recollections—but the book was never issued. Two of the articles in the Addenda to the present volume—those on the Rev. Murdo Mackenzie and the Rev. John Porteous—were written for the intended work.

It was the privilege of the editor of this edition to have seen and conversed with the Centenarian. In the autumn of 1851 I was employed as the deputy of a benevolent Inverness lady to convey a sum of money to the old man, who then resided with his daughter as housekeeper in a clay "biggin" in Maclean's Close, Muirtown Street. The old man expressed his thanks for the gift in Gaelic—the language, I think, he best understood—and the rest of the conversation was carried on in the same tongue. At this time, according to Finlay Maclean's statements, his father was in his 104th year. His shrivelled-up face, with deep lines, bleared eyes and decrepit form, presented all the appearance of the age claimed for him. He was among the last I saw dressed in a costume that must have been prevalent at one time in Inverness: a blue *cuartear* coat and knee-breeches—both decorated with bright brass buttons—the continuations being deep-ribbed stockings, evidently of home manufacture. On his head he wore one of the long Kilmarnock cowls or nightcaps. A crayon portrait of the Centenarian was taken in this year by a Mr Macarter, drawing master in Dr Bell's Institution. It was a striking likeness of the old man. John Maclean died on the 7th January 1852. The following obituary notice appeared in one of our local prints:—

"The oldest inhabitant of Inverness died on Wednesday. He had reached the seldom-equalled age of one hundred and five years. Of the many local changes that have occurred in that time he was a

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