

said Macleod, 'he made an express condition that the present occupiers, amounting to eight families, should be removed, and accordingly they were driven out in a body.'

The Presbytery of Tongue told the Duchess-Countess that the people of their parish had survived the hard times as a result of her bounty. 'When other districts were left to the precarious supplies of a distant benevolence, your Grace took on yourself the charge of supporting your people. By a constant supply of meal you not only saved them from famine but enabled them to live in comfort.' They hoped that the Almighty would bless her and long spare her for her people.

But within eighteen months she had gone to 'that inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away' (Which is how the Presbytery described her inevitable death). She died at her house in Hamilton Place, London. Mr Loch made all the necessary arrangements, of course. Her coffin was taken to the steamer *City of Aberdeen* at Blackwall in a great hearse, which was draped with black Genoa velvet and emblazoned with the arms of Sutherland and Strathnaver. A mounted man, attended by two pages, carried her coronet on a crimson cushion. He was followed by a long carriage procession of dukes, marquesses, earls and barons. When the steamer arrived at Aberdeen, the coffin was carried by road to Dunrobin Castle where the Duchess-Countess lay in state for three days.

She was buried beside her husband on a bitterly cold day, and once more the people of the parishes were gathered by their ministers. There was undoubtedly genuine sorrow among them, a sense of loss at the passing of the *Ban mhòrair Chataibh* rather than the anglicized wife of an English lord. Her son, the Duke, in one of those spontaneous acts of generosity that contrasted oddly with his more frequent indifference to what his agents were doing, remitted all arrears of rent among the small tenantry. Donald Macleod said that the factors added their own qualification to this - all future defaulters would be instantly removed. Macleod also gave the old woman his own valediction: 'That she had many great and good qualities, none will attempt to deny.... Her severity was felt, perhaps, far beyond her own

intentions, while her benevolence was intercepted by the instruments she employed.'

The death of this last link with the last true Earl of Sutherland may have released some of the people from any strong sense of loyalty to the authority of Dunrobin Castle. Or it may be that in most of them, those below the age of forty, this feeling had no meaning now, for throughout the whole of their lives they had known nothing of that authority but writs of eviction, burnings, famine and emigration. As early as 1816, only the *Military Register* found it significant that soldiers finishing their term of service with the Sutherland Highlanders were refusing to re-enlist in that regiment, saying that they had been betrayed by the removals in Strathnaver, and asking to be re-mustered in the regiments of Ross or Argyll. And the people were no longer afraid of their ministers, seeing them now as creatures of the landlords. The Church was moving toward its great Disruption, and the threat of hell-fire from a churchman had little effect when men saw that while their land was taken from them his glebe was increased. Certainly, in the few years following the death of the Duchess-Countess, there were bitter acts of violence and resistance such as Sutherland had never before known. The greatest of these occurred at Durness in September 1841.

A Low Country man called James Anderson was the principal leaseholder of Keneabin and other farms in the area, which he sublet to a number of small tenants who had tiny crofts of land but whose principal source of living was herring and deep-sea fishing. According to Donald Macleod, Anderson had originally come to the district as a fish-curer, renting the sea to his sub-tenants as if it were land, 'furnishing boats and implements at an exorbitant price while he took their fish at his own price, and thus got them drowned in debt and consequent bondage'. In 1841 he decided to turn his attention to sheep for the more profitable exploitation of his leases. 'With which view,' said the *Inverness Courier* 'it became necessary for him to remove several of the Keneabin people who, besides, had fallen into arrears of their rents.' The reaction of the people was violent.

When a Sheriff-Officer called Campbell came with the writs

in August he was mobbed and his papers were burned. The Superintendent of Police at Dornoch, Philip Mackay, got the same welcome when he rode across to tell the people to behave. He was driven off with sticks and stones, and when he returned with constables they too were routed.

On Friday, 17 September, the Law came back to Keneabin in force, and far south in Edinburgh Castle the 53rd Regiment was put under marching orders in case it should be needed in the north. When Campbell and Mackay had come to Keneabin most of the men of the crofts had been away at sea, and the officers had been driven back by the women, but now men and women were waiting to resist the Sheriff-Substitute, the Procurator-Fiscal and their army of Sheriff-Officers and constables. According to reports there were three hundred people on the cliff road, the men with sticks, the women with aprons full of stones. 'They were all in a highly-excited state,' said the *Courier*, 'using the most threatening language and swearing vengeance against all who dared to lay hands on the rioters.'

With Superintendent Mackay at their head, constables and officers fought their way through the crowd which, at one moment, almost succeeded in tossing Mackay into the sea. Finally the Law reached the Inn of Durine where it decided to spend the night under siege. Doors and windows were barred. At ten o'clock, in the pale light of the northern night, the people launched an assault on the house. They tore up railings and used them to prise open the windows. They broke down the door with blocks of stone. After a furious, clubbing fight, they dragged out the constables and dispersed them over the hills. The Sheriff-Officers escaped through the back of the house, hid in a field of standing corn and in rocks by the shore until dawn, when they escaped toward Loch Erribol.

Having got rid of constables and officers, the people came back to the Inn for the Sheriff and Procurator-Fiscal who, with commendable courage, had stood their ground in their room. They were pulled out, and maintained what they could of their dignity while the people argued what should be done with them. 'Some' proposed to destroy their horses and gigs,' said the *Courier*.

'while others suggested that they should be stripped naked and turned out to the rocks. At length they were compelled to retrace their steps to the nearest inn, about twenty miles distant, which they reached at five in the morning.' And the people of Keneabin went back to their crofts, jubilant.

But a few days later Hugh Lumsden, the Sheriff-Depute of Sutherland, came to Durness with his Clerk, the Procurator-Fiscal, and the threat of ordering the 53rd against Keneabin if it did not obey the Law. The people changed from angry lions to timorous sheep. Under direction from their minister, they wrote a letter to James Anderson and the Sheriff, 'stating their contrition and soliciting forgiveness, and promising to remove voluntarily the May next if permitted in the meantime to occupy their houses'. Anderson grudgingly allowed them to stay until spring, and by the following autumn he had their land under sheep.

In Assynt, two years later, John Macleod, a small tenant at Balhladdich, also stood up against the Duke of Sutherland's factor and refused to be evicted. 'He set his Grace and the managers at utter defiance,' reported the *Courier*, 'in violent and threatening letters which he addressed to them.' He was also a natural leader, a rarity in his race, for he gathered a small band of men and women willing to defend his holding with him. Together they drove the first party of Sheriff-Officers from Balhladdich with sticks and stones. But once again Hugh Lumsden came 'with a sufficient force to teach the deluded people that they would not be allowed again, as in Durness riot, to set the Law at defiance'.

Thirty constables, armed with ash-sticks, came down on Balhladdich, led by Lumsden, the Vice-Lieutenant of the county, the Procurator-Fiscal and several Justices of the Peace. John Macleod was for making a heroic fight of it, but his little army drifted away in despair until he was left alone with his son and two other young men. They were arrested and carried in handcuffs to Dornoch Gaol, eighty miles away.

The Highland people believed that there must be a punishment for the inhumanity with which they were treated. They could