

DEATH OF MR ROBERT MACKAY, DORNOCH.

A NOTED SHOT.

QUEEN'S PRIZE-WINNER IN 1883.

We regret to announce the death of Mr Robert Mackay, Westfield, Dornoch, which took place on Friday morning, 28th August. He had been confined to the house for several weeks, and his death was not unexpected. By his passing away, the Burgh has lost its Senior Bailie, its oldest Town Councillor, both in years and experience, and one who in many ways was a remarkable man.

He was born at Cyderhall, near Dornoch, on the 14th September, 1850, and was a well-known figure in the north. In his early youth, he became enamoured with the volunteers, and as a well grown youth of fourteen, passed into the Dornoch Company, by making his age seventeen. Mastering the simple drill of the period, he was quickly promoted to the rank of Colonel Sergeant. But the rifle shooting, not the drill, attracted him most of all, and we hear of him in 1871 making excellent shooting practice with an old Enfield muzzle loader. At this 1871 meeting on the Dornoch range, he carried off a first class medal and a first class prize value £1, and from then until 1930 he never got tired of his rifle shooting hobby, giving always first class shooting and most of it of a very high standard. In 1878 he (with other good shots of the Sutherland Volunteers) made it a yearly practice to attend the Wimbleton meeting. Many excellent shots went from Sutherland to Wimbleton in those days, but "Rob" (as he was familiarly known), outshone them all. He continued to visit Wimbleton annually from 1878 to 1890, until the great British Shooting Meeting was moved to Bisley. Between 1891 and 1930, he was only absent once (in 1920) when he was ill. His last appearance was in 1930, when, considering his age and failing powers, he did remarkably well. He shot himself into the "King's Hundred" at Bisley, nine times, viz., 1893, 1896, 1897, 1898, 1901, 1905, 1918, 1919, 1920, 1921. The last two years' show, that at "three score and ten," both nerves and sight were unstrained.

"THE QUEEN'S PRIZE."

He won the "Queen's Prize" in 1883. In those days the last stages of the Queen's were at 800 and 900 yards, and the sixty best shots were grouped in what then was the "Queen's Sixty." Twice the late Queen's prizeman succeeded in getting into the "Queen's Sixty"—in 1883 and 1887. In 1883 the "Sixty" took their places as they were called, and one after another shot off with varying success until at 900, the final stage, the coveted trophy lay between Captain Young, Paisley, with a 78, and Colour-Sergeant Mackay, Dornoch, with a 74 and one shot to go, a trying position for any man.

THE "SPOIL SPORT."

During a long shooting career, the late Queen's Prizeman could tell of more than one instance, where his nerves were put to quite unnecessary test by the thoughtless spectators. The following incident happened while 5,000 spectators were gathered round the 900 yards range in 1883, to see Mackay fire the shot which was to win, or lose, the Queen's Prize. We all know how to-day's sports like shooting, golf, etc., demand silence on the part of the spectators when witnessing a critical part of the sport. This is the sporting spectators' "give him a chance" attitude, that is so much admired all over the world. The incident at the 900 yards range took the form of an interruption. Young had "shot his bolt" so to speak for a 79, Mackay with a 74 had to score other five points to win the prize. He had settled down calmly to fire when the dead silence round the range was broken by a voice from among the spectators saying: "Make it an inner Mac, and get even!" The interrupter was quickly nudged quiet, when Mackay, still with his cheek to the butt and his finger on the trigger replied quite calmly: "I'll put up the bull and make sure of it!" and instantly pulling the trigger scored a "dead centre" bull's eye. The tension set up by the interruption got relief in the tremendous roar of applause which acclaimed Mackay the winner.

The day after winning the "Queen's Prize" he won the Olympic and £25, and came home that year with £310 in cash, as well as badges and other trophies.

He received a great reception when arriving home in Dornoch as the Queen's Prizeman. There was no railway to Dornoch in those days. He was met at the top of the brae leading to the town by a large assembly of the community, and he was "chaired" all the way to the Hotel. The Volunteers gave a Ball in his honour, and many congratulatory addresses were made.

A GREAT SHOT.

At the height of his shooting fame, he took part in all the great shooting competitions of Scotland and England, and in the International "shoots" of the three countries. His numerous prizes fill one room in Westfield, Dornoch, and overflow into other rooms. It is impossible in our limited space to chronicle all his prizes, but we give a few of his best:—The Queen's Prize, 1883; two 1st class badges of the Queen's Sixty, 1883-1887; nine 1st class badges of the "King's Hundred," 1893 to 1921; two

first badges of St. George's Wimbleton, 1884-87; two firsts of St. George's Bisley, 1898-1919. Grand aggregate prizes of Wimbleton and Bisley are first gold medal, 1893, first silver medal, 1882; seven bronze crosses of 1886, 1896, 1898, 1899, 1901, 1903, 1905. He shot seven times for Scotland in the International "shoot" against England and Ireland and had seven wins. Silver badges are for 1892, 1893, 1894, 1895, 1897, 1898, 1900. Seven bronze medals of the National Rifle Association, winning seven out of eleven at the S.R.A. ranges. Of the Scottish Twenty Club, he has 4 gold, 1 silver, and 2 bronze medals; three bronze of the Astor Cup competitions; seven badges of the Caledonian Shield Competitions, and 1 grand aggregate at Edinburgh, 1909-10, etc., etc. Other prizes in medals, cups, rifles, pictures, etc., show that he attended with success the shooting meetings at Edinburgh, Glasgow (Darnley), Inverness, Dunrobin, etc. He was presented in 1895 with the long service Volunteer medal, and was at the "Wet Review" at Edinburgh, on August 29, 1881. All his long life he was a teetotaler and non-smoker, and he often said he owed much of his success at shooting to his temperate habits.

Quite apart from his remarkable shooting ability, he had two qualities which will make him long remembered in Dornoch. One was the many quiet acts of kindness done to his friends. At Westfield, he cultivated a large garden of fruit, flowers and vegetables, and he was never done distributing all over the town and parish gifts from his store. His other quality was an extraordinary well developed intuition for forecasting the weather. Whatever instinct told him of approaching storm or other change, he invariably went round the district and gave the warning, fully seven to ten days before-hand. "Rob's storm" has become a well-known saying in town and parish.

For 32 years he was a member of the Dornoch Town Council, filling at various periods the offices of Senior Bailie, Junior Bailie, Dean of Guild, and County Council representative. For many years he was a member of the old School Board, and Parish Council.

FUNERAL.

The funeral on Monday was attended by the Dornoch Town Council and representatives of other public bodies and Shooting Clubs, particularly Edderton Shooting Club, of which he was President.

The service at Westfield was conducted by the Rev. William Macleod, Free Church, and the Rev. John Fraser, West Church, and at the graveside by Dr C. D. Bentinck, Dornoch Cathedral.

S.W.R.I. Annual Exhibition.

The annual exhibition of work, etc., under the auspices of the Scottish Women's Rural Institute (Sutherland Federation), takes place in the Territorial Hall, Dornoch, on Saturday, 12th September. It will be opened by Mrs Sykes, Dornoch Castle, hon. president of the Dornoch Institute, at 2.30 p.m. There will be the usual beautiful and tastefully arrayed exhibits of work, baking, dairy produce, etc. Another feature will be the buffet, where members and their friends can adjourn for a refreshing "cup that cheers but does not inebriate." Members of the Dornoch branch are reminded that contributions, such as edibles, will be appreciated by the local committee. The usual train and bus facilities will suit intending visitors to the exhibition and the Royal Burgh of Dornoch on that date.

CHIEF'S LAST HOMAGE.

PATHETIC INCIDENT OF THE "WET REVIEW."

Much has been written of the fatal results of the "Wet Review," but nothing is more touching than the story of the grand old Highland chief, Duncan Davidson of Tulloch, writes C. R. M. B. in the "Edinburgh Evening News."

Though well on to 90 years of age, he was determined to do homage to his Queen, and, heedless of the advice of his wife and friends, undertook the long journey from Dingwall to Edinburgh. There were no quick trains or motors in those days. Had the weather been fine, all would probably have gone well. As it was, his silver locks uncovered, he sat through all the pitiless downpour, until the Royal carriage was out of sight. He and his relative, Cluny Macpherson were said to be the most handsome and distinguished Highlanders there. He never rose from bed again, and in spite of every attention, in two days was dead.

The old chief had been a special favourite of Royalty from his youth. When a young man, and a great friend of the Prince Regent, he loved to tell of his gay doings in town. He was a guest at the Royal dinner party when a wager was laid of who could say the most impertinent thing. Beau Brummel won easily with "George, ring the bell." The Prince quietly did so, and on the footman's entrance, said, "Order Mr Brummel's carriage!"

Curiously enough, Tulloch fulfilled one of the prophecies of the Brahan Seer, who had predicted more than 200 years before that a laird of Tulloch should have five wives, and be outlived by the fifth. His wives were all beautiful and distinguished women.