



# THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

<b>Title</b>	Early political careers of James "Fingal" Macpherson, 1736-1796, and Sir John Macpherson, Bart., 1744-1821
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<b>Qualification</b>	PhD
<b>Year</b>	1967

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The Early Political Careers

of

James "Fingal" Macpherson  
(1736-1796)

and

Sir John Macpherson, Bart.  
(1744-1821)

A Thesis submitted for the Degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy

by

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B.Litt. (Oxon.)

of

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University of Edinburgh

1967



C O N T E N T S

EXHIBIT 20101101  
P. 101101

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INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

By the time James Macpherson was twenty five he had an international reputation as the translator or author of the poems of Ossian, described by Macpherson as the "son of Fingal", ruler of the ancient kingdom of Morven in the Highlands, but generally regarded as the son of the legendary Irish chieftain Finn MacCoul (or MacCumhail).<sup>1</sup> Whether Macpherson translated or composed the Ossianic sagas, few can fail to admire his ability to compile Fingal, a poem of 10,000 lines, in three months. His critics, however, have been extremely reluctant to accord him any sort of praise. In the last two hundred years they have moved with ever increasing confidence to the conclusion that he was a literary fraud, though most of them have neglected to admit that his frauds not only stimulated the romantic movement in literature, but also established a school of Gaelic scholars, whose attempts to disprove Macpherson's claims have unearthed or saved a mass of valuable material. Those of Macpherson's admirers who have adhered to the belief that he translated his poems from ancient Gaelic documents have tried to support their contention with emotional and spurious arguments, which the critics have countered with the researches of such great Gaelic scholars as John Francis Campbell of Islay, Alexander Carmichael of Lismore, Hector Maclean of Ballygrant, Lachlan Maclean of Arnabost, and Magnus Maclean of Brora. Foremost among these 19th century scholars was John Francis Campbell, who derided his

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1. James Macpherson's friends called him "Fingal", which tactfully implied that they accepted his claim to be a translator. His enemies called him "Ossian", which stressed their belief that this was James's pseudonym, and that he was the author of the Fingalian epics. Since his death most writers, whether for or against him, have referred to him as "Ossian" without realising, perhaps, that he would have regarded this description as an insult. In this thesis he is referred to by the name accorded to him by his friends.

fellow Highlander in these words:

"That pestilent Scotchman has shaken the whole system, to make Caledonian Epics with fragments of the ruin he created. To smash Stonehenge and build a Parthenon; to hew modern antiques out of the Elgin Marbles; to paint pictures by Zeuxis upon Raphael's Cartoons; or to write Cuneiform Inscriptions on the Book of Kells, could hardly afflict antiquaries more than the publications of Macpherson." 1

It was a harsh comment; but Campbell, and many others, may have taken too seriously a work which Macpherson himself may have regarded as a means to an end. Indeed, those who have written about James Macpherson have been so engrossed with the Fingalian controversy that they have tended to diminish his other activities as an historian, as a political journalist, and as an agent of the Nawab of Arcot. More important still, they have ignored his role as the political partner of John Macpherson, who succeeded Warren Hastings and preceded Lord Cornwallis as Governor General of India.

Nine years separated the births of James and John Macpherson, but that slight difference in time probably influenced their motives for succeeding in life. James was ten when the Jacobites were defeated at Culloden: John was still a baby. One could remember the clan system, the other could not. James, the grandson of a bastard brother of the Macpherson chieftain, belonged to the past; and his private ambition was to be the Macpherson who led his fellow-clansmen back to their rightful place in Highland society. John, the son of an educated vassal of the paramount Macdonald chieftain, rejected the past; and his private ambition was to be accepted as an equal<sup>2</sup> by his social superiors, especially those who wore crowns or coronets. In short:

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1. J.F. Campbell of Islay, Leabhar na Feinne, London, 1872, p. 180.

2. E.U.L. MSS., Dc 4.41, Letter 10, Sir John Macpherson to Dr. Alexander Carlyle, 7 February 1794 - "The society of Princes, Kings and Emperors, and if you will of Cardinals and Popes, is a very good one...We attach ourselves to them as we do to actors who engage our admiration. It is a great discovery to find that there are some of them whom one can and must love as if they were equals. It is my constant disposition, and that turn of mind has been my happiness, never to harbour dislike."

James longed to regain the prestige of being a feudal master in Badenoch, while John wished to show that he was as good as the feudal master of his childhood in Skye. In order to realise these dreams they made the most of every opportunity which came their way. Frequently they mistimed or misjudged a situation, or they inadvertently took opposite lines; but, by the time they had completed their early careers, they had learned enough to minimise the risk of repeating these errors in their later careers. Anyone who threatened their dreams, or otherwise stood in their way, was dealt with ruthlessly. They rarely, if ever, questioned the morality or justice of their actions; and they moved towards their goals, sometimes very slowly, but always with self-assurance and relentless determination.

Their personalities, temperaments and family backgrounds had little in common, but, in spite of these differences, they were drawn together by mutual acquaintances, similar interests, and complementary abilities. It was John who made most of the moves on the open stage, but it was James who finally directed the performance from the shadows of the wings, and it was James who proved to be the slightly stronger member of the partnership. Part of his strength was due to the fact that he had several years' experience of dealing with politicians before John was old enough to join him. Their joint careers covered two periods: from 1768 to 1778; and from 1778 to 1786. This thesis covers their early careers until 1778. In that year the political adventurer Lauchlin Maclean died, and this event gave the Macphersons the chance to exploit all the skill, money and trust they had accumulated up to that date. After 1778 their careers were much more interesting, and they moved forward at a faster pace, but they worked in new settings.

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My previous research was concerned with the career of Lauchlin Maclean; and it seemed logical to carry the Macphersons' careers up to the date of his death and no further. This not only allowed me to consolidate my examination of the first period

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1. J.N.M. Maclean, Lauchlin Maclean and his connexion with East India Company Politics: 1773-1778, (Unpublished B.Litt. Thesis), Oxford, 1965.

in which political adventurers acted as agents for European or native principals in India, but also gave me the opportunity to assess and re-assess how the actions of Macleane affected the Macphersons, and how their actions affected him. I have not, however, said more about Macleane than was absolutely necessary. This thesis is written strictly from the Macphersons' point of view.

The following table of agents who formally, informally, or even nominally, acted as the London representatives of the Nawab of Arcot and Warren Hastings may serve to clarify the period mentioned above.

	Mohammed Ali Khan, Nawab of Arcot		Warren Hastings
Dates	Principal Agent	Auxiliary Agent	Agent or Agents
First Period			
1768 - 1770	John Macpherson	-	-
1771 - 1774	The Nawab had access to the British Government through Sir John Lindsay & his successor Sir Robert Harland, the Crown Plenipotentiaries, who were credited to the Nawab's Durbar		-
1775 - 1777	Lauchlin Macleane	James Johnson	Lauchlin Macleane and John Graham
1777 - 1778	Lauchlin Macleane	Frederick Stuart	Lauchlin Macleane
Second Period			
1778 - 1780	John Macpherson	James Macpherson	John Macpherson
1781 - 1785	James Macpherson	Nathaniel Wraxall	John Scott-Waring
1786 - 1793	James Macpherson	John Macpherson	-

The purposes of this thesis could be summarised as follows:

1. To examine the joint and separate careers of James and John Macpherson until 1778; and to place James Macpherson's literary interests in perspective, by showing them as the means to an end, and not an end in themselves.
2. To trace the personal motives which governed the Macphersons' public actions, and to show how these personal motives affected their dealings with such men as Leuchlin Maclean and Warren Hastings.
3. To illustrate the modus operandi of two successful political adventurers.
4. To identify all the people with whom the Macphersons had any dealings until 1778.
5. To identify, as far as available evidence allows, all the pseudonyms which they used as political journalists until 1778.
6. To provide a background for the study of their later careers.
7. To examine all their correspondence (especially their Gaelic correspondence) until 1778. Some of these letters are quoted in extenso to show:

(A) what was important or unimportant when they wrote to each other in their native tongue.

(B) what interest (or, more often, lack of interest) they had in the political issues in which they were involved.

(C) what sort of men they were. In their letters they reveal their characters. Paraphrasing their letters could, in many instances, obscure rather than define their attitudes. This is particularly true in the case of John Macpherson, who wrote in a haphazard fashion. To quote small parts instead of whole sections of his letters could distort the impressions he was trying to create.

It would, perhaps, be of some value to say something about the sources on which this thesis has been based; and to make some remarks on sources which have eluded discovery.

Sources: James Macpherson

A. Manuscripts: The papers of James Macpherson, if they still exist, belong to the

present owner of the estate and house of Balavil, Mrs. H.E. Brewster-Macpherson, who lives in a cottage on her estate at Lynchat, near Kingussie, Inverness-shire. In the hope of obtaining some information about these papers I telephoned Mrs. Brewster-Macpherson on Saturday, 14th May 1966, and she very kindly invited both my wife and myself to tea. We spent a very pleasant afternoon with Mrs. Brewster-Macpherson on 21st May, but she changed the subject every time we tried to talk about James Macpherson or his manuscripts, although she was willing to show us some of the professionally-bound manuscripts which had belonged to Sir David Brewster, James Macpherson's son-in-law. After four hours all we learned was:

- (1) That James Macpherson's papers had been destroyed in a fire in Balavil House in 1917.
- (2) That the portrait of James Macpherson by George Romney had recently been given to the Baxters (of Gilston in Fife), who are descended from James Macpherson.
- (3) That among the collection of gold and silver pieces she had in the cottage were two items which she claimed had been the property of James Macpherson. The first of these was a beautiful silver seal, engraved with a series of Persian characters in reverse. As there was no sealing wax available I was unable to make an impression of the characters, but there can be little doubt that they represented the cypher of the Nawab of Arcot, and that James Macpherson had probably owned it when he was the Nawab's agent. The second piece was a silver mug, inscribed as follows:

$\begin{array}{c} 4 \\ S \\ R \div   \div K \\ \hline 1746 \end{array}$	<u>OR</u>	$\begin{array}{c} 4 \\ 5 \\ R \div   \div K \\ \hline 1746 \end{array}$
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According to Mrs. Brewster-Macpherson this was James Macpherson's christening mug, and she maintained this view even when I pointed out, as tactfully as I could, that James Macpherson was born in 1736, and that his family had been too poor to afford such luxuries. I could not, however, offer an alternative explanation for the inscription.



(4) That Dr. W. Douglas Simpson, C.B.E., the Librarian of Aberdeen University, had written several letters (which were shown to me) asking for details of James Macpherson's career, but that Mrs. Brewster-Macpherson had declined to reply. She explained that she very rarely answered letters, and that she answered the telephone on Saturday mornings only. If there were any papers about the place which she had not seen she thought they might be in her late husband's desk, but she was reluctant to disturb anything in this desk. She left all her business to her factors, Messrs. Brodies.

Since visiting Mrs. Brewster-Macpherson I have, of course, discussed the matter with my supervisor Professor D.B. Horn, who advised me to consult Mr. A.M. Broom, an Assistant Keeper at the Scottish Record Office, who is responsible for surveying all private collections. When I spoke to Mr. Broom he had nothing much to add. He had tried to see Mrs. Brewster-Macpherson two years ago, but had been obliged to deal with Messrs. Brodies. They had admitted the existence of papers which had belonged to Sir David Brewster, and gave him full details about them, but all they would say about the Macpherson papers was that they had been destroyed in a fire in Balavil House in 1903. The date, it will be noticed, does not coincide with the one given to me by Mrs. Brewster-Macpherson. As a last resort, therefore, I consulted Captain J.H.C. Macpherson, the Secretary/Librarian of the Clan Macpherson Museum in Newtonmore, who is in constant touch with a wide circle of people in the Newtonmore-Kingussie district. His enquiries have shown that there are many people in the area whose memories reach back to the beginning of this century, but not one of them can recall a fire in Balavil House in 1903 or 1917, or at any other time. It is certain that the troops who were billeted in Balavil House in the last war did some damage, but they never set any part of the house alight. Having tried but failed to gain some information about James Macpherson's papers I was obliged to complete this thesis without any reference to them. There can be no doubt, however, that they survived James Macpherson's death.

When he made his will in 1793 he left his literary papers to John Mackenzie of Fig Tree Court in the Inner Temple, and Mackenzie in turn, left them to Alexander Fraser of the Leadclune family. Fraser still had them in 1807, but they were lost sight of after that date, and have never been seen since. The rest of Macpherson's papers passed into the hands of Sir David Brewster, who referred to them on three occasions: twice in connection with Lauchlin Macleane and the Junius mystery; and once in a biographical article on James Macpherson. In 1865, three years before Brewster died, one of the servants at Balavil stole some (but not all) of James Macpherson's papers and disappeared. Since then nothing more has been heard about the collection. There are, of course, papers of James Macpherson in other collections and these have been used in this thesis.

B. Printed Sources: James Macpherson has been mentioned in a large number of articles and books, but "sources" is used here to mean those works devoted entirely to him. He wrote very little about himself. The introductions to his literary and historical works supply only a few incidental facts about his career. The first publication to

1. The evidence for the first occasion is to be found in B.M. Add. MSS. 40764, f. 158, David Brewster's "Memorandum of a Conversation with Mr. Bell", which took place in Edinburgh on 10th April 1822, in the presence of Alexander Hunter, W.S. During this conversation Brewster showed Bell a letter from Macleane to Redhead, which came from the papers of James Macpherson. Brewster did not identify "Mr. Bell", but he could have been Carlyle Bell (b. 1780), the 8th son of Captain Thomas Bell, a broker in Aldermanbury, London, in 1769, who had married, in 1760, Janet Carlyle, sister of Dr. Alexander "Jupiter" Carlyle of Inveresk, the friend of James and John Macpherson (see Carlyle's Autobiography, pp. 25, 59, 433, and 523). Captain Thomas Bell had been one of the members of the Royal Society of Arts who, in 1769, had tried to force the election of John Stewart, the friend of Lauchlin Macleane. The evidence for the second occasion on which Brewster mentioned the Macpherson papers is to be found in Macleane was Junius, by Sir David Brewster and George Wingrove Cooke, in the North British Review, Vol. 10 (1848/49), p. 140. In this article there are several references to letters written by Lauchlin Macleane in the papers of James Macpherson kept by Brewster.
2. James Macpherson, by Sir David Brewster, The Edinburgh Encyclopaedia, Vol. 13, 1830, pp. 222-224. In this article Brewster stated that he had obtained his information from the collection of James Macpherson's letters in his possession.

contain any biographical details was the Report of the Committee of the Highland Society of Scotland, appointed to inquire into the Nature and Authenticity of Ossian, which appeared in 1805, but this concerned his work on Highland poetry, and was limited to an examination of his life between 1758 and 1764. The first review of his whole life was published in 1830 in Volume 13 of The Edinburgh Encyclopaedia by Sir David Brewster, who edited the entire work as well as contributing a short article on his father-in-law. This article, which concentrated on James Macpherson's literary interests, and defended his claim to be the translator of the Fingalian epics, formed the basis for all subsequent works on Macpherson. It is a great pity that Brewster, who had so much material at his disposal, wrote so little. Apart from a few comments on appointments and salaries he practically ignored Macpherson's political career. What he did say was repeated by T.B. Saunders, who wrote the article on James Macpherson in the Dictionary of National Biography, and also published the first full length biography of James Macpherson in 1895. In spite of its title - The Life and Letters of James Macpherson - the book is virtually a defence of Macpherson's claim to be a translator; and his activities as a political journalist and as an agent of the Nawab of Arcot are dealt with briefly as part of one chapter. J.S. Smart, who published James Macpherson: An Episode in Literature in 1905, made no pretence of writing a full biography. He confined himself to a scholarly review of the Fingalian controversy, and he added nothing about Macpherson's political career. The same can be said about Professor D.S. Thomson's The Gaelic Sources of Macpherson's "Ossian", which was published in 1951. Professor Thomson devoted the whole of this book to an examination of Macpherson's texts; and he said nothing about Macpherson's career until 1963, when he wrote "Ossian" Macpherson and the Gaelic World of the Eighteenth Century for the Aberdeen University Review. Professor Thomson did not, however, include any new biographical details in this article. Indeed, not one of the publications mentioned so far has given more than passing notice of Macpherson's interests in history, politics, and journalism.

But this does not mean that these aspects of his career have been neglected by scholars. Professor D.B. Horn has accorded James Macpherson the credit he deserved as an historian in "Some Scottish Writers of History in the Eighteenth Century", which was published in the Scottish Historical Review in 1961; and Dr. L.S. Sutherland has examined the political careers of both James and John Macpherson in The East India Company in Eighteenth-Century Politics, which first appeared in 1952.

Sources: John Macpherson

A. Manuscripts: The papers of John Macpherson (over 200 bundles containing an average of 10 documents in each bundle) are kept by Professor C.H. Philips, Director of the School of Oriental and African Studies, in the University of London. When Professor Philips gave me permission to use the papers for my research he said that the pencilled notes on the documents were in the hand of his predecessor Professor H.H. Dodwell.

Professor Dodwell died on 30th October 1946, shortly after he retired as the Director of the School of Oriental and African Studies. In 1927 he published Warren Hastings' Letters to Sir John Macpherson, the first sentence of the preface of which reads as follows:

"The letters and other papers here printed have been in the continuous possession of Sir John Macpherson's family down to the present day."

And that was all Professor Dodwell said about the origin or ownership of the papers in the whole of his work. Sir John Macpherson, who died in 1821, left all his papers to his second cousin, Professor Hugh Macpherson of Aberdeen University,

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1. Hugh Macpherson (1767-1854), eldest surviving son of the Rev. Martin Macpherson, minister of Golspie. He graduated M.A. at King's College, Aberdeen in 1788, and M.D. at the University of Edinburgh in 1794. He was successively Professor of Hebrew (1793), Professor of Greek (1797), and Sub-Principal (1817) of King's College, Aberdeen. He married, firstly, Ann Maria (d. 1807), daughter of Samuel Charters; and secondly, Christian (d. 1860), daughter of Professor Roderick Macleod of the Talisker family, Principal of King's College, Aberdeen. See: Fasti Ecc. Scot., Vol. 7, p. 368.



by William Playfair in Volume 7 of British Family Antiquity, which appeared in 1811. It is a eulogy rather than a biography, and it has to be regarded with caution. Works such as the History of Hindostan, to which Macpherson contributed a section as the co-adjutor of Alexander Dow, contain no biographical details; and there are very few personal comments in Macpherson's The First and Second Letter to a Noble Earl, published in 1797, or in Macpherson's Verses addressed to the Archduke Charles, which is dated 1807. The following year there appeared The Case of Sir John Macpherson, Baronet, late Governor General of India: containing a Summary Review of his Administration and Services; prepared by Friends from Authentic Documents, August, 1808, which was printed and distributed in London, but bears the unusual caption "Not Published" on the title-page. This work, which may have been written by Macpherson himself, is heavily biased in his favour, but it contains some valuable information on his career after 1781. Nothing else appeared in his lifetime. For many years after his death he attracted little notice. The first to write anything at length was G.P. Moriarty, who, in 1893, contributed the article on Sir John Macpherson in the Dictionary of National Biography. Care should be taken when using this entry, as a great deal of what Moriarty said was obviously based on Playfair's eulogy. In 1927 two works were published. The first of these was Sir Harry Cotton's An Artist and his Fees: The Story of the Suit brought by Ozias Humphry, R.A. against Sir John Macpherson in the Supreme Court at Calcutta in March 1787, the subject of which is explained by the sub-title. The second was Professor H.H. Dodwell's Warren Hastings' Letters to Sir John Macpherson, which was mentioned earlier, under manuscript sources. As the title indicates, all the letters printed in this work were written by Hastings, and Macpherson is treated as a subordinate character. The only book to contain the full texts of letters written by Macpherson is The Private Correspondence of Lord Macartney, Governor of Madras (1781-85), which was edited by Dr. C.C. Davies for the Camden Series of the Royal Historical Society in 1950. Since that date the only biographical article to appear which is devoted

entirely to Sir John Macpherson is given in Volume 3 of Sir Lewis Namier and John Brooke's edition of The House of Commons: 1754-1790, published in 1964. This is a short survey article written by Mr. J.A. Cannon, who also contributed the short survey article on James Macpherson in the same volume.

#### MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

Dates: Whenever dates occur before September 1752 I have found it suitable to give the actual day and month according to the Old Style Calendar, and the year according to the New Style Calendar. Thus: the 1st January 1728 O.S. is not rendered as 12th January 1729 N.S., but as 1st January 1729.

Texts: When quoting from documents in English I have adhered to the original spelling and capitalisation, but I have occasionally introduced punctuation. James Macpherson was very attentive to accurate punctuation, but John Macpherson generally used a dash to represent any sort of pause, and he sometimes wrote long passages without a single punctuation mark, not even a dash. I have been careful not to introduce punctuation marks when this could lead to the wrong interpretation of an ambiguous sentence. When spelling Indian proper names I have tried to follow the principles recommended by Professor C.H. Philips in The Handbook of Oriental History (1951), but I have adhered to the Anglicized versions of well-known Indian places. When quoting from documents in Gaelic I have given an exact transcript of the original spelling, punctuation and capitalisation; and the accompanying translations have been rendered as literal and, therefore, rather clumsy interpretations, in order to ensure that the margin of error caused by translation has been kept as slight as possible. Translating the Gaelic correspondence of James and John Macpherson was a tedious task, and I am extremely grateful for the work done by the Rev. Donald Cameron, M.A., B.Sc., the minister of Blair Atholl, Perthshire, a native of the West Highlands, and a painstaking scholar of Old Gaelic, with special knowledge of the Gaelic idioms used in Badenoch, where James Macpherson was born. I am also grateful for help I received from Mr. Neil Morrison, M.A., of Carbost, Isle of Skye, who has

special knowledge of the Gaelic idioms used in Skye, where John Macpherson was born. In some cases I have reached a decision on the meaning of a Gaelic sentence, or a series of nouns, for which Mr. Cameron or Mr. Morrison could offer no interpretations, and any defects in these interpretations are my responsibility alone.

It should be explained that both James and John Macpherson wrote crude Gaelic, which deteriorated as they grew older, and their forms of phonetic spelling were very different. James adopted spellings which, in some cases, came very near to the standard spellings now in use, but John used a crude shorthand of his own, which bears no resemblance to modern Gaelic. Both of them used the language with the confidence of a native speaker who has allowed his command of his native tongue to decline for want of practice. By the time they used Gaelic for secret communications - after 1770 - they had forgotten many nouns, and were no longer capable of constructing complicated sentences. They even, on occasions, used the wrong tenses for verbs, and, in place of some Gaelic nouns, they used English nouns with Gaelic suffixes, or, worse still, they translated English idioms directly into Gaelic. James, in particular, used what has been described as "Putney Heath Gaelic", and it is clear that after 1770 he thought in English whenever he wrote Gaelic. The result was rather strange, and can be compared to Field Marshal Montgomery's use of French. In the last war he wanted to tell General Leclerc that a certain battle in the desert had been won with ease. "Il était l'argent pour la confiture," remarked Montgomery, wishing to show that he had enough French to dispense with an interpreter. To which the puzzled Leclerc, not knowing why the battle had been money for jam, gave the only polite but non-committal answer he could think of: "Formidable!" Montgomery had used accurate but incomprehensible French. In the same way, James Macpherson occasionally used accurate but equally incomprehensible Gaelic, or he violated Gaelic idioms, or he used English idioms which were meaningless in Gaelic. It was James's use of Gaelic which made 19th century scholars pour withering scorn on his Fingalian epice. As Hector Maclean of Ballygrant wrote:



"The difficulty of understanding the epic poems does not lie in ancient forms of speech, or in old obsolete words, but in the strange liberty that is taken with words by using them in quite a new way, and in arranging them in a manner that is incomprehensible to those whose native language Gaelic is, unless they happen to know English or some classical tongue. In many lines the words only are Gaelic; the structure has nothing to do with that language. The sentences may be English, or Latin, or Greek; may, in fact, be specimens of a new universal language, but they are not Gaelic. ... Some lines prove to be nonsense when closely examined. Bad grammar and violated idiom abound everywhere. Adjectives of more than one syllable are placed before substantives, which is much the same as if we were to say in English: 'There is a horse beautiful;' or 'O what a house elegant!'" 1

If Hector Maclean and the other scholars who tore the Fingalian epics to shreds had seen the Macphersons' Gaelic correspondence, they would, in Mr. Cameron's opinion, have settled the Fingalian controversy once and for all a hundred years ago. Nonetheless, although the Macphersons' letters were written in odd Gaelic, they served an important purpose; and they used their rusty knowledge of that tongue to convey news to each other about their political manoeuvres. Their letters are, therefore, of great interest to historians.

Throughout this thesis square brackets have been used in both Gaelic and English texts in a conventional manner. That is, they encompass letters, or words, or phrases, which were omitted or were illegible in the original documents; or they encompass explanatory words or phrases.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In compiling this thesis I have had the privilege of being supervised by

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1. In Popular Tales of the West Highlands, ed. J.F. Campbell of Islay, Edinburgh, Vol. 4, p. 159.

Professor D.B. Horn, to whom I owe a great debt. Although restraint in showing gratitude is essential on these occasions, I must record my sincerest thanks not only for his many acts of unobtrusive kindness, but also for his constant interest and for his many valuable suggestions and criticisms. Needless to add, all the errors and opinions in this thesis are mine alone.

I am also very grateful for the assistance given to me by: Mrs. H.E. Brewster-Macpherson of Balavil; Captain J.H.C. Macpherson, the Secretary/Librarian of the Clan Macpherson Museum, Newtonmore; Lady Anderson (wife of Sir James Drummond Anderson), of Reigate, Surrey, for giving me a full report on the papers in the possession of her brother, Brigadier A.D. Macpherson of Cluny, D.S.O., M.C., Chief of the Clan Macpherson, of Blairgowrie House, Perthshire; Dame Flora Macleod of Macleod, D.B.E., Chief of the Clan Macleod, of Dunvegan Castle, Isle of Skye, for entertaining myself and my wife so well in August 1965, and for allowing me unrestricted access to all the papers in her Muniments Room; Dr. Isabel F. Grant, M.B.E., of 35 Heriot Row, Edinburgh, for letting me have her personal check-list of all the materials in the Macleod Muniments Room, which she organised some years ago; Mr. R. M. Ogilvie, Fellow and Tutor in Classics, Balliol College, Oxford, for his advice on the classical sources of quotations used by the Macphersons; Miss B.L.H. Horn, of the Scottish Record Office, for drawing my attention to references to James Macpherson in the Cluny-Macpherson Muniments, and for other help; Dr. T.I. Rae, of the National Library of Scotland, for drawing my attention to Macpherson references in the unclassified Stuart-Stevenson MSS.; Miss C.M. Armet, Archivist to the Marquess of Bute, who kindly brought the necessary Bute MSS. from the Isle of Bute to Edinburgh, so that I could inspect them; Lt. Colonel C.B. Appleby, D.S.O., Director of the National Army Museum at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, for allowing me unrestricted access to the Hodson Collection; Mr. Malcolm Innes of Edingight, Q.C., The Lyon Clerk, for searching the records in Lyon Office for Macpherson documents; Miss P.M. Downie, The Reference Librarian, Edinburgh University Library, and Mr. C.P.

Finlayson, The Keeper of Manuscripts, Edinburgh University Library, for the trouble they both have taken on several occasions to locate books or manuscripts; Mr. John Moffat, Barrister-at-Law, Lecturer in Public Law in Edinburgh University, for advice on legal causes; Mr. E.R. Gregeen, Lecturer in the School of Scottish Studies, Edinburgh University, for his advice on the papers held by the Duke of Argyll; the Rev. Donald Cameron, minister of Blair Atholl, and Mr. Neil Morrison, of Carboist, Isle of Skye, for their work on the Gaelic correspondence; and my youngest brother Ian W.F. Maclean, of Wadham College, Oxford, for spending some of his own research time to survey the Grafton MSS., and for his efforts to trace the Memorial Plaque of Sir John Macpherson, which was fixed to the wall of St. Anne's Church, Soho, until the building was destroyed by a bomb in the last war.

My thanks are also due to Mrs. C.B. Walgate, who typed chapters 1 to 5, and the introduction and appendices to this thesis; and Miss E.G. Whitelaw, who typed chapters 6 and 7, for their kindness in getting the task done so quickly and so well.

Lastly, I owe a great debt to my wife, Virginia, both for her moral support, and for the willingness with which she has given up her holidays and leisure hours to help me with the work of transcribing documents.

Room 268,  
Old College,  
University of Edinburgh.

J.N.M.M.  
14th April 1967.

POST-EXAMINATION NOTES

1. Oral Examination. This was held in Old College on 6th June 1967, by:

Dr. L.S. Sutherland, C.B.E., M.A., D.Litt., (External Examiner),

and Professor D.B. Horn, M.A., D.Litt., (Internal Examiner).

Both examiners required certain modifications to be made to the thesis (mostly to a section of Chapter 6), which necessitated a short period of further research at the India Office Library. These modifications (now completed) have had a slight effect on the pagination; and the further research has produced some additions to the Bibliography.

2. Pagination. Pages 173 and 198 no longer exist. The pages now run as follows:

... 171, 172, 174, 175, ...; and ... 196, 197, 199, 200, ... By a previous oversight two pages were given the number 260. To avoid confusion the second of these pages has been given the number 260a. The pages now run as follows: ... 259, 260, 260a, 261, 262. ...

3. Bibliography. Additions are as follows:

A. Manuscript Sources (from the India Office Library, London):

Despatches to Madras, Vol. 6 (1774-75); Vol. 7 (1776-78).

General Letters from Madras, Vol. 5 (1770-71); Vol. 6 (1772-73), Vol. 7 (1774-76).

Madras Civil Servants, Vol. 1a (1768-80).

Personal Records, Vols. 1, 3, 4, 7, 14 and 15.

Home Miscellaneous Series, Vols. 267, 268, 269 and 270.

B. Printed Sources:

The Statutes at Large, Vol. 11 (10. Geo. III-13. Geo. III), London, 1774.

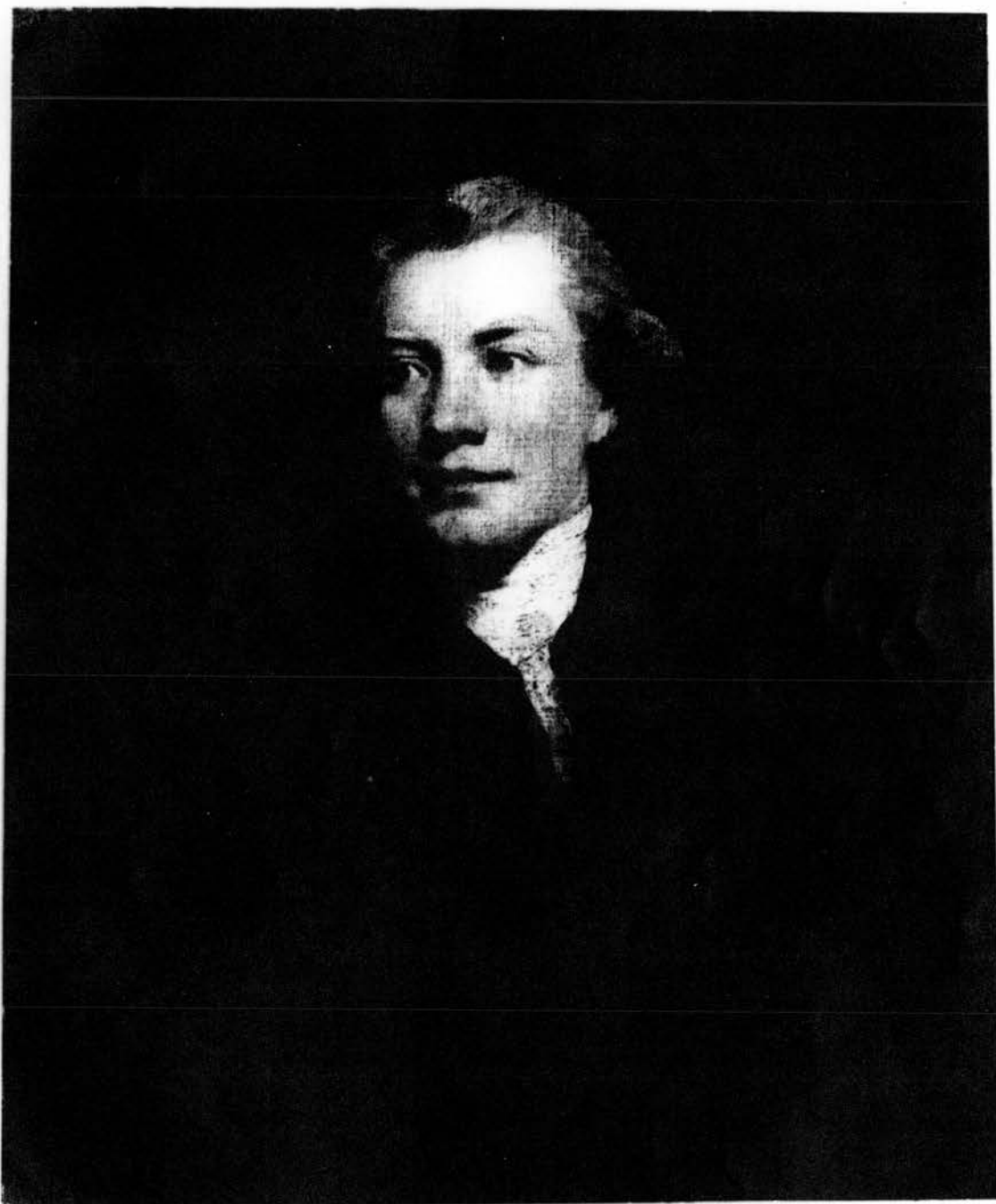
The Diaries of Col. the Hon. Robert Fulke Greville, ed. Frank McKno Bladon, London, 1930.

Calendar of Hume MSS., in Proceedings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, Vol. 52 (1932).

4. Further Acknowledgements. I am indebted to Dr. Sylvia L. England and to Mr. P.J. Jones, Assistant Librarian, India Office Library, who both took special trouble to ensure that all the records I needed were immediately available for consultation. I am more than grateful to Mrs. C.B. Walgate, who retyped the pages which needed modification or amendment. Without her kindness and efficiency, this thesis would not have been finished on time.



James "Fingal" Macpherson  
(1736-1796)  
by Sir Joshua Reynolds



Sir John Macpherson, Bt.

(1744-1821)

by Sir Joshua Reynolds

CHAPTER 1

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The background of James and John Macpherson.

Chapter 1. The background of James and John Macpherson.

For many generations the history of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland was transmitted by oral recitation. Today, there are still Highland storytellers who can recite for the benefit of collectors, but it is difficult to believe that they are the heirs of the oral tradition which existed before the passing of the Crofters' Act in 1886. Even John Campbell of Islay and Dr. Alexander Carmichael, when they were making their famous collections in the 1850's and 1860's, discovered that much of the spirit necessary for the survival of sagas had already been killed by the demoralising effect of the 'Clearances'. All they managed to save were fragments of the once great canon of epics. Modern Gaelic bards may have the manner and skill of their ancestors, but their material reflects the attitude of small-holders and peasants, not the arrogance of a proud militant race who delighted in giants, heroes, fairies and mysteries.

The present vogue for collecting 'folk' history is probably a reaction to the nostalgic Jacobite ballads, which glamourize the Stuarts, the clansmen who

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1. John Francis Campbell of Islay (1821-1885) and Alexander Carmichael (1834-1912) were the two greatest collectors of Highland stories and poems in the 19th century. Campbell's Popular Tales of the West Highlands and Carmichael's Carmina Gadelica rank as the main sources for research into Highland culture.



fought for them, and the beautiful country where much of the fighting took place. Widespread popular interest in history is generally founded on myths or distortions and oversimplifications of the truth, and there can be no doubt that the popular ideas on Highland history have such a basis. The Jacobite ballads have helped, but so has the part played by Highland soldiers in war. The colourful picture of kilted troops charging into battle to the skirl of bagpipes has captured the imagination of many people, particularly Englishmen, who two hundred years ago would have despised the men, the garb and the instrument.

Initial recognition was won by the Highlanders proving their worth to Britain at the time of the Seven Years' war. By the end of the Napoleonic wars contempt for them had gradually given way to grudging respect. Further recognition had to wait until the House of Hanover, in the person of George IV, came to Edinburgh in 1822. By cramming his awkward frame into full Highland dress, he set the seal of royal approval upon the once despised garments, and, incidentally, helped to give 'authority' to the large number of 'clan' tartans invented in the same decade by the Sobieski Stuart brothers. It only needed Queen Victoria to

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1. John Sobieski Stuart (c. 1797-1872) and Charles Edward Stuart (c. 1799-1880) were the sons of Lt. Thomas Allen R.N. (d. 1852), later (1829) called Thomas Stuart-Hay, who was said to be the son of Prince Charles Edward Stuart, but was undoubtedly the son of Admiral John Carter Allen, R.N. (d. 1800). The brothers Stuart were born Allen, but were known as Allan (by 1822), as Hay-Allan (by 1829), as Allan-Hay (by 1830) and as Stuart (by 1836), and from 1839/...

choose Balmoral as her favourite residence and the kilted ghillie John Brown as her resident favourite for the acceptance of all things Highland to be virtually complete. Final recognition was followed by the tartan fever. Manufacturers of tartan cloth and publishers of potted clan histories nourished the disease and, with the help of Scottish drapers, turned it into an epidemic. Nowadays, boards outside the shops of drapers dealing in tartan goods assure the public, no matter how outlandish some of their names might be, that the vast majority of them belong to a Highland clan, and are 'entitled' to wear its 'ancient' tartan. Mythology in the guise of history has become big business.

Some of the factors mentioned above contributed directly or indirectly to the growth of myths, but none equalled the contribution made by writers. Robert Louis Stevenson with such works as Kidnapped helped in the process, but he was only building on the skilful propaganda of Sir Walter Scott, whose Lord of the Isles and Rob Roy made the Highlanders figures of popular romance. Scott's

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1. (continued) 1839 used the style Comte d'Albanie. For their lives and their writings see Hugh Beveridge, The Sobieski Stuarts, Inverness, 1909. Their book of invented tartans, Vestiarium Scoticum, was finished by 1829, but not published until 1842. It was widely used as an 'authority' while still in a manuscript form.

1. See my articles Highland Tartans and Highland Carb, L.S.R.G., Vol. LIX, (1954), pp. 274-279, and 300-303.

contribution was significant, but he too was late in the field. The person primarily responsible for planting many of the roots from which the modern myths have grown was himself the victim of a myth, and, in spite of the suspicion which surrounds his work, an undoubted leader of the romantic movement in literature; namely James Macpherson, the author or translator of Ossian's 'Fingal' and Ossian's 'Temora'.<sup>1</sup>

Since Macpherson published these epics in the early 1760's controversy has raged over their authenticity, and continued to rage in spite of the publication in 1805 of the thorough and scrupulously impartial Report of the Committee of the Highland Society on the Poems of Ossian. This controversy will certainly not be continued in this thesis, the purpose of which is to examine the early political careers of James Macpherson and his friend John Macpherson, who succeeded Warren Hastings as Governor General of India in 1785. Any discussion of their writings will be confined to the influence they had on their authors' careers.

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1. Fingal, an Ancient Epic Poem, in Six Books; together with several other Poems, composed by Ossian, the Son of Fingal. Translated from the Galic Language by James Macpherson, London & Edinburgh, 1761; and Temora, an Ancient Epic Poem, in Eight books; together with several other Poems, composed by Ossian, the Son of Fingal. Translated from the Galic language by James Macpherson, London, 1763.

It has always been assumed that James and John were closely related. This was not so. It is important to settle the question of their relationship, and equally important to explain why James was the victim of a myth. Their backgrounds, and the special significance James seemed to place on his, help to throw some light on their extraordinary characters. It is, therefore, necessary to say something about the clans in general and the Macphersons in particular.

One of the popular misconceptions about clans is that all people bearing the same surname are descended in the paternal line from the same ancestor. This is not true.<sup>1</sup> A name where the prefix 'Mac' (Son) is followed by a proper noun, such as Macdonald, can be a patronymic or a tribal name; and the same applies to a name where the prefix 'Mac' is followed by a common noun, such as Macpherson (meaning son of the parson). In short: there are many Macdonalds who are descended from genuine members of that tribe, but there are probably many more who are descended from 'mac Donalds', whose fathers had the Christian name Donald

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1. See G.F. Black, The Surnames of Scotland: Their Origin, Meaning & History, (New York, 1946), intro., pp. xxiv-xliv; and my article Highland Surnames, L.S.R.G., Vol. LIX, (1954), pp. 248-252; and Professor Gordon Donaldson, (ed.), Common Errors in Scottish History, Historical Association Pamphlet (General Series G. 32), 1956.

but whose tribe was not Macdonald. Similarly, in addition to the Macphersons who can prove a descent from the small clan of that name which originated in Badenoch, there are probably many whose ancestors were sons of persons having no connection with the Badenoch tribe.

Another popular misconception about clans is that for every tribal surname there is only one chieftain. Again, this is not true. There is, for example, not one but several clans called Macdonald, all descended from a common ancestor, but each headed by an independent and autonomous Macdonald chieftain. And what is true of the Macdonalds is also true of the Campbells, Mackenzies, Macleans and Macleods. For certain reasons, too complicated to detail here, these consanguinous but independent chieftains have recognised (and still recognise) one of their number as the 'chief' of their name. It can be established, therefore, that there are a few great tribes sharing fewer tribal names, and that these great tribes once ruled lesser tribes and individual families - some related, others not - bearing a host of different surnames and patronymics. It can also be established that the leaders of these tribes derived their power not from sentimental loyalty but from the manner in which they held their lands.

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1. Although there is a great volume of valuable material on the clans in manuscript and printed sources (particularly the works in the Scottish History Society series), only one history of a clan has so far been published which can be considered a work of scholarship, namely Dr. Isabel F. Grant's Clan Macleod: The History of a Clan 1200-1956, London, 1959. In this work the entire structure of one clan is examined.

Broadly speaking, the great chieftains held their lands directly from the Macdonald Lords of the Isles before 1493, and directly from the Scottish Crown after that date; and all of them had confirmed their holdings by obtaining charters as feudal barons. The Macdonalds, Campbells and Mackenzies, each holding a large number of feudal baronies, were the three great tribes. Next in rank were the Macleans, with five feudal baronies, and then the Macleods, Frasers, Camerons, Mackintoshes, Mackays and Grants, each in possession of two or three important feudal baronies. The remaining feudal baronies were, for one reason or another, of minor importance.

All other Highlanders, even those who combined with their relatives to form a clan, were vassals of the feudal baronial chieftains, and held their lands by wadset (a form of mortgage renewable over a number of generations), by tack (or lease), or by rent and service. The wadsetters were frequently close relatives of the feudal baronial chieftains, usually senior cadets, and were men of some consequence. Those wadsetters whose families had held the same lands for three or more generations shared the right of the feudal baronial chieftains to describe themselves "of" their lands, and used their territorial designations as surnames. The tacksmen leased their lands either from the feudal baronial chieftains or the wadsetters; they could sublet their tacks and they had limited local power, but

they were "in" and never "of" their lands. Nobody, for instance, would have confused a Macdonald "in Moidart" with "Macdonald of Moidart".

The Highland form of land tenure, with vassals owing military service to their feudal superiors, had a superficial resemblance to the English feudal system. In theory all the feudal baronial chieftains owed homage and service to the Crown. In practice their geographical isolation allowed them to ignore the Crown and act as completely independent minor rulers. Even the church in the Highlands could not be compared with the church, or its role, in England. Highland clergy had undeniable influence before and after the Reformation, but they were never strong enough to challenge the power of the feudal baronial chieftains, upon whom they relied for protection or preferment or both.

Enough has been said to give a rough idea of the clan structure from 1493 to 1746. Between those dates it was modified by many interacting external and internal pressures. The clans in the west faced the constant threat of the land-hungry Campbells, forever trying to extend their influence north of Loch Linnhe, while those in the east contended with the power of such Lowland families as the Gordon lords of Huntly and the Murray lords of Atholl. External stresses aggravated internal vendettas, and as vassal families grew in size they began to flaunt the authority of their superiors. Such was the situation in the case of

the Macphersons.

Before the end of the 16th century there is no evidence to support the existence of any 'clan' called Macpherson,<sup>1</sup> although there were individual 'sons of parsons' dotted all over the Highlands and Islands. In 1591, however, a number of inter-related families named Macpherson, all vassals of the Gordons of Huntly,<sup>2</sup> and all living in the upper reaches of the River Spey or along Loch Laggan-side, in the district of Badenoch, signed "The Clan Farson's Band".<sup>3</sup> In it, Andrew Macpherson 'in Cluny' and his kinsmen bound themselves to serve faithfully their overlord Gordon, whose power, especially in the Badenoch area, had long been disputed by the chieftains of the Mackintosh clan. The balance of power between Gordon and Mackintosh largely depended on the loyalty to the latter of the members of Clan Chattan, a loose confederation comprising all the cadets of Mackintosh,

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1. William Cook Mackenzie, The Highlands and Isles of Scotland: A Historical Survey, London & Edinburgh, 1949, (App. III), pp. 303-304.
  2. See Alexander Macpherson's Glimpses of Church and Social Life in the Highlands in Olden Times, and Other Papers, Edinburgh & London, MDCCCXCIII (hereafter cited as Macpherson Hist/1,) passim; Margaret Mackintosh of Mackintosh, op.cit, passim., and Frank Adam (ed. Sir Thomas Innes of Learney), The Clans, Septs and Regiments of the Scottish Highlands, 4th edn., Edinburgh & London, 1952, passim.
  3. Printed in full in The Spalding Club Miscellany, iv, p. 246. Reprinted (with many other Macpherson documents) in Macpherson Hist/1, p. 429 et seq.



and all the lesser unrelated clans and families living under Mackintosh's

'protection'.<sup>1</sup> In 1609, the Tutor of Mackintosh, acting on behalf of his young chieftain, called a meeting of all the heads of the families belonging to Clan Chattan, and asked them to sign a Bond of Union.<sup>2</sup> Among those who signed this pact, and thereby swore allegiance to Mackintosh as "principal Captain of the haill kin of Clan Chattan" was Andrew Macpherson (now describing himself 'of Cluny') and his kinsmen Macpherson 'in Pitvain' and Macpherson 'in Invereshie'.<sup>3</sup>

Within the space of a few years, however, the Macphersons renounced their oaths to Mackintosh and once more declared their unswerving fealty to Gordon. Thereafter, the Macphersons' habit of switching allegiances developed into a regular pattern, determined, after the reign of Charles I, by the fluctuating fortunes of the Stuarts, and the attitudes adopted by the Mackintoshes and

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1. See Margaret Mackintosh of Mackintosh, The History of the Clan Mackintosh and the Clan Chattan, Edinburgh & London, 1948, passim. This book gives the Mackintosh interpretation of the quarrels between the Mackintoshes and the Gordons, and the Mackintoshes and the Macphersons. Although heavily biased, it gives a reliable account of the Mackintosh-Macpherson disputes; the same cannot be said for any of the Macpherson accounts; e.g. Macpherson Hist./1, or the most recent version by W.G.D.L.A. Cheyne-Macpherson of Dalchully, The Chiefs of Clan Macpherson, Edin., 1947.
  2. The Clan Chattan Bond of Union is printed in full in Antiq. Notes (1st ser.) pp. 28-31.
  3. *ibid.*, loc. cit.

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Gordons to the Stuart cause. Throughout the 17th century the numerical strength of the Macphersons rose rapidly, enabling them to take advantage of the quarrels and difficulties of their superiors. Their sense of their own importance rose accordingly, and was given definition by the social ambitions of Sir Aeneas Macpherson, a member of the Invereshie family.

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Although of humble origin, Aeneas was the first of his name to achieve success outside the Highlands. An advocate by profession, he eventually managed to win the patronage of Charles II and James II, being knighted by the latter.

3

Lacking a pedigree, arms, and the other trappings of gentility when he started out on his career, but determined to be recognised as a gentleman and not an upstart, Aeneas decided to flatter the vanity of his leader Cluny, and then rise on Cluny's ego. Aeneas claimed he had an old pedigree which, in addition to proving the descent of all the Badenoch Macphersons from a parson named Muirich or Murdoch (supposedly the fourth Chief

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1. See Macpherson Hist/1, passim; Margaret Mackintosh of Mackintosh, op. cit, passim., and Frank Adam (ed. Sir Thomas Innes of Learney), The Clans, Septs and Regiments of the Scottish Highlands, 4th edn., Edinburgh & London, 1952, passim.
  2. Sir Aeneas (or Angus) Macpherson (1644-1705), 2nd son of William Macpherson of Invereshie. He was Sheriff of Aberdeen in 1684.
  3. Macpherson Hist/1, pp. 312-313 and 495.

of Clan Chattan), confirmed that the senior Macpherson or Macmhuirich (pron:  
<sup>1</sup>  
 Macvurich) was none other than Cluny Macpherson. Although the pedigree was  
 undoubtedly the product of Aeneas's inner consciousness, it was seized on by  
 Cluny, who, in 1672, petitioned and obtained from the Lord Lyon King of Arms  
 a matriculation as "Laird of Clunie Macphersone, and only and true representer  
<sup>2</sup>  
 of the ancient and honorable familie of Clan Chattane."

Mackintosh was furious. He immediately appealed to the Privy Council and  
 the Lord Lyon, demanding full recognition of his position as the Chief of Clan  
 Chattan and annulment of Macpherson's matriculation. In reply, the Privy Council  
 ordered Mackintosh:

"to give bond..for those of his Clan, his vassales, these descendit of his  
 familie, and his men, tenants and servants, or dwelling upon his ground; and  
 ordaine Clunie to give bond for these of his name of Macpherson

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1. Macpherson Hist./1, p. 485. - This "curious MS. account..which may be as much depended on as any other traditional history..was put into order by the ingenious Sir Aeneas Macpherson, advocate in the reign of king Charles II." Although Aeneas had put the Macpherson 'pedigree' in order by 1670, he did not publish his views on it until much later. The pedigree covered 16 generations, not one of which was proved (or ever has been proved) by a single item of documentary evidence. For a definitive account of Sir Aeneas, his dealings with Cluny, and his various publications see the introduction to Sir Aeneas Macpherson: The Loyall Dissuasive and other Papers concerning the Clan Chattan, ed. (with commentary and notes) Alex. D. Murdoch, (Scot. Hist. Soc. Series 41), Edinburgh, 1902. The introduction to this work also gives a first-class account of the Macphersons' manoeuvres for recognition from 1594-1705. For the most recent and thorough examination of the pedigree produced by Sir Aeneas Macpherson, see Prof. Alan G. Macpherson's An Old Highland Genealogy and the Evolution of a Scottish Clan, in Scottish Studies, Vol. 10, Part 1, (1966), pp. 1-43.
  2. Macpherson Hist./1, p. 432. Lyon's Writ, 12 March 1672, printed in full.

descendit of his familie, and his men, tenants and servants, but prejudice allways to the Laird of Macintosh, to have bonds of releif<sup>1</sup> off such of the name of Macpherson, who are his vassals".

Anticipating this decision, the Lord Lyon recalled Macpherson's arms, and rebuked him for illegally assuming armorial supporters, the distinction in coats-of-arms reserved for feudal barons and above.<sup>2</sup>

For Mackintosh to gain official recognition was one thing; to gain Macpherson's was quite another.<sup>3</sup> Despite official rebukes, the Macphersons had become almost irrepresentable. By being inconsistent in their loyalty to Mackintosh and Gordon their leading men had acquired by deeds, charters, wadsets and tacks various lands throughout Badenoch. By being consistent in their loyalty to the Stuarts, and placing their fighting strength at the Stuarts' disposal whenever it was required, they had gained acceptance of their identity as a separate clan.

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1. Macpherson Hist/1, p. 433, Privy Council Ordinance, 25 November 1672, printed in full. See also Margaret Mackintosh of Mackintosh, op. cit., p. 4, quoting in full Lyon's Decree, 10 September 1672, in favour of Mackintosh - "I find the Laird of Mackintosh to be the only undoubted Chieff of the name of Macintosh and to be Chieff of the Clan Chattan, comprehending the Macphersons &c."
  2. *ibid.*, loc. cit., Letter from Lyon to Macpherson, September 1672, printed in full.
  3. *ibid.*, loc. cit., "Macpherson appears to have disregarded the Lyon's ruling against his assumption of chiefship, for in the next year 1673 he entered into a contract of friendship with Lord Macdonell "for himself and taking upon him for the heall name of Macphersons and some others called old Clanchattan as cheefe and principall man thereof." "

Flimsy as their claims to illustrious ancestry were, Cluny Macpherson and his clan had all the confidence and vigour of the sons of self-made men. By the early decades of the 18th century all the Badenoch Macphersons had convinced themselves that Cluny and no other was their chieftain, and that their version of history was the truth. The myth of the great Macphersons had been established; and one who saw another page added to the legend was James "Fingal" Macpherson.

James was born at Invertromie near the village and castle of Ruthven in Badenoch on 27th October 1736, the son of Andrew Macpherson by his wife Helen (who was also a Macpherson by birth)<sup>1</sup>. Although it is certain that James was closely related to his chieftain Cluny Macpherson, his immediate background has always been shrouded by some mystery. Like his more famous contemporary Edmund Burke, he seemed to contradict the pride he had in his name and family by being unduly reticent on the subject of his parents.<sup>2</sup> Burke, an Irishman with Roman Catholic relations, was probably cautious on religious grounds. James Macpherson's

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1. Evidence of the Baptismal Register, Kingussie Parish; quoted in Professor Alan G. Macpherson's James "Ossian" Macpherson's Ancestry: an elucidation of the mystery; The Scottish Genealogist, II, No. 3, (1964), pp. 15-20 (reprinted from Creag Dhubh, No. 16, (1964), pp. 20-25).

2. *ibid.* There is no document in existence where James mentions his father or mother.

attitude cannot be explained in the same way.

Until recently, the statement made by his nephew Alexander Clark a year after his death has been taken at its face value. Clark said that James's father was "Andrew Macpherson, son to Ewan Macpherson, brother to the then Macpherson of Cluny"<sup>1</sup>. In 1964, however, when Professor Alan Macpherson examined the evidence concerning James's parentage and grandparentage, it seemed clear that Clark had told the truth, but not the whole truth. He should have written "half" before "brother", because James's grandfather Ewan was a bastard. Although illegitimacy was not necessarily a stigma in the 18th century, it did have an important bearing on property rights and inheritance. Generally speaking, a Highlander's bastard was acknowledged by his or her father, but was ignored, or even rejected, by the legitimate members of the family, and invariably had to make his or her own way in life. This might explain why Ewan the Bastard's son, Andrew Macpherson, the first cousin of the celebrated Cluny Macpherson of the '45 (also called Ewan), was a tacksman, and a very poor one at that.

Ewan the Bastard's half-brother, Lachlan Macpherson of Cluny, succeeded as chieftain of the Badenoch clan in 1722.<sup>2</sup> His wife was Jean, daughter of Sir Ewan

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1. Macpherson Hist./1. quoting Alex. Clark to Rev. John Anderson, 25 October 1797.

2. *ibid.*, p. 492.

Cameron of Lochiel, and by her he had Ewan, his heir. In 1724, Mackintosh, in order to bring the Macphersons to heel as gracefully as possible, agreed to give Lachlan Macpherson of Cluny "the lands of Laggan, Gallovie, &c., in feu; while Clunie, on the other hand, and all the gentlemen of his name solemnly recognise<sup>d</sup> Mackintosh as their Chief"<sup>1</sup>. Ewan Macpherson, younger of Cluny, despised his father for submitting to Mackintosh, and demonstrated his contempt by gradually taking control of the Macphersons out of his father's hands. By 1736 he was acting as their leader.<sup>2</sup> He consolidated his position in 1742, when he married Janet, the daughter of Simon Fraser, Lord Lovat.<sup>3</sup> Two years later Ewan persuaded his father-in-law Lovat, and his cousin Donald Cameron of Lochiel, to sign a "Bond of Friendship between the Frasers, the Camerons and the Macphersons,

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1. Antiq. Notes (1st ser.), p. 359. The Minute of Agreement between Mackintosh and Macpherson was signed in 1724, and confirmed at a full meeting of the Clan Chattan in 1726.
  2. N.L.S., MSS., No. 874, f. 428. Lachlan Maclean of Kingairloch to Ewan Macpherson, younger of Cluny, 30 August 1736. In this letter Maclean of Kingairloch, one of the Chieftains and Feudal Barons of Clan Maclean and a laird of wealth and power, sarcastically rejected Ewan's offer of help. Some of Maclean of Kingairloch's cattle and horses had been stolen on their way to market, and Ewan had hinted that he could get them back. Kingairloch sardonically acknowledged Ewan as the leader of his tribe, but warned him "to speak to some of your trusty friends" about the stolen cattle, otherwise Lochiel would be told; and Lochiel's cousinly discipline was something to be feared.
  3. Macpherson Hist./1, pp. 163-166.

embracing a Revocation by the Macphersons of the Minute of Agreement between them and the Mackintoshes in 1724<sup>1</sup>". This pact, prompted by Ewan's obsession to renounce his superior Mackintosh, was to cost him dearly.

By the year in which the pact was signed, 1744, it can be proved that Ewan was a blackmailer. Under the pretence of protecting cattle-owners he was extorting "protection money" from them, and covering his criminal activities by portraying himself as a public benefactor to Duncan Forbes of Culloden, the Lord President. A year later he was using the secret knowledge he gained from his "protection" activities to supply Forbes with intelligence on those clans and families with Jacobite sympathies.<sup>2</sup> That this blackmailer, criminal and informer should emerge from the '45 Rising as the long-suffering champion and protector of Prince Charles, and be remembered as such ever since, is a tribute to Macpherson propaganda. The great Ewan of the '45 was, in fact, a captain and company commander in the Hanoverian regiment led by the Campbell Lord Loudoun at the

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1. Macpherson Hist.,/1, pp. 439-440, Original Bond printed in full.

2. For Macpherson's 'protection' activities see The Spalding Club Miscellany, ii, pp. 87-89 (Reprinted Macpherson Hist.,/1, pp. 442-443) - "A Brief Account of the Rise and Progress of the Watch undertaken by Ewan Macpherson of Cluny, Esquire, in the Year 1744, for the Security of severall Countrys in the North of Scotland from Thifts and Depredations.". For Macpherson's activities as an informer see The Culloden Papers (which are accurately referred to in D.N.B. under Ewan Macpherson) and Trans. of Gaelic Soc. of Inverness, xvi, (1891), pp. 157-170.



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 outbreak of the Rising, and was roughly handled by Jacobites for this association. It did not stop him, however, from following the family tradition of switching allegiances. Indeed, he was forced to change sides. He might have been able to disregard the wishes of those in his own tribe who wanted to support the Stuarts, but he was certainly in no position to resist the pressure of Lochiel and Lovat, both Jacobites, who were powerful enough to make him honour the "Bond" of 1744, which obliged the Macphersons to fight alongside the Camerons and Frasers.

Once forced to take the fatal step of committing his clan to the Stuart cause, Ewan threw himself into the venture wholeheartedly. As soon as Mackintosh heard that the Macphersons had joined the Jacobites, he reminded Ewan that his orders came from the Chief of Clan Chattan, no matter what instructions he received directly from the Prince.<sup>2</sup> Ewan promptly retorted that this was not difficult as he, the representative of Cluny Macpherson, was the leader of Clan Chattan.<sup>3</sup>

It so happened that on 16th April 1746, when the Jacobite clan army was defeated at Culloden, neither Mackintosh nor Macpherson were present, although

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1. *ibid.*, and (for the Macpherson version) Macpherson Hist./1, pp. 165-166.
  2. Macpherson Hist./1, pp. 472-473, quoting Mackintosh in full.
  3. *ibid.*, quoting Ewan Macpherson in full.

scores of Clan Chattan men gave their lives for the Stuarts in that battle.

Mackintosh, like many other wise Highland chieftains, stayed at home and saved his estates from forfeiture. Macpherson, who had fought gallantly in earlier actions, never reached Culloden. He and his men had stopped en route at Ruthven Castle in Badenoch, where a Hanoverian detachment of fourteen English privates of the 6th Regiment under the command of a dauntless Irish sergeant named Molloy had held out for several months.<sup>1</sup> In the final assault in 1746 Molloy capitulated with honour, after resisting the determined attacks of 300 Jacobite clansmen for three days. Hearing that Ruthven was at last in Jacobite hands, the remnants of Prince Charles's forces met at the Castle after Culloden in the hope of making a final stand. Instead they received orders from Lord George Murray to disperse. Before they broke up they gutted the Castle with fire to prevent its use as a barracks by a punitive garrison of Hanoverians.<sup>2</sup>

Prince Charles, now on the run, eventually found shelter with Cameron of Lochiel. Ewan Macpherson, also on the run, managed to get word to Lochiel. A rendezvous was fixed, and the Prince and several other leading Jacobites came into

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1. *ibid.*, pp. 390-391.

2. *Macpherson Hist./1*, pp. 391-393.

the care of Ewan, who hid them in a cave or 'cage' on Ben Alder until news was received that a French rescue ship had arrived. It would be unchivalrous to suggest that Ewan's interest in the Prince was partly motivated by financial considerations, but it is certain that he never accounted for all the money - at least 20,000 louis d'or - which the Prince, while at Ben Alder, entrusted to his care.<sup>1</sup> Ewan, of course, had good reasons to expect some sort of compensation. His house had been plundered and destroyed by Hanoverian troops; his lands had been forfeited to the Crown; and, in 1748, his wife was to have no better place to give birth to his heir, Duncan, than an old kiln on his former estate.<sup>2</sup>

After the Prince escaped by sea to France, Ewan was hounded throughout the Highlands, with a price on his head. For nine years he evaded capture with the help of his clansmen, and then managed to make his escape to France, where he died a broken man in 1764.<sup>3</sup> For Ewan of the '45 the only item on the credit side was

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1. *ibid.*, pp. 478-485, (for Cluny's dealings with the Prince in hiding), and *ibid.*, pp. 167-168 (for Cluny's part as the Prince's 'banker'); see also Creag Dhubb, No. 16 (1964), pp. 6-8, giving evidence from recently acquired documents from Cluny's Charter Chest.
  2. See Antiq. Notes (1st ser.), pp. 36-38; Burke's Landed Gentry, 17th edn., 1952, sub Macpherson of Cluny; and Macpherson Hist./1, p. 171, n.2. Ewan Macpherson of the '45 did not succeed his father Lachlan until 1746; in fact old Lachlan did not die until after the defeat of the Jacobites. It was ironic that Ewan lost the Cluny estates the moment he officially succeeded as chieftain.
  3. *ibid.*, p. 169.

the reputation he gained as a legendary and romantic fugitive, who had sacrificed everything in the service of his Prince. The person destined to retrieve the fortunes of the Cluny family was James Macpherson.

As a result of the controversy over 'Ossian' and his other Gaelic interests, James has always been the subject of partisan assessments, and the views of both his denigrators and apologists have tended to obscure rather than define his motives. His loves and hates were complicated and inextricably interwoven. Many celebrated or notorious men must have been spurred forward by secret and seemingly trivial or absurd dreams, and James Macpherson was, perhaps, such a man. Until he was sixteen years old he lived near Ruthven Castle.<sup>1</sup> During his eleventh year he saw the siege and fall of the castle, and its destruction by the last gathering in history of Jacobite clansmen under arms.<sup>2</sup> He was, in fact, an eye-witness of events which marked not only the final collapse of the Stuart cause, but also the death of the clan system. Then, from ten to sixteen, the most impressionable period in most people's lives, he endured the tension of watching

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1. Thomas Bailey Saunders, The Life and Letters of James Macpherson, London 1895, pp. 37-39. (hereafter cited as Saunders).

2. *ibid.*, p. 37., and Macpherson Hist./1, p. 256.

British army patrols scour Badenoch for his chieftain and kinsman, Ewan of Cluny. Boys are usually fiercely partisan in the matter of sides, and they rarely question the details of their family's history or the rights and wrongs of political or dynastic struggles.

It was probably sufficient for young James Macpherson to know that Cluny, the representative of a supposedly great family, had risked his life and liberty in a heroic manner for a romantic prince of the blood royal. One thing is certain: the stirring years from 1745 to 1752 made a lasting impression on James's mind.

He became a sentimental Jacobite and a fervent Scottish 'nationalist'.<sup>1</sup> His poem

On the Death of Marshal Keith, written two weeks after the death of the great

Jacobite refugee James Keith on 14th October 1758, and his introduction to his

Secret History of Great Britain, published in 1775, offer convincing evidence of

the former; and his Gaelic interests, and the resulting publications such as

Fingal and Temora leave no doubt on the latter.<sup>2</sup> That he dared to flaunt, almost

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1. Although not put so bluntly this is the view taken by Saunders, *passim*.

2. On the Death of Marshal Keith, J[ames] M[acpherson], Scots Magazine, 1758; and Original Papers, containing the Secret History of Great Britain, from the Restoration to the Accession of the House of Hanover; to which are prefixed Extracts from the Life of James II, as written by himself, 2 vols., James Macpherson, published by John Exshaw, Dublin, 1775. This, and other historical works by Macpherson will be discussed in a later chapter. They raised a storm of protest, and were nearly as controversial as Fingal and Temora.

taunt, the strong anti-Scottish feelings of Englishmen by publishing these works also reveals James as a defiant and courageous man. Defiant, because he heartily disliked the English; courageous, because he ultimately relied on powerful Englishmen for preferment and reward. In short: he seemed to be carrying on a personal campaign as the upholder of Celtic culture in general, and Highland, especially Macpherson, honour in particular. But this view, even if it is correct, is too simple. James was an intensely serious, almost humourless crusader; a sour man who was almost certainly embittered by resentment. As the grandson of Ewan the Bastard he belonged to, but was not part of the Cluny family, and this was probably at the root of his resentment. To establish this it is necessary to show what he did with his life after 1784, when he at last acquired wealth and a reputation. In that year he was given, as a reward for his services to various ministries, the forfeited Cluny estates. But instead of keeping them, he immediately transferred them to his second cousin Duncan-of-the-Kiln, the only

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1. James Boswell noted one of Macpherson's most revealing remarks on Englishmen. On 14th May 1763 Boswell was in the company of Macpherson and Dr. Hugh Blair. 'Blair asked him why he was fond of staying in England as he surely could not like John Bull. "Sir," said he, "I hate John Bull, but I love his daughters." ' See Boswell's London Journal, 1762-1763, ed. F.A. Pottle, 1950, 252-3.

son and heir of Ewan Macpherson of Cluny, the hero of the '45, and he did not charge him so much as a penny.<sup>1</sup> That was the point. The Bastard's grandson had shown who was the real leader of the clan. He had put the legitimate Clunies to shame.

2

James's father had been treated as an outsider by the family which, above all others, James wanted to be part of, and to be recognised by: and his father's poverty and exclusion must have been a long festering sore. It probably determined James to make the Clunies accept him on his own terms. After 1785, he began to lose interest in his political career, which might indicate that he had satisfied his ambition, and that his political career was merely the means of providing him with the wealth he needed to realise his personal goal. But he had not quite finished. With the wealth he accumulated after 1784 he bought Raitts, the home of the Mackintosh of Borlum family, whose head had been the bullying factor or

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1. See Saunders, p. 280; and R. Carruthers, Highland Note Book, Edinburgh 1843, pp. 305-312.
  2. The Rental Roll of the Forfeited Estate of Cluny, dated 1748, shows 48 tenants paying a total of just over £133. 10. 0 p.a. Of these, exactly half have the name Macpherson, but Andrew Macpherson in Invertromie is not one of them, see Antiq. Notes (1st ser.), p. 38. Andrew was, therefore, not a tacksman of the Cluny family. Indeed, according to Professor Alan G. Macpherson, he probably rented Invertromie through his wife; and was probably destitute until he married her. The lands of Invertromie were the subject of much dispute between 1680 and 1757. They were owned by Aeneas (or Angus) Macpherson of Killihuntly at the time of James Macpherson's birth in 1736, but Killihuntly's ownership of that part of the land which joined the Duke of Gordon's estate at Ruthven was claimed by the Duke. It is possible that James's mother, Helen Macpherson, was a member of the Killihuntly family. (see, S.R.O., Gordon Castle Muniments, G.D.44/Box 10/Bundle 15)

agent of the Gordon lords of Huntly.<sup>1</sup> In doing so James became the owner of the one property connected with the two families who had always been the superiors of the Macphersons; the men who had humiliated the Clunies.

To underline the meaning of his purchase, James obliterated all vestiges of the house of Raitts, and commissioned the famous Adam brothers to replace it with an elegant mansion called Balavil, or, as it is better known, Belleville.

Here, as the Macpherson of Balavil, James ended his days as a Highland Laird.<sup>2</sup>

But even that was not enough. He made Duncan of Cluny, and all the other local gentry, accept as social equals his children - everyone of whom was a bastard.<sup>3</sup>

What balm to a sore and twisted mind! Today, Macphersons are as proud as they ever were of their history, but most of them honour the Cluny family, and few, if any, of them seem to realise that it was James Macpherson who played the decisive part in their clan's renaissance, and that his remarkable achievement was probably manufactured from the weft of love and the warp of hate.

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1. Macpherson Hist./1, pp. 258 and 387.

2. *ibid.*, pp. 259-261.

3. See Mrs. Anne Grant of Laggan's Letters from the Mountains, Edinburgh, 1845, *passim*. Mrs. Grant has a lot to say about the social life of James Macpherson in his retirement and about his children, (see Appendix 3).



There must have been many men like Macpherson whose careers were wholly or partly directed by their refusal to accept the effect of illegitimacy on what they regarded as their rightful positions in society. Apart from Macpherson, the only example that comes readily to mind is Lawrence of Arabia, the illegitimate son of an Anglo-Irish baronet.<sup>1</sup> Lawrence assiduously acquired by skill, courage and exhibitionism the academic and military awards he thought were due to a man of his class, and then contemptuously threw them back into the faces of those who had honoured him before rejoining the forces as the lowliest ranker. Macpherson's

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1. Thomas Edward Lawrence (afterwards Shaw), styled Lawrence of Arabia (1888-1935), C.B., D.S.O., Chevalier de la Legion d'honneur, Croix de Guerre, was the second of the five illegitimate sons of 'Mr. Thomas Robert Lawrence' (the pseudonym adopted by Sir Thomas Robert Chapman, 7th Baronet of Killua) and Sarah Junner alias Maden. After a successful career as a scholar at Jesus College, Oxford, and as an archaeologist in the Middle East, Lawrence served with outstanding distinction as the leader of the irregular Arab army in the First World War, rising to the rank of Colonel. After the war he became a Fellow of All Souls, Oxford, but in 1922 he changed his name to Ross and joined the R.A.F. as a ranker. Upon the discovery of his true identity he was discharged, but rejoined in 1925 under the name Shaw, which he legalised by deed-poll in 1927. It is the present writer's contention (see my article Lawrence of Arabia in L.S.R.G., Vol. LXIV, (1959), pp. 218-221) that Lawrence assumed the name Ross (from the Arabic شور, or R'sh, meaning 'outcast') as a form of self-mockery; and then, when he had to use another name in 1925, he read the Arabic (as an Englishman would) from left to right to give the reverse of R'sh, namely Sh'r - hence Shaw. Macpherson, also an 'outcast', mocked himself in a similar way. He derided himself, for instance, by using the name 'Macvurich nan Stripichin' (see Macpherson MSS./1, 4/18). Macmhuirich, pronounced Macvurich, was the personal style reserved for the head of the Cluny family, an arrogant assumption by James, but 'nan Stripichin' (or 'of the Whores') modified the arrogance. James often disgusted himself by associating with loose women, but 'nan Stripichin' had no reference to this habit. It was an acknowledgment by James of his illegitimate grandfather, and amounted to self-mockery. Ewan the Bastard was the eldest son of a Macvurich who consorted with whores.

gesture, although as revealing as Lawrence's, was unspectacular. There was nothing flamboyant about Macpherson. On the contrary, for a man who gave irrefutable evidence of a romantic disposition, he was outwardly very unromantic.

When he was 23 and unknown he was introduced to Dr. Alexander Carlyle of Inveresk, who recalled that Macpherson was a big, good looking man, but proud, reserved and, above all else, unsociable.<sup>1</sup> Big was not an overstatement: Macpherson stood six feet three inches in his socks.<sup>2</sup> Carlyle also noted that the young Highlander wore unfashionable thigh boots, to hide his thick legs, about which he was very self-conscious.<sup>3</sup> The well-known portraits by Sir Joshua Reynolds and George Romney confirm Carlyle's opinion that Macpherson was good looking, but there is a touch of uncouthness in his florid, sensual and rather heavy features.<sup>4</sup> It is not an unfriendly face, but the impressions which commissioned artists freeze on canvas for posterity's judgment of their clients are

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1. Saunders, p. 70, referring to Carlyle's Autobiography.

2. Macpherson Hist./1, p. 259.

3. Alexander Carlyle's Autobiography, Edinburgh, MDCCCLX, p. 398; referred to in Saunders, p. 71.

4. See also R. Carruthers, op. cit. (Highland Note Book, new edn., 1887), pp. 354-357.

invariably flattering. David Hume, who knew Macpherson well, was not as  
 inhibited as the artists. He told Hugh Blair, who liked Macpherson but found  
 him difficult to please,

"you must not mind so strange and heteroclitite a mortal.. I have  
 scarce ever known a man more perverse and unamiable." 3

And Hume also said that Macpherson could fly into a passion if his veracity was  
 questioned. 4 But this was in 1763, when he was still in his twenties and before  
 he had become involved in politics. As he grew older he masked his emotions,  
 and found an outlet for his anger and frustration in writing. Even his most  
 famous quarrel, with Dr. Samuel Johnson in 1775, was conducted by an exchange of  
 insults on paper. 5

As some of his letters will show James was sardonic, aloof and given to  
 understatement, pretending indifference or laziness when he was neither indifferent

1. David Hume (1711-1776), the great Scottish philosopher and historian, whose History of England long held a leading place in English historical literature.
2. Hugh Blair (1718-1800), was Professor of Rhetoric in the University of Edinburgh from 1762 to 1784. This divine, literary critic, and theologian was celebrated for his rhetorical sermons. He was also a member of the Edinburgh 'Literati', a select company of the most distinguished Scottish scholars and men of letters of the time.
3. R.S.E. MSS., D. Hume to H. Blair, 6 October 1763. Letter printed in full in Saunders, pp. 209-210.
4. *ibid.*, loc. cit.
5. Saunders, pp. 243-253.

nor lazy. Men he liked he treated generously, and he sometimes went to a great deal of trouble to help those less fortunate than himself.<sup>1</sup> Women he regarded as vehicles created for his pleasure, and he never seemed to treat any woman with more than scant politeness.<sup>2</sup> No simple statement could sum up the character of this controversial figure. He was a libertine, a schemer and a hard headed opportunist, with a very unfortunate manner. He was also a romantic obsessed by a private ambition, who had the courage and ability to win the attention of eminent scholars and powerful politicians, and to use their interest to realise his dreams. Like a few other Scottish and Irish Celts in the 18th century, he had all the odds against him, yet he survived in the hazardous arena of English politics. He had that special determination of proud men born in poverty.

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1. For examples of Macpherson's generosity see Macpherson Hist./1, pp. 260-261, and Saunders, pp. 282-283. Other instances of Macpherson's help to his fellow clansmen will be given later.
  2. On 10th May 1763 Macpherson told Boswell that "he had no relish for anything in life except women, and even these he cared but little for." (Boswell's London Journal, 1762-1763, op. cit., p. 249).

Among those who shared the childhood poverty of James were his second cousins,  
<sup>1</sup> the brothers Allan and <sup>2</sup> John Macpherson, both of whom rose to be Lt. Colonels in  
the East India Company's service. Their mother Anna, a sister of Malcolm Macpherson  
who was executed for the leading part he played in the Black Watch mutiny of 1743,  
<sup>3</sup>  
died before the '45 Rising. Their father, William Macpherson, the Purser of the  
<sup>4</sup>

1. Allan Macpherson of Blairgowrie (1740-1816). Served with 42nd Regt. (The Black Watch) in North America and West Indies, 1757-62; transferred to H.E.I.C.S., 1763, served in India 1764-87, retiring as Lt. Colonel. From 1782-87 was the Quarter Master General of Bengal, and acted as Private Secretary and Persian Interpreter to John Macpherson, during the latter's term as Governor General. In 1788, with the direct help of James Macpherson he bought the estate of Blairgowrie from Thomas Graham of Balgowan (James's former pupil), but James did not allow Allan to forget the debt he owed him (see Antiq. Notes 2nd ser.), pp. 404-405 and Macpherson MSS./2, G.D.80/926-939; and Macpherson MSS./3, Misc. corres. (1789-1796). The present laird of Blairgowrie, Brigadier A.D. Macpherson (the great-great-grandson of Lt. Col. Allan) succeeded his distant cousin as Cluny-Macpherson and Chieftain of the Clan in 1965. For the careers of Allan and his brother John, and the help they both received from James and John (the Governor General) while they were in India, see Soldiering in India 1764-1787: Extracts from Journals and Letters left by Lt. Col. Allan Macpherson and Lt. Col. John Macpherson of the East India Company's Service, ed. William Charles Macpherson, Edinburgh, 1928. (hereafter cited as Macpherson Hist./2)
2. John Macpherson (1742-1784). Served with 89th Regt. (Gordon Highlanders) in India from 1760-1764; transferred to H.E.I.C.S., 1764, and continued to serve in India until 1782, when he retired as a Lt. Colonel. He was married but had no issue.
3. Malcolm Macpherson (of the Strathmashie family) and Samuel Macpherson (of the Breakachie family), with sixteen other Macphersons serving in the Black Watch in 1743, mutinied because they resented orders to serve overseas, which they had not agreed to when they were originally enlisted. It was on account of their punishment by the Hanoverian government that many of the Macphersons urged their reluctant chieftain to fight for the Jacobites in the '45 Rising.
4. William Macpherson (c. 1710-1746), Purser of the Clan, was the son of Andrew Macpherson, a younger and legitimate brother of Lachlan Macpherson of Cluny. He was, therefore, first cousin of Ewan of the '45 and of Andrew in Invertromie, the father of James Macpherson.

Glan, was killed fighting for the Stuarts at the Battle of Falkirk in January 1746. Under the Highland custom of 'fostering' the orphaned brothers were placed in the care of a near but poor relation, and they went to live with Andrew Macpherson in Invertromie,<sup>1</sup> who probably received some sort of allowance from wealthier clansmen for their upkeep.

One of Allan Macpherson's earliest memories was of throwing stones at the Hanoverian troops who burned down Cluny Macpherson's house in 1746.<sup>2</sup> Allan, who was six at the time, was probably joined in this anti-Hanoverian demonstration by his older companion and cousin James. According to one source James spent his childhood as a "barefit laddie",<sup>3</sup> but this alone did not indicate poverty, as most Highland children, even those of the most powerful lairds, were accustomed to go without shoes. Evidence of James's early poverty can be found in the comments of those who knew him as a young man, and from indirect sources, one of which also suggests that one of James's closest relatives lived a sordid as well as poor existence.

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1. Macpherson Hist./2, p. 2.

2. *ibid.*, loc. cit.

3. Saunders, p. 32.

James had two sisters, both older than himself and both married while he was still in his teens. The younger sister, Janet Margaret, married a respectable farmer from Invernahaven named James Clark, by whom she had one son, Alexander,<sup>1</sup> born in 1753. The elder sister, Isobel Jean (called Jean), was not so fortunate. Her husband, John Macintyre, who came from nearby Knappach to be the village tailor of Ruthven, was a lout. In the Kirk Session records of Kingussie for 10th February 1751 is the following minute:

"Compeared Jean Macpherson, spouse to John Macintyre, taylor in Ruthven, complaining on her husband, that he is a habitual drunkard, frequenting change-houses, spending his effects, ruining his family, beating the complainer, and selling his back-cloaths and bed cloaths for liquor, and that, when he comes home drunk, he tosses his own infant like a football, and threatens to take away her own life; she therefore begged the Session that they would put a stop to the progress of his wicked life, and secure the safety of the complainer and her child, and that they would discharge all the change-keepers in the parish from giving his liquor.

The Session, considering this complaint, and being persuaded of the verity of the facts, do agree to petition the Judge Ordinary to interpose his

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1. Alexander Clark (1753-1819), firstly of Invernahaven but later of Dalnavert, sometime Captain in the army and Writer in Ruthven; married Margaret (c. 1768-1820), daughter of William Shaw of Dalnavert, and had 3 sons and six daughters, all of whom had successful careers. Margaret's sister, Ellen Shaw, married Hugh Macdonald, by whom she had Sir John Alexander Macdonald (1815-1891), Prime Minister of Canada, who married his first cousin Isabella, 5th daughter of Alexander and Margaret Clark. See Macpherson Hist./1, pp. 183-185.

authority that no change-keepers or sellers of liquor votsoever shall gift or sell liquor of any kind, either ale or aquavitie [whisky], to the said John, under the failzie of twenty shillings str., that one-half of which to be applied for the support of the complainer and her child, and that this act, when obtained, shall be intimated from the pulpit." 1

2

Jean's baby, young John Macintyre, who was still under a year old when his father was tossing him around like a football, suffered no ill-effects from his treatment. With the recommendations of his uncle James Macpherson he did well in the army of the East India Company, and eventually rose to the rank of Lt. General. Jean, who lived very close to her father, could not have taken the above action lightly. In allowing her domestic distress to be broadcast from the pulpit, she shamed her entire family, especially her father, who was obviously

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1. *ibid.*, p. 41, quoting in full Kirk-Session Records of Kingussie Parish.
  2. John Macintyre (1750-1828). Arrived in India as a Cadet in 1771, and became an Artillery officer, retiring in 1821 as a Lt. General. In 1806 he married his third cousin Harriet, daughter of Lt. Col. Allan Macpherson of Blairgowrie (see p. 30, n.1). V.C.P. Hodson in his Officers of the Bengal Army 1758-1834, Vol. 3, p. 147, states that John was the son of Dr. Donald Macintyre of The Black Watch by his wife Isobel Macpherson, but this is inaccurately based on the statement in Macpherson Hist./2, p. 348. This is one of the rare mistakes in Major Hodson's painstaking work. There can be no doubt that Lt. General John Macintyre was of humble origin and the son of John Macintyre, taylor, by his wife Isobel Jean Macpherson (see Macpherson Hist./1, p. 316, a comment on birthplace and early circumstances of the General; together with transcript of the inscription on his memorial in Kingussie Parish Church; and Kingussie Parish Register of Baptisms for 1750). Dr. Donald Macintyre of The Black Watch was a native of Arrochar in Argyll.



not only incapable of dealing with her bullying husband, but also too poor to prevent her from seeking such a humiliating form of financial relief. It might be reasonable to assume, therefore, that Andrew Macpherson was not the sort of father for whom James could have had much respect. In the year following his sister's domestic trouble James probably left Ruthven for the first time.<sup>1</sup>

From sometime in 1752 until early 1756 James was a student. It has been assumed that he was supported by a bursary,<sup>2</sup> but he probably needed to supplement this with money he earned in the vacations. He matriculated at King's College, Aberdeen, in February 1753,<sup>3</sup> and stayed there until 1754, when the authorities added two months to the annual session.<sup>4</sup> This caused many of the poorer students,

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1. According to J.A. Cannon in House of Commons 1754-90, Vol. 3, p. 95, James Macpherson went to Inverness grammar school. He gave no source for this assertion, but he might have based it on the statement of the Rev. John Anderson of Kingussie, who in or about 1796 told George Chalmers that James Macpherson "was educated at the Parochial School of Kingussie in Ruthven, and at the Grammar School of Inverness for a short time." (see E.U.L. MSS., Ia.II, 451/2, Chalmers MSS.)
  2. John Ramsay of Ochtertyre (1736-1814) in his Scotland and Scotsmen in the 18th Century, ed. Alexander Allardyce, Vol. 1, Edinburgh, 1888, p. 545, said that it was probable that Macpherson was a bursar. Saunders, pp. 42-43, accepted Ramsay's suggestion, but gave it as a fact.
  3. Matriculation Roll for the University and King's College of Aberdeen.
  4. Roll of Alumni in Arts of the University and King's College of Aberdeen: 1596-1860, ed. Peter Anderson, Aberdeen, 1900, p. 77, n.2.

who relied on the long vacations to earn enough money for their education, to move to the other university in Aberdeen, Marischal College, where the fees were lighter and the sessions shorter. James was one of those who transferred to Marischal College, where he remained until 1755, but he did not graduate M.A. In 1756 he apparently went to Edinburgh for the first time, probably to find work, but he returned home with, it would seem, a jaundiced view of the city.

The Rev. John Anderson, minister of Kingussie, who knew James Macpherson well, said that "in the years 1757 and 1758 he taught the grammar school in his native parish, and attended for a short time during one of those winters at least, the Divinity Hall in Edinburgh." James had obviously decided to prepare himself for

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1. *Ibid.*, p. 78 - "Jacobus Macpherson, Invernessensis, m[agistrand], Mar. Coll., 1754-1755." As a magistrand was a fourth-year student, Macpherson must have entered King's College (assuming his time at both colleges is taken overall) in 1752.
  2. Saunders, pp. 42-43, states that by the winter of 1756-57 Macpherson was back in Ruthven, where he wrote "a brief and unfavourable description of the city [of Edinburgh]." No trace of this description has been found.
  3. E.U.L. MSS., La.II, 451/2, (Chalmers MSS.), J. Anderson to G. Chalmers, [c. 1798]. Saunders, p. 42, says he was helped by the registrar of Edinburgh University when he investigated Macpherson's career as a student. The registrar suggested "that students of Divinity alone, especially if they came from another university, were not then required to matriculate," which might explain the absence of Macpherson's name in the university matriculation roll. The present writer is very much indebted to Mr. C.P. Finlayson, the Keeper of Manuscripts in the University of Edinburgh, who spent the whole of 12th July 1966 going through the students' records from 1750 to 1760 (including unclassified library lists of "books borrowed" and other registers which Saunders may not have seen), but there was not one item to show that James Macpherson had ever been in the university.

the ministry, but it is doubtful if he went far with this intention, and there is no record of his ordination. All that can be proved about his university career is that he spent four years at Aberdeen as an arts undergraduate, and that he was an average and not very likeable student.

As the teacher in the local school at Ruthven (where his nephew John Clark was one of his pupils), James Macpherson's salary was so low that he borrowed money in order to live. In his spare time he began to write poetry. A piece

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1. In 1760 Thomas Gray, the poet, described Macpherson as a young clergyman (see Mason's biography of Gray, Vol. 2, 1807, p. 163), but this is poor evidence. Ramsay of Ochtertyre, op. cit., p. 544, who knew Macpherson, said that James had "designs" to be a non-juring minister, and others have hardened Ramsay's assertion into a fact. Ramsay also knew one of Macpherson's close friends at King's College, referred to (ibid., p. 545) and identified (ibid., p. 553) as Dr. Hugh Macleod (1730-1809), who graduated M.A. at King's Coll., Aberd., on 30th April 1755, and was Professor of Ecclesiastical History, Glasgow University, 1778-1807 (see Scott's Fasti Ecc. Scot., Vol. 7, p. 407). Ramsay was, therefore, in a good position to know something of Macpherson's student-ship and intentions.
  2. "I have," wrote Ramsay (op. cit., p. 545), "been told by a very competent judge apparently Dr. Hugh Macleod, who was acquainted with him Macpherson at the university, that he was in those days remarkable for quietness of parts and soundness of intellect than for application or proficiency in his studies. But even at that early period he gave indications of that harsh, overbearing spirit which made him so unpopular in the after part of his life." Ramsay then recounted (ibid., pp. 545-546, n.1) an anecdote describing Macpherson's treatment of an ugly, awkward and poor student named Hugh Machardy. The quarrel reached a point where both were ordered to keep the peace "under pain of expulsion", which made Macpherson "exceedingly indignant."
  3. The Rev. Dr. Peter Hately Waddell in his Ossian and the Clyde, Glasgow, 1875, pp. 4-5, recounted the following result of his own research. "The comparative indigence of Macpherson's youth is known. .. He never, in fact, took license as a preacher, and therefore never reached the rank of a beneficed clergyman. His career stopped short at the school-room, and his utmost ambition then was to be a successful teacher; but even in this position his emoluments were inadequate for his support, without occasional assistance from friendly hands. Mr. -----  
/...

known as The Hunter was followed by The Highlander, which he finished at the end  
of 1756, but it was not published until April 1758.<sup>1</sup> He was still living in

Ruthven at the end of October 1758, when he wrote On the Death of Marshal Keith.<sup>2</sup>

Soon afterwards, certainly before the end of 1758, he relinquished his job in

the village school to become the private tutor of Thomas Graham,<sup>3</sup> the son of the

Laird of Balgowan in Perthshire, who had a town house in Edinburgh.<sup>4</sup> While holding

3. (continued) [name not given], then a tenant farmer in the neighbourhood of Kingussie, was one of the friends who thus assisted Macpherson more than once, in the day of need; and the obligation, so far as he was concerned, was no more thought of. But when Macpherson returned after many years, an illustrious author and a monied man, to invest his fortune in an estate, and spend the remainder of his days at Belleville, so far from forgetting these favours, he showed that he was neither unmindful of, nor ungrateful for such kindness. He not only received his old friend with conspicuous courtesy among other tenants on rent-day - being now his landlord; but of his own accord desired him to select and enclose, from improvable pasture lands on the estate of Belleville, as much as he thought proper for a maintenance; to which he offered him, then and there, a freehold for life unconditionally. .. Information of an act so creditable to Macpherson we have on the authority of the person to whom the offer was made; and our informant can substantiate the statement."

1. Saunders, pp. 44-47. Macpherson's authorship has been proved.

2. *ibid.*, pp. 48-50. Again, Macpherson's authorship has been proved.

3. Thomas Graham of Balgowan (1748-1843), later (1814) created 1st Lord Lynedoch, was one of the Duke of Wellington's ablest generals. He was the only surviving son of Thomas Graham of Balgowan (d. 1766) by his wife Lady Christian Hope, daughter of Charles, 1st Earl of Hopetoun.

4. Saunders, p. 63. According to Delavoye's Life of Thomas Graham, Lord Lynedoch, p. 3, the Laird of Balgowan, father of the future general, declared that Macpherson was a modest young man of good taste, a master of Greek and Latin, and a good scholar.

this post Macpherson probably supplemented his income by doing part-time work as a corrector of the press, or proof-reader, for John Balfour, the Edinburgh publisher. Macpherson did not like tutoring, but it did bring him into contact with people of influence. When the Grahams moved around the country visiting friends and relatives, the young tutor went with them. In early 1759 Macpherson accompanied his pupil on a visit to the manse of Logierait in Perthshire, where he made the acquaintance of the minister's son, Adam Ferguson. It was an important encounter for Macpherson.

Ferguson, a Gaelic speaker, showed interest in some specimens of Gaelic poetry which Macpherson had with him; and hearing that the Grahams had arranged to spend

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1. The only source for Macpherson's employment as a proof-reader is Saunders, p. 63, but he gives no evidence; and none has been found elsewhere.
  2. John Balfour (1715-1796), publisher, and also a partner in Hamilton & Balfour, the official printers to the University of Edinburgh. He was the son of James Balfour, 1st of Pilrig, by his wife Louise, daughter of Robert Hamilton of Airdrie, Fife. His elder brother, James Balfour, 2nd of Pilrig, was Professor of Moral Philosophy (1754-1764) and Public Law (1764-1779) in Edinburgh University.
  3. Adam Ferguson (1723-1816), son of The Rev. Adam Ferguson of Logierait. Ordained in 1745, when he became deputy chaplain of The Black Watch, serving in Flanders and Ireland until 1754, when he resigned his commission. In 1757 he was appointed David Hume's successor as Library-Keeper and Clerk to the Faculty of Advocates in Edinburgh, but a year later he gave up this post (without resigning officially) in order to negotiate for a university chair. On 4th July 1759 he was appointed Professor of Natural Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh.
  4. The Authenticity of the Poems of Ossian, Allan Sinclair, The Celtic Magazine, Vol. 5, (1880), p. 311.

the summer and autumn at Lord Hopetoun's house in the fashionable spa of Moffat, Ferguson gave Macpherson a letter of introduction to his friend John Home, who also stayed at Moffat during the 'season'. Home, a Presbyterian minister who had been forced to resign his living after his play Douglas had been staged in 1756, had been interested in Celtic literature for several years.

In September 1759, on the bowling green at Moffat, Macpherson introduced himself to Home, and they talked about ancient Gaelic poetry, examples of which Macpherson claimed to have with him. When Home asked to see them, however, Macpherson made excuses, pointing out that as Home neither read nor spoke Gaelic he would not understand them. Home said that he was just as interested in translations, and, after countering several other objections, persuaded a seemingly reluctant Macpherson to prepare an English version of one piece, The Death of Oscar,

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1. John Home (1722-1808), son of Alexander Home, Town-clerk of Leith. Following ordination in 1745, he joined an Edinburgh volunteer corps. He fought for the Hanoverians at Falkirk, was taken prisoner by the Jacobites and confined to Castle Doune, from which he escaped by making a rope from his bedclothes. After the Rising was crushed he became minister of Athelstaneford. In 1756 his tragedy Douglas was produced in Edinburgh, and in the following year, with the help of Lord Bute, it was staged at Covent Garden. The play raised such a storm that he was obliged to resign his living. Bute, however, procured for him the sinecure of Conservator of Scots' Privileges, and, later, a pension, which allowed him to live comfortably for the rest of his life.
  2. See Henry Mackenzie's Account of the Life and Writings of John Home, Edinburgh, 1822, p. 127 (hereafter cited as Life of Home); and Rep. Cttee. Highland Soc. Appendix IV, pp. 56 and 66.

which was finished within a few days.<sup>1</sup> Home always believed, as did Blair and many other eminent scholars, that Macpherson had almost been dragooned into taking a deeper interest in Gaelic culture, a strong point in Macpherson's favour when the controversy arose, but it seems more than probable that Home was led into his conviction by clever acting on Macpherson's part. As J.S. Smart said in 1905:

"Criticism has depicted the poor young Highlander exhibiting to the learned men of Edinburgh, unaltered and undistorted, the fragments of Celtic poetry which he had brought from his native village, almost startled by their demand for the ampler monuments their fancy had conjured up, driven with reluctance and half unconsciously into fabrication by the eagerness of Home and Blair. Unhappily for this plea, it is now established that Macpherson invented and romanced from the beginning: the fragments were as much his own as the epics: the first poem The Death of Oscar which he gave to Home at Moffat is the most certainly spurious of all. In his dealings with his Edinburgh patrons he was never otherwise than disingenuous. To understand these youthful transactions, we must use our knowledge of his nature when it had reached maturity and was more plainly manifested. We may then find in his intercourse with Blair and Home some trace of that insight into character and occasion, quick adaptability, and shrewd self-confidence, by which in later life he amassed a fortune and, having been born in poverty, died the possessor of wealth and lands." 2

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1. Saunders, pp. 66-68.

2/...

It might be said, therefore that apart from any genuine interest Macpherson had in Gaelic culture, he used the subject as the means of making himself known to men of influence. His meeting with Home was the first, and decisive, opportunity to come his way. At the time he could have had no idea where this opportunity would lead, or how quickly it would work in his favour, but he handled Home with considerable cunning, and gave the earliest known demonstration of his ability as an opportunist. He had taken his first step away from obscurity and poverty.

Home was delighted with The Death of Oscar, and lost no time in bringing it to the notice of his friend Dr. Hugh Blair, who was equally enthusiastic, and sent for Macpherson.<sup>1</sup> When asked for further translations, Macpherson again appeared to be reluctant. "I at length," wrote Blair, "Prevailed on him to translate, and to bring me the several poetic pieces which he had in his possession."<sup>2</sup> With Blair's encouragement Macpherson produced sixteen pieces, which were published in

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2. (continued) J.S. Smart, James Macpherson: An Episode in Literature, London, 1905, pp. 207-208. (hereafter cited as Smart) Smart's review of the Ossian controversy is applauded by Professor Derick S. Thomson in his The Gaelic Sources of Macpherson's 'Ossian', (Aberdeen University Studies No. 130), Edinburgh, 1951.

1. Rep. Cttee. Highland Soc., op. cit., App. IV, p. 57.

2. ibid., loc. cit.



Edinburgh in early June 1760, under the title Fragments of Ancient Poetry collected in the Highlands of Scotland and translated from the Gaelic or Erse Language, with a preface by Blair. The volume was such a success that a second edition was called for immediately.<sup>1</sup> Blair was jubilant. On 23rd June 1760 he wrote to Lord Hailes, suggesting a scheme<sup>2</sup> "for encouraging Mr. Macpherson to apply himself to the making a further collection of Erse poetry"<sup>3</sup> and proposing a subscription to cover the expense of making the necessary search.

David Hume, at this juncture as keen as Blair to see more examples of primitive Gaelic poetry, supported the idea of financing Macpherson. In a letter he sent to a friend on 16th August 1760, Hume wrote:

"..we have endeavoured to put Mr. Macpherson on a way of procuring us more of these wild flowers. He is a modest, sensible young man, not settled in any living, but employed as a private tutor in Mr. Graham of Balgowan's family, a way of life which he is not fond of. We have therefore, set about a subscription of a guinea or two guineas a-piece, in order to enable him to quit the family, and undertake a mission into the Highlands, where he hopes to recover more of these fragments." 4

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1. Saunders, p. 82.
  2. Sir David Dalrymple, Lord Hailes (1726-1792).
  3. Quoted Malcolm Laing, Poems of Ossian, Vol. 1, Edinburgh, 1805, p. xvi.
  4. Printed in John Hill Burton's Life and Correspondence of David Hume, Vol. 1, Edinburgh, 1844, p. 464. (hereafter cited as Life of Hume).

Shortly afterwards Blair arranged a dinner so that leading men in  
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 Edinburgh could meet Macpherson. Among those present were David Hume, John  
 2 3  
 Home, Adam Ferguson, William Robertson, Lord Elibank and a young man named  
 4  
 Chalmers. It was agreed that Macpherson should give up his job, and that  
 Chalmers should act as the treasurer of a fund to support Macpherson's research.  
 From the money promised by those at the dinner, and from a subscription list  
 opened in Parliament House, about £100 was raised to cover the cost of Macpherson's  
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 mission. At the end of August or the beginning of September 1760 James Macpherson  
 6  
 resigned his tutorship and set out for the Highlands and Islands.

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1. Rep. Cttee. Highland Soc., App. IV., p. 58.
  2. William Robertson (1721-1793), Principal of Edinburgh University (1762-1793).
  3. Patrick Murray, 5th Lord Elibank (1703-1778), advocate, soldier and littérateur.
  4. In the Highland Society's Report the name given is "Robert Chalmers", but this is obviously an error. The person concerned was George Chalmers (1742-1825) who went through Macpherson's papers in 1797 soon after he died and not only collected a few biographical notes but also made a note of some of the pseudonyms which Macpherson had used as a political journalist. These papers cannot now be found. Many of the Macpherson documents were in the hands of Alexander Fraser of the Leadclune family in 1807 (but were lost sight of after that); others were stolen by a servant from Balavil in 1865: among them may have been the papers which Robert Chambers referred to in his Cyclopaedia of English Literature, (1844) Vol. 1, p. 625.
  5. Saunders, p. 94; on the authority of the famous bluestocking, Mrs. Montagu.
  6. *ibid.*, p. 117.

His journey was to last approximately two months, and for part of that time he was accompanied by his fellow-clansman Lachlan Macpherson of Strathmashie,<sup>1</sup> whose task was to transcribe the old Gaelic script in ancient documents and to assist in the recording of oral recitations. During this journey they stayed at the manse of the Rev. Dr. John Macpherson of Sleat in Skye, and there, probably for the first time, James met the minister's fifteen year old younger son John, the future Governor General of India. Although there was nearly ten years difference in their ages, James and John were destined to become partners in many political ventures. There is no known connection between the Skye and the Badenoch Macphersons: John and James were not related in the paternal line. The pedigree of the Skye Macphersons is easy to trace, because the majority of its members were<sup>2</sup> ministers, and it has recently been collated and proved by the Rev. Dr. Donald Mackinnon.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Lachlan Macpherson of Strathmashie (a cadet of the Pitmain family, see Macpherson Hist./1, pp. 499-500) was one of the very few Macpherson land-holders who had taken part on the Jacobite side in the '45 to emerge without losses of any sort. That he should have agreed to act as an assistant to the young, landless James Macpherson, is strange. It is the first instance of James dominating another member of his clan. For the part played by Lachlan see his letter to Dr. Hugh Blair of 22 October 1763 (printed in Rep. Cttee. Highland Soc., App. 1, pp. 8-9).
  2. Every one of John Macpherson's ancestors who was a minister is listed, with full biographical details, in Hew Scott's Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae, 8 Vols, Edinburgh, 1915-1950.
  3. The Macphersons of Skye, Donald Mackinnon, The Scottish Genealogist, Vol. 1, No. 2/3 (April/July 1954, issued May 1955), pp. 26-34.

The earliest recorded member of the Skye family was John 'Roy' Macpherson, known as Iain Ruadh or John Roy because of his red hair, who was living at Ostaig as the parson of Sleat in the mid 16th century.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Mackinnon states that Iain Ruadh Ostaig's ancestors were the Macphersons of South Uist in the Outer Hebrides, and that these island Macphersons, who invariably used the patronymic Macmhuirich, had been vassals and hereditary bards of the Macdonald Lords of the Isles before acting in the same capacity under the Macdonald chieftains of Clanranald.<sup>2</sup> The fact that the Uist Macphersons and the Badenoch Macphersons both used the patronymic Macmhuirich was a coincidence. Muirich or Murdoch was a very common name, and its use as a patronymic equally common. In the case of the bardic line of Hebridean Macmhuirichs it was adopted as a permanent surname, except in the case

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1. *ibid.* See also the article on Sir John Macpherson, Baronet, of Calcutta, in William Playfair's British Family Antiquity, Vol. 7, London, 1811, pp. 332-347. It is almost certain that Macpherson supplied Playfair with much of the information contained in this article, but it is clear from the mis-spelling of Gaelic names and other factual errors that Macpherson did not see any page-proofs before the article was published. In a footnote on p. 333 Playfair states that there is a plain near Ostaig known as "lasich Treaigh a Pherson Ruaigh" meaning "The Site of the Residence or House of the Red haired Parson", but not one of the older inhabitants living near Ostaig today has ever heard of the place. As the old manse of Ostaig has disappeared, it is probable that the name fell into disuse.
  2. For a full account of the Macmhuirich family see Professor Derick S. Thomson's The Macmhuirich Bardic Family in Trans. of the Gaelic Soc. of Inverness, xliii, (1960-63), pp. 276-304. Muirich is pronounced 'Murich', and Macmhuirich 'Macvurich'.

of John Roy of Ostaig's family, who preferred Macpherson; whereas the Badenoch family in the Eastern Highlands reserved Macmhuirich (implying "The Macmhuirich") as the Gaelic style for their chieftains, the Macphersons of Cluny, and it was never used by any other member of the Badenoch tribe.

It so happened that the man who gave James Macpherson considerable help was  
<sup>1</sup>  
 Neil Macmhuirich, the 17th hereditary bard of the Macdonalds of Clanranald, but Neil, an outstanding genealogist, never acknowledged James as a kinsman of any sort; and John Macpherson, the eventual Governor General, would never admit that he was connected with the Badenoch tribe, although he used their arms. John Macpherson, when asked, claimed that he could trace his family no further back than to Iain Ruadh Ostaig, who was a Macdonald vassal.  
<sup>2</sup>  
 He told the truth.

Iain Ruadh Ostaig or John 'Roy' Macpherson of Ostaig had, it is believed,

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1. *ibid.*, p. 282 et seq. For Neil Macmhuirich's connection with James Macpherson's research see the declaration of Neil's son, Lachlan Macmhuirich, dated 9 Aug., 1800, (Rep. Cttee. Highland Soc., App. XVII, pp. 275-279).
  2. Macpherson MSS./1, 30/15, Sir John Macpherson to Principal Roderick Macleod of King's College, Aberdeen, 14 March 1798. This letter contains a full account of the Skye Macphersons' pedigree, as far as it was known by John Macpherson. The question of his lineage had been raised by the writer of "the Baronetage" (this could have been Playfair, whose work was also known as "The Baronetage of England"). Macpherson's short pedigree in Extinct & Dormant Baronetcies of England, Ireland & Scotland, ed: J. & J.B. Burke, London, 1844, p. 333, is full of errors.

only one son, the famous warrior Iain Bann of John 'Bain' Macpherson, a fair-haired giant who served the Macdonalds as the Constable of Castle Camus at Knock in Sleat. He lived well into the 17th century and had several sons, but only one, Martin Macpherson,<sup>1</sup> seems to have survived, and even he was lucky to live as long as he did. Martin was the minister of North Uist, where he became so unpopular that in 1645 he sought the protection of John Macleod of Macleod to save himself from threatened assassination. With the help of the chieftain of the Macleods he was presented to the living of Duirinish in Skye, and was eventually succeeded in that charge by his only son, Dugald Macpherson.<sup>2</sup> Dugald had two sons: Martin,<sup>3</sup> the minister of Strath, and John,<sup>4</sup> the schoolmaster of Orbest, both places

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1. Martin Macpherson (c. 1610-1662), M.A. (Glasgow) 1632; minister of North Uist 1639-1645; minister of Duirinish 1645-1662. He married Margaret, daughter of Kenneth Macqueen of Orinsay, North Uist, and had two daughters and one son Dugald (see n. 2).
  2. Dugald Macpherson (c. 1641-1717), M.A. (Glasgow) 1661; minister of Kilmuir 1670-84; minister of Duirinish 1684-1717. He married (1) Christian Berry of Edinburgh, and had two sons: Martin (see n. 3) and John (see n. 4). He married (2) Margaret, daughter of Alexander Macleod of Drynoch, but had no further issue.
  3. Martin Macpherson (1672-1713), M.A. (Edinburgh) 1693; minister of Strath in Swordale 1693-1713. He married Mary, daughter of Lachlan Mackinnon, 1st of Corrie (or Coirechatachan) in Skye, the senior cadet of Mackinnon of Mackinnon, and had one son John (see p. 48 n.1) and two daughters, Mary and Isabella.
  4. John Macpherson (c. 1674-1730), schoolmaster of Orbest, and a noted classical scholar. He had one son Martin, minister of Golspie (see p. 55 n.1), and two daughters: Christian, who died unmarried, and Barbara, who married Alexander Macleod minister of St. Kilda, and had a son, Colonel Donald Macleod of Achmagoyle, whose son was a distinguished Indian civil servant, Sir John Macpherson Macleod of Glendale.

being in Skye. Martin Macpherson of Strath was as unprolific as his ancestors, and he died on 10th September 1713 without ever seeing his only son John,<sup>1</sup> the future minister of Sleat, who was born posthumously on 1st December 1713. This last named John was a very able man, with an interest in antiquities, poetry and local politics.

Following his graduation at King's College, Aberdeen, John Macpherson was ordained in 1732 and given the charge of the parish of Barra in the Outer Hebrides, where he wrote his first published work.<sup>2</sup> On 25th February 1740 he married Janet Macleod, the sixth daughter of Donald Macleod of Bernera, a fiery Jacobite supporter, known throughout the Highlands as "The Old Trojan". Two years later John Macpherson was translated to his native Skye and took up residence as Ostaig as minister of Sleat.

Three years after John moved to Sleat the island of Skye was split into many

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1. John Macpherson (1713-1765), M.A. (King's Coll., Aberdeen) 1728, D.D. (King's Coll., Aberdeen) 1761; minister of Barra 1734-1742; minister of Sleat 1742-1765. He married Janet, daughter of Donald Macleod of Bernera ('The Old Trojan'), and had two sons: Martin (see p. 54 n. 4) and John, the future Governor-General of India; and one daughter Isabella (see p. 54 n. 3). For a biographical sketch of the Rev. Dr. John Macpherson, and his relations, see E.U.L. MSS., La.II, 451/2 (Chalmers MSS.).
  2. Latin Ode to the Memory of Norman Macleod, minister of Duirinish [who died 1739], published in The Scots Magazine, 1739.

factions by the arrival of Prince Charles Edward Stuart: some of the leading men were active supporters of the Hanoverians, others were fervent Jacobites, and a few sat on the fence, or pretended to. Never before had the traditional loyalties in the island been so disrupted.<sup>1</sup> Since the collapse of the Lord of the Isles in 1493 Skye had been occupied by two major clans and one minor tribe: Macleod of Macleod and his cadets in the north, and Macdonald of Macdonald and Sleat and his adherents, including the vassal clan under Mackinnon of Mackinnon, in the south. Norman Macleod of Macleod, the M.P. for Inverness-shire from 1741 to 1754, was regarded as a Whig, but he was nearly persuaded by his cousin Lord Lovat to join the Stuarts. He resisted the temptation partly because his clan had suffered severe losses in men and money by taking the Stuart side since the time of Charles I, but mainly because he was one of the first to learn that Prince Charles had landed without supporting French troops, which convinced him that the venture had little chance of success. Seeing that the wiser course was to consolidate his position as a government man, he raised a Macleod regiment of four companies, which was used by the Hanoverians to suppress the followers of the

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1. For the situation in Skye during the '45, and the consequences for Macleod of Macleod see Alexander Mackenzie's History of the Macleods, Inverness, 1889, and Dr. Isabel F. Grant's The Macleods, op. cit.



Jacobite Gordons of Huntly.

It proved a costly gesture. The Hanoverians were as forgetful as the Stuarts had been in rewarding their supporters, and Macleod of Macleod was nearly ruined by the cost of maintaining his regiment. His action also incensed many of his clansmen, some of them important cadets, who renounced his leadership and fought for the Stuarts. Among them was Donald Macleod of Bernera, The Old Trojan, whose wife Anne was a cousin of Macleod of Macleod. The Old Trojan found himself opposed, and later hunted, by his eldest son and heir, Norman Macleod of Unish, the brutal and blackguardly captain of one of the companies in Macleod's Hanoverian regiment.

Norman Macleod of Macleod's wife Janet was the sister of Sir Alexander Macdonald of Macdonald and Sleat, who controlled the southern half of Skye. As the titular Macdonald of the Isles and the chieftain of the senior clan in the

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1. Donald Macleod of Bernera (1693-1783), "The Old Trojan", was the progenitor of what came to be called "The Bernera Tribe". He married (1) Anne, daughter of Roderick Macleod of Macleod by his wife Isabel, daughter of Kenneth Mackenzie, 3rd Earl of Seaforth, and had 20 children, including Janet who married John Macpherson, minister of Sleat. He married (2) Margaret, daughter of John Macdonald of the Sleat family, but had no children by her. He married (3) Margaret, daughter of Donald Macleod of Greshornish, minister of Duirinish, and had 9 children by her. His prowess as a soldier, his longevity and his 29 children made him one of the most celebrated Highlanders of his time. See Alexander Mackenzie, op. cit., pp. 250-256; and Isabel F. Grant, op. cit., pp. 468-469. Many of the Old Trojan's sons rose to positions of rank and influence in the army, navy and foreign or colonial services.

Macdonald confederation, Sir Alexander angered his fellow Macdonald chieftains outside Skye, especially those of the Roman Catholic faith, by taking the same line as Norman Macleod of Macleod. Inside Skye Sir Alexander's tenants in the south, among them the Mackinnons, and his kinsmen and cadets living under Macleod in the north, including the husband of the famous Flora Macdonald, defied him and joined the Jacobites. In an island where lairds and tenants, fathers and sons, and branches of the same families were in opposition the atmosphere was one of civil war, and the ministers, above all others, could not have avoided involvement.

Where John Macpherson at Sleat stood politically during this turbulent period is not, unfortunately, recorded. The sympathies of his immediate relations were in conflict with those of his laird and patron. His mother was a Mackinnon of Corrie, and his maternal uncles and cousins were Jacobites to a man. His Macleod father-in-law, The Old Trojan, and some of his Macleod brothers-in-law were also Jacobites, and, as he remained on the best of terms with these Mackinnon and Macleod relatives after the Rising, it could be assumed that he had some sort of sympathy

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1. In the Muniments Room at Dunvegan Castle there are several letters from John Macpherson to Norman Macleod of Macleod, covering the period 1746-1760, in which he asks for Macleod's help on behalf of his Mackinnon cousins and Macleod brothers-in-law, some of whom forfeited lands or lost money for their part in the '45 Rising.



with their politics. On the other hand, whatever his private sympathies might have been, his public attitude must have been conditioned by the fact that he held his living, and the tenancy of a small farm adjoining his manse, in a district<sup>1</sup> controlled by Macdonald of Sleat, whose views he was probably expected to reflect in the pulpit. Not that John Macpherson liked the Macdonalds of Sleat. At a later date he took the side of Norman Macleod of Macleod against Macdonald in local politics.<sup>2</sup> Again, what John was willing to risk in a local dispute was not necessarily an indication of his views on a national issue such as Jacobitism.

Perhaps the best guide to John's political views is to note the beliefs of men he mixed with as a completely free agent; namely his friends. From a series of letters beginning in 1743 and ending in 1764 it would seem that his two most

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1. The farm at Ostaig which Macpherson held from Macdonald of Macdonald and Sleat, adjoined a farm held by one of Macpherson's cousins. During the lifetime of Macpherson's elder son, Martin, this property was the subject of litigation. See Antiq. Notes (2nd ser.), pp. 308-310.
  2. Macleod Muniments Room, Dunvegan Castle, Box 56-B (Correspondence 1700-1769), Rev. John Macpherson, Sleat, to Norman Macleod of Macleod, 26 April 1760. This letter deals with a meeting of all the Skye parish ministers at Coirechatachan; and John Macpherson assured Macleod that he would obtain their support for Macleod against Macdonald concerning the vacant living of Duirinish and certain lands in that parish.



no mention of politics. They are confined to discussions about the church, or  
<sup>1</sup> history or literature. Occasionally they also contain personal references,  
 some of which give the impression that John Macpherson, in common with several  
 Skye ministers in the 18th century, was a rather gay person who appreciated  
<sup>2</sup> feminine beauty. He never, however, referred to his wife Janet, who died in  
 1748 leaving him with three very young children: <sup>3</sup> Isabella, the eldest, who was  
 probably born in 1741; <sup>4</sup> Martin, who eventually succeeded his father as minister <sup>5</sup>

1. In addition to the Latin Ode of 1739 (see p. 48 n. 2) John Macpherson published in his lifetime a paraphrased version of The Song of Moses in Latin Verse under the title Cantici Mosaici Paraphrasis, Scots Magazine, 1747; and (as joint author with his first cousin Martin Macpherson of Golspie) Letter to the Author of the Treatise on the Second Sight, 1759 [The treatise was by "Theophilus Insulanus", pseudonym of William Macleod, 3rd of Hamer, (d. 1770)]. Macpherson was also certainly part-author of Kenneth Macaulay's History of St. Kilda, London, 1764; and his most important work Critical Dissertations on the Ancient Caledonians (see later) was published after his death.
2. See Tour of the Hebrides, op. cit., p. 240; and N.L.S., MSS. 2958, passim.
3. Isabella was unmarried when Dr. Johnson visited Skye in 1773. She kept up a correspondence and received presents from Johnson until his death (see Mrs. Grant of Laggan's Letters from the Mountains, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 149). Isabella married John Macpherson of Ovie in Badenoch, and had one son Martin, who died unmarried. Her son Martin Macpherson of Ovie was probably the first Macpherson to have a descent from both the Badenoch and Skye Macphersons. See Alexander Mackenzie, op. cit., p. 251.
4. Martin Macpherson (1743-1812), M.A. (King's Coll., Aberdeen) 1764, D.D. (King's Coll., Aberdeen) 1803; minister of Sleat 1765-1812; he married (1766) his second cousin Mary (died 1808), daughter of Lachlan Mackinnon, 3rd of Corrie (or Coirechatachan), but had no issue.
5. Chart pedigrees of the families of John and James Macpherson are given at the end of this thesis under Appendices 6 and 7 on pp. 539 and 540.

of Sleat and was born in 1743; and John, the future Governor General of India,  
 1  
 who was born in 1744.

Young John Macpherson was orphaned by the time he was twenty, and the loss of  
 his parents, especially of his mother when he was four, must have been a severe

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 blow. He certainly grieved at the death of his father, whose place was taken by

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 his tutor Adam Ferguson acting in loco parentis. He also kept in close touch

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 with his father's first cousin Martin Macpherson, the minister of Golspie,

1. The article on John Macpherson by J.A. Cannon in House of Commons 1754-90, Vol. 3, p. 96, gives Macpherson's dates as "c. 1745-1821", which follows the precedent set in D.N.B. Alexander Mackenzie, op. cit., p. 251, who knew several of Macpherson's cousins, had no hesitation in giving John's year of birth as 1744. Mackenzie's assertion is confirmed by the note sent to George Chalmers on 14 January by John Allan, who had inspected the Registers of the Presbytery of Skye for the years of birth of the children of Rev. Dr. John Macpherson, (E.U.L. MSS., Ia. II, 451/2). The register inspected by Allan is not now in the public records, and its whereabouts cannot be traced.
2. Playfair's British Family Antiquity, Vol. 7, op. cit., n., p. 335. "Dr. Macpherson's sons Martin and John were sent for express to Edinburgh, during his illness in 1765, but only arrived in time to pay the last tribute of sorrowing affection to a father they tenderly and justly loved."
3. See Biographical Sketch of Adam Ferguson, LL.D., F.R.S.E., John Small, Edinburgh, 1864, p. 33, (hereafter cited as Sketch of Ferguson), John Macpherson to Adam Ferguson, 13 January 1781 (quoting from Edin. Univ. Lib. MS., now missing), "My friend Dr. Alexander Carlyle has written me, with an interest in your welfare, and all that belongs to you, that adds, if possible, to my attachment to him. There is a circumstance which, with all his love for you and me, he is not fully known to - it is that I met you when I lost my father, and that your children and I are of but one family."
4. Martin Macpherson (1723-1773), only son of John Macpherson, schoolmaster of Orbst (see p. n.). After leaving Glasgow Univ. he was missionary in Lochaber and Badenoch before acting as assistant at Rothesay; licensed (Skye) 1748; minister of Glenelg 1751-1754; minister of Golspie 1754-1773. He married (1755) Elizabeth (called "The White Hand"), daughter of Hugh Gordon of Carroll (now Gordonbush) by Brora, Sheriff-Depute for Sutherland, and had 5 sons and 5 daughters. His second (but eldest surviving) son Hugh Macpherson (1767-1854), laird of the Isle of Eigg, was Professor of Greek, of Hebrew and finally Sub-Principal of King's Coll., Aberdeen and became representative of the Macphersons of Skye in 1821, when Sir John Macpherson died childless. Professor Hugh Macpherson had many distinguished sons.

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but the affection he displayed to Martin and his family uncovered a rather odd attitude. John, unlike James Macpherson, did not attract much comment as a young man: at least, no evidence so far discovered has revealed any commentary before 1769. This does not, however, matter very much. As his career progresses his own letters will reveal the important facets of his character. For the moment it is perhaps only necessary to provide a possible explanation for some of the statements he made to the minister of Golspie.

John Macpherson was, above all else, a person of great charm, who captivated people with his easy conversation and manners, his optimism and his outstanding goodlooks. In full manhood his height of six feet six inches and pleasant approach earned from some the name of "The Gentle Giant", while others, more impressed by his distinguished bearing, called him "The Thane". He was, moreover, a man who proved his courage in military action. Yet there is not one vestige of evidence to show that he had any involvement with women, whom he must have attracted. It has been almost fashionable since the last war to slur the name of any man who has little or nothing to do with women by labelling him a homosexual. It is a

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1. The number of John's close relatives named Martin Macpherson is confusing. His brother was Martin of Sleat; his nephew Martin of Ovie; his cousin Martin of Golspie.

repugnant charge to make, but if made it should be based on some evidence. This evidence, it would seem, regrettably exists in the case of John Macpherson.

The first hint came from Mr. Robert Ogilvie of Balliol College, who kindly examined the Macpherson correspondence in order to pinpoint the sources of some of the Latin quotations used by John and James Macpherson. John, in one of his letters to James, talked of a "lumbo pialo" and added enigmatically "find that out".<sup>1</sup> After pointing out that the phrase was not Latin but Italian, Mr. Ogilvie wrote:

"Lumbo means 'loins' and pial(1)o is a 'plane, smoother'. If he is not referring to a dish of meat (which seems improbable), it is almost certainly indecent. Probably means no more than a whore - 'a loin smoother' - but if Macpherson was a homosexual other interpretations are possible!!" <sup>2</sup>

Mr. Ogilvie's comment caused the present writer to look again through all the Macpherson letters, one of which, written to John Macpherson by John Stewart,<sup>3</sup> the Secretary of the Bengal Council, seemed significant. Writing from St. Helena

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1. Macpherson MSS./1, 39/8, John to James Macpherson, Madras, 30th Sept. 1774.
  2. R.M. Ogilvie, 12 August 1965. (letter to present writer).
  3. John Stewart (d. 1778), the son of James Stewart, an attorney of the Exchequer in Edinburgh (and probably the same James Stewart who was a friend of Dr. John Macpherson of Sleat, see N.L.S., MSS. 2958, f. 56, John Macpherson to John Macaulay, 8 Oct. 1757). John Stewart, a political adventurer, will be dealt with more fully later.



en route from India to England, Stewart said:

"Sullivan <sup>1</sup> ~~has~~ been here in the Ajax, with the sentimental Eliza <sup>2</sup> aboard.  
 You may tell Dick his brother is much improved in her company; that he  
 talks of love now, entirely divested of all such beastly ideas as you  
 and he <sup>3</sup> indulge yourselves in at Madras." <sup>4</sup>

There cannot, surely, be any doubt about Stewart's meaning. He was stating that he knew that John Sullivan and John Macpherson indulged in unnatural practices. And, from some remarks made to Martin Macpherson of Galspie it would seem that John Macpherson tacitly admitted some sort of abnormality, and resigned himself to the consequences, at a comparatively early age. When he was twenty-two he was in London, considering a journey he was going to make to the far east. In a letter he sent Martin Macpherson on 1st January 1767 he mentioned the personal property he had in Skye as follows:

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1. John Sullivan (1749-1839), second son of Benjamin Sullivan of Dromeragh, Co. Cork, and a kinsman of the famous Laurence Sullivan (c. 1713-1786).
  2. Probably Elizabeth Draper (see Appendix 3).
  3. Richard (later Sir Richard Joseph) Sullivan (1752-1806).
  4. B.M. Add. MSS. 29137, f. 218, John Stewart to John Macpherson, 9 June 1776.

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"I intend to inscribe to Greville my books at Ostaig, which are the most valuable part of the library; these will, on my retirement and in case of Martin's having no son, be Jock's, but of this another time. Martin is married. I am pleased he asked my consent, but it was to the Sunbeam. <sup>2</sup> .. She is to my knowledge a smart agreeable girl, but bred in the high life of that country. He will now settle, and Corry, <sup>4</sup> tho' a pleasant rascal, is no bad father. .. It gives me no small satisfaction to see the two Martins in the way of keeping the most respectable of all families, as I think, above the water." <sup>5</sup>

It seems unusual, to say the least, that a healthy handsome young man of twenty-two (and John Macpherson was a very healthy man who never complained of illness during his whole life) should look forward to retirement without children, but that was the prospect he certainly envisaged. He did not even consider the

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1. Charles Francis Greville (1749-1809), second son of 1st Earl of Warwick.
  2. John ("Jock") Macpherson (1763-1771), eldest son of Martin Macpherson of Colspie.
  3. Mary (d. 1808), called "The Sunbeam", daughter of Lachlan Mackinnon, 3rd of Corrie. She married Martin Macpherson, minister of Sleat, on 19th November 1766, but had no children.
  4. "Corry" is the territorial title of Lachlan Mackinnon.
  5. Macpherson MSS./1700. .... 21/1, John to Martin Macpherson of Colspie, 1 January 1766, (this should read 1767; Macpherson, like many people, wrote down the number of the old year by force of habit on the 1st January).

possibility of having an heir. On the contrary, he had already made up his mind that in the event of his brother Martin of Sleat having no children his property would pass to his second cousin Jock, the eldest son of Martin of Golspie. Seven years later, when John Macpherson was in India, he received the belated news of the death of young Jock,<sup>1</sup> but not of the death of young Jock's father, which occurred in 1773. Not knowing that Martin of Golspie was dead, John sent him the following letter of condolence in 1774:

"Poor little Jock! I looked on Jock as almost my own son, and the accounts of his death, and the distress of the mother, affected me deeply. Indeed, to Jock I had an eye to keep up the old and noble Descent of Ian Bane.<sup>2</sup> .. The consolation is that the White Hand <sup>2</sup> Mrs. Martin Macpherson of Golspie<sup>7</sup> has still preserved the Race of the Slate Warrior<sup>2</sup> and the Revered Old Dugald.<sup>3</sup>"<sup>4</sup>

This statement confirms John's attitude. He was approaching the age of thirty, he was at the peak of his manhood, and still he rejected the prospect of

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1. Jock Macpherson died on 5 May 1771, six days after the birth of his third brother, who was baptised John on 7 May 1771. Martin of Golspie had, therefore, two sons named John:- John (primus) called Jock, b. 1763; and John (secundus), b. 1771.
  2. "Ian Bane", also called the "Slate Warrior", was John "Bain" Macpherson of Sleat (see p. 47).
  3. "Old Dugald" was Dugald Macpherson of Duirinish (see p. 47 n. 2).
  4. Macpherson MSS./1, 21/6, John to Martin Macpherson of Golspie, 13 March 1774.

paternity. Proud as he was of his family, and his descent from the warrior Iain Ban Ostaig, he had looked to Jock Macpherson to perpetuate the family name. He was distressed by Jock's death, but consoled to know that Martin of Golspie's wife had produced other children. In this respect he was prophetic, because it was Martin of Golspie's second son, Professor Hugh Macpherson, who eventually carried on the representation of the Skye family.

When, two years after the letter of condolence, John Stewart spoke of "love.. divested of..beastly ideas", there was only one reasonable interpretation to place on the facts. No young man who liked children, as John Macpherson did, would fatalistically accept the idea of dying childless unless he was sexually abnormal to some degree. Women often have to face the prospect of being childless. Whether they marry or not is largely a matter of luck: they cannot propose marriage. Men are not hindered by this convention. For Macpherson, a poor man, the easiest road to success would have been marriage to a wealthy or influential daughter of a well connected person. <sup>1</sup> George Macartney, who had a very similar background and talents, proved that it could be done. Why did not Macpherson, so well endowed in many ways, emulate his friend Macartney? Apparently, there can be only one answer.

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1. George Macartney (1737-1806), who will be discussed later.

It is, perhaps, also worth noting that in the letters which James and John sent to each other there is one marked difference. James, when he wrote in Gaelic, often recounted bawdy stories or used earthy and sometimes filthy expressions, whereas John, without appearing prudish, rarely responded in the same vein. At most he used mildly scatological terms, and whenever he mentioned women or scandals concerning women he did so without being crude and in a strangely detached manner.

In the autumn of 1760, however, when they probably met for the first time, John was only fifteen and James twenty-four, and it is doubtful if they had much of importance to say about women or anything else. In fact, they had very little in common. Their surname was the same, but their origins were not. They had no blood ties of any sort, either through their male or female lines. James was the son of an effete, poor tacksmen, whose father was born on the wrong side of an upstart's blanket. John came from a much better background. His father was a cultured, well educated clergyman, whose ancestors for several generations had been university graduates and ministers. And, better still, his mother was a daughter of the fiery Old Trojan, Donald Macleod, by his wife Anne, a grand child of the powerful Earl of Seaforth, chief of the great Mackenzie clan. Both men were proud of their forebears, but James was obsessed by his family and John was not.

And the same applied to their politics. James was a sentimental Jacobite, while John, like his father, appeared almost indifferent to the subject, and left no clue to his feelings, one way or the other. John was a strict Macphersonite, who willingly supported any person or group which would further his career.

Their personalities were entirely different. Indeed, it is tempting to say that they represented the extremes of what outsiders regard as "typical Highlanders". James, the melancholy, arrogant, bravely solitary figure, quick to take offence, with a touch of feyness. John, the picturesque, gay, emotional, fast talking and gregarious but courtly figure, also with a touch of feyness. The basic difference, however, obviously had nothing to do with their being Highlanders. Quite simply, James was an introvert and John an extrovert. Even so, the seemingly less-complicated John is a more difficult person to understand than the sour, aloof and lascivious James, whose delusions of grandeur, petty conceits and brooding hatreds make his motives easier to detect. They eventually became partners because each possessed special information and skills which were useful to the other, and because they trusted each other absolutely. They were plausible rogues and monumental liars, with supreme confidence in their ability to out-face anybody who questioned their veracity. Their consciences must have been as flexible as rubber, for they rarely justified their political actions, and they

always convinced each other that they were the innocent victims of misunderstanding on the part of other people. They cannot be admired, but their morality, or lack of it, is beyond judgment by normal standards. They had to manufacture their careers without ready-made tools. They started unknown and penniless; their only assets were wits, intelligence and a tenacious determination to use every opportunity that came their way. In building what they probably believed were admirable structures they did not hesitate to use bent or ugly scaffolding. In the minds of such men the day will come when the unsightly but necessary scaffolding will be discarded and the worthy, uncluttered edifice revealed. Their real enemy is the historian, whose main occupation is to search for the forgotten pieces of scaffolding in order to find out how they erected their structures, and how near they came to achieving their ambitions.

CHAPTER 2

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From Literature to Politics 1760-1768.



Chapter 2 - From Literature to Politics 1760-1768.

After leaving Dr. John Macpherson's manse at Ostaig, James Macpherson continued his journey through Skye with Ewan Macpherson, a schoolmaster from Knoydart. Ewan, who could read the old Gaelic script, was a native of Badenoeh and had known James as a boy, but he was reluctant to help his young fellow clansman. At Dunvegan, however, he was "in a manner compulsively obliged" by two lairds, Macleod of Talisker and Maclean of Coll, to accompany James on a tour of some of the islands in the Outer Hebrides.<sup>1</sup> They called at North and South Uist, and at Benbecula. In the Uists they met, among others, the famous bards Neil Macmhuirich and John Maccodrum. Maccodrum was much amused by the odd greeting he received from James, whose spoken Gaelic was poor due to long neglect; and James, not realising he was in the presence of perhaps the greatest Highland bard of all time, lost the finest opportunity he ever had to collect Gaelic material by taking offence at Maccodrum's good-humoured retort. Such was Macpherson's pride that he snubbed the bard, and abruptly went on his way.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Rep. Cttee. Highland Soc., App. VI, p. 95. The Declaration of Ewan Macpherson, dated 11 Sept. 1800 at Knock, in Sleat.

2. ibid., loc. cit.

At Benbecula the two Macphersons stayed for a week with Macdonald, younger of Clanranald, having previously spent a night or two with his father, the chieftain, who made arrangements for James to borrow some old Gaelic manuscripts, including the ancient Leabhar Dearg or "Red Book" of Clanranald.<sup>1</sup> The visit to Benbecula brought the Hebridean tour to an end. Ewan went back to Skye, and James made his way to Ruthven, where he remained for a while to discuss his work with the Rev. Andrew Gallie, the missionary at Brae-Badenoch, and other friends. While in Ruthven James decided to make a journey to the island of Mull and the coast of Argyll.<sup>2</sup> Little is known about this second tour except that he did get as far as Glenorchy.

By the time James Macpherson returned to Edinburgh in early January 1761 he had been away from that city for no more than four months, and yet he had covered a considerable mileage through areas where communications were bad. What he did or did not discover of literary value on his lightning survey of Gaeldom was

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1. *ibid.*, pp. 96-97, and App. XVII, p. 279.

2. *ibid.*, App. X, pp. 153-154, James Macpherson to Rev. James MacLagan, minister of Amulree (later of Blair Atholl), dated 27 October 1760 at Ruthven. MacLagan provided Macpherson with the texts of several Gaelic poems.

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eventually examined in 1805 by a special committee of the Highland Society.

Unfortunately, although the evidence gathered by the committee was extensive, and included testimonies written soon after the journey by men who had helped James, it throws little light on his career after 1765.

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Back in Edinburgh James took lodgings in Blackfriars' Wynd, close to the home of Dr. Hugh Blair, and here, under the latter's watchful interest, he continued the work on the epic Fingal which he had started while he was in Ruthven in October 1760. By 9th February 1761 Fingal, a lengthy production of six 'books' (or parts), was ready for the press, for on that date David Hume wrote to his friend William

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Strahan, a publisher in London, as follows:

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1. The person responsible for editing the evidence collected by the Highland Society was Henry Mackenzie (1745-1831), author of The Man of Feeling. Although great care was taken by Mackenzie it is certain that he made a mistake in ascribing a letter "dated Lauriston, 4th February 1760" to "Sir John Macpherson" (*ibid.*, App. I, pp. 1-3). Smart (p. 138) increased the error by saying that the correspondent was "a young baronet, Sir John Macpherson of Lauriston". In 1760 there were no Macphersons with either a baronetcy or a knighthood. It was not until 27th June 1786 that John Macpherson (the other subject of this thesis) was created a baronet, and he was the first-ever Sir John Macpherson. If Henry Mackenzie meant this John Macpherson (and they knew each other well) then the letter in support of James Macpherson must have been dated after 1786 - and it is possible that "1760" was a compositor's error for "1790".
  2. Rep. Cttee. Highland Soc., App. X, pp. 154-155, James Macpherson to the Rev. James MacLagan, dated 16 January 1761 at Edinburgh. See also John Ramsay of Ochtertyre (*op. cit.*, p. 544 et seq.)
  3. William Strahan (1715-1785), son of George Strachan, W.S., of Leith. In 1739 Strahan dropped the 'c' in his name Strachan when he settled in London as a master printer. As a result of publishing Samuel Johnson's Dictionary in 1754 he earned enough money to buy a share in The London Chronicle in 1757. By 1760 he was a moderately wealthy publisher of well-known (mainly Scottish) authors. From 1763 he/...

"I cannot give you a better return for your obliging Letter than by introducing to your acquaintance the Bearer, Mr. M'Pherson, who translated some Fragments of Highland Poetry, which have been extremely well received by the Public, and have probably come to your hands. He has also translated a larger Work, a Narrative Poem of great Antiquity, which lay in Obscurity, and would probably have been bury'd in Oblivion if he had not retrieved it. He proposes to print it by Subscription, and his Friends here [in Edinburgh] are very busy in procuring him Encouragement. He goes up to London with the same intention. ...

He will probably need your Advice in several Particulars; and as he is an entire stranger in London, you will naturally of yourself be inclin'd to assist him. He is also very worthy of your Friendship; being a sensible, modest young Fellow, a very good Scholar, and of unexceptionable Morals. I have advis'd him to be at first on a Footing of Confidence with you; and hope you will receive him as one who merits your Friendship." 1

In the early spring of 1761 James Macpherson, with George Chalmers as his companion, went to London for the first time. He quickly found himself the object of interest in literary circles. On 14th April 1761, for instance, he received

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3. (continued) began to attend debates in Parliament, reports of which he sent for many years thereafter to David Hume. He was M.P. for Malmesbury from 1774 to 1780, and for Wootton Bassett from 1780 to 1784.

1. Printed in full in Letters of David Hume to William Strahan, ed. G. Birkbeck Hill, Oxford, 1888, (hereafter cited as Hume to Strahan), pp. 35-36.

2. Saunders, p. 159, n. 1., quoting as a source the "catalogue of the sale of Mr. Lewis Pocock's Johnsoniana, May, 1875. (Copy in Brit. Mus.)."

ten guineas from Messrs. Robert & James Dodsley, booksellers and publishers of the Annual Register, for the option to print a new edition of Fragments of Ancient Poetry, which had launched James on his literary career in June 1760. It was also on 14th April 1761 that James received the first comments on Fingal from Horace Walpole, whose views had been sought on last minute improvements. Printing and proof-correcting began almost immediately, and the process of getting the book produced absorbed the whole of James's time for six months or more. At the beginning of November 1761 Fingal was published in London, not by Strahan but by Thomas Becket,<sup>1</sup> at half-a-guinea a copy. A few days later it was published at the same price in Edinburgh; and during the following month it went into a second edition. In the "advertisement" which served as a dedication James Macpherson acknowledged the generosity of "a certain noble person" whom he declined to name, "as his exalted station as well as merit had raised him above the panegyric of one so little known." In a letter, dated 26th November 1761 at the British Coffee House,<sup>2</sup> James Macpherson left little doubt that the person he addressed, Lord Bute, was the "certain noble person." He told Lord Bute:

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1. Thomas Becket (fl. 1730-1782), a partner in Becket & De Hondt, publishers and booksellers near New Church in the Strand (now St. Mary le Strand); and, from 1769, a fellow-proprietor of James Boswell in the syndicate which owned The London Magazine.

2. John Stuart, 3rd Earl of Bute (1713-1792).

"I do myself the honour of sending to your Ld<sup>p</sup> two copies of Fingal and other poems translated from the Galic [sic] language.

I wish they had more merit to deserve the generous encouragement which your Ld<sup>p</sup> has given to the translator." 1

Within a month of publication James was the talk of London. The first to laud both him and his work was Tobias Smollett in The Critical Review of December 1761. Smollett was a ministerial writer under the patronage of Lord Bute, who became the very unpopular head of the Administration on 29th May 1762. Smollett, the friend of the Rev. Dr. John Macpherson of Skye, and John Home, the friend of James Macpherson, were only two of the many fellow-countrymen of George III's Scottish favourite and chief minister to benefit from the latter's favours. On 22nd July 1762, James himself confirmed that he was yet another of Bute's protégés, when he wrote his patron the following letter:

"It gave me the utmost concern to hear, today, that I had unfortunately misapprehended the message your Ld<sup>p</sup> did me the honor [sic] to send by Sir Harry Erskine, a few days ago. I took it for granted from what he

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1. Bute MSS., 656/1761, James Macpherson to Lord Bute, 26 November 1761.
  2. N.L.S. MSS., 2958, f. 64, Rev. Dr. John Macpherson to Rev. John Macaulay, 8 December 1759, - "I wish Mr. Smollett had laid down a plan for me [for the History of St. Kilda]. Make my compliments to that excellent gentleman and tell him how it is I have been hindered [by the Badenoch colic]."
  3. Sir Henry Erskine (c. 1710-1765), 5th Bart. of Alva, in Clackmannanshire. He married Janet, sister of Alexander Wedderburn (later Lord Loughborough) and Brig. General David Wedderburn. He was M.P. for Ayr Burghs, 1749-54, and for Anstruther Easter Burghs, 1754-65. He was also a soldier, and by 1765 had risen to the rank of Lt. General. As the great friend of Bute, he was known as the "favourite of the the Favourite". During his patron's administration he styled himself "sous ministre to Bute", and handled most of the requests for Bute's favour.

said that suggestions had been made that I stood in need of money, and that it was from consideration that your Ld<sup>p</sup> ordered a hundred pound [sic] to be advanced to me. I signified to Sir Harry that I wished your Ld<sup>p</sup> might be told, that, as the situation of my affairs did not require a supply, I was unwilling to abuse the generosity to which I was so much obliged before. I now understand that no such suggestions have been made, and that this distinguishing favour (which was intended to be continued annually) proceeded from His Majesty's bounty, on the recommendation of your Lordship. Conscious of my want of merit, I consider myself intirely indebted to your Ld<sup>p</sup>'s goodness." 1

James Macpherson, so recently in obscurity, was being swept on two streams of good fortune. Firstly, his publications had struck an immediate chord in all those who supported the "Back to Nature" revolution led by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Summing up this ideal of primitive simplicity, J.S. Smart wrote:

"Those ages of refinement and art, of brilliant city and social life, which Voltaire had thought the only periods worth regarding, were to Rousseau the most pernicious. They were times of corruption and decay. Happiest of all was the natural man who lived before society had been formed, before the invention of property, before the competition for power and possessions had begotten all the vices, and had crushed the virtues that spring in the human heart. The primitive, untrained, untutored man was benevolent and good; for Nature made him so. Society depraved him. ...

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1. Bute MSS., 228/1762, James Macpherson to Lord Bute, dated "Friday-noon, Leicester [sic] street." Endorsed; "July 22d 1762, Mr. Macpherson - £100. "

It was at this moment that James Macpherson descended from his native hills and exploded a mine in the midst of Europe. Curious eyes had already been turned towards the Scottish Highlands. Their inhabitants were a remnant of the Celtic race that had been powerful before the modern world arose. They stood outside contemporary civilisation, preserving in their remote wilds the freshness of early life, their own picturesque costume and simple habits. They even retained, unimpaired by the contagion of luxury, all the valour of the race that had defeated the Romans themselves. Few years had elapsed since a Highland army, a mere handful of men, had risen against the government which the victories of Marlborough had made great, had scattered disciplined troops, penetrated into the heart of England, and had shaken the British throne. In the Highlands, if anywhere, poetry might be found that breathed the very spirit of Nature.

Macpherson more than satisfied these hopes. He published a mass of poems which he averred had been taken down from the lips of peasants in the north and literally translated from Gaelic into English." 1

James Macpherson never pretended to uphold the ideals which were propagated in his Ossian publications. Soon after Fingal appeared he told James Boswell:

"Let me..have something in perfection: either the noble rudeness of barbarous manners or the high relish of polished society. There is no medium." 2

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1. Smart, pp. 3-6.

2. Boswell's London Journal, op. cit., p. 80.



He undoubtedly retained throughout his life all sorts of illusions about the clan system and the Highlands, but nostalgia for the past did not inhibit his enjoyment of most of the evils of a corrupt but civilised society. As his friend John Macpherson said at a much later date of a mutual acquaintance, James acquired "that Experience which the Villainy of Mankind forces at length upon a good Heart."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the opportunist in James Macpherson made the most of the second stream of good fortune which had come his way. His "advertisement" in Fingal had merely hinted at the identity of his powerful friend, but the enemies of the administration soon identified the "certain noble person" as Lord Bute.

## 2

John Wilkes, whose paper The North Briton had been founded for the purpose of attacking Tobias Smollett and his ministerial paper The Briton, was one of the first to draw the public's attention to Bute as a patron of Macpherson. The North Briton of 27th November 1762 carried two attacks, both in verse. The first, called The Poetry Professor, was Wilkes's own composition and included these lines:

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1. B.M. Add. MSS. 29138, f. 22, John Macpherson to Warren Hastings, 19 December 1776.
  2. John Wilkes (1725-1797); for the career of this demagogue see Wilkes & Liberty, George Rude, Oxford, 1962; and The Life of John Wilkes, H.W. Bleackley, London, 1917.

"When England's genius droops her wing  
 So shall thy soil new wealth disclose;  
 So thy own Thistle choak the Rose.  
 .... Macpherson leads the flaming van,  
 Laird of the New Fingalian Clan." 1

The second, entitled Prophecy of Famine, was an even more pointed attack

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 by Charles Churchill, as the following extract shows:

"Thence issued forth at great Macpherson's call,  
 That old, new, epic pastoral, Fingal.  
 .... And if plain nature pours a simple strain,  
 Which Bute may praise and Ossian not disdain,  
 Ossian, sublimest, simplest bard of all,  
 Whom English infidels Macpherson call,  
 Then round my head shall honour's ensigns wave,  
 And pensions mark me for a willing slave." 3

Most Englishmen of the time probably regarded the verses of Wilkes and Churchill as political attacks on Scottish influence, and no more. Bute was the

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1. Quoted by Saunders, p. 186.

2. Charles Churchill (1731-1764), a contemporary of Warren Hastings at Westminster School, who contracted a reckless "Fleet" marriage while very young, and then took holy orders. He succeeded to his father's curacy in Westminster, but in 1761 he published The Rosciad, a satire on actors, which allowed him to pay his debts and to resign his living. He was an admirer and intimate friend of Wilkes, for whom he wrote biting attacks, which appeared in The North Briton. He was feared as a brutal and powerful satirist.

3. Quoted by Saunders, p. 187.

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focus of widespread dislike, and even hatred, of all things Scottish; and the Englishmen who would have enjoyed reading The North Briton were probably of the same mentality as those who, at Drury Lane in the same period, wildly applauded

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Charles Macklin's performance as Sir Pertinax MacSycophant, the much ridiculed Scotsman in Man of the World; a demonstration which made David Garrick afraid to play Macbeth in a kilt. But there were other Englishmen who, like Wilkes and Churchill, were attacking Macpherson for non-political as well as political reasons. Churchill's sarcastic reference to "that old, new, epic pastoral, Fingal" was a blunt refutation of Macpherson's claim that his poetry had been translated from ancient Gaelic sources.

Doubts concerning not the authenticity but the origins of the work had been expressed from the month in which it appeared. A very favourable but careful

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1. Bute had been warned by a friend not to have anything to do with James Macpherson's work. See Bute MSS., 691/1761, Lord Talbot to Lord Bute, 9 December 1761 - "I suppose you have read Fingal - if you have not do not read it. Ossian's harp is too much set to the key of your own soul, and you are engaged in Company that have no ears for such music."
  2. Charles Macklin, né MacLaughlin (1697-1797), a native of Ulster, was one of the greatest character actors on the London stage in the 18th century. As the Irish and Scottish were equally disliked by the English, he changed his blatantly Irish name Mac/Laugh/lin to the more neutral sounding Macklin. When he did play Irish or Scottish parts he was usually careful to make them the butts for English ridicule. He also gave lessons in English pronunciation to ambitious Scots who wished to rid themselves of their national accent. Among those who received speech training from Macklin (on Burke's advice) was Bute's friend Alexander Wedderburn (1733-1805).

review of Fingal, which had appeared in the Annual Register in December 1761, has been attributed to Edmund Burke, but if Burke was the reviewer he had reservations which he never put into print.<sup>1</sup> David Hume in a letter to Hugh Blair said:

"I was told by Bourke [sic], a very ingenious Irish gentleman, the author of a tract on the Sublime and Beautiful, that on the first publication of Macpherson's book, all the Irish cried out: 'We know all these poems; we have always heard them from our infancy!'"<sup>2</sup>

Burke's unprinted views were voiced, quite independently, by an Englishman, the Rev. Ferdinando Warner, rector of Barnes in Surrey, whose pamphlet Remarks on the History of Fingal, which was published on 2nd February 1762, also asserted that the Fingalian stories were Irish and not Scottish.<sup>3</sup> Warner never queried the authenticity of Fingal as a translation, but his pamphlet started a general enquiry which soon developed into a controversy over Macpherson's claim to be a translator. By the time Wilkes and Churchill alluded to the falseness of Macpherson's claim at the end of the same year in The North Briton the debate was gathering force, but it was still in its early stages. Even the first attack from the Continent,

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1. The attribution was made by Saunders, p. 172.

2. Printed in Life of Hume, Vol. 1, p. 466, David Hume to Hugh Blair, 19 Sept. 1763.

3. See Smart, p. 131; and Saunders, p. 178.

in the Parisian Journal des Scavans in November 1762, caused only a faint stir, and did not damage Macpherson's growing reputation in important European literary circles.

Although it was probably beneath Macpherson's dignity, whether he was in the right or in the wrong, to justify or explain himself, it is certain that during 1762 he tried to forestall some criticism by displaying Gaelic manuscripts in his publisher's shop; but the exact nature and number of these documents will never

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be known. Apart from this gesture he appeared to make no effort to defend himself. Indeed, it hardly seemed necessary when some of his eminent Scottish friends were

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1. The contributor to the Journal des Scavans signed his article "M. de C." and described himself as "un scavant Irlandois". He has never been identified, although he also admitted that he was an ecclesiastic. Macpherson must have taken great exception to M. de C., because at a later date he used the word "Scavan" (without the cedilla) in his Gaelic correspondence with his friend John Macpherson as a code-name for one of his political enemies.
  2. In Notes & Queries, 2nd series, Vol. 3, p. 28, there is the full text of a letter which Thomas Becket prepared for publication in the newspapers at the height of the quarrel between James Macpherson and Samuel Johnson. Part of it, which is dated "Adelphi, 19th January 1775", reads: "I hereby declare that the originals of Fingal and other poems of Ossian lay in my shop for many months in the year 1762, for the inspection of the curious. The public were not only apprised of their lying there for inspection, but even proposals for publishing the originals of the poems of Ossian were dispersed through the kingdom, and advertised in the newspapers. Upon finding that a number of subscribers sufficient to bear the expense were not likely to appear, I returned the manuscript to the proprietor, in whose hands they still remain." Becket's assertion is independently supported by an earlier anonymous statement in Journal des Scavans, Paris, February 1762 (quoted Smart, p. 141), as follows: "Les manuscrits d'après lesquels M. Pherson [sic] a fait sa traduction, sont déposés chez les Libraires qui l'impriment, et tout le monde peut les y voir."

doing the job for him. His most enthusiastic supporter was undoubtedly Dr. Hugh Blair, who in 1762, <sup>was appointed</sup> succeeded to the Chair of Rhetoric and English Literature in Edinburgh University. Blair made Macpherson's works the subject of a series of lectures; and these proved to be so popular that he collected them into A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian, which he published in London in January 1763.<sup>1</sup>

Blair's work was acclaimed as masterly by reviewers; and Macpherson's stock in literary circles, especially on the Continent, rose higher than ever before.

In March 1763, James Macpherson published Ossian's Temora, an epic in eight 'books', which was his third and last collection of Highland poetry. In the flowing dedication which prefaced Temora Macpherson openly named his patron as Lord Bute, who, it was claimed, had not only encouraged its publication, but had also met the bill for its appearance.

In a private letter Macpherson told Bute:

"My Lord: It is with some vanity I inform the world that the following translation was undertaken at the desire and executed under the protection of your Ld<sup>ship</sup>. This, at the same time, that it does me distinguishing honour, gives me some sort of right to inscribe it to your Lordship's name.

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1. See Saunders, p. 188.

The high reputation, my Lord, which you have justly obtained in the republic of letters intitles you to addresses of this nature. But, as your Lordship has eminently distinguished yourself as the protector and encourager of literature, some may ascribe to interested views what, in reality, is the result of inclination. This consideration induced me to give the former collection of Ossian's poems to the public without a dedication; notwithstanding my previous obligations to your Lordship. But now that the world owes the present work, if it has any merit, solely to the Earl of Bute, I am happy in being permitted to introduce it under the auspices of so illustrious a name." 1

A month later Bute resigned his leadership of the administration, but Macpherson had acquired, as he said, the lustre of being launched under the auspices of a Prime Minister; and this must have been an important factor in consolidating his reputation. No evidence has been found which identifies the intermediary who originally called Bute's attention to Macpherson, but the most likely person was John Home, whose advice and opinions Bute sought and respected.<sup>2</sup> It was Home who believed he had been the first to encourage a seemingly reluctant Macpherson to exploit his talents; it was Home whose standing with scholars had given Macpherson

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1. Bute MSS., u/78, James Macpherson to Lord Bute, u.d. but certainly written in 1763/.

2. For John Home's influence with Bute see Life of Home, pp. 53-54, and pp. 142-154 (letters of Bute to John Home, 1755-1780). In a letter dated 3rd December 1776 (B.M. Add. MSS. 29138, f. 6v.) John Macpherson, in dealing with Bute and his sons, told Warren Hastings: "John Home, one of my most intimate friends on Earth, rules that Family."

the eminent acceptance and backing for his first publication and subsequent tour; and it was Home, more than any other of Macpherson's early literary or academic supporters, who had the greatest influence with Bute. Another possibility was Lord Elibank, with whom Macpherson went on a limited 'grand tour' of Holland and France in April 1763, immediately after Temora was published.<sup>1</sup>

On his return from his first visit abroad Macpherson discovered that John Udry, the British Consul at Venice, had forwarded him a most flattering letter<sup>2</sup> from the distinguished scholar and poet, the Abbé Cesarotti, who was on the point<sup>3</sup> of translating the Fingalian epics into Italian. Macpherson, writing from the British Coffee House,<sup>4</sup> showed by his elegant reply to Udry that his fame was beginning to go to his head.<sup>5</sup> Only three weeks later Boswell confirmed this new

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1. Boswell's London Journal, op. cit., p. 244. On Sunday, 1 May 1763, Boswell wrote: "I breakfasted with Macpherson, who had just returned from a trip through Holland and France with Lord Elibank."
  2. B.M. Add. MSS. 22899, f. 5, Abbé Cesarotti to James Macpherson, u.d. [1763].
  3. Melchiorre Cesarotti (1730-1808), abbé, of Padua. He translated Macpherson's work, and published it under the title Poesie di Ossian (last edited, 1924). In Germany the Fingalian epics had a great influence on the Sturm und Drang movement; and within a few years the style of Ossian had been copied by Herder, Burger, and by no less a person than Goethe, who attempted a translation of Macpherson's work.
  4. The British Coffee House (see Bryant Lillywhite, London Coffee Houses, London, 1963) was one of the main meeting places for Scots in London. Its proprietor, Mrs. Anderson (see Life of Home, pp. 56-57), was the daughter of Archibald Douglas of Pittenweem, Fife; and sister of John Douglas (1721-1807), (a former chaplain in the Scots Guards and tutor to Lord Pulteney), who in 1762 had just been appointed Canon of Windsor. In the 1770's he contributed several letters under the pseudonym Tacitus to the Public Advertiser in defence of the ministry. His preferment as Canon of St. Paul's in 1776 was followed in 1791 by his appointment as Bishop of Salisbury. Both James and John Macpherson became close friends of the motherly Mrs. Anderson and they often used her coffee house as an accommodation address.



arrogance, when he recorded his activities for 23rd May 1763.

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"I dined," wrote Boswell, "with Dempster, having engaged to meet Dr. Blair and Macpherson at his house. The Sublime Savage (as I call Macpherson) was very outrageous today, throwing out wild sallies against all established opinions. We were very merry. He and I and Blair walked into town together. I brought on the subject of reserve and dignity of behaviour. Macpherson cursed at it." 2

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With the receipt of £1,200 from the sale of his books, and with his friendship of eminent or rising men in politics, society, and the world of letters, Macpherson had good reason to feel confident, but he had, in the opinion of at least one of his friends, overplayed his hand. The appearance of such a lengthy work as Temora on top of Fingal and the Fragments was more than David Hume could swallow as a dose of ancient Gaelic poetry. That so much material, with manuscripts to back it,

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5. (continued) B.M. Add. MSS. 22899, f. 165, James Macpherson to John Udry, 4 May 1763.

1. George Dempster (1732-1818), son and heir of John Dempster of Dunnichen, Forfar. He was M.P. for Perth Burghs 1761-68 and 1769-1790; and a director of the E.I. Co. in 1769 and from 1772-73. He was a lifelong friend of Dr. Adam Ferguson.

2. Boswell's London Journal, op. cit., p. 259.

3. Saunders, p. 200. This is the only source for the figure of £1,200, and Saunders does not cite his authority. No evidence has been found to verify it.

had remained undeclared for so long seemed to him incredible. And the serious doubts about Macpherson's work which Hume was beginning to have were being openly renewed in many quarters. Fingal had caused some dispute, but this had been offset by the Critical Dissertation of Blair. Temora not only revived the original dispute, but gave rise to a controversy which has never died. In September 1763, David Hume, who was in London, wrote to Hugh Blair, who had returned to Scotland:

"With regard to the authenticity of the poems..I often hear them totally rejected with disdain and indignation, as a palpable and most impudent forgery. .. The absurd pride and caprice of Macpherson himself, who scorns, as he pretends, to satisfy anybody that doubts his veracity, has tended much to confirm this general scepticism. ..

My present purpose therefore is, to apply to you, in the name of all men of letters of this, and I may say of all other countries, to establish this capital point, and to give us proofs that these poems are, I do not say so antient as the age of Severus, but that they were not forged within these five years by James Macpherson. These proofs must not be arguments but testimonies. ..

Becket tells me that he is to give us a new edition of your Dissertation, accompanied with some remarks on Temora. Here is a favourable opportunity for you to execute this purpose. You have a just and laudable zeal for the credit of these poems. They are, if genuine, one of the greatest curiosities, in all respects, that ever was discovered in the commonwealth

of letters; and the child is, in a manner, become yours by adoption, as Macpherson has totally abandoned all care of it." 1

To this Blair replied on 29th September 1763, as follows:

"..For my own part, it is impossible for me to entertain the smallest doubt of their being real productions, and ancient ones too, of the Highlands. Neither Macpherson's parts, though good, nor his industry, were equal to such a forgery. The whole publication, you know, was in its first rise accidental. Macpherson was entreated and dragged into it. Some of the MSS. sent to him passed through my hands. Several of them he translated, in a manner, under my eye. .. Who but John Bull could entertain the belief of an imposture so incredible as this? The utmost I should think any rational scepticism could suppose is this; that Macpherson might have sometimes interpolated, or endeavoured to improve, by some corrections of his own. .. I am in some difficulty with Macpherson himself in this affair. Capricious as he is, I would not willingly hurt or disoblige him; and yet I apprehend that such an inquiry as this, which is like tracing him out, and supposing his veracity called in question, will not please him. I must write him by the next post, and endeavour to put the affair in such a light as to soften him; which you, if you see him, may do likewise. .." 2

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1. Printed in full in Life of Hume, Vol. 1, pp. 465-468.

2. *ibid.*, pp. 468-470.

Hume, who was on the point of going to Paris, sent Blair a further letter on 6th October 1763:

"I am very glad you have undertaken the task which I used the freedom to recommend to you. .. You need expect no assistance from Macpherson, who flew into a passion when I told him of the letter I had wrote to you. .. He will probably depart for Florida with Governor Johnstone<sup>1</sup>, and I would advise him to travel among the Chickisaws or Cherokees, in order to tame him and civilize him. ..

John Hume went to the country yesterday with Lord Bute. I was introduced the other day to that noble lord, at his desire. I believe him a very good man, a better man than a politician. ..

Please to write to me as soon as you make any advances <sup>in</sup> verifying Macpherson's claims<sup>7</sup>, that I may have something to say on the subject to the litterati of Paris. I beg my compliments to all those who bear that character at Edinburgh. I cannot but look upon all of them as my friends." 2

David Hume's uneasiness about Macpherson was prompted by more than selfish regard for his own reputation as a scholar.<sup>3</sup> As a Scottish patriot and a loyal

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1. George Johnstone (1730-1787), 4th son of Sir James Johnstone, 3rd Bart., of Westerhall, Dumfries, by Barbara, dau. of Alexander Murray, 4th Lord Elibank. He began life as a merchant seaman but transferred to the R.N., and served with distinction in the Seven Years' War. He was on half-pay as a Captain R.N. in 1763; Governor of West Florida 1763-1767; M.P. for various constituencies (Cockermouth; Appleby; Lostwithiel; and Ilchester) 1768-1787; and a director of the E.I. Co., 1784-1786.
  2. Life of Hume, Vol. 1, pp. 470-471.
  3. David Hume wrote a scathing attack on Macpherson and the Fingalian epics, called Essay on the Genuiness of the Poems of Ossian (for full text see Burton's Life of Hume, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 471-480); but out of consideration for the feelings of his friend Blair he never published this attack (see Hume's letter to Edward Gibbon in Gibbon's Miscellaneous Works, Vol. 1, p. 225).

friend he was also deeply concerned for the reputation of his country and his fellow-countrymen, particularly Hugh Blair, Adam Ferguson and John Home. All four of them had involved themselves in a project which was becoming a great embarrassment. Their judgment as scholars was in danger of being questioned, and the man who had compromised them all, Macpherson, had (as Hume told Blair) totally abandoned all care or interest in the problem.

When Hume read Blair's letter of 29th September his uneasiness must have turned to consternation, because Blair, the guiding influence of the Edinburgh literati, left no doubt about his determination to support Macpherson. In deference to Hume's wishes he was willing to search for testimonies supporting Macpherson, but he was convinced that the charges of forgery were the result of the anti-Scottish feelings of "John Bull". Indeed, not only Blair, but Ferguson and Home, refused to believe that they had been deceived by Macpherson, and all three supported him for the rest of their lives.

In face of Blair's stubborn attitude, it was left to Hume to safeguard his own and his friends' good names. From his letter to Blair of 6th October it seems clear that Hume did take action. The evidence is not positive, but it is sufficient

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for more than mere conjecture. Bute had obtained the post of Governor of West Florida for George Johnstone, the nephew of Lord Elibank, the friend and recent travelling companion of Macpherson, whose literary patron was Bute. Apart from the Fingalian link, Hume and Bute did not, however, have anything in common; and yet just after Governor Johnstone's appointment, David Hume had seen Bute for the first time in his life - at Bute's request. It can be inferred, therefore, that Hume, at some time earlier in the year, had persuaded Bute (either by letter,

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or through the medium of Lord Elibank, another early supporter of Fingalian research) to find Macpherson a post in some remote place where he could no longer embarrass his supporters. In other words, Hume probably hoped that the Fingalian controversy might abate if Macpherson was not readily available to answer awkward questions; and if he was absent long enough the whole matter might drift into obscurity. The "out of sight, out of mind" policy was undoubtedly the best hope of minimising everybody's embarrassment - and it was a solution which would have

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1. For Bute's influence in obtaining the Governorship of West Florida for George Johnstone see N.S. Jucker, The Jenkinson Papers: 1760-66, 1949, pp. 157-159.
  2. For the relationship between Hume and Elibank see: Ernest Campbell Mosner, New Hume Letters to Lord Elibank, 1748-1776, in Studies in Literature and Language (Texas University publ.), Vol. IV, No. 3, (1962), pp. 431-460.

appealed to the artful Macpherson as well.

Macpherson must have realised that Temora was the last Fingalian epic he could publish. David Hume's reaction to it was sufficient to warn him that he had stretched credulity to the limit. Another work based (or supposedly based) on hitherto undiscovered Gaelic manuscripts would not only have destroyed his existing fame, but also shattered the faith of his staunchest supporters. On realising this, he faced the grim prospect that his only source of income - from the sales of his Highland poetry - would soon run out, and that he had to have another lucrative activity, if he was not to be reduced to the penury he had known as a schoolmaster. In this situation he apparently did nothing, except rely on the predicament of his more important Scottish patrons who, as a result of the charges brought against Temora, had more at stake than he had. That Macpherson was so sure that his patrons could not abandon him with impunity was demonstrated by his seeming indifference to the attacks on Temora. This cool indifference not only angered Hume (as his letter to Blair proves), but also probably warned Hume to be careful.

The air of indifference, alternating with bursts of rage when he was asked direct questions, was probably Macpherson's way of hinting that it was up to Hume and other less gullible supporters to save those who had deluded themselves into

believing that they were defending the veracity of a modest, reluctant and simple young Highlander. Furthermore, Macpherson also probably counted on the fact that none of his Scottish patrons (Hume included) would wish to give the English the satisfaction of seeing them turn on a fellow-countryman. Macpherson's inactivity was, in effect, tantamount to a kind of negative blackmail. He did not need to bluff, and Hume knew it. From 1763 until he died Macpherson haughtily refused to answer the challenge of his critics. On one pretext or another he adroitly avoided making any definite statement on the subject of the authenticity of his poems. He was deaf to the pleas of his friends and, with the exception of the quarrel he had with Dr. Johnson, almost impervious to the insults of his enemies. He must have had nerves of steel.

The pros and cons of the Ossian dispute are outside the orbit of this thesis. It is not profitable to discuss a controversy which has already been reviewed with scholarly detachment by J.S. Smart and by Professor D.S. Thomson of Glasgow University. Both regard Macpherson as an original poet rather than as a translator, and both, in spite of his many false claims, acknowledge his talents. Smart wrote:

"Macpherson possessed two things that are rarely joined, - a sensitive and poetic mind, and a shrewd capacity for business. He first appears as an unknown youth, with everything to do for himself, reserved and shy in appearance, but amazingly clever and consumed with ambition. .. He was



successful beyond his dreams, triumphantly aware that his writings were admired by all Europe... A nature so versatile, with so much power over others, commands our notice. .. Macpherson had genius which sometimes broke into a brilliant flame. He was one of the first men of letters who made Scotland famous in other countries. .. His moral demerits, which were not small, need not blind us to his one rare excellence." 1

It could be claimed, perhaps, that Macpherson's amazing but twisted cleverness was never more evident than in the early 1760's, when he used literature not only to provide him with capital but also as a stepping-stone to a political career. At a time when Scottish unpopularity was at one of its peaks Macpherson managed to squeeze considerable advantages from being a Scotsman. His first meeting with John Home provided him with the opportunity to impress several of his most distinguished fellow-countrymen, including the Prime-Minister, whose support helped to foist works of dubious antiquity on the readily-sympathetic followers of the widespread movement for romantic literature.

The epics of Ossian, a primitive Scotsman, became fashionable in the same period that Bute, a polished Scotsman, became the unfashionable head of the government and the distributor of patronage. Nothing could have suited Macpherson more. Having extracted all he could in the way of fame and finance from Highland poetry, he more or less blackmailed his benefactors into finding him a suitable post,

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1. Smart, intro., pp. v-vi.

by relying on their concern for their own and their country's reputation, and, more important, on their fears for some of their stubborn and self-deluded colleagues' reputations. And these benefactors, whom Macpherson abused so badly, took the hint. His poetry had served an important purpose, and was undoubtedly a burden ever afterwards, but it led to a political appointment. The fact that Macpherson disliked the English as much as some of his patrons makes his manoeuvres seem not only paradoxical, but almost diabolical. It is a very twisted man indeed who counts on the hates he shares with his supporters to embarrass them, and to oblige them to give him more support.

The irony of the situation was probably not lost on a philosopher of Hume's calibre, but if Hume believed that obtaining Macpherson a post in far-off America was the means of keeping him out of the limelight for a long period, then he deceived himself. George Johnstone, who was appointed Governor of West Florida on 7<sup>th</sup> October 1763, was an able but erratic, tactless and quarrelsome man, who made a nuisance of himself, or tried to dominate others, whenever he involved himself in politics. Whoever believed that Johnstone and Macpherson could work

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1. P.R.O., C.O.5/201. See also James A. Fadgett, Commissions, Orders and Instructions issued to George Johnstone, British Governor of West Florida, 1763-67, in Louisiana Historical Quarterly, Vol. XXI (1938), pp. 1020-1068.

together amicably for very long was a born optimist, but though their first  
 encounter ended in a quarrel,<sup>1</sup> which gave Macpherson the excuse to return to  
 Britain, their paths crossed many times before Johnstone died in 1787. Their  
 relationship shifted back and forth between friendship and hostility, but it was  
 one of some importance for James Macpherson, and later for John Macpherson as well.

James Macpherson left England for America in the summer of 1764, having been  
 appointed the Provincial Secretary and Clerk of the Council of West Florida by a  
 warrant issued under the royal sign manual.<sup>2</sup> He himself had not been informed about  
 his appointment until the late spring of 1764, if the following letter he wrote to  
 Lord Bute on 15th May of that year is evidence of his earliest knowledge on the

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1. E.U.L. MSS., Ia. II. 509, Archibald Campbell (author of *Lexiphanes*) to George Johnstone. u.d./c. 1766, asking for reasons of quarrel with the "Highland Homer".
  2. Saunders, pp. 212-213, inaccurately records that Macpherson was secretary to Governor Johnstone instead of Provincial Secretary of West Florida. He also wrongly asserts that Macpherson received the post of President of the Council. In *The Edinburgh Encyclopaedia*, Edin., MDCCCXXX, Vol. XIII, pp. 222-224 (hereafter cited as *Edin. Encyclopaedia*), which was edited by Sir David Brewster (1781-1868), James Macpherson's son-in-law, the former contributed an article on the latter. At the time he wrote this article Brewster certainly owned the bulk of his father-in-law's papers, and yet he too wrongly stated that Macpherson was appointed "private secretary to Capt. Johnstone, who was chosen Governor of Pensacola" (*ibid.*, p. 223). The accurate details of Macpherson's posts are to be found among the Library of Congress (Washington) MSS, on pp. 1-4 of a volume generally cited as *West Florida Commissions*, but properly entitled Record of His Majesty's Sign Manuals, Patents, Commissions, and other Papers, passed under the Broad Seal of His Majesty's Province of West Florida. I am indebted to my kinsman Malcolm Fraser Maclean III, Attorney-at-Law, of Lynn, Massachusetts, for drawing my attention to the American sources relating to Macpherson's career.

subject. Writing from Half Moon Street in London, he said:

"My Lord: When your Ld<sup>P</sup> did me the honour of procuring a pension for me, I considered it was only to continue till I was otherwise provided for. I take the liberty to inform your Ld<sup>P</sup> that I am now appointed Secretary for West Florida. The Sallary [sic] of the office is 150£ with some perquisites. But, under the uncertainty whether the climate will agree with my constitution and as my commission lies under a peculiar disadvantage, contrary to those of all the other Secretaries in our colonies, that I cannot hold it but during my residence in the province, I humbly desire of your Ld<sup>P</sup> that my pension may be continued sometime longer. I blush, my Lord, at making the request, when I consider my many obligations to your bounty, and that I owe any notice that has been taken of me in the world to the honor [sic] I derived from your Ld<sup>P</sup>'s countenance and protection." 1

Macpherson may have manoeuvred for a political post by dubious means, but he had obviously not counted on his supporters' determination to keep him abroad, by making his income dependent on his residence in America. He later fought and won the right to keep his appointment as a sinecure, with no residential obligations, but whether he kept the pension he had received on Bute's recommendation is not known. In the late autumn of 1764 James Macpherson arrived in Pensacola, the ramshackle capital of the new province of West Florida, which had been created as

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1. Bute MSS., 36/1764, James Macpherson to Lord Bute, 15 May 1764.

a result of the Treaty of Paris. At the first council meeting, held on 24th November 1764, Johnstone formally commissioned Macpherson in his posts under the terms of his warrant, with a salary of £150 a year.<sup>1</sup> This was not, however, the full extent of Macpherson's income.<sup>2</sup> As one of the privileges of his patent Macpherson himself appointed (at the same council meeting) Alexander Fraser as Deputy Clerk of the Council, for which he received a fee from Fraser.<sup>3</sup> And, apart from fees and other hidden benefits he derived from his office, Macpherson soon afterwards acquired the additional posts of Register of Grants, Patents and Records,<sup>4</sup> worth £100 a year, and (according to certain sources) Surveyor-General of the Province, worth £120 a year,<sup>5</sup> which he also deputed for fees to other men. Very

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1. P.R.O., G.O. 5/632, Minutes of the Council of West Florida, 24 November 1764.
  2. P.R.O., G.O. 5/586, pp. 45-52, Misc. Transactions (W. Florida) 1764-1769.
  3. See Cecil Johnson, British West Florida: 1763-1783, Yale, 1943, p. 26. Alexander Fraser has not been identified.
  4. *ibid.*, p. 227. Johnson cites The South Carolina Gazette, 13/20 June 1765, as the authority for Macpherson's appointment as Register of Grants. The appointment was confirmed in Britain on 29 July 1766, see Annual Register, 1766, p. 165, and E.U.L. MSS., Ia.II, 451/2 (Chalmers MSS.). The salary for the post is given in P.R.O., G.O. 5/586.
  5. The only evidence for Macpherson's appointment as Surveyor-General is given by Brewster in Edin. Encyclopaedia. Saunders, p. 213 also states that Macpherson was Surveyor-General with "a salary of £200 a year", but this statement was probably based on Brewster's comment. The salary of the Surveyor-General was never more than £120 a year (see P.R.O., G.O. 5/586).

little is known about Macpherson's stay in West Florida, mainly because he

remained there for such a short time. It is reported that while he was in America

he visited other colonies, and also made a tour of the West Indies, but whether

this was before or after his quarrel with Governor Johnstone is not stated. It

is certain, however, that James Macpherson was back in London by December 1766.

When James left for Florida, the responsibility for collecting testimonies

1. Johnson's British West Florida, op. cit., p. 227. In 1767, after he had returned to Britain, Macpherson deputed Daniel Clark or, if Clark refused or died, Jeremiah Terry to act in his place as Provincial Secretary, Clerk of the Council, and Register of Grants, Patents & Records (see Lib. of Congress MSS., West Florida Commissions, p. 38). In 1770 this arrangement was changed when Macpherson made Philip Livingston, jnr., (the private secretary of Governor Peter Chester), his new deputy in all offices. By a mutual agreement Macpherson reserved to himself the salaries granted by Parliament, and Livingston collected all fees in the colony, (ibid., pp. 109-111). In 1775 Macpherson further agreed that Livingston could nominate a deputy to assist him, (ibid., pp. 214-217). In 1778 Livingston delegated Macpherson's offices to Elihu Hall Bay, and in 1780, Elihu Hall Bay, in his turn, deputed John Bay, who acted until 1781, (ibid., pp. 351-353). To summarise this complicated chain of delegations: Macpherson held from the Crown, Livingston held from Macpherson, Elihu Bay held from Livingston, and John Bay held from Elihu Bay. Although Macpherson never visited America after 1766, his various posts were confirmed on 21 March 1772 (see Annual Register, 1772, p. 100; and E.U.L. MSS., Ia.II, 451/2). These West Florida posts were the only direct reward he received for services to the ministry from 1766-1784, see Macpherson MSS, 32/8, John to James Macpherson, 30 Sept. 1774 - "Why does not your Premier North make more of you than an idle Secretary of a sandy Colony?"; and ibid., 5/2, James to John Macpherson, 25 August 1761 - "The only thing I possessed for life and which was the foundation of my independence is lost forever by the conquest of West Florida. Pensacola was taken on the eight of May; and my £400 or £500 a year are irretrievably gone, for should a peace happen tomorrow we shall make no stipulations for the recovery of the Province."
2. Edin. Encyclopaedia, and Saunders, p. 213.
3. B.M. Add. MSS. 40166, f. 104, John Macpherson to Thomas Becket, 7 December 1766.

from various Highlanders to support his claim that the Fingalian epics were based on genuine Gaelic sources was accepted almost entirely by Dr. Hugh Blair. Blair told Hume at the end of 1763 that one of the Gaelic experts he had written to for help was "Macpherson, minister of Sleat, the author of a very learned work about to be published concerning the antiquities of Scotland."<sup>1</sup> The minister's younger son, John Macpherson had not yet achieved very much, but it is necessary to give an account of his life from the time he probably first met James Macpherson in the autumn of 1760 until the end of 1766, when John and James were both together in London.

From the end of 1760 until 1764, when he graduated M.A., John Macpherson was an arts student at King's College, Aberdeen.<sup>2</sup> The financial support for his education came from a special fund collected by the Synod of Glenelg. Years later, in 1799, the Synod reminded John Macpherson that having failed to enter the ministry he was obliged to repay not only the amount of his original grant (£36),

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1. Life of Hume, Vol. 1, p. 469.

2. Roll of Alumni in Arts of the University & King's College of Aberdeen, 1596-1860, ed: P.J. Anderson, Aberdeen, 1900, p. 82. - 1760/64, Joannes Macpherson, Invernessensis, (frater Martini in Edin.), A.M., 1764; LL.D., 1781; Lord Rector 1795-1798.

but also the interest (£46. 10. 0.) which had accrued over the years since it had been awarded in 1762.<sup>1</sup>

After leaving Aberdeen in 1764 John entered the University of Edinburgh,<sup>2</sup> where his brother Martin was already preparing for the ministry. John too may have had the same intention, but he probably never realised until he received the

1. In March 1757 the members of the Synod of Glenelg appointed the Rev. Dr. John Macpherson of Sleat and the Rev. Kenneth Macaulay of Harris as their Commissioners to the General Assembly in Edinburgh, with a brief to speak on general collections for the education of Highland students. In July 1757 the members of the Synod, having heard the Commissioners' reports, decided to found their own bursary scheme (with help from the S.P.C.K. and the Royal Bounty Committee) to assist young Highlanders who wanted to become ministers. In 1799 the Rev. Colin Maciver, minister of Glenelg, was ordered by the Synod to write to (among others) Alexander Macaulay of Naples, who had received £60, and Sir John Macpherson, Bart., of London, who had received £36; "as these gentlemen have not followed the ministry by Act of the Synod 1757 and in terms of the bond lodged by their cautioners, they are bound to refund the same." Replying to Colin Maciver on 15 August 1799, Sir John Macpherson wrote: "I have received your letter of 22 July last, and am truly happy to be reminded of an obligation which I was to return with interest. You are therefore to draw upon me at my bankers, Messrs. Devaynes & Coy., London, for the original sum from the period in which it was paid, together with interest. I thought the money had been paid out of the King's Bounty through the General Assembly, but I am better pleased that it was not." In 1800 Maciver laid before the Synod, Macpherson's draft for £82. 10. 0., "being the sum, including principal and interest, which the Clerk found from the records of the Synod to have been advanced to Sir John when a student." For all the foregoing details see Rev. Dr. Thomas M. Murchison, The Synod of Glenelg 1725-1821: Notes from the Records, in Trans. of the Gaelic Soc. of Inverness, Vol. XXVIII (1937-1941) (pub. 1962), pp. 94-100. The only detail omitted from Dr. Murchison's article is the year in which John Macpherson received his bursary. This is given in N.L.S. MSS., 2958, f. 70, Rev. Dr. John Macpherson (Sleat) to Rev. John Macaulay (Lisacre), 15 May 1762 - "In the distribution of the collections made for Highland students you will see justice done to our young folks."
2. A Catalogue of the Graduates in the Faculties of Arts, Divinity and Law of the University of Edinburgh, MDCCCLVIII, p. 212. John Macpherson was not recorded as a graduate until 29 November 1766, which was after he had left Edinburgh.



Synod's long overdue letter about his bursary (which he refunded promptly and gracefully) that ordination had been the purpose and condition of its award. His father would have known, but old Dr. John Macpherson was preoccupied from 1760 onwards with the completion and revision of his manuscript on the antiquities of Scotland, as far as his failing health and other frustrations would allow. In early 1765 Dr. John Macpherson told a friend:

"The MS. was bandied about in England, to my great disadvantage, and some parts of it [on Druidism] are lost. It is here [in Sleat] now; I begin to revise it, but am in such a state of languor and debility that I sometimes despair of ever being able to resume my work." 1

He never did revise his work. On 5th April 1765 he died in the manse as  
 2  
 Ostaig.

As soon as John and his brother heard that their father was dangerously ill they set out from Edinburgh for Skye, but he was dead before they arrived home.  
 3  
 Martin Macpherson, who soon afterwards succeeded to his father's living in Sleat, now became the nominal head of the Skye Macphersons, but it was his younger brother John who assumed control of the family's affairs and belongings, including the

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1. Playfair's British Family Antiquity, op. cit., Vol. 7, p. 335.

2. E.U.L. MSS., Ia.II, 451/2., (Chalmers MSS.).

3. *ibid.*, loc. cit.

manuscript which his father had never published.

John Macpherson was a self-reliant and assertive character, but, as indicated in the previous chapter, the loss of his father was a severe blow,<sup>1</sup> and he was fortunate in having Adam Ferguson as his tutor.<sup>2</sup> When he returned to Edinburgh after his father's funeral he not only lived with his tutor, ~~which was then the custom,~~ but was treated almost as a son by Ferguson. John Macpherson was deeply touched by Ferguson's kindness and, as a previously quoted extract from a letter has shown,<sup>3</sup> he always regarded his great tutor with genuine affection. And it was not only to Ferguson that he conveyed his gratitude later in life. He also told his friend James Macpherson in 1774:

"You know M<sup>c</sup> Erguis<sup>4</sup> is the man who drew me from obscurity. His politeness & friendship to me .. are debts and claims on me that oblivion itself can scarcely obliterate."<sup>5</sup>

In the autumn of 1765 John Macpherson was drawn, very briefly, into the dispute

1. see p. 55 n. 2.

2. In A New General Biographical Dictionary, ed. Hugh James Rose, London, 1850, Vol. IX, p. 393 it is stated that John Macpherson, "at the recommendation of Dr. Blair, became an intimate in the family of Dr. Ferguson, ... and his assistant in the tuition of the two younger sons of the Earl of Warwick."

3. see p. 55 n. 3.

4. "M<sup>c</sup> Erguis" is Macpherson's phonetic rendering of the Gaelic "Mac Fhearghuis", which can be pronounced either "Mack-ergus" or "Mack-erras" and means "Son of Fergus" or "Ferguson".

5. Macpherson MSS./1, 39/7, John to James Macpherson, 30 Sept 1774.

over the Fingalian epics, and it was Adam Ferguson who involved him. The person responsible for the incident was the Rev. Dr. Thomas Percy, a scholarly and aristocratic Englishman.<sup>1</sup> John Small, who unearthed the incident wrote:

"In October 1765 Dr. Percy, when travelling in Scotland, had been for a few days the guest of Dr. Blair. .. Blair, according to Percy's statement, carried him to Ferguson's house, that he might have an opportunity of hearing some of the original Gaelic of the poem of Fingal recited to him by a native of the Highlands. After the recitation took place, Dr. Percy was called upon by Blair to mention in print this circumstance, as a proof of the genuineness of the Gaelic poetry of Scotland."<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Percy did as Blair requested by stating in the second edition of his Reliques that he had heard Fingal "sung in the original language, and translated viva voce by a native of the Highlands, who had at the time no opportunity of consulting Mr. [James]<sup>3</sup> Macpherson's book." As the controversy grew more intense Percy began to regret this rash statement, and to reassure himself he wrote to Blair, asking for confirmation of the details of his visit, part of which he recalled as follows:

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1. Thomas Percy (1729-1811), Dean of Carlisle (1778) and later (1782) Bishop of Dromore. In addition to his celebrated Reliques (1st edn. 1765; 2nd edn. 1767), he also published Northern Antiquities, 1770.
  2. Sketch of Ferguson, p. 34.
  3. Thos. Percy, Reliques of Ancient English Poetry, 2nd edn., 1767, Vol. 1. p. 45.

"..you introduced me to many worthy and ingenious men, and among the rest to Mr. Professor Ferguson. I believe you mentioned to him that I had entertained doubts of the authenticity of Ossian's Poems, to remove which he sent for a student that was a native of the Highlands, who told me he had heard lines of the original sung by the servants and country people there; and being asked if he could repeat any lines himself, he recited some passages in Earse, which being translated to me, contained part of the description of Fingal's Chariot (a part of the poem of which I had entertained the greatest doubt). You then desired me, in a future edition of my 'Reliques of Ancient Poetry' to testify what I had heard. To this I could not reasonably object, and accordingly, in my second edition, 1767, I related in a note what had occurred. ...

P.S. - I have some notion that the student who was produced to me by Mr. Ferguson was (the Indian) Mr. Macpherson, then (I believe) his pupil. Perhaps this circumstance may serve and awaken the recollections of you both." 1

Blair sent a polite but evasive answer to this letter, with which he enclosed an equally polite but evasive answer from Ferguson. Percy was far from satisfied with these replies, and was amazed that Ferguson had forgotten the details of his visit.

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1. Thomas Percy to Hugh Blair, 17 August 1781, printed in full, Sketch of Ferguson, p. 36.

"I find," he wrote to Blair, "that on Wednesday, October 9th, Mr. Ferguson dined with me at your house; and on the Sunday following, October 13th,.. you caused me to drink tea with Mr. Ferguson. At his house it was, during that visit..the student was produced to me, who recited viva voce the passages in Barse, as I have related in my former letter. To which I can now add this farther circumstance, that being Sunday, he could not decently sing the tune, which I had a great curiosity to hear; and as I was obliged to leave Edinburgh early the next morning, and was not likely to see him again, he in the evening, as we were going away, took me aside, and in a low voice, hummed a few notes to me, as a specimen of the old Highland tune.

This having been the case I can have made no jumble, as Mr. Ferguson is pleased to suppose, nor could I possibly confound this with any other occurrence, for I not only never heard the sound of the Highland language from any other persons but Mr. Ferguson and his pupil during my stay in Edinburgh; but I do not find that I was ever there in company with any other natives of the Highlands but themselves. ..

... He Ferguson would not have been so positive on this head as he appears to be in his letter, if you had reminded him that the student produced to me was his own pupil, Mr. Macpherson, who, I believe, then boarded with him in his house." 1

Ferguson, having been shown Percy's letter by Blair, told the latter:

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1. Thomas Percy to Hugh Blair, 10 Sept. 1781, printed in full, *ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

"As I never questioned the fidelity of Mr. James McPherson in his publications, I was none of those who busied themselves in finding evidence of it. .. I never knew a student who pretended to repeat any part or specimen of Ossian's heroic poetry. And the mention of Mr. John McPherson's name does not at all alter the state of my recollection, for my memory of him is, among other particulars in which he is well known to me, that he never appeared to be in possession of any part of Ossian's poetry. I well remember that he was in some degree a singer, though I do not recollect any particular song but one, which, with a very few words of meaning, consisted chiefly of a chorus or burden, not more significant than lullabolaro or derry down .. I have totally forgot Dr. Percy's visit with you at my house." 1

Finding it impossible to obtain the reassurance he required, Percy attacked Blair and Ferguson in print, but both ignored his public challenge.<sup>2</sup> Of the many interpretations which could be placed on the attitude and conduct of Blair and Ferguson, two seem obvious. Either they both had very bad memories, which is difficult to believe, or they were both lying, which is even more difficult to believe. Nonetheless, it is strange that they should have told Percy that John Macpherson (whose father, to the certain knowledge of them both, had supplied Gaelic information to James Macpherson) had never been heard to recite or sing

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1. Adam Ferguson to Hugh Blair, 15 Sept. 1781, printed in full, *ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

2. See Sketch of Ferguson, p. 34; and William Shaw, An Inquiry into the Authenticity of the Poems ascribed to Ossian, London, 1781, Appendix, p. 82.

Gaelic poetry, and that he had never had the opportunity of consulting James Macpherson's books. The only surprising feature of Percy's enquiry was his failure to question the main actor in the affair, John Macpherson himself. If he had, the result, it might be fair to assume, would have been in character. A loyal and grateful pupil rarely contradicts a good and much respected tutor, and Ferguson was not only Macpherson's tutor, but also his patron.

Just before or just after the visit (or alleged visit) of Percy to Edinburgh,

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Adam Ferguson was asked by the Earl of Warwick to superintend the education of his

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younger sons, Charles and Robert Greville, who had entered the university. Ferguson accepted the responsibility, but delegated his teaching duties to John Macpherson,

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1. Francis Greville, Lord Brooke (1719-1773), created 1st Earl of Warwick in 1759. His wife was Elizabeth, daughter of Lord Archibald Hamilton. He was a man with little interest in national politics, but with good connections in political circles in London, and with considerable influence in the county and town from which he took his title. His father's cousin was Fulke Greville of Wilbury, Wiltshire, who was M.P. for Monmouth (1747-1752); Minister to the Imperial Diet (1765-1769), and Envoy Extraordinary to Bavaria (1764-1770): see British Diplomatic Representatives, ed. D.B. Horn, (Camden 3rd series, Vol. XLVI), London, 1932, pp. 42 and 46. Fulke Greville, the author of Maxims and Characters and Ode to Indifference, was married to Frances (d. 1798), daughter of James Macartney, first cousin of George Macartney later Lord Macartney (see below, p. 508, n. 3.), by whom he had a son, William Fulke Greville, M.P. (1751-1837). Fulke and Frances Greville were friends and correspondents of David Hume: see Calendar of Hume Manuscripts, in Proceedings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, Vol. 52, (1932), pp. 72-73.
  2. Charles Francis Greville (1749-1809); 2nd son of 1st Earl of Warwick, M.P. for Warwick 1774-1790; Lord of Trade 1774-1780; Lord of the Admiralty 1780-1782. His mistress Emma Hart married his uncle Sir William Hamilton, Minister at Naples, but she became better known as the mistress of Horatio, Lord Nelson. For Charles's and his brother Robert's period as students at Edinburgh from 1764-67: see Mary Delany, Autobiography and Correspondence, series 2, Vol. 1, (1861-62), p. 110.
  3. Robert Fulke Greville (1751-1824); 3rd son of 1st Earl of Warwick; M.P. for Warwick 1774-1780, and M.P. for New Windsor 1796-1806; commissioned as a Cornet in 10th Dragoons in 1768; Captain (1775) and Lt. Colonel (1777) in 1st Foot Guards (Grenadier Guards); Equerry to George III 1781-1797. For his career after 1781 see The Diaries of Colonel the Hon. Robert Fulke Greville, ed. Frank McKno Bladon, London, 1930.

who was not only glad to have the job (his first) and the small income he derived from it, but was also pleased for personal reasons. Although only 20 years of age he adopted an almost fatherly attitude to the Grevilles, whom he was still calling "my children"<sup>1</sup> a decade later. Indeed, he never spoke of Charles Greville, but in extravagant terms of affection. His term as the Grevilles' tutor lasted until the autumn of 1766, when a more exciting prospect came his way. John Macpherson explained his situation at this period in a letter he sent to his cousin, the Rev. Martin Macpherson of Golspie. As it is the earliest known letter from John's pen, and as it contains a great deal of important information, it is worth quoting at length. Dated at London on 1st January 1767, it reads as follows:

"My dearest Cousin ... I intended to write you only when my tale could be given completely. As it is, let it give you no uneasiness as I and my best friends are perfectly satisfied that my prospects and plan are good. Last autumn my uncle <sup>2</sup> Alexander Macleod<sup>2</sup> of the Mansfield Indiaman came

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1. B.M. Add. MSS. 29138, f. 2lv., John Macpherson to Warren Hastings, 19 December 1776.
  2. Alexander Macleod (c. 1715-1790), 2nd son of Donald Macleod of Bernera, "The Old Trojan", by his 1st wife Anne, daughter of Roderick Macleod of Macleod. He joined the naval service of the E.I. Co., and by 1756 was captain of the Marlborough. He next commanded the Lord Mansfield, and stayed as captain of that ship until he retired in 1769. He acquired a great fortune working for the E.I. Co., £15,000 of which he used in 1778 to purchase Harris, Bernera and St. Kilda from his cousin Norman Macleod of Macleod. Lady Haden-Guest incorrectly states in House of Commons 1754-90, Vol. 3, p. 94, that he married his cousin Helen Maclean of Boreray. Helen married his brother Donald Macleod; see the accurate genealogy by Hector Hugh Mackenzie, The Macleans of Boreray, Inverness, 1946, p. 138. Alexander Macleod was M.P. for Honiton in Devon from 1780 to 1781, a seat he reputedly paid £4,000 for: the matter of his election is discussed at length in a letter from James to John Macpherson, 1 June 1781, Macpherson MSS./1, 5/1.



to Edin<sup>r</sup> where he and I were much together. He saw my station, approved of it, but told me it was no settlement; and [might mean] beginning the world over again when I was tired of a studious and unprofitable life. Tho' the happiest man on the face of the earth in the company of my dear boys and firmest friends, I was very open to his reasoning. He saw that some people of the first distinction were willing to serve me. These services, together with his own interest, might, he thought, get me one of the first stations in the service of the East India Company, which was being appointed one of their Factors abroad. I communicated his proposal to the Master Grevilles and Ferguson. The signs we mutually gave of real and hearty wishes were more to my honour than I should even hint to any but those who know me and would not expect a misrepresentation. At length they saw that nothing could tend to my advantage in their power equal to the prospect before me. In short, Shelburne was immediately applyed to by Id. Warwick before I was told of an application to the latter. Unluckily for me, Shelburne's party was 'out' in India affairs, and so were all those to whom applications were made in my favour. At the same time I was desired to come up here [to London]. The Factorship is against the laws of the Company and, tho' it were not, it is a place of thousands a year, and in some more respects unfit for me. ...

The scheme now is .. that I go to China as Purser of my uncle's ship. The voyage is not unpleasant, particularly with such a friend, nor is it unprofitable. When I return, if it is allowed by Providence, I shall be more known

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1. William Petty-Fitzmaurice, 2nd Earl of Shelburne (1737-1805), later (1784) cr. 1st Marquess of Lansdowne. He was Secretary of State for the Southern Dept., July 1766 - Oct 1768, but he lost control of American affairs in Jan. 1768. For his career see John Norris, Shelburne and Reform, London, 1963.

to business and my prospects for a provision at home or abroad more ample. Warwick, who will not only serve me but my friends, insists I should stay longer with his sons, and he would make my stay more beneficial. But my uncle told him plainly that my time would run away without a certainty of independence. I am frequently with his Lordship; his sons' letters have engaged him as much for me as his strength can go. I am resolved not to be indebted for a trifle, and I see he will do anything. ...

You are never to say to any but The White Hand Mrs. Martin Macpherson of Golspie that Jock Macpherson, son of Martin is in Mr. Greville's pocket-book. It is hard to know if it will be of any use to him, but if I can judge of anything it is that my friend will have power, and will serve even his friend's friend.

There is no more danger in a China voyage than in sitting at Golspie. My constitution is quite fitted to a warm climate, and the station in which I go is agreeable and profitable. Besides, I always had a desire to see something of the world, and after I return in 2 years and a half, if tired of that station or if nothing else casts up, I can be an English Ecclesiastic. So bless your stars rather than lament at the change in my situation. The MS of the late Rev. Dr. John Macpherson is in great forwardings for the press, and I chose to give it its chance out of my own rather than out of other hands. ...

Ferguson, who has now the lead in the University and who you will perhaps admire more for refusing a place of £2,000 a year lately, intended your <sup>1</sup> friend for a Professorship in Edin<sup>r</sup> for which he was training him up; but

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1. By "your friend" John Macpherson meant himself. Both he and James Macpherson frequently referred to themselves in this manner.

he plainly told me that there was hesitation to be made in accepting of a voyage to China in my present way. Whatever comes of it gives a man some figure in life afterwards. Ferguson is <sup>1</sup> Lord Shelburne's particular and intimate friend. His exertions for me meet not only all my own attitudes, but that of every one connected with me. He is my idea of the noble and true character, and his manly sentiments will give force to his country. ..

I am and was much pained about your station, but have always some hopes of seeing it easier. Attend to that virtue which I admire more than I cultivate, Economy, but which I would cultivate in your situation; and I hope it may soon happen that you will be relieved. A King's Kick could be got if we were together, but why do I speak of this? Delvin/<sup>2</sup>e<sup>7</sup> is the man you took him for, notwithstanding his fine words to me. I think you may bully a little. They'll rather give something out of another's fund than be teased. I found by a Mr. Mackay, a drover who lives near <sup>3</sup> you, that your departure from there would be most disagreeable to them. ..

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1. There can be no doubt that Adam Ferguson and Lord Shelburne were on the best of terms. In October 1766 Shelburne offered Ferguson the Governorship of West Florida in place of George Johnstone, who was vacating the post, see Col. R. Clerk (brother of Sir James Clerk, Bt., of Penicuik) to Adam Ferguson, dated London 10 Oct. 1766, printed in full by Small, op. cit., p. 15. It was Ferguson's refusal of this post which probably caused John Macpherson to say that the professor should be admired "for refusing a place of £2,000 a year", although the official record shows that the salary was £1,200 a year, see P.R.O., G.O. 5/586.
  2. John Mackenzie of Delvine (d. 1788), a W.S. practising in Edinburgh, and a laird and chieftain of the Mackenzie clan. His father, Kenneth Mackenzie of Delvine (d. 1756) had been Professor of Civil Law in the University of Edinburgh from 1745 to 1755. From 1752 to 1771 John Mackenzie acted as lawyer to the Rev. Dr. John Macpherson and his two sons, and to the Rev. Martin Macpherson of Golspie, but the latter was far from pleased with the treatment he received as a client. For Mackenzie's transactions with the various members of the Macpherson family see N.L.S. MSS., 1384 (Mackenzie of Delvine Collection), ff. 76-101.

3./...

Write me immediately at the British Coffee House, Charing Cross, so as to overtake me in Britain, which we leave in a month at farthest." 1

John Macpherson rarely resisted the temptation to overstate his sentiments or his achievements or his influence. Most of the letters he wrote in his life sounded like hymns of self-love, and the boasts and claims he made tend to diminish their value as evidence. Nonetheless, his own interests (whether personal or professional) would not have been served by deceiving such intimate acquaintance as Martin Macpherson of Golspie or James Macpherson, and what he said to them (especially if he used Gaelic) can probably be accepted as the truth. There can be no doubt that his affection for the Greville boys was genuine, but, as they were not much younger than himself, his future as their tutor was a short-term prospect. Against his reluctance to leave them, and the inducement of a higher salary from their father, he had to consider his career once his tutorship ended. He was convinced that Ferguson would procure a chair for him in the University of Edinburgh (and there is no reason to doubt that he could have obtained a professorship), but even in this capacity his prospects of making money were poor; and, as some of his later

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3. (continued) *ibid.*, Martin Macpherson of Golspie had been trying, without success, for a larger stipend or a more lucrative living elsewhere through the mediation of John Mackenzie of Delvine.

1. Macpherson MSS./1,21/1, John Macpherson to Martin Macpherson of Golspie, dated "1st January 1766", but the year is obviously wrong. John Macpherson had forgotten to alter the number on New Year's Day, and, it is certain from internal evidence, that he should have written "1st January 1767".

letters will show, he was determined to be rich. His uncle's suggestion that he should seek his fortune in the East Indies, where the Scots (and Irish) competed on equal terms with the English for wealth and office, was therefore accepted with enthusiasm. But for the fact that Lord Shelburne had good reasons at this period for not taking an active interest in the affairs of the East India Company, it is more than probable that Warwick's unsolicited application on John's behalf to Shelburne might have produced a definite job for him as a junior Company servant in India. As it was, John had to take a chance on his own, and go out as the purser of his uncle's ship, the Lord Mansfield.

As soon as John Macpherson had made up his mind in the autumn of 1766 to serve under Captain Alexander Macleod, he used every means at his disposal to amass a small capital. In October 1766, before leaving Edinburgh, he managed to extract from the tight-fisted lawyer John Mackenzie the sum of £100, which later caused

his brother Martin Macpherson some trouble. By December 1766 he was in London,

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1. See L.S. Sutherland, The East India Company in Eighteenth-Century Politics, Oxford, 1952, (hereafter cited as Sutherland), pp. 171-172.

2. N.L.S. MSS., 1384, f. 101, Rev. Martin Macpherson (Sleat) to John Mackenzie of Dalvine, 7 July 1771. - "I was yesterday served with a summons at your instance on account of an arrangement laid in your hands many years ago by my father for debt due him by the family of Mackinnon. When my father died I was not very well known to matters of this kind & I frankly own to you I never heard anything as to the subject of the summons since that period. However, it consists with my knowledge that you payed my brother John some money in October in the year 1766. Whether that was the subject arrested in your hands or otherwise due to my father I really know not. What I mean by giving you this trouble, is to beg the favour that you inform me if the money arrested by my Father was payed by you or Mackinnon, or if I was at all payed." In a complicated reply Mackenzie stated only one thing clearly that the sum was £100. (ibid.)

where he met James Macpherson, who had returned from America. With the help of James he tried to sell the manuscript of father's work on the antiquities of Scotland to Thomas Becket, James's publisher. In his letter to Becket he wrote:

"You and Mr. Macpherson seemed desirous that I should mention my price for the MS in writing rather than conversation.

The subject may be called uninteresting, the manner of treating it irregular in some respects, and the performance on the whole but tolerably qualified for bringing in profit to the purchasser [sic]. ... The errors which have been objected to can have little weight. I see many of them with my own eyes, and our friend Mr. [James] Macpherson is so friendly as to undertake the revisale [sic] of the proof sheets. It is unnecessary to say that a few strokes of his pen will throw a lusture [sic] over the whole performance. .. If you desire to buy the MS. you have it for a £100. .. A Scotch bookseller who has a shop in town will give me £120. ..

When I first resolved to publish these papers I thought I was to go to India with no prospect of a speedy return. .. My prospect now has taken a different turn; I go only a voyage to China, and were it not for the expectations that my promises have raised, and the advantage of having some more money in my pocket I would make no publication at this time. If I return, the materials I have to work upon, and the aids to which I can have access, may I hope enable me to draw out a MS. for which I would ask four in place of one hundred pounds." 1

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1. B.M. Add. MSS. 40166, ff. 104-105, John Macpherson to Thomas Becket, <sup>L-7</sup> Dec., 1766. In this letter (*ibid.*, ff. 104-104v.) John also said: "If I may presume to any knowledge myself, it is a little in the literary way. From that I am convinced the book has more than common merits. .. The Author's reading was more extensive and more directed by judgement than that of most of our modern writers. Tho' a clergyman his taste was extremely classical." Dr. Samuel Johnson also had a high opinion of the Rev. Dr. John Macpherson's scholarship. He told Boswell in 1773 that Dr. John "had a great deal of Latin, and good Latin" (see Boswell's Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides, ed. F.A. Pottle & C.H. Bennett, London, 1963, p. 233).

On the 13th December 1766 Becket replied as follows:

"As you have been so very explicit with me, it becomes me to be so too. I am very sorry your terms do not suit me. I retain a grateful sense of your obliging desire in wishing it mine in preference to another - I wish it too - but as you have had such a generous offer from a Scotch Books<sup>eller</sup> my hopes are frustrated. .. I return the MSS. herewith." 1

Becket's rejection of the manuscript was not, apparently, a serious setback.

Two weeks later in the letter he sent to his cousin at Golspie (which has been quoted) John Macpherson was able to report that "the MS is in great forwardings for the press, and I chose to give it a chance out of my own rather than out of other hands." What he meant by the last part of the sentence is not clear. He certainly did not mean that he refused James Macpherson's help, because James used part of the manuscript in one of his own<sup>2</sup> works. It is also clear that he was not lying when he told Becket that "a Scotch bookseller" was interested in the work, because it was Strahan, the friend of David Hume, who published it in London in 1768.<sup>3</sup>

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1. B.M. Add. MSS. 40166, f. 105v., Thomas Becket to John Macpherson, 13 December 1766.
  2. James Macpherson based part of his An Introduction to the History of Great Britain and Ireland, 1771, on the manuscripts of the Rev. Dr. John Macpherson, see Saunders, pp. 217-218.
  3. Critical Dissertations on the Origins, Antiquities, Language, Government, Manners and Religion of the Ancient Caledonians, by John Macpherson, D.D., published in the Strand, London, by Wm. Strahan, 1768.

It is probable that as the MS, was "in great forwardings for the press" in January 1767 he received some sort of advance from Strahan at that time.

John was almost ready to leave for the East. His involvement with James at this period was short and was based on simple friendship. They shared a lot of mutual friends, and James was willing to help John to publish and, if necessary, to revise his father's manuscript. James may have already started his career as a political journalist,<sup>1</sup> but neither of them had yet established the bases for their future political partnership.

After certain formalities were concluded in January and February with the court of the East India Company, Captain Macleod was free to set sail.<sup>2</sup> On 6th March 1767 according to the log of the Lord Mansfield, John Macpherson "the purser came on board with the despatches."<sup>3</sup> Two days later the ship left its dock at Gravesend.

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1. No evidence has been found which throws a light on James Macpherson's employment as a political journalist in 1766 and 1767, but according to Saunders (p. 213) James was allowed to keep his West Florida appointments in 1766 "on the condition, so far as can be gathered, that he should devote himself henceforth to political writing." Unfortunately, Saunders does not indicate from whom he gained this impression.
  2. I.O.L., Court Book 75, p. 351 - "On 13th January 1767"Capt. Alexr. Macleod of the Lord Mansfield advises the arrival of his ship at Gravesend on 9th inst."; *ibid.*, p. 398 - "On 18th February 1767"Capt. Alexr. Macleod took oath and his leave of the court (and has permission to take Mr. John Macpherson as his purser)."
  3. I.O.L., Marine Records 463/A-C, Log of the Lord Mansfield. John Macpherson was listed as an officer, and 9th in precedence on board - after the surgeon, Joseph Nott of the Bombay Marine, but before the surgeon's mate.



A month out from England forty of the soldiers and sailors succumbed to fever or distemper, and John Macpherson put himself at the disposal of the surgeon. As soon as he had done all he could to tend the sick he then took charge of a party which had been ordered to disinfect the whole ship by washing it down with vinegar; an arduous job lasting three days. Realising that the epidemic might get worse, and that the sick, by the nature of their illness, were consuming too much fresh water, Captain Macleod decided to make an unscheduled call at St. Jago (or Sao Thingo in the Cape Verde Islands), where he arrived on 7th April. Here he disembarked all the sick, before proceeding to Madras, which he reached without further difficulties on 30th September 1767<sup>1</sup>. The call at Madras was to determine John Macpherson's whole career. He met the Nawab of Arcot<sup>2</sup>, the ruler of the Carnatic.

According to one of John Macpherson's opponents:

"He Macpherson<sup>3</sup> had formerly been a purser in the India Service, and in that station was at Madras some time in the year 1767 when the Nabob was

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1. All references to the voyage of the Lord Mansfield are taken from its log; *ibid.*
  2. Mohammed Ali Khan, Nawab Walajah of the Carnatic, and Subahdar of Arcot, (1717-1795), son (possibly illegitimate) of Anwar-ud-Din Khan (1659-1749), who in 1743 became the first Nawab or Nabob of the second dynasty to rule the Carnatic.
  3. John Macpherson was not a purser in the Company's service. His appointment as purser of the Lord Mansfield was the result of a private arrangement with his uncle Alexander Macleod, and was recognised as such by the Court of Directors of the East India Company, see I.O.L., Court Book 75, p. 398.

in very great distress on account of what he thought very hard usage from the Company's Servants then in power; and on account of the War which his Country had been involved in, by them and their predecessors.

Mr. Macpherson found means of being introduced to his Highness by one of his  
<sup>1</sup>  
 Dubashes, under the pretence of shewing some Electrical experiments and the phenomena of the Magick Lanthorn, sights very extraordinary to Asiaticks. During the course of those exhibitions he took care to acquaint the Nabob of his great interest in England, both by his family and other connexions, and that it would be very much in his (Mr. Macpherson's) power to serve his Highness's interests very effectually in that Kingdom. His Highness, at that time full of his distresses, and happy in an opportunity of communicating some account of his grievances to His Majesty through the intermediate chanel [sic] of the Minister, employed Mr. Macpherson to carry a Letter to Lord Chatham who had been in office when this gentleman left England, and very likely his Highness mentioned many things of his situation in words which he might not have thought prudent to commit to paper. Some present pecuniary gratification was given him [Macpherson], and a future reward promised should he execute his Commission to the Nabob's satisfaction. He  
<sup>2</sup>  
 received One thousand pagodas at the time, and the whole it seems was to be made up to Twelve hundred pounds Sterling (£1,200). After which he was dismissed with Jewels to the value of Three thousand pounds (£3,000) which Mr. Macpherson judged necessary presents to procure admission to the people in power in England.

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1. Dubash, an Anglo-Indian word derived from the Hindustani Dobashi, meaning 'man of two languages'. It was used by Europeans in India to mean interpreter or broker, but more often simply as 'agent'.
  2. A Pagoda was worth 8 shillings at the authorised rate of exchange, and held this value, with slight fluctuations, from the mid-1740's to the mid-1780's, see H. Davidson Love, Vestiges of Old Madrag, London, 1913, (hereafter cited as Love), Vol. 2., pp. 312-313. 1000 Pagodas were, therefore, worth £400.

Besides what had passed between the Nabob and Mr. Macpherson, some private transactions had been adjusted it seems between the Dubash Histris Swamey and him, which were reduced into writing by Mr. Macpherson from Histris Swamey's mouth, and which were sealed with this Dubash's Seal. This instrument Mr. Macpherson wished to be looked upon as his Credentials, and it would seem were intended to be used in order to obtain credit in England to whatever he should say or offer in the Nabob's name. For by it he supposed himself constituted the Nabob's Minister or Vaquael at the Court of Great Britain." 1

As the compiler of this report undoubtedly elicited some of the facts it contains from the Nawab himself, there is little need to question their accuracy. John Macpherson's use of the magic lantern and other electrical novelties to capture the Nawab's attention was ingenious; and Macpherson probably thought of the idea (but not, of course, its exact application) before he left England. Indeed, his decision to invest capital in expensive electrical equipment (not available in India) might explain why he went to some trouble to raise money from the family lawyer and from the sale of his father's manuscript. But the magic lantern was only a means to an end. Having obtained that end, an audience with the Nawab, Macpherson still had to sell himself; and for a man of only twenty-two he did this with some skill. The Nawab was always willing to air his many grievances, which will be outlined later,

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1. I.O.L., H. Misc. S. 110, pp. 495-496. Sir Robert Harland to the Earl of Rochford, 10 Sept. 1772. See Appendix 4.

to any European he thought might help him, but Macpherson was the first person he trusted with a letter to the British Prime-Minister. And, by giving him money and jewels (and also, it seems, unwritten instructions), he virtually appointed him an agent, and this appointment was not undermined by Macpherson's alleged attempt to reinforce his position by obtaining dubious credentials sealed by a dubash.

Having been entrusted with a mission by the Nawab, Macpherson had no reason to go to China, but he did not return home directly from Madras. As he explained to his cousin Martin Macpherson:

"While at Madras I mentioned to the N[awab] the good effect which an <sup>1</sup> attack on Hyder Ally's seaports would have been in drawing off part of his force out of the Carnatic; and in cutting off the channel through which he received his supplies and resources. This the N[awab] knew as well as anyone, and it was what he most desired."

The impression John Macpherson gives that it was he who suggested the subsequent <sup>2</sup> attack on Haider Ali's forts on the Malabar Coast can be dismissed as one of his

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1. Haider Ali Khan (d. 1782), the grandson of a Punjabi Dervish, who first became prominent as Killedar (or fort-commander) of Dindigul in 1755. In the mid-1760's he usurped the Rajah of Mysore, and as ruler of this state used his power to make war on his neighbours. His enmity for the Nawab of Arcot was to cause the British much concern and alarm.
  2. Macpherson MSS./1,21/2, John Macpherson to Rev. Martin Macpherson of Golspie 23 November 1768.

typical boasts, but he may have added his voice to those who advocated the assault.

His uncle, Alexander Macleod, was certainly in favour of the idea, and was certainly  
 ordered to take his ship on the expedition before resuming his voyage to China.<sup>1</sup>

John Macpherson could have avoided the engagement, but he volunteered to remain as  
 the purser of the Lord Mansfield until the mission had been completed.<sup>2</sup> On 20th

October 1767, three weeks after John had first set foot in Madras, the Lord Mansfield  
 set sail for Bombay, the rendezvous for all the ships taking part in the expedition.<sup>3</sup>

At Bombay, which was reached on Christmas Day, Macleod equipped his ship for the  
 coming fight, and under the leadership of a Royal Navy vessel left with the other  
 East Indiamen for Mangalore, the objective, on 18th February 1768.<sup>4</sup>

The battle for Mangalore, Haider Ali's main seaport, began on 27th February.

On 1st March, after a determined assault at dawn, the main or Octagon Fort was finally  
 taken, and the port was in British hands.<sup>5</sup> According to one report "young Macpherson,

1. I.O.L., Marine Records, 463/A-C, Log of the Lord Mansfield.
2. Macpherson MSS./1,21/2, John Macpherson to Martin Macpherson of Golspie, 23 November 1768.
3. 4. and 5. I.O.L., Marine Records, 463/A-C, op. cit. There are inaccurate accounts of the Mangalore expedition and the part played in it by John Macpherson in Playfair's British Family Antiquity, op. cit, Vol. 7, p. 337., and A New General Biographical Dictionary, op. cit., Vol. IX, p. 393.

at the head of a detachment of English sailors, was the first who ascended the breach. The capture of this place, and the share he had in its surrender, proved the foundation of his future fortune.<sup>1</sup> The Lord Mansfield's log confirms that he was in the thick of the fighting. He told his cousin Martin Macpherson:

"I went volunteer on this embarkation, and on the first of May I had the pleasure of writing my friend [the Nawab] at Madras that we had taken 32 ships-of-war, a large town, an arsenal of Military & Marine Stores, &c &c, with the loss of 80 men & 4 officers. .. I lost my poor cousin Mr. William Macleod's son, Ensign Macleod, killed by a cannon ball in the breast."<sup>2</sup> 3

After the battle the Lord Mansfield went south to Tellicherry to pick up a cargo of pepper and 174 sepoy (who were disembarked at Mangalore to form the garrison) before returning to Bombay, where it dropped anchor on 12th May.<sup>4</sup> From Bombay Alexander Macleod and his ship went to its original destination, China; and John Macpherson, with orders from Commodore Watson to take the official account of

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1. A New General Biographical Dict., op. cit., Vol. IX, p. 393. John Macpherson may have received some prize money, but the amount is not known, see I.O.L., Court Book 78, p. 135, 28 July 1769. The Petition of the Lord Mansfield's Crew, praying to be rewarded for assisting at the taking of Mangalore and Onore in the East Indies.
  2. The writing is bad. It may be "Mar." for "March".
  3. Macpherson MSS./1, 21/3, op. cit., loc. cit.
  4. I.O.L., Marine Records, 463/A-C, op. cit.
  5. Playfair, British Family Antiquity, op. cit., Vol. 7, p. 337. Commodore Watson was a friend of Capt. Alexander Macleod. They had served together 1756 on the expedition which Robert Clive led against Calcutta.

the victory to the Secretary of State, Lord Shelburne, took a passage to England in the Lioness East Indiaman by way of St. Helena, where he stopped for three <sup>1</sup> weeks. On 14th November 1768 he landed at Portsmouth. <sup>2</sup>

A fortnight later John Macpherson wrote from the British Coffee House to his cousin at Golspie, giving him a full account of his voyage to and from India, and a short report on the people he had met since his arrival in England. Eager as always to prove that he was a man of influence, he boasted of his intention to obtain a sinecure for a poor relative named James Macpherson, but, more important, he mentioned that he had renewed his acquaintance with James "Fingal" Macpherson. <sup>3</sup>

1. Macpherson MSS./1, 21/2, op. cit.

2. *ibid.*, loc. cit.

3. Macpherson MSS./1, 21/2, John Macpherson to Martin Macpherson of Golspie, 23 November 1768. - "What would surprize me more /on landing at Portsmouth/ than to meet our friend James here a /? Gopard/ of Invalids. I was struck on seeing a Son of Ian Ruagh McVaister /i.e. a Skye Macpherson/ so low. There was hardly a Skye/e/ character which escaped the strong strokes of his criticism. I will not think my toil in vain if I can get James advanced to a gun in Portsmouth, this is a sinecure of £50 a year, and after - as he says himself - trailing a scabbard through the 4 quarters of the world in the service of his country it is what he merits." James was certainly a Skye Macpherson, and related to both John and Martin, but his identity has not yet been established from various Macpherson pedigrees. Just over six Months later in another letter he sent Martin (*ibid.*, 21/3, 10 June 1769), John reported that "Col.<sup>t</sup> Macnab gave me instantly a Chelsea Pension for James, but mark the old disposition, for James thought ten pounds a year and leave to retire beneath his accepting; but, poor fellow, he says he must make his life agreeable to himself in his own way. He is now on the watch for something better, and he is to inform me of the first vacancy of a gun, which I am prepared to petition for him. But many accidents may disappoint him and me, and the worthy Col.<sup>t</sup> /Macnab/ is now just dying!"

John and James had, of course, much in common already.

Both were former students of the universities in Aberdeen and Edinburgh; both had been private tutors to the sons of wealthy men; and both had used Scottish history or literature as a means of raising capital: James with the poems of Ossian, and John with his father's work on customs and antiquities. They also shared the same network of acquaintances. James, with a letter from Adam Ferguson, had introduced himself to John Home, who had recommended him to Hugh Blair; and it was Blair who had sponsored the Highland tour during which James met the minister of Sleat, the Rev. Dr. John Macpherson, from whom Blair later obtained a testimony in favour of James's claim. Blair, probably out of gratitude, had recommended the minister's son, John, to Adam Ferguson, and the circle was complete.

With this background of mutual connections the two Macphersons had every reason to trust each other; and they soon discovered that they could unite their talents. James, whose salary or income depended on his loyalty to the ministry, probably saw in John the future medium for using special inside knowledge to make their joint fortunes, and John, who found that much had changed in political circles during his 20 months' absence, undoubtedly needed James's guidance on politics and help with the press, a sphere in which James was an expert and an excellent medium for broadcasting the Nawab's grievances. By returning to England to act as the



Nawab's agent John established, as Dr. Sutherland has pointed out, "his position as the pioneer of the shady ranks of European agents sent over to England in the coming years to further the interests of the princes of India by appealing to the State against the Company."<sup>1</sup> The Nawab's affairs were to provide John and James Macpherson, after many setbacks, with political power and considerable wealth. By the end of 1768 they had become partners in politics, and were ready to take part in what John later called "the campaigns of '69 and '70".<sup>2</sup>

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1. Sutherland, p. 198.

2. Macpherson MSS./1, 39/8, John Macpherson to James Macpherson, 30 Sept. 1774.

CHAPTER 3

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The Campaigns of '69 and '70.

Chapter 3. The Campaigns of '69 and '70.

"Upon my arrival [wrote John Macpherson] at the Court of Great Britain towards the end of the year 1768 I found two important changes had happened in Administration. The Earl of Chatham had retired in such a manner from power as convinced the most Intelligent upon those Subjects that there was little prospect of his ever again possessing a lead in Administration. The Earl of Shelburne had been dismissed at the instigation of the Duke of Grafton from the Office of Secretary of State.

These changes, however unexpected, did not discourage my resolution of supporting the cause of the Nabob. Whoever had the favour of the Sovereign it was my business to interest him in the support of my Employer." 1

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Although the Nawab's cause has been discussed fully elsewhere, it is perhaps necessary to give a brief outline of his main grievances. The East India Company's situation in the Carnatic was quite unlike its position in Bengal, where the native leaders had been turned into virtual puppets under the Company's rule, and where the French had no important settlements and little or no opportunity of undermining

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1. I.O.L., H. Misc. S. 110, p. 503. See Appendix 5.

2. For the details of the situation in the Carnatic given in this chapter see Maclean (1773-1778), pp. 36-63.

British influence by suborning native princes. In the Carnatic the British were allies of a politically independent native ruler, whose position as Nawab had been upheld in the 1750's by the British against a rival supported by the French, whose presence at Pondicherry was to remain as a continual threat to British influence in Southern India. By the 11th Article of the Treaty of Paris of 1763, however, the Nawab had been officially acknowledged by both the French and the British as the only legal overlord of the Carnatic; and this acknowledgement by Europeans had been endorsed in 1765 by Shah Alam, the Mughal Emperor in Delhi.

Unfortunately, what seemed to be an uncomplicated situation was disrupted by two separate problems, which soon became entangled. The first of these was the tension caused by the Hindu Rajah of Tanjore, whose tiny but fertile Maratha kingdom was in the heart of the Carnatic, and whose overlord was, therefore, the Muslim Nawab of Arcot. As a potential ally of the French in nearby Pondicherry, the Rajah posed a threat to the British in Madras. In 1762, George Pigot, the Governor of Madras, had therefore concluded a treaty with the Rajah, which encouraged the Rajah to defy his overlord the Nawab, and which gave the British certain revenues from

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1. George Pigot (1719-1777), later (1764) Sir George, Bart.; and later still (1766) 1st Baron Pigot of Patshull (Irish Peerage). He joined E.I. Co. as a Writer in 1737; Member of Council of Fort St. David 1750; Deputy Governor, 1754, and Governor, 1755-63, of Madras.

Tanjore which, by the Treaty of Paris the following year, rightfully belonged to the Nawab of Arcot. From 1763 the British found themselves allies of both the Muslim overlord and his Hindu vassal, and, by means public and private, helping them to fight each other. And it was the means which were at the root of the second problem.

The Nawab of Arcot, unlike his predecessors, had secured his position with the military assistance of Europeans, and in 1755 Pigot, on behalf of the East India Company, had presented him with the bill for services rendered. At the same time the Seven Years' War broke out, and he was again forced to protect his own interest by joining the British in their fight against the French. The costs of this struggle further increased his public debt to the Company. By 1762 his lands, long ravaged by war, were incapable of providing the revenues he needed to meet all his financial commitments; and when, in the same year, Pigot made a treaty with his vassal in Tanjore, he lost the revenues from that kingdom, which further reduced his ability to meet his obligations. This pattern of increasing public debts and decreasing revenues forced him to borrow large sums of money; and, as native money-lenders charged excessive rates of interest, he found the help he needed from their slightly less rapacious counterparts in the European community.

From the mid-1750's the Nawab had been the target of greedy Company servants in

Madras, but after 1762 the rapacity of some of them knew no bounds. To cover their loans, and the high interest due on these loans, the Nawab's private creditors obtained from him assignments of the future revenues from his lands; and those dealing with his enemy, the Rajah, covered themselves in a similar manner.

These future assignments further reduced the Nawab's ability to discharge his public debts. A stronger prince might have renounced them, but the Nawab, although supported by a sepoy army trained by European officers, was not powerful enough to defy the British; and without British military aid he had no hope of resisting the forces of Haider Ali of Mysore, whose growing strength was a threat to the security of the whole Carnatic. The French, with whom the Nawab might have made a new deal, were his long-standing enemies, and had made a poor showing on the battlefield against the British. He had, therefore, no alternative but to remain an ally of the British, who were themselves not powerful enough to conquer him, but certainly held the whip hand.

The scandal of his situation was not understood in Britain. The only people to whom he could complain were the Company servants in Madras, whose private and public interests in his affairs were in conflict, and whose individual interests in either the Nawab or his rival the Rajah brought internal conflict among themselves. But, whatever the internal rivalries in the Company, the servants in Madras were

unwilling to have their dubious transactions or the Nawab's grievances reported in England. <sup>1</sup> Palk, who was Governor of Madras from 1763 to 1767, did his best to control rates of interest and certainly reduced the Nawab's debt to the Company, but he did not stop the scandalous private transactions, and, apart from personal attempts to placate the Nawab, did nothing to ventilate his grievances in Britain.

John Macpherson's appearance on the scene in Madras in 1767 was, therefore, an unexpected but excellent opportunity for the Nawab to communicate his views to powerful men in England, some of whom were looking for evidence which would allow the State to intervene in Company matters. The battle between the State and the Company had arisen for a number of complicated reasons, <sup>2</sup> but reckless gambling in Company stocks had been one of the main causes for bringing the struggle to a head. For John Macpherson, the agent of an Indian prince at variance with the Company, and the intimate friend of a ministerial journalist, there was no difficulty in deciding which side would be more interested in helping the Nawab. From the outset

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1. Robert Palk (1717-1798), a Royal Naval chaplain who transferred to the E.I. Co. in 1749 without fixed status. He was admitted as a covenant servant in 1761 and made 3rd member of the Madras Council. In 1766, as Governor of Madras, he concluded a treaty with Salabat Jang, the Nizam of Hyderabad, which gave the British control of all the Northern Circars, except the Guntur Circar. He was created a baronet in 1782.
  2. See Sutherland, pp. 138-176.

he chose to rely on the government.

Even while he was still in India John Macpherson had tried to prepare the  
<sup>1</sup>  
ground in England by writing to Shelburne, and by arranging to carry Commodore  
Watson's despatches about the Mangalore victory to Shelburne. Moreover, as  
Shelburne was the friend of Lord Warwick and Adam Ferguson he had this connection  
in his favour as well. It must, therefore, have been a blow to find upon arriving  
in England that Shelburne had been forced out of his office as Secretary of State  
by the Duke of Grafton, who had replaced the Earl of Chatham as the head of the  
<sup>2</sup> <sup>3</sup>  
government. But, as Macpherson himself said: "whoever had the favour of the  
Sovereign it was my business to interest him in the support of my Employer", and  
he immediately set about the task of interesting the Duke in the Nawab's cause.

"I accordingly," wrote Macpherson, "obtained from my patron and friend,  
the Earl of Warwick, a Letter of Introduction to his Grace with this  
Letter, which declared from his Lordship's intimate knowledge of me

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1. I.O.L., H. Misc. S. 110, p. 509, (see Appendix 5) - "I wrote his Lordship  
/Shelburne/ overland from the Malabar Coast after receipt of my charge from the  
Nabob. But he was out of Ministry upon my arrival in England and violently in  
opposition."
  2. Augustus Henry Fitzroy, 3rd Duke of Grafton (1735-1811). M.P. (while heir to  
the Dukedom) for Boroughbridge and Bury St. Edmunds, 1756-1757; Sec. of State  
for the Northern Dept. 1765-1766: First Lord of the Treasury, July 1766 - Jan.  
1770.
  3. William Pitt, (1708-1778) later (1766) 1st Earl of Chatham.



that a perfect dependence might be made upon my honour and judgement, I waited upon his Grace and first presented him with a general state of India, and a plan by which the concerns of that Country might be turned to the publick advantage and which has since been partly adopted. This plan I drew out and presented with a view of discovering his Grace's sentiments before I was explicit. The consequence was favourable. I signified in some degree my Commission, and on the Eighth of December 1768 I received a letter from his Grace to wait of him. It was unnecessary to act with further reserve. His Grace spoke so feelingly of the oppression under which the princes of India laboured from the usurped authority of the Commercial Subjects of the State."<sup>1</sup>

Having engaged the Duke's interest in the Nawab's affairs Macpherson next tried to reinforce this interest by offering the presents and jewels he had brought from Madras, but the Duke, in a very polite letter,<sup>2</sup> refused to accept them.

"Overwhelmed with the nobleness of this answer," wrote Macpherson, "I took up the presents and offered them in the name of the Nabob to his Grace's Secretary, Mr. Bradshaw,<sup>3</sup> upon which Mr. Bradshaw said:

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1. I.O.L., H. Misc. S. 110, p. 503.
  2. *ibid.*, p. 505.
  3. Thomas Bradshaw (1733-1774), a man of humble origins who became a clerk in the War Office, where he attracted the notice of Lord Barrington, who in 1761, on becoming Chancellor of the Exchequer, took Bradshaw into the Treasury. He later formed a useful connection with Grafton, who appointed him Secretary of the Treasury in Aug. 1767 (a post he held until Aug. 1770), and also arranged his election as M.P. for Harwich in 1767, which he held until 1768, when he became M.P. for Saltash.

'Sir, Were it my power to shew my respect for the Prince you serve with such affectionate Zeal, he should have every proof of it. You seem to merit my regard, but you'll forfeit it if you insist upon my disgracing the example of the Duke of Grafton.'" 1

That such a greedy man as Bradshaw should have refused handsome presents is amazing, but it is possible that Grafton, fearing a later disclosure of the gifts, prevented his Secretary's acceptance of the jewels, and made him send Macpherson the hypocritical letter. Nonetheless, the Duke did, through Bradshaw, exact untraceable payment from John Macpherson in the form of his services as a journalist, and as a co-adjutor of James Macpherson. This was made evident some years later when John wrote to James in a state of frustration.

"I'll tell you what," he said, "(and that without a complete Joke as the Irish say), unless you do something great for yourself, and unless Administration are more grateful to me, I will carry home all my artillery of Rupees (and I may muster about a Lack<sup>2</sup>), you'll join me with with your artillery of the Quill, and its my humble opinion we have only to conceal the Barbarity of our names to upset the present system. Bradshaw is so mouldable that he, who once led, may like the place of

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1. I.C.L., H. Misc. S. 110, p. 505.

2. A Current Rupee was worth 2/-d; 100,000 Current Rupees = 1 Lakh = £10,000.

our Auxiliary - and it will make damned good fun (at least for Wilkes)  
 1  
 to see the cream coloured Champion and his old friends Pericles and  
Poetikastos take their station under his Wilkes's Banners." 2

There can be no doubt that the press campaign conducted in The Public  
Advertiser in 1769 and 1770 against the Duke's enemies, particularly "Junius"  
 3  
 and Wilkes, was organised by James and John Macpherson under the direction of  
 Bradshaw. According to John, who also carried on his own campaign in the press  
 on behalf of the Nawab, there were no other important defenders of Grafton writing  
 at the time. In a letter to his cousin at Golspie he said:

"I cannot but be a little vain. Could you imagine that during all  
 the political fire and action in this seat of mighty Empire two  
 Macphersons have been the only pillars of Government? So it has been  
 I assure you, and so it still is, but to no Man on Earth do you take  
 notice of this. Under about 40 different Signatures F/i/ng/a/1 and  
 your friend have fought and routed the Seditious Warriors in our  
 political writings here. He is incomparably the first Writer, Satirist,

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1. It was the polemicist "Junius", a vicious attacker of Bradshaw, who called him a "cream-coloured gentleman" (see Junius, ed. John Wade, London, 1850, Vol. 1, p. 442 - "Junius" to the Duke of Grafton, 28 Nov. 1771), and a "cream-coloured Mercury" (ibid., Vol. 2, p. 393 - "Veteran" "Junius" to Lord Barrington, 28 Jan. 1772).
  2. Macpherson MSS./1, 39/8, John Macpherson to Jas. Macpherson, 30 Sept. 1774.
  3. For the career of the mysterious "Junius" see Maclean (1728-1773).

and Drolist in the Nation. I bullied and, through the help of a wild enough fancy, astonished or confounded with ridicule the Enemy. Wilkes was at length obliged to make a new newspaper and sneaked of f the field. All the Essays - that you have read in your Scottish papers that are copied from the London ones - in favour of Government were the work of your friends, but say nothing. Finga1 is not yet provided for. He certainly shall be, but a hint to any one in opposition is dangerous. Tho' I should sink out of the race before the day, if a -----<sup>1</sup> lived to tell little Jock Macpherson that Ian Ruagh M'Vaistir Shoin John the Red (-headed) son of the Old Master (or Minister) has often conferred with the Minister of the Empire and been a successful Advocate for Government in the Capital, it will have some effect upon his Ambition." 2

Allowing, as always, for John Macpherson's distasteful exaggerations, it seems that there was a basis of truth in what he wrote. Insufficient evidence is available at present to identify the "40 different Signatures" which John claimed that he and James had used in 1769, but it is possible to give some of them. John openly admitted that he supported the Nawab's cause by writing

"the Letters in the Publick Advertizer [sic] signed Indianus, A Company's Servant, [which he was not, at the time],

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1. One word illegible. It could be "Nickeay" or "Mickeay" or "Vickeay", none of which resembles any phonetic renderings of any known Gaelic word.
  2. Macpherson MSS./1, 21/4, John Macpherson to Rev. Martin Macpherson of Golspie, dated London, 20 October 1769.

Hindustanus, Intelligence from Authority, and the Letters drafted from Arlington Street where the Minister [Grafton] lived. 1

John further acknowledged, in private letters to James, that he had used "Poetikastos", "Causticus", and "An Old Patriot" as pseudonyms; and to these, from internal evidence in letters published under those signatures, can be added "Philo-Poetikastos", "Poetikastossimos" and "Anti-Gnatho".<sup>3</sup>

James contented himself with fewer noms-de-plume, or so it would seem.

Dealing with James Macpherson's career as a political journalist, Saunders merely said:

"Whether he wrote much or little in this capacity, most of it is buried in obscurity; but we learn that under the signatures of "Musaeus" and "Scaevola" he attempted to reply to the letters of "Junius"." 4

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1. I.O.L., H. Misc. S. 110, p. 510.
  2. Macpherson MSS./1, 39/6 and 39/8, but there are several other refs. in Bundle 39.
  3. Public Advertiser 21.8.1769; 1.9.1769; 12.9.1769 (Philo-Poetikastos); 2.12.1769 (Poetikastossimos); 24.10.1769 (Anti-Gnatho), an unexplained attack on James Boswell - "A Card from the Banks of the Ganges To the Luminary of Auchinleck, the Pencil of Historic Excellence, the Syren Throat of Soul-moving Song, The Emerald of Masquerade, The most celebrated Personage JACOBINI BOSVELLI, from Anti-Gnatho, the meanest Pismire of the Earth and the Obscurest of the Children of Fame." It might have been John Macpherson's manner of supporting Andrew Stuart and his case for the Hamilton faction in the great Douglas Cause.
  4. Saunders, p. 215 (Chalmers's evidence).

No letters have been found signed "Musaeus". Saunders probably meant "Mutius Scaevola", which, with plain "Scaevola", was certainly used as a pseudonym by James, who did not confine the use of "Scaevola" for attacks on "Junius".<sup>1</sup> James's favourite signature seems, from analysis,<sup>2</sup> to have been "Pericles"<sup>3</sup> (or "Birclais"<sup>4</sup> as he was known in his Gaelic correspondence with John), but he was also referred to by John as "Brihone",<sup>5</sup> which is a rough phonetic rendering of the Gaelic for "Judge". No letters have been found signed "Judge", but there are some signed "Justice",<sup>6</sup> which were in support of the ministry. It is, of course, possible that "Brihone"

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1. "Scaevola" was used for attacks on Junius in the Public Advertiser on 12.10.71; 24.10.71; 9.11.71; 18.11.71; 22.11.71; 27.11.71; 5.12.71; 14.12.71; 24.12.71; 31.1.72; and 4.2.72; and "Mucius /sic/ Scaevola" was used for the same purpose on 30.12.71. "Junius" answered only one of these attacks: as "Philo-Junius" on 15.10.71. (see Junius, ed. John Wade, op. cit., Vol. 1. pp. 417-420). "Scaevola" was used for general satire in the Public Advertiser on 23.1.71; and "Mutius Scaevola" was used for general satire and attacks on Lords Chatham and Camden on 29.8.69; 1.2.70; and 13.3.70. In addition to the foregoing, "Scaevola" was used once in the Gazetteer & New Daily Advertiser on 14.8.70 in an attack on the Ministry and its American policy. All other "Scaevola" letters were defences of the Ministry.
  2. See Appendix 2.
  3. Macpherson MSS./1, 4/1 et seq; and 39/1 et seq.
  4. *ibid.*, 4/6 refers to himself as "Birclais"; and 4/13, signs "Piri-claish"; both of which are rough phonetic renderings in Gaelic of "Pericles".
  5. Macpherson MSS./1, 39/1, John to James Macpherson, 19 December 1770.
  6. Pub. Adv., 14.12.69; 26.12.69; 15.1.71; 22.1.71.

stood for a classical judge or lawyer, whose proper name could not be translated into Gaelic without disclosing its origins. A few more signatures could, without

<sup>1</sup>  
proof, be ascribed to both John and James, but until new evidence comes to light

<sup>2</sup>  
the list of provable political pseudonyms must be confined to those already given.

There was, however, one further provable pseudonym which James used to defend his

<sup>3</sup>  
reputation as an historian, and that was "Impartial", and neither he nor John

restricted themselves to pseudonymous writing. They also wrote anonymously, and

1. It is more than possible from indications of style and internal evidence that letters appearing in the Pub. Adv. signed "Silurus" (27.3.69; and 20.9.69); "Jack Razor (shaver to Poetikastos)" (19.9.69); and "Nudjam ad Doula" (21.11.69); are the work of John Macpherson; and that letters in the Pub. Adv. signed "Junius Asiaticus" (pro-Nabob, 28.2.70; 1.5.72., and 5.6.72); "John Bull" (14.6.71); "North Briton" (21.8.71); "Philo-Scaevola" (28.1.72); "Anti-Veridicus" (17.4.72); and "Philo-Mogul" (12.11.72) are the work of James Macpherson.
2. John Macpherson wrote in the Pub. Adv. as "A Company's Servant" (7.6.69; 21.6.69; 6.7.69; 12.7.69); "An Old Patriot" (31.3.69; 11.5.69; 19.5.69; 27.5.69; 18.7.69; 5.8.69; 24.10.69; 25.1.70; 1.2.70; 19.2.70); "Anti-Gnatho" (24.10.69); "Causticus" (15.5.69; 1.6.69; 16.8.69; 30.8.69); "Hindustanus" (22.9.69) /used again in Pub. Adv. after 1777/; "Indianus" (8.3.69; 2.1.70) /used again in Pub. Adv. after 1777/; "Poetikastos" (10.4.69; 22.4.69; 2.5.69; 29.9.69; 11.10.69); "Poetikastossimos" (2.12.69); "Philo-Poetikastos" (21.8.69; 1.9.69; 12.9.69); and he also wrote in the Gaz. & New Daily Adv. as "Indianus" (on 4.12.71). No items signed "Intelligence from Authority" or date-lined at "Arlington Street" have been found in either the Pub. Adv. or Gaz. & New Daily Adv. from 1769 to 1773, although John claimed he had used them. James Macpherson wrote in the Pub. Adv. as "Scaevola" and "Mutius Scaevola" (see p.133 n.1); and as "Pericles" (16.5.69; 24.5.69; 27.5.69; 8.6.69; 16.6.69; 29.6.69; 17.7.69; 1.8.69; 18.8.69; 21.9.69; 29.9.69; 1.11.69; 30.12.69; 22.2.70; 22.3.70; 11.12.71; 27.12.71); and also as "Pericles" in the Gaz. & New Daily Adv. (on 8.12.69).
3. In early 1775 James Macpherson's work entitled Original Papers, containing the Secret History of Great Britain... (see later) was bitterly attacked in St. James' Chronicle by a writer calling himself "A Plain Dealer". As a rejoinder, James Macpherson drafted his own reply, which he sent to his publisher Thomas Cadell (partner of William Strahan), telling him in a covering letter (printed Saunders, p. 230) to "transcribe it carefully, as it would be highly improper anything in commendation of the work should go in the hand of the author". Cadell did as he was asked, and Macpherson's letter in praise of his own work appeared in the St. James' Chronicle under the signature "Impartial" (see Saunders, op. cit. pp/...

under their own full names or initials.

Several chapters would be needed to analyse the views expressed by both the Macphersons in their pseudonymous letters to the newspapers. Even if such a discussion could be justified in a thesis of this nature, it would still be incomplete. If, for instance, Horace Walpole's scathing remark about "Macpherson's daily column of lies" was not an exaggeration, then James Macpherson alone, who was a ministerial journalist for a decade or more, must have produced scores of letters. But, as neither Walpole nor Macpherson gave details about the latter's "column", the probability is that his contributions were anonymous, and therefore untraceable. This means that the only continuous body of the Macphersons' journalism at present available for examination are the 66 letters they produced under provable pseudonyms between 1769 and 1772. Of these, James wrote 34 under 3 signatures, and John wrote

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3. (continued) pp. 230-231, letter printed in full). Malcolm Laing (see his Poems of Ossian, Edin., 1805, Vol. I, p. li.) was convinced that the highly favourable biographical sketch of James Macpherson which was printed in Ruddiman's Weekly Magazine in 1776 was Macpherson's own work. If it was, it was also a near confession, because the writer said "The most rigid critics allowed them [the Fingalian epics] to possess every mark of an exalted genius in the author or translator; whilst many did not hesitate to prefer them to all other poetical compositions, whether ancient or modern." (printed by Smart, p. 158). "Author or translator" - "ancient or modern" are two phrases which require no comment or interpretation.
  1. Horace Walpole to the Countess of Upper Ossory, 7 Jan. 1782 (see The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence, ed. W.S. Lewis, Vol. 33 (1965), p. 320).



32 under 9 signatures.

An analysis of their joint output shows that 42 of their letters were published in 1769, which gives some support to John's claim that he and James wrote "under about 40 different Signatures" in that year. More interesting still is the fact that all but 3 of their total output appeared in the Public Advertiser, which substantiates the frequent claims of both Macphersons that they invariably worked through Henry Sampson Woodfall<sup>1</sup>, the printer and owner of that newspaper.<sup>2</sup> Woodfall was, perhaps, the greatest newspaper proprietor in the second half of the 18th century. As the publisher of the celebrated letters of "Junius" from 1769 to 1772, he was arrested and twice tried for sedition against the State. For certain technical reasons neither of his trials brought a conviction, but they did establish his reputation for being an anti-government printer, which he reinforced shortly

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1. Henry Sampson Woodfall (1739-1805), and his equally celebrated younger brother William "Memory" Woodfall (1746-1803), the owner of the Morning Chronicle, worked in close collaboration. Their lives and their publications deserve to be the subject of a detailed work.
  2. As the Macphersons claimed on more than one occasion that they had invariably worked with Woodfall (e.g. Macpherson MSS./1, 5/2, James to John Macpherson 25 August 1781), the present writer searched through all the volumes of the Public Advertiser from 1.1.1769 to 31.12.1781 for letters signed with their names or initials or provable pseudonyms. The results of this search are given on p. 133 n. 1 (& Appendix 2) and n. 6, and p. 134 ns. 1 and 2. As a further check the present writer then searched through the volumes of the Gaz. & New Daily Adv. and the London Chronicle for the same period, but apart from 3 letters in the former, given on p. 133 n. 1 and p. 134 n. 1 the many letters which appeared in either or both of these newspapers were duplicates of Macpherson letters which had first appeared in the Public Advertiser. The Gazetteer was notorious for this sort of piracy.

afterwards by supporting Wilkes and other City magistrates in their stand against the government over the right to print Parliamentary speeches.<sup>1</sup> Woodfall's anti-government reputation was, however, contradicted not only by his willingness to print letters from all shades of political opinion, but by his long association with the government's "official spokesman", James Macpherson. Nor did Woodfall's ability to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds limit itself to dealings with government or anti-government writers. He also adopted the same policy with opposing groups in the East India Company.

In 1769, however, John Macpherson had little need to worry about any group in England opposing the Nawab. Most politicians, unless they were actively connected with the Company, had probably never heard of either the Nawab or his problems. To stimulate their interest John wrote 6 letters: 4 as "A Company's Servant" (in one of which he tried to fix the blame for the Nawab's distress on the former Governor of Madras, the moderate Robert Palk); 1 as "Indianus"; and 1 as "Hindustanus". The other 21 letters which John published in 1769 were all

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1. For Woodfall's trials on charges arising out of the publication of the "Junius" letters, and for his stand on the liberty of the press with Wilkes and others, see Maclean's (1728-1773), pp. 328-331. See also: Peter G.D. Thomas, The Beginning of Parliamentary Reporting in Newspapers, 1768-1774, in E.H.R., Vol. 74, (1959), pp. 623-636.

concerned with non-Indian topics. Of these, he wrote 9 as "Poetikastos" (or similar supporting signatures) against the mighty "Junius", whom he inferred was Edmund Burke; <sup>1</sup> 7 as "An Old Patriot" against John Wilkes; and 4 as "Causticus" on a variety of subjects, which included sneering assaults on "Malagrida", as Lord Shelburne was known by his opponents, and on the supporters of Wilkes in the City of London. The last were derided as "The Dunghillian Patriots", and the tone of John's journalism can be gauged by the conclusion to his attack. "I would not, <sup>2</sup> "offend your Worships for all the Hogs Lard, Giblets and Dross in your Possession."

James Macpherson's output in 1769 consisted of 15 (mostly very long) letters: 14 as "Pericles" and 1 as "Mutius Scaevola"; all of which were either defences of Grafton and ministerial policies or, as in the case of John, attacks on the ministry's opponents. John Wilkes was the main target, but "Junius", Edmund Burke,

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1. Pub. Adv. 2.12.1769 - "POETIKASTOSSIMOS TO Mr. E----- B-----, alias A.B. /the initials of a frequent contributor to the Pub. Adv. 7, alias PHILO JUNIUS, and vulgarly JUNIUS, his own self." Alvar Ellegård in Who was Junius? (Gothenburg, 1962), pp.25-26, gives a long list of attacks in the press which insinuated that Edmund Burke was "Junius". Burke, however, was a very unlikely candidate.

2. Pub. Adv., 30.8.1769.

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Lords Chatham and Shelburne, Sir George Colebrooke, and even Alexander Wedderburn and his friend Lord Bute received several broadsides as well. As examples of James's journalism are not readily available in any printed source, the following satire he wrote as "Pericles" might serve as a typical illustration of his style:

"I have two very respectable Bodies just now in my eye, whose Petitions must have very great weight with the Sovereign. The Affluence and Independence of the Borough of Gatton, and the Extent, Populousness and Great Commerce of Old Sarum, have deservedly placed those Cities very high in the Catalogue of Parliamentary Constituents. The Magistrates of the former consist of true Hearts of Oak, and the Common Council are not of much inferior Wood. <sup>2</sup> Horned Cattle range not more at large through Cheapside than they do through the lanes of G-tt-n; and it has one advantage over the Capital, that it is completely surrounded with a Wall. Shakespeare calls Great Britain Neptune's Pack; G-tt-n may, with less Fiction, be called Sir George Sweetshop's Enclosure. So pure is the Borough of Old Sarum, and so great an Enemy to Corruption, that it has not for a Century back kindled a Fire, excepting upon an

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1. Sir George Colebrooke, Bart. (1729-1809), of Gatton Manor, Surrey, the ownership of which carried with it the control of one of the two seats in Parliament for Gatton. He was a partner in banking houses in London and Dublin, and a proprietor in the East India Company. He first became involved in Company affairs as a supporter of Lord Clive and a rival of Laurence Sullivan in 1764. He was elected a director in 1767; was deputy-chairman 1768-69; and chairman in 1769, 1770 and 1772 (in a coalition with his former rival Sullivan). He was M.P. for Arundel, 1754-1774.
  2. Cf. "Junius" to Henry Sampson Woodfall, 19 Jan. 1773 (printed Junius, ed. Wade, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 60).

Election Day; for fear of staining its bright reputation with smok. In compliance with an old custom recorded in some misty Acts of Parliament, a few Pots are boiled at the Septennial Jubilee, which is kept there under an old Tree. This was formerly a city of Imperial Extent; but it is now reduced to the moderate compass of half a dozen Acres of plowed land; nunc seges ubi Troja fuit.

This piece of manured Ground has a Cart-load of Grievances. The robust Mr. Thomas Pitt, with true Georgical Genius, has extracted the essence out of this corrupted Compost of the oppressions of Old Sarum, inclosing it in a sheepskin, and will carry it next week to St. James's. The smell (so hope the strong-limbed Patriots) will prove so oppressive to the D[uke] of G[rafton] that he will be forced to leave the Treasury to the elegant Orator Mr. George Grenville." 2

There is nothing remarkable about either James or John Macpherson's journalism, with all their hypocritical jibes at corruption and their coarse allusions to dunghills and manure heaps. Most of the journalists of this period, even if they were outstanding writers, resorted to spiteful, almost childish, satire for attacks on their own or their patrons' enemies. In the bear garden of 18th century politics

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1. Thomas Pitt (1737-1793) of Bocomoc, Cornwall. M.P. for Old Sarum 1761-68, and 1775-84; and for Okehampton 1768-74.
  2. Pub. Adv. 1.11.1769. Cf. John Wilkes to "Junius", 12 Sept. 1771 (printed Junius, ed. Wade, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 85) in which Wilkes takes the same line as "Pericles" on the boroughs of Old Sarum and Gatton. "Junius" in his reply of 18 Sept. 1771 rejected Wilkes's views (ibid., Vol. 2, p. 91.).

wallowing in drumly waters was the rule, not the exception. What seems worse was the willingness of both the Macphersons to use the mask of pseudonymity for assaults on such men as Bute and Shelburne, who had not only acted or had been willing to act as patrons, but were to be counted on for support in the future. The reason for such treachery was, quite simply, that in the immediate circumstances Bradshaw and his master, Grafton, offered the best (and possibly only) hope ~~at the~~ ~~time~~ of preferment, and other rewards.

It was John Macpherson who apparently opened the newspaper campaign on behalf of Grafton by appearing at the end of March 1769 as "An Old Patriot"<sup>1</sup>. Six weeks later - in mid-May - James added his weight for the first time as "Pericles"<sup>2</sup>. By 10th June, John at least had already been rewarded for his work, as a letter he sent to his cousin at Golspie on that date shows. He wrote:

"Ever since my arrival here [in London] I have enjoyed perfect health, and succeeded in my applications so far as to gain a favourable reception from the Minis~~te~~<sup>r</sup>, and from a pretty close connection with him and his Secretary. I was too late for returning to India the season I came from

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1. Pub. Adv., 31.3.1769. John Macpherson's first known appearance in the Pub. Adv. was on 8.3.1769 on behalf of the Nawab as "Indianus".

2. Pub. Adv., 16.5.1769.

there, tho' I had the satisfaction to see that Grafton, the Minister, applied for me to the Directors, without my signifying that I should be happy if he did so. My intention now is to go in November next, and I should hope from various circumstances that if men can be depended on, there will be no difficulty in effecting that [situation] agreeable to my mind." 1

As events will prove, John Macpherson made no false claims in this statement.

Although the Company and the government were on very bad terms, the former, on the recommendation of the head of the latter, were actually considering John for a post in their service in Madras. It was a puzzling, almost incredible situation, but only one of many in which both the Macphersons were becoming involved. Partial explanations for some of their involvements were recorded in letters they exchanged between 1770 and 1773, but the whole truth about their activities will probably never be known. With the weak and inefficient Grafton at the head of the government the Macphersons faced the prospect of re-establishing themselves under new patrons in the not-too-distant future. As neither they nor anyone else could have predicted who would follow Grafton, it is obvious that they decided to safeguard their interests by dealing with as wide a range of people as possible, even if some of

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1. Macpherson MSS./1, 21/3, John Macpherson to Rev. Martin Macpherson of Golspie, 10 June 1769. It is stated in Alex. Mackenzie's History of the Macleods, op. cit., p. 251, that "John was groomsman at his grandfather Donald Macleod of Bernera's third marriage, in 1768, to Margaret Macleod of Greshornish." John's letters to his cousin Martin Macpherson (Macpherson MSS./1, 21/2 - 21/6) prove that he was not in Scotland in 1768 or 1769 or 1770. It must have been John's brother, Martin Macpherson, of Sleat, who acted as a groomsman at the wedding of "The Old Trojan".

these people were in conflict. They did not even neglect their local connections in Scotland. Continuing his letter to his cousin at Golspie, John wrote:

"My uncle Alexander Macleod<sup>1</sup> is just arrived. We are greater friends than ever. He has made a good voyage, and is upon the whole no unrespectable man.

You would hear of my treatment from Norman<sup>2</sup> Macleod of Macleod. Things may be well yet. The Sleat Baronet, of all Fools and Misers the completest, has used me more absurdly; for my asking a Tack of his farm for my brother Martin of Sleat, and some other such favours, for which I allowed him to have whatsoever he chose to demand. The Macdonalds of Badenoch, and those of Sleat whom Martin offended, told the Knight of Baronet, it seems, that I wanted to impose on him. He believed them and wrote me a most impertinent, foolish letter, which I answered as every Gentleman would do when falsely accused of a low design. I have not heard from him since, but he is constantly exposing himself by complaining of my pride, and impatience of advice from a person of his Rank! ...

1. I.O.L., Court Book 78, p. 63, 8 June 1769 - "Capt. Alexander Macleod of the Lord Mansfield in Margate Roads the 31st ultimo, and in Lee Roads the 1st and 3rd inst." And *ibid.*, p. 135, 28 July 1769 - "The request of Capt. Alexander Macleod for permission to resign the Command of the Ship Lord Mansfield." John Macpherson had originally intended to make the round trip to China with Alex. Macleod, but had left the ship at Bombay. Macleod had just completed this voyage, the last he ever made.
2. "The Sleat Baronet" was Sir Alexander Macdonald of Macdonald and Sleat, Bart., (d. 1795), who had succeeded his brother in 1766 as High Chief of all Clan Donald and as The Macdonald of the Isles. He was created Baron Macdonald of Slate, Co. Antrim in 1776. The Macphersons in Sleat had been vassals of the Macdonalds for many generations. John Macpherson, as brother of a tacksman, was certainly acting in a very arrogant manner towards his brother's landlord. The power of the Macdonalds had been considerably diminished, but the representative of the once mighty Lords of the Isles, whatever his failings, was still a Highlander of the very first rank.



For any-sake write me the real situation of your Affairs, or whether I could possibly turn a stone to serve you. Any kirks that are in the King's Gift I think I would be able to secure you; and Ld. Fife will give me any one of his presentations except the old Town kirk, which is engaged. ... No ships are yet arrived from Madras, so that I have no letters from Dony. ... What is <sup>1</sup> [your son] Jock doing? Is he in School, or do you trace more of the Ostaig Rollichan in him? I have a small ring for <sup>2</sup> [your wife] The White Hand. Mention to me the properest conveyance for sending it.

My friend Jo. Hume <sup>3</sup> [sic] has got a good addition to his Salary by selling his Conservatorship. Pray mention to me about my old friend George, your brother. 4

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1. Letters from John to Martin Macpherson of Golspie (Macpherson MSS./1, 21/1 to 21/6) identify "Dony" as Ensign (later Colonel) Donald Macleod of Achnagoyle, the son of the Rev. Alexander Macleod, minister of St. Kilda 1743-55, by his wife Barbara, sister of the Rev. Martin Macpherson of Golspie. As the close friend of his second cousin John Macpherson, young Ensign Macleod probably sent the latter useful news from Madras in Lord Mansfield late 1769. As Colonel Macleod, Donald bought the island of St. Kilda from Alexander Hume Macleod, the eldest son of Capt. Alexander Macleod of the Lord Mansfield, in 1804. Donald's eldest son, Sir John Macpherson Macleod, K.C.S.I., of Glendale in Skye, was named after John Macpherson (see Hist. of the Macleods, op. cit., pp. 181, & 261.).
  2. John often called himself "Rollichan", meaning "a wild or defiant fellow" (Skye Gaelic 'slang'). Ostaig was, of course, his birthplace. It was his way of asking if young Jock Macpherson was "a chip off the old block".
  3. John Home had obtained the sinecure of Conservator of Scots Privileges at Campvere from Lord Bute. He resigned the office (but not the salary) for an annual fee to a Scottish merchant in Rotterdam named Patrick Crauford; knighted 1777, M.P. for Arundel 1780-81. According to Henry Mackenzie's Life of Home, op. cit., p. 52, Home resigned his sinecure in 1770; according to Sir Lewis Namier (quoting from the Bute MSS. in his article in House of Commons 1754-90, Vol. 2, p. 274) Crauford obtained the Conservatorship from Bute in 1760. John Macpherson records the transfer in 1769.
  4. Martin Macpherson of Golspie had no brothers. John used brother in the 18th cent. manner to mean "brother-in-law", and was referring to the "White Hand's brother..George" (see Macpherson MSS./1, 21/2); namely George Gordon, of Gordonbush, Sutherland.

Would a recommendation to Hume, while he is in England, or to Dr. Robinson  
 [sic]<sup>1</sup> or Ferguson serve him from me. My Dearest Cousin - Fingal is come in.  
 He wants to be remembered to you. I am obliged to break off till next  
 week, when you shall hear further." 2

Although constantly engaged with James Macpherson at this period in writing  
 pro-ministry letters to the Public Advertiser, John apparently saw either Grafton  
 or Bradshaw about the Nawab's affairs on several occasions. In the "Memorial" he  
 prepared at a later date, John gave a lengthy account of his negotiations on this  
 subject, but, as evidence, it is probably more valuable as a guide to his aims rather  
 than as a report on his actual achievements. His main claim, for instance, was his  
 boast that he had brought about

"an Act of Parliament limiting the power of the Company's Servants, and  
 making it a crime in them against the State to interfere with the Government  
 and Succession of the Indian Princes in treaty with the Company, and...to  
 make this Act particularly relative to the Nabob and his posterity." 4

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1. "Dr. Robinson" was Dr. William Robertson, Principal of Edinburgh University. Both the Macphersons frequently mis-spelled Robertson's surname.
  2. Macpherson MSS./1, 21/3, op. cit., 10 June 1769.
  3. I.O.L., H. Misc. S. 110, p. 508, John Macpherson had interviews at the Treasury on 16 May, 30 May, 17 June, 7 July, 27 Sept., 30 Sept., 19 Oct., 17 Nov., in 1769; and 13 Jan., and 9 Feb. in 1770.
  4. *ibid.*, p. 507.

No such Act of Parliament was ever passed, but John Macpherson had raised for the first time an issue which was to become yet another grievance of the Nawab: his claim to nominate his successor as ruler of the Carnatic, and his well grounded fears that attempts might be made to frustrate his wishes. John also stated in his "Memorial" that he was the first to bring to the general public's notice the recognition given to the Nawab under the 11th article of the Treaty of Paris. His assertion was supported by a letter signed "A Company's Servant" in the Public Advertiser on 21st June 1769, in which he not only dwelt at some length on the status of the Nawab and the causes of his financial predicament, but also stressed that as the Nawab was an "ally of the British Crown, and personally respected by the best of K<sup>ing</sup>s, a private Company should, therefore, be cautious how they treat him; considering their present Dependence on Government." Conscious perhaps of his imminent employment by the Company he was threatening, John concluded his letter on a note of flattery and expressed his confidence in the good sense of the Directors of the Company.

The Company, determined to stop the government putting their house in order,

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had already decided to do it themselves by forming a Commission of Supervisors,<sup>1</sup>  
 led by a staunch "Company man" Henry Vansittart,<sup>2</sup> a former Governor of Bengal, and  
 this was to go out to India to enquire into alleged abuses and corruption in the  
 Presidencies. The government, on its part, was by various means seeking to  
 strengthen its influence over the affairs of the Company. Apart from having a  
 voice in the composition of the Commission of Supervisors, it had given secret  
 orders to Lord Weymouth,<sup>3</sup> the Secretary of State, for the appointment of a naval  
 officer,<sup>4</sup> Sir John Lindsay, as Plenipotentiary to the Durbar (or Court) of the Nawab  
 of Arcot. John Macpherson inferred in his "Memorial" that he had been the

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1. See Sutherland, pp. 195-198.
  2. Henry Vansittart (1732-c.1770), 3rd son of Arthur Vansittart, of Shottesbrook, Berks., of a Dutch family recently resident in Germany. He joined the Company in 1746; became a member of the Madras Council 1756; and was Gov. of Bengal 1760-1764. He was M.P. for Reading from 1768 until his death (or presumed death). Having suffered heavy losses in the India Stock crash of April 1769 he jumped at the chance to go out to India as a Supervisor.
  3. Thomas Thynne, 3rd Viscount Weymouth (1734-1796), later (1789) 1st Marquess of Bath. A member of the "Bloomsbury Gang", the diehard group led by the Duke of Bedford, by whose influence Weymouth became (1) in Jan. 1768, Sec. of State for the Northern Dept.; and (2) in Oct. 1768, Sec. of State for the Southern Dept. where he remained until Dec. 1770. Lord Shelburne had been ousted from the Southern Dept. by Weymouth.
  4. Sir John Lindsay (1737-1788), yr. son of Sir Alexander Lindsay of Evelick in Perthshire, by his wife Emilia, sister of William Murray, 1st Earl of Mansfield. Lindsay was knighted 1762; appointed Commodore in the East Indies in August 1769; and Admiral and C. in C. at Madras in March 1771, when he was invested with the red ribbon of the Order of the Bath by the Nawab, acting on behalf of the King.

inspiration for this important government decision, which by-passed the Company's authority, and gave the Nawab the prestige of diplomatic recognition and a weapon to use against the Company. When he later wrote of his dealings in 1769 with Lindsay, the Plenipotentiary-designate, John talked of:

"My going to Sir John Lindsay at his house in Bentin<sup>n</sup>ck Street at the time he was getting his secret Commission, and my recommending to him then and thereafter by Letter in a warm manner, the support of the Nabob; and my urging him to wait of the Duke of Grafton to get a more enlarged Commission. Sir John's answer to me upon this occasion was much in the style of a Gentleman and Minister. He said:

'he would disinterestedly support the Nabob according to his powers from his Master, that his Commission came immediately through Lord Weymouth, the Secretary of State, and that he would wait of the Duke of Grafton out of the compliment due to the Minister'.

This might be one cause why his Grace said only to him when he did wait:

'Take care the Servants of the Company do not make war to the prejudice of the State and its allies for their own emolument.' ...

To this I will add the steps I took in London to procure the Nabob a security against the Supervisors, by endeavouring to find out Mr. Vansittart's intentions under his own hand. This I did in a manner I cannot publicly explain. Mr. Vansittart's Letter will show this, and the use to which I turned it for the Nabob." 1

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1. I.O.L., H. Misc. S. 110, pp. 508-509.

By the time this statement was made Lindsay for certain reasons, which will be explained later, would neither confirm nor deny John Macpherson's assertions; and Henry Vansittart had disappeared, never to be heard of again. All it does show, if it is accepted as the truth, is that John, not knowing the details of the orders to the Plenipotentiary or the Supervisors, had done his best to find out. It is more than possible that John Macpherson's representations on behalf of the Nawab put the idea of appointing a Plenipotentiary in Grafton or Weymouth's head - and in this respect John's mission could be said to have had an important result - but John certainly did not know any details of the secret orders issued to Lindsay while he was still in London. It was not until 14th November 1770 that James, in a letter to John wrote: "You, by this time, know the nature of the Commission sent out to Sir John Lindsay," which is sure proof that John had only vague knowledge on the subject in 1769. At this stage in their careers both John and James, especially the latter, had a certain insight into confidential matters affecting the ministry, or they would not have been able to discharge their duties as ministerial

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1. For Lindsay's secret orders from Weymouth see I.O.L., Cleveland (Ohio) Pub. Lib. MSS., Microfilm Wf. 091.92-L645L, Roll 19.

2. Macpherson MSS./1, 4/3, James to John Macpherson, 14 Nov. 1770.

journalists, but, they were never, it would seem, allowed to know too much. Bradshaw<sup>1</sup> was their main source of information, but another seems to have been Robert Wood, the under-secretary in Lord Weymouth's department. When John brought home Commodore Watson's despatches on the Malabar victory he thought he was going to deliver them to the Earl of Shelburne, but finding him replaced by Weymouth probably handed them in to Wood and thereby established the connection. Wood was a dubious character, who was rumoured to conduct foreign affairs to suit his own jobbing interests. How much he helped the Macphersons cannot be judged, but, along with Bradshaw, he was certainly entangled in some of their manoeuvres.<sup>2</sup>

John Macpherson never disclosed how much he learnt about Henry Vansittart's intentions as a Supervisor in the manoeuvre he could not "publicly explain"; nor

1. Robert Wood (c. 1717-1771), of Putney Surrey. A lawyer and explorer who, as tutor to the Duke of Bridgwater in the 1750's, attracted the attention of the latter's guardian, the Duke of Bedford. In 1761 he was elected M.P. for Brackley, which he held until his death. As a faithful supporter of the Bedford group he was appointed under-Secretary of State to Weymouth in January 1768, and resigned his post when Weymouth went out in December 1770. He had previously been under-Secretary of State from 1756-63; having been appointed by William Pitt on the recommendation of Sir Richard Lyttelton (1718-1770), whose wife was the daughter of a Bedford and a widow of a Bridgwater. It was in this first period as under-Secretary that Wood became well-known as the man who seized John Wilkes's papers on a "general warrant", and was fined £1,000 for doing so in December 1763. For Wood see: A.F. Basil Williams, Carteret and Newcastle: a contrast<sup>70</sup> contemporaries, Cambridge, 1943.
2. Macpherson MSS./1, 39/1, John to James Macpherson, 19 December 1770. Unaware that both Weymouth and Wood were just resigning from their respective offices, John asked James to "keep a good look out at Maistir Coille's at Weym--h's office - all may be well." "Maistir Coille" is Gaelic for "Mister Wood".

did he ever say anything more about "Mr. Vansittart's Letter", which he had turned to the Nawab's advantage. He did, however, address the Supervisors in the Public Advertiser on 6th July 1769 under his still inaccurate signature, "A Company's Servant". After reciting the by now familiar catalogue of the Nawab's complaints, John implored the Supervisors to investigate the misconduct of the Governor and Council of Madras, whose treatment of the Nawab was deplored. This brought a sharp reply from "Ganges", who defended Du Pré<sup>1</sup> and Hastings<sup>2</sup> for a reason that is not clear, for neither man had succeeded to the posts in Madras that "Ganges" named. John's reply<sup>4</sup> ignored the people mentioned by "Ganges", but put forward for the first time an argument which became, over the next few years, a stock line with all those who espoused the Nawab of Arcot's interest. This was the menace of the French in the Carnatic.

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1. Pub. Adv. 10.7.1769. "Ganges".
  2. Josias Du Pré (1721-?1780), was not appointed Governor of Madras until Jan. 1770.
  3. Warren Hastings (1732-1818), the son of a feckless clergyman, Rev. Penyston Hastings, first went out to India as a Writer in 1750. He took his seat as Third Member of the Council of Madras on 4th September 1769, the day after he arrived back in India after a spell in England; and he did not become Du Pré's deputy and Second of Council until the day Du Pré took office as Governor; 31 Jan. 1770. Whoever "Ganges" was (and it could have been John Macpherson pretending to take the other side in order to keep the issue alive) he did not know much about the inner decisions made by the Company; or he knew too much and deliberately distorted facts.
  4. Pub. Adv., 12.7.1769. "A Company's Servant".



In what seemed a deliberate attempt to play on people's anxiety, John pointed out that if the British continued to abuse the Nawab's position or made no effort to settle the problem of his debts, then he might be driven into an alliance with the French, or the French might take advantage of the rift between the Company and the Nawab to storm the Carnatic with the aid of allies such as Haider Ali of Mysore. John stressed, of course, that the Nawab was an honourable man and had not even mentioned any alliance with the French, but if the British did not honour him as an ally, then who could blame him if he considered other powers as potential friends? With memories of how rumours caused by Haider Ali's aggression in the Carnatic had brought about a collapse of Indian Stock a few months earlier, those with financial interests in the Company were more likely to heed this warning than they were to take notice of even the finest satire. Professional politicians or political journalists constantly try to hammer home a point by either flattering the public or playing on its fears. In shifting his ground from attacks on personalities to insinuations about the Nawab's capacity to reduce British influence and trade, John began to display the attitude of a professional.

He was also beginning to shift his ground in another quarter. From the letter he sent to his cousin Martin Macpherson of Golspie in June 1769 it was apparent that John had tried to persuade both Sir Alexander Macdonald of Macdonald

and Norman Macleod of Macleod, the two landowners of Skye, to let him have a tack of some land in the island.<sup>1</sup> Having been coldly rebuffed by the haughty and wealthy Macdonald chief, John (whose maternal grandmother was a Macleod of Macleod) concentrated his attention on his debt-ridden kinsman, the Macleod chief, who had just returned to Skye after a period of residence in Edinburgh.<sup>2</sup> John knew that no landlord, not even the financially reckless Macleod chief, would grant a tack to a man who might be overseas for several years, so, when he wrote to Macleod of Macleod at the end of August 1769<sup>3</sup> he asked if he could purchase the tack of the small estate of Lyndale, north of Portree, for the benefit of his brother Martin Macpherson, the minister of Sleat. From this it seems obvious that John was trying to lay down some "insurance" for his uncertain future. If his post as a Company's servant was not confirmed, then he had a tack to fall back on as a livelihood. If the post was confirmed, and he went out to India, then his brother Martin was on the spot in Skye to look after his land, and to draw the benefits from it. John, who regarded Martin with a mixture of affection and

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1. Macpherson MSS./1, 21/3, (see above, p. 143).

2. For Macleod of Macleod's debts see I.F. Grant's The Macleods, op. cit., pp. 484-498.

3. Macleod Muniments Room, Dunvegan Castle, Box 56-B (Corres. 1700-1769).

contempt, was not simply motivated by brotherly love; and this is proved by his request to be named as the tacksman in all the documents. When Macleod of Macleod, a poor correspondent, did not reply, John wrote again on 9th September 1769, as follows:

"I did myself the pleasure of writing you about a fortnight ago under <sup>1</sup> cover to Mr. Macdonald of Breakish. Either he or my brother have, I suppose, waited of you with the letter, and as I left it entirely to your own goodness to grant its request I have no doubt but things are properly adjusted. ... It has been always my Idea, and more so since I have attended to the political constitution of this Country, that a Highland Chief at the head of a numerous Clan and a moderate income is a respectable man in the State." <sup>2</sup>

After more flattery, and a very lengthy account of the general political situation (which could be found in any newspaper), John concluded:

"I did not see <sup>3</sup> [your grandson] Norman when he was in Town, tho' I waited at his lodgings a long time. He was at Vauxhall. He behaved well.

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1. John Macdonald of Breakish (near Broadford in the south of Skye), a cadet of Macdonald of Macdonald and Sleat, was married to John Macpherson's maternal aunt, Sibella Macleod (of Bernera). John Macdonald was one of the Skyemen who had recited Gaelic poetry to James Macpherson in 1760 (see: Rep. Cttee. Highland Soc., App. 1, pp. 11912, Rev. Dr. John Macpherson to Rev. Dr. Hugh Blair, 27 November 1763).
  2. Macleod Muniments Room, Dunvegan Castle, Box 56-B.
  3. Norman Macleod of Macleod (1744-1801), succeeded his grandfather Norman as Chief in 1772, and eventually rose to be a Major-General in the East India Company's army.

I do not recollect anything farther to amuse you, but I'll send you  
 the newspapers. Pray, if you are with your Black Doctor Ebst,<sup>1</sup> please  
 make him my kindest respects. He wrote me some time ago, and said he  
 confided entirely in your goodness. I am confident he will have no  
 reason to resent [sic] often esteeming you the friend of a merry<sup>2</sup>  
 unavaritious [sic] man. Let not poor Sandy Morison fare worse than  
 his neighbours - he is strongly attached to you.<sup>3</sup>"

Macleod of Macleod took some time to make up his mind about Macpherson's  
 request. In the period of waiting for the decisions of the Macleod chief on the  
 tack and the Company on his appointment, John Macpherson continued to occupy his  
 time with letters to the press, mostly in support of general satires published by  
 James. On 22nd September, however, John made his solitary appearance as "Hindostanus"  
 in the Public Advertiser, when he made an impassioned "Appeal to the Commission

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1. Dr. I.F. Grant has suggested that this doctor at Ebst was either Dr. Alexander Macaulay (of whom later), or Dr. John Maclean of Cuidreach, a renowned Jacobite, whose 7th son, Sir Lachlan Maclean, M.D. (1760-1843) was a surgeon to the Prince Regent. John Macpherson's maternal aunt, Margaret Macleod, was the wife of Dr. John Maclean of Cuidreach. From John Macpherson's Account Book (Macpherson MSS./1, 82/1) it would seem that he was helping two of Dr. John Maclean's sons, George and Hector, who were in India in 1781, with small loans.
  2. Alexander Morison (fl. 1759-1801), a tenant of Macleod of Macleod at Skinnadin in Skye, and a captain with a loyalist regiment during the American War of Independence, after which he returned to Scotland and settled at Greenock. In 1760 James Macpherson stayed a night with Morison on his tour of the Highlands, and later, about 1780, he received from Morison the fragment of a genuine Gaelic poem called Address to the Sun, (see Rep. Cttee. Highland Soc., App. XIII, p. 175 et seq). John Macpherson did his best to obtain appointments for Morison's sons, one of whom was killed at Tanjore (see Macpherson MSS./1, 21/5 and 21/6).
  3. Macleod Muniments Room, Dunvegan Castle, Box 56-B.

[of Supervisors] on the eve of its setting out for India to investigate the Conduct of Company Servants in Asia", which he concluded by recommending that

"the unjust Accounts brought against him [the Nawab] for the Expences of a War in which his Country has been involved, be a Ground of Impeachment against the very being of the India Company".

On 2nd October 1769 the ill-fated Aurora, with Vansittart and his fellow Supervisors on board, set sail from Spithead for the East Indies.<sup>1</sup> The day before, Sir John Lindsay, the Plenipotentiary to the Nawab, had set sail from the same place in the Hawke.<sup>2</sup> On 6th October, the treacherous "Hindustanus" received the reward he did not deserve, when the Court of Directors met in Leadenhall Street and appointed John Macpherson a Writer in the Company's service at Fort St. George, Madras.<sup>3</sup> Nearly three weeks later securities for £500 were lodged with the Company on John's behalf by "Alexander Macpherson, of Craven Street in the Strand, Esq<sup>r</sup>," and Samuel Hannay, of Fenchurch Street, merchant."<sup>4</sup> In the same month Alexander Macpherson<sup>5</sup>

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1. Gaz. & New Daily Adv., 10.10.1769.

2. ibid., loc. cit.

3. I.O.L., Court Book 78, p. 257, 6 Oct. 1769.

4. Alexander Macpherson (1725-1788), 2nd son of John Macpherson of Banchor, and younger brother of Andrew Macpherson of Banchor (a cadet of Cluny-Macpherson), and a friend of both John and James Macpherson and Adam Ferguson (see E.U.L. MSS., Dc. 1.77).

5. Samuel Hannay (c. 1742-1790), 2nd son of William Hannay of Kirkdale, Kirkcudbrightshire, was a pharmacist turned merchant. In 1783 he established his claim to a baronetcy which had been dormant since 1689. His brothers, Alexander, Ramsay and Johnston Hannay, were all close friends of the two Macphersons.

6. I.O.L., Court Book 78, p. 276, 25 Oct. 1769.

was engaged in a manoeuvre with James Macpherson which concerned another Scot, whose future was to become enmeshed with John's in Indian affairs. This was John

1  
Stewart, a candidate for the post of Secretary of the Royal Society of Arts.

The details of the scandalous but unsuccessful attempt to force the election of John Stewart as Secretary, by packing the Society with new members who had agreed to support Stewart, has been fully recorded. The part played in the scandal by

2  
Alexander and James Macpherson was small: they merely applied to be members on 11th October 1769, but the name of their proposer was significant. It was Laurence

3  
Sullivan, a director of the East India Company, and one of its most able leaders.

4  
Under the sponsorship of Sullivan, or his associates, 55 of the 75 newly proposed

1. John Stewart (d. 1778), was the son of James Stewart, an attorney of the Exchequer in Edinburgh, who died in 1772. John Stewart was a well travelled adventurer and linguist, who had probably served in the army in America and the West Indies in the Seven Years' War. After a spell as a debtor in the King's Bench Prison in 1765 he was employed by Lord Shelburne, who sent him as a secret agent to Corsica in 1768.
2. See D.G.C. Allan's The Contest for the Secretaryship, 1769-70 (Studies in the Society's Archives XXXVI) in, Journal of the Royal Society of Arts, 1964/65, and Maclean (1728-1773), pp. 243-244.
3. Laurence Sullivan (c. 1713-1786), a native of Co. Cork; parentage unknown. He was a director of the E.I. Co. 1755-58; 64-65; 69-70; 71-72; 78-80; 83-86; dep. chairman 1763-64; 72-73; 80-81; and chairman 1758-59; 60-62; 81-82. He was also M.P. for Taunton 1762-68; and for Ashburton 1768-74.
4. R.S.A. MSS., Subscription Books and Minutes (1769). The list of members proposed by Sullivan, or his associates Maclean, Kellet and Lane, included: "Alex<sup>r</sup> Macpherson Esq<sup>r</sup>, Craven St.; James Macpherson Esq<sup>r</sup>, Queen St., Golden Sq.; Geo.<sup>e</sup> Johnstone Esq<sup>r</sup> Burlington St.; Ramsay Hannay Esq<sup>r</sup> Philpot Lane; Mr. Tho.<sup>s</sup> Bell, Broker, Aldermanbury [brother-in-law of Dr. Alexander Carlyle]; Pat.<sup>k</sup> Geo.<sup>e</sup> Crauford Esq<sup>r</sup> Nassau St; Mr. John Hunter, Surgeon, Jermyn St.; Robert Mayne Esq<sup>r</sup>, Marlborough St.; William Macintosh Esq<sup>r</sup>, Henrietta St.; Covent Garden; Hugh Macaulay Boyd Esq<sup>r</sup> Gt. Marlborough St.;" and many other immediate or future associates of John Macpherson.

members of the Society had agreed to support Stewart's nomination for the post of Secretary; and many of the 55 were Scotsmen connected with either politics or politicians. Mustering the support for Stewart was the devious Ulster-Scottish

1  
adventurer Lauchlin Macleane, the M.P. sitting in Sir George Colebrooke's interest at Arundel, but the associate of Colebrooke's rival Sullivan, who, with Lord Shelburne and others, had been entangled with Macleane in the India Stock disaster at the beginning of the year. A few years were to elapse before the Macphersons became intimately connected with John Stewart and Lauchlin Macleane, but it is probable that in 1769 James Macpherson gained some knowledge of East Indian affairs from John Stewart, who had also tried but failed to obtain the post of Secretary to the

2  
Commission of Supervisors. As a henchman of the well-informed Lauchlin Macleane, Stewart must have possessed a great deal of inside information on the Company, which if passed on to James or John Macpherson, could have supplied the bases for some of their pseudonymous letters to the press. Along with the majority of the newly proposed candidates for membership of the Society, Alexander and James Macpherson

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1. Lauchlin Macleane (c. 1728-c.1778), an Irish-born cadet of the Macleans of Coll. For his career see Macleane (1728-1773) and Macleane (1773-1778).
  2. See The Corres. of Edmund Burke Vol. 2., 1768-1774, ed. Lucy S. Sutherland, 1960, p. 35, n. 2.

were rejected, and Stewart lost the support necessary for his election. The whole affair gave English journalists the opportunity to indulge in their favourite sport of highlighting the iniquities of the Scots; and James Macpherson, for a change, found himself on the receiving end of a satirist's wit. From the Macphersons' point of view this ridicule was probably a small price to pay for chance they had had to enlarge their range of contacts in the political world.

On 20th October 1769, John Macpherson suddenly recalled that he had neglected his cousin Martin at Golspie, who had been promised a letter "next week" in June. To make up for his forgetfulness he therefore sent the following interesting letter to Martin Macpherson:

"My Dearest Cousin: What must you think of me and my silence by this time, when you was so displeas'd in your last letter. Were I silent now that I have obtained my appointment for India and advanced the interest of my good friend the N<sup>a</sup>wab, you might with reason blame me, and show the impropriety of my negligence. But little do you know, my dear Parson, of the Situation of a man in anxiety and suspense, of dependence; when you would construe his silence into anything but the impossibility of satisfying the inquisitive disposition of a passionate friend.

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1. A typical anti-Scottish anti-Stewart-supporters satire appeared on 2.10.1769 in Gaz. & New Daily Adv. Addressed by an anonymous writer to "The Members of the Society of Arts" it began: "Gentlemen: We the Mac Johnstones, Mac Stewarts, Mac Phersons, Mac Murrays, and all the rest of the Macs of North Britain, intend giving your Society two guineas a piece, to be immediately balloted members of your Society, that we may chuse for you a new Secretary out of one of ourselves."



You are, you know, next to my Brother, my nearest Relation in Blood [as a Macpherson], and were you only a casual acquaintance I could not but regard and esteem you. Judge, therefore, whether I would be silent towards you through neglect, or, after a year's stay in London, be taken up with its insipid daily amusements, so as not to mind the anxiety of my nearest friend. No! I assure you; and had I only a mind for a laugh your Correspondence would be the first that I would cultivate North of the Forth. The Truth is, ever since I wrote you first my mind has been agitated with all the Hope, Fear and Suspense of one whose fortune and Character were dependant on Ministerial Caprice. I was playing a great Card. The event depended on the honesty of men whose situation obliges them to be necessarily treacherous. I knew your anxiety was little less than my own, but how could I remove it? I could only communicate to you what I felt myself, unless I was disingenuous. Had I an interest in being so to you, I could have little pleasure in it. [Macdonald of] Breakish was the only man I wrote to in this situation, but never came to the point with him. It was only some trifling matter relative to my sister [Isabel] that made me take up the pen for him. My Brother [Martin] has had only two letters from me since I came to England. He indeed does not deserve to have any more: he is a very indolent, uninteresting Correspondent.

Ships from Madras are at length arrived. I have had no letter from Doni [Macleod] but Mrs. Col.<sup>1</sup> Campbell tells me she left him well in February last. God willing, I'll be with him in eight months. You will

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1. The only person this could be was Anne, daughter of John Campbell, 14th of Barbreck, and his wife Elizabeth Hay. She married at Fort St. George, Madras, in 1762, Captain (later, 1765, Colonel) Donald Campbell of Glensaddell (1726-1784), of the 1st Battn. European Infantry (Madras Establishment). See Sir Duncan Campbell's Records of Clan Campbell in the Military Service of the Honourable East India Company 1600-1858, London, 1925, pp. 88-93.

be then interested in the Carnatic, and we hope to have your recommendations coming in a few years to us in favour of your Sutherland friends. The career is good [and] will take its run. We shall be philosophers if we must be unfortunate, and that is all the Comfort which a Monarch or Minister of State or Lord or a Clergyman can have to oppose to the chances of life. Hitherto I have a right to say that I am a favourite of Fortune, and tho' I can claim little of my success from ability I must declare that I have now a singular happiness in being totally indebted to the friends I have<sup>1</sup> made myself for my Success. Neither Warwick, Northumberland, Capt.<sup>n</sup> [Alexander] Macleod or his allies have had the least application from me. I owe my appointment to a Writership in the Company's service entirely to the personal friendship of the Duke of G[rafton] and his Minister, Mr. Bradshaw. You may be sure it is no small satisfaction to a poor Sleat M.<sup>c</sup> faden<sup>2</sup> to draw an honourable and consequential appointment from so honourable a Source. It is more so that I know I am almost the only person for whom the Minister has provided in the India Company, so opposite are they to his interest." 3

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1. Hugh Percy, né Smithson, 1st Duke of Northumberland (1715-1786). This was the first time that John Macpherson mentioned Northumberland. It is not known how Macpherson made his acquaintance, but it was probably through either Warwick, or more unlikely, Dr. Thomas Percy, who had heard him recite a passage from "Ossian" while he was Ferguson's pupil.
  2. "M<sup>c</sup> faden" (properly Macfáden), means "Son of the peats". Macpherson is calling himself a "son of the soil" or a "countryman".
  3. Macpherson MSS./1, 21/4, John Macpherson to Rev. Martin Macpherson of Golspie, 20 October 1769.

John continued this letter by boasting about the "40 different signature" under which he and James Macpherson had been writing in the newspapers, but warned his cousin not to say anything as James was "not yet provided for". He then concluded his news as follows:

"I sail, I think, with Captain Maitland in the Bute about Christmas. Before then I take a trip over to France, and will, without fail, write you often. Frequently have I thought that if you had been brought up here in the Essay-World you would have rose by political writing, but we are not the artificers of what is a kind of Destiny. You will have some idea of my business here - the affairs of the N<sup>a</sup>aws<sup>b</sup> etc. - before I leave the place. It is not yet safe for me to mention somethings by letter. For any-sake name me some person here to whom I shall give a ring for the White Hand; it shall be the picture of Rollichan's face<sup>1</sup> if you will. Do you know Col.<sup>2</sup> Ross. I see him in the Coffee House. You need not be surprised how I have been able to live here. I can make the stay and journey alike after spending on my applications etc. - £600. Tibby <sup>3</sup> [Isabel Macpherson] has got a 1000 merks from me. God forever bless you and your young ones, John M.<sup>c</sup> ph---n." 4

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1. John Macpherson was offering a miniature portrait of himself ("Rollichan").
  2. Probably Lt. Col. Charles Ross (c. 1729-1797); M.P. for Tain Burghs 1780-1784.
  3. John Macpherson's sister Isabel ("Tibby") was housekeeper to her brother Martin.
  4. Macpherson MSS./1, 21/4, John Macpherson to Rev. Martin Macpherson of Golspie, 20 October 1769.

When John wrote to his cousin Martin he was dealing with a man who belonged to his father's generation, and who had a great knowledge of his background and his character. He could not deceive Martin with glib lies. He wanted to impress Martin - as he did everyone else - with the lustre which had rubbed off from his contact with important men and events; but he balanced his self-esteem with confessions of anxiety and uncertainty. In this respect, John's letters to his cousin stand alone. To nobody else did he ever drop his guard to reveal the fears which lurked behind his bold facade. A Protestant such as John would have recoiled at the idea, but he seemed to need the solace of the confessional, and his minister cousin served as his father confessor. In the absence of such an outlet for the emotions, it would, perhaps, be almost impossible for a treacherous, devious, corrupt and mendacious adventurer such as John Macpherson to remain sane. The pressure on John, caused by uncertainty, was, however, gradually being relieved.

The confirmation of his appointment as a Company's Writer in October was followed by the confirmation of his acquisition of a tack from Macleod of Macleod in November. In a long letter he sent the Macleod chief from London on 6th December he said, among other things:

"This evening I had the pleasure of your letter of the 27 November. I am happy the Set is finished and that you have retired into Peace and

and OEconomy. Your people may be yet happy, at least more so than their neighbours; and if you have been hard upon them, you have had<sup>1</sup> reason from your Situation. While you subject yourself to a more frugal system of life, they cannot but admit the justice of bearing a share of the burden; and if it is said against you that you have been too free with your fortune, you may plead double merits in your resolution of mending it. ...

Your grandson [Norman Macleod of Macleod, ygr.] did not do me the favor to enquire for me here, tho' I waited one night till twelve at his lodgings expecting his return from Vauxhall. He is the immediate loser by his forgetfulness. I would not but give him some little India Curiosities. ...

Your good wishes for my success are, I am convinced sincere. They are in a great measure answered by the Duke of Grafton's friendship, for I have carried my point, and am, in two months, to sail for India in the Company's civil service with the highest Recommendations. My greatest pleasure in this appointment is that I owe it to so great and noble a man. You need mention little of this, but my uncle [Captain Alexander Macleod], War[wic]k and Northumb[erlan]d were never asked for the least aid by me.

2

How oft do I regret your application of your Parliamentary Interest.

1. Macleod of Macleod had put up all his rents to help offset his many debts. John Macpherson's attitude was to be echoed in later years by all the advisors to Highland chiefs and lairds who wanted to justify the notorious "Clearances". There was never much sentiment in the Highlands about the relationships between a chief and his followers, but this was a sign that the old clan system was breaking up.
2. In 1764 Norman Macleod of Macleod had lost his appointment as "Gentleman of Police" (worth £400 a year) to a favourite of Lord Bute's, having held the sinecure since 1754, when he was succeeded as M.P. for Inverness-shire by Fryce Campbell of Cawdor, ygr., a government favourite with the powerful patronage of his chief, the Duke of Argyll. With the help of Simon Fraser, The Master of Lovat, M.P. for Inverness-shire from 1761 to 1782, Macleod of Macleod had hoped to return to politics or gain another sinecure, but had been thwarted by either Bute or Argyll or both. The Macleod Muniments contain no document which fully explains the/

It was sufficient to have carried all your views with Government. Indeed, the injustice with which you have been treated was enough, of itself, to obtain you redress had it been mentioned and publickly insisted on by no more than an Essayist in a newspaper. But, rather than be tormented on such a point, would - as it exposed his family partially, and the principles of Government - be brought to make any atonements. I wish you may never lose sight of the treatment you have met with. One day you may have redress. Affairs here are as I writ before: The Minister is permanent from the opposite attack of his Enemies. ...

I almost forgot the only article of Business I had to mention to you, which is the necessity [sic] of drawing out the Tack of Lindale in my name. I must pay the additional rent, and stock it. My Brother's management renders it necessary [sic] for his own good that he should only have an Idea of holding it at second hand. I beg likewise you put some clause in it by which I can order the management and improvement of the farm to my uncle Breakish or any of my Macleod friends. Without this the whole will be of no value to my Brother's family, and I will not advance the money for the rents &c. I beg you will not forget this Circumstance as you have proposed it partly; and I hope you'll condescend to acquaint me in [due] course and send up any obligation for me to sign. ...

I will write Lady Macleod soon all the little laughable news I can collect. The Grevilles are well. Charles is at Vienna and has by living with the Emperor, at his Uncle's House in Naples, contracted a strong friendship with him. He followed him to His Court and now lives there at the rate of £1500

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2. (continued) situation, see Dr. I.F. Grant's The Macleods, op. cit., p. 484 et seq.
  1. Charles Greville's uncle was Sir William Hamilton (1730-1803), 4th son of Lord Archibald Hamilton. Sir William was British Envoy to Naples from 1764 to 1800.

a year. Bob [Greville] is the handsomest young man in the Army. When he was last at Court with regimentals, the Queen's Brother made up to him without introduction, and they became great friends. He fell in Love with a fine Actress at the Opera, Seniora Gibetti [or Gilietti], but  
 1  
 got soon cured by the assistance of his old friend Macpherson." 2

With confidence in the strength of his patron Grafton, and with what seemed some confidence in his date of departure for India (which had gradually been postponed during 1769 from November to Christmas and then to the early months of 1770), John took a short holiday in France. At a future date one of his enemies,

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1. Here John Macpherson was unconsciously exhibiting his jealousy of any woman who attracted the attention of either of his "dear boys", the Greville brothers. His affection for the Grevilles, and for Charles in particular, later caused James to be resentful. Remarking on James's attitude, John told him on 30th September 1774:

"Is feidir ghò oni Cardis insi ghut gi veil mi faicin fuack more aunsi da Littir fo gheri is scriave u ga muisi. In reson, ha mi barrail, is fe shò. Ha beck agud gi beil cairdis cho more agumsi er son Duini elli, is i hagum orst fein. Na cruid shin gun brach. Cha nè nin shorsi chardis i ha agum er son nan Duini shin - si ha agum orstse. Ha fios ma agum nach heil Duini bò gha beil barack Chairdis agud fein - sma ha agud ormsi." (Macpherson MSS./1, 39/7). This means "I must in friendship tell you that I detect a great coldness in the last two Letters you wrote to me. The reason, I think, is this. You imagine that I have as great a love for another man as I have for you. Do not ever believe that. It is not the same kind of love that I have for that man as I have for you. I know that there is not a man alive who has more love for me than you have." To have used such a phrase as "not the same kind of love" was very revealing. It can be compared with the famous comment made by Oscar Wilde to Lord Alfred Douglas in a letter he wrote in Reading Gaol in 1897. Wilde talked of homosexuality as "the Love that dares not tell its name", see The Letters of Oscar Wilde, ed. Sir Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1962, p. 441 - (the letter was also published separately under the title De Profundis).

2. Macleod Muniments Room, Dunvegan Castle, Box 56-B.

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Sir Robert Harland, tried to undermine him by sending a confidential report about his mission for the Nawab to the Secretary of State. In this report John's activities from 1768 to 1770 were examined.

"During <sup>a</sup> great part of this time," wrote Harland, "I have understood he was in France with some of Lord Warwick's family. This, however, is no farther consequence but to explain the "immense expenses" which Mr. Mcpherson says he was obliged to be at on the Nabob's account: "during four years of the most interesting period of my life." In one of his letters, either to the Nabob or to Sir John Lindsay, I am told he made those expences amount to above twenty four thousand pounds sterling (£24000), but when desired by the Nabob's servants about the Durbar to give in the particulars of such expence, that his Highness might judge of their propriety, he declined it; and when urged by repeated messages to that purpose he rather chose, he said, to refer the whole price of his Services to the Nabob's generosity. Since that time he has received Three thousand pagodas, which with the former One thousand makes Four thousand (4000): something more than what was promised. The Nabob has never enquired to whom he gave the Three thousand pounds worth of Jewels, nor has Mr. Mcpherson thought proper to communicate the particulars to his Highness." 3

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1. Sir Robert Harland (1715-1784), created a Baronet in 1771. A Rear Admiral of the Blue, who became C. in C. at Madras and Plenipotentiary to the Nawab of Arcot in succession to Sir John Lindsay. He was Commodore of the East Indies station 1771-75.
  2. Harland misquoted John Macpherson, who actually said "I have spent the greatest part of my fortune, and four years of the most interesting period of life, in rendering those services and others which I can only explain in conversation to the Nabob." (see I.O.L., H. Misc. S. 110, p. 511). As his own "fortune" was negligible he was telling the literal (but misleading) truth.
  3. I.O.L., H. Misc. S. 110, pp. 497-498, Sir Robert Harland to the Earl of Rochford, 10 Sept. 1772.



Harland's suspicions about John Macpherson's misappropriation of the Nawab's funds probably had some foundation. John went out to India with next to nothing, and admitted he came back with "presents" from the Nawab to Grafton and Bradshaw, which they refused to take. After a year in London, having given money to his sister and, more important, having agreed to assume responsibility for leasing and stocking the farm at Lyndale, which must have been expensive, he admitted to his cousin Martin that he still had £600 left. It might, therefore, be reasonable to suppose that without an income from any other source in 1769, John's living costs, his holiday in France, his gifts, and the lease of the Lyndale tack, were all supplied from the Nawab's funds, or the sale of the jewels refused by Grafton. On the other hand, Harland was grossly exaggerating when he said that John spent the great part of his time from 1768 to 1770 in France with Lord Warwick's family. At the most he spent three weeks in France in December 1769, and he was there, not in the company of his Greville friends, who were in Vienna or London during that month,

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but with John Grant of Blairfindy, a cousin of the Gardens of Troup in Banffshire.

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1. John Charles Adolphus Grant of Blairfindy (d. 1784). For his relations and pedigree see Lyon Office, Register House, Register of Genealogies, L.O., 1-G/234; and for his family and career see my forthcoming article Grant of Blairfindy, Junius and Francis, to be published in the Bulletin of the Inst. of Hist. Research.

1

Alexander Garden of Troup, the M.P. for Aberdeenshire, had a nephew, who, said

John Macpherson (without identifying which nephew), was "one of my earliest friends

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and College Companions". This vague connection might explain how John Macpherson

came to know Grant, but not why he stayed with him. Grant, who had served his

apprenticeship as a mercenary soldier in Germany under the personal supervision of

the famous Marshal James Keith (an early hero of James Macpherson), was now a full

colonel of infantry in the French army, and an agent of the French secret service.

For certain missions he had performed as an agent he had received the knighthood

of the Military Order of St. Louis, and the title of Baron Grant de Blairfindy.

3

He was also a correspondent of Prince Charles Edward Stuart, whose cause had been

served by several members of the Blairfindy family, including the Abbés Peter and

Robert Grant, uncles of John Grant. All of which made this Jacobite Roman Catholic

1. Alexander Garden of Troup (1714-1785); M.P. for Aberdeenshire, 1768-1785.
2. B.M. Add. MSS. 29143, f. 35., John Macpherson to Warren Hastings, 8 February 1779. A short letter recommending Capt. Grant - "he is married to the sister of one of my earliest friends and College Companions, a daughter of a gentleman in Aberdeenshire of a very considerable fortune. By the interest of her uncle in Parliament his appointment was obtained..."
3. Mémoires de la Maison de Grant, Charles Grant, Vicomte de Vaux, Paris, 1794, p. 361, Prince Charles Edward Stuart to Col. J. Grant de Blairfindy, 29 January 1779. The Prince's congratulations on the marriage of Grant to Françoise d'Ancelet, dau. of Comte d'Ancelet, in Paris. She must have been Grant's second wife.

officer in the secret service of France a rather odd friend for a journalist who supported the British ministry, especially as Grant claimed that he not only knew the identity of "Junius", the scourge of the British ministry, but had actually

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 watched "Junius" write the audacious "Letter to the King", which Henry Sampson Woodfall printed in the Public Advertiser on 19th December 1769.

On that day John Grant of Blairfindy wrote to John Macpherson, as follows:

"Nothing could have done me more pleasure than a prolongation of your agreeable visit in this place [Versailles], and nothing so feeling as your so sudden departure. I wish you could have had some spare time to honour us with your company a little longer; there is no help, friends must part. Your acquaintance was most agreeable to me and Mrs. Grant, but the short enjoyment we had of it will make us always regret that circumstance.

I hope you will arrange it so that we may pass at least another day together, and if it is suitable to your convenience you will come to

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1. In a letter sent by Grant de Blairfindy to the Comte du May on 4th July 1774, he identified "Junius" as Thomas Mante, a former British army officer turned double agent, and made this comment: "En 1769, J'étois employé à Dieppe où Je l'ai vû écrire cette fameuse Lettre au Roy d'Angleterre qui a fait tant de bruit." (quoted in A New Document on the Identity of Junius by Frank Monaghan in Jour. Mod. Hist., Vol. 4, 1932, pp. 70-71, from Archives du ministère des affaires étrangères, Paris: Angleterre - mémoires et documents 1750 à 1810, 56, ff. 123 et seq.).

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Versailles. If not Mrs. Grant, Captain Elliott and I will meet at  
 our own worthy friend's, Mr. Gordon, or whence you please. You'll  
 drop me a Line which I may receive the day before, to my own direction -  
 without making use of the Duke's Cover untill you do me the honour of  
 writing me from England.

I intended to send you by this post a Letter for L.<sup>t</sup> G.<sup>l</sup> Elliott,<sup>3</sup> and  
 another for my cousin Mr. Garden, but I will trouble you with them  
 when I see you either here or in Paris. I am, My Dear Macpherson,  
 Your sincere friend & servant: Grant de Blairfindy.<sup>4</sup>"

Macpherson must have received and answered Grant's letter on the following day,  
 because on 21st December 1769 Grant, changing for some reason to the language of his adopted  
 country, wrote again to Macpherson, saying:

"J'ai reçu La Lettre obligante que vous m'avez fait L'honneur de m'écrire  
 hier. Mad<sup>me</sup> Grant, M<sup>r</sup> Elliott et moi aurons L'honneur de nous rendre à

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1. Captain Elliott was probably Captain Vernon Elliot Elliott (c. 1738-c. 1776), son of Archibald Elliott (1710-1759), 5th son of Sir Gilbert Elliott, 3rd Bart of Stobs, by his wife Eleanor, daughter of William Elliot of Wells.
  2. Unidentified, but as this Gordon seems to be a mutual friend of Grant and John Macpherson, and as Macpherson had hitherto in any of his letters only mentioned one person of that name, it could have been George Gordon of Gordonbush, brother-in-law of Martin Macpherson of Golspie.
  3. There was only one Lieutenant General of this name in the British army in 1769, and that was Lt. Genl. George Augustus Elliott (1717-1790), later (1787) 1st Baron Heathfield, 8th son of Sir Gilbert Elliott, 3rd Bart. of Stobs. Lt. Genl. Elliott was the uncle of Capt. Vernon Elliot Elliott.
  4. Macpherson M33./1, 160/2, Col. John Grant de Blairfindy to John Macpherson dated at "Versailles the 19 10<sup>bre</sup> 1769"; 10bre being December. The letters Grant sent Macpherson do not, unfortunately, have the wrappers giving the latter's address in France.

l'invitation que vous avez bien voulu nous faire. Vous la faites d'une manière si honnête qu'il n'y a pas moyen de vous refuser; mais à condition, toutefois, que vous nous receverés en amis, et sans ceremonie quelconque. En attendant le plaisir de vous voir Je vous supplie d'etre persuade que bon ne peut rien ajouter aux sentimens avec lesquels Je suis, mon cher Macpherson, votre tres humble et tres obeissant serviteur: Grant de Blairfindy." 1

These two letters from Grant are the only evidence of John Macpherson's visit to France. From them it is clear, by the speed of exchange alone, that Macpherson was staying near to Grant at Versailles, and that he was living in humble circumstances, or humble enough for Grant to accept an invitation on the polite condition that he and his wife and Eliott were received as friends, and without any ceremony whatsoever. It is also clear that John Macpherson was on friendly terms with members of the influential Eliott of Stobs family, who (in spite of the different spelling of their surname) were closely allied and related to the even more influential Elliot of Minto family. Their presence was to be felt in East Indian and Scottish affairs in which both the Macphersons were directly or indirectly concerned.

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1. Macpherson MSS./1, 160/1, Col. J. Grant de Blairfindy to John Macpherson ("Gentilhomme Ecossois") dated "Versailles, ce 21 10bre 1769". The original French has not been corrected, and no attempt has been made to supply missing accents.

Summing up his activities from late 1768 to early 1770, John Macpherson told his cousin Martin:

"While in London I had the happiness of making some valuable friends. I fixed the chord entirely with our friend Fingal. Our days were always spent together, and he is as valuable a man upon the whole as lives. Recovered, by the coolness of Time and the World from any extravagance in which the hurry of his good fortune led him, his good Sense, of which he has the greatest portion I ever knew with one, has quite naturalised him to every good virtue. James is, in a word, the warmest friend and most useful connection possible, if he is independent and above the brook of bad fortune. If otherwise, he retires into himself, and despises and condemns the World. His parts are of the most useful and agreeable kind; no Talents superior to them.

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Governor Johnson [sic], Dr. Eliot [sic] and John Hume [sic], I in a manner lived with; they are most valuable men." 2

All the last three named were friends originally made by James Macpherson,

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1. John Elliott (1736-1786) son of Thomas Elliott, W.S., of Edinburgh, who was no relation of the Eliotts or Elliots. He was M.D., St. Andrew's Univ., 1759, and L.R.C.P., 1762. He was knighted in 1776, created a baronet 1778, and became physician to the Prince of Wales. On 19 October 1771, he married Grace (1758-1815), daughter of Hew Dalrymple, LL.D., Advocate, of Edinburgh, (one of the Douglas Cause lawyers). In 1774 she ran away with Lord Valentia, from whom Elliott obtained £12,000 damages; and in 1782 she had a daughter by the Prince of Wales called Georgiana Augusta Fredericka Seymour, who married Lord Charles Bentinck. At the end of his life, James Macpherson provided "Mrs" Elliott (he refused to call her "Lady") with money; see Macpherson Hist./1, a facsimile letter bound between pp. 260/261.
  2. Macpherson MSS./1, 21/5, John to Rev. Martin Macpherson, 10 September 1770.

and all three were members of the "Scotch club" which met at Mrs. Anderson's

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British Coffee House in Charing Cross. Another member of this club was Alexander

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Dow, a soldier-playwright, who in 1768 and 1769 was on leave from India and was,

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for some of that time, engaged with John Macpherson in the preparation of a history

of that country. Referring to his part in this work, John wrote:

"from all my publications in favour of the Nabob, I must distinguish the Character and Print of him which I published in Major Dow's history, second edition, and the article I got inserted in the same vindicating the Nabob's father, Anwar-ul-dee Cawn [sic], from a charge the historians had fixt upon him; that of murdering his predecessor Abdalla [sic]. 4

Copies of this history so printed at a great expence were put in the hands of the Ministry, with what related to the Nabob in red characters.

The cause of this publication in support of the Nabob's honour was a suspicion that his Enemies were whispering against his fidelity to the

1. See Life of Home, pp. 56-57.

2. Alexander Dow (c. 1735-1779), born in Grieff, son of Hector Dow "of the Customs at Dunbar". After a period as an ordinary merchant seaman he joined the East India Co.'s army in 1760. He raised the 19th Batta. of Sepoys in Bengal in 1764 and this unit, called Doo-ki-Pal-tan after its founder, was eventually elevated to the status of a regiment as the 15th Bengal Native Infantry. He was promoted Captain in April 1764, and Major, acting Lieut. Colonel in Feb. 1769 (while he was on leave). His first tragedy, Zingis, was produced at Drury Lane, and reviewed by "J.M." (either James or John Macpherson, probably the former) "of the British Coffee House" in the Public Advertiser on 16 January 1769. It was a favourable review, and called Dow by his non-de-plume "Timur".

3. Alexander Dow, The History of Hindostan, 2nd edn., London, 1770.

4. See Love, Vol. 2, p. 286. It was widely believed that Khwajah Abdullah Khan, the last Nawab of Arcot of the first dynasty, was murdered by his successor Anwar-ul-Din Khan (1659-1749), the first Nawab of Arcot of the second dynasty; and the allegation was constantly revived by the opponents of the latter's son, Mohammed Ali Khan, the patron of John Macpherson.

English upon the arrival of the Dutton Indiaman from India in December 1769, which event detained me half a year longer at the Court of London. It was upon this occasion I addressed the authoritative Letter in support of the Nabob to the Supervisors in the Publick Advertizer [sic.] 1 A very effectual, tho' more general service that those publications rendered from [the] first to the Nabob was the restraint they occasioned at the India House, and the highlights they give [sic] the able attentive Secretary, Mr. Wood. This a person of his honour will admit." 1

John Macpherson must have had a bad memory. The letter he wrote as "Hindostanus"

to the Supervisors just before their departure appeared in the Public Advertiser on 22nd September 1769, and it was six months after that date when he finally left England. For the greater part of December 1769 he was in Paris, and by 13th

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January 1770 (if his own statement can be relied upon) he was back in London discussing, on that day, various affairs with Thomas Bradshaw. Four days earlier, when Parliament had re-assembled, Lord Chatham, in one of his increasingly rare periods of good health and lucidity, joined with Lord Rockingham in a violent attack on Grafton's administration, and, as members of the Cabinet reacted by resigning from their posts, the ministry began to topple. On 22nd January Grafton informed

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1. I.O.L., H. Misc. S. 110, pp. 510-511.

2. I.O.L., H. Misc. S. 110, p. 508.



the King of his intention to resign on 28th. The King tried but failed to persuade Grafton to hold on, and Lord North was offered and accepted the Treasury and, of course, the task of forming a new administration. This sudden change must have given many, including the Macphersons, a jolt. Having organised themselves, they now faced the tiring task of building up confidence in new masters, an especially frustrating prospect for John, who was on the point of embarking for India. In a final review of his activities between 1768 and 1770, John told his cousin Martin:

"Ever since my arrival in England in November '68 I was engaged in that scene where anxiety, hope, fear and expectation occupy the mind. You know the subject and more of my operations than, I believe, any other person unconcerned. I could not in justice to my solemn promises inform you of more. After passing twelve months in a manner that I ought to acquire a very different knowledge of mankind in the class above me, I succeeded and had the happiness of gaining the friendship of men I had to deal with, from the attachment I shewed to my friend in India. I never thought that I could sincerely love a Minister, and found myself happily disappointed in the D. of Grafton and his Secretary, Mr. Bradshew. The resignation of the former was the heaviest stroke I ever felt from fortune, but he did not forget me even at that time, for he gave me very strong letters of Recommendation to the chief People in India, which in any event of my other prospects will, I hope, serve me.

The many Conferences I had with these people would, if related to you, raise up the pride of Macfaden [Son of the peats - himself]. Let us wait the issue before we crow. The greatest pleasure, at the same time,

that I ever had in life was to surprise all those who professed friendship or had such for me, by my appointment, independant of them, from a first Minister of State to whom I introduced myself. I have, at the same time, no reason to accuse the indolence or coldness of other friends. Lord Warwick strained every nerve to oblige me. M<sup>c</sup>Leod, the Captain, was passively well disposed, but he acted the part, at the same time, that you would have endeavoured to act in his Situation. I might have got him at least nominated for a seat at the Direction in the Ministerial List. I was not negligent in letting him think so. ....

But, my dear Sir, what is the friendship of men to live by in a mercenary capricious age. Without a fortune to make you somewhat independant you have not the confidence to use the affection and regard of People that are on a different establishment. This voyage to India was necessary. Let it terminate as Providence wills. I am happy in the necessity and propriety of making the Experiment. ...

Inform [my brother] Martin and [my uncle] Breakish of this letter, in case theirs fail." 1

In October 1769 John had told Martin that James had not been provided for

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by Grafton, but the provision must have been made soon afterwards, because in

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1. Macpherson MSS./1, 21/5, John Macpherson to Rev. Martin Macpherson of Golspie, dated Rio de Janeiro, 10 Sept. 1770.
  2. There is not a single reference to either of the Macphersons in The Autobiography and Correspondence of Augustus Henry, third Duke of Grafton, ed. Sir W.R. Anson, Lond. 1898; and there is only one Macpherson item (a letter from John to the Duke, see later) in the entire Collection of Grafton MSS. which are kept partly in the private custody of the present Duke at Euston Hall, Norfolk, and partly by the West Suffolk Record Office, Bury St. Edmunds. Thomas Bradshaw's letters, which might have had references in them to the Macphersons, were left to his brother-in-law Anthony Chamier (1725-1780), M.P. for Tamworth; but these have disappeared. A thorough search in the National Register of Archives, London, has not produced any sources which would reveal the attitudes of Grafton and Bradshaw to the Macphersons.

January 1770, "when Lord North succeeded the Duke of Grafton, he found Mr. [James]

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Macpherson on the private list of pensioners." From the time North succeeded

it would seem that he allowed James to keep both his pension and his sinecures in

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West Florida. Together, if constant over the next decade or so, they provided

James with an income of about £800 a year, which was enough to cover his living

costs in London, but far from sufficient for the amount he needed to realise his

ambitions.

1. See The Corres. of King George III from 1760 to 1783, ed. Sir John Fortescue, (1927-28), Vol. 4, p. 414. Memorandum: Lord North to George III, 26 March 1782. "Mr. James Macpherson has for many years been a most laborious and able writer in favour of government. .. Almost all the good pamphlets on the side of administration were the production of his pen. When Lord North succeeded the Duke of Grafton, he found Mr. Macpherson on the private list of pensioners. He is now in possession of a pension of £500 a year, and has lately lost his place of secretary to the province of West Florida." In Feb. 1776 Walpole said that "Macpherson, the Ossianite, had a pension of £600 a year from the Court, to supervise the newspapers, and prevent the publication of truth or satire" (see The Last Journals of Horace Walpole during the Reign of George III, from 1771 to 1783, ed. John Doran and A. Francis Stewart, 1910, Vol. 1, p. 524). By Dec. 1782, Horace Walpole was still as biased against Macpherson but said that his pension was "£800 a year" (*ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 387). The only other reference to Macpherson's income from ministerial journalism was Macpherson's own admission on 7 January 1782 to the Countess of Upper Ossory that he received a share of the profits in the London Packet, in which he had recently become a partner (see B.M. Add. MSS. 38729, f. 165).
2. For James Macpherson's sinecures in West Florida see above, pp. 43-44. Apart from the information already given, Macpherson made only one other reference to his former and short connection with that province. This was on 17 August 1773, when he wrote from No. 9 Manchester Buildings to the Rev. Dr. John James Majendie (1709-1783), of Kew Gardens, and of Holles Street, who was then an instructor to Queen Charlotte and tutor to the Prince of Wales and Prince Frederick. Macpherson recommended Majendie to "receive the commands of the Board of Trade" if he wished to secure the living of Pensacola; an odd suggestion, never amplified. Majendie never went to West Florida. In 1774 he became one of the Canons of Windsor, see Calendar of Home Office Papers, 1773-75, ed. R.A. Roberts, London, 1899, pp. 75-76. For Majendie's career and other references to Macpherson see James Beattie's London Diary, 1773, ed. Ralph S. Walker, (Aberdeen University Studies No. 122), Aberdeen, 1946.

Letters on behalf of the ministry continued to appear from his (and for a short time John's) pen from the date of North's succession as prime-minister, but both James and John's output under their provable pseudonyms sharply declined in

<sup>1</sup>  
1770. It can be safely assumed that John did no writing for the press in that year, after he embarked for India. James, on the other hand, probably adopted supplementary signatures, which cannot be identified until new evidence comes to light. The change of government seemed to leave James in status quo. John, however, was not so well placed. Having no time to make himself known to North before he left England, he had to rely on recommendations from Grafton. The value of these to a government-sponsored Company's servant could have been very great, but, with Grafton out of office, their worth had been slightly reduced. Nonetheless, John Macpherson hoped to use them not only to reinforce his position as a Company's servant, but, as he told his cousin, for the furtherance of "other prospects". Although he never stated what these "other prospects" were, an attempt will be made to suggest their nature in the next chapter.

On 19th February 1770, John Macpherson, appearing for the last time as "An Old

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1. See above, pp. 62-63.

"Patriot" in the Public Advertiser, lauded Grafton in a valediction, and expressed his confidence in North. The following day, having arranged with Robert Orme<sup>1</sup> and George Johnstone<sup>2</sup> for Governor Du Pré of Madras to receive testimonials in his favour, John, with James to wave farewell, boarded the Morgan at Gravesend, and for the second time in his life set sail for India. Before the ship left home waters he wrote a letter to James, and this was obviously put ashore at Spithead, where the last despatches were sent aboard by a Company's pinnace. Answering it, James said:

"I received your letter yesterday, and as the wind continues west I hope this will come to your hands. I find nothing material to mention to you, except that to-day, by appointment, owing to some motions made by me, I

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1. Robert Orme (1728-1801), was born in India, and had served as a Company's servant on the Council of Madras until 1758, when he was dismissed by Governor Pigot for allegedly demanding presents from the Nawab of Arcot. The case was never proved as Orme was taken prisoner by the French on his way to England, and all the relevant evidence was lost. In England he spent his time chronicling the history of India, especially Clive's campaigns, and was finally reinstated by the Company as its Historiographer in 1769 at a salary of £400 a year. He was a very close friend of Lauchlin Macleane, with whom, since 1766, he had been involved in India Stock deals. He retained a close connection with many leading men in Madras, and his recommendations to them were valuable. For his letters, both dated 28 March 1770, recommending John Macpherson to Governor Josias Du Pré and Brig. General Joseph Smith, see I.O.L. Orme MSS., O.V. 202 (33F), f. 36. To Du Pré John was presented as "a man of knowledge, experience and abilities. .. If he is the author of some things which I have heard ascribed to him, he is a writer far beyond the common run of writers, even here in England, which since your departure is become a nation of public writers". To Smith he was described as "a man of excellent talents..amongst our first rates."
  2. See John's comment on Johnstone's testimonial in Macpherson MSS./1, 39/4.

was with Lord (N<sup>1</sup>/ort/h). It was an awkward meeting. As he sent for me, I thought to mention the business belonged to him. He did not say a single word about it. The Conversation was very general. He seems to have heard very little - or at least to have attended ill to what he heard. I am become much more indifferent since this interview, as it entitles me to proceed with vigor in the old Channel. I will do it - and if I gain nothing else - I will put an end to a state of very disagreeable Suspence. I believe many fictions have been told me. It is my business to convert them into real truth. In the Execution I speak enigmatically, under an uncertainty of your receiving this - but you'll understand me.

2

Mr. Macleod of Unish is just now with me. He informs me that you have forgot to sign one of the pages of the Lease [of Lyndale] you had from Macleod [of Macleod], as also a Marginal Note. He informs me that the deed is, therefore, not valid. My advice to you is to send a power of attorney, for that purpose only, to some one of your friends. Let the power bear an Authority to sign a New Lease for you, as the old one, in its present form, is a nullity in law. Neglect not to do this, considering what Advantages may be taken of your friends in your absence.

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1. The name has been scratched out in the original, but it is still possible to make out under the deletion the word "N---h".
  2. Norman Macleod of Unish (c. 1713-c.1785), eldest son of Donald Macleod of Bernera, "The Old Trojan", and therefore a maternal uncle of John Macpherson. This "unnatural and heartless son", as Norman was called, fought for the Hanoverians in the '45, and led the hunt for his Jacobite father. He was also mixed-up in the abduction of Lady Grange, and was the organiser of a brutal scheme to transport people from Harris and Skye as slaves to the American colonies. The only man Norman feared was his next brother, Capt. Alexander Macleod of the Lord Mansfield Indiaman. See Dr. I.F. Grant's The Macleods, op. cit., pp. 401-409.

If anything occurs to you, after your arrival in India, upon the business we talked about in the Chaise; pray do not neglect it. Commission for me from China for a large parcel of R<sup>in</sup>/gs. The rougher they are, and the more like the battlements of a Castle, the Better. Tell Hannay to send me the Address of the Lady I saw in the Morse at Gravesend.<sup>1</sup>  
 Your friend in Lincoln's-inn is much better. I have not seen him yet.<sup>2</sup>  
 Robert's cause comes on to-morrow. He is no less gloomy and rugged than Corry-Arroc in a sleet and rain Storm in february. .. my best compliments to John<sup>3</sup>/ston<sup>4</sup> Hannay." 5

This letter was not meant to be understood by anyone except the Macphersons.

James's disappointing interview with North, which allowed him "to proceed with

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1. The lady on the Morse known to Johnston Hannay (who was on his way to India to join his brother Alexander Hannay in the army) cannot be identified. James Macpherson had by this time at least one mistress, Elizabeth Fretwell alias Bradshaw, by whom he already had had an illegitimate son James (c. 1767-1824). The name Bradshaw may or may not have significance: she has not been identified. For James's bastards and mistresses, see Appendix 3 and his will (P.P.R., Harris Calendar, f. 137).
  2. Unidentified, but John Stewart, who had failed to secure the Secretaryship of the Royal Society of Arts, lived in Lincoln's Inn.
  3. Undoubtedly Robert Macpherson (1731-1791), former chaplain 78th Regt., and 3rd son of John Macpherson of Banchoir.
  4. Properly spelled Corryarrick (or Corrie-airack), the pass carrying the military road between Laggan Bridge and Fort Augustus.
  5. Macpherson MSS./1, 4/1, James to John Macpherson, dated (inaccurately) "3d Feb<sup>ry</sup> 1770". The log kept by Capt. John Horne of the Morse (I.O.L., Marine Index, p. 47) shows that the ship left Gravesend on 20th Feb. 1770; and picked up dispatches at Spithead on 27th Feb. 1770. If John sent ashore a letter at Spithead it would have reached James with ease by 2nd March. It is almost certain, therefore, that James's letter should have been dated 3rd March, 1770.

vigor in the old Channel [Obviously Grafton]", undoubtedly concerned his duties as a ministerial writer. The probable reasons for James's attitude to North, and the mysterious talk he had with John "in the Chaise" will emerge later. There was, however, no mystery about the rings. Having seen those which John had been given by the Nawab for bribes, James had commissioned John to send back rings set with large stones. If these came from the East in the Company's bags, then strict customs inspection was avoided, and large profits could be realised.

John was on his way to the source of jewels and great wealth, and James was in the place where information and pressures could be used to John's advantage. Now that a sudden change in government had thrown their plans into some confusion they were going to rely on each other as never before. The more James helped John in the future, the more he helped himself; and vice versa. Between them they had established contact with a wide range of political interests. Indeed, they seemed to have provided for future alliances of every possible description, with the idea, perhaps, of discarding at a later stage anyone who proved to be powerless or embarrassing or simply useless. This had led them into treacherous paths, particularly in their capacity as political journalists. In the kaleidoscope of politics, however, all alliances and relationships are subject to rapid change: interests converge only to separate again. In the ceaseless struggle



for power, backstairs politicians recognise only one law: necessity. The Macphersons understood this law. Some of the decisions that necessity had forced on them in 1769 and 1770 were to have unfortunate consequences, which were aggravated by unforeseen circumstances. The first setback caused by such a circumstance hit John on his voyage to India.

After reaching Madeira at the beginning of May 1770, the Morse was delayed for a week due to a fault in the mainmast. Soon after it set sail again the ship ran into a violent storm; the repaired mainmast gave way, and the Captain was obliged to make for the nearest port, Rio de Janeiro. Here, further delays held up the ship for seven weeks, and it was not until December 1770 that the Morse put into the Cape of Good Hope.<sup>1</sup> Reporting from the Cape, John told James:

"Thus far only have I as yet advanced in my voyage to India. I wrote you from Rio Janeiro and gave an account of our disaster before our arrival there. Fortune has been more kind since, and the prospect of arriving in two months hence in the Carnatic, together with present good health, opens with cheerfulness upon my mind. The arrival of the Dolphin Frigate<sup>2</sup> at the Brazils relieved my anxiety relative to you. I saw some [English]

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1. For an account of the Morse's voyage see its log; I.O.L., Marine Records.
  2. The letter of "Pericles" which John saw in August was probably the one in the Pub. Adv. on 22nd March 1770. As it was in defence of North and the ministry, John assumed that James had established a firm understanding with North. He had not, however, seen the Gaz. & New Daily Adv. of 14th August 1770, in which James, as "Scaevola" attacked North and the ministerial policy on America. By deserting the Pub. Adv. and by turning on North, James indicated that relations were far from satisfactory. "Brihone" cannot be identified as a signature (see above, p.133). James was, of course, both "Brihone" and "Bir-clais": two "friends", one person.

newspapers so late as August and find my friends are well - Brihone [? "Judge"] and Bir-clais ["Pericles"] are, I understand, still in the field. Nothing but a perfect good understanding could, I believe, lead them to stay the Summer in London. The Madrid Gazette staggered me at Rio. I learned so much Portuguese that I could read it with ease. ...

At Rio Janeiro I had several audiences of the Viceroy, the Marques de Lavradio, a clear smooth sly frenchified Portuguese knave. You have heard of his confiscating poor Robison's ship, and obliging us to leave the Company's Copper in pawn for our Expences. I urged him to give me distinct news about Egmont Island. He swore it was taken, but knew not the time, the names of the Chief People on both sides, nor any decisive Circumstance. After speaking to him upon this and other subjects in, I believe, a more intelligent style than he expected from an Anglois Passager, he employed about ten Espions to watch and report whatever I did or said. Luckily I was informed by the chief of them - a very good man, the Captain of our Guard upon the Island, and I desisted from further enquiry about the Country; otherways I might have suffered for my political gout. I have materials relative to Rio-Janeiro for an entertaining folio Epistle.

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1. Don Luis de Almeida Soares Portugal Alarcão Eça e Melo, 2nd Marquês de Lavradio (1727-1790). See Grande Enciclopédia Portuguesa e Brasileira, Lisbon and Rio de Janeiro, 1945, Vol. XIV, p. 761.
  2. He meant Egmont in the Falkland Islands, the subject of hot dispute between the British and Spanish governments. James Macpherson later used the topic for some of the letters he wrote as "Pericles".

I had writ the above lines in the morning. Since, the Lapwing packet ship is come in to the Cape from Madrass. Terrible news! The Aurora and Supervisors are lost. General Coote repulsed by Duprè and the Council at Madrass - and returned home in disgust by Land. The French making great preparations, and Plague and famine at Bengal that swept off  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the Inhabitants. Hyder-ali in war with the Morattoes Marathas, and insisting according to Treaty upon our giving him assistance. This the Council is disposed to do. The Morattoes upon the other hand address the Nabob and Sir John Lindsay. They struggle and protest against Council. The Devil is to pay. O! that I were in the heart of the Scene.

On the other hand, the Nabob has payed by an astonishing exertion all his debt - 400000 to the Company - in three months time - our Treasury is therefore full - we have a very fine army everywhere - and Duprè manages well and cunningly - great Jealousies of the Nabob - his army is augment'd and well disciplined - Sir John Lindsay lives with him - has made his fortune - the Council would not receive Sir John's Commission of King's Plenipotentiary to the Nabob. Titus has, I fear, writ himself and his

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1. Henry Vansittart and the other Supervisors were never heard of again, after leaving the Cape on 24 December 1769. One report (in Pub. Adv., 2.7.1773) suggested that the crew had mutinied and had murdered the Supervisors.
  2. Sir Eyre Coote (1726-1783), had served in the '45 against the Jacobites. He first went out to India with military command in 1769; eventually G. in C. in India 1777.
  3. "Titus" was George Paterson (1734-1817), a native of Edinburgh, where he qualified M.D. He went to India as Sir John Lindsay's private secretary, and stayed on in the same capacity to Sir Robert Harland when Lindsay was recalled.

friend out of their depth - their opponents are clever - we shall see all - keep a good lookout at Maistir Coille's Mister Wood's at Weymout's Office. All may be well.

I suppose there will be a new Commission of Supervisors coming out. Could you stir in this Affair? I confide in your Exertion entirely. I wish Governor George Johnstone may for peace's sake get himself appointed - or at the Government of Bombay now reported vacant by death. I think Id. Pigot should be one of the Commissioners. If you could stir North to this it would answer. I have understood Sir John's new Commission. It will not answer. Government must order the Company at home to receive their Servants abroad as such; otherways disputes must follow and the former come off upon the Lie.

<sup>1</sup>  
Dow was lately well at Bombay - the old man. Mrs. Draper and he had a literary friendship which he took in another light, and she is going to Surat. They shed Tears at parting and made every shrewd mouth in the settlement grin. Remember me kindly to Mrs. Anderson; give her all the news - and tell her the reason I do not write her is that I have not myself seen what I relate. Her acquaintance Miss Ross married the Chief Mate of the ship in which she went out - Compliments to the Misses Anderson.

<sup>2</sup>  
My best wishes to Jack in the Water - do you and him send me annually all newspapers and clever pamphlets. I'll write him from Madrass.

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1. Mrs. Elizabeth Draper, mistress of Alexander Dow, and for a short time, of James Macpherson, who called her "Ovisa", (see Appendix 3.) John Macpherson's reference to Dow as "the old man" is a translation of his Gaelic name for him: "Boddach", which can be used to mean "an old woman" or "a fussy person". The Macphersons also called Dow "Timur".
  2. Unidentified. If "Jack" was a "John" it could not be Elliott or Home, who were mentioned separately and distinctly.

Remember me affectionately to my dear little Doctor John Elliott in Cecil Street .. Pray write my uncle of Breakish in Skye<sup>e</sup> - a short line telling him I was well and that you remember him - and mind me zealously to my dear John Home - I'll write him soon." 1

Most of the news that the Lawing brought into the Cape proved to be accurate, as John Macpherson was soon to realise. On 23rd February 1771 he landed in Madras "after a tedious passage of a year and three days"<sup>2</sup>; an unforeseen delay which he could ill afford. He was to discover the truth of the adage that it is sometimes better to travel hopefully than to arrive. After a long and stormy passage he found himself in the doldrums.

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1. Macpherson MSS./1, 39/1, John Macpherson to James Macpherson, dated 19 December 1770 at the Cape of Good Hope. This letter, addressed to James at the "British Coffee-house, London", was fastened by the first known example of John's seal. This was an exact replica of the arms of Cluny-Macpherson, an odd choice for a Skye Macpherson. The only difference is the motto, which although badly blurred, is not Cluny's. It reads "SIC S-----VE--- BA---".
  2. Macpherson MSS./1, 39/2, John Macpherson to James Macpherson, 20 July 1771

CHAPTER 4

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Marking Time: 1770-1773.

Chapter 4. Marking Time: 1770-1773.

By January 1770 the Nawab of Arcot was convinced that he had been dealing for many years with a succession of greedy or unsympathetic or inefficient Governors of Madras; and he had no reason to believe that the men appointed in that month as Governor and Second of Council - Josias Du Pré and Warren Hastings - would be much different from their predecessors. They were, however, men of integrity and justice, and, in Hasting's case, of exceptional ability. Never had there been less need for the presence in the Carnatic of a watchdog who was independent of the Company. The arrival, therefore, of Sir John Lindsay, the Crown's plenipotentiary, soon after Du Pré and Hastings took office, was rather ironic.

As far as the Company was concerned, Lindsay had full rights as a plenipotentiary in the Persian Gulf, but elsewhere in the East his authority was confined to assisting the Company's servants in matters concerning peace and war with Indian powers - with special attention to the agreements reached under the relevant articles of the Treaty

<sup>1</sup> of Paris. But Lindsay also carried secret orders from Lord Weymouth, which empowered him to consult with the Nawab and to investigate his complaints against Company

<sup>2</sup> servants. Learning, by the usual devious routes, of the nature of these secret

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1. See Sutherland, p. 199.

2. *ibid.*, p. 200.

orders, the Company had become very suspicious of Lindsay; and the members of the Madras Council, not unnaturally, reflected this suspicion in their treatment of the plenipotentiary. Finding himself cold-shouldered by Du Pré and the Madras Council, Lindsay was not only inclined to be heavily biased in the Nawab's favour, but was also tempted to exceed the spirit of his orders. The Nawab was delighted by the turn of events. The granting of diplomatic recognition by the British government was balm to his long wounded vanity, but Lindsay's flattering attention was an unexpected bonus, which he soon found ways to exploit. Lindsay, and his successor Harland, were, in fact, powerful weapons to use against the Company, and the medium for redressing long standing grievances; particularly the Nawab's grievance against his unruly vassal, the Rajah of Tanjore.

By the time John Macpherson arrived in Madras in February 1771, after the long hold-up on his voyage, Lindsay had been an ally and friend of the Nawab for several months. Three-and-a-half years had elapsed since Macpherson had seen the Nawab, and his stay in Madras on that first visit had lasted for no more than three weeks. In the interim he had certainly pleaded the Nawab's cause, and he believed that he had been instrumental in bringing about the appointment of Lindsay, but, if that was the case, he had done his work too well. Now that the Nawab, a fickle man, had a Royal emissary as his adviser and ally, he saw no point in discussing



his troubles with a former acquaintance who had returned as a humble Writer of the Company, and who had, anyway, been paid in advance for his services with jewels and money. John Macpherson had served his purpose, and, much to his chagrin, found himself shut out of the Nawab's durbar, not only by Lindsay, who had every reason not to countenance a junior servant of the Company who claimed to have given him his power, but also by Lindsay's secretary, George Paterson.

But John Macpherson was not the type to take a rebuff with mild resignation. In England there was his friend James, who for his own sake as well as John's would make the Nawab see how ungrateful he had been. The trouble was that James was not quite as influential as John supposed, and like many people who are obliged to rely on friends at the centres of power thousands of miles away, he assumed that James's inability to act was due to laziness or indifference. As will be seen, the truth was that, in spite of James's pretence to be lazy, he was doing all he could to help John, in between long spells of literary effort. In the absence of the rewards he had been promised by North, James was providing for his expensive life in London by writing books, and had embarked on the most productive period of research and publication in his life. In addition to the letters he wrote for the press, James's output in the next few years included four major works and a long and important pamphlet. In 1771 he published An Introduction to the History of

Great Britain and Ireland, or an Inquiry into the Origin, Religion, Manners, Government, Courts of Justice /&c/ of the Ancient Britons. This was followed in 1773 by The Iliad of Homer, translated into prose; and then by two works in 1775: A History of Great Britain from the Restoration to the Accession of the House of Hanover, and the more important and controversial Original Papers, containing the Secret History of Great Britain from the Restoration to the Accession of the House of Hanover, to which are prefixed extracts from the Life of James II, as written by himself. Editions of all of them were published in London, and all of them, especially the last, brought a spate of angry criticism. The first of the pamphlets which can be definitely ascribed to James Macpherson - The Rights of Britain asserted against the Claims of America, being an Answer to the Declaration of the General Congress - appeared at the very end of 1775.

Commenting on the first of these publications, James said in May 1771:

"The Introduction a L'Histoire goes of better than I imagined. The whole impression is almost sold:" 1

and in November 1771:

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1. Macpherson MSS./1, 4/2, James Macpherson to John Macpherson, 9 May. [1771].

"The Introduction went off as well as could be expected for so dry a subject. An Edition is almost gone, and I am preparing another with considerable additions for the press. It has been allowed to have had merit: and those who like it worst say the language is nervous and elegant. I hear praise with a wonderful indifference. Not to be deemed a Blockhead is sufficient for a person whose chief vice vanity is not."<sup>1</sup>

The work, which was largely based on the manuscript of John Macpherson's father,<sup>2</sup> was bitterly attacked as a piece of Celtic impertinence, but David Hume,<sup>3</sup> although he did not agree with its conclusions, found that it contained "a great deal of genius and good writing", and sent James Macpherson a message of congratulations through their mutual friend Alexander Dow.<sup>4</sup> In the following year a serious attempt was made to refute it by John Whitaker in his Genuine History of the Britons Asserted - but this did not stop it reaching a third edition. Whitaker's refutation

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1. Macpherson MSS./1, 4/6, James to John Macpherson, 17 November 1771.
  2. Even the title of James Macpherson's Introduction to the History of Great Britain ... bore a great resemblance to the full title of the Rev. John Macpherson's work, see p. 111, n. 3.
  3. Saunders, p. 218.
  4. Edinburgh Monthly Magazine, September 1810, quoting D. Hume to A. Dow, u.d., /1771/. In 1769 Alexander Dow had been the host in London of a gathering, which included James and John Macpherson, David Hume, John Home, Dr. John Douglas (brother of Mrs. Anderson of the British Coffee House), David Garrick and Alexander Carlyle (see Carlyle's Autobiography, op. cit., p. 530). This seems to have been the first time that David Hume and James Macpherson had met each other after the fuss over Temora.

was almost certainly the result of frustration, because, as James had told John in a letter he sent him in March 1771:

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"A Dull Scotch Presbyterian Parson having come up to town, in the month of October last [1770], with two immense quartos on the origin and antiquities of the British nations, I was induced to furbish up my dissertations on that subject - and to add as many more, in order to get the start of the heavy rogue; and behold some copies are herewith sent. One copy is my present to you - or if you please - all ere mine to be given away to as many of your friends as you chuse; or to be used in a Madrass little house, for I believe the paper is of a delicate softness.

I have my reasons for having as many off the Stage as soon as possible; for I shall, perhaps, carry down the History near our own times - and you may suppose I do not chuse to be at that trouble for nothing; and the Phicheait our aig an Eglais nua <sup>2</sup> Becket at the New Church (now St. Mary le Strand) thinks that merit consists in numbers." 3

1. John Whitaker (1735-1808), was not a Scottish Presbyterian minister, but an Anglican clergyman born in Manchester; and a Fellow of Corpus Christi Coll., Oxford. Why James Macpherson thought he was a Scot (and continued to speak of him as such in the "advertisement" to the second edition of the Introduction.) is not clear. Whitaker, who was the preacher at the Berkeley Chapel in London, was so little known that Macpherson probably assumed he was Scottish on account of the subject of his rumoured history, which included references to the Scots. See John Nichols, Literary Anecdotes of the 18th Century, London, 1812, Vol. 3, pp. 101-106. (hereafter cited as Literary Anecdotes). Referring to James Macpherson's remarks in the advertisement to the second edition of the Introduction. John Macpherson said: "your answer to the Reverend Whitacre sic made me happy for at least an hour. Poor man; Hard I dare say has he laboured - and light have you made of him." (Macpherson MSS./1, 39/4, 1 October 1772).
2. Thomas Becket was one of James Macpherson's publishers.
3. Macpherson MSS./1, 4/4, James to John Macpherson, 25 March 1771.

Although James was working on his history, it was the translation of The Iliad of Homer that he brought out next. This work, which was completed in three months, was partly inspired by the encouragement which James Macpherson was given by the Edinburgh literati. While he was working on it in late 1772, Dr. Hugh Blair wrote:

"I am exceedingly glad to hear that you have undertaken Homer. Ferguson's idea that you were a proper person for such a work is not new. Ever since your translation of Ossian, we have often been saying the same in this country; and, if I mistake not, I have more than once told you so." 1

The attitude of Blair was not echoed by English scholars. After a general attack on James's translation in the Critical Review in March 1773, there was an outcry against the work, and James was ridiculed for "parading Homer in a plaid and a kilt." 2 The Scottish contingent of his friends in London, particular Dr. John Elliott of Cecil Street, did everything they could to defend it, but it was Dr. William Robertson, the Principal of Edinburgh University, who sang its loudest praise:

"It is," he told James, "the only translation in which Homer appears like an ancient poet in his own simple magnificence. .. The translation

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1. See Sir David Brewster's article in the Edin. Encyclopaedia.

2. Saunders, p. 223.

is very happy, and the force of the original is conveyed in beautiful and flowing language. I am persuaded that when the first rage and clamour of the English subsides, this will be the judgment universally received." 1

Robertson was an optimist: not only did the attacks subside, but also the interest; and the translation has attracted little or no attention since. James Macpherson's re-appearance on the scene as a translator may, however, have sharpened the interest being taken in him by Dr. Samuel Johnson, who, in 1773, made a point of discussing the Fingalian epics with many of the Highlanders he encountered in that year on his famous tour of the Hebrides.<sup>2</sup> Macpherson got wind of Johnson's intention to print some extremely damaging comments on his Gaelic works, and tried to forestall their appearance by sending polite letters to Johnson through William Strahan, the publisher.<sup>3</sup> When this approach failed James turned to violent threats, and the result was an exchange of savage insults on paper in early 1775,<sup>4</sup> when Johnson called Macpherson's bluff and silenced him.

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1. See Edin. Encyclopaedia.
  2. See Boswell's Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson, LL.D., 1773. ed. F.A. Pottle and C.H. Bennet, London & Yale, 1963, *passim*.
  3. For the full texts of the Macpherson-Strahan-Johnson correspondence see Antiq. Notes (2nd ser.) pp. 400-402.
  4. *ibid.*, loc. cit.

Both the translation of The Iliad and the quarrel with Johnson interrupted James's work on British history, which he had first mentioned to John in March 1771.

1

In that year Sir John Dalrymple of Cranstoun, a Lowland baronet, had brought out the first volume of his Memoirs of Great Britain and Ireland, from the dissolution of the last Parliament of Charles II until the sea-Battle off La Hogue, which was based on original documents in British and French official archives. The appearance of the second (and what was intended as the final) volume of this work in 1773 encouraged William Strahan to pester David Hume for the last volume of Hume's extensive survey of British history, which had been completed as far as the Glorious Revolution of 1688, but had been taken no further.

2

When Hume made no response to his pleas, Strahan told him:

"I altogether despair of seeing a continuation of your history from yourself; but I have some notion it may be done by some other hand; perhaps Sr. John Dalrymple or Mr. Macpherson." 3

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1. Sir John Dalrymple, later Dalrymple-Hamilton-Macgill (1726-1810), 4th Bart. of Cranstoun. His kinsman, Sir Hew Dalrymple, was a savage critic of James Macpherson's Fingal and Temora (see S.R.O., Hamilton-Dalrymple of North Berwick Muniments, G.D. 110/1171).
  2. See J.A. Cochrane, Dr. Johnson's Printer: The Life of William Strahan, London, 1964, pp. 55-56.
  3. Printed in Hume to Strahan, p. 258, n. 9.

Hume, who told one of his friends, Adam Smith, that James Macpherson had "the  
<sup>1</sup>  
 most anti-historical head in the universe", was not pleased with the suggestion.

"Macpherson, he informed Strahan, "has style and spirit, but is hot-headed, and consequently without judgment. The knight [sic, baronet] has spirit but no style, and still less judgment than the other." <sup>2</sup>

Hume was, perhaps, less than just to Macpherson and Dalrymple, both of whom took the trouble to use the privilege of inspecting archives in a way that Hume never did. Strahan, however, was not willing to wait any longer for work from Hume, and he gave the job to Macpherson. Strahan also paid £300 to Nicholas

<sup>3</sup>  
 Jernegan so that Macpherson could use the MSS. which had been collected by Thomas

<sup>4</sup> <sup>5</sup>  
 Carte. Further help was provided by Matthew Duane, who gave Macpherson full access,

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1. Quoted in Life of Hume, Vol. 2, p. 467.

2. Printed in Hume to Strahan, p. 256.

3. Nicholas Jernegan (d. after 1778), son of Henry Jernegan (d. 1761), goldsmith of London. He married Elizabeth Carte (née Brett), widow of Thomas Carte. After her death he inherited her first husband's MSS. in which he was given a life interest. At his death they passed to Bodleian Library, Oxford. While in his keeping, Jernegan obtained £200 from Lord Hardwicke for their use; £300 from Strahan (on behalf of Macpherson); and £50 (in 1778) from their eventual owners, the Bodleian Trustees. See Literary Anecdotes, Vol. 2, pp. 513-514.

4. Thomas Carte (1686-1754), son of Rev. Samuel Carte, Prebendary of Lichfield. In 1743 he issued his proposal for a history of Britain, but its heavy bias in favour of the Jacobites postponed its publication until 1747, when it was received with great hostility. Two subsequent volumes received similar criticism. The extracts and manuscripts upon which his work was based passed to his widow, and then to her second husband Nicholas Jernegan, and finally to the Bodleian Library. For Carte's career see Literary Anecdotes, Vol. 2, pp. 471-518.

5. Matthew Duane (c. 1703-1785), of Lincoln's Inn; F.R.S.; F.S.A.; and Trustee of the British Museum. For his career see Literary Anecdotes, Vol. 3, pp. 497-498.



without charge, to ten volumes of papers of the house of Brunswick-Lüneburg covering the period from 1701 until after George I was on the throne of England.

The Carte papers were valuable as they contained extracts of letters written by

<sup>1</sup>  
Nairne, who was for many years one of the under-secretaries at the Stuart court in exile. They were, nonetheless, extracts, and Macpherson felt it was necessary to consult the originals, which were kept in the Scots College in Paris. On 1st April 1774, James Macpherson told his friend John: "I go to France in search of manuscripts in a very few days."<sup>2</sup>

In the preface to his History of Great Britain...(1775), James Macpherson confirmed that he examined the collection of Jacobite papers in the Scots College. He also stated that he had obtained introductions from Count Patullo<sup>3</sup> "and others" to the French foreign minister, the Duc d'Aiguillon, who gave him permission to inspect certain documents in the French diplomatic archives. Among the "others" who helped James, but whom he did not wish to name, may have been John Macpherson's

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1. David Nairne was the under-secretary to James II and his son Prince James Stuart from 1688 to 1713.
  2. Macpherson MSS,/1, 4/13, James to John Macpherson, 1 April 1774.
  3. In spite of its foreign sound "Patullo" is a Scots surname, and is derived from two places called Pittilloch, one near Freuchie, Fife; the other in Glenfarg, Perthshire. The Count was probably Henry Patullo (or Pattullo), a Scotsman, whose pioneer work on agronomy, Essai sur l'Amelioration des Terres, was published in Paris in 1758. In it Patullo stated that he had resided in France for over ten years (i.e. from before 1748) and had benefitted from royal favours. In 1772 Patullo, who was still living in France, had a second work, called An Essay upon the Cultivation of the Lands and Improvements of the Revenues of Bengal, published/...

friend, Colonel John Grant de Blairfindy, who was not only the nephew of the Abbe

<sup>1</sup>  
Robert Grant, President of the Scots College in Douai, and a cousin of John

<sup>2</sup>  
Farquharson, Prefect of Studies at the same place; but was also a trusted subordinate

<sup>3</sup>  
of the Duc d'Aiguillon. It is reasonable to assume that the custodians of Jacobite papers would not have allowed any person to see, let alone use, their documents until they were sure that the privilege would not be abused; and Grant de Blairfindy

3. (continued) published in London. Although highly critical of the British administration in Bengal, Patullo suggested remedies which were later adopted, and he is regarded as one of the first advocates of 'Permanent Settlement' (see: A Rule of Property for Bengal - An Essay on the Idea of Permanent Settlement, Ranajit Guha, Paris, 1963, pp. 42-49). James Boswell met Henry Patullo at the Scots College in Paris in January 1766, and noted that he spoke in "braid Scots" (see: Boswell on the Grand Tour - Italy, Corsica and France, ed. F. Brady and F.A. Pottle, London & Yale, 1955, p. 281).

1. Abbé Robert Grant (d. 1784). See Maison de Grant, op. cit., pp. 60-61 and 363.
2. John Farquharson (d. after 1777), was the grandson of Francis Farquharson of Finzean, whose daughter Frances (wife of John Garden of Ballamore) was the mother of Barbara (wife of John Grant, 4th of Blairfindy), whose son was Colonel John Grant de Blairfindy: see L.O., 1-G/234. As a Vatican missionary in the Highlands, John Farquharson collected a volume of Gaelic poems from the Strathglass district of Inverness-shire before the '45 Rising. These poems were lodged at the Scots College in Douai, but were destroyed when the College was gutted by fire during the French Revolution. Farquharson saw (and approved of) James Macpherson's Gaelic works in 1766, but claimed he had gathered much more material than James; see Saunders, pp. 316-317.
3. In May 1773 Grant de Blairfindy introduced a "personnage anonyme nommé Junius" to the Duc d'Aiguillon: see Correspondence secrète du Comte de Broglie avec Louis XV (1756-1774), ed. Didier Ozanam and Michel Antoine, Paris, 1961, Vol. 2 (1767-1774), p. 402. In July 1774 Grant again referred to Junius in a report to the Comte du Muy. See Jour. Mod. Hist., Vol. 4, (1932), pp. 70-71 - A New Document on the Identity of Junius, Frank Monaghan. Both of Grant's reports show that he was in the service of, and trusted by, the French foreign minister.

was one of the best people available in France to test the sympathies of his fellow Highlander and fellow Jacobite James Macpherson. If this was the case, then Macpherson more than justified any trust that had been placed in him.

When the Original Papers, in two volumes, were published in 1775 they raised a storm of protest from the critics, who attacked the work, especially the part devoted to extracts from the autobiography of James II, as Jacobite propaganda.

<sup>1</sup> Horace Walpole, <sup>2</sup> Charles James Fox, <sup>3</sup> Arthur Parnell, <sup>4</sup> Sir Winston Churchill and <sup>5</sup> Lord George Montagu-Douglas-Scott have, among others, allowed their belief that James Macpherson was a literary fraud to prejudice their assessment of him as an historian, and all of them have tried to show that he falsified his evidence in his Original Papers, particularly where it concerned any of their ancestors. These

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1. The Letters of Horace Walpole, ed. Paget Toynbee, Vol. 8, p. 171; Vol. 9, p. 439 and Vol. 10, p. 135.
  2. C.J. Fox, A History of the Early Part of the Reign of James II, London, 1808, pp. xx-xci (intro.).
  3. A. Parnell, Macpherson and the Nairne Papers, in E.H.R., Vol. 12, (1897), pp. 254-284.
  4. Winston S. Churchill, Marlborough: His Life and Times, London, 1933, Vol. 1, p. 359.
  5. Lord George Scott, Lucy Walter: Wife or Mistress, London, 1947, pp. 18-21, and 208-212.

charges have been answered. In two defences of Macpherson's work, J.F. Chance<sup>1</sup> and Godfrey Davies<sup>2</sup> have demonstrated by careful examinations of his text that, apart from some careless slips and relatively unimportant emendations, the evidence supplied in the Original Papers can be trusted. And, in the most recent article on the subject, Professor D.B. Horn has given both James Macpherson and Sir John Dalrymple the credit they deserve as historians. Professor Horn writes:

"It is not too much to say that, so far as British history was concerned, Dalrymple and Macpherson between them added more information to the store of historical knowledge than the rest of their [Scottish] contemporaries put together. But, unlike many present-day researchers, they were not content merely to accumulate new facts. They believed firmly that a historian worthy of the name, not a mere antiquarian, must combine the new with the old and present a synthesis for the edification of the reading public. If Sir Charles Firth was right in thinking that 'what really antiquated the historians of the eighteenth century was .. the growth of the evidence', Dalrymple and Macpherson have much to answer for. Their works are still frequently used and referred to by present-day historians, largely because their work was so well done that no one

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1. J.F. Chance, Macpherson's 'Original Papers', in E.H.R., Vol. 13, (1898), pp. 533-549.
  2. G. Davies, Macpherson and the Nairne Papers, in E.H.R., Vol. 35, (1920), pp. 367-376. Both Chance's and Davies's articles were ignored by Churchill and Scott.

has found it necessary to republish most of the documents they contributed to the store of knowledge on British history from the Restoration to the accession of the house of Hanover. Some of the material they published is no longer to be found in the archives and the leading scholars who today work on this period constantly refer to the documents published by these two Scottish historians nearly two hundred years ago." 1

The publication of the Original Papers in early 1775 was immediately followed by A History of Great Britain..., which covered the same period as the Original Papers, but contained less documentation and more commentary, and was much easier to follow for the general reader. In a letter he sent to his friend John on 14th January 1775, James wrote:

"I have just finished and sold the History of this country from the Restoration to the death of Q. Anne. It is a very interesting period and my facts are new. I think it is tolerably well written. I was in France some part of the summer [of 1774]. During the rest of that season in a small and very pretty retreat I have on Putney Common.

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1. D.B. Horn, Some Scottish Writers of History in the Eighteenth Century, in S.H.R., Vol. 40, (1961), pp. 1-18. The passage quoted is on p. 15.

1

Macaulay was with me a month or two." 2

Four months later James was able to add:

"Chuir missa amach an History. I have put out (published) the History<sup>7</sup>.

It is wonderfully well received. I find that the Purser of this ship going to India carries out several copies for sale, so that I have not sent you any. Indeed, I had but six, and these I was obliged to give to persons from whom I had papers." 3

1. Alexander Macaulay was one of three men of that name known to both the Macphersons - and this has made identification difficult. In the present writer's B.Litt. thesis on Lauchlin Macleane (Macleane (1773-1778), p. 155, n. 4), he made the mistake of naming the elder brother of the political journalist Hugh Macaulay-Boyd, né Macaulay (1746-1794) as the intimate friend of the Macphersons. Hugh Macaulay-Boyd, and his elder brother Alexander Macaulay certainly moved in the same circles as the Macphersons, and they must have been known to each other, but there is no proof that they were on intimate terms. The Alexander Macaulay who sometimes lived with either James or John Macpherson, and became dependent on them financially, was certainly a Gaelic speaker, and wrote some of the Macphersons' letters in that language. This fact excludes Hugh Macaulay-Boyd's brother and narrows the choice to two other men. The first of these sent Dr. Hugh Blair a letter (dated 25 Jan. 1764 at Edinburgh) in support of the authenticity of James Macpherson's Gaelic works (see Rep. Cttee. Highland Soc., App. 1, pp. 23-27), and is referred to in a letter from Rev. Donald Macleod, minister of Glenelg, to Blair as "Mr. Alexander Macaulay, the Highland Chaplain" (*ibid.*, p. 28). This man is probably identical with a student who was a native of Inverness-shire and attended King's College, Aberdeen as a bursar from 1751-1755 (see Roll of Alumni..., *op. cit.*, p. 77). The difficulty is his occupation, and the probability that he was also identical with "The Rev. Alexander Macaulay" who replaced the Rev. Henry Pope as Chaplain of Marjoribanks Regiment in the Scots Brigade of the Dutch army in 1765 (see Papers illustrating the History of the Scots Brigade, ed. James Ferguson, Vol. 2, p. 482 [Scottish Hist. Soc. No. 35, 1899]) and remained in that capacity in Holland until 1779 (*ibid.*, Vol. 3, pp. xiii-xiv, intro., [Scottish Hist. Soc. No. 38, 1901]). The Rev. Alexander Macaulay could not have been in England at the times shown by the Macphersons' letters. This leaves the Alexander Macaulay who was described by James Macpherson as "Leach beg" or "the little doctor" (Macpherson MSS./1, 4/4, 25 March 1771), and who (in Dr. I.F. Grant's opinion, see above, p. 155, n. 1.) may have been the "Black Doctor of Ebst In Skye" referred to by John Macpherson in the letter he sent to Norman Macleod of Macleod in 1769. The "Leach beg" was recommended to Warren Hastings by James Macpherson on 9 June 1781 (B.M. Add. MSS. 29149, f. 166) as follows: "The express who carries the Company's packets to Bengal<sup>7</sup> is Mr. Alex<sup>r</sup> Macaulay, an intimate friend of Mr. John Macpherson as well as of mine. At a period of life, in which others are inactive, he has the spirit of adventure so far as to try India to mend his situation in life. He is an honourable and honest man. As such I introduced him to our friend Mr. Sullivan, who has given him the Company's packet as the excuse and the means of his journey." Although/...

James, who had just suffered a humiliating rebuff from the pen of Samuel Johnson, must have shut his mind to all criticism, because his history was not "wonderfully well received". David Hume, for instance, told Macpherson's publisher on 13th November 1775 that it was "one of the most wretched productions that ever came from his press"<sup>1</sup>; and what Hume said privately was repeated publicly by men such as Horace Walpole. Unpopularity did not, however, stop Macpherson's work going into a second edition, and he received £3,000 from Strahan for its copyright.<sup>2</sup> From the proceeds of this and his other publications James Macpherson not only bought his country retreat on Putney Common in 1774, but was also able to tell John in February 1776:

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1. (continued) Although there is an inference of advancing years, it is possible that this Alexander Macaulay was the student who received a bursary from the Synod of Glenolig in 1762 (at the same time as John Macpherson, see above, p. 96, n. 1.) and was asked to return it in 1799, when he was described as "of Naples" (*ibid.*, loc. cit.). John Macpherson, in the later part of his life, was an associate of Duke Leopold of Tuscany, and Macaulay may have drifted to Italy as a result of this connection. Assuming Macaulay was the fellow-bursar of John Macpherson, it is more than likely that he was nephew of the Rev. John and the Rev. Kenneth Macaulay; perhaps the son of their eldest brother Aeneas Macaulay (of Harris), see Fasti Ecc. Scot., op. cit., Vol. 7, p. 189.
  2. Macpherson MSS./1, 3/14, James to John Macpherson, 14 January 1775.
  3. *ibid.*, 4/15, James to John Macpherson, 10 April 1775.
  1. Printed in Hume to Strahan, p. 308.
  2. This sum was first given by Sir David Brewster in his article on James Macpherson in the Edin. Encyclopaedia.

1

"I now have a small house in No. 9 Manchester Buildings, where I contrive once a week to give a saddle of mutton and a bottle of Claret to half-a-dozen friends. I sometimes breathe the air on Putney Common. In short, I live now "mar dhuine uasal" - ach 's môr mo chostas. In short, I live now "like a gentleman" - but great are my expenses." 2

John Macpherson made ~~z~~ few remarks on James's literary works. One of his rare comments occurs in his letter of 30th September 1774, when he lashed James's critics, after referring to Alexander Dow's latest tragedy Sethona (which had been produced at Drury Lane in January 1774). He wrote:

"I have read Sethona. It is a good Play, full of Situations and Sentiments that strike the Heart. And, by the bye, I suspect the human heart in Drury Lane now must be positively struck to feel.

The Reviewers - those vermin that feed on the Slime of Literature in Garrets - that are only important from nothing - and that even a foolish Public relishes... these Existences are, I find, so entirely hostile to you that they will, as far as they can, Damn all the Literature you either compose or protect. You must write in your leisure hours a Periodical <sup>3</sup> Dunciad. Trace the Reptiles

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1. Manchester Buildings was a row of bleak tenements by the River Thames (near the site of the present New Scotland Yard), and during the 18th and early 19th centuries were occupied mostly by M.P.'s or people connected with politics. Their dinginess and their occupants were described by Charles Dickens in Nicholas Nickleby. See also: Henry B. Wheatley, London: Past and Present, London, 1891, Vol. 1, p. 460 et seq.
  2. Macpherson MSS./1, 4/21, James to John Macpherson, 10 February 1776.
  3. Alexander Pope's Dunciad was a scathing satire in verse, in which he denounced his enemies and critics.



to their Crevices, and have them smoked out of their shadow of entity like Bugs.

I really wish you not to publish your new History till I am on the spot. Causticus [John himself] has sometimes such a variety of Idea/s that you would select some curious ones from the mass; and it would be nearly a Similar amusement to that we often have here - (hitting of Pariar Dogs from a Pallet Bar) - throwing dirt at your Enemies." 1

Even if John's request for a postponement of the history's publication was seriously meant, it could not have been heeded; because the above letter did not reach James until after the book was published. Anyone in England who was dealing with people in India, and vice versa, was frequently frustrated by slow communications; a circumstance which could not be overcome, but did not lessen the anxiety of men such as John Macpherson. He was convinced that his progress was in the hands of his friend James, and he expected good news by every ship that arrived in Madras.

When the news John expected did not materialise, he assumed that the reason was indolence or indifference on the part of James, who, instead of dispelling this assumption, adopted the pose of a languid man about town, and admitted that he was lazy. The truth was quite the reverse. It has already been shown that far from

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1. Macpherson MSS./1, 39/7, John to James Macpherson, 30 September 1774.

being lazy, James produced more books between 1771 and 1775 than at any other period of his life. It can also be shown, by an examination of his letters to John, that he did all he could in that period to help himself and John in the political line. On the 14th November 1770 James wrote:

"..I flatter myself you will be well pleased to hear something concerning the State of India politics. You, by this time, know the nature of the commission sent out to Sir John Lindsay. General  
<sup>1</sup>  
 or Colonel Monson was kept here, it is said by the tears of an affectionate spouse; though I conjecture, yet the thing was so trivial that I did not inquire, that there were some political reasons to fix him here. North has weathered the point of sedition last session; and he is now to all appearance a fixed Minister. Fortune has not been less favourable to him than abilities. Many of the Leaders of the opposite party have been cut off by Death. ... Sir George  
<sup>2</sup>  
 Colebrooke, in the Course of the Summer, made up matters in Downing Street. A tendency to a coalition has through time grown into friendship. East India politics are settled. Sullivan comes in as a

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1. George Monson (1730-1776), 3rd son of John, 1st Baron Monson, and a cousin of the Marquess of Rockingham. Obtained a commission in the 1st Foot (Grenadier) Gds. in 1750; rose to be Lt. Colonel-Commandant 96th Foot by 1761; in 1763 promoted to Brigadier General (in India only). M.P. for Lincoln 1754-68. By the Regulating Act of 1773 he was appointed as "third of council" in the new Supreme Council of Bengal. His wife, Anne, daughter of Henry, 1st Earl of Darlington, was a shrew, who spread malicious and mendacious rumours about Warren Hasting's origins.
  2. Colebrooke, the Chairman of the E.I. Co., was veering towards a coalition with Laurence Sullivan, who was ousted from the direction in April 1770; and this coalition had been engineered by North. By supporting the Administration from October 1770, Sullivan, with the help of North, made sure of his restoration as a Director in 1771.

Director without his party. .. No opposition now exists in Leadenhall  
<sup>1</sup>  
 Street; even George Johnstone is in firm friendship with Sir George  
 [Colebrooke]. You may therefore look upon a permanency [sic] in the  
 Direction as certain; and, I believe, the Ministry are rivetted to the  
 Cabinet. ...

Now to private concerns. I remain in statu quo: nothing done, nor do  
 I believe ever there will. Promises are repeated, but the ingratitude,  
 from its magnitude, astonishes. The whole weight of the summer fell  
<sup>2</sup>  
 upon your friend [James himself]. He supported it with perseverance  
 that awakened the Nation. Nothing was mentioned, nothing opposed but  
 his. He appeared everyday, and even his enemies owned that he was a  
 damned clever fellow. The incommensurables of friends were great, their promises  
 frequent and large - but nothing done.

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1. After his recall as Governor of West Florida in 1767, Johnstone began to take an active interest in politics and East India affairs. As he was opposed to Government interference in the Company's business he was first drawn towards the Rockingham group, whose supporters strongly opposed intervention. But Johnstone, who later fell out with the Rockinghams over their recognition of American independence, was an erratic person, who swung from one political or Company faction to another. In 1770, as Macpherson pointed out, he was friendly with Ministerial supporters. Johnstone, however, was far from well. On 26th March 1771, James told John (Macpherson MSS./1, 4/5): "Poor Gov<sup>r</sup> Johnstone, as the last resource, has gone about three weeks ago, to Lisbon for his health." He recovered, and was back in politics by 1772.
  2. From Appendix 2 it can be seen that in 1770 the only letters written by James Macpherson, which can be proved to be his, were five in number; 2 as Pericles (in February and March); 2 as Mutius Scaevola (also in February and March) and 1 as Junius Asiaticus (in February). Yet he infers that "the whole weight of the summer" fell on his shoulders, and that in that period "he appeared everyday. This can only mean that James Macpherson (who certainly did not write in the Public Advertiser under his own name or initials during the summer of 1770) must have adopted one or more new pseudonyms which cannot, with the evidence at present available, be identified.

How things will turn out I cannot divine. There is perhaps an intention of making a merit of Ingratitude but - you may guesse [<sup>sic</sup>] the rest. I speak obscurely, but you understand me. It is necessary to guard against accidents, under the uncertainty that the distance of India occasions.

Robert [<sup>1</sup>Macpherson] has drawn the gloom of the Hills of Tulochromb on the native darkness of his countenance. He has not yet obtained [<sup>2</sup>his] lease though he is in possession of his farm: the shuffling here is inconceivable. I was at Edinburgh this summer. I believe I can inclose to you a letter from Dr. Robertson. I stayed only ten days; it was about Lochlaggan matters. I defeated there, by assiduity and management, the whole force of St[<sup>3</sup>uart-] Mackenzie's interest - and what

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1. Robert Macpherson (see above p. 183, n. 3.) was a member of the Banchor family, who had opened litigation concerning the lease of lands in Badenoch in 1767.
  2. Tulochromb, or correctly Tullochcróm, is near Aberarder on the west side of Loch Laggan.
  3. Dr. William Robertson, Principal, Edinburgh University.
  4. Loch Laggan was part of the territory held by Cluny-Macpherson before the '45. James Macpherson was therefore referring to matters affecting his chief's lands.
  5. James Stuart-Mackenzie, né Stuart (c. 1719-1800), of Rosehaugh; 2nd son of John Stuart Earl of Bute; nephew of the 2nd and 3rd Dukes of Argyll; and brother of John Stuart, 3rd Earl of Bute. He succeeded to the Rosehaugh estates (which had belonged to his great-grandfather Sir George Mackenzie) in 1723, when he assumed the additional surname of Mackenzie. He married his cousin, Lady Elizabeth Campbell, daughter of 2nd Duke of Argyll in 1749. He was Envoy to Turin 1758-61; P.C. 1761; and Lord Privy Seal 1763-65, and 1766-1800. In 1761, after Argyll's death, he took over the management of the Bute-Argyll interest in Scotland from Gilbert Elliot. He took his duties seriously, and was absorbed in the management of the annexed Jacobite estates and in his job as the "whip" of the Scottish M.P.s. He became Lord Privy Seal on his brother's resignation as head of the administration, and continued as Scottish minister until the fall of George Grenville. He was restored as Lord Privy Seal by Chatham, and gradually re-asserted himself under Grafton. His initial value to North in 1770 and 1771 soon declined, and by 1774 his influence was almost gone. Although disliked by many people, especially Bedford, he was considered to be "a man of strict honour". See Lady Haden-Guest's article in House of Commons: 1754-1790, Vol. 3, pp. 503-507.

is more I hope to do it here, and to acquire magna cum gloria gentis  
[with great glory for the clan] the lands for the Chief [Duncan Macpherson  
of Cluny]." 1

A postscript, dated 20th November, followed:

2

"The alarm of the ship's sailing a week ago came from Mayne, and you need not be surprized that he is a few days too precipitate. Alas! for Loo! Pam is forever over in Jermyn Street. His reign is at an end. Poor Mrs. Mayne expired in the first week of Last August. She was ill only a few days: Mayne is comforted, as good Husbands are generally resigned to the will of heaven on these subjects. But if M. has lost a wife John Home has got one. But such another. .. Sickly, decrepid, crippled, deaf, deformed, meagre, old and infirm: the very representative, the Envoy of

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1. Macpherson MSS./1, 4/3, James to John Macpherson, 14 November 1770.
  2. Robert Mayne (1724-1782), Banker, of Jermyn Street, London; 5th son of William Mayne of Powis Logie, Clackmannan. He first appears as a banker in 1770 under the name of Mayne & Needham, but by 1774 the firm had changed its style to Robert Mayne & Co. It was also in 1774 that he first sat as M.P. for Gatton in the interest of his elder brother Sir William Mayne (1722-1794), who was created a baronet in 1763, and was raised to the peerage as Baron Newhaven in 1776. It was the borough of Gatton that James Macpherson attacked as "Pericles" in November 1769 (see above pp.139-140). Robert Mayne became the personal banker of both the Macphersons. In 1782 he went bankrupt and committed suicide, causing losses to many of his friends, including, according to Sir John Elliott (in a letter to Dr. John Douglas, B.M., Egerton MSS. 2185, f. 105), James Macpherson.
  3. "Loo" and "Pam" cannot be identified.
  4. Anne Mayne (d. 1770), daughter of John Knight, a merchant, married Robert Mayne in 1763 as his first wife, but she died without issue. He had issue by his second wife, Sarah, daughter of Francis Otway.

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assembled Diseases. Poor John! - She is a namesake of his own; they have retired to the Country and have bidden an eternal farewell to London.

Though I have pushed things home this last week - nothing is done. I am at a loss how to proceed. Whether to cover things with silence and contempt - or fly into a flame against ingratitude. The Scavan <sup>2</sup> [Bradshaw] is what I always suspected him to be - Vox et pretera nihil [A Voice and nothing else] - a lickspittle; a warm promiser; a sluggish, a cold performer. He has, however, involved himself in the toils; and time will shew how he will extricate himself. The truth is: he has no power. Joseph, if he is known, is not so well known as he was before. But he is an useful witness - but they themselves are living witnesses of more than he ever saw. Things, however, may come to a crisis before the ship sails. If they do you shall hear.

I received your letter of the 8 and 17th of May from Madeira. Without mentioning it - I have already answered it. If anything shall occur in the course of the week you shall have another letter.." 3

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1. Henry Mackenzie (in Life of Home, p. 63) noted the "delicate frame and constantly interrupted health" of John Home's wife. She was Mary Home (b. 1741), daughter of The Rev. William Home (1710-1784), minister of Foggo; (see Fasti Ecc. Scot., op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 16).
  2. This is the first time that James Macpherson referred to Thomas Bradshaw as the "Scavan". From internal evidence in many other letters there is no doubt that Bradshaw and the Scavan were the same person. "Scavan" is not a Gaelic word. Its origin as a code-name was almost certainly in the title of the French Journal des Scavans (see above, p. 77.), which published one of the earliest attacks on James Macpherson's works. In searching for a code-name for Bradshaw which reflected his attitude of contempt, James obviously recalled the French "Scavan" who had criticised him in 1762.
  3. Macpherson MSS./1, 4/3, James to John Macpherson, 20 November 1770 (P.S). In the main body of the letter and in the postscript James used two Latin phrases, both of which were classical quotations; the first from Tacitus, (Hist., 4, 14); the second from the Vulgate. Mr. R.M. Ogilvie, who has seen a list of all the Latin quotations used by James, says that he displayed a wide and deep knowledge of the classics.

Here, for the first time, James asserted his determination to acquire the lands of the Macphersons of Cluny; and he not only claimed that he had defeated the Bute interest in Scotland, but also said he intended to do the same thing in England, in order to achieve his ambition. This was a bold claim. James Stuart-Mackenzie, the brother of James Macpherson's early patron Lord Bute, was beginning to disengage himself from the active political management, but he was still using his influence with Scottish politicians to the advantage of the ministry. By opposing this important supporter of North, Macpherson was, it seemed, risking his employer's displeasure. He was also risking the displeasure of Bute himself, and of Bute's friends, such as John Home, whose wife Macpherson described with such cruelty and disrespect. This, however, is an oversimplified view of a complicated situation, which both the Macphersons often referred to but never clarified. What does seem clear, in the letter of James just quoted, is that in carrying out his duties as a ministerial journalist he had become involved with Thomas Bradshaw and John Macpherson in some secret. In return for his discretion, and for his constant services as a ministerial journalist (especially throughout the summer of 1770), James had been repeatedly promised, but had not yet received, certain rewards. Among those who had made these promises, and was still relied upon in spite of Grafton's fall from power, was Grafton's right-hand man Thomas

Bradshaw, who had "involved himself in the toils" and was a "useful witness", but was not as important as others (not yet named), who were "living witnesses of more than he Bradshaw ever saw."

Having an insight into secrets obviously gave James enough confidence to oppose the Bute family in order to further his private ambitions concerning the lands of Cluny-Macpherson, but he was certainly not strong enough to risk pushing his demands for the promised rewards. Not only did he admit that he was "at a loss how to proceed", but also said that he had considered both contemptuous silence and feigned anger as means of gaining his ends. Rarely do men such as James Macpherson reveal how coolly they calculate the risks they are willing or unwilling to take; or how much they are in command of their emotions. Realising that there was nothing he could do, James spent his frustration by abusing the "Lickspittle" Bradshaw in a private letter to John, to whom he sent a further report on 25th March 1771:

"My dear John: Though we had it not from yourself, I heard of the misfortune which drove you into the Brazils, and the treatment of you by the Portuguese. .. I wrote you in the month of December, and many things public and private have happened, that might amuse you, since that period. The public I leave to the Newspapers; the private receive as follows -  
What you always suspected actually happened. Protestations continued



violent, but the thing was never thought of when my back was turned.

I was chagrined - and ceased: a peremptory demand was made: an evasive answer given. The Scavan was sent trotting with the most violent threats - "There never was any objection but the mode" it was said - The mode was given and the thing is accordingly done; but with the most damnable bad grace in the world. ...

The Scavan is out of all power: <sup>1</sup> Do charra môr Your great friend, i.e. Grafton<sup>2</sup> has nothing to say. Tua North hates him, like the Devil. They undermine one another. Time will discover many things. ...

Little Macaulay is here - The old, besotted, positive, good-natured, little fellow. The Leach beg little Doctor goes on wonderfully: he is hated by, as he is superior to, all; in the mode of collecting Cash. He professes the highest respect and regard for you.

This will be delivered to you by two poor volunteers. The one, Strathy's<sup>3</sup> son, is to remain at Madrass. I need say nothing in his favour, for you remember poor Lachlan Macpherson of Strathmashie. The other goes to

1. It is quite clear from the use made of this term in many of the Macpherson letters that "charra môr" is the Macphersons' code-name for the Duke of Grafton.
2. "Tua" (or Tuath) is the Gaelic word for "North".
3. Strathy is the pet name for Lachlan Macpherson of Strathmashie, a tacksman in Badenoch, who helped James Macpherson with his Gaelic works in 1760 (see above p. 44 n. 1). In his next letter to John, dated the following day, 26 March 1771 (see Macpherson MSS./1, 4/5) James Macpherson wrote: "Strathy's son Alec Alexander Macpherson of Strathmashie, ygr. delivers you this. .. You must get advanced for him any trifle [sic] necessary to fit him out for the field - and then let him take his chance of fortune. Draw upon me at your old friend Mayne's, Banker in Jermy Street, and your draft in favour of any man coming to Europe will be punctually answered."

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Bengal. Sculdudry had so much exhausted the sporan-rippach [shabby purse], that they are but shabbily accoutered. I'll say no more. Your recommendation, I am convinced, will not be wanting.

Sir Al. Ilerich [Sir Alexander (Macdonald of Macdonald and) of the Isles, (Baronet of Sleat)], your old friend, has play'd the Devil in Ealan a chaove Chè aich [The Isle of Mist, i.e. Skye]. Your friend [and uncle] Breaknish [sic, John Macdonald of Breakish] has bought lands in St. John's island [now Prince Edward Island, (Canada)], whither he is soon to remove: preferring a foreign country to the exactions of his Landlord [Sir Alexander Macdonald of Macdonald]. ...

Becket has made up a parcel of new things for you. You Nabobs must pay for your amusements. I have not seen Kirkpatrick but once since you went away: where he has hid himself I know not." 3

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1. Macpherson MSS./4 show no family with the designation "Sculdudry". James must, therefore, have meant to write "Skuldugry", (for "Skullduggery").
  2. James Kirkpatrick (1729-1818), son of Dr. James Kirkpatrick (1702-1770), a cadet of the Closeburn family. He was appointed an Ensign in the Infantry on the Madras Establishment in 1758; was a Cornet and Qtrmstr. of a troop of Cavalry in 1759; promoted Lieut. same year; wounded badly at Madura in 1764; promoted Brevet-Major (Cavalry) in 1765; transferred to Infantry as full Major in 1766; resigned and returned to Britain for the recovery of his health in 1767. By Julia Pigou (his mistress or first wife) he had one son: William Kirkpatrick (1754-1812), later a Major-General, H.E.I.C.S. In 1762 James Kirkpatrick married in Madras, Katherine (died Bombay 1766, aged 22), daughter of Dr. Andrew Munro of the Madras Medical Establishment, and by her had two more sons: George Kirkpatrick (1763-1838), later of the Bombay Civil Service, and later still of Hollydale, near Keston, Kent, (who has descendants alive today); and James Achilles Kirkpatrick (1764-1805), later a Colonel, H.E.I.C.S., who married the Begum Khair-un-Nissa of Hyderabad, with issue (who may have descendants alive today). On his return to Britain in 1767 James Kirkpatrick was, therefore, a widower, with three young children. He did not manage to obtain reinstatement in the Company's forces until 1776, when he was commissioned as a Lt. Colonel, and appointed C. in C. of Fort Marlborough in Sumatra. He was promoted full Colonel and Commander of the Forces of the West Coast of Sumatra in 1779. On his retirement he bought the estate of Hollydale in Kent, where he died. For the above information I am indebted to the late Major V.C.P. Hodson, 9th Bengal Lancers (Hodson's Horse), whose notes and extracts from Company records on the Kirkpatrick family are now at the National Army Museum, Sandhurst; and to the late Gordon Kirkpatrick Maclean of Coll (who died 25 December 1966: see the present writer's biographical article in The Oban Times of 5 January 1967, under the pseudonym "Jacobus"), who loaned me the papers which had belonged to his maternal great-grandfather/...

From this letter it is clear that James had decided to stop writing when the promised rewards failed to materialise. This had brought a reaction. Bradshaw, on behalf of his superior or superiors was sent as an intermediary to threaten James, who was informed that his writings were approved of and were (for some unexplained reason) necessary, but the superiors objected to the "mode". The mysterious "mode was given" by James, and the equally mysterious "thing [was] accordingly done; but with the most damnable bad grace in the world." Or so James thought. He still did not explain, however, how Bradshaw, Grafton and North were concerned in the matter.

The rest of the letter shows that James, who did not know yet how matters stood in India, thought that John was in the more powerful position. Two young Macphersons from Badenoch were recommended to John's care; the first of many Scots, particularly Highlanders, whom the Macphersons found places for in Bengal

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2. (continued) great-grandfather George Kirkpatrick of Hollydale, son of the James Kirkpatrick under discussion. The only article on this Kirkpatrick family is in A Memoir respecting the family of Kirkpatrick of Closeburn in Nithsdale, with notices of some Collaterals, [A/. Kirkpatrick, London, 1858, pp. 60-63 (B.M. Catalogue No. 10816. f. 17)].

3. Macpherson MSS./1, 4/4, James to John Macpherson, 25 March 1771.

or Madras; and James seemed so convinced that John would do well immediately that he referred to him as a "Nabob". Unaware of John's difficulties, James sent a third letter to his friend on 9th May 1771. He said:

"I wrote you lately by two very ill-provided Boys gone in the Rochford... The public affairs here are contained in the Newspapers, which you probably have an opportunity of seeing. ... The affairs of L'isle en air [The Isle of Skye] I left as a task for Macaulay, and the inclosed [not found] is his Lucubration. I have written according to your desire to your Uncle: but I have not heard from him: though I have no reason to believe he is not well.

I am no stranger to the situation of Affairs in the East. Dow wrote to me from Bussorah [Basra] on the 6th January [1771] on his way to the Desarts [sic] of Syria with Coote, who returns home by Land. They are not yet arrived - but they are daily expected. I have some Idea that your affairs in Asia are not in so promising a situation as the Directors wish to make us believe they are. It is, however, needless to enter into [a] dissertation on the subject, which you understand much better than we can do here.

Your friend Kirkpatrick has had an intrigue at Edinburgh, which has made some noise in that sweet capital. The Husband challenged the Gallant to meet him in St. Ann's yard: and when the poor Cocu was parading it there, Kirkpatrick decamped with his wife. This is the substance of a long letter on the subject, which I saw from Edinburgh the other day.

When I was in Scotland last July, Dr. Robinson [sic], Robertson, the University Principal, your friend, committed a letter to my care recommending one Mr. Bruce, a Subaltern in the Madras army, his nephew, for your attention. I lost the letter - but do as if it had arrived safe.

I told you, in my last letter, that a certain affair was done. I was deceived myself and I deceived you. They are a parcel of the most consummate Banditti in the world. They lied - nothing is done, and, after such repetitions of gross breaches of faith, I cannot form any reasonable hopes upon the Subject. I must after all - I believe - sit down, with the comfort of a little revenge. I shall not, however, be precipitate. The only thing the poor Seavan Bradshaw has in his power now, is to say that it was intended, promised, and firmly expected in his own reign, but neither he nor his Constituent have anything at all to say.

Tua North is a great Rasca - everybody complains. He performs no promise - he tells no truth. He has not the manners of a gentleman, nor the art of a low knave. He disoblige where he confers favours - and raises indignation only, when he disgraces himself with procrastination, timidity and indecision. He has not used Pir-clais Pericles, James himself worse than he has done others, and the only alleviation of his guilt is its frequency. . . . Though I abhor the writing of long letters, I like to read them. You favoured me with one which pleased me much from the Cape: do give one, two or three sheets with every ship. Lay your commands, whenever you please, with regard to the affair you mentioned to me in the Post Chaise to Cobham. I know the villainy of certain Persons to your friend almost certainly the Nawab, through various channels. Their behaviour, in short, is no longer a secret here, and I am glad he has the spirit to appeal to a higher Power, though that Power, without being egged on here will be of little service. You remember my opinions on that subject, and I have not altered them since your departure." 1

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1. Macpherson MSS./1, 4/2, James to John Macpherson, 9 May [1771].

The secret still remained a secret, but North was at last named as the person who has neglected to honour his own promises, and the promises made by his predecessor Grafton through Bradshaw, who could do nothing but admit that "it", whatever this might have been, "was intended, promised, and finally expected in his own reign." Although that reign had come to an end, Bradshaw was still in touch with government circles. He had hinted to North in July 1770 that Grafton would like to go to the Admiralty, and he continued to press this matter until April 1772, when he himself was made a Lord of the Admiralty.<sup>1</sup> In other respects Bradshaw's influence was waning fast. He had been provided for with pensions when Grafton had resigned, and had remained at the Treasury, with Grafton's and North's approval, but only until the autumn of 1770, when John Robinson assumed full control of the Treasury as the new Secretary.<sup>3</sup> From the end of 1770 until November 1774, when he died, probably by his own hand,<sup>4</sup> Bradshaw's main link with

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1. See Grafton's Autobiography, op. cit., pp. 260-263.

2. B.M. Add. MSS. 35505, f. 171. Thos. Bradshaw to Robt. Murray Keith, 16 April 1773.

3. John Robinson (1727-1802), eldest son of Charles Robinson, merchant, of Appleby, Westmorland. M.P. for Westmorland 1764-74, and for Harwich 1774-1802. Appointed joint Secretary at the Treasury by North in February 1770, but did not assume full control of his office until later that year. He was, perhaps, one of the shrewdest politicians who served under North. He became increasingly powerful after 1774, and his deep insight into many problems, especially those of the E.I. Co., gave him an effective voice in many decisions; and he was heavily relied upon by the King.

4. See Horace Walpole's Last Journals, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 407.

the government was as Grafton's agent; a role which carried little influence, but enough to interest the Macphersons.

In addition to the secret connected with journalism, James also referred for the second time to the "affair" that he and John had discussed "in the Post Chaise to Cobham."<sup>1</sup> The letter throws no further light on this second mysterious affair, except that it seemed to be connected with India or the Nawab, a subject upon which James had said surprisingly little to date.<sup>2</sup> By 17th November 1771, James had still not heard from John; at least the letter he sent John on that day gave no indication that he had. James wrote:

"The summer has produced too much in quantity to be comprehended in a letter, though the quality is scarce worthy of being committed to paper. Tua North and Birclais Pericles, James himself quarrelled in the beginning of the summer: and both parties lay upon their arms during most of the season, for both were a little afraid [sic] to come to action. The former, notwithstanding a natural want of gratitude, was somewhat sensible of his being in the wrong: and the latter was unwilling to throw

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1. See James Macpherson's letter of 3 March 1770, p. 183 above.
  2. James Macpherson did, however, occasionally send a letter proclaiming the Nawab's cause to the newspapers, under the signature "Junius Asiaticus": see p. 134, n. 1.

away all his services on a piece of revenge. Overtures were at last made: and a treaty was settled. The terms that could be obtained were proposed by Birclais and agreed to by Tua. The tart Birclais has got his former tenure for life: with an addition of two hundred, on another score.

The Loch's wild aires [sic] <sup>1</sup> will be given, in spite of an opposition more formidable than was ever imagined and Robert [Macpherson] will exhilarate his rueful countenance with whisky. Ronald and he have often turned up with their heels [sic] the bushes and made the affrightened brooks change their course: but no blood, of the reddish cast at least, has been spilt.<sup>3</sup> The Scavan [Bradshaw] and his patron [Grafton] behaved through the whole affair like two white-livered dogs, without gratitude, without spirit, without prudence. I have not absolutely quarrelled with them, but let me assure you that I know them to be as great knaves as their abilities will permit. It is too tedious - and perhaps it is improper - to tell you the whole - but trust them not upon any occasion. At the very time they were writing Jesuitical letters, without either head or tail, to Birclais, they were undermining him on the other hand and making professions to his opponents. The thing is past now these four months:

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1. The Loch was Loch Laggan; and James Macpherson was using an obscure phrase to say that The Rev. Robert Macpherson (from Tullochcróm, Loch Laggan-side) had won his lawsuit, in spite of a difficult fight.
  2. Almost certainly Ronald Macdonald, brother of Alexander Macdonald, tacksman of Inverwidden at Aberarder. Ronald and Alexander Macdonald were the leaders of the eighty Macdonalds living in Badenoch. They had treated Robert Macpherson as a friend, but after he had taken court action to dispossess them through Henry Butter, the factor for the Forfeited Estates Commissioners, they became his bitter opponents.
  3. James Macpherson was being cruelly flippant. His description of the grim legal battle between Ronald Macdonald and Robert Macpherson as a contest in which bushes were uprooted and brooks were diverted without blood being spilt, reflects his heartless attitude to a ruthless eviction.



and though passion is intirely vanished, their conduct appears blacker and blacker by the progress of time. They, in short, have no useful passion but fear: and the modest manner in which they were treated for two years could have no good effect upon R[asca]ls; which I have, without even quarrelling with them, had complete demonstration they are. I saw Scavan the other day. He seemed conscious of having been detected, but as I used something of his own duplicity - it was my dear Sir, and my dear friend. Enough of this pitiful subject.

Kirkpatrick, whose love of intrigue has involved him in a scrape - but with an excellent piece - has often written to you on India affairs. The dry detail of India courts I hate to write - but they have this season been very few. It is said the winter will produce something in Parliament: but I who know the inherent timidity of Tue [North] scarce hope for anything decisive. A fumbler in politics, he scarce enters a subject. and when he plays about the surface, he loses all his torpid vigour.

Coote's affair has been before the Court of Directors. They have approved of his conduct, but they have not disapproved of that of Duprè <sup>1</sup> [sic]. The friends of the first say he is to retire: those of the latter are morally certain that he will not be turned out: so that I cannot see how it is possible the General can go out to India at all. In short, my present opinion is that he will not. Dow arrived here with Coote in the month of August [1771]. ...

[Samuel] Hannay writes you. You know my indolence, and you'll readily forgive my want of punctuality. I am affraid [sic] I burthened you last

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1. Having "undefined powers" from the Company as commander-in-chief of their forces in India had given Coote the chance to over-rule and dominate Governor Du Pré in Madras; and Du Pré, not unnaturally, had resented Coote's high-handed and tactless way of directing both military and civil affairs. This personal quarrel was resolved by the Court of Directors in the manner outlined by James Macpherson (see, Love, Vol. 3, p. 3 et seq), but Macpherson opinion about the final outcome was wrong. It was Coote who eventually returned to India, and Du Pré who was recalled in 1773.

season with two youngsters as poor as some E. Indians are rich: but this villainous town is so expensive that nothing can be spared from the current expences." 1

Without resorting to the revenge he had contemplated, James Macpherson had obtained from North a confirmation of his "former tenure for life", by which he undoubtedly meant his sinecures in West Florida, and an additional £200, presumably <sup>2</sup> per annum, "on another score". It would seem, however, that this agreement was confined to promises made by North to James, in his capacity as "Pericles" the ministerial writer, and had nothing to do with other promises involving Grafton and Bradshaw, who are both mentioned in connection with The Rev. Robert Macpherson's claim for a lease of land at Aberarder and Tullochcróm on Loch Laggan-side.

The history of this claim went back to 1746, when Ewan Macpherson, popularly but incorrectly known as "Cluny of the '45" was attainted for his part in the Jacobite rising, and the Cluny lands were forfeited to the Crown as a result of this attainder. The forfeiture was, however, complicated by three factors: firstly,

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1. Macpherson MSS./1, 4/6, James to John Macpherson, 17 November 1771.
  2. James Macpherson's sinecures were confirmed publicly in the Annual Register (1772 edition, p. 100). For these sinecures, and his rewards as a journalist, see above, pp. 93 (and notes) and 179 (and notes).

the fact that Ewan Macpherson, although acting as head of his clan, was only "younger of Cluny" at the time of his attainder; his father, Lachlan Macpherson of Cluny, who did not support the Stuart cause, being alive on the day when the attainder came into force; secondly, that neither Lachlan nor Ewan Macpherson were the superiors of the lands in question, namely, those at Aberarder and Tullochcróm, which were held under contracts of wadset; and thirdly, that the eighty or so Roman Catholic Macdonalds of Badenoch, who had leases of the lands at Aberarder and Tullochcróm believed that their superior was Aeneas Mackintosh of Mackintosh. These factors led to a whole series of legal battles, the first of which was fought between Mackintosh of Mackintosh and the Forfeited Estates Commissioners, the former claiming his rights under a special clause of the Vesting Act of 20 Geo. II (1747). Mackintosh of Mackintosh, who had not taken part in the '45, held that the lands automatically reverted to him as a result of Ewan Macpherson's attainder. Mackintosh of Mackintosh eventually won this battle before the Court of Session on 4th August 1761, but on an appeal by the Commissioners the judgment was reversed. In the next battle Mackintosh of Mackintosh held that Lachlan Macpherson of Cluny had survived the attainder of his son Ewan, and on proof of this being allowed by the Court of Session on 27th July 1763, it was judged that Ewan Macpherson had never held the Cluny lands, which had reverted to Mackintosh

of Mackintosh on the death of Iachlan Macpherson. This decision was adhered to by the Court of Session at a further hearing on 7th December 1763, but was eventually reversed by the House of Lords on appeal from the Forfeited Estates Commissioners, on the grounds that if the Cluny estates did not come to the Crown from Ewan Macpherson's forfeiture under the Vesting Act, then they did come by escheatment to the Crown ob defectum haeredis, as upheld by the Annexing Act of 25 Geo. II (1752). Furthermore, it was found on close investigation that neither Mackintosh of Mackintosh (nor, as later stated, the Duke of Gordon) were the superiors of the lands under dispute, but that the lawful superior was Sir Ludovick Grant of Grant, who refused to enter a claim under the terms of the Vesting Act of 1747. With the complication of the superiority settled, the Barons of the Exchequer appointed a certain Henry Butter as factor for the Forfeited Estates Commissioners on the Cluny estates.

In 1767, Henry Butter was asked by The Rev. Robert Macpherson for a lease of all the lands at Aberarder and Tullochcróm which had been under dispute. Robert Macpherson was willing to pay a rent equal to the total of all the rents being paid by the Macdonald tenants, on condition that all these tenants were evicted, as he wished to turn the area into a profitable sheep walk. A special warrant for eviction was obtained by Butter, who in 1767 brought an action for removing the

Macdonalds before the Sheriff of Inverness. The tenants, led by Ronald Macdonald and his brother Alexander Macdonald, the wadsetter of the farm of Inverwidden at Aberarder, defended the action; and the Sheriff dismissed Butter's action, on the ground that Butter "had no title to sue". Butter, urged on by Robert Macpherson, brought a second action against the Macdonalds in 1768, but again he was thwarted, and again the Sheriff of Inverness decided in favour of the Macdonalds.

The next round has been reported as follows:

"Mr. [Robert] Macpherson was still determined to persevere in his scheme [for turning Aberarder and the surrounding district into a sheep walk], and, through influence [never explained] obtained a third order [in the name of Henry Butter] from the Barons [of the Exchequer] for removing the [Macdonald] appellants; and on this an action was raised in the Court of Session.

In this action the Lord Ordinary (Kennet), on 21st June 1769, after hearing, pronounced an interlocutor ordaining the appellants to remove from their possessions, excepting therefrom, however, Alexander Macdonald, wadsetter of Inverwidden, whom he found entitled to remain in possession of his lands until they were redeemed by the Crown". 1

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1. The Depopulation of Aberarder in Badenoch, 1770, Charles Fraser-Mackintosh, The Celtic Magazine, Vol. 2 (1877), p. 421.

Against this judgment (and its confirmation of 1st August 1769) the Macdonalds of Badenoch once more lodged an appeal, but the Court, although divided in opinion, adhered to Kennet's interlocutor, and on 7th August 1769<sup>1</sup> ordered the evictions to be carried out on Whitsunday 1770. This drove Alexander and Ronald Macdonald, as leaders of their eighty fellow-clansmen, to appeal to the House of Lords. Their pleadings, which summarised the whole history of the complicated case, are printed in an article written in 1877 by Charles Fraser-Mackintosh of Drummond, LL.D., M.P.<sup>2</sup> On the back of the pleadings were endorsed the words of final defeat: "4th April 1770 - Interlocutor affirmed."<sup>3</sup> With the exception of Alexander Macdonald of Inverwidden, the eighty Macdonalds of Badenoch, whose ancestors had held tacks in that area "for above a century past",<sup>4</sup> were ruthlessly evicted by Henry Butter<sup>5</sup> on

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1. For a report of this case see William Maxwell Morison, The Decisions of the Court of Session, (Part 27-28), Edinburgh [1801], pp. 11999-12000; the action of "Henry Butter, factor appointed by the Barons of the Exchequer for the forfeited estate of Cluny, against Ronald and Alexander Macdonald: 7 August 1769."
  2. Celtic Magazine, Vol. 2, op. cit., pp. 418-426.
  3. *ibid.*, p. 420.
  4. *ibid.*, loc. cit.
  5. Henry Butter (fl. 1730-1770) is referred to by Fraser-Mackintosh (*ibid.*, p. 420) as "an unfavourable specimen of that Englishman who does not recross the Border." Butter may have been an "unfavourable specimen" but he was not an Englishman. His immediate ancestors came from Ballechin or Butterston [Butter's town] in Perthshire - see Burke's Landed Gentry, 18th edn., Vol. 1, 1965, sub Butter of Pitlochry. The present Butter of Pitlochry is descended from both Henry Butter, and from James "Fingal" Macpherson, (see Appendix 3).

Whitsunday 1770.

The dispossessed Macdonalds emigrated to America, and the Rev. Robert Macpherson took their place as the sole leaseholder of all the farms in the Aberarder and Tullocherom district, with, of course, the exception of Inverwidden. Almost all the facts given so far come from Fraser-Mackintosh's article, which he based on a private collection, whose owner or whereabouts he never disclosed. It is unfortunate that Fraser-Mackintosh's assertions and quotations cannot be checked from public records, but, remarkable though it may seem, there is no known printed or manuscript source in public archives for this important judgment of the House of Lords, which <sup>one of</sup> the earliest precedents for the infamous "Clearances" of later years. <sup>1</sup> A few facts can, however, be added from the Macpherson correspondence. The first to mention the Macdonalds of Badenoch was John Macpherson in a letter he sent to his

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1. The present writer has tried but failed to find an official (and full) record of this extraordinary legal battle in the University of Edinburgh Law Library, in the National Library of Scotland, and in the Scottish Record Office: and a letter to the Librarian of the House of Lords has also failed to unearth a source. Appeals from Scotland to the House of Lords for the period under discussion are printed in Reports of Cases decided in the House of Lords upon Appeal from Scotland, Vol. 2 (1757-84), ed: Thomas S. Paton, Edinburgh, MDCCCLII, but the Aberarder case is not mentioned in this work. The only brief notice of it is in Morison's The Decisions of the Court of Session, op. cit., p. 12000, where an endnote merely confirms that on 4th April 1770 the Lords "Ordered and adjudged that the appeal of the Macdonalds be dismissed, and that the interlocutor therein complained of be affirmed." The present writer is indebted for the help he received from Mr. John Moffat, M.A., Barrister-at-Law, Lecturer in Public Law in the University of Edinburgh, who made a fruitless search for sources in the Advocate's private library. Mr. Moffat confirmed that the reports of 18th century legal causes, even those heard on appeal to the Lords, are far from complete, and that Paton must have ignored many manuscripts compiled by privately hired law reporters. In Mr. Moffat's opinion the article by Fraser-Mackintosh is obviously based on authentic documents from a private source, and his assessments (save for a few biased remarks about Butter and the Macphersons) can be trusted. It should also be noted that Fraser-Mackintosh concluded/...

cousin, the Rev. Martin Macpherson of Golspie, in June 1769. In it he admitted that his brother, the Rev. Martin Macpherson of Sleat, had offended the "Macdonalds of Badenoch, and those of Sleat,"<sup>1</sup> and this had brought John and his brother Martin a humiliating rebuke from the latter's landlord, Sir Alexander Macdonald of Macdonald, the Baronet of Sleat. As John was living with James Macpherson in 1769 there can be no doubt that James knew about the incident. It may have prompted him to join John in a tribal vendetta against the offending Badenoch Macdonalds, and to settle a few other matters on his own behalf at the same time.

James Macpherson first mentioned the Aberarder clearances on the former Cluny estates at Loch Laggan on 3rd February 1770, when he told John that "Robert's cause comes on tomorrow";<sup>2</sup> an indication that the appeal of the Macdonalds against Butter (and Robert Macpherson) began in the Lords on 4th February. Then in July 1770, three months after the Lords' decision in favour of Butter, James spent ten days in Edinburgh dealing with "Lochlaggan matters",<sup>3</sup> and claimed that while there he had

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1. (continued) concluded his article by writing: "It would be well if others in possession of documents bearing on similar cases would hasten to give them publicity, and thereby add to the store of authentic history," which helps to confirm that Fraser-Mackintosh gleaned his own knowledge from private documents.

1. See above, p. 143.
2. See above, p. 183.
3. See above, pp. 212 and 220.



defeated the Stuart-Mackenzie interest, and intended to do the same thing in England, in order "to acquire magna cum gloria gentis the lands for the Chief <sup>1</sup> i.e. for his second cousin Duncan Macpherson of Cluny<sup>1</sup>." James Stuart-Mackenzie, as manager of the Forfeited Estates Commission, was the person to whom Henry Butter, the Commission's factor on the forfeited lands of Cluny-Macpherson, was responsible. This, perhaps, is the clue to James Macpherson's actions.

Butter, it would seem, was used as an expendable pawn by James and Robert Macpherson in the first of a series of complicated manoeuvres which culminated in 1784 with the full recovery of all the lands of Cluny-Macpherson by James, who (for motives discussed in an earlier chapter) promptly returned them to his clan chief. Butter was the agent who did most of the dirty work concerned with the eviction of Badenoch Macdonalds from Loch Laggan-side. This must have given the Macphersons several kinds of satisfaction. Firstly, it was a Lowlander who had officially evicted the Highlanders; secondly, John and James Macpherson settled their score with a small tribe who had caused the humiliation of John through their paramount chief in Skye, Macdonald of Macdonald; and had probably incited the fury of James by having the effrontery to assert that their hereditary superior in

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1. See above, p. 213.

Badenoch was not Cluny-Macpherson but the Macphersons' traditional enemy, Mackintosh of Mackintosh; and thirdly, and most important of all, it had put part of the Cluny estate back in the sole possession of one Macpherson - Robert (who, as a half-pay chaplain with "a salary of £40 a year", was probably financed<sup>1</sup> by James to act as his nominee or even as his "caretaker"). The only issue that probably had no importance in any of the Macphersons' minds was the fact that the Macdonalds were Roman Catholics, although they might have counted on the possible secret prejudice of some of the Protestant judges to work against the brave Papists, who fought until they were defeated in the highest court in the realm.

Robert Macpherson won the case, but he was still answerable to Henry Butter, the government factor, and so James Macpherson started the process which eventually brought all the Cluny lands into his possession. To effect this, and so remove the now unwanted Butter, James Macpherson went in July 1770 to Edinburgh, where "by assiduity and management"<sup>2</sup> he defeated Butter's master, Stuart-Mackenzie. But success in Scotland was not enough: James still had to defeat Stuart-Mackenzie in England. On 14th November 1770 James could only report that although Robert

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1. Celtic Magazine, Vol. 2, op. cit., p. 421.

2. See above, p. 212.

Macpherson was in possession of his farm, he had not yet obtained the lease of the Loch Laggan lands, and this was due to "shuffling"<sup>1</sup> or procrastination on the part of unnamed people in London.

A year later, however, on 17th November 1771, James was able to announce that "the Loch's [Loch Laggan's] wild aires will be given, in spite of an opposition more formidable than was ever imagined - and Robert [Macpherson] will exhilarate his rueful countenance with whisky."<sup>2</sup> This could only mean that James (working in the name of Robert) had, in spite of tough opposition (presumably the Stuart-Mackenzie interest), freed the Aberarder portion of the Cluny estate from the grip of the Forfeited Estates Commission. James's private dream was beginning to come true. He, and no other Macpherson, was "leading" his clan - through jobs in India, leases in the clan territory, and influence - back to their "rightful" possessions and position in society. But the cost of giving effect to his obsession had been paid by eighty Macdonalds: and nobody has yet pointed out that James Macpherson, the creator of the romantic Highlander, was also the supporter

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1. See above, p. 212.

2. See above, p. 224.

one of <sup>1</sup> the first ruthless "clearances" in Highland history. It was Henry Butter who appeared as the villain of this little known but important precedent for making Highlanders give way to the more profitable sheep - but the greater villain was the hypocritical James Macpherson who lurked, almost anonymously, behind Robert Macpherson, who, in turn, skulked in the shadow of Butter. As far as James was concerned, however, it was probably no more than just revenge on men who had denied the superiority of the Macphersons. What a Highlander could do to fellow Highlanders was understandable - a "family" quarrel - but Lowlanders or Englishmen doing the same thing was quite another matter. For the obsessed any action can be justified or rationalised. By his own rules James Macpherson had taken a step nearer his goal. For him it was probably a remarkable achievement.

Even more remarkable was the statement in which he revealed that he counted for success on the help of "The Scavan and his patron" - namely, Bradshaw and Grafton - who, sneered Macpherson, "behaved through the whole affair like two white-

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1. Popular works, such as John Prebble's The Highland Clearances (London, 1963), have stressed the notorious evictions in Sutherland, and have given the impression that the practice of replacing men and women with flocks of the Great Cheviot Sheep did not begin until the beginning of the 19th century. Professor Gordon Donaldson in The Scots Overseas (London, 1966, p. 58 et seq) has dispelled this myth, but, in estimating the beginning of clearances of people for sheep, he says "they do not occur earlier than the 1770s." The Aberarder evictions, which were initiated by Robert Macpherson through Henry Butter in 1767, must, therefore, stand as the first case of a large-scale Highland clearance.

livered dogs, without gratitude, without spirit, without prudence." <sup>1</sup> Such an astonishing statement poses some obvious questions:- how were Bradshaw and Grafton involved in a dispute concerning a remote Highland estate? - why should they have been grateful to James Macpherson, rather than he grateful to them? - how had they helped him, even if they did lack spirit and prudence? - and what was the secret which must have given James some sort of claim on their support? Unfortunately, no solutions can be offered. Everytime the Macphersons become enmeshed in secrets, investigations are frustrated by the lack of evidence, and answers have to be provided by conjectures. It is remotely possible that the secret had some vague connection with the "Duke's Cover", which had been mentioned by Grant de Blairfindy in a letter he sent John Macpherson in 1769, but this is pure guesswork. <sup>2</sup> From a few hints made by James Macpherson, it is more likely that the secret had something to do with a press campaign, and the politics behind it.

This last conjecture is given slight support by the rest of the remarks in James's letter to John of 17th November 1771. After sneering at the conduct of Bradshaw and Grafton during the Aberarder case, he wrote:

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1. See above, p. 224.

2. See above, pp. 171-172

"At the very time they were writing Jesuitical letters, without head or tail, to Birclais, they were undermining him on the other hand, and making professions to his enemies. The thing is past now these four months." 1

Although there is no record of James writing to the press as Birclais ("Pericles") in July 1771, this did not mean he was silent. The use of his favourite pseudonym in a letter to John was a quick and simple manner of telling his friend that he was referring to himself or to his journalist activities in a general way: John did the same thing by referring to himself as "Poetikastos" or "Causticus".

The letters which James sent to the press in July 1771 were almost certainly anonymous, which makes their isolation and identification virtually impossible. There is, however, no doubt about the meaning of his remarks. He was angry because Bradshaw or Grafton had attacked his letters in the newspapers. It is difficult to understand why they attacked James, and he himself never explained the situation at a later date. It is, however, certain that the attacks had occurred before, because in his letter of 9th May 1771 James had alluded to Bradshaw and his friends as "Banditti", a term generally used by journalists for sarcastic

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1. See above, p. 224.

2. See above, p. 221.

references to their opponents. Concluding his remarks on Bradshaw and Grafton, James assured John that they had

"no useful passion but fear: and the modest manner in which they were treated for two years could have no good effects upon R<sup>1</sup>/asca/ls."

This sounds like an admission of blackmail. The hint about "passion" (which is underlined) infers that James and John knew of some indiscretion involving Bradshaw and/or Grafton; and the subsequent insinuation inferred that for a period of two years the Macphersons were in a position to embarrass Bradshaw or Grafton or both, but had let them off lightly, but not completely. This might explain why a former Prime Minister was drawn in to fight for a Highland estate. He was blackmailed into helping the Macphersons, because they knew too much about him - or so it would seem. Whatever the truth of the matter there was a secret or secrets which drew these men together, and John Macpherson continued to rely on help from Grafton and Bradshaw, in spite of James's warnings: "trust them not upon any occasion."<sup>2</sup>

The first of John's letters from India to reach James was dated 20th July 1771, and this contained a confirmation of John's reliance on Grafton's help. He wrote:

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1. See above, p. 225.

2. See above, p. 224.

"My dear Sir - I have received your Letter by the Queen Indianan - and have in vain been looking out for a succeeding Letter in the Ships that followed. I am happy that you have your health; and am under no anxiety as to your success, while you can wag a finger, to use a common phrase in a different sense. Ingratitude may astonish by its magnitude,<sup>1</sup> but it is a dan[er]d subject for the sublime. I see the Scavan [Bradshay] is retired. I see your fire [of] polemics to the press] discontinued, and a work of yours advertised. My apprehensions [sic] upon these events are not pleasing. Would to Heaven it were in my power to revenge your cause - and procure a better object for your Talents.

It is, my dear friend, in these circumstances of Situation that I would strain every nerve to assist. Depend upon it therefore - if I can by any exertion be serviceable in the style we once proposed, you have the preference.<sup>2</sup> But how come you to be so indifferent in your letter upon this Subject. Why did you not enquire and explain the causes of appointments & I arrived here after a tedious passage of a year and three days. ... On my arrival here my Recomm[en]dation<sup>3</sup>s induced Mr. Du Prè the Govern[or] to invite me to live in his family, where I am to remain. This is a very agreeable consideration - the merits of the man make me more obliged to the Govern[or]. He has honoured me with a Confidence which no Serv[ant] here out of the Secret Committee possesses. I am on the same footing with Mr. Hastings, who succeeds to the Gov[ernor] [of Bengal]. I had a letter to him

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1. A reference to James's letter of 14 November 1770, see above p. 211.
  2. There is no further evidence on the private arrangement to which John refers.
  3. A reference to the recommendations he received from Robert Orme, Brig. General Joseph Smith, and Governor George Johnstone, to Governor Josias Du Prè of Madras; see above, p. 181 (and n. 1 and n. 2).



from my dear friend Mala<sup>grid</sup>/a.<sup>Lord Shelburne</sup>. Bravo Pae<sup>tu</sup>/s! 1  
 Shir Ian <sup>Sir John (Lindsay)</sup> had put the Govern<sup>t</sup> here in a ferment,  
 having been secretly appointed by his Majesty Minister Plenipo<sup>v</sup> to the  
 Nabob, and vested with Powers under the Great Seal to make national  
 Treaties with the Country Powers. Mr Du Prè has been too many for the  
 Knight <sup>Lindsay</sup>. Both he and Coote stormed in a deaf ear, and the  
 Govern<sup>t</sup> has supported himself as Com<sup>t</sup> in Chief - and manfully defended the  
 rights of the Company against Titus <sup>Paterson, Lindsay's Secretary</sup> &  
 the Crown.

I have dined twice with Sir John <sup>Lindsay</sup> these four months back - you may  
 judge the rest.

Cha nachi mi duini ach in anir. Ha  
 duil agum gin duin i groich cuish  
 ga boille Shir Ian. The D<sup>uke</sup> of  
 Gr<sup>afto</sup>/<sub>2</sub>n is bound to support  
 M<sup>c</sup> Vurich. He received him in a  
 Character, and must support his  
 claim. Ha i Littir bo Sile in  
 Duini agum faist. Cha di gianach

I did not see anyone but once. I  
 think that the matter will succeed  
 despite Sir John. The D<sup>uke</sup> of  
 Gr<sup>afto</sup>/<sub>2</sub>n is bound to support  
 M<sup>c</sup> Vurich. He received him in a  
 Character, and must support his  
 claim. I still have the letter from him  
 under his Seal. He did not ask

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1. In the original the word appears as "Pae--s", which Mr. R.M. Ogilvie assumes to be an abbreviation for "Paetus", an allusion to either (1) Paetus, the correspondent of Cicero, or (2) Paetus, the stoic and bitter opponent of the Emperor Tiberius. This Paetus was eventually forced to commit suicide, and he became the standard example of heroic martyrdom under tyranny.
  2. John Macpherson was using Macmhuirich (pron: Macvurich), the Gaelic style of the chief of the Macphersons, as a quick way of referring to himself. Few English interceptors of mail would have known what "McVurich" stood for.

e fachiel ma yauin no ruidin. Ishi  
 mis i niarin gha eri chuili rude.  
 Ha i Ldatter i scriave i Duke nam  
 avar eigi. Fo mi groich na cuarst  
 ri uini.

anything about the matters. I will  
 tell him the truth about everything.  
 The Letter which the Duke wrote in my  
 favour he has. The matter will come round  
 in time.

As to the history of affairs in this Country, I will write all I know  
 to Sam<sup>l</sup> Hannay. You will by this time have Dow returned to you. ...

He went home by land with Coote.

Sir John [Lindsay] returns through his supersession [sic] in four or  
 five weeks. I will write you fully then. My compliments to Mrs.  
 Anderson. I have not received a single Letter from her, so cannot write  
 her." 1

The Macphersons' habit of being all things to all men who might be of future  
 use to them, even if those men belonged to opposing groups, complicates the task of  
 keeping track of their devious manoeuvres. "Malagrida" - Lord Shelburne - had  
 been one of the main targets for James Macpherson's abuse in the press, and yet  
 John was pleased to claim that it was his "dear friend Mala[grid]a" who had  
 introduced him to Warren Hastings. <sup>2</sup> The friendship which John established with  
 Hastings before the latter left Madras for Bengal was to be of the greatest

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1. Macpherson MSS./1, 39/2, John to James Macpherson, 20 July 1771.

2. Shelburne had sent Hastings a letter in which he mentioned John Macpherson on  
 16th July 1771 (see B.M. Add. MSS. 29126, f. 73).

importance to both the Macphersons a few years later. Having no means of knowing this, John tried to shape his future by relying on help from such government patrons as Grafton, Bradshaw and (through James) North, even though the government's representatives in Madras (Lindsay, the Plenipotentiary, and his secretary Paterson) had shut him out of the Nawab's durbar. At least that is what he admitted when he said "I did not see anyone but once", if "anyone" is interpreted as an allusion to the Nawab. John was, nonetheless, still optimistic enough to hope that a letter written in his favour by Grafton, which he had given to Lindsay, would be passed on to the Nawab, and that the Nawab would eventually recognise and reward the work he had done on his behalf in London. This hope, however, was governed by his position as a Company servant, and the efforts he had been obliged to make to earn the confidence of Governor Du Pré (with whom he was living) and Warren Hastings, both of whom were on bad terms with the Nawab's new allies, Lindsay and Paterson. John was, in fact, trying to achieve the seemingly impossible aim of winning the trust of the Crown's senior servants, the Company's senior servants, and, most important of all, the Nawab of Arcot; and in striving for this goal he ran the risk of destroying the confidence placed in him by the Company in Madras, which was his only gain so far. Undeterred by this risk, John continued to press James

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to muster support from the government, as his next letter, which is incomplete

and dated 9th October 1771, shows. He wrote:

"If North call/s/ upon Shir Ian [Sir John (Lindsay)] to explain, he'll hear a part only of my business.

My most worthy friend, Capt. Deane, will deliver or transmit you this -  
I have done all I could for him.

Ha littir secret eggi uani Pruci -  
gha mo charra more [Grafton]. Hug  
mi groich ma ~~ex~~ guarst gi ma - na abbir  
focul ris.

He has our secret letter from the Pruci -  
for my great friend [Grafton]. I brought  
the business about well [or, I managed the  
business well] - say not a word to him.

You will, my friend, speak to Mr. Bradshaw, if in terms, and to his Grace  
[the Duke of Grafton] to wake them up on my affair; this delicately - and  
you will watch in the Secretary of State's Office to find whether my business  
is done. I entrust all to you, and hope to share the profits with you.

Your Representation to North must be private - you know my reasons.

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1. (continued) The letter starts at a page numbered "17" and ends with a page numbered "20". It is clear that the first 16 pages of this manuscript have been destroyed or lost, which is most unfortunate, as they probably contained a full account of John Macpherson's early activities as a Company Writer in Madras.
  1. Captain Charles Deane [dates not known] was an officer of the East India Company's army on the Madras establishment (N.A.M., Hodson MSS., an incomplete index card from a drawer on Madras officers). He was also the first cousin of John Robinson, M.P., the Secretary to the Treasury (see Macpherson MSS./1, 39/8), and therefore grandson of Richard Deane of Appleby, Westmorland.
  2. "Pruci" is not a Gaelic or Latin or Greek word. As "B" and "P" are interchangeable sounds in Gaelic it could be read as "Bruce", but neither John nor James had a friend called Bruce at this period (at least, the records give no hint of such a friend). It is more likely an attempt to give the English word "Proxy" the rough appearance of a Gaelic word - Pruci for Pruxi or Proxi. If this is assumed to be the correct interpretation, then Samuel Hannay (who is referred to as "the Pruci") must have been the Macphersons' proxy in some secret deal or negotiation.

If you have influence in the Direction, or could meet with any of my friends that has, let me be appointed from home Paymaster of Trichanapoly [sic]. The Gov<sup>r</sup>: [Du Pré] would do anything, so would the 2<sup>d</sup> here [Hastings], but I am so young in the service the thing must be done at home. Make me known to Mr. Robinson, Secretary of the Treasury. He is known to the Power here, as Capt.<sup>n</sup> Deane will inform him. Is Dow arrived safe [?] Let him for God's sake come here. There is the prospect of great Doings. ...

Ha mi ansi chulli secret géni Government i sho, [I] am in every secret of this Government, [and I am] consulted upon all embarrassments. I beg you give North a great Idea of Mr. Duprè. I never met with an abler man, and unless Ministry send out a better set of Politicians than those we see, they are ever bad food for Duprè.

God bless you my dear friend. Unless my business in England is done for me, I must return personally - but this will be an extremity. Farewell - you have all my affect.<sup>n</sup> and Esteem. John M.<sup>c</sup> pherson

I have not heard a word from Sam. Hannay since my arrival here. The Pruci never asked about the things. I will tell the truth when he does.

I write Hannay - his Brothers are well at Alihabad [sic]. Stock will rise prodigiously by the inevitable fall of Tanjore, & the consequent disapproval of France." 2

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Two weeks after this letter was written, Brigadier General Joseph Smith, at

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1. See p. 244, n. 2.
  2. Macpherson MSS./1, 39/3, John to James Macpherson 9 October 1771.
  3. Joseph Smith (the son of a Gunner and Engineer of the same name) was commissioned as an Ensign in the Madras Infantry in 1754, and rose, after serving with distinction in many engagements to be C-in-C of the Company's forces in Madras. His first appointment as C-in-C lasted from 1767 to 1770, when he was superseded for a few months. His second period as C-in-C was from 1770 to 1772, and his third from 1773 to 1775, when he retired. He was well liked by the Nawab (see Macpherson MSS./1, 167/12, the Nawab of Arcot to Col. Lauchlin Maclean, u.d.)

the head of a force of Company troops supported by units from the Nawab's army, made the Rajah of Tanjore, whose capital had been under siege since September, submit. This gave great satisfaction to the Nawab of Arcot, who had long wished to subdue his turbulent Hindu vassal. It also caused the Nawab to change his mind on an important issue, because his eldest son, Usdat-ul-Umara, had proved himself a bad soldier during the Tanjore campaign, while his second son, the warlike Amir-ul-Umara, had acquitted himself with distinction as a cavalry leader. Henceforward, the Nawab regarded his second son as his lawful successor, an attitude which was to cause further trouble between him and the Company's servants. Sir John Lindsay, whose presence in Madras had given the Nawab the confidence to bring pressure on a reluctant Du Pré to organise a campaign commanded by a Company officer, was recalled to England (and had left Madras) before Smith's expeditionary force set out for Tanjore. Lindsay had not only offended corrupt Company servants in Madras, but had also upset such men of integrity as Du Pré and Hastings, and the ministry "were obliged to admit that the results of his mission were unfortunate." On his return, however, North's ministry considered that the threat of France justified them

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1. Sutherland, p. 201.

in sending out a successor to Lindsay, and he was replaced as Plenipotentiary (and Royal Naval Commander in the East Indies) by Admiral Sir Robert Harland, who was instructed to refrain from independent action, and to impress upon the Nawab that the interests of the State and the Company were the same.<sup>1</sup>

John Macpherson had undoubtedly antagonised Lindsay, and one of the few straightforward comments in his letter indicates that he was afraid of what Lindsay might say to prejudice North against him. He obviously hoped that James would offset this bias in a private interview with North. The rest of John's letter, apart from the request that James would use any influence he had with the East India Company to secure his appointment "from home" as Paymaster *at* Trichinopoly, is full of obscure and tantalising references to secret arrangements, which may or may not have been connected with each other. It would appear that John had managed some secret business in Madras which depended for complete success on James's dealings with Bradshaw, Grafton and somebody in the Secretary of State's Office. James was also expected to see North privately, but whether or not in connection with the same affair cannot be assumed. It is, however, certain that

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1. *ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

the mysterious business related to the Macphersons' "secret letter from the Pruci - for my [John's] great friend [Grafton]", and that the "Pruci" had not been told the whole truth by John about certain "things". Complete success in this business also meant "profits" for John, which he was willing to share with James. The Pruci's secret letter had been taken out to India, probably to impress somebody, and was returned in the care of Captain Deane to James, who was to give it to Grafton. One of the keys to the secret is the identity of Pruci, who could (from the context in which the name is used in the postscript) have been Samuel Hannay, the Scottish merchant and chemist in Fenchurch Street, who might have been the intermediary or "proxy" in a deal concerning "things" of value - perhaps diamonds. The difficulty is that Hannay had not written to John since the latter's arrival in Madras, and so the secret letter, if written by Hannay to some fellow merchant in India, must have been composed before John left England. Furthermore, John may have wished James to see Grafton and Bradshaw on an "affair" which was additional to, and had no direct connection with, the "Pruci" business, and there is, as already noted, a danger of reducing two (or even more) secret affairs to one.

As so much seemed to depend on chance, or the ability of James to rouse others to action, John had considered the possibility of returning to England to handle affairs for himself - but only as "an extremity". Meantime, he urged James to help



him to consolidate his position in India, mainly by influencing the Company to give him a more senior job, but partly by bringing his superior, Governor Du Pré, to the good notice of Lord North (and gain thereby, presumably, Du Pré's gratitude). Most important of all, he had asked James to recommend him to John Robinson, the Secretary of the Treasury, whose cousin, Captain Deane, he had tried to help in some way. For the second time in 1771 John had set out to earn the good opinion of a man who was to have significant influence on his own and his friend's careers. James (and later John) earned the trust of the powerful John Robinson, just as John (and later James) earned the trust of Warren Hastings, who unluckily never made the circle complete by winning the approval of Robinson.

In February 1772 Hastings arrived in Bengal to take up his appointment as Governor of that Presidency.<sup>1</sup> On the 7th of the same month John Macpherson sent Hastings the first of what was much later to become a flood of letters. After assuring Hastings that his departure from Madras had caused universal regret, he noted that the Swallow had just left for Calcutta.

"Mr. [John] Stewart," continued John, "sails in her, and will inform

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1. Although Hastings was appointed Governor of Bengal in the spring of 1771, and arrived there in February 1772 he did not officially succeed the outgoing Governor John Cartier until April 1772.

you of any little news that may have been stirring here,"  
and he concluded by saying he expected no answer to the letter  
"or to any I may occasionally send to repeat those sentiments of  
attachment and respect with which I have the happiness and honour  
to be your ever devoted servant." 1

2

John Macpherson's reference to Stewart, a henchman of Lauchlin Macleane and the  
unsuccessful candidate for the Secretaryship of the Royal Society of Arts in 1769  
(when he had been supported by, among others, James Macpherson) is interesting.  
Stewart, too, was to have a part to play in the futures of John Macpherson and  
Warren Hastings.

3

Again in the same month, on the 28th, John wrote to Grafton, congratulating  
him on his "return to office"; recommending Du Pré who had "the colony at peace";

4

and enclosing a gift (not described) for the Duchess of Grafton. The letter was

1. B.M. Add. MSS. 29133, f. 29, John Macpherson to Warren Hastings, 7 February 1772.
2. John Stewart, see above p. 157 (and n.1), had been appointed Judge Advocate General and First Secretary of the Council of Bengal on 9 January 1771, and had sailed for Madras in the Britannia on 22 June 1771 to take up his appointment. He transferred, after a short stay in Madras, to the Swallow, which sailed for Bengal on 8 February 1772; see Macleane (1728-1773) pp. 284-285.
3. Grafton MSS. (Euston Hall), MS. 996/1772, John Macpherson to the Duke of Grafton, 28 February 1772. This is the only letter from Macpherson to Grafton which survives in the Grafton MSS. (either at Euston Hall or in the West Suffolk Record Office, Bury St. Edmunds). There must have been others.
4. John Macpherson had probably just heard of Grafton's appointment as Lord Privy Seal in June 1771, and was congratulating on this as his "return to office".

short and seemed to have no other purpose than to flatter Grafton.

It was also in the same month, on 27th February 1772, that James Macpherson, having received the first of John's letters from India, sent his friend the news from London. James wrote:

"A whole winter has passed without my writing to you. I rely a great deal upon my known indolence in epistolary correspondence, when I hope for your forgiveness. Your letter came to hand six weeks ago. It opens up a scene I did not expect from that quarter.

Ha feagul orm gun chail u NDuina m<sup>1</sup>ôr:  
 'S barrail d'om go ndinails Shir Iân do,  
 gun labhair u ris an sa Bhaila sho!  
 - 'S doi dhôm gun scriob u ni nach bu  
 choir, do MacIian, an a Strait<sup>2</sup>  
 Bhurlington. - Cha n'eol duitsa an  
 duina cho mâth riomse. Chuina mi an  
 liatâr: agus ata an Ramsach grâid gun<sup>3</sup>

I fear you have lost the Big Man <sup>1</sup> [Grafton]  
 I surmise that Sir John [Lindsay] told him  
 that you spoke to him in this City!  
 - I assume you wrote a thing you ought not  
 to [Governor] Johnstone, in Burlington<sup>2</sup>  
 Street. - You do not know the man  
 as well as I do. I saw the  
 letter, and Ramsay is saying that Sir<sup>3</sup>

- 
1. James seems to be using the "Big Man" for two people: the first reference to Grafton, and the second to the Nawab: "the Big Man, beside you [in Madras]".
  2. "MacIian" (properly MacIain) and "MacIan" mean "Johnson", but James and John always used "MacIan" or its variants for "Johnstone", meaning Governor Johnstone.
  3. It is not clear who was meant. James Macpherson knew <sup>John</sup> ~~Ramsay~~ Ramsay of Ochtertyre (1736-1814) (see above, p.34, n.2; p.36, n.2), but the Ramsay he referred to could have been the painter Allan Ramsay (1713-1784), who knew many of the Edinburgh literati, and wrote political pamphlets and letters to the press. It is also possible that Macpherson was referring to Ramsay Hannay, the younger brother of Samuel Hannay, the merchant of Fenchurch Street.

1

scriob Shir Ian do chair du, go rômh  
 ussa nabhaidach dho; agus gur t'ussa  
 scriobh a huilla liatâr chiabh na  
 iosibhse o Dhupri:- Ata mi cînta go  
 ndinaiis e ni sin fein do Nduina mhôr,  
 lamh riot. Tabhair ussa airr ôrt fein:  
 dion feur a nuair Ehoilsgas Grian. Ni  
 nderich ni as ûr domse, os-n'âm a  
 scriobh mi dhuitsa roi so.

1

John [Lindsay] wrote to your black friend  
 that you were his enemy; and that you  
 wrote all the letters that went to  
 him from Du Pré:- I am certain that  
 he told that very thing to the Big Man,  
 beside you. You take care of yourself:  
 make hay while the Sun Shines. Nothing  
 new has happened to me, since I wrote  
 you last.

Opposition, in its ancient form, seems now to be at an end. North sits  
 firmly in the saddle: but we know not what a day may bring forth.

Nothing is done, as I prophesied, in India affairs. They still  
 threaten to do something, but I suppose nothing decisive will happen.

New Supervisors are again talked of. Andrew Stuart, it said to be  
 settled, is to be one: and who do you think we all wish to be Secretary  
 to the Commission but your friend Fergusson [sic]. He wishes it himself,  
 and has solicited all his friends.

- 
1. John Macpherson's "black friend" was the Nawab of Arcot.
  2. See p. 251, n. 1.
  3. Andrew Stuart (1725-1801), 2nd son of Archibald Stuart of Torrance, Lanarkshire. A close friend of the Edinburgh literati and a special friend of Lauchlin Maclean. He was a Writer to the Signet, and the legal representative of the Hamilton family in the famous "Douglas Cause", which was won by the Hamiltons in Scotland in 1767, but lost on appeal by the heir of Douglas to the House of Lords in 1769. After losing the appeal Stuart virtually abandoned the law for politics. He was M.P. for Lanarkshire from 1774 to 1784, and for Weymouth and Melcombe Regis from 1790 to 1801.
  4. Professor Adam Ferguson, John's former tutor, had certainly put himself forward for the post of Secretary to the Commission of Supervisors which had proposed as a replacement for the Commission whose members had been lost in the Aurora, (see above, pp. 147, 156 & 187). Writing from Berkeley Square on 3rd October 1772, Andrew Stuart told David Hume: "There seems now to be little doubt Ferguson will be Secretary or Joint Secretary to the Supervisors." (N.L.S., Mure of Caldwell MSS., 4945, f. 183v.). Stuart, however, was wrong, for the idea of a new Commission was dropped.

Dow, after a struggle, is appointed to his old rank in Bengal, which places him high among the Lieutenant Colonels:

Ehâ Shir Sheorsa Killabruik na aighi -  
 ach Chuir sin feugal a thona air an  
 1  
 Olâch, le Tuitam Coilla agus a phaiper  
 nuâchd. Châc an Ridir, ân na threuis;  
 2  
 mailla ris an Steuartach an a Strait  
 3  
 Bhuchdingam. Atta Diarmod O'Sullivan  
 mailla ris an tais ridir. - Châc essa  
 mar a nceudun - agus roin iât a gnôach.

Sir George Colebrooke was against it -  
 but we put the fear of his b-----e up the  
 1  
 wretch with Fall of Wood [Woodfall]  
 and the newspaper. The Knight ex-----d in  
 his trousers along with Stewart of Bucking-  
 ham Street. Dermot O'Sullivan 3  
 [Lauchlin  
Maclean] is along with the knight. - He  
 ex-----d as well - and they did the business

- 
1. "Olach" is a word that has caused some confusion. In the present writer's B.Litt. thesis (which was compiled before all the Gaelic correspondence of the Macphersons had been seen) it was assumed that it was used as a code-name for one person only; and this led to the further assumption that it possibly referred to Alexander Macaulay (Ola-/i7ch for Aula-ich). It is now certain, however, that both James and John Macpherson applied the term to several people (including Hastings at a much later period), and in the opinion of Mr. Neil Morrison of Carbost, an expert on Gaelic terms and idioms used in Skye, it is a term of abuse, and can mean "a sot", "a unsociable fellow", "a wretch" or even, in some contexts, "a drunkard". The word is still used in Skye, but not in other Gaelic speaking areas. In the passage quoted it is obviously used as a term of abuse for Sir George Colebrooke.
  2. John Stewart (c. 1723-1781), son of Archibald Stewart of Edinburgh (who had been tried and acquitted of trying to surrender Edinburgh to the Jacobites in the '45); and nephew of Sir James Stewart, 2nd Baronet of Allanbank; and second cousin of John Stewart, the Judge Advocate General of Bengal (see above, pp. 157, n. 1, and 250, n. 2). John Stewart was a partner with his father as a wine merchant at York Bldgs., Buckingham Street, London from about 1759. From 1766 he became involved in East India Company affairs, firstly as 'jackal' to Sir George Colebrooke, and then as an associate of Lauchlin Maclean in stock adventures. In 1771 he was elected M.P. for Arundel in place of Lauchlin Maclean, and held the seat until 1774. He was also a frequent contributor to the press on East India matters under the pseudonym "Philindus".
  3. It is certain (see Maclean (1773-1778) p. 59, n. 2) that "Dermot" was the Macphersons' code-name for Lauchlin Maclean; and that the use of O' before Sullivan indicated that Dermot belonged to Sullivan's clan (or, in political terms, party or faction). In short: James Macpherson used "Diarmod O'Sullivan" as a quick way of referring to Lauchlin Maclean who supported Laurence Sullivan's party or faction.

Tuitam Goilla Woodfall is the best solicitor in the world. There is no standing against that tree. The calm is now returned: and the offended have dropt their rage and begin to court.

'S feagul liom nach urra dhuitse a Hhêc  
a dhiona, an so ghnôach a labhair u  
riomsa dol to Chobham, mo na lietâr -  
Nuaichd, agus am fhêr Môr aig Shir  
Ian. 'S doi dhôm gun teanta an duina  
riute faâst. Ma thiontas è s'iul  
duitse ni as coir dhuit a dhiona.

I fear that you cannot defend(ed) his  
view, in the business you mentioned  
to me going to C/h7obham, about the  
News-letter, and the Big man at Sir  
John's. I hope that the man will come  
near to you yet. If he should turn,  
your course is to do what you ought to do

The bearer hereof will tell you who he is. He was recommended to me by  
Ralia - and I believe him to be a good young fellow. He is of the tigh an  
Tierna house of the Lord, and he has some knowledge of letters. He has  
still a few pounds in the hands of his friends, for which he can draw in  
case of necessity: but he has been bred in a noble contempt of affluence.  
Do take of him the notice he deserves.

- 
1. In spite of a contrary appearance, Macpherson was referring to the village of Cobham in Surrey, and not to nearby Chobham in the same county. The spelling of the name in this Gaelic passage is governed by the need to aspirate Cobham, by adding an 'h' after the 'C'. See also p. 221 above, where Macpherson, in an English sentence, used the spelling "Cobham".
  2. Lachlan Macpherson of Ralia (c. 1726-1813), was a close relation and senior cadet of Cluny-Macpherson. His wife Grace, a woman many years his junior, whom he married in 1777, was the niece of the Rev. Robert Macpherson (of the Banchor family), who occupied the Aberarder lands after the long legal battle with the Macdonalds.
  3. The "bearer" ~~cannot be identified, but he~~ was obviously a member of a titled family, being "of the house of the Lord" and having "a noble contempt of affluence." *In which case, Macpherson was almost certainly referring to Lord Bute's son, Frederick Stuart (see below, p. 347, n. 3), who went out to India for the second time in 1772.*

Poor Strathy's <sup>1</sup> [Strathmashie's] son is long ago with you. He is not the true representative of his most facetious father: but I hope he will do. He was thrown naked on your shore - and I know not what could become of him.

<sup>2</sup> Dow's history will be published in ten days. It is an excellent production - care having been taken of it. I shall have an opportunity of sending it to you. My introduction is again printed, with the <sup>3</sup> addition of ten sheets. There is none of the copies in Boards, otherwise this opportunity would be favourable. I recollect nothing to amuse you. Hannay is well - the same honest, excellent fellow. Johnstone <sup>4</sup> is busy about nothing. Kirkpatrick is in Town with his Cara Caledonica. I was the only person in London who saw them in their obscure retreat during the summer.

I am, my dear friend, Yours most affectionately, James Macpherson.

<sup>5</sup> I had forgot. Little Eliot [sic] is married to the Daughter of Hugh Dalrymple.

- 
1. Alexander Macpherson, elder son of Lachlan Macpherson of Strathmashie (see above, p. 44, n. 1, & p. 217, n. 3), by his wife Mary Butter, daughter of Archibald Butter of Pitlochry, and sister of Henry Butter, the factor for the Forfeited Estates Commission on the Cluny estate.
  2. The 3rd edn. (wholly revised) of Alexander Dow's History of Hindostan.
  3. The 2nd edn. of James Macpherson's Introduction to the History of Great Britain.
  4. James Kirkpatrick (see above, p. 218, n. 2) had decamped from Edinburgh with another man's wife (see above, p. 220), and was now living in hiding (in or near London) with his mistress - "Cara Caledonica" (? Scottish Darling).
  5. Dr. John Elliott of Cecil Street in the Strand (see above, p. 174, n. 1) married, on 19 October 1771, Grace, daughter of Hew Dalrymple, Advocate of Edinburgh. The hint that she was pregnant by Elliott is not confirmed by any record. She had no children by Elliott.

A pretty girl, without the aridity, but possessed of the spirit, of the father. Ata bhroin aig eri. Chuir an gear-olach cleatta ri haisna. The stomach is at rising. The little doctor put oil to her ribs. 7<sup>n</sup> 1

Although James was replying to the letter from John which has many pages missing, it is still possible to understand many of his remarks. John Macpherson had undoubtedly offended Sir John Lindsay, who had seemingly informed the Nawab of Arcot that some unfriendly or unhelpful letters which the Nawab had received from Governor Du Pré were actually composed by John Macpherson. As the Nawab was flattered by the presence at his durbar of Sir John Lindsay, who had encouraged him to take a firm line with the Company, and as John Macpherson was living with Du Pré, it must have been fairly easy for Lindsay to convince the Nawab that John Macpherson was an enemy. James had discovered or inferred all this from an informant named Ramsay, and from an indiscreet letter of John's he had seen lying around at Governor George Johnstone's house. James, who never completely trusted his old superior Johnstone, believed that Lindsay had been told of the contents of John's letter by Johnstone himself.

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1. Macpherson MSS./1, 4/7, James to John Macpherson, 27 February 1772.



What neither James nor John yet knew was that Lindsay's successor in Madras, Sir Robert Harland, also disliked John; and was to give positive expression to his feelings by sending a very unfavourable (and not always factually accurate) report to the Secretary of State on the work that John had carried out for the Nawab before he left England, and on his attitude to the Nawab since his arrival in Madras. Harland told the Earl of Rochford:

1

"Mr. Mcpherson's negotiations in England will be best explained by the inclosed copy of a Memorial [see Appendix 5] which he gave in to the Nabob about October or November 1771 [just after Lindsay had left Madras]; and Sir John Lindsay can give the best account of what passed between him and Mr. Mcpherson either before or since their arrival in India. All I know is that he repeatedly wrote to Sir John and also made some personal applications in order, as I understood, to prevail upon him to introduce him to the Nabob as one who had been of great service to His Highness in England. This Sir John refused it seems, notwithstanding Mr. Mcpherson's repeated offers of services if he complied, and threatenings if he did not. Both failing to produce the desired effect drew down this Gentleman's resentment on His Majesty's Minister Plenipotentiary." 2

- 
1. William Henry Nassau de Zuylestein, 4th Earl of Rochford (1717-1781), was Secretary of State for the Northern Department from 1768 to 1770, and for the Southern Department from 1770 to 1775.
  2. I.O.L., H. Misc. S. 110, f. 497, Sir Robert Harland to Earl of Rochford, 10 Sept., 1772 (Received: (in London), 10 April 1773).

These and a lot more damaging remarks about John Macpherson were to have their effect at a later date. Meanwhile, there were still one or more secrets upon which the Macphersons continued to rely for either protection or reward or both. Some light was thrown on one of these secrets by the reference James made in his letter about Henry Sampson Woodfall of the Public Advertiser, whom John had defended in a matter which had been discussed before he left England in February 1770, while he and James were travelling in a post-chaise to Cobham in Surrey. This matter certainly concerned a letter to the press (which had almost certainly been dealt with by Woodfall in the Public Advertiser) and the "Big man" at Sir John Lindsay's. Lindsay may have known many important men, but the only one of real importance in his family was his uncle, Lord Mansfield,<sup>1</sup> who had been the object of some of the most vicious attacks by "Junius" in Woodfall's Public Advertiser, and had presided over the trials of Wilkes and Woodfall, when they had been arraigned for seditious libels against the Crown. With this background, it would seem rather out of character for Woodfall to be the willing ally of such ministerial writers as the Macphersons. Woodfall, however, often published contributions from both parties

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1. William Murray (1705-1793), later (1756) Baron Mansfield, later still (1776), 1st Earl of Mansfield, was 4th son of David Murray, 5th Viscount Stormont. He was Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench from 1756 to 1788. His sister Emilia, wife of Sir Alexander Lindsay of Evelick, was the mother of Admiral Sir John Lindsay.

to an issue, even if he had a private understanding with either or both of the parties concerned. Whether or not he had anything to do with the main purpose of the Macphersons' visit to Cobham is not made clear. From what James had said

1  
previously about this mysterious jaunt, it would seem that other secret matters were discussed, and that the main purpose of the journey had nothing to do with Woodfall.

2  
The name "Cobham" was never mentioned again by either of the Macphersons.

The more recent affair concerning Woodfall, which James discussed in such vulgar terms, had (according to James) been caused by Colebrooke and Sullivan, the leaders of the Company's Court of Directors, trying to block the promotion of Alexander

1. On 3rd February 1770 (see above, p.183) James had told John: "If anything occurs to you after your arrival in India, upon the business we talked about in the Chaise; pray do not neglect it. Commission for me from China for a large parcel of R/in/gs." And on 9th May 1771 (see above, p. 221 ) he had told John: "Lay your commands, whenever you please, with regard to the affair you mentioned to me in the Post Chaise to Cobham. I know the villainy of certain Persons to your friend /almost certainly the Nawab/." In each case the sentence following the one in which the Chaise is mentioned may or may not have had some connection with the journey to Cobham. This could mean that the visit to Cobham concerned a deal involving diamond rings, or the affairs of the Nawab, or both, or neither.
2. The identity of the person the Macphersons may have visited at Cobham cannot be established. In 1769/70 the people who lived in the four important residences in the immediate neighbourhood of Cobham (and Chobham) were: Philip Champion de Crespigny (c. 1731-1803), of Burwood House, near Cobham, who was M.P. for Sudbury 1774-1775; General John Louis Ligonier (1680-1770), of Cobham Place; Harvey Christian Combe (1752-1818), of Cobham Park, who became Lord Mayor of London in 1799; and Sir Anthony Thomas Abdy. Bart. (c. 1720-1775), of Chobham Place, who was M.P. for Knaresborough 1763-1775. Not one of these men can be linked to the Macphersons. It could be assumed, therefore, that the Macphersons had made an arrangement to meet other people at an inn in Cobham, or they had merely taken a trip into the country so that they could discuss their future plans at ease.

Dow to full seniority as a Lieutenant Colonel, but this could have been only one of the reasons for the spate of attacks which were launched in the press against Colebrooke, Sullivan, and their associates, John Stewart of Buckingham Street, and Lauchlin Macleane, after the autumn of 1771. The first attack was probably stimulated by the announcement that Andrew Sturt, the Douglas Cause lawyer, and Lauchlin Macleane, had been considered for posts on or attached to the new Commission of Supervisors, who were to replace those who had been lost in the Aurora on their way to India.<sup>1</sup> The opening shot was fired in the Gazetteer & New Daily Advertiser on 24th September 1771 by a correspondent writing "From my Elephant at Roehampton"<sup>2</sup> (and Roehampton was close to Macpherson's retreat at Putney). The victim on this occasion was Lauchlin Macleane. The attacks were then carried on in the Public Advertiser under the signatures of "Indanus"<sup>3</sup>, "Publicus"<sup>4</sup>, "An Injured Orphan"<sup>5</sup> and "A Friend to the Company but no Nabob"<sup>6</sup>, any or all of which could have been

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1. See Macleane (1728-1773) p. 293 et seq.
  2. *ibid.*
  3. Pub. Adv. (and Gaz. & New Daily Adv.), 4.12.1771.
  4. Pub. Adv., 24.1.1772.
  5. *ibid.*, 1.2.1772.
  6. *ibid.*, 18.2.1772.

pseudonyms of James Macpherson. Most of the criticism was directed at Sir George Colebrooke (portrayed as a reckless stock-jobber who had ruined those widows and orphans who had invested money in the Company's stock), but Sullivan, John Stewart, and Lauchlin Maclean were also abused for similar reasons. During the same period of the attacks, from September 1771 to February 1772, James Macpherson used his

signature "Scaevola"<sup>1</sup> to oppose "Junius"; and his favourite pseudonym "Pericles"<sup>2</sup>

1. *ibid.*, 12.10.1771; 24.10.1771; 9.11.1771; 18.11.1771; 22.11.1771; 27.11.1771; 5.12.1771; 14.12.1771; 24.12.1771; 30.12.1771; 28.1.1772; 31.1.1772; 4.2.1772.

2. *ibid.*, 11.12.1771. "Pericles" to Lord North: "My Lord, Measures, and not Men, are the proper and usual Objects of our Enquiry, and consequent Applause or Censure. But that some are so wholly attached to Evil in their private as well as public Capacities, as to warrant the Exposition of their very sentiments, without the Impeachment of a Writer's Candour.

The Duke of Grafton is a Wretch thus infatuated; the Demon of Infamy has put a forcible Spell upon his Mind. Whether you enquire into his Actions or Opinions, you may trace the black Characters deep and indelible. In vain shall Junius exert his Counter-talents to exorcise him. Such men as Bradshaw and Lowther shall ever preserve his Grace's favour. But you, my Lord, I trust, have not shook Hands with Infamy: You have not sworn eternal Enmity to your Country, because you have once violated her Honour. ..

The Whisper of the day is "Lord North is for War." When I am fully convinced of the Truth of that Assertion, which I have from your Lordship's Friends, then will I abate you half the Contempt you have hitherto studied to deserve.

The political World have consigned your Fame to Perdition. You have the Character of being a Woman in Breeches - not an Amazonian, but of the tame Kind, having a mortal Aversion to Gunpowder.

The Court of Spain derives its Credit from our Dishonour. So long as we have you for Minister, a Mock-representative of the Nation, so long must we tamely put up with the Bullying and insults of a despicable Monarch. Muster up a little Manhood. Give your Sanction in Council to the voices of Rochford and Sandwich. Give fair play to our English Sailors, and the Spaniards shall lower their Topsails." James Macpherson followed this blunt criticism of his patron and former patron with a much more carefully worded, measured and respectful letter "From Pericles to Lord North" on 27.12.1771. Indeed, in this second letter Macpherson did a volte-face and cautioned North on the danger of war with France and Spain.

to criticise Lord North and to abuse the Duke of Grafton, in a letter dealing with Spain and the Falkland Islands dispute.

The particular letter which frightened Colebrooke and his associates, and caused them to change their minds about Dow's promotion, cannot be identified.

Attacks, and counter-attacks, in the Public Advertiser continued to appear after

James sent John the letter of 27th February 1772. <sup>1</sup> In August the attacks on

Colebrooke and his friends reached a new peak; <sup>2</sup> in September Henry Sampson Woodfall

became a proprietor of the East India Company; <sup>3</sup> and in December 1772, when an Act

was hurried through Parliament to prohibit the despatch of Supervisors to India <sup>4</sup>

1. Pub. Adv., 11.4.1772 - "Junius Asiaticus": a scurrilous attack on Lord Clive, answered (ibid., 15.4.1772) by "An Honest Man", who claimed that "Junius Asiaticus" was either "Governor Johnstone or Mr. L/lauchlin/ M/macleane/ or Colebrooke or Mr. Dow alias Macpherson"; which was in turn answered (ibid., 18.4.1772) by "A Dishonest Man", who attacked Colebrooke and John Stewart of Buckingham Street, but added confusion by defending Dow. "An Honest Man" (whoever he was) had made the mistake (perhaps intentionally) of aligning Colebrooke and Macleane with Macpherson, Dow and Johnstone. At one time or another all these men were enemies or friends, but there was never a time when they were all on the same side in an issue. "Junius Asiaticus" (almost certainly James Macpherson) appeared again on 1.5.1772 (ibid.) in an attack on Clive, and yet again on 5.6.1772 (ibid.), when he claimed that it was "Major [James] Kirkpatrick who won the Battle of Plassey". Against "Junius Asiaticus" there appeared "Junius Indianus" (ibid., 7.5.1772) and "Asiaticus" (ibid., 29.7.1772). One of the most vicious attacks was written by "Philo-Mogul" against John Stewart of Buckingham Street (ibid., 12.11.1772).
2. See Macleane (1728-1773) pp. 310-312, and 514 (n. 1116).
3. A List of all the Names of all the Proprietors of East India Stock, published at India House on 9 September 1773 (Quoted by James Holzman, The Nabobs in England, New York, 1926, p. 119).
4. See Sutherland, p. 236.

the press campaign against the Company leaders stopped.

James Macpherson sent John three more short letters in 1772. On 26th March

he wrote:

"Nothing new has happened since I wrote you. I have since seen Eglais Phadric [Kirkpatrick]: he is astonished, thunderstruck, bamboozled and surprised at not hearing from you. He for the first time mentioned to me the affair - but I gave not the least hint of any prior knowledge.

<sup>1</sup>  
One Bolts from Bengal, being affronted in a General Court, challenged, and I believe, has since kicked Sir George Colebrooke. The poor creature, though he retains the command of the wretched E.I. Company is despised and shunned by everybody.

<sup>2</sup>  
This is to be delivered to you by Mr. Peter Campbell. He is a relation of Mr. Robert Campbell, who has given us so good a pavement in London.

<sup>3</sup>  
Both Mr. Campbell and your friends, the Adams, solicited a letter from me in his favour. He is a Cadet - Pray take notice of him." <sup>4</sup>

- 
1. William Bolts, is described by Dr. Sutherland as "a peculiarly disreputable free merchant .. who had been a partner of John Johnstone [brother of Governor George Johnstone]." Bolts, who was deported from Bengal to England in 1769, was the author of Considerations on Indian Affairs "which appeared in the early months of 1772 [and] took the form of a sustained and copiously documented attack on Clive." See also: N.L. Hallward, William Bolts, a Dutch Adventurer under John Company, Cambridge, 1920.
  2. unidentified.
  3. The family of famous Scottish brothers, all architects, known as the "Adelphi" Adams.
  4. Macpherson MSS./1, 4/8, James to John Macpherson, 26 March 1772.

This was followed four days later by the following:

"I have weighed, with all attention, the state of a certain affair. I am not sanguine; but I think that what you wish shall be brought about. Though the Scavan [Bradshaw] never did anything for me, we have not quarrelled. I have forgot frequently his hollowness in his smile. I shall make no ceremony of insisting upon what you want; and I shall find an opportunity of forwarding it with Tua. [North]. I shall wait tomorrow on the Scavan; and if the ships at Portsmouth are not yet sailed you shall have soon after, or even before this, the result of the Conversation.

Ata mishi gû mhâth mailla ri Brathâir  
 1  
 Mâther Shir Ian. Roin mi feam do  
 N'Olach; Va mi ioma uair ân na Thigh  
 - agus ha neal cri aiga focul a rait  
 na m'aighi.

I am well along [I get on well] with Sir  
 1  
 John [Lindsay]'s Mother's Brother [Lord  
 Mansfield]. I did good to the wretch. I was  
 many a time in his house - and he dare not  
 say a word against me.

You'll hear soon from me; and, I have hopes, to your satisfaction. ..  
 Roin missa 'n gnoich [I did the business]. - I saw Eglais Phadric [Kirkpatrick]  
 the other day; he told me all. He is overwhelmed with your Silence: and  
 he will be more so when he further hears. I have just time, my dear John,  
 to sign myself

Yours most affectionately: J. Macpherson

[Postscript: written later, probably same day]

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1. It is usual in Gaelic to give the precise relationship of an aunt or uncle to the person under discussion. In this case James Macpherson referred to Sir John Lindsay's uncle as his "Mother's Brother"; in other words, it was one of the four brothers of Lady Lindsay (née Emilia Murray). Only one of Lady Lindsay's brothers was active in public life and politics; namely: William Murray, Lord Mansfield, the Lord Chief Justice. It can be assumed, with some confidence, that Macpherson was referring to Lord Mansfield.



<p>Chuna mi an diu Eglais Phadric. Yinais        è dhôm huilla ni va edir ussa agus        aissa. Ha fearg gun reâilt air an        aighi an Duina Mhoir smach: Ata è        graid gun dian è ndeual na aighi.        Huirè missi ris fan tin began - Agus        ni e sin." 1</p>	<p>I saw Kirkpatrick today. He told me        everything that was between you and        him. He has anger without reason against        the Big Man [The Nawab] out there: He is        saying that he will do the devil against        him. I told him to hold off for a short        while - And he will do that." 1</p>
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Both letters show quite plainly that Major James Kirkpatrick was mixed up in more than a love affair with another man's wife. James Macpherson (who had previously seen Kirkpatrick and his mistress at their secret retreat) had long known of another "affair" concerning John and Kirkpatrick, but he had not divulged his prior knowledge of it to Kirkpatrick. In common with most other secrets or affairs this one was never explained. It would seem, however, that during Kirkpatrick's service in Madras a few years earlier he had performed some service for the Nawab, who had promised but had not paid a reward. So, when Kirkpatrick learned that his friend John Macpherson was returning to Madras with hopes of collecting a reward, he had asked John to bring both their claims to the Nawab's attention. When time passed and Kirkpatrick received no news from John he became angry. What he did

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1. *ibid.*, 4/9, James to John Macpherson, 30 March 1772.

not know was that John had failed to see the Nawab, and, far from pressing Kirkpatrick's claim for a reward, had not even managed to obtain his own. This might explain James's remark that if Kirkpatrick was overwhelmed by John's silence, he would be further overwhelmed to hear of his boastful friend's failure to manage their affairs. It must have taken considerable skill<sup>1</sup> on James's part to stop the irate Kirkpatrick from taking some sort of revenge on the Nawab, and possibly jeopardize, by so doing, John's hopes of regaining the Nawab's confidence.

Even more skilful was James's ability to count on help from people he obviously despised. Not only did he admit that he was treated as a guest by Lord Mansfield, but he stated without any ambiguity that Mansfield dare not say a word against him. This attitude of calm contempt was reinforced by his use of the description "Clach" or "Wretch" for Mansfield. In a space of a few months James claimed Woodfall as an ally, yet dined with Woodfall's great enemy Mansfield; he went to Grafton and Bradshaw and North for help (and had been or was in receipt of a pension from two of them), and yet viciously attacked all three in the Public Advertiser under the pseudonym "Pericles", which all of them must have recognised; and wrote biting

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1. James may have restrained Kirkpatrick by flattering his vanity as a soldier. The letter of "Junius Asiaticus" in the Public Advertiser (on 5.6.1772, see above, p.261, n. 1), in which Kirkpatrick was praised as the hero of Plassey, may have been the work of James Macpherson.

attacks on John Stewart of Buckingham Street, although the latter's second-cousin, John Stewart, the Bengal Judge Advocate, was a close friend of John Macpherson. Were it not for the evidence these situations would be incredible - even by 18th century standards of double-dealing. James must have had some dangerous knowledge about these men, or he could never have done these things. Yet, he was still not powerful enough to make a "ceremony of insisting" on anything he wanted for himself or John.

In the last letter he sent John in 1772, on 10th April from No. 7 Cecil Street, the home of Dr. John Elliott, James wrote:

Hanic do Lietâr gu mo lâmh. Chuniac mi an Scavan. Yinis è dhôm; nach scriobh Secrâtêr na Stâit mo ni air bìach gnoich na Rìòchd. Thubhairt è rìom gun scriobh è fein agus an Duina mhôr dhuitse le laighas Cogi; agus thubhairt è rìom mar an cionta gun curagh è fios ormsè gheâchin dom na liétarchin. Ach ha ohuaille mi focul o sîn.

Heneîl ansâ agus an do Charra môr ach na Breacadich as mô sa n rìochd. Deuil! nach feâch tôn Brama o'nhâs Stripach. Ni missa na s'urra dhôm; agus cluina du ôm an ayir. - 'Ta

Your letter came to hand. I saw the Scavan [Bradshaw]. He told me; that the Secretary of State will not write about anything but the business of the Kingdom. He said that he himself and the big Man [Grafton] will write to you by the laws of War; and he said to me likewise that he would send for me to show me the letters. But I have heard nothing since. There is nothing to him and [to] your big Friend [Grafton] but the greatest Liars in the kingdom. A Devil! not worth a F---t from the stem of a Wh---e. I will do what I can; and you will hear from me shortly.-

Eglais Phadric an fearg mhòr ris an  
 èr mhòr. 'Ta è dol chuir Petition  
 air Beul fìr chean na Guidachd gu  
 dol amàch an sa n'airmailt. 1

Kirkpatrick is in great anger against the  
 big man [The Nawab]. He is going to Petition  
 before the head of the Company to go out  
 in the army. 1

The above you will understand. I wrote to you through another Channel;  
 but this will probably come sooner to your hand. The [Company] Election<sup>2</sup>  
 is over. - There was no proprietor's list except Dempster, who has got in.  
 There is, however, a division among the Directors. Sir George Colebrooke<sup>3</sup>  
 and Crabb Boulton head twelve each. Sullivan came to the Deputy's chair by<sup>4</sup>  
 the throw of a Dye, the numbers being equal. E. India affairs are to come  
 under an enquiry of Parliament - But nothing good is omened. Ata do Charra  
 Shìr Iàn agraìd nach do roin è bònse an a Madraish. [Your Friend Sir John  
[Lindsay] is saying that he did not make a halfpenny in Madras.] I have  
 not seen him since his arrival. I am to dine tomorrow with his Braithar  
Mathair [Mother's Brother, i.e. Lord Mansfield]. I dined yesterday with  
 your Uncle [probably Capt. Alexander Macleod] and drank so much that I am  
 obliged by a headach [sic] to curtail this letter." 5

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1. Major (later Lt. Col.) James Kirkpatrick (see above, p. 218, n. 2) did nothing about petitioning the Court of Directors until 12 July 1775, when his Memorial of Services was read (see I.O.L., Court Book 84). It was received with favour. The following year he was promoted Lt. Colonel and C. in C. of Fort Marlborough, Sumatra.
  2. For Dempster see above, p. 81 n. 1.
  3. For Henry Crabb Boulton, sometime a supporter of Clive, who succeeded Sir George Colebrooke as Chairman of the East India Company in April 1773, see Sutherland, pp. 245-246, and passim.
  4. Laurence Sullivan, after a period of struggle to regain power, had finally effected a working coalition with Colebrookes, which was consolidated by their election as Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Company in April 1772.
  5. Macpherson MSS./1, 4/10, James to John Macpherson, 10 April [1773].

The matter which concerned John at the Secretary of State's Office must have been unofficial, because Bradshaw told James that the Secretary of State would not "write about anything but the business of the Kingdom." Instead, Bradshaw promised that he and Grafton would write to John "by the laws of War", whatever that meant, and that James would be shown their letters. James, however, had not seen them by the time he sent his letter, and John had not received anything by 1st October 1772, when he replied to his friend. Although it is one of the longest letters that John ever sent James, the following extracts are worth quoting:

"My dear Friend: I have received your Letter of the 30th March last and  
 both your Letters of a former date by our namesake Cadets. I must alwise  
 forget your indolence in the merit of your Friendship. But as I have laid  
 it down as a Duty I owe you - to write you by every ship - you may judge  
 how much you will add to my happiness by writing me more frequently, and  
 at greater length.

Sir John Clerk [e] [Captain, R.N.] and his reinforcing men of war are not yet arrived, and as the monsoon is soon to come on it is probable that we may not see him upon this Coast for some months; should not even the accounts of the French Squadron [at Mauritius] have stopt his Destination. We had the news of the last Election at the India House - and the Prince of Wales, which sailed before that Event from England, is the only ship

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1. The cadets (previously mentioned in James's letters) were Alexander Macpherson of Strathmashie, younger, and another clansman called Ewan Macpherson, whose family is not identified (see Macpherson MSS./1, 39/6).

of the Season we are in expectation of for some months to come. I leave you then to judge of the anxiety of Mack-elan-i-Cho [Son of the isle of Mist; i.e. Son of Skye, himself] till he hears further from you.

Chaneil fegul idir ormsi - ma ni ussi  
 do ghrohich rist i Scaven - agus mo  
 Chara more in Dūk. Is feni ghut i rud  
 i ha veamsi. Ihittir Chairdis fon Dūk  
 i fregirt gan Do Ihittir-Chairdis in  
 scrive mo Chara more in shò ga uist.  
 /inan mailla ri Corniller Caimbeul.<sup>1</sup>  
 inain mailla ri Caiptein-Iuingi Shir  
 Iàn.. (Long in Davefeigh)<sup>2</sup> - .. Mari dig  
 i littir-fregirt shin (agus uimra  
 ormsi, agus mo Heirvais inti) fon Dūk  
 agus is Scaven - Hoir er no Bodich  
Testimony yé mo Heirvas aihin do, -  
 rò office Clerich no Staidi ni ine rud  
 i hollichis aid, yen Do rud, - mo  
 grohich, agus she mo choir inan yà.<sup>3</sup>  
 Ghias ussi gi socir rish mo Chardive.

I have no fear - if you do the business  
 with Scaven [Bradshaw] - and my great  
 Friend the Duke [of Grafton]. You know  
 what is hidden from me. A Friendly Letter  
 from the Duke in reply to a Friendly-Letter  
 my big Friend here [The Nawab] wrote to me.  
 /along with [care of] Colonel Campbell.<sup>1</sup>  
 along with [care of] Admiral Sir John  
 [Lindsay].. (in the Ship The Stag)-.. If that  
 reply-letter [answer] does not come (and an  
 account of me, and my Service in it) from  
 the Duke and Scaven - Make the Old-man get a  
Testimony of my Service, - for the office  
 of the Clerk [Secretary] of State or what  
 they would like to give, do what you can, -  
 [about] my affair, and my right to have one.<sup>3</sup>  
 You must wait patiently on my Friends. Do not

1. Colonel Donald Campbell of Glensaddell, see above, p. 160, n. 1.

2. "Davefeigh" seems to be a phonetic form of Damh (Stag) and Feidh (Deer), which is an odd combination as well as being tautological. He was referring to a ship which bore the simple name "The Stag".

3. This is a very badly constructed and confusing sentence in the original Gaelic.

Na lig ghaive barrail i vi acki gin i  
ghinis mi ghut ma no Litrichin-Cairdis  
in scriave no chara-more in sho ga  
nuisi. Abir rui gin dug mishi ordon  
ghut i ghol ga nuisi agus brath shin  
no scriave ad fregirt ga nuisi - i  
hive gur i haun er-eir in regirt shin  
i ghahin tilla Coni er in tallive  
sho. Gu ciantich mar i doir aid  
fregirt gho is fedor gho dol dachi  
Furimi Bliani fó lò sho.

Is more in miss i haig in Duini-vore  
in sho ormsi. Ha fegul i honi egi  
roim. Ach ha naivdin-falich agum no  
chuirst. Agus fedur ghò gluasid socir.  
Hig i grohich ma cuarst ha Barrail  
agum. Ma ghohim Shervais no Guidicki  
cha neil i chris eg - minsher Rhi no  
Direcker-iassach dad i ghoneive no miagh.  
Ha no Helaich chò' ciarrich ruimsi.  
Shir Shoris Guäl-smhin agus i  
Sullivanich ha ad fom ordaig. Cha neil  
Bliani nach heil aid i fahin Clochive-  
Diamoin (I have evidence) fo mi chara  
more in sho. Agus ni veil Clack in  
Cabinaid i Rhi eigi veil Lemhin glan.  
Is fuasich in Duini-more in sho. Agus-  
ha moran in caimbilli ri no ghrohichse.

allow them to know that I told you  
about the Friendly-Letters my great-friend  
here [The Nawab of Arcot] wrote to  
them. Tell them that I gave you an order  
to go to them and to find out if  
they wrote a reply to me - it is on  
that reply that I can stay  
in this Land. Certainly if they  
do not give me an answer I must go  
home. I will stay a Year from  
now.

Great is the esteem that the big-Man  
has of me, - He has the fear of his b-----  
from us. But I have secret-enemies in his  
court. And I have to move cautiously.  
The matter will come round I think.  
Regarding my Service in the Company they  
dare not do anything against me - neither  
King's minister nor the Board of Directors.  
The Wretches are as black as I am. Sir  
George Coal-brook [Colebrooke] and  
Sullivan are under my thumb. There is not  
a Year but they receive Diamond-  
Stones (I have evidence) from my big friend  
here [The Nawab] And there is not a Stone  
[Member] in the King's Cabinet who has  
clean hands. The big-Man here is powerful.  
And - there is much tied to my business.

Dian ussi mo charid dilis, do chuid  
fein ghoi ghroihich auni Iuinin --.  
Cha neil fegul ormsi agus gave focul  
mo chri agus mo chairdis er. Chaneil  
Duini bo ach ussi rish i rian mi  
Spuil. Cha neil Fergustonich, -  
Eglis Phadric, - MacI<sup>n</sup>, - no  
Grevillich b<sup>ò</sup> i hig edir us is mishi.  
Er son Eglis Phatric chaniach in  
Duine e. Sma i ghainich us e. Rian  
mishi meim fein ghe; agus nan Dianagh  
in Duini-more in sho dad er i hon  
vihin tollieti. Scavrig mi i Lhittir  
ghan Duini-vore. Cha duirsh è focul-  
agus cha neil mias eg eir.

Cha do scriave mishi riave rud nach  
bu choir do MacI<sup>n</sup>. Scriave mi go  
usi nach drian Shir I<sup>n</sup> groihich uasil  
in sh<sup>ò</sup>' - Scriave i Bhrahir Gideon ga  
uisi i rud cianta. Ach cha do lavir,  
cha do scriave mi riave focul gha ma  
ghohin in ghroihich i ha niassi edir  
us, agus mishi. Rian in Lhittir i

You my faithful friend, do your  
own share of the business in London.-  
I have no fear and take my word and  
my heart and my friendship as surety.  
There is not a Man alive but you who will  
share the Spoil. [Adam] Ferguson, -  
[James] Kirkpatrick, - [George] Johnstone,  
- nor [Charles] Greville will not come  
between you and me. As for Kirkpatrick he  
is a Man of little worth. Well you know  
him. I made my own use of him; and if the  
big-Man here would do something for him I  
would be happy. I wrote a Letter to  
the big-Man [The Nawab]. He did not say a  
word - and he has no idea for him.

I did not write anything that I ought  
not to Johnstone. I wrote to him that  
Sir John [Lindsay] did not make an  
honourable job here - His Brother Gideon  
[Johnstone] wrote in a like manner to him.  
I did not speak nor write a word about  
the matter that is now between you, and  
me. The Letter Johnstone gave me

1. The Macphersons mentioned Gideon Johnstone, the brother of Governor George Johnstone, on several occasions, but there is no record of him in the standard genealogical works. It could have been a nickname for one of the known brothers of Governor Johnstone, though none of them seemed to be in India in 1772. It is also possible that he was illegitimate, and therefore not shown in the official family pedigree.



hug M<sup>c</sup>Ian gho i ghuise Duprèich feim  
 more; is tiallum in Duini - Bairluim  
 gin diagigh è sho: ach shoil gho è. -  
 Chairdis Dhia gu ro mailli ruit i  
 Hemis.

for Du Pré did much good; I like  
 the Man - I wish he [Johnstone] would  
 come out here; but it is just a thought. -  
 The Friendship of God be with you  
 Hamish [James].

So far, my dear James, I have writ you on our family affairs - It is  
 a foolish Delicacy to be anxious in concealing or at all using Cypher  
 upon such subjects. But how can I speak of these matters but in terms  
 which you only will understand. Should this Letter not come to your  
 hands but fall to the inspection of other Eyes, how could I forgive  
 laying open the Honour of <sup>1</sup>———. She was you know.

As to my own History and the public news of this quarter of our Empire,  
 I have not time to be so very particular about Either as I would wish.  
 I fear the Packet must be sealed soon. My Health continues unimpaired.  
 I still live with my friend the Governor [Du Pré]. I have taken no  
 active part in the Company's service - yet they owe much to the Liberality  
 of Opinion and steady view of the public Interest which I have alwise  
<sup>2</sup>  
 endeavoured to mix with their Councils. I must, without prejudice, affirm

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1. The dash, of course, represents a non-existent woman. John made it quite clear that he was worried about interceptors reading his letter, so he followed his long passage in Gaelic with misleading nonsense about the indelicacy of discussing a woman's honour, and the need to hide her supposed indiscretion from anyone who was not a member of the Macpherson family. By concluding his nonsense with such a splendid touch as "She was you know", John Macpherson proved he had a fine sense of humour.
  2. John was not telling James the whole truth, that is, if Sir Robert Harland's report to Lord Rochford was accurate. On 10th September 1772, Harland told Rochford: "Mr. M<sup>c</sup>pherson has all along lived with M<sup>r</sup>. Du Pré and has been employed as his private secretary. .. he has lately been promoted to a very beneficial employment in the Service, and for some time past he has had access to all the Records of the Presidency to assist him ... for some work which may perhaps be intended for the publick," (see Appendix 4). Now, three weeks later, on 1st October, John pretended he/...

that Duprè is the best Servant the Company ever had; an Enemy to war, a firm Defender of their Privileges, able and shrewd in Politicks, Rigid in ORconomy, and liberal in his plan of public Defence. While he holds the Reins in the Carnatic, India Stock is good. The Country Powers respect his faith, his Resources and his persevering Firmness. He is, at the same time, almost worn out in Business and, like Greenville [sic, Grenville], too Laborious, too unsplendid and over cautious. If there were not too much acrimony and detail of Reasoning in his Correspondence with the King's Ministers, his opposition to the Encroachments of the Crown would do him no less honour from the measure than from the mode, notwithstanding these tinges. I can assure you that George's Ministers here have cut a most unequal, a most despicable figure.

In the name of God if North or Grafton mean to have a Deputy here, let them send us men who are not a disgrace to their Service, men who are not ignorant of the very language in which the affairs of State must be treated - to be understood.

Our present Plenipo. - Admiral Harland - is an able officer - steady and not tyrannical [sic] as a minister. I must allow him more principle, more sincerity and not less abilities than his Predecessor [Lindsay].

Our acquaintance <sup>1</sup> Titus [George Paterson] is Secetaire de L'Embassade.

He and I are little with each other Titus's abilities you know. He is,

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(continued)

2. he was not actively engaged on Company matters. While he was in India, John never told James about his job as Du Pre's private secretary, and he was always backward in telling James about his promotions or any money he had made. He may have thought that James would not work so hard for their joint benefit if he knew about financial gains or local promotions in Madras.

1. George Paterson, Secretary to Lindsay and later Harland, see above p.187, n. 3.

with great success and a very laudable rather than blameable activity, working for himself. ...

Had not some circumstances, unnecessary to be mentioned because uninteresting to you, interfered when we laid siege to Tanjore, the Nabob would have acquired without extending the limits of his Dominions an additional Territory worth a million sterling per an<sup>m</sup>. This is the only stroke in the Territory war that should be struck in India, unless the Politicks of Bombay should require more on that coast.

1

Wedderburn rules at Bombay and has an army of 1700 well-disciplined Europeans and a good body of Seapoys at his command.

In Bengal my friends Mr. Hastings and John Stewart are regulating a disordered Country. I have the happiness of being on the most agreeable and respectable footing with Hastings. He would, if I chose, solicit the Company for my being shifted to Bengal; and failing of what you know, that should be my object. I will wait a year more. If appointed, or rather transferred, to Bengal I might remain here while I chose; nor would my other Concerns suffer. On the contrary, I might act with more spirit and consequently with more success. I have strengthened the friendship between Hastings and Malagrida [Lord Shelburne]. If it falls in your way, get the Jesuit [Lord Shelburne] to write me; and never fail, my friend, to put my friends in St. James's Square in mind of any occasion that occurs of

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1. Brigadier-General David Wedderburn (d. 1775), the younger unmarried son of Peter Wedderburn, Lord Chesterhall, S.C.J., of Chesterhall, East Lothian; and brother of Alexander Wedderburn, later Baron Loughborough and 1st Earl of Rosslyn. He was G. in C. of the forces in Bombay from 1770.
  2. The friends in St. James's Square were the Grevilles.

1

writing me likewise. The Company's packets are safe Conveyances, and every Coronet gives weight in this Land. ...

[About 2 inches of a page, approximately 6 lines of script, have been torn from the page preceding the next incomplete sentence] - you may judge how I pray for Ferguson's success. But, known to the treachery of men in Business to those of Speculation, fear his want of success should Supervisors ever come. He on the spot here, and you at the elbow of the Cr[ow]n, all would prosper.

2

Remember me to all my friends. Drop a note to Martin in Sky[e] or

3

him in Sutherland. Hannay has not writ me. I am angry at him for I never missed an opportunity to him. I know nothing about the R[ings].

I wish you alwise sent me the newspapers. I have received none this year.

Alex [Macpherson of Strathmashie, ygr.] is doing excessively well. He is, I assure you, a Little Prodigy of Prudence, sense and ability in writing. Your nephew [John Macintyre] is doing very well at Bengal.

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1. John seemed to be contradicting what he had written earlier in the letter, when he said he had used Gaelic so that possible interceptors would not understand his correspondence. In fact, he might have been hinting to James that he did wish the interceptors to see any letters which important, especially titled, acquaintances might send him, so that the interceptors could report that he was in touch with men of influence. In short: when it was convenient (and did not harm his secret negotiations) John wanted to play to the gallery.
  2. His brother Martin Macpherson, minister of Sleat.
  3. His cousin Martin Macpherson, minister of Golspie.
  4. For John Macintyre, see above, p.33 , n. 2.

He is quartermaster to his noble Company of Cadets, and has a Com[missio]n now. Ewan [Macpherson] and Aeneas [Macpherson] I have disposed of in a proper manner. They are modest and prudent -- you do good in sending these young men. ...

I am very angry at my friend Mrs. Anderson -- she has never writ. She does not know how much I wish her happiness -- and how much she would contribute to my satisfaction by writing me. The length of my passage [out to India] put it out of my power to see or serve her son. But I would be glad to serve the good woman's child. Mind me affectionately to the gear-olach i chair Cleati riosna geal Nihin Dalruimpil [little-doctor who put the poultice to the white ribs of Dalrymple's Daughter]. O that I could have just [sent] her a shawl so as to swaddle and swathe her first offspring [sic] to my friend. I have infinite affection for Eliot [sic, Elliott]. The Rogue has never writ me. I forgive him.

Write Ferguson for me and inform him of what you chuse. I will ever wish you both in strongest friendship. His worth you know. Be likewise the friend of Charles Greville. I can't read over my letter." 1

This was followed by a supplementary letter dated 16th October 1772, when

John Macpherson wrote:

"My dear James, I have writ you at such full length by the Hawke Sloop of War ten days ago that I can have little now to say. However, this

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1. Macpherson MSS./1, 39/4, John to James Macpherson, 1 October 1772.

may be surer of finding you than my Letters by the Hawke .. This goes in the Not/t/ingham's packet. You will no doubt have a friend at the India House to look out for and immediately remit you my Letters.

The Squadron is now sailed for the monsoon to Bombay. Sir John Clerk <sup>le</sup> and his reinforcement not yet arrived, nor do we expect them this season. Ad.<sup>l</sup> Sir Rob.<sup>t</sup> Harland has sailed with the Squadron, and Paterson remains here, a kind of Chargé des Affaires....

The King, it seems, intends to keep a Min.<sup>r</sup> Plenipotentiary constantly at the Nabob's Durbar, and to support him in all the Rights of a Sovereign Prince. The Disputes between the Com.<sup>ys</sup> Agents and the Servants of the Crown here make no noise in England. They are, it appears, hushed between the Ministers and Directors. Yet I think there is something in this Business [that] will still make a noise. The Nabob has got a relish of Independence, which may be ruinous to our affairs or to himself, unless the line is drawn; and surely the Crown cannot mean to sever the Carnatic, acquired by and dayly defended with the Blood of Britain, from the British Dominions in the East. You must know all the Resources of this Country except the £400,000 of the Circars - and £300,000 more of Jaguire and Commerce - are in the Nabob's hands. His Revenue now is not much short of

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1. The Northern Circars (with the exception of the Guntur Circar) became subordinate to British rule by a treaty concluded by Robert Palk (in 1766 when he was Governor of Madras) with Salabat Jang, the Nizam of Hyderabad and Subahdar of the Deccan.
  2. The Company's jagir at Madras embraced the greater part of the territory around Chingleput. This acquisition, which brought in a revenue of 10 lakhs of pagodas (about £400,000) per annum to the Company, had been obtained from the Nawab of Arcot by Governor George Pigot before 1763.

£2,000,000. He pays our 14 Regiments of Seapoys - and all the expences of the army when on his service. But he only pays them from hand to mouth; and whenever he chooses he may really stop the machine of our Government. If the Company's Servants remonstrate to the Nabob, the King's Servants speak of nothing but the 11th Article of the Treaty of Paris - Royal Powers, &c. &c.

This Business is now well crushed by Mr. Duprè's steadiness, talent at writing and Defence. But Duprè is to leave us in a few months. Mr. <sup>1</sup>Wynch, a man of little knowledge and less ability, succeeds [as Governor of Madras]. His Council are men of the weakest, meanest capacities, and the list of the Company's Servants next in succession to Council are so incapable that to fill up one vacancy - formed by Mr. [John] Andrew's return - four senior servants must be superceded for want of common Capacity. Consider but the Heads of Men that came Boys to this Country, and that without a single acquisition of knowledge, have been under a raging sun for near 20 years. The step .. of passing over those four incapables is a great one for the Com<sup>y</sup>.. ..

The step would be violent but both Mr. Hastings of Bengal and the Governor here [Du Pré] would recommend it do Charid i hoirst sunsi Counsheil [to take your Friend (John himself) onto the Council]. But this I mention as a matter of course. Situated as do Charid [your Friend] is he can form no steady prospect or plan in the service of Ian Cadicki [John Company]. All depends on you now, or failing of that do Charid [your Friend] must return to Europe: that he must determine on in a year from this time.

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1. Alexander Wynch (c. 1720-1781), had joined the Company's Service in 1740; and was Governor of Madras from 1st February 1773 until 10 December 1775, when he was superseded by Lord Pigot, who came out to serve his second term as Governor.

I l'ò ron dhè scriave mishi Littir  
laidir in younsi mo chara more in shò,  
agus ghinis mi gho gin i chuir mi fìss  
ar official Testimonichin in younsi  
Ministerin in Rhi. Ghinsi mi ghò gin  
bedir ghò shin i ghianive, er son  
monnair fecin; i hive is nach ro è go  
mo chreidshin ans no rudin bu choir;  
agus i hive is nach do rein è mo  
ghroich mar i ghial è.

Huit Brone is mulad eir. Ghinis mi  
shin do nach dianigh shin dad is chron  
idir ghasin. Huirst è ghi bo choir  
gho sailtin ersin mar mo charid more.  
Gun bedir gha faintin beg i ghianive  
- gossi faigh e fregirt fon Duke in  
Gravetuin.

Gu ciantich ha Reason eg in Duini-  
vore i ha sho, agus mar in scriave in  
Duke agus is Scavan ga uisi littir  
Chardis er no Testimony hord ghesi  
rò Hecritair no Staidi, Na faic mishi  
Dia mar in cuir me caihi ma cossin,  
Pilligt mi agus bueligh mi beim shiehi  
i feir mone ori. Ach va ada cho  
cairdoil ruimsi gur i ham le shi is

The day before yesterday I wrote  
a strong letter to my big friend here,  
and I told him that I sent a message  
for official Testimonials to  
the King's Ministers. I told him  
that I had to do that, to manifest  
my honour; that he was not  
believing me in the things he ought;  
and that he had not performed my  
business as he had promised.

Sorrow and melancholy fell upon him. I  
told him that would not do him  
any harm. He told me that I  
ought to look on him as my big friend.  
That I would require to be a little  
patient - till he had a reply from the  
Duke of Grafton.

Certainly the big-Man has Reason  
[? Intelligence], and if the Duke  
and the Scavan [Bradshaw] do not write a  
Friendly letter to him or give me a  
Testimony from the Secretary of State, let  
me not see God if I do not put a stumbling  
block before their feet. I will return and  
make loud conversation that will make  
them p--s. But they have been so friendly



maellum mo ghroich i ghianive. Agus  
scriave mi gha nuisi le cheli lane do  
chardis mar nach biigh<sup>"</sup> fe gul ma smiant  
in agan nach dionigh ade mo ghroich.

to me that it is with peace that I prefer  
to do my business. And I wrote them both  
full of friendship as if I had no fear or  
thought that they would not do my business.

Your letter, my friend, of March 30th I received in very good time.

I had the first news of the Stag's<sup>1</sup> arrival by it; so you may receive  
this in March next, when you may have an opportunity of writing a  
decisive answer. If I do not receive it before this time next year,

I believe it will be too late, as the October ship is the best for  
returning to Europe. I am far from thinking, if I can rely upon the

papers,<sup>2</sup> that Tua [North] is steady in the sad/d/le. The Bloomsburys  
are formidable, and I think Grafton is personally the favourite in the  
Cabinet. We dread him much - I mean those who wish the Company's

independence to remain, for it was he [who] certainly sent us the first  
Plenipo. [Lindsay]. Why should Pirclais [Pericles]<sup>3</sup> be severe? I have  
seen some things of his that must hurt him. I have only time to wish  
you every happiness on Earth - J.M'P.

I inclose to your care a long and very amusing Narrative about that  
villain Mr. Patriot Green - who, in 1769, pretended to have killed  
Capt.<sup>n</sup> Douglass [sic]. I have only to assure you that the whole is true

- 
1. The Stag was the ship in which Sir John Lindsay returned home to England in 1771.
  2. In the letter he sent a fortnight earlier (see above, p. 275 ) he had said to James "I wish you alwise sent me the newspapers. I have received none this year."
  3. John had obviously seen the scathing attack written by James against North and Grafton under the pseudonym "Pericles" in the Pub. Adv. on 11th December 1771 (see above, p. 260a, n. 2 ), and he wondered why James had taken this seemingly incredible line against his patrons.

tho' a little embellished. Duprè has had an immense deal of trouble about him, and he is very anxious to have the whole printed. You will send it and my Letter to Woodfall. Don't fail to attend to this.

Green, now defies the Government here and will not be sent home but by force. ..

Pray assist Ferguson with all your soul as you would me. I forgot

1. John hoped that James would receive this letter by March 1773. James did - and he carried out John's wishes regarding the publication of the account of Green's activities in Woodfall's Public Advertiser. The account appeared in three instalments on 23rd, 26th and 30th April 1773, and each instalment was headed "M.P. to the Printer of the Public Advertiser" and "From our correspondent in the East Indies" with the date-lines "Madras" - 5 October 1772"; "6 October 1772"; and "13 October 1772". According to the many documents which John Macpherson quoted in his account, Richard Green was a grand imposter, who claimed to have been at Cambridge University in 1760; a member of the Middle Temple in 1763; and a Second Lieutenant in the Marines from 1746 to 1770, when he was promoted First Lieutenant (in the Plymouth Division). He also claimed to be an ordained clergyman, who had acted as a chaplain on a man of war. In 1769 he became a fervent supporter of John Wilkes, and asserted that he had killed a Captain Douglas who had insulted Wilkes - in a duel in Goodman's Fields, London. Nobody, however, had ever heard of a Captain Douglas dying in a duel in that year. (See Pub. Adv., 12.9.1769, Letter of "Silurus" /a possible pseudonym of John Macpherson/ who wrote a satire on "Poor Parson Green [who] has died of the wound he gave to Captain Douglas.>"). On 25th June 1772 Green had arrived in Madras with an astonishing array of testimonials from, among others, Lord Sandwich, Charles James Fox, and Lord Barrington (the Minister at War), who had given Green permission "to draw on me or my bankers for any sum which the situation shall require." He also introduced himself (with suitable documents) as the "Personal Plenipotentiary of the Lords of the Admiralty". He was arrested and tried for fraud before George Stratton in Madras on 15th July 1772, and committed to prison, where, on 2nd October 1772, he signed his resignation as a Cadet in the H.E.I.C.S. (although he had never proved that he was one). His defence counsel, John Sykes (Notary Public of Fort St. George), attested to the authenticity of the copies of the letters in Green's possession on 6th October 1772, and, for reasons which Macpherson does not explain, Green was released from gaol before 13th October 1772. What happened to him after that is not known. Macpherson summed him up by writing: "Richard appears to have acted with success in the various capacities of a Patriot - a sleight of hand man - a Chaplain of a Man of War - a Duellist - an Orator - a Man of Intrigue - and an Author. Had he completed his Escutcheon with the insignia of a Nabob, he had united every modern claim to Admiration in his character." The records of the alumni of Cambridge University and the Middle Temple, and the lists of Naval and Marine officers, make no mention of a "Richard Green" for the period 1760-1772.

to inform you that I am an Alderman here of the Mayor's Court, and  
 am to be L.<sup>d</sup> Mayor this year.<sup>1</sup> I may get before Duprè goes some places  
 of profit. But the line in the junior list here is miserable without  
 great and good accidents. Talents render a Junior Servant envied and  
 hated. Mais, as Desconeau would say, Les Bougres sont a meprises -  
Je m'en fou de tels Enemis."<sup>2</sup> 3

From what is known today about Grafton and North it would appear that the  
 Macphersons were concentrating their attention on the wrong man. They were: but  
 in 1772 this was far from obvious, even to a person with James Macpherson's political  
 judgment, who was in close touch with North. Since he had become interested in  
 politics in the early 1760's, James had seen five prime-ministers come and go quickly,  
 and he had no way of knowing that the mild and sleepy North would be the first leader  
 of one of George III's ministries to hold office for a long period. Until this  
 started to become clear, in 1773, the Macphersons preferred to deal with Grafton,

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1. John Macpherson was Mayor (not Lord Mayor) of Madras from December 1772 to July 1773, when he resigned, although he had 5 months in office to run (see Love, Vol. 3, pp. 555-556.). The main advantage of the office was the Mayor's House, which the incumbent occupied free of rent. This must have suited John Macpherson, who lived with Governor Du Pre until December 1772, but who would not have lived with Du Pre's successor Wynch. Wynch took office in February 1773 and was soon on bad terms with Macpherson.
  2. John is having a joke. There is no author called Desconeau listed in any of the standard biographical dictionaries of French writers, poets and philosophers.
  3. Macpherson MSS./1, 39/5, John to James Macpherson, 16 October 1772.

John's "Great Friend", whom James despised. Whatever his faults or indiscretions, Grafton had helped both Macphersons, but this had not inspired their respect or loyalty or gratitude. They were ambitious fortune-hunters, ready to take risks, and realistic enough to know what chances to take with their jobs. Neither could be classed as compliant placemen, willing to say 'yes' to any leader for the sake of steady and safe but modest incomes.

James had held a ministerial pension or sinecure since the time of Bute's administration, yet he had been quite willing to bite the ministerial hands that fed him, as his letters to the Public Advertiser proved; while John had told James that he was not afraid to risk the wrath of his superiors in the Company in London. Both left no doubt that their contemptuous attitude was based on knowledge they had which could embarrass men of power, although they had so far resisted the temptation to use their knowledge. If John alone had made this claim in English to a person he wished to impress, then it could be dismissed as a vain and empty boast, but he said it in Gaelic to his fellow conspirator James, who, though equally capable of distorting facts, had said the same thing in less extravagant terms, and had proved he had enough power to drive a bargain, by winning a battle over rewards with North.

Conspirators rarely think it wise or necessary to commit any details of their

plans to paper, but John was thousands of miles away from a partner, whom he wrongly assumed had become idle or indifferent, and anxiety and a feeling of impotence probably encouraged him to say more than he intended posterity to know. His immediate goal - to regain the confidence of the Nawab - had been frustrated by the Crown's plenipotentiaries, who had conveyed their dislike of him to the Nawab, and by his own association with senior Company servants, who were hostile to the plenipotentiaries, and distrusted by the Nawab. The Nawab, delighted by the effect that his alliance with the plenipotentiaries had had on the Company's servants, was particularly grateful to Grafton, under whose administration the first of the plenipotentiaries had been appointed. So, when John Macpherson persisted in claiming the major credit for the notice the Crown had taken of the Nawab's cause, the Nawab asked him to prove it with an official testimonial from the plenipotentiaries' superior, the Secretary of State, or from Grafton himself. This is why the Macphersons continued to give more attention to Grafton than to North. John expected James to persuade Grafton to send the essential testimonial. If the testimonial arrived and had the desired effect on the Nawab, then John felt sure he could implement his scheme (not explained) for making a fortune. In referring to this John not only made what was tantamount to a confession, but also gave the reason why no minister of the Crown or leader of the Company dared to

dismiss him: "The Wretches are as black as I am. Sir George Colebrooke and Sullivan are under my thumb. There is not a Year but they receive Diamond-Stones (I have evidence) from my big friend here [The Nawab]. And there is not a Member of the King's Cabinet who has clean hands. And - there is much tied to my business." He then went on to assure James: "There is not a Man alive but you who will share the Spoil. Ferguson, - Kirkpatrick, - Johnstone, - nor Greville will not come between you and me," which implied that at some time these four friends had been led to believe that they too would share in the Macphersons' profits. And, if the conversation in the post-chaise to Cobham and the business with "Pruci" were connected with the same affair, then John left out the names of Samuel Hannay, the merchant, and Grafton and Bradshaw, who (according to John's Memorial to the Nawab) had protested (perhaps too much) when they were offered jewels as presents from the Nawab in early 1769.

With so much uncertainty in his life, however, John was in a dither. If he found that James had not managed their affairs properly, then he thought he would have to go home the following year, unless (and here he tried to give himself an insurance against his failure to reach the Nawab) James could persuade North to

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1. I.O.L., H. Misc. S. 110, p. 505; see above, pp. 128-129.

transfer him to a Company post in Bengal. But the state of Indian affairs were as uncertain as John's plans. In April 1772 James had informed John that: "E. India affairs are to come under an enquiry of Parliament - But nothing good is omened."<sup>1</sup>

In October John told Hastings:

"The Cabinet are not unanimous as to Indian measures. L.<sup>d</sup> North is afraid to meddle, without doing so effectually. The Bedford People and Grafton wish him to interfere, that he might stand the danger of breaking the tie, and they reap the advantage and then tumble him from his seat."<sup>2</sup>

North, although reluctant to act decisively in Indian affairs, had been gradually driven to deal with the problems of the Company from the beginning of 1772, when a Judicature Bill, designed by the Company to control among other things its own servants, was brought forward too late, and killed largely as a result of the activities of the erratic Governor Johnstone (in an alliance with Lord Shelburne), who declared the Bill inadequate and demanded a Parliamentary enquiry into the corrupt practices and abuses of the Company's servants.<sup>3</sup>

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1. see above, p. 267.

2. B.M. Add. MSS. 29133, f. 261v., John Macpherson to Warren Hastings, 12 October 1772.

3. See Sutherland, pp. 230-231.

In April 1772 the House of Commons had set up a Select Committee under  
<sup>1</sup>  
 Grafton's friend, Colonel John Burgoyne, to look into "the most atrocious abuses  
<sup>2</sup>  
 that ever stained the name of civil government." The convening of this Committee  
 marked, as Dr. Sutherland has pointed out, "the failure of the combined efforts  
<sup>3</sup>  
 of Government and Company to reform the Company from within." The first Commission  
 of Supervisors had never reached India, the second, after a public outcry in the  
 press, had died still-born; and the two plenipotentiaries of the Crown had failed  
 to work in harmony with the Council of Madras. Worse still, the Company was found  
 to be in desperate financial straits when a crisis flared up in the City in the  
 summer of 1772. In the face of the indignation which ensued, the government had  
 no option but to intervene in order to prevent "widespread commercial dislocation,  
 and confusion in India."  
<sup>4</sup>  
 The days of the Company as a fully autonomous body were  
 now numbered. In November 1772 North appointed a Secret Committee to examine the  
<sup>5</sup>  
 Company's books, and to report on the situation, with a view to government action.

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1. For Grafton's connection with Burgoyne see B.M. Add. MSS. 29133, f. 576, John Macpherson to Warren Hastings, 8 June 1773.
  2. Parliamentary Hist., Vol. 17, p. 454.
  3. Sutherland, p. 232.
  4. *ibid.*, p. 233.
  5. *ibid.*, p. 238.



On 21 June 1773 North's Regulating Act, the government's mandate for controlling  
the Company's affairs in India, became law.<sup>1</sup> It altered the plans and careers of  
a host of people, including Hastings, the Nawab of Arcot, and both the Macphersons.  
In John Macpherson's case it brought to Madras a new and important ally; that  
prince of political adventurers, Lauchlin Maclean. It was as Maclean's friend  
that John Macpherson re-entered the durbar and was fully restored to the Nawab's  
favour.

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1. *ibid.*, p. 263.

CHAPTER 5

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The Winds of Change: 1773-1775.

Chapter 5. The Winds of Change: 1773-1775.

Although John Macpherson had boasted of his friendship with Warren Hastings, the evidence shows that it was he alone who made all the efforts to establish an intimate relationship with the Governor of Bengal. Hastings had not bothered to reply to the letter John sent him on 7th February 1772, nor to the one which followed it on 12th October 1772, when he tried to impress Hastings by saying he expected a packet of letters from Shelburne. In the same letter he also reminded Hastings that Du Pré was going home in January 1773. Du Pré's replacement as Governor of Madras was Alexander Wynch, a weak and inefficient man, who was soon dominated by some of the corrupt Company servants and durbar adventurers.

John Macpherson's capacity for exaggeration cannot be ignored, but he was probably giving a reasonably accurate picture when he told Hastings:

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1. B.M. Add. MSS. 29133, f. 29.

2. *ibid.*, f. 26lv.; John told Hastings: "Mr. Greville wrote 30/3[ /72] to say a packet from Shelburne for M<sup>C</sup>P was coming by Sir Jo<sup>hn</sup> Clerk." If this was the truth then why did John tell James only twelve days earlier (see above, p. ): "I have strengthened the friendship between Hastings and Malagrida / Shelburne," and then ask: "If it falls in your way, get the Jesuit / Shelburne / to write to me."? He either knew that Shelburne was going to write, or was merely hoping to impress Hastings with his supposed intimacy with an influential politician. Shelburne had, in fact, first mentioned John to Hastings some time before, in a letter dated 16th July 1771 (see B.M. Add. MSS. 29126, f. 73), but it was a very mild recommendation.

"After the departure of Mr. Duprè, who combatted with so much success in favour of the Company the combined powers of the Durbar and the King's Ministers, the affairs of Madrass fell under the absolute direction of two men removed from all Responsibility - Mr. Paterson, Sir Rob.<sup>t</sup> Harland's private secretary, and Mr. Benfield, who held the Governor in Strings. Both found the Durbar the best scene for their Politicks, and both became united in friendship and Intrigue."<sup>1</sup>

Paterson was never reconciled to John Macpherson; Benfield,<sup>2</sup> after a period of enmity, was eventually to become one of John's closest associates. Between them, in 1773, Paterson and Benfield maintained the precedent set by Lindsay and Harland of excluding John Macpherson from the Nawab's durbar. Left with his duties as Mayor of Madras and as Writer in the Madras civil service, John was far from satisfied, but busied himself by taking an interest in the activities of the Madras Council. In his letter to Hastings of 8th June 1773, the first sentence exposed his boredom. He wrote:

"Dear Sir; I find myself absolutely bound to write to you in the present conjuncture - and yet I have nothing particular to say. ..."

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1. B.M. Add. MSS. 29136, ff. 259-259v., John Macpherson to W. Hastings, 29 July 1775.
  2. Paul Benfield (1741-1810), son of John Benfield of Cheltenham, carpenter. He went out to India in 1764, as a civil architect, with the rank of Lieutenant on the Madras establishment of the H.E.I.C.S. After twice being dismissed from the service, for disobedience and lending money, and twice restored on promises of future good conduct, he broke his word again. By 1774 he was banker to the Nawab of Arcot and in the process of amassing a huge fortune. He was one of the most notorious of all "Nabobs", and was known as "Count Rupee", a nickname given to him by John Macpherson

Your not writing me since you left Madrass, knowing your disposition and the labours of your station, I take as a mark of your unceremonious friendship than otherwise. It is enough to know you are well and doing all good in your power, without having the detail from your own pen. ... My situation here since Mr. Duprè's departure is more honourable than pleasing. I have been of a good deal of use to a weak distracted government - and there is nothing I could propose but they'll do for me. Still, the scene is narrow. My friends at home will do anything that is possible for me. I leave the rest to Duprè and your representations, if you can see any particular station that I could, with use to the Co. and myself, be transferred to in your establishment. Duprè will strain every nerve for me: and I have directed all my friends to act as he directs.

There are some particulars interesting to us both that I'll communicate to you by my friend Col.<sup>1</sup> Dow, whom I dayly expect here on his way to Bengal.

As to our politicks here, the N<sup>awab</sup> is determined on a second attack on Tanjor/e7. The Gov.<sup>r</sup> is with him this morning on the subject - we are in fact dependent on His Highmightness for everything. Wonderful are the praises of you now in the Durbar - upon my word I believe he esteems you much." 2

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1. On 12th October 1773 (B.M. Add. MSS. 29133, f. 262) John had sent Hastings a copy of the 3rd edn. of Dow's History of Hindostan, with its proposals for the reform of Bengal, "reeking from the press," and to impress Hastings further asserted that it was the only copy in India.
  2. B.M. Add. MSS. 29133, ff. 575-580v., John Macpherson to Warren Hastings, 8 June 1773.

Wynch agreed to organise a second expedition against the Nawab's vassal, the Rajah of Tanjore, who had not been completely subdued by the first expedition, which had besieged his capital in the autumn of 1771.<sup>1</sup> The person chosen to lead the mixed force of units drawn from the Company's and Nawab's forces was again Brigadier-General Joseph Smith, one of the few friends of John Macpherson in Madras, and a member of the Madras Council. It was partly through the influence of Smith that John received an appointment in the expeditionary force. On the 3rd July 1773,

John resigned from his office of Mayor of Madras.<sup>2</sup> The same day he received the following document from the Council:

"You are hereby appointed Paymaster to the Army which is ordered to assemble at Trichinopoly under the Command of Brig.<sup>r</sup> General Smith. You will therefore proceed thither with all convenient Expedition. You have herewith a Book of Orders, Rules and Regulations for your Guidance.

Alexander Wynch  
 John Smith  
 Joseph Smith  
 John Whitehill  
 Charles Smith  
 Samuel Johnson  
 John Maxwell Stone." 3

Fort St. George. 3<sup>d</sup> July 1773.

1. See above, pp. 245-246.

2. Love, Vol. 3, p. 554.

3. Macpherson MSS./1, 33/1, "Letter of Appointment of Mr. John Macpherson as Paymaster to the Army, 3rd July 1773, Madras." In his letter to James at the time of the first expedition to Tanjore (see above, p. 245) John had asked to be "appointed from home Paymaster of Trichanapoly [sic]." It is possible that James had managed to influence members of the Company and that John's appointment as Paymaster to the second expedition was partly the result of James's efforts at the time of the first. At a later date John admitted to Hastings that he had received some help in getting the/...

Most of the Councillors who signed this 'commission' were probably glad to see the back of the bumptious and interfering John Macpherson. For John it was the first chance he had had since his return to India of making some money - and he made the most of his opportunity.

Writing from a "Camp near Tanjore" on 29th September 1773, John acknowledged the successful outcome of James's efforts with Grafton, but made further demands on his friend. He wrote:

"My dear Friend: Here I had the pleasure of receiving both your Letters [not found] by the Harcourt. There cannot be a heartier satisfaction to me than that which I receive from your Correspondence. The vortex of literary toil, in which you have been engaged, is sufficient excuse for your not writing to me voluminously; indeed your conciseness of Idea makes a few of your Sentences equal to long Letters.

Mo chara more [My great friend (Grafton)] did write me, and to mo chara du [my black friend (The Nawab)]. So did the Scaven [Bradshaw] to me. The Letter of Chara more [The great Friend] to Chara du [The black Friend] - of which he enclosed me a Copy - was writ in a very masterly manner. The original was enclosed to Shir Rebin Harl----- [Sir Robert Harland]: a precaution of the guarded and reserved Mac Ri - Fitz, you understand the rest. 1

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3. (continued) the job from Joseph Smith and his fellow Councillor, John Maxwell Stone, (see B.M. Add. MSS. 29133, f. 111, 8 January 1777).

1. Mac Ri is a phonetic rendering of Mac Righ, meaning "Son of the King", and is equivalent to Fitz Roy, which is Norman-French for "Son of the King." John was therefore, referring to the Duke of Grafton, whose family name was Fitzroy.

Tua's North's Conduct has been like himself. Did not your Indolence, my friend, give time to the Enemy? - hence the change in his guiltin attitude.

Summi navid i haggamsi man cuarst don  
Chuirst St. Shemis. Gairdin Shir Ian  
- Cairdin Shir Rebert - ministirin i  
chacki - chreiock in onnair sin Cheil  
eig Chuirst mo Chara dù. -

Ha eggil gin nari eg ni Duavilsin  
roimsi. Cha neil ni rian ad an so,  
nach fanni gho. Hüirst ad, le in  
Beul, ri mo chara dù, nach do rian  
mi feum gun bi gho. Ach gloir do  
Dia - ha missa fas ladir, agus mar i  
dian mi spain milli mi avirg. Ha  
Cara Dù tin ma cuairst. Saist dò  
nishí fis chuir orm agus finaack ghìom  
"In doir u ghois de chardis? 'S  
tussa i rian i chlad ghroich ghois. -  
'S tussi dhuinna mà sin Dhuinna ghlic"  
- and a great deal of that with a  
little of something better. But  
Mac Bodi no brilli tuti Titus droch

Many enemies I have about the  
Court of St. James. Friends of Sir John  
- Friends of Sir Robert - Ministers of  
ex-----t - who have sold our honour  
at the Court of my black Friend.

The Devils are shamelessly against me.  
They have done nothing here, but  
what I know. They have said, by word  
of Mouth, to my black friend, that I  
did have no good that I'm worthless. But  
glory to God - I am becoming powerful, and  
if I do not make a spoon I will spoil a  
horn. The Black Friend is coming round. He  
is in the habit now of sending for me and  
asking "Will you give me your friendship?  
You were first in helping my affairs. -  
You are to us therefore a Wise Man"  
- and a great deal of that with a  
little of something better. But the  
brilliant Son of a C—k Titus Paterson

1. "If I do not make a spoon I will spoil a horn" is a Gaelic idiom, meaning "If I do not get my own way I will ruin everything."
2. "Brilli" is not a Gaelic word, but John was probably trying to render the English word "Brilliant" into what he thought was a Gaelic sound. He is using it for a very vulgar description of Paterson, whose former career as a medical practitioner might have involved him in the cure of venereal disease. What John probably meant was that James Macpherson had bribed Paterson to help certain people, but that Paterson would let these people down badly - or cheat them.



Card no buiddin whose lotion and  
 Inject.<sup>n</sup> i chosta moran airgid ghutse.  
 Ha essin, na Mhinistair Rhi, as Riach  
 aunsì Durbar. -- agus ha cluas mo  
 Chara Dù eggi gi bolich.

He and I have never yet come to any explanation -- tho' he knows all  
 in regard to me and I a good deal in regard to him. Both respect  
 each other's strength. The whole will probably take some decisive  
 turn before any further steps taken on your part could be of use.

Is mi-orstonach in gnoach nac do  
 scriave Tua er no i Heicheriter in  
 Liattir.

Chionigh i fecat ghaive feun, ghutai,  
 agus ghosi. The Liattir should have  
 been to Cara Du for me to deliver and  
 representing gu mi bha lo chairdis in  
 Duinna Dhui -- gu mo Duinna aunsa  
 n'Hinnais missha -- agus ò va fias  
 acki in Sherivals in rian missa gha  
 auni 69 agus 70 -- gum drian ad feim  
 yiomsì go insa gha in miass mhòr i  
 vack eri hon, -- or to that purpose;  
 or if Tua just took up the pen and  
 addressed mishi a line -- saying: that  
 the zeal your friend had shewn for  
 the public Interest was known to him,  
 and that he would receive any

will prove a bad Friend of the c---ks whose  
 lotion and Inject.<sup>n</sup> cost you a lot of money.  
 He is, as a Minister of the King, like a Ruler  
 in the Durbar. -- and he has the ear of  
 my Black Friend entirely.

It is an unfortunate business that  
 North or the Secretary did not write to him  
 a Letter.

They would be helping themselves, helping  
 you, and helping me. The Letter should have  
 been to The Black Friend for me to deliver  
 and representing that I wish the friendship  
 of the Black Man -- that I was a big Man  
 in India -- and since they knew  
 the Service I rendered to him  
 in 69 and 70 -- that they asked me  
 to tell him the great esteem they  
 have for him, -- or to that purpose;  
 or if North just took up the pen and  
 addressed me a line -- saying: that  
 the zeal your friend had shewn for  
 the public Interest was known to him,  
 and that he would receive any

Representation he would make him,  
relative to this part of India; and  
that the Chara Du and his family had  
his wishes for their prosperity -  
d'foclin begi mar sin, suni Lave agus  
fo Sili Moxer Tua - would do wonders;  
and if you can get him to that point  
you do wonders. If that cannot be  
done, agus nach dion ad Ministair  
er nò Shevaishich Ri Ghìomsi oni sho,  
gu ro bod in Diavil nan toin gun Leur.

My friend Duprè will have explained my other views to you. I again  
insist on your being united with him in heart and hand. It is my  
resolution to stay here as I am, till I hear from him.

Na Diani Essin, ussi, Chara More is  
Tua in ni ha ceorst - ghìoni shive  
Governor do Mhadraiss ghiam. - in  
chuid in slia aunsì chounseil. Gave  
mocul er chaneil Shervaistich eggi  
Chuidicki that would fill the Chair  
nos fair na do charid. Ferin deich  
mili pount sasinich ghut na duggi  
du gnoich na chuarst.

Is mishi ha cumail i government in  
ha sho ri chelli, o galive in Dupreich  
- cha neil ni som bi ach mar i  
ghiorin, agus is smi iscriave the

Representation he would make him,  
relative to this part of India; and  
that the Black Friend and his family had  
his wishes for their prosperity -  
a little word like that, in the Hand and by  
the Seal of Lord North - would do wonders;  
and if you can get him to that point  
you do wonders. If that cannot be done,  
and if they do not make a Minister of you  
or a King's Servant of me here, may the  
Devil's c---k be in the b-----s of them all.

If he, you, my Great Friend [Grafton] and  
North would do the right thing - you would  
make me Governor of Madras. - [? above/over  
certain people] in the council. Take my  
word there is not a Servant in the  
Company that would fill the Chair  
better than your friend. I would give you  
ten thousand pounds English [sterling] if  
you brought this matter round.

It is I who am keeping the government here  
together, since the departure of Du Pré  
- everything is as I would ask [demand],  
and it was I who wrote the general

general Letters on politicks that went in the Triton, and va parsti vore in shò in the Council against Duprè after his departure. Ha in Governair na ghuini lag coir. Those in opposition wrote better than pairsti i Ghovernair. Hug è itti ghoi to your friend. Bhuail mi beim skei - and all has been silence on their part since.

Letters on politicks that went in the Triton, and there was a big party here in the Council against Du Pré after his departure. The Governor [Wynch] is a weak kindly man. Those in opposition wrote better than the Governor's party. He gave a goose quill to your friend. I struck a warning note - and all has been silence on their part since.

Dow lived with me at my Mayoralty House about a fortnight. We were very happy and talked over all scenes.

Wonderful have been some Events. I only feel for Ferguson. Why did you oppose any measure that was to his advantage and which must have been so to mine? Do you know I have not heard from him since I came to India. Your Homer I have not seen yet. I wish Causticus [John himself] had been on the spot. His Grecian Majesty must be respected, at last [sic, least] in your dress. Pelt the mean Enemy [the Critics of James Macpherson's translation of The Illiad of Homer]; and lay Siege to both the Universities in force.

Dow received great Honour from the Nabob on account of the Character of His Highness in his Book [The History of Hindostan]. I have heard from Dow since his arrival at Bengal. .. I hope the Historian will succeed. I gave him very strong Letters to Mr. Hastings, who will regard them. ...

All the Homers depend on my security, and that with due respect to the  
1  
Bonds.

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1. It is not known what John meant by this sentence. His Account Book (Macpherson MSS./1, 82/1) has no record of Bonds with a date as early as 1773. The first recorded transaction bears the date "9th October 1774". There may, of course, have/...

The Ship has not been here, nor have I heard of her yet.

Mind me affectionately to all our mutual friends, and believe me  
unalterably, Yours most affectionately, M<sup>c</sup>pherson

Along with this I'll write you another Letter, Iiatir i ghiadis du  
hailtin ghan Tuach na do Robetsonich, <sup>1</sup> a Letter you may show to  
North or Robinson<sup>7</sup>, and in which shall be the news of our signal  
Events here.

Alec <sup>1</sup> Macpherson of Strathmashie, ygr.<sup>7</sup> is an Ensign and doing well:

Ewan Macpherson died - as I got him in a good station. He was a very  
honest fellow. <sup>1</sup> Donald Macpherson of <sup>1</sup> Breakachie's nephew <sup>1</sup> Aeneas

Macpherson<sup>2</sup> went to Bengal with Dow. I gave him 40 P<sup>s</sup>. Your Nephew

<sup>1</sup> John Macintyre<sup>7</sup> is doing very well, and so is the other poor Namesake

<sup>3</sup> Ewan Macpherson<sup>7</sup> who came along with him.

1. (continued) have been an earlier Account Book, which has since been lost or destroyed.
1. Donald Macpherson of Breakachie (c. 1710-1778), was a close companion of Ewan of the '45, whose sister, Christina, he married. In 1773, Breakachie was evicted from his land by William Tod, the Chamberlain of the Gordon estates, who leased them for a higher sum to Lachlan Macpherson of Ralia (see above, p. 254, n.2 ). In 1791 Ralia outwitted Tod into ceding 20,000 acres of Gordon lands to the Macphersons by a "boundary adjustment" and so settled the score for the long dead Breakachie. Breakachie's son, Col. Duncan Macpherson of Bleaton (1735-1810), married his cousin Margaret (1742-1808), daughter of Ewan, the "Cluny Macpherson" of the '45. Breakachie's brother Samuel Macpherson (1714-1743) was the leader of the Black Watch mutiny in 1743 (see p.30 , n.3 ), and another brother, Kenneth Macpherson (c. 1716-1791) was in 1789 the guardian of James Macpherson's elder illegitimate daughter Ann, (see Appendix 3).
2. Aeneas (or Angus) Macpherson (d. 1784), was the son of Angus Macpherson in Gallovie (a younger brother of Donald Macpherson of Breakachie) by his wife Anne, daughter of the Rev. William Blair, minister of Kingussie. Aeneas went to Bengal in 1773, and died in Calcutta in 1784 as a Lieutenant, Bengal Infantry. He was unmarried.
3. Ewan Macpherson, see later, p.499, n. 4. The Macpherson "namesake" who went out with John Macintyre was undoubtedly Ewan Macpherson, in Ovie, who sailed for India in 1771, and served as a Sergeant in the Bengal Artillery, before retiring "for reasons of health and age" in 1776; (see N.A.M., Hodson Collection). In 1778 Ewan Macpherson in Ovie obtained a commission in the British army with the help of James Macpherson; (see Macpherson MSS./2, G.D. 80/902, 2 Letters, James Macpherson to Capt. John Macpherson; and James Macpherson to John Macintyre, both dated 15 June 1778).

1

Dow's Stewart was with me this morning. He was highly Raptured at your Enquiry. He is alive, but as dry as a Chip. I have not heard this Season from Gov<sup>r</sup>. Johnstone. His sufferings have been great. His Debt on me in his sacrifice to Ferguson, I'll never forget. Tell him so. The two broms<sup>2</sup> he recommended to me are thriving wonderfully under my hands. Little bro<sup>2</sup>m Jon<sup>3</sup>my is very tall, and just an Ensign. Gideon<sup>4</sup> is alive, invincible and desperate. He swears by me. I will absolutely get him to leave all to George in case of a demise. He swears he'll put Poltney<sup>5</sup> [sic] to death." 6

The letter from Grafton to the Nawab, which John thought would be his passport into the durbar, had not produced the desired effect, partly, perhaps, because it had been sent care of Sir Robert Harland. The Nawab had seen John, and had apparently made some flattering remarks, but that was all. Paterson, the

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1. This was not John Stewart, the Judge Advocate of Bengal, who was in Calcutta on this date. The Stewart or Stuart who was the friend of Alexander Dow cannot be identified. There were many Stewarts and Stuarts in India at this time.
  2. There can be no doubt that the word in the original is "broms", repeated in the singular form "brom". It is not a Gaelic word.
  3. Unidentified; there is no John Johnstone whose dates would have fitted this "Jonny" in the Johnstone pedigree published in the current edn. of Burke's Peerage.
  4. Gideon Johnstone (see above, p. 271, n. 1), brother of Governor George Johnstone.
  5. William Pultenay, né Johnstone (1729-1805), 3rd son of Sir James Johnstone, 3rd Bart., of Westerhall, Dumfries-shire; and younger brother of Governor George Johnstone. He changed his name to Pultenay in 1767, when his wife Frances Pultenay, succeeded to the estates of Lord Bath. He was M.P. for Cromartyshire from 1768 to 1774, and for Shrewsbury from 1775 to 1805.
  6. Macpherson MSS./1, 39/6, John to James Macpherson, 29 September 1773.

Plenipotentiary's secretary, was the main influence in the Nawab's durbar, and had, as John admitted, "the ear of my Black Friend entirely." So, as Grafton's letter had carried no weight, John wanted a full testimony from North. Moreover, he wished North to send the letter to him personally, and not to the care of any of the Crown's servants in Madras. He was expecting a great deal of James, whom he was willing to give £10,000 sterling, not for persuading North to send the letter, but for nothing less than the Governorship of Madras. And John was not joking. He really thought that he was the most suitable man in Madras for the job. It would be tempting to dismiss his claims of holding the Madras government together, by writing the general letters of the Council or by taking up his pen in defence of the weak Governor, as the babblings of a self-deluded megalomaniac or a day-dreaming liar. Few people could read John's letters without being irritated by his habit of continually exaggerating his importance, or, if frustrated, of overrating his ability to frighten or blackmail people who had not given him the recognition or rewards he thought he had earned or deserved. Few people could find much to commend in his character. But he was more than a facile braggart. His will to succeed and his determination to make people take notice of him, mostly by strident self-publicity, drove him forward when other men would have resigned themselves to obscurity. In common with his friend James he was sustained by a

fanatical pride. Unlike James, he rarely gave a clue to its source. In the last letter he sent his cousin Martin Macpherson of Golspie, however, he not only declared that he had made a fair amount of money as Paymaster to the Tanjore Expedition, but also gave, in his exultation, a hint to the source of his pride.

Writing from a camp near Vellore on 13th March 1774, John told Martin:

"Happy is Rollichan <sup>1</sup> [John himself] to tell you that through Industry and Honest Management he has already collected more than the Thiona of <sup>2</sup> Mc faden <sup>3</sup> in the Wilds of Skia ever had united. It is difficult for him to give you my first Idea, as everything of that kind is never effectually realised till remitted to Europe, and secured there. Could he once see deich mili Pount Sassenich [ten thousand Pounds English] landed in England - a thing! Two years, if friendly, might effect. All would be well. He should be satisfied himself, and aid you a little. Your Nephew <sup>4</sup> [Donald] Macleod is well. I have made him remit £100 for you to

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1. A Gaelic term used in Skye for a wild or defiant fellow, see above, p. 144, n. 2.
  2. "Thiona" is a rough rendering of "Tighearna" meaning "Chief" or "Head of the House".
  3. "Mc faden" in this case, must be an abbreviation for "Mhac-faden" meaning "Sons of the peats" or, more freely, "Sons of the soil" - peasants. The whole phrase: "the Thiona of Mc faden in the Wilds of Skia" means, therefore, "the Lord or Chief of the peasants in the Wilds of Skye", and as there were two Skye Chiefs, Macleod and Macdonald, John was referring to one of these men. The one he meant to isolate was undoubtedly Macdonald of Macdonald, who had always been the superior of the Skye Macphersons.
  4. Ensign Donald Macleod, see above p. 144, n. 1.

employ to support his friends.

<sup>1</sup>  
 Poor Morison was killed at Tanjore. Obstinacy and Mauliness were his Character. Mind me most affectionately to the Dear White Hand Mrs. Martin Macpherson of Golspie<sup>7</sup> and the Children." <sup>2</sup>

The Tanjore campaign had ended, and John, on the point of returning to Madras after a period with the garrison at Vellore, knew he had made a lot of money, but not the exact amount until the accounts were cleared and the sum credited in Europe. His aim was £10,000, the amount he had offered James for arranging his appointment as Governor of Madras, but he did not expect to see quite as much as that for another two years. The important thing was that he now thought he had as much money as his family's superior, Macdonald of Macdonald. For several generations the university-educated Macpherson ministers of Ostaig in Skye had been Macdonald

1. Alexander Morison, the younger, (d. 1773), a son of Alexander Morison, tacksman of Skinnadin in Skye (see above p. 155, n. 2). On 10 September 1770 (Macpherson MSS./1, 21/5) John had told his cousin Martin: "I took measures in England to get Sandy Morison's son appointed a Cadet for India. I have reflected since, and as Sandy's family is numerous and weak, I think it would be better to rear him for the Kirk. I write Sandy from here Rio de Janeiro and send the boy a line to Mr. Ferguson, to help him to some pupils, in case one line miscarries." John had obviously been persuaded to change his mind, and had helped young Alexander Morison to secure a cadetship on the Madras establishment of the H.E.I.C.S. (see N.A.M., Hodson MSS., Notes on Madras officers and cadets).
2. Macpherson MSS./1, 21/6, John Macpherson to Rev. Martin Macpherson of Golspie, 13 March 1774. John had not heard that his cousin Martin had died on 10 September 1773. By the time this letter reached Golspie the intended recipient had been buried for a year.



vassals. The influence that each of them had enjoyed had been that of a big fish in somebody else's small and remote pond. The prospect of maintaining that tradition had not appealed to John Macpherson. Early in his life he had rejected his ancestors' profession, and the subservience to a laird that went with it. By 1769, when he was only twenty-five, he was discussing important affairs with the leading men of the realm, and when, in the same year, Macdonald of Macdonald had put him in his "place" he had bristled with indignation.<sup>1</sup> Who, he had asked his cousin Martin, did the Macdonald chieftain think he was, merely because he had the power to deny the Macphersons the lease of a farm in a remote area like Skye? Didn't Macdonald know that he was addressing a man of affairs, the envoy of a foreign prince? The fact would have to be impressed on him. And now, in 1774, a mere five years later, John Macpherson thought he had the means to back up his arrogance. Jack was not only as good as his master - but at last had the wealth to prove it. Naturally, he wanted applause for his achievement, especially from those he respected or loved. Hence the letter of triumph to Martin Macpherson of Golspie, who was the senior member, by age, in the family.

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1. See above, p. 143

The letter also disclosed the other way in which John, in common with James, backed up a sense of superiority. Although neither of them had secured their own futures they had already given their 'patronage' to several of their Highland friends or relations. James had helped Macphersons belonging to the Banchor, Pitmain, Breakachie, Strathmashie and Ralia branches of the Badenoch clan, which meant that with the exception of the Cluny-Macphersons (whose turn was to come) James had already put all the leading Macpherson families in his debt. It was he who loaned their sons money to go out to India, or supported their law actions with his influence in political circles, and nobody else. Similarly, John had helped members of Macpherson, Macleod, Macaulay and Morison families from the Hebrides, most of them tenants of Macdonald of Macdonald. From both these groups there were men, such as Morison of Skinnadin and Macpherson of Strathmashie, who had helped James when he was collecting his Gaelic material. It could be said, therefore, that the Macphersons were not only indulging their tribal instinct for nepotism, but were also repaying kindnesses which had been shown to James. That is the appearance, but it is not the whole truth. An inspection of all the references made by the Macphersons about the men they helped reveals that they invariably referred to them in a condescending manner. Their condescension was

sometimes disguised as concern, but they often belittled their dependents openly, by making critical remarks about their characters or abilities or poverty.

This attitude, although despicable, was not unusual. Men such as the Macphersons are as touchy as sea anemones, and they hate to admit that their progress has depended on help from others: even small acts of simple kindness are liable to be misinterpreted as charity or patronage. To do these people a favour is, more often than not, to earn their resentment. They cannot accept kindnesses with grace or gratitude, and they cannot rest until all obligations, big or small, have been discharged. Until they reach their private goals, and have completely dominated circumstances to their own satisfaction, their fanatical pride and will-power drives them on. For James, the goal was mastery of the Badenoch Macphersons, and their acceptance of him on his terms. For John, the goal was less clear, but it seems to have been a baronetcy, the rank of his enemy Macdonald of Macdonald, and his general acceptance as a "Big Man" (to use his favourite term) by important, especially royal or titled, people. And both, of course, wanted the wealth to support their pretensions. Once they had reached these goals, and had paid off all their "debts", they both retired from active politics. Until they did, not one of their benefactors was safe from their resentment. The weaker ones were made the contemptuous objects of their "patronage"; the stronger ones were attacked

or betrayed. Of their more important patrons, Home, Bute, Hume, Shelburne, Grafton, Bradshaw, North, Robinson, and Hastings all had cause, whether they were aware of it or not, to regret the assistance or trust they had given the Macphersons. It was, perhaps, safer to have been one of their enemies.

Many of their friends and patrons made the mistake of thinking that they were vain, but otherwise different characters. The cynical understatements of James and the pompous overstatements of John certainly gave the illusion of strongly contrasted personalities. Essentially, however, they were remarkably alike. Each sensed, or perhaps knew, that the other was just as ruthless, and fanatical, and egoistical as himself: they had no need to bluff each other. Each had similar goals, but as these goals were not in conflict they could afford to combine their talents for mutual benefits: they were never competitors. And each time one helped the other he helped himself, either directly or indirectly: they were complementary agents in an exceptional partnership. Of the two, John was the more likeable, and not only because he was obviously more affable and charming than James. John retained an affection and respect for some men, whose kindness he never forgot. This was particularly true of his relationship with Adam Ferguson, who had taken the place of his father at a critical age.

The first letter John had from Ferguson after his arrival in India leaves no

doubt that his affection and respect for the professor was reciprocated. Writing

from Edinburgh on 3rd November 1773, Ferguson said:

"My dear Sir: I have just received your letter by Col.<sup>1</sup> Campbell  
who, being in haste, has sent it with a very obliging Message and  
defers the pleasure of my seeing him till his return to this place  
about Christenmas.

I have, without a moments delay, taken this paper and I shall not  
think of anything else until I have sent off a letter to you. Yours  
have all come safe, and at least do not refer to any more than I have  
received.

I could muster up some excuses for not writing: but must confess on  
recollection that the Principal cause has been a senseless habit of  
Procrastination. I sometimes waited one event and then for another.  
Some months of this long silence passed even in expectation of seeing  
you from India, and I had the womanish humour of wishing to surprise  
you: but of this you have heard, as I guess, from a letter of yours to  
Doctor [William] Robertson [Principal of Edinburgh University], and I  
need not tell you how that matter went off. The wonder is that it ever  
encreased a little since you heard of me.

<sup>3</sup>  
Bell has got a little Brother, about three years old, and a Sister, about

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1. Colonel Donald Campbell of Glensaddell, see above, p. 160, n. 1.

2. Ferguson was probably referring to his application for the post of Secretary to the Commission of Supervisors, which had come to nothing. He had, seemingly, kept or increased an income from some source connected with the East India Company, perhaps its stock. He had obviously hoped to surprise John by turning up in Madras.

3. Isabella Ferguson, eldest daughter of Adam Ferguson.

eight months. The little boy has a good deal of stuff in him, both Attention and Vehemence. I begin to recommend him in Time, and shall bequeath him your Fellowship as the best part of his Inheritance. His name is Adam,<sup>1</sup> and I shall call him M<sup>c</sup> Pherson too if you please.

Mrs. Ferguson and Bell join me in their best Respects and acknowledgements for your new Present, which was not landed when Col.<sup>1</sup> Campbell left London, but they hope will come safe. Mary too will have a share of it, and thus you have a Catalogue of all my Children.<sup>2</sup>

My demerits as a Correspondent has diminished the frequency of my Intercourse even with Charles Greville. His Father is dead within a few Months. He will be in Parliament for the first time this session. I have heard nothing directly from him. I did not expect the Instrument was to have Magnanimity enough to behave Properly to you. The Lustre he wished to assume required keeping you out of sight. But I hope that the other party concerned has had sense enough to see and acknowledge the Truth.<sup>3</sup> The Company has received some blows within this twelve month and is still upon the Anvil to be hammered into nobody knows what. But I hope and believe that no hurt will happen, I shall be sorry if any thing be done to hinder the Company's servants from acquiring fortunes in an Innocent way Abroad, for after all that has been said this I believe to be the likeliest way of bringing wealth from India to Europe. The State, I hope, will leave

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1. Adam (later Sir Adam) Ferguson (1771-1855), Keeper of the Regalia in Scotland; eldest son of Adam Ferguson.
  2. Mary Ferguson, second daughter of Adam Ferguson.
  3. Ferguson's meaning is not clear. John Macpherson never complained of Charles Greville and another depriving him of any reward, or of denying him credit.

the Company in all matters to Govern itself, and it will be wise in any Minister to leave them accountable for what happens there, but it will be allowable likewise to squeeze them to the last farthing they can pay. ...

Mrs. Ferguson joins me in most affectionate Respects, and I, in the name of all my little Children, earnestly pray for your Wellfare, and am your most affectionate and most humble Servant: Adam Ferguson." 1

If Ferguson was naive enough to believe that the Company's Servants acquired "fortunes in an Innocent way Abroad," then he would have been shocked to his core by the conduct of his former pupil and the other ambitious adventurers in Madras. The weak Governor Wynch had allowed himself and the affairs of the presidency to be dominated by the notorious financier Paul Benfield, and the Plenipotentiary's secretary George Paterson, who acted "like a Ruler in the Durbar" and seemed to have more influence with the Nawab than his superior, Sir Robert Harland. In March 1774, after six months with the army in the field, John Macpherson was still barred from the Durbar and the Nawab by these men.

The reply John sent to the letters he had received from James (by the Harcourt) leaves no doubt that he knew the ministry had been prejudiced against him by the reports of the two plenipotentiaries: Lindsay, who had probably given his opinions

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1. E.U.L. MSS., Dc.1.'77, Letter 1, A. Ferguson to John Macpherson, 3 November 1773.

verbally, and Harland, who had sent a letter to Lord Rochford, the Secretary of

<sup>1</sup>  
State. John also knew that the testimony of the Duke of Grafton, upon which he had placed so much hope, had made little, if any, impression on the Nawab. By the spring of 1774, therefore, John's prospects must have seemed bleak, and he had little to look forward to except the receipt of the money he had made as Paymaster, and the result of his requests for a transfer to a post in Bengal. Reluctant as he was to leave Madras without gaining his long sought-for recognition and reward from the Nawab, he had asked James Macpherson and Warren Hastings to help him to make the change. When James Macpherson sent his annual batch of letters by the ships sailing from England in the spring of 1774, the transfer to Bengal was the first matter discussed. On 22nd March, James wrote:

"My dear friend: The want of having something worthwhile to say has kept me silent so long. I told you that I asked Tun [North] for a removal for you to the other side of frith <sup>2</sup> [the forest] and he promised it. Now I find he cannot do it with certainty till after the Election. He has most of the inferior Gentry, but as the Tirach tarin [Country party], at least the Majority of them, are to be turned out, no wonder they should

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1. See Appendix 3.

2. "The other side of the forest" is a Gaelic idiom for "The other side of the country".



oppose him in everything. I think the thing must be done. Of India matters you shall hear enough, from the shoal of Councillors, Judges, cooks, scullions and dependents, that go out in the present ships. Your friend Ferguson is arrived here [in London]. He is<sup>1</sup> on his way to France to travel with the young Earl of Chesterfield. There is a settlement of 200 [pounds per annum] for life made upon him. I send you inclosed a play [Sethona] of Dow's. It has been received here with the most astonishing applaude. Ian Tachie [John Home] is here. He did not like all the bursts of applause which attended Sethona. He is, however, a good man. But of the genus irritabile.

You shall hear from me by the ship which shall carry out the news of the Election. Government is to be pitted against the field. I see frequently your friend Mr. Du Pré. He has dined with me and I with him. I like the man much. Not a syllable has been uttered against him. Never writeto Mac Iian [Johnstone]. He is not to be trusted. We ought never to have trusted the Scavan [Bradshaw]. We thought he was all our own. But what do you think? I read a series of letters from him, written to our friend an d'Aw Geal [The Argyll] in Straitte Chraven [Craven Street], wherein his promises were larger and his professions of gratitude greater than to you or me. He flung him, however, entirely. I am realy [sic] ashamed after all to be put by

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1. Philip Stanhope, 5th Earl of Chesterfield (1755-1815), succeeded his cousin as earl in 1773. He was P.C. 1784; Ambassador to Spain 1784-87; Master of the Mint 1789-90; and Joint Postmaster General 1790-98.

such a scoundrel on an inferior footing to Aw-Geal <sup>1</sup> Argyll<sup>2</sup>. He will never do any good, but under the discipline of an Oaken Towel; a discipline, which, for reasons of secrecy, he must never have from,  
My dear friend, Yours

Macvurich an Dieuil Macvurich the Devil<sup>3</sup> 3

Here, for the only time, James disclosed that in the secret business which had concerned himself, John, Bradshaw, and possibly Johnstone, a few years earlier, a no lesser person than the Duke of Argyll, the chief of the Campbells, had also been involved; and James, furious at the thought of being placed on an inferior footing to Argyll not only expressed his contempt for Bradshaw, but also signed himself "Macvurich an Dieuil", the personal style of the chief of the Macphersons made more impressive by the addition of "the Devil". One can almost feel the arrogant Macpherson bridling at the comparison: was not he, The Macpherson,

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1. John Campbell, 5th Duke of Argyll (1723-1806). Before succeeding his father, and before accepting the title of Baron Sundridge in the Peerage of Gt. Britain, he had sat as M.P. for Glasgow Burghs from 1744 to 1761, and as M.P. for Dover from 1765 to 1766. He married, 1759, Elizabeth (Gunning), widow of James, 6th Duke of Hamilton. Although he was closely connected to the Bute family, the opposition of Lord Bute and James Stuart-Mackenzie to his stepson, the 7th Duke of Hamilton, in the famous "Douglas Cause" caused a rift in the Argyll-Bute alliance. From 1761 to 1766, the period of the rift, Argyll was closely connected with the Bedford party. By 1767 the Argyll-Bute alliance was restored, and in 1770, on the death of his father, Argyll virtually retired from active politics. His association with Bradshaw and Grafton must have had something to do with Grafton's friendship with the Duke of Bedford.
  2. The "Oaken Towel" was a Scottish cudgel, similar to an Irish shillelagh.
  3. Macpherson MSS./1, 4/11, James to John Macpherson, 22 March 1774.

just as dangerous and devilish as the much vaunted head of the devilish Campbells? The contempt that James had always had for Bradshaw, changed from this time to utter scorn. He had never had a high opinion of either Grafton or Bradshaw, but as they had held power, and as they had been compromised by him in some way, it had seemed foolish not to use them. Gradually, however, it was dawning on James that Grafton and Bradshaw had not as much to offer as North and Robinson, especially the latter.

It was probably difficult for James to admit to himself that he had wasted his time nursing the patronage of the Duke and his henchmen. It was undoubtedly even more difficult for John, who was not at the heart of British political life, to admit the same thing. But, henceforward, they both began to sever their links with Grafton; and their disappointment in him, and their annoyance with themselves for relying on him was reflected in the insults they heaped on his head. They were also disappointed with each other. The lack of real progress was beginning to make them both irritable. Although they never quarrelled, they started to find fault with each other. The partnership was never damaged, but in 1774 it was at its lowest ebb. In the second of his spring letters, written on 30th March, James said:

"Two letters inclosed from you came to my hands last night. The slip of paper, which accompanied them, was dated at the Camp on the twelvth of October 1773. When I hear of your writing fully to others, I am a little surprized to find nothing to me, but to forward two letters to the Isle of Skyle. This, however, shall immediately be done. As the situation of your affairs there has, at present, a degree of importance, I had some expectations that you would have been full upon that subject to me.

I wrote you about a week ago. The Council and Judges set out immediately; and I have, therefore, no time to enlarge. India news is so multifarious, yet of so little importance here that I cannot, had I even the time, enter upon such a wretched and barren field. .. I had a letter from Dow. He speaks handsomely of you, but complains of your not answering his letters.

Car son nach do scriob ù dhà? Ata è barrail gun bail fearg ortsa, air son é dhòl do Phattersanach, agus am fionais an ìr mhoir. Scriobh thuigga. Na tilgse màch air duina sa bhith. Cha neil coltach ri do Thiogsa. Ata è ginsa dhonse gun labhair éssé ris an èr mhòr uisatse. Ach gur beg air an èr mhòr ussa. Burast am fèr mhor chuir humna 'n diuieil. Mò huir ù trì na cear miltà, Thig dachi: agus innis do nèar mhoir gun cuir u sòp tein a ri iorpul. Ach s'fear am fios agus fein na agansa. - Thubhairt Tua rionna roi' Sheekretair, gun dìona è

Why did you not write to him? He is of the opinion that you are angry, because he went to Paterson, and in the presence of the big man The Nawab. Write to him. Do not cast the man out in anger. This is not like your Understanding. He tells me that he will speak to the big man about you. But that the big man hates you. It would be easy to send the big man to the devil. If you have acquired three or four thousand, Come home: and tell the big man that you will put a burning faggot to his tail. But you yourself will know better than I do. - North said to me through the Secretary Robinson,

ruitingin air do shonsa air an  
 d'Sheamhra so. Ach ha feum ach da  
 ormsa, air an trà so; agus dheir iatsa  
 nî air bìth. Seavan môr an dheufl, se  
 trustôr as mô air tallamh, ach an  
 Duick fein, - Sallach a phair iâtsê!

that he would do something for you  
 this Summer. But they need me,  
 at this time; and they will say  
 anything. Big Scavan Bradshaw the devil,  
 is the biggest rascal on earth, but for the  
 Duke himself, - Dirty the pair of them!

Your friend Ferguson sets out tomorrow for France to take upon him  
 the tuition of the young Earl of Chesterfield. John Home is just  
 now here. Elliot [sic, Elliott] dines with me today. He is your  
 fast friend. Hannay will write you himself." 1

Two days later, James wrote his third and last letter of the season. He  
 told John:

"Your packet, containing three letters of different dates, came to  
 hand this moment. I sent the ostensible one instantly to Tua North.  
 Though he is a Scavan [Though he is like Bradshaw] he is likely to  
 continue to rule an Rìochda [the Kingdom]. Your Cara Môr [Great Friend]  
(Grafton) is fallen into the most insignificant contempt.

Va mi aig Levee an Robostanich two  
 days ago; Where I found your friend  
the Scavan. He told me he had been  
 there an hour. When I came I was  
 instantly called in, the Scavan  
 remaining where I found him. Yarrid

I was at the Levee of Robinson two  
 days ago; Where I found your friend  
Bradshaw. He told me he had been  
 there an hour. When I came I was  
 instantly called in, Bradshaw  
 remaining where I found him. I asked

1. Macpherson MSS./1, 4/12, James to John Macpherson, 30 March 1774.

mi yè, an R/obost/anich, why the Scavan  
was kept dancing attendance. He asks,  
says he, a triffling place, which is  
already given away. This anecdote  
[sic] is sufficient to inform you.

Ha neil û ginsa yôm gun d'roin û  
Ôr air an Aikspedition. Ata Duwach  
ginsa yôm gin dion an Aikspedition û  
Sochrach ri do Veo.

him, Robinson, why Bradshaw  
was kept dancing attendance. He asks,  
says he, a triffling place, which is  
already given away. This anecdote  
[sic] is sufficient to inform you.

You are not telling me that you made  
Money on the Expedition. Dow tells  
me that the Expedition will make you  
Comfortable for Life.

Write to Cubla [Dow]. Shew him that you are above what he suspects -  
a little jealousy. ..

As I have no time to see either Tun [North] or his man [Robinson],  
I can say nothing material. There is likely to be a warm contest  
at the E. India Election. the government have a majority of votes. ..  
I have not a moment further to employ; the people just going off  
[with the mail]. I go to France in search of manuscripts in a very  
few days. Yours affectionately,

Piri-claish [Pericles]." 1

Weeks before John Macpherson received his friend's letters, the political  
scene in India had completely changed. John's return to Madras in April 1774  
coincided with the arrival there of Lauchlin Maclean. The part that Maclean

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1. *ibid.*, 4/13, James to John Macpherson, 1 April 1774.

2. B.M. Add. MSS. 29134, f. 448, John Macpherson to John Stewart, 22 May 1774.

played in the East India Company's affairs during this period has already been examined.<sup>1</sup> There will not, therefore, be any discussion in this thesis of the details of his career. On the other hand, he was so closely connected with the same interests as the Macphersons until his death (or presumed death) in 1778, that it is impossible to ignore him. In the examination of his career the Macphersons were mentioned only when their actions threw light on his. Here, the reverse will be true, and the entire emphasis will be given to the Macphersons, and how they were affected by Macleane, the friend of, among others, Warren Hastings. John Macpherson might have eventually won the confidence of the Nawab without Macleane's help, but after 1774 success with the Nawab depended to some extent on a person's standing with Hastings, and this was where Macleane had a vital part to play.

The Regulating Act of 1773 provided the first central government in India for the three British presidencies of Bengal, Madras and Bombay, which were to be controlled from Calcutta by a Supreme Council, whose membership reflected the views of the State and the Company. Personal conflicts, and the great distances between the Presidencies, were to reveal many weaknesses in this first experiment in State-influenced Company rule. Clause 9 of the Regulating Act recognised these difficulties. It not only provided for the punishment of the subordinate Governors and Councils of Madras and Bombay, if they disobeyed the Governor-General and Supreme Council of

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1. See Macleane (1773-1778).

Bengal, but also gave the circumstances under which the subordinate Governors and Councils could act independently; namely, in "Cases of imminent Necessity" and when the subordinate Governors and Councils "received Special Orders from the...Company".<sup>1</sup> From the outset, the Governor-General, Warren Hastings, and the Supreme Council of Bengal had de jure but not de facto control over Madras and Bombay. Nevertheless, although the Act had certain weaknesses, it did remove the need for plenipotentiaries at Madras.

This meant that the Nawab, a very fickle man, was bound in future to turn to the man in Madras who seemed to have the most influence with Hastings or the British ministry, or both. John Macpherson might have tried to assume the role of the influential man by posing as Hastings's intimate friend, but he might not have sustained this role for very long without Macleane's friendship. Until April 1774, and for some time afterwards, Hastings ignored all the letters he received from John, and his failure to answer them was probably a deliberate policy. While he was "Second in Council" at Madras, Hastings had taken a strong dislike

to the group of Scottish adventurers who supported the Nawab, and had formed an

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1. 13 Geo. III. c. 63; see The Statutes at Large, London, MDCCLXXIV, Vol. 11, pp. 816-817, (Clause 9 cited in full).

2. B.M. Add. MSS. 29126, f. 105v., W. Hastings to L. Sullivan, 10 February 1772.



unfavourable opinion of the Nawab himself; an opinion which had been reinforced by a warning about the Nawab he had received from his old chief and friend, Josias Du Pré.<sup>1</sup> By not responding to John Macpherson's overtures for friendship, he had, it would seem, decided to avoid the traps of the Madras situation. If this was Hastings's attitude while he was Governor of Bengal it was a wise one, and, if he had adhered to it as Governor-General, he might have avoided many of the troubles ahead. Unfortunately, he allowed himself to be swayed by the men who became his agents.

The first man to modify Hastings's attitude to Scotsmen was probably Macleane's henchman John Stewart, who had arrived in Calcutta in 1771 as Judge Advocate General and Secretary of the Council of Bengal. Two years later, at the end of 1773, Colonel Lauchlin Macleane himself arrived in Calcutta as Commissary General of Bengal, with his path already smoothed by the personal testimonies of John Stewart and the recommendations of Shelburne and Laurence Sullivan, a friend of Hastings. Macleane's purpose was to repair his own and his creditors' (including Shelburne's and Sullivan's) fortunes, which had been lost in the India Stock crash of 1769. He had obtained his post with the help of Sullivan and Colebrooke just before the

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1. B.M. Add. MSS. 29127, f. 139, J. Du Pré to W. Hastings, 21 March 1773.

Regulating Act became law, and he knew that he had a limited time to make money before the new Councillors appointed under the Act arrived in India. All depended on the opportunities provided by Hastings, and the impression which Hastings formed of the tall and ugly Ulster-Scotsman, who was proud of his Highland grandfather, and of his descent from one of the senior branches of the Macleans of Coll.<sup>1</sup>

Hastings did not allow his dislike of the Scots or Ulster-Scots to bias his judgment. On the contrary, Hastings, a reserved man, said that nobody ever won his confidence faster than Lauchlin Maclean.<sup>2</sup> He cannot be blamed for being impressed. Although Maclean was a stock-jobber, a gambler and a bankrupt, and although he was afflicted by a bad stutter, he was a charming, persuasive, widely-travelled, and vastly experienced man. He was introduced to Hastings by Sullivan as a former Lt. Governor of St. Vincent in the West Indies, a former Under Secretary of State, and a former M.P.<sup>3</sup> | Sullivan could have added that Maclean was also a good classics scholar, a Doctor of Medicine who had qualified at Edinburgh University,

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1. See Maclean (1773-1778), passim.
  2. See A.M. Davies, Warren Hastings, London, 1935, p. 220, quoting W. Hastings to J. Stewart, L-7 January 1776.
  3. B.M. Add. MSS. 29133, f. 533 et seq, L. Sullivan to W. Hastings, 28 April 1773.

a good linguist, a journalist, a former soldier and secret agent, and one of the ablest backstairs politicians of the day. He had made and lost more money, and had owned and lost more land, than the Macphersons had yet dreamed about, and, unlike John Macpherson who was still bluffing, he really did know a great number of the leading British politicians intimately.

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Maclean, however, was a sick man when he arrived in India. He fought his sickness until he had put his department on a sound footing, with the right to charge personal commissions on a large range of army supplies, and then succumbed to dysentery. Hastings, as a gesture of kindness, ordered him to take a short sea voyage to Madras for the recovery of his health.

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Even a schemer of Maclean's calibre could not have chosen a better time to go there. The place had been buzzing with rumours about the impending changes for months, but the official despatches containing the provisions of the Regulating Act had not yet arrived. Nobody, not even the Governor, had a precise idea of what was intended. Maclean, who had been in London and in the closest touch with Sullivan while the Act was

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1. See Maclean (1728-1773), passim.

2. Bod. MSS., Vansittart Papers, Dep.b.97, p. 27, G. Vansittart to R. Falk, 22 March 1774; and I.O.L., H. Misc. S. 358, ff. 121-122, Extract of General Letter from Bengal, 15 March 1774.

being drafted, therefore had the advantage of knowing more about it than anybody else in Madras. It was a very important advantage. Apart from his rank as Commissary General and his friendship with Hastings, it encouraged Wynch, the Governor, and Paterson, the right-hand man in the durbar, to treat him as a very special visitor, and they lost no time in taking him to see the Nawab. <sup>1</sup> Where John Macpherson had been manoeuvring to get for three years, Lauchlin Maclean reached in the same number of days, and without any real effort on his part at all. He summed up the Nawab and his associates with his usual shrewdness, and allowed them to impress his importance on the Nawab, that is, if John Macpherson's <sup>2</sup> glowing account of what happened is accepted as the truth.

Stripped of its possible distortions, Macpherson's account showed that Maclean quickly assessed the characters of the Nawab and the men who surrounded him, and then acted accordingly, with his own future interests in mind. The keys to the situation were the Nawab's delusions of grandeur, and his wrong-headed attitude to the State and the Company. In spite of heavy public debts to the Company and even

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1. I.O.L., H. Misc. S. 286, ff. 39-65, Narrative of the Reasons which induced Colonel Maclean to resign the Service, 13 February 1776.
  2. B.M. Add. MSS. 29136, ff. 26lv.-263, John Macpherson to W. Hastings, 29 July 1775. (quoted in full in Maclean (1773-1778), pp. 56-57.

heavier private debts to some of the corrupt Company Servants, the Nawab regarded himself as a completely independent prince. With the reluctant help of the Company, and the positive encouragement of the plenipotentiaries, he had twice subdued and defeated his vassal in Tanjore; and this had given him the confidence to demand, among other things, the withdrawal of Company troops from some of his forts and garrisons in the Carnatic. His failure to make the Company agree to this demand, even with the help of his allies the plenipotentiaries, had fortified his belief that the Company was his enemy. And, when as a result of the conduct of his two eldest sons in action during the Tanjore campaigns, he had decided that his wilful and domineering second son, Amir-ul-Umara, and not his weak and compliant eldest son, Umdat-ul-Umara, would in future be his heir and successor, he began to run into further arguments with the Company, who preferred to regard the amenable Umdat as the legal heir to the Nawabship of the Carnatic. Unscrupulous Europeans had convinced him that the interests of the State and the Company were opposed, and that his dignity and independence rested on his continued defiance of the Company, and his direct communications with the State, which the presence of the plenipotentiaries seemed to confirm. So far, nobody had challenged this idea. Indeed, for adventurers such as Benfield it was imperative that the Nawab's vanity was sustained by faulty notions. Benfield had future assignments on the revenues

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from Tanjore against money he had loaned at an enormous rate of interest.

Benfield did not want a close investigation by either the State or the Company:

nor did Paterson or even the weak Governor Wynch (who was hoping to make money by

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supporting Benfield). Investigators might decide that the Company had a prior

claim on the Tanjore revenues, and, if they did, then Benfield & Co.'s chances of

making a fortune would be diminished.

This was where Macleane came in. The durbar adventurers hoped that he would corroborate some of the notions they had put in the Nawab's head; but Macpherson apparently reached him first. They liked each other, and their interests were mutual. Macleane saw a chance of insuring his own future as an ally of the Nawab; and Macpherson saw a chance of breaking into the durbar as a friend of the knowledgeable and important Colonel Macleane. When Paterson and Wynch introduced Macleane

1. B.M. Add. MSS. 29135, ff. 234-234v., John Macpherson to W. Hastings, 27 September 1774. "When you are informed of the transactions here; the Loans made the N<sup>w</sup>awab through Benfield at exorbitant Interest, near 40 p<sup>r</sup> C<sup>t</sup>, and the ruin that must fall upon that system the minute the N<sup>w</sup>awab feels your friendship and receives your advice in his Affairs, you will not be surpris'd at the efforts of Party at Madrass: the alliance between the Gov<sup>r</sup> and late Plenipo., and their wishes that a Majority should prevail against you at your own Board; for they will know you can countenance their Black Transactions, tho' others might. The whole of Macleane's and my Labours here have now wound up to a Point, and the whole is to animate into life or blow into non-existence at your Nod. My friend James Johnson, a person you know but slightly, if not unfavourably, carries the whole Negotiation with him."
2. *ibid.*; and confirmed by Macpherson MSS./1, 167/12, Report of the Nawab of Arcot to Lauchlin Macleane, u.d. [but certainly compiled in 1774]; I.O.L., European Tracts 419/184; and *ibid.*, 85.E.13., The Case of Mr. Benfield.

to the Nawab they extolled his virtues, his vast experience in various high offices, and his friendship with leading people in the State. When they had finished flattering him, Macleane calmly turned on them, and, in the role of a good Company servant, took the line that was against their interests and "made the Nabob feel that His Highness's confidence was misplaced."<sup>1</sup> Macleane himself claimed that he told the Nawab to "look up to the King as the head of the whole" and also "to look through and not over the Company"<sup>2</sup> when dealing with the Crown. He also told the Nawab that he must "not avail himself so of the weakness of the Company's present Government [In Madras]"<sup>3</sup> as a new strong central government under Hastings would soon be in charge in India. The Nawab was impressed. Paterson and his friends were hoisted on their own petard. Having praised Macleane, their subsequent attempts to blacken his name by telling the Nawab that he was a bankrupt were virtually ignored. Any doubts that Paterson and his friends might have roused in the Nawab's mind about Macleane were completely dispelled, by the arrival in the warship Swallow of the full text of the Regulating Act just as Macleane was embarking

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1. B.M. Add. MSS. 29136, ff. 261v.-262, John Macpherson to W. Hastings, 29 July 1775.

2. I.O.L., H. Misc. S. 286, f. 45.

3. B.M. Add. MSS. 29136, f. 262v.

<sup>1</sup>  
for Bengal. It confirmed all that he had said.

In the space of a month Macleane had not only secured the confidence of the Nawab, but had also come to an understanding about the future, by suggesting privately that the Nawab should send an agent to England to place his grievances before the State and the Company.<sup>2</sup> He was soon to have cause to take advantage of this understanding. The Nawab (encouraged, no doubt, by John Macpherson) was so struck with the idea that within three months of Macleane's departure he ordered his secretaries to prepare all the documents he wished Macleane to take to England,<sup>3</sup> and he sent one of his European aides, James Johnson, on a secret mission to Bengal to win Hastings's approval.<sup>4</sup> Macleane, however, was away with the army in the field when Johnson arrived.

On his return to Calcutta in June 1774, Macleane had been asked by Hastings to undertake a secret mission, which was in Macleane's interest. A month later he was on his way to Rohilkhand. Officially, he went as the inspecting Commissary

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1. I.O.L., H. Misc. S. 286, f. 48, n. 1.

2. *ibid.*, ff. 45-51.

3. I.O.L., H. Misc. S. 118, ff. 297-308.

4. *ibid.*, f. 317.



General of Bengal. Unofficially, he had a double role as Hastings's secret agent (with orders to investigate a dispute over prize-money, which was causing serious trouble among the British troops who were supporting the Nawab-Wazir of Oudh in his campaign against the Rohillas), and as a private merchant (with the intention of making as much money as possible from the sale of several boat-loads of Company-subsidised merchandize, which accompanied him up the Ganges). He hoped to complete both these tasks before the arrival of the new members of the Supreme Council.

In his letter of 30th March 1774, James Macpherson had casually mentioned the departure from England of the new Councillors - Francis, Clavering and Monson - "the triumvirate". Unlike Hastings and Barwell (the other two members of the new

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1. See Maclean (1773-1778), pp. 64-86.
  2. Philip Francis (1740-1818), son of the Rev. Dr. Philip Francis, was born in Dublin. From 1763 to 1772 he was First Clerk at the War Office. For his battle with Hastings see Sophia Weitzman, Warren Hastings and Philip Francis, Manchester, 1929; Sir Keith G. Peiling, Warren Hastings, London, 1954; J. Parkes & H. Merivale, Memoirs of Sir Philip Francis, K.C.B., London, 2 Vols., 1867; Sutherland, and Davies, op. cit.
  3. John Clavering (1722-1777), a Lt. General and a martinet, who had reached high rank as the result of a sound but <sup>v</sup>spectacular career as an infantry commander. He was made a K.C.B. in 1776.
  4. George Monson (1730-1776), see above, p. 210, n. 1.
  5. Richard Barwell (1741-1804), son of William Barwell, a former Governor of Fort William, Calcutta. He was M.P. for Helston (1781-84), St. Ives (1784-90) and Winchelsea (1790-96).

Supreme Council) the triumvirate coming from England were not drawn from the ranks of experienced Company servants: two were soldiers and one was a former civil servant. Both Macleane and Hastings had been warned that there would be trouble when they arrived, but when the trouble occurred it was worse than they ever imagined. Hastings, who had grappled with enormous problems as Governor of Bengal<sup>1</sup>, was in head-on conflict with the triumvirate (who were completely unversed in Indian affairs) from the moment they landed in Calcutta on 18th October 1774. From that date Hastings had the seemingly powerful position of Governor-General in India. In fact, he was thwarted at every turn, especially by the mendacious and trouble-making Francis.

Pate played a dirty trick on Hastings. He had no illusions about the triumvirate. They were his declared opponents. In trying to fight them, however, he relied for support on men he should never have trusted. Some, such as Lauchlin Macleane and John Stewart, who were primarily concerned with their own welfare, dazzled him with their knowledge of home politics, and enmeshed him in alliances which harmed his own cause; but, according to their lights, they did their best for him. Others, particularly the Macphersons, posed as his friends and champions,

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1. For Hastings's achievements as Governor of Bengal see M.E. Monckton-Jones, Hastings in Bengal, 1772-1774, Oxford, 1918.

but ultimately betrayed him. Indeed, it would not, perhaps, be an exaggeration to state, though the point has never been made before, that one of the most insidious and dangerous opponents Hastings ever had was James Macpherson. In 1774 this seemed far from clear, but the die had already been cast.

Such an assertion, however, does not make sense unless Macleane is regarded as a catalyst in a complicated process. He was the "friend" who, having disarmed Hastings, led him into the dangerous currents which gripped him and inexorably drew him into the clutches of the Macphersons. Macleane went to Madras to recover his health knowing that he had gained the entire confidence of Hastings. While in Madras, at a very critical time, Macleane (who had a shrewd idea that his days as a Company servant in India were numbered) saw in the Nawab what John Macpherson and other adventurers had seen: a gullible keeper of a gold-mine. Feeding the Nawab's vanity as an independent prince by taking up his cause was, it seemed, the fastest way to a fortune. Macleane quickly impressed the Nawab and then returned to Bengal to attend to other pressing business, but, as a resident ally or representative at the Nawab's durbar was essential, Macleane was quite pleased to have his friend John Macpherson act in this capacity. And John Macpherson, after months of exclusion, was more than pleased to accept this subordinate role. The real damage was done later in the year when Hastings appointed Macleane as one of the

agents to represent his own case in England. Henceforward the causes of Hastings and the Nawab were linked in one agent, Macleane, and Hastings was no longer in a position to stand aloof from the friends of the agent he trusted; which meant he had to accept John Macpherson as a friend and ally. Any lingering suspicions which Hastings may have had about Scottish adventurers were probably dispelled by the fact that Leuchlin Macleane, John Stewart and John Macpherson were all Company servants and all were supporters (or claimed to be supporters) of his friends Sullivan, Shelburne and Du Pré. He was deceived by appearances, especially in the case of John Macpherson.

From the time he disembarked in England in 1768 John had thrown in his lot with the government. He returned to India in 1770 to collect his reward from the Nawab, and as the only way of getting out there was as a Company Writer, he had reluctantly accepted that post. He was, in fact, an outright opponent of the Company, and had undoubtedly hoped for a job as a government emissary to the durbar, as this would have given him the surest lever for extracting gold from the Nawab's seemingly inexhaustible mine. Finding that others had secured the favoured positions of influence in the durbar that he thought were rightly his own, John had fused with jealousy and frustration. Forced to accept his position as a Company servant he had made the best of a bad job, by securing such lucrative

appointments as Paymaster to the second Tanjore Expedition. He believed, of course, that his "temporary" situation as a Company servant would be altered by his powerful government patrons, through the intercession of his friend James.

James had done what John had asked, but without enthusiasm. James was always (for want of a better term) a "government man", in spite of his occasional outbursts against ministers; which were his way of demonstrating to Grafton, Bradshaw and North that he was not to be treated as a hired hack. He was of course; but, for the sake of his vanity, he had to pretend otherwise. Unlike John, he had been making slow but sure progress towards his private goals. His publications were earning him enough money to allow him to imitate the style of a gentleman, with a "town apartment" in the seedy Manchester Buildings off Whitehall, and a "country seat" in unfashionable Putney; and his attention to Loch Laggan matters had brought a part of the Cluny estate back into the possession of a Macpherson. Nothing was going to deflect the single-minded James from his private goals, which could only be realised by his strict adherence to the government. Not only were his current needs sustained by the steady income he received as a government journalist, but much, much more important, it was the government alone who had the power to rescind the forfeiture on the entire Cluny estate. The Company, having no jurisdiction or in this sphere, had no means of satisfying the private obsession of James: they were

absolutely useless to him. And, the opposition of some of their leading men to the government made them positively dangerous to his private interests. He was, of course, more than willing to help John secure the confidence of the Nawab, partly because the Nawab was his own main hope of securing wealth, and partly because the Nawab was pro-government and anti-Company. In short: it was in James's interest to support the Nawab, and to attack the Company, even when it meant hurting the prospects of such friends as Adam Ferguson.<sup>1</sup> James was, therefore, less than pleased when he heard about the events of 1774. His friend John had at last gained the favour of the Nawab, but not on his own account. He had shuffled into the durbar on the coat-tails of Macleane, which meant that Macleane was in the superior position, and had a prior claim on the Nawab's generosity. It also meant that John Macpherson was automatically involved with all Macleane's connexions, including Hastings and Sullivan, the opponents of the triumvirate. The point was that North and his Secretary, Robinson, disliked Hastings and Sullivan, and were bound to support the triumvirate, partly because they had sent them out to India to help

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1. Ferguson had hoped for the job of Secretary to the Commission of Supervisors (see above, p. 252), but James had not hesitated to attack the idea of the Commission in the newspapers in 1772 (see above, p. 260), and so deprive Ferguson of the opportunity for employment. John had complained to James about opposing this measure (see above, p. 297), simply because it had hurt Ferguson, who was only one of the aspirants concerned.

settle the situation there; and partly because two of the triumvirate, Clavering and Monson, had powerful friends in the King's court and Parliament whom they did not wish to offend. James Macpherson, therefore, was not going to risk his standing with his government employers by pleading the cause of their opponents. From 1775 until (for the Macphersons) the *fortunate* death of Macleane in 1778, James handled the delicate situation with great skill, and managed to survive without seriously antagonising either North or Robinson. He supported Macleane's efforts on behalf of the Nawab, but deceived him into believing he was an ally of Hastings. He also used every opportunity to restrain his friend John's enthusiasm for Hastings's cause. The situation was changed by Macleane's death, which more or less coincided with John Macpherson's return to England. The agencies that Macleane had held for the Nawab and Hastings passed into the joint control of the Macphersons, working side by side in London. With Macleane removed from the scene, John Macpherson at last succeeded to the position of the Nawab's most trusted agent; and the solution to the Hastings's problem became clear. With James's continual urging, John suffocated any qualms he may have had about betraying Hastings, and set off on the course which brought him Hastings's job as Governor-General, a baronetcy, and a fortune for himself and his friend James from the Nawab's coffers and other Indian sources. And James, for his unswerving service to the government,

was given the Clary Lands. Hastings, who knew little about John and less about James, discovered in the end that he had been betrayed by John, but he probably never realised that one of his most ruthless and implacable adversaries was James, who would have sacrificed anybody who threatened his private dreams. What has been said in the last few pages gives a very rough outline of a complicated situation. The outline has been given at this stage to explain why Macleane was important to the Macphersons; why Hastings was undermined by the reactions of James to the events of 1774; and why James seemed to adopt a puzzling line in the letters he sent to John after 1775. The years between 1775 and 1778 were beset by complications which have not yet been mentioned, and John did not secure Hastings's friendship or survive in Madras without some difficulties.

When John Macpherson and Lauchlin Macleane were together in April 1774, the former probably learned a great deal about politicians and political tactics from the latter. He may even have been warned by Macleane to approach Hastings through his secretary Stewart, so that the cautious Governor was lobbied by word of mouth, and was not disconcerted or made suspicious by a welter of Celtic flattery. Whether this was so or not, it is certain that the first letter John Macpherson sent to Bengal after Macleane's departure from Madras in May 1774 was to Stewart and not Hastings. It opened with the hope that Hastings had received a letter which John



## 1

had sent care of Alexander Elliot while on active service in the field, and then went on to a long review of the Nawab's military policy before coming to the main message. This was John's explanation of his activities in Madras, and an attempt to convince Hastings, through Stewart, that he was a good "Company man" who had used his influence with the government for the Company's good. He wrote:

"On my return from Europe my advice to the N<sup>awab</sup> was so entirely opposite to that of Lindsay that the closet was shut against me. Sir Jo. Lindsay acted a villainous part in the affair: and my connection with Messrs. Dupre and Hastings completed my ruin at the Durbar. I neither told you nor any other this business before; such was my situation; such the chain of Honour about my neck. The D. of Grafton, the friend with whom I secretly and confidentially arranged the N<sup>awab</sup>'s support at home in 1769, has writ the N<sup>awab</sup> ministerially of the real integrity & ability with which I executed his commission in England. This staggered the Plenipot<sup>y</sup>, but they endeavoured to cut me off from his Grace by the most wicked insinuations through the pen of the N<sup>awab</sup>: and such were the presentations to the Ministry as to charge me with all the oppositions the Plenipot<sup>y</sup>'s Commission had met with here, by my making use of the rights I had from

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1. Alexander Kynynmound Elliot (1754-1778), third son of Sir Gilbert Elliot, 3rd Baronet of Minto. A very close friend of Hastings, and, seemingly, a good friend of John Macpherson, whose acquaintance with the various Elliot/Elliott/Elliott families had dated from at least 1769, when he visited Baron Grant de Blairfindy in France (see above, p. 171).

the Govern.<sup>t</sup> at home to the prejudice of their Interest in India.

L.<sup>d</sup> North had been sounded to ruin me. The manœuvre [sic] got me a false promise of his support if I made him my Patron for the D[uke] of G[rafton]. This I would not: my maxim being adhesion to Party or Patronage till Death or Dishonour. Here stood my affairs when Mac[leane] arrived. ... The Col.<sup>l</sup> [Macleane] is to tell my whole story to Mr. Hastings." 1

As an example of how to twist bits and pieces of the truth into a convincing lie, this has few equals among John's letters. The idea of John Macpherson adhering to any politician till death or dishonour is ludicrous. He had already made up his mind that Grafton might not be as useful as North, although he had not yet reached the point of giving up all hope of using Grafton.

The visit of Macleane had thoroughly unsettled John. He was pleased that his position with the Nawab was improving, and he certainly had no further wish to transfer to Bengal now that that problem had been resolved, but the uncertainty of how matters would stand once the triumvirate assumed office worried him as it did many others in India. His restlessness was apparent in the two letters he sent James in the autumn of 1774. In the first, dated 30th September, he wrote:

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1. B.M. Add. MSS. 29134, ff. 449-449v., John Macpherson to John Stewart, 22 May 1774.

"My dear Friend: Were I to proportion the length of my Letters to you, to that of yours to me, we should soon wear out our acquaintance. I have received, in the course of this season, five or six of your laconicks. It is true the absence of business, and even public Events, is comprisable in short slips: and your Indolence pleads your cause very powerfully with me. Still, I must condemn you as a Correspondent; nor can I forget that in my attachment to you, and the voluminousness of my Letters, I have a solid natural claim upon more of your conversation on paper.

By mentioning the matter, I clear the account. Let me then thank you sincerely for your exertion with Seavan /Bradshaw/ & Tua /North/ in favour of my Removal [to Bengal]; nor is my obligation the less to you that I am indifferent as to his Lordship's performance of his Promise or not. Depend on this; as a cool, deliberate, yet hearty, purpose of mind - that whatever is done for me is, in a great measure, eventually done for yourself. I think I begin to know mankind. I am therefore noways surpris'd at the non-exertion of my other friends. They are distant from my power to rouse them; and they are ignorant of what could be, what ought to be done, - and I expect no miracle in the course of nature. In other words, I leave the tide of affection, of remembrance and goodwill, to flow in its common channel from the breast of Cara more /big Friend (Grafton)/ down to Becket's [the publisher]. You and a few more are exceptions. On you, therefore, I rant; and therefore it is I rally you for your neglect in the exterior ceremony of friendship - that of words on paper.

MacIan /Johnstone/ I will always regard for his many undisputed valuable qualities. But peace to all epistolary Intercourse with him - this ship carries my valedictory. Had he spent half the toil in getting me made

Gov<sup>r</sup> of Madrass that he has done in arranging Patriotism with Richmond, he had done more good to John Company, and proved himself almost as good a Citizen. <sup>1</sup> Selfish as this Idea may appear, it is founded in truth. Nor is it an Irish ambition of mine to have entertained a view to an active Power in a Government, which, but for my exertions, would have positively gone to the Devil long since. As to the Devil; viz., Bob Fletcher, <sup>2</sup> is coming to it [the Council of Madrag] now. I will probably in the course of a year draw back from this scene. An office, indeed a sinecure, I hold of about £1,200 a year - the best in the Colony. <sup>3</sup> The Difficulty of collecting and remitting my little matters [profits as Paymaster], and the just extinguishing hope of ministerial support from

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1. During the fight before the passing of the Regulating Act, Governor George Johnstone, at the head of a strong opposition group in the Company, had supported the Parliamentary opposition group led by Rockingham's friend Charles Lennox, 3rd Duke of Richmond and Lennox (1735-1806); see Sutherland, p. 246 et seq.
  2. Sir Robert Fletcher (c. 1738-1776), of Ballinasloe, Co. Roscommon, and Lindertis, Angus. M.P. for Cricklade (a seat later held by John Macpherson) from 1768 to 1774. He had a very stormy career as a Company servant and army officer, being dismissed once and reprimanded several times for insolence or mutinous conduct between 1757 and 1763, when he was knighted for gallantry in action. His parliamentary career was equally tempestuous, and he changed sides more than once. On returning to India in 1771 as a Colonel on the Madras establishment he became the opponent of Josias Du Pré. By January 1773, Fletcher, who had gained a seat on the Madras Council, was so hostile to the Governor that he was dismissed from his post and sent on active service. Rather than submit to this indignity he went home, and stirred up trouble for Du Pré. In 1774 the Company appointed him a Brigadier General and he arrived once more in Madras in April 1775, and again involved himself in disputes. He was an enemy of Du Pré's and Macpherson's friend, Brigadier General Joseph Smith.
  3. I.O.L., Madras Civil Servants, Vol. 1/a (1768-1780). The following details are taken from the annual lists which contain references to John Macpherson.

<u>Time of</u>	<u>Date received</u>	<u>Present</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
<u>Compilation</u>	<u>in London</u>	<u>Rank</u>	
Spring 1772	10 Sep. 1772	Writer	[Serving] under the President [Du Pré].
Spring 1773	29 Sep. 1773	Writer	[Serving] under the Mint Master [Wynch], & Agent for providing Sepoys' Slops.
Spring 1774	10 July 1774	Writer	Agent for providing Sepoys' Slops, & Paymaster at Camp [Trichinopoly].
Spring 1775	22 Aug. 1775	Writer	Agent for providing Sepoys' Slops.
Spring 1776	18 Aug. 1776	Factor	Agent for providing Sepoys' Slops. Dismissed the Service [23 Jan. 1776].

Harland referred to Macpherson's sinecure (as Agent for Sepoys' Slops) in September 1772 (see Appendix 4), but this was the first time John told James about it.

home; these were and are the causes of my stay here after the Siege of Tanjour [sic]. The very discouraging Idea of being obliged to return again to India stands likewise a Block in my way. I can muster no decisive Resolution as to the expected time of my Departure; but do you write me constantly, as if I were to remain here, till you hear pointedly from me on the subject.

After four years Labour I have now some prospect, through my own patience and management, of some redress from the Cham Du Black Briand (The Nawab). I have even a prospect of getting my Enemies brought to shame, and the whole train of their knavery and Corruption exposed. The January Ship will convey the Particulars; and perhaps matter for the Committee of Secrecy & India Enquiry. I am not so angry at Shir Ian Idnahi Sir John Lindsay as at his foolish villain of a successor Sir Robert Harland and that most miserable of Reptiles Titus Paterson, who discovered achin i bhuid discovered without his c--k (showed himself to be impotent). Nothing but political reasons could save the back of that little knave from my Lorig Chaultin Hazel Stick<sup>1</sup>. However, I have had my victory<sup>2</sup> over him, even in Politicks, and he now trembles amidst his Spoils.

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1. Paterson, although subordinate to Harland, was always regarded by John Macpherson, as the most influential government servant in Madras. This was an impression he shared with Lauchlin Macleane. James Macpherson dismissed the idea that "Titus Paterson put Robinson against him Macleane" in a letter he sent John in early 1776 (Macpherson MSS./1, 4/21), but both John and Macleane had good grounds for their suspicions, as a letter from John Robinson to the Nawab (ibid., 23/5, 26 December 1775) shows. Robinson thanked the Nawab for a present sent by Paterson, to whom he had been introduced "by my relation Capt. Deane."
  2. George Paterson left Madras in July 1775. Apart from £10,000 he received from Benfield for his "help" in the durbar transactions (see B.M. Add. MSS. 29136, f. 261, John Macpherson to W. Hastings, 29 July 1775), he made a fortune from presents he received from the Nawab. In 1776 he married Anne, daughter of Lord Gray of Kinfauns, and bought Castle Huntly in the Garse of Gourie, where he lived as a wealthy laird for the rest of his days.

You astonished me by your mentioning Cubla's Dow's suppositions.

Never was man, this side of Lunacy, so wrong in his conjecture.

Poor Cubla! It was I who put him in train - nor was there a Syllable passed between him and the Reptile Titus, that he did not tell me. The Circumstance of my not writing was owing to my being on a march, and supposing him gone. I have writ him repeatedly since, and not a word have I heard from him, or of him, but once. ...

It is absolutely necessary for my Interest that the Papers intended for the Public A/d/v/e/r/t/i/s/e/r, and inclosed to you under cover to Mrs. Anderson, should be dressed up and issued against my foes. To invalidate the Representations made meanly and secretly against me, and which may find their way to the K/i/n/g himself, it is alone necessary to paint themselves in true colours, and impress the Viziers M/i/n/i/s/t/e/rs with what they should know about those everlasting D/a/m/n/e/rs of the Royal fame in Indostan.

The Judges and Counsellors of Indostan were here two days only. It was a matter of the utmost Indifference to me that I was not mentioned to any of them at home, for Monsieur Vit-<sup>4</sup>fort could introduce himself; but were all my C/a/r/a's more b/i/g Friends asleep? ..... H/e/r/e there is a whole sheet missing

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1. John was answering James's query of 1st April 1774 (see above, p. 316 ).
  2. The letters which John wished James to put in the Pub. Adv. have not been identified. The reason for this was, perhaps, indicated in John's hint. He wished James to write a satire pretending he was a friend of the Plenipotentiaries, or, if "themselves" has significance, a mock confession under a name that was recognisably connected with one of the Plenipotentiaries. Assuming the guise of the enemy was a common trick among 18th century journalists.
  3. See later p. 346.
  4. It is unnecessary to translate this very vulgar French expression.

... regard him. His <sup>1</sup>Mr. Du Pré's great reserve, bad opinion of the world in general, and a habit of OEconomy through which he rose to what he is: these circumstances stand in the way of his being fully known, and, of course, esteemed. But take my word for it, there are few more rational more pleasing in Intimacy, and more capable in Society. Continue to cultivate his acquaintance.

If it ever occurs that my friends could throw me into any high Station in this Service, Mr. Duprè would afford at least a pretext for it, for he would write the Directors a Page in my favour.

Mrs. Anderson's son was here. I leave him to relate my attention to him. He is a very manly youth. I think I can venture to prophecy that he'll make a clever fellow. If I were at home I could assist him in his line. Here I could have got, and would have got him a Commission, if he had not had a dislike to that line of life. Mrs. Anderson has wrote me a very sensible Letter. She writes me about you, and much to the purpose. I am sorry for the expence of her House, and I have an Idea of adding my mite <sup>2</sup> if I go home next year.

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1. The words "Mr. Du Pré's" have been written over "His" on the original in pencil. It would seem, therefore, that the missing page was deliberately destroyed, but, before it was, the destroyer first identified the pronoun.
  2. Why the Macphersons felt obliged to support Mrs. Anderson is not known. John was, however, already helping his former tutor, Adam Ferguson, with money. On 9th April 1775, Ferguson first recommended his brother-in-law Joseph Burnett to John's favour for a post in India, and then wrote: "Charles Greville has payed me since I have been here <sup>1</sup>In London with Lord Chersterfield/ One hundred Pounds on your account. I do not know if your old acquaintance, the farm of Bankhead <sup>2</sup>near Currie to the south-west of Edinburgh/ deserves to have so much additional expence laid out upon it, but if I live to see or to inhabit that undutiful place I shall make it carry some mark of your Friendship, which is a better fruit than it commonly bears." (see E.U.L., MSS. Dc.1.77, Letter 3). As he grew richer Macpherson treated Ferguson with greater generosity, and eventually refurbished the Bankhead farm completely.

1

I suspect my Uncle Macdonald of Breakish is hurt about his son - for I have not heard a Syllable from him or my Brother this year. Had he come here I could have got him a Commission in the Army; which, by the bye, is only a livelihood. A Writer's berth here is a sad one, and so are all the inferior Stations in the Service since the late Regulations. Out of about a hundred young Servants on this Coast, there are not (tho' many of them have served many years, and have a good Interest) above two or three beside myself who have had any luck. At Bengal the Scene is now become almost as bad as here.

I never hear from the Hannays, tho' the fault is not mine. Major Alexander Hannay is reckoned the first military Character there. Not a word have I heard from Fenchurch Street the place of business of Samuel Hannay this year. I had one friendly Letter from old Mac Alexander Macpherson of Craven Street? Give him my affection. I'll write him in January next.

Little Alec Macpherson of Strathmashie, ygr. does well. Not the General's Interest could get him on the last Expedition to Tanjore owing to the Place he was stationed in, and which for the sake of the Batta Allowances I had got him before. The happiest friendship subsists between the General, I mean General Joseph Smith, and me. I have had it in my power to shew him my gratitude. He is the most amiable Character that India ever saw from Europe; too good is his Character.

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1. John Macdonald of Breakish, near Broadford in Skye, had only one son, Allan. In his letter of 11 December 1775 (Macpherson MSS./1, 4/17) James told John that he was trying to get a Cadetship in H.E.I.C.S. On 19th February 1776 (ibid., 4/22) he was able to report that young Macdonald had obtained a passage, and that "Your friend Mr. Macleane has in a manner rigged him out with his own sea-habiliments"; and on 3rd April 1776 (ibid., 4/27) that young Macdonald, a spendthrift, had left from Gravesend for India on the previous day in the Hector, with presents from James Macpherson and Lauchlin Macleane amounting to over £80.



Fortunately, he stays another year, so that, by this stroke, we keep Sir  
 1  
 Bobby out of Council and the power of mischief - for some time at least.  
 I cannot give you any light further than I have done in my repeated and  
 bulky Letters about myself and my views.

Bu vall lot fis vi agud gi de roin mi  
 yore onin Expedition. Is fiach mi  
 gu leir mon-cuairst do nigh mili Pount  
 Sassinich; agus fiadi mi vi blieni shò  
 gun tulli i ghionive. I spend yearly  
 here cehir chiad diaz Pount Sassinich;  
 ach, na fain togail gho no Chouncil na  
 yousi in Ghovernment, ghianin torston  
 ghut hein, 'is yho hine, onin dò  
 blieni. Ach gu de feim lavirst ma  
 cuarst shò.

You would like to know how much I made  
 from the Expedition [Tanjore]. I am worth  
 altogether about nine thousand Pounds  
 English; and I may be many years here  
 without making more. I spend yearly  
 here fourteen hundred Pounds English;  
 but, if I was promoted to the Council or  
 to the Government, I would make a fortune  
 for yourself, and for myself, in two  
 years. But what use is there in talking  
 about this.

To be transferred to Bengal with my rank would be doing nothing. It  
 is true Mr. Hastings is fully my friend - But the Laws are there so  
 strict nothing could be done; and it is not impossible but a majority  
 may prevail in Council against the Go.<sup>r</sup> Gen.<sup>l</sup> ...

As no Company's Ship sails till January I am prevented sending home more  
 2  
 money. I send to Mr. Alexander, Mr. Duprè's Brother; to Mr. Duprè;  
 and to you; having appointed you three my attorneys, a second set of my  
 navy Bills - and that of Gideon Johnstone.

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1. Sir Robert Fletcher.

2. By "Brother" John probably meant "Brother-in-law": in which case "Mr. Alexander"  
 (unidentified) was the brother-in-law of Josias Du Pré.

This money being about £2383. 6sh., I would cheerfully have disposed of either to obtain me high Station here - or to procure me some good patent Place at Home. By the January Ship I'll complete it to £3,500 or more, if an object offers. Do gun You two and Mr. Duprè manage the matter as you please for my Interest. My Intention is, if I go home and complete £10,000, to sink a considerable part of it in an annuity or Patent place: and live on the rest, and that in some villa near my friends till something occurs either in India or at home for me, like an Object. I once had a wish to purchase some Rigs in the natale Solum, some Angulus terrerum, but I find that both from migration and the inclemency of Heaven all lands in Scotland are almost ruined. Write me fully on those perhaps ideal plans.

As you sent my Letters about Tanjore to Tua North a thought has struck me of writing you a short one on General Affairs that you might throw it before his sleepy eye. It costs me a minute or two to write it. If there is nothing in it to hit - let it fall to nothing.

Yours ever and most affectionately, J. M<sup>c</sup>P.

.. And so my friend you just left Town on the Eve of the India Election. It was then you should have pushed for my Interest; and you had then been more substantially employed for yourself and me than by going a second Dalrymple to the Lord of Manuscripts. But I only give you this rub at a venture, being really ignorant of the subject." 2

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1. A reference to James's letter of 1st April 1774 (see above, p. 316). "The Lord of Manuscripts" was probably the Duc d'Aiguillon, who had given James permission to use the French diplomatic archives (see above, p. 201).
  2. Macpherson MSS./1, 39/7, John to James Macpherson, 30 September 1774.

So much for the claim of a man who would not desert a patron or party until death or dishonour. John Macpherson's second autumn letter to James, dated the same day, 30th September 1774, amplified some of the points he made in the first.

He wrote:

"My dear Sir: This goes by the last division of Sir Rob<sup>t</sup> Harland's  
<sup>1</sup>  
 Squadron. I wrote you so fully by the first Ships, and so particularly about myself, that I have now little to say, except on General Subjects.

You were exceeding good to apply to the Minister for my removal to Bengal, and the Minister very indulgent in seeming to wish me that removal, after the Pains that the able and judicious Plenipotentiaries of this place have taken to make me known to the Ministry. But, perhaps, their efforts have not been directed to prejudice me in my Lord North's  
<sup>2</sup>  
 Idea; if he has any idea about me. It has been the Ton with the Tons that the Crown sent to act the farce of Ministry here - to despise my Lord the Premier. They spoke of nothing but in the Style of the Cardinal Wolsey: Ego et Rex meus. The first L<sup>d</sup> of the Treasury is, in their creed, nobody; the Secretary of State is somebody, they say; but they had themselves (they always hinted) more to say with the Batshaw Bradshaw - or His Majesty - than my Lord North.

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1. Harland was relieved as Naval Commander in the East Indies by Admiral Sir Edward Hughes, who came out with the new Councillors and escorted them from Madras to Calcutta. Hughes did not, however, succeed Harland as Plenipotentiary to the Nawab.
  2. John was being very vulgar. More politely, he said that it was the "Fool" (meaning Paterson) with the "Fools" (meaning Lindsay and Harland) who had been sent out as Crown representatives.

It was, by the bye, exceedingly prudent in His Lordship, not to accept the Diamond Ring, sent by Sir Rob.<sup>t</sup> Fletcher to his Lordship from the N<sup>w</sup>ab. His Highness asked me: "What men are these first Duans Divans (Ministers)? - they alone reject my Presents?" I answered: "They are the Amirs who lead the Parliament, and have charge of all the Treasures of Britain." The N<sup>w</sup>ab has now seen, in its full force, the imposition of the Plenipotentiaries; and before three months are over he sends Commissioners to plead his Cause and lay open many Scenes - to the first Vizier of England. I have got into the direction of this matter here.

The Counsellors-General and Judges with their Ladies arrived here some Days ago; they stayed two days. Judge Impey<sup>1</sup> I talked much with; he is a sensible good man, and so is J<sup>2</sup>udge Chambers, tho' he smells much of the Alma Mater of Oxford. Gen.<sup>1</sup> Clavering seems a hard-headed soldier, full of hauteur, desirous of information, with few ideas, but these strong. .. C.<sup>1</sup> Monson is a Politician, complains of the Minister, and is, I think, determined on a deep yet honourable line in our India Cabinet. Mr. Francis dressed prettily: and seemed to bemoan the dismissal of C. Fox from the Treasury; I heaved no sympathetic sigh with the son of the Translator on

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1. Sir Elijah Impey (1732-1809), the first Chief Justice of Bengal. He went out to India with the new Councillors, and like them had been appointed under the terms of the Regulating Act. He was at Westminster School with Hastings, whose side he took in the conflict with the triumvirate, Francis, Clavering and Monson.
  2. Sir Robert Chambers, with Stephen Caesar Le Maistre, formed the new Court of Justice in Bengal under Sir Elijah Impey; all three judges being on their way to Calcutta to take up their appointments.

1  
the occasion.

I had many reasons, which you may judge of, for not entering on any explanation with these Chiefs. Mr. Hastings was jealous and would be more so. He is my best friend.

2  
Col. Monson asked my friend Mr. Petrie, the Secretary here, "whether I acted the same part here for L<sup>d</sup> North that I did for the D. of Grafton?" You see what curious Ideas spring from half knowledge.

The Col.<sup>1</sup> [Monson] and General [Clavering] seemed coldly polite to each other; which I liked much; as Mr. Hastings had conceived an Idea that a majority was intended against him by Ministry in the Council General. He sent L<sup>d</sup> Bute's son, Frederick Stewart [sic]<sup>3</sup>, here to meet them and sound

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1. Philip Francis's father, the Rev. Dr. Philip Francis, was the translator of Horace; and from 1756 had been chaplain to Lady Caroline Fox, and was employed by Henry Fox (Lord Holland) as a pamphleteer. On 20 February 1772, Charles James Fox (1749-1806), the famous son of Henry Fox, Lord Holland, had, seemingly, lost the confidence of Lord North, and had resigned his post as a Lord of Admiralty.
  2. William Petrie, had been in Madras since 1765, and was a former Secretary to the Council of Madras who had transferred to the service of the Nawab of Arcot. In 1775 he went to England on behalf of the Nawab to deliver "resources, materials and every support" for Lauchlin Macleane (see B.M. Add. MSS. 29136, ff. 247-247v., John Macpherson to W. Hastings, 5 July 1775). In 1776 he was reinstated as a Company servant and went back to India as Resident at Nagore. From 1790 to 1794 he was a member of the Council of Madras (see Love, pp. 143, 402, 522). His dates are not known, but his son, William Petrie, married Ann, the only child of the famous explorer of Australia, Captain Matthew Flinders (1774-1814); and their son was the eminent Egyptologist and scholar, Professor William Matthew Flinders Petrie (see H.C.M. Austen, Sea Fights and Corsairs of the Indian Ocean, being the Naval History of Mauritius from 1715 to 1810, Port Louis (Mauritius), 1935, pp. 201-203).
  3. Frederick Stuart (1751-1802), the third son of the Earl of Bute. He went out to India (in the same ship as Warren Hastings) in 1769 as a Writer. After a brief spell at home in 1772 he went out again to Bengal, and was befriended by Hastings, who promised him the job of resident at the court of the Nawb-Wagir of Oudh, but the triumvirate wrecked his chances of assuming that post. In the ensuing conflict between the supporters of Hastings and those of the triumvirate, his treatment by the latter drove him and his father on to the side of Hastings. His mother, Mary, Countess of Bute, was the daughter of Edward Wortley Montagu, M.P., and she was not "Lady Mary Wortley" either by her married or unmarried style.

the political Dispositions of the trimvirate. You cannot conceive how the Son of the Thane thirsts for Politicks. He has the sound sense of his father without those forbidding Defences around it, that hang about Bute's head and manner. He has the vitious [vicious] blood of Lady Mary Wortley, and all this embellished with the finesse of the Asiatic and sharpened by the edge of want and avarice. I got into his very soul and, to my no small astonishment, found that he was deep in the System of the Stewart <sup>1</sup> [Stuart-Mackenzie] and Sir Gilbert [Elliot] Cabinet. By God! John Bull has some reason to growl.

By having fought the campaigns of 69 and 70 with Woodfall, I was ripe for a mutual Confidence of Particula[r]s, and assumed all the Consequence that Bradshaw's intelligence of those Scenes could entitle me to. Frederick is no friend to North and prophecy's [sic] his fall soon, either through his own fatigue, or the dissatisfaction of the Back-stairs Junto. I answered rather sarcastically (which he observed): "that I hoped he would not forget my friends of the [Bedford] [Gang], or to place my Duke [Grafton] at the head of the Admiralty," or, if they did not do that, I swore I would even turn a Dependent on their Party, tho' I detested the Patronage of my own Countrymen.

I presented him, Mr. Stewart, at the Durbar, and in two Days working,  
<sup>2</sup>  
 he got them to write to his Father. The Letter goes under cover to Coutts

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1. Sir Gilbert Elliot (1722-1777), 3rd Baronet of Minto, M.P. for Selkirkshire (1753-65) and for Roxburghshire (1765-77). He was closely connected with the Bute-Argyll group, and was associated with Bute's brother, James Stuart-Mackenzie, in the management of Scottish political affairs. Through his connection with the Bute family he was popularly supposed to be close to the King. He was one of Hastings's supporters, and helped him even when he was dying, probably on account of his son Alexander's friendship with the Governor-General. The special meaning of John Macpherson's remark cannot be fathomed.
  2. There is no trace of this letter in the Bute MSS.

1

the Bankers in the Ship. I wrote Hastings about all.

Mr. Hastings has conceived, in spite of my Lord North's public Declarations about him, that some of the Company's Instructions are meant by Ministry to disgust him with a long tenure of his Governor Generalship. I have invalidated the Idea, by telling him what is really my belief - viz., that if he vacates his seat, the whole system must go wrong, and recoil on Ministry themselves. ...

The Government here [in Madras] has gone to Rags since the able Duprè left it. Sir Rob.<sup>t</sup> Fletcher writes that he comes out, and through the Interest of L<sup>d</sup> North. I am positive that, beyond the Respect due to the Representative of Crick-lad [sic, Cricklade], not an Idea has L<sup>d</sup> North agitated in his mind about the K[ing]. If he has, the more the Disgrace to his L<sup>d</sup>ship.

At Bombay the Company runs regularly and annually 14 Lacks in Debt. We keep Broach yet, and the Chief there, one Counsellor Shaw, (with whom, and <sup>2</sup> the Marques de Lavradio, the Viceroy of Brasil, I had a curious adventure),

1. John Macpherson sent Hastings two letters about his meetings with Frederick Stuart. The first (B.M. Add. MSS. 29135, ff. 228-229v., 24 September 1774) was left open so that Stuart could read it, and was, therefore, full of praise for Stuart. John also kept up the pretence of being loyal to Grafton by saying: "L<sup>d</sup> North has been pleased to promise much in my favour (the effect of a Representation of my Enemies). But I will adhere to my first friend. His Lordship says "he'll send or transfer me to you." Should it be so, which Duprè doubts, I would not in my present state go. My sense of pride, perhaps of folly, has received a severe check in this country and Europe must be resorted to, I imagine, for redress." The second (ibid. ff. 230-236, 27 September 1774) was not intended for Stuart's sight, and the remarks about him were far less complimentary, with references to his "calm, artful manner and appetite for Politicks." It also reported on a combination formed in Madras to invalidate Maclean's ideas by "a Bramin, one Vincatachellum, .. who was once Dubash to Col. Monson, and since almost Prime Minister to the N[awab]", as agent for Paul Benfield, and "our Fool of a Gov.<sup>t</sup> [Wynch]." This anti-Maclean group had little success.
2. Councillor William Shaw, Resident at Broach (north of Bombay), had gone out to India in the Morse with John Macpherson in 1770, when both had been temporary prisoners of the Marques de Lavradio in Rio de Janeiro (see above, p. 186).

has made a fortune by the curious mystic number - N<sup>o</sup> 45.

Broach is situated on the Banks of the River Narbedda, and once every 45 years all the Indians come and wash in the River near the Fort; each paying a Rupee to the Gov<sup>t</sup> or Nabob of it. The Nabob being extinct, Mr. Shaw assumed the name, and effectually collected the Duties on the sacred Stream for his own use, to the amount of three Lacks. Happy N<sup>o</sup> 45! - and foolish the Company that has not yet arrived at the perfection of precluding their Servants from trafficking in water.

Quere - Quere: Seek - seek: and you may submit it to the Committee of Secrecy. Does the case of Shaw fall under the head of Peculation? Ask my friend Gov<sup>t</sup> Johnstone.

Is it true that my friend Malagrida Shelburne<sup>2</sup> is disposed to desert the cause of the Tavern<sup>1</sup>? I see Mr. Cornwall is come over, and am glad of it.

But support becomes so cheap now, and the Ministry may become so careless

1. The "Tavern" was the London Tavern, where the Bill of Rights Society held its meetings. To talk of the "Tavern", therefore, was to refer to the Society, which had been formed by the friends of John Wilkes in February 1769 to support his cause, by paying his fines, legal costs and election expenses. Wilkes, however, used much of the money collected for his personal use and comfort, which infuriated some of his followers, including the fiery Rev. John Horne (later Horne-Tooke), who attacked Wilkes in the newspapers. Shelburne had, in common with many other leading politicians in opposition, found it useful to support Wilkes; but his support, always discreet, was gradually withdrawn in 1771.
2. Charles Wolfran Cornwall (1735-1789); M.P. for Grampond (1768-74), for Winchelsea (1774-80), and for Rye (1780-89). A former friend of Clive, he was offered the post of one of the Supervisors in 1772; but turned against Clive and became a member of Burgoyne's Select Committee. An active supporter of the Regulating Act he was offered, but refused, the post of one of Councillors in the new Supreme Council of Bengal, and told North he would prefer to take his chance in home politics. He was Speaker of the Commons from 1780 to 1789.



about it, that Edmund Burke may hatch a Storm in the Calm, and overset matters. I have heard from my Pupil Greville, and the Story of his getting the Seat at the Board of Trade. I wish it had not come invita<sup>1</sup> Minerva. ...

With whom have I passed many merry hours lately here - but with honest Dermot Lauchlin Macleane, now the Commissary General of Bengal. The best and warmest heart! - and the most intelligent and deepest Head. I was of infinite Service to him here, and he to me. The Plenipo. Harland has writ against him home, but the miserable fool - the avaricious insolent old Knave - will repent it; ..Croyez moi.

Macleane was much in favour with the Premier and Mr. Robinson. He gave me the best and fullest Ideas of both, and I was happy in having had it in my Power here to serve Cap<sup>t</sup> Deane, the friend of the Letter. I leave Deane to speak, if the worthy fellow lives. Macleane knew all your Services to the State - and told me he sometimes pointed out on Robinson's table the noise of a thousand voices from your one. He insists on your friendship through me, and adds that He and John Stewart, the Bengal Secretary, with you and me, may any day carry the State. Stewart is making a fortune.

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1. Charles Greville had become a Lord of Trade in January 1774 "against the will of Minerva" (Ara Poetica, p. 385). North was probably reluctant to waste a post on such a lazy supporter. James told John that Greville was a sincere friend "each 'Slag bock an Duine ô" but he is a slack, poor man, (see Macpherson MSS./1, 4/19). It would seem that Greville sent very few letters to John; only three rather scrappy ones have been found (*ibid.*, 38/1, 11 March 1771; 38/2, 20 March 1772; and 38/3, 29 March 1775, in which support for Du Pré was mentioned). John received most of his news about the Grevilles from Adam Ferguson, (see E.U.L. MSS., Dc.1.77, Letters 1-5).

2. See above, p. 244, n. 1.

Most entertaining and happy were my discourses with Macleane. ... The London Tavern made a Capital Text. Do you know that it was Macleane<sup>1</sup> who formed that Society; and my attack upon them about devouring the funds collected only, as I insisted for Wilkes began the civil war. Horne swore the Old Patriot was Wilkes himself. The Packet is ready to close, otherwise you should have a volume from Macpherson."

In spite of his willingness to recount all the news, John was being less than frank with his friend James. Macleane's visit to Madras was mentioned, and John's friendship with Hastings was stressed (even though Hastings had still not responded to any of his letters), but no straightforward statement was made of the plans that had been hatched. The most John admitted was that the Nawab was going to send "Commissioners to plead his Cause" to North in the very near future, and that he had "got into the direction of this matter." He in no way linked Macleane with the affairs of the Nawab or Hastings (whose fears of the triumvirate's intentions he had learned from Frederick Stuart), which indicates that he knew that James would

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1. For Macleane's part in the affairs of the Bill of Rights Society see Macleane (1728-1773), 258 et seq. John Macpherson had written against Wilkes in the Pub. Adv. on 10 occasions as "An Old Patriot" during 1769 and 1770 (see above p. 134, n. 2; and p. 138). Wilkes's opponent Horne had obviously thought that Wilkes himself had, for some perverse reason, pretended to be "An Old Patriot."
  2. Macpherson MSS./1, 39/8, John to James Macpherson, 30 September 1774.

disapprove of his ideas. The letters were, in fact, very disingenuous, with all the news items given in such a way that the whole truth was obscured. Enough details, however, were included so that John could always say he had not attempted to hide anything. Indeed, his object may have been to prepare James carefully for acceptance of the whole truth; because he was fairly certain that Macleane would soon go to England, and that Macleane, once he arrived there, would soon reveal everything to James. To appear more open than he was being, John finally disclosed to James the amount he had made as Paymaster to the Tanjore Expedition, and the *Agent for providing Sepoys' Slops.* income from his sinecure as ~~Factor~~. He did not offer a share of these spoils to James. Instead, he asked his partner to undertake, with two others, the management of his financial affairs, without a hint of any advantage for their trouble.

Soon after John wrote to James in September 1774 the pace of events began to quicken. By December Macleane had returned to Calcutta from Rohilkhand to find that the triumvirate had already attacked Hastings, and were making his task as difficult as they could. Macleane himself also came under immediate attack, when he refused to explain why he had increased the establishment of his Commissary's department, and why he had used Company funds to finance his mercantile activities on his journey up the Ganges. His answer was to notify the Supreme Council of his resignation as a Company servant, and to request leave to return to England so that

he could explain to the Court of Directors why he had resigned. On 12th January 1775, Lauchlin Macleane and John Graham sailed for England in the Dutton as agents of Warren Hastings, with his instructions to tender his resignation to the ministry, if certain conditions for the tenure of his office were not met. With them went Frederick Stuart. Nothing now could prevent the struggle in the Supreme Council being made the subject of factional warfare in England. En route the Dutton called at Madras, where Macleane called on the Nawab for instructions and also discussed future action with John Macpherson. On 7th February 1775, the Dutton set sail again, carrying as an additional passenger, James Johnson, the Nawab's aide, who was to act under Macleane as an assistant agent. The interests of Hastings and the Nawab were now firmly linked in the person of their common agent,

2  
Macleane.

When James Macpherson sent John his usual batch of letters by the Winter and Spring sailings he was still unaware of what had happened, but he was able to tell

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1. John Graham (d. 1776), son of John Graham, merchant of Leith, by his second wife Helen Mayne, sister of Robert Mayne, the Macphersons' banker until 1782 (see above, p. 213, n. 2). He had served as a member of the Council of Bengal until the Regulating Act obliged him to resign his post. He was, however, a very sick man, and would probably have resigned on account of his health.
  2. For a full account of these happenings see Macleane (1773-1778), pp. 89-99.

John that death had put an end to their connection with Bradshaw. On 14th January

1775 he wrote:

"I shall enter into but a few particulars, as the packet is, I am afraid  
[sic] already closed.

Yalav do Charra an Scavan. Yêr è  
1  
Scorman. Cha dug mi dho lietair. Sôran  
as eolich mishi na ussa air na hôlich.  
'San a thanic an dieuil orasa nach rove  
agam tri mili pount sassanach, cu mo  
thovairt 's Tigh un mease na Cusmantin.  
Cha nurra mi fein yhinive yhon fein na  
do Charrid, gun vi ansa Phaliarsaid.  
Boekin an dieul mhoir! Na bi mi agam  
tri mili vi in ân an Tigh Chumant agus  
an an Tigh na Hinnsecha. Thuvairt Morer  
Tua rion gun duggave è yhon na chosta  
soichean dôm hair tri mili; ach an dieuil  
tri mili va agam - agus ata mi mâr  
b'avaist dôm, gun ni, gun naira, gun  
argid.

Your friend the Scavan Bradshaw has  
1  
departed. He cut his throat. I did not  
give him your letter. I know the wretch  
better than you. The devil has come on me  
that I have not three thousand pounds  
English, to take me among the House of  
Commons. I cannot do good to myself or a  
Friend, without being in Parliament.  
Poverty of the great devil! If I had  
three thousand I would be in the House of  
Commons and in India House. Lord North  
said to me that he would give me what a  
seat would cost over three thousand; but  
devil the three thousand I had - and so I  
am as I was, without anything, without  
chance, without money.

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1. Mr. John Brooke in his article on Thomas Bradshaw in House of Commons, 1754-90, Vol. 2, p. 110, leaves the manner of Bradshaw's death as a point of uncertainty, by quoting Charles Jenkinson's view that death was by fever, and Horace Walpole's assertion that it was suicide. Walpole, however, said that Bradshaw shot himself. James Macpherson was much closer to Bradshaw than either Jenkinson or Walpole; and his repeated assertion that Bradshaw committed suicide by cutting his throat can, perhaps, be accepted as the most reliable account of Bradshaw's end.

So much for the old Celtic. What I have said above will give you a state of my politics....

1

Your last letters came when I was in the country, and they are still there; so that I cannot answer the particulars. I remember something about Arvid Money<sup>7</sup>. You may do in that particular, as suits your own convenience. The naming either Greville or me especially is totally useless, if the other person will undertake it. Nay, I think it not decent, as it might have the appearance of an anxiety about a trifle. As for myself, I have been so ill a manager of my own, that I never desire to take any charge of that of any other person.<sup>2</sup>

The truth of the matter is that I don't want to see anybody in the management of your concerns here; as I should think it for your interest to be here yourself. I wrote you last year my sentiments on this subject.<sup>3</sup> I have found no reason to alter them since. This is also the opinion of your friend Du Pré. I saw him the other day. We seldom meet; but, I believe, are well together. You have a chance of having Pigot out this

1. James was not referring to John's letters of September 1774. Firstly, it was almost impossible for letters leaving Madras in the late autumn to reach England in four months or less; secondly, James would have certainly commented on John's dealings with Hastings and the triumvirate. It is also unlikely that James had received the September 1774 letters by the Spring of 1775, because he still failed to make any direct comments then. It was not unknown for mail to be held up for 9 months to a year, or even lost altogether: that is why "duplicates" were sent by second or third ships.
2. The arrangements to which James referred cannot be explained. He probably mentioned them in the letters (no longer to be found) which were sent by the Harcourt.
3. Again, the reference was probably to the missing Harcourt letters.

season. His antagonist <sup>1</sup> [sic] is Rumbold. But I perceive that should the affair come to the proprietors, the first will be the man. Form no judgements of men at such a distance. Mankind, like their measures, suffer a change, through time. MacIsa [Johnstone] is a very great knave. I always thought so, but now I know it. He has behaved in a most shameful manner to your poor friend Mackanni. <sup>2</sup> As for me, I have no business with him. But I believe he would wish to hear of my Seaman being seart [Throat being cut]. He is completely profligate, and the world are no strangers either to the meanness or unprincipledness of his conduct. In short: he is scarcely worth the notice I have taken of him in this paragraph. Trust him not in anything. It is much safer not to write to him at all; for it is ten to one but he will make the worst use of it, for your names's-sake [James himself]. He is still more vindictive than the Jewish divinity. He extends his revenge such further than the third and fourth generation. After all your Carra [Friend], (mishi) [myself], is on polite terms with him, when there is a chance meeting. All I say is to caution you." 3

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1. Thomas Rumbold (1736-1791), the son of William Rumbold of the H.E.I.C.S. He joined the Company's service as a Writer at Madras in 1752; transferred to the military service in 1756, and served at Plassey as Clive's A.D.C.; reverted to the civil service in 1763, and became a member of the Council of Bengal in 1766, and remained as such until he returned to England in 1769. He was M.P. for various constituencies (New Shoreham; Shaftesbury; Yarmouth (I.o.W.); and Weymouth & Melcombe Regis) from 1770-1790; and a director of the E.I. Co. in 1772 and from 1775 to 1777. He served as Governor of Madras from 1777 to 1780, and was created a Baronet in 1779.
  2. James had written but crossed out "k--zie" after "Mac" before substituting "Mackanni", which is a rough rendering of the sound of "MacCoinnich" or "Mackenzie". He was referring to John Mackenzie (see later).
  3. Macpherson MSS./1, 4/14, James to John Macpherson, 14 January 1775.

This was followed by at least two short letters in the Spring. In the first,

dated 10th April 1775, James said:

"Like every indolent man, I put off the trouble of writing till it is too late for writing much. I wrote you concerning Pigot's success. I saw since your friend Du Pré. He is hearty in your cause, and will effectually recommend. I wrote you by Charles Macpherson, Robert's brother. You must do something for him. I have a personal interest in his success, as I advanced for him more than 150£.

Chualla mon Scavan. Yher an duinna a Scornan; agus chualla mi o'brathair do Mhair gun faica feona so do literehinse amease a phaiperin. Cha bu chor yuitae ni air bi a scriba, ach ni bu chomma-leat co chi è. Ach scomma co yeu so. Na scriaba gu brath do Mhac Iain. 'S Cú an t'olach, agus beg air ussa agus missa. Cap a chachd è. Ha Ian Tachi an a sho an drasta. ...

I heard about Scavan Bradshaw. The man cut his Throat; and I heard from your Mother's brother that he saw some of your letters among his papers. You ought not to write anything, but a thing you would not care who saw it. But never mind him. Do not ever write to Johnstone. The wretch is a dog, and he hates you and me. He is the cream of the s--t. John Home is here just now. ...

1. Charles Macpherson was a younger brother of the Rev. Robert Macpherson at Tullocheróm (see above, p. 183, n. 3), but he is the only one of Robert's brothers whose details are not recorded in the Macpherson of Banchoir pedigree (Macpherson MSS./4). He seems to have been the black-sheep of the family. James seemed particularly anxious about his welfare, (see later), perhaps because he wanted to put the Banchoir family deeper in his debt.
2. James was undoubtedly referring to John's uncle (his mother's brother) Captain Alexander Macleod, formerly master of the Lord Mansfield. If so, then Macleod must have been one of Bradshaw's friends, and probably helped John in his relations with him in 1769 and 1770. John had told his cousin, the Rev. Martin Macpherson of Golspie (see above, p. 161) that he had had no help from Macleod. It seems that he was not being completely frank.



Ata tigh mâ agumse ansa nduich. Guin  
 a chi mi ussa an so? Ata mi am barrail  
 gun fan û an sin fein, vo na ha M<sup>[orer]</sup>  
 Pigotich dol amach. Scriob mi yuit an  
 la roi so - and therefore there is  
 little occasion for enlarging. ... Na  
 biagh Soichan agam an an Tigh a  
 Chumanta, yian in feim dom fein agus  
 'do mo Chardin. Se an Dieulle vi gun  
 Argid." 1

I have a good house in the country. When  
 will I see you here? I am of the opinion  
 that you will stay there, since the L<sup>[ord]</sup>  
 Pigot is going out. I wrote to you the day  
 before last - and therefore there is  
 little occasion for enlarging. ... If I  
 had a Seat in the House of Commons,  
 I could do good for myself and for  
 my Friends. It is the Devil to be without  
 Money." 1

In the last of his Spring letters, dated 19th April 1775, James wrote:

"I wrote you two days ago by this ship; and nothing has occurred since  
 worthy of notice. I am not particularly informed upon what footing an  
Dupriach Du Pre has put you with the Morer Lord (North). But, in  
 my opinion, nothing ought to keep you longer in India. A campaign here  
 is, in your situation, worth two on the banks of the Crisna. The inclosed  
[not found] is from our friend in Cecil Street. It is in his usual stile.  
 But you may depend upon it, that his information concerning the D<sup>[uke]</sup> of

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1. Macpherson MSS./1, 4/15, James to John Macpherson, 10 April 1775.
  2. The River Krishna marked the approximate boundary between the Carnatic and the Circars, and could be regarded as the division between north and south India.
  3. This was Dr. John Elliott, who lived at No. 7 Cecil Street, off the Strand, and was the physician to the Duke of Grafton (see Grafton MSS., A. 25/1038). Elliott was, therefore, a useful informant.

Grafton is literally true. I know not what could have made the creature so avowedly hostile; though there is reason to believe that to oblige him is to secure his enmity. Take my word for it, he is a compleat Scoundrel and that you will, upon trial, find him such. I commit the inclosed letters to your care, as I suppose there is an uninterrupted communication between the Coast [of Coromandel] and Bengal.<sup>1</sup>

I am, my dear friend, Yours most affectionately, J. Macpherson  
All contests are forever over in the India House. Govt. are now compleat masters." 2

How wrong James was. In July Maclean and his fellow agents arrived in the Dutton and the battles in India House began. Nor were the battles confined to England and Bengal. James had also mentioned Lord Pigot, who, against all the wishes of the government, had been sent out to Madras to replace the inept Alexander Wynch as Governor of Madras. When Pigot arrived at Madras on 9th December 1775<sup>3</sup> another battle began there, in which John had an important part to play. James, who pretended indifference about most things, except Governor Johnstone, for whom he

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1. These were probably letters to his second cousins Captains Allan and John Macpherson (see above, p. 30) and Macpherson MSS./3, (General corres.)
  2. Macpherson MSS./1, 4/16, James to John Macpherson, 19 April 1775.
  3. Love, Vol. 3, p. 4.

had a pathological dislike, always retained his pose of indolence, but after he met Leuchlin Macleane and received his friend John's letters of September 1774 he kept a very close watch on affairs. Bradshaw was dead and Grafton was useless. The future depended on North and Robinson.

CHAPTER 6

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Revolt in Madras: 1775-1776

Chapter 6. Revolt in Madras: 1775-1776

From 1775 to 1777 Lauchlin Maclean spent his time in England fighting for himself and his two principals, Hastings and the Nawab. He was, as Laurence Sullivan observed, a man who would "fight on his stumps"<sup>1</sup>, and he deserved this reputation for never acknowledging defeat. He fought hard, and at times displayed flashes of the brilliance that had once made him rich and influential, but the odds were against him. He was sapped by the fatigue which resulted from frequent bouts of ill health; he was still suspected as the financial gambler who had been associated with the spectacular stock crash in 1769; and North and Robinson were difficult to interest in Indian problems; partly perhaps because they were reluctant to admit that the Regulating Act had created more difficulties than it had solved, but mainly because they did not want Indian affairs to distract attention from the larger problems in America. Maclean also failed to estimate correctly the worth of some of the men he counted upon to support Hastings. His worst, though understandable, mistake in this respect was to assume that James Macpherson was an ally. Backstairs

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1. Bod. MSS., MS. Eng. Hist., C. 269, Laurence Sullivan's Letter-book.

politicians survive or succeed because they are never tempted to blindly trust one man on the enthusiastic recommendations of another. Macleane obviously broke this cardinal rule, and was convinced by John that he could rely for unqualified support on James.

At this juncture, however, James would have agreed, though for opposite reasons, with the sincerest friends of Hastings, that the coupling of the Governor-General's and the Nawab's causes was a very bad thing. James wanted the government's support for the Nawab, and saw that the Nawab's cause was endangered by its being associated with men in the Company who were disliked by North and Robinson. In oversimplified terms: James hoped that by helping John win the Nawab's gratitude he would share the eventual rewards; and that by helping the government he would be given the forfeited Macpherson lands in Badenooh. Anybody who threatened those two hopes was an enemy; and once he realised that Macleane was the agent of the Governor-General he looked on Hastings as a threat. Furthermore, James would still not have been pleased if Macleane had returned simply as the Nawab's agent. He had advised John that their best interests would be served if John returned to England in that capacity, and that one campaign at home was "worth two on the banks of the Crisna"<sup>1</sup>. As it was, James

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1. See above, p. 359.

had to accept the immediate situation, with Macleane as the Nawab's agent, before doing his utmost to save himself and his friend John from an involvement with Hastings, which would incur the government's displeasure.

It so happened that Macleane not only began his negotiations by being moderate in matters affecting Hastings,<sup>1</sup> but he gave most of his initial attention to the Nawab's affairs. Against the wishes of the Company, Macleane pressed for the Nawab's right to name his second son as his successor in place of the eldest. This was, of course, a measure which met with the approval of James Macpherson, who was able to inform John that:

"MacRobin [Robinson] and Tua [North] were both urged; they saw the impropriety; and the words were softened into legal succession, which, I am made to understand, may, according to the custom of the East, comprehend any of the Nabob's sons; or, in other words, it leaves him the power of disposing of the Sovereignty by his Will."<sup>2</sup>

The help he received to reach this compromise probably lulled Macleane into a final conviction that James Macpherson was his true ally in ministerial circles. From December 1775, however, James judged the temper of North, Robinson, and the

1. See Macleane (1773-1778), pp. 109-110.

2. Macpherson MSB./1, 4/18, James to John Macpherson, 14 December 1775, (letter quoted in full in Macleane (1773-1778), p. 111). *The words which were "softened" were in paragraph 39 of the Company's General Letter to Fort St. George, Madras, dated 25<sup>th</sup> November 1775, (see I. O. L., Despatches to Madras, Vol. 6 (1774-75), p. 480).*

ministerial supporters among the Company directors, better than Macleane.

James knew that the best Hastings could hope for in his conflict with the triumvirate was a compromise solution, as North and Robinson were strongly biased in favour of the latter. But as the year 1776 progressed, and some of the leading politicians, including groups influenced by Bute, Sir Gilbert Elliot, Shelburne, Rockingham, Richmond and Governor Johnstone, began to use India House as an arena for supporting Hastings and opposing the government, the attitude of North and Robinson towards Hastings began to stiffen. And, when this oddly composed Hastings "party" (which was organised by Macleane) won a victory against ministerial policy in India House in May 1776, North and Robinson began to fear that Indian affairs would intrude on Parliamentary business (especially the time they needed for American problems). This made them angry, and it determined them to settle the fight between Hastings and the triumvirate as quickly as they could, and on their terms.<sup>1</sup>

Macleane was approached through intermediaries to see whether or not terms could be arranged for Hastings's resignation as Governor-General. Acting without his usual shrewdness, Macleane allowed himself to be persuaded that there was a danger

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1. For an account of these happenings, see *ibid.*, pp. 124-128; and Sutherland, pp. 306-310.



of "incurring the resentment of ministry ... by pushing matters to extremity", and that if the Hastings question came up in Parliament it would be treated "rigorously and summarily". Deceived into believing that he had to act before Parliament re-assembled, Macleane moved rapidly. At the end of August 1776 he met Hastings's leading supporters at Haldon Hall in Devon, and discussed terms for his principal.<sup>1</sup> On 21st September, accompanied by James Macpherson, he went to Robinson's private residence at Sion Hill, and there the terms were agreed.<sup>2</sup> A week later, again in the company of James Macpherson, he met the Chairman of the Company at Robinson's private residence when, wrote Macleane:

"Mr. Robinson stated what had been agreed upon ... in the fairest manner, and they promised their most cordial support. It was then agreed that I should deliver in a letter signifying Mr. Hastings's wish to resign, to the Court of Directors on Wednesday, 9th October."<sup>3</sup>

The matter was actually settled on 16th October,<sup>4</sup> when the Secretary of State

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1. L. Macleane to W. Hastings, 10 November 1776 (letter printed in full by G. R. Gleig in Memoirs of the Life of the Rt. Hon. Warren Hastings, London, Vol. 2, 1841, pp. 71-91 (hereafter cited as Gleig); the reference to the Haldon Hall meeting is on p. 77).
  2. *ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 81. See also: B.M. Add. MSS. 37833, ff. 36-36v., John Robinson to George III, 24 September 1776.
  3. *ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 85.
  4. *ibid.*, Vol. 2, pp. 88-89.

was officially informed that Hastings had resigned as Governor-General, and that his place as a member of the Supreme Council of Bengal was to be taken by Edward Wheler.<sup>1</sup>

The effects of the resignation will be referred to later. The immediate point is that Macleane himself told Hastings that he trusted Robinson as a negotiator of terms because there was "a witness present"<sup>2</sup> - the witness being James Macpherson. It is not only certain that Macleane regarded James Macpherson as his own and Hastings's friend, but he also probably assumed that if the resignation or the terms were not in Hastings's favour, then James would have warned him. Not one of Macleane's letters to Hastings gave the smallest hint that James had acted in his own or Robinson's interest, and against Hastings's interest. Indeed, if Macleane had recorded the merest suspicion of duplicity on the part of James, then Hastings would never have trusted the Macphersons at a later date. There cannot, however, be any doubt about James Macpherson's attitude. Without repeating letters which have been quoted in full elsewhere,<sup>3</sup> a few extracts must be given from the letters which James sent John in 1776 as a means of supplying necessary evidence. These extracts are from:

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1. Edward Wheler (1733-1784) was chairman of the Company from 1774 to 1775. When he went out to India as a member of the Supreme Council of Bengal he supported Philip Francis; but when Francis left in 1780 he shifted his support to Hastings.
  2. Gleig, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 82.
  3. Macleane (1773-1778), pp. 113-123, where the six letters from James to John Macpherson, all dated in 1776, are quoted in full.

(1) A letter dated 6th January 1776:

"Cùm u fein às a Ghroich pallich. 'S  
edir dhai an Ceannart chuir sios, a  
reur mo bharrailse. Ha na deuille  
eille ro laidir an nan Cairdin, in shò.  
Cha dìon MacChol feum."

"Keep yourself out of this business my  
lad. They must butt down the Headman  
[Hastings], according to my opinion. The  
other devils are too powerful in Friends  
here. The Son of Coll will not succeed."

(2) A letter dated 12th January 1776:

" 'S barrail liomsa gun eìdar do  
N'Hastinich, taise ata é glan na nach  
eil, thithin dachi. Gabh ussa m'fhocul  
air gun cùm an Tuach suas na Deuille  
eil na aghai a Cheanart. Ata Gliocas  
agudse - Na Labhair moran an aighi na  
Tri-fherre mòr; 'S aidse shessas.  
Chunna mi an diu an Ropostanach. Ata è  
an aighi N'Hastinich. ..."

"I think that Hastings, whether he is  
clean [in the right] or not, must  
come home. Take my word on it  
that North will support the other Devils  
against the Headman [Hastings]. You have  
Wisdom - Do not speak much against the  
Three Big Men [The Triumvirate]; the  
longer to stand. I saw Robinson today.  
He is against Hastings. ..."

(3) A letter dated 10th February 1776:

" 'S beg air an Tuach agus air an  
Ropostanich an d'Hastinich; agus chà  
nòad eìd gun bhi na aghai; agus cho fàd  
sa bhias MacChol na Fher-diona aig an  
d'Hastinich, cha ghàbh aid è an sa

"North and Robinson both hate  
Hastings; and they dare not  
but be against him; and as long  
as the Son of Coll is Hastings's Agent  
[or Attorney], they will not accept him

1. Both the Macphersons used "MacColl" or "The Son of Coll" as a code name for Lauchlin Macleane, a cadet of the Macleans of Coll, who, as chieftains, used their territorial style as a surname. Although Lauchlin was not entitled to the territorial style, it was a convenient way of referring to him; and it would have confused anyone who intercepted their letters.

2. Macpherson MSS./1, 4/19, James to John Macpherson, 6 January 1776.

3. *ibid.*, 4/20, James to John Macpherson, 12 January 1776.

Chuir mar Fher-dioni aig an Fhêr-Dhuth.  
 'S diaulli sho! Labhair an Ropostanach  
 riomse, aig eari òrm scriobha an aighi  
 an d'Hastinich; agus dhuilte mi <sup>1</sup>ê."

(4) A letter dated 27th March 1776:

"Chail mishi cluas 'n Tuaich agus an  
 Ropostanich ni chinnir na h'Inchichan,  
 o n'uair chual aid gum rômh mi mo  
 charid do MhacChol. Ata aid 'm  
 barrail gur essi chuir mo cheanse  
 h'uille ni a thubhairt mi mo n'fher-  
-dhùth agus 'n d'Hastinich."<sup>2</sup>

(5) A letter dated 2nd April 1776:

" 'S diuillè na h'Olìch 'n Tuach agus  
 'n Sealac aigi. Ata mishi ga 'm  
 faicin a huille là; ach o n'am gun  
 d'fhuair è fios gur carid mi do  
 MhacChol cha labhair aid focul riom  
 mo na h'Inchichan shios."<sup>3</sup>

(6) A letter dated 5th April 1776:

"Se mo bharrailse gun cuir aid amach  
 'n d'Hastinich, mus fhalbh a Phaicaid

in Court as the Black-Man's Agent.

This is devilish! Robinson spoke to me,  
 asking me to write against  
 Hastings; and I refused him."<sup>1</sup>

"I have lost the ear of North and  
 Robinson about India, since  
 they heard I was a friend of  
 the Son of Coll [Maclean]. They are  
 of the opinion that he put in my  
 head all I have said about the black-  
man and Hastings."<sup>2</sup>

"Devils are the Wretch North and  
 his Servant [Robinson]. I see them  
 every day; but since they  
 discovered I was a friend of the  
 Son of Coll [Maclean] they will not  
 speak a word to me about India."<sup>3</sup>

"It is my opinion that they will  
 expel Hastings, before the Packet

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1. *ibid.*, 4/21, James to John Macpherson, 10 February 1776.
  2. *ibid.*, 4/25, James to John Macpherson, 27 March 1776.
  3. *ibid.*, 4/27, James to John Macpherson, 2 April 1776.

an a mios Chiune. 'S olc a fhuara  
 'n d'Impiach. 'S annigh dhôm 'n  
 d'Olich. Bhà è na Ghille-roi aig 'n  
 d'Shulibhanich agus aig Bhanshittartich  
 deuch bliana roimh shò. ... Thobhair  
 ussa n'fhairra ort fein. Na Ceanghail  
 u fein ris 'n Hastinich. Nuair thig  
 è dhachi tuitis è sios àn 'n Obscurity  
 mar thuit a Phredecessarrin; Olich  
 gun suim uille gu leir."

leaves in the month of June.  
 Impey is in trouble. I know the  
 Wretch. He was the Manager for  
 Sullivan and for Henry Vansittart  
 ten years before this. ... You  
 look after yourself. Do not tie  
 yourself to Hastings. When he  
 comes home he will fall into Obscurity  
 like his Predecessors; the Wretch is  
 altogether without influence."

The final extract comes from the last known letter which James sent out to India before the return of John in 1777. Even so, the extracts show that James was becoming increasingly concerned about losing the confidence of North and Robinson. A month later, Macleane and the Hastings's "party" won an interim victory in India House; and four months after that Macleane agreed to the ministry's terms in the presence of James Macpherson, who, it can be safely assumed, gave his services to Robinson as the means of regaining Robinson's and North's trust. Hastings, who had never met or even corresponded with James Macpherson by this date, never knew that his affairs had been partly at the mercy of a seemingly unimportant government hack, ~~and that his agent, Macleane, had walked straight into a trap.~~ What James Macpherson

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1. *ibid.*, 4/28, James to John Macpherson, 5 April 1776.

did to Hastings in 1776, when he was afraid of offending his ministerial chiefs, was despicable; his treachery after 1780, when he had Hastings's complete trust as a confidential friend, was ten times worse. As the later treachery was so well documented,<sup>1</sup> there need be little hesitation in accepting the half-documented evidence for 1776.

James's object in restraining John by warning him off an association with Hastings was not, however, achieved by his letters. Even the first of them, dated in January 1776, was sent too late to restrain John, and arrived long after other events in Madras had forced John to take stock of his situation. After Macleane left Madras in February 1775, John did all he could to strengthen his link with Hastings. His reasons for doing so were undoubtedly selfish, but, in all fairness to him, there was no hint of treachery in his dealings with Hastings at this period. He saw in the Governor-General's friendship a means of consolidating his standing with the Nawab (always his first consideration), yet his enthusiasm for Hastings's cause was so keen that his interest must have been partly genuine. His letters<sup>2</sup> were full of

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1. The later documents will be mentioned in the final chapter.

2. Before receiving a reply from Hastings, John wrote two long letters on 10th and 11th May (see B.M. Add. MSS. 29136, ff. 186-197v). In the first of these (*ibid.*, f. 186) John congratulated Hastings on the political advantage he would reap out of a conspiracy charge against the Rajah Nandakumar (c. 1705-1775), who had accused Hastings of taking bribes. Part of this letter is printed in Warren Hastings' Letters to Sir John Macpherson, ed. Henry H. Dodwell, London, 1927, p. 38, (hereafter cited as Dodwell). John was wrong to assume that the trial of

unqualified commitments to the cause, and his flattery was excessive. On 4th May

<sup>1</sup>  
1775 Hastings finally broke his long silence and answered John, and this encouraged him to bombard Hastings with volumes of sympathy and advice. In his letter of 25th June, John wrote:

"Francisco furioso del Nonsense had surely sensa enough to see that before the Triumvirate could be entitled to the names of Imperators you were a primary and necessary sacrifice. The letter General Clavering wrote from Madeira requiring additions of Power and Emolument in his Station (a fact that has disgusted King and Ministry) proved his Demerit as a Statesman and Soldier. On the Principles of that Letter the Triumvirate, with honourable and honest Monson one of them, have shewen [sic] themselves! Alas! Monson and I have lost our Interest. My Dusty Duke [of Grafton] is no Lady. Bradshaw has, with Clive, put a hasty period to life! ...  
<sup>3</sup>  
However, I am happy! My two little Children, my dear Boys, my Grevilles, are both in Parliament; the Eldest in the House of Lords. They write me: 'Mac we have no Object; what is yours? You have taught us to value what

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2. (continued) Nandakumar would help Hastings. It was taken up by the Triumvirate, and used by them as a means of blackening Hastings's name. See L. S. Sutherland, New Evidence on the Nandakuma Trial, in E.H.R., Vol. 72, (1957), pp. 438-465; J. D. M. Derrett, Nandakumar's Forgery, in E.H.R., Vol. 75, (1960), pp. 223-238; and N. K. Sinha, The Trial of Maharaja Nandakumar, in Bengal Past & Present, Vol. 78, (1959).
1. The first letter from Hastings to John Macpherson was definitely dated 4th May 1775. John acknowledged it as such in the opening of his letter to Hastings of 25th June 1775 (B.M. Add. MSS. 29136, f. 234). The first letter from Hastings to John printed in Dodwell, pp. 37-38, is dated 12th July 1775.
2. Not found. John mentioned this letter again later to Hastings without giving further details (see B.M. Add. MSS. 29136, f. 272 [-] August 1775).
3. Robert Clive, 1st Baron Clive of Plassey (1725-1774), had, like Thomas Bradshaw, committed suicide. He died on 22nd November 1774.

is good.' My answer is: 'You have done all you could like zealous Soldiers, for Duprè. The Battle is now for Hastings! I tell you, and I know you will swear it, on India Intelligence,<sup>1</sup> that he is the only Governor to keep the thing at satisfaction ... and the Son of the Isle of Sky<sup>e</sup> happy.'

It is done: and all the human Influence in my Entire Powers is yours. ...<sup>2</sup> Maclean must immediately publish his Commission of Ministry. Bob Greville was to give him his Seat [in Parliament] 'because Mac [John Macpherson not Lauchlin Maclean] desired it.' These boys must be yours, if I die before you. They are the joy of my Soul - My Eyes are dim. I will not explain Matters to you from here fully, because tomorrow I write to your Opposition to support the N<sup>a</sup>wa<sup>b</sup>. The Plan is mine. All their Correspondence - and more than shewen [sic] to you - is mine.<sup>3</sup> Jean Jacques writes the King by the Swallow (sailing in a few days -<sup>4</sup> Petrie aboard to join the Son of Coll [Maclean]) that India is in ruin, you the only Saviour - tho' thy Excellency is severe. Tell John Stewart he is too reserved. Death! Information! and Villainy! are no terror to

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1. Items appeared in the Pub. Adv. under "India Intelligence". John probably meant that Hastings would see the effect of the Grevilles' help by pieces that would be published under that heading.
  2. By "Commission of Ministry" John meant Maclean's "Commission as Agent of the Nawab".
  3. "Jean Jacques" was the name that John invented for the Nawab of Arcot (see Hastings's first acknowledgement of the name, Dodwell, p. 38). It was, perhaps, the only one of the Macphersons' code-names to pass into general usage. Its inspiration was obviously Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who believed in the simple integrity of primitive natives; a belief that was "supported" by James Macpherson when he published Fingal and Temora. Rousseau, of course, would have had great difficulty in recognising the Nawab of Arcot as an unspoilt, uncorrupted, simple or primitive native. John Macpherson had a warped sense of humour.
  4. William Petrie, see above, p. 347, n. 2.



me, at least in the Prospect. I will support old Sullivan and all my friends at any risque. I will send you, by and bye, what Woodfall, No. 1 Ivy Lane, is to speak for me. When every Mode of ruining you my dearest Friend is adopted, prudence and caution are vices.

I contrived that Col. Mo<sup>1</sup>nsq should be told, on my Part, that his is the Sword and yours the Head to make Indostan of value to Britain. ... Adieu my very dear Friend; you are not to be angry at me for writing what my heart told me to write and publish at home. ...

<sup>2</sup>  
Old Mackay has misbehaved to your true friend Jean Jacques. Sir Bobby Fletcher is arrived by this ship. ...

<sup>3</sup>  
There is not a Being you love or hate, but I adore and detest."

Hastings, a very formal and restrained Englishman, must have flinched when he faced this froth of Celtic impertinence. The thought of John Macpherson's eyes dimming with tears as he wrote about his "two little children", the adult Greville brothers, was enough to make Hastings go rigid with embarrassment. In any case,

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1. John's promises of publicity in the newspapers led Hastings to believe that a work prepared by Lauchlin Maclean was actually written by John Macpherson (see Dodwell, pp. 41 and 43). Although a great deal was written for and against Hastings in the Pub. Adv. during 1775 and 1776, much of it was anonymous. Philip Francis claimed in 1776 that Hastings had the press in his pay "for a year past" (see Parkes & Merivale, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 215), but, even if true, it was probably organised by Lauchlin Maclean. James Macpherson had refused to write ~~me~~ against Hastings (see above, p. 369), but he did not, on the other hand, offer to write in his favour; and James would have filtered anything coming from John for publication in the Pub. Adv. It was against James's interests to support Hastings in the press.
  2. "Old Mackay" was George Mackay, the member of the Madras Council with the longest service in India, and an opponent of his fellow Highlander John Macpherson. John told Hastings: "He Mackay has positively a bad Disposition. Did Milk-Hedge Milk-weed grow in the northern Hills of Scotland, I could swear he was suckled on its juice." (see B.M. Add. MSS. 29138, 106v., 8 January 1777).
  3. B.M. Add. MSS. 29136, ff. 236-241, John Macpherson to W. Hastings, 25 June 1775.

the Grevilles were not much use to anybody as allies, as Lauchlin Macleane and James Macpherson discovered when they were dealing with the Nawab's problems. <sup>1</sup> James, if he had seen his friend's letter, would have also been embarrassed, and rigid with fury. To him, the idea of committing to paper a promise to "support old Sullivan and all my friends at any risque" would have been foolish: it was one thing to speak about these things to deceive a man; it was quite another to leave written evidence around. A "friend" who, for expediency, later had to be treated as an enemy, was provided with unnecessary weapons.

James had not the slightest intention of soliciting Woodfall on Hastings's behalf, and John must have known this; because he had been very devious in the way he had prepared James for Macleane's return to England. The one bright flash of truth - which may have impressed Hastings by its bluntness - was John's admission that he was going to write to the triumvirate, in the hope that they would support the Nawab. The fact also emerged that Monson, the least aggressive member of the triumvirate, had been linked with John as a protégé of Grafton. Acknowledging this provided John with an interim step for renouncing Grafton, whom, a year earlier, he

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1. See above, p. 351, n. 1. John Macpherson did, in fact, try to encourage Charles Greville to take an interest in Indian affairs in general, and Hastings and the Nawab in particular, but with no real effect; see B.M. Add. MSS. 42071, John Macpherson to C. F. Greville: ff. 186-190v. (5 February 1774); ff. 191-192v. (19 July 1774); ff. 193-194v. (1 October 1774); ff. 236-249v. (u.d. [but certainly written in 1775]).

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was not going to desert "till Death or Dishonour."

2

John sent five more letters to Hastings in 1775, each of which was very long and saturated with gushing flattery. They are of very limited value as evidence of what was happening in Bengal, because John was removed from the scene by time and distance, and his predictions or interpretation of events there, when compared to the numerous on-the-spot and accurate accounts of the situation, were frequently wrong or distorted. They are of some value as accounts of the situation in Madras in 1775, but again, he was heavily biased and he repeated himself continually. Trimmed of all repetitions, flattery, cajolery, half truths, worthless offers of help, valueless predictions, and prejudice, John's letters merely revealed that the Nawab was still in the financial grip of Benfield, the weak Governor Wynch and a corrupt Council; that factions among the Europeans were fighting for control of the Nawab's affairs; and that John had no real hope of impressing the Nawab until Hastings gave his complete support and/or until the effects of any work done in England by Maclean, Petrie, Johnson, and James Macpherson, were felt in the durbar.

From February to December 1775, therefore, Madras was in a state of near anarchy,

1. See above, p. 336.

2. B.M. Add. MSS. 29136, John Macpherson to W. Hastings: ff. 251-254 (11 July 1775); ff. 259-266v. (29 July 1775); ff. 269-276v. (~~27~~ August 1775); ff. 326-333v. (27 October 1775); ff. 391-392v. (11 December 1775).

with the people there waiting for some circumstance that would throw up a real leader. Without quoting John Macpherson's letters in extenso, some extracts give news of men who were to play a part in the coming crisis, or throw some light on John's attitude. On 5th July 1775, for instance, John told Hastings:

"Sir Robin Fletcher is arrived, and, Wonder of Wonders, he pays Mr. M.<sup>c</sup> Skye [The Son of Skye, (John himself)]<sup>7</sup>, the friend of Duprè, more attention than to all the Colony. He swears Duprè made his Peace with L.<sup>d</sup> North, and that he could make nothing of his Informations against him. The English are tired of Informations. They think no more of them now than of common Advertisements. ...

Our Government here must be Smashed. They depend on the Disputes with you - thank the Triumvirate! ... I am vexed with Stewart [for not writing]<sup>7</sup>. What is he afraid of? We all go or rise together. He is safe in spite of Fate.

Do you want Injustice for Injustice? I can get a Thousand Evidences here to sink the purity of the Triumvirate if I choose to lay out a 1000 P.<sup>s</sup> in the Examiner's Court.<sup>1</sup>"

Three weeks later John again urged Hastings to act, in the following manner:

"I assure you upon my word of Honour as a Gentleman that it is my sincere opinion that if your Board does not speedily supercede the Power of this Government [of Madras]<sup>7</sup> in proceeding farther, and put them upon their most alarming fears for what is past, one of two Events must follow: the ruin of the poor Nabob, or a Convulsion in this ruined Government that the

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1. B.M. Add. MSS. 29136, ff. 253-253v., John Macpherson to W. Hastings, 11 July 1775.

Company may never have strength to recover.

An Empty Treasury; an open Fort; a foolish, perverse, corrupted Majority  
 [in the Madras Council]; the army dispersed! - while Hyder is looking on;  
 Bombay in ruin; and your Government [in Bengal] said to be totally lost  
 in party Contest.<sup>1</sup>"

These predictions of disaster were followed in August by more passages in the same vein, but in one letter sent in that month John made a statement which helped him to move further away from Grafton and nearer to North. John, with typical disregard for the truth, pretended that he was not enamoured with the ministry, and that he had been reluctant to make a move, which troubled his conscience, and might bring retribution. He wrote:

"I have not been well treated by Government, nor would it be in my Power to take much Revenge; but it was a confidence I had more than the official Ministers [Plenipotentiaries] that were here, that secured me against their pointed public attacks.

It is a fact between us, upon my Honour, that I had a confidential signification made me here by order of L.<sup>d</sup> N[or]th, through an intimate friend of mine in his Confidence 'that if I applied to him and by any Proposition relative to this Country could join my own to the public good, he would answer for the success, and either lay my Plan officially or confidentially before the King.'

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1. *ibid.*, ff. 266-266v., John Macpherson to W. Hastings, 29 July 1775.

I knew my first and really true friend, the D. of Gr<sup>a</sup>fto<sup>n</sup>, and Lord North were not then well together. I hesitated long. My answer was: 'that as I knew his L<sup>d</sup>ship and my original Patron were one, so his Grace would inform him of all my Sentiments on Indian affairs.' I never yet had any answer; and I have perhaps lost myself upon what I now honestly reckon the chief<sup>1</sup> virtue among men - steadiness to first friends forever."

Hastings must have been confused if he bothered to analyse some of the remarks made by John between June and August 1775. First, John boasted of his ability to recruit Woodfall and the power of the press to Hastings's cause, but contradicted himself by appearing to agree with Fletcher's view that a press campaign was worthless, as the public were so inured to partisan propaganda that they dismissed such items as advertisements. Then, after bragging about his friends in influential circles, he admitted that he was powerless to take revenge on the ministry (although, of course, he did not want to do any such thing).

John was, perhaps, as anxious about the future at this period, as he had been before Macleane's visits had increased his stock at the durbar, and his contradictions, although found in his writing at other times, might have been one of the symptoms of the tension he was experiencing. His next letter, to his friend James, gave further evidence of his feeling of suspense. He had not received all the

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1. *ibid.*, ff. 272-272v., John Macpherson to W. Hastings, [ ] August 1775.

letters which James had dispatched at the beginning of the year, and his own letter, of 15th October 1775, was a mixture of complaints about neglect and boasts about his influence. He wrote:

"My dear Friend: Had I all the spare time that I could wish I ought not in justice to employ much of it in writing you. All the Ships of the season arrived but one! - and nothing but a single uninteresting Line from the Friend I am most attached to, and on whom I most depend in London. My friend, Mr. Duprè, has wrote me by every Ship, and with the warmest attention to my Welfare. What can be the matter with you. Tho' your Silence does not in the least cool my friendship for you, you may readily judge it must be very displeasing to me. But I have said enough!

You must soon after you receive this wait of my Benefactor and Companion and the best of good Fellows - General Joseph Smith. Offer him your aid your knowledge and good offices in return for his Conduct, his goodness and friendship to me.

I have the pleasure to feel that I have fully repaid him in many secret and public good offices his friendship to me; but you owe him great regard on my account. Your Conduct to Duprè has gained the warmest wishes of my Heart.

Ha mishi misk no marrinin more yè ni  
Politicks. Le toil Dhè heid in Grohich  
 luim, agus fer mi fèd er mo naidive. Ha  
 mo Lamve Shir, agus oni Bliani gu lè bi  
 mi ro Shir, agus heid mi gachi. Guim

I am among the big "shots" in  
Politicks. By the will of God the Matter  
 will go with me, and I will overtake my  
 enemies. Sir [the Nawab] is in my Hands,  
 and in a Year and a half I will be a Sir,

1

suas Cardis ri Macilain in Cornilair.  
 Ha na mo chrihi feim i ghianive ghutsi  
 massi harimi. Ach is nonich in gnoich  
 nach hel u Scriabhi ghom in conì. Bihigh  
 barric is dha mhili Pount sashinich ye  
 mo chuid Ergid in nisti on ni Luinin.  
 Chuir do chian mar ri chian in Dupreich  
 leis in airgid shò, 'is fiach mon  
 cuairst - a good Patent Place.

Dia Liat,  
2  
 M.<sup>o</sup> faden i vuid"

and I will go home. Keep up Friendship  
 with Colonel Maclean<sup>1</sup>. It is in my heart  
 to do as much for you if I can. But it is  
 a strange thing that you are not Writing  
 me constantly. More than two thousand  
 Pounds English of my Money will be now in  
 London. Put your head to Du Pré's head  
 with this money, and look around  
 for - a good Patent Place.

God be with you,  
2  
 The cocky son of the peats"

General Joseph Smith actually sailed for England a few days after John told James he was on his way home. His departure meant the loss of one of John's few remaining friends on the Madras Council. On the evening before Smith left, a farewell dinner was held in his honour on board the flagship of Admiral Sir Edward Hughes. Present at the dinner, with Hughes, who was becoming increasingly involved in the affairs of the durbar, were John Macpherson, Sir Robert Fletcher, and Colonel Thornton, who had stopped off at Madras en route for England. From Thornton, who was returning home as General Clavering's agent, John learnt of the latest situation

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1. Mac-ilain is a good phonetic rendering of MacGhilleathain (Son of Gilleán), the standard Anglo-Gaelic form of which is Maclean. In this case it stands for the eccentric form of the name used by Colonel Lauchlin Maclean.

2. Macpherson MSS./1, 39/9, John to James Macpherson, 15 October 1775.



in Bengal. Reporting the event to Hastings on 27th October 1775, John wrote:

"After dinner he [Thornton] took me aside on Deck, and, having drank a great deal, he began to pour forth volumes in Gen<sup>l</sup>. Clavering's praise, and often with Tears in his eyes. ...

He talked of Stewart's dismissal and told me the course. He talked favourably of my friend Dow who, by the bye, never writes me now. ...

From all that passed I drew these conclusions on my return. That the Rancour is now turned against the Judges. That there is no cordiality between the Trio. That the Col. [Thornton] goes home from a sense of the necessity of a strong Exertion to carry the Day, but that he is not an able Agent. ...

The Rancour is great against the Son of Coll [Maclean], and his ruin is meant by the <sup>3</sup>OOO. The first O [probably Francis] wrote thus of him to Sir E.<sup>d</sup> Hughes: 'He will pocket Jean Jacques's money and ruin his affairs. His and Johnson's visit here are now no secret.'<sup>2</sup>

Having said that "We all go or rise together" the news of Stewart's dismissal as Judge Advocate and Secretary of the Supreme Council by the triumvirate probably worried John Macpherson. The triumvirate were seeming to dominate Hastings, and his friends the Bengal Judges - Impey, Chambers and Le Maistre - who had been offended by the triumvirate over an incident arising out of the Nandakumar affair,

1. Colonel Alexander Dow succeeded Colonel Lauchlin Maclean as Commissary-General of Bengal on 31 March 1775 (see I.O.L., H.Misc.S. 356, ff. 135-138, Extract from the Proceedings of the Bengal Board of Inspection). Dow returned to military duties on 18 March 1778 (with the approval of Hastings), and died on active service at Bhagalpur on 31 July 1779, aged 43.

2. B.M. Add. MSS. 29136, ff. 332-333v., John Macpherson to W. Hastings, 27 October 1775.

and had thrown their support behind Hastings. By 11th December 1775, however, when he next wrote to Hastings, John had heard some of the news from home, and knew that Macleane and Sir Gilbert Elliot were working hard on Hastings's behalf. This pleased him, and seem<sup>ed</sup> to give him some new heart. What seemed to please him more was the news with which he opened his letter. He said:

"Yesterday our new Governor [Pigot] arrived; and today he takes the Chair. Winch [sic] is quite annihilated; for the General Letter was addressed to his Lordship. Difficult and critical is the prospect which I see before his Lordship. But he is strong in Resolution and Support. He was no sooner appointed than all the Ministry approved, and it is said North shed no Tears for Rumbolt's [sic] defeat. ...

The D[uke] of Grafton and our friend Duprè and other Powerful Interests have recommended me so strongly to Pigot, that I am apt to think he thinks me too powerfully Supported to have that sense of Attachment which obtains the Confidence of great men. I have not drawn to him yet. You know my situation elsewhere, and when you shall have heard of strong measures meant to be adopted relative to that quarter, you must be in some pain for me. To this hour, I assure you upon my most sacred word of honour, I have not realised my old Rights due from that quarter [the Nawab], nor touched one Pagoda since the Beginning of my Support.<sup>1</sup> Many were my inducements for thinking so clear. One was that I might solemnly have the Power of assuring you that your Friend acted disinterestedly. My

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1. John was, of course, lying. See his own and Harland's statements in Appendices 4 and 5.

Resolution now is to endeavour to mediate between Pi<sup>g</sup>ot and the N<sup>awab</sup>.  
 If the former will not employ me thus, I will claim his permission to  
 settle and extricate my own affairs. I will on no consideration counteract  
 him <sup>1</sup> [Pigot]. But should he unreasonably prevent my obtaining what is my  
 right (which I cannot think him capable of) I am determined to act for  
 myself, and by returning soon to Europe to aid the common cause and get this  
 Government [of Madras] properly checked. To you am I attached by every Tie  
 binding on my affection and Reason."

All the actors for the coming drama had now arrived in Madras, with the exception  
 of one man, Colonel James Stuart. <sup>2</sup> On the same day that John Macpherson wrote to tell  
 Hastings of Pigot's arrival in Madras, James wrote to John, to tell him of Stuart's  
 departure from England. <sup>3</sup> James then went on to recount the news of the fighting over  
 the Hastings/triumvirate conflict, and finished by hinting that he could do a great  
 deal more for his friend if he was in the House of Commons. Now that he knew John  
 had nearly £3000 banked in London, James never stopped reminding his friend that he  
 could buy a seat in Parliament for that amount.

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1. B.M. Add. MSS. 29136, ff. 391-392v., John Macpherson to W. Hastings, 11 December 1775.
  2. James Stuart (d. 1809), the younger brother of Andrew Stuart (1725-1801), the Douglas Cause lawyer. He joined the British army in 1747, two years after his elder brother had served Prince Charles Stuart as an officer in the Jacobite army. After active service in North America and the West Indies he was promoted to the rank of Lt. Colonel in 1761. He arrived at Madras on 1st May 1776, as a full Colonel, having served in the British army for 29 years.
  3. Macpherson MSS./1, 4/17, James to John Macpherson, 11 December 1775.

Four days later James wrote again to John, and gave his final views on Grafton, having first warned John that American affairs were the only topic that really interested the government, and that he was helping them by writing against the American Colonists. He continued:

"Nothing material has happened since I closed the other packet. Since then another edition of the pamphlet <sup>1</sup> is come out; and to avoid the trouble of unpacking the other, I enclose for you a copy of this edition. The demand is so great that a third edition is in the press; though the first publication only happened five days ago.

Ach haneil fios achda gur mishi  
scriave é. Na biágh cha neil fios  
agumse gun cenachigh aid an leabhar  
cho má. Pot an Deuille an Tón an  
d'Hassanich. <sup>2</sup> Cha neil án ach amadan.  
Ha an Duike, do charra mór, a nois cho  
beg ri Chri fein; agus ha pólla yê; yê  
ainme cho mi thlachdair ri Scairte a

But they do not know that I  
wrote it. If they did I would not  
know that they would buy the book  
so well. The C---k of the Devil in the  
B-----e of <sup>2</sup> [Hastings]. He is only a fool.  
The Duke [of Grafton], your big friend, is  
now as small as his own Heart; and he  
stinks; his name is as ill-favoured as [a

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1. The Rights of Britain asserted against the Claims of America, being an Answer to the Declaration of the General Congress, [James Macpherson], London, 1776. The copy in the B.M. is dated "1776", but it is certain from James's remarks that the 1st edn. was published on 9th December 1775. On 6th January 1776, James told John: "Chreic aid Seachd milli an an tri Seacamin do Leabhar. [They sold Seven thousand copies of the book (pamphlet) in three Weeks]" (see Macpherson MSS./1, 4/19).
  2. "Hassanich" is not a Gaelic word. James was probably trying to render "Hastings" into a Gaelic form, without making the name too obvious to English interceptors. In a letter he sent a month later to John he used the form "Hastinich" for the first time, and kept to that version. In this instance he was undoubtedly saying for the first time: "To the devil with Hassanich [Hastings]. He is only a fool."



two months later, that he had asked Robert Gregory to obtain young Macdonald of  
 Breakish (John's first cousin) a cadetship in the H.E.I.C.S., James underlined the  
 blunt warnings he gave John (in extracts already quoted). Both Fraser and Gregory  
 were friends of Philip Francis, and opponents of Warren Hastings. And to add further  
 edge to his warnings, James continued to point out to John that "American affairs are  
 in such a damnable situation that your E. India squabbles command no attention  
 whatsoever". The ministry were becoming increasingly annoyed at the bother caused by  
 the Bengal dispute, and their resentment was directed at Hastings. But in December  
 1775 John Macpherson was still oblivious of his friend's views, and he committed  
 himself more deeply to Hastings's cause.

John Stewart, who had been dismissed from his posts by the triumvirate, left  
 Calcutta in the Ankerwyke at the end of the month, and arrived in Madras in the  
 middle of January 1776. With him he brought a friendly letter to John from Sir

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1. Macpherson MSS./1, 4/21, James to John Macpherson, 10 February 1776.
  2. Robert Gregory (c. 1729-1810), son of Henry Gregory of Galway. He was a free merchant in Bengal from about 1747 to 1766; and a director of the E.I.Co. for three periods: 1769-73, 1775-79, and 1780-82; and chairman for a short time in 1782. He was also M.P. for Maidstone, 1768-74, and for Rochester, 1774-84. Although an independent, he tended to support Lord North, and in the Company battles of 1775 to 1777 he was certainly against Hastings.
  3. See above, p. 342, n. 1.
  4. Macpherson MSS./1, 4/19, James to John Macpherson, 6 January 1776.
  5. I.O.L., MSS. EUR. E. 18, f. 13, P. Francis to C. D'Oyly, 25 August 1775.

1

Elijah Impey, who wanted John to assure the Nawab of his goodwill, and an equally friendly letter from Hastings, who wrote:

"Mr. Stewart will answer in person all your Letters, for he is Master of all my Sentiments and of the State of this torpid Government. ... He will tell you all, and you will find him a most admirable Budget, and very sober and temperate on every Subject but that of Secretary and Judge Advocate General, and the Law. I have given him a Letter to the Nabob. It is a mere Form of Introduction. I would wish him to deliver it with the Knowledge of the Governor, but on this you will advise him. I would not have him in Addition to the other horrid Crimes with which he is loaded, carry home that of a Traitor on his Head, as our Friend Colonel McLeane did. But you will let the Nabob know that Mr. Stewart is my Friend, and my confidential Friend. I am afflicted by the news which I hear concerning the Disposition of Tanjour [sic]. It will be a severe stroke to the Nabob. Stewart will let you know the Line of Conduct which I have observed towards him."

2

In his last letter to Hastings, John had rejoiced because the Company's General Letter had been addressed to Pigot and not to Wynch, the retiring Governor of Madras.

3

By the time Stewart arrived, John not only knew that the General Letter voiced the Court of Directors' disapproval of the reduction of Tanjore by the two expeditions,

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1. B.M. Add. MSS. 16263, f. 30, Sir Elijah Impey to John Macpherson, 30 December [1775].
  2. W. Hastings to John Macpherson, 29 December 1775 (printed in full, Dodwell, pp. 38-39).
  3. B.M. Add. MSS. 29136, ff. 153-168, Company's General Letter to Fort St. George, Madras, dated 12 April 1775.

but he also had a shrewd idea that Pigot would give practical effect to the Directors' disapproval. Of all people the Company could have sent to Madras, Pigot was the worst possible choice. As the negotiator of the 1762 Treaty with the Rajah of Tanjore during his first term as Governor, he had made a bitter enemy of the Nawab. Since that date corrupt Company servants and durbar adventurers had made fortunes out of the Nawab's unending battle to reverse Pigot's work. Pigot could argue that the Company had a prior claim to the Tanjore revenues, because the Nawab had not eliminated his public debt; but private creditors of the Nawab, including Paul Benfield (and several of the members of the Madras Council), had lent the Nawab money against future assignments of those revenues; and if Pigot went ahead with the Company's orders they stood to lose great fortunes. For once the warring factions among the Company servants and durbar adventurers were faced with a common enemy, Pigot. It was only a matter of how the battle would open. With Hastings's assurance of friendship, and the need to introduce John Stewart to the Nawab as Hastings's "confidential Friend", John Macpherson rushed to the durbar, although Pigot had warned Company servants not to meddle in the Nawab's affairs.

In a letter to his friend, Robert Palk, a Madras merchant called Chokappa Chetti

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1. See Sutherland, pp. 317-318.



reported that John Macpherson

"contracted great friendship with the Nabob, and gives him all the intelligence he possibly can of what passes amongst the Gentlemen here. And since the present circumstances commenced between his Lordship, &c., and the Nabob, he was found frequent<sup>ly</sup> going <sup>to</sup> the Nabob in an unseasonable hour; that is, at eleven or twelve at night; and <sup>a</sup> few days ago he, together with Mr. Stuart <sup>sic, Stewart</sup> that came from Bengall to go from hence, went to the Nabob at about 12 at night. This behaviour of Mr. Macpherson coming to the knowledge of the Governour and Council, they thought proper to suspend him the Company's service.<sup>1</sup>"

The word "suspend" was wrong. On 22nd January 1776, just six weeks after he assumed office as Governor, Lord Pigot, at a full meeting of his Board, told his fellow Councillors:

"that a Paper, unsought for and unsolicited, had been put into his hand, that there was no Signature affixed to it, but, that it contained matter of so dangerous a Tendency to the Interests of the Company that he has thought it expedient to lay it before them."<sup>2</sup>

Pigot next ordered John Macpherson's Memorial<sup>3</sup> to the Nawab of 1771 to be read out in its entirety, and recorded by the Minutes Clerk, who then wrote:

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1. H.MSS.C., Palk MSS., p. 264, Chokappa Chetti to Robert Palk, 2 February 1776.
  2. I.O.L., Madras Military Consultations, Range 251, Vol. 80, p. 37.
  3. See Appendix 5.

"At the desire of the President [Pigot], M<sup>r</sup>. M<sup>c</sup>. Pherson is then called before the Board, and upon being asked whether or not he is the author of it, the same being first read to him, he replies -

'that it is impossible for him to give a precise Answer to that Question, the Paper being neither wrote in his hand, nor signed by him; nor does the President inform him that he has received it from any Authority; - It is a paper of considerable length and refers to transactions previous to his being in the Company's Service.'

Mr. M<sup>c</sup>. Pherson is then ordered to withdraw.<sup>1</sup>"

No decision was taken on the matter until the Board met on the following day.

After the minutes of the previous meeting were read, Pigot informed the Board;

"that having given them time to consider the subject of what passed in yesterday's Consultation, at which M<sup>r</sup>. M<sup>c</sup>. Pherson, when sent for before the Board and asked if he was the author of the Memorial then read to him, in an evasive manner replied -

'that he could not give a precise answer, that it was not written in his hand, and that it referred to transactions before he was in the Company's Service.'

The President observes to the Board, that a Person holding such Principles, and being concerned in such Transactions, who at the time should apply to be appointed into the Service of that Community which he was endeavouring to destroy, was, instead of an extenuation, the highest aggravation, and that Mr. M<sup>c</sup>. Pherson's reply is a clear proof not only that he is the author, but that he still holds the same Principles; unfaithful to the

Company and ruinous to their Interest, and is therefore a very improper Person to remain in their Service. On which Account, he strongly recommends to the Board that John M.<sup>c</sup> Pherson be dismissed from the Company's Service, which instance of condign punishment he has great reason to think will tend very much to bring the Affairs of the Company to Order.

1

- Carried in the affirmative by a Majority of the Board, nine to two."

Those who voted for his dismissal were Lord Pigot, George Stratton (Second in Council), George Dawson, Claud Russell, John Maxwell Stone, Francis Jourdan, Henry Brooke, Alexander Dalrymple, and George Mackay; and those against it were Archdale Palmer, and, most unexpectedly, Sir Robert Fletcher, whom Macpherson had regarded as

2

an enemy. The vote having been taken, Pigot ordered the following letter to be written:

"To M.<sup>r</sup> John M.<sup>c</sup> Pherson.

Sir:

I am commanded by the Hon.<sup>ble</sup> the President of the Council to acquaint you that they have thought proper to dismiss you from the Service of the East India Company; and you are hereby dismissed accordingly.

Dated in Fort Saint George the 23rd Jan<sup>y</sup> 1776

By Order of the President and Council

3  
Rd. Sullivan, Sec<sup>ry</sup>."

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1. *ibid.*, pp. 50-51.

2. *ibid.*, pp. 51-53.

3. *ibid.*, p. 53.

Four years earlier Harland had, with justification, wondered why Du Pré, who had apparently known about the Memorial, had not dismissed John Macpherson. There was not the slightest doubt in Harland's mind that Macpherson had operated against the Company's interest before and after his appointment as a Writer in their Service. With a copy of the Memorial in the Nawab's records, it was almost inevitable that some enemy of Macpherson's would sooner or later disinter it, and use it against him. It was weak evidence, but it served Pigot's purpose. He was determined to impose his authority quickly, and to make an object lesson of the first person who defied him. Macpherson's nocturnal visits to the Nawab with a dismissed Company servant, Stewart, provided Pigot with an obvious scapegoat; and in dismissing Macpherson he did him a favour, because when the big fight came a few months later Macpherson had no "official" responsibility for what happened, and could not be penalised. In the long term, also, the end of John Macpherson's service in the Company as a protégé of Grafton worked in the favour of both Macphersons; and, much later, allowed John to come back into the Company as the choice of a minister actually in power. The immediate effect, however, was to provide John with the means of dragging Hastings further into the Nawab's affairs, and to lay the grounds for Hastings's opposition to his subordinate Governor, Pigot.

On 9th February 1776, John Macpherson sent Hastings the following letter:

"Your letter by Mr. Stewart I had the happiness to receive about four weeks ago. He and I have since lived together at my little villa on the [Choultry] Plain; and I hope to have one week more of his Company before he directs his course for Europe. He has, as you foretold, proved a Budget to me of inexhaustible and most pleasing communication. ... Before Stewart's arrival my mind was often with you and silently engaged in your scene, but now I am perfectly transferred to Calcutta. And yet I have of late been made very sensible that I am at Madrass - and whether it has been owing to any infection that Mr. Stewart has spread here, or to a bite which Pigot received from L.<sup>d</sup> North I know not, but the fact is I am no longer a Company's Servant. I am, according to the genteel phrase here, exonerated.

The circumstances of this strange, this ridiculous, this most unjust proceeding, I have delayed informing you of till I obtained a Copy of the Proceedings. That I have at length effected, and shall in a week send you the whole. The Board (the proud, despotic President excepted) are now sensible of their error. They dismissed me without giving me a crime or a hearing. The ground of the dismissal is an unsigned surreptitious Copy of a Memorial, which the President received from no Authority, and from which he would infer that I had endeavoured to ruin the Company, by throwing them in the Hands of Ministry in '69, before I was in the Company's Service, and when I was Agent for the Nabob in England. He would infer that I still hold the same Principles, by my evasive answer when I was questioned whether I was the author of the Memorial.

The fact is his Lordship has thought fit (not having the fear of the Lord

and Sovereign before his Eyes, and at the Instigation of a Devil called Dalrymple &c. &c.) to make direct war upon the Ministry through me. He confesses great esteem and regard for me at the same time. I never knew any Event that gave me a better sense of my own importance than this. It will force Ministry to <sup>do</sup> me that Justice, which they were sluggish about before, and I have reason to think Wolaja [The Nawab] will find it necessary to do me justice likewise. Thus it is that a man owes often to the malice of Enemies what Friends may have neglected to do. I seriously think that your Board [in Bengal] will be under the necessity to make Pigot follow my Example. He holds your Authority in such contempt, and talks so freely of you all. The Directors are, in his conversation, but Rogues, the Proprietors wretches, and your Board nothing. Ministry - you see how he values them. The Durbar here must yield at the stamp of his foot; and the Council may kick their heels till 11 or 12 from 10, the hour of meeting, and he'll deign to visit their Board then. The fact is he has been either asleep or intoxicated ever since he left this chair in '63, and in his return he thinks there is no change. The faculties you'll have a sample of in his public reasons for my Dismission.

I propose to remain here till I know the fate of affairs in July next. Then you must give me your orders for the field of Europe or India. Present my best respects to the Lord Chief Justice [sic, Impey]. ... Mr. Stewart will write you a long Letter before his Departure. The Hillsborough is not yet arrived. ...

I should have told you that Sir R. Fletcher and some other Members [of the Madras Council] have acted a very proper part in my affair. It has sown a spark in Council that in a few months may kindle to the most violent

1  
Flame."

Macpherson could have added that he would be one of the willing hands to fan the spark into a flame, but that would have made prophecy seem like intent. Stewart was impressed by Macpherson, and told Hastings that, thanks to Macpherson, Madras was

2  
"a nest of Hastonians". The Hillsborough, mentioned by Macpherson, brought another Hastonian to Madras on 14th February. This was George Vansittart,<sup>3</sup> who was also on his way to England from Bengal, where, after fifteen years service, he had made about £150,000. As a close friend of Hastings he had promised to assist Maclean, Stewart and the other friends of the Governor-General to his utmost. By the end of February Vansittart in the Hillsborough, and Stewart in the Ankerwyke, had sailed from Madras; and both arrived in England on the same day,<sup>4</sup> 16th August.

John Macpherson decided to wait until July, when dispatches arrived from England, before following the procession of dismissed Company servants to the battle-ground in London. On 3rd March he wrote again to Hastings, and added some further details

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1. B.M. Add. MSS. 29137, ff. 60-64v., John Macpherson to W. Hastings, 9 February 1776.
  2. Quoted by Sir Keith Feiling in Warren Hastings, op. cit., p. 167.
  3. George Vansittart (1745-1825), a younger brother of Henry Vansittart, the former Governor of Bengal, who was lost in the Aurora, and brother-in-law of Robert Palk, of Haldon Hall, Devon, the former Governor of Madras. He went out to Bengal as a Writer in 1761; junior merchant 1767; senior merchant 1769; 14th in Council of Bengal 1773; member of Bengal Board of Trade 1774; retired from Company 1776. From 1784 to 1812 was M.P. for Berkshire.
  4. Bod. MSS., Vansittart Papers, Dep. b. 101, frontispiece; and Dep. b. 103, p. 92.

about his dismissal. He said:

"If it is true, what Lord Pigot says, that I at so early a Period conspired with Ministry to ruin the Company, it must be likewise true that I laid the first foundation of the Government-General. ...

I think I could prove that the Conduct of the Board in my business is a clear Proof that, however able they may be to destroy the 'Community of the Company' (Pigot's Phrase), they are dreadful bad hands to preserve it; which is a clear Proof that your Government should immediately interfere. ...

The Act of Parliament directs that this Presidency should write you on all affairs regarding the Interest of the Company, speedily and diligently. My affair was one that confessedly regarded the vital Interest of the Company, and they mention that my Dismission will bring the Company's affairs to order. ...

You must know they had my Memorial four years since, and they kept it as snug as any secret of the Cabinet Council. Pigot had many political and many very unpolitical Motives for his Conduct. Without being able to expose Ministry he has forever ruined any hopes he might have from them.

My Letter to the Company they have sent him without a Remark.<sup>1</sup> On surveying it round and round they found it a genuine Carduus Thistle.<sup>2</sup> The nemo me impune lacessit struck them, tho' they are very bad Latinists.

I should tell you that before I presented the Memorial to the Nabob in 1771, I took care to have Mr. Duprè's express leave. I have his letter still by me. I have shewn Sir Rob.<sup>t</sup> and one or two of them the Letter. The secret would not, I knew, keep; so they are mortified in their only hope. Pigot

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1. This letter has not been traced.

2. The motto of the Royal <sup>House of</sup> Stuarts, and of all Scottish regiments: "nobody provokes me with impunity".



tells his Friends that he truly wishes me success and that he had a great Interest in my welfare; but that had I been his own Brother who had been so ruinous to the Company, I had suffered in the same manner as I have done.

Poor Walaja [The Nawab] was much affected! He sees clearly that his Friends will not now think it safe to correspond with him, if surreptitious Copies of his Papers, unsigned, unattested and unavowed, are to be made matter of Record by the Board of Madrass.<sup>1</sup> It is impossible for me to have any serious Resentment against L.<sup>d</sup> Pigot, when his conduct against me must turn to my Advantage. ...

I am sure you do not know how tender I am of your name in a certain place [the durbar]. I can most safely declare to you, upon my sacred word of Honour, that from the Hour you mentioned my name there to that I lost the "service", I never received a Pagoda of my own Rights even; and this out of Delicacy.<sup>2</sup> I wrote you once they had pay'd me; but they had only done it in Promise. I may now (thanks to Pigot's oppressions) speak in a firmer tone - and I am sure of success."<sup>3</sup>

By the terms of Clause 9 of the Regulating Act, Pigot was duty bound to carry out the direct orders he received from the Company to restore the authority of the Rajah of Tanjore, even if the execution of these orders caused severe resentment to the Nawab and his European supporters. Anticipating this resentment, John Macpherson

1. John Macpherson was lying. His Memorial was signed, attested and avowed (see Appendix 5). He probably knew that there was little chance of Hastings seeing the original.
2. Compare this statement with the one John made in December 1775 (see above, p. 383). He had seen Stewart in the interim; and something Stewart may have said probably induced him to justify himself in Hastings's eyes. There is, however, no doubt that he had received money from the Nawab (see Appendix 4).
3. B.M. Add. MSS. 29137, ff. 92-97v., John Macpherson to W. Hastings, 3 March 1776.
4. I.O.L., Despatches to Madras, Vol. 6 (1774-75), pp. 343-398. The Company's Orders to the President and Council of Fort St. George, dated 12th April 1775 (sent with Lord Pigot on the Grenville).

intensified his efforts to turn Hastings against Pigot in the next letter he sent to the Governor-General.

"I think", wrote John, "that Pigot's violence will lay the foundation of French Power in India. If you could be sure of getting Col. Dow appointed Plenipo. or your Envoy at this Durbar, there is not an hour to be Lost. I would wish no other. ... On the ground of a breach of that part of the Act that directs a constant and diligent communication from the Subordinate Presidencies, you may proceed against this Government. ...

Now, my good Friend, as to my own views. I cannot leave this Place till July, if then. By that time we shall be able to form a good Opinion of Events, and, as I wrote you before, my Distinction must depend much on your Fate. An hour I would not stay after you in India, unless I had a Station and Power that would keep your Enemies in check. That I cannot have if you give into a Majority in your own Person. My Dismission would prevent you employing me in any Public manner. This Pigot foresaw, and, foreseeing likewise that the Power would fall into your hand, and hearing from Duprè &c. your good wishes to me, he was bent on my Dismission the more keenly!

From all this I think it is best for us all that I should return to Europe as soon as possible. The Difficulty will be to get the poor N[awab] to assent. I have my fears that another Mac's [Macleanes] private Circumstances may embarrass his public Line. Without vanity, I believe that I am the Person who, as an Agent, could serve the N[awab] most, of any he can appoint from here. I am sure I could likewise serve the Public and the cause of my Friends. Weigh all this, and be prepared for my asking your approbation to my being permitted to go and serve under another Mac [Macleanes], if he has succeeded, or to take up the business if he has not. I mean not to get your Opinion committed for me. I mean only to open my

Soul to you, and move in nothing but with your leave."

From the moment Pigot arrived in Madras all those with an interest in politics could have predicted that he would try (but fail) to persuade the Nawab to restore full sovereignty to his vassal, the Rajah of Tanjore; and, having made a show of persuasion, Pigot would go ahead with the Company's orders in defiance of the Nawab's wishes. This would put the Nawab back to the position in which John Macpherson had first found him in 1768.

For years, John had been trying to impress the Nawab with his influence. At last Pigot gave him the best opportunity he had ever had to display it; and all the circumstances were in his favour. Hastings was frustrated by the defiance of the triumvirate on his own Council; he had been inveigled by his friends, Maclean, Macpherson and Stewart into making friendly gestures to the Nawab; and now Pigot, had not only dismissed Macpherson, but was also going to carry out legal orders which would cause an uproar in the Carnatic. John Macpherson tried to estimate the reaction of Hastings to an inevitable event, and hammered home his warnings about <sup>the</sup> effects of Pigot's determination to implement his orders. When the inevitable

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1. B.M. Add. MSS. 29137, ff. 104-107v., John Macpherson to W. Hastings, 15 March 1776.

happened John hoped that he would be able to remind Hastings of his prescience and political judgment. John was also looking beyond a possible victory over Pigot to the time when he would return to England, by conditioning Hastings to accept him as the Nawab's official agent. He had also, without knowing James Macpherson's views, given himself a specious excuse for not acting as an official agent for Hastings.

On 29th March 1776, John Macpherson was able to tell Hastings that Lord Pigot had taken the inevitable step.

"Our Irish Lord", wrote John, "will not stop till Poor Walaja either throws himself under the Power of an Oblivious Draught or that of Mr. Law. He has today marched to the Tanjore Country; assumed Military and Dictatorial Command; and, without any Respect to the Government, has taken two Counsellors with him as Clerks. Our wits call this the 3d. Tanjore Expedition. ...

A Flame is kindling in our Council, and I suspect the Lord [Pigot] is bent on the ruin of the Kt. [Sir Robert Fletcher]. I am, in my old Intentions, waiting your approbation. I believe Pigot finds he has caught a Tartar

in me. ...

I send you my friend [James] M.<sup>c</sup> pherson's History. When you have a mind to look into it, it may not please you the less to consider that the Same Pen is now working for you against your Enemies. I have early attached him to you, and he, tho' not susceptible of enthusiastic ardor [sic] for my Friends, is most prone to indulge against their Enemies; and my hint is a Perwanna [Parwana, (Written Order)] to him. He is, besides, L.<sup>d</sup>  
1  
North's best and most confidential Literary Friend."

If John Macpherson had waited two more months he would not have been able, unless he had deliberately lied, to have assured Hastings that James was writing against the Governor-General's enemies. And, if Pigot had waited a few more months,  
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he would have received a direct order from the ministry "to do nothing about Tanjore."  
3  
But it was too late. On 11th April 1776 Pigot personally restored the Rajah, Tuljaji, at a ceremony in Tanjore City. Immediately afterwards, the Rajah, with the support of British troops, seized the grain crop on which the Nawab's creditors held a lien, as a security for the assignments the Nawab had granted them. By this stroke Pigot settled his fate. When he returned to Madras, towards the end of the

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1. B.M. Add. MSS. 29137, ff. 129-132, John Macpherson to W. Hastings, 29 March 1776.
  2. Macpherson MSS./1, 4/25, James to John Macpherson, 27 March 1776 (Quoted in full in Maclean (1773-1778), pp. 120-121.
  3. For the best accounts of the Rajah's restoration see: H.MSS.C., Palk MSS., pp. 275-277, John de Fries to Robert Palk, 20 June 1776; and pp. 277-280, Chokappa Chetti to Robert Palk, 27 June 1776.

same month, all those with claims on Tanjore revenues demanded satisfaction. Pigot held that the Rajah was not responsible for any assignments granted by the Nawab; and the Nawab refused to meet the private debts he had covered by the assignments from any other source, unless ordered to do so by the Company. The principal creditor was Paul Benfield, but the majority of the members of the Madras Council also had direct or indirect interests in the assignments, and supported Benfield against Pigot and a minority of the members of the Council. The battle began as a verbal dispute in the Council chamber; it was to end quite differently.

John Macpherson was delighted by the situation, and heightened its drama when he wrote to Hastings on 24th April, by concluding his letter as follows:

"It is unnecessary to state to you the Situation of J[ean] J[acque]s. I am a Prophet in Politicks. The Hostile Scene is commenced by Pigot, in which if you do not instantly Interfere the Carnatic is lost! ... You must send Dow [as an Envoy] or some Vaquil [Agent] here. I seized a cool moment to write to you. I now tremble on this Subject. Dismiss! Dismiss! - or remember what I wrote before."

Macpherson was not, however, so pleased with Hastings's short reply, which was

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1. *ibid.*, pp. xxxix-xl.

2. B.M. Add. MSS. 29137, f. 176v., John Macpherson to W. Hastings, 24 April 1776.

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non-committal. John wanted the Governor-General to commit himself to the Nawab  
in unequivocal terms. On 14th May, therefore, he told Hastings:

"Matters are in a very critical posture here. Poor Jean J<sup>a</sup>ques gone  
unless you either remove or frighten his Enemies!! For God's sake write  
me the letter you gave me a hope of, - to him! Any <sup>?</sup> Solomon is  
Charity!

Opposition gathers force here, but the Terrors of Dismission &c. &c. are  
held over every head; but mine already relieved from Servitude! Can  
you believe it possible that Pigot should order Sepoys at 12 at night to  
storm the Nabob's Garden and seize some People there? Poor Walaja! -  
often has he spoke to me in broken English. ...

I never felt such a Sense of my own worth as the little Support I am  
able to give him. It is the cause of Friendship, Justice, Honour,  
Humanity and Public Good!

Believe it as a fact that the Exped<sup>i</sup>tion to Tanjore has got for me  
8 Lacks <sup>2</sup> <sup>of</sup> P<sup>a</sup>goda<sup>s</sup>. I say no more. There the Spring of all misery  
and oppression. ...

1. Dodwell, pp. 43-44. Professor Dodwell suggested that this undated letter was written in "<sup>?</sup>July 1776". In it Hastings wrote: "I will talk with Colonel Dow; but it appears to me impracticable. You must be more explicit. The Passage in one of your Letters which I said gave me Uneasiness was something relating to good Sir Edward Hughes." This letter was answered by John Macpherson on 24th April and 14th May 1776. In the first of these letters John said: "Your Letter of the 2d. of this month <sup>of</sup> April made me truly happy"; and then repeated a request first made on 15th March: "You must send Dow." (B.M. Add. MSS. 29137, ff. 175 and 176v.). In the second John said: "Sir Ed. Hughes is arrived here today. In a few Days I'll clear up matters with you about him;" (ibid., f. 196v.). It would seem, therefore, that the letter printed in Dodwell, pp. 43-44, should be dated "2nd April 1776", and not as given by Professor Dodwell.
2. One Star Pagoda was worth 8/-d; 8 Lakhs = 800,000 Pagodas = 6,400,000 shillings = £320,000. This figure seems absurdly high. The abbreviation is certainly "Ps"; but John (whose writing was bad) might have meant "Rs" for "Rupees". If this was the case then 8 Lakhs of Rupees = 800,000 Rupees = 1,600,000 shillings = £80,000.

My Temper, naturally cool and happy, can bear no mean injustice towards the Friends, yea, the very few Friends, in whom I find united what gives lustre to two of the best lines of Character in the Human Scene - Social  
<sup>1</sup>  
 elegant Affection and Robust public Worth."

When Hastings replied to Macpherson on 27th May 1776, he showed that he was not impressed by the latter's attempts to discredit Pigot. Hasting's letter has not survived in its entirety, but his tone leaves no doubt about his attitude. He was not going to be precipitated into further trouble by taking action against a subordinate Governor who had carried out the Company's orders. He warned Macpherson to be wary of "P", probably Paul Benfield, who, wrote Hastings, "is not my Friend,

<sup>2</sup>  
 nor can I trust him;" and then continued by saying:

"I have written a Letter to the Nabob which will accompany this. I hope he knows and makes Allowances for my situation and does not expect regular Replies from me to all his Letters. This Difficulty of mine you can explain to him.

I am not competent (as I told you before) to judge whether your Presence would be most necessary where you are, or in England, but I am pleased to find that there is a probability of your staying, because I am sure the Nabob requires a Comforter as well as an Adviser. You are properly qualified to administer Relief to him in both Characters, and I do not know another. D[ow] is sensible, but he wants the Art of Persuasion and Conciliation. ...

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1. B.M. Add. MSS. 29137, ff. 195-196v., John Macpherson to W. Hastings, 14 May 1776.
  2. See Dodwell, p. 41, W. Hastings to John Macpherson, [27 May 1776]. Professor Dodwell makes it quite clear that "P" was not Pigot; and was almost certainly Paul Benfield (ibid., pp. 42-43).



I had almost concluded without telling you, and it is proper that you should know it, that however my Adversaries may have pledged themselves to give up the Battle, if it is not completely decisive for them, I have pledged myself to stay till it is Decisive, and have declared that whatever I might suffer from so painful and humiliating a Situation, I thought it my <sup>1</sup> Duty to wait for the final Decision of this Contest."

Hastings had sent a letter to the Nawab, and had stressed his determination to stay in office until the battle in Bengal had been decided, but his rejection of Dow as an envoy, and his mild interest in John's plans for the future amounted to a mild rebuff. All John Macpherson's demands for action, and all his emphasis on Pigot's determination to defy the wishes of the Nawab and his adherents had produced none of the effects intended by John. This failure to bring a plan to fruition must have depressed John, and the news that was beginning to reach Madras from London must have turned his possible depression to near dejection.

2

By messages overland he had heard that his friend Governor Johnstone had been attacking the triumvirate by trying to overturn the ministry; and when Colonel James Stuart had docked on 1st May he had received the first of his friend James Macpherson's letters, which warned him to steer clear of Hastings, and not to

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1. *ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

2. B.M. Add. MSS. 29137, ff. 193-195, John Macpherson to W. Hastings, 14 May 1776. In this letter Macpherson told Hastings of the news he has received personally from the mouth of Captain Primrose Thomson, a close friend of Governor Johnstone. Thomson had just arrived in Madras by the overland route.

attack the triumvirate. By the middle of June, when the bulk of James's winter correspondence had arrived, he was left in no further doubt that in political matters he had been taking the opposite line to his partner. The first of James's letters which sounded a warning was dated 6th January 1776, and was delivered by John Mackenzie.

"Mr. Mackenzie", wrote James Macpherson, "one of my friends, will deliver you this letter. I hope you will pay him the attention he deserves, as a genteel, spirited young man. He is a particular friend of the Solicitor-General's; and I am convinced that he will be much pleased with any civilities shown to a person who has lived so long with him, as Mr. Mackenzie."

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1. John Mackenzie (d. 1806). His identity has not been established from the large collection of printed Mackenzie histories and genealogies. He was first spoken of by Charles Greville in a letter to John Macpherson as "our mutual friend John M. Kenzie" (who was related to Lady Mary Scott, daughter of the Earl of Erroll) on 11th March 1771 (Macpherson MSS./1, 38/1). He next appeared in a letter written by Alexander Wedderburn, the Solicitor-General, to the Court of Directors of the E.I.Co., dated 16 February 1774, in which Wedderburn recommended "Mr. John Mackenzie, who was secretary to my late brother Brigadier [David] Wedderburn [of Bombay] to be appointed a Writer on the Bengal Establishment," (see I.O.L., Court Book 82, p. 798). Mackenzie arrived in Bengal in mid-1776 with letters from James Macpherson and Samuel Hannay (which have been quoted), and was described by both as though he was one of their friends and unknown to John Macpherson. This form of introduction was, perhaps, a formality of the time, or for the benefit of any interceptor of mail, because Mackenzie was certainly known to John Macpherson before 1776 (as the Greville reference proves). In 1778 Mackenzie left Bengal, and brought home various papers for John Macpherson (who noted this in a letter to Hastings; see B.M. Add. MSS. 29140, f. 426, 23 May 1778). By 1784 Mackenzie was the Secretary of the Highland Society of London, and living in Fig Tree Court in the Inner Temple; (see Saunders, pp. 279, 290-292 and 314; and Smart, pp. 168, 188-189 and 194). Thereafter he was very active in trying to persuade James Macpherson to print the Gaelic originals of his Highland epics - with, of course, little success. James, however, made Mackenzie one of the executors of his will, with instructions to take care of his literary papers. Mackenzie himself died without editing these papers, and they were delivered to Alexander Fraser of Lincoln's Inn, who kept them until his death in 1832, when they were lost. John Mackenzie's executor was George Mackenzie "late Surgeon, 42nd Regiment [Black Watch]" - see Antiq. Notes (2nd ser.), p. 403. John Mackenzie was known to Lauchlin Maclean, and had been connected in some negotiation between Alexander Wedderburn and Laurence Sullivan (see James Macpherson's letter of 12 January 1776).

Ata è ghuillan math, gun mhòr spinna  
iontin. Cùm na do lamh è. Thoir dhà  
am bottal. Thoir do Thigh fein è. ...  
Ata MacCholla dol a ghabhail a bhig  
cuida riomse an Diu. Ata moran  
fheguil orm nach dìon è feum. 'S màth  
an ainna do MhacChoinich è. 'Sè  
MacCoinich bhà eider Wedderburn agus  
an Sullivanich. ...

He is a good lad, with no great strength  
of mind. Take him in hand. Give him  
the bottle. Take him into your House. ...  
The Son of Coll [Maclean] is taking his  
meal with me today. I greatly  
fear that he will not succeed.  
Mackenzie knows him well. It was  
Mackenzie who was between Wedderburn  
and Sullivan. ...

Mr. Mackenzie carries to you a copy of the second Edition of my History. He  
will inform you of all the news here. ... I must put you again in mind of  
1  
Poor Charles Macpherson, if he is thrown yet on your coast."

Other parts of this and subsequent letters from James to John have been quoted  
2  
earlier in this chapter. In the last of them, dated 5th April 1776, James not only  
gave a further warning to John about the dangers of involving himself with Hastings  
but also added the following:

Ata ministarrin 'n righ scriobha  
literchin do n'fher-dhà, gun n'fhocul  
air MacChol. Ata na Directarin a  
scriobha dhà, gun chomunication bhi  
aigi ri duin air bi, ach 'n Ghobhormair  
agus 'n luichd Gliocas ('n Council) an

Ministers of the King are writing letters  
to the black-man [The Nawab], without a  
word about the Son of Coll. The Directors  
are writing to him [Nawab] not to have any  
communication with anyone, but the Governor  
and the Wise people (in the Council) in

1. Macpherson MSS./1, 4/20, James to John Macpherson, 12 January 1776.

2. See above, pp. 368-370.

Madras: agus ata a'aid a'ig insi dhômse gun scriobh a'id do na Ghobharnar duin air b'ĩ bhi-as 'n Servais na Cuidachd chuir amach as 'n d'Servais, mo bhi-as è na charid na na fher-comharl do n' fher-Dhùth. San nal' a'ighe ata sho; ach cha neil t'ainm san lietar. Ata MacChol a'ig insi dhômse gun deit è mach sa bhliana sho, mar dìon a'id ni air b'ĩ air son 'n fher-dhuith. Ach se mo bhairrailse gun tig nichinin o la gu la, mon cuairt a chum as è 'n sho. Still out of reach, but never out of view -

Spes spei semper succedit, ut unda undam sequitur; aliquando luctu oppressus sed saepius efferus. Bonus autem est vir caecus stultitiae amicorum sed in amicitia tantum constans; in re, in negotiis nunquam.

Too many intimates, some friends, a great many enemies. Deceived, through vehemence, into hopes; reduced, through the same vehemence, to a kind of despair by trifles.

Foini focul da dhuinnè glic. Bod 's sporan gu brách, a charid!

This, I am affraid [sic], is the last you may expect from me this season.

Madras: and they are telling me that they have written to the Governor to expel from the Service anyone in the Service of the Company, if he is a friend or an adviser of the Black-man. This is against you; but your name is not in the letter. The Son of Coll tells me that he will go out this year, if they will not do anything for the black-man. But I am of the opinion that things will happen from day to day, which will keep him here. Still out of reach, but never out of view -

Hope always follows hope, as wave follows wave; sometimes [he is] depressed with sorrow but more often excited. But he is a good man, blind to the folly of his friends; he is, however, only dependable in friendship; never in business, or affairs.

A word suffices for a wise man. May you ever have a c--k and a purse, my friend!

1

You cannot, however, blame me, as formerly, for negligence."

Although the last letter did not arrive in Madras until the end of July 1776, it only stated at length the warnings given in the letters which had arrived in May and early June. Lauchlin Maclean was not trusted by the ministry or the Company while he acted as joint-agent for Hastings and the Nawab; that the ministry were not mentioning him in letters they sent to the Nawab; that he was an honourable but undependable man who was failing in his missions; and that he intended to return to India. James Macpherson was unfair to Maclean, who was fighting hard for both Hastings and the Nawab; but John Macpherson was not to know this. His friend James had, for once, dropped his pose of indifference; he had written fully and urgently; and his information, when tested, proved to be accurate. Who better than John knew that the Governor had instructions to dismiss anybody who advised the Nawab? And, who better than John, now fully in the Nawab's confidence, knew that Robinson was writing to the Nawab without mentioning Maclean? The last letter from Robinson had

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1. Macpherson MSS./1, 4/28, James to John Macpherson, 5 April 1776.
  2. Macpherson MSS./1, 23/5, J. Robinson to the Nawab of Arcot, 26 December 1775. In this letter Robinson gave his thanks for the present he had received from the Nawab by the care of George Paterson, to whom Robinson had been introduced by his cousin Capt. Charles Deane, who was returning to Madras by the Earl of Sandwich with a packet of letters from Robinson for the Nawab. The letter ended by Robinson saying: "I have presumed to approach your Highness with a tender of an Act of My Sovereign, His Lords and Faithful Commons in Parliament assembled, chiefly indeed for Bengal, but in some degree comprehending the Carnatick. May you be pleased to accept it as an humble Testimony of my Respect. Prosperity daily attend your Highness. What can I say more?" Robinson originally wrote "Act of Parliament", but crossed it out and substituted the more elaborate phrase.

not only ignored Macleane, but had mentioned John's old enemy, George Paterson. Even James's repeated assertion that the ministry were irritated by Indian affairs, because they intruded on time needed for American business, was confirmed by another letter which young Mr. Mackenzie brought from England. This was from Samuel Hannay, the merchant and pharmacist, whose name had been vaguely connected with diamond transactions at an earlier date.<sup>1</sup> Instead of mentioning jewels, however, Hannay asked John to help him to market one of his pharmaceutical products. He obviously suspected nothing about John's attitude to women, for he concluded his letter as follows:

"Having lately given to the public a discovery which I had the good fortune to make, and which I conceive to be of the greatest importance to mankind; a specifick for the infallible prevention of the venereal disease; I am desirous [*sic*] to extend the good effects of it to the Inhabitants of India. With that view, therefore, I have sent out a case containing 164 bottles by Cap.<sup>t</sup> Mitchell, who has been so obliging [*sic*] as to carry it under his privilege [*sic*]. I have delivered an Invoice thereof to the Captain, with directions to dispose of the consignment, if he can, during his stay in Madras, but before his departure to commit the care of the whole, or of such part as may remain unsold, to you. This trouble I request you will be so good as to undertake, and I expect that you will exert yourself in making known the good effects of my discovery; for I can

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1. See above, p. 244, n. 1.

assure you, in the most positive terms, that nothing more is necessary to establish its reputation; and I shall be able to ascertain your Industry by the extent of my orders from India some time hence.

This will be delivered to you by my friend Mr. Mackenzie, of whom I made honourable mention in my last. He was prevented at that time from performing the voyage on account of his health, but being now perfectly recovered, he ventures to revisit India. ... You will find him intelligent, well informed of what is passing in this country, and perfectly honourable."

For all his faults, it is almost possible to feel sorry for John Macpherson.

For six months it had seemed that his years of scheming were going to end in his idea of success, but his best laid plans had gone badly a-wry. Grafton was out of power; Hastings was cool; James Macpherson was in opposition to Hastings; Macleane was achieving nothing for the Nawab; and Hannay, instead of talking about diamond deals, was asking him to peddle 164 bottles of a worthless patent medicine. The month of June 1776 must have been one of the blackest in John Macpherson's life. And his dejection, although masked, can be discerned in the two letters he sent his friend James in that month. In the first John wrote:

"I have received your Letters by the early Ships of the Season. Their Contents add to my happiness in many Respects. The American Contest must have a Critical Interest with the Nation in General, and especially

with the Ministry. I am not, therefore, surprised at their almost total neglect of the Concerns of this Country. The rude Continent beyond the Atlantic moved into some active life by the Provocatives of false English Patriotism is really an awkward beast of a Business for North to manage. I am amazed that earlier, and more artful, and vigorous Steps were not taken. But we have had so many head ministers that I suspect it may be said of America - that it was everybody's and nobody's Business to manage it. The seriousness of the Affair now, will convince the Cabinet that the medicine, which allays patriotic fervour at St. Stephen's, must be plentifully employed in the formerly non-important Robin-hoods of America. Then, and not till then, will these Patriots admit that Taxation is no Tyranny. Then the poor Yanky, now so boldly in arms, will be labouring with other weapons to support his own existence, and the luxury of regenerated Hancocks and Washingtons

I wrote you before of L.<sup>d</sup> Pigot's violence and folly in dismissing me the Service. I imagine he finds very little reason to be satisfied with that Business upon reflection. His Lordship arrived at this Government the most powerful and uncontrouled Despot that ever mounted a Throne. His own Spirit; the fears of a weak and a guilty Council; the orders with which he was charged, &c. &c., made everything yield to his nod. He has been now but five months in the Chair, and mark his situation. He is overcome by his own Council, attacked and probably to be dismissed by the Superior Government, and impeached by the Nabob of Acts of Violence and Outrage, which must certainly bring him before

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1. John was one month out. When this letter was written Pigot had been Governor for six months.



Parliament. The World will say that I have had a pars magna in the Drama, which has placed his Lordship so awkwardly on the Stage of our Affairs. The truth is I have endeavoured with all my might to support the aimable and outraged Nabob - nor is there a Step I ever took, either in his or my own Defence, but what I avow to the World. His Lordship is the cause of all, and forced us to the attack. God knows how the scene may close.

I am now to give you a very confidential hint. A Friend of yours at the Treasury [Robinson] has been grossly deceived by a Person [almost certainly George Paterson] who went lately from this Country, and who with very mean Abilities figured here as a Minister, tho' he hardly knew how to give a Clyster [sic, Clyster] in Europe.<sup>1</sup> Assure your Friend that there is danger in the Connection. To convince him of this I will write him; for I know the merits of his Character, and he alone shall know from me what I mean as the foundation of this hint. Whether he takes my Letter well or not (as far as I will venture to explain matters) he will be convinced on my arrival in Europe that I do him a very disinterested Act of Friendship.

The Parties at Bengal are not to be cemented, and, if Hastings is not supported, future Generations will curse the Minister. So far have the Judges admired him on seeing the Treachery of the Informations against him, and the noble manliness with which he stood against iniquitous and overwhelming Power, that they are all convinced that he alone can govern India. ...

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1. The sneer about the unnamed person's inability to administer a clyster leaves no doubt that John was referring to George Paterson, who was a Doctor of Medicine. This attack on Paterson was probably stimulated by the arrival of Robinson's letter to the Nawab (see above, p. 410, n. 2).

And so my Duke [Grafton] is out! I feel the force of all you have wrote to me about him; yet I can never forget his obligations to me. It is my business to take it for granted that he has had good public and private Reasons for his Tergiversation. I have wrote him a Letter, which determines my line with him according to his Reception of it. By this means I will be probably disengaged on my arrival in England. But I am, my Friend, sick of Politicks; and the scene with you is miserable compared to that of Asia.

Unstationed and untitled here, and unsupported from home, I have had the management to move some of the Grandest Wheels of the Indostan State: and tho' my success in Rupees has not been like that of other Nabobs, yet I am safe and satisfied.

This being the case, and as you must be the worse of the wear in Politicks, I think you should be getting ready two little neighbouring Retreats in the Country. If you have absolutely convinced the Americans by that answer to their Congress-Declaration, I think you may withdraw all your Tubes of Signatures; and I will then sing to you.

Vos Caesarem altum, militia simul  
Fessus cohortes abdidit oppidos,  
Finere quaerentem labores  
Pierio recreatis entro.

You are refreshing in your Pierion cave  
great Caesar, as he seeks to put an end  
to his labours, now that he has lodged in  
towns his cohorts weary with campaigning.

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1. James Macpherson's pamphlet, see above, p. 385, n. 1.
  2. Although Adam Ferguson had not been very complimentary about John Macpherson's ability as a singer when he was a student (see above, p. 102), John was, in fact, noted for his singing, and was always on the look-out for new songs to add to his repertoire (see B.M. Add. MSS. 29137, f. 382v., John Macpherson to W. Hastings, 13 October 1776). Feiling (Warren Hastings, op. cit., p. 71) states that John Macpherson "had a gift of tongues, and could sing his ballad songs with equal brio in Gaelic, Spanish, and Hindustani."
  3. An address to the Nymphs from: Horace, Odes, 3,4, 36.

- How many People would take this for good Prose as I write it? Adieu!  
 whether it shall be our fate ever to meet and live so, or whether the  
 Campaign may not end so harmoniously or fortunately for us both, you  
 shall ever possess the best affection of - J. M.<sup>c</sup> pherson.

Our namesake Charles is with me. I'll do all I can. You cannot  
 conceive what Multitudes I have served. The loss of Tanjore has changed  
 the Scene."

On the following day, 26th June 1776, John added some further thoughts in a  
 second letter. He told James:

"By the close of next year I hope to have in England nigh mili  
Pounsasinich <sup>3</sup> [nine thousand Pounds-english]. My object is much to  
 purchase an Estate near Edinburgh for hochi mili [eight thousand] if the  
 Situation were happy. I would wish it near the Sea, with a good House  
 and Planting, and favoured by the Sun. The John Hume [sic] side of  
 Town is I think the best, and about the same distance from Edin.<sup>4</sup> Do  
 not think from all this that I mean to repose myself there. No! - your  
 Scene must be that for me till many matters are settled. My wish is  
 that I, or some M.<sup>c</sup> pherson, should have a landed Establish.<sup>t</sup> in the  
 warmest part of Caledonia. England for Excursions and brilliant

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1. This is the last time that Charles Macpherson was ever mentioned by either John or James. Charles's name appears in no army or civil service list for India; and he seemed to be the only Macpherson patronised by either John or James who did not rise to some position of importance, or end with money or land.
  2. Macpherson MSS./1, 39/10, John to James Macpherson, 25 June 1776.
  3. Compare this figure with the one John gave to Hastings (see above, p. 404, n. 2).
  4. John Home leased a farm at Kilduff in East Lothian from 1767 to 1779, (see Life of Home, p. 62). John Macpherson therefore wanted a property to the east of Edinburgh.

undertakings, but ever naked Caledonia for a resting Place. I bear  
 great Respect to the Society of my old Literati Friends at Edina.  
 You will probably take a visit to Scotland the Summer after you receive  
 this. Look round and enquire for what I would be at; and then, if I do  
 not go home, I will give you and Duprè a Power to make the Purchase, if  
 you and he approve. My present Idea is that Landed Property must be  
 easily purchased in these curious times. I once wrote [Macdonald of]  
 Breakish about a Highland Estate, but I begin to grow very cold to such a  
 possession now. ...

I have sent you a Pipe of Madeira by Capt.<sup>n</sup> Johnstone of the Marquis of  
Granby Indiaman. It goes round by China, and your name at full length  
 is marked on the Cask.<sup>2</sup> It is directed to the care of Mr. Hannay. The  
 freight and duty must be laid to my account; and on your receipt of the  
Pipe take it to Putney and Play away upon it as fast as you please. I  
 have endeavoured to shew every Civility to Mayn[e]'s friends that he  
 recommended to me. Mr. Dunkison [<sup>3</sup>sic] is really a fine manly youth.

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1. On 10 February 1776, James told John: "Your friend Ferguson has obtained a Pension of £200 p.<sup>r</sup> annum. This, with the 200 from [Lord] Chesterfield, together with his class [at Edinburgh University] and salary, makes him as comfortable as he could wish or perhaps ought." (Macpherson MSS./1, 4/21).
  2. In the 18th century the recognized way of maturing Madeira was to send pipes or casks of the wine from England to the East Indies and back in the holds of ships. The cost of maturing Madeira wine in this manner was offset, to some extent, by the fact that the pipes or casks were used in the place of ballast.
  3. Alexander Duncanson (b.c. 1758) was the son of James Duncanson, merchant, of Inverary, Argyllshire, by his wife Isabel, the sister of Robert Mayne, of Jermyn Street, London, the banker to both the Macphersons (see above, p. 213, n. 2). Alexander Duncanson was appointed a Writer on the Bengal Establishment in 1776, (see List of the Company's Civil Servants at their Settlements in the East Indies, MDCCCLXXVI).

If Hastings succeeds, which I am confident he must, I will serve Cubla's  
 [Dow's] friend with him. I am, perhaps, the Friend Hastings values most.  
 All the informations against him disproved!

<p>Chia u gu math gi dé feim bu va luim          ussi 'ghionive do hé ghe na Liatrichin          in scriave me gad youisi leis in          Salmon. Nuair in chi Robsonach na          Tuäch in Littir shin chi ad gur heidir          ghiave bristi ris in Patersonach. Chi          an Tuach cuddich gir Dioni ussi agus          missi i ghidis i vi er in ussine fein.          Innis gan Dupreich gu veil missi          dionive meim fein ghe navid Shir          Ro[bert] Fleister. Ha in Pigaitich in          tihin ma cuarst ghesi. Ha feigil orm          nach bi MacCholla aun so tir agus          nuor i hig mo Litrichin ghachi. Fosci          ussi mo Liatrichin ga uisi."</p>	<p>You will see very well what use I          wished you to make of one of the Letters          I wrote to you with Salmon. When          Robinson or North see that Letter          they will see the necessity for          them to break with Paterson. North          will also see that you and I          are men who can be of use to himself.          Tell Du Pré that I am making          my own use of his enemy Sir          Robert Fletcher. Pigot is coming          round to me. I fear that the          Son of Coll [Maclean] will not be in          your country when my Letters come home.          You open my Letters to him."</p>
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John Macpherson's talk of retiring to Scotland after he had settled certain  
 matters with James Macpherson in London, and the grand manner in which he reviewed  
 his efforts in India, gave the impression that he was summarising the end of a chapter  
 in his life. But men such as John Macpherson rarely surrender to despair, or admit  
 total defeat. In the last few lines of his letter he showed that his scheming brain

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1. Macpherson MSS./1, 39/11, John to James Macpherson, 26 June 1776.

was still actively engaged on his situation in Madras. The Nawab had to be impressed. If Hastings could not be induced to take action against Pigot, there were others who might. Sir Robert Fletcher, the commander of the forces in Madras, not only disliked Pigot, but had a long record of disobedience to his superiors; and Paul Benfield and the majority of the Madras Council were furious with Pigot on the issue of the Tanjore revenues. Ever since Pigot had returned from Tanjore the Council had been split by heated disputes over the issue.

It was Pigot who brought matters to a head, by nominating Claud Russell, one of the Councillors, to act as Resident at Tanjore. Russell with Dalrymple and Stone formed the "minority" supporting Pigot. The majority, formed by Stratton, the Second in Council, and Fletcher, Brooke, Palmer, Jourdan, Mackay, and a recent addition to the Council named Charles Floyer, moved that Russell's appointment should be cancelled, and that Colonel James Stuart, Fletcher's second in command of the forces, should go to Tanjore to recover the Nawab's assignments from the Rajah. The orders for Stuart were prepared, but Pigot refused to sign them, unless Russell also went to guard the Rajah's interests. On 22nd August 1776, Stratton, supported by the majority, (with the exception of Fletcher, who was away sick) ordered Richard Sullivan, the Secretary to the Council, to sign the orders on Pigot's behalf. Sullivan

prepared the document and passed it round for signature. Pigot allowed Stratton and Brooke to sign, and then seized the paper. He then moved their suspension from Council for inciting the Secretary to commit an illegal act; and because Stratton and Brooke were the subjects of the motion, and Fletcher was absent through illness, the remaining members of the "majority" found themselves outvoted by the "minority" of four, plus Pigot's casting vote.<sup>1</sup> Pigot proved himself to be an astute tactician by this manoeuvre; but it was one of his last political manoeuvres as a free man. But for his small minority of four; he had every influential section in Madras against him. The majority in Council, the forces under Fletcher and Stuart, the durbar adventurer Benfield, the Nawab's adviser Macpherson, and the Nawab's sons were united by the common enemy. What happened next was reported by Chokappa Chetti in a letter he sent to Robert Palk:

"On the 22nd August, after Lord Pigot had suspended Messrs. Stratton and Brooke for inciting the Secretary to commit an unlawful act, the Majority, consisting of Mr. Stratton, Sir Robert Fletcher, and Messrs. Brooke, Floyer, Palmer, Jourdan and Mackay, joined (with the exception of Sir Robert, who was ill) Messrs. Benfield and Macpherson and the two sons of the Nawab at night at Mr. Benfield's garden house, where they received communications from the Nawab.

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1. For accounts of this situation see: H.MSS.C., Palk MSS., pp. 282-285, George Baker to Robert Palk, 30 August 1776; and pp. 294-295, John de Fries to Robert Palk, 21 September 1776.

Next morning all, except the Nawab's sons, met at Sir Robert Fletcher's garden, where the Majority resolved to assume the Government, and sent out notices to that effect. On receipt of the notice Lord Pigot suspended the Majority members and appointed Colonel Stuart Commander-in-Chief. Colonel Stuart, after repeatedly enjoying his Lordship's hospitality, drove with the Governor on the evening of the 24th from the Fort towards the Company's Garden, having previously arranged with Benfield, Macpherson and others that the carriage should be stopped by Colonel Edington<sup>1</sup> and Captain Lysaght<sup>2</sup>, supported by an armed party of sepoy and Nawab's troops. The two officers emerged from the shadows of the avenue of trees on the Island, and presenting pistols, halted the chaise. Colonel Stuart forced Lord Pigot to enter Mr. Benfield's carriage, which was in waiting, and despatched him a prisoner to the Mount, where he was placed in the custody of Major Horne<sup>3</sup>. The Majority immediately went to the Fort, and next morning issued orders to 'all the military and civil servants of the Company and black and white inhabitants of Madrassapatnam to give them their attendance at the Fort Square at 11 o'clock in that morning, and to hear the proclamation they drew out themselves in the names of his Majesty, [the] English nation and the East India Company. ... On the 26th the Nabob and his two sons with great pomp came to the Fort to give his visit to Mr. Stratton, and the 27th Mr. Stratton went to the Nabob with great pomp, where he was

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1. Lt. Colonel James Edington, the Adjutant-General of Madras.
  2. Captain Arthur Lysaght, C.O. of 7th Madras Sepoy Battalion, and a younger brother of 1st. Lord Lisle. He was supported by Sergeant George Shaw, Provost Sergeant of the same Battalion.
  3. Major Matthew Horne, C.O. of the Corps of Madras Artillery.



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received very handsomely."'

Although Pigot had behaved in a high-handed fashion towards the majority of the Council of Madras, the majority had also acted unwisely. As a majority they could have suspended Pigot pending an investigation by the Supreme Council, but they had erred by forcibly arresting and then imprisoning him. The Madras revolution was

2

bound to have serious consequences for all those who were civil or military servants of the Company. Meantime, both Pigot's friends and the conspirators waited for the reaction of Hastings and the Supreme Council. John Macpherson, whatever the result, was not officially involved, although he was a ringleader. His position, if he had one at all, was that of an adviser to the Nawab; and, as such, enjoyed immunity as a person protected by the Nawab. For once, however, Hastings and the triumvirate were in agreement; and on 10th September 1776 the Supreme Council of Bengal upheld (pending instructions from the Company) the provisional right of the majority over the minority in the Council of Madras; censured the "intemperate conduct of Lord Pigot;" acknowledged the "title and authority" of Stratton as Governor; and promised

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1. H.MSS.C., Palk MSS., p. 289, Chokappa Chetti to Robert Palk, 15 September 1776.
  2. Colonel James Stuart insisted that he organised the arrest on the orders of a legal majority; and to exonerate himself eventually demanded a court-martial. His papers on the case are complete, see N.L.S., Stuart-Stevenson MSS. 5387. He was also defended by his elder brother, see Andrew Stuart's A Letter to the Honourable Directors of the East India Company, [Pamphlet], 1778. James Stuart was eventually re-instated in the Company's army as a Major-General. For the penalties suffered by the civil servants, see later.

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to support his rule "by all the means" which he required of them.

The conspirators in Madras soon renounced the uneasy alliance which had united them against Pigot, and the members of the Supreme Council quickly returned to their own battles, but John Macpherson had proved his worth to the Nawab in a spectacular manner. It was necessary, of course, for John to exonerate the Nawab, and to cover the whole proceeding with a gloss of respectability. On the other hand, there can be no doubt that the defeat of Pigot must have given the Nawab considerable satisfaction; and he was not likely to forget the adviser who had helped to humble his old enemy. John himself said nothing about his part in the affair when he wrote to James on 15th October 1776, but he did give other interesting news. He said:

"I have nothing new to write to you, but I have never yet missed one Conveyance of Correspondence, whether I had anything material or not to inform you of. The Gov<sup>r</sup> Gen<sup>l</sup> and Council have fully approved the Change in this Gov<sup>t</sup>, which has made L<sup>d</sup> Pigot a Prisoner, and the Second, M<sup>r</sup> Stratton, Governor.

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1. Love, Vol. 3, p. 102, quoting letter: The Supreme Council of Bengal all members signing<sup>7</sup> to The Hon. George Stratton, President of the Council of Madras, 10 September 1776

Edir u agus mishi, i fa'talich faddi  
do charid <sup>1</sup> [?] in groich.  
<sub>2</sub>

Between you and me, long weary is  
your friend <sup>1</sup> [?] the business.

Col. Monson is dead, by which Event Mr. Hastings is in Power. A  
Minister or Company who attempt to deprive him of it ought to forfeit  
every Success. No man but him alone fit for the Station.  
There will be a Struggle for the Succession to Monson. Could no  
Carid [Friend] come there? It is a great Object.

Ha duil agamsi nach be in Shinirail  
Claveringich fadi bò. Ha in Duini  
auni brone, agus lan niscaidin. Inis-  
shin ghan Tuàich. Bu chair gha Dhuini  
math i chuir i mach er no hig in  
Diavil er. Calli shin in Duich sho  
mar in doir ad in norri va. Ha da  
cheid deg Francich lackin ri Delhi aun  
i shervais in Rhi. Hig in Diavil  
orne shor in doir shin in norri. Sma  
is fanni ghosi in Duich sho. Ha mo  
huichshi fein agus huichsi nir  
Dù.

I do not think that General  
Clavering will live for long. The man is  
in misery, and full of boils. Tell  
that to North. He should put a good  
Man out here or else the Devil will  
come upon him. We will lose the Country  
if they do not look after it well. There  
are twelve hundred French lackeys close to  
Delhi in the service of the King. The Devil  
will come on us if we have not a care. I  
know this Country very well. I have my own  
understanding and the understanding of the  
Black man.

Tell Sam, Hannay that his brother, the Major, has got a handsome appointm.<sup>t</sup> -

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1. In the original this Gaelic sentence is very heavily erased. Even with the help of an infra-red lamp it is impossible to read it all. Enough can be read, however, to see that John was going to tell James he was sick of the politics in Madras, and then had second thoughts about admitting that he was exhausted.
  2. Monson died on 25th September 1776.

1

Envoy to Nadsuf Cawn in Delhi.

Is shè Mackinich mishi agus Duini  
elli huair gha tati sho.

It is Mackenzie, myself and another Man  
who got this place for him.

He knows not this. Tell Hannay I am very angry at his finding fault with  
my Silence while I wrote him continually. His Chest of Matters is getting  
in fame against all the Devils of Opposition. He shall hear and feel from  
me soon. I love him unalterably. That is better than twenty Letters.

Chuir M.<sup>c</sup> Chol mishi auni triblaid  
vore i hive Ergid. Abbir focul ye  
sho. Glac ussi mo Litrichin ga uisi  
ma hanic i er falve. They are  
directed to you.

The Son of Coll [Maclean<sup>e</sup>] put me in great  
trouble regarding Money. Do not say a  
word about this. You get hold of my  
Letters to him before they disappear. They  
are directed to you.

1. Alexander Hannay (1741-1782), elder brother of Samuel (later Sir Samuel) Hannay. He transferred to the E.I.Co.'s army in 1765 as a Captain, having served for several years as an infantry officer in the British army. He was promoted Major in 1769, and was attached to the 2nd Brigade during the Rohilla campaign. He was promoted Adjutant-General "by a drole mistake of Francis voting for him" in 1775, although Francis hated him; (see: Bod. MSS., Vansittart Papers, Dep. b. 97, p. 67). In 1776 he was appointed Adviser to Najaf Khan, The Moghul's General, at Delhi. Two years later he transferred to the service of the Nawab-Wazir of Oudh, and commanded his forces until 1781. Francis was probably the other man mentioned by John Macpherson.
2. John Macpherson was referring to Samuel Hannay's letter of 13 January 1776, see above, p. 411.
3. John Macpherson frequently complained that Maclean and the Nawab had placed him in financial difficulties, and after 1778 he rarely wrote a letter to Hastings without referring to these difficulties. The only mention of Maclean in John Macpherson's Account Books is under a list of bonds. On 7th January 1777 John included in this list a "Sealed paper containing Colonel Maclean's Persian Chops, John Stewart's, James Johnson and Mrs. James Johnson's," but he did not add any figures, (Macpherson MSS./1, 82/1, Account Book No. 2). It is certain that Macpherson did subsidise Maclean in the hope of recouping the money from the Nawab, (ibid., 175/26, Memorandum of John Macpherson to the Nawab of Arcot, relative to Col. Maclean's Bills), but John did not itemise all the sums involved, or give an overall figure. As related in Maclean (1773-1778), the finances of Lauchlin Maclean were so complicated by his borrowing from "Peter" to pay "Paul" that no clear picture of his transactions can be given. Maclean certainly received large sums of money from both Hastings and the Nawab for his services as an agent (see I.O.L., H.Misc.S. 286, f. 56; and B.M. Add. MSS. 29226, f. 2v.) From the Nawab he received a salary of £4,300 per annum, and from Hastings the sum of £10,000.

Cha borrrin M.<sup>o</sup> Chau rahid elli ghavail  
 ach M.<sup>o</sup> Eorli Bhuid. Er son shò cha neil  
 misshi in naigh i ghroich. Ach nuair i  
 hig misshi ghachi chi ussa Groich elli.  
 Na abbir focul er son sho. Bi ro  
 chairdic ri M.<sup>o</sup> Cholla. Duina math, math  
 è. Innis gha Robsonach gur is ma i  
 hachir gha misshi vi na mo Duini  
 Honorach. Feir missi mar air Honair is  
 Robsonach. Is beg i ha issa egi gu dè  
 ghroich bu va leis in Patersonach i  
 ghianive le anim agus carrid in  
 Patersonich - in Benfieldich, i ha sho.  
 Cholligtin Robsonach ati, agus sma ghiti  
 Chain mar in bein auni sho. Is fuasach  
 in navid gha in Pigaidich. Ach hug  
 missi in norri va cha do chuir in Duini  
 Dù present riave in ghuinsi in  
 1  
 Robsonach. Foni sho ghutsi ghratin ris.  
 --- Bod, Ergid, Glu agus Shi ghut  
 blaidh.

Do not be surprised, tho' contrary to your advice, I have wrote to M.<sup>o</sup>Iain  
 [Johnstone]. The thing cannot hurt, and was necessary. I wish you and

The Son of Coll [Maclean] could not take  
 another road but that of the Cocky Son of  
 the Earl [of Bute]. Because of this I am  
 not against the matter. But when I come  
 home you will see another Matter. Do not  
 say a word about this. Be very friendly  
 towards the Son of Coll. He is a good,  
 good man. Tell Robinson that good has  
 happened to him that I am a Honourable  
 Man. I will take care of Robinson's  
 Honour. Little does he know what business  
 Paterson and Paterson's friend - Benfield,  
 who is here - would like to have done in  
 his name. Robinson would lose his place  
 and perhaps the Khan [Nawab] too if I  
 were not here. Pigot is a terrible enemy  
 to him. But I have taken good care the  
 Black Man never sent a present to Robin-  
 1  
 son. It will suffice for you to tell him  
 this. --- C--k, Money, Fame and Peace to  
 you my lad.

1. Cf. Robinson's letter to Nawab, (p. 410, n. 2).

1

him to beefstake and Closet it together often. Is fanni gho Duini gu math [We know that man well]. Our Namesakes all well. From the hint you once gave me I never mention your name with Duprè's in money matters. But in case of accid[ent] to him, you must look to my affairs. <sup>2</sup> Mayne shall be my Banker."

This is the last known letter which John sent to James before he left for England three months later. Although he took a pro-ministry line under the cover of Gaelic, he professed to continue his support for Hastings in English. This open support might have been for the benefit of interceptors, but he probably meant what he said about Hastings's worth. He certainly seemed to see in the death of Monson a chance for himself, and the event certainly gave Hastings the whip hand in Bengal, now that the triumvirate had been reduced by Monson's loss to two. The vacancy, however, had already been filled by Wheler, who had actually been appointed to fill the place left by Hastings's "resignation". But neither Hastings nor John yet knew about Wheler, or the offer and acceptance of Hastings's resignation made by Maclean. News of the decisions reached in London was awaited with anxiety or interest by all the leading

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1. The original is quite clear; but what the sentence means is far from clear. John might have been making some allusion to the famous Beefsteak Club; and he might have been suggesting that James Macpherson should show friendship to George Johnstone by entertaining him in the Beefsteak Club. Johnstone had once helped Adam Ferguson in some way; and for this reason John Macpherson would not sever his connection with Johnstone. This was the one matter which the two Macphersons could never see eye-to-eye on; but James never gave up hope of turning John against the Governor.
  2. Macpherson MSS./1, 39/12, John to James Macpherson, 15 October 1776.

politicians in India. Meanwhile, the Pigot affair occupied their attention. John Macpherson had little to say to his friend James on the subject. With Hastings he took the opposite line. On 13th October 1776 he told the Governor-General:

"Two days after the arrival of your Public Dispatches confirming Mr. Stratton in the Chair, I was favoured with your Private Sentiments on the Event. They are no less decisive than just. It was impossible for your Government to shew too much vigour on an appeal founded on Civil Convulsion, and, from your Determination of which, Peace was to stand confirmed, or the Spirit of Party to rebel. Not all the unanimity or force of your Decision has yet dismayed the Party of Pigot. His Lordship and his Friends talk with a Spirit of Opposition, I am informed, that still aims at the Recovery of Government by Force. I am likewise told that all the members of the Gov.<sup>t</sup> General are supposed, by them, to have been bribed into the part they have acted. But these are the Reveries of Political Lunacy. ... Col. Stuart is very unjustly charged with improper Duplicity in the management of the Plot. ... His Error was Refining too much in an opposite line. That Error might have been fatal had the Enemy had more Sagacity. The Proclamation [of assumption of the Government of Madras by the majority] was little more than a field Oration calculated for the Capacity of the Soldier. It was the Composition of a minute of Danger. Its Effect on the Parade was that of wild fire. The King's name did everything. It certainly breathes little of the evil and artful Diplomatic Genius. A Friend of yours [John himself] dictated it to a Counsellor, who could hardly write, and who valued it when it was finished more than Euclid did his Heurōka Proposition. Where Neutrality could have had the least bad Effect, you may be assured your Friend neither was nor would be Neuter.

It was only where an unnecessary and illiberal Persecution [of Pigot] was exerted, and where a Part was required for the N[awab] that would ruin all future Confidence in him, that he not only stood back, but even checked others. ...

I wrote you of my determination to go home in this month. The N[awab] would not permit me to move. By my advances to the Son of Coll he had me bound, and he stated his distress, and my Power to remedy it so strongly, that I have given up my own Happiness to his. Another Consideration had much weight with me. Pigot was no sooner down than Sir Robert F[letcher] began to be troublesome. I must own to you his Conduct has given me a total dislike to his Character. His Breast contains your Devil of Faction. Did I not imagine that he is approaching beyond redemption to his speedy grave I would tell you more.

Next to the ungenerous Acts of the Durbar, the most disagreeable Circumstance in any Situation is the unfriendly Disposition of the N[awab's] Eldest Son [Umdat-ul-Umara]. To me alone he owes his present Situation of favour with his Father. For such has been the imprudence of his Conduct in employing Paterson &c. &c. to counteract at home, and to intrigue with his Father's opponents here, that he must have been removed to some Place of confinement had I not interfered, and shewn the Father that a milder treatment of him was the best Chance for his better Behaviour. He has set up a Separate Correspondence with the Direction &c. &c. Sir Rob.<sup>t</sup>, in hopes of future Rewards, has espoused his side. He has likewise, I am told, complained of me to you, and writes you requiring your Support. He has been likewise writing to Cl[averin]g. ... If you should ever write the Eldest Son through any of his Friends, tell him of his weakness in looking to any Friend in preference to his Father. ...



His Heart is good, but his Genius at fine Lies is Wonderful! - one of these was that you and Duprè once offered him the Nabobship. ... The Amir [-ul-Umara] is positively a good fellow, and improves every day in Secrecy and good Management. He is not so generous as his [elder] Brother. Can you believe it, yet by God I can swear I never received one Pagoda from him. ... He never disguises Friendship or Enmity. You, Duprè and Maclean are the Trio he esteems. ...

The Nawab, now that you have something to say in your own Gov.<sup>t</sup>, is to write you soon, and to propose a formal and full Treaty with your Gov.<sup>t</sup>, by which at least his Person, his Garden, his Family and normal Rights may be protected. I will send you our English with the Persian. If this Business is affected, I hope I may be able to leave the good old Prince in Security. In matters of Dispute with Tanjore, he will submit to no decision from any Government's hand, as no Person is entitled to decide between him and his Vassals. But to save his Honour, and the public Quiet in any difficulties that may arise, and as a Compliment to the King (who he understands, often submits to the decision of his own Judges), he will submit to the decision of the King's head Ghazi at Bengal, Sir E. Impey, and employ Judge Chambers' Brother as his Agent.

By the Blessing of God you must now [with Monson dead] have it in your Power to contrive this Presidency under your direct protection, and to do some good to your own.<sup>1</sup>"

With Pigot behind bars, and Stratton in his place as Governor with the approval of the Supreme Council, Madras had returned to factional fighting. Macpherson,

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1. B.M. Add. MSS. 29137, ff. 373-382, John Macpherson to W. Hastings, 13 October 1776.

conscious of his improved relationship with both the Nawab and Hastings, whose causes were now almost irretrievably joined, was determined to consolidate this relationship before he left India. Not only did he pose as Hastings's loyal friend by passing slanderous gossip about Sir Robert Fletcher's links with the Nawab's eldest son and, by implication, Clavering, which he probably knew Hastings would never be able to check, but he suggested a treaty, never to materialize, which appeared to flatter Hastings and Impey, by recognizing their authority, yet defied them to impose any decision which affected the Nawab's rights over his vassals. There is no doubt that John Macpherson was a master of double-talk; and was extremely clever in the art of combining threats with flattery, arrogance with humility, and bluntness with persuasion. Although most of his letters to Hastings were full of humbug and hypocrisy, the overall impression they give is that of earnest sincerity. During October he sent Hastings two more letters, in which he repeated his views in the letter just quoted. All that he added in the way of news was that Sir Robert Fletcher

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1. B.M. Add. MSS. 29137, ff. 383-383v., John Macpherson to W. Hastings, 14 October 1776; and *ibid.*, ff. 414-417v., John Macpherson to W. Hastings, 25 October 1776.
  2. Sir Robert Fletcher, who was ill at the time of Pigot's arrest, suddenly grew worse in early October. On 10th October 1776, Pigot, through one of his supporters, filed a complaint against Fletcher in the Mayor's Court of Madras for false imprisonment, and claimed £200,000 as damages. Fletcher, however, was too ill to answer the charge, and obtained leave from Stratton to go to the Cape of Good Hope in order to recover. He never reached the Cape. He died en route at Mauritius on 24th December 1776. (see Love, Vol. 3, p. 100).

had left Madras; that Colonel James Stuart was ill; that Pigot and his adherents still hoped to overturn Stratton, who was working well as Governor; and, most important of all, that he was going to remain in Madras until he knew something of Macleane's manoeuvres; which meant he could not leave until January or February.

On 31st October 1776, Hastings responded to John Macpherson's news, as follows:

"You must not be offended at McL<sup>eane</sup>. He is too busy, and acts too much to write. I sometimes receive from him scarce more than half Hints in a dozen Lines of the most interesting Events.

I am sorry for the Resolution which you have taken, because I think the Loss will prove in the period which must remain of Suspence to him an irreparable Loss to your Friend the N<sup>abob</sup>. He wants a Counsellor of Understanding, Integrity and persuasion, Qualities not always united. But I know not what Reasons may be in the opposite scale to make your Departure necessary. If you are fixed in your Resolution I shall an additional Regret from the impossibility of your making Calcutta a part of your route. I fear it is impossible. You know best. ...

I begin to despair of another packet from Suez, though another was to have followed in Ten Days after the former, and the Event of the Reconsideration of the Resolution of the Court of Directors was too  
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important not to have been sent to me had Mr. Graham, for whose Life I am greatly apprehensive, been able: But he was cautioned not to exceed

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1. John Graham had fallen ill soon after his arrival in England with Lauchlin Macleane in 1775, and Macleane had little or no assistance from his fellow agent. Graham went to the Mediterranean to recover his health, but died as his Lisbon-bound ship was passing Minorca on 23rd June 1776, (see S.R.O., Kinross House Papers, MS. 2065, John Routledge to George Graham, 29 June 1776).

the latter end of July in the Time of his Packet reaching Cairo, and it  
 is now 3 months from the period. ...

You will hear from others of the little Change which has been produced  
 yet by Colonel M[onson]'s death, and perhaps will be disappointed, as  
 others have been, who expected it to occasion an instant and universal  
 revolution. I have laid down a Line which has nothing personal in it,  
 but in the Event adding to my Credit. I mean to exert my power, but  
 with great Caution, and for great purposes only. ...

I have received a Letter from J[ean] J[acques] but must take Time to  
 reply to it. I read with Joy the expressions of it which the whole  
 contains, but the request with which it concludes is not I fear within  
 my Reach. ...

I am grieved to hear that the Members of the new [Madras] Council do  
 not maintain the Cordial Union of sentiment which they ought. It is  
 the Duty of every Man who has an Influence with them to preach to them  
 the indispensable Necessity of Unanimity in all their Resolutions and  
 in all their declared Sentiments. Let them differ in private; but in  
 public and on record they should be but of One Mind. No Man's Name  
 should appear to a separate Opinion. If they divide they are ruined.  
 If they proclaim Doubt of the Legality of their powers they will teach  
 others to doubt it, and to disobey them. Do you understand me?"

With this letter Hastings sent another, dated 6th November 1776, which was  
 virtually a postscript. He wrote:

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1. Hastings had not even received Maclean's letter of 25th June 1776 (see Gleig,  
 Vol. 2, p. 69) in which Graham's serious illness (but not death) was reported.
  2. Dodwell, pp. 45-47.

"My last by Accident missed the post and therefore goes with this. I have since received yours of the 13th of October. I most heartily rejoice at your Resolution to stay. You may see by my former Letter how necessary I thought your Presence in this short Crisis - it cannot be long. The Occasion is too alarming to admit of the Delays usual in other References made to England. I am glad Sir R[obert Fletcher] is gone. It is the Fault of the Council if they suffer an Opposition that may endanger the public Safety, or embarrass the Measures. I am grieved at the Nabob's Domestic Uneasiness. The Fault lies in the indiscrete [sic] Zeal of the Friends of O. al A. [Umdat-ul-Umara]. I wish it could be retrieved. A desperate Cause will always drive the best Men to Desperate Means of Safety, but I cannot think him otherwise culpable. He did possess a Disposition most ingenuous, mild and amiable. He cannot be wholly changed. I repeat that the Situation into which he is forced by the unhappy Decrees past in his Favor in the Supposition of an Event which in an Asiatic Government ought never to be Supposed, excuses every Step that he takes to elude the Effects of it. I see but a Glimpse of Light to the Remedy of such an Evil, and that I cannot trust to writing. ...

I will most gladly meet the Design of your Friend <sup>1</sup> [The Nawab] which is wise and seasonable; and I am pleased with the proposed Reference."<sup>2</sup>

It is clear that Hastings did not know what John already did; namely, that the ministry, as a result of Macleane's successful plea on behalf of the Nawab had reached

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1. *ibid.*, p. 50, Macpherson himself wrote "Nabob" in the margin of the original.

2. *ibid.*, pp. 49-50.

a compromise solution to the problem of the Nawab's successor, and, instead of naming either his first or second son, had left it for the Nawab to make his wishes plain in his will.<sup>1</sup> The question of the succession merely provided a suitable means of attracting Hastings's interest. This John had secured; and Hastings's letters gave him the confidence to begin preparations for his return to Britain. This time he could feel that the confidence he had built up in the Nawab's mind would be maintained in his absence by nobody less than the Governor-General.

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1. See above, p. 364. John Macpherson had a copy of the Nawab's last will (see Macpherson MSS./1, 61/24).

CHAPTER 7

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The End of a Cycle: 1776-1778

Chapter 7. The End of a Cycle: 1776-1778

On 3rd December 1776, John Macpherson opened his letter to Hastings by saying:

"Since August last I have written you very frequently; but as my Letters are merely conversations upon paper I have never kept copies of them, so that I neither remember their number or dates. I am ready enough to believe that some of my Letters are intercepted, but I hope I have missed none of yours."

As a result of the friendly and confidential letters he sent John from October 1776, Hastings invited volumes of "conversations upon paper." Much of what John said in his frequent and lengthy letters to Hastings after that date was repetitive; but this seemed natural in an age when duplicates were safeguards against loss of mail at sea; and John had, in any case, excused himself in advance for any repetition by admitting, almost casually, that he never kept copies of his letters. He may, however, have deliberately or instinctively used repetition as a technique. Busy men such as Hastings are not easily fooled by a short lucid message, but they have not sufficient time to analyse a flood of long-winded and repetitive letters, and they can be deluded by a sheer confusion of words.

In the short time at his disposal before leaving India John appeared to have

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1. B.M. Add. MSS. 29138, f. 1, John Macpherson to W. Hastings, 3 December 1776.



three aims when writing to Hastings: to impress upon him that the Nawab had nothing to do with the Pigot plot; to assure him that he had received no money from the Nawab or his sons; and to present himself as a more suitable agent than Maclean. These points were rarely made bluntly, and yet they were all hinted at in a dozen oblique ways. Hastings knew that few men in India were there from a sense of public service and that most of them risked their health in the hope of making a fortune, but there were degrees of rapacity, and the desire for wealth was conventionally acceptable if it was combined with a strong sense of responsibility. John Macpherson sensed what Hastings thought was acceptable, and he cloaked his private aims with a mantle of public spiritedness. The whole process allowed him to make some changes quite rapidly, and from behind a welter of words he created the picture of a man who was magnanimous to his beaten enemies, merciless to his traducers, and unswervingly loyal to his friends. Although his letters are far too long to quote in their entirety, it is worth using extracts to show how he impressed Hastings. Continuing his letter of 3rd December, he wrote:

"I entirely agree with you that the hour for discussing the mode of L/ord P/igo't's removal is past, and yet I really wish for his own sake that his Return were so far compulsory as to cover his mortification under necessity. There is no disgrace in obedience to great Guns and fixed Bayonets, but what would he feel if he had his Liberty amidst his disgrace. I can

candidly declare that I have no Resentment against his Lords/hi/p. He has suffered enough. But his Situation must be unsupportable when he recovers his Freedom without his Power in a Settlement where he was once so high.

You are surprised at his Stay by choice - but you forget that by staying he still keeps his Tanjore affairs covered by his influence. The N/awab/ will have it that the Raja has been taught to apply to Leaden/hall Street. By many prevailing signs His L/or/d/shi/p is still all-Powerful at the Raja's Durbar. Hence many strange things may arise. I do believe myself that my late Hon.<sup>ble</sup> M/inis/ters [The Crown Plenipotentiaries] are not in purity one touch above The House of C/ommo/ns. I believe further that your cause was attacked by such weapons in the India House. There were some others, beside your direct opponents, who had a deep interest in your removal, and who worked through the whole spiral line of Corruption and Intrigue that runs from the foot of the Th/ron/e to the meanest Voter's Stall in the east end of the Town. You must ever be aware of those who would attack you through such a line, and you should have agents at home to maintain the justice of your ground. ... Poor Walaja has likewise different difficulties to engage. The intrigues of Rogues who set on his Family the false Representations of disappointed Gov/erno/rs and Counsellors &c. &c. - The Treachery of false Friends and the numberless evils that mixed Connections with Ministers and Directors create! Every Engine is now set at work to undermine that Confidence which he so singularly merits from the Nation. ...

The N/awab/ has repeatedly told me that he would like to make one great effort and send one of his own People an Ambassador to the King to make a formal demand of Tanjore, and to obtain redress in other affairs. The Reasonableness of such an application would ensure it success. ... I begin

now to think that the measure would be necessary, as well as his having a Vacqueel near you. Our Friend M.<sup>c</sup> L[eane] is to be here in June next; and, if he did not leave London the Hindustan Minister, it would be fixed to his Orders and Directions.

In all communications of this nature I never mean to get an Opinion from you. Your Situation demands the most guarded Reserve in giving opinions, even to your Friends, on such political Difficulties - especially by Letter. My aim is that you should know my every thought, and the real Situation of the poor N[awab]. When you disapprove you can always check.

For my own part I am entirely exhausted amidst the disgusts, apprehensions, fatigues and difficulties of the present Durbar Scenes. As I value your friendship and my own honour, I can assure you that I have not from the time of the Convulsion made a single addition of a Rupee to my Fortune. On the contrary, I must withdraw to Europe at any Event. By such a step only, can I extricate myself and secure M.<sup>c</sup> L[eane]; for I assure you he could never obtain the proper Support or Justice on his Return here if I was not there. And yet I propose not to take any Powers from the N[awab] further than to secure myself in co-operation with F[rederic]k St[uar]t. The Conduct of that Family to you has made me give up what was certainly my real Right. I am sure I can make them retain a proper sense of the succession. John Home, one of my most intimate friends on Earth, rules that Family. After all that I have stated to you regarding my fixed Determination to go to Europe, it is possible that the N[awab] may chain me here by his Distress and Entreaties. However, you see my purpose, so let me have your Orders. ...

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You remember little Vincatachellum, the N<sup>a</sup>wab's Bramin, Paterson's great agent and once Dubash to Co<sup>n</sup>lonel<sup>l</sup> Monson. By most villainous Conduct he had nigh set the whole Durbar by the Ears, and the Father so suspiciously against the two Sons, that I, with Difficulty, prevented Extremities. He is now banished the Durbar and imprisoned in one of the Nabob's Forts. This was a Fortunate Event, and I hope will have good Consequences. Observe how that Villain Paterson was again working.

L<sup>d</sup>. P<sup>i</sup>got<sup>t</sup> is, as usual, at the Mount. His Behaviour in his Confinement does him great Credit indeed. But there will be no peace here till he is gone. I mix very little with Stratton and the present Council. They used me much worse than Pigot, for I find they wrote a joint Minute against me, representing me as a Person of dangerous Ability to the C<sup>o</sup>ur<sup>t</sup> of Directors<sup>l</sup>. This Minute was signed by Mackay, Brooke, Jourdan and Stratton. I did not see it till lately. It gives me not the least uneasiness. All this spite arose against me for the Support I gave the N<sup>a</sup>wab in Wynch's Disputes. I will force these Gentlemen to write a very different Minute when I am going home, otherwise they will find me really a dangerous opponent in Europe. I could, with great ease, get them all Exe<sup>c</sup>u<sup>t</sup>ed!

I beg you will write me a short note immediately on receipt of this. I may probably go in the Jan<sup>y</sup> Ship. My best Respects to Mr. Barwell. I hope if the Coun<sup>c</sup>il Gen<sup>e</sup>ra<sup>l</sup> is increased, that Bombay and Madrass shall receive Gov<sup>e</sup>rn<sup>o</sup>rs<sup>l</sup> from your hand."

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1. See above, p. 349, n. 1.

2. B.M. Add. MSS. 29138, ff. 1-9v., John Macpherson to W. Hastings, 3 December 1776. Although Macpherson invariably asked Hastings to pass on compliments to Barwell, he had little to do with Barwell or his family until he returned to England; and then he had conferences with Barwell's very able sister "Mrs." Mary Barwell (see B.M. Add. MSS. 29141, ff. 57-58, John Macpherson to W. Hastings, 13 June 1778).

Stripped of all its padding, and reduced from a bulky and badly written manuscript to a neat typescript, the edited letter reveals the shiftiness of John Macpherson. Even unedited, Hastings should have isolated the inconsistencies, and have been put on his guard by them. For instance, the simple contradiction about Pigot should have told Hastings that Macpherson had the unstable qualities of a chameleon. John started by endorsing Hastings's view that Pigot should not be moved from Madras, and ended by saying that there would be no peace in that place until Pigot was moved. But this and other obvious contradictions were not as important as John's attitude to Macleane, who was still both Hastings's and the Nawab's principal agent.

Although John stressed that he wanted no official power from Hastings or the Nawab (except, in the Nawab's case, sufficient to secure the co-operation of Frederick Stuart, who will be referred to later), he spoke of Macleane as an auxiliary who needed his, John Macpherson's, support. From James Macpherson's letters, John knew that Macleane was fighting a losing battle, and that Hastings would probably be disappointed by the news that was expected from England. John, therefore, prepared Hastings to accept him as Macleane's eventual replacement. It was a cunning piece of planning, but it should have warned Hastings (who was loyal to his friends, even if they disappointed him) that if John was capable of diminishing Macleane, he was also

capable of outright treachery. Macleane had been useful to John, but once anybody had served either of the Macphersons' purposes, or impeded their progress, that person was ushered from the scene. The day would come when Hastings would have cause to reflect on some of John's words. In 1777, for example, he probably dismissed John's threat to have the 'majority' executed, or his broad hints about governorships in Bombay and Madras, as exuberant conceit. Like John's earlier boast to James that he would be a "Sir", these boasts did not appear so preposterous a few years later, when the 'majority' had long since faced a charge of murder, and John was "Sir John", having served in Hastings's place as Governor General. Even the demand for an immediate reply did not make Hastings suspicious about the man he was dealing with; though, if he had not been so busy or anxious about his own problems, he might have interpreted John's pressing demands as a sign of unusual determination, especially when they became more familiar and far-reaching in subsequent letters.

Without waiting for Hastings's reply, John wrote the following letter to him on 19th December 1776:

"This is not the last Letter which I propose to give myself the Pleasure of writing you in India, but it is the last to which I can probably expect a Reply during my stay in this Settlement. I have resolved to visit Europe in the January Ship. My aimable and great Friend here has more than half assented to a Separation. The Regard, which I owe him, my other Friends and myself, require my Return.

I feel the pain of parting with you, tho' at the distance already of more than a thousand miles, and yet I feel that if I live you will ever find me near every wish and every zeal that can serve you, and that is within the exertion of my affection or ability. I ask and will take no Authority or Power from you to act for you. I possess enough, and the best in my own mind. I must likewise tell you plainly that you are one of my chief objects of Return to England. I will have enough of Fortune for myself, and if I can be of any use in my attachments to you and my friend of this place, I will do the greatest Good within my possible Sphere of Action as a man. I will often expect your Attention to my Friends, and if the Carrier [sic, Career] fails with myself at home, I will return to you with all the pleasure that I used to dine with you at the Mount, and with no more parade.

Col. Stuart seems bent on sending P[igo]t home a Prisoner in the first Ship. If he succeeds, it shall be in contradiction to my Soul and personal Efficacy in the Politicks of the Settlement. The measure would ruin the N[awab] &c. &c. I will publicly and solemnly exculpate you from any approbation of its barbarity, and insult to the Expected Judgement of the Co[mpany]. His Lord[shi]p, as I told you before, was never so great as in his distress: his opponents never shewed such weakness and incapacity as in their Power. Your Letter to them was admirable on this Subject, at least so I am told, for I never saw it. This political Quixotism (if it deserves not a worse name) of Stuart has not broke our Intimacy, but it has given me a very dispassionate view of the Scene. I will keep myself and my friends clear, and if the Lord is the Prisoner of the first Ship, I will be the Passenger of the Second; and then I will meet him on a Ground on which he shall be convinced he had better have me as a friend than an opponent. I am determined on my

arrival in England to send one of my Children, the Grevilles, to the Chiltern Hundreds, if it was but for a Session; and I know I can speak what I feel and what I believe. That is all I will ever attempt.

The Son of Coll [Maclean] will be here in June next by his last Letter. If I was to tell you what I have done for him, and only what I did for myself, you would be astonished. I know if he returns, and has had any Success, he will return my Services ten-fold - if he can.

I scarcely know whom to recommend [sic] to you as your Correspondent here till his [Maclean's] Return. Dick Sullivan is an excellent fellow, but he has not had that Experience which the Villainy of Mankind forces at length upon a good Heart. However, he is the man with whom, for many Reasons, I deposit my Dur[ba]r Secrets. He is in a Confidential Correspondence with his old Kinsman [Laurence Sullivan], and I have placed him on a kind and good footing with the N[awab] and his second Son. Your great, yea very great, Caution runs not a shadow of risque with any Person. The public good is alone your object and wish. So write Dick any little matters that you like, as to my friend. He will do all the good he can to keep J[ean] J[acque]s alive. ...

My Idea is that India must be made as a Feudatory to Britain, secured by its own Force but protected by the name of the Sovereign Power. ... Poona, Madrass and Calcutta should be the Pillars on which the Total Power should rest. Call them Legs and let your forces be so arranged that mutual assistance could in time be afforded. Then you might throw Indostan about  
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like the Isle of Man arms. ... My Friend David Hume, Dr. Johnson and many

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1. It was, perhaps, odd for John Macpherson to acknowledge his friend James's bitter enemy Dr. Samuel Johnson; but Johnson had stayed with John's elder brother, the Rev. Martin Macpherson, at Ostaig in Skye on his famous Hebridean tour in 1773, and John had doubtless had letters from his brother in which Johnson's views were recounted, (see Boswell's Tour of the Hebrides (ed. Pottle and Bennett), op. cit., pp. 231-239).



others, who have grown wise and learned in the Smoke of Cities, say 'that the loss of India and America would be the greatest Blessing to Old England.' ... The Fact is if England does not retain India, France must; and if France possesses India, England must."

Although John admitted he had heard from Lauchlin Maclean, he did not, it will be noticed, tell Hastings what Maclean had said. It is certain, however, that no message had yet reached India by any route which gave the news of Maclean's negotiations for Hastings's resignation. This left John in an uncertain position; which he dealt with in his usual manner, by keeping as many irons in the fire as possible. He wanted to act for Hastings, but not officially; and he left himself room to manoeuvre for a job in Bengal under Hastings if things went wrong when he arrived in London. He also moved himself and the Nawab further away from any connection with the Pigot affair, and further strengthened the links between the Nawab and Hastings, by arranging for the latter to keep an eye on the former's interests through a member of the Sullivan family, whose leader, Laurence Sullivan, was a special friend and ally of Hastings. John underlined his sympathies with Hastings by concluding with views on the management of India which he probably knew would appeal to his correspondent. At the same time, he virtually upheld the right of the State to control the affairs of the Company. And, apart from the skill he

showed as a writer of non-committal but enthusiastic ambiguities, John adopted a slightly more familiar line with Hastings. In the absence of a letter from Hastings, he became even bolder in his letter of 8th January 1777, when he reported the latest developments in the Pigot affair. He said:

"Why did you not write me a line by the Europe Ship? Is it proper or useful that I should be necessitated [sic] to glean from vague Reports all the good you are doing? As there is not a man living more attached to you, so there is no one who tells you his Sentiments so freely as your friend Mac. He therefore tells you that this Indolence is very bad. ...

We have been again on the brink of Convulsion here, owing to the violence of Stuart, and the inveteracy of Mackay. The latter I conjure you never to correspond with, and to withdraw yourself from all regard for him. He has positively a bad Disposition. ... They wanted to make your last Public Letter their cover for the forcible Expulsion of Pigot from this Country. He swore that he would forfeit life sooner than suffer such an ignominious injustice. What think you of the N[awa]b? He was so moved with Pity, and so fearful of the Imputation of being supposed the secret mover of so black a Business that he sent a Public Message to the Board, telling them 'that he neither favoured nor would countenance such a Measure, and that he disclaimed, in the most solemn Manner, any connection with it. ...'

All this would have had little Effect had not I produced your Private

Sentiments to me in your Letter of the 20th October to the Members of the Board, to prevent their founding on your Public Letter a Measure which could not be executed without Blood. ... What think you has been the result? Why, the measure has been prevented; four to two were against it in the final Discussion in Council; tho' before the N[awab] and I moved there was a majority for it.

The Effect this Business has had is the happiest that ever resulted from Politicks. Pigot declares that he owes his life to the Nabob: that when deserted and betrayed by the Depravity of his Countrymen and of Christians, he has been saved by the Humanity and noble Generosity of a Mahometan Enemy. The whole Settlement adore the Nabob for the part he has taken. You have your share in its honour, and the Satisfaction of poor Walaja. The happy result of the Business is inexpressible. He said, with great address, to some of Pigot's friends who came to thank him: 'Very true, M<sup>c</sup> pherson advised me to this step, but it is likewise true that others, and Counsellors too (old Mackay one) threatened me with their Resentment if I interfered, so the two scales were even till I threw my own generosity in that of Pigot's.' In all my life I never felt more sincere satisfaction from any part of my own Conduct than I did on this occasion. I have even had the acknowledgement of Stuart for my Candour with him; and I believe he is very glad I prevented the Measure, now that he sees more calmly the Consequences that must have attended it. Mr. Benfield was the active mover of the Iniquity, for it could be nothing less once Pigot's private Determination was known. But the great Blessing to the Nabob from his

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1. John meant Hastings's letter of 31st October 1776 (see above, pp. 432-433), and he was probably referring to the last paragraph. Hastings did not send John a letter on 20th October.

Conduct on this occasion is the total overthrow he has given to the black allegations of the Pigot Party. Besides, how fortunate it is now that I am going to leave him that I leave him amidst the good Opinion of the Public, and that his bitterest Enemies are disarmed of all their Resentment; yea, compelled to Applaud.

Before you receive this account I shall be upon the wide Ocean. I intended at first to go home in a French Ship, but now I have resolved to go in the Lioness. After a very cool and candid review of my own Conduct, amidst all the intricate and difficult Situations I have been in during a five year Connection with the Politicks of Madrass, I cannot accuse myself of ever deserting first Principles, first Friends and good Intentions. So, I face Europe with great Satisfaction of Soul.<sup>1</sup>

In the space of three months John Macpherson had performed a complete volte face. Not only had he used, without Hastings's Authority, a private letter to thwart the 'majority', but had contrived to make them appear to be the oppressors, and the Nawab appear to be the protector of Pigot. As a ringleader in the plot to overturn Pigot, John contrived a remarkable feat in bringing the Nawab to announce publicly that he disapproved of the treatment which the other ringleaders wished to mete out to Pigot, who had first upset the Nawab twenty years earlier, and had been his enemy ever since. Hastings, who knew most of the leading people concerned in the event, must have been amazed by the news. As a grand finale to his first long stay in India, John gave a

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1. B.M. Add. MSS. 29138, ff. 105-110v., John Macpherson to W. Hastings, 8 January 1777.

truly impressive demonstration of his skill as a political acrobat. Hastings, however, had already been seduced by the first two letters quoted in this chapter, and on 17th January 1777 he sent John the following message:

"Having missed the Opportunity of the last Post to reply to your Letter of the 19th ult., ... I fear that my Answer will be too late to find you at Madras. This Doubt precludes me from writing to you so fully as I might, were I certain of its reaching you in Time. I learn, with a good Deal of Regret, your final Resolution of returning to England. I am sorry to lose you, though but as a Neighbour at the Distance of some Degrees, but what I mostly regret is that I could not see you before your Departure. I have many Matters which I anxiously wish to communicate to you, but I cannot commit them to writing, and on many points I wish for that Communication which a personal Meeting only could afford.

The Materials which you desire would fill volumes, and I cannot command my Time to write even Pages, but I will employ all my vacant Time in furnishing you with them. ... Were you with me I have not a Thought that I would keep a Secret from you, for my Confidence in you is unlimited. I am certain of your Friendship, your Honor, and of the Benefit which I would derive from your Judgement and especially from that Knowledge in which I am most deficient; I mean the Knowledge of the British World to which all my Designs ought, if they can be, to be squared.

Why I tell you this I scarcely know, for if you have not already taken your passage, you must have formed all your Arrangements, so as to put it out of your power (at this Season of the Year especially) to visit Bengal. Allow me however to add that if it could be made a part of your Route, you would meet with as affectionate a Reception from me, as

you could be entitled to from a Friend attached to you even by a long Intercourse of Years. If not, accept my heartiest Wishes for the Accomplishment of all yours, whatever They may be, and God give you a prosperous Voyage. I will send you ... a Copy of my Letter to Mr. Stratton. I doubt if you have seen more than the complimentary preface. The whole I would not fear to read aloud to a Court of Proprietors. It was unfair in him to shew What I wrote confidentially to him, and to make me a party in his Disputes: It was disingenuous to publish a partial Extract, when he knew that that part had an intimate Connection with the whole. Adieu. I am most affectionately Yrs: Warren Hastings.<sup>1</sup>"

This was the accolade which John Macpherson had sought so tenaciously and he received it before he left Madras in the Lioness on 8th February 1777. He could go home knowing he had won the full confidence and affectionate regard of the Governor-General, whom he had known for a short time five years earlier, and had not met since. Hastings was a very great and often wise man, but, in choosing some of his friends, he was his own worst enemy. In spite of his self-confessed inexperience in home politics, he need never have been deceived by the eulogies of a man such as John

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1. Dodwell, pp. 51-53. Hastings was relying on John Macpherson to show the Company and the Government the whole of his Letter to Stratton supporting (till the Company itself could deal with the matter) the "majority" of the Madras Council against Pigot. Stratton had, Hastings believed, misled opinion about his attitude by publishing it only in part, and thus making him appear a partisan of the "majority". Macpherson showed no sign of even trying to understand Hasting's position, and certainly did nothing about it.

Macpherson. He needed no knowledge of any sort of politics to analyse the gushing flatteries of a self-seeking adventurer. He was foolish to give his unqualified trust to John Macpherson, and he only had himself to blame when this trust was abused a few years later. Who, with any knowledge of the world, would be deceived by any of the letters from Macpherson to Hastings which have been quoted in this thesis? Who, then, could feel complete sympathy for Hastings's later predicament? Nevertheless, it was a great pity that Edmund Burke, a man of wordly knowledge, justice and sympathy, did not know the full truth about Hastings; but even he was deceived by lesser and selfish men. When Hastings and Burke eventually faced each other as enemies,<sup>1</sup> they were both victims of the lies and deceits of such villains as Philip Francis and the Macphersons.

When John Macpherson wrote his last letter from India on 7th February 1777, he no longer addressed Hastings as "Dear Sir". It was now "My Dear Friend", and his letter was noticeably less effusive than any which had preceded it. He wrote:

"It was necessary that I should defer writing to you to the last minute, for in the uncertainty of every Event connected with the People I have had to deal with, nothing can be related from Expectation. You would see from many of my Letters the Disagreeableness which I found connected with my Situation here, and the Dangers which I saw collecting against my

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1. See P.J. Marshall, The Impeachment of Warren Hastings, Oxford, 1965.

good old Friend [Maclean] from Europe, when there might not be a single friend upon the Spot to counteract them in their formation. Your Situation has likewise had it[s] weight with me, and if ever it is destined that I should cut a great Stroke for myself relative to India affairs, it must be at a time when the whole force of India, the approaching Expiration of the Charter, and the apprehended loss of America, call loudly for the attention of Ministry to those who may be able to assist them in or out of the Scrape. I expect to arrive in England in August next, in the Recess of Parliament, when from the Events of India the Minister must be forming his arrangements. Not a decided step shall be taken in your Contests till long after my arrival, and those who are gaping for news from Europe to this Coast in May next, may gape on to the May thereafter. The news of the [Madras] Revolution gets home about this time; General Courts follow to April, and in May, before the House is up, a restriction will be left on the Company from changes in the Administration of Madrass till Parliament examine the Matter. Then one voluminous Bill determines the future Charter, the future Admin.<sup>n</sup> of the East, and future perfect dependence of the Subordinate Presidencies, with Courts of Justice in Each. ...

You seem to think in your last ... that there is a Crisis of Political Decision at hand. I cannot agree with you. The non-arrival of your second packet by Suez is a perfect Proof that there was no Business for any. Indeed, there could not be. The [Bengal] Majority was a Murus<sup>1</sup> Ahaeneus indeed. That and other considerations make you the necessary

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1. "Murus Ah[a]eneus" (A Brazen Wall), comes from the motto of Macleod of Macleod: "Murus Aheneus Esto" (Be thou a Brazen Wall). John Macpherson must have been very conscious of the fact that his maternal grandmother was a Macleod of Macleod. In his letter to Hastings of 19 December 1776 (see above, p. 444), he had referred to "the Isle of Man arms" (viz. gules, three legs in armour proper, garnished and spurred or, flexed and conjoined in triangle at the upper part of the thigh). The Isle of Man arms form the 2nd and 3rd quarters of the Macleod of Macleod arms.



Gov.<sup>r</sup> Gen.<sup>l</sup>. Discussion was all I ever wanted for not only your safety, but likewise for your future Renown. It would ultimately raise you to your Rights and sink your opponents to their proper level.

I carry with me addresses of friendship from the N<sup>r</sup>awab to all the Eminent men in the State. They are aimed at obtaining me and the Agent before me, whether M.<sup>c</sup> Leane or Frederick Stuart, a fairer hearing. The Artillery is well and decently pointed, and must have effect; Fred.<sup>k</sup> Stuart to be agent in the absence of M.<sup>c</sup> Leane. For my own part I take no Power with me but such as will prevail with the Porter to open the Gate and draw the Lord into Conversation. I have improved on the Circumstances which opposed M.<sup>c</sup> Leane, and I will have a personal audience before I advance further from the King to the Under Minister. I hope to meet M.<sup>c</sup> Leane at the Cape. It must have ruined everything our being here together.

Such a Counsellor as you specify is certainly wanting for Jean Jacques. The last application to you puts it in your Power to employ the men you like here. I often thought the safety of the Public required that you should vest Colonel James Stuart with Plenipot<sup>y</sup> Powers, tho' the Comm.<sup>r</sup> in Chief here. He is bound to Lavering as a military man, but his Esteem and Connections are elsewhere. I wish you would take an opportunity of doing him some service either by Letter or otherwise. It is wonderful how he has provided for the safety of the Carnatic and fortified Tanjore - on his Death-bed almost. He has the most indomitable working spirit for the Public I ever knew. ... I leave all my opponents low, yet obliged to applaud my line of opposition. You will, of course, write by every Conveyance. You give more in a Page than others in a Volume. Direct to me at L.<sup>d</sup> Warwick's, St. James's Square, and occasionally to the British Coffee-house. ...

There is absolutely wanted here some Power to protect the N[awab]'s person and residence from the Insults of Creditors. You will hear how the poor Man has been forced to assign most of his Revenues to the English Saucars [Soukars (Bankers)]. What can be done? Your Glimpse of Light must grow to a settled Beam about the Family Disputes, if you are not interrupted by some Orders from Europe. I really am unhappy about the future arrangement. The Eldest Son was what you knew him, and still is amiable; but distress and weakness and the native genius of the Mahometan have brought him to be a very dangerous Subject. And yet the mild Character of the Family prevents Mischief. I will write you again before the course is directed out of sight of Land. In the meantime I call down the Spirits of Happiness, Prosperity and Friendship to protect you.

Your ever devoted: J.<sup>O</sup> M.<sup>C</sup> pherson.<sup>1</sup>

As John Macpherson and his dependent friend Alexander Macaulay were later close acquaintances of the Grand Duke Leopold of Tuscany, the line of a future kinsman of Macaulay's about the Duke's <sup>predecessors</sup> ~~ancestors~~ springs readily to mind: "and even the ranks of Tuscany could scarce forbear to cheer."<sup>2</sup> Macpherson's narcissism knew no bounds. The idea of the hard-headed ranks of Durbar adventurers and members of the Madras 'majority' cheering him as a conquering Horatius is incredible. He left India without even coming to terms with his future ally Paul Benfield, upon whom he shifted

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1. B.M. Add. MSS. 29138, ff. 176-179v., John Macpherson to W. Hastings, 7 February 1777.

2. Lord Macaulay, Lays of Ancient Rome, Horatius, lx.

the entire blame for the Madras revolt, by assuring Hastings (in his letter of 8th January) that "Mr. Benfield was the active mover of the Iniquity." But John Macpherson was cock-a-hoop. Nearly nine years before he had left India in the Lioness as an untried young opportunist, with secret orders from the Nawab. Now, he was returning for the second time, again in the Lioness, and again with secret orders from the Nawab; but on this occasion he thought he had left his affairs in the hands of the most powerful caretaker in India, the Governor-General himself. This time the Nawab would not be allowed to forget his absent agent - everything had been organised. But when John Macpherson reached the Cape of Good Hope his confidence was badly jolted. He gave his views in a letter he sent to Hastings from that place on 13th April 1777. He wrote:

"On the tenth of this month I arrived here after a happy voyage from Land to Land. Sir Edward Vernon in the Rippon man-of-war and the Princess Royal Indiaman had just sailed for India two days before our arrival. The broken intelligence from England which I was able to pick up after their departure has been sufficient to strike me with astonishment and concern. A Danish ship, Capt.<sup>n</sup> Davidson, was just sailing for Tranquebar; by her I have written you a short Letter.

I do not remember that any Event ever affected my mind so much as the account of your Proxy Resignation, and yet I cannot think M.<sup>o</sup> L[eanes] erroneous. Surely the Chapter of Accidents in your favour must have been supposed possible, and a suitable security arranged. But I am lost

in conjecture, wonder and thought, that have wearied and depressed all my Political Reason and Fortitude. Capt.<sup>n</sup> Mairs, who left England the 1st of January, informs me only of the Event, but can clear it up no further than that all your Friends are enraged, and loud in their Complaint. I find that an Express came by Sir Ed.<sup>d</sup> Vernon's Ship addressed to me or, in my absence, to Richard Sn. I have even received a note from the Bearer, Macintosh, which he left here, and was to be sent by another Ship to Madrass. I likewise saw a note to the Mayor of this Place from John Stew<sup>2</sup>art, informing him that he is restored and coming out. What contradiction is this? Where can rest the Importance of Dispatches now? Why should he come out for the Lion's mouth?

I hear from Mairs, who is intimate with our Friends, that the Son of Coll Macleane was coming out likewise towards the end of the Season. This is curious too! Well, in my uncertainty what can I say to you? I hear, by report, that I am likewise restored to the Service - the Service! D<sup>am</sup>n Seize, as it must, the whole. My Indian views I forever give up.

1. William Macintosh (fl. 1745-1798), born in the West Indies, the son of a Highland Scottish father and a Creole mother. He was a scoundrel and imposter, and had been employed on Lauchlin Maclean's West Indian plantations as an overseer of Negro slave labourers. James Macpherson told Hastings that he had introduced Macintosh to Maclean (B.M. Add. MSS. 29141, f. 342v., 30 August 1778). It was not only a mendacious but a bad recommendation, because Macintosh defected to Francis soon after reaching Calcutta. For Macintosh see Maclean (1728-1773), passim, and Joseph Price, Some Observations and Remarks on a late Publication entitled 'Travels in Europe, Asia and Africa', London, 1782/3.
2. John Stewart was not restored to his post as Judge Advocate General of Bengal, which was given to John (later Sir John) Day on 23rd November 1776. Stewart was appointed instead to the Board of Trade in Calcutta, but died in 1778 on his way out to India. His restoration had been one of the terms agreed for Hastings's resignation in October 1776 by Robinson and Maclean, (see Maclean (1773-1778), p. 151).

On Earth you were the only man equal to the charge of India. I now see clearly that the whole concern must go to ruin if you leave the Chair. All the Country Powers with whom your name and experience had such weight will look elsewhere, and not to the English. A war with France cannot be distant, and I truly believe that India will be mismanaged like the other wing of the Empire.

There is but one ray of light which breaks in on me; that is that you should not give up the Government till an arrangement is made for some Security to the Public. If C[laudin] is so ill that he cannot attend business with a prospect of being able to manage it long, and especially if he is not alive, it will be impossible for you in any Duty to the Public to leave the Chair. Your appointment is from Parliament, nor can a Resignation by Proxy incapacitate you, if you chuse to persevere.

There is a vacancy for Wheeler [sic], who is coming out: therefore there can be no injury to him. There is, besides, a Duty you owe your Friends, who must be ruined in Bengal in case of your leaving them to the mercy of their opponents. How easy will it be for you to adhere to the Spirit of your Resignation, and yet continue longer in the Chair. This is certainly one of the most nice conjectures that your Conduct can be involved in. There is one leading Principle which, I think, will determine you, and your wanted Fortitude of Mind will not, I am certain, yield to any little Punctilio of Delicacy. It is this: if your own Soul assures you that you can do more good to the Public by Staying longer you will Stay if possible. Of the Possibility and the Legality I have no doubt; for till the volition of Resignation to the Co. (a deputy Employer) is confirmed by the positive act, the mere tender of volition is no exclusion. You were appointed by Act of Parliament. There is no clause

in that Act empowering you to resign the appoint.<sup>t</sup> to the Company, or by Proxy.

I am truly happy to find that the voice of the Public is full in favour of the [Bengal] Judges. Capt. Mairs tells me that Sir E. Impey is highly applauded and that the Publication of the Trial of Nundoomar has silenced the malevolence of Party.

I had written you a long volume at sea. I could not write you from Madrass in reply to your most affectionate and estimable Letter of the 17th January, for I wished to give you a decided account of my Conduct, and the Objects of my Return. It was night before I left the Durbar, and the next morning I was far out to sea. My part was fully and well managed, and I returned with the happy conviction of my being able, on my arrival in England, to do great things for us all. I am charged with a confidential measure that must please the K[ing], and which will do more credit to the Minister than any one arrangement that could come from India. You was to have heard all after my departure from the Fountain-head. Besides, the whole aim of my charge and Letters to all sides was to impress what you would wish, and what my own Heart and Knowledge told me in your Favour. I trust in God I am not too late. Do you but continue seven months after you receive this Letter. I cannot be more explicit. Farewell my friend. If you continue your charge of affairs I shall be happier. The business of my days and the thoughts of my nights will be to make your merits known to obtain your Support. If you return my Happiness will not be lost, for I will often be with you."

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1. B.M. Add. MSS. 29138, ff. 318-322, John Macpherson to W. Hastings, 10 April 1777.

Although Professor Dodwell only referred to this letter in passing, he gave the impression that he believed Macpherson's concern over Macleane's proxy resignation was based on genuine sympathy for Hastings's predicament.<sup>1</sup> This would seem to be an over-favourable view of Macpherson's character and motives. It is much more likely that Macpherson was concerned because his carefully planned arrangements had been put in jeopardy. If Hastings confirmed Macleane's act of resignation, it would mean that the Nawab would place his trust in a new Governor-General, probably General Clavering, and John Macpherson, having no friends in Clavering's circle, would once again find himself ignored by the Nawab. Hence, the angry outburst in the middle of the letter, and the advice which followed. Macpherson wanted Hastings to hold on to the Chair for another seven months at least - until, in fact, he arrived home and had discovered the full facts. Once he had seen his friend James Macpherson and had a thorough understanding of the situation he could review his relationship with Hastings with some confidence. Meanwhile, he was worried because Macleane, instead of being at the Cape to meet him, had not yet left England; because Stewart, the Bengal Secretary, had been restored to the Company's service in Bengal; and, what alarmed him most of all, because he had heard rumours, which proved unfounded, that he too had been restored to the Company's service. He made not the slightest attempt

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1. Dodwell, p. 56.

to disguise his anger on this score. The last thing he wanted was to be restored to his old post of Company Writer. That was an insult. Indeed, John Macpherson seemed so anxious to learn what had been happening in England that, instead of waiting until the Lioness docked at Gravesend, he disembarked at Dover on 21st July 1777;<sup>1</sup> exactly five weeks after Macleane had taken a packet boat from there to Calais in the first leg of his journey to India by the short route via Suez.<sup>2</sup>

There is no record available to show what was discussed when the two Macphersons were re-united in London, but John lived at No. 9 Manchester Buildings with his friend James, who would certainly have put him in the picture immediately, by telling him what had happened since Macleane had handed in Hastings's resignation in the previous October. Macleane's right to act on behalf of Hastings has been the subject of much debate, but, apart from written credentials and instructions in his possession, he was supported by the verbal testimonies of George Vansittart and John Stewart. The fact that the instructions were not specific and were based on discretionary powers,<sup>3</sup> allowed Hastings to disavow his agent's act, and it also gave Hastings's supporters a loophole for challenging the validity of the resignation, when they heard what

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1. I.O.L., Marine Records 463, Log of the Lioness.

2. Macleane (1773-1778), p. 172.

3. *ibid.*, p. 144, n. 1, and pp. 212-214 (App. 3) - Warren Hastings's Instructions to his agents, quoted in full.



Macleane had done.

Governor Johnstone used the situation for a fierce attack on the Directors for "yielding to the influence of the Ministry"<sup>1</sup> at a Special Meeting of the Court of Proprietors in November, but he was defeated when the issue was taken to the vote. Johnstone, however, had been moved more by a desire to embarrass the government than to help Hastings, whose closest friends, including Sullivan, had at first been pleased with the result of Macleane's negotiations. Both their own and Macleane's attitude had changed, however, when they learned at the beginning of November that Clavering, the Second in Council at Bengal, but not Hastings, was to receive a knighthood.<sup>2</sup> The award of this honour had nothing to do with the conflict in Calcutta, but it sent Lauchlin Macleane, John Stewart and William Macintosh post-haste to Portsmouth, where Macintosh was put on board the Rippon with an urgent dispatch to Hastings telling him not to resign.<sup>3</sup> Macintosh also carried a message for John Macpherson, which, as John said in his letter, he picked up at the Cape of Good Hope. With the warning dispatched, Macleane played the whole matter down, even at the Special Meeting when

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1. Pub. Adv., 22 November 1776, Report of the Special Meeting of the General Court on 20 November 1776.

2. B.M. Add. MSS. 29138, f. 54, L. Sullivan to W. Hastings, 23 December 1776.

3. Gleig, Vol. 2, p. 97 (letter of L. Macleane & J. Stewart to W. Hastings (by bearer W. Macintosh), dated 13 November 1776, printed in full).

he was attacked by Johnstone, and he turned his attention to the affairs of his other principal, the Nawab.

With Hastings's affairs in abeyance, James Macpherson found no embarrassment in assisting Macleane in his efforts on behalf of the Nawab. On the contrary, James Macpherson, who had played such a dubious part in Hastings's "resignation", merely continued to reflect the views of his ministerial employers, who, from December 1776, began to press the Company to modify its policy over Tanjore: <sup>1</sup> as a means of re-establishing some goodwill in the Carnatic until the question of its future could be decided when the Regulating Act and the Company's Charter came up for revision. When the Company showed signs of resisting ministerial pressure, Macleane sent North <sup>2</sup> a long statement of the Nawab's case, and received some sort of assurance that Tanjore would be restored to the Nawab. In February 1777, the Company's Committee of Correspondence considered and rejected certain propositions on the Carnatic which had ministerial backing, and in March they were still obdurate on the matter. <sup>3</sup>

Macleane himself probably hoped that he would be sent out to Madras as a Commissioner - or "Hindustan Minister", to recall John Macpherson's term - to deal with the

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1. B.M. Add. MSS. 29138, f. 17v., George Vansittart to W. Hastings, 17 December 1776.

2. Transcribed in full in Macleane (1773-1778), App. 2, pp. 204-212.

3. See Macleane (1773-1778), p. 153 et seq.

Carnatic problems, including, of course, the Nawab's grievances, but he had been very cautious in letting the Company know that he was employed by the Nawab. He was especially guarded in his handling of the press campaign in the Nawab's interest, which opened in the Public Advertiser in January 1777. He was assisted in this field by James Macpherson and Hugh Macaulay-Boyd.<sup>1</sup>

Between January and March 1777 the Nawab's cause was supported by a series of five unsigned "Tanjore Letters"<sup>2</sup> (probably the work of Maclean), two letters signed "Hindustanus"<sup>3</sup> (undoubtedly the work of Macpherson), and single letters signed "Pondicherry"<sup>4</sup>, "Le Bourdonnais"<sup>5</sup> and "A Proprietor"<sup>6</sup> (probably the work of Macaulay-Boyd). And, in the same period, the letters to the press were backed up by two

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1. Hugh Macaulay-Boyd, né Macaulay (1746-1794), second son of Dr. Alexander Macaulay, K.C., M.P. for Thomastown in the Irish Parliament, whose grandfather, Aulay Macaulay, was a native of South Uist. Hugh Macaulay (but not his elder brother Alexander, see above, p. 206, n. 1) assumed the additional surname of Boyd on the death of his maternal grandfather, Colonel Hugh Boyd of Ballycastle, Co. Antrim, in 1765. A year later Hugh Macaulay-Boyd settled in London in order to study law at the Middle Temple. From 1768 to 1780 he wrote many letters to the press under various signatures (see L. D. Campbell, Miscellaneous Works of Hugh Boyd, 2 Vols., London, 1800). In 1781, as a protégé of Lord Macartney, he went out to India; and eventually became Resident at Kandy in Ceylon. He was known to both the Macphersons.
  2. Tanjore Letter No. 1 (Pub. Adv., 24.1.1777); No. 2 (ibid., 27.1.1777); No. 3 (ibid., 28.1.1777); No. 4 (ibid., 29.1.1777); and No. 5 (ibid., 30.1.1777).
  3. ibid., 10.2.1777, and 11.2.1777.
  4. ibid., 13.2.1777.
  5. ibid., 3.3.1777.
  6. ibid., 25.3.1777.

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 anonymous pamphlets, one by Macpherson, the other by Macaulay-Boyd, which were based  
 on information supplied by Maclean. These pamphlets and copies of the letters to  
 the press were sent by Robinson to the King on North's orders. 3 Any effect they might  
 have had was, however, confused by the receipt of the first news in March 1777 of  
 Pigot's arrest and deposition. This not only interrupted the ministry's negotiations  
 with the Company, but also rallied the supporters of Pigot in the Company and the  
 Parliamentary opposition. 4 Governor Johnstone, supporting Admiral Hugh Pigot (the  
 Governor's brother), a member of the Rockingham group, now turned against Hastings  
 and, of course, the Nawab, who was immediately accused of conspiring against Lord  
 Pigot. On 26th March 1777 a General Court, which had been demanded by Governor  
 Johnstone, Admiral Pigot and seven others, met to discuss the startling news. Two

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1. James Macpherson, A Letter from Mohammed Ali Chan, Nabob of Arcot, to the Court of Directors, to which is annexed a State of Facts relative to Tanjore, with an Appendix of Original Papers, London, 30 January 1777. (Although published anonymously it is provably the work of James Macpherson, see Macpherson MSS./1, 31/18). The only other pamphlet on Indian affairs which can be ascribed to his authorship is James Macpherson, The History and Management of the East India Company from its commencement to the present time, London, 1779. This was attacked by "Candid" (William Julius Mickle) in his Examination of the Reasons for depriving the East India Company of its Charter, London, 1779; (see Halkett & Laing's Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous English Literature, Vol. 1, London, 1926).
  2. Hugh Macaulay-Boyd, Original Papers relative to Tanjore, London, 22 March 1777. For proof of authorship see L. D. Campbell, Miscellaneous Works of Hugh Boyd, London, 1800, Vol. 1, p. 208.
  3. Corres. of King George III, ed. Sir J. W. Fortescue, London, 1927, Vol. 3, p. 433 et seq.
  4. Hugh Pigot (1722-1792), younger brother of George Pigot, Lord Pigot. He was M.P. for Penryn (1768-74); and for Bridgnorth (1778-84).

days earlier, a Committee of the Directors had been convened to examine the anonymous pamphlets written by James Macpherson and Hugh Macaulay-Boyd, and they had decided that they were the work of Lauchlin Macleane. At the meeting of the General Court, which was crowded by angry Proprietors, great indignation was expressed at the pamphlets inspired by Macleane, and he was attacked by Governor Johnstone and an Irish Proprietor named Keane Fitzgerald, who demanded his dismissal from the Company's service. Macleane, who had in fact resigned before he left India so that he could plead for re-instatement on new terms, defended himself in a well-argued plea for an investigation before hasty measure were adopted, and he was supported by some of the ministerialist Directors, but the meeting was swayed by Lord Pigot's friends. All the ministerial supporters could do was to demand a ballot to give people time for second thoughts, and this was arranged for 31st March.

Before the ballot took place, however, the Directors condemned the pamphlets in a special advertisement in the press. A day later, on 29th March, Macleane

retaliated with his own advertisement, in which he admitted furnishing the material

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1. Pub. Adv., 28 March 1777, Report of the General Court held on 26 March 1777.
  2. ibid., 28 March 1777. Advertisement issued by East India Company, quoted in full in Macleane (1773-1778), App. 4A, pp. 214-215.
  3. ibid., 29 March 1777. Advertisement issued by Lauchlin Macleane, quoted in full in Macleane (1773-1778), App. 4B, pp. 215-216.

for the pamphlets, and announced his occupation as "Agent for the Nabob of Arcot"; but he never disclosed the identities of the authors of the pamphlets, and so James Macpherson escaped the censure of his old superior Johnstone and the Pigot faction. John Macpherson was not as lucky. He was not attacked by Johnstone personally, but the public were reminded of the part he had played in the Madras revolt by John Lind<sup>1</sup> in a pamphlet entitled A Defence of Lord Pigot.<sup>2</sup> John, of course, had taken measures to disassociate himself from the conspiracy, but neither Macleane nor his opponents yet knew this. As far as politicians in London were concerned, John Macpherson had been dismissed from the Company's service by Pigot, and had taken revenge on him by helping to organise his deposition. Macleane decided to avoid the punishment which

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1. John Lind (c. 1738-1781), who registered his pedigree in Edinburgh (see L.O., 1-G/131-134), was the son of the Rev. Dr. Charles Lind of Colchester, and grandson of Adam Lind, merchant, of Edinburgh. John Lind's early career was that of chaplain to the British Embassy at Constantinople, but he was better known for the pamphlets he wrote as the diplomatic agent in London of Stanislaus Poniatowski, King of Poland. For Lind's career, see D. B. Horn, British Public Opinion and the First Partition of Poland, London & Edinburgh, 1945, pp. 20-33 et seq.; and Zofia Libiszowska, Misja Polska w Londynie w Latach 1769-1795, in Prace Wydziału II - Nauk Historycznych i Społecznych Nr. 64 (Łódzkie Towarzystwo Naukowe), Łódź, 1966, pp. 30-32 et seq.
  2. This pamphlet was dated "1777", but from internal evidence, its date of publication can be narrowed to the period - 1st April to 22nd May 1777. Part of the pamphlet (App. I, p. 48 et seq.) was devoted to a full transcript of John Macpherson's Memorial to the Nawab of Arcot, 1771 (which appears in this thesis as Appendix 5). John Macpherson's Memorial was also printed in full in the Third Report of the Select Committee 1782 (see Reports from Committees of the House of Commons, Vol. 5, p. 641 et seq.).
  3. B.M. Add. MSS. 29138, f. 99, L. Macleane to W. Hastings, 4 January 1777. "The King is much provoked at the attack upon Government by the dismissal of Mr. John Macpherson."

Macpherson had received from Pigot. Having shown his hand publicly Macleane forestalled notice of dismissal by notifying the Company on 31st March, the day appointed for the ballot, that he abandoned all claims to re-instatement as a Company <sup>1</sup> servant.

When the ballot was held on 31st March the Pigot party won a victory over the ministerial elements, by rejecting certain proposals made by Robinson for a settlement <sup>2</sup> in Madras. Warned by this result, Robinson probably decided to avoid unnecessary conflict, and probably ordered James Macpherson to publish no more inflammatory articles on the problems of the Carnatic. If this was so - and there were few pro-ministry letters in the press between April and June - then James was probably very glad to obey Robinson. John Macpherson had been attacked by the Pigot party, and James probably wished to wait until his friend returned from India before drawing further attention to himself or John. In any case, Macleane was now completely free to espouse the Nawab's cause openly, and he willingly assumed the responsibility for publishing items in favour of the Nawab, including a pamphlet, <sup>3</sup> which he acknowledged

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1. I.O.L., Court Book 85, p. 675, 31 March 1777.
  2. Pub. Adv., 4 April 1777, Report of "A Proprietor".
  3. Lauchlin Macleane, An Impartial View of the Origin and Progress of the Present Disputes in the East India Company, relative to Mahomed Ally Khan, Nabob of Arcot, and Tuljagee, Raja of Tanjore: To which are annexed Observations on Mohamed Ally Khan's Letter to the Court of Directors, London & Edinburgh, 1777.

as the entire work of his own pen. Although working separately and by different means, Macleane and Robinson were both resisted by the Pigot party, whose leaders demanded the re-instatement of Lord Pigot as Governor of Madras, and the punishment of the "majority".

By the middle of April, Robinson had managed to work out the basis for compromise, whereby Pigot was to be re-instated but recalled immediately, and measures were to be considered for supporting the just claims and rights of the Nawab. At a General Court on 23rd April these propositions were placed before the Proprietors, who asked for an adjournment until 7th May so that everyone had a chance to think

<sup>1</sup> about them. When the General Court reconvened on 7th May, more than 700 Proprietors

were present, and a <sup>2</sup> great battle was fought. The ministry called out their followers

<sup>3</sup> from all over the country, and they were supported by the Directors' "Household Troops", the Company opposition group led by Laurence Sullivan, the associates of Lauchlin Macleane, and the friends of the Madras 'majority'. After a very long meeting, and many speeches, the debate ended with a demand for a ballot, which was held two days later, and resulted in Robinson's propositions being accepted by a

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1. Pub. Adv., 25 April 1777, Report of Quarterly General Court of 23 April 1777.

2. ibid., 9 May 1777, Report of Special General Court of 7 May 1777.

3. Parl. Hist., Vol. 19, p. 276.



decisive majority. George III was delighted. The result, he thought, "must give pleasure to Lord North as it fairly gives him ground to keep that unpleasant business out of Parliament." He was wrong.

Angered by the ministerial victory in India House, the Pigot party carried the matter into Parliament, and made it the subject of a full-scale debate in the Commons

on 22nd May. Admiral Hugh Pigot was joined by Governor George Johnstone, Edmund Burke and Charles James Fox in making passionate speeches in defence of his brother, and Thomas Townshend abused Lauchlin Maclean, "who ... as soon as he had effected the Nabob's business by the destruction of Lord Pigot, was to return back as

Ambassador from the King of Great Britain to the Nabob." Burke suggested that Hastings had avoided recall because he had "the Nabob of Arcot for his friend; a

most powerful friend in the Court and Ministry of England," and this underlined a point made by Townshend: that the man acting as the Nabob's agent, Maclean, was

also the agent of "Mr. Hastings, the avowed enemy of Lord Pigot." The weight of oratory was on the opposition side, but Lord North calmly scouted their condemnation

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1. B.M. Add. MSS. 37833, f. 198, George III to John Robinson, 9 May 1777.

2. Parl. Hist., Vol. 19, pp. 276-279.

3. *ibid.*, loc. cit., (printed Sutherland, p. 325).

4. Parl. Hist., Vol. 19, pp. 276-279.

5. *ibid.*, loc. cit.

of the ministry, the Nawab, Hastings, and Macleane, and when the opposition moved that the papers concerning Lord Pigot's arrest and recall should be brought before the Commons, they were defeated by the ministry. The opposition then threatened to revive the controversy in the next session of Parliament, but the issue was, in fact, closed.

It was, in a way, a minor triumph for Macleane, but the cost of achieving it had been great. He had broken with the Company permanently, he had failed to revindicate Tanjore for the Nawab, and worst of all, he had reinforced the growing belief that the Nawab exerted a corrupt influence over the ministry, and that Hastings, as an ally of the Nawab's, was associated with corrupt forces.<sup>1</sup> From this belief grew a myth which the Parliamentary opposition was to exploit for many years. Macleane could be held primarily responsible for inveigling Hastings into this position, and causing so much harm to his reputation, but John Macpherson was equally, if not more, to blame, as events discussed in previous chapters have shown.

On 14th May 1777, Laurence Sullivan told Hastings: "Maclean [<sup>sic</sup>] sets off viâ Suez in a few days - the Nabob owes him much," but several matters delayed him. He was short of money for the journey out to India, but this he raised by drawing bills

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1. Sutherland, p. 323.

2. B.M. Add. MSS. 29138, f. 409, L. Sullivan to W. Hastings, 14 May 1777.

for over £9,000 on John Macpherson, leaving Macpherson the job of extracting repayment

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from the Nawab. And he also had to wait for the resolutions passed at the General Court on 9th May to be transformed into detailed plans for dealing with the complicated problem of first reinstating Pigot as Governor, and then recalling him. What is more, the Directors had also insisted that the names of other Company servants and conspirators, including that of Paul Benfield, should be added to those of the Madras 'majority', who were being recalled to answer for their rebellious conduct. In their place, a new Madras Council was named, with Pigot as interim Governor until he was replaced by Thomas Rumbold, the new Second in Council.

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3  
On 13th June, John Whitehill, the new Fourth in Council, was sent overland to Madras to announce the changes before Rumbold arrived. The Pigot party came to hear of this arrangement at the end of May, and it aroused their suspicions. On 4th June Admiral Pigot and Governor Johnstone obtained permission to send out copies of the

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1. The Nawab eventually accepted bills drawn by Lauchlin Maclean on John Macpherson dated 24 July 1777 and 25 August 1777 to the total value of 23,217 Pagodas (£9,286) - see Macpherson MSS./1, 175/26, Memorandum relative to Col. Maclean's bills, u.d. [but certainly post-1777]. The acknowledgement of payment made by John Macpherson in the Memorandum was contradicted in The Case of Sir John Macpherson, Baronet, ... prepared by Friends, London, 1808, pp. 72-73. The figures quoted are the same, but the writer asserted that (in 1808) "the balance together with the interest remains still due." The writer was presumably one of Macpherson's "Friends", or "Friends" was a plural pseudonym for one person, Macpherson himself.
  2. See Maclean (1773-1778), pp. 171-172.
  3. John Whitehill (dates unknown), joined the Company's service as a Writer in 1752, and had been Chief at Masulipatam in 1773. He was Provisional Governor of Madras in 1777-1778 and 1780. His niece was Elizabeth Draper (see Appendix 3).

orders for Lord Pigot's release and re-instatement by their own nominee, and two days later it was agreed that William Burke, kinsman of Edmund and onetime friend of Macleane, should be the nominee.

Macleane, in his turn, heard of Burke's nomination, and hurriedly completed his arrangements for his departure. On 14th June, the day after Whitehill left for Madras, he rushed down to Dover and just succeeded in forestalling Burke, who was

hard on his heels, by hiring the only packet boat available. Racing neck and neck, Whitehill, Macleane and Burke, rushed across Europe. Macleane caught Whitehill up

at Suez, and they both arrived at Madras in the same ship, after making the journey in the record times of 78 and 79 days respectively.

When they disembarked they found that they had hurried in vain, because Lord Pigot was beyond recall. He had died of fever and liver congestion as a prisoner on 11th May 1777, and Whitehill, in the absence of the senior members of the new Council, who were still making

1. William Burke (1729-1798), son of John Burke, barrister at law; and kinsman of the famous Edmund Burke. He was M.P. for Great Bedwyn 1766-1774. For his earlier association with Lauchlin Macleane see: L. S. Sutherland and J. A. Woods, The East India Speculations of William Burke, in Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society, Vol. XI (1966), Part VII, pp. 183-216. For Burke's activities as agent of the Rajah of Tanjore, see B.M. Add. MSS. 39856, Entry Book of Correspondence relative to the Kingdom of Tanjore: 1777-1780, (Corres.: Tuljā-  
raja Bhonsla, Rāma-Pratapa, and William Burke).
2. I.O.L., MSS. EUR. D. 18, f. 493, Christopher D'Oyly to Philip Francis, 9 July 1777.
3. See Macleane (1773-1778), p. 172. Macleane's time was beaten 5 years later. In a letter William Digges La Touche sent Hastings on 5th July 1782, he reported: "Last advices from England were received here from thence in 62 days." (B.M. Add. MSS. 29155, f. 36).

arrangements for their departure from London, found himself the Provisional Governor of Madras, with a host of problems arising out of the Pigot scandal to settle. The news of what had happened in Madras did not begin to trickle back to England until later in 1777. The same applied to the news of events in Bengal. On the day Macleane left England, Hastings in Calcutta received from Macleane's messenger, William Macintosh (who had transferred from the Rippon to a faster ship in order to get ahead of the official dispatches), the advice not to resign. Four days later the Rippon itself arrived, and the Supreme Council of Bengal was split into two equal parties. Clavering, supported by Francis, tried to assume office as the new

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1. Before Whitehill's arrival the Coroner in charge of the inquest on Lord Pigot had drawn the jury's attention to the following points; (i) that Pigot had died in confinement; (ii) that his death had been occasioned by rigorous treatment; (iii) that the persons responsible should be identified; (iv) that the major question was the legality or illegality of Pigot's confinement. On 30th July 1777, the jury found a verdict of "Wilful Murder" against Stratton, Brooke, Palmer, Jourdan, Mackay, and Fletcher (who was already dead), the members of the Madras 'majority'; and Stuart, Edington, Lysaght, and Horne; the officers concerned in Pigot's arrest. The Coroner did nothing until Whitehill arrived. On 24th September 1777 Whitehill was notified, and the accused were taken into custody, and held until 5th October, when they were released on bail. Their trial, however, had started on 30th September, before Whitehill. He had immediately sent to Calcutta for advice of the Bengal Supreme Court. On 26th November, Whitehill read the Supreme Court's decision to the prisoners, who heard that the proceedings had been quashed because the Coroner had not been legally appointed, and that even if he had, there was insufficient material for indictments of either manslaughter or murder. The prisoners were discharged, but four of them, Stratton, Brooke, Floyer, and Mackay, faced further charges when they returned to England (see later). For the above events see Love, Vol. 3, pp. 115-119, and Sheffield Public Library MSS., The Diary of Sophia Pigot.
  2. Gleig, Vol. 2, p. 162, quoting W. Hastings to L. Sullivan, 29 June 1777.

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Governor-General; Hastings, supported by Barwell, refused to resign from his post. After a "convulsion of four days" the warring parties, on the advice of the Bengal Supreme Court, agreed to refer their respective claims to London.

By forcing a crisis, and then accepting the advice of the judges, Clavering not only put the whole issue of Hastings's resignation in abeyance, but also gave Hastings time to consider ways and means of disavowing Macleane's actions. Clavering's only triumph was his knighthood (with which he invested himself on 28th June 1777, the day he tried to assume power as Governor-General). On 30th August 1777, the day before Macleane and Whitehill docked in Madras, he died; and the old triumvirate was reduced to one member, Philip Francis. Inside a year three of Hastings's four main enemies, Monson and Clavering (of the Bengal triumvirate) and Pigot, had been killed by complaints contracted in and aggravated by the Indian climate.

Five weeks before Clavering's death, and five weeks after Macleane's departure from Dover, John Macpherson landed in England and undoubtedly learned all that had been happening in London from James Macpherson. His return was welcomed by Adam

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1. A. P. N. Muddiman, Governor General of a Day, in Bengal Past & Present, Vol. 1, (1907), quoted by A. Mervyn Davies, Warren Hastings, op. cit., p. 226. As Dr. Sutherland has pointed out: "Had an Act of Parliament reached India in 1777 instead of the outcome of an informal agreement it could not have been disobeyed and Hastings would have left India before the most crucial years of his tenure of office." (Sutherland, p. 316).

2. Macleane (1773-1778), p. 182 et seq.

Ferguson, who sent John the following letter on 9th August 1777:

"I had the pleasure of your Letter from Dover, and was extremely happy to hear you were arrived on British Ground. The other intimations in your letter, tho' very general, gave me likewise very great pleasure. I have waited with some impatience for your second letter from London, in which I hoped to find some time mentioned for your appearance in this Country [Scotland]. And this, I still hope, will be in your Power in this remiss time of Bussiness [sic]. You do not say whether you are come home for good and all, as John Bull says, or only for some special Bussiness. Nor do I know which to wish. There is certainly much Bussiness to be done relating to the Country you have left, and I am very glad there is such a person as yourself in the Way to be employed in it. I hope we shall meet before the whole of it is adjusted, and I will stretch all my Politics to show how much I wish you success.

We are so dispersed [sic] at Present that I have not seen either Jn.<sup>o</sup> Home, Carlyle, Dr. Robertson or Dr. Blair since I received your letter. Jn.<sup>o</sup> Home will certainly pass the greatest part of the Winter in London, but is here now till near Christenmas unless something particular requires him going away sooner. ...

I am extremely happy to find that you come home on the best terms with Col[one]l [James] Stuart. I saw a letter from his Brother Andrew lately to this purpose. How Politics may steer I know not, but this last I will venture to say is among the ablest and fairest men you can have a Connection with in this Countrey [sic].

I write mainly to put you in mind of me, and that I may hear more of you. My Wife and my five Children join in Respects. ...

Since writing the above I have received your last letter, and am extremely

happy to find you still think of coming [sic] here. If Mr. Charles Greville will be of the Party that will complete the pleasure.<sup>1</sup>"

Whatever business John Macpherson was attending to in London, he gave no time to writing letters to his great friend Warren Hastings. Apart from the fact that East Indian affairs received little or no notice between June and December 1777, either in the press or political circles, John's silence was an indication that he had been warned by James Macpherson to keep clear of all Indian business until news was received from India about Hastings's reaction to the news of Maclean's proxy resignation, and until Maclean sent word about the situation in Madras. After such a long absence abroad John was, of course, keen to see all his old friends and to revisit his native land, but he could have spared some little time to write to Hastings. John Macpherson did not visit Scotland until after 27th October 1777, because on that date Ferguson sent him the following letter:

"Your enclosing me a cover in your last letter was a sufficient hint that I ought to write to you. And you, perhaps, have not found out that it was directed to me instead of yourself; and I shall now turn it back to London to see what it will bring from thence. I did not want disposition to write even without this hint, and had sent a letter enclosed to Governor Johnstone; but from you not acknowledging it suspect the Governor has been out of town, and either not received it or not known

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1. B.U.L. MSS., Dc.1.77, Letter 5, Adam Ferguson to John Macpherson, 9 August 1777.



how to forward it. Moreover, Dr. Robertson told me about ten days ago that your Brother [Martin Macpherson], by a letter of his own from Skye, was coming [sic] here [to Edinburgh] in about a fortnight to meet you; and I have long flattered myself with the hopes of seeing you: circumstances which would have damped a much greater Ardour than mine in writing Letters, and prompted by a much greater collection of materials than this place and my situation affords. I have, however, now lost all hopes of seeing you for the Season, and procrastinate no longer.

Andrew Stuart told me you had taken a house in Parliament Street, but as he could not be positive [sic] and particular enough, I send this under cover to that Never-do-well James M.<sup>c</sup> Pherson. I suppose you are deeply and, I hope, successfully engaged in India bussiness [sic]. Not merely who shall be condemned or acquitted in late affairs, but what is to become of this Countrey [sic] in India for Century's [sic] to come. It is full time at least that this Subject were, in the newspaper style, on the Tapis, and there is no time fitter than when you are at London to aid with your Lights that reach not only to India, but to other Similar Scenes in the history of human affairs. My notion is that instead of making up the Suit here, the Taylors should be sent to take the Gentleman's measure on the Spot, and endeavour to fit him, and report on their return for the approbation or disapprobation [sic] of those it may concern. But I will not puzzle my brain with Projects.

Andrew Stuart is gone from here very earnest in his Brother's Cause, and very sensible of your Friendship, which I shall be very glad that both of you Cultivate. I have been much with John Home lately, and we were in hopes of being surprised by you. He will probably be soon in London. Your Friends Robertson and Blair made a long Journey into England, and I a

short one into Perthshire. My Wife has been in mighty distress [sic] in the Rheumatism [sic] for many Months past, but my Children - in Number five coming six - are in the most perfect Health and Vegetation. You are probably as Anxious as we are to have news from America, and I hope by this time more successfully. We are certainly under a necessity, at least for our own Credit, of giving that people if we can join them [in battle] a sound drubbing: but I protest that if we had news tomorrow that Howe had beat Washington and Burgoyne Arnold, the use I would make of it would be to leave America with Contempt, for it looks as if no Calamity would force them to Submission, and, if it did, their Submission is not worth haveing [sic]. Their whole resources for any Distant time to come will not pay the Army that keeps them in Submission. So, I am partial enough to Great Britain to wish them in the bottom of the Sea.

My Affectionate Respects to the Grevilles, who I hope will soon be in  
<sup>1</sup>  
 London."

With Governor Johnstone opposing all these concerned in the deposition of Pigot,  
<sup>2</sup>  
 including Andrew Stuart's brother James, who had actually arrested Pigot, it was unlikely that he would forward any letters to John Macpherson. Ferguson was obviously completely out of touch with politics, and he still displayed a naïvety about Indian affairs and John's part in them. He showed a much more realistic attitude to America, which was now occupying everybody's interest, but his strong

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1. E.U.L. MSS., Dc.1.77, Letter 6, Adam Ferguson to John Macpherson, 27 October 1777.

2. For Andrew Stuart's defence of his brother James, see above, p. 422, n. 2.

prejudice against the Americans must have made him an uneasy member of the confidential Commission which was sent to negotiate with them a year later.<sup>1</sup> He was also wrong in thinking that John Macpherson had abandoned the idea of visiting Scotland. John spent some in Scotland in November and December 1777 before returning to live with James in Manchester Buildings. Ferguson, writing from Edinburgh, sent a letter to John at that address on 23rd December 1777. He wrote:

"I this moment have the pleasure of your letter. ... My first Business will be to see [Macpherson of] Banchor, which, I hope, I shall before this letter is sent off. I will afterwards deliver your Message at Dalkeith. As to the letter you left for my perusal, perhaps the Silence you enjoin me would be the best Course, if it were practicable. In the first place<sup>2</sup> the thing speaks for itself, and I am very ostentatious of it. Mr. Wordie too I have made free with.

You were not gone 24 hours from hence when I had a Call for part of what that hopefull place you was to see has cost me. I chose to owe you, rather than the other person; and even ventured to put your Building scheme to some risk at least of Delay. I Delivered your Canes, and Mrs. Ferguson delivered your Muslins. I believe really that we are all vain of these marks of your Regard. The Principal [Dr. William Robertson], who is a great speech Maker, chose to expatiate on my part of the matter

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1. B.M. Add. MSS. 29140, f. 433v., John Macpherson to W. Hastings, 23 May 1778. "My friend Dr. Ferguson ... is gone the Confidential Man with the Commissions of America." See also Sketch of Ferguson, passim; and E.U.L. MSS., Dc.1.77, Letter 4, Adam Ferguson to John Macpherson, [1778].

2. unidentified.

and, without knowing the whole ground, said what is true - that if my own Son had returned to me in Prosperity I could not be made to feel it more Sensibly; and I, who am not a speech Maker, am nevertheless very glad he has furnished me with this.

My Blessing to the Grevilles. I hope to see you and them before Summer begins. In the meantime get some franks from them directed to yourself and inclose them to me. I shall write and send packets with less scruple, when they are not to be paid for.

I have had long Conferences with [Macpherson of] Banchor since the above was written, and been much occupied with him that I do not know what is doing by anybody else. I do not know what stir there is in the Nation in General, or if anybody be likely to move in this Country. I shall deliver your Message, half Joke half Earnest, to the Duke of Buccleugh [sic], and offer to make him Chief of the M<sup>c</sup>. Phersons. The best feather, if it were fixed in his cap, that is to be seen there. O thou  
1  
[-----], who will put us again in the Pasture which we had?"

John Macpherson had not visited Scotland for social reasons only, although his return there had given great pleasure to Adam Ferguson, who regarded his former pupil with almost fatherly affection. Ferguson, a notoriously bad correspondent and organiser, had been persuaded by John to carry on some negotiations and conferences  
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with Macpherson of Banchor, the elder brother of the Rev. Robert Macpherson, whom

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1. E.U.L. MSS., Dc.1.77, Letter 7, Adam Ferguson to John Macpherson, 23 December 1777.
  2. Andrew Macpherson of Banchor (1720-1780), eldest son of John Macpherson of Banchor, who surrendered the arms of the Macphersons who had served in the Jacobite army to Brigadier Mordaunt in May 1746.

James Macpherson had supported in the fight for the Cluny lands at Aberarder.

Ferguson had also been persuaded to deliver a message to the Duke of Buccleuch, a<sup>1</sup> cousin of the Duke of Argyll, who had been engaged with Thomas Bradshaw and James Macpherson some years earlier in a political manoeuvre. From what happened in subsequent years this was clearly the beginning of James Macpherson's major effort to regain the whole of the forfeited Cluny estate. Both Macpherson of Banchar and the Duke of Buccleuch were drawn in to help with the business at the Scottish end; and John Macpherson had, on James's orders undoubtedly, used his visit to Scotland for arranging the preliminary moves.

John had also done what he could to render financial assistance to Ferguson, by lending him or guaranteeing him money for building improvements on the Professor's farm at Currie. In later years Ferguson had more to say about this help, but even in 1777 he was proud of the young Nabob who had returned "in Prosperity," and who brought back presents for his friends from India. Ferguson and Robertson were also grateful for the appointments John had secured for their relatives, the Burnetts and

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1. Henry Scott, 3rd Duke of Buccleuch, and 5th Duke of Queensberry (1746-1812). It could be assumed that he knew that James Macpherson had published a history which was not complimentary to his ancestor John Scott, Duke of Monmouth, or to the latter's mother Lucy Walter. This did not prevent him from being the friend of both James and John Macpherson. The Duke's descendant took a very different view (see Lord George Montagu-Douglas-Scott, Lucy Walter: Wife or Mistress, op. cit.)

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the Bruces, whom John had recommended for cadetships to Warren Hastings.

Hastings must have wondered why he had heard nothing from the man who had  
 pestered him so much in 1776, and had sworn undying friendship. Hearing nothing  
 from John Macpherson by 23rd November 1777, Hastings sent him the following letter:

"My last Letter was dated the 26th of July. With it I sent a Letter to  
 be delivered to Mr. Woodman containing my Request that he would shew you  
 all my Dispatches, to you my Confidential Friend, and I introduced him at  
 the same time to you by the same Title.

The same Packet enclosed an introductory Letter for you to Mr. Dunning,  
 expressed with the warmth peculiar to the generous Feelings of the  
 Writer. At that Time General Clavering was living, nor had I any  
 expectation of his Death, though it followed so soon after. The  
 Principle of my political Conduct was therefore very different from  
 what his Death occasioned, but the effect of both is precisely the same,  
 as you will have discovered by recollecting what I told you in that  
 Letter, and comparing it with what I have since written to Mr. Dunning,

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1. E.U.L. MSS., Do.1.77, Letters 3 and 5, Adam Ferguson to John Macpherson, 9 April 1775, and 9 August 1777.
  2. John Woodman (d. 1816), of Cleveland Row, London, and Ewell, Surrey, was married to Warren Hastings's only sister Anne (d. 1802). The first letter from John Macpherson to Woodman (for money) is dated 11/12 June 1778 (B.M. Add. MSS. 29141, f. 47).
  3. John Dunning (1731-1783), later (1782) Baron Ashburton. An outstanding advocate and close friend of Lord Shelburne, he was Solicitor-General 1768-1770. From 1768 to 1782 he was M.P. for Calne. Hastings had a special regard and trust for Dunning, and the letter he had sent him (to which he referred) contained a strong statement about Macleane's act of "resignation". At this date it went further in disavowing Macleane than he had gone elsewhere. Macleane died without knowing that Hastings had done this. The last letter Macleane could have received from Hastings mentioned the resignation, but it was very affectionate (see I.O.L., Cleveland (Ohio) Public Library MSS., Microfilm Roll 6, Wg 091.92/H2791T, W. Hastings to Lauchlin Macleane, 15 October 1777). This letter could have caught Macleane at the Cape at the end of November 1777.

and now to Mr. Woodman. This I consider as the close of my political Contests, as I have left myself no more to do in them than to receive aequa Mente whatever may be their Issue. ...

<sup>1</sup>  
Mr. Wheeler [sic] is not yet arrived, and the Season being so far advanced, I do not suppose that he will here before January, if so soon. I shall make a point of public Duty to be on quiet, if I cannot be on confidential Terms with him. ...

Adieu! Believe me most affectionately and truly yours: Warren Hastings.<sup>2</sup>

John may or may not have received Hastings's letter of 26th July 1777. If he did he made no mention of it in the letter he sent to Hastings on 31st January 1778. In this, the first message he sent his great friend for nine months (his last had been despatched from the Cape of Good Hope in April 1776, and he had sent nothing since), John Macpherson had little to say. Having opened with the words: "Should this find you in India, which I pray every auspicious Power it may,"<sup>3</sup> John immediately made a terse request for Hastings's attention to the bearer, who was a relation of the under Secretary of the Treasury, and that was all. As far as John Macpherson (and later James Macpherson) cared, Hastings had one value, and that was as the provider of places for their friends. Apart from this brief note John Macpherson did not bother

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1. Edward Wheeler filled the vacancy on the Bengal Supreme Council created by Monson's death. When he arrived in Calcutta, Wheeler first sided with Francis against Hastings, but later worked well with Hastings.

2. Dodwell, pp. 54-56.

3. B.M. Add. MSS. 29140, f. 57, John Macpherson to W. Hastings, 31 January 1778.

to write to Hastings again until 17th April 1778, by which time he could see, perhaps, the value of maintaining good relations with Hastings. He had, of course, warned him at a much earlier date that nothing much would be done in Indian affairs until May <sup>1</sup> 1778, and so his silence may not have seemed discourteous to Hastings. In his letter

John told Hastings:

"We have just received the news of Gen.<sup>1</sup> Clavering's Death. The whole Nation, Ministry and the Company will all be sorry if you have not followed the request I made you in my Last Letter from the Cape. I trust you still remain in your Government. If you have, you will have everything to your wish. I am very well with the Government, and have laboured with every zeal for my Friends.

By an extraordinary Effort I got Sullivan into the Direction. This goes by a Private hand. When Matters are settled after Maclean's arrival you shall have a volume from me. I have without Powers or Directions taken upon my whole Shoulders your whole Interest. I have removed all Prejudices, and offered to shew your private Letters to me to the Minister, to undeceive him in Every Respect.

Most fortunately the Correspondence of all your opponents was referred to my friend Fingal. In a word, if you have followed my last Ideas to you, everything will be as your utmost Expectations could wish. If you have resolved to return you are to be received well. Farewell my very Dear Friend, and may Heaven bestow its best Happiness of Life upon you. Mind me to Mr. Barwell. I have done him all the good in my Power. Sir E.

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1. See John's letter to Hastings of 7th February 1777, (p.452 above).



Impey is placed in the best light.

Yours ever affectionately: John M.<sup>c</sup> pherson

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This goes by Cadet Home, a Brother in Law of my very affectionate friend

Douglass Home. Should fate throw this young Gentleman to Bengal I

request your attention and regard to his Interests. J.M.P.

Macleane left India the 28 Sept.<sup>r</sup> last, and the Cape the 30th December.

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He is not yet arrived, and I am very anxious about him."

John Macpherson's claim that he had been responsible for Laurence Sullivan's return to power as a Director, at the Company's annual elections in April, could be discounted as a typical Macpherson boast. He had, however, been concerned with Sullivan since January 1777, or perhaps earlier, in talks concerning the Nawab's agency. When Macleane left for India in June 1777, Frederick Stuart, the worthless son of the Earl of Bute, was left behind as the Nawab's agent in England - at least in name. John Macpherson had referred to Frederick Stuart's role in letters he had sent to both James Macpherson and Warren Hastings. In December 1776 John had told

1. John Home, otherwise Hume (c. 1761-1815), whose parentage is not recorded on his cadet papers. He sailed for Bengal in the Mount Stuart on 19th May 1778, as a Cadet, H.E.I.C.S. He was promoted Ensign (21st October 1778), and Lieutenant (22nd October 1778) on Hastings's recommendation. Hastings was, therefore, willing to please the Macphersons by giving immediate attention to their friends. Home did not become a Captain until 1st June 1796. He was promoted Major (20th May 1800), and finally Lt. Colonel, 3rd Bengal Native Infantry (30th September 1803). His brother-in-law Douglass (or Douglas) Home has not been identified. The latter does not appear in the pedigree of the Earls of Home, who had not assumed the surname Douglas-Home at the time of John's letter. For John Home see N.A.M., Hodson Collection, Bengal Officers.
2. B.M. Add. MSS. 29140, ff. 279-280v., John Macpherson to W. Hastings, 17 April 1778. John was exactly one month wrong in his date for Macleane's departure from the Cape. Macleane left the Cape on 30th November 1777 (see later).

James that he understood Macleane's difficulties as the Nawab's agent, because he  
 "could not take another road but that of the Cocky Son of the Earl." In the same  
 month John informed Hastings that on his return to England he would co-operate with  
 Frederick Stuart in order to help the Nawab; and two months later, in a further  
 letter to Hastings, said that "Fred.<sup>k</sup> Stuart [was] to be agent in the absence of  
 M.<sup>c</sup> Macleane from England<sup>3</sup>." Stuart, who had earlier carried out a mission for Hastings,  
 had, it would seem, insinuated himself into the agency on the grounds of the alleged  
 influence of his family. Writing to his son Stephen in or about January 1778,  
 Laurence Sullivan wrote:

"I have this moment (in confidence)  
 learned the exact scheme of the Flints  
 as settled by Jacques with Cautious,  
 and now confirmed by Little on Job's  
 authority.

To wit: Double, Flint (or  
 Ambassador if practicable), thro' whom  
 all intercourse with The Friends or  
The Carcase is to pass, with a  
Measure of Twenty-two Shirts; Sharp

I have this moment (in confidence) learned  
 the exact scheme of the Agency as settled  
 by Laughlin Macleane with James Mackenzie-  
Stuart, and now confirmed by John  
Macpherson on The Nawab's authority.

To wit: Frederick Stuart, Agent (or  
 Ambassador if practicable), thro' whom all  
 intercourse with The Company or The  
Government is to pass, with a Salary of  
Four-Thousand Pounds; James Macpherson is

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1. See above, p. 426.
  2. See above, p. 439.
  3. See above, p. 453.

is the Noddy, with a Measure of  
<sup>1</sup>  
Twenty Shirts."

the Official Confidential Secretary with a  
<sup>1</sup>  
Salary of Two-Thousand Pounds."

This scheme was based undoubtedly on the presumption of Macleane's survival, and the continuing value of Frederick Stuart or his family's supposed influence. James Mackenzie-Stuart still had some prestige, but he had no influence with North or Robinson, who are not referred to in the plan, except by the vague allusion to "The Government". Macleane had been spoken of by John Macpherson, and by Thomas Townshend in Parliament, as the "Hindustan Minister" or "Ambassador from the King of Great Britain to the Nabob", but there is no evidence to show that he left for Madras with such a position. What Macleane actually did in Madras is uncertain.<sup>2</sup> In the three weeks he spent there in the autumn of 1777 he seemed to be chiefly occupied in preparing, with the Nawab, a petition to the King and to Parliament. He set sail from Madras in H.M.S. Swallow on 21st September 1777, having heard that Clavering was dead. As he was about to sail he sent Hastings a letter pledging himself to deliver the news to Lord North before the official dispatches reached him.<sup>3</sup> When the Swallow reached the Cape of Good Hope its masts had been damaged by storms. Rumbold, who

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1. Bod. MSS., MS. Eng. Hist. C. 269, f. 31, Laurence Sullivan to Stephen Sullivan [January 1778]. The key to Sullivan's code is given on ff. 1-3.

2. See Macleane (1773-1778), p. 180 et seq.

3. B.M. Add. MSS. 29139, ff. 163-163v., Lauchlin Macleane to W. Hastings, 21 September 1777.

was passing through the Cape on his way out to take over from Whitehill as Governor of Madras, reported that the Swallow left the Cape on 30th November 1777, and that the Captain did not intend to make an intermediate call at St. Helena.<sup>1</sup> That was the last that was heard of the Swallow, which was due to dock in England in February 1778. By 17th April 1778, when John Macpherson told Hastings that he was anxious about Macleane, the Swallow was two months overdue, and it was feared lost in the violent storm which had raged in the Bay of Biscay in February. By 5th May 1778 Laurence Sullivan was sure that "Poor Macleane is no more."<sup>2</sup> The principal agent of Warren Hastings and the Nawab of Arcot was dead.

The field was now completely clear for John Macpherson. The accident of Macleane's death at this particular time allowed him to envisage the possibility of using Hastings, who now looked as though he would retain the Governor-Generalship, for a future career in India. John Macpherson had already reached an understanding with Sullivan, Hastings's most trusted ally in England, who was now back in power in India House, and had a special interest in the Carnatic.<sup>3</sup> From a remark he had made

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1. B.M. Add. MSS. 29140, ff. 114-115, Sir Thomas Rumbold to W. Hastings, 12 February 1778.

2. *ibid.*, ff. 350-351, Laurence Sullivan to W. Hastings, 5 May 1778.

3. See Laurence Sullivan's letters to his son Stephen at the beginning and the end of 1778 (Bod. MSS., MS. Eng. Hist. C. 269, p. 26 et seq.; and MS. Eng. Hist. C. 270, pp. 39-42). See also Macleane (1773-1778), p. 188.

to Hastings, John had correctly estimated that future bargaining between the ministry and the Company would be over the details of the Regulating Act and the Company's Charter, both of which were soon due for renewal and revision. He had also made a shrewd guess that Hastings might be a major factor when the ministry and Company began to bargain over the details of the Act and the Charter. From May 1778, therefore, John Macpherson's first aim was to be on the best terms with the bargaining parties, the ministry and the Company, and to retain his special position as Hastings's confidential friend. His second aim was to control the Nawab's affairs. With Maclean dead, Frederick Stuart faded from the picture, and John Macpherson, in co-operation with James Macpherson (and later Nathaniel Wraxall), had no difficulty in assuming full control of the Nawab's agency. Everything began to work in the Macphersons' favour. Sullivan, the important Company man, had shown that he was willing to work with them; and Robinson, the important ministry man, who had long been on working terms with James, proved that he was well-disposed towards John as well.

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1. Nathaniel (later Sir Nathaniel William) Wraxall (1751-1831); was a Writer in the E.I.Co. in 1769; and Judge Advocate and Paymaster to the Guzerat Expedition in 1771-72. He was M.P. for Hindon (1780-84); for Ludgershall (1784-90); and for Wallingford (1790-94). He was created a baronet in 1813. For his part as joint-agent with James Macpherson to the Nawab of Arcot see The Historical and Posthumous Memoirs of Sir Nathaniel William Wraxall, ed. Henry B. Wheatley, London, 1884, Vol. 4, p. 91 et seq.

On 3rd May 1778 John Robinson wrote a letter in which he first gently chided John Macpherson for not keeping a dinner engagement, and then went on to say:

"I will endeavour to give you a call tomorrow in my way to Town, and I shall be glad if you will do me the Favor, with Dr. [William] Robertson and our Friend James [Macpherson], to eat your Mutton with me here next Sunday, for I shall be happy to spend a few hours with my namesake quietly and uninterruptedly here. I will also endeavour to get Bob<sup>1</sup> Adam to be of the party, if it is fixed, and John Home.

The Death of Clavering, and a resignation from Hastings will be most unfortunate, but until further Acco[un]ts are received it does not appear to me that any step can be taken by Government, and indeed I don't know now whether it may not be best to leave the Directors to manage their own way for a while, if the Country can be saved."<sup>2</sup>

One of the main reasons for the ministry's desire to get rid of Hastings, and to put General Sir John Clavering in his place, was the General's friendship with the King, and his brother Sir Thomas Clavering's<sup>3</sup> influence with a small group of powerful

1. Robert Adam (1728-1792), the Scottish architect.
2. Macpherson MSS./1, 23/7, John Robinson to John Macpherson, 3 May 1778. Robinson and Dr. William Robertson called each other "namesake", although their surnames were not the same. Writing to John Macpherson on 16th August 1780, William Robertson first recommended his youngest son David to John's attention (as he hoped David would join his elder brother James Robertson in the army), and then wrote: "Do you think that I might trouble my namesake at Sion-hill about such a matter. I request of you to think for me for a few minutes, and let me know the result of your meditations as soon as you can." (see *ibid.*, 33/3). The last sentence must have been drawn from Principal Robertson's repertoire as a tutor.
3. Sir Thomas Clavering (1719-1794), 7th Bart. of Axwell, Co. Durham. M.P. for St. Mawes (1753-54); for Shaftesbury (1754-60); and for Co. Durham (1768-90).

M.P.s. With General Clavering's death the ministry's fear of his family's influence vanished, and the Clavering faction were told that if they stopped attacking Hastings, then Hastings's friends would not oppose any proposal made by the Company to provide for the General's family.<sup>1</sup> The solution was accepted, and Robinson was free to devote himself to the drafting of a plan for a new settlement in India.<sup>2</sup> He was, as he told John Macpherson, pleased to leave the Company "to manage their own way for a while." Macpherson had tried, before the news of General Clavering's death reached England, to offset the reports sent home by Hastings's opponents. He offered to show North and Robinson all the private letters he had received from Hastings "in order to dispel the false impressions they had received of his earlier conduct."<sup>3</sup> The offer was not accepted, but it may have helped to reduce the ministry's suspicions about Hastings. John Macpherson, of course, exaggerated the part he had played in securing the ministry's new acceptance of Hastings, and he underplayed the factor which had had a decisive effect in conditioning their attitude: General Clavering's death. The letter John Macpherson wrote to Hastings on 23rd May displayed all his worst characteristics to the full. He wrote:

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1. Dodwell, p. 57.

2. Sutherland, p. 330, and pp. 337-341.

3. Dodwell, p. 57, loc. cit., and p. 484 above.

"From the day of my arrival in England, in the latter end of July '77, to this, I have constantly endeavoured to prepare for the Events which have been lately communicated to us from Bengal. I mean your non-Resignation and the Death of your Opponent. Nothing under Madness could have warranted your vacating your Government, and the Climate, ill-Humour, and Sickness of Clavering left him no chance of Recovery.

As well might you have retreated before the Jaws [of] a hungry Tyger, with arms in your hand, and left it to the winds to bind him from devouring you, as to have trusted the words of Ministers to restrain your Opponents. The ruin of yourself and of your Friends and the giving him the Power of mischief was the same. Here, then, the conduct of poor Maclean was both weak and unaccountable. To vacate for a man of so impracticable a Soul, and whose Sole pursuit on Earth was to seek your Destruction was folly! - if it was no worse! But your Folly would have been greater, had you submitted yourself and your Friends to such evident Ruin: and without a shadow [sic] of Advantage or Security. You have, I hope, learned a Lesson, which is never to be forgot, and which must demonstrate that Power is the best tie upon either the Faith of Ministers or the Gratitude of your Country. It is for your Honour that you have all along acted as a real Philosopher in your Administration, but it will not be to either your Honour or your Advantage to forfeit the Experience which you have gained.

There was one weapon which I found effectual in your Favour, in regard to your part of the Contest with your Opponents. I mean offering to produce your Private Correspondence with me, in which your mind appeared really as it felt in the combat with your rancorous Majority. My Readiness and Earnestness always prevented its being read, tho' if it had, it would do you credit.



My first Intimation of the Convulsion which followed the 19 June '77 was from Secretary Robinson at his own Table. He had only heard Mr. Francis's side of the Story. I told him to be more moderate unless he had a mind to give L.<sup>d</sup> North the additional weight of losing India, or unless he wished India and America to acknowledge one Congress. A violent and open Discussion followed, which gave me a clear view of what was intended. We parted in good Humour, for we are great Personal Friends. But that night I sent Mr. Home, my very particular Friend, to L.<sup>d</sup> Bute's. ... L.<sup>d</sup> Bute sent me positive assurances of Friendship. ... I besides sent to L.<sup>d</sup> Mansfield, and got my Friends, the Grevilles, to work with the Bedford People. Then I went to Old Sullivan, who entirely owes his Seat in the Direction to my exertion, and I told him my apprehensions. He went and assured Mr. Dun<sup>n</sup>g. In short: we had our Troops in motion in two Days. I then went to Mr. Robinson and told him that I was ready to meet him upon your ground. I further told him that I should give my Reasons first to Lord North for this opposition. This prevented any hasty or violent order of Parliament. A few days after, Sir Edward Hughes arrived with the Egmont &c. under convoy, and with Clavering's Family aboard. ... The ground was then clear, and finding that Sir Edward Hughes had a packet for Mr. Woodman, I instantly sent Mr. Woodman word. Before then we had no communication with each other, ... your Letters of Introduction of July had not arrived. At length I got yours of the 23 Novem<sup>r</sup> last. ... Having possession of more Lights my fears subsided, and my Confidence rose.

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1. Sir Edward Hughes brought with him a copy of the Nawab's Petition to the King, the original of which had been lost with Maclean when H.M.S. Swallow went down. For the Petition see Sixth Report from the Committee of Secrecy appointed to enquire into the Causes of the War in the Carnatic and of the Condition of the British Possessions in those Parts, Appendix 376-B ("The Requests of the Nabob Walla Jah"), London, 1782.

... in proportion; as your Friend's Confidence gained, your opponents' sunk. I communicated your narrative, and turned the whole on two Points: [1stly] the Proof you gave in your Minute preceeding the arrival of the Dispatch [by the Rippon], but subsequent to your first Intelligence [by William Macintosh] that you had resolved to resign and accede to Mr. Macleane's arrangement; 2ndly, Clavering's gross violation of the Compact, by attempting to kick you out of your Chair; and the subsequent Breach of the Minister's Plighted Faith.

I then stated the whole arrangement of Lord North or Clavering's agent, and Macleane as yours, and that the former had first broken the Compact, either by his own Insincerity or the Disavowal of his Principal in India. Fortunately, my most particular Friend, Mr. James Macpherson, was ready to attest, very justly, the arrangement. L.<sup>d</sup> North never could bear being brought upon the Carpet as Clavering's negociator. The Ridicule would have sunk him; and so with his usual good Nature he has given up the Business, and is in his Soul, I believe, heartily glad that his Principal has left him to explain the arrangement, and that a Man of your Abilities is in possession of the Chair of India. He has no Affections or Enmities, pro or con, and even Sir Thomas Clavering, tho' he and his Country Party talked high at first, is softened. I sent him a gentle hint, that if your Friends were not disturbed they would not oppose a Provision for his Brother's family. But if we were disturbed we would fight the ground inch by inch; and fortunately there were so many Private Letters against Clavering's violence and the alarm of Calcutta from his Tirrany [sic], that we should have had proofs, yea - heavy proofs, that the Dead could be ill-spoken of.

Mr. Sullivan stood calm and ready in the Court of Directors, and on that

quarter we stood secure enough. Thus, my Friend, the Storm is past, but let it shew you the neccessity [<sup>sig</sup>] of early communications with your Friends. ...

Tho' I have done wonders for the Nabob, he has totally forgot me, and nothing but my affection for him, never to be removed, now binds me to his Service. I have been obliged to draw upon him for money that he really owed me, and which as my right he promised to send by the next Ship after I sailed. He should at least leave me the power of spending my own Fortune to do him Service. ...

The Virulence of Pigot's Party against you is sheer Folly and will be fully exposed. We have very masterly Defences ready to come forward, if  
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the affair is to be in Parliament.

The Ministry have communicated to me the Plan for India, but mark my words - it will not be settled next year, but merely an order passed to continue the Administration of India on its present footing longer.

This is our way of doing Business in England. The great line is a Viceroy, with a Council to advise, not to controul, and the Company to  
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have their Trade and Annuities for their Fortifications, &c.

Now, my Friend, after all my Battles with Ministry, do you know that you have as good a chance for this office as any one I know. They are determined that none of those under you can have it. Mr. Francis has

1. In 1779 the House of Commons, on the motion of Admiral Hugh Pigot, resolved on an Address to the Crown, praying for the prosecution of four members of the Madras 'majority' - Stratton, Brooke, Floyer and Mackay - who had been recalled to England as ringleaders of the Madras revolt, and the deponents of the late Lord Pigot. They were ultimately convicted of misdemeanour, and each fined £1,000. John Macpherson was not even reprimanded; (see Love, Vol. 3, p. 119).
2. No provision was made for a Viceroy in Pitt's India Act. John Macpherson was flattering Hastings on the basis of guesswork, or general ideas which had been thrown out at informal discussions among interested politicians.

overdone his plan. His vast Fortune is in his favour. My friend, Mr. Ja.<sup>s</sup> M.<sup>c</sup> pherson, was left in London to forward Dispatches after me and sound the Ministry. He is their Confidential Man. His ground is different from mine, and he does not know my work with other Quarters for you. It is not necessary [sic] he should, tho' he is one of your truest Friends, and has the secret of all your opponents - yea, their Letters to the Minister - and I send you his last note to me. He sees things always through the most unpromising medium. The key to his note is Mack Robert, the Secretary of the Treasury."

Apart from the usual flood of outright lies, distortions, exaggerations, and claims of influence, John Macpherson covered up all the loose ends concerning his friend James's association with Lauchlin Maclean<sup>3</sup> at the time of the "resignation"; with impunity, of course, because Maclean could never be questioned, and Robinson would (almost certainly) never be asked if John Macpherson's account was true. Far from being an enemy, James had all along been Hastings's and not the ministry's watchdog; and in the end it was James's knowledge of the ministry's promises that made North and Robinson agree to accept John's pleas on behalf of Hastings - or so John said, and Hastings probably believed him. It was audacious bluff, and it

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1. Not found.

2. B.M. Add. MSS. 29140, ff. 424-431v., John Macpherson to W. Hastings, 23 May 1778.

3. See above, pp. 365-367.

succeeded. It also allowed John, who was off on his second trip to Scotland,<sup>1</sup> to present his partner James to Hastings as a future ally.

James Macpherson introduced himself to Hastings for the first time in a letter dated 25th August 1778,<sup>2</sup> which was followed by a second dated 30th August 1778.<sup>3</sup> In both he gave general news or discussed the Nawab's affairs; and in both he gave Hastings a list of "friends" in Bengal who would welcome Hastings's attention. He was particularly insistent in drawing Hastings's notice to his second cousins, the brothers Allan and John Macpherson.<sup>4</sup>

1. In September 1778 John Macpherson (who was staying with Macleod of Macleod at Dunvegan Castle) received a letter from William Brummel (Macpherson MSS./1, 164/1), who wrote: "Lord North has received your letter, and he authorises me to assure you that he will lay it before His Majesty, and at the same time render you that justice which your services entitles you to, and which he will the more willingly do from the opinion he entertains of you, and the personal regard he has for you. This much I am commissioned to say to you with respect to the little matter of Dignity. I foresee it would not bear a moments hesitation as to the Man, but I suppose the reasons, whatever they are, for deferring to give you a specific answer to this request, arise solely from the Character in which you stand with the Nabob, and the awkwardness, to be sure, in the case is that you ask it for the Character and despise it for the Man."

I can assure you that when I represented to Lord North your Feelings at this Disappointment, he was much hurt at them, and will, I am confident, be very sorry if you place the Delay (for I know not of any Refusal in it) to any Motive of Disrespect to the Nabob, or to personal Disregard towards you. I wish you to wait a little longer with a little Patience, and all may yet turn to your Satisfaction.

I shall make no remark upon your Declaration of having commenced a Siege against Government, because as I have frequently known Sieges terminate in a Treaty and Amity, I am in hopes you will be more inclined to enter into the latter, than pursue the former."

From this it would seem that John Macpherson had asked for some honour, as the representative of the Nawab, and had, in typical fashion, mixed threats with cajolery.

2. B.M. Add. MSS. 29141, ff. 311-312v., James Macpherson to W. Hastings, 25 August 1778.
3. *ibid.*, ff. 342-343v., James Macpherson to W. Hastings, 30 August 1778.
4. For Captains Allan and John Macpherson see above, p. 30, n. 1; and Macpherson *Hist./2*.

"Captains Allan and John Macpherson," wrote James, "are among my nearest relations, and their success was one of the principal objects of my attention for some years past to Indian affairs. I used the freedom, in May 1777, to request Mr. [Alexander] Elliot to introduce Captain Allan Macpherson to the Governour General, which I find he has done. Your placing him in a line such as his merit may deserve, and which may bring within view the moderate limits which he has prescribed to his ambition, will flatter me extremely, and command my utmost gratitude."

A month earlier, on 15th June 1778, James had written to his second cousin

Captain John Macpherson as follows:

"I seldom hear from you, and have so little to say on private matters, that you are not to be surprised that I trouble you with so few letters. I have, by the Express, obtained for you the strongest recommendations to Mr. Hastings, who is likely to continue Governour till the termination of the India Bill.

Mr. Hastings and his friends lie under some obligations to me, in this Country. I therefore have reason to expect that he will pay some attention to my friends in Bengal. I sincerely congratulate you on your having obtained the Command of a Battalion. I trust that time, if nothing else, will work so much in your favor, that we shall have you here in a few years with comfortable provision for the remaining part of life.

As to Country news - they have been all busy in recruiting for his Majesty's Service for Six months past. My Situation here enabled me to

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1. B.M. Add. MSS. 29141, ff. 342-342v., James Macpherson to W. Hastings, 30 August 1778.

obtain Commissions for several Badenoch friends. You have a list of them on the other side. Old <sup>1</sup>Donald Macpherson of Breakachy is just dead. Your cousins by the Mother are in Glengarry and well. I am much in haste, but always, My Dear Sir,

Yours most affectionately,

Ja.<sup>s</sup> Macpherson.

List of Officers:

Capt. John Macpherson of Balechroan <sup>2</sup>	} Duke of Hamilton's Corps
Lt. John Macpherson of Banchor <sup>3</sup>	
Lt. Ewan Macpherson of Ovie <sup>4</sup>	
Ens. Angus Macpherson of Inverhall <sup>5</sup>	
Ens. Ewan Macpherson of Lynwilg <sup>6</sup>	L. <sup>d</sup> Seaforth's Corps

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1. Donald Macpherson of Breakachie, see above, p. 298, n. 2.
  2. John Macpherson of Balechroan (1724-1800), 2nd son of Alexander Macpherson of Phoness (of the Invereshie branch). John of Balechroan was the famous Othaichear Dubh or "Black Officer". Most Highlanders know the story of the Call Ghàig or "Gaick Catastrophe" of New Year's Day 1800, when the hated Black Officer (who had been a bullying recruiting officer) died with three companions in a hunting lodge, as the result (it is said) of terrifying supernatural forces. The story of this affair, and the testimonies of men who cleared up the devastated lodge and the twisted rifles, is given in Macpherson Hist./1, pp. 144-152. The true cause of the hunters' deaths was probably an avalanche, which buried the lodge during a blizzard.
  3. John Macpherson of Banchor, ygr. (1756-1792), eldest son of Andrew Macpherson of Banchor (1720-1780), and nephew of Alexander Macpherson of Craven Street, London (see above, p. 156), of The Rev. Robert Macpherson in Aberarder (see above, p. 183), and of Charles Macpherson (see above, p. 358, n. 1).
  4. Ewan Macpherson of Ovie (fl. 1720-1780), 4th son of John Macpherson of Breakachie; and younger brother of Donald Macpherson of Breakachie (n. 1). Many Highlanders of advanced years fought as very junior officers (see M. H. Ellis, Lachlan Macquarie: His Life, Adventures and Times, Sydney (3rd edn.), 1958, intro., p. xvi). Ewan's son, John Macpherson (later of Ovie), married Isabella, only sister of John Macpherson, one of the two main subjects of this thesis.
  5. Angus (or Aeneas) Macpherson of Inverhall, ygr. (fl. 1760-1780), elder son of John Macpherson of Inverhall (of the Invereshie branch), sometime Barrack Master at Ruthven, and his wife Anne, daughter of Ewan Macpherson of Ovie (n. 4).
  6. Ewan Macpherson of Lynwilg (c. 1759-1830). A headstone over his grave in Kingussie Churchyard gives the details of his own and his wife Mary's deaths, and a note of his regiment (79th Foot) and tack at Lynwilg, but nothing more. It is not known to which family he belonged, and there is no note of him in Macpherson MSS./4.

Ens.	John Shaw, Nephew to Dalradie <sup>1</sup>	D. of Athol's Corps
Lt.	<u>Peter</u> Gallie, Brother to )	
	Mr. <u>Andrew</u> Gallie, Minister )	L. <sup>d</sup> Seaforth's Corps
	of <u>Leagan</u> . <sup>2</sup>	
Ens.	Ewan Macpherson of Banchor <sup>3</sup>	Ensign in an old Regiment. <sup>4</sup>

Capt. John Macpherson must have been impressed by his cousin James's efforts on behalf of himself, his brother Allan and the other Macphersons, and pleased to know that his cousins in Glengarry (who were also James's cousins in the same degree) were well. These cousins in Glengarry were the impoverished Macphersons of Cluny, still living in exile from their forfeited lands. For the first time (as far as any available records show) James had referred to the Cluny-Macphersons, but not, it will be noticed, by name or by any claim of relationship, although he did not hesitate to acknowledge Captains John and Allan Macpherson. James Macpherson was a "Big Man", and so was his friend John Macpherson, the Skye-man, but they had only built the foundations for their later political careers. The moments of real triumph were

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1. Possibly John Shaw, son of William Shaw of Dalnavert, by his wife Magdalene, daughter of George Macpherson of Invereshie and Dalraddie (whose descendants assumed the additional name of Grant, and are now known as Macpherson-Grant of Ballindalloch, and held a baronetcy under that style).
  2. Andrew Gallie (1730-1803), see above, p. 66, and below, p. 506, n. 1.
  3. Ewan Macpherson (1761-1796), second son of Andrew Macpherson of Banchor (see above, p. 499, n. 3).
  4. Macpherson MSS./2, G.D. 80/902, James Macpherson to Captain John Macpherson, 15 June 1778. See letter same date (ibid., same bundle) from James Macpherson to his nephew, Lt. John Macintyre.



several years ahead; much remained to be done. With the death of Lauchlin Macleane, however, and the forging of the links between Hastings and James and John Macpherson in mid-1778, one cycle in both the Macphersons' lives and in Hastings's life was over. The Macphersons' early political careers were at an end.

If appointments alone were marks of achievement, then it could be concluded that the early careers of the two Macphersons had ended in failure, because James was still no more than a hired ministerial journalist, and John was a discharged <sup>Factor</sup> ~~Writer~~ of the East India Company. But appointments, in their cases, would be false guides to achievement. John Macpherson had returned from India with a considerable amount of money. The exact amount cannot be given, but it was sufficient to buy them both into Parliament in the next two years, and for John to purchase an elegant mansion in Kensington Gore at the end of 1778.<sup>1</sup> Only two years before, in 1776, James had been complaining about his lack of the £3,000 necessary for a seat, and had hinted in the broadest terms that John should let him have the money.<sup>2</sup> In 1780 he was able to find

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1. B.M. Add. MSS. 27780, f. 54, John Macpherson to H. S. Woodfall, u.d. [but certainly written in November or December 1778]. John was in Scotland from July to October 1778, and this letter was written soon after his return to London. He told Woodfall: "I am now established at Kens[ingto]n Gore, after a ramble of 4 months and 2000 miles." John's house was at Brompton Gate, and he kept it until his death.
  2. Macpherson MSS./1, 4/26, James to John Macpherson, 2 April 1776. "Na bi-inse 'n d'thig a Chumant bhí-in an 'n tigh na h'Inchichan, Cha n'fhioch dhóm shó a dhianámh soillair dhutse." [If I were in the House of Commons I would also be in India House. Is it not worthwhile to make this plain to you.]

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 £4,000 for his seat at Camelford in Cornwall, and in 1779 John was able to find the necessary amount for his seat at Cricklade in Wiltshire, and to stand for re-election in 1780 for the same place with Paul Benfield.<sup>2</sup> What is more, the validity of the 1780 Cricklade election was challenged, and the expense of defending the lawsuits which followed must have been considerable.<sup>3</sup> There is a lot of evidence relating to this scandalous and corrupt election among John Macpherson's papers.<sup>4</sup>

One source of John's fortune before 1778 must have been the commissions he earned as Paymaster to the second Tanjore Expedition, but this was the only source he acknowledged, and the figures he gave James Macpherson and Warren Hastings cannot be regarded as accurate.<sup>5</sup> The most likely source for the bulk of his small fortune was

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1. Parliamentary Papers of John Robinson, 1774-1784, ed. William T. Laprade, (Camden 3rd series, Vol. XXXIII), London, 1922, p. 35. John Robinson's record of James Macpherson's payment for his seat at Camelford: £4,000. See also: H.M.S.S.C., Abergavenny MSS. (10th Report, App. Pt. 6, London, 1887), Item 237, p. 27, James Macpherson to John Robinson, 18 December 1779. Letter concerning Macpherson's application for a seat in Parliament.
  2. See House of Commons 1754-90, Vol. 3, p. 96; and B.M. Add. MSS. 29143, f. 357, John Macpherson to W. Hastings, 3 June 1779.
  3. Materials for a History of Cricklade (ed. T. R. Thomson), Chapter 4 (published separately 1949) The Parliamentary Borough and its Members, (by W. B. Crouch), pp. 27-52. The contested Cricklade election gave rise to an Act of Parliament, which received the Royal Assent on 17th May 1782 (22. Geo. III, c. 31).
  4. Macpherson MSS./1, 11/1-11/31 (The Cricklade Papers). This is a series of 31 letters covering the period 1779-1795, in which the elections at Cricklade were discussed in great detail by both the Macphersons. The series also includes copies of documents, official and legal, which are not to be found elsewhere.
  5. See above, pp. 404, n. 2, and 416, n. 3. George Baker told Robert Park that John Macpherson remitted to England before he left India in 1777 about £20,000, but this figure must be regarded with caution. The view of one Company servant about another's financial position was usually optimistic, and the figure quoted was probably the top limit: see H.M.S.S.C., Park MSS., p. 270.

smuggled jewellery, but again the whole matter was wrapped in deliberate obscurity,

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and he left no clue in his account books on the subject of precious stones. His annual expenses he gave as £1,400, and these were almost covered by the income he

*Agent for providing Sepoys' Slops*

derived from his sinecure as ~~Factor~~, which he said was worth £1,200 a year. James

was equally secretive about his income. From the government he had received, as has

2

been shown, between £500 and £800 a year, but he had also earned a lot from the books

he had published: sufficient at least to allow him to keep a house at Putney, an

apartment in Manchester Buildings, and to enjoy the high life of an interim gentleman.

The last source, from which both had hoped to benefit, was the Nawab, but apart from

the jewels John had obtained and acknowledged in 1768 there is no evidence to show

that they secured any money from the Nawab before 1778. In fact, they had to wait

several years before making any substantial gains from that source, or, to be more

3

accurate, claims based on that source.

1. Macpherson MSS./1, 82/1, Account Book No. 2 of John Macpherson, for the period ending 7th January 1777, together with List of Bonds, Bills and Papers left in the care of Messrs. Charles Oakeley and James Henry Casamaior. Account Book No. 1 is not in the Macpherson Collection.
2. See above, p. 179, n. 1; and Bod. MSS., MS. Eng. Hist. C. 70, North's Pensions, &c.
3. For John Macpherson's financial dealings with the Nawab see Macpherson MSS./1, 53/1-53/18. This is a series of letters and bank documents (re: Drummond; Coutts; and Kindersley) dating from 30th January 1779. Some of them refer to bills of exchange drawn by Lauchlin Maclean and (later) James Macpherson. For James Macpherson's financial claims on the Nawab for agency expenses see Antiq. Notes (2nd ser.), p. 405. On 1st January 1793, James Macpherson claimed that his expenses to that date were 37,500 Pagodas (£15,000), and he had been receiving a salary of 12,000 Pagodas (£4,800) a year since 1st September 1780. These figures

From a financial point of view, therefore, the Macphersons had established a reasonably sound basis for future schemes. They had also, after many frustrations and some lucky accidents, made the most of their political opportunities. James, as a ministerial writer, had moved slowly but surely to a position where he was treated as a confidential aide by North and Robinson. The one unusual feature about his career, although it could be explained by the view he might have taken of the unstable decade before North assumed power, was his reluctance to break with Grafton, whose power diminished rapidly after his resignation as First Lord of the Treasury.

John was even more reluctant to renounce Grafton as a patron; and both Macphersons seemed to have some hold on him. What this was they never clarified, but there cannot be the slightest doubt that their association with Grafton (and Bradshaw) allowed them both to retain a precarious place on the outer edge of inner influence during a very difficult period of change. Very few of Grafton's protégés survived into the North era.

John, in particular, was remarkable in holding his place as a reluctant Company servant recommended by Grafton as long as he did; and his ability to survive the

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3. (continued) did not take into account the "acknowledgements in rings and East Indian manufactures" which he had received as presents. How much these were worth is not known, but their value represented a great sum of money, and the basis of James's fortune.

prejudicial reports of Lindsay, Harland and Paterson (whom he regarded as the most dangerous and influential of the three Crown servants at the Nawab's durbar) was equally remarkable, because his name was blackened in the Nawab's, the Company's and the ministry's eyes by all three men. More remarkable still was John's ability to survive his dismissal by Pigot as a Company servant, and then to take a leading part in Pigot's downfall without suffering the slightest consequence.

Both the Macphersons had this amazing ability to survive under any difficulties, and the reason for it is, perhaps, revealed in their correspondence. Neither of them cared a jot about politics. If they discussed the subject with each other it was only to find out how they were personally affected by any situation. Their concern for the public good was never displayed. Indeed, like the Vicar of Bray, they would have worked for anybody and for any cause that would have kept them safe or furthered their private ambitions. They did, of course, have a detailed knowledge of the subjects which affected their careers, and they were able to project that knowledge in a convincing manner, especially if they wished to persuade other people that they were capable of being employed or trusted - but that was all. Everything was ultimately governed by their private ambitions and obsessions. They inched their ways forward by using people, and then by betraying or discarding them. They were both ruthless, if not merciless, egomaniacs.

John had some scruples, but these were ultimately destroyed by James. All those who could expose James as a literary fraud were eventually silenced by feelings of obligation. The Rev. Andrew Gallie, who had helped James with his work on Fingal years before, was a good example of this manoeuvre. James placed him under an obligation by obtaining a commission for Peter Gallie, one of his brothers. He was only one of many; others have also been referred to in this thesis. Many were Macphersons or relations with other names. They were assisted partly, perhaps, because Highlanders have a traditional leaning towards nepotism, but mainly because James, and John to a lesser extent, had particular obsessions, which included a need to patronize their kinsmen. Until 1778 their means of supplying this "patronage" had varied. After that date they began to rely heavily on the goodwill of Hastings, whom they treated despicably. Hastings had already given John his complete affection and trust, and he saw no reason to suspect James, who was accepted as an ally. On this trust they founded their future plans.

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1. For the Rev. Andrew Gallie (minister of Laggan 1758-74) and his connection with James Macpherson see Macpherson Hist./1, pp. 237-238, and above, p. 500.

An examination of the Macphersons' later political careers is outside the scope of this thesis, but a quick look at the key to their future success - their treachery - is perhaps necessary, because this was also the key to their whole lives. From mid-1778, in spite of many difficulties and some near disasters, they moved towards position and wealth with some speed, and with the assurance of veteran politicians. Slow communications made it impossible for any politicians to synchronise their actions in India and England, but the Macphersons came to terms with this problem, and managed to co-ordinate their efforts. James kept a very close watch on political affairs between 1778 and 1785, and not only advanced his own and John's joint and separate interests, but gave John early and accurate information about all confidential decisions made by the Company and the ministry on India.<sup>1</sup> It was John who acquired the important offices in India, but it was James who did the hard bargaining in England, and proved to be the dominating partner. Whenever James thought that John's resolution was wavering, he sent a succession of letters in which he battered at John's scruples. Exposed to the full force of the implacable and twisted will of James Macpherson, all that remained of John's elastic conscience was finally eroded, and he betrayed Hastings's trust.

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1. James worked closely, for example, with Charles Jenkinson. See B.M. Add. MSS. 38202, 38206, 28210, 38213, 38216, 38219, 38220, 38222, 38306, 38308, 38309, 38409, and 40166.

In assessing John Macpherson's character, Professor H. H. Dodwell was, perhaps, misled by the many affectionate letters he received from Hastings<sup>1</sup>. Dr. C. Collin Davies, who has edited the correspondence of John Macpherson and Lord Macartney<sup>2</sup>, was not inclined to accept Professor Dodwell's assessment<sup>3</sup>; and nor was Dr. L. S. Sutherland<sup>4</sup>, when she examined John Macpherson's career in her definitive study of the East India Company in the 18th Century. The conclusive proof of the way in which both the Macphersons abused Hastings's trust is to be found in the long Gaelic passages in the letters they exchanged after 1781. In 1784 Hastings, in a letter he

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1. Dodwell, intro., pp. xxxi-xxxiii.

2. The Private Correspondence of Lord Macartney, Governor of Madras (1781-85), ed. C. Collin Davies, (Camden 3rd series, Vol. LXXVII), London, 1950. This work contains many of the letters of George Macartney and John Macpherson in the following collections: B.M. Add. MSS. 22415-22464, and Bod. MSS., MS. Eng. Hist. c. 66 - c. 117.

3. George Macartney (1737-1806), later (1776) Baron Macartney of Lissanoure, and later still (1794) Earl Macartney; son of George Macartney, an Ulster-Scottish landowner of Lissanoure, Co. Antrim. Macartney was knighted when he was appointed Envoy to St. Petersburg in 1764; he was promoted to Ambassador to Russia in 1767, but did not go out. Governor of Grenada 1775-79; and of Madras 1781-85; and of Cape of Good Hope 1796-98. Also Envoy to China 1792-94, and to Verona 1795-96. Before accepting a British peerage he was M.P. for Cockermouth (1768-69); for Ayr Burghs (1774-76); and for Bere Alston (1780-81). He married, in 1768, Lady Jane Stuart, daughter of the Earl of Bute, but had no issue. For his Indian career see C. Collin Davies, op. cit.; and for his diplomatic career see British Diplomatic Representatives, ed. D. B. Horn, (Camden 3rd series, Vol. XLVI), London, 1932, pp. 116-117.

4. Dr. Davies (op. cit., intro., p. xvi) refers to Hastings's suspicions that Lord Macartney had betrayed him to his enemies, and then states: "Macpherson appears to have been the villain of the piece for, when news reached India that Macartney's friends were striving to secure his appointment as Hastings' successor, Macpherson made no attempt to eradicate from Hastings' mind that Macartney was intriguing to supplant him, although Macartney had begged him to do so."

5. Sutherland, p. 300, n. 1.



1

sent John, referred to the "Celtic strong box of which you have the key", meaning the secret Gaelic passages in John's letters to James. If Hastings had known what that Celtic strong box contained he would have choked with rage. Here are just a few examples:

(1) James to John Macpherson, 12th February 1783

"Na biagh ussa na aghaigh, thiggu  
gum biagh tu an Caithair na n'  
Inshichan: na biagh do chairdin se  
na aighaigh 'n Sho thuitagh è bliana  
na dha roi sho."  
2

"If you were against him [Hastings], you  
might possibly be in the Chair of  
India: if your friends were against  
him here he would have fallen a year  
or two before now."  
2

(2) John to James Macpherson, [---] May 1783

"Scribe i Stapilich Litrichin ru va  
i ghuisi ni Direckerin ma mo ghain  
si. Chan arrin me essin agus fer  
no Caffaig i chummail eorst; chaneil  
auni fer no Caffeg ach Dumni beg  
more. ... Na eadich er fer no Caffeg  
i hive gur i missi havail no  
Hisichin."  
3

"Stables wrote very good Letters  
to the Directors concerning  
me. I cannot keep him and the  
man of Haste [Hastings] on good terms;  
Hastings is but a little big Man.  
... Hastings is jealous  
because it was I who saved  
India."  
3

(3) John to James Macpherson, 12th May 1783

"Chaneil cardis tuiksi ma ceon  
Laickti aig fer no Caffaig - agus

"Hastings has no friendship understanding  
or shortage of Lakhs - and if

- 
1. Dodwell, p. 192, W. Hastings to John Macpherson, 27 January 1784.
  2. Macpherson MSS./1, 45/2.
  3. *ibid.*, 9/8. John Stables, a member of the Bengal Council, was Robinson's protégé.

ma chuir ad i mach shin gu leir se  
shin is bar na vi nos faiddi cuddi  
rish. Ghalve ni va do math ausi  
Dunni agus ha mi ski ga chummail  
1  
aunsi Rahid cheorti."

they put all of us out that  
is preferable to being with him any  
longer. What good there was in the  
Man has gone and I am tired of  
1  
keeping him straight."

(4) James to John Macpherson, 13th June 1783

"Cha neil ar do charrid mór 'n shin  
ach duine gun chardis! Roin mi  
máth gun chaoiäs dha o chin iumid  
bliana, agus chu d'roin ma bu choir  
2  
dha air son mo chardin.!!!"

"Your big friend there [Hastings] is  
but a man without friendship. I have  
willingly done good for him for many  
years, and he has not done as much as  
2  
he should for my friends.!!!"

(5) James to John Macpherson, 12th July 1783

"Ta fios agum gu mo mhâ letsa 'n  
Gobhairnair mhór 'n ghoich shin a  
thobhairt a do laimh. Bu choir dha  
shin a dhiana na biagh onair aïga.  
'Ta fios aig 'n t'Shaoil uile 'n  
Sho gun tuitagh è mar iom magh mo  
laimh suas è, ri Struan, ri Tuath,  
agus MacIain. Na n'iarin ni air mo  
shon fein, agus gnöichin nan Inshich-  
-an leig mo lâr dhëon è.  
Mo chloinas mi nach dian 'n  
t'Hastinach ni bu choir dha cuirrigh  
mi spöac na chaoila. 'S fadir dha

"I know that you wish the big  
Governor [Hastings] to hand the  
business over to you. He should  
do that if he had any honour.  
The whole World here knows that  
he would fall if my hand did not  
support him, and Robinson, and North,  
and Johnstone. If I were to ask for  
anything for myself, and let Indian  
affairs fall to the floor, I would get it.  
If I hear that Hastings  
does not do what he should I  
shall put a spoke in his wheel. He

1. *ibid.*, 9/12.

2. *ibid.*, 45/6.

tighin tachi! Sessigh ussa, na  
 biagh fe gul ort. Fhuair mi cintas  
 air a ghnoich shin, o 'n Tuach, mo  
 bhias mo lamh ladir leis agus leis  
 1  
 'n t'Sheonach."

must come home! You will stay,  
 have no fear. I got assurance on  
 that matter from North, if my  
 hand is strong with him and with  
 1  
 Fox."

(6) James to John Macpherson, 27th October 1783

"Sho a thubhairt 'n Tuach riomse:  
 'Cha neil speis agumse,' a thubhairt  
 è, 'do dh'fher na Caffaig. Ha è na  
 dhuine màth agus olc àn a n'iomha nì!  
 Chròch e Nuncomar air son feirg,  
 agus roin è cogga air na Rohillich.  
 Bha è huillie 's garg ri Cheit Sing,  
 agus ta e na dhuine marchuisich;  
 2  
 agus gun chairdis.'"

"This is what North said to me:  
 'I have no respect,' said he,  
 'for the man of Haste [Hastings]. He  
 is a good and bad man in many things.  
 He hanged Nandakumar for wrath,  
 and he waged war on the Rohillas.  
 He was unduly harsh to Chait Singh,  
 and he is a haughty man;  
 2  
 and without friendship.'"

(7) James to John Macpherson, 16th March 1784

"Cummi 'm Pittach ussa na l'aite  
 agus cuir mi ù air sheol math ri  
 duine air bi a theid amach. Mo  
 thiontas do Chairdinse 'n culahm ris  
 'n t'Hastinich, tuiti aish air  
 Sheararah 'ta tighin. 'N Glaccuir  
 olich! 'S tu fein thug ormse  
 3  
 sessibh suas air a shon!"

"Pitt will keep you in your place  
 and I will set you on a good footing  
 with anyone who goes out. If  
 your Friends turn their backs on  
 Hastings, he will fall in  
 the coming Term. The babbling  
 wretch! It was you who persuaded  
 3  
 me to stand up for him!"

1. *ibid.*, 45/8. "Fox" was, of course, Charles James Fox.

2. *ibid.*, 45/15.

3. *ibid.*, 5/5. "Pitt" was, of course, William Pitt, the younger.

(8) James to John Macpherson, 30th July 1784

"Currigh shin ussa n'aite Fer na Caffaig; ach dian suas gnoich ris, mo s'urrin ù. Mar urrin, bi cho soàch sa dhaoitis ù. Mar urrin shin do chuir n'aite fer na Caffaig, i urri shin ù 'M Bumbailli shin; a h'uile ni 'n sho; dian ussa a h'uile <sup>1</sup> ni 'n shin."

"We will put you in the place of Hastings; but mind matters with him, if you can. If you cannot, be as tractable as you can. If we cannot put you in Hastings's place, we will send you to Bombay; we will do everything here; you do everything <sup>1</sup> there."

The above extracts are not meant to give a coherent picture of any situation.

They merely prove an attitude: and they do not distort that attitude. There are many more examples, which must be included in an account of the later careers of the Highland partners. The second time John Macpherson returned to India as a Company servant he went as a member of the Bengal Supreme Council, and was very carefully

2

1. *ibid.*, 5/9.

2. Laurence Sullivan, a very shrewd politician, was also persuaded that the Macphersons were worthy men. On 9th January 1781 he told Warren Hastings: "We have carried John Macpherson into the Supreme Council with a pretty high hand. We confide that he will be to you a second Barwell. He embarks in a few days." (B.M. Add. MSS. 29147, f. 45). On 11th February 1781, Sullivan wrote to John Macpherson: "Dear Mac, The inclosed /a testimonial/ is a proof of my regard and a pledge of my unshaken attachment. Peruse, seal and deliver it. ... Should you in any instance forfeit the character given by me, I most solemnly declare that I will be the first man to turn against my friend John Macpherson." (Macpherson MSS./1, 41/1). On 1st June 1781, Sullivan told John Macpherson: "Our good friend Fingal and I are upon the most cordial terms." (*ibid.*, 41/4). The most glowing testimonial of all was written by Sullivan to Hastings on 10th July 1781: "I have kept John Macpherson for a separate letter. Respecting him and his character, it is fit and proper that you should have my unreserved sentiments. You know my heart, and I cannot deceive you. From Mr. Macpherson's last arrival in England (for we were not acquainted before) we have been in constant habits of intimacy. I have studied his character to pronounce, from experience, /that he is/ able, honourable, sincere, with a temper and disposition so pleasing and conciliatory that he has hardly an

supported from home by James Macpherson. The evidence covering the later period  
*(among others)*  
shows that Hastings was deceived and finally betrayed by that cold and ruthless  
devil, James Macpherson, and that charming smooth-tongued Judas, John Macpherson.

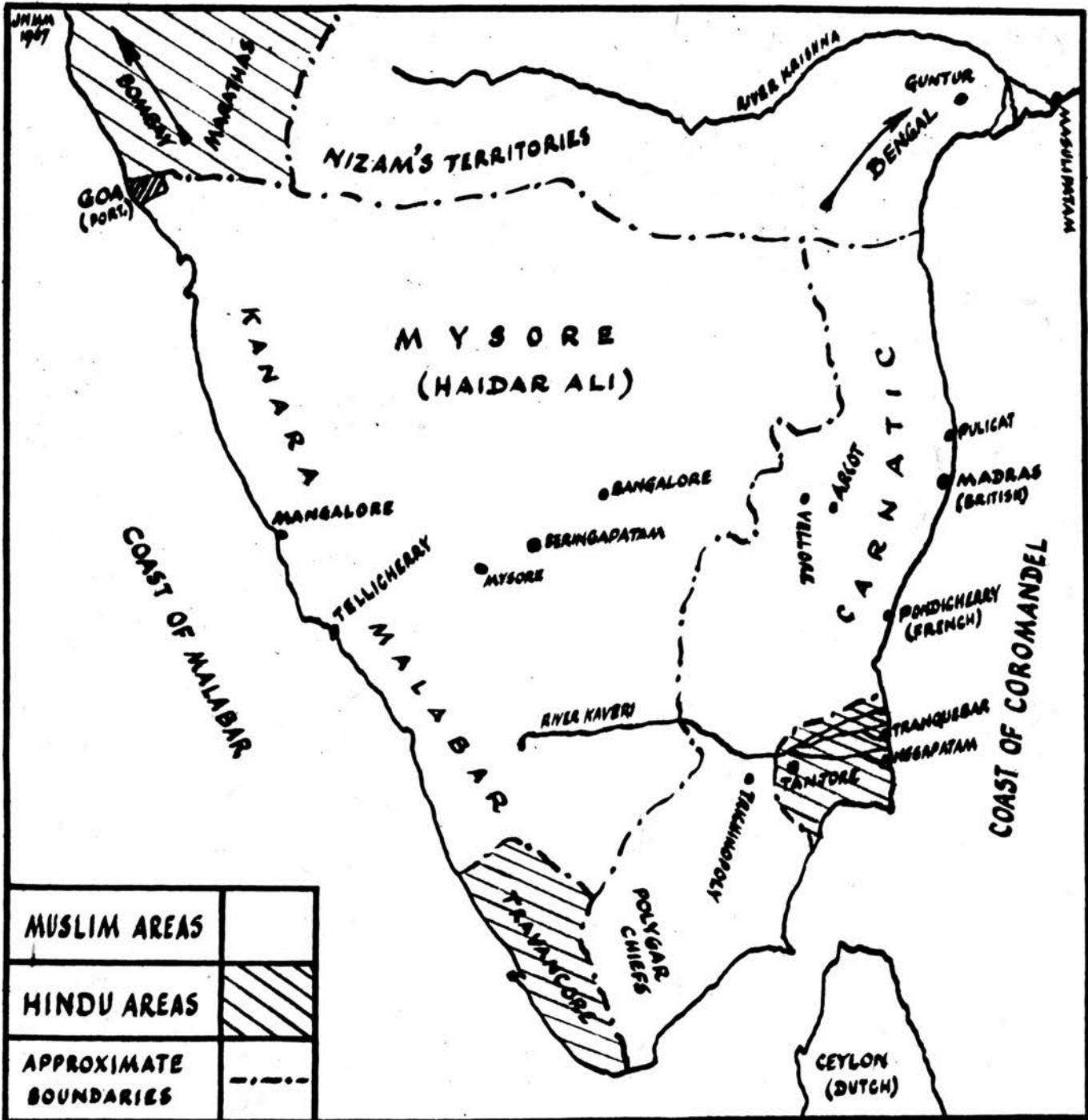
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2. (continued) avowed enemy. His attachment to you brought us first together. He stood forth boldly, at the hazard of his own prospects, in defence of your public character in the hour when those whom he counted upon found it their interest to vilify you; and by unremitting application he has been of most essential service to Mr. Hastings. The attention that is paid to Mr. Macpherson by the Minister and his confidential friends will hardly be credited. They have a great affection for him, and few are better informed of the secret interior moves." (ibid., 41/10). John Macpherson must have been a brilliant actor.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1.



Southern India: c.1770

APPENDIX 2An Analysis of Provable and Possible Pseudonyms used by James and John Macpherson

	<u>1769</u>	<u>1770</u>	<u>1771</u>	<u>1772</u>	<u>1773</u>	<u>Totals</u>	
<u>A. James Macpherson</u>							
<u>Provable Pseudonyms:</u>							
Pericles	14	2	2	-	-	18	
Mutius Scaevola	1	2	1	-	-	4	
Scaevola	-	-	10	2	-	12	
<u>Possible Pseudonyms:</u>							
Philo-Scaevola	-	-	-	1	-	1	
Justice	2	-	2	-	-	4	
Anti-Veridicus	-	-	-	1	-	1	
Anglo-Indianus	-	-	-	-	1	1	
John Bull	-	-	1	-	-	1	
North Briton	-	-	1	-	-	1	
Junius Asiaticus	-	1	-	3	-	4	
	<u>17</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>47</u>	<u>47</u>
<u>B. John Macpherson</u>							
<u>Provable Pseudonyms:</u>							
A Company's Servant	4	-	-	-	-	4	
An Old Patriot	7	3	-	-	-	10	
Anti-Gnatho	1	-	-	-	-	1	
Causticus	4	-	-	-	-	4	
Hindustanus	1	-	-	-	-	1	
Indianus	1	1	1	-	-	3	
Poetikastos	5	-	-	-	-	5	
Poetikastossimos	1	-	-	-	-	1	
Philo-Poetikastos	3	-	-	-	-	3	
<u>Possible Pseudonyms:</u>							
Jack Razor	1	-	-	-	-	1	
Nudjan-ad-Doula	1	-	-	-	-	1	
Silurus	2	-	-	-	-	2	
	<u>31</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>36 83</u>
<u>Provable Pseudonyms:</u>							
James Macpherson	15	4	13	2	-	34	
John Macpherson	27	4	1	-	-	32	
	<u>42</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>66</u>	<u>66</u>
<u>Possible Pseudonyms:</u>							
James Macpherson	2	1	4	4	1	13	
John Macpherson	4	-	-	-	-	4	
	<u>6</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>17 83</u>



APPENDIX 3.The Mistresses, Illegitimate Children and Descendants of James "Fingal" Macpherson, 1st of Balavil (1736-1796).

Saunders (op. cit., p. 297), who saw the will of James Macpherson, said that he had "three sons and two daughters", but thought that "to give the names of their mothers would now serve no useful purpose." As Saunders may have given James one son too many, and as there is no longer any harm in giving the names of the mothers of his children, it is worth recording the mistresses and children named in his will and six codicils (P.P.R., Harris Calendar (1796), f. 137). In view of the care which James took to acknowledge the paternity of two daughters and two sons, it is first necessary to deal with the "third son" mentioned by Saunders. In the second codicil to his will (dated 7 June 1793) James left £200 to "a son of Mary O'Connor born in the year 1783" but only "if worthy of the attention of the Executors". In no way did James acknowledge Mary O'Connor's son as his own; and Saunders was wrong to assume that he was one of James's bastards. The O'Connor boy could have been the son of one of James's friends; or James may not have been convinced that he was the boy's father. Without better evidence the boy certainly cannot be accepted as one of James Macpherson's children.

The four children James "Fingal" Macpherson did acknowledge as his own were (in order of birth) as follows:

(1) James Macpherson (c. 1767-1824), later (1796) 2nd of Balavil.

His mother was Elizabeth Fretwell alias Bradshaw (alive 1793). He went out to India as a Cadet in the H.E.I.C.S. in the General Coote in 1782 (aged about 15); Ensign 1783; A.D.C. to Sir John Macpherson (acting Gov. Genl. of India) 1785; Political Assistant to James Anderson, Resident to Scindia 1786; Lieut. 1790; Capt. 4th Bengal Native Infantry Regt. 1801; struck off and sent home 1804. He married Maria Sophia Craigie, (d. 1833) sister of Colonel Edmund Buchan Craigie of Ferry Bank, Fife, but died without issue. Colonel Craigie married Harriet,

widow of Lt. General John Macintyre (nephew of James "Fingal" Macpherson), and daughter of Lt. Colonel Allan Macpherson of Blairgowrie (2nd cousin of James "Fingal" Macpherson).

(2) Ann Macpherson (c. 1778-1862), later (1824) 3rd of Balavil.

Her mother was Elizabeth Cass alias Marshall (alive 1793, living near Bagshot, Surrey). In 1789 Ann was "residing with Mr. Kenneth Macpherson of Walcot Place, Lambeth", and in 1793 was at "Mrs. Perk's Boarding School at Putney". She died unmarried, having controlled the Balavil estate for nearly 40 years. Unlike her half-brother James she was well-liked and respected by her tenants, see Memoirs of a Highland Lady 1797-1827, Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus, (ed. Angus Davidson), London, 1950, *passim*.

(3) Charles Macpherson (1784-1808).

His mother was Monica Hartshorne alias Isard, daughter of Robert Hartshorne of Derbyshire; (she was alive 1793, living at 3 Duke Street, Westminster). In 1793 Charles was "at school on Hampstead Heath". In 1799 he went out to India as a Cadet in the H.E.I.C.S. He became an Ensign in 1800, and Lieut. (also in 1800) in the 20th Bengal Native Infantry Regt. He died unmarried at sea on his way home.

(4) Juliet Macpherson (c. 1786-1850).

Her mother was Monica Hartshorne alias Isard. In 1810 she married David (later Sir David) Brewster (1781-1868), Principal of Edinburgh University (1859-1868), 2nd son of James Brewster, Rector of Jedburgh grammar school. Charles Fraser-Mackintosh, see Antiq. Notes (2nd ser.), pp. 406-407, gives a scathing but perhaps biased account of the attempts made by Juliet and her husband to take over the Balavil estate from her half-sister Ann.

Juliet and David Brewster had three sons, of whom the third survived. He was: Lt. Colonel David Edward Brewster, afterwards Brewster-Macpherson (1815-1878), later (1862) 4th of Balavil, who succeeded his aunt Ann in 1862, when he assumed the additional surname of Macpherson. He married, in 1849, Lydia Julia, daughter

of Henry James Blunt, with issue:

- (a) Charles Julian Brewster-Macpherson, of whom presently.
- (b) Juliet Maria Brewster-Macpherson (d. 1897); married, 1871, Col. Archibald Butter of Pitlochry (1836-1880), with issue; and descendants alive today (see Burke's Landed Gentry, 18th edn., 1965, Vol. 1, sub Butter of Pitlochry).
- (c) Amy Constance Brewster-Macpherson (d. 1881); married, 1876, John Henry Baxter (1851-1908) of Gilston, Fife, 2nd son of Edward Baxter of Kincaldrum, with issue; and descendants alive today (see *ibid.*, Vol. 1, sub Baxter formerly of Kincaldrum).
- (d) Edith Mary Brewster-Macpherson (d. 1895); married, 1882, John Peter Grant of Rothiemurchus, 13th Laird of Rothiemurchus (1860-1927), with issue; and descendants alive today (see *ibid.*, Vol. 1, sub Grant of Rothiemurchus).

Lt. Colonel David Edward Brewster-Macpherson was succeeded by his only son:

Charles Julian Brewster-Macpherson (d. 1942), 5th of Balavil; married Lucy Eleanor, (d. 1943), 2nd daughter of Edward Baxter of Kincaldrum, and had an only son:

Henry Edward Brewster-Macpherson (d. 1944), 6th of Balavil, who died without issue and was succeeded by his wife:

Margaret Brewster-Macpherson (née Fletcher), 7th and present proprietor of Balavil whose heir is her only nephew:

Allan Fletcher (b. 1950), only son of the Rev. John Fletcher (b. 1908), minister of Lockerbie since 1939; the son of the late Duncan Fletcher of Breakish in Skye (a property once held by John Macdonald of Breakish, uncle of John Macpherson) and his wife Catherine Campbell.

From the foregoing it can be seen that the last laird of Balavil to have a descent from James "Fingal" Macpherson was Henry Edward Brewster-Macpherson (d. 1944)

and that all the descendants of James Macpherson alive today are descended from the three daughters of Lt. Colonel David Edward Brewster-Macpherson. In 1965 these amounted to 28 persons belonging to the Baxter, Butter and Grant families.

James Macpherson did acknowledge two other mistresses: Margaret Macpherson (in his will), and Elizabeth Draper alias "Ovisa" (in his correspondence), but he did not admit having children by either of these women.

Margaret Macpherson, his housekeeper from 1776, and his mistress from 1782, was left a legacy in James Macpherson's will, and was still alive in 1809, when she gave evidence in the legal actions caused by the disputes over his will. According to her evidence she was born Margaret Macpherson, and had been the wife of "Walter Bain, mason in Dundee," - see Antiq. Notes (2nd ser.), pp. 404-405. Mrs. Anne Grant of Laggan probably had Margaret Macpherson in mind when she said in her Letters from the Mountains that James Macpherson was "the dupe of wretched toad-eaters and designing housekeepers."

More is known about "Ovisa", who was certainly the mistress of James Macpherson for a short period in 1771. She was, in fact, the only woman concerned with James Macpherson about whom any comments survive. "Ovisa" was the name given by both Macphersons to Elizabeth Draper (1744-1778), the daughter of May Gilbert Sclater, resident at Anjengo, by his wife Catherine, sister of John Whitehill (Provisional Governor of Madras, 1777-8 and 1780). In 1762 she married Daniel Draper of the Bombay Civil Service but the marriage was a failure on account of Draper's brutality. In 1765 she went to England, where she met Laurence Sterne. A correspondence resulted which was published; and she became known as Sterne's "Eliza". From 1765 until two years before her death she was constantly on the move between Britain and India, and constantly having affairs of the heart. In the period covered by the extracts which follow she had a passing affair with James Macpherson, and more serious flirtations with Captain Sir John Clerke, R.N. (d. 1776) and the

Macphersons' friend Alexander Dow, who wished to marry her. Dow was known to the Macphersons by several code-names, which they used in a confusing and haphazard manner. In these extracts he was called "Timur", "Cubla" and "Boddach" (meaning "The Old Man"). In the first letter Elizabeth Draper (who had returned to India in 1769) was on her way to England via Bombay and Surat, and Dow was also travelling to England, but by the overland route.

(i) John to James Macpherson, 19 December 1770 (Macpherson MSS./1, 39/1)

"Dow was lately well at Bombay - the old man! Mrs. Draper and he had a literary friendship which he took in another light, and she is going to Surat. They shed tears at parting and made every shrewd mouth in the settlement grin."

From the next letter it is clear that Elizabeth Draper reached England ahead of Dow.

(ii) James to John Macpherson, 17 November 1771 (ibid., 4/6)

"Dow arrived here [in London] with Coote in the month of August [1771]. Ovisa, after all her new rambles through the town was received into immediate favour; and she has again been threatening daggers and Bowls: but it is all love and kindness, so partial is our friend to beauty in distress."

During 1772 Elizabeth Draper returned to Bombay, and her husband; but he behaved as badly as before. In 1773 "she eloped from Bombay in a ship commanded by Sir John Clerke" (see H.MSS.C., Palk MSS., pp. xxxvi and 255, n. 9), the elopers' ship bearing the far from appropriate name of Prudent. In the next letter John Macpherson said what happened after she left Bombay, and why she was forced to return to India. By the time she reached Madras her unpleasant husband had died of fever.

(iii) John Macpherson to Warren Hastings, 8 June 1773 (B.M. Add. MSS. 29133, ff.581-582)

"Sir John Clerk [sic] [is] daily expected [at Madras] with the prudent Mrs. Draper.

That Lady has been dreadfully used by her gloomy husband and has acted with spirit. The Letters of Eliza were prophetic; they have touched me so much that I will exert all the power I have (the Mayor's not excepted) to break a league that is forming among our virtuous married Ladies against the Company.

Almighty God! as if nature ever gave us dispositions and sensibilities of the heart to have them chained like felons to a dungeon! - or as if any positive inst[itu]tions of men can be virtuously binding when they put us guiltless to the Torture, by forcing us to act a part that is against our affections and in rebellion to our wishes. Draper would neither give a separate maintenance nor any other indulgence to Eliza; and when she remonstrated he is said to have held the Dagger to her Breast in secret. Sir John Clerk is by the carrier [sic, caree] he has run, not very able (they say) to injure a husband. Eliza found him benevolent, liked his humour and told him her distress. He gave her a passage to Bassora [sic, Basra] per Resolution, was to cross the Desert, sue for a separate maintenance and live the rest of her days in England; but the Plague raging at Bassora stopt the course of the unfortunate Eliza; and malice and Envy, those worse than deadly plagues, are now prepared to meet her here."

By September 1773 Dow had arrived in Madras, and had stayed with John Macpherson (while he was Mayor of Madras) before moving on to Bengal. Mrs. Draper, had been in Madras (having arrived on board Sir John Clerke's ship) and had also moved on to Bengal, where she hoped to meet Dow. This is clear from the next letter.

(iv) John to James Macpherson, 29 Sept. 1773 (Macpherson MSS./1, 39/6).

"Dow lived with me at my Mayoralty House [in Fort St. George] about a fortnight.

We were very happy and talked over all scenes. ...

What you say of the Boddach [i.e. The Old Man - Dow] and Ovisa is just; but who is free from fault? I had trivial Instances of the Boddachship in my House; and knowest thou that the fair Ovisa was lately at Madrass incog[nito] in her way to Timur [Dow]. She gave out that she was recommended to me, and that she was to marry the Col[onel]. [i.e. Dow]. Timur told me he was apprehensive of her sallying out. Faith, I think he is Lucky. I am sure he'll never marry her; and she will just do well enough pour passer le temps avec elle [sic]. He told me all betwixt you and him about her. You should let him have had his Humour, and you have taken yours. Still he has a firm Esteem and most affectionate friendship for you. I could sovereignly wish that we three met again and lived together."

Dow (who had secured an appointment in Bengal) wrote to James soon after reaching Calcutta to complain that he had heard nothing from John. In his next letter James, told John to write to Dow, and then went on to mention Elizabeth Draper. James's comments have been expurgated in the translation, as they are so crude and vulgar, but he leaves no doubt that for a short time in or before August 1771, while Dow was still on his way to England from India, Elizabeth Draper had been his mistress.

(v) James to John Macpherson, 1 April 1774 (ibid., 4/13).

"If the P[ri]n[ce]s Ovisa is gone [to Bengal], it is surely at the desire of Ti[mur] [Dow]. A nuair va essi ans a h'Inchichan roin, va issa air a Bhaill. Va î en simn na bear na dur chunna ussa i. Hachir i orm, oicha air an Strait, agus huggi mi bod yi. Hannic

"If the P[ri]n[ce]s Ovisa is gone [to Bengal], it is surely at the desire of Ti[mur] [Dow]. When he was coming from India [in 1771], she was in the Town. She was better than when you saw her there. I met her, one night on the Street, and I had my \_\_\_\_\_, She

i ga sheoltin iam a uair after that;  
 agus yinnish i yom ioma Bodachail  
 thubhairt an Bodach ri. Yinnis i yhôm  
 nach bu toil lé riave ê, ach gun thugga  
 bhriara gun po sa é i. Ha Chaille  
 tigsach, agus fuasach an lëss ha na  
 h'irpul. San vo sho, hanc the love of  
Cubla [Dow]. Yeug pair Chubla yé  
 Callair a bhuid an an Dunedin. Chai  
 huilla a Deuil Scriovair huic. Salach  
 han story sho. Therefore I shall say  
 no more on the subject."

came to see me many times after that;  
 and she told me a Bawdy-thing the  
 Old-Man [Dow] said to her. She told me  
 she never liked him, but that he gave  
 his word that he would marry her. The  
 girl is willing, and terrible is the heat  
 in her ----. It was from this, that the  
love of Cubla [Dow] came. The sister of  
 Cubla died from the pox in Edinburgh.  
 Every Devil of a Writer went with her.  
 Dirty is this story. Therefore I shall  
 say no more on the subject."

In the next letter John explained why he had not written to Dow, and then made this comment about his friend.

(vi) John to James Macpherson, 30 September 1774 (*ibid.*, 39/7)

"Cubla [Dow] is little known in his own circle and has been, I think, neglected by Mr. Hastings. In the airible te [hot tail] of Ov[is]a he has, I fear, lost more than bodily vigour. Cubla is an extraordinary Person and merits laxity in his Errors. A perfection of Character I never require anywhere, for I never expect it."

In the last reference to her, John Stewart, the Bengal Judge Advocate, wrote from St. Helena on his way home to Britain to tell John that Elizabeth Draper, having deserted Dow, was also returning to Britain in another ship, the Ajax.

(vii) John Stewart to John Macpherson, 9 June 1776, (B.M. Add. MSS. 29137, f. 218).

"[John] Sullivan [has] been here in the Ajax, with the sentimental Eliza aboard. You may tell Dick his brother is much improved in her company."

There is no doubt that the "Eliza" referred to by Stewart was Mrs. Draper (see H. MSS. C., Palk MSS., p. 271). She died in London two years later, a widow. No explanation can be given for the name "Ovisa": it is not Gaelic, Latin or Greek.



APPENDIX 4.

Letter from Sir Robert Harland, Bart., H.M. Plenipotentiary to the Nawab or Arcot, to The Earl of Rochford, Secretary of State for the Southern Department.

Dated: Fort St. George, Madras, 10th September 1772.

Received in London: 10th April 1773.

Source: I.O.L., Home Miscellaneous Series 110, pp. 495-500.

/p. 495/ My Lord:

I am now to trouble your Lordship with the history of some very extraordinary transactions, which I have chosen to make the subject of a separate Letter, as they may in some respects be considered as private; yet as they have some relation to my Mission, and as it is difficult to say how far such Instruments may be made subservient to the wishes of designing men to obstruct or impede publick business, I have thought it necessary to lay the whole before your Lordship.

There is at present in this place one M<sup>r</sup>. John M<sup>c</sup>. pherson, a Writer in the Company's service on the Fort St. George Establishments, who came from England in the Morse Indiaman, and arrived on this Coast some time in the year 1771. He had formerly been a Purser in the India Service, and in that station was at Madras some time in the year 1767, when the Nabob was in very great distress on account of what he thought very hard usage from the Company's Servants then in power; and on account of the War which his Country had been involved in, by them and their Predecessors.

Mr. M<sup>r</sup>. pherson found means of being introduced to his Highness by one of the Dubashes, under the pretence of shewing some Electrical experiments and the phenomena of the Magick Lanthorn, sights very extraordinary to Asiaticks. During the course of those exhibitions he took care to acquaint the Nabob of his great interest in England, both by his family and other connexions, and that it would /p. 496/ be

very much in his (Mr. Macpherson's) power to serve his Highness's interests very effectually in that Kingdom. His Highness, at that time full of his distresses, and happy in an opportunity of communicating some account of his grievances to His Majesty through the intermediate channel [sic] of the Minister, employed M<sup>r</sup> Macpherson to carry a Letter to Lord Chatham who had been in office when this gentleman left England, and very likely his Highness mentioned many things of his situation in words which he might not have thought prudent to commit to paper. Some present pecuniary gratification was given him [Macpherson], and a future reward promised should he execute his Commission to the Nabob's satisfaction. He received One thousand pagodas at the time, and the whole it seems was to be made up to Twelve hundred pounds Sterling (£1,200). After which he was dismissed with Jewels to the value of Three thousand pounds (£3,000) which M<sup>r</sup> Macpherson judged necessary presents to procure him admission to the people in power in England

Besides what had passed between the Nabob and M<sup>r</sup> Macpherson, some private transactions had been adjusted it seems between the Dubash Histria Swamey and him, which were reduced into writing by Mr. Macpherson from Histria Swamey's mouth, and which were sealed with this Dubash's Seal. This instrument Mr. Macpherson wished to be looked upon as his Credentials, and it would seem were intended to be used in order to obtain credit in England to whatever he should say or offer in the Nabob's name. For by it he supposed himself constituted the Nabob's Minister or Vaquael at the Court of Great Britain, as he has over and over again mentioned in his Letters to his Highness since his last arrival in India. The Nabob, however, refuses all concern in the Transaction /p. 497/ and the Dubash acknowledges that he had no authority for any such deed. Besides, affairs of such consequence are never entrusted to such menial servants. But when his Highness communicated this to me he expressed great concern, lest should it be supposed he had acted improperly even in what he had done; but he hopes his situation, the distress of his Affairs, and his ignorance of European manners, will excuse his listening to the insinuation of

this man.

Mr. M<sup>c</sup> pherson's negotiations in England will be best explained by the inclosed copy of a Memorial [see Appendix 5] which he gave in to the Nabob about October or November 1771; and Sir John Lindsay can give the best account of what passed between him and Mr. M<sup>c</sup> pherson either before or since their arrival in India. All I know is that he repeatedly wrote to Sir John and also made some personal applications in order, as I understood, to prevail on him to introduce him to the Nabob as one who had been of great service to His Highness in England. This Sir John refused it seems, notwithstanding Mr. M<sup>c</sup> pherson's repeated offers of services if he complied, and threatenings if he did not. Both failing to produce the desired effect drew down this Gentleman's resentment on His Majesty's Minister Plenipotentiary.

M<sup>r</sup> M<sup>c</sup> pherson returned to England as Purser of the Lord Mansfield India-man sometime about the end of 1767, or beginning of 1768, and left it again to return to India a Writer in the Company's Service in the beginning of 1770. During [the] great part of this time I have understood he was in France with some of Lord Warwick's family. This, however, is of no farther consequence but to explain the "immense expences" which M<sup>r</sup> M<sup>c</sup> pherson says he was obliged to be at on the Nabob's account /p. 498/ "during four years of the most interesting period of my life." In one of his Letters, either to the Nabob or to Sir John Lindsay, I am told he made those expences amount to above Twenty four thousand pounds Sterling (£24,000) but, when desired by the Nabob's Servants about the Durbar to give in the particulars of such expence that his Highness might judge of their propriety, he declined it; and when urged by repeated messages to that purpose, he rather chose, he said, to refer the whole price of his Services to the Nabob's generosity. Since that time he has received Three thousand pagodas which, with the former One thousand, makes Four thousand (4000); something more than what was promised. The Nabob has never enquired to whom he gave the Three thousand pounds worth of Jewels, nor has M<sup>r</sup> M<sup>c</sup> pherson thought proper to communicate the particulars to his Highness. He has

been pressed also to shew the Credentials which he mentions to have received, but he says that he left them with the Duke of Grafton.

I intended communicating those particulars to your Lordship much sooner, but I was told I might expect a personal application from Mr. M<sup>r</sup> pherson in a publick capacity to obtain justice for him from the Nabob, as a Subject of England employed by his Highness on Secret Services; this, however, he has not thought proper to do; and my attentions have been employed about concerns of much more moment. He has ever since Sir John Lindsay's departure been importuning the Nabob with Letter after Letter, sometimes requesting an audience, at other times (in terms not very decent from one of his Station to the Prince of the Country) demanding justice to his Services: even threatening to make his cause a publick concern (which he always connects with the Interests of Great Britain in all his Letters) and to make application to the Government /p. 499/ of this place for redress.

It appears by his Letters that he wished to persuade the Nabob that the Mission to India was his (Mr. M<sup>r</sup> pherson's) planning. That all the protection given to his Highness was thro' his means. That the Servants of the East India Company were restrained from oppression by his representations: and that he had come with express authority from the Duke of Grafton, the then first Minister of Great Britain, to finish his Negotiation with the Nabob of the Carnatick.

Sir John Lindsay refused any communication with him I am told, and assigned him the reason that he (Sir John) had not been made acquainted in the smallest degree in a publick capacity with any such person or any such authority as he mentioned in India. The Nabob refused to see him or to answer any person who formed such pretensions to transact business between the Court of Great Britain and his Highness - which could pass through His Majesty's Minister alone; but he ordered the promised reward to be sent him and took his receipts in full of all demands. This, however, being greatly below Mr. M<sup>r</sup> pherson's expectations, he did not give over his pursuit; but has sent many Letters to the Nabob since, with any

favourable articles of Intelligence which he either collects from newspapers or receives from his Friends in England.

I do not mean to trouble your Lordship with any reflections on this subject, the inconveniences of such persons being listened to by the Nabob, had he succeeded in his endeavours, will appear sufficiently clear, without any observation of mine. I only mean to give /p. 500/ a history of what came to my knowledge and to make your Lordship acquainted with a character now at Madras. Mr. M<sup>r</sup> pherson has all along lived with M<sup>r</sup> Du Fré and has been employed as his private Secretary. He even appeared to be in great confidence at the very time when he was addressing the Nabob and Sir John Lindsay, and making severe strictures on the conduct of the Company's Servants; whether those pursuits of Mr. M<sup>r</sup> pherson were with the Governor's knowledge or not, or if there were any intentions to impede the operations of Government by such means, I shall not pretend to say. However, he has lately been promoted to a very beneficial employment in the Service, and for some time past he has had access to all the Records of the Presidency to assist him, as I have been informed, in compiling materials for some work which may perhaps be intended for the publick. Should any such appear, and should any attempt be made to explain the political state of this Country, with the interests, connexions or variances subsisting between its different powers either with respect to themselves or the Company, and should the political maxims of one be blamed, while the pursuits of others are vindicated, your Lordship may judge of such a work, and the degree of credit it deserves, from an acquaintance with the Character of the Author. I have the honour to be with the greatest respect, My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient and most humble servant,

R.<sup>t</sup> Harland.

APPENDIX 5.

A Short Memorial of Services rendered to his Highness the Nabob of the Carnatick, Maulajah &c<sup>a</sup> &c<sup>a</sup> &c<sup>a</sup>, by John Macpherson, whom he sent upon a Secret Commission to his Majesty's first Minister of State in 1767.

Undated, but written (according to Sir Robert Harland, see Appendix 4) "about October or November 1771."

The Persian Seal of the Nawab of Arcot on the first page indicates that it was officially received into the Nawab's records. It is not, of course, the Nawab's seal of approval of the document.

Source: I.O.L., Home Miscellaneous Series 110, pp. 503-512.

An exact transcription of the document was entered into the records of the East India Company in the Minutes of the Consultation presided over by Lord Pigot, the Governor of Madras, at Fort St. George, on 22nd January 1776.

Source: I.O.L., Madras Military Consultations, Range 251, Vol. 80, pp. 37-48.

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..... /p. 503/  
 : Persian Seal: :  
 : Nawab of Arcot :  
 : :  
 ..... The object of this Commission was to procure relief from the oppressions under which the Nabob was labouring, tho' in alliance with Great Britain. It was necessary the Commission should be secret as well as the powers to execute it confined for several reasons. To procure the wished for relief, the means to be employed were, if possible, to raise in the breast of the prime Minister a favourable respect for the Nabob; then to lay before him, not in the mode of direct complaint of which he might avail himself against the Company, the distresses of the Prince; likewise to show the advantages which would arise to the State, from granting him the proper protection and supporting him in the rights of his alliance.

let

1st

Upon my arrival at the Court of Great Britain towards the end of the year 1768 I found two important changes had happened in Administration. The Earl of Chatham had retired in such a manner from power as convinced the most intelligent upon those Subjects that there was little prospect of his ever again possessing a lead in Administration. The Earl of Shelburne had been dismissed at the instigation of the Duke of Grafton from the Office of Secretary of State.

These changes, however unexpected, did not discourage my resolution of supporting the cause of the Nabob. Whoever had the favour of the Sovereign it was my business to interest him in the support of my Employer. But fortunately the favourite and Minister /p. 504/ was a personage of the first distinction, of the noblest and most steady principles. Every consideration pointed out his Grace as the member of the British Empire whose friendship and support, next to those of the Sovereign, were the most desirable to the cause of the Nabob, but above all the consideration of his being at the head of affairs rendered it necessary to apply to the Duke of Grafton.

I accordingly obtained from my patron and friend, the Earl of Warwick, a Letter of Introduction to his Grace. With this Letter, which declared from his Lordship's intimate knowledge of me that a perfect dependence might be made upon my honour and judgment, I waited upon his Grace and first presented him with a general state of India, and a plan by which the concerns of that Country might be turned to the publick advantage and which has since been partly adopted.

This plan I drew out and presented with a view of discovering his Grace's sentiments before I was explicit. The consequence was favourable. I signified in some degree my Commission, and on the Eighth of December [1768] I received a letter from his Grace to wait of him. It was unnecessary to act with further reserve. His Grace spoke so feelingly of the oppression under which the princes of India laboured from the usurped authority of the Commercial Subjects of the State.

I then expatiated upon the superior merits of the Nabob [and] shewed that he was a person to whom Britain owed the life of her power in India. That his attachment and unsullied honour to the English were unparalleled [sic]. I then dwelled upon his personal merits as a Statesman and Gentleman and shewed that, tho' he had assurances of protection under the Sovereign's hand, he was treated with Indignity and even Tyranny.

The Letter and Credential presents [sic] were then presented. /p. 505/ The answer of the Duke of Grafton did honour to the Minister of the best of Kings and the first of Nations --

"Sir,

It is my sincere disposition that the Nabob should have every support that is consistent with the power and Interests of the Crown to give. I will gladly receive from you every proposal upon that subject and warmly represent them to my Sovereign, and I desire you to believe that the Nabob's Interest runs no risque from my want of caution. If you [correspond] with him, inform him of my wishes for his prosperity, and explain to him that I'll not accept his presents, however great my respect for him is. I will have no return for the just regard I owe him as a man, but my own sensibility. It is from my fidelity to my Master, and Duty to my Country, that I will only serve him as Minister."

Overwhelmed with the nobleness of this answer, I took up the presents and offered them in the name of the Nabob to his Grace's Secretary, Mr. Bradshaw, upon which Mr. Bradshaw said --

"Sir,

Were it in my power to shew my respect for the Prince you serve with such affectionate Zeal, he should have every proof of it. You seem to merit my regard, but you'll forfeit it if you insist upon my disgracing the example of the Duke of Grafton."



I cannot describe what I felt upon those occasions. Upon reflecting I thought it would be difficult to persuade my Employer that men who would not receive his presents had any serious intentions to serve him. I likewise apprehended that being without any proofs of having insisted on their being received, my want of persuasion would be found fault with. Upon my making these objections the Secretary said --

"From the confidence the Nabob has placed in you, any representation you are pleased to make him will convince him. If he will find /p. 506/ his cause espoused here and the consequent effects in his situation, you will have less difficulty in persuading him that the Minister can be his friend without receiving his presents."

This passed at a subsequent interview to which I was appointed by a Letter from his Grace on the 20th January 1769.

## 2nd

Having represented the Nabob's distress, and the oppressions under which he laboured, in the most cautious manner to his Grace, I availed myself of the disputes which subsisted or were, rather, commencing between his Grace as first Lord of the Treasury and the India Directors, to enforce the propriety of supporting the Nabob. This dispute was about the Territorial acquisitions of the Company. His Grace was going to refer the decision of this question to Parliament. I seized the opportunity; but it is now unnecessary to be explicit upon this subject. The Nabob may inform himself of my arguments by looking to the Memorial N<sup>o</sup> 2, now in his possession. This Second Memorial is not in the India Office Records. I can only, upon this head, refer to the attestation of the Minister and spirit of my writings, which had always this useful tendency to the Nabob's Interest. They shewed that the firm support of his Highness in the rights of his Guarantee by the Crown was the best restraint which Government had upon the Usurpations of the Servants of a certain Company.

The Nabob will likewise be pleased to inform himself whether there was ever any publick mention made of his Guaranteement by Article 11.<sup>th</sup> of the Treaty of Paris prior to my application for him in England. I remember none.

3<sup>d</sup>

The cautious manner in which I presented the Nabob's application to the Duke of Grafton in his Ministerial Character. My preforatory [sic] address to those applications were in these words /p. 507/

"To his Grace &c<sup>a</sup> &c<sup>a</sup> &c<sup>a</sup> --

It is not solely in your character of first Minister of the British Empire that your Grace is expected to receive these applications in favour of the Nabob; they are likewise addressed to your Grace as the personage whose rank, greatness and liberality of mind render you the most worthy of receiving the addresses of Princes, who are allied to your Nation. As your Zeal and Influence in the Service of your Country, and sensibility of the rights of mankind, render your Grace the most capable of preserving those alliances to the mutual advantage of the State and the Princes on whom they are bestowed."

From the tenor of my applications and representations of the Nabob's merits I will venture to say that I have obtained him the friendship and esteem of his Grace; of this the Nabob is, I hope, not insensible.

4<sup>th</sup>

The Steps I took at my own proposed expence to bring about an Act of Parliament limiting the power of the Company's Servants, and making it a crime in them against the State to interfere with the Government and Succession of the Indian Princes in treaty with the Company, and my endeavour to make this Act particularly relative to the Nabob and his posterity. A copy of my proposal to this purpose, accepted by the Secretary of the Treasury, and returned with a Letter from the said Secretary for my correction, that he might afterwards lay it before Lord North and M<sup>r</sup>

[Jeremiah] Dyson [M.P.; a Lord of Treasury, 1768-1774], is now in the hands of the Nabob. Here his Highness will see that I stipulated to be at the expence of the Act &c<sup>a</sup> out of my own pocket. The utility of it he will, I hope, be sensible of.

5th

The manner in which I executed the Nabob's first and grand injunction to me; his desire of lending a capital of Seventy Lacks of Rupees to the Publick at the low Interest of two p<sup>r</sup> Cent. The words /p. 508/ of my proposal upon this subject to his Grace as first Lord of His Majesty's Treasury are as follows---

"Proposal:

The Nabob, from his knowledge of security of the British funds, the precarious tenure of pecuniary property in India, and his desire of providing for his youngest Children, proposes to invest a Capital of Seventy Lacks of Rupees in any of the National Stocks of Britain, as the Minister would direct him. The money would be remitted to Europe in the annual payments; on receipt of these sums, obligations drawn up, so that the Nabob might be secure, should be remitted to him.

If the foregoing proposal should not be agreeable, the Nabob would lend the same or greater Capital to the Treasury; a pledge of his fidelity towards and trust in the British State".

It is impossible for me to express the noble and respectable Idea which this confidential proposal gave of the Nabob to the Minister.

My subsequent and frequent interviews with the Secretary of the Treasury, Mr. Bradshaw, as appears by his Letters, which are in the order of their dates in 1769 - May 16th, D<sup>o</sup> 30th, June 17th, July 7th, September 27th, D<sup>o</sup> 30th, October 19th, November 17th: in 1770 - January 13th, February 9th, &c<sup>a</sup> &c<sup>a</sup> &c<sup>a</sup>. These interviews were all to advance the Nabob's Interest. I cannot recapitulate the interesting subjects of them here. They might afford subject for a volume. They are not now

so material, since the object sought in confidence is obtained. His Majesty has been graciously pleased to grant the support.

6th

My going to Sir John Lindsay at his house in Bentinck Street at the time he was getting his secret Commission, and my recommending to him then and thereafter by Letter in a warm manner, the support of the Nabob; and my urging him to wait of the Duke of Grafton to /p. 509/ get a more enlarged Commission. Sir John's answer to me upon this occasion was much in the style of a Gentleman and Minister. He said:

"He would disinterestedly support the Nabob according to his powers from his Master, that his Commission came immediately through Lord Weymouth, the Secretary of State, and that he would wait of the Duke of Grafton out of the compliment due to the Minister."

This might be one cause why his Grace said only to him when he did wait: "Take care the Servants of the Company do not make war to the prejudice of the State and its allies for their own emolument."

Sir John will, I hope, attest for me here how I wanted him to be present at the account I gave the Nabob of the discharge of my Commission. His reasons were Ministerial for not being present.

To this I will add the steps I took in London to procure the Nabob a security against the Supervisors, by endeavouring to find out Mr. Vansittart's intentions under his own hand. This I did in a manner I cannot publicly explain. Mr. Vansittart's Letter will show this, and the use to which I turned it for the Nabob.

7th

The Friends I interested in the Nabob's prosperity (besides those of the Ministry I addressed) and that without discovering to them my Commission. Those Friends I interested for the Nabob for fear of a change in Administration, the chief of them is the Earl of Shelburne, whom I found very inquisitive in his

conversations about the affairs of the Carnatick, as may appear by a Letter with which I was honoured by his Lordship. I wrote his Lordship overland from the Malabar Coast after receipt of my charge from the Nabob. But he was out of the Ministry upon my arrival in England, and violently in Opposition. I never asked him whether he received my Letter, tho' I believe he did, for he judged me to be in the Nabob's /p. 510/ Interest. I could not explain anything to his Lordship; but, at his request, sent him the pamphlets about the Nabob's affairs, especially that where it was proposed to raise the Nabob to the Musnud i.e. the Throne of the Decan [sic]. "You see," said his Lordship, "how attentive I am to these subjects."

"I request your Lordship to continue so," was my answer. This passed when I took leave. He spoke well of the Nabob and told me he had presented the fine Diamond Ring, brought by Mr. Palk, to His Majesty.

The Earl of Warwick, Lord Greville, &c<sup>a</sup>. The Friendship of the Earl of Warwick is so disinterested that he forbids any return of presents. To them I might add many other respectable names; but circumstances forbid.

### 8th

My publications for a year and a half in favour of the Nabob. The aim of these publications was to interest not Ministers and Directors alone in his favour, but the whole British Nation. See the Letters in the Publick Advertiser [sic] signed Indianus, A Company's Servant, Hindustanus, Intelligence from Authority, and the Letters drafted from Arlington Street where the Minister [Grafton] lived.

In these publications I proclaimed the Royal and Ministerial determination of supporting the Nabob, especially against any unjust debts that might be brought against him for the expence of the late War. Let these Essays speak for themselves; but I will venture to assert that relative to the expence of the War I have rendered a signal service to the Nabob.

But from all my publications in favour of the Nabob, I must distinguish the

Character and print of him which I published in Major Dow's history, second Edition, and the article I got inserted in the same, vindicating the Nabob's father Anwar-ul-dee Gawn [Anwar-ud-Din Khan] from a charge the historians had fixt upon him; that of murdering his predecessor Abdalla [Ahwahjah Abdullah Khan].

Copies of this history, so printed at a great expence, were put in the hands of the Ministry, with what related to the Nabob in red characters. /p. 511/

The cause of this publication in support of the Nabob's honour was a suspicion that his Enemies were whispering against his fidelity to the English, upon the arrival of the Dutton Indianan from India in December 1769, which event detained me half a year longer at the Court of London. It was upon this occasion I addressed the authoritative Letter in support of the Nabob to the Supervisors, in the Publick Advertizer [sic].

A very effectual, tho' more general service, that those publications rendered from [the] first to the Nabob was the restraint they occasioned at the India House, and the lights they give [sic] the able attentive secretary, Mr. Wood. This a person of his honour will admit.

### 9th

That I returned to India [having] endured a most perilous voyage to render my Negotiation effectual to the Nabob's Interest; not to solicit rewards and expences, which I might have had better, perhaps, remitted to me in England.

But, above all that, I have spent the greatest part of my fortune, and four years of the most interesting period of life, in rendering those services and others which I can only explain in conversation to the Nabob.

In answer to this Memorial those who attend solely to the Nabob's immediate convenience will ask what proofs have you brought of those Services.

This is a question which the Nabob will be cautious of putting himself; but the answers would be no Embarrassment.

The event of the Negotiation, my honour unforfeited, and in which the trust and

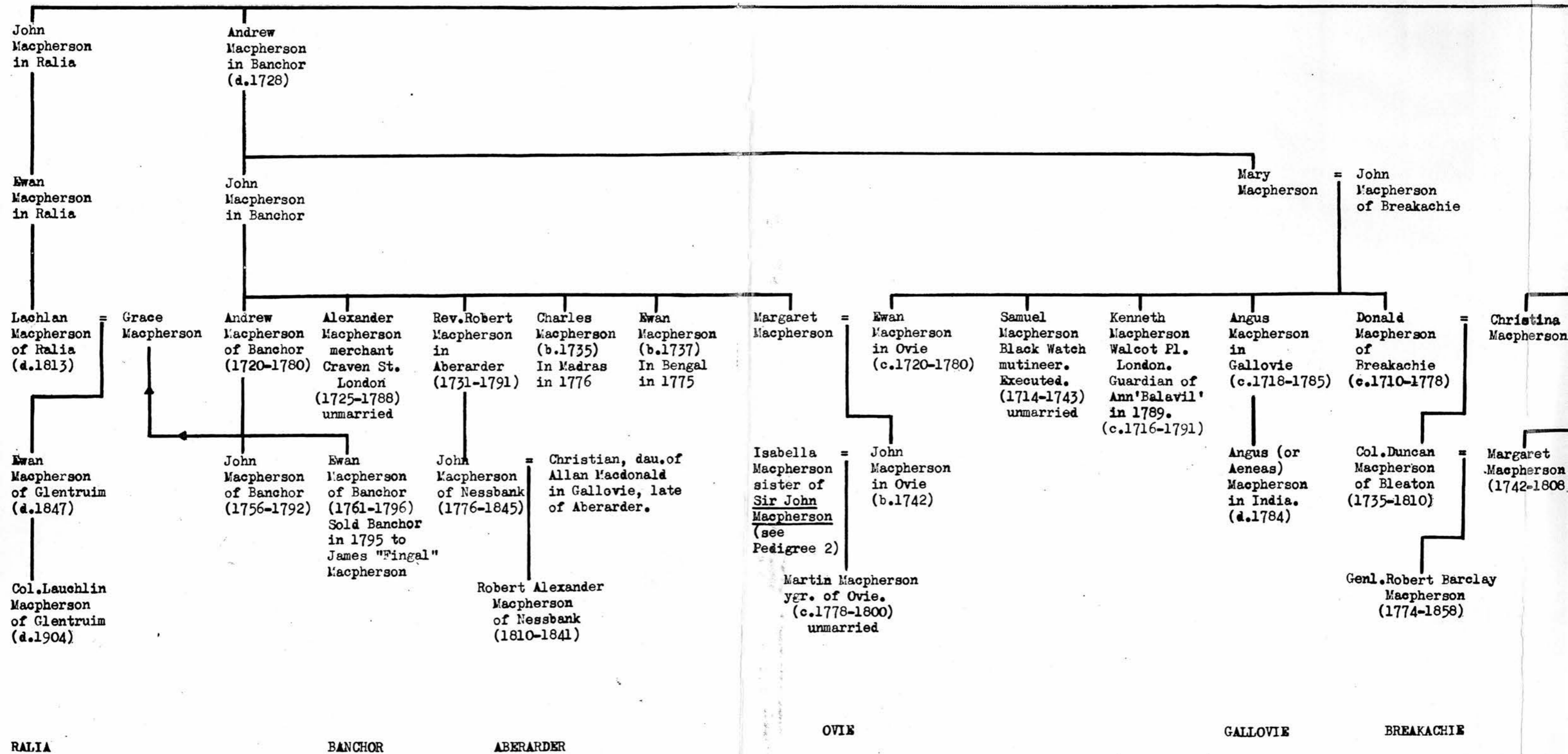
confidence were put in the time of the Nabob's distress. The Letters under the hands and seals of the Duke of Grafton and the Secretary of the Treasury, attesting to that honour; other Letters from the Nabob's Friends; my publications; the particulars of this Memorial; my /p. 512/ request at my arrival here that His Majesty's Minister should be present at the account I gave of my Negotiation; my readin<sup>g</sup> [sic, readiness] and earnest desire [to] give the Nabob, under my hand and Seal, this Memorial of a Secret Negotiation, without receiving the expences I incurred and the rewards I [was] promised for effecting the business I undertook.

What other proofs are wanted? If there are any more wanted, they must be obtained by command of His Majesty to His Ministry. The Negotiation becomes then a publick one. I have, in that event, the happiness to feel that I have done my duty as a man of honour, and fidelity to the trust reposed in me by the Nabob, as a faithful Subject to His Majesty.

.....  
 : Personal Arms :  
 : John Macpherson :  
 : .....

The only Bond I had for the expences that I was to incur [for] my proposed services, were the honour and gratitude of the Nabob, which will never be forfeited to his most faithful  
 Servant -

John Macpherson.





Appendix 6.

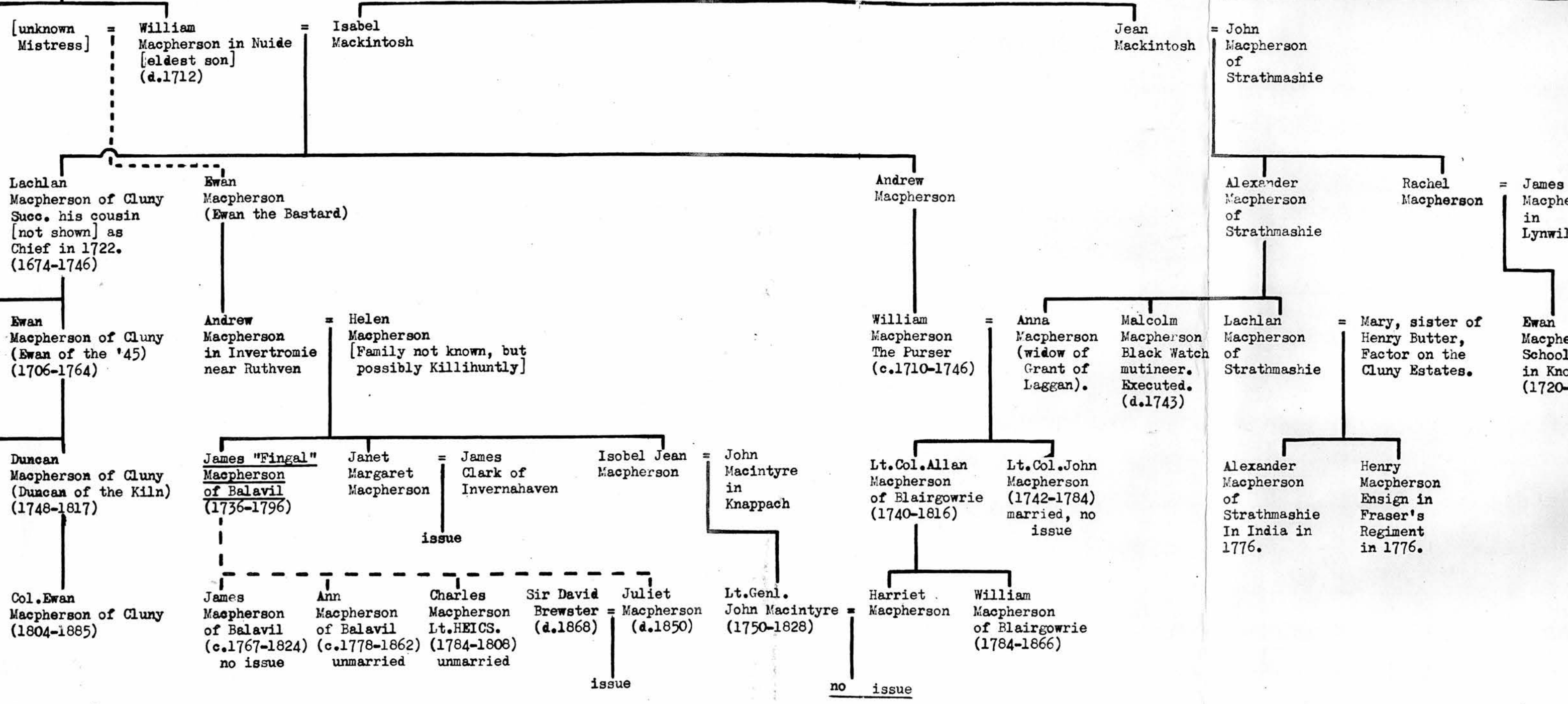
Pedigree No.1: The Macphersons of Badenoch  
The kinsmen of James "Fingal" Macpherson

Compiled from MSS., TSS., and printed works kept in the Clan Macpherson Museum (Library). Dates have been given only when they have been given.

————— continuous lines: legitimate  
----- broken lines: illegitimate descent

Donald Macpherson in Nuide [First-cousin of Cluny-Macpherson]. (d.1676)

Lachlan Mackintosh of Mackintosh (d.1704)



CLUNY

BALAVIL

BLAIRGOWRIE

STRATHMASHIE

KNOYDART

Appendix 6.

Pedigree No.1: The Macphersons of Badenoch

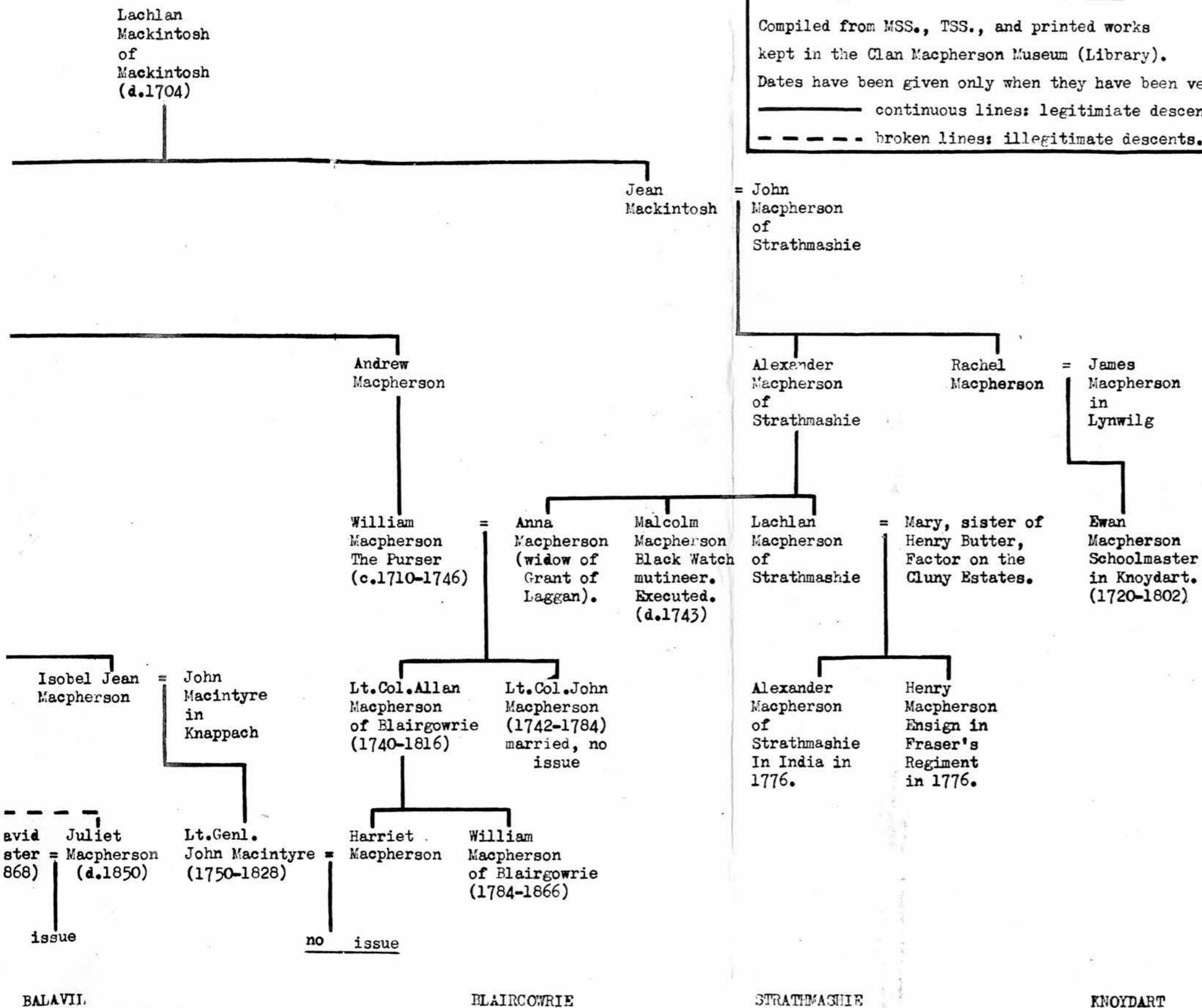
The kinsmen of James "Fingal" Macpherson

Compiled from MSS., TSS., and printed works kept in the Clan Macpherson Museum (Library).

Dates have been given only when they have been verified.

————— continuous lines: legitimate descents.

- - - - - broken lines: illegitimate descents.



Rev. John 'Roy' Macpherson  
The Parson of Sleat, Skye.

John 'Bain' Macpherson  
Constable of Castle Camus, Skye.

Rev. Martin Macpherson, M.A. = Margaret, dau. of  
Minister of Duirinish, Skye. Kenneth Macqueen,  
(c.1610-1662) of Orinsay, N.Uist

Rev. Dugald Macpherson, M.A. = Christian, dau. = Margaret, dau. of  
Minister of Duirinish, Skye. of John Ferry of Edinburgh. Alexander Macleod  
(c.1641-1717) of Drynoch.  
no issue

Rev. Martin Macpherson, M.A. = Mary, dau. of  
Minister of Strath in Skye. Lachlan Mackinnon  
(1672-1713) 1st of Corrie, Skye.

Rev. John Macpherson, M.A., D.D. = Janet, dau. of  
Minister of Sleat in Skye Donald Macleod  
(1713-1765) of Bernera,  
'The Old Trojan'

Rev. Martin Macpherson, M.A., D.D. = Mary (The Sunbeam),  
Minister of Sleat in Skye dau. of Lachlan  
(1743-1812) Mackinnon,  
3rd of Corrie.  
no issue

Sir John Macpherson, Baronet,  
Governor-General of India  
M.A., LL.D.  
(1744-1821)  
unmarried

Isabella Macpherson = John  
(b.1741) Macpherson  
in Ovie.  
(See Pedigree 1)

Martin Macpherson  
in Ovie, Badenoch  
(c.1778-1800)  
unmarried

John Macpherson, M.A. = Barbara,  
Schoolmaster Norman Ma  
of Orbst in Skye (of Oze,

Rev. Martin Macpherson, M.A. = El  
Minister of Golspie da  
(1723-1773) Ca

John Macpherson primus ("Jock") = Prof. Hugh Macphe  
(1763-1771) M.A., M.D.  
(1767-1854)  
Twice married:  
1. Ann Maria Charters 2. Chris  
Macleod

Martin Macpherson = Samuel Charters = Willie  
(1804-1860) (1806-1860) Macphe  
unmarried unmarried (1812-  
with i

ARMS:

used by

Sir John Macpherson, Bt.

Apart from the motto

they are very similar to

those used by

Cluny-Macpherson and his

Cadets in Badenoch.



SOURCE:

Macpherson MSS./1, 39/1,  
Letter, dated at the  
Cape of Good Hope on  
19th December 1770.

Wax around motto was  
smudged. It reads:

SIC S----VE--- BA----

Barbara, dau. of  
Norman Macleod  
(of Oze, Skye?)

Appendix 7.Pedigree No.2 : The Macphersons of SkyeThe kinsmen of Sir John Macpherson, Bt.

James "Fingal" Macpherson's third-cousin, John Macpherson in Ovie, married Isabella Macpherson, the sister of Sir John Macpherson, Bt.; and this connection by marriage was the only relationship that existed between the subjects of this thesis.

In the person of Martin Macpherson, ygr. of Ovie, the Macphersons of Badenoch and Skye became both homonymous and consanguinous for the first time.

The second member of the family of Skye to become a Member of the Council of the Governor-General of India was Sir John Molesworth Macpherson, KCIE, the eldest son of Dr. John Macpherson, Inspector-General of Army Hospitals (1817-1890), the fourth son of Professor Hugh Macpherson, Sub-Principal of King's College, Aberdeen, and Laird of the Isle of Bigg (1767-1854), the second-cousin of Sir John Macpherson, Baronet, Governor-General of India.

Sir John Molesworth Macpherson (1853-1914) bought Creag Dhu, Onich, Inverness-shire, and left three sons and one daughter. His uncle, Sir Arthur George Macpherson, KCIE (1828-1921), was a member of the Judicial Department of the Govt. of India. His second son was Arthur Holte Macpherson, B.C.L. (1867-1953).

N.F.P. = No Further Particulars

