

# If Wonderful Conversion of Muckle Kate

Among the Highlanders of Ross-shire the name of Mr. Lachlan Mackenzie (1754-1819), the godly minister of Lochcarron, was very fragrant, and even now there are some to whom "the great Mr. Lachlan" is a pleasant name. Mr. Lachlan began his ministry in Lochcarron in 1782 and continued serving the Lord's people there until his death in 1819.

The following story will illustrate the sovereignty and power of grace, and is given on the authority of a late eminent, godly minister in Ross, who was an eye-witness of the principal scenes here-in stated.

Not far from the Manse at Lochcarron, a wicked, old sinner lived, who was supposed to have been guilty of every forbidden crime in the Law of God, except

murder. As she had very masculine dimensions she was known as "Muckle (Large) Kate." "An ill-looking woman without any beauty in the sight of God and man," Mr. Lachlan used to say of her.

The efforts of her Minister could not succeed to get from her even occasional attendance at the House of God; entreaties, visits, appeals to her conscience, many and strong, were made by him, but all in vain; nothing could reach the heart which seemed certainly to have reached the point "past feeling."

Her Minister adopted a plan to reach her conscience, which certainly was very strange; some would perhaps say it was unwarrantable, but God owned it, and as He is a Sovereign, doing just as He will, we shall not say "it was unwarrant-able."

It was customary among the Highlanders during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to meet at nightfall in each other's houses, and spend the long evening in singing Gaelic melodies (Gaelic being the original celtic language of Scotland). The women brought with them their distaffs (cleft sticks holding wool) and spindles (slender rods to twist and wind thread), while the men mended their brogues (rough shoes) or weaved baskets and creels (fishing baskets). This was called "going on ceilidh (an informal social gathering with music, singing and storytelling; the word is actually pronounced, 'kailie')."

Kate devoted herself to this practice with eagerness. Her Minister knowing this, and having a skill in rhyming, composed a Gaelic song in which all Kate's known sins were enumerated and lashed with all the severity of which the composer was capable. This song Mr Lachlan set to music, and sending for some persons who were known to "go on kailie" with Kate he taught them the song and instructed them to sing it in her hearing on the first opportunity. Strange! It was so, but the suddenness of the blow, from such an unexpected quarter, gave point to the stroke, while God drove the truth right home to her heart.

Her subsequent agony of mind was fearful. The bleak scenery of Lochcarron was in strange unison with her feelings. Among the dreary mountains of that lonesome, western wilderness, runs up

the small es-tuary from which the parish derives its name. In these wilds Kate now spent most of her time. For what purpose? Joseph-like, she sought where to weep. The solitudes of Lochcarron were heard to resound with the voice of wailing, and the inmates of the bothies (cottages or shelters) amid the hills knew from whose lips those cries of agony were wrung. They came from the once-hardened Muckle Kate. Deep as her conviction was, it never seemed to subside; weeks, months, even years passed, yet the sorrows of the convicted sinner were as fresh as ever. "Never breathed a wretch like her; there might be hope for others, but oh, there was none for Muckle Kate!"

She was a "wonder to many," as well she might be, for at her age, between 80 and 90, it is rare to see a person called by grace. However, age has nothing to do with the matter as in God's sight ; the set time had come for her to be brought to know herself a sinner, and now she was a wonder to her neighbours, to unbelievers, to the Church, to her astonished Minister, but most of all a wonder to herself. Into the depths of conviction under the Law she, poor soul, went, inasmuch as to understand that part of it which says: "I also will do this unto you: I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes" (Lev. 26: 16), and Muckle Kate wept herself stone-blind! Yes, without exaggerating by a hair's-breadth, she wept away her eyesight! Poor Kate! Rich Kate! What deep,

penetrating eyes she had into her own soul's state before God. Would that God would give many of us in this hard-hearted day a few tears for sin.

During one of her visits to the Manse, and while waiting to converse with her Minister, she heard the noise of a flock of ducklings, and, not aware of the presence of any other person, she said, "Oh, my poor things, ye're (you are) happy, happy creatures. Ye ha' e na' (have not) crucified a Saviour like me; it would be well for Muckle Kate to be a duck like you, for then she would have no sin to answer for – no sin, no sin!" Others have entered a little into this feeling of the poor, blind woman. In the third year of her sorrow for sin her Minister was anxious for her to sit down at the Lord's Table, but nothing could prevail upon her to comply with his requests.

"I go forward to that holy table! I, who have had my arms up to the shoulders in a Saviour's blood! My presence would profane that blessed ordinance, and would be enough to pollute the whole congregation. Never will I sit down at that Table; the Communion is not for me."

However, it was for her. The Communion day arrived, the hour of meeting drew nigh, but Kate's determination still remained unchanged. The Tables had all been served, the elements removed, the Minister had returned to "the tent," and all were listening for the words of the concluding address, when a cry of despair

was heard in a distant part of the audience – a shriek of female agony – that rose loud and clear, and was returned, as if in sympathy, by the echoes of the surrounding hills. It was the voice of Muckle Kate, who now thought all was over. Hundreds started to their feet and looked anxiously toward the spot from whence the scream had proceeded.

Mr. Lachlan knew the voice, and as each true Pastor has a Pastor's heart, he understood the cause of the cry, stepped over among the people till he had reached the spot, took Kate kindly by the hand, led her through the crowd to the Communion Table, and seated her at the head. He next ordered the elements to be brought for-ward and replaced upon the Table; and there sat that one solitary, blind being, alone in the midst of thousands – every eye of the vast multitude turned in wonder upon her – partaking of the em-blems of the Saviour's body and blood, and she her-self unconscious of their gaze. Mr. Lachlan spoke from the words – "Not a hoof of them shall be left," and his address was so blessed to the assembled multitude that it is computed that two hundred were awakened that day to a sense of their lost estate.

Muckle Kate lived about three years after this, manifesting the marks of a close and humble walk with God. Not having seen any account as to the manner of her Gospel deliverance from the terrors of the Law under which she so long suffered, we

cannot state the means that were used, but of the reality of her deliverance, her life henceforth, and her triumphant death testify. As Muckle Kate was led deep into the knowledge of sin and sorrow for sin, so she was led deep into the knowledge of Christ; and so clear as to her interest in His work, that assurance became so sure that she ceased to think of self; she was absorbed in the glory of her Redeemer, Christ was "all in all" to her. "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ," was her happy experience.

As she stood on the threshold of eternal glory, her sanctified tongue was heard to exclaim, as its farewell effort to honour Christ: "Tell, tell to others that I have found Him." Lay the emphasis upon the "I" and what depth of sin, shame and pollution are comprised in that "I." If we could compress into that "I", those ninety years of sin – as she had been taught sin – as she had felt sin – -as she had wept her sight away for sin, we should better catch what she meant when she said, "I have found Him."

"Tell them that the worst of sinners – the drunkard, the profligate, the Sabbath-breaker, the thief, the blasphemer, the liar, the scoffer, the in-fidel – tell them that I, a living embodiment of every sin, even I, have found a Saviour's person, even I have known a Saviour's love."  
"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into

the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

Reader, if you fear God, you will bless Him for such mercy as is here evident. But if one reads this who is still without God, I would say: you may not have sinned openly as poor Muckle Kate, but God looks on your heart, and unless you partake of saving mercy before you die, you must be etern-ally lost. Hell is solemnly real, notwithstanding many declaring against it. The wages of sin is death – eternal death – after the death of the body.

Should a true seeker read this, one who feels he is too bad for salvation, surely here is something to encourage such to hope for mercy. If He has given you the felt want, the anxious yearning after His blood to be applied to your soul; if He, in mercy, has granted you sorrow for sin, then it is hoped, by His blessing, that this record of saving mercy may encourage you to press your case before Him who is "plenteous in mercy."

The author of this narrative in its original form submitted the proof-sheets to the inspection of Mr Lachlan's sister and nephew; the former of whom distinctly remembered the circumstances recorded, and was actually present at the serving of "Muckle Kate's Table" at Lochcarron, while the nephew also testifies to the truth of the same, for he heard the story from his uncle's lips very shortly before he died.