

1847

## Notes by a Pioneer

---

The events in my early life will not be of much interest to strangers, and perhaps no part of this narrative will be.

I am the third son of the late Alex. Macdonald, of Vally<sup>a</sup> North Uist, and Glendale Isle of Skye, and his wife, Flora McRae, daughter of Captain McRae, of Inverinet Kintail—my grandfathers on father and mother's side were in the Army. My father served first in the Navy, his discharge being purchased on account of his father's death. He afterward served in the County Yeomanry. My early days spent at home in Aird and Kilmuir, under a private tutor, with my three brothers. The first tutor being Rowland Hill Macdonald, son of an army man who served in Egypt under Lord Hill. My second tutor was the Rev. Donald Murray, a hot tempered man who used to punish us severely. No doubt we deserved punishment, but not to be struck on the fingers with a heavy square ruler in frosty weather. My best tutor was Alex. McPhee, of the public school Uig, under whom I began to understand the benefit of education as being superior, and more useful than outdoor exercises. Without vanity I may refer to an incident of mutual confidence. Fish curers and fishermen came to Mr. McPhee to settle disputed accounts. He said, "I will not undertake it, but ask William Macdonald to hear your case." I did so, heard both sides of the disagreement, revised their accounts and in two hours settled the matter to the satisfaction of both parties. This being my first judicial act, at the age of 17.

1847-8

I had my first appointment to any work, my father and self were asked by Admiral Fishbourne, in charge of the Isle of Skye relief work during the famine, owing to the unaccountable potato blight, to administer relief and provide employment for the destitute, the men road-making and the women knitting stockings. Our supervision extending to the parishes of Snizort and Kilmuir. After a time Admiral Fishbourne called me to headquarters at Portree, to be his private secretary and superintendent of work.

1849

This year my eldest brother left for Australia to try his fortune. Married there and died, leaving a large family.

The end of this year my father died, also my grandmother, Mrs. McRae, of Knitail. I was offered by the Hon. Edward