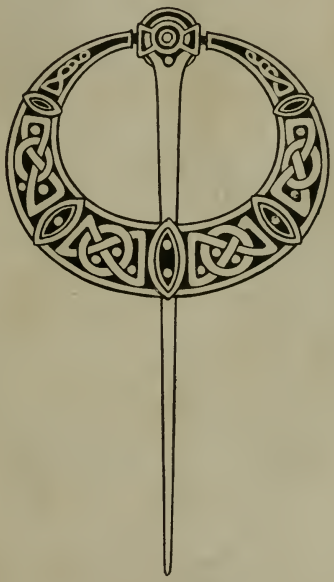
THE LITERATURE OF THE HIGHLANDS

MAGNUS MACLEAN LL.D.



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BY

MAGNUS MACLEAN
M.A., D.Sc., LL.D.

New and Extended Edition

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SOME PRESS OPINIONS ON THE FIRST EDITION

"The book altogether is a very sound and readable account of the development of modern Gaelic literature in Scotland."—*The Glasgow Herald.*

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PREFACE

THE favourable reception given to *The Literature of the Celts* has encouraged me to issue *The Literature of the Highlands* as a companion volume.

Owing to the close affinity that subsisted between the different Celtic nationalities in the earlier periods of their literary activity, it was possible for me in my former book to treat of their literature as a whole. The greater divergence of production among these peoples in more recent times renders it desirable and even necessary that their literary history during this modern period should be detailed in separate volumes.

Accordingly for the third series of Celtic Lectures delivered in the University of Glasgow during the Session 1902-3, and now published in this form, leaving the later contributions of Ireland, Wales, and Brittany to writers more intimately conversant with these, I selected for treatment the Literature of the Highlands, the history of which has hitherto probably received less attention than that of the others above mentioned.

Two pioneer efforts to supply this deficiency as regards the Highlands had, indeed, been made towards the end of last century; the first by Professor Blackie, who founded his account of the poets largely on the biographical notes furnished in Mackenzie's *Beauties of Gaelic Poetry;* the

second by Dr. Nigel Macneill, a worthy exponent of Gaelic poetry, and himself no mean poet.

In design and arrangement the present volume differs from both these earlier works. It is intended to supply a succinct and popular account of the Gaelic literature of the Highlands after the Forty-five,—the golden age of Highland poetry,—with information from the best available sources regarding the lives of the bards, their choice poems, the charming heritage of hymn and song and proverb peculiar to the Celts of Scotland, translations and translators, travellers and historians.

For full information regarding the Highland bards before the Forty-five, the printed literature of the Scottish Gael, and the gleaners of their poetry, the reader is referred to the chapters on these topics in my previous volume, *The Literature of the Celts.*

Distinctively English books by modern Highland authors do not fall within the scope of this work. They belong more appropriately to the wider field of English literature.

My sincere thanks are due to Mr. Henry Whyte, "Fionn," for supplying me with various books, pamphlets, and papers containing information of a kind not otherwise easily obtainable; and to my friend Mr. David Mackeggie, M.A., who has again accorded me his efficient aid.

MAGNUS MACLEAN.

The Technical College,
Glasgow, *September*, 1903.

NOTE

In the present edition opportunity has been taken to add a chapter on "Popular and Anonymous Songs of the Highlands".

March, 1925.

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CHAPTER I

HIGHLAND LITERATURE

In the literary studies upon which we now enter we have to do with the Highlands of Scotland almost exclusively, since it is there chiefly that the Gaelic has perpetuated itself to this day. Contemplating the position of Gaelic Literature after the Forty-five, we are confronted with the remarkable fact that up till the time of the Rising that romantic part of the country—so full of the pathos and poetry of the past—had not a single original production of its own in print, if we except a vocabulary compiled by Alexander Macdonald. The Gaelic volumes in circulation did not exceed half-a-dozen, and these consisted of translations of the following religious works—Knox's Liturgy, The Psalter, Calvin's and the Shorter Catechisms, and the Confession of Faith.

Bookless, indeed, must have been the Highlands then, so far as its own vernacular was concerned, and if a rigid scrutiny were made as to the *written* material in evidence, it seems not unlikely that the net result might prove correspondingly disappointing and meagre; for there was as yet no standard of grammar or orthography, and in the chief documents that have since come to light—the Book of the Dean of Lismore, and the Fernaig MS.—the language is spelt phonetically. So that even admitting—what some have asserted—that there was more literary culture among the Gaels before the Reformation than for two centuries

thereafter, it is still true that, without printing and almost without writing, the Highland literature had to struggle into existence.

Nor were these the only drawbacks to authorship. For centuries the land was an arena of strife. Clan feuds and national convulsions, incessant raids, and frequent battles were not conditions favourable to the cultivation of the more peaceful and settled arts of life. Literature could not flourish among a people so violently distracted by war-like movements as the Highlanders were. The struggle for existence had to be somewhat relaxed before the intellect could well assert itself in literary production. And thus we find that what remain of pre-Reformation compositions are but the beginnings of our Highland literature—the first rude attempts at versification. The poems are interesting in many ways, but chiefly for the light they shed on those medieval times in which they came into existence, on the language, and the stage bardic enterprise had reached.

It is to the Book of the Dean of Lismore we are most indebted for their preservation, and if we set aside the more ancient Ossianic fragments which have so much in common with the Irish literature dealing with similar subjects, we recognise that, judged by later standards, these early productions are not of a high order.

Some of them are moral and aphoristic, others are mere rhymed genealogies, and family histories, while a certain number consist of eulogies and war-songs.

The Gael was aye the Gael, and in these origins we have the germs of what was to follow. The topics handled from the first are those that are largely in evidence all through Highland literature. For example, Muireach Albannach in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century leads the van with religious poetry. Finlay Macnab sings the praises of his patron, as subsequent bards were wont to do of their own. The two poetesses Efric Maccorqudale and Isobel, Countess of Argyll, among other elegists, knew how to express the sorrows of love and death, quite as

characteristically as the renowned Lady Macintosh or the authoress of Macgregor's Lullaby. Nor were the producers of martial strains and impassioned amatory effusions unrepresented. Witness the Brosnachadh-Catha,[1] Lachlan Mor Macvurich's "O children of Conn of the Hundred Fights," and the number of love poems. An amorous John Macvurich seems to have experienced a similar disappointment to Rob Donn and William Ross in after days, for it is in this manner he salves his feelings :—

My rage and wrath are great
For how she's grieving me ;
I see her sweet soft skin
Like white foam on the sea.

So rosy is her hand ;
Her lips like berries red :
My soul she holds while sleep
At night flies from my bed.

I fancied she was nigh,
And that she smiled on me ;
But since my grief began
The maid I cannot see.

Her raven curly locks
Are prettily arrayed ;
Five lovers there are knit
To th' name of the fair maid.

O that she were my own !
Then I should be so blest !
My love for evermore
To press her to my breast !

The period between the Reformation and the Forty-five was, so far as the subjects selected were concerned, almost identical with the one that had gone before. There is less of the moral and aphoristic and sententious perhaps, and an increasing love for elegies and eulogies displayed. While the martial spirit is still strong, it has been diverted into

[1] See *Songs of the Gael*, by L. Macbean, for Gaelic and English versions.

patriotic and Jacobite channels. These are the main outlets of its song. The vein of satire continues, and the religious element is not awanting, as we see from the Fernaig MS.; but the readiness to sing the enchantments of love and the charms of feminine beauty is as yet comparatively dormant. There is not the witchery and fanciful abandon of after days.

But though the themes, with the exception of the new-found Jacobite topics, were practically the same before and after the Reformation, we recognise a steady growth in the strength and quality of the verse, as well as in the power of sustained amplification.

It is in the form rather than in the subject-matter that the greatest development has taken place. In this respect the change has been so great that the second period has hardly anything in common with the first. The traditional versification has been abandoned and the new metres with which we are most familiar in later times have been introduced. For this remarkable advance we are largely indebted to the bards and bardesses who, like Mary Macleod, boldly forsook the stilted, intricate conventions of the past for more natural and musical measures. Thus the period between the Reformation and the Forty-five, though still limited in its choice of subjects and in its power to make artistic use of elements of permanent human interest, prepared the way, by its invention of new rhymes and rhythms, for the splendid renaissance that was to follow, and in this way may be regarded as the early dawn of that bright noon.

Highland literature right on to the middle of the eighteenth century was slowly emerging from a remote past, but seemed till then a soul careless of written embodiment, and might well be regarded by the critic as a thing of naught. Yet like the winged thing that it actually was, it flitted about from glen to strath and strath to island by oral transmission, invading the memory and imagination of the people and stirring their hearts, so that besides the productions of the popular poets there was at the time of the last Stuart Rising a large residuum of ancient Ossianic ballads

and prose romances circulating freely throughout the Highlands without the intervention of pen or paper, pencil or printing-press.

At length the time came when the distracted Highlands, after ages of internecine strife and bloodshed, were finally to be pacified. Like a bolt from the blue the Prince Charlie adventure announced itself. The campaign was anon in progress, and the old Highland life, with all its paraphernalia of chief and clan and sword and dirk, kilt and plaid and claymore, made its last stand on Drumossie Moor, Culloden.

The result proved to be the dawn of a new day for the Highlands. The strong traditional bonds were snapped asunder. This fractious outlying fragment of Gaeldom was gathered up into the unity of the Kingdom, and the causes of the fierce feuds and animosities of the past having been thus fortunately removed, the land quickly settled down into the ways of peace.

By some remarkable coincidence the stirring time which ushered in the new order of things witnessed also the arrival of the golden age of Gaelic poetry. In the year 1745, besides other lesser lights, there were living and composing in the Highlands the great masters of Gaelic poetry—Alexander Macdonald, Duncan Ban Macintyre, Dugald Buchanan, and Rob Donn. Like the Attic period in Greece, or the Elizabethan or Victorian periods in England, this new renaissance of literary production was the most brilliant that the Highlands has seen. For the next half century the activity among Gaels of poetic genius proved so great that a new literature had practically sprung into being and found printed embodiment.

The features of this period are well marked and distinct. They stand out boldly and cannot be mistaken. The new race of bards, it is evident, had gained a mastery over the language and a power of expression never before attained.

In perusing their lyrics one cannot fail to feel enthusiasm for the Gaelic sentiment expressed in the lines:—

> This is the language Nature nursed,
> And reared her as a daughter,
> The language spoken at the first
> By air and earth and water,
> In which we hear the roaring sea,
> The wind when it rejoices,
> The rushes' chant, the river's glee,
> The valley's evening voices.

The bards' range of subjects has been greatly extended. Elegies and eulogies and war-songs, though still dear to the hearts of the clansmen, are no longer the most natural themes for poetry and song. The genius of the people has awakened to other and wider interests. And since the Poetry after the Forty-five is mainly lyric, almost every topic that lends itself to this kind of treatment is from time to time seized upon by the Celtic bard and made the subject of song.

Echoes of the old time still linger in the Jacobite productions of Alexander Macdonald, Duncan Ban Macintyre, John Roy Stuart, and Rob Donn, where devotion to the chief has been transferred in the main to the Prince. Yet there is a breezy independence about these loyal and patriotic effusions which shows that the bards were living in a new time. It was natural that an event full of so much loyalty to the past, full of romance and stirring adventure, should appeal powerfully to the spirit of the Gael and enlist his sympathies. To the enthusiasm thus roused is due that interesting outburst of Jacobite song which is a feature of the period, and which anticipated, by more than half a century, the delightfully plaintive and soul-stirring Stuart songs of the Lowlands.

More striking, and in some respects more novel, is the interest taken in Nature. It is true that from ancient times, as seen in pagan poet and Christian apostle, the Gael manifested no ordinary delight in, and sympathy with, the objects and phases of outward nature. In him there appeared a feeling of kinship with his environment. Nature was instinct with life reflecting his moods and emotions.

Yet it is to the bards that arose towards the middle of the eighteenth century that we must turn for the full expression of this intimate sympathy and keen enjoyment. Macdonald's "Birlinn" and Duncan Ban Macintyre's "Coire-cheathaich" and "Ben Dorain" are the best of the kind in the language. These poets find in the aspects of the mighty ocean, the towering ben, or even the misty corrie or inobtrusive brook, ample scope for the exercise of the poetic gift.

The seasons too with their varying changes were favourite topics. Alexander Macdonald, Duncan Ban Macintyre, William Ross, and Ewen Maclachlan have all odes to Summer; Alexander Macdonald, Dugald Buchanan, Rob Donn, and Ewen Maclachlan, to Winter. In fact Maclachlan, like Thomson, sang the praises of Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter. So enamoured of the beauties and wonders of Nature were the bards of this period that they can scarcely dissociate these from the most human and overpowering emotions and sentiments, especially those of love or sorrow. Consequently, when natural objects are not actually their theme, they weave descriptive sketches of scenes of nature, beautiful or bare, into their poems as part of the experience depicted. No sentiment or emotion seems complete without its setting in the world of nature around.

From this period also dates the headlong entrance of passionate love into Gaelic poetry. Most of the numerous and attractive love songs so characteristic of Highland literature were composed since the time that Alexander Macdonald sang the praises of Morag, Rob Donn of Ann Morrison, and Duncan Ban Macintyre of his Mairi bhàn òg. This class of poetry found its most ardent devotees in these pioneers, in the love-lorn William Ross consumed of longing, in Ewen Maclachlan, and in various anonymous Romeos and Lotharios, born adepts of sweet Gaelic speech.

Stirred in all their nature by the profound changes that seemed to overthrow their entire system of things, the Highlanders turned likewise to religion and found in hymn-

writing and hymn-reciting and singing a soothing balm for the sorrows of their changing and changeful life. Except in the case of the poems of Muireach Albannach in the Book of the Dean of Lismore, and the hymns of Munro and others in the Fernaig MS.—not of exceptional merit—the Highlands had not hitherto displayed any marked genius for sacred song. It was long before the doctrines and principles of the Reformation took root in its soil; but towards the middle of the eighteenth century we find the evangelical religion so generally diffused that it found exponents among the sons of song, and not the least striking feature of the lyrical outburst that ushered in the golden age of Highland poetry after the Forty-five was the number and excellence of the hymns produced. All the best and most choice hymns of Highland origin date from that period. Around the sublime Dugald Buchanan as central figure was grouped a number of able hymn-writers who were followed by others whose names are household words in many of the pious homes of the North and West of our country.

The extraordinary outburst of poetic genius that marked that brilliant time was still to a large extent independent of printing or writing, for men like Rob Donn and Duncan Ban Macintyre could neither read nor write, and much of the poetry produced then only found type in the earlier years of the nineteenth century. Yet the influence of the printing-press in connection with this bardic awakening cannot possibly be ignored; for it was contemporary with the literary revival that the Highland literature first began to be published, and such of the Highland people as could read became familiar with the productions of their own bards in book form. Thus in 1751 there appeared a volume of Alexander Macdonald's poems, the first instalment of original Gaelic literature that ever was published on behalf of the Highlands. Beyond some hymns in 1752, no other similar work passed through the printing-press till Dugald Buchanan's spiritual songs were issued in 1767, and Duncan Ban Macintyre's poems of nature in 1768.

Yet through the work of the bards and the labours of translators from other languages, a Gaelic literature was gradually taking shape and coming into print. It was at first a very slow and hidden process. Few people even in the Highlands were aware of the wealth and promise of the new movement. And when we remember that up till 1767 the only original Gaelic productions in print were Macdonald's, and Mackellar's, and possibly one other anonymous hymn, we cannot be surprised that beyond the Celtic fringe, few people, if any, had the remotest idea that the Highlands possessed a literature of its own. Even within that fringe the very existence of the more important written documents such as the Book of the Dean of Lismore, the Books of Clanranald, and the Fernaig MS., seemed to have been unknown to all but those who possessed them and were ignorant doubtless of their value. Not without reason, therefore, in the following years did Dr. Johnson and the English critics run counter to the impoverished Highlands; the land had so little to offer either in print or handwriting of its own literary work.

Nevertheless in 1760 an event occurred which was destined soon to present the situation in an entirely new aspect. This was the publication of James Macpherson's "Fragments of Ancient Poetry, collected in the Highlands of Scotland." Insignificant in itself, this action on the part of the Badenoch student proved an event of the first magnitude for Highland Gaelic literature. It led to a research and activity of production which have done more to promote the development of the latter, and enhance its prestige, than anything that had hitherto taken place in the literary history of the Highlands.

The tide of lyric poetry had been steadily rising and gathering strength when it was thus unexpectedly reinforced by a new stream of epic poetry, quite as remarkable in its own way as the other. Though there undoubtedly existed in the Highlands, as in Ireland, a body of Ossianic poems —preserved by oral transmission from a remote time—these

old lays had not as yet come to recognition by the literary world. As in the case of the Icelandic literature of the old Vikings, they were hidden away in unfrequented parts and among a people then regarded as rude and barbarous.

It was not the Gaelic-speaking James Macpherson who first called attention to these ancient survivals, though he got the credit for it, but the English-speaking Jerome Stone, Rector of Dunkeld Grammar School, who died of fever at the early age of twenty-nine. In 1756, just before his death, this enterprising youth published in the *Scots Magazine* the first translation of old Gaelic lays that had ever been printed, and though his able yet comparatively obscure efforts in this direction did not catch the eye of the world as Macpherson's did, it is almost certain that it was to his initiative that the renowned Badenoch bard owed the knowledge he had, four years later, of the Ossianic fragments. In addition to his translations, Stone left a collection of such ancient ballads as he had been able to collect, and these are now in the library of Edinburgh University. Neither the gifted pioneer nor his better-known successor followed the original old lays too slavishly, nor rendered them quite literally.

As an example of Stone's earliest attempt to bring under notice the more venerable products of the Gaelic Muse, the following translation of "Fraoch's Death" may be quoted. It appeared under the title "Albin and the Daughter of Mey."

A thousand graces did the maid adorn;
Her looks were charming, and her heart was kind:
Her eyes were like the windows of the morn,
And wisdom's habitation was her mind.
A hundred heroes try'd her love to gain;
She pitied them yet did their suits deny;
Young Albin only courted not in vain,
Albin alone was lovely in her eye:
Love filled their bosoms with a mutual flame;
Their birth was equal and their age the same.

The poet then proceeds to tell how the maiden's mother

conceived a guilty passion for the youth, and, baffled in her love, decreed revenge.

Amidst Lochmey, at distance from the shore,
On a green island, grew a stately tree,
With precious fruit each season cover'd o'er,
Delightful to the taste and fair to see:
This fruit, more sweet than virgin honey found,
Served both alike for physic and for food:
It cured diseases, heal'd the bleeding wound,
And hunger's rage for three long days withstood.
But precious things are purchased still with pain,
And thousands try'd to pluck it, but in vain.

For at the root of this delightful tree
A venomous and awful dragon lay,
With watchful eyes, all horrible to see,
Who drove th' affrighted passengers away;
Worse than the viper's sting its teeth did wound,
The wretch who felt it soon behoved to die;
Nor could physicians ever yet be found
Who might a certain antidote apply;
Ev'n they whose skill had sav'd a mighty host,
Against its bite no remedy could boast.

With the same sinister intent with which Fionn sent Macdoon of old to slay the magic boar, revengeful Mey induced Albin to pluck the fruit.

The hardy hero swims the liquid tide;
With joy he finds the dragon fast asleep,
Then pulls the fruit and comes in safety back;
Then with a cheerful countenance, and gay,
He gives the present to the hands of Mey.

Disappointed at his success she said—

"Well have you done, to bring me of this fruit;
But greater signs of prowess must you give:
Go pull the tree entirely by the root,
And bring it hither, or I cease to live."
Though hard the task, like lightning fast he flew,
And nimbly glided o'er the yielding tide;
Then to the tree with manly steps he drew,
And pulled and tugg'd it hard, from side to side;
Its bursting roots his strength could not withstand;
He tears it up, and bears it in his hand.

But long, alas! ere he could reach the shore,
Or fix his footsteps on the solid sand,
The monster follow'd with a hideous roar,
And like a fury grasp'd him by the hand.
Then, gracious God! what dreadful struggling rose!
He grasps the dragon by th' envenom'd jaws.
In vain; for round the bloody current flows,
While its fierce teeth his tender body gnaws.
He groans through anguish of the grievous wound,
And cries for help; but, ah! no help was found!

In submitting this rendering to the press, Stone spoke of "the sublimity of sentiment, nervousness of expression, and high-spirited metaphors" which marked some of the original Gaelic pieces he knew, and he equalled them in these respects to the "chief productions of the most cultivated nations."

Even more than the romance of Prince Charlie, the Ossianic compositions of Macpherson and of tradition became a new source of Celtic inspiration; and imitators of this style of poetry forthwith took the field, producing imitations of old lays of such considerable merit that for a time they passed as genuine survivals from a remote past. And certainly they have contributed in conjunction with Macpherson's own great work to glorify and enhance the golden age of Highland literature. The period of Ossianic production thus initiated continued for several decades.

Among the best known poets of the Ossianic order after their renowned countrymen, were the Rev. Dr. John Smith of Campbeltown, author of "Seana Dana" (English 1780, Gaelic 1787); John Clark, land surveyor in Badenoch, who published his "Caledonian Bards" in 1780; and the Rev. John Maccallum of Arisaig, author of "Mordubh."

From the dawn of the nineteenth century the printing-press came more than ever into requisition in the interests of Highland literature. A mass of poetry that had not hitherto found type then began to be printed, and new poets coming constantly on the scene, kept up the succession all through the interval till now. The more noted

bards of the Victorian era have been Evan Maccoll, William Livingston, James Munro, Dr. John Maclachlan, Mary Mackellar, Mary Macpherson, John Campbell, Angus Macdonald, Dugald Macphail, and Neil Macleod. Various others might be mentioned, but none of the nineteenth-century poets, notwithstanding their originality and freshness, rival the great bards of the eighteenth.

In addition to the volumes of individual bards, there are at least sixty song-books now in existence, and as many as twenty collections of secular poetry. Perhaps the number of religious poetical works amount to double the last-named figure. Thus the stream of Gaelic literature that seemed lost among the hills so late as the time of Culloden has broadened out into a mighty river. Needless to say it has its own features, characteristic and marked from the beginning. If the poetry were classified we should find that the following kinds are most represented: the poetry of sentiment and reflection; elegiac, objective and subjective; devotional, loyal, patriotic, amatory, bacchanalian, martial, didactic, satirical, pastoral, and descriptive verse. Considering the reputation of the Celts in ancient times for fancy and imagination, it is rather singular that Highland poems of this class are comparatively few in number. Dugald Buchanan holds the palm for sublimity, and really stands, for intensity and imagination, in a category apart. The ballads on the Feinn and kindred topics are generally in the heroic strain, and beyond the Ossianic productions of James Macpherson, there is no Gaelic poetry we can call epic except William Livingston's.

To philosophic poetry the Highlanders never attained, nor yet to dramatic, unless we so designate Livingston's "Danes in Islay." Indeed, it is worthy of note that none of the Celtic peoples throughout their long literary history until very recent times ever produced a drama. The Cornish productions were really miracle plays. The nearest approach in ancient times to dramatic representation were the curious and interesting dialogues of Ossian.

Even more remarkable than the dearth of philosophical

and dramatic poems, and, we might add, of narrative and pastoral poetry proper, is the scarcity of Gaelic prose. Of translations from other languages, especially in the department of religion and devotion, there is no lack. But when John Reid published his Bibliography in 1832, he found the land singularly barren of original prose works. "Gaelic literature," he observed, "is much more meagre in this department than in any other; the following very few works are all we have been able to pick up, and we believe that if not all, they are nearly all that have been printed." Those he thus names are only ten in number, all of them, with the exception of two, belonging to the early decades of the nineteenth century; and as the majority are sermons they are not of much literary interest. Who would suppose that all the original prose printed in the vernacular of the Highlands up to 1832 consisted of—"Beith on Baptism," "Beith's Catechism on Baptism," "Crawford's Sermon," "Dr. Daniel Dewar's Sermon," "Dr. Daniel Dewar's Gaelic Preacher," "Fraser on Baptism," "M'Dermid's Sermons," "Mackenzie's Catechism," "Munro's Life of Dr. John Love," "The Christian Soldier," and an additional volume of "Gaelic Sermons by Various Authors"—a book not known to Reid? Yet such seems to have been the case.

Fortunately, the Highland prose literature now available is not confined to religious works. As early as 1785 Macintosh's Gaelic proverbs appeared, original in that they express in pithy idiomatic language many of the popular sayings that have been current for generations in Gaeldom. Re-edited in 1819 with additions by Alexander Campbell, they were again in 1880-1 made the basis of the more comprehensive and valuable contribution of Dr. Alexander Nicolson.

Since Reid's day we have also had Mr. John F. Campbell's *West Highland Tales* (vols. 1 and 2, 1860; vols. 3 and 4, 1862). They consist of *sgeulachdan* or prose fairy tales and fiction once popular throughout that part of Scotland,

and are far more characteristically Highland and literary than the ephemeral homiletic works already mentioned. But the most outstanding classical Gaelic prose was undoubtedly that of the Rev. Dr. Norman Macleod, minister successively of Campsie, Campbeltown, and St. Columba Church, Glasgow, and father of the late Dr. Macleod of the Barony Parish in that city. To the memory of this author Sheriff Nicolson dedicated his "Gaelic Proverbs"; and in writing of his "Highland Dialogues" he says, "In wisdom, humour, tenderness, in height of aim, pureness of spirit, and simple beauty of style, they have not been surpassed in the literature of any country." "Of all men that ever wrote Gaelic prose, *he* wrote the best and raciest, the language not of mere propriety and elegance, but of natural genius, equally incomparable in moving laughter or tears." Indeed if we homologate the opinion of Professor Blackie, his style is "marked by the dramatic grace of Plato and the shrewd humour of Lucian."

Dr. Macleod's best contributions were made to these four Gaelic periodicals: *Teachdaire Gaelach*, 1829-31; *Teachdaire Ur Gaidhealach*, 1835-36; *Cuairtear nan Gleann*, 1840-43, and *Feartathaich nam Beann*, 1848. His Gaelic dialogues were collected chiefly from the *Teachdaire* and *Cuairtear*, and published in book form with other papers under the title *Caraid nan Gaidheal*. This latter work is therefore the greatest monument of Highland Gaelic original prose we have, though some good papers may be found in subsequent periodicals.

Professor Blackie has translated one of the most beautiful and striking pieces of *Caraid nan Gaidheal* — "The Emigrant Ship"—and as it offers an example of the style of our very best Gaelic prose-writer, part of the version may here be quoted, even though the rendering, good as it is, fails to convey all the original charm and beauty of Dr. Macleod's choice language.

"In returning from Iona, on one of the finest summer evenings I ever remember to have seen, we landed at a snug

and sheltered place on the north side of the island of Mull. I cannot imagine a harbour more effectively fenced from the rage of the storm and the swell of the sea. In front of it a long narrow island stretches out, spreading its protecting wings around boat or ship that may be either seeking covert here from the rush of the ocean waves, or waiting for the turn of the tide to help it round the huge headland that fronts the broad Atlantic. On the right hand as we enter, the land rises sheer and steep. We sailed in close to the lip of the crag, where the branches of the trees were hanging quite close to our masts.

"The fragrance of the fresh green leafage flowed sweetly down on the breeze, and hundreds of little birds were warbling their welcome to us from every bush, as we sailed in gently beneath their haunts. All around in whatever direction the eye might turn, the view was full of beauty and pleasantness. The mountains of Ardnamurchan, green to the top, Suinart with its lovely hills and knolls, and the whole breadth of the adjacent coast of Morven, were rejoicing quietly in the flavour of the summer evening.

> O lovely and beautiful Ben,
> The chief of all Bens art thou!
> The white cloud sleeps on thy crown,
> And the stag looks out from thy brow.

When we entered the bay there was nothing to see within its circle but ship masts and streamers floating idly before the breeze, and nothing to be heard save the stroke of the oar, the murmur of the brook, and the roar of the waterfalls, which were leaping down from many a lofty steep into the wide bosom of the bay. On our left hand, from side to side of the beach, rows of high houses rose up, as white as snow; and right behind them the ground rose up so steep that the branches of the trees—ash, rowan, and hazel—with which it was thickly tufted seemed to hang over the very roofs of the houses. On the slope of the brae higher up, you see another part of the town between you and the sky, in a fashion of

which you will with difficulty find the match, whether for beauty or strangeness. And looking outward to the bay itself, a sight was presented full of animation; scores of vessels, some large and some small, many a tiny pinnace with green oars, many a trim yacht with white sails, and a warship with tall masts and the royal flag.

"And in the midst of all my eye rested on a ship that far overshot the rest in size and equipment; towards it, I observed a great many small boats were making their way, and everything indicated that it was about to set sail. There was one of our fellow-voyagers, who joined us from the back end of Mull, and who had scarcely lifted his head since he entered the ship; this man now raised his eye, and directed his gaze with an expression of eager anxiety to this ship. 'Do you know,' said I to him, 'what ship this is?'

"'Yes, I do, and to my sorrow,' he replied; 'I know it only too well; sorry I am that there are more of my dear friends than I wish in that ship; there, too, are my own brothers and the best blood that belongs to me going to make a long, long journey to America, whence they will never return; and a pitiful wretch am I, so bound by harsh circumstance that I may not follow my heart and go along with them.'

"I followed him and some others to the ship; for I could not restrain the strong desire that I felt to see those warm-hearted men who were this day going to bid a long farewell to dear old Scotland, in search of a country where they might establish a permanent dwelling for themselves and their families. It is not possible for me to convey to a person who was not present any idea of the sight that there met my view. That day will never fade from my memory. Here there was crowded together a great multitude of all ages, from the babe a week old to the old man with the weight of three score and ten years on his white locks.

"It was pitiful to see the deep sorrow, the pain of mind, the despondency, the despair, and the heart-breaking pangs that were depicted on the countenances of the greater part

of them,—people gathered together from many a remote island and corner of the Highlands, but all brothered here in one common grief.

"My attention was specially drawn to one man, old and blind, who was sitting apart from the rest, with three or four little boys round about him, his old arms stretching over them, while they were trying to come as near as possible to his breast, his head bending over their heads, his long grey hair and their curly brown locks loosely mingling together, and the big tears rolling down his cheeks. Near him, close to his feet, was a handsome woman, sitting and sobbing as under some heavy affliction; and I guessed that it was her husband who was walking up and down with a short hurried step and his hands folded. His eye had a wild and unsettled look, and the disturbed expression of his countenance showed plainly how little peace there was in his mind. I drew near to the old man and asked him in a gentle voice if he, in the evening of his days, was going to leave his ancient country. 'I,' he said, 'emigrate—not I—I shall not move from my earthly home till I go to that land to which we must all go some day; and when my hour comes to go, who is there now that will put his shoulder under my head and help to carry me to my last resting-place? Ye are gone! Ye are gone! and I am left alone, blind and old, without brother, without son, without stay or support! And to-day—day of my sorrow! God forgive me—you, Mary, my daughter, my only child, with my dear, beautiful, bright-eyed grandchildren, you are going to leave me! . . . I shall go back this night to the old glen; but I shall not know the hand that leads the blind old man. Never more shall I hear the prattle of your sweet voices beside the stream; never again shall I cry, "Come back! come back!" though the danger was not great; but still I loved to cry, "Come back! come back from the brink of the water;" never again when I hear the barking of the dogs will my heart leap up, when I shall be crying "They come, they come, my children!" Who

now will guide me to the shelter of the hill, where we may sit down and read the Holy Book? Where will you be in the grey of the evening, when the sun sinks behind the hill, O children of my love? And who will lift up the cheerful psalm to gladden my heart at our morning devotions?'"

With such moving pathos the tale moves on to the last sad farewell, when the inevitable parting takes place and the scene so real and vivid melts from the view for ever.

This one really great prose writer belonged to the ranks of the clergy. But it is a remarkable fact that though in the nineteenth century some of the minor poets belonged to that profession, previous to that period, and especially throughout the golden age of Gaelic poetry, the ministry did not contribute much poetry of note, Dr. John Smith of Campbeltown being almost the only clergyman whose name is remembered in this respect. On the other hand, we owe most of the best of our Highland literature to men who at one time or another of their lives engaged in scholastic work, notably to some who were employed by the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge. Thus Alexander Macdonald, James Macpherson, Dugald Buchanan, William Ross, and Ewen Maclachlan had all been teachers or tutors when they exercised their bardic gifts, and all, with the exception of William Ross, had some University training. Most of the bards, however, belonged, like those of Wales, to the peasant class, and several of the best, such as Mary Macleod, Duncan Ban Macintyre, and Rob Donn, had never been to school, and were quite illiterate so far as the arts of reading and writing were concerned. Farming and teaching seem to have been the mainstay of many who were not actually attached as professional bards to some chief or patron. And it is worthy of note that in Gaelic literature the Macdonalds, on the whole, figure as the most prolific contributors of all the clans, though the Macleans, the Macleods, the Mackays, the Mackenzies, and the Campbells have done well also. But the study of our

own characteristic Highland literature offers a field of the most varied interest, and in the chapters which are to follow we shall have occasion not only to examine the choice productions of the various groups of poets, such as the Jacobite bards, the poets of nature, the hymn-writers, Macpherson and his following, the elegiac, amatory, and satiric bards, but also to give an account of the nineteenth century succession, the English versions of the vernacular poetry, Gaelic proverbs, the travellers and historians of the period, with biographical sketches of the more eminent of these men of song and of letters.

CHAPTER II

ALEXANDER MACDONALD AND THE JACOBITE BARDS

AMONG the most popular of Scottish songs are those which voice the national sentiment regarding the heroic Prince Charlie and his lost cause. All the pathos and sympathetic enthusiasm which failed to find adequate expression in the political and historical literature of the time have found it in the songs of the people—in those rich and varied notes, joyous or despairing, that echo the last hopes of the Stuart cause.

Who with Scottish blood in his veins, and the memory of the brilliant failure in his heart, does not feel a thrill of emotion when the sweet strains of such melodies as "The Skye Boat Song," "Sound the Pibroch," "Oh! wae's me for Prince Charlie," "Cam' ye by Athole?" and "Charlie is my darling," fall on his ears?

Yet nearly half a century had passed before the Jacobite movement had become a theme of Lowland song. While the seditious events were in actual progress, they were too dangerous and too hateful to the majority of Scottish people to wear a patriotic aspect or to win their sympathy, and though there was a minority, chiefly of the nobility and gentry, in favour of the Stuarts, it is not from that class that the popular songs of a country usually emanate.

As soon, however, as the element of danger had permanently disappeared, the spirit of romance threw a halo and glamour over the past, and the stern political facts were henceforth palliated or forgotten in the generous

enthusiasm felt for the brave hearts that had risked all and failed. It was then that the song writers and the poets of the South had their opportunity, in the afterglow, as it were, of the great struggle. Indeed, the present generation, so much has the sentiment changed, may not be aware that even in the early decades of last century the Jacobite songs were more or less proscribed in Scotland, and singing them anywhere in public was regarded as an offence. But when Queen Victoria, on her first visit to the land of the tartan in 1842, specially asked Mr. John Wilson to sing that exquisite song, "Oh! wae's me for Prince Charlie," on the occasion of her visit to Taymouth Castle, that graceful act on the part of Her Majesty finally removed any stigma of disloyalty that might be associated with the public rendering of the songs.

It was otherwise in the rugged North, where the adventurer and his cause drew around him from the first the sympathies of the people. There the rising was associated with quite other feelings and hopes than those that depressed the loyal Lowlanders; and the emotions of the Gael, stirred to their depths, found immediate and natural expression in verse.

It is to the Highlands, then, and to the Gaelic tongue, that we must turn for real spontaneous Jacobite song, instinct with the life of current events and of keen personal participation in them, and rich, not only in poetic, but also in historic interest.

And of all the Gaelic bards of this order, Alexander Macdonald was the first and the greatest. Born about the year 1700, probably at Dalilea in Moidart,—the exact date and place are nowhere recorded,—he was the son of an Episcopalian clergyman of some note in that district. Popularly known as Maighstir Alasdair, his father, besides being minister of Ardnamurchan, was also tacksman of Dalilea, and owed his reputation among the rude Highlanders of those days as much perhaps to his immense physical strength and prowess as to his other good qualities "of

candour, ingenuity, and conscience." It is one of the commonest traditions in Moidart, says a well-informed writer,[1] that leaving his home at an early hour on Sunday morning he would reach Kilchoan before mid-day, preach and perform the rest of the service for his congregation, and then travel back on foot to Dalilea, which he generally reached before midnight, covering the whole distance of between fifty and sixty miles in one day. In view of such exploits he is most appropriately designated "a minister of the olden times." After the Revolution he was deposed for non-jurancy, but apparently was too popular to be actually removed. He had several of a family, both sons and daughters. The eldest, who succeeded him in the farm, was a man of diminutive stature, but of extraordinary muscular development, and many stories are told of his remarkable feats of strength.

Alexander, the bard, was the second son, and according to a usage common among Highlanders, was called after his sire, Alasdair Mac Maighstir Alasdair. Of his youth absolutely nothing is known beyond the fact that he received his early education at home under the superintendence of his father, and from the first gave indications of great intellectual ability.

Naturally, the minister was desirous to have him trained for his own sacred calling, but Clanranald offered to undertake the cost of his studies if he went in for law. It is not known how the matter was finally adjusted. According to one account his father came to recognise in the lad some traits of character not well adapted for a clerical career, and probably may have been reconciled to the more feasible scheme of the chief. At any rate, to Glasgow University young Macdonald was sent. The minister, his father, had graduated there as Master of Arts on July 16, 1674, and doubtless expected his son to do even better.

But alas for the good intentions and high hopes of chief and sire. After receiving a fair classical education,

[1] Rev. C. Macdonald in *Moidart, or Among the Clan Ranald.*

and while yet a student, this wayward fondling of the Muse fell in love with a Glen Etive damsel, Jane Macdonald of Dalness, or *Sine bheag nam brogan buidhe* (Little Jean with the yellow shoes), as she was locally called, and this winsome maid he married—a most imprudent step for one who had no profession and no means wherewithal to maintain a wife.

The immediate result was that he had to abandon his course at the university, and return to his native parish. There can be no doubt that at this stage of his life Macdonald missed his golden opportunity, and his subsequent career but too pathetically illustrates the Shakespearean aphorism :[1]—

> There is a tide in the affairs of men,
> Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune ;
> Omitted, all the voyage of their life
> Is bound in shallows and in miseries.

With his abilities he might reasonably have hoped to achieve eminence at the Scottish Bar ; but failing to take the current when it served, he found himself stranded among the illiterate and factious Highlanders of Ardnamurchan, in a district so remote and impoverished that it entailed a life-long, and to him sordid struggle, to keep the wolf of poverty from the door. But fortunately for the improvident young husband, a society, which afterwards came to be known as the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, had been promoted in Edinburgh in 1701, for the purpose of establishing Charity Schools throughout the Highlands. In 1725 King George the First granted a donation of £1000 to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland to be employed for a similar purpose. This sum he and his successors continued to give annually, and it was placed under the control of a Committee nominated by the Assembly, and called the Committee for managing the Royal Bounty.

These two agencies—the Society and the Committee—

[1] *Julius Cæsar*, Act iv., Brutus to Cassius.

naturally co-operated, securing the aid of the presbyteries of the Church. From them, it appears, Macdonald got an appointment in his native district as teacher and catechist. The first mention we have of him in this capacity dates from 1729. He had been brought up an Episcopalian, but in the new office he figures not only as a Presbyterian—which qualification was a *sine qua non*—but also as an elder of the Established Church.

The salary his employers were able to give him was, reckoning by present standards, a mere pittance. £16 in 1729, it was raised to £18 in 1732, whereof £3 was contributed by the Society, and £15 by the Committee. It continued at that maximum till 1738, when it dropped to £15, because the funds could bear no more. Next year witnessed a further reduction to £14, and in 1744, the year before the Rebellion, it actually went down to £12.

Nor was the bard all this time located in one place. Owing to the great extent of the parish and the very limited means of education, his school had to be transferred from time to time from one district to another to meet the requirements of the population. And so for the first few years he taught in a small and primitive structure at Eilean Finnan. Then in March 1738 he was ordered to remove to Kilchoan, and the year following, to Corryvullin, where he continued teaching till May 1745.

This latter place lies almost directly opposite Tobermory on the other side of the Sound of Mull, and is picturesquely situated at the base of Ben Shiante, near the ancient ruins of Mingary Castle. Here, in addition to his school, the bard worked a small farm, and the magnificent view it commanded appears to have inspired him to the production of those beautiful descriptions of Nature with which the Gael is familiar, in such lyrics as the "Sugar Brook" and the "Odes to Summer and Winter."

It was while teaching, farming, and writing poetry in this sequestered spot that the invitation came to him, about the year 1740, to compile a Gaelic vocabulary. The

Society, in whose service he had now been for a number of years, resolved to issue such a book for the use of their schools, and on the recommendation of the Presbytery of Mull, they entrusted Macdonald with the work, which he successfully accomplished in due time, grouping the words, not alphabetically as in the more modern dictionaries, but under various headings, such as names of flowers, names of the parts of the body, etc. It was the first attempt of the kind in the language, and was published in 1741. The bard's vast acquaintance with the language, combined with his academic training, rendered him particularly well qualified for work of this sort. And whatever may have been the remuneration, possibly not much, its publication has constituted the schoolmaster of Ardnamurchan the pioneer of Highland lexicographers.

But Macdonald's initiative did not rest here. In the literary line he holds still further the distinction of having been the first to publish a volume of original Gaelic poems. Hitherto not a single book of purely Highland origin had been issued from the press in that language. So that in these two respects, whatever else he might or might not have done, the gifted son of Maighstir Alasdair was instrumental in opening a new page in the history of Gaelic literature.

As a poet he undoubtedly ranks among the two or three foremost Highland bards. When at his best he is not surpassed by any other. His compositions are classic. He has the inspiration evoked by the towering mountains, the deep mysterious valleys, and the surging ocean. All his poems are lyric, the spontaneous utterance of a strong emotional nature finding easy expression ; for he had a copious command of the Gaelic language. Vehement, rapid, and exciting, he is sometimes carried along in a perfect tornado of passion ; at other times his metres move with a natural smoothness, exhibiting more the qualities of tenderness and grace. Macdonald had an eye for striking effects, not less in the wild and threatening aspects of Nature than in its quiet, pastoral scenes.

Yet withal, as Pattison has remarked, "he is the most warlike, and much the fiercest, of Highland poets; indeed, almost the only one of them all, at least for three centuries back, to whom this trait can with any truth be ascribed." With the exception of James Macpherson and Ewen Maclachlan, he was also the best educated of the Gaelic bards. But his college training did not influence much his poetical compositions. In these he is always the pure Highland singer. Beyond an occasional English word or Greek name he does not borrow.

Though it is impossible to fix the dates of Macdonald's various poems, they may be easily classified in three groups :—

1. Love songs.
2. Descriptive poems.
3. Patriotic and Jacobite songs.

And probably it was in this order they were produced.

1. In his student days he composed a song on his sweetheart Jane Macdonald, not lacking in tenderness or affection, but considered cold and artificial in comparison with the lofty and impassioned strains of his famous "Praise of Morag." Morag was a young girl whom he met some time after his marriage, and whose beauty so enthralled him that it drew forth from the admiring bard this song, which is admitted, in spite of some blemishes, to be one of the finest productions of the Celtic Muse. Contrasting her with other local belles, he says :—

A face I never saw
Since my dawning days—
Not one so free of flaw,
Full of glorious grace;
Though Mally still was mild,
And her cheek like rowans wild,
As fickle as the wind she smiled
When it drones and strays.
Peggy had a slight
Trace of age's blight;
Marsaly was light,
Full of saucy ways;

Lily's love was bright,
Though a speck had dimmed her sight;
But they were all as tame and trite
As washing suds to Morag.

My heart is all but broken
Since I saw thy golden locks
In twisted folds of beauty
Curled and twirled
In ringlets, folded o'er,
Wavy, glorious—
In starry circles
As if with pearls adorned
Or powdered in fashion—
Fair sun-kissed and golden hair.

It is said the poet was really enamoured of this country maiden, and spoke slightingly of the marriage bond. His amorous language, indeed, needs frequent asterisks at the hands of publishers and translators.

But his wedded wife having something drastic to say to this, the bard most unscrupulously turned to abusing Morag with as much abandon as he formerly praised her. And the censure was evidently as cruel, unmanly, and undeserved as the praise was foolish and extravagant. His "Mi-mholadh Moraig," however, is a pretty lyric in which he exalts the charms of his wife at the expense of her rival. Another love poem of a more decorous sort is "Cuachag an Fhasaich." Here the heroine is an attractive dairymaid who figures in a very touching and realistic picture of happy country life, such as the bard was very deft in depicting. These lines are from L. Macbean's English rendering:—

When Mary is singing
The birdies come winging,
And listen, low swinging,
On twigs light and airy.

My heart bounds with pleasure
To hear the sweet measure
That's sung by my treasure,
The maid of the dairy.

The sunshine soft streaming
Around her is beaming,
It's glowing and gleaming
On the locks of my Mary.

O'er the moors waste and dreary
Trips gaily my dearie,
With foot never weary,
As light as a fairy.

The maid of this ditty
Is charming and pretty,
She's wise and she's witty,
She's winning and wary.

My bonnie, bright dairymaid,
Fairy maid, dairymaid,
Bonnie, blithe dairymaid,
Maid of the dairy.

2. It is in his descriptive poems and his representations of Nature that Macdonald is seen at his best. As to Wordsworth half a century later, so to him, Nature was instinct with meaning and life, and it was his unfailing delight to hold converse with her. So we have such celebrated compositions as "The Birlinn," "The Sugar Brook," "Hail to the Mainland," and the "Odes to Summer and Winter."

"The Birlinn" is acknowledged on all hands to be his masterpiece, and probably the most unique production in the Gaelic language. "No poem," says Pattison, "is ever spoken of in the same breath with it, except the 'Coire Cheathaich' or 'Ben Dorain' of Duncan Ban; and even these are perhaps not always looked on with quite the same pride; though being easier understood, and composed altogether in a more elegant style, they probably impart fully as much pleasure both to hearers and readers. Yet if all Gaelic poems were to be destroyed, and one only excepted from the general ruin, I believe the voices of the majority of Highlanders would fix on 'The Birlinn of Clan Ranald' as that one."

It is the longest poem in the language, excluding the

Ossianic pieces, and has been translated by Sheriff Nicolson, Thomas Pattison, and, in part, by Professor Blackie. The following lines are from the Professor's spirited rendering :—

Now bring the dark boat, deftly fashioned,
To the place of sailing ;
Take the poles, the stout, the smooth,
And push with might prevailing ;
Grasp the shapely oars, smooth-handled,
Limber oars that lightly
Sweep with venturous van across
The waters foaming brightly.

Come, stretch your limbs, my lusty callants
Lift the oars and bend them,
From your firm palm, strong and sinewy,
Pith and vigour lend them.
Ye brawny boatmen, stout and stalwart,
Stretch your length, and readily
Let your hand and knotty muscles
Rise and sink full steadily,
Making the smooth and polished blades,
Whose lordship reins the ocean,
Cuff the rough crests of the fretful brine,
With a well-timed motion.

Come now, thou man of the first oar,
Thou king of lusty fellows,
Raise the song that makes men strong
To mount the heaving billows,
Raise the *iorram* that will drive,
With shouts of glee the Birlinn
Through the bristling, bellowing rout
Of waters wildly whirling.
Ho ! for the waves, as they hiss and spit,
To the storm-blast ramping and roaring ;
Huzza for the boat in its plunging fit,
Where the foamy streams are pouring !
Ho ! for the blade, so limber, lithe,
When it twists the writhing billow,
Huzza for the hand where blisters burn
To each hard-pulling fellow,—
Fellows with shaggy-breasted might,
And stout heart never quailing !
Though oak and iron creak and start,

And boom and spar are failing,
They, in the face of the sea, will steer
The slender craft, nor borrow
Fear from the breath of the cutting blast,
Or the gape of the salt sea furrow.
This is the crew, o'er the waters blue,
With a kingly strength presiding,
Untired, unflagging, and unspent,
On the breast of the rough wave riding.

The voyage was from South Uist to Carrickfergus, and on starting (to quote from Pattison)—

The sun had opened golden yellow
From his case,
Though still the sky wore dark and drumly
A scarr'd and frowning face;
Then troubled, tawny, dense, dun-bellied,
Scowling and sea-blue;
Every dye that's in the tartan
O'er it grew.
Far away to the wild westward
Grim it lowered,
Where rain-charged clouds on thick squalls wandering
Loomed and towered.

But presently the storm burst in wildest fury, and not until the masts had been bent, the sails torn in shreds, planks and spars strained, oars shattered, fastenings unloosed, spikes cracked, cordage snapped, and even the nails started, did the plucky ship of Clanranald enter the harbour, battered, but not beaten.

In "Allt an t'Siucair" or the "Sugar Brook" we have a delightful picture of natural scenery in striking contrast to the strenuous "Manning of the Birlinn." It is a pæan in praise of the little burn that meandered past the bard's farm into the neighbouring Sound of Mull. Macdonald has done for this obscure stream what Burns did for the Doon and Gray for the Luggie. The piece presents an animated and faithful description of a beautiful scene in the country on a lovely summer morning. "The bard walks abroad and sees

the dew glittering on every leaf and flower, the birds warbling their songs, the cattle grazing, and the bees collecting their honey. The fish leap out of the water, and all Nature rejoices in the luxuriance of the sunshine. The very rivulet seems to partake of the common joy, and murmurs a more agreeable sound ; the cows low loudly, and the calves answer responsive, while the dairymaid is busily engaged at her task. The grass is bespangled with flowers of richer hues than the most costly gems. The horses gather together in groups to drink of the streamlet, and the kids are sporting and dancing about its banks. Ships, with their white sails bent to the gentle breeze, are passing slowly along the Sound hard by."

It shows what the poetic faculty could do for Macdonald to transfigure the hard and narrow circumstances of his lot.

> O many are the poets that are sown
> By Nature! men endowed with highest gifts,
> The vision and the faculty divine.[1]

But few are able to give such charming expression to their vision as he.

> Passing by the Sugar Brook
> In fragrant morn of May
> When like bright shining rosaries
> The dew on green grass lay ;
> I heard the Robin's treble
> Deep Richard's bass awake ;
> And the shy and blue-winged cuckoo
> Shout "goog-goo" in the brake.
>
> The wailing swans their murmurs blend
> With birds that float or sing ;
> Where joins the Sugar Brook the sea,
> Their tuneful voices ring.
> Softly sweet they bend and breathe
> Through their melodious throat,
> Like the mournful crooked bagpipe,
> A sad but pleasing note.

[1] Wordsworth's *Traveller*.

O ! dainty is the graving work
By Nature near thee wrought !
Whose fertile banks with shining flowers
And pallid buds are fraught.
The shamrock and the daisy
Spread o'er thy borders fair,
Like new-made spangles or like stars
From out the frosty air.

Ah ! what a charming sight display,
Thy ruddy rosy braes ;
When sunbeams dye their flowers as bright
As brilliants all ablaze ;
And what a civil suit they wear
Of rich grass and of hay ;
And gay-topt herbs o'er which the birds
Pour forth their pompous lay.

But this is tame to the verve, the music, and assonance of the original—

An Coire brocach, taobh-ghorm,
Torcach, faoilidh, blath ;
An Coire lonach, naosgach,
Cearcach, craobhach, graidh ;
Gu bainneach, bailceach, braonach,
Breacach, laoghach, blàr ;
An sultmhor mart a's caora,
'Sa 's torrach laomsgair bàrr !

Similarly in the "Ode to Summer" we have a peculiarly elegant and happy address to the primrose.

O primrose ! that growest
So pallid and sweet on the brae,
In tender tufts blowing,
In curly leaves flowing—
The hardiest flower art thou
Sprung from the clay ;
Thus wearing thy spring-dress
While others still slumber away.

And wreath of Cuchulinn [1] of cairns,
How pleasant the odour that's shed
Where tasselled and brindled,
With legs long and spindled,

[1] Meadow-sweet.

Rough clustered, modest-hued,
Yellow light, high o'er head,
Round the lone knoll we see thee
With wood sorrel spread.

Of singular tenderness, pathos, and beauty is one other of these descriptive poems entitled "An Elegy on a pet dove that was killed by a dog." Dr. Stewart, "Nether Lochaber," from whose rendering the following stanzas are taken, considered it the finest thing of the kind in the Gaelic. Its quaint conceits and abrupt transitions, which the reader cannot fail to notice, he reckoned as no small part of its merit, even though they may seem strange at first. In his translation, which is about as literal as he could make it, Dr. Stewart charmingly imitates the manner and measure, the rhyme and rhythm of the original. The fifth stanza begins :—

Not easy to rob thy nest, thou dove,
By cunning or strength of men ;
On a shelf of the beetling crag above
Was thy castle of strength, thy home of love,
Who dare come near thee then ?
Harmless and gentle ever wert thou,
Dear, darling dove !
In the ear of thy mate with a coo and a bow
Still whispering love !

Not in silver or gold did'st thou delight,
Nor of luxuries ever did'st dream ;
Pulse and corn was thy sober bite,
Thy drink was the purling stream !
Never, dear dove, did'st need to buy
Linen or silk attire ;
Not braided cloth, nor raiment fine
Did'st thou require.
Thy coat, dressed neat with thy own sweet bill,
Was of feathers bright green and blue,
And closely fitting, impervious still
To rain or dew.

No creed or paternoster thou
Did'st sing or say ;
And yet thy soul is in bliss, I trow,
Be't where it may !

That now withouten coffin or shroud
In thy little grave thou dost lie,
Makes me not sad; but O, I am wae
At the sad death thou did'st die.

The above descriptive poems are believed to have been written between 1725 and 1745.

In spite of his farming, teaching, and literary activities, Macdonald lived poor. The rewards that fell to him were not at all commensurate with the skill and intellectual power expended. And it is no matter for surprise that this restless, Titanic spirit, conscious of his own exceptional abilities and high poetic vision, chafed at and rebelled against the limitations of his lot.

The very year that he gave to the public his interesting Gaelic and English Vocabulary, there appears in the Minutes of the Presbytery, under the date 28th April, the following significant entry:—"The visitors of the Charity School of Ardnamurchan report that when they attended there in order to visit said school, Alexander Macdonald, schoolmaster thereof, sent an apology to them for absence, namely, that through the great scarcity of the year, he was under immediate necessity to go from home to provide meal for his family. The appointment is therefore renewed for said visitors."

Now and again it would seem as if sinister rumours were reaching the Society regarding their teacher's conduct. Perhaps the impropriety of some lines in certain of his poetical pieces may have given rise to these; perhaps Macdonald was losing interest in his ill-paid duties, especially as his yearly pittance, constantly decreasing, had now reached an absurd minimum in relation to his talents and the growing needs of his family.

It must be borne in mind that the times in which he lived were wild and unsettled, and he himself was not a paragon of all the virtues. If the people among whom he resided had hereditary tendencies to fight and quarrel, and

even harboured an occasional scandal[1] among them, Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair was not the man to stand aloof; and from his position as elder, catechist, and bard, any improprieties of conduct due to his natural disposition were peculiarly liable to notice. That the Society was dissatisfied with his behaviour is evident from the records, but there is no definite charge reflecting upon him in the performance of his duties beyond the sufficiently grave one for a man in his position "of composing and singing indecent songs."

During the greater part of the summer of 1744 he was absent from work, his son Ronald acting as substitute in the school; and at the beginning of the following winter he visited Edinburgh. Thereafter the presbytery was asked to acquaint the Committee how he conducted himself since his return home. It would seem as if the bard were now giving rein to his own restless nature and disappointed hopes. By next Whitsunday, in all likelihood anticipating the action of the Society, he finally abandoned his charge without sending in any resignation.

3. To him, as to hundreds of other broken and impoverished Highlanders, the news of the landing of Prince Charlie and the impending rebellion came as a godsend. It offered immediate escape from dire straits and the promise of brighter prospects. For years the bard had fostered in himself and his countrymen the Jacobite sentiments, and now he was ready for action. On this occasion he turned Roman Catholic, and bidding farewell to his pedagogic and catechetical functions, "with gun and pistol" he left that summer in company with his Dalilean brother and other enthusiasts to join the Prince's followers, and was present at the memorable unfurling of the Stuart Standard at Glenfinnan on the 19th of August 1745. There he is believed to have had the honour of an interview with the Prince, and to have recited a song in his praise. Indeed, the traditional

[1] Fama Clamosa!! In 1735 the minister of Ardnamurchan had the fatuity to write and publish in London during his absence from the parish, a pamphlet entitled "An Essay upon Improving and Adding to the Strength of Great Britain and Ireland by Fornication."

account maintains that Allan Macdonald, brother to Kinloch-Moidart, set the royal invader on the knee of the bard, who straightway proceeded to extemporise the spirited strain known as "Tearlach Mac Sheumais."

On joining the rebel army, Macdonald received a captain's commission under the younger Clanranald, and both as an officer and as a poet he was regarded as a valuable accession to the Stuart enterprise. He has been called the Tyrtaeus of the Highland Host, Professor Blackie characteristically observing that his poems were to the rebellion of 1745 what the songs of Körner and Arndt were to the Liberation War of the Germans in 1813. They roused and inflamed the spirits of his countrymen, and showed how heartily he enlisted in this daring adventure and how sanguine he was of its ultimate success.

In his "Song of the Clans," the bard calls on the Prince to hurry to their aid, and pictures the various Jacobite clans advancing to make him king. It is a soul-stirring, martial appeal, and well fitted to rouse the war-spirit of the Gael.

O faithful band and royal,
In homage duly bend
With eyes whose looks are loyal;
Now every gallant true-heart
The toast of noble Stuart
With joy around will send;
But from each craven coward
That holy cup defend!

For Charles, fill up the beaker,
And, rascal, lift it high;
Although my heart were weaker,
The news would soon restore me
(Though Death himself stood o'er me
With visage pale and dry)
That God across the ocean
Had brought your galleys nigh.

Your friends are weary-hearted,
So long from us you stay,
Like fawns from mothers parted,
Or bees, whose store is taken

By fox, while they forsaken
Lie dying on the brae ;
Then to our succour hasten
And clear our woes away.

Both sea and land will shield you
If you yourself are bold ;
Their hundreds they will yield you
Of soldiers stout untiring,
From Britain and from Ireland,
Beneath your flag enrolled,
Those heroes fierce and fiery
Whose deeds shall yet be told.
. . . .
Full many a corpse blood-streaming
Shall lie upon the hill ;
The ravens, hoarsely screaming,
Will stalk 'mid dead and dying,
And hungry kites come flying
To eat and drink their fill,
While groans from wounded rising
Shall pierce the morning still.

With blood and gore bespattered
They fall in battle's heat,
Where heads and hands are scattered.
And bodies cleft in sunder ;
Our foes shall yet go under
In dark and dire defeat,
And Charles be crowned 'mid hundreds
With Frederick 'neath his feet.

These are the first four and two last stanzas, but they fail to give the original metre where the vowel sounds are too intricate to be successfully imitated. In the following rendering of "A Call to the Highland Clans," the bard's exact style is more nearly retained, and the sentiments expressed show with what zest Macdonald must have entered the struggle when news of the Prince's arrival actually came.

Gladsome tidings through the Highlands,
Tumult wild arising ;
Hammers pounding, anvils sounding,
Targets round devising ;

Din of forges scaring George's
Traitor lords that brave us.
While in motion o'er the ocean
Help is close to save us.

Winds are blowing, waves are flowing,
All our hope is nearing ;
Men unflinching, weapons glinting,
Round our Prince unfearing.
Charlie Stuart, royal true-heart
Sees his due restored him ;
Britons round him yet will crown him
Kneeling down before him.

Highland heroes, quick and fearless,
'Neath their chiefs assemble,
Men in thousands round him crowding
Make the proudest tremble,
Towering large with swords and targes,
Swift to charge unbending,
Noble scions, fierce as lions,
Flesh and fibres rending.

Many a noble gallant soldier
Void of hope is drooping ;
Soon our land will see them banded,
'Neath your standard trooping;
This will raise e'en hearts of cravens,
Make them brave and hardy.
Onward sweeping like the leaping
Flame in fields of barley.

Often scanty troops have vaunted
Battles gained with daring,
Forward gallants ; give them challenge,
Hearts of valour bearing.
Lovat, Gordon, gird the sword on,
From the north repairing,
While around you horsemen, frowning,
Charge them down unsparing.

There are various other shorter pieces in the same strain, such as "Health to Charlie," "The Year of Charles," "Song to the Prince," and "The Ark"; but the most spirited and elegant of all our Gaelic Jacobite songs is the

well-known "Morag." It is much simpler in form and more charming in its simplicity than those already quoted. In it Prince Charlie is represented in the personality of Morag—a young girl with flowing locks of yellow hair waving on her shoulders. She had gone away over the seas, and the bard entreats her to return with troops of other maidens—that is, soldiers to dress the red cloth, which in less ambiguous language means to beat the English red-coats. In this allegory the poet introduces himself as one who had followed Morag in lands known and unknown, and who still is ready to follow her the world over if need be.

There are in all forty-seven verses in the song with a chorus characteristic of the type of composition which is known as a "Waulking Refrain." This chorus is without any particular meaning. The song itself runs on in the following delightful fashion :—

Lovely Mòrag, rich in ringlets,
I would sing your praises sweetly.

Yes; and ho Mòrag, child of love,
Beloved of many.

O'er the deep from us you journeyed,
Soon returning may we see you.

Troops of maidens round you pressing
Fit to dress the red-cloth neatly.

Dainty Mòrag is my dear one,
Round whose ears the locks are sweeping.

O'er her shapely shoulders falling
Blinding all that chance to see them.

Would that all those ringlets shining,
Were but mine, with love to cheer me.

Though as mine I never held you
Love compelled me to be near you.

Could my arms but reach to catch you
Only grasp of death would free them.

I would follow you and serve you,
Still unswerving in allegiance.

Cling to you with love compelling,
Like the shell to rock adhering.

With your love my soul is flaming,
All my frame with longing eager.

Mòrag with the face divinest,
Fair the lines of every feature.

From the Orkneys south to Manann
Many a man adores you dearly.

There would come, did you but call them,
Many a stalwart Highland hero,

Who, with sword and shield, would
Cannon's thunder charge unfearing.

Many a youth with ardour swelling
Loves you well in high Dunedin.

These would boldly gather round you,
Once they found that you were near them.

All the Gael their love would show you,
Faithful, though the world should leave you

Good at need when swords at playing,
When the claymore round is sweeping.

Then they full the cloth so rarely,
Using care to pound it neatly.

Firm and close they leave it lying
Crimson-dyed, like blood appearing.

Hasten then with all your maidens
These will aid the work and cheer you.

Agus hò Mhòrag, no ho-rò,
'S no hò-rè-ghealladh.

Little is known of the actual part the bard took in the Highland campaign, beyond the fact that after Culloden he and his brother evaded the pursuit of the enemy and took refuge in the woods and caves of Kinloch-nan-Uamh above Borrodale in the Clanranald country. There they

suffered great privations. One night, indeed, while thus lurking, the cold was so intense that the side of his head which rested on the ground became grey before morning, and his hardy, virile brother on seeing it jocularly insinuated that he was now an old man.

When the Act of Indemnity was passed in 1747 he received from Clanranald—probably as a reward for his services—the office of land-steward of the Island of Canna. Here he composed the beautiful lyric "Hail to the Mainland."

A few years later he visited Edinburgh, on the invitation of Jacobite friends, in the hope that he might there secure an appointment as teacher, but in this quest he failed and had soon to return to seek the shelter of his old haunts in the Highlands. His Edinburgh visit was fruitful in one respect at least, that he published there in 1751 a volume of his poetry—the same which has the proud distinction of being the first-printed original work in Gaelic literature, and thus appropriately bears the suggestive title, *Ais-eiridh na Sean Chanain Albannaich*, or *The Resurrection of the Old Highland Language.* Among the more famous of his poems not already mentioned are "The Parting of Charles and the Highlanders," "The Plaid of Pride," "The Dispraise of Caber Feidh," and the more expansive "Lion's Eulogy."

The Jacobite pieces issued in book form breathe rebellion in almost every verse, so that it has been matter of much surprise that Macdonald did not fall into the hands of the law agents of the Crown for such treasonable sentiments published so soon after Culloden. As it was, there is a statement to the effect that numerous copies of this collection were burnt by the common hangman in Edinburgh, in 1752, by order of the Government.

Although thirty-one of his poems remain, it is believed that not more than a tenth of the whole has been preserved. These, in whole or in part, have been republished five times; in 1764, 1802, 1835, 1839, and 1851. It is apparent from

the preface of the first edition that he meant to publish a volume of ancient Gaelic poetry, and it is highly probable that it was he who gathered the materials for the valuable collection issued by his son Ronald in 1776.

On his return from Edinburgh, the bard continued his chequered career in Clanranald's territory, largely dependent upon the generosity of his chief, who gave him a piece of land first at Eignaig, then at Inverey, Knoydart; and afterwards successively at Camus-an-talmhuinn and Sannaig in Arisaig. At Sannaig he lived long enough to win back much of the respect which his earlier objectionable pieces had caused him to forfeit. To the last he composed poetry, seemingly dying in the act of giving smoother form to verses recited by two friends who watched by his bedside; and having departed this life at an advanced age, he was buried in the cemetery of Kilmory near the present Roman Catholic Church of Arisaig.

Though Macdonald has been head and front the chief of the Gaelic Jacobite bards, there were various other poets of the period imbued with the same sentiments, such as John Maccodrum, John Roy Stuart, Rob Donn, and Duncan Ban Macintyre. In his "Ode to Falkirk"—so strongly Jacobite that it was withheld from publication during his lifetime—Duncan Ban deals with the battles of Falkirk and Culloden. Iain Macruaraidh, who is easily recognised as Prince Charlie, he eulogises with much enthusiasm. He attributes the retreat of the army of King George, in which he was serving, to lack of proper command, and playfully remarks that Calum Macpharuig and he quickly disappeared or it would have gone ill with them. The Jacobites he praises without stint, adding that, given "Cothrom na Feinne"—that is, the fairplay of the Fenians—to the Camerons and Macdonalds, no power in Europe could prevent the loss of the throne to King George. The victory of Culloden he deplores for its crushing effect on the beaten Highlanders. Henceforth they forfeit their land and must even dispense with their national garb—the kilt and hose and bonnet—to don the degenerate and contemptible trousers, grey-coat and hat. This song breathes the

same spirit as Macdonald's own, and closes with the hope that better days are in store when Bonnie Prince Charlie shall yet reign as king.

Of all Highland Jacobite poets, however, the most representative of his suffering countrymen, and the one who approaches nearest the Ardnamurchan bard in his intense loyalty to the cause and as having gone personally through the campaign, was John Roy Stuart. Born in Kincardine, Strathspey, Roy was both a soldier and a poet, and had this additional interest in the rising, that he claimed to be descended from the royal family of the Stuarts. When the Rebellion first broke out he was serving with the French army in Flanders against the British; but on receiving the news, he hurried home to engage in that enterprise, and as colonel and poet became one of the notables of Prince Charlie's following. His prowess at Culloden attracted the Duke of Cumberland's notice, who, on enquiry, was surprised to find that this was the hero who had proved such a valiant opponent against his army so very recently on the Continent.

Like Macdonald, Roy Stuart had for a time to lurk among the caves and woods and fastnesses of his native country, until he managed to escape to France, where he ultimately died. Unlike Macdonald, he was profoundly depressed by the disastrous issue of the campaign and invariably writes in a despairing and melancholy strain. The one seemed to emerge from the struggle with buoyant hopes for the future success of the cause, the other retired sad and regretful, conscious that all was lost.

The dream which he in common with so many of his countrymen had cherished for years had in a few hours dissolved like the baseless fabric of a vision. All might have been so different had Lord George Murray taken his advice to delay for a day before the fateful fight, but now the opportunity was finally past, and the cause extinguished. To these sombre feelings the bard gives beautiful and pathetic expression in two songs—one dealing directly with the battle, the other with the day of Culloden and the

condition of the Gael. The latter has been somewhat freely and yet vigorously rendered as follows:

On my heart grief is pressing
For the wounds and distress of my land;
King of Heaven still guard us
From our foes that are hard on each hand.
On our track is Duke William
And we fall by his villanous band,
Till the vilest and basest
On the flower of our race have their stand.

O, that bonnie Prince Charlie
By King George and his carles should be chased!
That the Right should be banished
And the Truth thus have vanished disgraced!
But, O God, if it please Thee,
Bring the Kingdom in season to peace;
And the true king enthroning
In time make our moaning to cease.

O, the companies plaided
That are scattered and faded away
Whom the Saxons disloyal
Have deceived and destroyed as they may!
Though they gained in the fighting
Not their valour nor might won the field,
But the wind and the raining
That blew from the plains made us yield

Had we then been but roaming
In England, with home far away,
Not so quick had we parted,
But remained with good heart for the fray;
But when witchcraft and treason
On our forces seized ere we met,
In the hills we went cowering
By our foes and their power overset.

'Neath their feet we are trampled,
To our shame and our ample disgrace,
Our lands and our dwellings
Are wasted and felled to our face.
Castle Downie,[1] fire-blackened,
Is a ruin all lacking in form,
O, how bitter the changes
That have left us to range in the storm!

[1] Simon, Lord Lovat's castle, near Beauly.

While our life-days are wearing,
Deep regret will we bear from the field,
For the chieftains so lordly,
That were active with sword and with shield.
But for storms on us beating,
We had charged them as fleet as the deer,
And their troops had been lying
All commingled, or flying in fear.

In the woods we are hiding,
In the glens and the wide hills around,
Without solace or pleasure,
Never hearing sweet measures of sound;
Food and fire both are failing,
And the mist is a veil on our sight;
Like the owl's is our calling,
That is heard at the falling of night.[1]

Such are the poems, and these the more famous Gaelic Jacobite bards through which and by whom the memory of the Prince and his lost cause has been enshrined in the hearts of the subsequent generations and in the lyric literature of the Gael.

CHAPTER III

DUNCAN BAN MACINTYRE AND THE POETS OF NATURE

THE love of Nature as a theme and inspiration for the bard is recognised as a late growth in English poetry. Prior to the eighteenth century, where descriptions of natural scenery come in, it is generally as a setting or background for the drama of human life. There is not among earlier poets that loving observation and passionate depicting of Nature in all her varied forms with which we are familiar in such poets as Wordsworth, Keats, and Tennyson.

Yet from the earliest times, from the days of Deirdre and of the Feinn, the Gael seems to have evinced this peculiar intimacy with and regard for the phenomena that we class under the term Nature. For him, as for the later English poets, Nature was instinct with life, full of wonder and delight. He heard the voices in which she speaks to man in her solemn moods as well as in her cheerier aspects. So near and intimate was this kinship of the Highland bard with his environment that he conceived of all outward things as suffering with him in his sorrow and rejoicing with him in his day of triumph.

And if ever there was a pure unsophisticated poet of Nature sensitive to the feelings she inspired, Duncan Macintyre was one. Born of poor parents at Druimliaghart, Glenorchy, March 1724, he came to be known in after-life as Donnacha Ban nan Oran, or "Fair-haired Duncan of the Songs." In the lonely glen near the Monadh Dhu, half way between Tyndrum and Glencoe, he spent his childhood and

youth, without ever learning to read or write or speak English. In later life he could scrawl his signature—no more. The neighbouring deer-forest was his only school, and the lessons he there learned consisted in fishing for trout and salmon, shooting grouse and wild fowl, and stalking deer. For mental pabulum he had simply the oral tales and songs of his native mountains. Thus circumscribed, the youth, like Wordsworth's Traveller, was early led to hold converse with Nature, who took him as a child to her bosom and revealed to him secrets of her own which are generally hid from the more wise and lettered. Ear and eye were trained at the lone shielings in the bright summer days, and on the remote, lonely Druimliaghart in the dark wintry time.

Duncan had just reached manhood when the memorable Rising of 1745 took place, and ignorant alike of book-learning and the ways of men, though ever on the alert and shrewdly observant, he was easily lured into the great struggle. For the paltry sum of 300 merks Scots, or £16, 17s. 6d., he engaged to act in the army of King George as substitute for Mr. Fletcher, a tacksman of Glenorchy, and in this capacity served under Colonel Campbell of Carwhin at the battle of Falkirk, 17th January 1746.

But the young hunter's heart was not with the army he joined. Fain would he have been on that occasion with the lads who followed Prince Charlie. And lacking enthusiasm for the fight he was hired to uphold against his own countrymen, he thought no shame, on the sudden repulse of the red coats, to fling away his sword and fly with the vanquished. Indeed in his first poem on the battle he is playfully humorous in describing the retreat and his own undignified share in the rout—in this resembling the more famous and more ancient poet, Horace.

The sword with which Macintyre so lightly parted had been given him by Fletcher, and because he had lost it, that irate gentleman refused to pay him his bounty. Yet in this affair the substitute was more than a match for his principal. In the above-mentioned poem, which became widely known and

popular, he satirised the missing weapon and its stingy owner in a provokingly ingenious fashion. The sword he described as an edgeless lump of iron with a twist in the hilt; so heavy, that it bruised his side, and like an alder-tree in size. One that could neither hew nor cut, it carried the soot and rust of ages on its blunt, lack-lustre blade. And not content with the simple power of sarcasm, the defrauded youth submitted his grievance to the Earl of Breadalbane, who compelled the tacksman to hand over the money.

Stung by this humiliation the foolish Fletcher harboured revenge, and meeting the object of his ire at a local market, he struck him with his staff, shouting, "Go, rascal, and make a song on *that*." Duncan might have retaliated, but being of a peaceable and non-pugnacious nature he quietly withdrew. The publicity which those who were witnesses gave the incident in the district won for the bard additional sympathy and respect, while it served to lower his assailant considerably in the popular esteem.

Shortly after this the poet was appointed gamekeeper or deer-forester to the Earl of Breadalbane in Coire Cheathaich and Ben Dorain. There he lived for many years until he accepted a similar appointment from the Duke of Argyll in Buachaill-Eite — a beautiful name which means "Shepherds of Etive," and is applied to those gnarled peaks overlooking Glen Etive and Glencoe.

In the history of the young hunter bard, the battle of Falkirk was destined to prove a red-letter day, since from it dates the awakening of his poetic faculties and the starting-point of his career. Hitherto there is no evidence that he had composed any poems or even knew that he had been born a son of the Muse. At twenty-two years of age the afflatus came, and he entered on the new *rôle* to which his genius called him.

As a poet of Nature he ranks with Alexander Macdonald, unrivalled among the masters of tuneful Highland song. His pictures of the things which came under his own notice are not inferior for reality, vividness, and

beauty, to those of any descriptive poet. And some pieces —notably his "Mairi bhan òg"—may be read beside the sweetest and most expressive of the Lowland lyrics. Accordingly the gifted Duncan has been frequently compared with Burns. "What Burns is to the Lowlands of Scotland," says Robert Buchanan in *The Hebrid Isles*, "Duncan Ban is to the Highlands, and more; for Duncan never made a poem, long or short, which was not set to a tune, and he first sang them himself as he wandered like a venerable bard of old. . . . His fame endures wherever the Gaelic language is spoken, and his songs are sung all over the civilised world. Without the bitterness and intellectual power of Burns, he possessed much of his tenderness; and as a literary prodigy, who could not even write, he is still more remarkable than Burns. Moreover, the old simple-hearted forester, with his fresh love of Nature, his shrewd insight, and his impassioned speech, seems a far completer figure than the Ayrshire ploughman, who was doubtless a glorious creature, but most obtrusive in his independence. Poor old Duncan was never bitter. The world was wonderful, and he was content to fill a humble place in it. He had an independent mind, but was quite friendly to rank and power wherever he saw them, for, after all, what were they to Coire Cheathaich with its natural splendours? What was the finest robe in Dunedin to the gay clothing on the side of Ben Dorain?

"In the life of Burns we see the light striking through the storm-cloud, lurid, terrific, yet always light from heaven. In the life of Duncan Ban there is nothing but a gray light of peace and purity, such as broods over the mountains when the winds are laid. Burns was the mightier poet, the grander human soul; but many who love him best and cherish his memory most tenderly, can find a place in their hearts for Duncan Ban as well."

It is apparent that the one knew more of man, the other of Nature. Of all Macintyre's poems and songs those composed when following the pursuits of his early manhood

are incomparably the best. His language is characterised by simplicity of diction and purity of style. Most felicitous in the choice of words, idioms, and expressions, he invariably paints his scenes in bewitching colours. All his poetry is lyric, and his pieces present a wonderful variety of form and topic; yet they may be succinctly classified under these four categories—

1. Jacobite and martial songs.
2. Songs of love and sentiment.
3. Comic and satiric pieces.
4. Descriptive poems.

1. The Jacobite compositions we place first, as apparently the earliest.

The one in which he describes the battle and alludes to Fletcher and his sword, is entitled "Falkirk Field"; the other, which is said to have been withheld from the printing-press during his lifetime owing to its pronounced Jacobite sentiment, is known as "Another Ode to Falkirk." In a humorous piece reflecting on the *régime* which proscribed the Highland dress soon after Culloden, the bard shows himself again out of sympathy with the cause of the reigning family. Here, like a true Highlander, he deplores the compulsory use of the new garb, which he characterises as most unfit for free movement on the hills, and he laments the loss of arms and liberty. But his "Ode to the King" and his subsequent poems show how completely he accepted the Hanoverian rule in after days.

His other songs of war are composed on such congenial subjects as the Highland clans; favourite regiments, notably the Black Watch; and the martial accoutrements of the Gael. Nor is that useful possession the gun, with which he was so much associated all his days, forgotten by his Muse. He has two odes to different weapons, the one written earlier, the other later in life.

In the first he eulogises his favourite fowling-piece under the name Nic-Coiseam, and shows how happy he was roaming the hills with this companion. It is extremely

interesting to note the various euphonious names of places to which he introduced Nic-Coiseam. Among others he mentions Coire Cheathaich, Beinn-a-chaisteil, Mam, Creagan-aparain, Beinn-nam-fuaran, Beinn-dorain, Coire-chruitear, Gleann Eitidh, Meal-a-bhuiridh, Beinn-a'-chrulaist, Lairig-gharstain, Chreachain-ghlas, Cloich-an-tuairnear, and Coire-chaolain.

In the second ode to the gun, his musket figures as a comely widow named Janet whom he was induced by Captain Campbell to espouse when he entered the City Guard.

2. As a young man the bard, who appears to have been remarkably handsome, fell in love with a young girl of higher station and easier circumstances than his own. Her father, Robert Campbell, Claisgour, Blackmount, was an under-factor and freeholder, and she, as a farmer's daughter, had some cows and calves in her own right for dowry. The son of poor parents and without patrimony, Macintyre was afraid she would spurn his love, and for three months he suffered terrible suspense while he daily watched her from his own door go in and out about her work more than half a mile away. In all, three of his published songs are in praise of this heroine. And when in the first of these he ventured to address her, he tried to extenuate his humble circumstances by saying that twelve things had kept him poor. These he enumerates as drinking, feasting, weddings, music, society, merchants, markets, wooer's gifts, folly, and youth. What the remaining two were the bard does not say. But there is nothing more pleasing in the lives of any of the poets than the courtship of Duncan and Mairi.

If Mairi bhan òg had charms inestimable, Duncan had eyes to see them, and words to do them justice. Here is his portrait of her, reduced to sober prose by Pattison.

"Tall and round and graceful; with a profusion of curly fair hair, a pure complexion, white teeth, fine eyebrows that knew not a frown, and a mouth from which of all others the mountain lays had the sweetest sound. She had a good

temper, a lively disposition, a light foot, and a happy heart. So gay was she, she made her love's heart dance with rapture when she was playful. So winning a way was hers, she could, when she pleased, draw from him his dearest secrets. She was gentle, humane, almsgiving, liberal. She was like the bough in the forest that is covered with blossoms—like the fresh sea trout just landed from the river and yet lying on the green bank, splendid and dazzling, and white. She was the star of the morning whose beauty delighted every bosom. But that which delighted him most was that firmness in good which was hers. Yet was she very accomplished and very useful—the best of dancers to the pipe or fiddle, the cheeriest of companions, the most attractive of speakers. On summer evenings she could milk the cows at the fold by the bend of the river, while the calves around her played ; or in winter, with her well-formed and lady-like hand, sew her bands and her plain seams—yes and the rarest embroidery in the lighted room that shone like day."

Of the three songs in her praise one is the beautiful lyric "Mairi bhan òg," or "Fair Young Mary," composed after she had become his wife. On account of its grace, delicacy, and tenderness, it is considered the finest love-song in the Gaelic language.

Specially noteworthy are the sixth and seventh stanzas:—

I roam'd in the wood many a tendril surveying,
All shapely from branch to stem,
My eye, as it looked, its ambition betraying
To cull the fairest from them ;
One sweet-smelling branch, in blossom all over,
Bent lowly down to my hand,
And yielded its bloom that hung high from each lover
To me the least of the band.

I went to the river, one net cast I threw in,
Where the streams transparent ran.
Forget shall I never how the beauty I drew in,
Shone bright as the gloss of the swan.

Oh! happy the day that crowned my affection
With such a prize to my share:
My love is a ray, a morning reflection,
Beside me she sleeps a star.

Other songs of sentiment are his "Ode to John Campbell" and his elegies.

As showing how arbitrary and fantastic the love potions of nations usually are, it may be noted that there is in one of his amatory pieces a most curious charm, whereby a young maiden is supposed to recover the lost affections of her lover. Rising early on a Sunday morning, with the congregation's blessing, and a priest's hood, she is to repair to a level stone. The hood and a wooden shovel must be placed over her shoulder. Nine ferns cut by an axe and three bones of an old man taken from a grave are then to be burnt to ashes, and the ashes to be thrown against the north wind, on the loved one's breast. This proceeding should ensure the desired effect. Such practices—odd though they may seem to-day—were common enough down to a late period in the land of the Gael, even as they are still common elsewhere where superstition holds sway.

3. That the bard had a strong vein of comic humour, is evident from his earliest productions. He could be very cutting, and sarcastic too, as his satires show. Of an agreeable and easy disposition, he was always a pleasant and convivial companion, with the reputation of never wantonly attacking people; but if provoked, as in the case of Fletcher who refused him his due, he was wont to make his opponent feel the pungent effect of a bard's resentment. Among those whom he pilloried for their sins against himself or his country there were Domhnuil Ban mac O'Neacainn the tailor; Anna, nighean Uilleam a'n Cròmpa; Hugh the Piper; and John Wilkes, the enemy, as he conceived him, of Scotland.

4. But to find Macintyre at his best we must turn to his inimitable poetry of Nature, and of this kind his two masterpieces are "Ben Dorain" and "Coire Cheathaich." For

vivid, original, elaborate, and accurate description there is nothing in the language to touch these with the exception of Macdonald's "Birlinn."

In both these compositions the bard dwells with the most loving minuteness on all the varied features of the object he depicts, be it ben or glen, and lingers over their beauties as if they were the charms of living personal friends.

There is much diversity of opinion as to which of his two outstanding productions is the better one, some preferring "Ben Dorain," others "Coire Cheathaich"—but all finding both unique.

"Ben Dorain," with five hundred and fifty lines, is the longer. Adapted to a pipe tune, it follows with extraordinary skill all the turns and twirls and wild cadences of the pibroch.

The poem is divided into eight parts, alternating with a sort of strophe and antistrophe, one slow, called *urlar*, in stately trochees; the other swift, called *siubhal*, in a kind of galloping anapæsts; the whole ending with the *crunluath* or final quick motion.

It opens thus:—

Honour be to Ben Dorain,
Above all Bens that be;
Beneath the sun mine eyes beheld
No lovelier Ben than he,
With his long smooth stretch of moor
And his nooks remote and sure
For the deer,
When he smiles in face of day,
And the breeze sweeps o'er the brae
Keen and clear:
With his greenly waving woods
And his grassly solitudes,
And the stately herds that fare
Feeding there.

Later he says, in the spirit of Gray's famous lines on the flower "born to blush unseen and waste its sweetness on the desert air"—

'Tis passing strange to me,
When his sloping side I see,
That so grand
And beautiful a Ben
Should not flourish among men
In the scutcheon and the ken
Of the land.
'Tis plenished o'er and o'er
With rich gifts a fruitful store,
You will seek and far explore
Ere you find, etc.

"In no poem on record," remarks Principal Shairp, "have the looks, the haunts, the habits, and the manners of the deer, both red and roe, been pictured so accurately and so fondly."

And Professor Blackie, even more highly enamoured, observes that "what Landseer, in a sister art, has done for animals in general, Macintyre, in this singular work, has done for the deer and the roe." Shairp and Pattison have each made much-prized translations of "Ben Dorain," but the passages we quote are from the rendering of Blackie, who seems to have caught more naturally the spirit of the original.

O what joy to view the stag
When he rises 'neath the crag
And from depth of hollow chest
Sends his bell across the waste,
While he tosses high his crest,
Proudly scorning,
And from milder throat the hind
Lows an answer to his mind
With the younglings of her kind
In the morning;
With her vivid swelling eye,
While her antlered lord is nigh,
She sweeps both earth and sky,
Far away;
And beneath her eyebrow gray
Lifts her lid to greet the day,
And to guide her turfy way
O'er the brae;

O how lightsome is her tread,
When she gaily goes ahead
O'er the green and mossy bed
Of the rills ;
When she leaps with such a grace
You will own her pretty pace
Ne'er was hindmost in the race,
When she wills,
Or when with sudden start
She defies the hunter's art,
And is vanished like a dart
O'er the hills !

The bard's account of the mountain brook or hill water is very happy :—

A spring of lively cheer,
Sparkling cool and clear,
And filtered through the sand
At their feet ;
'Tis a life-restoring flood
To repair the wasted blood,
The cheapest and the best in all the land ;
And vainly gold will try
For the Queen's own lips to buy
Such a treat.
From the rim it trickles down
Of the mountain's granite crown,
Clear and cool.
. . .
Where dark water-cresses grow
You will trace its quiet flow,
With mossy border yellow,
In its pouring ;
With no slimy dregs to trouble
The brightness of its bubble
As it threads its silver way
From the granite boulders gray
Of Ben Dorain.
Then down the sloping side
It will slip with glassy slide,
Gently welling,
Till it gather strength to leap,
With a light and foaming sweep,
To the corrie broad and deep
Proudly swelling ;

Then bends amid the boulders,
'Neath the shadow of the shoulders
Of the Ben,
Through a country rough and shaggy,
So jaggy and so knaggy,
Full of hummocks and of hunches,
Full of stumps and tufts and branches,
Full of bushes and of rushes,
In the glen;
Through rich green solitudes,
And wildly hanging woods
With blossom and with bell,
In rich redundant swell,
And the pride
Of the mountain daisy there,
And the forest everywhere
With the dress and with the air
Of a bride.

It is related of an artist that, having on one occasion to take shelter from a shower of rain in a clay pit, he was so struck with the beauty of the place that his description afterwards drew crowds to view the wondrous excavation. But lacking the vision of the original seer, Demos went away disappointed on finding only an ordinary clay-hole. No doubt thousands who frequent our streets and cities—ay and rural districts too—would find the "Misty Corrie" which Duncan Ban glorified an insufferably dull, remote, circumscribed, and uninteresting region. Even cultured English contemporaries of his own, such as Captain Burt and Dr. Johnson, had no eye for the real beauties of Highland scenery. The big bens repelled them, as did also the barren moors covered only with heath and shrouded in frequent mists. But before even Sir Walter Scott threw his magic wand over the land of the mountain and the flood and transfigured it for English eyes, the hunter bard of Glenorchy had already done this service for Highlanders. In "Coire Cheathaich" every flower and bush, and stone and hillock, forms a feature in the landscape, and the "Misty Corrie" stands out as live and real to the soul as Egdon Heath does on Thomas Hardy's pages.

Se Coire-cheathaich nan aighean siùbhlach.
An coire rùnach is ùrar fonn,
Gu lurach, miadh-fheurach, mìn-gheal, sùghar,
Gach lusan flùàr bu chùbhraidh leam ;
Gu molach dù-ghorm, torrach lùisreagach,
Corrach plùireanach, dlù-ghlan grinn ;
Caoin, ballach, ditheanach, cannach, misleanach,
Glean a mhilltich, 'san lionmhor mang.

The rendering which follows is by Robert Buchanan in *The Hebrid Isles* :—

My beauteous corri ! where cattle wander—
My misty corri ! my darling dell !
Mighty, verdant, and covered over
With wild flowers tender of the sweetest smell ;
Dark is the green of thy grassy clothing,
Soft smell thy hillocks most green and deep,
The cannach blowing, the darnel growing,
While the deer troop past to the misty steep.

Fine for wear is thy beauteous mantle,
Strongly woven and ever new,
With rough grass o'er it, and, brightly gleaming
The grass all spangled with diamond dew ;
It's round my corri, my lovely corri,
Where rushes thicken and long reeds blow ;
Fine were the harvest to any reaper
Who through the marsh and the bog could go.
. . . . . .
Around Ruadh Arisidh what ringlets cluster ;
Fair, long, and crested, and closely twined,
This way and that they are lightly waving,
At every breath of the mountain wind.
The twisted hemlock, the slanted rye-grass,
The juicy moor-grass, can all be found ;
And the close-set groundsel is greenly growing
By the wood where heroes are sleeping sound.

In yonder ruin once dwelt Mac Bhaidi,
Tis now a desert where winds are shrill ;
Yet the well-shaped brown ox is feeding by it,
Among the stones that bestrew the hill.
And fine to see, both in light and gloaming,
The smooth Clach-Fionn, so still and deep,
And the houseless cattle and calves most peaceful,
Grouped on the brow of the lonely steep.

Gladsome and grand is the misty corri,
And there the hunter hath noble cheer;
The powder blazes; the black lead rattles
Into the heart of the dun-brown deer;
And there the hunter's hound so bloody
Around the hunter doth leap and play,
And madly rushing, most fierce and fearless
Springs at the throat of the stricken prey.

Oh! 'twas gladsome to go a-hunting,
Out in the dew of the sunny morn:
For the great red stag was never wanting,
Nor the fawn nor the doe with never a horn.
And when rain fell, and the night was coming,
From the open heath we could swiftly fly,
And, finding the shelter of some deep grotto,
Couch at ease till the night went by.

And sweet it was, when the white sun glimmered,
Listening under the crag to stand,
And hear the moor-hen so hoarsely croaking,
And the red-cock murmuring close at hand;
While the little wren blew his tiny trumpet,
And threw his steam off blithe and strong,
While the speckled thrush and the red-breast gaily
Lilted together a pleasant song!

Not a singer but joined the chorus,
Not a bird in the leaves was still,
First the laverock, that famous singer,
Led the music with throat so shrill,
From tall tree-branches the blackbird whistled,
And the gray-bird joined with his sweet "coo-coo",
Everywhere was the blithesome chorus,
Till the glen was murmuring through and through.

. . . . .

The verse describing the motions and appearance of the salmon in the whirling eddies is considered the most famous of its kind in the Gaelic language.

Out of the ocean comes the salmon,
Steering with crooked nose he hies,
Hither he darts where the waves are boiling—
Out he springs at the glistening flies!
How he leaps in the whirling eddies!

With back blue-black, and fins that shine,
Spangled with silver, and speckled over,
With white tail tipping his frame so fine!

But to appreciate its genuine excellence one needs to turn to the original, where the movements and colours are most realistic and vividly true to Nature.

Tha bradan tarra-gheal sa choire gharbhlaich
Tha tig'n o'n fhairge bu ghailbheach tonn,
Le luinneis mheanmnach a' ceapa mheanbhchuileag,
Gu neo-chearbach le cham-ghob còm;
Air bhuinne borb, is e leum gu foirmeilt
'Na eideadh colgail, bu ghorm-glas druim,
Le shoilsean airgeid, gu h'-iteach meana-bhreac
Gu lannach, dearg-bhallach, carr-gheal sliom.

Among the other descriptive poems of Duncan Ban, his "Ode to Edinburgh," the "Gift Sheep," and "Ode to Summer" are all fine lyrics and much admired. The remarkable thing about their author is, that for years, as he could neither read nor write, he had to carry the whole of his poetry, amounting to about six thousand lines, in his memory. So tenacious, however, was that faculty that not a line, not a single word of his own compositions, escaped it, even though it was well stored with Ossianic and other lore.

At length, about twenty-two years after his first song took shape, the son of a neighbouring clergyman, himself afterwards well known as Dr. Stewart of Luss, committed the poems to writing from the bard's own recital,[1] and in 1768 they were published in Edinburgh under the title *Gaelic Songs by Duncan Macintyre.*

Some time later, when the Highland Society of London, with a view to encouraging bardic effort in the Highlands, offered prizes for original compositions on the Gaelic language and on the bagpipes, the Glenorchy bard bent his Muse to these subjects with the result that there appear

[1] One authority, whose account is different, says, "Duncan Macintyre's poems were taken down from his mouth by James Macintyre of Glenow, and revised by the Rev. John Smith of Campbeltown."

among his published works six prize poems of dates 1781, 1782, 1783, 1784, 1785, and 1789 respectively.

Certain of his opinions therein expressed sound rather quaint and ingenuous now. He would be sorry if his melodious mother-tongue should die, seeing it is the best for conveying amusement and merriment, the fittest for the music of the pipe and harp, and unsurpassed as a vehicle of song. It can gladden the saddest heart and is the most effective weapon for satire. The bagpipes, he maintains, are requisite at weddings and in war; useful to awake the slumberer in the morning, but most bewitching in the jovial eventide.

A second edition of the poems, with more recent ones added, came from the press in 1790, and as the bard's deer-foresting days were now well-nigh ended, he travelled through a great part of the Highlands disposing of the issue.

Though not born to be a soldier, in 1793 he joined the volunteer regiment known as Breadalbane's Fencibles, which was then being formed, and continued as sergeant therein until it was disbanded in 1799. Subsequently, through the influence of his old friend the Earl, he obtained a place in the City Guard of Edinburgh.

Macintyre's ode to his musket written about this time shows how kindly he took to the new life. Under the name of Janet he thus praises the weapon—

She keeps my rising family
As well as I could e'er desire,
Although no labour I do try,
Nor dirty work for love or hire.

I laboured once laboriously,
Although no riches I amassed;
A menial I disdained to be
An' keep my vow unto the last.

I have ceased to labour in the lan
Since e'er I noticed to my wife,
That the idle and contented man
Endureth to the longest life.

'Tis my musket—loving wife, indeed,
In whom I faithfully believe;
She's able still to earn my bread,
An' Duncan she will ne'er deceive;

I'll have no lack of linens fair,
An' plenty clothes to serve my turn,
An' trust me that all worldly care
Now gives me not the least concern.

After years of absence he revisited the scenes of his earlier life in the Highlands and spent a whole day wandering with melancholy pleasure over Ben Dorain. A great change had taken place in the interval, throughout the Highlands. The deer forests were giving way to sheep farms, and the people were being driven over seas. The thought of this affected the bard sadly, and gave rise to that pensive, pathetic production entitled "The last Adieu to the Hills." It is touching to consider the circumstances in which it was composed, when the bard, an old man of seventy-eight, stood for the last time on the lonely heights so dear to his heart, reflecting on the scenes around, the departed friends, and the vanished glories of his youth. This poem, the only one of his accurately dated, is set down as having been composed on the 19th of September 1802. It begins thus:—

Yestreen I stood on Ben Dorain and paced its dark-gray path;
Was there a hill I did not know—a glen or grassy strath?
Oh! gladly in the times of old I trod that glorious ground,
And the white dawn melted in the sun, and the red deer cried around.

How finely swept the noble deer across the morning hill,
While fearless played the fawn and doe beside the running rill;
I heard the black and red cock crow, and the bellowing of the deer.
I think those are the sweetest sounds that man at dawn may hear.

Oh! wildly as the bright day gleamed I climbed the mountain's breast,
And when I to my home returned, the sun was in the west;
'Twas health and strength, 'twas life and joy, to wander freely there,
To drink at the fresh mountain stream, to breathe the mountain air.

And oft I'd shelter for a time within some shieling low,
And gladly sport in woman's smile and woman's kindness know.

Oh ! 'twas not likely one could feel for long a joy so gay ;
The hour of parting came full soon—I sighed, and went away.

Yestreen I wandered in the glen ; what thoughts were in my head !
There had I walked with friends of yore—where are those dear ones fled ?
I looked and looked : where'er I looked was naught but sheep ! sheep ! sheep !
A woeful change was in the hill ! World, thy deceit was deep !

From side to side I turned mine eyes—Alas ! my soul was sore ;
The mountain bloom, the forest's pride, the old men were no more ;
Nay not one antlered stag was there, nor doe so soft and slight ;
No bird to fill the hunter's bag—all, all were fled from sight.

Farewell, ye forests of the heath ! hills where the bright day gleams ;
Farewell, ye grassy dells ! farewell, ye springs and leaping streams !
Farewell, ye mighty solitudes, where once I loved to dwell,
Scenes of my springtime and its joys—for ever fare you well ![1]

In 1806 he was able to retire from the City Guard and live in comparative comfort on his little savings and the profits of the third edition of his poems published in 1804.

More than once he had wandered through the Highlands to obtain subscribers for one or other of the various issues of his poems. A lady who long years after remembered to have seen him in her childhood, told one of his biographers that he was accompanied on that occasion by the wife of his youth, the fair young Mary, still fair though no longer young. Her famous husband, best loved of all the Gaelic bards, wore a tartan kilt, and on his head a cap of fox-skin. He was fair of hair and face, as his name implied, with a pleasant countenance and a happy attractive manner.

Others who saw him later, probably also on one of these North country excursions, remembered him as venerable and patriarchal, with silvery hair and a long pilgrim staff—a striking personage who was treated with marked respect wherever he was known.

Duncan lived till his eighty-ninth year, when he died in Edinburgh, May 1812, and was buried in Greyfriars' Church-

[1] Rendering by Robert Buchanan in *The Hebrid Isles.*

yard. Suitable monuments now stand to his memory, both there [1] and by the wayside near the banks of Loch Awe, a short distance above Dalmally ; but his greatest monument is the volume of poetry which his untutored genius has bequeathed to his countrymen. In all, there have been up to date as many as ten editions of this popular work, which is destined from its quality to occupy a permanent niche in the treasury of Gaelic literature.

The bard had two of a family, a son who died in his teens, and a daughter who married Dr. Macnaughton in Killin district.

Besides Alexander Macdonald, James Macpherson, and Duncan Ban Macintyre, who stand in the front rank by themselves as Highland poets of nature, there is no lack of others who were gifted with a similar faculty of vision and descriptive epithet though in a less degree. Two of the more prominent of these, as representative of the rest, may here be mentioned, namely, Rob Donn, and Ewen Maclachlan.

Of the Reay bard's contributions to this class of poetry the most striking is his "Song to Winter." The power of alliterative harmony that he displays as he paints the conditions of life in the chill season is extraordinary. One needs to know the original, fully to appreciate it, though without taking the sense it is possible to get some idea of it from the sounds. Thus the fourth stanza goes rhythmically on with many descriptive adjectives as in Duncan Ban's own productions :—

Mhios chaiseanach, ghreannach,
Chianail, chaimeanach, ghearrt',
'Si gu 'clachanach, currach,
Cruaidhteach, sgealpanach, puinneach.
Sneachdach, caochlaideach, frasach,
Reotach, reasgach, gu sàr ;
'Se na chaoirneinean craidhneach
Fad na h'-oidhche air lar.

[1] On the Edinburgh monument there is inscribed one of the verses of the elegy which the bard wrote for himself.

Mhios dheirtheasach, chaoile,
Choimheach, ghaothach, gun bhlàths,
Chuireadh feadail na fuarachd
Anns gach badan bu dualaich,
Dhoirteadh sneachda 'n a ruathar
Air gach bruach nam beann àrd';
'San àm teichidh na gréine,
Caillidh Phœbus a bhlaths,

'Tis the season when nature
Is all in the sere,
When her snow showers are hailing,
Her rain-sleet assailing,
Her mountain winds wailing,
Her rime-frosts severe.

'Tis the season of leanness,
Unkindness and chill;
Its whistle is ringing,
An iciness bringing,
Where the brown leaves are clinging
In helplessness still,
And the snow-rush is delving
With furrows the hill.

The sun is in hiding,
Or frozen his beam
On the peaks where he lingers,
On the glens where the singers
With their bills and small fingers
Are raking the stream,
Or picking the midden
For forage—and scream.

When darkens the gloaming,
Oh! scant is their cheer;
All benumbed is their song in
The hedge they are thronging,
And for shelter still longing,
The mortar they tear,
Ever noisily, noisily
Squealing their care.

The running stream's chieftain
Is trailing to land,
So flabby, so grimy,

The spots of his prime he,
Has rusted with sand;
Crook-snouted his crest is
That taper'd so grand.

How mournful in winter
The lowing of the kine;
How lean-backed they shiver,
How draggled they cower,
How their nostrils run owre
With drippings of brine,
So scraggy and cringing
In the cold frost they pine.

. . . . .

Ewen Maclachlan, who is joined with Macpherson as the most learned of all the Gaelic bards, was born at Torraculltuinn in Lochaber in 1775, but his parents soon after removed to Fort William, where he received his early education. At first he acted as tutor for several years among the upper-class families of the district.

Entering King's College, Aberdeen, he greatly distinguished himself in classics, and graduated Master of Arts. Originally he had intended to become a minister and actually took a full course at the Divinity Hall. From this purpose his mind was diverted by the advice of Professor Beattie, author of "The Minstrel," and other friends who, recognising his exceptional linguistic gifts, encouraged him to seek a Chair. Though he never succeeded in rising to this exalted office, he afterwards became assistant librarian of King's College, and Rector of the Grammar School of Old Aberdeen,—positions which he occupied till he died in the forty-seventh year of his age, March 29, 1822.

Maclachlan was a poet and philologist of no mean order. In addition to the classics he was familiar with some oriental and modern languages. In 1798, when Allan (Dall) Macdougall's Gaelic poems were printed in Edinburgh, Maclachlan published some of his own along with them—such as "Dàin nan Aimsirean," that is, Songs of the Seasons, "Dan mu chonaltradh," and some transla-

tions. In 1816 appeared a volume of his own entitled *Metrical Effusions*, consisting of a number of Latin and English, several Gaelic poems, and one in Greek. So laborious a mental worker was he, that years before his early death his locks had become silver grey.

Indeed at the very time the fell serjeant took him he was engaged in two arduous tasks, which were thus never finished. These were (1) the translation of Homer's *Iliad* into Gaelic heroic verse, of which he committed nearly seven books to MS., and (2) the compiling of the Gaelic-English part of the Highland Society Dictionary.

Maclachlan's poetry is replete with the love of Nature, as any of his songs of the seasons will show. Here we may quote rather from "The Mavis of the Clan."

In that poem, following a custom not uncommon among the Gaelic bards, he assumes the character of a song bird—"Clan Lachlan's tuneful mavis"—and pours forth his lay.

The sun is on his flashing march, his golden hair abroad,
It seems as on the mountain side of beams a furnace glow'd,
Now melts the honey from all flowers, and now a dew o'erspreads
(A dew of fragrant blessedness) all the grasses of the meads;
Nor least in my remembrance is my country's flowering heather,
Whose russet crest nor gold nor sun nor sweep of gale may wither.
Dear to my eye the symbol wild, that loves, like me, the side
Of my own Highland mountains that I climb in love and pride.

Dear tribes of nature! co-mates ye of nature's wandering son—
I hail the lambs that on the floor of milky pastures run;
I hail the mother flocks that, wrapped in warm and sheltering fleece,
Defy the landward tempest's roar, defy the seaward breeze;
The streams they drink are waters of the ever-gushing well—
Those streams, oh, how they wind around the swellings of the dell!
The flowers they browse are mantles spread o'er pastures wide and far,
As mantle o'er the firmament the stars, each flower a star!
I will not name each sister beam, but clustering there I see
The beauty of the purple-bell, the daisy of the lea.

Such are some of those gifted Highlanders who have voiced the sentiments that are more or less dumb and inarticulate in us all.

CHAPTER IV

MACPHERSON AND HIS OSSIAN

WHEN James Macpherson published the first instalment of his *Ossian* a notable figure in English literature had arrived. Of all the Highland bards *he* made the biggest stir. For upwards of a century his great masterpiece was the subject of the keenest scrutiny; and as is well known a long-drawn-out controversy, perhaps unparalleled in the literary history of modern times for its bitterness, has been waged round his name.

That controversy has at length ceased to stir up strife. Time, the great arbiter, has stepped in with its verdict, and we can study the life and work of the bard to-day in the soft light and quiet succeeding the conflict. Viewed from this vantage-ground, there can be no doubt that his genius, his individual personality, and the unusual elements of romance in his career have been much obscured by the vituperation with which he was, while living, assailed; and to get a clear estimate of this remarkable man we must approach him from three different points of view; namely, from the point of view (1) of his personal history, (2) of the controversy in which he was involved, and (3) of his famous poems.

All these furnish topics of the most absorbing interest, since they deal with the life and work of a man, who, as the poet Gray affirmed, was the very demon of poetry, or had lighted on a treasure hid for ages.

Looking dispassionately at James Macpherson, therefore,

and his remarkable career in relation to his early environment and the age in which he lived, it is evident we have here a rare combination of the picturesque and romantic in life. A descendant of a stricken clan whose chief was a fugitive and whose territory was confiscated after the fateful Forty-five, the bard could hardly have alighted upon a poorer land or worse times than were those into which he was born in the Highlands. And yet he achieved not only affluence but also a fame that resounded through Europe.

It was in the parish of Kingussie, and in the year 1736,[1] that he first saw the light; and he would be a boy of nine and a half years of age when the battle of Culloden was fought, and living in the very heart of the troubled area. He received the rudiments of his education in his native county, and with the view of studying for the ministry, entered, in 1753, King's College, Aberdeen, and afterwards Marischal College, and the University of Edinburgh. In the intervals of college life, he taught as a schoolmaster in a turf schoolhouse near his home; but later was employed as a tutor at Moffat to young Graham of Balgowan, the future Lord Lynedoch.

While yet a lad and student at college, he appears to have been addicted to versification. Thus in 1758 he published a poem in six cantos entitled "The Highlander," and in the *Scots Magazine* of the period might be seen other pieces from his pen. "The Highlander" made no impression, but next year an event occurred which was the making of Macpherson. At Moffat he had the good fortune to meet with the poet John Home, author of *Douglas*. Home, as an intimate friend of Professor Adam Ferguson, an Athole Highlander, had been apprised by the latter of the existence in the Highlands of very old Gaelic poems and was eager to sample them. Questioning the young Badenoch man on the subject, he was delighted to be informed that

[1] The usual date of birth given by his biographers is 1738, but 1736 is the date on his tomb in Westminster Abbey.

the tutor himself had a few such gems in his possession. Here at last was Home's coveted opportunity, and he at once asked Macpherson if he would translate any of the pieces he considered of most value. It is said that the latter refused at first, but afterwards consented and handed the poet an English rendering of the Ossianic ballad entitled "The Death of Oscar."

Home was so well pleased with the poetical genius it displayed that he mentioned the fact to the Rev. Dr. Carlyle of Inveresk who happened to be staying with him on October 2, 1759, and they both agreed that it was "a precious discovery." Copies were sent to Gray and Shenstone, and the author of *Douglas* also showed the translation to his literary friends in Edinburgh, including Dr. Hugh Blair, Dr. Ferguson, and Principal Robertson. The first of these three was the great arbiter of literary taste in his day on this side of the Border, and under his patronage and with the enthusiastic approval of the rest, Macpherson was induced to publish all he had. And so there appeared anonymously in June 1760, with a short preface by Dr. Blair, *Fragments of Ancient Poetry, collected in the Highlands of Scotland, and translated from the Gaelic or Erse Language.* There were in all fifteen of these translations. Published in Edinburgh, and under such distinguished auspices, they immediately attracted attention, and the new arrival was made much of by the *élite* of the city. Dr. Blair had stated in his preface that in addition to many more remains of ancient genius, an epic poem of considerable length existed in Gaelic and might be recovered and translated if encouragement were given. This poem described the invasion of Ireland by Swarthan, King of Lochlyn, who defeated Cuchulain, the general or chief of the Irish tribes, but was in turn driven from the country by Fingal, King of Scotland, who is represented as living in the third century.

On the strength of this announcement, a subscription was easily raised, and Macpherson set out on a tour of

research through the Western Highlands, commissioned to collect all the materials he could find.

In this undertaking he was accompanied and assisted by Lachlan Macpherson of Strathmashie, Ewan Macpherson, Knoydart, and later on by Captain Alexander Morrison, all recognised Gaelic scholars, and known to be superior to himself in their knowledge of the ancient tongue.

After much wandering the youthful collector returned in the autumn, the happy possessor of a considerable amount of old lore and poetry taken down from oral recitation, and carrying with him also various MSS., some of which were lent him by Clanranald, the others he received from people in the Hebrides. On the way back he stayed for a time in the manse of the Rev. Mr. Gallie, Laggan, arranging his materials. Then he went in January to Edinburgh where he remained in constant communication with Drs. Blair and Ferguson until his so-called translation was finished.

To Mr. Maclagan, Blair Athole, he confided the statement that he had been "lucky enough to lay his hands on a pretty complete poem, and truly epic, concerning Fingal."

From Edinburgh the aspiring author journeyed to London and published in 1762 the volume, a large quarto, containing this epic in six books, with fifteen other smaller poems. The epic he styled "Fingal," and in it were embodied two or three of the Fragments issued in 1760, such as "Comala" and "Songs of Selma."

In 1763, following hard on the first, there came from the London press a second and even larger epic poem, entitled *Temora*. It was in eight books, text and notes together filling 156 pages. But in addition the volume contained "Cath-Loda" in three *duans* or cantos; four other pieces; and the Gaelic of the seventh book of "Temora" as a specimen of the original. All these, as well as those published in 1762, were announced as having been "composed by Ossian, the son of Fingal, and translated from the Gaelic language by James Macpherson."

And so in three brief years, by this effort of genius and

novel expedient, the Badenoch bard laid the foundation of his future greatness. The sale of the books was enormous, and before the end of the century the *Ossian* was translated into almost every language of Europe, and chanted in hall and boudoir. Even Napoleon carried it about with him on his marches.

So far so good. But how came it that, contrary to all known history and accepted ideas, there existed in the third or fourth century in the uncivilised Highlands a people exhibiting all the high and chivalrous feelings of refined valour, generosity, magnanimity, and virtue, here displayed, and this people, *mirabile dictu!* capable of producing *epic* poems? More astonishing still, how was it possible that such lengthened compositions could be carried by oral tradition for upwards of a thousand years among tribes rude, illiterate, and barbarous? Therein lay the early charm of these wonderful products brought to light by Macpherson and which seemed to embody in their melting strains the genuine sentiment of the past. Had they not all the appearance and sound of ancient poems for which there were no equivalents in the modern world? Following the lead of the bard's Edinburgh patrons, Highlanders generally, and many others outside the Celtic fringe, regardless of all objections, accepted them as such.

At that time, however, smarting from the shock which the rude tribes north of the Grampians had given England, and especially London, by their almost triumphant invasion, and accustomed as they were for centuries to despise the troublesome mountaineers, the English-speaking peoples of the south were by no means disposed to believe that the Highlanders had so worthy a past or so unique a tradition as *Ossian* implied. And they were strengthened in this prejudice by the more impartial conclusions of men of letters who argued the point from literary and historical considerations.

From the outset reasoned opposition was imminent, but so sudden and brilliant was the success achieved by Macpherson's publications, that he held the field before the

battle was put in array, and gathered the fruits of his triumph.

Thus while the profits of his *Ossian* were still pouring in, he was appointed secretary to Governor Johnstone, and in 1764 accompanied that public official to Florida, where he resided for a time. After visiting the Leeward Islands as surveyor, he returned to England in 1766, with a pension of £300[1] a year for life. From this time he lived in Manchester Buildings near the Houses of Parliament, and was an active literary ally of the Government and of the Tory powers of the period. Abandoning poetry, he plunged into the turmoil of politics and party warfare, adding to this the labour of historical compilation. "It is not generally known," says Dr. Carruthers, "that Macpherson was the Scævola of Junius. He attacked Junius under a dozen of other signatures in defence of the ministry of the day." Besides various popular pamphlets, he wrote *An Introduction to the History of Great Britain and Ireland;* a translation of the *Iliad* of Homer; and *The History of Great Britain from the Restoration to the Accession of the House of Hanover*, for which he received £3000.

These books made no particular mark, and are now practically forgotten. When he had not the groundwork of *Ossian* to build upon, his poems were mediocre, and even his large prose works more or less failures. This was particularly true of the translation he published of the *Iliad* in 1773, a rendering in the same style as his *Ossian*, but one which only exposed him to ridicule and contempt.

However, Macpherson was now one of the notabilities of London public life, and his more successful political pamphlets and influence with the Government secured him a lucrative appointment as agent for the Nabob of Arcot, and a seat in Parliament as member for Camelford, to which he was first elected in 1780, and re-elected in 1784

[1] James G. Wilson, in Messrs. Blackie's *Poets and Poetry of Scotland*, mentions the sum as £200, while Dr. Carruthers of Inverness in his Highland Notebook states £300.

and 1790. His annual allowance from the Nabob is given as 12,000 pagodas (value of each, 3s. or 4s.), and from the bard's accounts against the same dignitary Dr. Fraser Mackintosh made the following excerpts:—

"To secret service money for obtaining of information, copies of papers, dispatches, etc., from the time of my being employed to 1st January 1793 . . . 7685 pagodas." "To H. . . of C . . ., expenses from the 1st of September 1780 to 1st January 1793 . . . 37,500 pagodas."

Thus the agent prospered, and though he never married he had a family, born out of wedlock, of sons and daughters, the eldest of whom first saw the light in 1765, the third in 1778, and the youngest some time after. These were his heirs and successors.[1]

But notwithstanding his material good fortune and his literary renown, an element of bitterness had entered his life in the wake of his first triumph. This was due to the famous controversy that sprang up over the authenticity of his *Ossian*, and the acrimonious attacks to which he was personally subjected by his refusal to meet the just demands of public criticism. It was to be expected that if he brought to light a national legacy so important he would also furnish the proofs that it was genuine. This he apparently never did. As early as 1763 David Hume wrote to Dr. Blair urging him to make a thorough investigation and seek for data that would satisfy men of letters everywhere that the poems were not forged, adding:—"You need expect no assistance from Macpherson, who flew into a passion when I told him of the letter I had written to you. But you must not mind so strange and heteroclite a mortal, than whom I have scarce ever known a man more perverse and unamiable." Dr. Blair made his inquiry, and was satisfied with the apparently sincere, though now discounted statements of Strathmashie and others.

In the course of the controversy that inevitably followed, Macpherson's most formidable opponent, it is well known,

[1] A daughter was married to Sir David Brewster, the philosopher.

was Dr. Johnson, whose opinion may be given in the very words in which he afterwards in the Highlands expressed it to Boswell. "That is just what I always maintained. He has found names, and stories, and phrases, nay, passages in old songs, and with them has blended his own compositions, and so made what he gives to the world as the translation of an ancient poem."

This was really the verdict also of Malcolm Laing, native of Orkney, the searching legal critic who, next to Johnson, delivered the most telling attack; and it expressed the conviction of the thousands of unbelieving Sassenachs who regarded Macpherson as the original author and not the translator of *Ossian*.

Johnson, of course, was mistaken in supposing that the Gaelic never had anything written, but where were Scottish Gaelic documents then to be found that were not in Macpherson's own possession? It was years after the death of the two original combatants in the controversy that the rich legacy of Celtic MSS. now preserved in Edinburgh and elsewhere came to light. And though much has been made by the friends of Macpherson of the fact that he deposited MSS. for public inspection at the establishment of Mr. Becket, his London publisher, advertised the fact, and yet no one chose to go and examine them, still it must be borne in mind that it was a far cry then from the Highlands to the English metropolis. Those who could read Gaelic were mostly, if not all, partisans of Macpherson. Besides, if the MSS. were really ancient they required a *nineteenth-century* expert to decipher them. In the circumstances it is a vain and futile challenge to urge that opportunity was afforded for inspection. For who among those most desirous of proof was capable of reading one word of a written language which it took the genius of a Zeuss or a Zimmer to interpret a century later?

In 1773 Macpherson published a new edition of his *Ossian*, and this gave occasion to Dr. Johnson to renew the attack, which he did in 1775, with all the more increased

vigour, because he had visited the Highlands in the year the new issue appeared, and had returned more convinced than ever that Macpherson was an impostor.

In a letter to Mr. W. Strachan, publisher, Fleet Street, the bard wrote :—"I find I cannot pass over the expressions contained in Dr. Johnson's pamphlet. I desire therefore that you will use your endeavours with *that impertinent fellow* to induce him to soften the expressions concerning me, though it should occasion the delay of a few days in the publication."

Not content with indirect pressure of this kind, it would seem that he hurled a challenge to fight, or threat of some sort, against the Doctor, which drew forth the following animated reply :—

"MR. JAMES MACPHERSON—I received your foolish and impudent letter. Any violence offered to me I shall do my best to repel, and what I cannot do for myself the law shall do for me.

"I hope I shall never be deterred from detecting what I think a cheat by the menaces of a ruffian.

"What would you have me retract? I thought your book an imposture. I think so still. For this opinion I have given my reasons to the public, which I here dare you to refute. Your rage I defy. Your abilities, since your Homer, are not formidable ; and what I hear of your morals induces me to pay regard not to what you shall say, but to what you shall prove. You may print this if you will. —(Signed) SAM. JOHNSON."

These letters serve to show how the favourite of fortune, who reached the mouldy harp of Ossian from the withered oak of Selma and awakened the song of other times, was stung in the midst of his prosperity. But they hardly reveal the rancour and bitterness that were carried into the controversy by the rank and file.

After some time his friends urged him to publish the Gaelic originals as the best reply to his critics. He pleaded the great expense as an insurmountable obstacle, and when,

in 1783, Highlanders in India sent him £1000 for the purpose, he promised to get them ready for publication as soon as he had leisure, but allowed year after year, in fact his whole subsequent lifetime, to pass without doing so. "How," queries Principal Shairp, "could one who acted thus complain with right if the public distrusted his word?"

Later, in the *Edinburgh Magazine* of 1785, his name appeared in a mock list of candidates for the office of Poet-Laureate, and what professed to be a probationary poem, headed "Duan, in the True Ossianic Sublimity," by Mr. Macpherson, was there given, the piece running as follows:—

Does the wind touch thee, O Harp,
Or is it some passing ghost?
Is it thy hand,
Spirit of the departed Scrutiny!
Bring me the harp, pride of Chatham;
Snow is on thy bosom,
Maid of the modest eye!
A song shall rise!

Every soul shall depart at the sound!!!
The withered thistle shall crown my head!!!
I behold thee, O King!
I behold thee sitting on mist,
Thy form is like a watery cloud,
Sitting in the deep like an oyster!
Thy face is like the beams of the setting moon,
Thy eyes are of two decaying flames,
Thy nose is like the spear of Rollo,
Thy ears are like bossy shields,
Strangers shall rejoice at thy chin.
The ghosts of dead Tories shall hear me in their airy hall,
The withered thistle shall crown my head;
Bring me the harp,
Son of Chatham,
But thou, O King, give me the lance.

The bard was a portly and handsome man, and, according to the testimony of Mrs. Grant of Laggan, good-natured and kind, though he had a strong dash of Celtic temper. His character would no doubt have appeared to better ad-

vantage had it not been embittered and exposed in the fierce light of personal controversy. He was of an entirely different intellectual character from Dr. Johnson and many of his opponents. Being of a sceptical turn of mind, and not imbued to the same extent with the current religious beliefs of the age, Macpherson was liable to be misunderstood by men holding other views. That he was a man of taste, warm-hearted and grateful to his friends, open-handed and generous to his countrymen, and, above all, possessed of a rare genius, are points that do not now admit of doubt.

About 1788 he bought the delightful estate of Raitts, near the present Kingussie, from the family of Mackintosh of Borlum—a Highland laird who had been a notorious robber in the district, and had ultimately to escape from the toils of the law to America. Here Macpherson built a stately mansion in the style of an Italian villa, and changed the name of the property to Belleville. To this romantic abode, which still stands on a beautiful spot on the Spey, commanding a splendid prospect of the district, he used to retire for a few weeks every summer. Of this aspect of his life Dr. Carruthers, in his Highland Notebook, gives pleasing reminiscences. "We were once," he says, "ferried over the Spey by an old grey-headed Celt—a capital head for Caravaggio—who had fifty years before done the same duty for Macpherson. The poet was a great man from London and the Court, bedizened with rings, gold seals, and furs; but he looked with a moistened eye on the turf schoolhouse in which he had once taught English, and on the hills on which he had run in his youth. They were then his own property, and he told the ferryman, with strong emotion, and no doubt with Highland pride, that he would make every poor Highlander on his estate a comfortable and a happy man! We have always thought more of Macpherson since."

"An act of generosity is recorded of him connected with the chief of his clan, Cluny Macpherson. Cluny had been out in the Forty-five, and his estate was confiscated. When

Macpherson rose into favour with the Government, he exerted himself to have the property restored. It was offered to himself. He had the virtue to decline the offer, and at length he succeeded in placing it again in the hands of the rightful owner."

"To the poor around Belleville he seems uniformly to have been kind and generous. . . . He built his house, not by contract, but by native workmen, whom he paid liberally on day's wages, and he was the first person in Badenoch who gave 1s. a day to agricultural labourers who had previously received 8d. and 9d. Scores of them were employed on his grounds and in forming his embankments. His gay and social habits drew around him much company. After a forenoon's writing he used to mount his horse, sally out, and bring home with him 'troops of friends' from both sides of the Spey. Then with wine and jest—and no man was more various and fascinating in society—the festivities were prolonged far into the deep dark night of the mountains."

Among his countrymen he was known as "Fair James." And Mrs. Grant of Laggan, with touching regard for the memory of the hero, describes the closing scenes when death removed him from his favourite home on Feb. 17, 1796. He had arrived late in the Highlands that year and feeling unwell had resolved to remain through the winter.

"Friday last R. dined there," she writes. "James had been indisposed since the great storm, yet received his guests with much kindness, seeming, however, languid and dispirited; and towards evening he sank much, and retired early. Next morning he appeared, but did not eat, and looked ill; R. begged he would frank a letter for Charlotte; he did so, and never more held a pen."

For two months he was confined to his bed, and though he had sent for doctors, he refused to take anything prescribed, on the principle that his time was come and it did not avail.

By his will he bequeathed a sum of £500 to defray the

cost of a monument [1] to himself, near Belleville, and ordered his remains to be interred in Westminster Abbey. Friends in high quarters, with sufficient means, it appears, could accomplish the latter object in those days. On his tomb in Westminster Abbey the following is the inscription: "James Macpherson, Esq., M.P., born at Ruthven, County of Inverness, 27th Oct. 1736. Died 17th Feb. 1796."

Beyond an ambitious preface to the edition of the entire collection of his Ossianic poems in 1773, where he seemed not unwilling to usurp the honours of the ancient bard himself, using indifferently the appellations, author, writer, and translator, he never acknowledged that he was other than the translator. It was on the strength of their supposed antiquity that his compositions had taken the public taste, and probably he thought that if the real authorship were known, his fame would collapse as suddenly as it had been inflated.

Nor did he wholly forget the promises he had made his friends years before, for he sent the Gaelic poems which we now possess to Mr. John Mackenzie, his executor, and left by his will £1000 for publishing them. These poems were all written in his own hand or in those of amanuenses employed by him. "No one can tell," says Dr. Clerk, "how the MSS. which he had collected in the Highlands were disposed of, but not a leaf of them was left behind or any explanation given of their fate."

It is believed that the publishers whom he nominated had them revised and transcribed by Mr. Thomas Ross, and instead of depositing them in some public library, straightway destroyed them. Among legal proceedings relating to the succession, Dr. Fraser Mackintosh found a distinct reference which showed that as late as 1807 these Ossianic papers did exist. Mr. Mackenzie finally handed over the MSS. he received to the Highland Society of London, who

[1] The monument stands above the road and may be seen through the trees. It is a white marble pillar ornamented on one side with a fine medallion portrait of the poet. On the other is an allegorical female figure bending over an urn, and above, the family crest.

published them in 1807, and this is the Gaelic *Ossian* now in evidence, and of which Dr. Clerk gave a literal rendering in 1871. Robert Macfarlane had translated it into Latin—a version which was published along with the Gaelic in 1807.

In their investigation carried out at the beginning of last century, the Highland Society of Edinburgh arrived at these results, briefly summarised by Dr. Skene :—

1. That the characters introduced into Macpherson's poems were not invented, but were really the subjects of traditions in the Highlands, and that poems certainly existed which might be called Ossianic, as relating to the poems and events of that mythic age.

2. That such poems, either brief, or complete, or in fragments, had been handed down from an unknown time by oral tradition, and that there existed many persons in the Highlands who could repeat them.

3. That such poems had likewise been committed to writing, and were to be found to some extent in MSS.

4. That Macpherson had used many such poems in his work ; and by piecing them together, and adding a connected narrative of his own, had woven them into longer poems—into the so-called epics.

5. No materials remain to show to what extent the poems published by Macpherson consist of ancient materials, and how much he himself may have added.

This was all the length the Society could go with the evidence available in 1805. They were at the disadvantage of not having the Gaelic *Ossian* of 1807. But since the publication of that work, of the Book of the Dean of Lismore in 1862, of Mr. J. F. Campbell's *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* that same year, of Dr. Clerk's translation of the Gaelic *Ossian* in 1871, and of Campbell's *Leabhar na Feinne* in 1872, facts which were lacking in the early scrutiny have been brought to light, and the whole tide of Celtic scholarship that has been gradually rising, accumulating materials since the middle of last century, has been brought to bear upon the subject, so that now the

Ossianic question is finally and definitely settled, and we wonder how there should ever have been such a century of wrangling over a matter so patent.

The great desideratum at the outset had been the lack of sufficient MS. materials, knowledge of the more ancient written Gaelic, and the critical methods with which in these later times we are daily familiar. To deny the authenticity of Macpherson's *Ossian* meant, in the eyes of the partisan Highlanders, to deny the existence of the oral tradition, just as to-day to deny the Mosaic or Davidic authorship of certain parts of Scripture, or the Mosaic version of creation, is equivalent, in the mind of the ignorant and uncritical, to denying and repudiating the Bible itself. They would not or could not differentiate between the two. They knew that there were Ossianic poems handed down from of old, but they confused the issue between the authenticity of these and the so-called translations of Macpherson, purblindly resisting the hateful criticism of the English Southerner. In fact this controversy has constituted one of the last outbursts of racial animosity between Celt and Saxon, and hence its virulence.

After the publication of the bard's own Gaelic *Ossian* in 1807, the question came to be, Was this Gaelic the actual original, or simply a translation of Macpherson's English?

On this point modern scholarship has made patient inquiry and gives no uncertain sound. The Gaelic is the translation, the English the original. The Gaelic it finds to be exceedingly modern, defective, bristling with Anglicisms, and conspicuously wanting both in ancient inflection and those idiomatic turns in which the old tongue abounds. As Dr. Macbain observed, "Macpherson's departures from modern Gaelic grammar and style are not survivals from antiquity; they are the bold errors of an imperious intellect which, like the King of the Romans, rose superior to grammar. . . . We may accept it as fairly true that Macpherson has some error of grammar, idiom, or composition, on the average in every twenty or twenty-five

lines. . . . The Gaelic is in fact a paraphrase of the English. Mr. John Mackenzie naïvely records in his diary that in 1784 (?), while visiting Macpherson, the latter told him he had been putting together the Gaelic of Berrathon; 'that he had only put together a few lines of it, and that not to his liking; that he had tired of it after a short sitting.' This occurred about the time that the thousand pounds were subscribed to induce and enable Macpherson to publish the Gaelic original. Likely most of the Gaelic that now exists was *put together* then and afterwards—a fact which may account for the procrastination in the matter of publishing it. He probably wished to write Gaelic for the whole of his Ossianic English, but this he never accomplished."

Both Drs. Macbain and Ludwig Stern give detailed linguistic evidence that the Gaelic *Ossian* was translated for the most part from the revised English edition, 1773, and J. F. Campbell demonstrated as early as 1872 that, with the exception of a solitary line, not one stanza of the Gaelic harmonises with the text of the ballads. A curious feature of the whole controversy was that Macpherson himself treated the genuine heroic ballads in his 1763 preface as Irish and non-Ossianic, and even the Highland Society of Edinburgh regarded them in the light of "corrupt copies," in comparison with the supposed standard version of Macpherson; while Dr. Clerk, his champion, asserted that they "could not be of the same authorship" as the latter, though *they were actually the only poetry known among the people as Ossian's.*

That the English *Ossian* was substantially his own, Celtic scholarship has no difficulty in establishing on other grounds. The history, manners, customs, and mythology are found to be inconsistent with those of the genuine literature and tradition. Among other discrepancies, it has been noted that Macpherson places Cuchulinn and Fingal in the same cycle, whereas the ballads, even the most degenerate of them, never treat the two as contemporaries. He antedates the arrival of the Norsemen by five centuries, clothes

the Gael in mail, equips him with bows and arrows, and brings on the scene ghostly apparitions more in keeping with Norse than Celtic mythology. It is a fixed point in Gadelic archæology, observes Dr. Macbain, that the ancient Gaels, Scotch and Irish, wore no defensive armour, and the old literature is completely silent with regard to bows and arrows. The Celtic ghosts were as substantial as living men, and appeared only when invoked, as in the case of Fergus and Cuchulinn.

But what exposes the modern origin of the *Ossian* as much as anything is that echoes of Homer, Milton, the Hebrew Prophets, and other poets abound throughout its pages—a fact which gave Malcolm Laing his most incisive argument, and impelled him to arraign the author as one of the first literary impostors of modern times, showing in parallel columns the various authors to whom he was indebted.

Dr. Macbain, after a careful critical examination, sums up the whole result statistically thus:—"Seven-thirteenths of the whole Ossianic poetry is Macpherson's own *absolutely*. We may regard also as his, though some of Blair's correspondents thought they recognised known pieces inserted in them, War of Inis-Thona, Lathmon, and Berrathon. This makes five-eighths of the work Macpherson's own. Darthula, Carthon, the battle of Lora, and about half of the first book of Temora are more or less founded on ballad stories. They form a seventh of the whole work. Fingal, which forms a fifth, has a plot similar to the ballad of Manus and embodies the plots of about half a dozen other ballads." Its leading plot, execution, and epic form are all Macpherson's own inventions.

And so modern scholarship, while it has shown Dr. Samuel Johnson mistaken in his view regarding the antiquity of the Gaelic MSS., has proved him right from the outset in his main contention regarding the authenticity of *Ossian*. But what the bard of Badenoch has lost on the score of veracity as the result of this scrutiny, he has gained on the

score of intellect. For it is now recognised beyond the region of controversy, that on the slender basis of names and stories and phrases in the old ballads he had the genius to raise that beautiful structure of poetic excellence which forms an era in the history of British literature.

Only an intellect and soul of rare capacity could achieve a result so potent and striking. Though his poetry lacks the classic chasteness and repose of Virgil's, it is esteemed far superior to his in some other respects. It sounded notes that were new even to Continental ears. And in view of the services thus rendered alike to English and Celtic literature and the impetus he gave to the study of Gaelic generally, few would care now to deny that Macpherson deserved the place he claimed in Westminster Abbey.

"Make the part of what is forged, modern, tawdry, spurious in the book, as large as you please," says Matthew Arnold, "there will still be left a residue with the very soul of Celtic genius in it, and which has the proud distinction of having brought this soul of Celtic genius into contact with the genius of the nations of modern Europe and enriched all our poetry by it. Woody Morvern, and echoing Lora, and Selma with its silent halls!—we all owe them a debt of gratitude, and when we are unjust enough to forget it may the Muses forget us!"

To recognise the truth of this eulogy, we have only to turn to the poems themselves, and listen to the tender and sublime bard, son of the winged days, as he awakes the voices of the past. And first we may quote his address to Malvina in Oina-Morúl. It illustrates the dominant note of sad melancholy which runs through all, the vein of piercing regret that cannot forget departed days.

"As flies the inconstant sun over Larmon's grassy hill, so pass the tales of old along my soul by night! When birds are removed to their place, when harps are hung in Selma's hall, then comes a voice to Ossian and awakes his soul! It is the voice of years that are gone! they roll before me with all their deeds! I seize the tales as they

pass, and pour them forth in song. Nor a troubled stream is the song of the King: it is like the rising of music from Lutha of the strings. Lutha of many strings, not silent are thy streamy rocks when the white hands of Malvina move upon the harp! Light of the shadowy thoughts that fly across my soul, daughter of Toscar of helmets, wilt thou not hear the song? We call back, maid of Lutha, the years that have rolled away."

The next is a passage from the Songs of Selma, where the bard addresses the evening star:—

"Star of descending night! fair is thy light in the west; thou liftest thy unshorn head from thy cloud; thy steps are stately on thy hill. What dost thou behold in the plain? The stormy winds are laid. The murmur of the torrent comes from afar. Roaring waves climb the distant rock. The flies of evening are on their feeble wings; the hum of their course is on the field. What dost thou behold, fair light? But thou dost smile and depart. The waves come with joy around thee; they bathe thy lovely hair. Farewell, thou silent beam! Let the light of Ossian's soul arise!

"And it does arise in its strength; I behold my departed friends. Their gathering is in Lora, as in the days of other years. Fingal comes like a watery column of mist; his heroes are around. And see the bards of song, gray-haired Ullin! stately Rhyno! Alpin with the tuneful voice! the soft complaint of Minona! How are ye changed, my friends, since the days of Selma's feast? when we contended, like gales of spring, as they fly along the hill, and bend by turns the feebly whistling grass."

Ossian's address to the Sun in Carthon is even more sublime, and has been universally admired:—

"O thou that rollest above, round as the shield of my fathers! Whence are thy beams, O Sun, thy everlasting light! Thou comest forth in thy awful beauty: the stars hide themselves in the sky; the moon, cold and pale, sinks in the western wave! but thou thyself movest alone. Who can

be a companion of thy course? The oaks of the mountains fall; the mountains themselves decay with years; the ocean shrinks and grows again; the moon herself is lost in heaven, but thou art for ever the same, rejoicing in the brightness of thy course. When the world is dark with tempests, when thunder rolls and lightning flies, thou lookest in thy beauty from the clouds and laughest at the storm. But to Ossian thou lookest in vain, for he beholds thy beams no more; whether thy yellow hair flows on the eastern clouds, or thou tremblest at the gates of the west. But thou art perhaps, like me, for a season; thy years will have an end. Thou shalt sleep in thy clouds, careless of the voice of the morning. Exult then, O Sun, in the strength of thy youth. Age is dark and unlovely; it is like the glimmering light of the moon when it shines through broken clouds, and the mist is on the hills; the blast of the north is on the plain; the traveller shrinks in the midst of his journey."

The same note is struck in the Desolation of Balclutha, which is also in Carthon:—

"Raise, ye bards, said the mighty Fingal, the praise of the unhappy Moina. Call her ghost with your songs to our hills; that she may rest with the fair of Morven, the sunbeams of other days, the delight of heroes of old. I have seen the walls of Balclutha, but they were desolate. The fire had resounded in the halls; and the voice of the people is heard no more. The stream of Clutha was removed from its place by the fall of the walls. The thistle shook there its lonely head; the moss whistled to the wind. The fox looked out from the windows, the rank grass of the wall waved round its head. Desolate is the dwelling of Moina; silence is in the house of her fathers. Raise the song of mourning, O bards, over the land of the strangers. They have but fallen before us; for one day we must fall. Why dost thou build the hall, son of the winged days? Thou lookest upon thy tower to-day; yet a few years and the blast of the desert comes; it howls in thy empty court, and whistles round the half-worn shield."

Such is the uniform style of Macpherson's poetic prose. It is thought he did not know that the Celts had invented rhyme and used it from an early period, for even his Gaelic version is of the same unmetred order, and its structure alone might well destroy its claims to antiquity. There is no fixed number of syllables, no alliteration, no assonance, and no rhyme.

That Macpherson was capable of these is evident from the following elegant stanza which on the back he endorsed as the "First stanza of an address to Venus—1785."

> Thrice blest, and more than thrice, the morn
> Whose genial gale and purple light
> Awaked, then chased the night
> On which the Queen of Love was born!
> Yet hence the sun's unhallowed ray—
> With native beams let beauty grow;
> What need is there of other day,
> Than the twin-stars that light those hills of snow?

We may fitly conclude this study of the real Celtic Homer with his own forecast of the future. It is a passage taken from Berrathon.

> But why art thou sad, son of Fingal?
> Why grows the cloud of thy soul?
> The chiefs of other times have departed;
> They have gone without their fame—
> The sons of future years shall pass by,
> And another race shall arise.
> The people are like the waves of the ocean;
> Like the waves of woody Morven—
> They pass away in the rustling blast,
> And other leaves lift their green heads.
> Did thy beauty last, O Rhyno?
> Stood the strength of car-borne Oscar?
> Fingal himself passed away,
> And the halls of his fathers forgot his steps;
> And shalt thou remain, aged bard,
> When the mighty have failed?
> But my fame shall remain,
> And grow like the oak of Morven,
> Which lifts its head to the storm,
> And rejoices in the course of the wind.

So lived, so died, so acted and thought, the "CLOUD POET," and after the storm and shine of life he now sleeps with the heroes. Future times shall hear of him. They shall hear of the fame of the Badenoch bard and of the voices he awakened from the past.

CHAPTER V

ROB DONN AND THE ELEGIAC, AMATORY, AND SATIRIC POETS

ROB DONN, the best authorities assume, was born at Allt-na Caillich, Strathmore, Sutherlandshire, in 1714. Among the influences that went to mould his character and poetry, stress is naturally laid upon his physical, intellectual, historical, social, and religious environment.

For romantic loveliness and alpine grandeur, the district is hardly surpassed by any other in the Highlands of Scotland. From his time, and apparently before then, it was a land of song. The people were musical and fond of poetry and folk-tales handed down from ancestral sources.

Memories of wars and battles in which local warriors took part were also cherished. And it is curious to think that for centuries before this first and best of the Reay bards was born, the saying was current in his native strath, "Cha deachaidh an Fheinn riamh air a h-ais ach aon cheum air traigh Thorrasdail" (The Feinn never retreated but one step on the beach of Torrisdale).

The men of Reay were justly proud of their martial heroism. But though the bard lived under the old *régime* in the clan days before the Forty-five, raids had already ceased, and tribal feuds had all but died down in his district; so that not even the Jacobite ferment or the local forays that convulsed neighbouring counties could prevent the people of that remote corner from leading peaceful, pastoral lives.

The reformed religion had obtained a firmer hold of them and at an earlier period than of the populations to the east and south, and it had rendered them more frugal, industrious, and God-fearing than most other Highland communities. Hence the bold, but doubtless exaggerated, assertion of Rose in his *Metrical Reliques*, that "there was no spot in Britain where the Gospel shone with greater lustre than in Lord Reay's country during our author's time."

The bard's life was singularly uneventful. Even his surname is now controverted—his most ardent admirers ranging themselves in two camps: one maintaining it was Calder, the other Mackay. His latest editors support the one the former, the other the latter view.

Popularly known as Rob Donn or Robert the Brown, he was the son of humble parents. Nothing unusual is known of his father, but his mother is reputed to have been musical, and a seanachie who used to enliven the winter evenings with song and story, much to the delight of her infant prodigy, who began like Pope when only three years of age to "lisp in numbers." His first impromptu took the form of a satire directed against the local tailor for making him a frock which fastened behind.

Professor Blackie has rendered the spirit of this verse as follows:—

> Nay, blame not me! the tailor blame!
> A blundering loon was he,
> Who placed my buttons behind my back,
> Where I had no eyes to see.

Education the bard never received, and consequently all his life long he was as innocent of book-learning as Duncan Ban Macintyre, and never could read or write. When little over six years of age Rob's precocity attracted the attention of an influential gentleman in the district who had himself a faculty for poetry. This was John Mackay, tacksman of Musal, a grazier and cattle-dealer on a large

scale, who took the boy into his employment as a herd, just at the time he ought to have been going to school. But John of Musal, though he neglected to educate the little poet, was very kind to him, treating him as one of the family.

So Rob learned to look after his master's cattle, and as he grew up attended the markets in his interests, travelling sometimes as far as Falkirk and Carlisle, and making frequent incursions into different parts of the Highlands where the beasts were kept for grazing.

Like many poets, he was influenced from an early age by the tender passion, and suffered one or two amorous disappointments, but about 1740 he married Janet, daughter of Thomas Mackay, a small tenant in Islandreir. Though he had ceased to live in family with his employer since 1737, he continued in his employment, and after his marriage removed from Islandreir to Badnahachlais, at the south end of Loch Hope.

In September 1745, when Prince Charlie entered Edinburgh with his Highland army, John of Musal happened to be there, and was so favourably impressed by the event that he became an ardent spokesman on the way north for the Stuart enterprise. His warm and glowing account when he reached home stirred the enthusiasm of his poetic cattleman, who composed two political lays, one in praise of Prince Charlie, the other against the Act forbidding the use of the Highland garb.

Rob Donn's favourite pastime was deer-hunting, from which he could scarcely be restrained even by law. His escapades in this direction led to his removal to the west side of the Kyle of Durness. And in this small township he lived probably till 1759, when he joined the first regiment of Sutherland Highlanders.

In the regiment the bard seems to have figured more as a kind of camp-follower and favourite of the men than as a soldier. It is not known whether or not he actually enlisted.

On his return he engaged as cattleman at Balnaceill, in the service of Lord Reay, but failing to fulfil the irksome duties of the post or to stand well in the good graces of the family or factor, he was summarily dismissed.

Thereafter he resided in Achumore, and on the suggestion of his minister accepted an invitation to visit the poetic minister of Sleat in the "Misty Isle," where he met another Skye bard of some renown and had hospitable entertainment and congenial intercourse.

From Achumore he removed to Saingo, and it would appear he had no regular employment during the time that Mackay of Skibo was factor for Lord Reay. But when Colonel Hugh Mackay, son of his early patron and employer, returned from Jamaica and came to reside at Balnaceill in 1770, the bard was re-established at work there.

In this situation he remained until his wife's health gave way, when, resigning the post, he retired from Balnaceill to Nuybig in the vicinity. Shortly after this change his wife died, and in less than a year Rob Donn himself succumbed, in the sixty-fourth year of his age—August 1778.

Half a century later, in 1829, his poems were published, and that same year his countrymen erected a handsome granite monument to his memory. It has elaborate inscriptions on its four sides in English, Gaelic, Greek, and Latin, and stands at the west end of the church at Balnaceill, not far from the spot where the poet lies buried.

His was a life of honourable toil and pure domestic happiness. One of the people, he lived in touch with them in every respect. That he was esteemed a man of respectable character is evident from the fact that he was appointed assessor in the Kirk Session of his native parish, and more than most men of higher position in the Highlands than his own, he ruled the country round and helped to maintain life at a fairly decent level, by the power of his satire and ready repartee.

He has been compared to Pope in that "he engraved ideas. His poems are full of those couplets which can

clearly and without damage to themselves be taken out of their setting." In other respects his matter not infrequently bears a striking resemblance to that of the English bard. This has been explained by the fact that Rob Donn's minister, the Rev. Murdoch Macdonald, had translated some of Pope's works into Gaelic and made free use of them in his monthly prayer meetings. Besides the minister of Reay —himself Pope by name, and so enamoured of his namesake's poems that he had paid him a visit to England—was on terms of intimate friendship with the Gaelic bard.

But Rob Donn was no mere imitator. In the number and variety of his original musical airs and poems he ranks high among Highland authors. And he is typical in this respect that his compositions are not confined to any one class. Not only does he hold a place, as we have seen, among the Jacobite bards, but he figures in a way as a descriptive poet whose style may be gauged from the poem on Winter already alluded to.

At waking so early
  Was snow on the Ben,
And the glen of the hill in
The storm-drift so chilling
The linnet was stilling,
  That couched in its den,
And poor Robin was shrilling
  In sorrow his strain.

Every grove was expecting
  Its leaf shed in gloom;
The sap it is draining,
Down rootwards 'tis straining,
And the bark it is waning
  As dry as the tomb,
And the blackbird at morning
  Is shrieking his doom.

. . . . .

Though not usually thought of as a religious poet, he has produced at least one good hymn [1]:—

[1] Translation by Mr. Lachlan MacBean.

DEATH

O Death, thou art still a herald of ill,
Thy grasp, hard and chill, ne'er faileth ;
Where warriors fight thou showest thy might,
To shun thee no flight availeth.
O messenger drear, no pity or fear
Saves peasant or peer before thee ;
For gold and for gain thou hast but disdain,
And victims in vain implore thee.

The babe at its birth, ere sorrow or mirth
It knows upon earth, thou takest ;
For the maid to be wed, ere to church she is led,
An eerisome bed thou makest.
If old or if young, if feeble or strong,
In wisdom or wrong and error ;
If small or if great, whatever our state,
We have the same fate of terror.

O Power, from whom our sorrowful doom
Of death and the tomb descendeth,
How happy is he whose confident plea
On Thy promises free dependeth !
Our Father Thou art, the widow's sure part,
Ne'er shall Thy support forsake her ;
All good is bestowed, all favour is showed,
By our bountiful God and Maker.

But, after all, it is under the three categories of elegiac, love, and satiric poems that the best productions of Rob Donn chiefly fall.

1. Few languages can compare with the Gaelic for lays of sorrow. In some respects they are the most striking and characteristic of the songs. So in our Highlands we have the Marbh-rann and the Cumha—the elegy and the lament.

The Highland lament, it has been observed, is a thing by itself, having no exact counterpart in any other language. Undoubtedly the Gael could give unique expression to "the joy of grief." Nearly every Highland bard of repute has produced one or more elegies, if not actual laments, so that

if we were to name the elegiac poets we would almost need to go over the whole gamut of popular favourites.

In the older lays of sorrow the sadness is most melancholy — in fact, unrelieved and oppressive. The following English verses composed by Mr. Malcolm Macfarlane, in harmony with the traditional melody and sentiment of Mackintosh's Lament, furnish a good illustration of the weird pessimism they display :—

Day of dule ! day of woe !
Day that saw Evan low,
Thou wilt ne'er from memory go
While life's dim lamp is burning.
In the morn a bride was I ;
Wife when noonday's sun was high ;
Ere its light had left the sky
I was a widow mourning !

Life is drear now to me ;
Since they've ta'en him from me,
What again can gladden me ?
What dispel my sorrow ?
Love was sweet and I was gay ;
Love was short, now joy's away ;
Grief has come, but grief will stay
Renewed with every morrow !

In the more modern elegies, brighter elements are introduced, and sometimes a chord of sweetness and exquisite imagery, as in the instance quoted by Mr. Lachlan Macbean, where the bard Evan Maccoll laments the death of a child:—

She died—as dies in eastern skies
The rosy clouds the dawn adorning ;
The envious sun makes haste to rise
And drown them in the blaze of morning.

She died—as dies upon the gale
A harp's pure tones in sweetness blending.
She died—as dies a lovely tale
But new begun, yet sudden ending.

Rob Donn's elegies are of the earlier and more sombre cast. There is almost a score of his, and they contain

many fine passages. Thus in the one on the minister of Eddrachilis and the schoolmaster of Farr the poet's power of making sense and sound flow harmoniously together is very conspicuous.

Glacaidh tu chloinn
A mach o na bhroinn,
Mu's faic iad ach soills' air eigin ;

Glacaidh tu 'n òigh,
Dol an coinnimh an òíg
Mu 'm feudar am pòsadh éigheachd.

Ma's beag, no ma's mòr,
Ma's sean, no ma's òg,
Ma's cleachdamh dhuinn còir no eucoir ;

Ma tha sinn 'n ar beò,
Is anail 'n ar sròn,
Cuirear uile sinn fo' na féich ud.

As a typical example of his elegies, we may take what Thomas Pattison calls "The Death Song of Hugh." Hugh, or more correctly Ewen, was a poor old man, a martyr to asthma, living in a hut by himself at the head of Loch Erribol. On the day in 1754 that the news of the death of Mr. Pelham the Prime Minister reached the bard, he set out deer-hunting among the mountains of Durness. Towards evening, on arriving at the solitary abode of Ewen, where he intended to pass the night to be in readiness for continuing the chase next morning, he found his humble host almost at the last gasp with spasms of his old complaint. Thinking the poor man's end was fast approaching, and powerfully affected by the solitude and his own reflections throughout the day on the death of the statesman, the bard began to recite an elegy on Ewen, who was stretched, apparently unconscious, on his squalid bed of heath or straw. Rob, it is said, never took long to compose a poem, and in this one he naturally contrasted the earthly fate of the dead Premier and the dying peasant.

This is Pattison's version :—

Death ! how oft we're reminded
To cry out for aid !
When the small fall before thee—
The great low are laid ;
Since Autumn closed o'er us
The hint you renew
With this stride from the Court
To that death-couch with Hugh.

Oh ! if we believed thee,
Not blind should we go,
When there's none of mankind
You disdain to lay low ;
High and mean dost thou take them—
That byword is true,—
Yonder's Pelham the high one,
And here lies poor Hugh.

You come in the one way—
Great griefs then arise ;
You come in the other,
And nobody sighs ;
Yet who can repose him
Where you ne'er pursue,
In a golden mean careless
'Twixt Pelham and Hugh ?

They drop all around,
As if struck down with ball ;
The report is our warning,
And loud is its call ;
Thou, the least among many,
Hast thou heard of poor Hugh ?
Thou, our chief man forget not
Pelham, grander than you !

Oh ! should we not tremble all,
Brethren and friends,
When we're thus like the candle
That's burnt at both ends ?
Where in all this wide world
Was one meaner than Hugh ?
And the Court than great Pelham
But one higher knew.

When the hapless asthmatic heard the last lines, enraged

at the disparaging comments on the lowliness of his own abject lot, it is recorded that he had still life enough to seize his staff with the intention of smiting the offending elegist. Rob evaded the blow, but he was as much taken aback by this sudden resurrection of physical vigour and fiery wrath as if his assailant had emerged from the tomb.

2. Though the Gael was so sensitive to grief and could give such exquisite expression to his feelings of sorrow, he appears to have been still more under the sway of the tender passion; and so of all the poems composed for singing, the love-songs form by far the largest class. With the single exception of William Livingstone, perhaps, there is no Highland poet of note who has not shown himself in verse amenable to this influence.

We have already referred to the charming amatory pieces of such masters of song as Alexander Macdonald and Duncan Ban Macintyre. Rob Donn is not of their order. Yet he is the author of some very choice love-songs which rank among the more admired productions of the sentimental poets. "The Shieling Song," reckoned his best, finds a place in every good Highland collection. It is on the "merry-lipped" Ann Morrison. This belle of Westmoine was his first love, with whom he spent many happy days at the shieling; but the pretty girl was not above flirting with other suitors, and finally, during the poet's absence from home, she married a joiner, much to his chagrin. Hence these lines. The rendering here quoted is Pattison's:—

THE SHIELING SONG

O sad is the shieling,
  And gone are its joys!
All harsh and unfeeling
  To me now its noise.
Sweet Anna—who warbled
  As sweet as the merle—
Forsook me—my honey-mouth'd
Merry-lipped girl!

Heich! how I sigh;
While the hour
Lazily, lonelily,
Sadly goes by!

Last week as I wander'd
Up past the old trees,
I mourn'd, while I ponder'd,
What changes one sees!
Just then the fair stranger
Walk'd by with my dear—
Dreaming, unthinking,
I had wander'd too near,
Till "Heich!" then I cried,—
When I saw
The girl, with her lover, draw
Close to my side,—

"Anna, the yellow-hair'd,
Dost thou not see
How thy love unimpair'd
Wearieth me?
'Twas as strong in my absence,
When banish'd from thee—
As heart-stirring, powerful,
Deep as you see—
Heich! it is now,
At this time,
When up like a leafy bough,
High doth it climb."

Then, haughtily speaking,
She airily said,
"'Tis in vain for you seeking
To hold up your head;
There were six wooers sought me
While you stay'd away;
And the absentee surely
Deserv'd less than they.
Ha! ha! ha!
Are you ill?
But if Love seeks to kill you—bah!
Small is his skill!"

Ach! Ach! Now I'm trying
My loss to forget,
With sorrow and sighing,
With anger and fret.

But still that sweet image
Steals over my heart;
And still I deem fondly
Hope need not depart.
Heich! and I say
That our love,
Firm as a tower gray,
Naught can remove.

So Fancy beguiles me,
And fills me with glee,
But the carpenter wiles thee,
False speaker! from me.
Yet from Love's first affection
I never get free;
But the dear known direction
My thoughts ever flee,
Heich! when we stray'd
Far away,
Where soft shone the summer day
Through the green shade.

But more than Rob Donn and all other Highland bards, William Ross figures in the minds of his countrymen as the most characteristic Gaelic poet of love.

This young "Burns of the Highlands" was born at Broadford, Skye, in 1762, and educated at Forres. An enthusiastic student of Gaelic, he knew Latin and Greek also fairly well, and had a reputation for proficiency in vocal and instrumental music. After completing his education at school he travelled for a time with his father, who was a packman, itinerating in the Western Isles. In these journeys he made the best use of his opportunities for advancing his knowledge of Gaelic, and ultimately settled down as parish schoolmaster of Gairloch, Ross-shire.

A simple-hearted and winsome young Highlander, he was even more unfortunate than the Reay bard in his love suit; for, unlike the latter, he was a discarded lover who continued to pine after his scornful mistress and would not be comforted. The object of his affections was Marion Ross of Stornoway, a rosy, golden-haired Hebridean, whose charms

he sung in sweet lyrics, and at the shrine of whose beauty he paid incessant homage; but all to no purpose. Miss Ross remained coldly indifferent to the addresses of her poet-lover, and later on married another.

The disappointment impaired Ross's health and constitution, and though the immediate cause of his early death in 1790 was consumption and asthma aggravated by this circumstance, he figures in biography and popular regard as a martyr of love who passed into the silent land before he had seen thirty summers.

"William Ross," says Pattison, "is a graceful poet, perhaps the most polished of any of the Highland minstrels; although he is certainly inferior to more than one of them in point of strength and energy. He is tender and easy and plaintive." He delighted in pastoral poetry, of which he seized the true and genuine spirit, and in his descriptions of nature is very sweet and pretty. His "Praise of the Highland Maid" is a masterpiece of its kind:—

Let the maids of the Lowlands
Vaunt their silks and their hollands,
In the garb of the Highlands
  O give me my dear!
Such a figure for grace!
For the loves such a face!
And for brightness the pace
  That the grass shall not stir.
. . . . .
When *Beltane* is over,
And summer joys hover,
With thee a glad rover
  I'll wander along,
Where the harp-strings of nature
Are strung by each creature,
And the sleep shall be sweeter
  That is wooed by their song.

There, bounding together,
On the grass and the heather,
And free from the tether,
  The heifers shall throng.

There shall pasture at will
Ewes and goats on the hill,
While the kids, never still,
  Join in madness of play;
They shall butt, they shall fight,
They shall simulate flight,
They shall break with delight
  O'er the mountains away.

And there shall my Mary
With her faithful one tarry,
And never be weary
  In the hollows to stray.

While a concert shall cheer us,
For the bushes are near us;
And the birds shall not fear us,
  We'll harbour so still.
. . . .
Strains the mavis his throat,
Lends the cuckoo her note,
And the world is forgot
  By the side of the hill.

"Feasgair Luain," with its richness of ideality and mellowness of expression, is an amorous piece, even more tender and plaintive.

In all collections where the exquisite song "Cuachag nan craobh" has hitherto been quoted, it has been attributed to Ross, and the story is frequently told how in his last illness he rose one fine evening in May, and strolling out full of melancholy reflections, sat under a tree on which a cuckoo presently alighted and began to utter its loud note. The beauty of the evening, the stillness of the scene, and the clear voice of the spring-bird, accentuating his own sad mood, filled the heart of the poet until it flowed spontaneously in the poem that speaks of the loss of his true love and of his own approaching death with such subdued pathos and passion. The poem has much in common with Keats' "Ode to the Nightingale." And it has been remarked that had Burns been a Gaelic scholar he might have been accused of plagiarism when he sang the couplet—

How can ye chant, ye little birds,
And I sae weary, fu' o' care?

But it has been quite recently discovered that this delightful lyric is older than the time of Ross, and in fact may have been composed before 1700. That it is the work of some susceptible and disconsolate Highland minstrel other than Ross may be taken as established by the fragile foolscap MS. recently discovered by Mr. Henry Whyte among the Maclagan papers. "Cuachag nan craobh," or "The Cuckoo on the Tree," thus adds one more worthy member to the list of love-poets. It is quite possible that Ross may have touched up some of the verses, but in all probability, as competent authorities now hold, the real author was Macdonald, younger of Dalness and Glencoe, who died about 1720 or 1725. Like all good Gaelic poetry, it loses much in translation:[1]—

Small bird on that tree, hast thou pity for me,
Out through this mild misty gloaming?
Would I were now 'neath the dusk of the bough,
All alone with my true love roaming;
I would raise up a bield her fair form to shield
From the chill moory tempest blowing;
And rest by her side in my fondness and pride,
And kiss her young lips sweet and glowing.

I slept late and dreamed, but 'twas no lie that gleamed
On my mind—Oh! so sad and despairing—
When a husband I spied with his beautiful bride
Affection's pure transports sharing:
How my old love returned and cold reason it spurned,
Till I moaned and wept, wildly crying;
Every pulse, every vein, boiling—bounding amain—
With the blood from my heart quickly flying!

Yes,—I'm pledged to her still in spite of my will;
Alas! and I'm wounded badly;
But a look's all I lack of her face to bring back
The health I have lost so sadly:

[1] Translation by Mr. Thomas Pattison.

Then I'd rise without fail, and her would I hail,
Light with joy, and not thus, sorrow-laden ;
She's my own tender dove—my delight and my love—
The sun over every maiden.

Nought to me but a sting all her bright beauties bring—
I droop with decay, and I languish :
There's a pain at my heart like a pitiless dart,
And I waste all away with anguish.
She has stolen the hue on my young cheeks that grew,
And much she has caused my sorrow ;
Unless now she renew with her kindness that hue,
Death will soon bid me "Good-morrow" !

The curl of her hair was so graceful and fair,
Its lid for her eye a sweet warden ;
Her cheek it was bright, and her breast limy white,
And her breath like the breeze o'er a garden.
Till they lay down my head in its stone-guarded bed
The force of these charms I feel daily,
While I think of the mirth in the woods that had birth,
When she laughed and sported gaily.

Her mouth was so sweet, and her teeth white and neat ;
Her eyes like the sloeberry shining :
How well will she wear, with her matronly air,
The kerchief where nobles are dining.
Oh ! if she could feel the like ardour and zeal
Which so long in my breast have been glowing ;
And if she were mine, with the blessing divine,
I might turn from the way I am going.

Softly, some day, will they make in the clay
My bed, since her coldness so tries me ;
I've wanted her long, and my love has been strong,
And the greenwood bough still denies me.
If she were thus low, with what haste should I go
To ask how the maiden was faring :
Now short the delay till a mournful array
The brink of my grave will be bearing !

But any account of the love-poetry of the Gael cannot be complete without reference to the "Ealaidh Ghaoil" of Ewen Maclachlan. The first verse with a chorus was composed by a Highland lady, on finding which Maclachlan added the other four verses, and then translated the whole

into English as it now stands, fragrant with all the freshness and charm of Nature in the glorious summer-time :—

Not the swan on the lake, or the foam on the shore,
Can compare with the charms of the maid I adore ;
Not so white is the new milk that flows o'er the pail,
Or the snow that is shower'd from the boughs of the vale.

As the cloud's yellow wreath on the mountain's high brow,
The locks of my fair one redundantly flow ;
Her cheeks have the tint that the roses display
When they glitter with dews on the morning of May.

As the planet of Venus, that gleams o'er the grove,
Her blue-rolling eyes are the symbols of love ;
Her pearl-circled bosom diffuses bright rays,
Like the moon when the stars are bedimm'd with her blaze.

The mavis and lark, when they welcome the dawn,
Make a chorus of joy to resound through the lawn ;
But the mavis is tuneless, the lark strives in vain,
When my beautiful charmer renews her sweet strain.

When summer bespangles the landscape with flowers,
While the thrush and the cuckoo sing soft from the bowers,
Through the wood-shaded windings with Bella I'll rove,
And feast unrestrain'd on the smiles of my love

The original chorus is well known. In its authoress's first application it had reference to a sacramental communion rather than the communion of lovers, and therefore perhaps is not quite so congruous to Maclachlan's purpose :—

Air faillirin illirin, uillirin ò,
Air faillirin, illirin, uillirin ò,
Air faillirin, illirin uillirin ò,
Gur boidheach an comunn,
'Th' aig coinneamh 'n t-Srath-mhoir.
. . . . . .

3. It is a remarkable fact that the best Highland bards—those who could sing most sweetly of love and nature and patriotism—were also the greatest masters of satire, illustrating rather forcibly the truth of Buchanan's couplet—

For roses grow on thorny trees
And honey comes from stinging bees.

So we have the distinguished quartette, John Maccodrum, Alexander Macdonald, Duncan Ban Macintyre, and Rob Donn. Maccodrum may be regarded as the first satirist of our modern Gaelic poets, and although Rob Donn was not nearly equal to Macdonald or Macintyre in the highest qualifications of the poet, he was their superior in the faculty for satire.

This power exhibits at once his strength and his weakness. There can be no doubt that he exercised a potent influence in his time by restraining some from evil, and encouraging others in virtue, and he rather enjoyed the dread of those who feared his power to castigate. But though it is true that "he reproved offenders, exhorted the careless, encouraged the well-doing," it is no less apparent that "many of his published pieces are such as no good man ought to have produced against his fellow-creatures. His love of satire was so indiscriminate that he often attacks persons who are not legitimate objects of ridicule." Old age, diminutive stature, and misfortune might well be spared the slings and arrows of derisive wit.

Yet his satire, it has been pointed out, is not rancorous and vindictive, but playful and sportive, more calculated to annoy than to wound. If he were not invited to a feast or wedding he invariably composed a satiric piece, full of mirth and humour, and sometimes too indelicate for repetition. It is no doubt owing to this undue license and occasional coarseness of his verses, as well as to the temporary interest of this class of his poems where he sings of persons and things unworthy of a poet's notice, that his satires have never been translated.[1] Dealing with local and transient affairs, as most of them do, the interest in them has passed away with the characters they were meant to ridicule.

For example, one of the earliest and best known of Rob Donn's satires—in fact, the one that first made his reputation in the Reay country—had reference to a wedding to which his patron Mr. Mackay and his house-

[1] Pattison has translated only four verses, and they are not worth quoting.

hold had been invited. Rob expected to go as one of the family, but on his return from his day's work was disappointed to find the guests had left without him. He salved his feelings there and then by composing a satire in which he makes the bridegroom and guests the butts of his ridicule. Seizing on the idea that the former was known as "the gray man," he plays throughout on the word "liath" (gray), in the most comic fashion, so that one would imagine that all the company—the happy couple not excepted—were gray, representing an assembly of the oddest and oldest ruins of humanity.

THE GRAY-HAIRED BRIDEGROOM

'N uair shuidh iad ri biadh,
'S'n uair thaingich iad Dia,
Bha'n duin' òg ac' cho liath,
'S ged b'iar-ogh' do Adhamh e.
Bha'm muillear mòr liath ann,
Le' churrachd mhòr liath,
'S a' chailleach mhor liath bu mhathair dha.
Bha'm bodach mor liath a' sgeulachd dhoibh,
'S bha chailleach mhor liath a' g èarlachadh,
'S bha 'm ministeir liath a' càbhadh dhoibh.
Bha Seorasan liath, 's a cheann anns a' chliabh,
Agus Guinneich beag liath a *Ardachadh.*
Na h-uile fear liath, o'n ear gus an iar,
Eadar *Bealach-nam-Fiann* is *Carnachadh.*
Bha h-uile fear liath d' an cairdean ann,
Gach duine bha liath an *Arnball;*
'S na h-uile fear liath a thogair ann triall,
'S Mac Neill mor liath 'g am bàrnaigeadh.
Bha bioran mor iaruinn mar b' abhaist ann,
Bha teine le biadh 'g a earlachadh.
Bha moine dhe 'n t-sliabh, air a tarruing le cliabh,
Mar ri cuilionn mòr liath nan *Ardachain.*

Another takes the form of a depreciative elegy on John Gray of Rogart, much in the style of Burns' "Death and Dr. Hornbook." Satan is sad, for the defunct was such a rogue he has not the slightest idea where he will get a man to take his place. And so the people of Caithness and

Sutherland cannot be too thankful that Death has outwitted the man who had five hundred times outwitted them.

"Briogais Mhic Ruaraidh," on the other hand, is a satire full of the most comic humour. On the way to a marriage the bard heard of the flutter caused by the unfortunate mislaying of "the breeches of little Rory's son," and allowing his mind to work on the subject, he no sooner arrived at the house and got seated than he began singing the above-mentioned song to the great amusement of all the guests.

Chaidh bhriogais a stampadh,
Am meadhon na connlaich,
'S chaidh Huistein a dhanns' leis
Na gruagaichibh ;
'N uair dh' fhag a chuid misg e,
Gu d' thug e 'n sin briosgadh,
A dh' iarruidh na briogais,
's cha d' fhuair e i.
An d' fhidir, no 'n d' fhairich, etc.

In personal appearance rather good-looking, Rob Donn has been described as brown-haired, brown-eyed, with pale complexion and clear skin. When he entered a room his eye took in the whole at a glance, and the expression of his countenance always indicated much animation and energy. In figure he was below the middle size, stout, and well-built.

Greater diversity of opinion seems to prevail over his merits as a poet than over any other of the leading Highland bards. While the pre-eminence of men like Alexander Macdonald and Duncan Ban Macintyre is never questioned, many of the poems of Rob Donn are not considered of a very high quality, and in point of genius he is regarded as distinctly inferior to these. A deficiency in pathos, invention, and imagination accounts for this. He had little depth of feeling and no great descriptive power. But though he is not generally placed on the highest pedestal, he is none the less universally admired by his countrymen as one of the princes of song—fresh, original, and influential, who had poetry to express his passions, and wit at will to express his contempt and provoke laughter.

Even a critic unfamiliar with the language, as John Gibson Lockhart was, after the first edition of the Reay bard's poems appeared, in reviewing in the *Quarterly Review* the few renderings at his command in English, expressed himself thus :—

"Rude and bald as these things appear in a verbal translation, and rough as they might possibly appear even if the originals were intelligible, we confess we are disposed to think they would of themselves justify Dr. Mackay in placing this herdsman-lover among the true sons of song." Those to whom the originals are intelligible have never doubted that.

Rob Donn has been honoured in various ways since his death more than any other of his brother poets in the Highlands. It is true that his poems have not been issued with the astonishing frequency of Dugald Buchanan's Hymns, and few of them have as yet been translated. Nevertheless, in contrast to those of the other bards, they have received a study, attention, and care on the part of their various editors that leave little to be desired. The investigation into all details regarding the bard's life and compositions has been well-nigh exhaustive.

In all there have been four editions of his works, each with a memoir. The first was that prepared by the Rev. Dr. Mackintosh Mackay, and published in Inverness in 1829. Two manuscript collections of Rob Donn's songs had been made during the bard's own lifetime and to his own dictation by two different persons—the Rev. Ewen Macleod, minister of Rogart, and one of the daughters of the Rev. John Thomson, minister of Durness. These Dr. Mackay had at his hand when preparing the work for the press, but apparently made most use of Mr. Macleod's MS.

As a fellow-countryman of the bard, this distinguished Gaelic scholar devoted himself with the utmost enthusiasm to the production of a thoroughly reliable book. But exception has been taken to his edition in two respects. First, his estimate of the bard's character is regarded as biassed.

He makes him appear too religious. And second, as the vernacular of the Reay country differed widely from the accepted standard, with the desire to make the compositions of Rob Donn as intelligible as possible to the generality of Highlanders, the standard of Gaelic orthography having been by that time fixed, he altered provincial words, taking pains to present the poems as nearly as possible in the common orthography. This uniform system of spelling resulted in innumerable metrical blemishes. As one of the later editors, the Rev. Mr. Gunn, remarks, "The substitution of the southern form of the word for the native vernacular grates harshly upon a musical ear, and often completely destroys the assonance."

A second edition was issued in Edinburgh in 1871, and since then other two editions appeared, almost simultaneously, in Edinburgh and Glasgow in 1899. The earlier is by Mr. Hew Morrison, F.S.A., and contains several poems never before published, with English notes and a new memoir of the poet. The later, edited by the Rev. Adam Gunn, M.A., of Durness, and Mr. Malcolm Macfarlane, and entitled *Orain agus Dain*, is illustrated. It embodies several original and hitherto unpublished melodies collected in the Reay country; a sketch of the bard and his times; a dissertation on the Reay country dialect; a full glossary of uncommon words; and a supplementary chapter on the bard's surname.

Both these works are extremely interesting, and contain between them really all that is worth knowing of Rob Donn and his work. To their editors all praise is due for the thoroughness with which they have established the literary cairn of this peasant-poet.

> 'Tis the last keystone that makes up the arch.
> Then stands it a triumphal mark! Then men
> Observe the strength, the height, the why and when
> It was erected; and still walking under,
> Meet some new matter to look up, and wonder.

CHAPTER VI

DUGALD BUCHANAN AND THE RELIGIOUS POETS AND HYMN-WRITERS

THE lyrical outburst of the Forty-five, which gave us so many of the finest songs and descriptive poems in the Gaelic language, was scarcely less remarkable for the number of hymns and other sacred pieces it produced.

Since the days of St. Patrick and St. Columba there had not arisen in Gaeldom any notable religious poet or any marked genius for hymn-writing. Stray pieces, generally of indifferent merit, might be traced in the course of the long ages, but few hymns, in the Scottish Highlands at least, fit to take their place in any choice anthology. Even the verse-producing Bishop Carswell, who represented the earliest fruits of the Reformation there, has not left among his quaint effusions one sacred song.

The times were wild and unsettled, and the general amelioration of manners was slow in taking effect in the Celtic arena of clan strife. But after the middle of the eighteenth century, when the Jacobite cataclysm burst the bonds and fetters of the past, so preparing the way for the new regime and its fresh inception of ideas, there came that wonderful renaissance of hymn and song which has rendered the period the most pregnant in the history of Highland poetry.

The first religious poem to find type was David Mackellar's hymn, consisting of thirty-three stanzas. It was published in Glasgow in 1752 by John Orr, a

native of Bute, and, like the earliest swallow heralding the approach of summer, this sacred lay led the way for the more brilliant succession that was so soon to follow. Of its author little is known beyond the simple facts that he lived in Glendaruel of old-time renown in the early part of the eighteenth century, was blind when he composed his hymn, but afterwards, as tradition affirms, recovered his sight. The hymn is the only piece of authorship on which his memory rests.

Contemporary with him, the chief and far-and-away the most popular of the Highland sacred bards, stands Dugald Buchanan. With the exception of the Bible and Shorter Catechism, no other book has exercised such a commanding influence over the religious imagination of the Highlanders or been printed so frequently as his *Spiritual Songs*. What the sublime conceptions of Milton and John Bunyan were to the devout thought of England those of the sacred bard of Rannoch have been to that of Gaelic Scotland. They have woven themselves into the warp and woof of Highland religion and coloured all its contents.

Born at Ardoch, Strathyre, Perthshire, in 1716, Buchanan was a fellow parishioner, and in early life a contemporary, of the renowned Rob Roy. Thus the romantic district of Balquhidder produced at one time two men radically different in type and temperament, yet who have both rendered themselves famous in the song and story of their country. The year that immediately preceded the birth of the bard saw the outlaw marshalling his clansmen on the battlefield of Sheriffmuir.

Buchanan's father, who was miller and farmer at Ardoch, married in 1711 the poet's mother, Janet Ferguson. Both were religiously disposed. His mother in particular has been described as an intelligent, pious woman, who died when Dugald was only six years old. Upon his infant mind she early strove to impress the principles and doctrines that dominated her own life. But her system of religious training, it is obvious, though well-meant, was not the best adapted

to the needs of her child, as it laid too much stress upon the more gloomy doctrines. It thus unduly excited his powerful imagination and rendered what might have been otherwise a happy childhood and youth, the saddest apology for such, clouding his mind with dread fears and forebodings.

We find the memory of these experiences coming back upon him long after in manhood's prime when he writes: "Then the Lord began to visit me with terrible visions—dreams in the night—which greatly frightened me. I always dreamed that the day of judgment was come, that Christ appeared in the clouds to judge the world; that the people were gathered together before the throne! that He separated them into two companies, the one on the right hand, the other on the left, and that I saw myself along with others sentenced to everlasting burnings. I always saw myself entering into the flames and so would instantly awake in great fear and trembling." This was about his ninth year, he tells us, while yet a boy at school in his native parish.

Three years later the youthful scholar was engaged as tutor in a neighbouring family. Its members happened to be of an unruly order and their example most baneful to one of his years. But not less detrimental, though for a wholly different reason, were the solemn talks of judgment and eternity in which the mistress of the house engaged him. She was a pious woman, and interested in the spiritual welfare of the boy. These talks, however, revived all the old apprehensions which were otherwise fading from his mind, and the vivid and realistic details she supplied gave wing to his abnormally developed imagination, so that on the approach of a storm one night with thunder and lightning, he was almost prostrated with terror, fancying he heard the crack of doom.

At the age of fourteen the precocious dreamer was sent to school in Stirling for two years. Here he caught fever and was dangerously ill. Several times while yet in his teens he had perilous escapes—once or twice from drowning, once from fever, and again from the bayonet of a drunken soldier.

Six months' residence in Edinburgh completed his education, and now that he was in his eighteenth year his father naturally desired to see him acquire a trade. But the lad loved not routine work and demurred at first. Later on, yielding to the advice of his friends, he began an apprenticeship as joiner at Kippen. A quarrel with his employer before his stipulated term of three years had expired led him to leave, and he entered upon a new engagement with a master in Dumbarton. Inwardly restless, and ill at ease as ever, his early manhood resembled a series of moral pendulum-swings, in which at one time he gives rein to his folly, at another, filled with religious alarms, he goes to the opposite extreme of morbid, dejecting penitence.

He did not remain long in Dumbarton, for we soon find him back again in his native district.

During the ten years from 1741 to 1750, Buchanan kept a diary which throws an interesting light on his character and temperament. It is an autobiography much in the style of Augustine's "Confessions," and it reveals the striking fact that this hymn-writer went through religious experiences not dissimilar to those of Augustine and almost identical with the violent mental throes of John Bunyan. In his journal he chronicles the progress of these inward agitations, and some of them appear to have been as vivid, realistic, and overpowering as any that the pious Bishop of Hippo or the Bedford tinker ever experienced.

Like the former, he speaks of his youth and early manhood as a period of recklessness and ungodliness, profanity and vice, interrupted by frequent fits of remorse and earnest strivings after a better life. Coming from a religious enthusiast, apt like all such to exaggerate in the depth of their after-penitence the character of their sins, it is probable that he paints his conduct in darker hues than it really merited. As he advanced in years, however, the conflict increased intensely until at length, partly through the words of an affectionate sister, partly through the conversation of a pious woman, the jarring elements within were pacified,

and he reached an inner serenity which lifted him up to an altogether new level of spiritual vitality.

This was in his twenty-sixth year, and it was well; for such was the grim nature of the mental distress through which he passed that some advised him to cease reading religious books or he would lose his reason. Others believed he was already mad.

These experiences, beginning from his childhood, left an indelible impression on his mind, and furnished the material for those awe-inspiring productions which he composed in after years. Without them we would not have the sublime and dreadful realism which finds expression, for example, in the hymn entitled "The Day of Judgment."

Like Dante, who used to be spoken of as the man who had been in hell, Buchanan lived for years in daily vision and fear of the dread underworld, as real and materialistic to his imagination as ever the Inferno was to the theologians of the Middle Ages. And from the vivid terrors of his own morbid introspection he could no more tear himself than the ill-fated bird from the cruel fascination of the snake.

After the spiritual crisis which marked the close of the long-drawn-out struggle, he migrated to Sacramental Communions in Muthil, Cambuslang, Comrie, Kilsyth, Kippen, and elsewhere. How he was manually employed during the years immediately succeeding his conversion there is no record to show.

But one episode of this interval affected him deeply. In 1745 it appears the men of Balquhidder, strongly Jacobite in sentiment, were caught up in the Rising of Bonnie Prince Charlie, and followed the Stuart flag to England. On the retreat from Derby, several of Buchanan's friends and relatives who had been left behind to garrison Carlisle were taken when the town surrendered, and were subsequently tried, condemned, and executed.

Though the bard himself had not espoused the Jacobite cause, this summary vengeance on his kith and kin so

moved and exasperated him that for a time not even his new-found Christian fervour could banish wild thoughts of revenge from his mind.

In what year his father passed the goal of life's pilgrimage is not known. But Dugald, succeeding to the mill and farm, married about 1749 Margaret Brisbane, a daughter of the land-steward of the Earl of Loudon.

A son was born in 1750, and shortly thereafter some reverse or want of success in the business, it is thought, compelled him to quit the old home and occupation at Ardoch and turn for a livelihood to teaching. In this capacity he itinerated in Strathyre, the Braes of Balquhidder, and Lochearnhead, and doubtless found it an unremunerative pedagogy. But in 1753 he was fortunate enough to obtain more settled employment through the influence of the manager of the confiscated estate of Robertson of Struan, who recommended the Barons of Exchequer to appoint him schoolmaster at Drumcastle near Kinloch Rannoch.

Those were days of clan feuds and animosities, and the people of Rannoch were reputed not one whit behind some other districts in their poverty and unruly conduct. But the bard, in addition to his scholastic duties, voluntarily addressed himself to their spiritual needs, and "eloquent in address, evangelical in doctrine, and full of zeal for the salvation of souls," as his biographer says, he soon came to wield a mighty influence over the turbulent and irreligious populace.

As an instance of this, it is related that on one occasion the poet-evangelist visited an outlying part, and the people of two contiguous districts were equally anxious to hear him preach, but being at daggers drawn, they could not trust each other in mutual proximity, even for worship. Whereupon Buchanan mounted a boulder in the middle of a stream that parted the hostile parties and preached to them as they sat or stood on the opposite banks, and, it is added, with such effect that they retired mutual friends.

Two years after his advent in Rannoch the Committee of the General Assembly who managed the Royal Bounty,

recognising his worth, appointed him catechist in addition to the office he already held as teacher.

It may be inferred from his diary, which was written in English and first published in 1839, that his poetic gift showed itself early, but it was while acting as teacher and catechist in this remote district of Rannoch that his sacred songs first attracted public attention. In all likelihood it was here he composed and recited the larger number of the notable eight, now extant, namely, "The Majesty of God," "The Dream," "The Sufferings of Christ," "The Day of Judgment," "The Hero," "The Skull," "Winter," and "Prayer."

These show that the bard was possessed of a very felicitous style, great power of imagination, combined with an unusual measure of moral and religious enthusiasm.

Fervid, lofty, and animated, his is perhaps the only modern Gaelic poetry that may be characterised as sublime. And partly from the nature of the themes they deal with, but most of all from the vivid, dramatic, and impressive treatment, the sacred pieces of Buchanan have rendered him the most popular poet in the language.

His masterpiece and the hymn that is of most general human interest is undoubtedly "The Skull." More than those of any other Gaelic bard the literary productions of Buchanan show that their author was acquainted with English literature. Among other indications, there is a high probability that he got the idea of writing his memoir from frequent perusal of Thomas Boston's Autobiography; inspiration for his own spiritual life and the composition of his hymns from the works of Philip Doddridge and Isaac Watts; and the suggestion which led to the production of "The Skull," from Shakespeare.

In *Hamlet* the subject is treated with the philosophic humour peculiar to the great dramatist, but there only incidentally. In Buchanan's hymn it is the one theme throughout and elaborated with more grim and graphic details.

'S mi 'm shuidhe aig an uaigh,
Ag amharc ma bruaich,
Feuch claigeann gun snuadh air lar ;
Is thog mi e suas,
A' tiomach' gu truagh,
Ga thionndadh mu 'n cuairt am laimh.

Gun aille gun dreach,
Gun aithne gun bheachd
Air duine theid seach 'na dhail ;
Gun fhiacail 'na dheud
No teanga 'na bheul
No slugan a ghleusas càil.

Gun ruthadh 'na ghruaidh
'S e rùisgte gun ghruaig ;
Gun eisdeachd 'na chluais do m' dhàn :
Gun anail na shroin,
No aile de'n fhoid,
Ach lag far 'm bu choir bhi ard.

As I sat by the grave,[1]
At the brink of its cave
Lo ! a featureless skull on the ground ;
The symbol I clasp,
And detain in my grasp
While I turn it around and around.

Without beauty or grace,
Or a glance to express
Of the bystander nigh a thought,
Its jaw and its mouth,
Are tenantless both,
Nor passes emotion its throat.

Its cheek has no red,
And bald is its head,
Its ear cannot list to my lay,
No smell hath its nose,
No breath comes or goes,
It is wasted and hollowed away.

The eye's wonted beam,
And the eyelid's quick gleam—
The intelligent sight are no more ;

[1] Verses selected from two different translations : Mr. L. Macbean's, and that in Messrs. Blackie and Son's *Poets and Poetry of Scotland.*

But the worms of the soil
As they wriggle and coil
Come hither their dwellings to bore.
. . . .
Grave-digger come near
And breathe in mine ear,
To whom did this skull belong,
Then ask it will I
Of its life long gone by
Though it ne'er will reply to my song.

Say wert thou a maid
In beauty arrayed,
Whose eyes with soft brilliance shone,
Were their charms as a net
That was cruelly set
For each youth that they sparkled upon ?

Of thy graces that won
Such triumphs, there's none
But is turned into loathsome disgust ;
A curse on the tomb
That withered thy bloom,
And turned all thy beauty to dust.

A series of other surmises follow ; for, after questioning the skull as possibly that of a charming maiden, he wonders if it may not have been, on the contrary, the cranium of a mercenary judge, skilled physician, mighty general, dissolute drunkard, glutton, powerful landlord, or clergyman. One representative after another of these classes, dead and gone to clay, is thus conjured up in imagination and invited to answer as to past conduct at the bar of the poet's reflective faculty ; and in this scrutiny all are contemplated as reduced to one level in the grave—the prey of the hungry worm and the crawling beetle.

Next in popular estimation to " The Skull " comes " The Day of Judgment."

Opening with a vivid delineation of the crack of doom as the archangel sounds the last trumpet, this poem goes on to depict the sublime and awful scenes consequent upon the wreck of the elements, and pictures the gathering together of the whole human race to judgment before the throne.

As an example of the beauty of thought and expression in several of the passages, the following may be quoted from the English rendering of Dr. Nigel Macneill:—

Then like the morn enkindling red,
A glowing spreads throughout the skies
Where Jesus comes, a glare is shed
By Heaven's burning tapestries.

The clouds all suddenly unfold
To make for the High King a door,
And we the Mighty Judge behold,
Whose glory streams forth evermore.

The rainbow glows around his form,
His voice resounds like mountain floods;
Out-flashing o'er the sullen storm,
His lightning eye pours from the clouds.

The sun, great lustre of the skies,
Before his glorious Person pales;
At length her failing brightness dies
Before the light His face unveils.

Her robes of gloom she will uptake
The blood-red moon drops down in space,
The mighty heavenly powers shall shake,
Outcasting planets from their place.

Like tempest-shaken fruit on trees,
So shall they tremble in the skies!
Like heavy rain-drops on the breeze,
Their glory like a dead man's eyes.

But perhaps for stanzas reminiscent of Dante, the stern and sad poet of the *Inferno*, these lurid descriptions of Buchanan taken from the rendering by Mr. L. Macbean are the most terrible and sublime.

Down in the caves of horror there
Each baleful band together cleaves;
The perjured, those that kill or swear,
Drunkards, adulterers, and thieves.

Like briars bound in bundles here
They lie in chains of iron tied,
With those who were their comrades dear
Piercing like thorns into their side.

Like lion fierce that tries in vain
To burst his bonds with bleeding jaw,
Their raging teeth shall bite their chain,
But never can its iron gnaw.

The pains of death their souls surround,
Their hearts eternal woe consumes,
On seas of burning brimstone bound,
Choked with green smoke and poison fumes.

Like limpets fixed on rocky bed,
They lie on heated reefs made fast,
The boiling billows o'er their head
Driven on by God's fierce anger-blast.

When weary sleep shall close their eyes
Despair and wrathful heat awake!
Fire and the worm that never dies,
Their torments ever hotter make.

Surely the poet touched the De Profundis of past cure, past hope, when he uttered the abysmal cry—

Oh! canst Thou cast me from Thy face
Where Thou shalt never hear me cry?
Is there in hell so dark a place
As hide me from Thy piercing eye?

Canst thou in blessedness complete
Hear Thy poor creature's mournful tones—
Father, have pity, ease the heat
That boils the marrow in my bones!

Hear, O my God, my wretched prayer,
And hear the groans that tear my breast,
And for the sins I have to bear
Grant me, O Lord, this sole request —

When I shall weep in flaming fire
Until ten thousand years go by,
Till even torturing demons tire,
Grant then, O Lord, that I may die!

"The Dream" and "The Hero" are replete with striking passages. In the former he says:—

None free from trouble wilt thou find
Among the millions of mankind;

The monarch has as many sighs
As has the slave that lowest lies.

Each brand its share of smoke must bear;
Each good must have of ill a share;
For roses grow on thorny trees
And honey comes from stinging bees.[1]
. . . .
He whom the world serves best has got
A crook of some kind in his lot
Which all his striving and his skill
Can ne'er make straight, 'tis crooked still.

Like a bent staff, ill-set in grain,
Whose gnarls and knots are stretched in vain,
For though thou shouldst its top amend
'Twill twist far worse the other end.

In the opening stanzas of "Winter" the poet shows a descriptive power which renders a comparison between this hymn and the odes of Alexander Macdonald, Rob Donn, and Ewen Maclachlan on the same subject extremely interesting. In contrast to theirs it is a didactic poem, but one of the best specimens of such poetry in Highland literature. "The Majesty of God" and "The Sufferings of Christ," though not quite on the same plane with the others, are equally suffused with the bard's religious fervour and originality of style; while "Prayer," which comes last of all in the collection, is full of the richest devotional feeling and evangelical sentiment.

[1] Compare Spenser's:—

Sweet is the rose but grows upon a brier;
Sweet is the juniper but sharp his bough;
Sweet is the eglantine, but pricketh near;
Sweet is the firbloom but his branches rough;
So every sweet with sour is tempered still,
That maketh it be coveted the more.

And Burns:—

O Life! how pleasant is thy morning,
Young Fancy's rays the hills adorning;
Cold-pausing Caution's lesson scorning:
We wander there, we wander here,
We eye the rose upon the brier,
Unmindful that the thorn is near.

Buchanan's influence as an evangelist had become so great that the Presbytery of Dunkeld were approached to license him as preacher and pastor in Rannoch. But there were technical difficulties in the way, some members of Presbytery even hinting that Buchanan's addresses were of such a wild, inflammatory character that they were more fitted to fanaticise than to edify. Thus the proposal fell through.

Nevertheless, being fully abreast of the Gaelic scholarship of the age, the poet-evangelist was afterwards selected to assist the Rev. James Stewart of Killin in seeing through the press the first version of the New Testament that was ever published in the language of the Highlands. Before then the only Bible available consisted of the Irish translations of Bishop Bedel and O'Donell. These, that they might be more intelligible to Highlanders, had some time previously been printed in Roman letters instead of the Irish characters in which they were first issued. But as they still retained the Irish idiom and the Irish spelling they were practically of little use to the Scottish Gael.

Hence the need for the new translation of the New Testament undertaken by Mr. Stewart at the request and expense—as the title page shows—of the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, and published in Edinburgh in 1767. In common with the subsequent renderings of the other parts of Scripture revised and published entire in 1826, it has been the standard Gaelic classic for Gaelic orthography ever since. And the credit for the superior excellence of Stewart's version when it appeared has been shared with the Rannoch hymnist.

It was while superintending this important work as it passed through the press that Buchanan published his own poems in 1767. Though fifty years of age at the time, he further availed himself of the opportunity afforded in Edinburgh of attending the classes for natural philosophy, anatomy, and astronomy at the University, mayhap with a view to qualify if possible for the regular ministry of the

Church, from which academic considerations had previously debarred him.

There was then no Gaelic congregation in the Scottish Metropolis, and Highlanders there proposed to have him settled as their pastor, but though again ecclesiastical use and wont declined to dispense with the full attendance at college, the number of people to whom he ministered as a lay evangelist formed the nucleus of the Gaelic charge which afterwards received sanction and is still maintained in Edinburgh.

An incident always associated with his city life is often related for its spice of dramatic interest as well as for the light it sheds on the bard's character. Having been introduced to several literary celebrities, including David Hume, Buchanan called on the philosopher one day, but finding the latter engaged for a little, he employed the interval of waiting looking through a volume of Shakespeare's plays which lay on the table. In this diversion the famous passage in the "Tempest" caught his eye, where Prospero says—

> These our actors,
> As I foretold you, were all spirits and
> Are melted into air, into thin air;
> And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
> The cloud capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
> And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
> Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep.—Act iv. sc. i. 148-158.

On Hume entering, a comment on this lofty conception led him to ask the bard if he thought he had ever read anything so sublime. To which question Buchanan made answer that he had, and forthwith astonished his host by quoting in an impressive manner the verses, Rev. xx. 11-13, which run thus, "And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

"And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works."

In less than two years from this interview Buchanan's own life was rounded with a sleep; for he died at Rannoch in June 1768 of virulent fever. The circumstances were peculiarly pathetic. All his household, with the single exception of his *enceinte* wife, were ill together, and owing to the dread of infection entertained at that time by Highlanders, the smitten family were pitifully abandoned to their own helpless condition. In his delirium the bard still sang psalms and talked of the Lamb in the midst of the throne. Two sons and two daughters alone with their mother survived the trying ordeal.

His death at fifty-two made a deep impression on the countryside. And when the men of Balquhidder and the men of Rannoch, equally anxious to have his remains for sepulture, were on the eve of coming to blows over the point, the latter, through reverence for the dead and in the interests of peace, laid aside their claim and permitted the former to carry the body quietly away and bury it in the place of interment at Little Leny in his native parish.

Buchanan has been described as a tall black-haired man, dark complexioned and large-eyed. Till the use of the Highland dress was forbidden by law he used to wear the kilt. Later in Rannoch his usual attire consisted of knee-breeches, a blue greatcoat, and a broad Highland bonnet.

After him came a succession of hymn-writers, more or less popular, but not nearly so lofty and impressive. While conversant with the more solemn notes they knew to touch the lighter chords of the evangelic faith. Of these the best known, and indeed most voluminous of all the Highland

sacred bards, was the Rev. Peter Grant, a Baptist minister in Strathspey, who published the first edition of his hymns in 1809. His object was, as he tells us, to find an entrance for the gospel into the affections of the people that it might prove an antidote to the prevailing heathenism.

Vigour was not his characteristic as a poet, but sweetness and grace. There is a touching humanity and winning tenderness about some of his pieces that certainly tended to enhance his presentations of spiritual truth and make them popular. The thoughts are always simple and the style natural. Among the hymns that have been most admired are "The Lasting Home," "The Cry of the Gael," "The World," "Where St. John Lay," "Strangers," "The Day of Judgment," "My Saviour's Love," "A Hymn of Praise," "The Gospel," and "The Young Child in Heaven." The last is particularly touching, and has been translated by Mr. L. Macbean as follows:—

I lay warm at rest
On my mother's breast,
And her arm held me pressed to her side,
When Death's herald came nigh
To call me on high
And no longer could I abide.

She awoke with a start,
Crying, "Love of my heart!
What ails thee! Thou art not dead!
And she fondled me so,
She would not let me go
Till my life, ebbing low, had fled.

When they closed my young eyes,
Angels came from the skies,
And they made me to rise above;
Oh! swift was our flight
Through the valleys of night,
And I now dwell in light and love.

Could my parents conceive
What joys I receive,

They never would grieve for me;
They would long to appear
With the holy ones here,
Where such fellowship dear can be.
. . . . .

"The Cry of the Gael" is also very interesting.

In ancient stories the Gael were glorious
And oft victorious in fields of fight;
Their strength was proudest, their war-shout loudest
And war and plunder was their delight;
But in their rudeness, they knew not goodness,
No godly fear in their hearts was found,
Though they were christened, and sat and listened
At high communions when they came round.

With minds in error, they thought with terror
Of shapes unearthly and dark alarms,
But sought salvation in incantation,
In spells unholy and mystic charms.
A people careless, profane and prayerless,
Were like the beasts in the dewy dale;
No Bible reading, no praise or pleading—
Such was the custom among the Gael.
. . . . . .

A Highland bard, who, like Peter Grant, conceived the design of clothing the doctrines of the Gospel in Gaelic versification, that he might thereby unite the best lessons with the sweetest melodies of his native land, was the Rev. James Macgregor of Pictou, Nova Scotia, 1759-1830.[1] A native of St. Fillans, Perthshire, and a member of the anti-burgher Secession Church, he is said to have gone through his literary course in the University of Edinburgh, and studied theology under the Rev. William Moncrieff at Alloa. Thus fully equipped and licensed, he was sent by the General Associate Synod in 1786 to minister to the Gael who flocked into Nova Scotia. His lifelong labours among his fellow-colonists combined with his literary work secured for him in after-life the degree of D.D. from Glasgow University.

[1] 1762 is the date of his birth given by Dr. N. MacNeill; 1759, by Rev. A. Maclean Sinclair and others.

His hymns were published in 1819, and though not on the level of the masters of sacred song, they set forth the evangelical truths of Christianity with much earnestness and freshness. Apparently an admirer of Duncan Ban Macintyre, he sometimes adopted the hunter-bard's metres. And surely we find an echo of the great poet of Rannoch in these lines from "The Resurrection:"

The bones that are placed
On the hill or wild waste,
In the desert or pit or shore;
In the ocean deep,
'Neath the river's sweep—
To life he shall then restore.

When the earth shall be shaken
All classes shall waken—
The poor and the King and the brave ·
Then forth shall be rolled
The young and the old,
The maiden, the lover, and slave.

Some will rise in great fear
When the Lamb shall appear,
The just from the evil to sever;
Some will wake in delight
In garments all bright,
As the heirs of the Kingdom for ever.

Another bard who emigrated to Nova Scotia and who had some repute in after-life as a hymn-writer was John Maclean, native of Caolas, Tiree. Born in 1787, he published a volume of secular songs in 1818, and next year set out for the land of the virgin soil. In the lonely backwoods there, while felling trees and preparing the ground for cultivation, his hard lot awakened in the soul of the bard aspirations for a better world, and he began to compose religious poems. Of these a small edition appeared at Antigonish[1] in 1835 and in Edinburgh in 1880. Since then the Rev. A. Maclean Sinclair has supplemented the

[1] Published in Glasgow, according to Rev. D. Maclean, Duirinish; in Antigonish, according to Rev. A. Maclean Sinclair.

latter edition by issuing the bard's songs and secular poems complete under the title *Clarsach na Coille*, or "Harp of the Woods." The following verses, translated by Mr. L. Macbean from the hymn "Saorsa tre fhuil an Uain" and styled by him, "Life's Pilgrims," show the quality of this hymn-writer's verse.

Life's pilgrims at rest in the isles of the blest
No storms can molest for ever:
But peacefully there, all blessings they share,
Sweet fellowship ne'er to sever.

Now free from all pain, in glory they reign,
With the sweetest refrain high swelling:
His praises, who bore them safe to that shore,
Their songs evermore are telling.

They set out in fear, their journey seemed drear,
And tempests severe distressed them;
Dire trouble they found, dark night on them frowned,
And sins all around sore pressed them.

Their terrors were quelled, their darkness dispelled,
God's light they beheld down-pouring:
With faith in His grace, they came to His place,
And fell on their face adoring.

Of a much higher order than either of the three preceding, and fit to rank next Buchanan in a category apart, stands John Morrison, the poetic blacksmith of Rodel, Harris, 1790-1852. Self-educated, this son of the Muse worked at his trade in his native island for the greater part of his life and showed wonderful ingenuity both as a craftsman and as a writer of poetry. In 1820 he married, and from this time began to exercise his mind on religious problems. The immediate outcome of this was the production next year of that wonderfully subdued yet delightfully musical composition known as "An Iondruinn." Its predominating note, as its name implies, is desire, "a longing, yearning, striving, for the good we apprehend not." It is one of the gems of the Gaelic language and has been rendered into English by Dr. Henderson, the enthusiastic

editor of the poet's works, which extend to two volumes "An Iondruinn," begins thus—

When as I did refrain for long
Age smote my bones and sorely;
Age smote my song with silent wrong,
Age smote me long and lowly:
Not as of yore in weakness strong,
Time but prolongs my story—
Grief and death's bond to me belong
Save Heavenly Song restores me.
My heavy heart adds to my smart
Like to a hart when wounded,
My steps abound but still I start,
And fall athwart confounded:
Though all around I seek the Highest,
No one is nigh or round me,
To smite sweet chords upon my lyre
And so in sighs I'm grounded, etc.

In 1828 the song-smith was appointed catechist, first under the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, then, in 1843, under the Committee of the Free Church of Scotland—which office he held to the end of his life. The next year after entering on the first of these engagements his wife died, and a remarkable change took place in the inward life of the bard, a change which was reflected in his conduct as catechist, for from 1829 onwards he devoted himself to the work of preaching. A hymn significant of his experience at this time is that which begins "Tha duin' òg 'us seann duin' agam," which for subtlety of conception, felicity of expression, and cunning weavings and turnings of the phraseology, is quite unique. With the most quaint originality Morrison here depicts the holy war carried on within the soul between the contending old man and the new.

The New man in my bosom reigneth[1]
Where still his ground the Old maintaineth,
O that the Old were mine no longer
And that the New were dearer, stronger.
. . . . .

[1] Trans. by Rev. Nigel Macneill in *Highland Magazine*, pp. 231-232.

The Old man's power has depraved me
And by Satan's help enslaved me;
But the New has kindly sought me,
And salvation free has brought me,
In the dust the Old man soiled me,
The New has washed from him that foiled me

When first the New my state regarded
He found asleep the Old unguarded;
And when the New with power hailed him,
Then all at once the Rogue assailed him,
When by his spear the New unveiled him,
The Old man fiercely armed and mailed him

The struggle started dark and raging,
Keen lances drawn were fast engaging;
The Old received a fatal crushing,
Through which his lifeblood has been gushing.
The Old lies wounded and inglorious,
The New stands over him victorious.

Since then no harmony can bind them,
In discord dire you ever find them;
No common fare their spirit nurses,
The New gives blessings, the Old his curses,
The Old delights in brutish folly,
The New in holy virtues wholly.

Their ways are mutually repelling
Though living in this sorry dwelling;
But this poor tent will be demolished
When all its sin is gone—abolished.
The Old a cunning soul-constrictor,
The New at every step a victor, etc.

In addition to these more eminent hymn-writers there are various others who have enriched our Highland anthology and whose names are cherished in the North.

Contemporary with Mackellar and Buchanan were John Mackay, of Mudale, "a poet, scholar, and gentleman" whose hymns the Rannoch bard is reported to have sung "with great glee"; Donald Matheson of Kildonan; Rob Donn, the Reay bard; Lauchlan Maclauchlan of Abriachan, and

Mrs. Clark[1] of Laggan. The first three all belonged to Sutherlandshire, the last two to Inverness-shire.

In the nineteenth century there lived Mrs. Cameron of Rannoch, William Mackenzie of Croy, Donald Macrae of Petty, Margaret Campbell of Glenorchy, Rev. Dr. Macdonald of Ferintosh, Rev. Duncan Macdougall of Tiree, Rev. Duncan Maccallum of Arisaig, Rev. Duncan Maclean of Glenorchy, a bard of rare quality though not so popular as some of the rest.

Like David Mackellar, several—perhaps indeed the majority of the above-mentioned—are known for one popular hymn only, but there has been a widespread disposition to woo the sacred Muse in the mystic land of the Gael.

Yet for genuine mysticism, which strangely enough is as a rule lacking in the Highland hymns, Donald Macrae, weaver of Petty, stands pre-eminent among his fellow-bards. His verse, strong, fiery, and rapid, has been characterised as combining the spiritual insight and holy sympathies of George Herbert with the subtlety of Shelley. For a happy delineation of the imagination what could be more neatly conceived than the following—

I gu h' iteagach, sgiathach,[2]
Mar eun anns an neoil ;
Lan easumhail do'n riaghladh,
O'n tha miann anns an fheoil.
I gu brosgulach faoilidh
Ga mo shlaodadh air sgod ;
Gus na chuir i orm daorach
Le saoghal nan sgleo.

When we look back over the hundred and fifty years that have elapsed since religion began to enter seriously into the poetry of the North, we are impressed with the large

[1] Rev. Mr. Sinton of Dores has published (in 1902) the six extant hymns of Mrs. Clark. The Rev. J. Kennedy first published three and Mr. Sinton then discovered other three in a Cluny chest. There were originally about thirty it is supposed, but the rest perished. Mrs. Clark died early in the nineteenth century.

[2] *Sacred Poetry of the North*, p. 239.

output of sacred song during a period so comparatively late and short. Every district of the Highlands is represented, and indeed few lands of similar restricted population can show a larger number of sweet religious singers within the time mentioned above.

The hymns came to immediate recognition and far surpassed all other poetry in popularity, if we may judge by the proportion such compositions bear to the other printed literature of the Highlands. Undoubtedly there was a reason for this, deep-seated in the needs of the time. This will be the more apparent the more we consider the conditions prevailing after the Jacobite collapse, when they first began to come into favour.

In the crash of the old clan system, the loosening of tribal bonds, the disintegration of long cherished ideals and traditions, the dispersion of communities, and the gloomy memories which these changes entailed, it was not at all unnatural that the Highland people, broken in spirit and fortune as they were, should find a solace in singing or reciting the sacred lays.

The stern, Puritanic theology of the latter seemed to be in close harmony with their own tragic experiences, and the sentiment appealed to them.

It will be seen that the chief characteristic of the hymns is a sad earnestness, rising at times, as in Buchanan, to a passionate fatalism. The common themes are sin, death, and judgment, with ameliorating reflections on the love, the sufferings, and atonement of Christ.

While the authors by no means disdain artistic effect, preaching is their main object. In their message there is no trace of the religious currents that were so characteristic of the nineteenth century. Their theory of the universe is strictly that implied in the Westminster Catechisms, logical, fixed, and determinate; and they seem to have had little inkling of other realms of thought beyond the range of their own theological duality.

Hence there is much even in the best of our sacred

poetry that no longer appeals to the modern mind, and least of all in English translations where the original metrical effect is partially or wholly wanting. Further, in so much hymn-writing, as we should expect, there is a considerable modicum, especially in the case of the less gifted, where the thought, if not hopelessly commonplace, is either tawdry or mawkishly pious.

Yet the Gaelic anthology in addition to its more sublime creations contains Christian songs of the brightest and happiest order, as may be seen from perusal of such collections as Rose's, L. Macbean's, Dr. Kelly Maccallum's, and the new Hymnal about to be issued by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Several translations, more or less successful as we have seen, have been made of the best-known pieces, but good renderings of the gems scattered over all are still a desideratum.

One peculiarity most of the Gaelic hymns have in common with the songs. They are of extraordinary length. The singing of a hundred or more stanzas seems to have been as natural and agreeable to our Highland ancestors three or four generations ago as it would be tiresome and monotonous to us. In the slow moving days such singing was indulged in as a pastime as well as for purposes of worship, and we must remember that however long or plaintive or even austere the hymns, they generally had a devotional and evangelical sentiment that appealed to the pious Highlander and helped to reconcile him to the hardest fate.

CHAPTER VII

GAELIC PROVERBS

THE first to publish a collection of Gaelic proverbs was Mr. Donald Macintosh, whose book appeared in 1785.

Born at Orchilmore, near Killiecrankie, in 1743, Macintosh was the son of a small farmer who had originally been a cooper. After receiving a parish school education, he acted for a time as tutor to the younger members of his father's family and some neighbours' children.

By and by, in the hope of bettering his fortune, the youth, probably then grown to manhood, removed to Edinburgh, and in 1774 or 1775 might have been seen as one of Peter Williamson's penny-post men, with his bell in his hand and on his head a uniform cap on which were painted in gilt letters the words, "Williamson's Penny Post." In this capacity he collected and delivered letters. "But, as he wrote a pretty legible hand," remarks his quaint biographer, Alexander Campbell, "he got employment occasionally to keep books and transcribe papers, which caused him to lay aside his cap and bell and take up the more honourable calling of a quill-driver."

Perhaps it was his good fortune in falling in with much proverb lore in the possession of one John Wallace, in his native district, that led him to think of compiling a book of Gaelic popular sayings.

At any rate in 1784 he made a tour to Lochaber, where he obtained from a namesake of his own a considerable proportion of the proverbs that went to make up his volume,

and thus equipped with material, he took counsel with the leading literary Gaels of the time, who encouraged him in his enterprise.

Soon after the publication of the book Macintosh was admitted into the office of Mr. Davidson, Deputy Keeper of the Signet and Crown Agent, and was also appointed "Clerk for the Gaelic Language" to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.

These appointments he held till his curious career was influenced by an occurrence, far enough removed, one would think, from his destiny. This was the death, in 1788, of Prince Charlie, an event which, it appears, caused quite a flutter among a remnant of the Scottish Episcopal Church who remained faithful to the Stuart cause and would not pray for the reigning Sovereign as long as the Prince's brother, the Cardinal, whom they hailed as Henry the Ninth, was alive. When the great body of their brethren substituted the name of George in the morning service for that of Charles this remnant seceded. They had just one prelate, Bishop Rose, who being very old, consecrated a Mr. Brown as his successor, and this Bishop Brown finding Macintosh a willing subject, put him in deacon's orders and in due time ordained him priest. As pastor the quondam quill-driver ministered to the faithful few scattered over a vast district from Loch Katrine and Glenfinlas right up through Glen Tilt and Glen Shee as far as Banff. Thus our proverbist ultimately emerges in his own last will and testament as a figure not unlike Ossian after the Feinn. "I, the Reverend Donald Macintosh, a priest of the old Scots Episcopal Church, and last of the non-jurant clergy in Scotland," are the words in which he describes himself to his legatees.

In 1801, while continuing to fulfil his sacred functions, he was appointed Gaelic Translator and Keeper of Gaelic Records to the Highland Society of Scotland, which office he held with the other till his death in Edinburgh in 1808.

After all, Macintosh is best remembered for his book of proverbs. Regarding it Sheriff Nicolson has justly

remarked that it has the great merit of being a genuine product of the past, the editor's share in the compilation of which consisted in simply giving as correctly as he could the words of sayings familiar to the people among whom he lived, rendering them into English, and occasionally illustrating them by an explanation, an anecdote, or a parallel.

The compiler had intended to issue a new edition, but on his removal by death this work fell to the hands of Alexander Campbell, author of *The Grampians Desolate*, and editor of *Albyn's Anthology* (2 vols. 1816-1818), who sent it to press in 1819 with a new dedication and such other additions as he may have found among Macintosh's papers. His own share in the work is quaint enough, consisting as it does of what has been characterised as "a curiosity in biography," and the "Englishing anew" of the proverbs.

As Campbell's ignorance of Gaelic appears to have been phenomenal for a translator, one wonders how the idea ever entered his head that he could improve upon Macintosh. For example, to take one instance, the pithy proverb "Cha 'n ann do 'n ghuin an gaire" is neatly and fairly accurately rendered by Macintosh as "Smiles are not companions of pain." This the more grandiloquent and Johnsonian Campbell thinks he has bettered by Englishing as follows: "The laugh is not excited by the sharp lancinating pain of a stitch." Similar aberrations of his faculty for translation might be cited.

From this time a more general interest appears to have been taken in the proverbs; and proverbial maxims and phrases began to appear in the dictionaries and the magazines. First, in the monthlies associated with the pen of Dr. Norman Macleod, who spiced his prose—the Gaelic dialogues, in particular—with witty sayings of popular usage. Later, in newspapers such as the *Highlander* and *Gael*, and more recently in the *Celtic Magazine*, the *Oban Times*, and the *Highland News*.

But for upwards of three score years after the publication

of the second edition of Macintosh's collection, no other book appeared either to supplement or supersede it. At length, in 1881, came the work of Alexander Nicolson, M.A., LL.D., which is based on Macintosh's volume and is now the standard work. For this collection Sheriff Nicolson received contributions from the Rev. Messrs. J. G. Campbell, Tiree; J. W. Macintyre, Kilmodan; M. Macphail, Kilmartin; and A. Macgregor, Inverness; Messrs. Alexander Carmichael, North Uist; Archibald Sinclair, Glasgow; Donald C. Macpherson, Advocates' Library; Donald Maclaren, Lochearn; Alexander Mackay, and Murdo Macleod, Edinburgh; Mrs. Mary Mackellar; and other sources.

Thus while the number of proverbs in Macintosh's first edition was 1305, and in the second 1538, in Nicolson's it exceeds 3900, a number which, there is every reason to believe, is by no means exhaustive. The Sheriff's is a book, however, which with its preface and notes brings the subject more comprehensively before us. Yet as the proverbs are arranged alphabetically and not in categories, there remains much interesting work for the student who would exploit this mine.

Some of the sayings are common in one form or another to various countries; we might almost say they are universal proverbs; others are evidently borrowed, but a very considerable proportion are of native origin and growth. And these are of special interest, furnishing us as they do, when put into proper focus, a revelation of the people's peculiarities, habits, and ideas.

Without going into detail in the enumeration of those which serve to enforce the natural virtues, such as self-respect, fidelity, courage, temperance, patience, industry, kindness, courtesy, hospitality, etc., of which there are, as in most languages, a great many, we may in this study arrange some of them under such leading characteristic categories as will help to exhibit the Gael in his own native atmosphere of feeling and fancy, of thought and action, of moral, superstitious, and historical associations.

It is plain from the outset that in reading over these proverbs, all of which may not be exclusively Highland, we encounter gems of thought which would do no discredit to a Socrates, a Marcus Aurelius, or a Seneca. While there are many that may have originated in simple minds, there are not a few that we associate rather with the thought of the philosopher who reflects deep and long on the phenomena of experience and gives utterance to his expressions in short epigrammatic sayings which have ultimately passed into the popular currency.

Such are some wise utterances like these :—

The stone which my foot meets not hurts me not.
Silent is the operation of ruin.
Do what becomes you and you will see what pleases you.
The wise man's opinion is nearest the truth.
A good name is easier lost than gained.
That ostentation was not needless.
Assurance is two-thirds of success.
The man who goes forth always with his net will catch birds now and then.

This last illustrates rather forcibly the law of averages.

That some of the Gaelic proverbs are very ancient there can be no manner of doubt. Among those that refer to prehistoric times we have at least two reminiscent of Druidism, several that refer by name to Fionn and his heroes, others that embody various time-honoured names and incidents. A few profess to be the sayings of early mythical or historical characters such as :—

Fionn to Ossian—

Follow close the fame of your ancestors.

Motto of Gaul Mac Morna—

First to come and last to go.

And the sarcastic remark of St. Columba,

Where a cow is, a woman will be ; where a woman is, temptation will be.

The paradoxical saw,

> The liberal (bronnair) will get as he spends (mar a bhronnas e),
> but the niggard will get more wretchedness,

is evidently very old, for the word *bronn* or *pronn* is now obsolete in vernacular Gaelic, and occurs only in Ossianic ballads. The following list therefore may be noted as having reference to names and incidents of the more ancient times :—

As clever as Coivi the Druid.
Though the stone is near the ground, yet nearer is Coivi's aid.
As strong as Cuchulinn.
As strong as Garbh Mac Stairn.
Like peerless Fionn, a shelter to the Feinn.
Almost, but didn't, the worst dog in the Feinn pack.
Fionn's door was free to the needy.
Fionn never climbed a brae, and he left no brae unclimbed.
(Probably he zigzagged up.)
Fionn never forsook his right-hand friend.
Fionn never fought a fight without offering terms.
The fairplay of the Feinn.
Like Ossian after the Feinn.
If it be not Bran, it is his brother.
Conan's life among the demons—if bad for me, for them no better.
It would be something to one man, but it is a small thing for two, as Alexander the Proud said about the world.

(Alexander the Great is generally called *Uaibhreach*—that is, proud—in Gaelic).

St. Patrick's tribute from Ireland would not pay it.
Na tagh Brinneagag, no Grinneagag, no Gaogag,
No ruadh bheag, no ruadh mhòr, no ruadh mhàsach
Ach ciarag bheag air dhath na luch na sir's na seachain i.

[Cormac's advice to his son about choosing a wife—Nicolson, p. 330.]

What meddles not with thee, meddle thou not with it ; quoth the Bell of Scone.
All songs up to the Song of the Red One ;
All lays up to the Lay of the Great Fool ;
All tales up to the Tale of Connal ;
All fame up to the Fame of Ewen ;
All praise up to the Praise of Loch Cè.

(A saying which carries us back into the early golden age of Celtic literary production).

The records of the Gael for many centuries being so full

of forays, of feuds, and tribal battles, it is natural that there should linger among the proverbial literature of the race, allusions to fighting and the dangers and possibilities of the fray. Such references do occur, and the bow and sword and dagger are not infrequently mentioned, as witness the following :—

No hero is proof against wound.
The man who will not yield, will be yielded to.
The man who will not flee, will be fled from.
Great noise and little hurt.
The knife in the place of the sword.
He that is not used to the sword will leave it where he sat.
He that did not get at his bow, got at his sword.
He who would not wait for his bow would not wait for his sword.
I would give him a night's quarters though he had a man's head under his arm.
At daggers drawing.
Never show your teeth if you may not bite.
As an arrow darts from the bow.
Neither desire nor decline the strife.
One knock on the head or two on the neck.
I like not the plunderer's flow of salutation.
Better is a good retreat than a bad stand.
It is a hard fight from which one man does not come
Fear is worse than battle.
Fear often begets danger.
Bloodshed from a battle, and a battle from a shot.
It is easy to take a man's part, but the matter is to maintain it.
It is proper to lay by something for a sore foot.
Oft-times has the little (man) proved powerful.
The man's knife down there and the man's sheath up yonder.
Tighten your belt till you get food.
The man who would put his finger in my eye, I would put my knee on his chest.
The foray and the pursuit have different tales to tell.
It is not a bad foray where the half is kept.

Revenge, too, was a concomitant of the warlike life notoriously dear to the Highlander of old.

Though Barra be far out, it can be reached.
(Said by one of the Mac Ians of Ardnamurchan to Macneil of Barra who had been very hard on him at a Court of Justice.)

Other proverbs are equally threatening:—

That he would yet be the end of him.
I'll make you so that you cannot drink milk from a spoon.
Conan never got a stroke without returning one.

A characteristic of the Gael of ruder days which must not be passed over, for it is much in evidence, is his readiness to curse, and fling maledictions against his foe. The anathemas sound very fearful sometimes in the original.

The death-bandage on thee!
Poverty take thee!
The omen of your hanging to you!
A bad death to you!
You are an ox and may you enjoy the name!
Heart burning to thee!

These were some of his choice phrases when he wished his neighbour ill. Yet we are happy to find that though the Highlander was impetuous in malediction, even as was Columcille himself, his treasury of proverbs shows an equally cordial and intense desire to heap goodness and happiness and luck and well-being upon the objects of his affection and such as he had good reason to count his friends. There is a warmth of fervour and beauty of expression in some of the following good wishes which are quite refreshing and do credit to the Gaelic heart.

Thy choice of sweetheart and full store of cattle to thee!
(very pretty)
May your pulse beat as your heart would wish.
Length of good life to thee!
Peace to thy soul and a stone on thy cairn!
Arthur's journey to you!
Both ends of the rope and leave to pull it!
Delay to the day of the shovel!
Good luck befall you.
Every day good luck to thee,
And no day of sorrow be!

Whatever the ethics of the Gael may have been in the more turbulent periods of his history, his proverb legacy

is not lacking in a strong sense of right and wrong and a persistent enforcement of moral truths. In one or two instances, as in the doctrine of sacrifice and the idea of theft, neither his theory nor his practice seems to have coincided with the modern conception or usage. Moral maxims are represented thus :—

Woe is he who fears not falsehood.
Better to be poor than to be false.
Small is the difference between right and wrong.
It is right to take the good man's counsel.
Better be blessed than prudent.
Better to be alone than in bad company.
Truth is frequently bitter in the telling.
Commend the dead.
Better the long clean road than the short dirty one.
Better teach the world than shun it.
The first vice is to get into debt, the next is to go telling lies.
Shame is more lasting than anything.
Truth is better than gold.
A lie needs a prop.
Time tells everything.
Honour is a tender thing.
A man will die to save his honour.
There is little and much between right and wrong.
Delay to the evildoer is not an oversight.
Good done to an old man, good done to a bad man, and good done to a little infant, are three goods cast away.
Put not your sickle without leave into another man's standing corn.
Good thoughts come not from an unclean heart.
Put off evil to the last.
Eschew evil, and evil will fly you.
May harm betide hapless greediness.
A salmon from the pool, a wand from the wood, and a deer from the hill are thefts which no man was ever ashamed to own.

So thought the Gael of old times, and some poachers still, but sentiment has changed since this proverb first came into vogue.

Alongside these aphorisms and adages of morality it is worth while considering some of the Gaelic business maxims.

There is an expending that proves a saving, and there is a saving which proves expending.
(B 99)

I'll keep no reckoning with him that keeps no reckoning with me.
A man in a farm and his thoughts away is better out of it.
If a man looks not after his business, his business won't look after him.
Better not begin, than stop without finishing.
He that does not do his work as quickly as his mate, must do it at a less convenient time.
Begun is two-thirds done.
It is a poor trade that is not learned.
A new boat and old rocks.
Wherever you are, get what you can.
Bare is the flat stone you may not take a hold of.
Frequently does the pedlar depreciate what he would wish to have in his pack.
It is not easy to deprive the hand of its customary skill.
To scatter is easier than to gather.
The kern's share is difficult to lay by.
Much might be done under the hand of a good man.
Correct reckoning leaves friends satisfied.
Better be idle than labour for nought.
Better to be slow in buying than tardy in paying.
Ofttimes has good-luck attended a slow traveller.
Abandon not your old clothes till you get your new.

"The kern's share is difficult to lay by" is a particularly happy way of expressing the truth that thought is not always taken, nor is it easy to make allowance for the depreciation of a machine or other article. Indeed these proverbs sometimes not only hit off common affairs very neatly, but they also show a very shrewd insight into character. Thus:—

A man that is neither good nor bad does more harm than good.
Every man has a "Were it not" in him.
You may go round the world, but you will not meet a man without fault.
He changed his haunt, but not his habit.
Though you were called a dog, you would be the very marrow of a hound.
The clothes are not the man, but he is no man without them.
Though poor, I am not a parasite.
A farmer on his feet is taller than a gentleman on his knees.
Till two days before he die, man should not speak his weightiest word.
As a man is himself, he thinks of his neighbour.

It may surprise many to learn, considering the place whisky occupies in the Highland esteem, both as an industry

and as a beverage, that among all the proverbs of Nicolson's collection, extending to nearly four thousand, the name is only mentioned once, thus —"The great churl's whisky, let us drink it, and no thanks to him." Of course there are frequent references to *Deoch-an-doruis*, and such homely names, to which no stigma adhered.

More astonishing still is the attitude towards religion which is little in evidence in these proverbs, at least in the popular doctrinal forms. Sheriff Nicolson, eager to present in the best light what apparently seemed to him so lean a fact, volunteered the opinion that "there is a religion of old date indicated in some of the proverbs, the creed of which is very short and simple, but good so far as it goes." This creed he characterised as distinctly necessitarian, implying a fixed belief that there is a Fate or Providence that shapes our ends,—a tenet associated in later sayings with belief in an almighty and just God. But this savours more of a philosophy than a popular religion, and simply shows us that the popular religion does not obtrude itself in the existing collection of adages.

Notwithstanding the fact that Christianity has been known to the Gael for ages, it is not in any single instance mentioned. There is no reference to Christ by any of His names, nor is there any allusion to the popular doctrines of the Christian religion. Heaven and Hell are rarely heard of, and never in the lurid imagery of Buchanan or of the Puritan theology. This is most singular considering the hold religion has had from time to time upon the Gael. The outstanding Christian doctrine of self-sacrifice, in particular, appears to find no recognition in these proverbs. In the saying "Good done to an old man, good done to a bad man, good done to a little infant, are three goods cast away," it even appears to be discountenanced, as also in the proverb "Better be idle than labour for nought." The clergy were not always perfect, if we may judge by the following caustic remarks.

God has not said all thou hast said.
It is not the priest's first story that should be believed.

It is his own child the priest baptizes first.
The priest drank only what he had.
The justice of the clergy to each other.
The friendship of the clergy, scraping and scratching one another.
Hard as is the factor's rule, no better is the minister's.

It is true that fate or destiny figures largely in the proverbs. Thus we say :—

There is no guard against necessity.
What must be, must.
The bigger beast eating the lesser one, and the lesser one doing as it may. (The Gaelic version of "Nature red in tooth and claw.")
There never was a burst of joy that deep grief did not follow. (Greek idea of Nemesis.)
Your portion was never amissing.
Though separation be hard, two never met but had to part.
The worst, if strongest, will be uppermost. (So we say, "God is on the side of the biggest battalions.")
For whom ill is fated, him it strikes.
The fated will happen.
Where folk's fate is to go, ford or hill won't prevent.
It is woeful on whomsoever falls all that is sufferable.
Many things befall the calf that his dam never thought of.
Be not a man of sorrow with regard to futurity; you will get your allotted portion. (A saying quite Emersonian.)
He hath himself his own question's solution.
Good comes of sadness.
To bestow luck on the unlucky man is not easy.
The man fated to misfortune is he whom it touches.
The thing that made the roe swim the loch? Necessity.
The thing that is destined is inevitable.
A man may push a livelihood, but cannot force fortune.
His hour was pursuing him.
He had a life coming, *i.e.* his hour was not yet come.
One must go where his grave awaits him.

It is in the conception of death that the Gaelic idea of Necessity, Greek *ἀνάγκη*, comes out most forcibly.

Strong is the smith, he can split the iron,
But stronger is death than the smith.
Death makes some poor and others wealthy.
Death comes not without excuse.
The hour is as unknown as the minute.
Death comes not till the time comes.

A child may survive bad nursing, but he cannot escape death.
Death and flitting are hard on housekeeping.
The earth must have its portion.
There is hope of a mariner's return (from sea), but none of a man from the churchyard, *i.e.* from the grave.
It is a little excuse that brings the old woman to the churchyard.
It is a small thing that brings a man to the churchyard when his sweetheart is there.
The noise of burning brushwood and the cry of an old woman do not last long.

On the other hand, the number of proverbs in which the name of the Deity is mentioned is small. In these God is still thought of as Fate or Providence ordering human affairs, but in contrast to the more abstract idea underlying previous adages, here He is regarded as personal, kindly, sympathetic, righteous, and good.

What God has promised man cannot baulk.
Two days alike ill, God to poor men doth not will.
God never sent a mouth into the world without providing its portion.
From God comes sleep and death, and I would close my eyes for Him only who opened them.
Not less in God's sight is the end of the day than the beginning.
All will be as God wills.
All good has an end, but the goodness of God.
Truth is pleasing to God.
What God bestowed not will not be long enjoyed.
Brief is every decree but the ordinance of God.
During distress God cometh, and when he comes it is no more distress.
The man whom God will not instruct, man cannot teach.
Assist thyself and God will aid thee.
God is stronger than Doideag (a witch);
Doideag is stronger than Maclean.
(Maclean of Duart, most potent in Mull.)
A wife may bear a son, but it is God makes him an heir.

The Devil is in evidence, but not often. It is not the Miltonian Satan we have here, nor yet the villain of popular religion. In the idea of the Gael, he appears to have been more of the tricky rascal than the personal incarnation of evil. The names by which he was commonly recognised were An Deamhan, An Diabhol, An Donas, Mòisean or

Muisean (the Mean Fellow), An Riabhach Mòr (the Great Grizzled One), Am Breamas, and An Droch-fhear (the Bad Man). His character is represented by these epithets, and proverbs such as the following:—

The Devil is often attractive.
The Devil was never found dead behind a dyke.
Sain thyself from the Deil and the laird's bairns.
The Great Grizzled One catch thee.
What is got at the Devil's head will be lost at his tail.
Evil comes by talking of it.
The Devil waits his day.
The Devil's loan to the mill.
The Mischief will not outwit you.
What sent the Devil to hell? Asking what he knew full well.

The Gael was often superstitious beyond all reason, but he does not seem to have been so ready as we might expect to throw the blame for every mischief done, on Mòisean. On the contrary, he looked to the proper quarter and had an eye to evil persons and evil influences, whose wiles and spells he tried either to avoid or counteract, and thus combat the lurking dangers. So we hear of—

The succour from spells.
Sweet is the lark at dawn, but sweeter the cock at midnight.
See that the eye does not rest upon it.
Wet your eye lest it light on him.
Him that yields to spells, let spells yield to.
Alas for tender infant's mother when Beltane falls on Thursday.
A red-haired black-eyed woman, a dun fiery-eyed dog a black-haired red-bearded man—the three unluckiest to meet.
There's no holiday for nails, but Friday and Sunday.

I would cut my hair on Thursday,
And pare my nails on Monday;
Then I'd sail from sea to sea.

Go about the bridge as the ghost did.
The dream of the night is but a warning unsolved.
He has bewitched blood in his head.
When Hallowmas falls on Wednesday all men are uneasy.

I heard the cuckoo while fasting,
I saw the foal with his back to me,
I saw the snail on the flag-stone bare,
And I knew that the year would be bad for me.

The cry is in my ear: God keep all who are dear to me.
(The death warning.)
As numerous as Finlay's people. (Lewis name for fairies.)
Large mouth is often lucky.

The Gaelic sayings regarding the weather show that notwithstanding opinions to the contrary, the weather in the past did not differ so much from that which we experience to-day.

Winter comes not till after New Year, nor Spring till after St. Patrick's day (March 17).
February's calm and Dog-days' wind won't last long.
Finest Autumn—sun and shower.
Long harvest and little reaping.
Autumn to Christmas; Winter to St. Patrick's day (March 17); Spring to St. Peter's day (June 29); Summer to Martinmas.
Better foray coming to the land than mild morning in the cold Faoilleach (corresponding with February).

South wind, heat and plenty;
West wind, fish and milk;
North wind, cold and tempest;
East wind, fruit on branches.
(This saying is said to have reference to the direction of the wind on the last night of the year.)

Frosty Winter, misty Spring, chequered Summer, and sunny Autumn, never left dearth in Scotland.
It is a hard Spring when the wilks are counted.
There is the mark of turf-clearing in the sky, it will be fine to-morrow.
The brown rain at the fall of the leaf; the black rain at the springing of roots; and the gray rain of May—the three worst of waters.
A Spring protracted long after Easter.
It were pity dry weather should do harm.
A dappled sky to-day: a good day to-morrow.
Better to have snow in May than to be without rain.

If the Highlander had much to say of the eccentricities of the weather, in his own way he knew a good deal also of the disorders of the body, and some of the proverbs in the medical line are certainly very odd. For example we are assured that—

An egg without either salt or butter may breed a malady at seven years' end.
If the cow's fat applied outwardly and inwardly heal not a Gael, his cure is not to be found.
There is no sickness without salve, but for death no check.
Grey St. Patrick's wort (groundsel) will drive pain away from the bone.
Good nurture overcomes disease.
By degrees comes health, but in great waves comes sickness.
A long disease and death at its root.

"The mad fellow in a creel," though a pathetic, is also a ludicrous spectacle, since it suggests the Highlander's expedient for a strait waistcoat.

That the clansmen were not unfamiliar with adversity, and many a time with the direst poverty, is evidenced by their proverbial lore as well as by their history.

There are many fine touches and much pathos in the sayings that treat of straitened circumstances.

It is best known to a man himself where his shoe hurts him.
The burden is heavy that is unsupported.
The needy must "keep moving."
Small is the alms that is better than none.
The poor man has many faults.
It is an evil thing to be without substance.
Truth will come out with misfortune.
Every peat's end has its ain reek.
Many an evil comes out of one calamity.
The destitute man was friendless ever.
The poor man's wisdom is as useless as a palace in a wilderness.
There is no distress like that of the utterly destitute.
A lonely man is of no value.
The man who is in the mire every one treads on him.
But—The blind of an eye is a king among the blind.
Many a ship as broken has come to land.
The day is longer than the brae; we'll be at the top yet.

Taken as a whole, the Gaelic proverbs are by no means melancholy. They do not leave a sombre impression. On the contrary, their sarcasm, mother-wit, and characteristic humour lend a piquancy and *bonhomie* to the collection which is rather agreeable. Though, as in the case of the poets,

irony and satire are more in evidence than humour strictly so-called, the latter is by no means absent, as may be seen from the following :—

My grandmother could understand that, and she was two generations behind.
What the women do not know they will conceal.
Like a hound lapping broth are the names of Clan Maclean ; Eachann, Lachlann ; Eachann, Lachlann.
Whoever burns his bottom must himself sit on it.
He is like Mackay's cat, still in the flesh.
That were trusting a pudding to the black dog.
The badger's opinion of his own claws—a poor opinion.
Donald Martin's cold.
(Donald was said to take a cold once a quarter, which lasted three months.)
For mirth to the company, as the slattern went to dance.
He remembers the burning of his finger.
You would be a good messenger to send for death.
Martin's smile at his porridge.
"That's a pair !" as the crow said to her feet.
It is difierent with the man of the boil and the man that squeezes it.
The King does not care for Ewen, and Ewen cares not whether or no.
What is good for the Jura factor will do no harm to fleecy Macphail.
(A dram.)

Some things the Gael considered beyond the reach of possibility. Here are a few :—

Yesterday won't visit to-day.
I cannot eat the meal, and blow the fire.
I might as well attempt to bore a stone with my finger.
What is not but, cannot be brought ben.
Neither fire nor water can be grasped.
A peat cannot fall from an empty creel.
There is no good that may not be marred.
Black will not change its colour.
Wet fuel may kindle, but a stone never will.
What never came, nor will come home : the roe's liver untainted.
You may take the life from him, but not the manly look.
Till the sea takes fire, you cannot be the sire of another man's children.
An empty bag cannot stand upright.
Time will not wait, nor tide show mercy.

Yet still many things are possible—

Your cow perhaps may come to my fold yet.

Name references, especially to clansmen, are very common. They are usually concerned with some quaint saying, humorous incident, or clan trait of the past, and thus help to perpetuate the memory of bygone scenes and sayings and incidents which would otherwise have been forgotton.

The clans will here find snap-shots of their ancestors.

Ask anything of a Cameron but butter.
Mackillop's invitation—"Take or leave."
Better were it for Macdonald to have as much as would cover himself.
The dry feet of the Macintoshes; also, The delay of the Macintoshes.
As fond as the Macleods are of cats.
(There is a tradition that long ago one of the Dunvegan family was killed by a cat, hence their aversion.)
It is not every day that Macintosh holds a court.
It is not every day that Macneil mounts his horse.
The Nicolsons are not revengeful.
The Clan Farquhar will flourish till the tenth generation.
There is a hidden nobleness in the Maclachlans.
The race of the foxes—Clan Martin.
Macdonald swagger and Maclean airs.
There never was a clown of the Macgregors, nor a hussy of the Macnabs.
The Robertsons' drink.
The gentleman of Clan Maclean and the warrior of Clan Ranald.
As long as there are moors in Kintail, Mackenzie will not want cattle in the pen.
I have seen two Mackenzies before you.
The seal Maccodrums.
The gruelly Macphersons.
Hills and water and Macalpines, but when did the Macarthurs come?
To whom will Matheson be good, if not to himself?
To whom can I make my complaint and no Clanranald in Moidart.
Macquarrie has his own luck, whether it be hard or soft.
Macphie would take it for warning.
The Clans of the Gael shoulder to shoulder!
Like Mackillops' barley bread, getting better and better.
Every man that's down in luck will get a dollar from Mackay.
(This refers to the enlisting for the Highland regiment raised by Lord Reay for service under the King of Denmark (1626-29) and Gustavus Adolphus (1629-32), in which the men of Sutherland won so much renown.)

Equally interesting are the proverbial references to place-

names, of which there is a considerable number enlivening the collection, such as—

Though Cromarty should go with the tide.
The Barvas folks' fishing.
Till Argyll be a King, Iona will be as she was.
England's art, and Scotland's force.
The queerness of the people of Muckairn.
There is no stick, straight or crooked, but will find use in Roag.
(Sheriff Nicolson writes that this saying reminds one of Dr. Johnson's reply to Boswell, on being consoled with the hope that his oak stick, which he had lost, would be recovered, "No, no, my friend," said the Doctor, "it is not to be expected that any man in Mull who has got it will part with it. Consider, sir, the value of such a piece of timber here.")

Bonnie Tain, and hungry Dornoch,
Skibo for apples, and Beil for oat-cakes.
Eribol for haddocks, Dunrobin for kail,
Golspie for black-shells, Drumuie for brine.

You would not suit well in the lower end of Troternish.
It was done to please the company, as the tailor went to Perth.
Stir thee, Sunart! Ardnamurchan is done for.
Butter is scarce in Holland.
The Guernsey sheep came last night and ate it.
He that has Rome, must keep up Rome.
Beloved Scotland!
Should never a cow be calved in Ireland!
Great is the profit of the Aird to Lovat.
Russet Sleat of pretty women.

If the Gael had a belief in fate, he had equally strong views on heredity, or blood. And the virtues or vices of ancestors were looked for in their *sliochd* (descendants). This is often hinted if not roundly expressed in the proverbs.

The twist of the mother is natural to the daughter.
Sad is the inheritance of a bad disease.
Pity him whose birthright is to eat dirt.
The swarthy girl takes after her blood.
That was his birthright. (*Bu dual da sin*—very common.)
Ofttimes has a good cow had a bad calf.
From the sow there comes but a pig.
Swarthiness is hereditary.
A black ewe may have a white lamb

Though bad the bird, the chicken is worse.
An old man's child has often had a touch of madness.

The love of home and the admiration of women have always been distinguishing features of the Gael. Have we not mention of their heroines in our earliest Sagas, and was it not their romantic tales that created in great measure the chivalry of the middle ages in Europe? With them the marriage tie was always a sacred bond, to be entered with great rejoicings and much ceremony. It is interesting therefore to read the sayings that have been and still are current among the people on subjects that lie so near their hearts. In doing so one of the things that most powerfully strike us is the extraordinary influence for good or ill with which woman is credited in these proverbs. She makes or mars, bends or breaks, according to her whim, or more often her innate qualities.

Home, women, and marriage are thus breezily represented :—

A house without dog, without cat, without child, a house without cheerfulness or laughter.
The three kindest things I ever met: my home, my purse, and my mother.
Good is the good man's wife; but it is better to get her good than to make her so.
Women's patience—till you count three.
A dear-wife may be got, but a love-wife is rare.
Who can do ill but the women?
A wise wife will set a man up, but a foolish one will bring him down with both hands.
A man cannot get rich unless his wife allow him.
As swift as the fancy of foolish women.
There never was good or ill but women had to do with.
The pride of women will never be laid in the dust.
One woman understands another woman.
Two old women could dispose of it without leaving the fireside. (How potent is gossip—the feminine avizandum.)
Take a bird from a clean nest.
Choose the good mother's daughter were the Devil her father.
When you see a well-bred woman, catch her, catch her! if you don't do it, another will match her.

Harsh is the praise that cannot be listened to, dark are the dames that cannot be dallied with.
You are too merry, you ought to marry.

References to music, especially the harp, are not uncommon. In view of the length of many Highland productions, the first proverb here quoted is reassuring.

The longest chant has an end.
They heard the music but understood not the tune.
You will get it for a song.
Pity him who would burn his harp for you.
Harsh is the harper of one tune.
You would take as long to tune your pipe as another would to play a tune.
It is a slender string he cannot take a tune from.
Neil would make harps if others would put music into them.

Throughout the entire proverbial treasury of the Gael there are many beautiful poetical sayings which show the Highlander's inherent wistful outlook upon Nature, and his intimate, loving, admiring, and close observation of, and acquaintance with, her sights and sounds. A few choice examples will serve for illustration.

What could be more delightfully natural in thought and felicitous in expression than the following?

Wave will rise on silent water.
Listen to the mountain wind till the streams abate.
Any one may laugh on a hillside.
Sending birds to the wood.
Blue are the hills that are far from us.
Night is a good herdsman: she brings all creatures home.
The three prettiest dead—a child, a salmon, and a blackcock.
The sea likes to be visited.
Black is the berry, but sweet! black is my lassie, but bonnie!
Every bird is melodious in its own grove.

From these various categories that we have been considering it will be seen that the Gaelic proverbs and familiar phrases offer a rich field for the study of the ways of thinking

and feeling, the life and manners, the wisdom and superstition, the wit and even the vagaries of the Celtic inhabitants of Scotland in times past; and as has been wisely observed, they are interesting in this respect not only to the historian, but also to the philologist and student of human nature.

CHAPTER VIII

ENGLISH RENDERINGS OF GAELIC POETRY AND THEIR AUTHORS

To English-speaking people who are dependent upon translations for their knowledge of the songs and poetry of the Gael, these latter must often appear very poor and insipid in comparison with the artistic productions of their own language. Even the best, the most lauded efforts of men like Alexander Macdonald, Duncan Ban Macintyre, and Dugald Buchanan seldom show in their English dress half so fine as in the original. Few would ever divine that in the tuneful Gaelic these poems are of the most exquisite order.

Various reasons have been assigned for this, such as the difficulty of rendering any poem, especially lyric poetry, from one language to another; and in the case of songs, the want of adaptability of English words to Gaelic tunes; but the chief reason is undoubtedly the difficulty presented by the Gaelic metres. Hardly any of these are so simple as the forms common in English, and many of them are so intricate that they defy imitation. This arises from the fact that more than almost any other language, the ancient tongue of the Gael depends for its rhyme and rhythm upon numerous assonances or repetitions of the same vowel sound, in the body of the lines as well as at the end. And to repeat this in English and still preserve the original effect and meaning is usually impossible. Yet if it is not done an essential part of the poetry is lost.

Added to that there is the further consideration, that the sensuous element is very strong in the Gaelic. The attempt to convey music in words has been carried perhaps further there than in any other poetry, and to reproduce all the richness of rhythm, the lusciousness of sound and perfection of harmony characteristic of such poems as Mary Macleod's or Duncan Ban Macintyre's, is hardly to be expected of any one who tries to construe in another language. The spirit of the original may be kept, the form may be approximately imitated, and even the obvious meaning conveyed, but the beautiful expression, the delicate elusive shades of feeling, and the warm, rich tints peculiar to the Celtic muse are missed. Hence it is that Gaelic almost always suffers in translation, and English readers are puzzled to find the charm that lurks in those vernacular lyrics that fall with such enchantment on Highland ears, and which competent authorities assure them are of rare quality.

Notwithstanding the difficulties, there have not been wanting able and enthusiastic admirers of Highland poetry who have attempted to produce English renderings worthy of the originals, and some of them have been so far successful that now a very fair proportion of the best poetry of the North may be read in the national language, either in the form of prose-poetry or of verse.

This is in itself so important a work and so necessary to the spread of a real knowledge of the Gaelic literature, that an account of the more prominent translators cannot but prove interesting.

It is significant of the attitude of the outside world towards the belligerent, and, as they were then commonly esteemed, barbarous Highlanders, that before the Forty-five no efforts seem to have been made to translate any of their poetry into English. There was no demand for such despised stuff. But soon after the middle wall of partition between the Gael and Saxon got broken down, a new spirit of curiosity prevailed, and among other classes some of the *literati* of England and Scotland began to cast wistful glances on the

weird hinterland, so long the object of their dread and aversion.

It is not strange therefore that the desire for English renderings should arise among English-speaking people, but it is somewhat remarkable that the first to attempt translation was an English-speaking man of letters, Jerome Stone, who acquired his knowledge of the Highland tongue while first assistant in, and afterwards Rector of, the Grammar School, Dunkeld. Born at Scoonie, Fifeshire, in 1727, Stone was by birth a Lowlander. While a student at St. Andrews it is said his interest in Highland lore was first awakened through the remarks of one of his professors, and when he afterwards went to reside within the Celtic fringe, having developed scholarly tastes, he naturally turned his attention to the products of the Gaelic Muse. And so pursuing his literary researches among the local people, this talented youth recognised before any outsider the value of the traditional poetry of the Highlands, and was the real discoverer to modern knowledge of the ancient Ossianic ballads.

He translated several, not with any literal exactness, but with the freedom of poetical composition which best accords with the rendering of a poem from one language to another. His most important contribution was his version of "Fraoch's Death" known as "Albin and the daughter of Mey," which appeared in the *Scots Magazine* in 1756, the year of his death, and a sample of which has already been given (p. 10).

Stone passed from the literary arena almost unnoticed, but his mantle fell on the more brilliant James Macpherson, who by similar renderings, mostly his own creative work, electrified the world of letters in this country and on the Continent.

It has already been shown how the obscure Badenoch student was led on quite fortuitously to this fruitful task. In his capacity as tutor to young Graham of Balgowan he had the good fortune on one occasion to meet John Home, the poet, at Moffat. Home was one of those at that time on the outlook for some information regarding the quality of the inscrutable and otherwise elusive Gaelic poetry which seemed

to exist only in the memory of the least accessible Celts, and he was heartily glad to learn through a friend that the Balgowan tutor could furnish specimens.

Needless to say the author of *Douglas* immediately availed himself of the opportunity presented, and persuaded Macpherson—not without some difficulty at first, it is said—to make an English version of one of the best Ossianic ballads he knew. It was then the poetic youth produced his rendering of "The Death of Oscar," just as Stone had previously selected "The Death of Fraoch." That was the first outcome of this chance solicitation, but it was followed in June of the next year, 1760, by the famous "Fragments of Ancient Poetry collected in the Highlands of Scotland."

The story of the later and longer epics which he issued also as translations needs no reiteration here. It is sufficient to say that these so-called renderings served admirably to continue the work inaugurated by Stone, and arouse such an interest in the poetry of the Gael as has lifted it to permanent respect in the eyes of the nations.

Among the best known of those who afterwards invoked the English Muse on behalf of the Ossianic tradition were Dr. John Smith of Campbeltown, John Clark of Badenoch, Mrs. Grant of Laggan, Rev. Mr. Maccallum of Arisaig, and in more recent times Rev. Drs. Thomas Maclauchlan, Edinburgh, and Archibald Clerk, Kilmallie.

Of these, Mrs. Anne Grant was probably the most interesting personality and certainly the one who figured most prominently in literary circles. Born in Glasgow in 1755, her father, Duncan Macvicar, was an officer in a Highland regiment, her mother a descendant of the ancient family of Stewart, Invernahyle, Argyllshire. Her early years she passed in America, whither her father had gone with his regiment. After the conquest of Canada the family removed to Vermont, settling there on the land till ill-health compelled her parent to return once more to Scotland and resume military duties, this time at Fort Augustus. There the youthful Anne got engaged to the army chaplain, James Grant,

who was afterwards minister of Laggan, and whom she married in 1779. Happy and tranquil years followed, though otherwise full of activity and care, for she was the mother of twelve children, eight of whom were living when their father died in 1801. On the death of her husband, Mrs. Grant, face to face with privation, removed first to Stirling and then to Edinburgh where she courageously maintained a home for herself and her family by means of literary work. Living till 1838, she takes her place in that galaxy of litterateurs which made Edinburgh in the early nineteenth century so brilliant a centre of letters. In the North she was an intimate friend of James Macpherson and in the South of Sir Walter Scott, Lord Jeffrey, Henry Mackenzie, and other well-known authors. So conspicuous was her interest in Highland literature and so widely known her literary ability, that the authorship of the earlier *Waverley Novels* was frequently attributed to her pen.

Her renderings from Gaelic do not bulk nearly so large as the output of the other translators above named, but from her standing as an author and her felicity of style, they made a deeper impression. It was she who first gave a metrical version of those much-prized, or at least much-talked of, modern compositions known as "The Aged Bard's Wish" and "Mordubh," and in addition clothed some of the surveyor Clark's productions in more attractive poetic garb, in the mistaken supposition that they were genuine ancient materials, and as such worthy of nobler form.

Dr. Thomas Maclauchlan did scholarly and laborious work as the translator of the Book of the Dean of Lismore, and Dr. Archibald Clerk, minister of Kilmallie, imposed upon himself the unavailing task of making an English version of Macpherson's Gaelic *Ossian* on the unshaken assumption that he was dealing with the originals of the famous epics, and that if he could not rival the brilliant English style of the Badenoch bard he could at least improve upon his translation in literal exactness. His elaborate work appeared in 1870—a monument to his Gaelic scholarship, and a further

factor in the elucidation of the Ossianic controversy; but since what he took to be the genuine originals are no longer regarded by experts as such, this careful translation has lost the interest and permanent value it was intended to have. Nevertheless Dr. Clerk occupies a worthy place among those who have striven to transfer to English some of the wealth of the Gaelic past, and by his notable effort he has constituted himself the last great worker of the group whose renderings were of Ossianic poetry.

The translators of modern poetic compositions belong almost without exception to the nineteenth century. Sir Walter Scott led the way with one or two pieces, but owing to his lack of knowledge of the Gaelic his renderings are more appropriately styled imitations than actual translations.

The first really important author to deal with the modern poems was Peter Thomas Pattison, to whom we owe the choice selection in his posthumous work entitled *Gaelic Bards*. Pattison made quite a number of metrical translations of the ancient Ossianic poetry also, such as "The Banners of the Feinn," "Ossian and Evir Alin," "The Death of Oscar," "The Lay of Diarmad," "Ossian's Address to the Sun," "The Bed of Gaul," and "Fingal going to Battle." Besides, he has given us in English verse that curious Highland poem found in the Book of the Dean of Lismore and known as "The Four Wise Men at Alexander's Grave." And like Mrs. Grant, Rev. Dr. Hugh Macmillan of Greenock, and others, he has exercised his poetic faculty on the ever-attractive "Aged Bard's Wish," so that he might worthily claim a place among the earlier band of writers already referred to, who addressed themselves mainly to the task of furnishing English versions of the older poetry. But it is of the modern bards he has given the larger number of renderings, and as he was the first really competent author to break ground here, and as his translations are still those largely in use, he is the poet of the transition and the pioneer of the later group who have made us acquainted in English metre with the masterpieces of Highland poetry.

Peter Thomas Pattison was born, as the baptismal register of Killarrow shows, on "27th August 1828," on the farm of Skerrols in Islay. When his father died, some time after, his mother and the family abandoning husbandry removed to Bowmore and thence to Fern Cottage, a charming seaside villa in the vicinity. The boy had to walk a mile to the parish school, where he was educated by Mr. John Taylor, one of whose sons was afterwards Professor of Church History and Divinity in the University of Edinburgh. Destined for the ministry, Pattison also made his way to the same university; and both there and at the University of Glasgow, to which he had gone later, this shy, retiring student studied to excellent advantage. He was particularly fond of English literature, and became intimately acquainted with the works of most of the great authors of prose and poetry. Indeed had he lived, it was expected he might himself have achieved some renown in the world of letters.

As a licentiate of the Church, he fared no better than his namesake Thomas Davidson, the clever, poetic, and attractive "Scottish Probationer" whom Dr. Brown in his popular biography has rendered so notable. Pattison had not perhaps the vivacity and humour of the versatile Borderer, but he had similar ability, and like his Chargeless, itinerant fellow-preacher whom no congregation chose to "call," he died at the comparatively early age of 37 years. Commenting on his early death, his friend Professor Taylor wrote: "It would seem as if men passed from the midst of us at intervals whose moral and intellectual worth, after covering their own lives with its beauty and bidding fair to make lovelier the lives of many, were suddenly restrained by stern, inscrutable decree from wider influence. It is as if the stream that had worn its way from the bosom of the lone hills, and made beautiful its narrow course through glen and gorge, were of a sudden to slip underground, disappearing at its broadest and strongest, where the wild flowers of the uplands give place to the green verge of tilled and peopled plains. Their natural genius and the discipline

they willingly undergo, because the eye is fixed on some farther goal, having served to trim their own *life's bark*, these men quit us on a voyage in which we may be borne to them, but from which they cannot return to us. Such men are understood only by the few who feel their power and influence, as those of a life rich in its own gifts, and moving altogether, with its faith, hopes, aims, and labours, in a plane higher than that on which the traffic of ordinary minds is driven."

So ended the career of Peter Thomas Pattison on the 16th day of October, 1865, at 28 Florence Place, Glasgow; but Gaelic literature owes a debt of gratitude to him for his zeal in making it intelligible to English readers. The princes of song, Alexander Macdonald, Duncan Ban Macintyre, Dugald Buchanan, and Rob Donn have all found an interpreter in him. Those who would know the best poems of these authors will find them rendered in English in *Gaelic Bards*. "Macleod's Ditty" by Mary Macleod, "Cuachag nan craobh," three famous Macgregor and other well-known fugitive songs, are there also, with some sixteen original poems by the author.

Pattison had a difficult task, because unlike most of the earlier translators, he attempted to give literal renderings and at the same time preserve as much as possible the original effect. It cannot be said that he entirely succeeded, for his English verses lack the verve of the original. Yet, all things considered, they are exceedingly good, and have not been surpassed except in the case of a few of the better known poems, on which more than one subsequent poet has exercised his skill.

We are thus carried well past the middle of last century before much had been attempted in the way of introducing the poetry of the modern Gaelic bards to the English public. But several capable authors who afterwards contributed were already in the field. Two of these, Professor John Stuart Blackie and Principal John Campbell Shairp, may be grouped together, for they had several points in common.

Both were men of high academic position and learning, and no mean poets, and though neither of them was of Highland origin they were enthusiastic admirers of the Celtic language and literature.

Of the two, Professor Blackie was the older, and contributed the larger share. Born at Glasgow, July 28, 1809, his father was a banker, who removed to Aberdeen when his talented son was very young. About the early age of twelve years the boy became a student in Marischal College, where he remained for four years and then attended the University of Edinburgh. Subsequently, in 1829, he migrated to the Continent, continuing his studies at Göttingen and Berlin. From Germany he removed to Italy and devoted himself to the study of the language and literature of that country as well as to the science of archæology. Scotland in due time lured him back, and there after a legal training he was called to the Bar in 1834. But not finding his adopted profession congenial, the versatile youth began writing for the reviews and translating Greek and German works. His remarkable linguistic powers found fuller recognition in 1841, when, at the age of thirty-two, he was appointed Professor of Humanity in Marischal College and University, his quondam Alma Mater; and again in 1852, when he was further promoted to the Greek Chair in the University of Edinburgh. The following year he travelled in Greece, and used to spend much of his time in after-life in the Highlands of Scotland at a beautiful villa near Oban, whence he made interesting excursions through the islands and glens of the Gael, acquiring a knowledge of the language and literature and social customs of the people.

Thus after *The Lays and Legends of Ancient Greece*, which he published in 1857, his *Homer and the Iliad*, in 1860, the *War Songs of the Germans*, in 1870, he was not unmindful to issue, in 1872, *Lays of the Highlands and Islands*. It is not necessary to mention all the books the erudite brain of the Professor produced. What we are here mostly concerned with is the volume published in 1876,

entitled *The Language and Literature of the Scottish Highlanas*. In it we have his racy account of our vernacular literary heritage illustrated by many characteristic renderings from the originals, of which it may fairly be said that his own generally are the most spirited. Among the bards who have called forth his special admiration and poetic powers of imitation were John Maccodrum, Alexander Macdonald, Dugald Buchanan, and Duncan Ban Macintyre, of the best of whose poems he has given characteristic versions. One of these poets was more than all the rest to his mind, namely, Macintyre, so richly endowed, like the Professor himself, with the love of Nature and the sympathy for all things human. Finding in the Glenorchy hunter a congenial spirit with a vein of truly original and unsophisticated poetry, Blackie has been most happy in his rendering of the bard's famous "Ben Dorain."[1] It is the best of his Gaelic translations, better even than that of Macdonald's "Birlinn," or Buchanan's "Skull," though these take a high place.

Like Professor Blackie, Principal Shairp also published original poems of his own relative to the Highlands. Indeed his claim as a poet rests chiefly on the volume entitled *Kilmahoe, a Highland Pastoral; with other Poems*, 1864. And like his enthusiastic contemporary, he was particularly fond of the poems of Macintyre, of several of which he has given English poetic renderings. In introducing passages of the translation he made of "Ben Dorain" to beguile hours of lonely wandering among the Highland hills, he says: "Be it remembered how different a thing is a wild Celtic chant, adapted to the roar and thunder of the bagpipe, from a literary performance meant only to be read by critical eyes in unexcited leisure." Though admittedly lacking the spirit and vivacity of Blackie's, Shairp's translation is not unworthy of the original in sympathetic touch and delicate grace.

This friend of the Gaelic Muse was, like his peer, a Scotsman, born at Houston House, Linlithgowshire, July 30, 1819. Educated at Edinburgh Academy, Glasgow

[1] See pp. 55-58.

University, and Balliol College, Oxford, he was appointed an assistant master of Rugby School, where he remained till 1857, from which year he undertook the duties of the Humanity Chair at St. Andrews, and subsequently was appointed to the Professorship. Ultimately he became Principal in that ancient burgh by the sea, and also Professor of Poetry at Oxford,—positions for which his scholarship and literary tastes so well qualified him.

Another notable poet, but of a younger generation, who turned his attention to Highland life, and who has given us delightful renderings of some of the hunter-bard's poems, was Robert Buchanan. From his youth Buchanan gave himself up to letters, and it is well known how he accompanied David Gray, author of the *Luggie and other Poems*, in the adventurous attempt to win fame in London, where they lived together for a while a very precarious existence in a garret. Gray, who caught cold while lying out one night in Hyde Park, did not long survive the ordeal, but Buchanan, whose death only occurred just recently, continued his literary career in the Metropolis through storm and shine for well-nigh half a century. He had been born at Caverswall, Staffordshire, August 18, 1841, and was the son of a well-known Socialist missionary long resident in Glasgow, in which city the poet was educated—first at the High School and then at the University. It is in his volume entitled *The Hebrid Isles* that his renderings of Macintyre are to be found. Those of "Coire Cheathaich" and "The last Adieu to the Hills," are very fine—apparently the best, if not the most literal, versions of these famous poems that have yet appeared. Of his translation of "Coire Cheathaich" he says, "Not a word is lost, but any Highlandman will tell you that no English could convey the unutterable tenderness and rich music of the original."

With such glowing enthusiasm and interested activity on the part of men of letters who were born and bred outside the Celtic fringe, and who only acquired what knowledge they had of Gaelic in after life, it was to be expected that

among the Gaels themselves, familiar with the language at first hand, there would be found some at least equally desirous of rendering their native poetic treasures in English. And of these there have been a prominent few, though not many. The Gael has always been slow to take the initiative, though ready to be led, and even in this matter of translation he has been largely forestalled by Saxon enterprise.

Of the older generation of Highlanders there were two who, like Pattison, first saw the light towards the end of the third decade of last century—breezy litterateurs, and very capable, if so minded, of introducing the Gaelic bards to English readers. These were Sheriff Nicolson and the Rev. Alexander Stewart, LL.D., Nether Lochaber, both of whom are now dead. Neither did much in the way of poetic rendering from the vernacular, but what they did was generally very good. Of the two, Sheriff Nicolson has contributed much the larger share.

A gifted son of Skye, the Sheriff was born at Husabost in 1827. Educated there privately, "under excellent tutors," while yet a youth he began his university career in Edinburgh with the view of entering the ministry of the Free Church. Taking the degree of B.A., he afterwards "received the honorary degree of M.A. in respect of services rendered as assistant to several of the Professors." A distinguished student of Sir William Hamilton, he acted as substitute for that philosopher during his illness and filled the same *rôle* later on for Professor Macdougall. His brilliant university career awakened the highest hopes in his friends.

In due course he entered the Divinity Hall, but ere long withdrew from the theological arena, thinking, as he said himself, the uniform of the Church was too strait for him. Abandoning the Church as a profession he drifted for a time into literature, acting at first as one of the sub-editors of the 8th edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and afterwards doing journalistic and editorial work in connection with various Edinburgh newspapers.

Literature would no doubt have proved his real vocation

had his means at the time permitted his full pursuit of it. But his father dying, new responsibilities overtook the struggling journalist, and he turned aside to law as a profession likely to offer him a more secure livelihood, and was called to the Bar in 1860. Success did not crown his initial efforts to gain a practice, and years passed by in a monotonous pacing of the boards of the Parliament House. At last, in 1872, he accepted office as Sheriff-Substitute of Kirkcudbright, to which Wigtown was afterwards added—but he keenly felt the pangs of exile from the social life of Edinburgh.

In 1865 he was appointed Assistant Commissioner to visit and report upon the state of Education in the Highlands, and in 1883 joined Lord Napier as a member of the Crofter's Commission. When the Celtic Chair was founded in Edinburgh through the strenuous exertions of Professor Blackie, Nicolson's friends hoped he would accede to the wish of the interested authorities and accept the appointment as first Celtic Professor, but he declined, loath to part with his vested interest in the office he held, and in the end it is said regretted that he had refused. In the sleepy atmosphere of the Stewartry his life seemed to be wasted. The office was not lucrative and he had dependents. Consequently when opportunity offered he exchanged Kirkcudbright for Greenock. The new sphere, however, proved less happy and fortunate than the old, and after four years, in 1889, he resigned and withdrew with his sister to Edinburgh, where he died in January 1893.

Nicolson was undoubtedly a man of brilliant parts, genial and social, with many warm friends, but he never achieved the success of which his early life gave such promise. Those who knew him best attributed the failure mainly to his dreamy temperament and Celtic lack of continuous energy. His chief contribution to the vernacular literature of the North has been his *Gaelic Proverbs*. He was himself a poet, and Dr. Walter C. Smith has edited his verses with memoir. Of his renderings from the Gaelic, Macdonald's

"Birlinn" is the longest.[1] In commenting on the Sheriff's translation of a poem by Mrs. Mary Mackellar quoted in *The Language and Literature of the Scottish Highlands*, Professor Blackie remarks that it is from the pen of a gentleman well known all over Scotland for the truly Celtic inspiration which he flings into his lyrical compositions, whether in the tongue of the Saxon or of the Gael.

His contemporary, Dr. Stewart, Nether Lochaber, "for fifty years, from 1851, the minister of Ballachulish and Ardgour," and a distinguished contributor to the *Inverness Courier*, was a native of Benbecula, where his father served as an Inland Revenue officer. On the removal of the family to Oban in his boyhood, Alexander was educated there, and afterwards, from 1843, at the University of St. Andrews—the same which in after life conferred on him the degree of LL.D., as Edinburgh had done in the case of Sheriff Nicolson. A good specimen of Dr. Stewart's rendering from the Gaelic is that of the elegy by Alexander Macdonald on his pet dove that had been killed by a terrier. This translation was contributed by the author to the *Scotsman* many years ago, and is quite literal, imitating the manner and measure, the rhyme and rhythm of the original.[2]

Of living translators, the best known are Messrs. Lachlan Macbean, Malcolm Macfarlane, Henry Whyte, and Alexander Carmichael; Rev. Dr. Nigel Macneill and Rev. Mr Sinclair.

The work of the first-mentioned is particularly noteworthy. In the *Songs and Hymns of the Scottish Highlands*, published with translations and music and an introduction, Mr. Macbean has given many renderings of his own that are most felicitous and breathe the spirit of the original. Indeed as one of his own fellow-countrymen, Alexander Fraser, now on the staff of the *Toronto Mail*, has remarked, "His great service to Gaelic literature has been his translations of Gaelic songs and hymns. A poet himself, his renderings convey

[1] *The Gael*, vol. 6, Feb. 1877.
[2] See p. 34.

much of the beauty of the original, and generally its true and full meaning. He has had comrades in the field—men whose work is most meritorious—they will be found among the greatest admirers of his great literary talents. Fields which are peculiarly his own are the translations of Gaelic hymns set to their familiar tunes, and old Gaelic psalm tunes which he collected and published. Those weird, sacred melodies have found in him their sole protagonist, and his countrymen owe him much indeed in this respect. Happy selection and felicitous translation in the one case, careful collation and typical variants in the other. There are several collections of Gaelic hymns; here only are the words and music brought together, and when with these we have singable and beautiful translations the service rendered is complete."

Mr Macbean's work is always interesting. It is saturated with the glamour, the grace, and spirit of the original Gaelic, and in the case of many of the hymns and songs, his English versions are the best that have yet appeared. This is particularly evident in his renderings of Dugald Buchanan's, John Maclean's, and Peter Grant's hymns, and well-known songs like "Mo Mhali bheag og."

Macbean was born about forty-nine years ago on the pretty little croft of Teanacoill, overlooking the magnificent strath of the Aird and about five miles west of the Beauly Firth. Both his great grandfathers took part in the battle of Culloden. His father, a shoemaker, was a very intelligent man, his mother belonged to the Clan Macdonald. It is stated that young Lachlan could read the Gaelic Bible before he was five years old. At Kineras, a moorland district up country, the old-fashioned Highland school had walls of turf, a roof of heather, and an earthen floor, and to this primitive seat of learning the boy was sent for his education. Ere long an injury to his father's hand led to the removal of the family to Dalnacardoch, where the incapacitated shoemaker was placed in charge of the stores in connection with the Highland Railway, then in course of construction. Lachlan was about nine years of age and attended school for three

months at Grandtully, Strathtay; and for one month at Kirkliston, Midlothian. Returning afterwards to the old home in the Aird he continued his school career at Culburnie, till he was apprenticed at the age of fifteen to an Inverness draper. Though he did not remain long in this business, he studied assiduously in his spare time, and helped, in 1872, to form the flourishing Gaelic Society of Inverness. Some of his English renderings appeared in print when he was only eighteen years of age. Four years later we find him on the staff of *The Highlander*, but in 1877 he received an appointment as journalist in Kirkcaldy, and from that date till now he has been associated with the *Fifeshire Advertiser*. For many years he edited that paper, of which ultimately, in 1899, he became proprietor, extending the business and including within its scope the *Dunfermline Citizen* and the *Kirkcaldy Mail*. It was in the midst of his busy journalistic career that Mr. Macbean made his best contributions to the service of Gaelic literature.

Not less enthusiastic, though in a different profession, Dr. Nigel Macneill has laboured year in year out, generating interest in the literature of the Highlanders, and his book on that subject is sufficient to attest the range of his knowledge and his quality as a successful translator of Gaelic poetry in English metres. The author of *Neniae, with other Poems*, *Dermid and Judith*, *The Highland Hymnal*, and other works, Dr. Macneill was born in Islay in June 1850, and is a brother of the Rev. J. G. Macneill of Cawdor. He studied for the ministry in the Glasgow University and Free Church College, and afterwards, in 1880-81, wrote a series of articles in the *Glasgow Herald*, which subsequently took shape as *The Literature of the Highlanders*. When he published this book he was minister of Bedford Church, London, but has since removed to his present Congregational charge at Ilford, Essex. Throughout the volume there are very interesting renderings by Dr. Macneill, whose knowledge of Gaelic is so extensive and his poetic faculty so effective that he can transfer the bardic

sentiments from one language to the other with considerable ease. In this direction he has made a contribution towards the English knowledge of Gaelic poems worthy of all praise.

His fellow clergyman, the Rev. Mr. Sinclair of Kinloch Rannoch, is best known for his edition of Dugald Buchanan's hymns with memoir and translations. Mr. Sinclair is not ignorant of the art of weaving verse, but he has been content to give in the main a literal translation of the hymns in prose, with the single exception of "The Skull," for which he adopts the metre of the original. His volume has certainly served to bring our most sublime bard more prominently before the English-speaking public.

There are numerous translators of occasional pieces, but the most active within recent years have been Messrs. Malcolm Macfarlane, Henry Whyte, and A. Carmichael. The two former are perhaps the best living authorities on the songs and melodies of the Scottish Gael, while the latter, as the author of *Carmina Gadelica*, stands pre-eminent in his knowledge of the poetic traditionary lore, hymns and incantations —transmitted orally from generation to generation in the Western Hebrides as well as on the mainland of Scotland.

All three have associations with Argyllshire; Malcolm Macfarlane was born at Kilmun Farm, Dalavich, Lochawe, brought up at Inkerman and educated there. A measurer by profession, he now lives in Elderslie, and is the author of *The Phonetics of Gaelic* and *Songs of the Highlands*, recently published by Messrs. Logan, Inverness. Henry Whyte, on the other hand, is a native of Easdale, long resident in Glasgow, thoroughly well known among the Celts of the city and the Gaelic-speaking population of the Highlands and the Colonies under the *nom-de-plume* "Fionn." In his *Celtic Garland*, *Celtic Lyre*, as well as in *Clarsach an Doire*, and various Highland newspapers and magazines, he has contributed some graceful renderings from the songs and poetry of the North. The merit of his and of Mr. Macfarlane's translations is that they can be sung to the original melodies.

Though living for many years in the Outer Hebrides as

an officer in the Inland Revenue service, Alexander Carmichael was earlier in life connected with Argyllshire, having been born in Lismore. After retiring from the post he held so worthily, he took up residence in Edinburgh, where he passes the evening of his days in the bosom of his family, as ardent as ever a lover of all things Celtic, and especially of that undercurrent of Gaelic life that has now all but disappeared except in the lone islands of the West. Mr. Carmichael's renderings are usually very fine, full of taste, of choice and select diction, showing a mind deeply imbued with Gaelic sentiment, and in sympathy with the best traditions of the race.

After all, it is a small part of the vernacular poetry of the Scottish Highlands that has been translated; and not much of that, owing to the reasons already assigned, adequately represents the original. A few fitful voices are still heard in the land singing new strains in the old tongue, but to all appearance the days of the Gaelic bards are numbered. Important works like Mackenzie's *Beauties of Gaelic Poetry*, Sinclair's *Songster*, Campbell's *Leabhar na Feinne*, and Cameron's *Reliquiæ Celticæ*, which appeal only to those who have a comprehensive knowledge of the language, make a fainter and fainter appeal every decade, because the number of Gaelic readers rapidly declines. If such books are to be of popular, as they are certainly of permanent, value they must, as in the case of Alexander Carmichael's *Carmina Gadelica*, be accompanied by worthy English renderings, or they are lost upon the multitude of modern readers. A small percentage of older Gaels can still read and appreciate the Gaelic poetry of the last two hundred years, but to the great bulk of the inhabitants the printed poems are for the most part unintelligible.

Hence the service rendered by authors who are able to communicate the lofty, impassioned thought and sentiment of the past in the language of the present. Only so far as this is successfully done—and it takes exceptional qualities to do it well—will the brilliant products of the golden age

of Highland poetry be available for the inspiration and enjoyment of the future generations. And so we owe a debt of gratitude to those who have led the way in this fruitful enterprise, and would fain hope that by and by the best poems of the princes of Gaelic literature will crystallize into such beautiful English forms that they may be of perennial interest and value to a wide circle of readers both north and south of the Celtic border.

CHAPTER IX

THE GAELIC BARDS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

At the beginning of the nineteenth century quite an unprecedented number of Highland bards existed; among others Duncan Ban Macintyre, Ewen Maclachlan, Allan Macdougall, Alexander Mackinnon, John Maclean, Donald Macleod, Kenneth Mackenzie, James Shaw, James Macgregor, John Macdonald, Donald Macdonald, Angus Fletcher, and Allan Macintyre. The splendid renaissance of the Forty-five had thus culminated in the remarkable result that there was scarcely a parish or clachan throughout the Highlands and Islands that had not its own poet.

And yet the noontide glory had already departed, for of the great sons of the Muses, Macdonald, Maccodrum, Macintyre, Roy Stuart, Macpherson, Buchanan, Rob Donn, and William Ross, only one was then living—the venerable hunter-bard of Glenorchy, who outlived his peers and died at Edinburgh in 1812.

With the decline of the golden age of Highland poetry, and the gradual passing away of the poetic spirits whose names are indelibly associated with it, there arose a new succession of bards, for the most part inferior to the brilliant galaxy that had gone before. Sweet voices they were, and some at least of a very high order, but none to equal the great creators of the post-rebellion period.

Among the changes the new century brought, we recognise the salient one that while the sons of song in the past confined themselves almost exclusively to their melodious

mother-tongue, the later Highland bards acknowledged no such restriction, but exercised their poetic gifts generally in both languages.

Of the nineteenth century poets it is a curious coincidence that the two most notable were born in the same year and month—William Livingston at Gartmain in Islay, and Evan Maccoll at Kenmore, Lochfyneside, September 1808.

Livingston's father was a joiner occupying a cottage upon the Islay estate, and in the service of Walter Campbell of Shawfield. He had a large family, of whom William was the least educated, for he was a wild, restless boy who could hardly be induced to go to school at all, and did little good even when there. Such teaching as he received must have been of the most elementary kind. In the circumstances he was early sent to herd cows, and while thus engaged the youth used to compose poetry as a pastime.

Later on his father had him apprenticed as a tailor, and he itinerated from farm to farm and clachan to clachan, after the custom of those employed in the trade in those days, when they made suits for the various members of the families in the different houses they visited.

At this time, according to his own testimony, he was wild, tricky, and full of mischief. One Hallow-e'en escapade, in fact, caused his master to turn him adrift, whereupon the budding poet took revenge by composing the song entitled "An t-Oircein."

Henceforth he resolved to seek his livelihood on the mainland, and, quitting his native isle, he found his way to Dumbarton and the Vale of Leven, where he worked for a while, residing afterwards at Arrochar, Comrie, and about Strathearn. In the latter district he married and settled, till a shock of earthquake, felt at Comrie, induced him to remove. For several years he lived in Greenock, and latterly in somewhat straitened circumstances in Glasgow, where he died in the month of July 1870, and was buried in Janefield Cemetery. There a freestone obelisk raised to his memory by admirers now marks his last resting-place. His wife,

a faithful helpmeet throughout his chequered career, predeceased him by a few months.

As a man Livingston was very opinionative, combative, querulous, and suspicious, and often by his cranky ways taxed the patience and sympathy of his best friends, who tried to overlook his faults in view of his defective education. It is true that as soon as he had left Islay he determined to make up for the neglect of early days by studying hard. In particular he perused every old history of the country that he could lay his hands on, and acquired not only a fair knowledge of Latin with which to read ancient chronicles, but also a smattering of Greek and Hebrew. He even turned his attention to Welsh and French, in his eagerness to know something about languages cognate to the Gaelic. The Rev. Dr. Blair, who edited his poetical works with memoir, in 1882, remembers calling upon him in his little garret at 68 Dale Street, Tradeston, Glasgow, and finding the bard and his wife busily engaged in translating a French history of the Druids.

Yet Livingston never gained breadth of view. He was an Anglophobe of the deepest dye. In this spirit he wrote in English a *Vindication of the Celtic Character*, and a *History of Scotland* which he tried to publish in parts, but failed to complete for lack of subscribers. Five parts only appeared. From his blind, unreasoning hate of England and all things English, he was absolutely incapable of taking an impartial view of historical questions. The depopulation of his native island through changes in the tenure and use made of the land sorely exercised him. His delightful poem, "Fios thun a' Bhaird," in which he deprecates the passing of the old order, can hardly be surpassed for its sad pathos.

FIOS THUN A' BHAIRD

Tha 'mhaduinn soilleir grianach,
'S a' ghaoth 'n iar a' ruith gu réidh,
Tha'n linne sleamhuinn sìochail,
O na chùinich strì nan speur.

Tha'n long na h-éideadh sgiamhach,
'S cha chuir sgìos i dh' iarraidh tàmh,
Mar a fhuair's a chunnaic mise,
A'toirt an fhios so thun a' Bhaird,

Thoir am fios so thun a' Bhaird,
Thoir am fios so thun a' Bhaird,
Mar a fhuair's a chunnaic mise,
Thoir am fios so thun a' Bhaird.

Na dùilean stéidh na cruitheachd,
Blàth's is sruitheadh's anail neul,
Ag altrom lusan ùrail,
Air an luidh an driùchd gu sèimh,
Nuair a thuiteas sgàil na h-oidhche,
Mar gu'm b'ann a' caoidh na bha,
Mar a fhuair's a chunnaic mise,
Thoir am fios so thun a' Bhaird.

Ged a roinneas gathan gréine,
Tlus nan speur ri blath nan lòn.
'S ged a chithear spréidh air àiridh,
A's buailtean lan de dh-alach bhò,
Tha Ile'n diugh gun daoine,
Chuir a chaor' a bailtean fas,
Mar a fhuair's a chunnaic mise,
Thoir am fios so thun a' Bhaird.

This latter verse Professor Blackie has racily rendered as follows :—

Though the sun is shining brightly,
And bright flowerets gem the lea,
And a thousand sheep are feeding
On the land, so dear to me ;
Though the shag-haired nolt are browsing
On the brae and in the glen,
I have seen, and I will sing it,
Islay, thou hast lost thy Men.

As a bard Livingston undoubtedly ranks high. The most forceful poetic personality of the Gaelic poets of the nineteenth century, this son of the Muse is equally powerful in the expression of ruthless fierceness and tearful sorrow.

In two respects he may be said to be unique as a Highland poet: first, in that he is so little influenced by the tender

passion—he never sings of love in the manner of his predecessors; and second, in that he is the only bard of the Highlands who has produced a dramatic poem, so-called. This is his longest composition—"The Danes in Islay"—but it is not equal in merit to his prize poems, such as "Duan Geall." In the competition instituted by the Celtic Society of Glasgow the latter poem was pronounced the prize-winner by such able judges as the Rev. Dr. Smith, Inveraray; Rev. D. Maclean, Glenorchy; and Rev. D. Macnab, Glasgow. Of this piece—one of Livingston's best—Dr. Nigel Macneill writes: "As much of its beauty consists in a sort of proverbial form of expression of which the bard was a consummate master, and in a rhythm of consonantal rhymes, much of what is powerful in the original becomes quite prosaic when rendered literally in English."

The poem deals with the campaign of the Highlanders under Sir Colin Campbell in the Crimea; and Dr. Macneill gives a rendering of the battle of Alma, its opening incident, from which we quote these lines—

Tidings of awe came to my ear—
An ominous threat that war was near,
I sought out Albin's central height,
To view the distant scene of fight.
I saw beneath one standard there—
The figure of the Northern Bear.
There thousands in their armèd might
Panted for battle's fierce delight.
O'er Alma's heights the Russians rolled,
Defiant, warlike, keen, and bold;
In war-array, the hostile force
Stood there in ranks of foot and horse;
Then came the order for the Gael
Those scarpy brows of death to scale.
Down from that hoary, rocky crest
Poured showers of fire into their breast:
Forward the fearless heroes leapt;
'Mid clouds of slaughter on they swept;
"For Victory," the Lion roared;
The Finian clans unsheathed the sword,
Like rapid, swollen floods in Clyde;
Grand, swift as Es-linns silver tide;

So rushed the heroes in their might
Of ardour, to the field of fight.

Evan Maccoll, Livingston's contemporary, was a man of an entirely different type, and far better known and loved. His father, a small farmer and fisherman better-circumstanced than the majority of peasants in the district, was famed among his neighbours for his store of Celtic song, as his mother was for her fund of traditional tales. The second youngest of their family of six sons and two daughters, the boy Evan very early displayed an insatiable thirst for legendary lore and Gaelic poetry, such as his parents contributed to the local *ceilidh*.

The first rudiments of education he received in a hovel which did duty for a school, the teacher of which had a salary of not more than £10 per annum with board and lodging, the latter secured by a constant house to house dilleting. As the parish school was too far away, Evan's father engaged a tutor who had been an S.P.C.K. teacher and was waiting for an appointment promised him as book-keeper on one of Mr. Malcolm of Poltalloch's estates in Jamaica. Luckily this young man remained in the family for a year, during which time he taught the boy English, and awakened in him an interest in English literature. About the same time, his father happening to fall in one day with a Paisley weaver whom dulness of trade had driven to the Highlands with old books for sale, bought the lot, including *The Spectator*, *Burns' Poems*, and *The British Essayists*. A red-letter day it proved in the history of the incipient poet, for he began to peruse these volumes with avidity, and in this intellectual exercise found a new world opening out before him.

Meanwhile, like other Highland lads, he had to help his parents with their farming and fishing, and for many years the spade, the plough, and the sickle were implements of labour far more familiar to him than the pen. He also assisted in the herring fishing during the season on Loch-fyne, going out in his wherry, "Mairi Chreagh-a'-gharaidh,"

of which he has sung in Gaelic verse; and since his father was seldom without a road-contract, and the repairs to the highways were usually carried out in winter time, the bard and his brothers had to work along with the other labourers employed. Yet those were the years during which many of his best lyrics were composed.

Like Alexander Macdonald he made his first song in praise of a neighbouring damsel by whose charms he was captivated. This production was well received by the local people, and after a time the bard began to contribute to the Gaelic magazine published in Glasgow. His neighbours in Inveraray and vicinity were not greatly enamoured of such vaulting ambition, as it appeared to them, and decried his temerity; but other more discerning friends, such as Mr. Fletcher of Dunans and Mr. J. F. Campbell of Islay, recognising his merit, encouraged him.

When his father, accompanied by other members of the family, emigrated in 1831 to Canada, Evan remained behind, determined to cultivate his poetic faculty, and as the first-fruits of his purpose he published in 1836 the volume entitled *The Mountain Minstrel*. It contains a series of Gaelic songs and poems and his earliest English poetry. Two years later, Messrs. Blackie, Glasgow, issued all his vernacular productions up to that date under the Gaelic name *Clarsach nam Beann*, and at the same time brought out the first exclusively English edition of *The Mountain Minstrel*. Both these books have since appeared in other editions. Their publication in 1838 established the reputation of Maccoll as a new and rising Gaelic bard. In the following spring, through the influence of his patron Mr. Campbell of Islay, then M.P. for Argyllshire, he was appointed to a clerkship in the Liverpool Custom House, and withdrew from the scenes of his youth to the bustle and stir of the great port. For nearly a dozen years he continued to act as clerk until in 1850, his health giving way, he obtained six months' leave of absence to visit his friends in Canada and recruit his physical energies. Falling in on

arrival with an old friend of his father who was a member of the Colonial Government, Maccoll was induced to accept an appointment in the Provincial Customs of Upper Canada, and went to take up his duties at Kingston, where he remained till 1880, when he was superannuated. At first, in this office, he had high hopes of preferment to a more lucrative position under the Canadian Government, but political exigencies were not in his favour, and the opportunity passed. Indeed, it was considered by many of his friends that he was unfairly treated by the authorities, who were accused of having removed him on account of his poetical effusions having taken a political colour. After his retirement he continued to reside in Kingston for two years, and was then induced to remove to Brooklyn to the home of one of his sons; but the bustle of that city proved uncongenial and he returned to Canada, settling in Toronto, where he had warm friends, and where at length he died on July 24, 1898. Like the old bards, the Lochfyne poet lived to a great age. He had been twice married, and had a family of nine sons and daughters, of whom one, the eldest daughter, wife of Professor Otto H. Schulte of Newark, N.J., gave fair promise of poetic gifts similar to her father's.

Standing as he does along with Livingston at the head of the Highland bards of the Victorian era, Maccoll ranks high as a poet. He had a larger and more varied outlook upon life than the majority of his predecessors, and a mind full of the most tender sensibilities and refined tastes. Among the reviewers of his *Mountain Minstrel* who passed kindly encomiums on his poems were such literary authorities as Francis Jeffrey, Henry Cockburn, Dr. Browne, author of the *History of the Highland Clans*, Hugh Miller, and Philip James Bailey, the late distinguished author of *Festus*. Hugh Miller characterised his efforts thus: "There is more of fancy than of imagination in the poetry of Maccoll, and more of thought and imagery than of feeling. In point, glitter, polish, he is the Moore of Highland song. Comparison and ideality are the leading features of his mind

Some of the pieces in the volume are sparkling tissues of comparison from beginning to end. The images pass before us in quick tantalising succession, reminding us of the figures of a magic lantern hurriedly drawn athwart the wall, or the patterns of a web of tapestry, seen and then lost, as they sweep over the frame. Even when compelled to form a high estimate of the wealth of the bard from the very rapidity with which he flings it before us, we cannot avoid wishing at the same time that he had learned to enjoy it a little more at his leisure. This if a fault, however,—and we doubt it after all,—is a fault of genius."

This power of comparison and of producing a quick succession of images, which dazzled Hugh Miller, may be aptly illustrated by that beautiful elegy of the bard on the death of the two-year-old daughter of one of his brothers. "Mary's Death" is a poem in striking contrast to the unrelieved and oppressive sadness of the earlier Highland elegies.

BAS MAIRI

Chaochail i—mar neulta ruiteach
'Bhios 'san Ear mu bhriste fàire ;—
B'fharmad leis a' ghrein am bòi'chead,
Dh'eirich i'na glòir 'chur sgail oirr' !

Chaochail i—mar phlatha greine,
'S am faileas 'na reis 'an toir air ;
Chaochail i—mar bhogh' nan speura,—
Shil an fhras a's threig a ghloir e.

Chaochail i—mar shneachd a luidheas
Anns an traigh ri cois na fairge ;
Dh'aom an lan gun iochd air aghaidh—
'Ghile O ! cha b' fhada shealbhaich.

Chaochail i—mar ghuth na Clarsaich
'N uair a's druitiche 's a's mils'e ;
Chaochail i—mar sgeulachd àluinn
Mu'n gann 'thòisichear r'a h-innseadh.

Chaochail i—mar bhoilsge geallaich',
'S am maraich' fo eagal's an dorcha ;
Chaochail i—mar bhruadar milis,
'S an cad'laiche duilich gu'n d' fhalbh e

Chaochail i—'an tus a h-aille!
Cha seachnadh Parras as fein i;
Chaochail i—O! chaochail Mairi
Mar gu'm baithte 'ghrian ag eiridh!

The following is a translation of the above by the Rev. Dr. Buchanan, Methven, who styles it, "The Child of Promise":—

She died—as die the roses
On the ruddy clouds of dawn,
When the envious sun discloses
His flame, and morning's gone.

She died—like snow glad-gracing
Some sea-marge fair, when lo!
Rude waves, each other chasing,
Quick hide it 'neath their flow.

She died—like waves of sun-glow
By fleeting shadows chased;
She died—like heaven's rainbow
By gushing showers effaced.

She died—as dies the glory
Of music's sweetest swell;
She dies—as dies the story
When the best is still to tell!

She died—as dies moon-beaming
When scowls the rayless wave;
She died—like sweetest dreaming
That hastens to its grave.

She died—and died she early;
Heaven wearied for its own.
As the dipping-sun my Mary
Thy morning-ray went down!

The same wistful, dreamy eye may be detected gazing with far-away look behind the poem, "My Rowan Tree." That delightful lyric was written when he received in Canada a branch of rowan berries, taken from a tree planted by himself when a boy in Scotland.

MY ROWAN TREE

Fair shelterer of my native Cot—
That cot so very dear to me—
O how I envy thee thy lot,
My long-lost Rowan Tree!

Thou standest on thy native soil,
Proud-looking o'er a primrosed lea;
The skies of Scotland o'er thee smile,
Thrice happy Rowan Tree!

Well do I mind that morning fair
When, a mere boy, I planted thee;
A Kingdom now were less my care
Than then my Rowan Tree.

How proudly did I fence thee round!
How fondly think the time might be
I'd sit with love and honour crown'd
Beneath my Rowan Tree.

My children's children thee would climb,
Inviting grand-papa to see;
I yet might weave some deathless rhyme
Beneath my Rowan Tree.

'Twas thus I dreamed: that happy day,
I'd die to think my fate would be
So soon to plod life's weary way
Far from my Rowan Tree.

Maccoll's poetry is clearly the product of a mind impressed with the beauty and grandeur of the rural scenes in which his youth had been passed. It is this love of nature and the emotions which it awakened that filled the eye of Philip James Bailey when he wrote: "There is a freshness, a keenness, a heartiness, in many of these productions of the Mountain Minstrel, which seems to breathe naturally of the hungry air, the dark, bleak, rugged bluffs among which they were composed, alternating occasionally with a clear, bewitching, and spiritual quiet, as of the gloaming deepening over the glens and woods. Several of the melodies towards the close of this volume are full of simple and tender feeling,

and not unworthy to take their place by the side of those of Lowland minstrels of universal fame." As an example of the bard's mellifluent poetry of nature, a few verses of "A May Morning in Glen Shira" may here be quoted.

Lo, dawning o'er yon mountain grey
The rosy birthday of the May!
Glen Shira knoweth well 'tis Beltane's blissful day.

The Maum has donned its brightest green,
The hawthorn whitens round Kilblane,
And shows Dunchorvil's crest its own heath-purpling sheen.

Hark! from yon grove that thrilling gush
Of song from linnet, merle, and thrush!
To hear herself so praised, the morning well may blush.

The lark, yon crimson clouds among,
Rains down a very flood of song;
An age, that song to list, would not seem lost or long.

Yon cushat by Cuilvocan's stream
The spirit of some bard you'd deem—
One who had lived and died in love's delicious dream.

Thrice welcome minstrel! now at hand,
The cuckoo joins the tuneful band:
A choir like this might grace the bowers of fairyland.

Now is the hour by Duloch's tide
To scent the birch that decks its side,
And watch the snow-white swans o'er its calm bosom glide.

Now is the hour a minstrel might
Be blameless if, in his delight,
He Druid-like adored the sun that crowns yon height.

O May! thou'rt an enchantress rare—
Thy presence maketh all things fair;
Thou wavest but thy wand, and joy is everywhere
. . . . .

Above—around me—all things seem
So witching that I almost deem
Myself asleep, and these, creations of a dream!

But cease, my muse ambitious! Frail
Thy skill in fitting strains to hail
The morn that makes a heaven of Shira's lovely vale.

But even more than as a descriptive poet of nature, Maccoll excelled as an amatory bard. There are no less than fifty love-songs of his, and these have a character peculiarly their own, moulded by Lowland influences. His love ditty "Duanag Ghaoil" is a good example, and that fine version he has given of "Mairi Laghach," from the Gaelic of John Macdonald, the Ross-shire bard, is very popular. He was a keen satirist and effective writer of elegies, and, unlike the warlike Livingston, touched life on every side.

Two other contemporary bards who resemble Maccoll in the charm of their descriptions of nature and moving sentiment were Dr. John Maclachlan of Rahoy, Morven; and James Munro, Fort William.

Dr. Maclachlan, born in 1804, and educated for his profession at Glasgow University, passed his career as a doctor in his own native district and parish, rendered so famous by the Macleods, one of whom, the Rev. Dr. John Macleod, was his neighbour. In the exercise of his calling as a country practitioner, Maclachlan was daily brought into touch with nature and with man, and upon both he looked with the sympathetic eye of the poet as well as of the physician. Indeed the quality of the Gaelic poetry of this sweet lyrist of Rahoy rivals that of Maccoll himself. Some of his elegies are very touching, and occasionally exhibit the genial bachelor-doctor in lonely and pensive moods, as, for example—

Chi mi thall a h-aiteal caomh,
'Dearrsadh caoin ri taobh na tràigh;
'S truagh nach robh mi air an raon
Far an deach' i claon 's an àllt.

'S truagh nach robh mi tràs'
Air an traigh a's airde stuadh,
Ag eisdeachd ri comhradh tlàth
Aig an òigh is àillidh snuadh.

And again—

TUIREADH

. . . . .

O'n a thainig mi do'n t-saoghal
'S beag a rinn mi 'smaointean glic;
Mar bhlath cluarain air an raon,
'Ghluaiseas leis gach gaoith a thig.

Gidheadh tha smaointean tiamhaidh, bochd,
'Nochd a' mosgladh ann am chridh',
Tha mar fhasach falamh, fuar,
'S e gun luaidh air neach, no ni.

Cha'n'eil agam leannan gaoil.
No caraid caomh agam fo'n ghréin,—
Cha'n'eil agam bean no clann,
No neach a b' annsa leam na 'cheil'.

Amhuil mar bhruid air a mhagh,
Gun eagal Dhe, gun ghradh gun duil;
Cha'n'eil cúram air mo chrídh',
'S mi gun ni 's an cuir mi uigh.

Ard-Righ nam feart tionndam riut,
A's air mo ghluinean guidheam ort,—
Deònaich dhomh-sa cridhe nuadh,—
Eisd ri m'urnuigh thruaigh an nochd.

Like the bard of Loch Fyne, he has a charming lyric on a child—not dead as in the poem of Maccoll, but sleeping The first verse runs thus—

DO LEANABH

Dean cadalan samhach a chuilein mo ruin;
Dean cadalan samhach a chagair 'sa ruin.
Co dhiultadh ghràdh dhuit,
'S gur aillidh do ghnuis?
Dean cadal a phàisdein
Gu samhach, sèimh ciùin,—
Gu'n robh sonas a's agh leat
Gu bràth anns gach cùis.

As an illustration of his descriptive pieces, where the poetic vision of the doctor is seen to advantage, we may

instance "A ghlinn ud shios," a poem well rendered in English by Mr. Henry Whyte.

O LOVELY GLEN

O, lovely glen! as through a haze
Of tears that dim mine eye,
Upon thy fertile fields I gaze,
Fair, as in days gone by.

Thy stately pines their tall heads rear
O'er fairy knolls and braes,
Thy purling streamlets now I hear
Like music's sweetest lays.

Thy herds are feeding as of yore
With sheep upon the lea,
The heron fishes in the shore,
The white-gull on the sea.

The cuckoo's voice is heard at dawn,
The dove coos in the tree,
The lark, above thy grassy lawn,
Now carols loud with glee.

Repose, supremely reigns o'er all,
Love crowns the mountains hoar,
And vividly they now recall
The days that are no more.

Thy gurgling brooks, and winds that fleet
Through grooves of stately pine,
Awaken with their converse sweet,
Sad thoughts of auld langsyne.

Thy peaceful dwellings, once so bright,
In dreary ruins lie,
The traveller sees not from the height
The smoke ascending high.

To yonder garden, once thy pride,
No one attention shows,
And weeds grow thickly side by side
Where bloomed the blushing rose.

Where are the friends of worthy fame,
Their hearts on kindness bent,
Whose welcome cheered me when I came,
Who blessed me as I went.

Full many in the churchyard sleep,
The rest are far away,
And I forlorn in silence weep
With neither friend nor stay.

Death in my breast has fixed his dart,
My heart is growing cold,
And from this world I'll soon depart
To rest beneath the mould.

A small volume of Dr. Maclachlan's poems was published in 1868, and since then a new edition, with memoir by Dr. Cameron Gillies, in 1880.

Though the physician-bard had an extensive practice, it was not very remunerative. Towards the end of his career he was often in straitened circumstances. He had never married, but had two sisters, for whose support he manfully devoted the income from a small property he owned at Dumbarton. After a period of enfeeblement from paralysis, which much affected the conditions and outlook of his life, the lonely and sad doctor, not without the failings as well as the virtues of his race, passed away at Tobermory in 1874 at the age of three-score years and ten.

James Munro, his contemporary, who was born at Fort William in 1794 and died there in 1870, is better known perhaps as the author of a Gaelic grammar than as a bard. Yet in the composition of short poems of the sentimental kind he sometimes touched a chord as melodious as any of the foregoing.

In the following rendering of one of his songs given by Dr. Macneill, we not only seem to catch an echo of Rob Donn's well-known descriptive piece, but also find its counterpart.

Dark winter is going;
Kind breezes are blowing,
The mountains are glowing
With colour more fair.

The face of the flowers
Grows fresh 'neath the showers;
And warmer the bowers
Appear in the glare.

The summer advances
With heat shedding glances;
His sunny beam dances
With joy on the cold.

The little birds singing,
The woodlands are ringing;
The primrose is springing
To deck the green wold.

The sun in fresh power
Calls forth bird and bower
In robes of fair flower
Enchanting to see.

But, honey-lipt lover,
Thy charms I look over,
In them I discover
Sweet beauties more rare.

Come with me, then, dearest,
To woodlands the nearest,
To plight troth sincerest
Of love evermore.

When a youth, Munro, who was the son of a joiner, thought of studying for the legal profession, but he ultimately became a teacher—first at Carradale, Kintyre, then at Corpach, and afterwards at Blarour, Kilmonivaig. He was for some time Inspector of Poor also in the last-named parish, and an elder in the Established Church; but when he retired on a competency he went to live in his native village Fort William, and dying in the Old Fort there, was buried not far from the last resting-place of his fellow-poet Ewen Maclachlan.

Munro's contributions to Gaelic literature have been thus briefly summarised: *A Grammar of the Gaelic Language*, 1835—enlarged edition, 1843; *A Gaelic Primer with Vocabulary, An Treoraiche, or First Book for Schools*, 1843; *An t-Aillegan*, a collection of Gaelic songs, 1830; and *Am Filidh*, a collection of songs with music, 1840. The songs in this last volume are mostly the production of his own Muse. Many of them are still popular.

Dugald Macphail and John Campbell of Ledaig follow naturally in the succession. They figure in the nineteenth century minstrelsy of the Highlands as authors who knew well how to tune the Celtic lyre to notes of pastoral sweetness.

Macphail was born in the year 1818 at Torosay in Mull, and when he grew up learned to be a joiner. From this position he gradually raised himself until he became clerk of works and surveyor—first for twelve months in England, and afterwards in Glasgow. Under the *nom-de-plume* "Muileach" he contributed largely to the *Gael*, and in 1859 gained a prize given by the Celtic Society of Edinburgh for the best original essay on the Highland clearances.

As a Gaelic speaker and writer, and translator from English, he was very effective, but though richly endowed with the gift of song he did not produce so many poems as his peers. Those that he did make are of very good quality. Most of them appear in Sinclair's "An T'Oranaiche" among the other choice songs of the century.

Professor Blackie has translated the one entitled "An t'Eilein Muileach," and has also given us renderings of similar productions by the poetic postmaster of Ledaig. Campbell, living as he did to a length of days in his peaceful retreat between Loch Etive and Loch Creran, and near the ancient vitrified fort miscalled Beregonium, might well be inspired in view of such picturesque and magnificent scenery to voice his sentiments in song, and true Highland feeling finds expression in his poetry. He sang of nature, of love, of home, of kindred and friendship, and countrymen in a foreign land.

These are some verses relative to the latter from the rendering of Professor Blackie:—

> Dear land of my fathers, my home in the Highlands,
> 'Tis oft that I think on thy bonnie green glens,
> Thy far-gleaming lochs, and thy sheer-sided corries,
> Thy dark frowning cliffs, and thy glory of Bens!

Thy wild sweeping torrents, with bound and with bicker,
That toss their white manes down the steep rocky brae,
Thy burnies that, babbling o'er beds of the granite,
Through thick copse of hazel are wimpling their way.

Thy close-clinging ivy, with fresh shining leafage,
That blooms through the winter and smiles at the storm,
And spreads its green arms o'er the hoary old castle,
To bind its grey ruin and keep its heart warm.

The sweet sounding plash of thy light-rippling billows,
As they beat on the sand where the white pebbles lie,
And their thundering war when, with whirling commotion,
They lift their white crests in grim face of the sky.

The land I was born in, the land I was bred in,
Where soft-sounding Gaelic falls sweet on the ear;
Dear Gaelic, whose accents take sharpness from sorrow,
And fill me, despairing, with words of good cheer.

'Twas oft I looked backward, and wistfully turned me,
When my travel-worn foot to the Lowlands was near;
Like a glimpse of the sun through the dark cloud out-peeping
Was the land of my love which I left with a tear.
. . . . .
My blessing be with you, brave land and brave people;
In the bright roll of story is blazoned your name;
And may the fair fame of our forefathers never
Be blurred with dishonour or blotted with shame.

More prolific than either of these two, though not so choice, so well-known, or appreciated, has been Mrs. Macpherson, *née* Macdonald, of whose poems nearly 9000 lines were taken down from the recitation of the poetess by Mr. John Whyte, Inverness, and published in 1891, with portrait, and a memoir by Dr. Macbain.

From this survey we omit the distinctly religious poets whose lives and work have been dealt with in a former chapter. But in addition to numerous other minor bards that have appeared during the century, and modern song-writers, including such well-known names as Malcolm Macfarlane, Henry Whyte, Callum Macphail, John Macfadyen, and Murdo Macleod, all still producing good work, there are three Gaelic poets who have stood out more

prominently than the rest in the later decades of the nineteenth century, and who may here be grouped together, because they each in turn received the distinction of being elected bard to the Gaelic Society of Inverness. These are Angus Macdonald, Mary Mackellar, and the present holder of the office, Neil Macleod.

Angus Macdonald was born at Bunloit, in Glen Urquhart, about the year 1804. His early education he received from his father, John Macdonald, who was teacher and catechist there. Later on he attended the High School at Inverness. He took to the teaching profession, and we find him instructing—first in a venture school near Borlum Bridge in his native glen, and next in the district school of the Leachkin, near Inverness. After a chequered and unfortunate career he died in the Highland capital in 1874.

His poems, like those of Dugald Macphail, have never been published separately in book form. Some of them appeared in the *Gael* and the *Transactions of the Inverness Gaelic Society*. Others were left in manuscript, but such compositions of his as have seen the light reveal poetic genius of a high order. He excelled particularly in poetry of the Ossianic type, and having a keen and cultivated ear owing to his knowledge of music, of which he was for a time a teacher, his metres are full of melody and harmonious cadences. As early as 1869, and before he was appointed the first bard to the patriotic Society in the Highland capital, he won the prize medal of "The Club of True Highlanders," London, for the poem he submitted. True to the poetic genius of his race, Macdonald found inspiration in nature and love, and wrote lyrics that are rich in idiomatic Gaelic, and tender or terrible as the theme and the mood determined.

After him came Mary Cameron,—the future Mrs. Mackellar,—who was born at Fort William on October 1, 1834. Her early days were spent with her grandparents in Corrybeg, on the north shore of Loch Eil, where she picked up what education she could, for she appears to have been mainly

self-taught. While yet a girl of tender years, her father died, and she was thrust into the battle of life in a shop that he left on her care at Ballachulish. Marrying young, however, she became the wife of John Mackellar, captain and joint owner of a coasting vessel called the *Glencoe*, and with him she visited many Continental ports and cities in France, the Netherlands, Germany, and Russia. These travels gave her a wide acquaintance with life, sharpening her natural faculties and furnishing her with ample material for brilliant conversation, in which she excelled. Various adventures by flood and field marked the course of this roving life. Particularly memorable was one in the year 1868 when their ship was wrecked in the river Weser, and they, after hanging for ten hours in the rigging, were rescued with great difficulty.

But this was not all. In the course of the years her marriage ceased to be a happy one. The poetess and the bluff sea captain did not always see eye to eye. There were incompatibilities of taste and temper which finally ended in judicial separation. Her poems, such as that on "Wasted Affection," are eloquent of much suffering.

> Affection never was wasted,
> I've read in a poet's hymn,
> But they who the bitterness tasted
> Say that's but a poet's dream.
>
> Affection is wasted often,
> And though its streams may return,
> They may come as waters to soften,
> Or lava to blast and burn.
>
> And how can a floweret blossom,
> Or summer herbage grow,
> In the land o'er whose arid bosom
> The molten streamlets flow?

From about 1880 she had to struggle alone, earning her living in Edinburgh by pen and household work. She had many friends who were kind and sympathetic, but the task before her was far from easy. Consequently, in 1883,

leading men of the North supported her claims to a literary Civil List pension. The application failed. Mrs. Mackellar, however, was not entirely overlooked, for she received a commission to translate into Gaelic the Queen's second series of *Leaves from Our Journal in the Highlands*, and in 1886, when it was finished, she received substantial remuneration for the work. The translation is considered a masterpiece of forcible and idiomatic Gaelic. Ten years before, in 1876, she had been appointed bard to the Gaelic Society of Inverness in succession to Macdonald. In later life her health proved very indifferent, and she suffered from chronic bronchitis aggravated by heart disease, of which she died on September 7, 1890, at her residence, 10 Leven St., Edinburgh, at the comparatively early age of less than 56 years. Mrs. Mackellar was a woman of high spirit, warm heart, and fine intellect. She had an excellent command of the Gaelic tongue and a wide and minute knowledge of its lore and literature. Her poems first began to appear in various publications, such as *The Ladies' Own Journal*, *The Highlander*, *Celtic Magazine*, *Inverness Gaelic Society's Transactions*, and *Inverness Courier*. They were collected and published in 1880 under the title *Poems and Songs, Gaelic and English*. Afterwards she continued to contribute to the newspaper and serial press, including—during this period—*The Scottish Highlander*, *Oban Times*, *People's Journal*, and *Highland Monthly*.

Nor did she confine her efforts to poetry. Many interesting prose papers appeared from her pen; among the more important are, "The Educational Power of Gaelic Poetry," "Unknown Lochaber Bards," "Waulking Day," "The Shieling: Its Traditions and Songs," "The Superstitions of the Highlanders," "The Bodach Glas." As a writer of fiction she also wrote serial tales for the weekly press.

Though generally marked by felicity of diction, it cannot be said that her songs and other poetic pieces contain much of that subtle undefinable element which constitutes poetry in the highest sense. Her Gaelic com-

positions in particular are mainly objective. It has been observed that whatever of the subjective entered them seems somewhat strained and characterised by self-consciousness and a lack of spontaneity. Yet her poems have much vigour and freshness, and occasionally rich thought and melody; and as the English pieces are as good, often even superior in imagination and feeling to the Gaelic ones, we quote from one of the best known of these, namely, that on "Home-sickness."

Oh! for the beautiful sunlight
That smiles on hill and lea,
And oh! for thy glorious freshness
Thou rippling western sea!
The smell of the purple heather,
The myrtle wild, and thyme,
And the balmy fragrant sweetness
Of the Autumn's golden prime.

Oh! for a sight of Ben Nevis!
Methinks I see him now,
As the morning sunlight crimsons
The snow-wreath on his brow.
As he shakes away the shadows,
His heart the sunshine thrills,
And he towers high and majestic
Amidst a thousand hills.
. . . .
But dearer far than Ben Nevis,
And thy blue shores, Loch Eil,
The touch of the hand that bringeth
Emotion's gladsome thrill;
And the sight of kindly faces
Mine eyes have yearned to see;
And the music of living voices,
That sounds like psalms to me.

Oh! fair is the face of Nature,
But fair all things above
Is the soul that from her window
Beams forth the light of love.
The wealth of affection treasured,
In hearts that ne'er grow cold,
Is better than all earth's riches
Of priceless gems and gold.

Neil Macleod, the third of this honoured trio, is a son of Donald Macleod, popularly known as "The Skye Bard." As early as 1811 his father came to the front by publishing, when only twenty years of age, a volume of original and other poems, not indeed of a very high order, but sufficient to show that he had in him the elements of true poetic expression if these were properly cultivated. Years after, this literary aspirant travelled through the Highlands canvassing for subscribers in connection with a new book he meant to publish, but which for some reason or other never appeared.

Later on he emigrated to America, but returned about the year 1840 and set up as a merchant in Glendale.

It was there in 1843 that his son Neil, far more gifted than himself, was born, and spent his early, happiest days. Books were rare in the district, but the boy was fortunate in having a copy of Mackenzie's *Beauties of Gaelic Poetry* in his home—a volume which he made a bosom companion, and from the perusal of which he got the ambition and the desire to be able, as Burns said, "to sing a sang at least."

The *Ceilidh* was a great institution in the Glen in those days, and an irresistible attraction to the growing youth, whose mind through it became saturated with the folklore and traditions of his country. The heroic tales and Ossianic ballads had always a peculiar fascination for him. For the rest of the knowledge and education he acquired, he had to depend mainly on the Book of Nature and contact with his fellow-men.

Like most of his class in Skye, Macleod was obliged to leave home very early, without means and without trade, to seek employment in the South, and for some years had his full share of the toils and drudgery of life. But in 1865 he went to Edinburgh and started in the tea trade with his cousin, the late Mr. Roderick Macleod. The connection thus happily formed the bard has maintained, continuing in the employment of the firm to this day.

During these years he has never ceased to cultivate his gift of song. "All his productions," Dr. Macneill felicitously remarks, "are characterised by purity of style and idiom, freshness of conception, gentleness of spirit, and liquid sweetness of versification." Of his *Clarsach an Doire*, which was first published in 1883 and has now reached its third edition, it is surely much to say that it contains as great variety of good popular songs as any volume of a single author in the language. English renderings of several of these have been made by such interesting translators as Henry Whyte, D. Mackay, P. Macnaughton, Mrs. Mary Mackellar, Neil Ross, and Malcolm Macfarlane.

Perhaps the most popular of his songs is that delightful poem, "An Gleann 's an robh mi og."

Nuair phileas ruinn an samhradh,
Bidh gach doire 's crann fo chroic;
Na h-eoin air bharr nam meanglan
Deanamh caithreim bhinn le'n ceol;
A' chlann bheag a' ruith le fonn
Mu gach tom a' buain nan ros—
B' e mo mhiann a bhi 's an àm sin
Anns a' ghleann 's an robh mi og.

Anns a' ghleann 's an robh mi og,
Anns a' ghleann 's an robh mi og,
B'e mo mhiann a bhi 's an am sin
Anns a' ghleann 's an robh mi og.

'S a' mhaduinn 'n àm dhuinn dusgadh,
Bhiodh an driuchd air bharr an fheoir;
A' chuthag is gug-gùg aic'
Ann an doire dluth nan cno;
Na laoigh og a' leum le sunnd,
'S a' cur smuid air feadh nan lòn;
Ach cha 'n fhaicear sin 's an àm so
Anns a' ghleann 's an robh mi og.
Anns a' ghleann, etc.

Of the above, Mr. Henry Whyte has given the following Scottish rendering:—

MY BONNIE NATIVE GLEN

When the simmer bricht returnin',
Decks each grove and buddin' tree,
When the birds amang the branches
Are a' pipin' loud and free;
And the bairnies fu' o' glee,
Pu' the roses in the den,
O! 'twere dear delight tae wander
In my bonnie native glen.

In my bonnie native glen,
In my bonnie native glen,
O! 'twere dear delight tae wander
In my bonnie native glen.

At the early peep o' mornin',
When the grass was wat wi' dew,
Amang the woods o' hazel
Gaily sang the shy cuckoo;
An' the calves, clean daft wi' joy,
Gae'd a' friskin' roun' the pen—
Now we've nae sic scenes o' gladness
In my bonnie native glen.

When the lasses gae'd a fauldin',
Aft I joined the merry thrang;
In their hands their milkin' coggies,
An' frae ilka voice a sang.
While the echoes sweet an' clear
Wad gi'e answer frae the ben—
But we hear nae mair their lilting
In my bonnie native glen.

. . . . .

Like mist upon the mountains
Our youthfu' days did glide;
Now our kin an' auld acquaintance
Are scattered far and wide;
An' some mair are sleepin' soun'
'Neath the shadow o' the ben,
That were ance baith leal and hearty
In my bonnie native glen.

But fare ye weel each fountain,
Each dell an' grassy brae,
Where aft the kye I herded
In boyhood's happy day.

When life's gloamin' settles down,
An' my race is at an' en',
'Tis my wish that Death should find me
In my bonnie native glen.

In the opinion of competent critics his "Oran na Seana Mhaighdinn" is the best specimen of satirical Gaelic song extant. Full of trenchant yet inoffensive wit it races on with fine rhythmic effect:—

ORAN NA SEANA-MHAIGHDINN

Ma gheibh mise fear gu brath,
Plaigh air nach tigeadh e!
Ged nach can mi sin ri cach,
B' fhearr leam gu'n tigeadh e;
'Na mo luidhe 'n so leam fhin,
'S tha e coltach ris gu 'm bi,
Ma tha leannan domh 's an tir,
Sgriob air nach tigeadh e!

Ged a bhiodh a sporan gann,
Dhannsainn na 'n tigeadh e;
Ged a bhiodh a leth-shuil dall,
M' annsachd na 'n tigeadh e;
Biodh e dubh, no biodh e donn,
Biodh e direach, biodh e cam,
Ma tha casan air is ceann,
Dhannsainn na 'n tigeadh e.

'Nuair a bha mi aotrom og
Phosadh a fichead mi;
Chuir mi dhiom iad dhe mo dheoin,
'S spors dhaibh a nise mi;
Theid iad seachad air mo shroin,
Le 'n cuid chruinneagan air dhorn,
Chaill mi tur orra mo choir,
S leonaidh e nise mi.
. . .
Ach ma chuir iad rium an cul,
Smur cha chuir sud orm,
Ach ma 'se gu 'n tig fear ur,
Sunnd cuiridh sud orm,
Biodh e luath, no biodh a mall,
B' fheairrd an tigh so e bhi ann,
Feithidh mi gu 'n tig an t-am,
'S dhannsainn na 'n tigeadh e!

Thus is the roll of the nineteenth century bards rounded off with Macleod, who is undoubtedly chief among the living singers of the Gael. Had this study been intended to embrace also within its scope poets of Highland extraction who invoked the muse in English rather than in Gaelic, there would fall to be added a further list of honourable names, including Peter Thomas Pattison, Dr. Charles Mackay, Dr. Norman Macleod, and Sheriff Nicolson, all of whom produced fine poetry.

But is it not significant that while in the dawn of the nineteenth century every district in the Highlands had its native poet, now at the beginning of the twentieth not a single Gaelic bard of known reputation exists anywhere within its borders? They have one by one disappeared—all but those who still live in the towns and cities of the South. Will there be a solitary Ossian left—even though last of the Gaelic bardic race—to sing the praises of love and nature, of kin and country, when a new century opens ten decades hence? It is a far-reaching question; but who can answer it? The bibliographer Reid, in 1832, confidently calculated that the ancient tongue could not survive more than fifty years at the longest: yet it is still a living speech to-day. One thing, however, cannot have escaped us, and that is, that even in bardic effort the tuneful language of our fathers is gradually being supplanted by its rival, English, because the new poets coming up prefer the latter as a medium, and know it better.

CHAPTER X

THE LITERATURE OF TRAVEL AND OF HISTORY

ALONGSIDE the lyrical development of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there was growing up a literature of Highland travel and history written in English, and for the most part by Englishmen and Lowland Scots. As the travellers and historians belonged to various ranks and professions in life and each pursued his own objects of interest, the books produced are without exception of a most fascinating and entertaining kind, revealing not only the natural features of the country, the manners and customs and history of the people, but also the idiosyncrasies of their authors. All the more because these Southern gentlemen entered the Highlands pretty much in the same manner as a modern traveller finds his way into some hinterland of Africa to explore the country for the first time and record his observations and impressions.

The earliest we know who attempted a description of the Western Isles of Scotland, called in his time "Hybrides," was Mr. Donald Munro, High Dean of the Isles, who travelled through the most of them in the year 1594. His account is somewhat meagre, but dealing with each island singly as it does, it affords an interesting basis of comparison between the state of these islands as they existed then and their condition now.

The Dean's quaint style and manner of treatment may be inferred from his opening paragraphs.

1. First in the Ireland seas, fornent the poynt of Galloway,

neirest betwixt Scotland, England, and Ireland, lyes the first iyle of the saids isles, called in Latin tongue Mona and Sodora, in English, Man, in Erishe, Manain, whilks sometime, as auld historiographers sayes, was wont to be the seat first ordynit by Fynan king of Scottis to the priest and the philosophers called in Latine, Druides, in English, Culdeis and Kildeis—that is, worshippers of God; in Erish, Leid Draiche, quhilks were the first teachers of religion in Albion, quherinto is the cathedrall of the bishop of Man and Isles dedicate, in the honour of St. Peter the apostle. This ile is twenty-four myles lang and eight myles braid, with twa castellis.

2. Elsay. Northwart from this ile of Man, sixty myles off, layes Elsay, an iyl of ane myle lange quherin is ane grate high hill, round and roughe, and ane heavin, and als aboundance of Soland geise, and ane small poynt of ane nesse, quherat the fishing bottis lyis; for in the same ile is verey good killing, ling and uther whyte fishes. Forment this ile layes Carrick on the southeast pairt, Ireland on the southwest pairt, and the landes of Kintyre on the west and northwest pairt; the said Elsay being neir hand midsea betwixt the said marches.

M. Martin, who came next, commenting in the preface to his own book on Munro's pioneer effort, says: "Perhaps it is peculiar to those isles that they have never been described till now by any man that was a native of the country or had travelled them. They were indeed touched by Boethius, Bishop Lesly, Buchannan, and Johnston, in their histories of Scotland, but none of those authors was ever there in person; so that what they wrote concerning them was upon trust from others. Buchannan, it is true, had his information from Donald Munro, who had been in many of them, and therefore his account is the best that has hitherto appeared, but it must be owned that it is very imperfect. That great man designed the history and not the geography of his country, and therefore in him it was pardonable. Besides, since his time there is a great change in the humour of the world, and, by consequence, in the way of writing. Natural and experimental philosophy has been much improved since his days, and therefore descriptions of countries without the natural history of them are now justly reckoned to be defective."

Martin's own *Description of the Western Isles*, published in 1703, purports to contain

"A full account of their situation, extent, anchoring places, and fisheries.

"The ancient and modern Government, religion and customs of the inhabitants, particularly of their druids; heathen temples, monasteries, churches, chapels, antiquities, monuments, forts, caves, and other curiosities of art and nature. Of their admirable and expeditious way of curing most diseases by simples of their own product.

"A particular account of the second sight or faculty of foreseeing things to come by way of vision, so common among them.

"A brief hint of methods to improve trade in that country, both by sea and land.

"With a new map of the whole, describing the harbours, anchoring places, and dangerous rocks, for the benefit of sailors.

"To which is added a brief description of the Isles of Orkney and Shetland."

This curious book breathes the atmosphere of those olden times in the Highlands and gives us rather startling glimpses of the inner life of the people and their superstitious practices. It differs from most that follow in that it is written by a native from within who has not the outward standard of comparison which is never absent from the minds of subsequent travellers when they write of Highland scenes and usages. He says, with reference to that age, "The Isles here described are but little known or considered, not only by strangers, but even by those under the same government and climate."

And following this we have a critical remark not inapplicable to our own time. "The modern itch after the knowledge of foreign places is so prevalent that the generality of mankind bestow little thought or time upon the place of their nativity. It is become customary in those of quality to travel young into foreign countries whilst they

are absolute strangers at home; and many of them when they return are loaded with superficial knowledge, as the bare names of famous libraries, stately edifices, fine statues, curious paintings, new dishes, new tunes, new dances, painted beauties, and the like."

He himself visited St. Kilda a few years before the issue of his book and printed an account of the island in 1698. In his dedication of the volume on the Western Isles, he makes the proud statement that the islanders "can boast that they are honoured with the sepulchres of eight kings of Norway who at this day, with forty-eight kings of Scotland and four of Ireland, lie entombed in the island of Iona."

After Martin came the enthusiastic Mr. John Mackey, who visited Inverness about 1717 and gained the goodwill of the inhabitants by calling it "a pretty town." His account of his travels through Scotland was published in 1723, and it is worthy of note that he says of the inhabitants of the Highland capital at that early period that they spoke as good English as the Londoner, and since the days of Oliver Cromwell were in their manners and dress entirely English.

Mackey's account thus supplements the information to be gleaned from the epistolary efforts of such public men as Simon, Lord Lovat; and General Wade. But there was employed under the latter of these, afterwards so well known in the Highlands for his roadmaking, an officer whose "Letters from the North" now form the most interesting and valuable commentary we have on the social condition and customs of the Scottish Gael in the period immediately preceding the Forty-five. This was Captain Burt, an Englishman who served in some civil capacity with Wade either as a surveyor or as an accountant. Living in Inverness, as his centre, he had occasion to make visits from time to time to outlying districts in the neighbourhood, and to his observant and amused eye the old *régime* in the Highlands, then in full vogue, offered a study of the most fascinating kind. Possessed of a facile pen and a humorous turn for sketching, he found pleasure in communicating impressions

of the Gael and his surroundings, his modes of thinking and acting, in a series of letters to a friend in London. These letters were not originally meant for publication, and accordingly they have all the racy, frank, confidential characteristics of the private epistle.

Naturally this son of a more advanced civilisation did not take kindly to the rugged hills or the impoverished glens. Nor did the beautiful scenery amid which he moved appeal to his fancy in the same way that it impressed the travellers of the nineteenth century, who saw it transfigured under the wizard wand of the great magician of Abbotsford, and who could travel in peace and comfort without fear of dirk or dirt. All his observations, however, whether of country or of people, have an interest and value as the impressions of a man of education and culture who looked upon Gaeldom with fresh eyes and recorded his opinions with impartiality, even though at times he may appear to be laying a heavy brush on the canvas.

His letters, which were probably written about 1725-26, were published in London in 1754.

There was apparently very little disposition shown by any outsider before the Forty-five to travel in so wild and unsettled a hinterland. Burt himself says that when any one was obliged to go there on some extraordinary occasion he usually made his will before setting out.

But after the notable event which permanently pacified the Highlands quite a succession of interested and inquisitive travellers came to spy out the land.

The hero of Quebec was there in 1751, not as General James Wolfe, but as a lieutenant-colonel quartered in Inverness, and engaged with others in the task of keeping the country in order. He had fought under Cumberland at Culloden five years previously, and among the excursions he made he revisited the scene of the battle. Wolfe, like Burt, looked on his environment with English eyes, and thought it part of the hardships of his lot as a soldier to be stationed in such a dreary and remote outpost of civilisation.

He was then a young officer just twenty-four years of age. The tedium of the winter he sometimes beguiled by writing long letters to his mother and other people, some of which his biographer, Robert Wright, has embodied in his Life. These, though not so full of details relative to the state of the country as Captain Burt's, throw a welcome sidelight on the situation, and occasionally are enlivened by interesting touches, as when he writes: "We have an assembly of female rebels every fortnight, entirely composed of Macdonalds, Frasers, and Macintoshes. I had the honour to dance with the daughter of a chieftain who was killed at Culloden, the laird of Kippoch. They are perfectly wild as the hills that breed them, but they lay aside their principles for the sake of sound and movement. They make no converts, which I chiefly attribute to a strong dialect of the Erse that destroys the natural softness of their notes." How like Tolstoi's account of the Cossack girls!

In 1760 another distinguished visitor was touring in the Highlands. Richard Pococke, D.D., LL.D., F.R.S., F.S.A., Lord Bishop successively of Ossory and Meath, was a man of a very different type and profession. An Englishman by birth and an Irishman by adoption, he had also a connection with Scotland, in that he became citizen by presentation of no fewer than seven Scottish cities and royal burghs.[1] Born at Southampton in 1704, son of the Rector of Colmer, and educated at Oxford, he rose rapidly through various grades in the Church, and while yet little more than thirty years of age was seized with a passion for travelling. The mantle of his celebrated kinsman Dr. Edward Pococke, Oriental scholar and traveller, had evidently fallen on the young Churchman, for he journeyed extensively not only on the Continent but also in Egypt, Palestine, and other parts of the East, and published important books bearing on his observations in those lands. Subsequently he visited various districts of England and made three tours to Scotland, the first in 1747, the second in 1750, and the third in 1760. This last was by far the

[1] Aberdeen, Glasgow, Perth, Lanark, Forres, Nairn, and Dornoch.

longest and most important, extending as it did to the Orkney Islands.

In anticipation of it he had carefully digested all the literature relating to Scotland that he could command, such as Bede, Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, Camden, Buchanan, Sacheverell's *Isle of Man and Iona*, Dean Munro's and Martin's *Western Isles*, Gordon's *Itinerarium Septentrionale*; De Foe's and Mackey's *Journeys*, Richard of Cirencester's *Itinerary*, etc. From England he travelled through Clydesdale to Glasgow, and *via* the western banks of Loch Lomond, and Inveraray to Iona; then through the wilds of Lochaber by the road made by Wade, sailing down Loch Ness and pursuing his journey till he reached Inverness, whence he visited Culloden.

From Inverness he proceeded through Easter Ross into Sutherlandshire, which he investigated as far as Cape Wrath, and then crossed from Thurso to Orkney, the Ultima Thule of his long-cherished wishes. Returning to the mainland he came south through the Eastern counties, and through Elgin, Aberdeen, Perth, St. Andrews, Stirling, Edinburgh, Dunbar, and finally across the border into England.

This bishop-traveller was mainly interested in antiquities, and there was scarcely any abbey, cathedral, ruined church, so-called "druidical circle," or other place of interest on his route that he omitted to visit and describe, though he had little to say of the social condition of the people.

The accounts of his tours in Scotland have been preserved in letters to his mother and sister. This written material slept in manuscript for more than a century till the Scottish History Society found and published it in 1887. It is believed, however, that Thomas Pennant, who came to Scotland nine years after the Bishop, had access to his manuscripts, and that Pococke's tours may have been to a considerable extent living in the interval in the pages of the book that has made his successor so well known.

Like the distinguished Bishop, Thomas Pennant, Esq. of Downing, Flintshire, was a traveller interested in antiquities;

though, unlike the former, his chief bent was towards zoology, on which subject he published important works. It was mainly in pursuit of his study as a naturalist that, leaving Chester on June 26, 1769, this attractive writer crossed the Border and made his way through the east of Scotland by Dunbar, Edinburgh, Perth, Glentilt, Aberdeen, Elgin, Forres, to Inverness, and thence north as far as John o' Groat's, returning the same way to Inverness, and south by Fort Augustus, Fort William, Dalmally, Inveraray, and Loch Lomond to Glasgow and Edinburgh, hence to Lockerbie, Carlisle, and his home in Wales.

Pennant's account has been highly esteemed for the description he gives of the social condition of the Highlands after the Forty-five. What Captain Burt did for the period immediately preceeding that memorable event, the English naturalist has done to a great extent for that which followed. His "Tour" was the first of the kind published after the overthrow of the old clan system, and it is full of quaint information.

In 1772 he set out again—this time for the Hebrides. But two other men with quite other aims in view had been over the Highlands before him, though their books were not published till much later. These were John Walker, D.D., Professor of Natural History in the University of Edinburgh, and John Knox, a gentleman who first visited the North through motives of curiosity, but came afterwards to interest himself in the development of the fishing industry.

In his *Economical History of the Hebrides and Highlands of Scotland*, published in 1808, Dr. Walker explains that the work was the result of six journeys made between the years 1760 and 1786, during which a greater extent of these distant parts of the kingdom was surveyed than had probably ever been traversed by any former traveller. Two of the journeys were particularly extensive, each of them having been continued from the month of May till late in December.

"In 1764," says the introduction, "the author received a

commission from the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland to inquire into the state of religion in the Highland counties; into the distribution of His Majesty's bounty, granted for the religious instruction of the inhabitants; and to point out the districts where the erection of new parishes might be judged most necessary and expedient. He, at the same time, received a commission from His Majesty's Commissioners on the Annexed Estates, to examine the natural history of these counties, their population, and the state of their agriculture, manufactures, and fisheries." In 1771 he was asked by the same authorities to extend his survey over the parts of the country he had not formerly visited, and in due course he sent in reports to both bodies.

His *Economical History* contains the observations which he made on those journeys regarding the state of husbandry at the time, and the improvements he suggested. And in this respect it is a valuable testimony to the rise and progress of farming and agriculture in the interval since then. Particularly interesting are his statistics of population. Martin, he remarks, supposed that the Western Isles at the beginning of the eighteenth century contained 40,000 people, Chamberlayne soon after reckoned the number at 50,000—both, of course, conjectural computations. But in 1764, from special reports of the clergy and catechists, Dr. Walker believed he had reached a very exact enumeration for that year, and set down the number of the inhabitants of the 95 western islands of Scotland, from Bute to St. Kilda, as 61,536. Dr. Webster had previously, in 1755, computed the population in the Highland parishes on the mainland as 237,598.

Meantime, while Dr. Walker was prosecuting his researches, the other traveller, John Knox, was engaged inquiring into the possibilities of the harbours and fishing industry, into the most effectual means of employing the inhabitants, and of preventing emigration, which at that time prevailed to quite an exceptional extent.

In his account of the special tour he made into the Highlands in 1786, he tells us that between 1764 and the

latter year he had penetrated and explored that region sixteen times, making himself acquainted with the various classes of people, the districts, towns, ports, bays, lochs, shipping, fisheries, and manufactures. It is interesting to note that his geographical guide at that period was Dorret's Map of Scotland, the outlines of which he himself filled in as he visited the various places.

Both Walker and he were thus in the midst of their wanderings and labours when the two more famous travellers, Dr. Johnson and James Boswell, Esq., set out in 1773. The route followed by these London celebrities was by Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Elgin, Inverness, thence by Fort Augustus, and Glenmoriston across country to Glenshiel and Glenelg; Skye, Raasay, Coll, Mull, Ulva, Iona, were all visited, after which the interesting pair returned by Inveraray, Loch Lomond, Glasgow and Auchinleck, back to Edinburgh and the South.

Johnson in his Journal has said that "he scarcely remembered how the wish to visit the Hebrides was excited"; but he told Boswell in 1763 that his father had put Martin's account in his hand when he was very young, and that he was much pleased with it. For many years the two friends had in view a journey into the Highlands. They expected to see the primitive simplicity and wildness depicted by Martin, but were only in time to find the old order broken up and the ancient *régime* fast passing away.

In this undertaking of theirs they reckoned there would be some inconveniences and hardships and perhaps a little danger. Indeed Boswell divulges the common opinion entertained outwith the Highlands in the amusing remark: "When I was at Ferney in 1764 I mentioned our design to Voltaire. He looked at me as if I had talked of going to the North Pole and said, 'You do not insist on my accompanying you?' 'No, sir.' 'Then' (he replied) 'I am very willing you should go.'" With reference to the adventurers' mutual capacity for enjoying scenery he is delightfully frank. "Dr. Johnson always said that he was

not come to Scotland to see fine places, of which there were enough in England, but wild objects—manners; in short, things which he had not seen before." "I have a notion," adds his companion, "that he at no time has had much taste for rural beauties. I have myself very little." The two travellers had, on the whole, a very pleasant time of it, and were able to put on record a genial and by no means unfavourable account of the native and his ways.

There is really nothing in either of their journals to warrant the attack made on the Doctor for the views expressed, if we except his Ossianic opinions; and in the main, but for his confident assumption that there were no ancient Gaelic writings in existence, we are not aware that in all his wanderings he was confronted with any such genuine antique documents as would reasonably induce him to change his opinion. The Gaels themselves were, for the most part, so far as documentary evidence was concerned, as blind as he.

But now that the dust of controversy has blown away, Dr. Johnson's *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*, 1775, and Boswell's *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, 1785, remain two of the most popular and at the same time most reliable accounts that we have of the social condition of the Highlands in the period after the Forty-five—interesting alike for the information they afford and for their literary style.

Within the dozen years following their visit, no less than four authors of books penetrated the Celtic fringe making observations and recording their impressions. Of these Cordiner was the first and the one whose books are most valuable. He had got into touch with Pennant through some drawings of ancient ruins which he had made, and which had attracted the notice of that well-to-do traveller, who commissioned him to go over the ground he himself had traversed in the Highlands and make more sketches. The direct result was that delightful volume entitled *Antiquities and Scenery of the North of Scotland*, in a series of letters to Thomas Pennant, Esq., by the Rev. Charles Cordiner, Minister of St.

Andrew's Chapel, Banff. It was published in London in 1780.

The tour apparently occupied six months, and the first letter, dated from Banff, May 15, 1776, opens thus :—

"The antiquities and scenery of the North which you mention as such excellent subjects for drawing, every day more and more attract my attention ; the point of view in which you place them as useful appendages to your 'Tours' makes the idea of delineating them yield me an interesting pleasure.

"I look on it as a fortunate event that the few of my drawings which made their way to you should have gained so much of your notice as to occasion a correspondence which is so flattering and agreeable to me. It is of much importance to those who may command their time to have their thoughts directed into some useful channel, and I am very sensible how great your favours have in this way enlivened my leisure hours.

"I beg to add the account of this journey as a supplement to your 'Tours,' and thus to attempt fulfilling your work of drawing out of its obscurity the remotest parts of our country. Should I be fortunate enough to execute your commands with approbation, it will doubtless be to me a spring of much entertainment and pleasure."

Starting from Banff a day or two afterwards, he visits ruins in the counties of Aberdeen, Banff, and Moray, proceeding along the coast to Beauly, Dingwall, Invergordon, Tain, Dornoch, Helmsdale, Brora, round Caithness to Thurso and by the coast westwards, taking inland localities like Strathnaver on the way, and returning by Loch Shin to Lairg, Tain, Cromarty, Fort-George, and Banff. His last letter is dated 30th June. At the end of the book he gives extracts from a history by Torfaeus, a native of Iceland, who died about 1720, aged 81. The history begins about 850 and ends 1591. There are 21 plates in this first volume, of old castles, churches, monuments, and some rock scenes.

The following is a very interesting example of the author's literary style :—

ABBEY OF BEAU-LIEU,[1]
June 10.

Round the ruined monastery at present nothing but rural images invite attention ; the venerable boughs of aged trees cast their shade on either hand ; within all is silence and desolation ; decaying monuments of saints and heroes are but as the clouds of other times, and give a transient solemnity to the recollection of past ages. The thought of these courts having often echoed with the glad *Te Deums* of thousands who, along with their temple, are now mouldering into dust, deepens the veneration which these hallowed walls inspire.

The whole floor of the abbey is crowded with tombstones of various ages, many of them, I should suppose, nearly coeval with itself, which was built in the thirteenth century. The most ancient of these appear to have been the lids of stone coffins ; on each is a large cross, ornamented with various flourishings, sometimes with swords and other emblems at the side.

And as there is not along with these any vestige of letters, it is a tacit acknowledgment that writing was little practised at the time when these monuments were carved ; for as many of them must have been cut under the eye and by the direction of the clergy, and as monasteries were in this country the first seats of learning and where the fine arts were principally studied and encouraged, it must place the era of these stones at least five hundred years back ; at the same time a degree of neatness and elegance which prevails both in the design and execution of the carvings implies a refinement in taste and progress in the arts at that period which certainly had much declined in later ages. In the vaults of the abbey there are some remains of bodies found in the stone coffins ; on the lids of these are warriors well carved, and in fine relief ; these have Latin inscriptions in old characters round the margin, which seem to be dated in the fifteenth century, but are in general so much defaced it is impossible to copy them.

Two other volumes by the same author, published in 1795, are entitled *Remarkable Ruins and Romantic Prospects of North Britain, with Ancient Monuments and Singular Subjects of Natural History*. The engravings in this work were by Peter Mazell.

[1] Beauly.

In the introduction, dated July 1, 1788, Cordiner says "that the favourable reception accorded to his first book induced him to give this more extended and particular account." These later volumes take not the form of an itinerary, but of plates each followed by two pages of description. The plates bear at the foot, "Published according to Act of Parliament by Peter Mazell, Engraver," and the date. The dates in the first of the two volumes range from November 30, 1784 to July 17, 1788, and the plates seem to have been done in twos and threes at irregular intervals. The subjects cover a wide extent of country from Ruthven Castle, Kingussie, to Cullen, Beauly, Nigg, and Sutherlandshire.

The plates of the second volume date from March 12, 1789 to August 1794, and take in such diverse scenes as Fort Augustus, Loch Lomond, Holyrood, St. Andrews, Aberdeen, Dunrobin, etc. The last is entitled "Caledonian and Egyptian symbols compared," and there is the following note at the end of it:—

"While the author was yet meditating the illustration of these symbols it pleased Almighty God to terminate his researches here below. The above was copied from some of his original scrolls which he had noted down when contemplating the present plate. It is impossible for us to make the description more complete, but what is given will in some degree unfold the intention of the author and enable those who delight in such studies to follow out the idea at greater length."

It appears that this accomplished antiquarian artist died at the early age of forty-eight, leaving a widow and eight children; but his interesting work abides—a monument of industry and skill.

Another representative of the Church who contributed a book of travels in the Western Hebrides from 1782 to 1790 was the Rev. John Lane Buchanan, M.A. Its purport may be gleaned from the author's own words.

"The writer of the following notes, whose commission

from the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, from 1782 to 1791, gave him an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the actual situation of affairs in the Western Hebrides, trusts that he will do no disservice, but, on the contrary, promote the interests of both the chiefs and the natives at large by disclosing scenes industriously concealed from the eye of the benevolent landholder as well as of the inquisitive stranger, in the hope that humanity and sound policy may devise some means for alleviating the miseries and converting to both public and private advantage the industry of a sober, harmless, and ingenious but ill-treated people. The picture, on the whole, will be a melancholy one, but here and there relieved by some curious manners and customs, and some particulars in natural history. The author could never boast of any elegance of style in composition ; but this, such as it was, has not, he is very sensible, been improved by wandering about for nine years, where he very seldom heard or conversed in any other tongue than the Celtic. He has set down some things as he had heard them in this language, not knowing how to give their full meaning in English."

The remaining two travellers whose books illuminate the latter part of the eighteenth century were Englishmen—Colonel Thornton of Thornville Royal in Yorkshire, and Captain Newte.

The Colonel was a sportsman, and in 1786 sought the Highlands for shooting and fishing, in which he was particularly interested. In this respect he figures as the pioneer of that numerous class who make their appearance every year on the moors and lochs and rivers of the North. Hiring the house of Raitts, near Kingussie, the Englishman provided himself with boats and tents and sporting appliances of every kind, which he carried with him as he wandered over the wide district from Rothiemurchus to Loch Laggan. His travelling companion on these expeditions was the artist Mr. Gerard, whom he engaged to accompany him and take drawings of the scenery. They both moved about on their numerous

journeys in a gig with two horses driven tandem. The scenery to the genial colonel was ever full of beauty, and though he had often to rough it in the course of his hunting and angling operations, he seemed always full of appreciation of the land and the people. Hospitable himself, and much given to entertainment, wherever he went he met with Highland politeness and native hospitality.

His book, published in 1804, and entitled *A Sporting Tour through the Northern Parts of England and great Part of the Highlands of Scotland*,[1] has been characterised as a delightful chronicle of sport, enlivened with various episodes and references to the social life of the people which are very pleasing. In particular there is an account of the restoration of Cluny Macpherson to the estates of his ancestors, which had been forfeited, and of the festivities which followed the joyful event.

The popular Colonel was in the district at the time, and receiving an invitation to the feast in honour of the great occasion he attended and joined in the banqueting, the mirth, and the reels, as heartily as any of the overjoyed clansmen. He was specially struck by the charming appearance of the ladies who were dressed in all their Highland pride, each following her own fancy and wearing a shawl of tartan, which, in contrast to the other parts of the female adornment, presented in the candle-light a most picturesque appearance.

The happy gathering was a survival from the olden time, and every hill and mountain in Badenoch blazed with bonfires of wood, peat, and dry heather. But even the Colonel noticed the extraordinary transformation that was stealing over the land, and he was astonished to observe how very much all ranks of the people were changed in their manners in the course of ten or twelve years since first he knew them.

As almost contemporary with the above event we may set down the visit of Captain Newte to the North, described in the book which he issued, entitled, *Prospects and Observa-*

[1] It was republished in 1896 by Sir Herbert Maxwell in his *Sporting Library*.

tions on a Tour in England and Scotland, Natural, Economical, and Literary, by Thomas Newte, Esq., 1791.

On May 17, 1785, he left Oxford on horseback accompanied by friends, whose social sympathy enlivened the impressions produced by the varying scenes through which they passed. His itinerary is detailed in the following order:—From Oxford to the Border of Scotland. From the Border of Scotland to the entrance into the Highlands. From Loch Lomond to Inverness. From Inverness by the sea coast to Perth. From Perth, by Stirling, to Edinburgh. Edinburgh, with its neighbourhood. From Edinburgh to York.

At the outset he says, "It was merely with a view to that species of amusement which arises from the recollection of interesting scenes and the time when they passed under observation, that the writer of the following memorandums ever thought of committing them to paper." His friends also importuned him to undertake this task. In his dedication of the book to the King we find his purpose had developed a stage further, for he there expresses his motive in publishing the production in these words:—

"I beg leave to present to your Majesty a book which aims at a general description of the northern parts of this island, but whose principal object is to give a proper direction to the labour of the people, to improve their natural resources in the land and sea, and to contribute to the independence, the happiness, and the increase of the most virtuous and useful part of the community." And in the advertisement he adds: "Nothing but the hope of being in some degree beneficial to mankind would have induced the author to offer the views and observations contained in this volume to the public. Part of these were published two years ago in a small octavo, entitled, *A Tour in England and Scotland, by an English Gentleman.*"

As an example of the sententious style of this eighteenth century traveller, and the interesting remarks that are scattered through his book, we may quote the following passage:—

"In Ross-shire, I was told, as in other countries, there is a very marked distinction between the inhabitants of the mountains and those of the plains with regard to religion. The former, though they pay the utmost respect to the ceremonies and yield unbounded faith to the doctrines taught by the minister, as far as they can comprehend them, yet have nothing of that fanaticism and religious melancholy about them, or spirit of dogmatism and disputation, which is everywhere found in the Low country of Scotland, except among the smugglers in Ayrshire, the iron manufacturers at Carron, and the farmers and country people in such fertile districts as the Merse, the Lothians, and the Carses, where hearty food, open air, and variety of occupation happily conspire to engender good health and brisk spirits" (p. 145).

In 1800 Dr. J. Garnett published another *Tour through the Highlands and Western Isles of Scotland, Staffa, Icolmkil, the Falls of Clyde, Moffat, etc.*, in two volumes, with map and fifty-two plates.

During the summer and early autumn of the same year the erudite Dr. John Leyden, the friend of Sir Walter Scott, was peregrinating over similar ground in the company of two young foreigners, and writing a descriptive journal and letters, which have only recently come to light. The party started from Edinburgh, seemingly afoot, and proceeded by Linlithgow and Falkirk to Stirling. Passing over the field of Bannockburn, they went through the Trossachs on to Inveraray and Oban; thence to Staffa, Iona, and the Crinan Canal, which was then in course of construction. Their further route took them to Eigg, Muck, Glencoe, Ben Nevis; up the great glen to Inverness, Nairn, Keith, and Aberdeen, the valley of the Dee as far as Braemar, and that of the Tay, from Killiecrankie to the Ochil Hills. It was no ordinary globe-trotting performance, for the learned traveller shows the keen interest he took in the historic scenes which he visited, as well as in the geology and scenery of the Highlands. Unlike Captain Burt and Pennant, he has very little to say about the social habits and customs of the people, but

was particularly interested in the Ossianic question. His observations and adventures, however, are sometimes very entertaining, and throw some light upon the condition of the counties of Argyll, Perth, and Inverness at the end of the eighteenth century. Only the beginning of his account is in the form of a journal. The other part consists of descriptive letters to Walter Scott; Robert Anderson, the editor of the *British Poets;* Professor Thomas Brown, of the University of Edinburgh; and another friend. Where the manuscript of this tour in the Highlands had lain for nearly a century after it was written, it is impossible to say, but two years ago it came under the scrutiny of Mr. James Sinton, who edited it for Messrs. Blackwood, and it was published for the first time in 1903.

The same publishers have recently issued MS. 104 in the King's Library, British Museum, entitled, *The Highlands of Scotland*, 1750, and edited by Dr. Andrew Lang. It is conjectured that the writer was a Mr. Bruce, an official under the Government, who in 1749 was employed in the work of surveying the forfeited and other estates in the North.

From the end of the eighteenth century the Highlands was thus no longer a *terra incognita*. Every part had been visited by authors, and every phase of its life depicted. Yet distinguished strangers continued to frequent the weird hinterland over which, even in its grinding poverty, there hung the glamour of the past. The Earl of Selkirk interested himself in schemes of emigration, and Telford, the engineer, in the projects of the Government, such as the making of roads, bridges, and the Caledonian Canal. But of those who penetrated the Celtic fringe for further research and who gave their observations literary form, the most important was John Macculloch, M.D., F.R.S. A votary of science, especially geology, Dr. Macculloch undertook a number of autumnal journeys between the years 1811 and 1821, and as an intimate friend of Sir Walter Scott communicated to the great novelist in the course of a series of letters the discoveries he had made and the impressions he

had formed as he proceeded through the mountains and glens of the North.

These letters were afterwards, in 1824, published in four volumes under the title, "*The Highlands and Western Isles of Scotland*, containing descriptions of their scenery and antiquities, with an account of the political history and ancient manners, and of the origin, language, agriculture, economy, music, present condition of the people," etc. Like Dr. Johnson and all those who in that age dared to express their opinions and impressions impartially, Dr. Macculloch was accused of entertaining prejudices against the Highlanders, and more or less vilified by perfervid Celts for his elaborate and interesting work. Yet he no more deserved the extreme strictures passed upon him than did the great lexicographer himself. As an example of his tone and temper and literary style, we quote the opening paragraphs of Letter 1.

My dear Scott,

More years than either you or I are fond of remembering have elapsed since first, on the borders of Sydenham Common, we compared a few of our observations on the subject of the Highlands, since we discussed their wonderful scenery, and since we lamented together how imperfectly that country,—all that belongs, and all that ever did belong to it,—was known, even to its immediate neighbours —even, I may fairly say, to its own inhabitants. These days can return no more. You are still delighting the world, and so is Campbell; but our excellent friend Lord Selkirk is gone to receive the reward of his benevolence and his virtues. My own tenure has long been precarious; the foot of time is stealing on, but not noiseless and inaudible; and as I feel that the night is coming when it will be too late to do what I then neither intended nor thought to have done, and too late to repent of it unperformed, I have at length undertaken to collect all that has not been forgotten, and much that you will now hear for the first time. It is but another consequence of the same train of unforeseen circumstances that led to my intimacy with this country which has thus caused the record of what those unexpected events forced on my observation.

From whatever causes these recollections have assumed their present form,—under whatever circumstances that which was about to vanish has been embodied, to disappear now, only with the paper

on which it is written,—I know not to whom these letters could better have been addressed than to him who has so often stepped forward in this very career; to the Poet of the Highlands, to him who has revived the rapidly diminishing interest of a country as singular in its romantic beauties as its people are in their history, in their position in society, and in their manners and feelings.

The world knows much of the interest which you have taken in this people, and of the illustration which you have bestowed on them: it knows what you have acknowledged, and it believes what you have not confessed. Had I been acquainted with the author of *Waverley*, of *Montrose*, and of *Rob Roy*, I might have balanced in my choice between him and the poet of the *Lord of the Isles* and the *Lady of the Lake*. But the Poet is a substance, and the Novelist is a shadow. To that I could not have addressed myself; yet, as we judge of the presence of the sun by the shade which it casts, and as the midnight robber is detected by his image on the wall, I must trust that, in laying hold of the substance, I have secured the shadow also. More dexterous, however, than the noted Greek litigant, you have contrived, like the German magician, to separate your shadow from yourself, to give it a local habitation and a name, and to erect it into your own rival; eclipsing, like the moon in its darkness, the very luminary on which it depends. Thus I have gained as my correspondent him whom I should above all mankind have chosen; for by whom could I hope to have been so well understood as by him who, while he is the poet of the isles and of the mountains, of Macdonald and Clan Alpin, is, at the same time, the poet of *Waverley*, *Montrose*, and *Rob Roy*, of the *Cearnach* and the Clans, of Highland chivalry and Highland feelings.

If, however, you expect much order in what follows, you will expect what I never intended, and what, if I had even desired it, I could not have accomplished. Many years—a fearful period of retrospect—have elapsed since first I was enchanted with Loch Lomond and Loch Cateran, since first my heart used to beat at the name of Macdonald and Campbell, since I wandered an enthusiast among the visions of Ossian, since no melodies had charms like the melodies of Lochaber and Strathspey. After a long interval I returned to find beauties never forgotten in every blue hill and bright lake, in the wild woodlands and foaming torrents, to see a friend in every tartan, and once more to feel the joy that was wafted in every mountain breeze. Chance, necessity, duty,—each, all, I need not say what,—compelled me to cultivate for many successive years an acquaintance thus unexpectedly renewed; and the same necessity compelled me to visit more of the country,

and that more minutely, than it has fallen to the lot of any person existing to do.

But Dr. Macculloch's renowned friend, Sir Walter Scott, had done more by his literary enchantments to bring the Highlands into prominence than all the travellers who had written before. After *Waverley* appeared, a new enthusiasm seemed to have been generated for the manners and customs of the despised Gael, and more exhaustive books on the subject began to appear. Among these the most outstanding were—*Sketches of the Character, Manners, and Present State of the Highlanders of Scotland, with Details of the Military Service of the Highland Regiments*, by Colonel David Stewart; and *The Scottish Gael*, "or Celtic manners, as preserved among the Highlanders; being an historical and descriptive account of the inhabitants, antiquities, and national peculiarities of Scotland; more particularly of the northern or Gaelic parts of the country, where the singular habits of the aboriginal Celts are most tenaciously retained. By James Logan, Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland." The former was published in 1822, the latter in 1831, both being in two volumes.

Colonel Stewart—afterwards better known as General Stewart of Garth—tells of the adventitious way in which he was led on to write his book, occupied so much as it is with the Highland regiments. When the historical records of the Black Watch up to the year 1793 had fallen into the hands of the enemy on the Continent, the Commander-in-Chief, at the close of the war, directed that a new record of its services be drawn up and entered in the regimental books for future use. Unfortunately none of the officers who had served in the 42nd previous to the above date were then in the regiment, and some difficulty arose in preparing the required statement. Colonel Stewart, however, was known to be an enthusiast—well informed on the doughty deeds of his countrymen, and in 1817 his commanding officer requested him to supply him with a few notes on the subject. The Colonel began with the intention of jotting down as

much as would cover thirty or forty pages of the record book; but as he proceeded he found that he knew more and had a better recollection of circumstances than he was previously aware of. Hence the extended and interesting account, which was followed up with even more completeness by the able work of Logan.[1]

Up till that period it will be observed that the books produced were concerned mainly with descriptions of the manners and customs, the physical features, and social condition of the Highlands. No real authentic history of events in the past had been attempted, except the accounts that appeared here and there of the more recent rebellions. But the age of the more serious historian had now definitely arrived,—late indeed, in comparison with the records of other countries, but henceforth wonderfully voluminous.

The first important contribution in this direction was *The History of the Western Highlands and Istes of Scotland, from* A.D. 1493 *to* A.D. 1625, *with a brief Introductory Sketch from* A.D. 80 *to* A.D. 1493, "By Donald Gregory, Joint Secretary to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, Secretary to the Iona Club, Honorary Member of the Ossianic Society of Glasgow, Honorary Member of the Society of Antiquaries, Newcastle-on-Tyne, and Member of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of the North, at Copenhagen." It was published in 1836.

Mr. Gregory made large use of the public records, and was in touch with many able historians and authorities who were interested in his work, and gave him much historical data and information, so that his book is a valuable record of the period covered.

The very next year, in 1837, appeared *The Highlanders of Scotland, their Origin, History, and Antiquities, with a Sketch of their Manners and Customs*, by W. F. Skene," and the year following, in 1838, *A History of the Highlands and of the Highland Clans, with an extensive*

[1] A second edition was published in 1876, with a memoir and notes by Dr. Stewart (Nether Lochaber.)

Selection from the hitherto inedited Stuart Papers, by James Browne, LL.D., advocate.

Dr. Browne says that without the benefit of the researches of Gregory and Skene it would have been a task of no ordinary difficulty to compile even the faintest sketch of the history of the Highland clans,—far less to arrange it in anything like a systematic form. He himself brings the account down to the episode of the Forty-five. A new edition of his book was published in 1849, and a quarter of a century later the same publishers, finding that such a book was in popular demand, resolved to issue an enlarged work based on Browne's, and containing the general history down to the date of issue.

This production appeared in 1875, and was reissued in 1887 under the title, "*A History of the Scottish Highlands, Highland Clans, and Highland Regiments*, with an account of the Gaelic language, literature, and music, by the Rev. Thomas Maclauchlan, LL.D., F.S.A., Scotland; and an essay on Highland Scenery, by the late Professor John Wilson; edited by John S. Keltie, F.S.A., Scotland, and illustrated with a series of portraits, views, maps, etc., engraved on steel, clan tartans, and upwards of two hundred woodcuts, including armorial bearings." The book, issued in two large volumes, consists of three parts, and the publishers announced as a novelty at the time that the editor had added a sketch of the progress of the Highlands within the last hundred years.

Another monumental work, embodying much research and throwing fresh light on the early period, is Dr. Skene's *Celtic Scotland: a History of Ancient Alban*, three volumes, published in Edinburgh, 1876-80. Each volume is complete in itself and the subjects are (1) History and Ethnology, (2) Church and Culture, (3) Land and People. The principal aim of the author has been to ascertain the true facts of the early civil history. "For this purpose," he says, "the narratives of the early historians afford no available basis. The artificially-constructed system of history first brought into

shape by John of Fordun, and elaborated in the more classical text of Hector Boece, must, for the Celtic period of our history, be entirely rejected."

Dr. Skene has done more for the elucidation of the past of the Gael than any other historian of last century. Two other books complete the list of more important contributions down to the present—namely, the Duke of Argyll's *Scotland as it was and as it is*, 1887, and *A Popular History of the Highlands and Gaelic Scotland from the earliest times till the close of the Forty-five*, by Dugald Mitchell, M.D., 1900.

The Duke's is a reasoned work dealing with Celtic feudalism, The age of charters, The age of covenants, The epoch of the clans, The appeal from chiefs to owners, The response of ownership, Before the dawn, The burst of industry, and The fruits of mind; whereas Dr. Mitchell's, in view of the size and cost of previous histories, is meant to supply a shorter and cheaper book, though it has itself run into a volume of no less than 700 pages.

In addition to these it is worthy of note that Dr. Skene's *Highlanders of Scotland* has recently (1902) been re-edited, with excursus and notes, by Alexander Macbain, M.A., LL.D.

Thus the literature of travel and of history dealing with the Highlands, if it was late in coming to the birth, has now assumed bulky proportions, and perhaps the most remarkable fact of all it discloses is not the war and bloodshed—for the past of all nations was written in blood—nor even the peculiarities of manners and customs and the social habits that prevailed, but it is the extraordinary rapidity with which the Highlands has emerged from the old *régime* of feud and plunder to the new conditions of to-day.

Down to the Forty-five the people had continued for ages in primitive ways which were the wonder and curiosity of travellers. But the change effected within the last century and a half has been without parallel in our history—a change which has brought the land of the Clans into line

with the rest of the country, so that each remotest island and strath now feels the daily throb of our advancing civilisation, and is amenable to a birthright of law and order and settled industry to which our ancestors, so shortly ago, were utter strangers.

CHAPTER XI

POPULAR AND ANONYMOUS SONGS OF THE HIGHLANDS

Much interest always attaches to the songs of a country. They naturally breathe the spirit and sentiment of the people, and wield an influence over the development of these, more potent than can be readily surmised. In earlier times, before education, the press, and easy travelling facilities had assumed the power over the public which they hold to-day, the popular songs were, in a much more obvious manner, real moulders of popular conduct and popular opinion. They travelled from glen to glen and house to house, taking hold of the infant mind from the days of its dawning consciousness in the cradle, and dominating it through all the after stages.

History shows how that often a song has been more effective than a battle, a policy, a court of justice, a book, a sermon, or a laboured satire. Hence Burns's notable ambition:

> "That I, for puir auld Scotland's sake,
> Some usefu' plan or buik could make
> Or sing a sang at least".

Both in the Lowlands and in the Highlands the spirit of song has entered into the warp and woof of the national character, and if in one more than the other, then in the Highlands, where for ages the vast majority of the people were independent of books and settled plans, though not of songs.

The songs were always there, even when art and law were not, to guide and inspire, to make merry or melancholy. They are to-day the most distinctive product of the Highland genius. To hear him sing and catch something of the

meaning of the strain is to understand in no small degree what manner of man the average Highlander is. His poetry, unlike that of the English people, has this characteristic: that it was all, or nearly all, composed to be sung or played on some musical instrument, such as the harp, the violin, or bagpipe. Words and melody invariably went together, forming a peculiar Celtic combination. And it is this fact, no doubt, that accounts for the great number and variety of the songs—a number that rivals that of much larger and more populous nations.

The Gael had songs for every occupation and every sentiment—war songs, boat songs, love songs, milking songs, waulking[1] songs, shieling songs, drinking songs, marching songs, marriage songs, death songs, funeral songs, nature songs, religious songs, and lullabies. Many of these that were much in vogue in the past have fallen into disuse, as the circumstances or modes of life that called them forth have passed away. So not a few of the elegies and eulogies and laments of the olden days, and most of the waulking, the drinking, and the shieling melodies are heard no more on lip or chanter.

By far the larger class of Highland popular songs sing of love and personal beauty, and the better-known may here be taken first. To the choice productions of the major bards of the eighteenth century it is not necessary to revert, since these have already been dealt with. And indeed there is no need for reiteration in view of the wealth of material from later and less well-known sources.

Most of the love songs owe their popularity as much to the melodies as to the words. "Ho ro mo nighean donn bhoidheach", "Fear a bhata", "An gille dubh ciar dubh", "Ged tha mi gun chrodh gun aighean", "Faill ill o agus ho-ro eile", and "Air a ghille tha mo run", have a singular charm, yet all are anonymous. Though among the most delightful and perennially pleasing, their authors have never been

[1] Solo of one or two lines with chorus, used in the operation of thickening cloth.

discovered, nor can it be definitely ascertained when these gems of song first caught the popular ear.

Ho ro, mo nighean donn, bhoidheach,
Hi ri, mo nighean donn, bhoidheach,
Mo chaileag laghach bhoidheach
  Cha phosainn ach thu.

A Pheigi dhonn nam blath-shul
Gur trom a thug mi gradh dhuit;
Tha d' iomhaigh ghaoil, 'us d' ailleachd
  A ghnath tigh'nn fo m' uidh.

Gnuis aoidheil, bhanail, mhalda
Na h-oigh a 's caoine nadur;
I suairce, ceanail, baigheil,
  Lan grais agus muirn.

Ge lurach air a' chabhsair
Na mnathan oga Gallda
A righ! gur beag mo gheall-s'
  Air bhi sealltainn 'n an gnuis.

'S ann tha mo run 's na beanntaibh.
Far bheil mo ribhinn ghreannar,
Mar ros am fasach Shamhraidh,
  An gleann fad' o shuil.

Ach 'n uair a thig an Samhradh,
Bheir mise sgriob do 'n ghleann ud,
'S gu 'n tog mi leam do 'n Ghalldachd,
  Gu h-annsail, am flur.

The English renderings of this song by Mr. L. Macbean and Mr. M. Macfarlane are among the best that have yet appeared. Mr. Macfarlane is here quoted:

Ho ro, my brown-haired maiden,
Hee ree, my brown-haired maiden,
My bonnie winsome maiden,
  I'd wed none but thee.

Thine eye with love is gleaming;
Thy face with beauty beaming;
When waking, or when dreaming,
  My thoughts dwell on thee.

Of cheerful, comely features;
Of gentle, kindly nature;
There ne'er was living creature
More lovely than thee.

Though Lowland girls are fine, love,
E'en some may say divine, love,
There's none can thee outshine, love,
Or lure me from thee.

For 'mong the hills she's dwelling,
Where crystal streams are welling,
Like rose all flowers excelling,
The maiden for me.

When summer comes again, love,
I'll seek your Highland glen, love,
Mine own to make you then, love,
And take thee with me.

Of "Fear a bhata" there are also various translations such as that in Finlay Dun's "Collection of Gaelic Airs", Professor Blackie's, Pattison's, and Macbean's. This plaintive melody is ever a prime favourite. The unknown authoress laments "The Man of the Boat", the idol of her heart who had gone over the sea and was like never to return.

'S tric mi sealltuinn o 'n chnoc a 's àirde,
Dh' fheuch am faic mi fear a bhata;
An tig thu 'n diugh, na 'n tig thu maireach
'S mar tig thu idir, gur truagh a tà mi.

Fhir a' bhàta na hó-ro ei-le,
Fhir a' bhàta na hó-ro ei-le,
Fhir a' bhàta na hó-ro ei-le,
Mo shoraidh slan dhuit 's gach àit' an téid thu!

Tha mo chridh'-sa briste, bruite;
'S tric na deòir a' ruidh o m' shùilean
An tig thu nochd, na 'm bi mo dhuil riut,
Na 'n duin mi 'n dorus, le osna thursaich?
Fhir a' bhàta, etc.

'S tric mi foighneachd do luchd nam bàta
Am fac iad thu, na 'm bheil thu sabhailt;
Ach 's ann a tha gach aon diubh 'g raitinn,
Gur gòrach mise ma thug mi gradh dhuit.
Fhir a' bhàta, etc.

Ged a thu' irt iad gun robh thu aotrom,
Cha do lughdaich sud mo ghaol ort;
Bidh tu m' aisling anns an oidhche,
'Us anns a mhadainn bidh mi 'gad fhoighneachd.
Fhir a' bhàta, etc.

Tha mo chàirdean gu tric ag innseadh,
Gum feum mi d' aogas a leig' air dìchuimhn';
Ach tha 'n comhairle dhomh cho diamhain;
'S bhi tilleadh mara 's i tabhairt lionaidh.
Fhir a' bhàta, etc.

It is thus rendered in English by Thomas Pattison:

How often hunting the highest hill-top,
I scan the ocean thy sail to see.
Wilt come to-night, love? Wilt come to-morrow?
Or never come, love! to comfort me?

Oh, my boatman na ho-ro ai-la,
Oh, my boatman na ho-ro ai-la,
Oh, my boatman na ho-ro ai-la,
Happy be thou where'er thou sailest!

My soul is weary; my heart is breaking;
With frequent tear-drops mine eyes o'erflow.
Wilt come to-night, love? May I expect thee?
Or, sighing sorely, the door put to?
Oh, my boatman, etc.

I question fondly thy friends, and ask them
Where last they saw thee? Where thou art now?
But each one, jeering, some answer gives me,
That sends me homeward with burning brow.
Oh, my boatman, etc.

They call thee fickle, they call thee false one,
And seek to change me; but all in vain.
No; thou'rt my dream yet throughout the dark night,
And every morn yet I watch the main.
Oh, my boatman, etc.

My friends they warn me, and oft advise me
To let thy false vows forgotten be;
As vain their counsel, as if they ordered
Yon little streamlet roll back the sea.
Oh, my boatman, etc.

"An gille dubh, ciar dubh", similarly by an anonymous authoress is sung to a beautiful and most winning air, and like the preceding is a wail over an absent lover:

Cha dirich mi bruthach,
'S cha siubhail mi mointich,
Gu 'n d' fhalbh mo ghuth cinn,
'S cha seinn mi òran;
Cha chaidil mi uair
O 'n Luan gus an Dòmhnach
'S an gille dubh ciar dubh
A' tigh 'nn fo' m' ùidh;
'S an gille dubh ciar dubh
A' tigh 'nn fo' m' ùidh.

Mo ghille dubh boidheach,
Ge gorach le cach thu,
Gu 'n deanainn do phósadh
Gun deoin de mo chairdean;
'Us shiubhlainn leat fada
Feadh lagan 'us fhasach;
'S cha ghabh mi fear liath,
'S tu tigh 'nn fo' m' ùidh,
'S cha ghabh mi fear liath
'S tu tigh 'nn fo' m' ùidh.

Once o'er the wide moor wending,
Or round the green hill bending,
Gay words and wild notes blending
Spread far my good cheer;
For then my heart, light-leaping,
In waking, in sleeping,
Had no dubh, ciar dubh keeping
Its joys far from here.
. . . .
My bonnie dubh, ciar dubh!
Let sharp tongues assail thee,

One heart will not fail thee
That knows to be true.
Dubh ciar dubh! dubh ciar dubh!
Though poor, poor thou be,
No rich old man can please me
Like thee, love, like thee!
. . . .

This pretty little song, Mr. Mackenzie says, is attributed to a Highland Sappho of the thirteenth century. Burns became so enamoured of it on hearing it sung by a lady, during his peregrination to the mountains, that he immediately wrote verses to the air, and it then became known for the first time to the English reader.

Even more exquisitely touching are the strains of a third love-lorn maiden in the melodious "Ged tha mi gun chrodh gun aighean". Her lover was a youth of noble qualities who came over from Sunart, but who afterwards enlisted in the army and went to Jamaica.

Conscious of the uselessness of grieving for her lost one, she comforts herself with the thought that, though she has no cattle or heifers, calves or sheep, she will yet get a suitable husband. As dowry she can bring him a beautiful face, and will weave him a lovely plaid and lovely clothing. Mingled with these makeshift consolations of soliloquy are the ever-recurring undertones of regret for the one who carries with him her thousand blessings over the sea. Indeed one can almost catch the "shiubhlainn, shiubhlainn, shiubhlainn fhein leat" of the authoress of the pretty song "Faill ill o agus ho ro eile", whose heart also goes out after a voyager on the great ocean.

"Muile nam mor bheann", or "Mull of the high hills", is, on the other hand, a masculine production by Duncan Livingston, Crogan, Mull. Though felicitously worded it is not easily translated:

Am Muile nan craobh tha 'mhaighdean bhanail,
D' an tug mi mo ghaol 's mi faoin 'am bharail;
'S ma chaidh i fo sgaoil 's nach faod mi 'faighinn
Cha taobh mi caileagan Chòmhail.

In Mull of the woods there lives the maiden
For whom my poor heart is now love-laden:
Though dead be that love like joys of Eden,
I woo no lasses in Cowal.

. . . . . .

Of other love songs whose genesis is more or less definitely known, "Gu ma slan a chi mi"; "Mo run geal dileas"; "Mairi Laghach"; "C' ait 'an caidil an ribhinn an nochd"?; "Feasgair Luain"; "Mo Mhali bheag og"; "The Lassie of the Glen"; "An cluinn thu leannain an cluinn thu"; and scores of others, have only to be sung in Gaelic circles to call up fond memories. They have been chanted times without number on hill and dale, in hut and homestead, and are full of the yearning of that passion which is ever tender though often baffled.

"Gu ma slan a chi mi", otherwise known as "Mo chailin dileas donn", was composed by Hector Mackenzie, a sailor, who belonged to Ullapool, Lochbroom. The air is one of the most popular, though the words are not quite so happy as those of some of the other songs mentioned.

Gu ma slàn a chi mi,
Mo chailin dileas donn;
Bean a chuailein reidh
Air an deise dh' eiridh fonn,
'Si cainnt do bheoil bu bhinne leam,
An uair bhiodh m' inntinn trom,
'S tu thogadh suas mo chridh' sa
N uair bhiodh tu bruidhinn rium.

Gur muladach a ta mi
'S mi nochd air aird a' chuain,
'S neo-shunndach mo chadal dhomh,
'S do chaidreamh fada bhuam;
Gur tric mi ort a' smaointeach';
As t' aogais tha mi truagh,
'Us mur a dean mi t' fhaotainn
Cha bhi mo shaoghal buan.

Suil chorrach mar an dearcag
Fo 'n rosg a dh' iathas dlùth,

'Us gruaidhean mar an caorann
Fo 'n aodann tha leam ciùin—
Mur d' aithris iad na breugan
Gu 'n d' thug mi fein duit rùn,
'S gur bliadhna leam gach latha
Bho 'n uair a dh' fhàg mi thu.

There are very good English versions of it by Dr. Nigel Macneill, Professor Blackie, and Mr. L. Macbean; that of Dr. Macneill runs thus:

Full happy may I see thee,
My faithful auburn maid;
Sweet girl with flowing tresses
In pretty smiles arrayed.
My soul was oft uplifted
By words thy lips have said;
And oft by strains of gladness
My fluttering heart allayed.

This night to me how dreary
Upon the ocean tide,
My slumber is full cheerless—
To thee my fancies glide.
Without thee here I sorrow,
My thoughts are at thy side;
I pine away in anguish
Till thou become my bride.

Warm eyes are thine like berries
With lashes sweetly lined;
Fresh cheeks are thine like rowans,
In loveliness enshrined.
My heart is filled with fondness
For one so true and kind;
And ever since I left thee
The days like years I find.

. . . . .

In contrast to the cheery effect of this one, we have a more melancholy interest attaching to the history of certain others, such as "Mo run geal dileas"; and that most touching and pathetic refrain "Mo Mhali bheag òg". It will be

observed that many of the Highland bards—some of them known to fame, and others unknown—were beyond measure susceptible to the love of some particular woman. The charm of life was bound up for them in her person and qualities, and when by the accident of feminine caprice, or refusal, parental intervention, or death, the coveted prize passed for ever beyond their reach, the unhappy Lotharios succumbed to the void in their hearts that could not be filled by any other ideal or interest.

Thus it is on record that the author of "Mo run geal dileas"; was Maclean of Torlusk, Mull, a young farmer who visited Islay and was captivated by the attractions of the fair Isabel of Balinaby. To this coy maiden he, in due time, offered his hand in marriage, but she delayed giving him a definite answer. The suspense of waiting preyed upon his ardent mind, and he gave way to melancholy. In the circumstances his friends advised him to go abroad for a change, which he did.

Hence the verse:

Thug mi còrr agus naoi miosan,
Anns na h-Innsean a b' fhaide thall;
'S bean bòidh'chead d' aodainn cha robh ri fhaotainn
'S ged gheobhainn saoghal cha 'n fhanainn ann.

In foreign regions I lived a season,
And none could see there with thee to vie,
Thy form so slender, thy words so tender,
I will remember until I die.

Nine months later, he was back again seeking her hand, and this time her parents withstood the match. Whereupon the devoted Maclean, who had already suffered much on the damsel's account, fairly lost his reason. It was while in confinement, as a man demented, that he composed "Mo run geal dileas", which has appealed so much to the popular imagination even though its origin is not widely known.

There are several Gaelic versions of varying length, and

Dr. Macneill thinks the chorus itself may have belonged to an earlier set of verses than those now in common vogue. Maclean wrote other songs, but never recovered from his sad misfortune.

As to the history, circumstance, and locality of "Mo Mhali bheag òg", there is considerable divergence of opinion. Both Ireland and the Highlands have laid claim to the air, and various places have been mentioned as the scene of the incident it commemorates. With regard to the occasion, there can be no doubt, as the poem itself furnishes the clue.

Two lovers had eloped, and were pursued. The gallant, a young Highland officer, on being discovered in the company of the maiden, stood to the defence of his fiancée. In the mêlée which followed, the latter stole behind her betrothed for protection, or threw herself between the combatants, where she was accidentally struck by the point of her lover's sword. But the blow proved so violent that she expired at his feet. It was as a disconsolate prisoner in some dungeon, awaiting execution for this untoward incident, that he composed the heart-melting yet exquisitely worded song on his "dear young May".

Nach truagh leat mi 's mi 'm priosan
Mo Mhaili bheag òg?
Do chairdean a' cur binn orm,
Mo chuid de 'n t-saoghal thu;
A bhean na mala mine
'S nam pògan mar na fioguis,
Is tu nach fhagadh shios mi
Le mi-run do bheoil.

Di-domhnaich anns a ghleann duinn,
Mo Mhaili bheag òg;
'N uair thoisich mi ri cainnt riut
Mo chuid de 'n t-saoghal mhòr;
'N uair dh' fhosgail mi mo shuilean,
'S a sheall mi air mo chùlthaobh,
Bha marcaich' an eich chruthaich
Tigh 'nn dluth air mo thoir.

Is mise bh' air mo bhuaireadh,
Mo Mhaili bheag òg,
'N uair thainig sluagh mu 'n cuairt duinn,
Mo ribhinn ghlan ùr;
Is truagh nach anns an uair sin
A thuit mo lamh o 'm ghualainn,
Mu 'n d' amais mi do bhualadh,
Mo Mhaili bheag òg.

Gur bòidhche leam a dh' fhas thu,
Mo Mhaili bheag òg,
Na 'n lili anns an fhasach ,
Mo cheud ghràdh 's mo rùn:
Mar aiteal caoin na greine
Am maduinn chiùin ag eiridh,
B' e sud do dhreach 'us t' eugais,
Mo Mhaili bheag òg.

Mr. Macbean's rendering proceeds as follows:

Dost thou not see my anguish,
My dear little May?
In dungeon dark I languish,
My own darling May.
No eyes were sweeter, clearer,
No kisses could be dearer
Than thine, my loving cheerer,
My dear little May!

Oh! hapless love that sought thee,
My dear little May;
Oh! fatal tryste that brought thee
Along yon green brae;
We met with words endearing,
No evil were we fearing,
When horsemen came careering
In angry array.

My heart with anger bounded,
My dear little May,
To see us thus surrounded,
My lady so gay;
Oh! withered let this arm be
That ever chanced to harm thee,
I never would alarm thee,
My darling young May.

Oh! fairer wert thou, blooming,
My dear little May,
Than lily sweet, perfuming
Some glen far away,
Like morning glory gleaming,
Along the mountains streaming,
So was thy beauty beaming,
My bright little May.

Very few Highland collections of popular songs are now without "Mairi Laghach", which is generally reckoned a great favourite.

In its original form it was the work of a red-haired Lochbroom drover named Murdoch Mackenzie, who composed other excellent songs, which he consigned to the flames at the instigation of his brother-in-law, the famous Rev. Lachlan Mackenzie, minister of Lochcarron. "Pretty Mary" was his own daughter, whom he extolled though she was apparently not much admired by the local swains. Mackenzie died in 1831, but John Macdonald, farmer, Scoraig, Lochbroom, took the air to which the gifted drover had sung the song, and composed an entirely new set of verses which for purity of style and genuine poetry are quite delightful. Macdonald's Mary eventually became his wife. It is said that when on a visit to Ireland he was astonished to hear his own song sung in an adjoining room. It had quickly gained a wide vogue.

"Mairi Laghach" thus owes its music to Mackenzie and its poetry to Macdonald. Among the English versions that have appeared may be mentioned those of Pattison; Mr. D. Macpherson, bookseller, London; Professor Blackie; Evan Maccoll; and Dr. Nigel Macneill. The air is simple and uncommonly beautiful.

Hó mo Mhàiri laghach,
'S tu mo Mhàiri bhinn;
Hó mo Mhàiri laghach,
'S tu mo Mhàiri ghrinn!
Hò mo Mhàiri laghach
'S tu mo Mhàiri bhinn;

Mhàiri bhoidheach lurach,
Rugadh anns na glinn.

B' òg bha mis' 'us Màiri
'M fasaichean Ghlinn-smeòil,
'N uair chuir macan Bhenuis
Saighead gheur 'nam fheòil
Tharruing sinn ri chéile,
Ann an eud cho beo
'S nach robh air an t-saoghal;
A thug gaol cho mòr.

Ged bu leamsa Alba
'H airgiod 'us a maoin,
Ciamar bhithinn sona
Gun do chomunn gaoil?
B' annsa bhi 'gad phògadh,
Le deadh chòir dhomh féin,
Na ged gheibhinn storàs,
Na Roinn-Eòrp' gu leir.

Tha do chailc-dheud snaighte,
Dreachmhor mar a b' àill;
T' anail mar an caineal;
Beul o 'm banail fàilt;
Gruaidh air dhreach an t-siris;
Min-ruisg chinealt, thlàth;
Mala chaol gun ghruaman,
Gnùis gheal, 's cuach-fhalt bàn.

The version of Maccoll may here be quoted:

Chorus. Hey, my winsome Mary—
Mary fondly free!
Hey, my winsome Mary,
Mary, mine to be!
Winsome, handsome Mary,
Who so fair as she?
My own Highland lassie,
Dear as life to me!

Long ere in my bosom
Lodged Love's arrow keen,
Often with young Mary
In Glensmeoil I've been;

Happy hours succeeded
By affection true,
Till there seem'd 'neath heaven
No such loving two!

Often I and Mary
Desert haunts have sought,
Innocent of any
Evil deed or thought,—
Cupid, sly enchanter,
Tempting us to stray
Where the leafy greenwood
Keeps the sun at bay.

Hers are teeth whose whiteness
Snow alone can peer;
Hers the breath all fragrance,
Voice of loving cheer—
Cheeks of cherry ripeness,
Eyelids drooping down
'Neath a forehead never
Shadowed by a frown.

. . . .

"The Lassie of the Glen", by Mr. Fletcher, author of *Clachan Ghlinndaruail*, at one time schoolmaster at Dunoon, is worthy of a place beside verses so idyllic and romantic.

Beneath a hill 'mang birken bushes,
By a burnie's dimpilt linn,
I told my love with artless blushes,
To the Lassie o' the Glen.

Chorus. O! the birken bank sae grassie,
Hey! the burnie's dimpilt linn:
Dear to me's the bonnie lassie,
Living in yon rashie glen.

Lanely Ruail! thy stream sae glassie
Shall be aye my fav'rite theme;
For on thy banks my Highland lassie
First confessed a mutual flame.

What bliss to sit and nane to fash us,
In some sweet wee bow'ry den!
Or fondly stray amang the rashes,
Wi' the Lassie o' the Glen!

And though *I* wander now unhappy,
Far frae scenes we haunted then,
I'll ne'er forget the bank sae grassie,
Nor the Lassie o' the Glen.

"C' ait 'an caidil an ribhinn an nochd" used to be very much in evidence in the West Highlands, and is still one of those most frequently sung at Gaelic concerts. According to reliable authorities, it was composed by a Troternish Skyeman of the name of Maccuien in the early days of emigration when so many sons of the Misty Isle sought a home on the great continent of the West. When, with her friends, the beautiful ribhinn of whom the bard sings was about to set sail for America, he determined to accompany her, but on the day that the emigrant ship weighed anchor, his own friends bound him hand and foot to prevent his going. In this sorry plight he burst into song, wondering where would the maiden sleep that night, and fondly wishing that he were near her.

O c' ait' an caidil an ribhinn an nochd?
O c' ait' an caidil an ribh-inn?
Far an caidil luaidh mo chridh,
Is truagh nach robh mi fhin ann.

Tha 'ghaoth a' séideadh oirnn o 'n deas,
'S tha mise deas gu seòladh;
S' na 'n robh thu leam air bhàrr nan stuadh,
A luaidh, cha bhithinn bronàch.

Bha mi deas 'us bha mi tuath,
'S gu tric air chuairt 's na h-Innsean,
'S bean t' aogais riamh cha d' fhuair mi ann,
No samhladh do mo nigh' naig.

'S ann ort fein a dh' fhas a' ghruag
Tha bachlach, dualach, riomhach,
Fiamh an òir a 's boidhche snuadh,
'S e dol 'na dhuail 's na cirean.

Much less numerous, though quite as passionate and popular, are the *patriotic* songs of the Highlander, those that breathe of love for his native soil. It is characteristic, that while the Lowland Scot delights to sing of home and of Scotia as a whole, the Gael sings most frequently of the glen, or island, or strath in which he was born and brought up. We have no popular song in Gaelic corresponding exactly with "The Auld House", "The Bonnie House of Airlie", "Home Sweet Home", and a host of others reminiscent of the associations that attach to a particular dwelling endeared to memory by the name of home, if we except M. Macfarlane's "Mo dhachaidh". But we have songs to all the chief islands, and to many glens and straths and districts of the Highlands, such as "Eilean an Fhraoich", "Eilean a Cheo", "Failte do 'n Eilean Sgiathanach", "An t' Eilean Muileach", "Toirt m' aghaidh ri Diura", "Chi, chi, chi mi na mor bheannan", "Hò ro Eileinich", "A ghlinn ud shios", and "Anns a ghleann 's an robh mi òg".

The associations of home for the Highlander were largely the associations of the clan and of the place where his childhood and youth had been passed. "Eilean an Fhraoich", or "The Isle of the Heather", is by Mr. Murdo Macleod, a native of Lewis.

A chiall nach mise
Bha 'n Eilean an Fhraoich,
Nam fiadh nam bradan
Nam feadag 's nan naosg
Nan lochan, nan òban
Nan osan 's nan' caol
Eilean innis nam bò,
'S aite comhnuidh nan laoch.

Tha Leoghas bheag riabhach
Bha riamh 'san taobh tuath,
Muir traghaidh 'us lionaidh
'Ga n-iadhadh mu 'n cuairt;
'N uair dhèarrsas a ghrian oirr'
Le riaghladh o' shuas,
Bheir i fas air gach siol
Air son biadh do an t-sluagh.

An t-Eilean ro mhaiseach
Gur pailt ann am biadh
'Se Eilean a 's àillt' air 'n
Do dhealraich a' ghrian;
'Se Eilean mo ghràidh-s'e,
Bha 'Ghàidhlig ann riamh;
'S cha 'n fhalbh i gu bràth
Gus an traigh an cuan siar!

'N àm éiridh na gréine
Air a shleibhtibh bith'dh ceo
Bith'dh a' bhanarach ghuanach
'S a' bhuarach 'na dorn
Ri gabhail a duanaig
'S i cuallach nam bò,
'S mac-talla nan creag
Ri toirt freagairt d' a ceòl.

Air feasgar an t-samhraidh
Bith'dh sunnd air gach spreidh:
Bith'dh a' chuthag 'us fonn oirr'
Ri òran di fhein;
Bith'dh uiseag air lòn
Agus smeorach air géig,
'S air cnuic ghlas' 'us leoidean
Uain oga ri leum.

Air feasgar a' gheamhraidh
Theid tionndadh gu gniomh
Ri toirt eolais do chloinn
Bidh gach seann duine liath;
Gach iasgair le 'shnathaid
Ri càradh a lion,
Gach nighean ri cardadh
'S a mathair ri sniomh.

It has been rendered in English by Mr. Henry Whyte, and is a typical example of the others of this class.

I wish I were now
In that isle of the sea,
The Isle of the Heather
And happy I'd be;

With deer in the mountains
And fish in its rills;
Brave heroes have lived
'Mong its heath-covered hills.

The Island of Lewis
Stands now as of yore,
With the brine of the ocean
Encircling its shore;
The warmth of its summer
Makes all things to grow,
Till storehouse and barn
With abundance o'erflow.

This dearest of isles
Is so fertile and fair;
That no other island
May with it compare:
Here Gaelic was spoken
In ages gone by,
And here it will live
Till the ocean runs dry.

At dawning of day
When there's mist on the hill
The milk-maids go skipping
By fountain and rill,
When milking their cattle,
They raise a sweet song,
And softly the echoes
The chorus prolong.

The notes of the cuckoo
Are welcomed in May,
And the blackbird sings blithe,
'Mong the silvery spray;
The lark and the mavis
Pour forth their sweet lay,
While the lambs in the meadows
Are sprightly at play.

In the long winter evenings
We sit by the fire,
And the children are taught
By their hoary-haired sire,

A story is told, as
Our fish nets we darn,
While the maidens, with distaff,
Are spinning the yarn.
. . . .

In the same manner in which the above appeals to the Lewisman, "Eilean a Cheo", by Mrs. Mary Macpherson, and "Failte do 'n Eilean Sgiathanach", by Mr. Neil Macleod, excite the enthusiasm of the sons of the Misty Isle. "Eilean a Cheo" has been translated by Robert Ferguson, and "Failte do 'n Eilean Sgiathanach", by Neil Ross. The latter I quote from "Clarsach an Doire".

O! failt' air do stùcan,
Do choireachan udlaidh,
Do bheanntainnean sughmhor,
Far an siubhlach am meann
Tha 'n geamhradh le dhubhlachd
Mu na meallaibh a' dunadh,
'S gach doire le bhuirean
Air a rusgadh gu bonn.

Chi mi an Cuilionn
Mar leomhann gun tioma,
Le fhiasaig de 'n t-sneachd
Air a phasgadh m' a cheann;
'S a ghruaidhean a' sruladh
Le easannan smuideach,
Tha tuiteam 'n an lùban
Gu ùrlar nan gleann.

Do chreagan gu h-uaibhreach,
Mar challaid mu 'n cuairt dhut
'S na neoil air an iomairt,
A' filleadh mu 'm barr;
'S am bonn air a sguabadh
Le srulaichean gruamach,
Bho bharcadh a' chuain
A' toirt nuallain air traigh.

O! c' ait' 'eil na gaisgich
A dh-araich do ghlacan,

Bu shuilbhire macnus
Mo stacan a' cheo?
Le fudar 'g a sgailceadh
Bho 'n cuilbheirean glana
'S na mial-choin 'n an deannaibh,
Nach fannaich 's an toir.

. . . .

Gu ma buan a bhios t-eachdraidh,
Agus cliu aig do mhacaibh,
Gus an crionar an talamh,
'S am paisgear na neoil!
Fhad 's bhios sioban na mara
A' bualadh air carraig,
Bidh mo dhurachd gun deireas
Do dh' Eilean a' Cheo.

O hail to thy summits
The stag's verdant dwelling,
Thy dells they are buried
In desolate gloom!
The rigours of winter
Thy passes do enter;
And groves by the tempest
Are stripped of their bloom.

I see the high Coolin,
A lion so sullen:
His head is enveloped,
And bearded with snow;
His cheeks are deep furrowed
By thundering torrents
That sweep in their hurry
To meadows below.

Majestic and proudly
Thy cliffs do surround thee;
Afar till enshrouded
In clouds they expand;
Their base curbing boldly
The waves of the ocean,
In dreadful commotion
That roar on thy sand.

O where are the gallants
That lived in thy valleys,
'Mong mist-crowned summits
Who travels enjoyed?
The chase was their custom,
Where glittering musket,
And hounds unexhausted
By haste, they employed.
. . . . .

May thy name never perish,
Thy sons ever flourish
Till moulder the mountains
And clouds shall be rolled!
While rocks do not quiver
At raging of billows
The dear "Misty Island"
I highly will hold.

"An t' Eilean Muileach", in praise of Mull, cannot be overlooked in any category of this kind, for it never fails to rouse to admiration the patriotic islander. It is a song by Mr. Dugald Macphail, breathing intense love of the hilly isle. Professor Blackie was so enamoured of it that he has given a breezy version in keeping with the spirit of the original.

An t'Eilean Muileach, an t'Eilean aghmhor,
An t'Eilean grianach mu 'n iath an saile,
Eilean buadhmhor nam fuar-bheann àrda
Nan coilltean uaine 's nan cluaintean fasail.

B' fhallain, cubhraidh 's bu reidh an t-ailean
Le bhlathan maoth-bhog 'bu chaoine faileadh;
Bu ghlan na bruachan mu 'n d' fhuair mi m' arach
An Doire-' chuilinn aig bun Beinn-bhairneach.

Air Lusa chaisleach nan stachd 's nan cuartag,
Bhiodh bradain tharr-gheal nam meanbh-bhall ruadh-bhreac,
Gu beo-bhrisg, siubhlach, le surd ri luth-chleas
'N a cuislibh du-ghorm gun ghruid, gun ruadhan.

Bu chulaidh-shugraidh do dh-og-fhir uallach,
Le gathan tri-mhearach, rinneach, cruaidh-ghlan,

Air caol-chroinn dhireach, gun ghiamh, gun chnuachd-mheoir
'Bhi toirt nan lan-bhreac gu traigh mu' bhruachan.

Gheibhteadth 'n ruadh-chearc 'sna coilltean iosal
'S an coilleach tùchanach dluth 'ga briodal;
'S ged bha na beanntan gun fhaing gun fhrithean
Bha daimh na croice 'nan corsaibh lionmhor.

Chlaon gach sòlas dhiu siod mar bhruadar,
'S mar bhristeadh builgein air bharr nan stuadh-thonn;
Ach soraidh slan leis gach loinn us buaidh
A bh' air eilean aghmhor nan àrd-bheann fuara.

O the island of Mull is an isle of delight,
With the wave on the shore, and the sun on the height,
With the breeze on the hills, and the blast on the bens,
And the old green woods, and the old grassy glens.

There was health in thy breeze, and the breath of thy bowers
Was fragrant and fresh 'neath the light summer showers,
When I wandered a boy, unencumbered and free
At the base of the ben 'neath the old holly-tree.

Where the Lussa was swirling in deep rocky bed,
There the white-bellied salmon, with spots of the red
And veins of dark blue, in young lustihood strong
Was darting and leaping and frisking along!

And a deft-handed youth there would gallantly stand
With a triple-pronged spear, smooth and sharp, in his hand,
And swiftly he pounced, like a hawk, on his prey—
And glancing and big on the bank there it lay!

And the red hen was there 'neath the wood's leafy pride,
And the cock he was crooning and cooing beside;
And though forest or fence there was none on the ben,
The red deer were trooping far up in the glen!

Bright joys of my youth, ye are gone like a dream,
Like a bubble that burst on the breast of the stream;
But my blessing, fair Mull, shall be constant with thee,
And thy green-mantled bens with their roots in the sea!

For "Chi, chi, chi mi na mor bheannan", "I see, I see,

I see the great bens", we are indebted to the muse of John Cameron, Tayphuirt, Ballachulish. Like "Hò ro Eileinich" and "Toirt m' aghaidh ri Diura", it owes its popularity, in great part, to the swinging, tuneful melody which harmonizes so effectively with emotions that oft swell Highland hearts. "Hò ro Eileinich" touches this chord with all the inarticulate fervour of an unintelligible chorus.

Chi mi thall ud an Aird-mhor
Aite 'choilich dhuibh 's a gheoidh;
Ait' mo chridhe 'us mo ghaoil
'S an robh mi aotrom ainmeil.

Ged 'tha Landaidh creagach ciar,
'S moch a dh-eireas oirre 'ghrian;
Innis nam bà-laoigh 's nam fiadh
'S gu 'm be mo mhiann 'bhi thall ann.

Hò ro, etc.

O! I love thee, Islay green,
Of my youthful days the scene;
Where the best of men have been
Who loved the songs of Landai.

Hò ro Eileinich ho gù
Hò i rithil ho i thù
Hò ro Eileinich ho gù
Gu bheil mo rùn 's an Landaidh.

But far more homely and satisfying than the above are the strains of "An gleann 's an robh mi òg", by Neil Macleod.[1]

'N àm an cruinneachadh do 'n bhuailidh
B' e mo luaidh a bhi 'n an còir;
Bhiodh a duanag aig gach guanaig
Agus cuach aice 'n a dorn;
Bhiodh Mac-talla freagairt shuas,
E ri aithris fuaim a beoil;
Ach cha chluinnear sin 's an àm so
Anns a' ghleann 's an robh mi òg.

[1] See pp. 202, 203.

Chaochail maduinn ait air n-oige
Mar an ceo air bharr nam beann;
Tha ar cairdean 's ar luchd-eolais
Air am fogradh bhos is thall;
Tha cuid eile dhiubh nach gluais,
Tha 'n an cadal bhuan fo 'n fhòd,
Bha gun uaill, gun fhuath, gun anntlachd
Anns a ghleann 's an robh iad òg.

Mo shoraidh leis gach cuairteig
Leis gach bruachaig agus còs,
Mu 'n tric an robh mi cluaineis
'N am bhi buachailleachd nam bò;
'N uair a thig mo reis gu ceann
Agus feasgarr fann mo lò,
Bè mo mhiann a bhi 's an àm sin
Anns 'a ghleann 's an robh mi òg.

The same sad note that obtrudes in the later verses is much in evidence in the song, "A ghlinn ud shios" by Dr. Maclachlan of Rahoy. It, like Macleod's, has found English expression at the hands of Mr. Henry Whyte.[1] Indeed the sentiment that lingers mournfully over the past, so strong in the Highlander especially when severed from his native country, has given rise to quite a large number of pathetic songs, most eloquent of home-sickness.

As is generally well known, for a hundred years after Culloden, and more particularly during the early decades of the nineteenth century, when sheep-farming was introduced on a large scale into the Highlands, the Gaels of the mainland and islands were in a state of chronic unrest. Thousands left their native shores for America and the Colonies—for the most part involuntary exiles, who pined for the glens and straths of their youth. This great movement furnished the bards with a very congenial topic for poetry, and they have been pouring forth in song ever since then, the tragic feelings that overpowered the Highlander as he bade farewell to his native heath, or sadly recalled it in a foreign land.

Unlike the people of some other countries, the susceptible

[1] See p. 192.

Scottish Celt cannot easily shed his past or part with the scenes endeared to childhood. They hold him to the last, and however bright and wholesome the new lands to which a kindly destiny has removed him, he still dreams of the rain-drenched Hebrides. In his poetic imagination, even the stubborn realities of his former experience, the barren soil, the moist climate, the superstitious atmosphere, and the melancholy swish of the restless ocean are transfigured, and he views them through a haze of sentiment as features of a very paradise in comparison with those of the land of his adoption.

Of the earlier "Farewell Songs", the most widely known and most appreciated is the Rev. Dr. Norman Macleod's "Fiunary". Father of the more famous Dr. Norman Macleod of the Barony, this poet-preacher was minister in Campbeltown, and Campsie, before settling in St. Columba's, Glasgow; and in his biography, his son, John N. Macleod, F.S.A.Scot., of Kintarbert and Glen Saddell, gives the following interesting account of its inception:

"It owed its origin," he says, "to an amusing little competition between Dr. Macleod and Mrs. Macgregor of Campbeltown, who then figured as a bit of an authoress. He may have already had the ideas in his head, when he retired for a little, bringing back to her the now well-known words. A short time afterwards, he was horrified to hear the song sung on the streets of Campbeltown, and sent to buy up all the copies that the singer had, but apparently to little purpose. Its popularity in the west of Scotland, and even in the colonies, is surprising. The words do not admit of criticism; they resemble, however, the old ballad. But with the exception of some of Burns's, no song seems to come home so thoroughly, or so to touch the Highland heart.

"To most members of his own connection, it is almost too trying to sing or hear; but at Highland soirées, fireside meetings, etc., it is most popular—the air, too, being plaintive and beautiful. It is said that on a festive occasion in Edinburgh, when a late and most distinguished judge was present, who had strong Highland affections (albeit not easily moved),

a tear was observed trickling down his cheeks as he listened to the song with a sad expression of countenance. There are many happy Gaelic versions."

Perhaps the most beautiful and certainly the most popular of these is that by the late Mr. Archibald Sinclair, printer, Glasgow, beginning thus:

Tha 'n latha maith s' an soirbheas ciuin,
Tha 'n uine 'ruith s' an t' àm dhuinn dluth
Tha 'm bat' 'g am fheitheamh fo a siuil
Gu m' thoirt a null o Fhionn-Airidh!

Tha iòmadh mile ceangal blàth
Mar shaighdean ann am fein an sàs;
Mo chridhe 'n impis a bhi sgainnt'
A chionn bhi fagail Fhionn-Airidh.

Ach cha 'n iad glinn 'us heanntan ard'
A lot mo chridh 's a rinn mo chradh,
Ach an diugh na tha fo phramh
An teach mo ghraidh am Fionn-Airidh.

Am feum mi suibhal uait gun dail?
Na siuil tha togte ris a bhat'—
Soraidh slan le tir mo ghraidh,
'Us slan, gu brath le Fionn-Airidh.
. . . . .

Dr. Macleod's English original, though poor poetry, is rich in charming sentiment:

The wind is fair, the day is fine,
And swiftly, swiftly glides the time—
The boat is floating on the tide
That wafts me far from Fiunary!

Eirich agus tuiginn O,
Eirich agus tuiginn O,
Eirich agus tuiginn O,
Farewell—farewell to Fiunary.

A thousand, thousand tender ties
Awake to-day my plaintive sighs,
My heart within me almost dies
At thought of leaving Fiunary.

Allt na Caillich! gentle stream,
That murmurs sweetly through the green,
What happy joyful days I've seen
Beside its banks at Fiunary!
. . . . .

Of emigrant songs suffused with the pathos of parting and mournful regrets of after days, we have "'S mi Fagail mo Dhuthcha", by Dugald Maclachlan; "Theid i 's gu 'n teid i leam", by William Mackenzie, Inverness; "An Gaidheal an tir chein", by John Campbell, Ledaig; "Oran dealachaidh", by Donald Maceachern; and "Fuadach nan Gaidheal", by Henry Whyte. The last is very expressive in the Gaelic. Its equivalent in English gives no idea of its original quality, or of its soul-stirring effect on the emotional Highlander when sung, as it usually is, to Lord Lovat's March. The last verse in particular is very fine. It says, in a few choice words relative to the depopulation of the glens: The lark is in the sky singing her pretty carol without any one to hear it when she rises on high, Return, return, will not the men who were hearty and hospitable; Like chaff on a windy day they were scattered for ever.

These retrospective lays are just a shade less doleful than the laments, which, though sometimes adapted as songs, are nowadays more usually played on the violin, the piano, or the bagpipe. Chief among them stands "Maccrimmon's Lament", said to have been composed by his sister on his departure with the men of the Clan Macleod for the struggle which culminated at Culloden. The Macrimmons had achieved a unique reputation as hereditary pipers to the Lairds of Macleod at Dunvegan, where they had a college for pipe music at Borreraig. And this Donald, who fell in the memorable night sortie near the castle of the Mackintosh at Moy before the battle of Culloden, was held in the highest esteem as perhaps the most famous of his line in the art of his fathers. The chief note of the refrain is struck by the sad presentiment that he will never return.

Dh iadh ceò nan stùc mu aodann chuillinn
Us sheinn 'bhean-shìth a torman mulaid
Gorm shuilean ciuin 'san Dun a sìleadh
O 'n thriall thu uainn 's nach till thu tuille.

Tha osag nam beann gu fann ag imeachd
Gach sruthan 's gach allt gu mall le bruthach;
Tha ealtainn nan speur feadh gheugan dubhach,
A' caoidh gu 'n d' fhalbh 's nach till thu tuille.

Tha 'n fhairge fa-dheoigh lan bròin us mulaid,
Tha 'm bata fo sheol, ach dhiult i siubhal;
Tha gairich nan tonn le fuaim neo-shubhach,
Ag radh gun d' fhalbh 's nach till thu tuille.

Cha chluinnear do cheòl' san Dùn mu fheasgar
'S mac-talla nam mùr le muirn' ga fhreagairt;
Gach fleasgach 'us oigh gun cheòl, gun bheadradh;
O 'n thriall thu uainn 's nach till thu tuille.

Cha till, cha till, cha till Mac Criomain
An cogadh no sìth cha till e tuille;
Le airgiod no ni cha till Mac Criomain
Cha till e gu bràth gu là na cruinne.

Round Cullen's peak the mist is sailing,
The banshee croons her note of wailing,
Mild blue eyne with sorrow are streaming
For him that shall never return, Maccrimmon!

The breeze on the brae is mournfully blowing!
The brook in the hollow is plaintively flowing,
The warblers, the soul of the groves, are mourning,
For Maccrimmon that's gone, with no hope of returning!

The tearful clouds the stars are veiling,
The sails are spread, but the boat is not sailing,
The waves of the sea are moaning and mourning
For Maccrimmon that's gone to find no returning!

No more on the hill, at the festal meeting,
The pipe shall sound with echo repeating,
And lads and lasses change mirth to mourning
For him that is gone to know no returning!

No more, no more, no more for ever,
In war or peace, shall return Maccrimmon;
No more, no more, no more for ever
Shall love or gold bring back Maccrimmon!

Mr. Lachlan Macbean has translated the chorus thus:

No more, no more, no more returning,
In peace or in war is he returning:
Till dawns the great Day of Doom and burning,
Maccrimmon is home no more returning.

Much older than Maccrimmon's is the "Mackintosh Lament", which, according to the traditional account, was composed by the bride-widow of Evan or Hugh, chief of the Mackintoshes, who was killed by being thrown off his horse, according to prediction, on his marriage day. The unhappy lady is credited with having followed the funeral cortège from Dalcross to Petty Churchyard chanting the lament and marking the time by tapping with her fingers on the lid of the coffin.

Mr. Lachlan Macbean has published the following note from the late Dr. Fraser Mackintosh, which puts another complexion on its origin.

"There was no chief of the Mackintoshes named either Hugh or Evan," says the latter, "and no incident such as is related is known in any authentic Mackintosh tradition. A history of the Mackintoshes, written in Latin in 1676, by Lachlan Mackintosh of Kinrara, uncle of the then Chief, refers to the Lament as follows: 'It was this William (second of that name and thirteenth Laird of Mackintosh), that, in his expedition to Rannoch and Appin, took the bard Macintyre, of whom the Macintyres of Badenoch are descended, under his protection. This Macintyre was a notable rhymer. It was he that composed that excellent Erse epitaph (called Cumha Mhic an Toisich), in joint commemoration of Ferquhar vic Conchie and William vic Lachlan Badenoch, Laird of Mackintosh.' Ferquhar, fourth of that name and twelfth of Mackintosh, died at Inverness, 10th October, 1514, a year

after his release from his very lengthened imprisonment as a State prisoner in the Castle of Dunbar. William, thirteenth laird, was murdered at Inverness, by some lawless members of the clan, on the 20th, or, according to the manuscript of Croy, on the 22nd May, 1515."

Beautiful settings of the melodies of both these notable Laments are to be found in Brown's "Thistle", as well as in Macbean's, Logan's, and other modern collections.

As a marching song "Gabhaidh sinn an Rathad Mor" is perhaps as popular as any, and of milking songs, "Crodh Chailein" (Colin's cattle). Of iorrams, or boat songs, we have the anonymous "Leis an lurgainn O hi", "Bata Phortrigh", by Angus Macphee, "Ho ro clansmen", and that breezy production of the Rev. John Macleod of Morven, set to the air of "Mairi Laghach" and translated in vigorous style by Professor Blackie:

Ho my bonnie boatie,
Thou bonnie boatie mine,
So trim and tight a boatie
Was never launched on brine.
Ho my bonnie boatie,
My praise is justly thine,
Above all bonnie boaties
Were builded on Loch-Fyne.

More distinguished than either of these, and one that has a wide vogue in English and is often quoted from, is the Canadian Boat Song. In Noctes Ambrosianæ, No. XLVI, *Blackwood's Magazine*, September, 1829, Christopher North gave the following verses of a translation which he had received from a friend in Upper Canada. That friend is usually taken to be Mr. Galt, and the translation is from the Gaelic.

Listen to me as when ye heard our father
Sing long ago the song of other shores;
Listen to me and then in chorus gather
All your deep voices as ye pull your oars.

Chorus. Fair these broad meads—these hoary woods are grand;
But we are exiles from our father's land.

From the lone shieling of the misty island
Mountains divide us, and the waste of seas;
Yet still the blood is strong, the heart is Highland,
And we in dreams behold the Hebrides.

We ne'er shall tread the fancy-hunted valley,
Where, 'tween the dark hills creeps the small clear stream,
In arms around the patriarch banner rally,
Nor see the moon on royal tombstones gleam.

When the bold kindred in the time long vanished,
Conquered the soil and fortified the keep,
No seer foretold the children would be banished
That a degenerate lord might boast his sheep.

Come foreign rage—let discord burst in slaughter,
O then for clansmen true, and stern claymore!
The hearts that would have given their blood like water
Beat heavily beyond the Atlantic roar.

Of drinking songs there are not a few—the Highlander having been proverbially fond of his dram. Among those that have maintained some degree of popularity to this day are the anonymous "Deoch slaint' an Oighre", "Cuach Mhic-Il Andrais", by Ronald Macdonald, and "Calum a Ghlinne", by Malcolm Maclean, Kinlochewe, Ross-shire—a pensioned soldier, notorious for his tavern propensities. Of the last mentioned, Mackenzie, author of "The Beauties of Gaelic Poetry", says: "Few men have had the good fortune to buy immortality at so cheap a rate of literary and poetical labour as Calum a Ghlinne; on this single ditty his reputation shall stand unimpaired, as long as Gaelic poetry has any admirers in the Highlands of Scotland."

The humorous element is often in evidence in the more cheery Gaelic productions, but almost always it takes the form of satire. It is thus generally a mocking derisive wit, harmless enough in many cases, in others possessing the effects of a stinging sarcasm. In either case the humour is of the kind that provokes laughter by presenting its object in a peculiar if not a ridiculous light.

Two songs stand out pre-eminent in this respect, namely "Cabar Feidh" and "Oran na Seana Mhaighdinn", neither of which has been rendered in English. "Cabar Feidh", the famous clan song of the Mackenzies, owes its origin to an incident which was not at all uncommon in the old clan days of raid and foray. Both the air and the words were the production of Norman Macleod, a well-to-do farmer in Assynt, Sutherlandshire, whose sons afterwards became well known—the one as Professor Hugh Macleod of Glasgow University, the other as the Rev. Angus Macleod of Rogart.

The author himself, at the time he composed the ballad, was a near neighbour and intimate friend of Mr. Mackenzie of Ardloch. For some reason or other the Earl of Sutherland is said to have issued a commission to William Munro of Achany, who by virtue of this mandate made a descent on Assynt with a body of retainers and clansmen, carrying off much spoil. Apparently both Macleod and Mackenzie suffered loss on this occasion, as their cattle were out on the hills, and very much exposed to such a foray. Stung by the base injustice of the marauders, who scrupled not to plunder the shielings as well as to carry off the cattle, Macleod composed the song, which is directed mainly against the Munroes and their allies. With withering sarcasm and piquancy of wit, these latter are portrayed in every undignified attitude of flight in presence of the all-conquering Mackenzies. The effect is heightened in an extraordinary degree by the line: "Nuair dheireas do chabar ort", with which several of the stanzas end. The tune is certainly one of the most spirit-stirring that can be played on the bagpipe, and Mr. Mackenzie author of the "Beauties of Gaelic Poetry", says that he saw "Cabar Feidh" danced in character, and can bear testimony that for diversified parts, mazes, and evolutions, it yields not, when well performed, to any "Cotillon, brent new from France".

The other satire, entitled "The Song of an Old Maiden", is one of Mr. Neil Macleod's happiest productions. It takes the form of a soliloquy by a man-hunter who let her youth

pass without marrying. Its racy humour may be gauged from the following sentiments:[1]

Though his purse were empty,
I would dance if he came;
Though he were half blind
My desire is that he come.
Black or brown, straight or bent,
If he has a head and feet
I would dance if he came.

Without reverting here to the lullabies,[2] of which there is a goodly number quaint and curious in the Gaelic, there is one eulogy very popular on account of its cheerful air. It is entitled "Tha tigh'n fodham eiridh", and was composed by John Macdonald, a native of Benbecula, in honour of the famous Captain of Clanranald who fell at Sheriffmuir in 1715. Boswell, the biographer of Dr. Johnson, chronicles the interesting detail that "when Clanranald's servant was found watching the body of his master the day after the battle, one asked who that was? The servant replied, 'He was a man yesterday'". Even when the song is sung in English, the Gaelic chorus is invariably retained:

Tha tigh'n fodham, fodham, fodham,
Tha tigh'n fodham, fodham, fodham,
Tha tigh'n fodham, fodham, fodham,
Tha tigh'n fodham eiridh.

Boswell boasted that he could sing one verse of this ditty. What an accomplished hero he must have reckoned himself

[1] See p. 204.

[2] "Caidil thusa' ghaoil", "Taladh", "Brochan buirn".

Brochan buirn, brochan buirn,
Brochan buirn gheibh mo leanabh;
Nuair a bheireas am mart maol
Gheibh mo ghaol leit 'us bainne.

Water gruel, water gruel,
Water gruel gets my child;
But when the hornless milk cow calves
My darling will have porridge and milk.

had it been possible for him to master the whole repertoire of beautiful songs we have been considering. But to appreciate the full effect of Highland vocal melodies one would need to hear them sung in some glen or strath, or on a hillside, as Wordsworth heard the song of the Highland maiden at Inversnaid:

Will no one tell me what she sings?
  Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
  And battles long ago;
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain
That has been, and may be again.

Whate'er the theme, the maiden sang
  As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
  And o'er the sickle bending;
I listen'd, motionless and still;
And as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore
Long after it was heard no more.

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