

Notices of Ancient Gaelic Poems
and Historical Fragments in a M.S. Volume
(written in the years 1512 to 1529)
called "The Dean of Lismore's Book"
in the Advocate's Library -
by the Revd. Thomas M'Lauchlan, Edinburgh



NOTICES OF ANCIENT GAELIC POEMS AND HISTORICAL FRAGMENTS IN
A MS. VOLUME (WRITTEN IN THE YEARS 1512 TO 1529) CALLED "THE DEAN
OF LISMORE'S BOOK," IN THE ADVOCATES' LIBRARY. BY THE REV.
THOMAS M'LAUCHLAN, EDINBURGH.

This MS., which is now deposited in the Advocates' Library, was brought originally into notice by the late John Mackenzie, Esq., of the Temple, London, and was given by him to the Highland Society. Through what channel Mr Mackenzie obtained it, or where it lay during the three hundred years between the days of the Dean and the beginning of the present century, is not stated in any of the accounts we have of it; although there would be very considerable interest in an acquaintance with its past history. It may have come into Mr Mackenzie's hands as executor of Mr Macpherson, the translator of Ossian, and thus perhaps have formed part of Mr Macpherson's own collections. Dr Johnson says, in his "Journey to the Western Islands, &c.," "The editor (Macpherson) has been heard to say that part of the poem was received by him in the Saxon character."¹ This answers the description of the writing in this collection. Johnson's comment is amusing,—“He has then found, by some peculiar fortune, an unwritten language, written in a character which the natives probably never beheld.” It is well known that Mr Mackenzie was entrusted with the whole of Macpherson's Ossian in the original, and that he was the party under whose editorial care it was given to the world.

The MS. has been described in the extensive report on the Ossianic controversy drawn up in the year 1805 by a Committee of the Highland Society. There is a notice of it in the body of the Report, and a fuller one in the Appendix written by Dr Donald Smith, the best Celtic scholar of his day. These notices, however, had reference solely to the existing controversy, and in consequence the contents of the volume are entirely overlooked, with the exception of those bearing upon that controversy. Thus, of far the larger portion of this collection, and assuredly not the least interesting, we have no account whatsoever.

The MS. in its present condition is not complete, there being several pages wanting both at the beginning and the end. It contains still 311 pages, numbered apparently in the hand of Mr Mackenzie. Many of the leaves are stained and rendered almost illegible from the effects of damp, and several are much worn from use and exposure. Though called the Dean of Lismore's MS., there is nothing to show that he was the compiler save the inscription on the 27th page, where we have on the lower margin "Liber Domini Jacobi M'Gregor

¹ Johnson obviously mistook the Saxon for the Roman character. The ancient Irish character is in reality the Saxon.

Decani Lismoren,," and the handwriting of which bears a strong resemblance to that in which the greater portion of the work is written. There are, however, obviously in the volume two distinct handwritings, and there must have been at least two compilers. The other of these, besides the Dean, is probably the person called in p. 144 "Duucha deyr aclyth MacDhowl vic Eone Reawych," (Duncan son of Dugald son of John the Grizzled), written in what seems to be the hand of the Dean. This second writer is also a M'Gregor.

This collection is one of much interest on account of its age, its orthography, and the nature of its contents. Its date is unquestionably the beginning of the sixteenth century.¹ It is thus the oldest specimen we possess of what may be called, without challenge, written Scottish Gaelic. There are other specimens in existence, but it is difficult, from various reasons, to set aside the claims of Irish writers to these. We have here, however, a full and satisfactory record of what the Scottish Gaelic was in the early part of the sixteenth century, including numerous specimens from writers, or rather composers, who existed a couple of centuries before. In this I do not include the Ossianic remains, but compositions of Scottish bards of the fourteenth century. The orthography of the volume is, so far as Scotland is concerned, *unique*. It is on the principle of phonetic writing, the orthography following the orthoepy. This system had previously been adopted by the Welsh; it has ever been followed by the Manx; but this collection is the only existing specimen of it among the Scottish Highlanders; although from the very outset of the volume the system of orthography seems so fixed, and is so uniform, that it must have been well known in the country. It evidently did not originate with, nor was it confined to the writers of this volume. It is clear, however, that it did not commend itself generally to the writers of Scottish Gaelic, for within thirty years after the compilation of this MS., the first printed Gaelic book, viz., Bishop Carswel's Prayer-Book, appeared, and in it we find the old Celtic orthography uniformly followed. Nor is this to be wondered at, the phonetic method of writing being at variance with the whole genius of the Celtic language. In languages whose inflections are formed by changes in the *terminations* of words, the nearer the orthography approaches to this phonetic method, the more perfect it is; but in a language like the Gaelic, in which most of the changes take place in the beginning of the words, such a method must necessarily destroy the general resemblance of the same word in its different parts. Thus, there will often be no resemblance between the nominative and genitive of the same noun, and between the different parts of the same verb. It is necessary, in order to preserve these resemblances and other analogies of the language, to preserve throughout the funda-

¹ Vide Highland Society's Report.

mental articulations of the words. The system of orthography in the Dean's MS. renders it most difficult to decipher, the mere pronunciation of the words upon which the spelling depends being so different in different parts of the Highlands, and probably at different periods. There is room even for questioning the correctness of some of Dr Smith's readings, as given in the Highland Society's Report. An important inference from the preceding observations, and one which seems to be perfectly legitimate, is that the writing of Gaelic was extensively practised during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; so extensively as to give rise to different and well-defined systems of orthography. This is a striking commentary on the statements of Dr Johnson, that the "language had "nothing written," that "the Earse never was a written language," and that "there is not in the world an Earse MS. a hundred years old."

Passing over the personal history of the author or authors, of whom little seems to be known, we are brought to the contents of the MS. These are abundantly voluminous and various, but consist chiefly of fragments of Gaelic poetry to the extent of about 11,000 lines. There are productions of about 66 different authors, containing from half-a-dozen lines up to 100. About 800 lines of these are Ossianic, the rest of them are by Scottish and Irish bards, many of whom are altogether unknown even to tradition. What I call Ossianic poems do not profess to be all composed by Ossian, but are in the Ossianic style, and measure, and refer to events in the Fingalian history. Many of the pieces are said to be by Ossian, others by Caoilt M'Ronan, Conall M'Edirskioil (or O'Driscoll), Fergus Filidh, and other poets of the Ossianic period, and some of them by Allan M'Rorie, Gillicolum M'Anolla, and other later imitators of these. In analyzing the MS. it may be as well first to notice the Ossianic poems, and afterwards take up the others. It is sufficiently obvious, from these fragments, that poems said to be composed by Ossian, the son of Fingal, existed in the Scottish Highlands in the sixteenth century, and were written down in the vernacular. It is obvious also that the persons who are the subjects of these poems are the same with those whose names are met with in the Ossian of Macpherson, that the scene of their actings is the same, viz., Ireland and the Scottish Highlands, and that the events narrated are often identical. The question, however, remains, are there any of the poems in this MS. the same with those published by Macpherson? In answering this query we should be possessed of advantages that were not possessed by the Committee of the Highland Society. When they drew out their report, only two fragments of the whole of Macpherson's Ossian had been published in the original, viz., the poem of "Carrickthura," and one book of "Temora." Hence the Committee were obliged to compare their Gaelic collections with Macpherson's English translation. Since then the whole work has been published in the original Gaelic,

and we should be able now to compare any collections that may be, or have been, made with that. The fact is, the necessity of judging through a translation served to affect not a little the whole character of the Ossianic controversy.

In the fragments contained in this MS. we have unquestionably the names which appear in Macpherson's publication—Fingal, Gaul the son of Morni, Oscar the son of Ossian, Garve the son of Starno, the Danes, Cuchullin, &c. Without doubt, if Macpherson's Ossian be an imposture, he has made use of persons and names familiar for centuries to every native Highlander. The only peculiarity in the case of the fragments in the MS. under consideration is the frequent introduction of St Patrick. There are numerous dialogues between the Saint and Ossian, and many of the poems are addressed by the latter to the former. This may be the consequence of later monkish interpolations, Ossian being represented as a convert of St Patrick's. The Christianity of the poet, however, is of a somewhat questionable order. If these passages belong to the original compositions, they would fix the era of Ossian as being that of St Patrick, and would also indicate that his country was not Scotland, but Ireland. The following is an extract from one of these fragments :—

Ossian the son of Fingal said—

Tell me, Patrick, the honour which belongs to us,
Do the Fingalians of Ireland enjoy the happy heaven ?
I tell thee assuredly, Ossian of bold deeds,
That neither thy father, nor Gaul, nor Osear, are in heaven.
Sad is thy tale to me, O Priest,
I worshipping God, and that the Fingalians of Ireland should be excluded from heaven.
Is it not well for thee to be blessed thyself,
Although Caoilt, and Osear, and thy father should not share thy blessedness ?
I care little for any blessedness above
Unless shared with Caoilt, and Osear, and my father !
Better for thee to see the countenance of the Son of Heaven
Than that thou should'st possess all the gold in the world.
Tell me, thou censured priest, concerning the heavenly throne ;
I would gladly give thee an account of the battle of Gaura. &c.

We do not find the name of St Patrick in any part of Macpherson's Ossian, probably from his concluding that all the passages of the traditional poetry in which allusions to the Saint's name occurred were not authentic, and were mere later interpolations.

But besides the persons and names in our MS. and in Macpherson's Ossian being identical, the historical incidents occurring in both are often found to be so likewise. We have the death of Oscar in p. 230 of the MS., and in the first book of Macpherson's Temora. We have the story of Faineasolis, the Maid of Craea of Macpherson's Fingal, in p. 220 of the MS., and several other

similar instances. From this it is evident that the story of the Ossianic Poems was familiar to the Highlanders in 1512, and, to say the least, became the subject of the poems of Ossian as given afterwards by Macpherson ; or, in other words—and there is no little importance to be attached to the fact—what is historical in the Ossianic Poems was long known, and is of an antiquity far beyond the range of written history. Recent discoveries of authentic historical documents in Ireland serve very effectually to establish this statement, and farther show that many of the incidents in ancient Irish history related by Ossian are strictly correct, although long thought to be at variance with authentic history.

But while the above statements are easily established, the question of verbal identity between our MS. and Macpherson's Ossian still remains.

In the fragments referred to above—the episode of Faineasolis and the death of Oscar—it is easy to bring this question to the test of a comparison. But it is disheartening to find, that while in the English translation of Macpherson the former of these is given, it is not given in the Gaelic. Instead of the original we have merely a number of asterisks. This is remarkable, as the story was one well known in the Highlands. The death of Oscar, while similar in incident, is not identical in words ; for instance, when the father discovers the son we have in Macpherson—“ Chunnaic sinn òg Oscar air 'sgéith, 'S a dhearg fhuil ag iadhadh m'a thaobh.” “ We saw young Oscar stretched on his shield, his red blood eddying by his side.” In the MS. we have “ 'S ann fhuair mi mo mhac fein 'n a luidh air uilin cli,” a sgiath uabhrais air an làthair, agus a lann 'n a dheas laimh. “ I found my son lying supported by his left arm, his terrible shield on the ground, and his right hand grasping his spear.” This gives a fair idea of the occasional verbal resemblance, which, as will be seen, is by no means very close. It may be observed, however, that this edition of the *Battle of Gabhra* is attributed in the MS. to Allan M'Rorie, and not to Ossian. The most remarkable instance of agreement between the MS. and Macpherson's Ossian is in the Poem of Carthon, as it is called in the latter. In Macpherson's edition the story given is that of Clessamor and his son Carthon, the latter of whom was killed by his father in single combat, he not knowing that it was his son, and the son declining to avow himself lest it should be construed into cowardice. This story is told in the MS. of Cuchullin and his son Conlaoch, and this was the edition generally known in the Highlands. There is little difference save in the names ; but it is mortifying to find, when we proceed to compare the MS. with the published Gaelic poems of Macpherson, that the whole of this part is withheld in the latter. As compared with the English translation, the resemblance, with the single exception of the names, is almost complete. There is a very striking similarity between this story of Cuchullin and his son, and that of Rustum and his son Zohrab, as given by the Persian poet Firdousi. In reading

the sketch of Rustum given in Lamartine's "Celebrated Characters," any one acquainted with the Celtic tradition must be struck with the almost complete coincidence between the two. The birth of the sons, their training by their mothers, their being sent by their mothers to meet their fathers in battle, the unwillingness of the fathers to engage in the combat from some secret impression of calamitous results, the death of the sons, and the grief of the fathers. The resemblance is so complete that it can hardly be accidental. Could the story have travelled from the East in later years—or are some of these Celtic traditions older than the settlement of the race in either Scotland or Ireland—and were they carried along with them in their migrations from the East? The concluding portion of the poem, being the well-known address of Ossian to the sun, is also withheld in the original of Macpherson, for what reason it is difficult to suppose. It may, however, be shown, without possibility of dispute, that the poem of Carthon, as given by Macpherson, is an ancient Gaelic poem, the greater portion of which is contained in this MS. of the sixteenth century. But the length of this paper does not admit of extending this comparison further. It may, however, be added, that there are several Ossianic fragments in this MS. hitherto unknown, and of very considerable interest. One of these contains an account of Fingal's captivity with Cormac MacArt, king of Ireland, and the price paid by his friends for his liberation, which comprises a pair of almost all existing beasts, birds, and fishes. It might be interesting to present these to the public as specimens of what was received as Ossianic poetry in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Besides the Ossianic poetry the MS. contains a large selection of the compositions of later bards, some Scotch, some Irish. The names of a few of these are Godfrey earl, Duncan Campbell the good knight, Duncan O'Daly, Teague O'Huggin, Murdoch Albanach, bard to Clanranald, Gilpatrick M'Lachlan, Godfrey O'Daly, Isabella Countess of Argyll, Red Finlay the Bard, Gilchrist Taylor, Connil M'Edirskeol, Duncan Og, &c., &c. Most of these names are entirely lost even to tradition in the Highlands. The O'Dalys are well known in Ireland. Few other clans, if any, produced so many bards. Angus O'Daly, the celebrated satirist who visited the castles of almost all the Highland chiefs, and composed his strictures on them, is one of the best known among all the Irish bards. The O'Dalys of our MS., however, are of a much earlier date. Duncan Mor O'Daly, of whose compositions we have several fragments, was Abbot of Boyle in 1244. Some of his pieces have a reference to persons and events in Irish history, and are highly respectable as to their literary execution. One of them is an expression of the poet's good-will to a certain Cathal upon getting a new belt, beginning with "May'st thou enjoy thy belt, O Cathal," &c., and giving a very full description of the belt, with its trappings and silver ornaments. Several of the pieces in the volume are Irish, besides the compositions

of the O'Dalys. We have some pieces by a Teague Og O'Huggin. These are uniformly of a religious character, such as addresses to the Virgin Mary, prayers, &c. Both O'Daly and O'Huggin are known in Ireland. They are noticed at length in O'Reilly's report upon early Irish writers given in to the Ibero-Celtic Society of Dublin in 1820. Several of their compositions at that time existed in MS., but whether they were ever printed I do not know. None of those contained in this volume, however, seem to have been otherwise preserved, as in no instance do they correspond with those given by O'Reilly as preserved in Ireland. Before passing from this notice of the Irish bards in our MS., it is worthy of observation that the mixed Irish and Scotch character of this collection indicates the almost complete unity of the two races at the time it was made. The language and literature of Ireland and the Scottish Highlands were identical, or the difference between them was trivial. There are no doubt to be found in this MS. what a Celtic scholar is able at once to pronounce as Irish and Scottish idioms, but the difference between the languages was at its date far less than it is now. The fact is, both races have, to a certain extent, diverged from the language of the sixteenth century. Which has done so to the greatest extent is a question which cannot be discussed here. With reference to the connection between Ireland and the Scottish Highlands, it would seem as if it were severed by the Reformation, with the consequent colonization of Ulster. Since that period these two branches of the Celtic race seem to be separating farther and farther from each other. O'Huggin is to be distinguished from Teague Dall O'Huggin, a later Irish bard.

The Scottish bards, whose names appear in the MS., are numerous. The only one of these whose fame has been handed down by tradition is Murdoch of Scotland (Muredheach Albanach), the first of the celebrated line of M'Vurriehs, bards to the family of Clanranald. His era, judging from a chronological, or rather genealogical account of the family given in the Report of the Highland Society already referred to, must have been the thirteenth century. None of his compositions have reached modern times, nor were they known to exist until they appear in this MS. It would naturally be expected, from the period at which this Murdoch of Scotland lived, that his poetry would savour of the supposed barbarity of his age; that as common modern Gaelic poetry, down to within the last 80 years, treats of little but clan feuds, heroes, and battles, the older poetry of the Highlands would exhibit this character in an intenser degree. But this is not the case with the Clanranald bard. He is indeed said in the Highland Society's Report to be an imitator of Ossian, but this must be from a mistake in the reader, as an examination of the MS. gives us nothing as the composition of this poet but some truly beautiful Christian hymns. The following is a specimen :—

Great are the tidings, that a sinner like me should have a place in the heart of the
Son of God :

And that I should now have in my mouth the Cross of Jesus Christ.

Oh Jesus Christ, sanctify thou my feet and my hands for thyself ;

Sanctify me of thy good will, blood, flesh and bones.

I never cease from doing evil, because of the temptations of my body.

May thy protection be over me, my head and my body.

I am so prone to be tempted, it is my sorrow

That I should readily forsake the way, set so clearly before me.

The influence of Iona must have been felt over all the Highlands during the period at which these lines were written, and a far higher state of civilization must have existed—as can, indeed, be shown from various sources—than several centuries afterwards, when the whole population of the country was divided into small sections at perpetual war with each other. Several influences came into operation during the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, which told most unfavourably upon the social position of the Highlanders. The length of this notice would not admit of our entering into a consideration of these. At p. 87 of the MS. we have a curious fragment on the game of “Tabblisk” so often referred to among the older Highland poets, and which most writers on the subject suppose to have been chess. The author of these lines is not mentioned, but they contain an account of an unfortunate sufferer by severe loss at the play, and a warning to others to avoid it. . . . It proceeds thus :—

Ruinous is ‘Tabblisk,’ few men but know it ;

Of what I know myself, I have a little tale to tell—

On a certain day I was travelling through Foytle (Athole or Ireland ?) The land

Variegated, beautiful, pleasing, I came there at noon,

When a maiden of red lips, met me in the town,

And asked me to join in one of these games ;

She produced a chess-board, &c. &c.

He proceeds to describe the game. From speaking of the men and dice it is clear that the game must have been more like backgammon than chess. Irish writers maintain that it was backgammon.

Several of the poems in this MS. are Clan songs, such as genealogies, elegies on chiefs, &c. There are songs on the M'Donalds, the M'Dougalls, the M'Leods, and more particularly the M'Gregors. The Dean appears to have had a fair measure of the clannishness of his countrymen. The verses on the last must have been written previous to the almost complete proscription of the clan Gregor. At p. 28 there is a poem in praise of the M'Donalds, of 30 lines, by Gillicallum M'An Ollamh am fear-dàu (Malcolm the son of the learned man, the poet). It begins :—

There is no joy without the Clan Donald, no battle in their absence ;
 The greatest of all the clans, before whom men tremble in the battle ;
 The noblest of all the clans, who are full of strength and courage ;
 The clan who can protect the lands in which there is faith and godliness,—
 Brave, bold, enterprising, the clan of oldest descent,
 The greatest among friends, the most terrible in the day of battle.

The poem proceeds in the same strain. In pp. 129 and 130 we have poems on the clan Dougall, who must, even at the time of their composition, have possessed considerable power, although it is probable they were composed subsequent to the reign of Robert Bruce, by whom the clan was much reduced. The first of these is a laudatory ode to M'Dougall of Torattan, called also Duncan Carrach. His fame both as a soldier and a hunter is sung in strains thoroughly poetical. The author's name is Duncan M'Cabe. The second of these pieces is by John M'Ewen M'Eacharn, and is an elegy on John M'Dougall of Dunolly. I have not been able to discover the period at which this chief of Dunolly lived, but it is probable that it can be found in the records of the family. His death seems deeply lamented by the poet. The weeping of the widow and the grief of the clan are described in the most pathetic terms.

Two of the poems on the M'Gregors are given at pp. 208 and 209 respectively. The first is by Duncan M'Dougall maol, or the bald. It extends to 35 lines, and is genealogical. It begins with John M'Phatrick, and says that the genealogy given corresponds with the opinion of the readers of books. This John M'Phatrick was the son of Patrick, Malcom the father of Patrick.

MacIandu was he, the hero without deceit ;
 Another John was father to this Iandu, the son of Gregor, the son of John,
 Three of bold deeds, three of fame and of might ;
 The father of this John was Malcom, of no deficient bravery,
 He was the son of Duncan the small, of the great race of Conn ;
 Another Duncan was his father, son of Gillelan the active,
 Who came from Grey Hugh of Urquhay ;
 Ronan of wise speech was father of Hugh of Urquhay,
 Son of Alpin of pure descent, High King of mighty blows,
 Four fours this from Alpin to John, &c., &c.
 Thy true descent is from Fergus the son of Ere the Great,
 The blood of forty and three Kings in the blood of the Great King (Alpin) ;
 Three to the North, three to the South,¹ after Malcom Kenmore,
 Wore the crown of the race from Malcom to Alpin ;
 From Alpin upwards there are fourteen to Fergus, &c.
 The blood of many races in thy pure blood which we cannot name, &c. ;

¹ Both banks of Loch Tay.

The blood of Arthur in thy gentle veins, &c. ;
 The blood of Conn of two Conns beneath thy soft skin ;
 The blood of Grant, as also of the race of Neil, &c.

The genealogy here given is identical with that in p. 144 up to Alpin, King of Scotland, and seems to have been the generally recognized genealogy of the clan Gregor chiefs. The writer of the latter, apparently a grandson of John M'Fadrick, states that it was copied by him from the books of the genealogy of the kings. The second of the poems of the M'Gregors is given as the composition of "M'Gillindak, the man of songs." Its first line is "Lords have had the pre-eminence over leaders (Toiseachs) since the beginning." He continues—

"The mightiest Lord in this land is little Duncan of the Great soul."

This is the Duncan, son of Duncan, referred to in the last extract. This poem brings the M'Gregors from Galloway ("Gallew," it is called, which can hardly mean Caithness). The rights of the M'Gregors to hunt over Scotland are traced up to the days of Fingal, who, it is said, would not dare to hunt in Scotland without the permission of M'Gregor. This is a curious piece, although there is much of the exaggeration of the old bards and Sennachies in it. It has been, however, a uniform tradition in the Highlands, that the clan Gregor and two or three other cognate clans were the descendants of the old Scottish kings. This implying probably rivalry, might account for a portion of the dislike which the later Scottish monarchs bore to them, and which was laid to the account of their own turbulence.

Several of the pieces in this collection are the composition of persons known in history, though not as poets. Four of them are by the Knight of Glenorchy (Duncan M'Callean, who fell in the battle of Floddon), three by the Earl of Argyle, and three by Isabella, Countess of Argyle, who became afterwards the Countess of Cassilis. Some of these are exceedingly difficult to read, while of those that can be read the greater number are so indecent, that they are either a strange specimen of the state of feeling on matters of common decency among the class to which their authors, ladies and gentlemen, belonged at the time, or they are specimens of very worthless and ribald verses pawned on respectable names in order to give them currency. The Dean and his coadjutor would hardly venture to give them a place in their scrap-book did they live in modern times. In many of these there is reference to the malpractices of priests, which would seem to betoken the existence of the spirit that issued in the Reformation. This is not to be wondered at, either in the families of Argyle or of Breadalbane. It is a striking indication of the state of the Highlands in the sixteenth

century, to find the Earl of Argyle and the Knight of Glenorchy composing Gaelic verses. Nothing can more distinctly show the declension which the language has suffered in the course of a few centuries. Few of the better classes can in modern times speak or understand a sentence of it.

But we must close this notice. The MS. has not been exhausted, but a fair specimen has been given of its varied contents. The writer cannot, however, close without observing, that there is much cause to regret that, with the exception of the interesting volume of *Collectanea* published by the Iona Club, so little has been done in Scotland to preserve and elucidate what remains there are of our ancient Celtic literature. Ireland, by means of its Archæological Society and otherwise, has rescued from oblivion and given the place of which it was worthy, to its own ancient, and, in many respects, remarkable literary remains. It is cause of regret that in Scotland, of all that ever was produced in Iona, or elsewhere, among its ecclesiastics, its medical men, or its Bards and Sennachies, there is little now existing. But there is a little, and that little is deserving of an amount of attention which it has never received. There are in the Highlands compositions, even of our later bards, which would excite interest in a wider circle than that which can now enjoy them, could they but be rendered into English with the skill and effect with which many of the writings of the Irish poets have been translated.

[The Dean of Lismore's Manuscript is a volume possessed of such peculiar interest, that it was thought desirable to subjoin a detailed list of its contents: This has been obligingly furnished by the Author of the preceding communication. The volume itself is a small 4to, containing, as numbered, 311 pages. The paper is much stained, and in such a frail state, that unless something is done for its preservation, it runs great risk of being further mutilated or injured. The writing, for the most part, is evidently of the reign of James the Fourth, or the minority of James the Fifth; although a few additions have been made at a somewhat later date. Independently of its claims as a MISCELLANY OF GAELIC POETRY, the only one of its kind known to exist, it is valuable, as already explained, for exhibiting the actual state of the language and orthography at that early period.

In the *Report of the Highland Society on the Poems of Ossian*, 1805, three of the pieces, beginning, *Is fadda nocht* (MS., p. 50); *Annit doif skayle* (*Ib.*, p. 220); and *Iunnis dowin a Erris* (*Ib.*, p. 230), are printed (at pages 93-102) with translations. It may also be noticed, that the Obituary relating to the Highlands (MS., pp. 189-197) was communicated to the Society of Antiquaries by the late Mr Donald Gregory, and printed, with some explanatory notes,

in the *Archæologia Scotica*, vol. iii., p. 318, under this title, "CHRONICON DOMINI JACOBI MACGREGOR, Notarii Publici ac Decani Lismorensis, qui obiit circiter A.D. 1542." Mr Gregory has evidently fixed the probable date of Dean MacGregor's death, from the date of the latest entry in this curious and valuable Obituary. A few English verses, chiefly satirical, against the female sex, and of no value, occur at pages 48, 77, 89, 92 of the MS. The lines profess to be copied from Chaucer and (Lydgate's) Bochas.—D. L.]

ANALYSIS OF THE DEAN OF LISMORE'S GAELIC MS.

Page of MS.—The first four pages are illegible.

- 5 Godfred or Gorroyd Erla. Possibly one of the Earls of Argyll. Six lines almost illegible. Apparently a love ditty.
- 6 Author's name obliterated. A piece of 38 lines in praise of a Ewen or Jone Stewart, son of a Sir Robert Stewart.
- 8 Author's name defaced. The sense extremely obscure.
- 10 Author's name not given. Imitation of Ossian, 10 lines.
- 10 Duncan Campbell, 12 lines. Probably the Knight of Glenorchy, although the title is not given. The sense obscure, many of the words illegible. In the 2d line we have "O tha is a milleadh gach sluagh o eas ruadh gu Innis horc." We have Adam and Eve and the curse referred to, but the general scope is obscure.
- 11 Duncan O'Daly, 95 lines. Religious.
- 16 Author's name not given, 10 lines, almost illegible.
- 16 Gochondyth M'Kerla vee, 65 lines. Obscure.
- 19 Muredhach Albanach, 14 lines. Religious. This poet seems to have been a truly religious character. There are 8 lines succeeding the above, a prayer to Christ, very beautiful and truly poetical.
- 20 Muredhach Sessin Dall O'Daly, 60 lines. Irish. Historical.
- 23 Duncan Mor V——, 10 lines. Satirical, on bad singers and bad harpers. The *dryng drang* of the harp ridiculed.
- 23 Gillecrist Talyer or Gilchrist Taylor, 32 lines on hunting. The name of Ewen or John Stewart occurs in them, also that of Lochaber. This Stewart is called MacRobert.
- 25 Author not given, but one of the Fingalian poets, 14 lines. A conversation between some heroes regarding a demand for the head of Gaul.
- 27 I prey dhu eyenord, 5 lines. Proverbial.
- 28 Duncha M'Cowle Voil, 9 lines.
- 28 Gilliccallum M'An Olla, 30 lines. In praise of the MacDonalds.
- 30 Author not named. An *Urgcul* regarding a poor man and a king of France, 31 lines.
- 31 Ossin M'Finna, 8 lines. "Do chunnaic mi 'teaghlach Fhinn."
- 32 Author's name not given, 59 lines. Love song.
- 35 Dugall ———, 20 lines. "Innis duinn a chrupain," &c.
- 36 Author not given, 33 lines. A love song.
- 37 Dunca M'Callain The Knight of Glenorchy, 16 lines.

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 38 A prognostication, &c., on "the three perilous days," of the different seasons, in the Scottish dialect.
- 39 Author not given, 15 lines. On a member of the M'Leod family.
- 40 A poem of 16 lines, scored, as if deleted by the transcriber.
- 41 Seathan or John Mor O'Daly, 84 lines. Historical.
- 45 Author not given, 40 lines. Obscure. The first portion is an elegy on a Connil M'Scanlan, by a lady admirer, and the latter after a division an account by a lady of her numerous suitors.
- 49 Author's name defaced, 18 lines. Fingalian.
- 50 Ossian. Addressed to St Patrick lamenting the change in his circumstances. (Given in the Highland Society's Report, except 3 lines.)
- 51 Meildonich M'Uenis Vullich, 50 lines. An address to the Virgin Mary.
- 53 Gorrie Finn O'Daly, 30 lines. In praise of a lady of the name of Gornlee.
- 54 Gilpatrick M'Lachlan, 2 lines. An aphorism.
- 55 Seathan Chnoidart, 14 lines. A eulogy on Diarmad.
- 55 Gormley M'Lean, 18 lines. An elegy on her husband, a M'Neil.
- 57 Gormley M'Lean, 10 lines. Expressive of grief and admiration for her husband.
- 57 Author not given, 30 lines. On Chess-playing called Tabblisk.
- 59 Two trivial pieces of 10 lines and 2 lines.
- 59 Feylim M'Dougall, 22 lines. Aphorisms beginning, "It is not good to travel on Sunday," &c.
- 61 Ewen M'Murrich, 25 lines. A love song.
- 62 Gormlay M'Lean, 6 lines. Lament for M'Neil.
- 63 Ossian, 34 lines. Known as "Sliabh nam beann fionn."
- 64 Duncan M'Dougall Voil and Dun. M'Pharson.
- 64 Gilli Hurssi O'Soyviu. Murdoch M'Lean had two swords and two sons, but death was stronger than them all, 57 lines.
- 68 Author not given, 12 lines. Twenty-four things which the poet disliked.
- 68 Gorry Earl, 20 lines. A satire on marriage.
- 70 The Bard M'Intyre, 38 lines. On a fairy ship loaded with troublesome and talkative widows.
- 71 Allan M'Dougall bain, 32 lines. Amorous.
- 73 M'Callein Earl of Argyle, 12 lines.
- 75 Author not given, incomplete, 49 lines. Imitation of Ossian.
- 78 Chronological list of Scottish kings, in the Scottish dialect, "Heir beginnis the names of all Scottis Kingis," &c., with a reference to the books and chapters of Hector Bece's *Chronicles*. The list ends with "James the fyfte rengnis now in great felicite."
- 84 Ean M'Dhuncha, 12 lines. Apparently to Lochiel.
- 85 Author not given. Colloquy at the grave of Alexander the Great. (See Ronald M'Donald's Collection.)
- 87 Elle nin dre vrainin, 32 lines. Aphorisms.
- 88 Gorry, 6 lines. Ferchar M'Fadrick Grant, 6 lines. Humorous.
- 88 and 89 Ewen M'Vurrich, 2 lines. Duncan M'Pherson, 4 lines. Humorous.
- 93 Ossian, 84 lines. In praise of the Fingalians—not known.

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- 97 Author not given, 81 lines. In praise of some hero. Obscure.
- 101 Duncan Mor O'Daly, 26 lines. In praise of Cathal's belt.
- 103 Finlay the Red Bard, 28 lines. In praise of M'Gregor's horse.
- 104 Do. do. 26 lines. On the M'Gregors.
- 106 Teague Og O'Huggin, 48 lines. Irish. Lament for the son of Dervail.
- 106 Duncan M'Kermont, 20 lines. On anger and jealousy.
- 109 Duncan M'Callean, the good knight, 48 lines. An elegy on a certain Lachlan Mor.
It is difficult to make out exactly who this Lachlan was, but apparently he was a privileged sturdy beggar, or else a son.
- 111 Duncan M'Challeine, the good knight, 14 lines. A satire on a certain Donald Donn and his wife.
- 112 Dermoyd O'Heffernan, 36 lines. Irish. Didactic.
- 113 Murdoch Albannaich, 2 lines. Defaced.
- 114 Ossian, 42 lines. A Fingalian tale. The testing of the wives of the Heroes.
- 117 Author's name defaced, 80 lines. In praise of M'Donald—John M'Donald.
- 120 Gillecrist Tailleur, 48 lines. A monkish legend.
- 122 Duncan Mor O'Daaly, 36 lines. An ecclesiastical legend. This Duncan was Abbot of Boyle in 1244.
- 124 Gorrie Finn O'Daly, 44 lines. On the family of O'Brian. The Clan O'Daly furnished a great number of the Irish poets. O'Reilly gives a list of 28 of them.
- 126 Osseane M'Fynn, 24 lines. A complaint to St Patrick.
- 129 Duncan M'Caybba, 22 lines. On M'Dougall of Torattin.
- 130 John M'Ewin M'Eachern, 66 lines. An elegy on John or Ewen M'Dougall of Dunolly.
- 133 Keilt M'Ronan, Ossianic, 184 lines. An account of a plundering expedition into Ireland in the reign of Cormac M'Art. Not known, but of considerable interest; with numerous corrections as if by the author.
- 143 Finlay M'Nab, 18 lines. Obscure.
- 144 Gorroyd Earle, 6 lines. Against gambling.
- 144 Date and genealogy of the writer in the year 1512.
- 145 Farris Filli, Ossianic. The praise of Gaul. (An abridged copy printed in Gillies's and M'Callum's Collections, but fuller in Miss Brooke's.)
- 147 Allan M'Rory, Ossianic. The death of Diarmid, 52 lines. (Appears in the Collections of Gillies, p. 284, and M'Callum, p. 186.)
- 148 Effric ne Corgitill, 30 lines. Obscure. Addresses a Rosary.
- 149 Duncan M'Callean, 16 lines. Obscure. Refers to the Ark.
- 150 Murdoch Albanach, 81 lines. Address to the Virgin Mary.
- 153 Gillechrist Browlingach Lamont's Bard, 43 lines. Apparently to one of the Argyles, called alternately M'Callan and M'Dermit.
- 155 Dugall M'Illeglas, 48 lines. In praise of the M'Gregors, especially the chief called M'Fadrick.
- 157 Duncan Campbell, the good knight, 12 lines. Obscure.
- 158 Gillipatrick M'Lachlan. Elegy on M'Callean. Perhaps the good knight who fell at Floddon.
- 161 Author's name not given, 14 lines. Obscure.

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- 161 Author's name not given, 28 lines on the clans, with special reference to the Clan Dougall.
- 164 Ossianic, 26 lines. Battles of the Fingalians in Italy, France, &c.
- 165 Gerry Finn, probably O'Daly, 21 lines. General.
- 166 Teague Og, 72 lines. Religious.
- 170 Robert Lamont a gaskgach, 16 lines. Moral.
- 171 No author, 8 lines. Pleasant sounds.
- 171 Do. 6 lines. Address to an old woman.
- 172 Ossianic, 62 lines. The banners of the Fingalians.
- 174 Ossianic, 20 lines. A Fingalian tale.
- 174 Ossianic, 43 lines. Description of a Fingalian feast.
- 176 Author not given, 22 lines. To music and poetry.
- 179 Barron Ewin M'Conne. Imitation of Ossian.
- 179 Oflyne. Apparently a mistake for Ossian. Fingalian legend, 18 lines.
- 183 Fragment of account of the divisions of Ireland.
- 186 Obitus Malcomi Kenmore, &c. (See *supra*, p. 46.)
- 199 Donil Leith M'Cowle M'Gregor, 62 lines. On three women whom the poet satirizes.
- 202 Duncan Campbell, the good knight, 26 lines. Much defaced.
- 204 Author not given, 27 lines. An address to the Earl, and especially the family of Argyll, whom the poet calls to remember their heroes.
- 205 Connil Carnych M'Eddirskeol, 48 lines. In M'Callum, p. 132. On the heads of the enemies of the Fingalians.
- 208 Duncan M'Dulle Voil, 35 lines. The genealogy of the M'Gregors.
- 209 M'Gillindak Infardan, or "the Poet," 44 lines. On the M'Gregors, with the rights of hunting in Ireland and Scotland.
- 212 Ossian, 48 lines. A lament for the Fingalians, addressed to St Patrick.
- 215 Ossian, 22 lines. Ossian asks St Patrick are the Fingalians in heaven?
- 216 Bard royg Finlay, 34 lines. On a certain Allan, apparently of the Clanranald family, whom the poet, among other enormities, accuses of having spoiled Iona and Religoran.
- 217 Author not given, 34 lines. On one of the M'Leods of Lewis, who was married to one of the Argyll family.
- 220 Ossian, 76 lines. Fainesolas. (See *supra*, p. 40.)
- 223 Duncan M'Cowle Voil vic Eoyne Reawych, 7 lines. Amorous; one of the writers of the MS., see p. 144.
- 224 Beginning wanting, 22 lines. Obscure.
- 225 Duncan Campbell, 12 lines. Amorous.
- 225 A wooer, 6 lines. Amorous.
- 226 Gillebreid beg M'Nom, 85 lines. On a person called M'Echen and M'Ewen crugeall Echen.
- 230 Ossianic. Fergus Filidh, brother to Ossian, 28 lines. (See *supra*, p. 38.)
- 232 Allan M'Rory, Ossianic. The battle of Gaura, 117 lines.
- 236 Gillecallum M'Ollaigh, 52 lines. Death of Coulaich; also in M'Callum.
- 239 Duncan Ogga, 20 lines. Moral. Seven shafts pierced him. Shame, lust, laziness, covetousness, &c.

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- 240 Gillecallum M'N'Ollaigh, 48 lines. A lament for David I. of Scotland, or a person called M'Merraid (Margaret).
- 244 Gillicriod Browlingeach, bard in Lemin, 48 lines. On two Irish chiefs, Tomuldach M'Diarmad and Thomas Magwil.
- 246 Turn O'Meilchor, 84 lines. On the same Tomuldach M'Diarmad, in praise of his hospitality.
- 250 Several detached pieces.
- 251 Isabella Contissa Ergadien, 8 lines. These and the following lines indelicate.
- 251 Duncan Campbell, the good knight, 12 lines.
- 252 Teague Og O'Huggin, 63 lines. Religious.
- 255 Muredhach Albanach, 111 lines. Religious.
- 260 Teague Og O'Huggin, 92 lines. Religious.
- 263 Arthure Dawle M'Gurkych, 56 lines. To Ewen M'Sween, with an account of his fleet landing at Castle Sweyn.
- 266 M'Intyre the bard, 24 lines. A vessel filled with bad wives. The name of Duncan Dorcha (black) M'Challan appears.
- 267 M'Pherson, 28 lines. Amorous.
- 269 O'Meilchor, 51 lines. Irish, historical. Apparently a leaf wanting.
- 271 Gillicriod Taylor, 36 lines. Moral.
- 271 M'Callan Mor, *id. est.*, Callan Math, 4 lines. Defaced.
- 273 Duncan Og Albanach, 37 lines. A conflict with the Gaul.
- 275 Gillicriod Taylor, 62 lines. An urskail or tale.
- 278 Gilliglass M'Intalyer, 48 lines. Lament for Duncan M'Gregor of Glenurquhay.
- 279 Gerroyd Earle, 10 lines. On music.
- 280 Ossianic, 21 lines.
- 281 Finlay Roy the bard maath (good ?), 26 lines. Address to M'Gregor.
- 282 The bard M'Intyre, 26 lines.
- 284 Muredhach Albanach, 24 lines. Religious; a prayer.
- 285 Isabel Ni V'Callan (Countess of Argyll), 6 lines. Amorous.
- 286 Author not given, 36 lines. Eulogy on a certain Cathal.
- 287 Ossianic, 65 lines.
- 290 Isabel Ni V'Callan (Countess). Amorous.
- 293 Teague Og O'Huggin, 26 lines. Ecclesiastical legend.
- 294 Osseane M'Finn, 121 lines. In praise of Fingal.
- 296 Duncan Mor O'Daly, 54 lines. On the Virgin Mary.
- 301 M'Keich O'Cloan, 66 lines. Fraoch. In Gillies, p. 107.
- 303 Gerroyd Erla, 20 lines. Amorous.
- 304 Finlay am bard roy, 39 lines. On M'Diarmad.
- 306 Duncan M'Callan, the good knight, 8 lines. On the loss of a son.
- 307 No author, 15 lines. Obscure.
- 307 Murrach Albanach, 98 lines. Religious.



