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## THE CELTIC MAGAZINE.

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**No. III.**

**JANUARY 1876.**

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### THE STATE OF THE OSSIANIC CONTROVERSY.

[CONTINUED.]

MR ARNOLD in that handsome, but slightly ambiguous admission of his, that the Celts in their intellectual capacity come very near the secret of nature and of natural magic, does not seem to imply more in reality than that they have a subtler sense of certain natural affinities than their Anglo-Saxon brethren have; that they apprehend more surely when, where, and how the truest impress of physical nature occurs on the percipient faculties of the soul, than men of a more phlegmatic constitution do; and that they can draw from such intuitions of their own a sort of inspiration, or second-sight of nature, comparable to prophecy, which gives their highest poetic utterance a rapt enthusiasm—and the accuracy of this estimate need not be disputed, but, so far as Ossian is concerned, it must be considerably extended. To read Ossian as we do, from the text of Macpherson, there was another sort of insight, purely scientific, into the mysteries of nature, inherited and expressed by him; a certain acquaintance with her hidden powers, and a certain augury of her possible future development, if men could only attain to it, far beyond the mere rapt enthusiasm of a poet, or the so-called second-sight of a seer. Whether this peculiar faith of his was derived by tradition, and if so, from whom; or whether it was the result of practical experiment in his own generation, is foreign for the moment to our present inquiry. But that it was relied upon as an endowment of the most gifted heroes; that it was exercised by them in extremity, as if to subdue nature from whom they had borrowed it, and to wrest the very power of destruction out of her hand; and that such practical conquest was sometimes achieved by them, or is said to have been achieved by them, is just as certain as that Macpherson's translation is before us now. What we refer to more especially for the present, is the secret of extracting or discharging electricity from the atmosphere by mechanical means—by the thrust of a spear, or of a sword, into the bosom of the low-hanging cloud, or lurid vapour, and so dislodging the imaginary spirit of evil by which they were supposed to be tenanted. Only the very best, and bravest, and wisest could prevail in such conflict with nature; but they did prevail, according to Ossian; and the weapons of their warfare, and the mode of their assault, were precisely similar to what an experimentalist in electricity might employ at the present day, or to what the Egyptians employed in the days of Moses. We shall not now go further back in the prosecution of this inquiry, but would seriously recommend the reader who has any difficulty on

[Pg 67]

[Pg 68]

the subject to compare, at his leisure, the work of Moses on the top of Mount Sinai and elsewhere, with an Egyptian "rod" in his hand, and the exploits of Fingal in conflict with the Spirit of Loda on the heights of Hoy, with a sword in his hand. There might have been a far-derived and long traditional secret connection between the two, most edifying, or at least most curious, to investigate; or they might both have resulted from that sort of intuition which only the most gifted of any nation enjoy independently, re-appearing again in Franklin, and now familiarised to the world. Let those who doubt, or who differ on this point, satisfy themselves. What we are now concerned to maintain and prove is, that the fact is more than once described by Ossian, in circumstances, in situations, and with instrumentalities, which render the allegation of it at least indubitable. In the case above referred to, for example, Fingal, challenged and assaulted in a thunderstorm by the Spirit of Loda, encounters his antagonist with a sword, on the very verge of a cliff overhanging the Atlantic; and by one or two scientific thrusts, with incredible daring, disarms the cloud, dissipates the storm, and sends his atmospheric adversary shrieking down the wind with such violence that "Innistore shook at the sound; the waves heard it on the deep, and stopped on their course with fear." The scene is described in that well-known passage in *Carric-Thura*, which Macpherson himself characterises as "the most extravagant fiction in all Ossian's poems."

Now the question as regards the authenticity or reliability of this very passage, is whether Macpherson understood the meaning of it; what it represented, where the conflict occurred, or how it happened? It has been sufficiently demonstrated elsewhere—in "Ossian and the Clyde," pp. 311-324—that the encounter took place near the celebrated "Dwarfie Stone" on the western headland of Hoy in the Orkneys—a region more remarkable for its sudden electric gatherings and violent atmospheric currents than almost any other in Great Britain, and at that particular spot so much so, that the very scene described in Ossian has been selected by Walter Scott for a similar electrical display in the "Pirate." But of this obvious fact, and of all that is connected with it in his own translation, Macpherson is so ignorant that he not only does not point it out, but does not understand it, and cannot even conjecture where it was. His great antagonist Laing is equally at fault on the subject, and by way of exposing, as he believes, the dishonesty of Macpherson, endeavours to show that in patching up his account Macpherson had mistaken Thurso for Thura. Macpherson, in fact, knew nothing either about Thurso or Thura—even less than Laing did; and it is only in the work above cited that either the scene has been identified, or the encounter explained.

Here, then, is a question, not of linguistic criticism, but of scientific fact—of geographical position, of atmospheric agency—which should be disposed of on its own merits, and which, like many others of the same sort, must ultimately transfer the whole inquiry to a much higher field than that of syllables and syntax.

But the description in question, it may be objected, is very much exaggerated, and therefore cannot be relied on: which is the very objection Macpherson himself urged—that it is "the most extravagant fiction in all Ossian's poems." But if that was the case in his opinion, how could the passage be his own? It was easy enough either to remedy or explain it, if he could explain it, or not to introduce it. On the other hand, when rightly understood, there is no undue exaggeration in the account at all—not more than might be reasonably expected from a poet of the highest sensibility and the most vivid imagination in describing an incomprehensible natural phenomenon; not more, for example, than in "the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words" on Mount Sinai. Still it is not the question of descriptive exaggeration, but of scientific fact, that is now before us; and if the whole of the so-called conflict of Fingal with the Prince of the Power of the Air on Roraheid in Hoy was so utterly inexplicable to Macpherson, both as to place and character, that he speaks of it hopelessly as a story "concerning ghosts," on what principle of critical consistency, or of common sense, can he be said to have been the author of it? If the Septuagint translators, for example, had added a note of their own on the giving of the Law at Sinai, to the effect that it appeared "the most extravagant fiction" to them, at the same time transferring, in defiance of their own text, the entire scene from one end of the Red Sea to the other, would any reader in his senses accuse the Seventy of having fabricated not only the two chapters in question, but the whole Book of Exodus—even although the original had been now lost? Their very simplicity and ignorance would have acquitted them. Yet Macpherson, in similar circumstances, is to be held guilty, although he could have more easily cleared himself by altering or omitting the whole passage, than a man in London could prove by an *alibi* that he had been guilty of no forgery at Inverness or Edinburgh six hours before! But if this hitherto incomprehensible passage in Ossian be genuine then the entire poem of *Carric-Thura*, which is identified with it in every word and syllable from beginning to end, must be genuine also.

In the same sort of field, but without the addition of supernatural agency, we have another scene of scientific import in the *War of Inisthona*. Inisthona, according to Macpherson, was on the coast of Norway—he did not know where; Inisthona, according to Laing, was a wilful corruption of Inisowen in Lough Foyle; Inisthona, in point of fact, was Iceland—as clearly and distinctly so in Macpherson's own text, as latitude, longitude, and physical configuration can make it; far more distinctly recognisable than any *Ultima Thule* of the Romans. But here, in this Inisthona, we have first a fountain surrounded with mossy stones, in a grassy vale, at the head of a bay; then a wilderness of half a day's journey inland; then a lake at the end of the wilderness, exhaling pestilential vapours, called Lake Lano—but no volcano visible as yet: and in Iceland we have still the basin of the fountain, surrounded with its mossy stones, petrified and dried up by volcanic heat, at the head of the bay; we have still the dreary wilderness beyond it, now scorched and blackened, ending in the Plain of Thingvalla, where the King of Denmark was entertained more

than a twelvemonth ago; we have still the lake beyond that, where it should be, but now relieved of its sulphurous vapours by eruptive jets of steam in its neighbourhood; and besides, we have now Mount Hecla in active operation, by whose accumulated fires and dreadful discharges, since Ossian's day, the whole island has been torn and desolated. Here, therefore, again, the same question of fact arises, and must be disposed of by all reasonable inquirers. In this one identification we have geography, geology, history, and navigation combined, beyond Macpherson's own comprehension—earthquakes, subterranean fires, latent volcanic forces; a beautiful island where there is now desolation; and a warlike people occupying its soil, subject to the Danes 600 years and more before the Danes themselves are supposed to have discovered it. In the face of such a revelation as this, nowhere else to be found but in Ossian, what does it signify that the Gaelic text of *Inisthona* has perished? The fact that it survives in English is only a greater miracle, for which we are indebted solely to the patience and fidelity of a man who has been called a liar and an impostor.

One more miracle has yet to be added in the same field—viz., that Lake Lego or Lough Neagh in Ireland, and Lake Lano in Iceland, both emitting pestilential vapours, are geographically connected in Ossian with subterranean volcanic movements which pass from Ireland, by the west coast of Scotland, through the Orkneys to Inisthona; and thus the latest theories of the most accomplished geologists have been anticipated more than a hundred years before their announcement, by the work of a man who is supposed to have had no original to guide him, and who himself had not the remotest idea of what his own words conveyed.

It remains then, after such illustrations, for those who still deny the authenticity of Ossian to declare whether they have ever studied him; and for those who still wrangle about the style of Macpherson's so-called Gaelic to decide whether they will continue such petty warfare among vowels and consonants, and ill-spelt mediæval legends, when the science, the history, the navigation, the atmospheric phenomena, and the impending volcanic changes of Western Europe fifteen hundred years ago, are all unveiled and detailed, with an accuracy and a minuteness beyond cavil or competition, in the matchless English translation before them. Will our most erudite grammarians never understand? Would they abandon Genesis, shall we say, because *Elohim* and *Jehovah* are sometimes interchanged in the text? Can they believe that any Jew, who could concoct a book like Genesis, did not also know that *Elohim* was a plural noun? Can they any more, then, believe that a Celtic man with brains enough to fabricate poems like *Fingal* and *Temora* did not know that the Gaelic name for the sun was feminine? Can they see no other way of accounting for such alleged variations of gender, and number, and case, than by forgery, when the very forger himself must have seen them? Or do they seriously prefer some letter of the Gaelic alphabet to a law of nature? Will they forego the facts of an epoch, for the orthography of a syllable? If so, then the friends of Ossian, who is one great mass of facts, must turn once more to the common sense of the public, and leave his etymological detractors at leisure to indulge their own predilections, and to entertain one another.

In the present aspect of the controversy, indeed, the only antagonists entitled to anything like a patient hearing are the respectable, perhaps venerable, geologists and antiquarians who still lodge or linger about the Roman Wall; who talk, with a solemn air, about stern facts; who are also fortified by the authority of Hugh Miller and Smith of Jordanhill, and are led on to continuous defeat on their own ground, under the auspices of the *Scotsman*, who knows well how to shut the door politely in any man's face who pursues them. These gentlemen are far from being either unimportant or unworthy antagonists, if they would only speak intelligently for themselves and not allow their credit to be usurped by some nameless reviewer in a newspaper, who may know less about the whole matter in dispute than they do about Sanscrit. But let them have patience. Their favourite haunts, and impregnable strongholds, about Dunglass and Duntocher, shall be investigated with religious care; and the waters of the Clyde, as high as they will honestly flow, let in upon them without ceremony or remorse. As for the others, who, with no great semblance of either grace or grammar to support them, persist in affirming, with point-blank stolid effrontery, that Macpherson "must have been an impostor," and that Ossian is a "fudge"—they may safely be consigned in silence to their legitimate fate.

**P. HATELY WADDELL.**

(*To be Concluded in our next.*)

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## TO PROFESSOR JOHN STUART BLACKIE.

A LOCHABER LILT.

—o—

A health to thee, Stuart Blackie!  
 (I drink it in *mountain dew*)  
 With all the kindest greetings  
 Of a heart that is leal and true.  
 Let happen what happen may  
 With others, by land or sea;

For me, I vow if I drink at all,  
I'll drink a health to thee.

A health to thee, Stuart Blackie!  
A man of men art thou,  
With thy lightsome step and form erect,  
And thy broad and open brow;  
With thy eagle eye and ringing voice  
(Which yet can be soft and kind),  
As wrapped in thy plaid thou passest by  
With thy white locks in the wind!

I greet thee as poet and scholar;  
I greet thee as wise and good;  
I greet thee ever lord of thyself—  
No heritage mean, by the rood!  
I greet thee and hold thee in honour,  
That thou bendest to no man's nod—  
Amidst the din of a world of sin,  
Still lifting thine eye to God!

Go, search me the world and find me;  
Go, find me if you can,  
From the distant Farøes with their mists and snows,  
To the green-clad Isle of Man;  
From John O' Groats to Maidenkirck,  
From far Poolewe to Prague—  
Go, find me a better or wiser man  
Than the Laird of Altnacraig.

Now, here's to the honest and leal and true,  
And here's to the learned and wise,  
And to all who love our Highland glens  
And our Bens that kiss the skies;  
And here's to the native Celtic race,  
And to each bright-eyed Celtic fair;  
And here's to the Chief of Altnacraig—  
And hurrah! for the Celtic Chair!

**NETHER-LOCHABER.**

[Pg 72]

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## **GENERAL SIR ALAN CAMERON, K.C.B.,**

COLONEL 79<sup>TH</sup> CAMERON HIGHLANDERS.

—o—

A POPULAR writer<sup>[A]</sup> of the past generation, in some introductory observations to his historical essay, makes the following on Scotland and its natives:—Considering the limited population and extent of that country, it has made a distinguished figure in history. No country in modern times has produced characters more remarkable for learning, valour, or ability, or for knowledge in the most important arts, both of peace and of war; and though the natives of that formerly independent, and hitherto unconquered kingdom, have every reason to be proud of the name of *Britons*, which they have acquired since the Union; yet they ought not to relinquish all remembrance of the martial achievements, and the honourable characteristics of their ancestors. Acting on the recommendation embodied in the foregoing quotation; and as the conductors of the *Celtic Magazine* have intimated their intention of making biographies form occasionally part of its contents, the following sketch of one who, in his day was not the least distinguished among our Highland countrymen, but of whose eminent services to his country, little or nothing has appeared, may prove interesting. Biography is admitted to be one of the most interesting sections of literature. We therefore trust that this feature in the Magazine will be appreciated. The field will be found extensive, inasmuch that, happily for the country, its benefactors have been numerous, the record of whose deeds deserve to be remembered in this Celtic periodical for the entertainment, and may be, the emulation of its readers.

The details of the life and public services of the gallant gentleman now submitted, and deserving record, are supplied partly from oral information collected at intervals, and partly from documents received by the writer, but which, although imperfect, it is hoped may be acceptable, even at this distance since the lifetime of the subject.

The absence of any adequate notice of Sir Alan Cameron's services, save that in a couple of pages of the *Gentleman's Magazine* at his death (1828) may be ascribed much to his own reticence in supplying information respecting them. Sir John Philliphart and Colonel David Stewart, when

collecting materials for their respective "Military Annals," expressed their regret that Sir Alan's reply to their applications for particulars of his life and career was of the most meagre nature. Although in common with the majority of other distinguished men, averse to giving publicity to the incidents of his life, he was otherwise than reticent with his friends, and was never happier than when surrounded by them. His house in Gloucester Place was a rendezvous during many years for his companions in arms, and his "Highland cousins" (as he fondly termed them) were always received with a genial welcome. Notwithstanding the general absence of his name from unofficial publications, it may be affirmed, without hesitation, that in his day few were better known, and there was none whose fame stood higher than *Ailean an Earrachd*. In the army he was held in universal popularity, where, in consequence of his familiar habit of addressing the Irish and Highland soldiers with the Gaelic salute of "*Cia mar tha thu*," he was known as "Old cia mar tha." Indeed, he is so styled in Mr Lever's novel of "Charles O'Malley," where he is represented (vol. 1, chap. x.) as one of the friends of General Sir George Dashwood. Another writer (Miss Sinclair's "Scotland and the Scotch") refers to him as "a frequent visitor at her father's house in London, and a celebrity of the past generation who was said to have been one of the principals in the last duel fought with broadswords; and also known to his friends for the more than hearty grasp he shook their hands with." These distinctions, no doubt, combined many incidents for their existence. A tragic adventure at the outset of his career; his imprisonment during the American War; and afterwards his services with the Highlanders throughout the wars of the period. He was remarkable for the immense size and powerful structure of his person. In a verse from one of the many Gaelic songs written in honour of *Fear an Earrachd*, alluding to his majestic form and figure when in the Highland costume, the bard says:—

[Pg 73]

Nuair theid thu 'n uidheam Gaidheil  
 Bu mhiann le Ban-Rìgh sealladh dhiot,  
 Le t-osan is math fiaradh,  
 Do chalp air fiamh na gallinné:  
 Sporan a bhruic-fhiadhaich,  
 Gun chruaidh shnaim riamh ga theannachadh,  
 Gur tric thu tarruing iall as  
 'S ga riachaidh a measg aineartaich.

He was the firm friend of the soldier, and considered every man in his regiment committed to his personal care. In health he advised them; in sickness he saw that their wants were supplied; and once any became disabled, he was incessant in his efforts till he secured a pension for them. Numerous are the stories told of the encounters between Sir Harry Torrens (Military Secretary to the Commander-in-Chief) and himself for his persistent applications for pensions and promotions. These poor fellows, for whom he was never tired of interceding, were naturally grateful for his fatherly feeling towards them. Such is an outline of the characteristics of the subject of the following Biographical sketch.

## CHAPTER II.

THE sires of the subject of our memoir were of the tribe of Camerons' known as *Sliochd Eoghainn 'ic Eoghainn*, and descended directly from the parent stock of the chiefs of the clan, to whom they stood next in relationship after the Fassiferns. The lands assigned for their occupation, and on which they lived from the earliest settlement of the Camerons in Lochaber, were within a short distance of the castle of the chiefs, and the homestead of Sir Alan's family was named *Earrachd*, and situated on an elevated plateau at the entrance of *Gleann Laoidh* (Glen Loy) which leads off in a westerly direction. It is close to, and seen from, the banks of that portion of the Caledonian Canal between Gairloch and Banavie Locks.

[Pg 74]

The parents of Alan were Donald Cameron and *Marsali* (Marjory) MacLean (of the family of Drimnin in Morvern). Two incidents connected with the infancy of both father and son are peculiarly remarkable. The father was an infant in the arms of his mother when she went to the gathering place to support the Earl of Mar (1715) to bid farewell to her husband the day the clan left; and Alan was an infant in the arms of his mother when *his* father marched out with the clan to meet Prince Charles at Glenfinnan (1745). The battle of Sheriffmuir ended the career of Alan's grandfather, and the disasters on the field of Culloden made the father a wanderer from his hearth and home for the next three years, while his family were subjected during that time to cruelties and indignities, which were a disgrace to men calling themselves the soldiers of the king. Domiciliary visits were made at frequent intervals, and on every occasion numbers of cattle were driven off the lands for the use of the garrison at Fort-William. These spoliations continued for several months after the *rising* was suppressed, and proved ruinous to the poor people whose only crime was that they risked their lives in support of the claims of one whom they believed to be the rightful heir to the Crown of the United Kingdom. Their descendants, a quarter of a century afterwards, risked their lives in another cause with equal fidelity and bravery, asserting the rights and defending the honour of the British Crown. It is known that the Clan Cameron was the first to appear in support of the standard of the Prince. The gathering place of the clan was at *Drochaid Laoidh*, and there ten of the *twelve* tribes promptly answered the *Cothionnal* "*Thigibh a chlann na 'n con 's gheobh sibh feoil*." The absentees were, the Camerons of Fassifern, and the Camerons of Glen Nevis; the proverbial caution of the first forbade their adherence, while the influence of the Whig Clan Grant prevailed with the latter. The defection of the Fassiferns gave the place of second in command, or Lieutenant of the clan, to Cameron of *Earrachd* (Alan's

father). The clan turned out 600, but these were considerably augmented a few days afterwards. After a spirited address from the chief (the "gentle Lochiel"), the first march of that eventful movement commenced with pipers playing and banners flying, wending their way with steady demeanour and elastic step up Glen Loy, and over the hills that separated them from Glenfinnan.

Many of the chiefs of Lochiel were, in addition to being men of great military renown and martial ardour, shrewd politicians. They encouraged other septs to dwell on their lands that they might be serviceable to assist them in keeping the jealous or more turbulent spirits of their own clansmen in subjection. At any rate, with the Camerons in this campaign, a third was composed of Maclachlans, Macmillans, Kennedies, Macphees, Mackinnons, &c.

The Governor of the garrison at Fort-William having heard of the intended gathering at Glenfinnan, sent out a company of soldiers by way of reconnoitring the proceedings. To avoid observance they followed a devious path over the hills, and most opportunely fell in with the Camerons, by whom they were surrounded, and without much difficulty made prisoners. Besides the *eclat* of this the first victory, the arms thus possessed were of considerable advantage to the Highlanders, most of whom were miserably equipped for the exigencies of the campaign.

[Pg 75]

A most cordial reception was given to Lochiel and his clan by the Prince, after which the Marquis of Tullibardine unfurled the standard, amidst unbounded enthusiasm. It was made of white and blue silk. Meanwhile the Laird of Keppoch was observed advancing with a contingent of 300 of his Macdonells. At the head of the diminutive force thus made up, Prince Charles embarked on a contest with a power the most formidable in Europe. And the daring of this small band was even more conspicuous when they at once determined to march direct on the capital of the kingdom. Glenfinnan, formed not unlike an amphitheatre, and easy of access for all parts of the Western Highlands, was admirably fitted for the rendezvous.

The morning march of the little army took the route alongside of an arm of the sea named Lochiel (the same from which the chief takes his modern title) to Corpach. Here they encamped the first night, afterwards continuing their way up the Braes of Lochaber, Blair Athole, and towards the City of Perth, which they occupied as an intermediate resting place. A few days further march brought them within a short distance of Edinburgh. On nearing the capital a halt was made at Duddingston, and a council was held, at which it was decided to detach Lochiel's force to make the advance and demand the surrender of the city. The Camerons having been the first arrivals at Glenfinnan, may have been the cause of this selection. Lochiel having received some injury from a fall off his horse on the journey, he was unable to accompany his clansmen. Cameron of Earrachd consequently succeeded to the command of this important mission, and its success is matter of history. The events of the '45 are introduced into the career of Alan (the son) somewhat irrelevantly, but only to connect the latter with the singular incident that sixty-two years afterwards it fell to *his* lot to have been ordered by Sir Arthur Wellesley to take possession of the Citadel of Copenhagen (1807). Taking leave now of Prince Charles and his Highlanders, with their fortunes and their failures, the narrative of Alan Cameron will proceed without further divergence.

### CHAPTER III.

IT was during these turbulent times that Alan Cameron passed his infantile years—he was four years of age before he saw his father, and, although it was hoped that the settlement of the difficulties which had existed would favour his career in life, exempt from the toils and strifes of war, it was not so ordained, as the narrative will prove.

Alan was the oldest son of a family of three sons and three daughters, some of whom found meet employment subsequently in his regiment. Their education was conducted as customary in those days by resident tutors from Aberdeen and St Andrews. With one of these Alan, on reaching a suitable age, went to the latter University for one or two sessions to complete his education. As the oldest son, it was intended that on arriving at a certain age he should relieve his father of the care and management of the lands and stock, and become the responsible representative of the family at home; while it was arranged that of the other sons, Donald was to enter the naval service of the Dutch East India Company, and the youngest, Ewan, was to find a commission in one of the Fencible Corps of the county of Argyll. But this arrangement was not to be, especially as regards the eldest and youngest sons. A circumstance of melancholy interest occurred before the former had taken to the succession of the farm, or the other had arrived at the age to be an effective officer of his regiment, which had the effect of exactly reversing these intentions. The occurrence referred to was of a tragical nature, and caused the utmost sensation among the families of the district, inasmuch as relationship was so general there that whatever brought affliction to the hearth of one family, would leave its portion also at the threshold of the others. Alan, like other youths, employed much of his juvenile years in the sports of a Highland country life—fox-hunting, deer-stalking, and fishing for salmon on the Lochy; at all of which he was more than ordinarily successful. The nearest house to his father's was that of another Cameron—chieftain of a considerable tribe (*Mac Ile' Onaich* or *Sliochd Ile' Onaich*), who had recently died of wounds received at Culloden. His widow and children occupied the house at Strone. The lady is reputed to have been very handsome, and would apparently answer *Donachadh Ban's* description of *Isabel og an or fhuilt bhuidhe*, leastways, to borrow a word from the Cockney—she was styled *par excellence*, a *Bhanntarach Ruadh*. Alan, like a friendly kinsman, was most generous in sharing the successes of his gun and rod with the widowed lady, for which, no doubt, she expressed her

[Pg 76]



acknowledgments to the youthful sportsman. The course of this commendable neighbourhood was rather unexpectedly interrupted by some words of misunderstanding which occurred between Alan and a gentleman (also a Cameron) who was closely related to the widow's late husband. He was known as *Fear Mhorskheirlich*; had been *out* in the '45 when quite a youth, and escaped to Holland, from which he had only returned a few months previous to the incident of this narrative. Contemporaries spoke of him as being most accomplished, and of gallant bearing. The real nature of the dispute has not descended sufficiently authentic to justify more minute reference than that rumour assigned it to have been an accusation that Alan was imprudently intimate with the handsome widow of Strone (*a Bhantrach Ruadh*). The delicate insinuation was resented by Alan in language probably more plain than polite. Mr Cameron was Alan's senior by some twenty years or so, but notwithstanding this, his high spirit could not brook the rough retort of the accused; and, much to Alan's confusion, the result was that he received a peremptory demand to apologise or arrange a meeting for personal satisfaction. As he declined to return the one, he was obliged to grant the desperate alternative. Reading this account of men going out to engage in personal combat for a cause so small, will lead us to consider that such a result ought to have been prevented by the interposition of friends. But it must not be overlooked that the customs of the times are very much ameliorated from what prevailed in those days (1772). It is probable that even then if the management of the affair had been confided to skilful diplomatists the meeting might have been averted. Friends of such conciliating habits were either not at hand, or they were not consulted; and, as men equal in high spirits, the principals could not volunteer any compromise. Alan's chief anxiety was how to keep the event secret from his parents and family, therefore, he quietly repaired to a relative to request his attendance the following morning as his friend for the occasion. It is said that this gentleman used his utmost powers of dissuasion, although unsuccessful—determination had, in the interval of a few hours, become too settled for alteration. Alan, as the challenged, was, according to duelling etiquette, entitled to the choice of weapons and place of meeting. Although the pistol had in a measure superseded the rapier in England, the broadsword remained the favourite weapon in the north when required for the purpose of personal *satisfaction*. Highlanders had always a preference for the weapon named by Ossian—*An Lann tanna*—and by the modern bards—*Tagha nan Arm*. Alan decided on making choice of the steel blade, and named a certain obscure spot on the banks of the Lochy for the meeting on the following day at the grey hour of the morning. His difficulty now was how to get possession of one of these implements of war without exciting suspicion or inquiries. They numbered more than one in the armory of every Highland household, and in the case of those in his father's house they were preserved with a care due to articles which had been often used with effect in the past. Among them was one which had been *out* in the campaigns of 1689 (Dundee's), 1715 (Mar's), and in 1745-6. It was of Spanish manufacture, and remarkable for the length and symmetry of its blade, in consequence of which it received the sobriquet of *Rangaire Riabhach*.<sup>[B]</sup> In his failure to find the keys of the arms depository, he bethought him to make a confident and enlist the sympathies of an elderly lady, who had been a member of the family since the days of his childhood. The aged Amazon not only promised her aid, but highly approved, and even encouraged, the spirit of her youthful relative. Having access to the keys of the armory, the *Rangaire* was soon in Alan's hands, and with it he repaired to the place appointed, "to vindicate his own honour and give *satisfaction* to his antagonist."

[Pg 77]

The time of year when this event took place was in the early days of autumn. Daylight and the combatants arrived on the scene together. Vague particulars of the preliminaries between them have been variously retailed, but they are not necessary to the narrative, and therefore not referred to. The fact that the elder Cameron was reputed to be a skilled swordsman, also that it was not the first time he had met his foes in the field, may have had some effect on the nerves of his younger opponent, but there was no outward indication of it. The home-taught countryman, however, must have felt that he was standing face to face with no ordinary opponent. Alan, like the generality of young men, had such practice in the use of the weapon as to make him acquainted with the *cuts* and *guards*. The superiority of Mr Cameron was at first apparent and proved, inasmuch as he not only kept himself for some time uninjured, but inflicted a severe cut on Alan's left arm. This blow may be said to have brought the conflict to its sudden and fatal termination. The pain, together with the humiliation, roused Alan's wrath to desperation. It became manifest to the only two friends present, that the life of one, if not of the two combatants, would be sacrificed; but they found themselves quite powerless to restrain the rage of the wounded principal. Their anticipations were not long in being confirmed. The elder Cameron fell from a blow delivered on the head by the powerful arm of his opponent. The force may be imagined when it is stated that it was what is known as No. 7 cut, and that the wounded man's sword in defending was forced into his own forehead. He lived just long enough to reach Strone house—a mile or so distant. It is impossible, except to those who have experienced a similar trial, to estimate the state of feeling such a painful scene produced on the three now remaining on the field. Time, however, was not to be trifled with, for, although, there were no "men in blue" to make prisoners of the breakers of the peace; yet the vanquished combatant had friends who would not hesitate to take life for life. Alan's *achates* at once thought of that probability, or of revenge in some form. They, therefore, hurried him away from the field and across the river Lochy. A short consultation decided that he should remove himself entirely from the Cameron country for the time being. This was concurred in by Alan, who girded his claymore and determined on making direct for his uncle's house in Morvern—(Maclean of Drimnin)—distant about sixty miles, where he arrived without resting or drawing breath. The advice of his counsel, and the decision arrived at, proved to be not unnecessary, as the sequel proved. The fallen man was one of the cadets of a numerous tribe, and they would naturally, in accordance with the habit of the times, seek to avenge the death of their kinsman. They sought for the slayer of their friend

[Pg 78]

with diligence and zeal. Their search was far and wide; but, fortunately for the fugitive, and thanks to the vigilance of his relatives, his pursuers were defeated in their attempt to capture their intended victim. The consternation of the uncle (Drimnin), on learning the cause of his nephew's sudden visit, may be surmised; but what was done could not be undone. When the Laird was satisfied with Alan's version, that *Morsheirlich* fell in fair fight, brought about by himself, his displeasure somewhat relented. Affection and sympathy mingled in the old Laird's bosom, and he decided to befriend his unfortunate nephew at all hazard. It was conjectured that the search of the avengers would be directed towards this district, where Alan's relatives were numerous, and where he would likely betake himself in this emergency. That he might elude his pursuers with greater certainty, the Laird of Drimnin had him escorted across the Sound of Mull by some trusty kinsmen, to the charge of another Maclean (Pennycross), and with whom he was to remain until he received further instructions respecting his future destination. The grief and revenge of *Morsheirlich's* friends had not yet subsided, and would not, for years to come, so that Alan would be unwise to return to his native home, or place himself in their path.

The Collector of His Majesty's Customs at the Port of Greenock was an immediate relation to the Laird of Drimnin by marriage, and a correspondence was entered on with him with the view of ascertaining his opinion as to what was best to be done for Alan. Negotiations occupied more time for their conduct at that time than in the present day; at any rate nothing satisfactory was proposed to Alan, so that for a couple of years he continued wandering up and down the island of Mull, and through the glens of Morvern, entirely under the guidance of his uncle. At last a request came from the Collector to send the fugitive to him, that he might find employment for him in his own office. The uncle decreed, rather against Alan's grain, that the offer of clerkship should meanwhile be accepted. He remained in this occupation for several months, until he received an invitation from another friend residing in Leith. This gentleman wrote to say that there was now an opportunity of giving him service in an enterprise likely to be congenial to "a man of metal" such as he conceived Alan to be. The war of American Independence had commenced, and the employment which the Leith friend proposed was that Alan should join a privateer which was fitting out in an English port, armed with letters of marque, to capture and destroy American shipping. Alan answered the invitation by repairing to Leith in person with all speed. The nature of the service offered, however, did not accord with his ideas of honourable warfare; in fact, he considered it more akin to piracy, and not such as a gentleman should take part in. He had no affection, he said, for clerkship, but he had still less for the life of a pirate.

[Pg 79]

While Alan was oscillating in this manner, he learned that another relative of his mother's, Colonel Alan Maclean of Torloisk, who had emigrated to one of the North American colonies some years previously, had received a commission to embody a regiment of those of his countrymen who had become residents on free-grants of land at the same time with himself. To this gentleman Alan decided on going. Soldiering was more genial to his nature than marine freebooting, and he calculated on Colonel Maclean's assistance in that direction. (This Colonel Maclean's grand-daughter was Miss Clephane Maclean, afterwards Marchioness of Northampton.) Arrived in America, Alan was received kindly by his relative, and being a soldier himself he viewed the past event in Alan's life as of a nature not entirely without a certain amount of recommendation to a wanderer in search of fame. Alan was not long in the country when Colonel Maclean added him to his list of volunteers, in a body, which was soon afterwards enrolled as the "Royal Highland Emigrant Corps."

(To be Continued).

## FOOTNOTES:

[A] Sir John Sinclair.

[B] Brown or brindled wrangler.

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A. R. wants to know "the best standard for Gaelic orthography?"

CABAR-FEIDH would like to know if any of Grant's [*Bard Mor an t-Slagain*] Poems were ever published? If so, where? and by whom? It is believed many of his pieces, which were famous in his day, are still known in the Lochbroom and Dundonnell districts. *Cabar* requests that any of the readers of the *Celtic Magazine* to whom any of the poems are known would kindly forward them for publication. Grant knew more Ossianic poetry than any man of his day—1746 to 1842. Any information regarding him would be of interest.

MACAOIDH enquires to what sept of the clan the famous pipers—the Mackays of Gairloch—belonged, and how did they find their way to that part of the country? Are there any of their descendants still living in this country or in North British America, where the last famous piper of the race emigrated? The "Blind Piper" and bard was the most famous of this remarkable family, and was a pupil in the celebrated College of the Macrimmon's in Skye.

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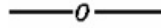


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## THE HIGHLAND CEILIDH.

BY ALASTAIR OG.

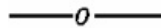
[CONTINUED.]



ON the conclusion of the "Spell of Cadboll" Norman received the hearty and unanimous congratulations of the circle. The frail old bard, pulling himself together, got up, went across the room, and shook him heartily with both hands. This special honour was a most unusual one. It was clear that *Alastair* was just in the mood when a little persuasion would suffice to get him to recite one of his own compositions. This he was generally very chary of doing, but Norman getting the hint from one of his immediate neighbours to ask the bard a special favour on this occasion at once begged the honour of hearing one of the bard's compositions from his own lips. The venerable old man bent himself forward, began to work the fingers of both hands and beat time on his leg as on a chanter, humming a quiet *cronan*. This was his usual practice when composing or reciting poetry, and it was at once seen that he would consent. "I will give you," says he, "a *Marbh-rann*, or Elegy which no one ever heard, and which I have recently composed to the late 'Bailie Hector' of Dingwall, a son of my late esteemed friend 'Letterewe,' on condition that you, Sir, will give us another story when I am done." Norman at once agreed, and the bard commenced as follows:—

### MARBHRANN.

DO BHAILIDH EACHAINN, INBHIR-FEOTHARAN, MAC FEAR LEITIR-IUGH.



AIR FONN—"S mi 'm shuidhe 'm 'onar."

O 's truagh an sgeula tha 'n diugh ri fheutainn,  
Thug gal air ceudan a measg an t-sluaigh,  
Mu Eachainn gleusta 'bha fearail, feumail,  
Gun da ghlac an t-eug thu a threun-laoich chruaidh:  
'S mor bron do Chinnidh, mar eoin na tuinne  
Tha 'n cronan duilich 's an ullaidh uath  
'S bho nach duisg an gair thu, 's nach cluinn thu 'n gailich,  
Se chlaoidh do chairdean do bhas cho luath.

Tha do chairdean cianal, tha bron da' lionadh,  
Tha 'n inntinn pianail bho n' ghlac thu 'm bas,  
'S iad a ghnath fuidh thiorachd 's nach faigh iad sgial ort,  
Ach thu bhi iosal an ciste chlar  
Bu tu ceann na riaghailt 'us lamh na fialachd,  
A sheoid gun fhiaradh, gun ghiamh gun sgath,  
'Sa nis bho 'n thriall thu, 's sinn lan dha d' iargan,  
'S nach eil 's na crìochan fear a lionas d' ait.

Bha d' aite miaghail 's gach cas an iarrt' thu,  
A reir mo sgiala bu teirc do luach:  
Bha thu pairteach, briathrach, ri ard 's ri iosal,  
Gun chàs gun dioghaltas air an tuath.  
Bha foghlum Iarl' agad 's ciall fear riaghlaidh  
Bu mhor an diobhail nach da liath do ghruag,  
'S ann a bharc an t-aog ort mas d' thainig aois ort,  
A ghnuis bha faoilteach air chaochladh snuaidh.

Bha do shnuadh cho aillidh 's nach fhaodainn s' aireamh,  
Mar ròs a gharaidh ri maduinn dhriuchd,  
Bu chuachach, faineach, do ghruag an caradh—  
Mar theudan clarsaich an' inneal ciuil  
Do ghruaidh dhearg dhathte, do shuil mar dhearcag,  
Fuidh ghnuis na maise bu tapaidh sùrd  
Rasg aotram, geanach, bho 'm b'fhaoilteach sealladh  
Beul muirneach tairis, 's deud thana dhluth.

O! 's dluth bha buaidhean a stri mu'n cuairt duit,  
Cha b' eol dhomh suairceas nach robh 'do chrè

Bha thu ciallach, narach, 's tu briathrach, pairteach,  
'S tu rianail, daimheil, ri d' chairdean fhein:  
Bu tu firean, fallain, bha rioghail, geanach,  
'Sa leoghann tapaidh bu ghlaine beus;  
Bhiodh min 'us gairg' air, bhiodh sith 'us fearg air,  
Nuair chit' air falbh e bhiodh colg na cheum.

Se do cheum bu bhrisge 's bu shubailt iosgaid,  
Bha moran ghibhtean ri d' leasraidh fuaight.  
Bu tu glas nan Gaidheal, bho mhuir gu braighe  
Gu crìoch Chinntaile 's na tha bho thuath.  
O! 's lionmhor oigfhear tha 'n diugh gu bronach  
A fasgadh dhorn, 'us ruith-dheoir le ghruaidh,  
'Bhiodh dana, sgaiteach, gun sgath gun ghealtachd,  
Na 'm bu namhaid pears' bheireadh Eachainn bh' uainn.

Bha thu mor an onair, bu mhor do mholadh,  
Bu mhor do shonas, 's tu gun dolaidh gibht'  
Bu mhor a b'fhiach thu, bu mhor do riaghailt,  
Bu mhor do mhiagh ann an ciall 's an tuigs',  
Bu mhor do churam, bu mhor do chuissean,  
Bu mhor do chliu ann an cuirt 'sa meas,  
Bu mhor do stata, 's bu mhor do nadur,  
'S cha mhor nach d'fhag thu na Gaidheil brist'.

O! 's priseil, laidir, a ghibhte 'dh-fhag sinn—  
'S mios'da Ghaeltachd bàs an t-seoid,  
Tha Mhachair tursach bho n' chaidh an uir ort,  
'S tu dh-fhuasgladh cuis do gach cuirt mu bhord,  
Bha 'Ghalldachd deurach ri cainnt ma d' dheighinn,  
Gu ruig Dun-eidin nan steud 's nan cleoc,  
'S cha ghabhainn gealtachd, air son a chantuinn,  
Gur call do Bhreatuinn nach eil thu beo.

'S tu chraobh a b'aillidh bha 'n tus a gharaidh  
'S i ùr a fas ann fuidh bhlath 's fuidh dhos,  
O! 's truagh a dh-fhag thu ma thuath na Gaidheil  
Mar uain gun mhathair ni'n sgath ri frois,  
'S tu b'urr' an tearnadh bho chunnart gabhaidh,  
'S an curaidh laidir, chuireadh spairn na tost,  
Tha 'n tuath gu craiteach, 's na h-uaislean càsai,  
'S bho 'n chaidh am fàd ort 's truagh gair nam bochd.

*"Ma ta 's math sibh fhein Alastair Bhuidhe; 's grinn comhnard a bhgardachd a th'air a mharbhrainn, ach cha 'n eil i dad nas fhearr na thoill brod a Ghaidheil agus am fìor dhuin' uasal dha'n d'rinn sibh i," arsa Ruairidh Mor.* (Well done yourself, *Alastair Buidhe*, the composition of the Elegy is beautifully elegant and even, but not any better than the memory of the best of Highlanders and the truest of gentlemen, to whom you composed it, deserved, said Big Rory). This was the general verdict of the circle.

[Pg 82]

Norman was now called upon to fulfil his part of the arrangement, which he promptly did by giving the Legend, of which the following is a translation:—

## THE RAID OF CILLIECHRIOST.

THE ancient Chapel of Cilliechriost, in the Parish of Urray, in Ross, was the scene of one of the bloodiest acts of ferocity and revenge that history has recorded. The original building has long since disappeared, but the lonely and beautifully situated burying-ground is still in use. The tragedy originated in the many quarrels which arose between the two chiefs of the North Highlands—Mackenzie of Kintail and Macdonald of Glengarry. As usual, the dispute was regarding land, but it were not easy to arrive at the degree of blame to which each party was entitled, enough that there was bad blood between these two paladins of the north. Of course, the quarrel was not allowed to go to sleep for lack of action on the part of their friends and clansmen. The Macdonalds having made several raids on the Mackenzie country, the Mackenzies retaliated by the spoiling of Morar with a large and overwhelming force. The Macdonalds, taking advantage of Kenneth Mackenzie's visit to Mull with the view to influence Maclean to induce the former to peace, once more committed great devastation in the Mackenzie country, under the leadership of Glengarry's son Angus. From Kintail and Lochalsh the clan of the Mackenzies gathered fast, but too late to prevent Macdonald from escaping to sea with his boats loaded with the foray. A portion of the Mackenzies ran to Eilean-donan, while another portion sped to the narrow strait of the Kyle between Skye and the mainland, through which the Macdonalds, on their return, of necessity, must pass. At Eilean-donan Lady Mackenzie furnished them with two boats, one ten-oared and one four-oared, also with arrows and ammunition. Though without their chief, the Mackenzies sallied forth, and rowing towards Kyleakin, lay in wait for the approach of the Macdonalds. The first of the Glengarry boats they allowed to pass unchallenged, but the second, which was the thirty-two-oared galley of the chief was furiously attacked. The

unprepared Macdonalds rushing to the side of the heavily loaded boat, swamped the craft, and were all thrown into the sea, where they were despatched in large numbers, and those who escaped to the land were destroyed "by the Kintail men, who killed them like *sealchagan*."<sup>[A]</sup> The body of young Glengarry was secured and buried in the very door-way of the Kirk of Kintail, that the Mackenzies might trample over it whenever they went to church. Time passed on, Donald *Gruamach*, the old chief, died ere he could mature matters for adequate retaliation of the Kyle tragedy and the loss of his son Angus. The chief of the clan was an infant in whom the feelings of revenge could not be worked out by action; but there was one, his cousin, who was the Captain or Leader in whom the bitterest thoughts exercised their fullest sway. It seems now impossible that such acts could have occurred, and it gives one a startling idea of the state of the country then, when such a terrible instance of private vengeance could have been carried out so recent as the beginning of the seventeenth century, without any notice being taken of it, even, in those days of general blood and rapine. Notwithstanding the hideousness of sacrilege and murder, which, certainly, in magnitude of atrocity, was scarcely ever equalled, there are many living, even in the immediate neighbourhood, who are ignorant of the cause of the act. Macranuil of Lundi, captain of the clan, whose personal prowess was only equalled by his intense ferocity, made many incursions into the Mackenzie country, sweeping away their cattle, and otherwise doing them serious injury; but these were but preludes to that sanguinary act on which his soul gloated, and by which he hoped effectually to avenge the loss of influence and property of which his clan were deprived by the Mackenzies, and more particularly wash out the records of death of his chief and clansmen at Kyleakin. In order to form his plans more effectually he wandered for some time as a mendicant among the Mackenzies in order the more successfully to fix on the best means and spot for his revenge. A solitary life offered up to expiate the manes of his relatives was not sufficient in his estimation, but the life's blood of such a number of his bitterest foemen, and an act at which the country should stand aghast was absolutely necessary. Returning home he gathered together a number of the most desperate of his clan, and by a forced march across the hills arrived at the Church of Cilliechrist on a Sunday forenoon, when it was filled by a crowd of worshippers of the clan Mackenzie. Without a moments delay, without a single pang of remorse, and while the song of praise ascended to heaven from fathers, mothers, and children, he surrounded the church with his band, and with lighted torches set fire to the roof. The building was thatched, and while a gentle breeze from the east fanned the fire, the song of praise, mingled with the crackling of the flames, until the imprisoned congregation, becoming conscious of their situation, rushed to the doors and windows, where they were met by a double row of bristling swords. Now, indeed, arose the wild wail of despair, the shrieks of women, the infuriated cries of men, and the helpless screaming of children, these mingled with the roaring of the flames appalled even the Macdonalds, but not so Allan Dubh. "Thrust them back into the flames" cried he, "for he that suffers ought to escape alive from Cilliechrist shall be branded as a traitor to his clan"; and they were thrust back or mercilessly hewn down within the narrow porch, until the dead bodies piled on each other opposed an unsurmountable barrier to the living. Anxious for the preservation of their young children, the scorching mothers threw them from the windows in the vain hope that the feelings of parents awakened in the breasts of the Macdonalds would induce them to spare them, but not so. At the command of Allan of Lundi they were received on the points of the broadswords of men in whose breasts mercy had no place. It was a wild and fearful sight only witnessed by a wild and fearful race. During the tragedy they listened with delight to the piper of the band, who marching round the burning pile, played to drown the screams of the victims, an extempore pibroch, which has ever since been distinguished as the war tune of Glengarry under the title of "Cilliechrist." The flaming roof fell upon the burning victims, soon the screams ceased to be heard, a column of smoke and flame leapt into the air, the pibroch ceased, the last smothered groan of existence ascended into the still sky of that Sabbath morning, whispering as it died away that the agonies of the congregation were over.

[Pg 83]

[Pg 84]

East, west, north, and south looked Allan Dubh Macranuil. Not a living soul met his eye. The fire he kindled had destroyed, like the spirit of desolation. Not a sound met his ear, and his own tiger soul sunk within him in dismay. The Parish of Cilliechrist seemed swept of every living thing. The fearful silence that prevailed, in a quarter lately so thickly peopled, struck his followers with dread; for they had given in one hour the inhabitants of a whole parish, one terrible grave. The desert which they had created filled them with dismay, heightened into terror by the howls of the masterless sheep dogs, and they turned to fly. Worn out with the suddenness of their long march from Glengarry, and with their late fiendish exertions, on their return they sat down to rest on the green face of Glenconvinth, which route they took in order to reach Lundi through the centre of Glenmorrison by Urquhart. Before they fled from Cilliechrist Allan divided his party into two, one passing by Inverness and the other as already mentioned; but the Macdonalds were not allowed to escape, for the flames had roused the Mackenzies as effectually as if the fiery cross had been sent through their territories. A youthful leader, a cadet of the family of Seaforth, in an incredibly short time, found himself surrounded by a determined band of Mackenzies eager for the fray; these were also divided into two bodies, one commanded by Murdoch Mackenzie of Redcastle, proceeded by Inverness, to follow the pursuit along the southern side of Loch Ness; another headed by Alexander Mackenzie of Coul, struck across the country from Beauuly, to follow the party of the Macdonalds who fled along the northern side of Loch Ness under their leader Allan Dubh Macranuil. The party that fled by Inverness were surprised by Redcastle in a public-house at Torbreck, three miles to the west of the town where they stopped to refresh themselves. The house was set on fire, and they all—thirty-seven in number—suffered the death which, in the earlier part of the day, they had so wantonly inflicted. The Mackenzies, under Coul, after a few hours' hard running, came up with the Macdonalds as they sought a brief repose on the hills towards the burn of Aultsigh. There the Macdonalds maintained an unequal conflict, but as guilt

only brings faint hearts to its unfortunate votaries they turned and again fled precipitately to the burn. Many, however, missed the ford, and the channel being rough and rocky several fell under the swords of the victorious Mackenzies. The remainder, with all the speed they could make, held on for miles lighted by a splendid and cloudless moon, and when the rays of the morning burst upon them, Allan Dubh Macranuil and his party were seen ascending the southern ridge of Glen Urquhart with the Mackenzies close in the rear. Allan casting an eye behind him and observing the superior numbers and determination of his pursuers, called to his band to disperse in order to confuse his pursuers and so divert the chase from himself. This being done, he again set forward at the height of his speed, and after a long run, drew breath to reconnoitre, when, to his dismay, he found that the avenging Mackenzies were still upon his track in one unbroken mass. Again he divided his men and bent his flight towards the shore of Loch Ness, but still he saw the foe with redoubled vigour, bearing down upon him. Becoming fearfully alive to his position, he cried to his few remaining companions again to disperse, until they left him, one by one, and he was alone. Allan, who as a mark of superiority and as Captain of the Glengarry Macdonalds, always wore a red jacket, was easily distinguished from the rest of his clansmen, and the Mackenzies being anxious for his capture, thus easily singled him out as the object of their joint and undiverted pursuit. Perceiving the sword of vengeance ready to descend on his head he took a resolution as desperate in its conception as unequalled in its accomplishment. Taking a short course towards the fearful ravine of Aultsigh he divested himself of his plaid and buckler, and turning to the leader of the Mackenzies, who had nearly come up with him, beckoned him to follow, then with a few yards of a run he sprang over the yawning chasm, never before contemplated without a shudder. The agitation of his mind at the moment completely overshadowed the danger of the attempt, and being of an athletic frame he succeeded in clearing the desperate leap. The young and reckless Mackenzie, full of ardour and determined at all hazards to capture the murderer followed; but, being a stranger to the real width of the chasm, perhaps of less nerve than his adversary, and certainly not stimulated by the same feelings, he only touched the opposite brink with his toes, and slipping downwards he clung by a slender shoot of hazel which grew over the tremendous abyss. Allan Dubh looking round on his pursuer and observing the agitation of the hazel bush, immediately guessed the cause, and returning with the ferocity of a demon who had succeeded in getting his victim into his fangs, hoarsely whispered, "I have given your race this day much, I shall give them this also, surely now the debt is paid," when cutting the hazel twig with his sword, the intrepid youth was dashed from crag to crag until he reached the stream below, a bloody and misshapen mass. Macranuil again commenced his flight, but one of the Mackenzies, who by this time had come up, sent a musket shot after him, by which he was wounded, and obliged to slacken his pace. None of his pursuers, however, on coming up to Aultsigh, dared or dreamt of taking a leap which had been so fatal to their youthful leader, and were therefore under the necessity of taking a circuitous route to gain the other side. This circumstance enabled Macranuil to increase the distance between him and his pursuers, but the loss of blood, occasioned by his wound, so weakened him that very soon he found his determined enemies were fast gaining on him. Like an infuriated wolf he hesitated whether to await the undivided attack of the Mackenzies or plunge into Loch Ness and attempt to swim across its waters. The shouts of his approaching enemies soon decided him, and he sprung into its deep and dark wave. Refreshed by its invigorating coolness he soon swam beyond the reach of their muskets; but in his weak and wounded state it is more than probable he would have sunk ere he had crossed half the breadth had not the firing and the shouts of his enemies proved the means of saving his life. Fraser of Foyers seeing a numerous band of armed men standing on the opposite bank of Loch Ness, and observing a single swimmer struggling in the water, ordered his boat to be launched, and pulling hard to the individual, discovered him to be his friend Allan Dubh, with whose family Fraser was on terms of friendship. Macranuil, thus rescued remained at the house of Foyers until he was cured of his wound, but the influence and the Clan of the Macdonalds henceforth declined, while that of the Mackenzies surely and steadily increased.

[Pg 85]

[Pg 86]

The heavy ridge between the vale of Urquhart and Aultsigh where Allan Dubh Macranuil so often divided his men, is to this day called *Monadh-a-leumanaich* or "the Moor of the Leaper."

*(To be Continued.)*

## FOOTNOTES:

[A] Snails.

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## CAN THIS BE THE LAND?

—o—

*"How are the mighty fallen!"*

Can this be the land where of old heroes flourished?

Can this be the land of the sons of the blast?  
Gloom-wrapt as a monarch whose greatness hath perished,  
Its beauty of loneliness speaks of the past:—  
Tell me ye green valleys, dark glens, and blue mountains,  
Where now are the mighty that round ye did dwell?  
Ye wild-sweeping torrents, and woe-sounding fountains,  
Say, is it their spirits that wail in your swell?

Oft, oft have ye leaped when your children of battle,  
With war-bearing footsteps rushed down your dark crests;  
Oft, oft have ye thundered with far-rolling rattle,  
The echoes of slogans that burst from their breasts:—  
Wild music of cataracts peals in their gladness,—  
Hoarse tempests still shriek to the clouds lightning-fired,—  
Dark shadows of glory departed, in sadness  
Still linger o'er ruins where dwelt the inspired.

The voice of the silence for ever is breaking  
Around the lone heaths of the glory-sung braves;  
Dim ghosts haunt in sorrow, a land all forsaken,  
And pour their mist tears o'er the heather-swept graves:—  
Can this be the land of the thunder-toned numbers  
That snowy bards sung in the fire of their bloom?  
Deserted and blasted, in death's silent slumbers,  
It glooms o'er my soul like the wreck of a tomb.

WM. ALLAN.

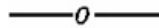
SUNDERLAND.

[Pg 87]

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## HIGHLAND FOLK-LORE.

By "NETHER-LOCHABER."



FOLK-LORE—a word of recent importation from the German—is a big word, and Highland Folk-Lore is a big subject, so big and comprehensive that not one Magazine article, but a many-chaptered series of Magazine articles would be necessary ere one could aver that he had done his "text" anything like justice. On the present occasion, therefore, we do not pretend to enter into the heart of a subject so extensive and many-sided: we shall content ourselves with a little scouting and skirmishing, so to speak, along the borders of a territory which it is possible we may ask the readers at some future time to explore along with us more at large. A few of the many proverbs, wisdom words, and moral and prudential sentences in daily use shall, in clerical phrase, meantime form "the subject-matter of our discourse." Nor must the reader think that the subject is in any wise *infra dignitate*, unworthy, that is, or undignified. Of the world-renowned Seven Wise Men of Greece, five at least attained to all their eminence and fame no otherwise than because they were the cunning framers of maxims and proverbs that rightly interpreted were calculated to advance and consolidate the moral and material welfare of the nation around them. Of the remaining two, it is true that one was an eminent politician and legislator, and the other a natural philosopher of the first order; but it is questionable if either of them would have been considered entitled to their prominent place in the Grecian *Pleiades* of Wise Men had they not been proverb-makers and utterers of brief but pregnant "wisdom-words" as well. Even Solomon, the wisest of men, was less celebrated as a botanist and naturalist, though he spake of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall; and of beasts, and of fowls, and of creeping things, and of fishes—less celebrated even as a lyrist, though his songs were a thousand and five, than for his proverbs and moral maxims of which the record takes care to tell us he spake no less than "three thousand." So much then for the dignity of our subject: what engaged the attention of Solomon and the Seven Sages of Greece cannot surely be unworthy some small share of our regard.

"Six and half-a-dozen" is an English phrase, implying either that two things are exactly the same, or so very much alike as to be practically the same. The old Gael was not much of an arithmetician, he rarely meddled with numbers, and therefore no precisely similar phrase is to be found in his language; but he could express the same idea in his own way, and so pithily and emphatically that his version of the proverbial axiom is, perhaps, as good as is to be found in any other language whatever. The Gael's equivalent for "six and half-a-dozen" is, "*Bo mhaol odhar, agus bo odhar, mhaol*"—(A cow that is doddled and dun, and a cow that is dun and doddled)—a phrase drawn, as are many of his most striking proverbs and prudential maxims, and very naturally too, from his pastoral surroundings. We recollect an admirable and very ludicrous application of this saying in a story once told us by the late Dr Norman Macleod of Glasgow, "old" Norman that is, not the Barony Doctor, but his father:—When a boy in Morven, of which parish his father was minister, there was a well-known character in that part of the country called

[Pg 88]

"*Eoghann Gorach Chraigan Uibhir*," Daft Ewen of Craig-an-Ure in Mull, a born "natural," who, although a veritable "fool," had yet in him much of the quiet, keen-edged satire and roguery which is not unfrequently found in the better ranks of such "silly ones." Ewen regularly perambulated Mull and Morven, with an occasional raid into the neighbouring districts of Sunart and Ardnamurchan. He had sense enough to be able to carry the current news of the day from district to district, and on this account was always a welcome guest in every farm-house and hamlet on his beat; and as he sung a capital song, and was remarkable for much harmless drollery and "dafting," he was, it is needless to say, a great favourite everywhere. He took a great interest in ecclesiastical affairs, and always attended the church when the state of his wardrobe and other circumstances permitted. On one occasion Ewen was passing through Morven, and knowing that the annual communion time was approaching, he called upon the minister and begged to know who his assistants on that particular occasion were to be. He was going to pay a visit, he said, to all the glens and outlying hamlets in the parish, and as the people were sure to ask him the important question, he wished to have the proper answer direct from the minister himself. "*Tha raghadh 'us taghadh nam ministeiran, Eoghainn; An Doiteir A. B. a Inneaora, agus an Doiteir C. D. a Muille.*" (The pick and choice of ministers Ewen said the minister, Doctor A. B. from Inverary, and Doctor C. D. from Mull). "Whe-e-we!" in a contemptuously prolonged low whistle replied Ewen. "*An ann mar so a tha; Bo mhaol, odhar, agus bo odhar, mhaol!*" (And is it even so; are these to be your assistants? A cow that is doddled and dun, and a cow that is dun and doddled!) Than which nothing could more emphatically convey Ewen's very small opinion of the "assistants" mentioned. They were much of a muchness; six and half-a-dozen; a cow doddled and dun, and a cow dun and doddled! The Gael was a keen observer of natural phenomena, and some of his best sayings were founded on the knowledge thus acquired. Meteorological "wisdom-words" for instance, are quite common. "*Mar chloich a ruith le gleann, tha feasgar fann foghairidh*" is an admirable example. (As is the headlong rush of a stone, atumbling down the glen, so hurried and of short duration is an autumnal afternoon.) The philosophy of the saying is that you are to begin your work betimes in the season of autumn; at early dawn if possible, and not to stop at all for dinner, seeing that once the day has passed its prime, the hour of sunset approaches with giant strides, and there is little or no twilight to help you if you have been foolish enough to dawdle your time in the hours of sunset proper. "*S fas a chùil as nach goirear*" is another pregnant adage. (Desert, indeed, is the corner whence no voice of bird is heard.) Some people are very quiet, almost dumb indeed, but on the occurrence of some event, or on the back of some remark of yours, they speak, and speak so clearly and well that you are surprised, and quote the saying that it is a solitary and silent glade indeed whence no voice is heard. "*Am fear a bhios na thamh, saoilidh e gur i lamh fhein as fhearr air an stiùir*" is a common saying of much meaning and wide application. (He that is idle [a mere spectator] thinks that he could steer the boat better than the man actually in charge.) And we all know how apt we are to meddle, and generally unwisely, with the proper labours of others. Nothing, for instance, is more annoying and dangerous even than to put forth your hand by way of helping a driver in managing his horses, or to interfere with the tiller of a boat at which a perfectly competent man is already seated. We have known the saying just quoted scores of times suffice to stop the unwise and gratuitous intermeddling of such as were disposed to interfere with what did not properly belong to them. "*Bidh fear an aon mhairt aig uairean gun bhainne*" is a frequent saying, and implies more than is at first sight apparent. (The man with only one cow will be at times without milk.) The import of the saying is something more than a mere statement of fact. You have only one cow, and you are certain to be at times without milk. Get by your industry and perseverance *two* cows or three, and then you are pretty sure to have more or less milk all the year round.

[Pg 89]

We have thus briefly touched the hem, so to speak, of a very interesting subject—a subject that in the Highlands of Scotland, at least, has never yet received a tittle of the attention it deserves. And let no one be afraid to meddle with it to any extent he pleases, for we promise him that he will meet with nothing in any way to shock his delicacy or offend his taste, no matter how fine so ever of edge and exquisite; and in this respect, at all events, the good old Gael is superior to that of any other people of whom we have any knowledge. We may, perhaps, deal more at large with the subject in a future number. Meantime, we may state that we are of the same opinion as the Editor of the *Inverness Courier*; there is abundance of room for the *Celtic Magazine* if it continues to be well conducted, without, in the least degree, encroaching upon the territories of any other periodicals interested in Celtic affairs.

**NETHER-LOCHABER, November 1875.**

[Pg 90]

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## IMAGINATION.

*Dedicated by consent to* ALFRED TENNYSON.

—o—

All hail! far-seeing and creative power,  
 Before whose might the universe bends low  
 In silent adoration! Guide my pen  
 While from my soul the sounds of music pour

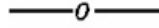


Towards thy praises! For to thee belongs  
The sounding stream of never-ending song.  
When out of chaos rose the glorious world,  
Sublime with mountains flowing from the skies,  
On lonely seas, sweet with slow-winding vales,  
Clasping the grandeur of the heavenly hills  
With soft and tender arms, or lowly glens  
Shrinking from glowing gaze of searching sun  
Beneath the shade of the high-soaring hills;  
Grand with great torrents roaring o'er fierce crags  
In suicidal madness, sad with seas  
That flash in silver of the gladdening sun,  
Yet ever wail in sadness 'neath the skies  
Of smiling heaven (like a lovely life  
That wears a sunny face, and wintry soul),  
Hopeful with fickle life renewing spring,  
Gladden'd with summer's radiance, autumn's joy,  
And sad and sullen with fierce winter's rain;  
Ruled by the race of God-made men who rush  
Towards eternity with half-shut eyes,  
Blind to the glories of sweet sky and sea,  
Wood-covered earth, and sun-reflecting hill,  
Thou in the mind of God, almighty power!  
Ruled, and directed his creative hand.  
With thee the seas spread and the hills arose  
To do thy Maker's will; the silvery stars  
Like heavenly glow-worms, beautifully cold,  
And gladly silent, gemmed the gloom of night,  
And shed the gladdening glances of their eyes  
On the sad face of the night-darken'd earth.  
Without thy sweetening influence, the soul  
Of nature's bard were like a sunless plain,  
Or summer garden destitute of flowers,  
A winter day ungladden'd by the gleam  
Of flowing sun, or river searching wild  
Through desert lands for ne'er appearing trees,  
Or peaceful flowers that sandy scenes disdain.  
No thought the philosophic mind imparts  
To an enraptured world, but bears thy power,  
And owns thee as the agent of its birth.  
O'er the sweet landscape of the poet's mind  
Thou sunlike shed'st the gladness of thy love,  
Inspiring all the scenes that lie below,  
Sweetening the bowers where Fancy loves to dwell,  
And on the crest of some huge mountain-thought  
Placing the glory of thy fleecy cloud,  
To make its frowning grandeur greater still,  
And heighten all its beauteous mystery.  
Thro' the sweet-coloured plains of Poesy  
Thou flowest like a sweetly-sounding stream,  
Here, rushing furious o'er the rocky crags  
Of wild, original thought, and there, 'neath bowers  
Of imagery, winding on thy way  
Peaceful and still towards the fadeless sea  
Of all enduring immortality.  
Like lightning flash for which no thunder-roar  
Makes preparation, from th' astonished mind  
On an astonished and admiring world  
Thou dartest in thine overwhelming course,  
Leaving a track of splendour in thy train,  
And lighting up the regions of thy way.  
With thee sweet music sings her various song,  
And thrills the soul and elevates the mind  
With "thoughts that often lie too deep for tears,"  
And own a sadness sweeter than the rills,  
A softer sweetness than the sinking sun  
Gives to the sparkling face of pensive sea.  
With thee great genius walketh hand in hand  
Towards the loftiest thought, or sits in pride  
Upon the golden throne of starry Fame.  
Borne on thy wings the pensive poet flies  
To the sweet-smiling land of sunny dreams,  
Or pours his floods of music o'er the world.  
With thy bright gleams his daily deeds are gemmed,  
And by thy balmy influence, his life

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## LACHLAN MACKINNON,

OR "LACHLAN MAC THEARLAICH OIG," THE SKYE BARD.



AMONG many who have distinguished themselves by their display of poetical talents, the subject of the present brief memoir, holds a prominent place as a Gaelic poet. It is true that he was but little known to the world, but he was much admired as a bard, and greatly respected as a gentleman in his native "Isle of Mist."

Lachlan Mackinnon, patronimically designated "Lachlan Mac Thearlaich Oig," was born in the parish of Strath, Isle of Skye, in the year 1665. He was son of Charles Mackinnon of Ceann-Uachdarach, a cadet of the old family of Mackinnon of Mackinnon of Strath. His mother was Mary Macleod, daughter of John Macleod of Drynoch, in the same island. The poetical genius of *Lachlan Mac Thearlaich* showed itself almost in his infancy. His father, like all Skye gentlemen in those good olden times, was a very social and hospitable man, who seemed never to be contented unless he had his house at Ceann-Uachdarach full of neighbours to enjoy themselves in his family circle. The company were often much amused with little Lachlan when a mere child, seeing the facility with which he composed couplets on any subject prescribed to him. At the age of eight he possessed a vigour of mind, and a vivacity of imagination rarely to be met with in youths of more than double his age. A predilection for poetry seemed to have gained an ascendancy in his mind, over all other pursuits and amusements of his tender years. He received the rudiments of his education, under a tutor in his father's family, and as his native island had not, at that remote period, the advantage of public schools of any note, the young bard was sent, at the age of sixteen, to the school of Nairn, which, from its reputation at the time as an excellent seminary, was much resorted to by gentlemen's sons from all parts of the north. The young Hebridean remained at Nairn continuously for three years, and was greatly distinguished, not merely by his bright talents, but by his assiduity and perseverance in improving them. His studious disposition and diligent application were amply testified by the progress made by him, and no less duly appreciated by his superiors in the place. His love for study was enthusiastic, particularly in regard to the languages. He was by far the best Greek and Latin pupil at the Nairn Academy. His moments of relaxation were spent in the composition of poems in the English language while at Nairn, although, undoubtedly, the Gaelic was the medium which was most congenial to his mind for giving expression in rhyme to his sentiments. At Nairn, however, he composed several beautiful little pieces, and among the rest a song which was much admired, to the air subsequently immortalized by Burns as "Auld Lang Syne." Although his productions in English were much admired, yet, as it was to him an acquired language, they could bear no comparison with his truly superior compositions in Gaelic. It is a matter of much regret that so few of his Gaelic poems are extant. Like many bards he unfortunately trusted his productions to his memory; and although well qualified, as a Gaelic writer, to commit them to paper, yet he neglected it, and hence hundreds of our best pieces in Gaelic poetry are lost for ever. Had they been all preserved, and given to the public in a collected shape, they would have raised the talented author to that high rank among the Celtic bards, which his genius so richly merited.

[Pg 92]

In appearance *Lachlan Mac Thearlaich* was tall, handsome, and fascinating. He was distinguished by a winning gentleness and modesty of manners, as well as by his generous sensibility and steadfast friendship. His presence was courted in every company, and he was everywhere made welcome. Of most of the chieftains and Highland lairds he was a very acceptable acquaintance, while no public assembly, or social meeting was considered complete if that object of universal favour, the bard of Strath, were absent.

When a very young man he was united in marriage to Flora, daughter of Mr Campbell of Strond, in the Island of Harris. Fondly attached to his native isle, he rented from his chief the farm of Breakish, with the grazing Island of Pabbay, at £24 sterling annually. And as an instance of the many changes effected by time, it may be mentioned that the same tenement is now rented at about £250 a-year. From what has been said of the bard's amiable disposition and gentle manners, it will seem no wise surprising that he proved to be one of the most affectionate of husbands, and dutiful of fathers. The happiness of the matrimonial state was to him, however, but of short duration. His wife, to whom he was greatly attached, died in the prime and vigour of life. He was rendered so disconsolate by means of his sudden and unexpected bereavement, that he took a dislike to the scene of his transient happiness, and relinquished his farm in Strath. Having removed from Skye, he took possession of a new tenement of lands from Mackenzie in Kintail. Greatly struck by what he considered the unrefined manners of his new neighbours in that quarter, and contrasting them with the more genial deportment of his own distinguished clan in Strath, he had the misfortune to exercise his poetic genius in the composition of some pungent satires and lampoons directed against the unpolished customs of the natives of Kintail. It is

needless to add that by these means he gained for himself many enemies, and forfeited the good wishes of all around him. Finding himself thus disagreeably situated, after an absence of four years, he returned to Skye, where he was cordially received by his chief, and put in possession of his former farm at Breakish. After being twelve years a widower he went to Inverness for the purpose of visiting some of his schoolfellows who resided there. Previous to his leaving the capital of the Highlands his acquaintances there urged upon him the propriety of marrying a widow lady of the name of Mackintosh, whom they represented as being possessed of considerable means. He reluctantly complied with their wishes, but it became soon too apparent to him that he did so at the expense of his own happiness. His bride was not only penniless but deeply involved in debt. Next morning after his marriage he was visited by messengers who served him with summonses for a heavy debt due by his wife. In the impulse of the moment, while he held the summons in his hand, he seized a pen, and having taken his bride's Bible, wrote the following expressive lines on the blank leaf:—

"Tha'n saoghal air a roinn,  
Tha dà dhàn ann,  
Tha dàn ann gu bhi sona,  
Ach tha dàn an donuis ann."

This marriage proved, in every respect, an unhappy one. The lady, as a stepmother, was peevish, harsh, and undutiful. Her cruelty to her husband's children was a continual source of grief to him, and of unhappiness to his domestic circle. On a certain day, the lady quarrelling with one of her step-daughters, told her she hated to see her face, and that she always considered the day an unlucky one on which she had the misfortune to meet her first in the morning. The girl, inheriting no doubt a share of her father's power of repartee, quickly answered her stepmother, and said, "You have every cause to believe that it is unlucky to meet me, for I was first-foot to my dear father the unfortunate morning on which he left home to marry you."

Even amid his misfortunes, which he endured with much forbearance, *Lachlan Mac Thearlaich* was renowned for his hospitality and genuine Highland friendship. Remote though the period be since he lived, still his memory is fondly cherished in the place. He was possessed of so endearing accomplishments, that time itself can hardly wipe away his memory from the minds of his countrymen and clan. Many fragments of his numerous songs continued for ages to be repeated in the country, but it is feared, from all the changes which have taken place in the circumstances of the natives, that these are now irretrievably lost. Many of his witty sayings became proverbial in the island. He was one of the first sportsmen in the country, and was considered one of the most successful deer stalkers of his day. Along with his other accomplishments he was an excellent performer on the violin, and in this respect he had no equal in the Western Isles. Of him it may be justly said:—

"To thee harmonious powers belong,  
That add to verse the charm of song;  
Soft melody with numbers join,  
And make the poet half divine!"

As a proof of Lachlan Mackinnon's loyalty, it may be mentioned that, quite contrary to the wishes of his chief, he went along with some other loyal subjects, all the way from Skye to Inverness, in the year 1717, to sign a congratulatory address to George I. on his succeeding to the British throne. He spent the remainder of his days in his native isle and parish, and died universally regretted in the year 1734, at the age of sixty-nine. His funeral was attended by most of the Highland chieftains, and their principal vassals. His cousin-german, Alasdair Dubh of Glengarry, and all his gentlemen tacksmen were then present, as also Macdonald of the Isles, Macleod of Dunvegan, Mackinnon of Mackinnon, and Mackenzie of Applecross, with their chief retainers. A numerous band of Highland pipers preceded the bier playing the usual melancholy coronach. Amidst a vast assemblage of all ranks and classes his remains were consigned to their kindred dust in the old churchyard of Gillchrist, being the burying-ground of the parish which gave him birth. A rude flag, with an inscription, still marks the poet's grave; but the memory of his many virtues will be handed down in the place to generations yet unborn.

*Lachlan Mac Thearlaich* composed a beautiful and pathetic song which is still preserved, to "Generosity, Love, and Liberality." He personified those three, and pretended that he met them as lonely outcasts in a dreary glen, and addressed them:—

Latha siubhal slēibhe dhomh,  
'S mi 'falbh leam fein gu dlùth,  
A chuideachd anns an astar sin  
Air gunna glaic a's cù,  
Gun thachair clann rium anns a' ghleann,  
A'gul gu fann chion iùil;  
Air leam gur h-iad a b' aillidh dreach  
A chunnacas riamh le m' shùil.

Gu'm b' ioghnadh leam mar tharladh dhoibh  
A'm fàsach fad air chùl,  
Coimeas luchd an aghaidhean,  
Gu'n tagha de cheann iùil,  
Air beannachadh neo-fhiata dhomh  
Gu'n d' fhiaraich mi, "Cò sùd?"

'S fhreagair iad gu cianail mi  
A'm briathraibh mine ciùin.

"Iochd, a's Gràdh, a's Fiughantas,  
'Nar triùir gur h-e ar n-ainm,  
Clann nan uaislean urramach,  
A choisinn cliu 's gach ball,  
'Nuair a phàigh an fhèile cis d'an Eūg  
'Sa chaidh i fein air chàll  
'Na thiomnadh dh' fhàg ar n-athair sinn  
Aig maithibh Innse-Gall."

SGIATHANACH.

[Pg 95]

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## FINGAL.

—o—

IN the yellow sunset of ancient Celtic glory appear the band of warriors known as the Ossianic heroes. Under the magnifying and beautifying influence of that sunset they tower upon our sight with a stature and illustriousness more than human. Of these heroes, the greatest and best was *Fionn* or Fingal. Unless our traditions are extensively falsified he was a man in whom shone all those virtues which are the boast of our race. The unflinching performance of duty, the high sense of honour, the tenderness more than woman's, and the readiness to appreciate the virtues of others were among his more conspicuous characteristics. Now that Celtic anthropology is being so extensively discussed, is it not remarkable that Fingal, who so truly personifies the character of that race, is not adduced as the representative Celt? He was a Celt to the very core, and Celtic character has been in no small degree moulded by copying his example. He was, in truth, not the *ultimus* but the *Primus Gaelorum*.

Nevertheless, it must be confessed that to many English readers Fingal is nothing but a name, and that even to most of them he looms dark and dim through the mist of years. Unhappily, a nature so transcendently humane and heroic as his is not the sort to win the admiration of the vulgar. Nay, so far is its simple grandeur removed above the common materialism of modern life that the most refined cannot, at first sight, appreciate its exalted loveliness.

The fullest and, we believe, the truest account of him is to be found in Ossian's poems. That the poetry so denominated was, in substance, composed by Ossian we have no doubt. At any rate the descriptions of Fingal therein contained are not only consistent throughout, but also in accordance with all that we know of him from other sources. But were we even to adopt the absurd theory that Fingal is a creation of Macpherson's imagination, the intrinsic beauty of the picture well deserves our study.

An old man retaining all the energy, but not the rashness of youth; age with vigour instead of decrepitude, delighting in the words of sound wisdom rather than the usual tattle of second childhood; and, withal, an old man who is prone to moralise as old men are; a man able and willing to do his duty in the present though his heart is left in the past; such is the most prominent figure in these poems. He is portrayed as of tall, athletic frame and kingly port, his majestic front and hoary locks surmounted by the helm and eagle plume of the Celtic kings.

Though the idea of Fingal pervades most of Ossian's poems he is seldom introduced *in propria persona*. Even when attention is directed to him the poet merely and meagerly sketches the herculean outline, and leaves our imagination to do the rest:—

[Pg 96]

At intervals a gleam of light afar  
Glanced from the broad, blue, studded shield of war,  
As moved the king of chiefs in stately pride;  
With eager gaze his eye was turned aside  
To where the warriors' closing ranks he sees;  
Half-grey his ringlets floated in the breeze  
Around that face so terrible in fight  
And features glowing now with grim delight.—*Tem. B. V.*

In order to introduce his hero with the greater *eclat*, the bard first places his friends in great straits; represents them, though brave, as overcome by the enemy and without hope, apart from Fingal. Both friends and foes speak of him in terms of respect, and even the greatest leaders acknowledge his superiority. When Fingal appears on the scene the poet rouses himself to the utmost. He piles simile on simile to give an adequate idea of his first charge—

Through Morven's woods when countless tempests roar,  
When from the height a hundred torrents pour,  
Like storm-clouds rushing through the vault of heaven,  
As when the mighty main on shore is driven,  
So wide, so loud, so dark, so fierce the strain

When met the angry chiefs on Lena's plain.  
 The king rushed forward with resistless might,  
 Dreadful as Trenmor's awe-inspiring sprite,  
 When on the fitful blast he comes again  
 To Morven, his forefather's loved domain.  
 Loud in the gale the mountain oaks shall roar,  
 The mountain rocks shall fall his face before,  
 As by the lightning's gleam his form is spied  
 Stalking from hill to hill with giant stride.  
 More terrible in fight my father seemed  
 When in his hand of might his weapon gleamed,  
 On his own youth the king with gladness thought  
 When in the furious highland wars he fought.—*Fingal B. III.*

The notion that Ossian drew in part, at least from real life, is favoured by the wonderful calmness and absence of effort evinced in delineating so great a character. Expressions that go far to heighten our admiration of Fingal are employed in a quiet matter of course way. "The silence of the king is terrible," is an expressive sentence. Or this again, "The heroes ... looked in silence on each other marking the eyes of Fingal."

Nor are the gentler feelings less fully brought out in Ossian's favourite character. Nothing could speak more for his affability than the attachment shown by his followers. "Fear, like a vapour winds not among the host! for he, the king, is near; the strength of streamy Selma. Gladness brightens the hero. We hear his words with joy."<sup>[A]</sup>

Gallantry and philanthropy we might expect to find in his composition, but the tenderness he frequently displays strikes us as remarkable in an uncivilized chief. His lamentation over the British city on the Clyde is as pathetic as any similar passage in our language.

Another surprising trait is the generosity he invariably displays to his vanquished foes. All the more surprising is it that a "savage" should show magnanimity when the heroes of civilized Greece, Rome, and Judea, counted it virtuous to torture their captured enemies. "None ever went sad from Fingal," he says himself. Over and over he is represented as lamenting the death of enemies when they fall, or granting them freedom and his friendship when they yield—"Come to my hill of feasts," he says to his wounded opponent Cathmor, "the mighty fail at times. No fire am I to lowlaid foes. I rejoice not over the fall of the brave."

[Pg 97]

A notable fact about Fingal is, that though he lived in times of war, in disposition he was a man of peace. "Fingal delights not in battle though his arm is strong." "When will Fingal cease to fight?" he complains, "I was born in the midst of battles, and my steps must move in blood to the tomb." Under the influence of this desire for peace he formally gave up his arms to Ossian—

My son, around me roll my byegone years,  
 They come and whisper in the monarch's ears.  
 "Why does not grey-haired Fingal rest?" they say  
 "Why does he not within his fortress stay?  
 Dost thou in battle's gory wounds delight?  
 Lovest thou the tears of vanquished men of might?"  
 Ye hoary years! I will in quiet lie,  
 Nor profit nor delight in blood have I.  
 Like blustering storms from wintry skies that roll,  
 Tears waste with grief and dreariness the soul.  
 But when I stretch myself to rest, I hear  
 The voice of war come thundering on my ear  
 Within the royal hall, with loud command,  
 To rouse and draw again th' unwilling brand.—*Tem. B. VIII.*

Limited as were the means of communication in those pre-telegraphic times the fame of such a man must have spread. Accordingly, we read of his name being known and respected far and near. Foreign princes speak of him with admiration, and refugees from distant lands seek his protection.

But it is on the power of his name in after times that we wish more particularly to dwell. There have been no people who honoured their heroes so much as the Celts. With them *valour* and *value* were synonymous terms. Theirs was not a nobility of money, or literature, or æsthetics, or even of territory. Nobleness should be the qualification of a nobleman, and strange as it may seem, it was among the uncivilised Celts of Ireland and Scotland that such a character was properly appreciated. But they held nobleness and heroism to be identical. They seem to have thoroughly believed that cowardice was but the result of vice. A fearless man, they felt, must be a true man, and he was honoured accordingly. *Flath-innis*, the *Isle of the Noble*, was their only name for heaven. *Allail* or *divine* they applied to their heroic men. To imitate such was the old Celtic religion as it was the primitive religion of most other peoples.

Among all the heroes whom the ancient Gael worshipped there was no name so influential as Fingal's. Through the ages he has been the idol and ideal of the Celt. His example was their rule of justice. His maxims were cited much as we would quote Scripture. To the youth he was held up as the model after which their lives should be patterned, and where Christianity had not yet eradicated the old creed, a *post mortem* dwelling with him in *Flath-innis* was deemed no mean

incentive to goodness. He was, in fact, the god of the Gaelic people, worshipped with no outward altar, but enshrined in the hearts of his admirers. How far the more admirable traits of Highland character may be attributed to the assimilating influence of the idea of Fingal we cannot decide. That our character as a people has been largely influenced for good by the power of his example we have no doubt. The bards, an order of the old Druidic hierarchy, became the priests of the Fingalian hero-worship. Songs, elegies, and poetic legends formed their service of praise. To induce their countrymen to reverence and imitate so great and glorious a Gael as Fingal was the object of many of their bardic homilies. Taking into account the nature and circumstances of the ancient Caledonians, we must conclude that from position and influence none were more suitable to become their ethical and æsthetical advisers than these minstrel ministers of the Fingalian hero-olatry.

Of course such a faith could not long withstand the more generous and cosmopolitan spirit of Christianity, yet we venture to assert that it was vastly preferable in its effects to some abortions of our common creed. That there was a conflict between the two religions we know. As late as the sixteenth century a Christian ecclesiastic complains that the leaders of Gaelic thought of the period were heathen enough to delight in "stories about the Tuath de Dhanond and about the sons of Milesius, and about the heroes and *Fionn* (Fingal), the son of Cumhail with his Fingalians ... rather than to write and to compose and to support the faithful words of God and the perfect way of truth."

Down to the present day the name of *Fionn* is revered by the less sophisticated Highlanders and Islanders. That his name will in future be more extensively, if less intensely, respected we may confidently predict. As men's views become more broad and just, and their feelings become more cultivated and refined, we may hope that a superior character such as Fingal will by-and-by be appreciated. Even now he is widely admired and we begin to read in the signs of the times the fulfilment of his own words:—

When then art crumbled into dust, O! stone;  
Lost in the moss of years around thee grown;  
My fame, which chiefs and heroes love to praise,  
Shall shine a beam of light to future days,  
Because I went in steel and faced th' alarms  
Of war, to help and save the weak in arms.—*Tem. B. VIII.*

**MINNIE LITTLEJOHN.**

### FOOTNOTES:

[A] The quotations in prose are from Macpherson's translation.

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