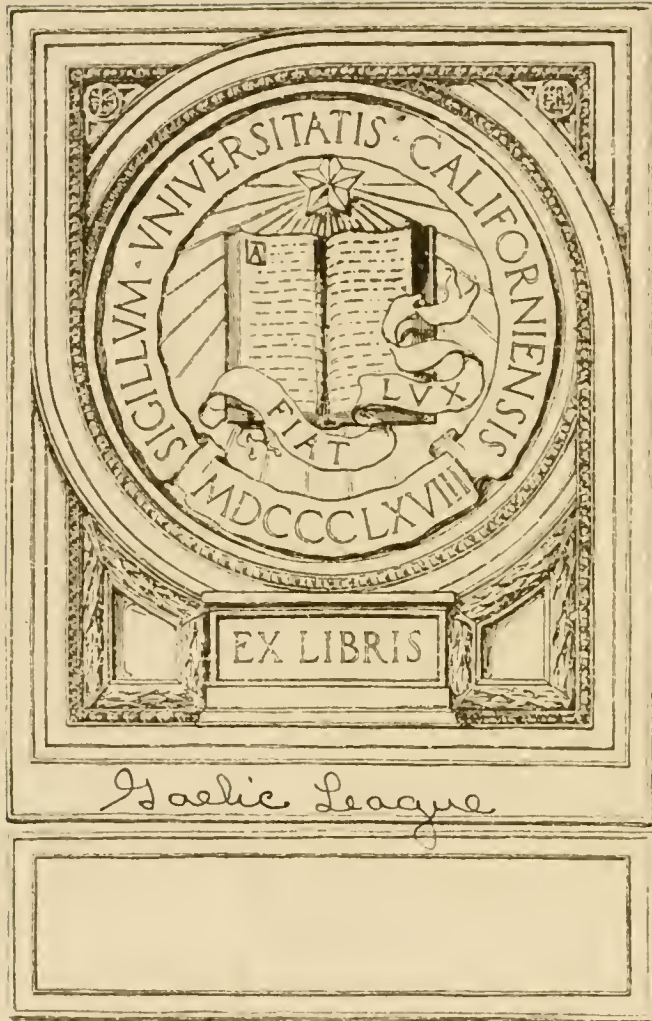


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THE LITERATURE OF THE SCOTTISH GAEL

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BY

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PREFACE

STUDENTS have often asked me where they could get a suitable book on our Gaelic Literature. I invariably directed them to Professor Magnus Maclean's book on *The Literature of the Highlands*, to Professor Blackie's book on the *Language and Literature of the Highlands of Scotland*, to articles in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (11th ed.), and Hastings' *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, and recently to a short but valuable paper by the late Dr. George Henderson on the 'Literature of the Highlands, 1500-1745,' in the *Home Life of the Highlanders*, 1400-1746. They complained of the price of the first of these as being beyond what they could easily afford; and of the others as not being always within their reach. This hand-book is an attempt to meet the demand and circumstances of such students, and the probable wish of others interested in Gaelic literature—literature with which alone it deals. Collectors of rare Gaelic books may also find within its pages something to interest and help them. The three articles which form the book appeared in the *Celtic Review*, and are now reproduced by the kind permission of the editors and publishers.

D. MACLEAN.

EDINBURGH, *November* 1912.

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THE LITERATURE OF THE SCOTTISH GAEL

I

THERE is substantial evidence for the belief that the monks of the Celtic Church in Scotland were bookmen and scholars. What remains of their scholarship we have in the manuscripts in the British Isles and the Continent encourages the deserved admiration that sees through the thick mist of the intervening ages earnest students sedulously investigating the sacred writ, and bringing their acquired and native talent to bear on the problems that confront them. The virility, stamina, and self-respect that characterised our race owe not a little to the infusion into our veins of the blood of those intrepid sailors from the lands of the North, who scoured our seas and harried our coastline. Yet we deplore the Norse barbarity that assigned to the fire and to the sea the achievements of this devout scholarship. What would we not give to have now in our possession records of those monks' outlook on life and its intricate problems, their view of the pagan religion and the general status of society, as well as the wit and humour that gave life a charming ease and a soothing relief. In the three well-known books—the *Antiphonary of Bangor*, written

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before 691 ; *Liber Hymnorum*, transcribed about the latter half of the eleventh century ; and *Leabhar Breac*, transcribed before 1411—we have litanies, invocations, and poems of adoration, which bear more directly upon the work of the Christian preacher, and indicate much literary merit as well as deep religious feeling. But there must have been much more than those produced in the collegiate schools of Iona and Applecross, at the disappearance of which we feel a deep pang of regret.

MEDIÆVAL ROMANTIC LITERATURE

In the Ulster cycle of literature that revolves round the central figures of Conchobar and Cuchulinn, we have presented to us, with a precision which is substantiated by classic writers who were observers or recorders of the events portrayed, a history of the pre-Christian social life of the Gaels. Here we have depicted to us the wars of mighty monarchs and petty kings, tribal jealousies, and inter-tribal rivalries, the roistering life in the sumptuous hall, the happy buoyancy of the life of the chase, the striking ethics and coarse morality, and the undoubted chivalry and heroism of pagan people living in pagan culture and influenced by pagan sentiments. The Leinster-Munster cycle, with Fionn and Ossian as its central figures, develops at a later period, and flows down to us, gathering colour and substance from the vicissitudes of conquest and defeat that

characterised the periods through which it streamed, and increasing in volume until it takes such a prominence in the popular estimation as ousts entirely the earlier cycle. This latter cycle has its origin sunk in deep and almost impenetrable obscurity. The solvents that have been brought to bear on the problems that surround its rise have not yet succeeded in proving to us that these wonderful romances rest upon an historic basis. Their supposed origin in the second or third centuries does not coincide with the historical facts disclosed within the texts. The books which supply us with the ballads that surround Fionn, Ossian, Caoilte, Oscar, Diarmaid and Grainne are: the Dean of Lismore's book, *Leabhar na Feinne*; Campbell's *Tales of the West Highlands*; Dr. Cameron's *Reliquiæ Celticæ*; and the collections of manuscripts not transcribed in the latter book, but available in the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh, and elsewhere. Here, then, we have a great heroic-mythic romance. The heroes in the ballads are men of gigantic proportions, before whom ordinary mortals are but insignificant entities. They achieve superhuman feats of strength and bravery, distance is no barrier to their movements; the raging ocean, the towering hills, and all else in Nature form no impassable barrier to their efforts. Always chivalrous and courageous, boundless generosity is perhaps their chief attribute, as Caoilte sings of the lordly Fionn: 'Were but the brown leaf which the wood sheds from it gold, were but the white billows silver, Fionn would have given it all

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away.' Who are the prototypes of this race of warriors ? has been asked, but no satisfactory answer has been given. Have we here impersonated gods of an earlier paganism ? The doctrine of incarnation is prevalent among the Celts. Fionn himself re-incarnated is Mongan. The descent of the gods to confer the primary attributes of manhood is found among Australian aborigines. Their *Byamee*, through the minor deity *Wooroomah* (God of wind), descends, and a boy becomes a man. Survival of a similar belief is still discoverable in the superstitious conception of our people in regard to the development of the human embryo. Another phase in the development of the heroic ideal is found in the double names of most of the heroes connoting seemingly contrary views and ideals which are combined in an effort to harmonise opposing principles ? Fionn is also Demne. Cf. Mars, Vintios, Zeus, Pluto, Poseidon, etc.

Have we not here, in fact, the gods reconciled in persons that express the ideals and aspirations of the people rather than an organised warrior band raised among the tribes of the Scottish kingdom to resist and oppose Lochlannich ? That this latter word signifies not only the Norse, but any opponents of the people that dwell in the lochs or in the inaccessible swamps of their land, and ever a threatening and dangerous foe, gives colour to the contention of historical and exegetical criticism that here we have a mythical romance without any basis in history or prototypes for its warriors, but which, however, contains within it those aspects

of social life and religion that the poets of the period thought fit to commit to story. But it is conceivable and even probable that Fionn and Ossian had their prototypes in men who sprang from the race, and who, because of certain high qualities that clearly differentiate them from the common stock, were at once invested by the popular fancy with the attributes of the gods, and adored as such. A clear analogy to this is found in the reverence accorded by the Lycaonians to Barnabas and Paul, whom they recognised as Jupiter and Mercurius respectively. Such a deifying of heroes affords the most reasonable and natural basis for the hero-worship which finds ample expression in the Ossianic ballads, in the magniloquent panegyrics of post-mediæval poets, and in the exaggerated elegies of more recent date. The warrior chief conceived by the idealising fancy of the mediæval Gael is 'Braver than kings ; foremost always, of vigorous deeds, a hero brave, untired in fight, leopard in fight, fierce as a hound, of woman beloved.' The chieftain of feudal times, and ministers and 'men' of a more enlightened age have each and all been extolled and assigned such a place in the popular imagination that differs from that of the heroes of this romance not so much in nature as in degree, and in objectivity more than subjectivity.

Generally those romances introduce us to the social life of the community in later pagan times and during the early Middle Ages. We have stories of the chase, in which

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the people revelled. We have warfare, but not so exhaustively or precisely delineated in details as are other aspects of the passing history. We have bounteous hospitality and a patriotic chivalry ; and further, the contrast between Christianity and paganism, or of the opposing principles that were struggling for victory, which appeared at times in sharp and bitter antagonism. It is a striking feature of the romances that those of the earlier or pre-mediæval ones show a contrast between Christianity and paganism impersonated in Ossian and Patrick, which presents ideals in closer alliance with the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries than with the Middle Ages. In pre- and post-mediæval times the attitude of Christianity is that of an uncompromising opponent of the prevailing paganism—it gives it no quarters—while in the middle period both look at each other with apparent self-satisfying complacency. There is wanting in the middle period on both sides that precision of statement and differentiation of the causes that stand opposed the one to the other which present themselves in the other periods in language that may be harsh on the one hand, and frankly barbarous on the other, but which nevertheless indicate a vitality and a reality which impress upon the reader that here there are evidences of Christianity's youthful vigour in its first impact with paganism, as well as the certainty of faith and lofty ethics which sprung into lively exercise and fully developed during the post-reformation centuries in which the later manu-

scripts bearing the romances were written. This indomitable paganism reaches the highest level of defiance in the truly anthropomorphic conception of God with which Ossian rails at Patrick :—

‘Were my son Oscar and God
Hand to hand on the hill of the Fianns,
If I saw my son down
I’d say that God was a strong man.’

The difference in the ballads of the middle period may truly be ascribed to the spirit of an age of moribund or decadent spiritual life rather than to the assiduity of any harmoniser who in his story might gloss over the prevailing thought in order to reconcile opposing principles. Still, all the ballads that cluster round Ossian are wonderfully homogeneous in characterisation, in locale, in themes, and personages. Differences are more marked in style of expression, and in the tone and vigour with which thoughts are uttered. But through them all, there is a sensitiveness to nature that is impressive, there is a gentle pathos, a soft tone of melancholy that sometimes rises to a shrill cry of poignant yearning for the return of the days that are gone. There is a joyous bound, an intimate fellowship with animal life, a rush into the glamour of what is remote and illusory. And there is nothing in contemporary European literature that expresses the passion of love with such keen intensity as this song of Grainne for her beloved Diarmaid, which is as old as the tenth century :—

‘There lives a man
 On whom I would love to gaze long,
 For whom I would give the whole world,
 O Son of Mary ! though a privation.’

Though a heathen heroine proclaiming love by the Son of Mary presents a disturbing anachronism which would suggest the anxiety of a Christian redactor to enhance the charm of the unhappy wife of Fionn, that does not in the least invalidate the genuineness of the poem which was redacted. This solitary poem, in which we have Grainne’s deep and intense love for Diarmaid, gives a glimpse of what is really a sweetening and relieving tone, colouring the generally sombre romance of life in those far-off days. Nevertheless, those distant ages have transmitted to the modern Scot a good deal of their spirit, discernible in the sympathy with Nature, and love for the woodland, for the mountain and the sea which find expression in the literature of modern times. Their influence on our religious literature is even more marked. The claim of the Druidic priesthood to control the elements by means of incantations imposed upon the Christian missionaries the necessity of proving the superior powers of Christ, as being greater than the greatest Druid ; hence the origin of those invocations which were so potent in the sphere of the miraculous, and which have invested the early missionaries with such super-human qualities as have made the record of their lives transmitted to us as fabulous as that of any modern necro-

mancer or ancient Druid priest. The Luireach means a corslet or breastplate. Patrick's hymn, and hymns of a similar character, were intended to form a shield of defence against forces visible and invisible of varying degrees of animosity and hostility. This form of invocation, many examples of which are found in Dr. Carmichael's *Carmina Gadelica*, have been succeeded by the charms which up to the present day are the analogous instrument used for similar purposes. The eschatology of our forefathers did not escape this influence. The pagans' view of hell was a place of exposure and cold. This conception arose undoubtedly from the climatic conditions that prevailed, where the most extreme penalty that could overtake a mortal would consist in being the shelterless victim of the roaring tempest, the piercing winds, and the dark and dismal night. This view of a place of torment is seen in the Christian hymnology of the Middle Ages, in the Fernaig Manuscript of 1689, and in David M'Kellar's poem of 1752, and others. In one of our oldest and most beautiful Gaelic hymns we have this expression :—

‘It were my soul's desire
Not to know cold hell.’

Duncan MacRae of Inverinate, writing before 1688 of the Day of Judgment, thus describes the condition of the lost :—

‘They shall depart so sadly
Into cold hell where there is coldness.’

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And another old poet says :—

‘What a fool to choose cold hell,
The cave of prickly thorns !
I shudder at the thought
Of hell cold and wet.’

The pagan view of heaven was a land of eternal youth, the abode of warrior chiefs and princes—a green and sunny isle floating somewhere in the Western Ocean, where the sun ever shone, and which bid defiance to the blowing horns of the howling tempest. Peace undisturbed prevailed, and the joyous buoyancy of a continuous youth formed the ideal of perfect happiness after which even the pagan mind had striven.

1500–1745

When Bishop Carswell published Knox’s Prayer Book in Gaelic in 1567, he ushered in the first period of printed Gaelic literature, and deserves the enviable distinction of being the father of the printed literature of the Scottish Gael. His pious aim in publishing this book was to provide material for the guidance of the people in devotion. Now it is a canon of criticism that literature postulates a knowledge of letters, and it would certainly have been futile and a vain, self-sacrificing, ordinance on the part of this first editor to throw the product of arduous labours on a community that were incapable of making use of the publication. Ireland and Scotland were politically, socially, and

linguistically identical. There was a community of interest in the common heritage, and a free intercourse of thought and aspiration. Harpists, bards, story reciters, and scholars crossed and re-crossed, and it is safe to say that in no part of Britain was there such a mass of ancient literature and a keener cultivation of it. To suggest, as Lord Rosebery did at the recent celebrations at St. Andrews, that the overthrow of the Northern Celts at Harlaw in 1411 was the conquest of barbarism by civilisation, is evidence of palpable ignorance or an ignoring of the potency of letters and literature as factors in civilising races. During the supremacy of the Lords of the Isles over large tracts of the north of Ireland and the whole of the north and the west of Scotland, colleges of learning were encouraged by these petty monarchs; and from the suggestive reference in Carswell's dedicatory epistle to 'the learned men in Alban and Eireand, skilled in poetry and history and some good scholars,' there is clearly indicated the prevalence of letters among the people in his day, while the further reference to 'those who prefer and practice the forming of vain, hateful, and lying earthly stories about Tuatha de Dhanond and about the sons of Milesius, and about the heroes of Fiann Maccumhil, and about many others whom I shall not number or tell off in detail' puts beyond any reasonable doubt that there existed a mass of literature, either in manuscript or orally recited, which unfortunately has not been transmitted to us. It would have been interesting

to know the stories about the 'many others' here referred to, and what these stories reflected of the life and ways of the community at the time.

Following upon Carswell's book, of which only three copies are now known to exist, one of which—the Duke of Argyll's—was sold a few years ago in a London saleroom for £500, the next book to appear in Gaelic is Calvin's Catechism, translated in Argyllshire, 1631; the first fifty Psalms, translated and published by the Synod of Argyll in 1659. Kirk's Psalter appeared in 1684; Lawrence Charteris Catechism in 1688; Kirk's Bible, 1690; Nicolson's *Historical Library*, 1702; Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted*, translated by the Rev. Mr. MacFarlane, 1725; *Confession of Faith*, 1725; Macdonald's *Vocabulary*, 1741. At the end of Kirk's Bible there are a few pages of vocabulary, and attached to the fifty Psalms of 1659 is a Shorter Catechism, and to the complete Book of Psalms in 1694 is also added a Catechism. Not less than eight editions of the Psalms and the Catechism passed through the press before 1745. In the Dean of Lismore's book, which came to light at a much later date, we have religious poems. The Fernaig Manuscript, published in the *Reliquiæ Celticæ*, contains also many pieces composed about 1689 of a religious and political nature. We have the Book of Clanranald Mac-vurich, which contains to a large extent the history of the wars of Montrose, Ossianic ballads, and eulogies of living heroes of the Clan Donald. But this is by no means the

entire literature of the period. It is the small beginnings of printed literature, traversing only a short, and in many respects an unfruitful, period. When John Reid published the *Bibliotheca Scoto-Celtica* in 1832, the entire literature of the Highlands then amounted to four hundred and sixty volumes, including editions and reprints, but now it has reached nearly fifteen hundred and fifty. The only printed material of the period under review is what has already been referred to. Before now the Gaels of Ireland were gradually separating politically and linguistically from the Gaels of Scotland. With the gradual advance of the Reformation the gap between both was widening, but the Highlands were awakening to a deeper interest in religion and letters. It is not therefore surprising that the entire output is of a religious character.

Although it is admitted that we owe our Christianity to Ireland, it is not sufficiently recognised that we owe also to the same country the divine oracles that enshrine it. In 1602 William O'Donnell published the New Testament in Gaelic with type supplied by Queen Elizabeth, which is the first published edition of the Scriptures in that language either in this country or in Ireland. Bishop William Bedell, an Englishman, prominent as a Protestant and as an indefatigable Churchman, was appointed Provost of Trinity College, Dublin, in 1627, and was raised in 1629 to the bishopric of Kilmore and Ardagh in Ireland. He addressed himself soon after his enthronement to the

praiseworthy enterprise of getting the Scriptures into the language of the people. These are his own words in his biography :—

‘ And surely it was a work agreeable to the mind of God that the poor Irish, being a very numerous nation, besides the greater half of Scotland, and all those islands called Hebrides, that lie in the Irish Sea, and many of the Orcades also that speak Irish, should be enabled to search the Scriptures (as others) that in them they might find the way that leads to everlasting life, which they could never do whiles the Scriptures remained a sealed book to them.’

In this work he was helped by Murtach King and Owen O’Sheridene. His translation was published in 1685, and two hundred copies of Bedell’s Bible were sent for distribution among the families in the Highlands of Scotland. Robert Kirk of Balquhidder, who has not received deserved recognition at the hands of his countrymen, conceiving the difficulty that people might have in reading the Bible in Irish characters, undertook and finished transcribing the whole Bible and New Testament into Roman letters in 1690. So laborious and industrious was this man, both in the transcription of the Bible and in the translation of the Psalms, that he adopted the novel device of preventing himself from falling asleep, when engaged with his task, by holding a piece of lead in his mouth over a basin of water, whose splash summoned his mental activities into livelier exercise. Thus indirectly, as has been noted, the Bible has come to us from across the Channel. But it should not be forgotten

that the charge of neglect against the clergy of Scotland in the field of literature, and in providing the sacred Scriptures for the people, is not entirely warranted by the facts, for we find the Rev. Dugald Campbell of North Knapdale, at the direction of the Synod of Argyll, translating the Pentateuch and some other parts into Gaelic before November 1660, and he was advised to proceed immediately with the translation of Ecclesiastes. His manuscript, which has not been published, has had a chequered career, and is now believed to be deposited somewhere in the neighbourhood of Sydney, New South Wales.

The literature under review has flowed down to us in two parallel channels, widely separated, refreshing and fertilising the same soil. This soil is the Highland people. In the one channel flowed the religious and sacred writings and sayings; in the other, the purely secular. Between the two there was a difference in ideals, in ethics, and morality. The one appealed to and tried to uplift man on his spiritual side, the other largely addressed itself to the human emotions and feelings, and developed the sensuous in man. The unfortunate antagonism that appears between these two in our literature was hurtful to both. The religious writers and readers, instead of assimilating the truly beautiful elements in the secular, ostracised it as a whole because of certain gross defects in parts. This tended to make the secular more coarse, and helped indirectly to introduce into it that immoral realism that is

a painful feature of later poets. Still it is true that both contributed their share in developing that mental culture and personal characteristics that distinguish our people to-day. To the religious we look for the history of ecclesiastical questions and problems, and in them we find invaluable aid to a true appreciation of the controversies of the time. A poet, in the Book of the Dean of Lismore, who is an eyewitness, speaking before 1512, says :—

‘I myself, Robert, went
Yesterday to a monastery,
And I was not allowed in
Because my wife was not with me.’

This naïvely suggestive allusion indicates the state of public feeling towards the questionable morality within the monasteries that is worth more than volumes of present-day apologetics or ingenious critical discussions. Nor need one hesitate for a moment to affirm the sturdy Episcopacy of Duncan MacRae of Inverinate (1688), who wrote :—

‘But keep us united
In this thy true faith
From the haverings and lies
Of Presbyterian and Priest.’

The development of theological thought within the community we find reflected in the religious poetry of the period, of which there is a considerable quantity of varying merit. The progress of Reformed thought can easily be traced. The invocations and poems of adoration gradually

give place to that introspection which reaches its full development in a later period. The doctrine of sin, of judgment, the atonement, retribution, and the like are referred to, but of real didactic verse we have little. The teaching poets had not yet arrived.

When religion in its various aspects impresses a people for the first time, it is itself also invariably impressed. Amalgamating the enthusiasm of the new convert, it gives gaiety to his joy, tone to his ecstasy, and gloom to his melancholy. Though it destroys the credulity of scepticism, it may exaggerate the credulity of superstition in the mind that is neither enlightened nor analytical. Thus the prophecies of such men as the Brahan Seer, a crystal gazer who was born in the island of Lewis in the beginning of the seventeenth century, were indeed an important part of our oral literature. They were accepted by a religious people whose joy or gloom having been intensified by mental concentration on the newly discovered prophecies of revelation impels them to give credence to whatever makes a fair claim to come within the region of the prophetic. On this assumption can we fairly account for this class of literature, whose rise synchronises with the introduction of the Christian faith, and its decay with the advance and enlightened knowledge of that faith.

Concurrently with the published literature, there floated among the people the medical literature of the M'Conachers, M'Beaths, or Beatons, comprising discussions on the physical

sciences, astronomy, astrology, philosophy, and metaphysics, oral traditions and romances, as well as a mass of poetry that reflected the passing phases of life. Among the contributors to this stream of literature, we have such men as Maclosa O'Daly, chief sage or poet of Eirin and Alba, died 1185; Muiredhach Albannach, died 1224; Tadhg O'Higgin, died 1448; and others. Later, we have James Macgregor, the Dean of Lismore, with his brother Duncan, 1512-26; Duncan Macrae of Inverinate and his two clerical brothers, and the Macvurichs; Domnull Mac Fhionnlaidh na Dan, who flourished in the early part of the seventeenth century; and to this period belong M'Intyre—the Bard of Macintosh—Maclean of Duart, Margaret Maclean, the middle of the seventeenth century; Nicossain of Uist, John Macdonald, Ian Lom, 1620-1710; Archibald Macdonald, 1688; Angus Macdonald, Mary Macleod, 1650-1720; Brian, the Assynt poet; Julia Macdonald, 1670-1709. We have also Lachlan MacKinnon, died about 1734; Murdo Matheson, bard of Seaforth; Roderick Morrison, the blind harper; John Mackay, the hereditary family piper of Gairloch, and others. The most eminent of these is undoubtedly Mary Macleod. With her advent in the field of poetry came a marked change on the intricate and difficult metrics of the old Gaelic poetry. She, too, is the sweetest, most precise, and perhaps the most elegant of our poets. Her verses glide on with a soft and gentle smoothness, like waters running over the surface of polished stones.

She describes to us the life in the halls of the high chiefs with a precision that marks the poem as a contribution to the history of the period. She eulogises the great men of the day. The chase, the mountain, the stag and hounds, and the social condition of the people surrounding the hall of the chieftain are all brought before our vision with discriminating and intelligent interest. John Macdonald, Ian Lom, has the honour of being the first of the long line of Jacobite poets. He is a satirist and a eulogist according to the subject which he handles. Montrose and the heroes of the Macdonalds are described in language and diction of high praise. His satires have a tone of asperity about them. Still his contribution to literature is of historical importance and high literary value. The other poets, like those in the Fernaig Manuscript, are deeply religious and strongly Jacobite as are nearly all the poets of the people. Peering across the vista of the ages, and looking to the literature that we have surveyed from early dawn till the end of the period under review, we find contributors to it from among the men whose intellects have been tutored in the schools, and from among the unlettered rustics of the country. The former may have been bound by the literary convention of their times, the latter broke through these into fresh fields. The illiterate poets, like Mary Macleod and others of that class, are perhaps the most interesting, as being the most true to human nature. They lay in the lap of Nature, with their ear to her throbbing heart and their

hand on her pulse. They watched the seasons' changing moods: they heard the sigh of the wind, the soft melancholy murmur of the waves upon the shore. The thunder, the storm, the moods and fancies of men, the tragic, pathetic, and comic in the drama of life, they have depicted to us in the poetry which has been transmitted. The class of poetry which predominates in this entire mass is the panegyric or eulogistic. The chieftains of later days are glorified without any fear of exaggerating their virtues, their courage, and their chivalry. This is what we might expect, for the spirit of Gaelic poetry is one of praise. The heroes of the Ossianic period may have been glorified impersonated gods; their successors in the popular imagination were real men, to whom, however, glory and honour are ascribed in a similar unstinted fashion. The fervour of intense nationalism pervades the whole; but the outlook is narrow, and prevents a worthy appreciation of forces and personages that oppose the national spirit and aspiration. We have songs of the chase, with the joy attached thereto; we hear the clash of arms, and we see the carnage. Songs of industry and waulking songs have their note of practical interest, and reach their sublimest form during this period. The genealogical tree mingles with feats of valour and local social life of the people in songs that depict the varying phases of existing conditions. We have boat songs of three grades. There are lullabies too—so different from those of modern times; a tone of melancholy softness pervades them. The thought

of fear more than anything else seems to ring through them, and the effect of fairy belief comes into clear relief. There are no dramatic writings worthy of the name, nor are there lengthened epics with sustained power and a magnificent display like those of ancient Greece, and what is even more striking, we have but few love-songs. True it is that Grainne long ago expressed her love for Diarmaid with a passion and intensity unparalleled in literature of the time. With the Dean of Lismore we find no such tenderness. His seven pieces that treat of women are satires of a bitter character. The chief satirist in the collection reaches the depth of his depreciation of womankind in the words: 'I dislike a table where a woman sits; may my curse amongst women rest'; and yet again: 'It is best to have nothing to do with women.' There are occasionally pieces during the early post-Reformation period, such as Maclean of Duart's love-song (sixteenth century), which can equal, in the beauty of its description and the intensity of its affection, any of the best known love-songs of a later age:—

‘As the topmost grain in the ear,
As sapling that in young wood grows,
As the sun that hideth the stars,
So art thou among women.’

But the absence from the literature of any appreciable quantity of such songs must be traceable to aspects of religion and morality which had been transmitted from the early pagan times of matriarchy. It is Grainne that expresses her

love for Diarmaid. Here is a sidelight thrown upon the facts of history which show the loose and unchecked relationship of womankind with man in pagan times, when the priority of the choice of spouse lay with the woman rather than with the man. This view of the social relationship filtered even through Christian ethics and morality down to the reformed times. The Norse invasion, too, had its baneful effect upon the morals of the people and the status of woman as is still observable in their subordination in those parts of the country where the Norse sway was felt strongest. The ethics which liberated woman from this thralldom, and elevated her to her position in the family and in society have been the outcome of the Reformed Faith, and not until the latter half of the eighteenth century was their effect clearly felt upon the literature of the Scottish Gael.

II

1745-1830

THE debacle at Culloden which terminated the wasteful devotion of a splendid fidelity was more inglorious, and less beneficial, to the victors than to the vanquished. The genius of the people that had hitherto expressed itself in wars and conquests, in feats of personal valour, and in charging 'the enemy as fleet as the deer,' now found room for expansion in other spheres. The feuds and conflicts, the jealousies of ruling chieftains, and the restlessness incidental to all these, were not fitted to foster an interest in literature and art. After the collapse of the Stuart cause, the Highlanders, with the rest of Scotland, gradually awoke to a true appreciation of their new opportunities, the wider outlook afforded by these, and the possibilities for asserting their power in other domains of life than those in which it had already excelled. The power of the chieftain was broken, the clan system was largely abolished, and with it slowly disappeared the pupilage which was its peculiar feature. Improved means of communication brought the north more in touch with the commercial centres of the south, the standard of living was raised, cattle gave way to sheep, tillage was improved, and agriculture showed signs of prosperity.

As early as 1770, there were large emigrations

from the Uists and Skye to the Dominion of Canada. These people carried with them the traditions of their homeland. They were knit together by that almost indissoluble bond of blood, which attached them not merely to one another, but to their common traditions—hence the origin of the Gaelic printed literature of Canada.

Of all the factors that helped to develop literature, none is perhaps more worthy of grateful recognition than the work of the teachers of the S.P.C.K. and the Bounty Schools. In a Report of the former, of date 1729, it is stated that the teachers of those schools must be persons of piety, loyalty, and prudence, having a complete knowledge of literature, and that in that year there were not less than seventy-four teachers having under their care three thousand scholars. One of the directions given to the schoolmasters was that as soon as the scholars could read comparatively well, the masters should teach them to write a fair and legible hand, and also instruct them in the elements and most necessary rules of arithmetic, that they might be rendered more useful in their several stations in the world, but that they teach no Latin nor Irish. Although for political purposes, the Gaelic language was barred as a study, and Latin probably from ecclesiastical reasons, there is good cause to believe that Gaelic¹ was

¹ This authentic example from the old-time schoolroom may serve to illustrate the point. 'Ciod is ciall do "gèneration," Chailein, arsa maighstir Sgoil. 'Sron daimh na tairbh arsa Cailean.' 'What is the meaning of *generation*, Colin, said the schoolmaster. 'The nose of an ox or a bull, said Colin.' The answer was prompted by a wag.

made the medium of instruction, and that in this way phraseology was stereotyped, and the language of the Catechism and the Bible became the language of the common people. Zimmer shows that a deadly blow was given to the Irish language by the Catholic Church, inasmuch as the faithful children of the Holy Father were robbed of their most sacred possessions through the ignorance of their priests, who thought themselves too good to speak the language of their people. The opposite, however, holds true in regard to the Gaelic of Scotland, inasmuch as preaching holds a most prominent part in the order of the Protestant service. Further, the reading of the Bible, the Catechism, and other religious books, and the catechising of old and young individually, were carried on in the language which the people could best understand. Quietly, amidst the many turmoils of political convulsions, these teachers of the church were sowing the seeds of religion and helping to retain and perpetuate the language of the community, until, as in the Highland glades the spring flowers show their heads after the winter's snows have thawed away, a luxuriant crop of national literature blossomed with the most seductive hues after the long and cloudy day and the dreary night of political unrest.

It must not be forgotten that James Macpherson, during this period, like a brilliant meteor, shot across the literary firmament, dazzling the eyes of the European litterateurs with the Epics of Ossian. His writings were

the subject of a stern and bitter strife. They were exhaustively scrutinised and subjected to a most critical analysis, which had the effect of drawing the attention of many scholars to the possible sources from which Macpherson had derived his writings, and in creating an interest in, and an enthusiasm for, the ancient language and literature of the Gaels, which have not yet ebbed out.

The Reformed Faith was established now, not merely in the State, but also in the affections of the people. The waves of religious revival that sprang up in the south rolled onwards to the northern counties, and to the utmost limits of the Lewis, Skye, Easter Ross, and Caithness, which were all more or less affected. An enthusiasm for the Bible, and for religious books containing the doctrines of grace, sprang up with these awakenings, which could only be satisfied by providing a suitable literature for the people. The Gaelic Bible, the Catechism, and Confession of Faith were in their hands; excellent translators were busy; and from the native soil itself sprang up men of repute, who were able to sing in the vernacular devout songs of encouragement and warning to anxious believers. These are the chief features in the development of the literature of the Gael in this period, which is the richest in the history of the Gaelic language; and in view of the circumstances of the times, and the large part which religion held in the thoughts and lives of the people, it is not to be wondered at that religious books greatly predominated.

The entire literature of the time is approximately classified as follows :—

THEOLOGICAL.—Baxter's Call to the Unconverted, 1750, and three other editions before 1830 ; Sum of Saving Knowledge, 1767 ; Menzies's Christian Doctrine, 1781 and 1815 ; Alleine's Alarm to Sinners, 1781, and five other editions before 1830 ; and the Saints Pocket Book, 1823 ; Guthrie's Great Interest, 1783 and 1832 ; the Christian Soldier, 1804 ; Thomas A Kempis's Imitation of Christ, 1785 ; Rev. Daniel Campbell's Sufferings of Christ, 1786 and 1800 ; Shepherd's Christian Pocket Book, 1788 ; Duncan Lothian's the Pope and the Reformation, 1797 ; Dodsley's Economy of Human Life, 1806 ; Boston's Fourfold State, 1811 and 1825 ; Doddridge's Rise and Progress, 1811 and 1823 ; One Thing Needful, 1811 and 1812 ; Salvation by Grace, 1813 ; Covey, An Account of, 1813 ; Gilfillan on the Sabbath, 1813 ; Dyer's Christ's Famous Titles, 1817 ; Newton, Life of, 1817 ; Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, 1812 and 1819 ; Hannah Sinclair's Letter on the Christian Religion, 1819 ; Richmond's Dairyman's Daughter, 1822 ; Bunyan's Barren Fig Tree, 1824 ; Bunyan's Death of Mr. Badman, 1824 ; Bunyan's World to Come, 1825 ; Bunyan's Sighs from Hell, 1825 ; Faith and Salvation, 1825 ; Brook's Apples of Gold, 1824 ; Beith on the Antibaptists, 1824 ; Colquhon's Covenant of Grace, 1826 ; Flavel's Token for Mourners, 1828 ; Fraser on Baptism, 1828 ; Dunn's Life and Conversion, 1829 ; Munro's Life of Dr. Love,

1830; Heavenly Footman, 1829; Gospel Compulsion, 1830.

HOMILETICAL.—Crawford's Sermons, 1791; Sermon to Women, 1795; Isaac Watts's Sermon to Young People, 1795; Broughton's Sermon, 1797 and 1804; Rev. Hugh MacDiarmid's Sermons, 1804; Dr. Dewar's Sermons, 1805, 1829-30; Blair's Sermons, 1812; Burder's Sermons, 1821; Rev. Malcolm MacLaurin's Exhortation, 1822-1826; Spence's Sermon on Infant Baptism, 1825; Seventeen Sermons, 1827; Rev. Duncan Grant's Address to Children, 1829; the Gaelic Preacher, 1830.

DEVOTIONAL.—Church of England Book of Common Prayer, 1794 and 1819; Office of Communion, 1797; Dr. John Smith's Prayers for Families, 1808; Rev. William Smith's Sacred Lessons, 1810; Saints' Pocket Book, 1823; Earle's Sacramental Exercises, 1827; Innes's Instruction for Young Enquirers, 1827; Peter Macfarlane's Collection of Prayers, 1829.

CATECHETICAL and CONFSSIONAL.—Shorter Catechism, Synod of Argyle's (five editions before 1745 and forty-eight other editions before 1830); William's Shorter Catechism, 1773, 1779 and 1820; Isaac Watts's Catechism for Children, 1774; the Reformed Catechism, 1779; Young Communicant's Catechism, 1798 and 1811; Mother's Catechism, 1798 (and eight other editions before 1830); Brown's Catechism for Children, 1799, 1802; Shorter Catechism with Proofs by Morrison, 1800 (and six other editions

before 1830); Gray's Catechism, 1813; Thomson's Sacramental Catechism, 1813 and 1825; Dr. Ross's 1820; MacKenzie's Church Catechism, 1821; Campbell's Catechism on Christ's Kingdom, 1824; Key to First Initiatory, 1827; Beith's Catechism on Baptism, 1827; Dr. MacDonald's, 1829; MacBean's, 1829; Confession of Faith, 1756, 1757, 1816-1821.

ANTHOLOGICAL (*Sacred*).—David McKellar's Hymn, 1752; Hymn of Praise, 1752; Dugald Buchanan, 1767 (and fourteen other editions before 1830); Duncan MacFadyen's Spiritual Hymns, 1770; Duncan Kennedy's Collections of Hymns, 1786; Duncan Macdougall's Spiritual Hymns, 1800; William Gordon's Spiritual Songs, 1802; Hymn of Praise by a Christian in Argyleshire, 1803; Alec Clark's Christian Hymns, 1806; Dr. Dewar's Hymns, 1806; Angus Kennedy's Hymns, 1808; Rev. Peter Grant's, 1809 (and seven other editions before 1830); Margaret Campbell's Spiritual Hymns, 1810; John Rose, Collection of Hymns, 1815; Donald Matheson's Spiritual Hymns, 1816, 1825; Inverness Collection of Hymns, 1818 and 1821; Archibald Maclean's Spiritual Hymns, 1818; John Munro's Collection of Hymns, 1819; Dr. James MacGregor's Spiritual Hymns, 1819 and 1821; Ronald MacDonald's Hymns, 1821; Donald Macrae's Spiritual Hymns, 1825; Donald MacKenzie's Spiritual Poems, 1827; Hugh Fraser's Spiritual Hymns, 1827-1830; John Morrison's Spiritual Hymns, 1828; John MacDonald's

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Embarrassment of the Church of Scotland, 1828; John MacDonald's New Year Gift of Hymns, 1829.

ANTHOLOGICAL (*Secular*).—Alexander Macdonald's Poems, 1751, 1764, and 1802; James Macpherson's Temora, 1763; Duncan Ban McIntyre's Songs, 1768 (second and third editions in 1790 and 1804); Ronald Macdonald's Collection of Songs, 1776; 1782 and 1809; Forrest's Mirthful Songs, 1777; Lothian (D.) Poems, 1780; Gillies's Collection of Songs, 1780-1786; Smith's Ancient Songs, 1780; Peter Stewart's Songs, 1783; Hill's Ancient Erse Songs, 1784; Angus Campbell's Songs, 1785; Brown's Congratulatory Poem, 1785; Alexander Cameron's Songs and Poems, 1785; Margaret Cameron's Songs and Poems, 1785 and 1805; Smith's Dargo and Gaul, ancient poem of Ossian, 1787; Young's Ancient Gaelic Poems, 1787; Kenneth MacKenzie's Songs, 1792; Alexander Macpherson's Songs, 1796; Duncan Campbell's Songs, 1798; Allan MacDougall's Songs, 1798 and 1829; Donald Dewar's Songs, 1800; Inverary Ballads, 1800; Christian and Donald Cameron's Poems, 1800; MacGregor's Songs, 1801 and 1818; John MacKenzie's Green Book, 1801; Robert Stewart's Songs, 1802; George Gordon's Songs, 1804; Duncan Cunningham's Songs, 1805; Inverness Collection of Songs, 1806; Ossian's 3 vol. edition (H. S.), 1807; Donald Macleod's Songs, 1811; Peter Macfarlane's Songs, 1813; Turner's Collection of Songs, 1813; Donald Macdonald, A Song on Napoleon, 1814; Alex. Campbell, Albyns

Anthology, vols. i. and ii., 1816-1818 ; Macallum's Ossianic Poems, 1816 ; E. MacLachlan's Metrical Effusions, 1816 ; Walker's Songs, 1817 ; John Maclean's Songs, 1818 ; Macgregor's Melodious Warbler, 1819 ; Rev. D. Macallum's Songs, 1821 ; Alex. Mackay's Songs, 1821 ; B. Urquhart's Song to H. S. London, 1827 ; James Munro, The Songster, 1829, The Jewel, 1830 ; Translated Songs, 1829 ; Rob Donn's Songs, 1829 ; Allan McIntyre's Songs, 1829 ; William Ross's Songs, 1830.

EDUCATIONAL.—Macdonald's Gaelic Dictionary, 1741 ; Shaw's Grammar, 1778, Dictionary, 1780 ; Rev. Patrick Macdonald's Gaelic Airs, 1781 ; Mackintosh's Proverbs, 1785, and 1819 ; Franklin's Way to Wealth, 1785 ; Robert Macfarlane's Gaelic Vocabulary, 1795 ; A. Stewart's Grammar, 1801-1812 ; Rose of the Field (periodical), 1803 ; Robertson's Gaelic Dictionary, 1803 ; MacLaurin's Text Book, 1811 ; Peter Macfarlane's G. and E. and E. and G. Vocabulary, 1815 ; School Books, Class 2nd, 3rd, and 4th editions, 1816 ; Elements of Gaelic, 1816 ; Rational Primer, 1819 ; Rev. F. MacBean's Spelling Book, 1824-25-27 ; Four editions (Class II.) S. P. C. K. School Books,—General Assembly School Books, 1824 ; Armstrong's Gaelic Dictionary, 1825 ; Currie's Gaelic Grammar, 1828 ; Highland Society's Dictionary, 1828 ; Dr. Norman Macleod's Collection for Schools, 1828 ; Neil M^cNish on Preserving Gaelic, 1828 ; Highland Messenger (periodical), 1829-1830.

THE BIBLE.—N. T. 1767 (and several other editions

before 1830), O. T. in four parts, 1783-1801; O. T. and N. T. 1807 (and various other editions before 1830); Pulpit Bible, 1826; Synod of Argyle's Psalms in metre, 7th ed. 1751; Macfarlane's ed. 1753 (and twenty other editions before 1830); Macfarlane's version with Brown's notes, 1814; Smith's version 1787 (and twenty-two other editions before 1830); Smith's Psalms, 1801 (suppressed); Ross's version, 1807 (and four other editions before 1830); General Assembly's version, 1826 (and four other editions before 1830). The Bible (O. T.), ed. 1783-1801, fixed the standard of Gaelic orthography, and it can be safely said that what the authorised English Bible was to English literature, even more than that was the Gaelic Bible to the literature of the Highlands.

The religious literature arranged under the above categories is largely translation. The theological books are translations of classical puritanic compositions, and the number of editions through which these passed is sufficient proof of their wide circulation, and of the interest of the Gaelic community in them. The evangelical doctrines were new and fascinating to the people as a whole. Scottish theology did not occupy the prominence which English theology did, yet Boston's Fourfold State was a household work among the Highlanders. It was such books as these that formed the staple food of the mind of the devout Highlanders, and their attitude to religious movements and creeds was defined for them by the theo-

logical opinions therein discussed. It is surprising that none of the Highland clergy, who had full mental and educational equipment for the work, did not systematise and formulate their religious doctrines in the language of the people. No effort is discernible to discuss theologically the great doctrines of the Atonement, Justification by Faith, and others, which entered into the basis of the religious thought of the time. When Daniel Campbell of Glassary published his book on the Sufferings of Christ, which passed into fourteen editions before 1851, it was in the English language this was done, even though this devout and earnest Christian minister was, in the esteem of his brethren, capable of translating the Confession of Faith into Gaelic, and also the Psalms and Paraphrases.

The department of Homiletic literature shows the same sterility as far as native ability is concerned; yet it is only here we have the few original books there are in circulation about this time. Of these the Sermons of MacDiarmid are understood to be translations from a Scottish divine, while the Popular Sermons of Dr. Blair are also translations. The latter served as valuable pulpit aids to the indolent and indifferent clergy, of whom there are many in every age. Of this class, the minister of Lochalsh, who was a greater expert in the chase than in the pulpit, is a striking example. While in the homiletic literature we have largely the ethical teaching of the old and new moderates, in the theological literature, circulated

by the directors of the society schools, only evangelical thoughts, conceptions, and doctrines have been put in circulation, a fact which seems to indicate that the reading public differed from their preachers in matters of faith and doctrine.

The Devotional literature comprises prayer books and communion addresses, and is not extensive or important. The striking feature of the Catechetical literature is the vast number of editions through which the Shorter Catechism passed, and the variety of these editions. This little book, which circulated perhaps more than any other outside the Psalm Book and the Bible in the Highlands of Scotland, was the great medium of instruction in the schools and in the family.

It was at this period that the first attempt was made at a scientific study of the language, and now we have the beginnings and development of grammars and dictionaries, both of which passed through the printing presses, and with these unquestionably began a real and successful application of scholarship to the scientific study of the Gaelic language. Dr. Stewart's grammar still holds its own, while the dictionaries are still consulted with benefit by students. That monumental work, the Highland Society Dictionary, which owes much of its value to the erudition of Dr. Mackintosh Mackay, is not likely to be superseded. The books issued to the schools are numerous and largely contain religious pieces, well printed, in good

idiomatic Gaelic, while the dawn of the rich periodical literature is ushered in by the appearance of the Rosroine. The literature which is comprised under this group contains very little of a purely secular character, and nothing of a philosophic nature. Even the social and economic movements of the country found no expression in the literature of the Gael, beyond a translation of Franklin's (Dr. Benjamin) the Way to Wealth. This booklet, which created considerable stir in the English-speaking world, and formed the basis of Adam Smith's introductory chapters to the Wealth of Nations, was translated into Gaelic at the instigation of the Earl of Buchan, who writes a preface to the book. The Colonies were attracting the interest of statesmen as well as opening up fields in which the Highland population could find happy settlements. Whether this pamphlet was in the interests of emigration or not, it is difficult to determine, but it is interesting as being the only one of its kind of which any copies are now known to exist. In Dr. W. L. Mathieson's recently published book the Awakening of Scotland, p. 124, the statement is made that Paine's Rights of Man was translated into Gaelic and distributed in the North. This statement cannot be verified for the good reason that the book was not published. If it were published it is not at all likely that a book which caused such commotion in the English-speaking world would have been unknown in the Highlands. Copies of the English edition, how-

ever, circulated as far north as Stornoway. . But it is interesting to record that on 16th October 1824, Thomas Hardy, formerly Secretary of the London Corresponding Society, wrote to Francis Place, the well-known reformer, as follows: 'At the same time you will receive a copy of the Declarations of Rights of Men and Citizens adopted by the National Convention of France, 23rd June 1793, translated into Gaelic by the Rev. Dr. Shaw, and printed at my expense. Some of the copies have lain by me for many years. It has now become a curiosity.'—(Place's Collection, British Museum; addl. MSS., No. 27816 F. 233.) This hitherto unknown Gaelic work cannot be found among Place's collection. Yet in view of Hardy's direct and clear statement it is impossible to doubt that the translation was effected, though probably never circulated. The translator, 'Dr.' Shaw, is in all probability the Rev. William Shaw (1749-1831), the lexicographer and grammarian. But Shaw, though an M.A. of Glasgow and B.D. of Cambridge, is not known to have been a Doctor of Divinity, Medicine, or Law. Shaw, who was ordained at Ardclach in October 1779, demitted his charge in August of the following year and removed to London. There he came in contact with the famous men of letters of the time. Among them was Dr. Samuel Johnson, who bade farewell to Shaw, as the latter was proceeding north to collect for his Dictionary, in this characteristic fashion: 'Sir, if you give the world a vocabulary of that language,

while the Island of Great Britain stands in the Atlantic Ocean your name will be mentioned.' Shaw, influenced by Johnson, renounced Presbyterianism, and entered the Church of England as Rector of Chelvey, Somerset, 1795. He graduated B.D. of Cambridge, 1800. It should be noted that Paine co-operated with Condorcet in drawing up the famous Declaration.

It is in the field of poetry that the Highland literature shows the richest products, of which Highlanders can boast neither vainly nor unjustifiably. Among Gaelic religious poets, Dugald Buchanan (1716-1768) occupies a position of incontestable supremacy. In the lucidity of felicitous style, in the majestic flow of sublime conceptions, in the vivid realism of personified abstractions, in the impressive grandeur of massive imagery, and in the graphic and dramatic effect of intense fervour, his poems not merely excel the best efforts of the creative power of religious Highland poets, but they can bear comparison with similar classics of other languages. If one reads his Day of Judgment with a painful feeling of harsh and overawing severity, it must not be forgotten that the poet was under the dominion of an overmastering passion for the salvation of men, which he expresses in an effort to produce on the mind a deep impression of the issues of good and ill, and the reality of the judgment of God. He aims at quickening the mental torpor of his countrymen with startling conceptions of the magni-

tude, the variety, and infinite shapes and degrees of sin, the efficacy of the Sacrifice of Christ, and the faithfulness of His free and sovereign grace, borrowing from the Bible and from nature the figures and images necessary to emphasise his central theme—the awful demerit of sin. Demons and unbelievers in hopeless misery are depicted with the clear realism of a visible procession. The doom of the world and the destiny of the race, the being and attributes of God, the atonement of Christ, and the ineffable glory of the Judge moving in stately majesty to the last great assize, the eternal bliss of the blessed, and kindred themes, which hitherto were hidden in the turgid sentences of the various theological schools, are now brought by this poet of faith and genius, in his grand bursts of imagination and feeling, within the circle of the common thoughts of the people, and translated into their language with the first perfect accents of modern Gaelic speech. The kind of criticism that condemns the poet as if he cherished a perverse severity, is an ungenerous appreciation of the closing appeal of his prologue to the Day of Judgment:—

‘ And bless to every one this song
Who will in love its lessons learn,’

and of his tenderness and suppressed emotion as he recoils from entering on the painful duty of describing the state of the lost:—

‘ We may put down their grievous cry
In such harrowing words as these.’

Though at times his imagery may be uncongenial, and even fantastic, no one can read the poems of Buchanan without a feeling of wonder at the sublime proofs of undeniable genius that accumulate with a closer study of the serious vehemence of his deep thoughts on the world that is, and the mysteries of the world unseen.

Dr. James Macgregor (1759-1830), the pioneer-missionary of Nova Scotia, who was also a Perthshire man by birth, ranks perhaps next to Buchanan as the poet of the sublime. The great doctrines of grace formed his themes. In spontaneous heart gushings, overflowing with tender affection for his expatriated countrymen, in vigorous harmonious verse, he succeeds in adapting these great themes of revealed religion to the attractive melodies of the people. The best and most polished of his poems are: On the Translation of the Bible, The Gospel, The Complaint, The Last Judgment, and The Righteousness of Christ. Most of his poems were composed, he says himself, 'when travelling the dreary forests of America.' In addition to a collection of hymns, he translated into Gaelic, but did not publish, the Confession of Faith, more than one hundred of the Psalms of David in metre, and most of the Scottish Paraphrases.

Next in popularity to the poems of Buchanan are those of the Rev. Peter Grant (1783-1867), Baptist minister of Grantown-on-Spey. Though lacking the imaginative power of the Rannoch poet, Grant nevertheless succeeded in a marked degree in clothing the brighter aspects of the

evangelical faith in such winsome and felicitous verse as touched the tenderest chords of his countrymen's hearts, and kindled their devotional feeling into a burning flame. Grant showed unmistakable signs of being influenced by Isaac Watts.

The output of Gaelic verse was very considerable and of varying merit. These poets were all didactic, and rhymed utterances were the usual vehicles for exhortation and warning. They were a valuable adjunct to the Church. Their themes, which were nearly always borrowed from revelation, were developed with an intensity of feeling, severity of tone, penitential sorrow, and self-depreciation, as reflected not merely the sternness of environment, but also the deep religious convictions of the writers. The mystical element in the religion of the Highlanders has not been reflected in their poetry in proportion to its prominence in their mode of thought and severe introspection. This is due undoubtedly to the influence of Buchanan, the founder of modern sacred poetry. His themes were borrowed, and his method was followed by nearly all his successors. The phenomenon of mysticism did not find a place in the practical teaching of that poet. Mackay of Mudale, Matheson of Helmsdale, Mrs. Clark of Badenoch, John Maclean of Caolas and Nova Scotia, and some others show traces of it, but unquestionably its best exponent was the illiterate weaver and poet of Petty, Donald MacRae (1756-1837). Amongst

the works of God in providence and grace he moves softly and solemnly, delicately tracing as he proceeds the unfolding of the Divine purposes, interpreting their meaning, and causing his picture to glow with his own warm and earnest mysticism. As if afraid of the vagaries of the imagination, he proceeds to express his own experience in this striking description and definition:—

‘She, flying and soaring
Like a bird in the skies,
Spurns the restraining
Of her fleshly desires.

Eggs for quick hatching
In her presence I found;
By an hour of her brooding
Her chicks chuckled loud.

Quick hatching, I said,
But what gain I thereby,
If the least trifling word
Sets my passion on fire.

She, flattering and kind,
Drags me unwilling aside,
And drugs my poor mind
With world shadows that glide.’

He was quick in repartee, and his humour and happy disposition always served him to good purpose.

Elegiac verses form a considerable proportion of the large output of the poetry under review. Men and women

of piety, who left a deep impression on the age, are idealised in fluent language, subdued by touches of moving pathos, and vague, indefinable sorrow, so characteristic of the intense concentration of the Gaelic bard, continuing entrenched in the seclusion of his own isolated world, quite unaffected by any external developments. Satire was also freely used by those religious poets as a moral corrective. MacLauchlan of Dores (1729-1801) with righteous anger vigorously lashed the abuse of card-playing, with its baneful associations, and succeeded in largely uprooting the practice. Donald Matheson of Kildonan (1719-1782), whose reproving satires were popularised by their sprightliness and chiming melody, wielded great influence as a purifier of his countrymen's morals. The burning ecclesiastical questions of the period, such as the abuse of patronage, the religious apathy, and the worldliness of the ministry, have received the attention of the satirists. Unhappily an element of fierce vindictiveness is painfully evident, but it is wholly confined to the satires which celebrate the conflict between the separatist section of that unlicensed order of pious religious speakers known as the 'men,' and the organised ministry.¹

¹ Peter Stuart (1763-1840), catechist in Strathspey, Strathdearn, and Strathnairn, a native of Caithness, thus attacks the ministry in his song 'Oran na Cleir':—

‘ Biad sud na ciobardan bronach truagh
A thog an stiopan as an luath,
Air son biadh is eudach is onoir shaoghalt,
Ghabh craicin chaorach gu mealladh sluaigh.’

The Rev. John Macdonald, minister of Alvie from 1806 till his death, fulminates

The religious poetry was to a large extent discursive and argumentative, and many of the poems are theological dissertations, which were intended and fitted to instruct the people in the doctrines of the Reformed faith. For the poets wielded a great influence, and they were useful auxiliaries to the Church in disseminating evangelical doctrines, and in formulating the religious views of the community. At times the poetry rises to a sublime height, and although pieces of adoration and devotion are not too conspicuous, a spirit of deep devoutness moves through the whole. As a part of the literature of the times, it is the most valuable and interesting, not only as proving the genius of the bards, but as reflecting phases of religious thought which, with the changing times, have fallen into abeyance.

It was during this period that secular poetry reached the zenith of its imaginative brilliance and the nadir of pernicious suggestiveness. The poets reflect the spirit of their age, and the dark stains on the beauty of their wonderful creations may only be the reflection of the con-

against Peter Stuart, whom he describes as *Graidhean* in a long anonymous poem entitled *The Wolf Unmasked*, of which the following verse is a mild example :—

‘ Feumaidh muilt-fheoil as cearcan
 Bhi gle phailt air a bhord an ;
 Feumaidh bior a bhi laimh ribh
 ’S toil le *Graidhean* feol rosda ;
 Feumaidh buideal le siucar,
 Air son fliuchadh an scornan
 Measg a chuideachd is fiughail
 Mar am burn bhi ’ga dhortadh.’

ventions of their time. William Ross, who was restive under the moral restraint of the 'Pauline Creed,' was a precentor in the parish church of Gairloch, an officer whose moral character should defy the finger of scorn. Yet the minister of religion here condoned the moral delinquencies of the local laird, the sire of a numerous progeny (not all born of wedlock), in the local presbytery, on the ground that the delinquent had presented a 'mort-cloth' to the parish. Members of that same reverend court had on another occasion their gravity disturbed much more than their moral sense by the rehearsal of an obscene song by William Mackenzie, the cripple Catechist of Gairloch, who appeared before them in his own behalf. Alexander Macdonald, who could apparently with equal facility, and with as little remorse, forsake his wife as his creed, poured out his wild and coarse effusions in the ears of a people whose spiritual guide dared to publish a pamphlet on adding to the strength of Britain by fornication. While acknowledging that the ethical code, by which high and low regulated their lives, had not yet attained to that lofty standard by which indecency in speech is condemned as a breach of high moral principles, an indiscriminate laudation of all the poets of this period would be a distinct disservice to the literature of the country. Without minimising their rude defects while treating of human nature, it should not be forgotten that they could control the baser passions of their own, and its great resources

served them nobly in translating nature and life into those glowing and fascinating literary achievements that have won for them a fame that will die only with their race. In forming a true estimate of this poetry, without having regard to the unimpeachable or impeachable morals, or other extraneous merits or demerits, of the authors, the task must be undertaken with sympathetic interest and an intelligent knowledge of the music and meaning of words which form the external expression of the poets' intuition, rapture, and swift vision. Any effort at classifying those poets under the categories of Jacobite, Amorous, Bacchanalian, Ethical, etc., is more pedantic than precise, and ignores the patent fact that all poets were the exponents of the race spirit that incarnated in the family tie which stifled all political expansion, opposed alien ideas, and invincibly resisted foreign rule. They were amorous, like most people, by an instinct, which is not confined to them alone. They were Bacchanalian by reason of an inherited trait of character by no means accurately described as sordid. The poets, in fact, embodied the genius of a nation which they expressed with such intensity, passion, and force, in those wonderful images of their creative power as truly claims for this period the name of the golden age of Gaelic poetry. This lyric poetry is more accurately designated under the heads of descriptive and interpretative. It was in the power of vivid description that the poets rose to the full measure of their stature. Foremost

among the secular descriptive poets is Alexander Mac-Donald (*circa* 1700—?). With a nature composed of the dual elements of ferocity and tenderness, his poems show equally striking contrasts. Sugar Brook is the anti-thesis of the Birlinn of Clan Ranald, and the Elegy to the Dove is an arresting contrast to the Song to the Clans. The Birlinn is generally acknowledged to be the masterpiece in Gaelic poetry. The description is truly wonderful. The fierce conflict of the elements seemed to appeal to his turbulent spirit; while the ‘lusty and sinewy, stout and stalwart callants,’ who strain their ‘knotty muscles’ in a defiant venture with the challenging tempest, could never have been drawn by a physical derelict. The creaking of thafts, the cracking of spars and pins, the snapping of cordage, the boiling rage of baffled waves, and the deep yawning sea troughs, are perhaps the counterpart of a violent mental agitation, and an inward alertness and rapidity of motion and action. The scene has a distinctness and realism that is ever faithful to the reality of the borrowed images. The poet projects his own personality into his work through the medium of a vigorous imagination so successfully, that his thrilling achievement has a vitality and naturalness that secure it a permanence independent of its merit as a skilful adapting of musical and picturesque phraseology.

But none of the bards has so effectively woven the elements of pathos into their versification as John Roy

Stuart of Strathspey (eighteenth century). Nor is he excelled as an interpreter of the feelings of pain, resentment and remorse. The gloom of the caves and fastnesses of his native land is transmuted to a mournful dirge piquant with sorrow. Baffled and battered, he, true to the Celtic character, resigns to destiny, and translates the depressed mood of the pensive soul of defeated Jacobitism into angry growls of no hope.

Keenly sensitive to the feelings that nature can inspire, Duncan Ban Macintyre (1724-1812), that unsophisticated child of nature, caresses the Ben with all the affection of real filial attachment. He smooths her wrinkles and decks her with resplendent glory. Never did a bride go forth to meet the bridegroom bejewelled and spangled as she. Coire Cheathaich and Ben Dorain reflect idealism as well as that close affinity between man and nature which characterised the youth of the Celtic people. Nature's mystic voice vibrates on sympathetic chords, and the dulcet notes, in perfect harmony of sounds, are lilting to the outer world on waves of choice words without a jarring note. Not less successful is he in his description of woman. Woman had slowly come to her own under the external influence of civil and religious laws. Impelled by the Celtic spirit that ever seeks after the ideal, the poet pursues the eternal illusion beyond his reach and grasp, but not beyond his thought. The ideal woman—Mari bhan Og, for example—is drawn with great delicacy and

intimacy, and with a wealth of detail, fittingly arranged, with the aid of apposite similes from nature, into a perfect image intermediate between man and the supernatural world. Not only in her external aspect is she depicted, but also in her inward life of emotions and feelings, and always flawless. When the bard's spirit had been liberated from its confinement within the circle of the family of the chieftains, it spread abroad and idealised heroes of the common stock with equal vigour and effect. The elegiac poetry is full of this.

William Ross (1762-1790) is unrivalled as an interpreter of the emotion of love in its ecstasy and depression. Though less original ¹ in his descriptions than many poets

¹ William Ross was apparently a copyist of William Mackenzie, the Lochcarron poet, who preceded him by at least a generation, as can be seen from the following comparisons :—

- (a) 'Gur bachlach, dualach, casbhuidh, cuachach
T-alt mun cuairt an ordugh ;
'San tha gach ciabh mar fhainn air sniamh
'S gach aon air fiamh an oir dhiubh.'
(Mackenzie, *Nighean Fhir na Comraich*.)
- 'S bachlach, dualach, casbhuidh, cuachach,
Caradh suaineas gruaig do chinn,
Gu h-aluinn, boidheach, faineach, or bhuidh
An curaibh seoghin san ordugh grinn.'
(Ross, *Fcasgair Luain*.)
- (b) 'Do sheang shlios fallainn mar an cala
No mar channach sleibhe.' (Mackenzie.)
'Sheang shlios fallain air bhla cannaich,
No mar an cal' air a chuan.' (Ross.)
- (c) 'Siunnailt t-eugais 's teare ri fhaotainn
Gur tu reul nan oighean.' (Mackenzie.)
'S teare an sgeula siunnailt t-eugaisg
Bhi ri fhaotainn 'san Roinn Eorp.' (Ross.)

Besides these, there is a whole verse borrowed by Ross in his 'Praise of the Highland Maid' from Mackenzie.

of less repute, in accurate analysis of the tender passion, as well as in elegance, fluency, grace of diction, and penetrative notes that go to the very heart, he occupies a place all his own. Behind his rapturous ecstasy 'a tear is not slow to glisten.' In Feasgair Luain the one follows the other in quick succession. The buoyant hope and gleaming eye give place to pining love and leaden-eyed despair. In all his love-songs he is always at his best as an interpreter.

Ewen MacLachlan (1775-1822) described and interpreted the seasons. Though his classic lore occasionally stiffens verses otherwise flexible and smooth, his poems deserve the high place they have held among his countrymen. His adaptation of the melody of the Swan on the Lake to a theme different from that to which the music was first set, shows a susceptibility to, and a fine appreciation of, the beautiful in nature characteristic of the true poet.

In the poetry of this period, the strictly pastoral falls short, both in point of quality and quantity, of what might be expected of poets with a quick eye to catch the simple scenes and events in pastoral life and nature. Still the life in the sheiling, the milkmaid, and the reapers, have been represented with the vividness and simplicity of real idyllic charm.

The bottle, the bowl, and the cup have been decreed worthy of the praises of those that invoked the muses.

The so-called Bacchanalian poems are numerous, and as literary productions merit high praise. Wild carousals and noisy scenes round the drinking-table are features of the social life of the eighteenth century of such common occurrence that the poets, as faithful chroniclers of all phases of life, are valuable moral statisticians. Is there anything in the character of the Celt that fairly explains this? Has his environment anything to do with it? Have we here a craving for that form of gaiety which produces a forgetfulness of hard conditions and sad destinies? If it be true, as Renan alleges, that 'the essential element in the Celt's poetic life is the *adventure*—that is to say, the pursuit of the unknown; an endless quest after an object ever flying from desire,' then the marked tendency to quaff the cup can be partially at least accounted for by 'an invincible need of illusion innate' in the race. One poet, so far removed in religious thought from Renan as Dugald Buchanan, gives a definition of the drunkard's heaven in striking accord with that of the Breton critic, when he declares that it consists in the joy of

'The dizziness of drink in the brain.'

It is not the sordid appetites, or gross sensuality, that are being satisfied, but the cravings for the illusion of an unreal world.

At a time when every clachan had its poet, and every poet was a reflector of the hard conditions of his age, it is not surprising that a sad solemnity should pervade the

mass of poetry under review. Yet there are bursts of brilliant raillery to be met with here and there. Life and manners are seldom attacked in the unkind spirit of cold cynicism, though frequently with irony and sarcasm.¹ Vice, folly, and hypocrisy met with trenchant and railing exposure. The harshness of even the vindictive pieces is smoothed by a mocking use of wit and humour. John Mac Codrum (1710-1796) holds a high place as a humorous satirist. His song on the Widows, and on Donald Ban's Bagpipes, are perhaps the best of their class. But the greatest of the satirists is undoubtedly Rob Donn (1714-1778). Though not lacking in the power of clear and accurate description of nature and human life, he showed the best aptitude in searching analysis of character and motives. Faults, defects, and even physical infirmities, are lashed by him with a severity, and even irreverence, that appear at times to be unnecessarily cruel, and in language that occasionally savours of vulgarity and even borders on blasphemy. Reid, the bibliographer, manifestly ignoring Dr. Mackintosh Mackay's magnificent tribute to Rob Donn's character and worth, fastens the stigma of unpopularity and immorality on the poet—a stigma that is unjust both to the poems, and to the devout and pure-

¹ This is how the famous Rev. Lachlan Mackenzie, minister of Lochcarron from 1781-1819, humorously bids farewell to bad lodgings :—

‘Tha tinn fo’m, fo’m, fo’m,
Tha tinn fo’m eirigh
'S fagam lite thana phluacanach,
Bhios aca 'n tigh na h-eigin.’

minded scholar who edited them. As writers since Reid's day, following the unhappy lead, have been inclining to an estimate of the poet's character by no means flattering, it may not be out of place to record this hitherto unpublished narrative. 'The late Dr. Gustavus Aird of Creich took great pleasure in relating the following fact, to which he attached much importance, as showing how Rob Donn was regarded by some of the outstanding Christians of his day in the Reay country. Dr. Aird's father, when a young lad, was in the habit of spending some time with his maternal uncle, the Rev. George Munro, the saintly minister of Farr. When Rob had occasion to be in the parish, as was often the case, he seldom or never passed without calling at the manse, where he was always pressed to stay for the night or longer. At family worship he was invariably asked to take part, and he and his host alternately engaged in prayer. This information Dr. Aird got from the lips of his father, who had frequent opportunities of meeting the famous bard. The inference is plain. Rob must not only have conducted himself with propriety, but was also looked upon as a pious man, at any rate in his latter days, otherwise the godly Mr. Munro would never have asked him to lead the devotions at the family altar.'¹ Rob Donn's satire on the two miserly brothers, who lived together,

¹ I am indebted to the Rev. Donald Munro, Free Church minister, Ferintosh, for this interesting narrative.

died together, and were buried together, would by itself immortalise his name. For where in any language is the span of worthless human lives so contemptuously and effectively compressed as in this neatly drawn cipher?—

‘ At least, as far as others knew,
They never went the pace,
But neither did they anything
That folk would reckon grace ;
Begotten, born and bred, they grew
Together side by side,
A stretch of time passed over them,
And in the end they died.’

III

1830-1912

FROM 1830 there has issued from the printing houses in Scotland and Canada a steady stream of Gaelic literature which, though in comparison with the output of English literature it is as a mountain rivulet to a mighty river, varies in quality, expression and tone as much as the sounds of the rushing burn among the jagged rocks differ from its mellow plash upon the polished flags. In the intervening decades the output of Gaelic books, reprints and editions was approximately as follows:—from 1830 to 1840, 106 volumes; from 1840 to 1850, 164 volumes; 1850 to 1860, 115 volumes; 1860 to 1870, 142 volumes; 1870 to 1880, 169 volumes; 1880 to 1890, 98 volumes; 1890 to 1900, 111 volumes; 1900 to 1912, 80 volumes. This literature takes to some extent its colour from certain epochs in the life of the people, such as the Disruption of the Church of Scotland, the passing of the Education Act, the founding of a Celtic Chair in the University of Edinburgh, the renaissance following the inauguration of An Comunn Gaidhealach and its Mòd, and certain industrial movements affecting the social life of the community, such as the traversing of the country with railway lines. Literature which deals with human affairs generally chronicles events

and problems, and essays to discuss, interpret and solve these. This is particularly true of the literature that gathers round the Church, there being the relatively large number of thirty volumes in this category, apart entirely from religious books which came into existence as a result of this movement. In this special literature incidents are recorded and questions affecting opposing interests are discussed, visualising protagonists in the controversy, and emphasising the importance and significance of the points in the disputes from the viewpoint of the various writers. First we hear the sound of battle unmistakably, but in the later literature we have merely the echoes of the battle sound, while the spirit of controversy itself seems to move more gently under the restraining influences of changed times.

The passing of the Education Act brought a great change over educational affairs in the Highlands. The schools of the Churches gave place to the schools of the public. This transformation from the old order of things, when the Gaelic language was a commoner medium of instruction than it became after 1872, did not, however, adversely affect the output of Gaelic literature, as is shown by the striking fact that in the decade between 1870 and 1880 we have a larger output of Gaelic books than in any period of the same duration in the history of Gaelic printed literature. An analysis of the books which appeared during this decade also affords reasons to assume that the

stimulus given to general education had an indirect influence other than adverse upon Gaelic literature; but, as affecting the spoken language, the question of how largely it was ignored finds sufficient answer in the experiences of those who were taught in schools, where prejudice against the Gaelic tongue arose from the ignorance of the teacher of its value as a means of culture.

Unquestionably when Professor Blackie had succeeded in endowing in the University of Edinburgh the Celtic Chair, which has been so honourably occupied by Professor Mackinnon, Gaelic language and literature began to be approached with the scientific method which had characterised the study of other languages. This academic study of the spoken speech helped to destroy old prejudices against the language, and fired the sons of the Highlands with a new enthusiasm for their native tongue. The ministry of the Highlands, who more than any others make use of the speech as a medium of instruction, have, as a result of the facilities offered by the University of Edinburgh, ceased from being linguistic illiterates in regard to their own language; and the eighteenth century minister of Applecross, who required his precentor to read for him his Psalms, has no present day counterpart. To this source is to be traced, too, the numerous scientific studies in Gaelic which have appeared in publications of varied forms and sizes, and which indicate the precision and certainty of higher culture and scientific knowledge.

Notable among such publications is the revised version of the Gaelic Bible.

It is too soon yet to trace the influence of An Comunn Gaidhealach and its Mòd on Gaelic writings, although there is a disquieting decrease in the output of Gaelic books since 1900. The depressing effect of this discovery is counteracted by the undoubted fact that the quality of the literature is of a much higher order. Many of the writings of the nineteenth century were ephemeral, and, as contributions to the literature of the people, were of no real importance. The output now is generally otherwise, and has about it the elements that guarantee permanence. The Comunn with the liveliness of their enthusiasm have already stirred up the people in many parts of the country to an appreciation of their own speech, and this revival of interest will undoubtedly have the effect of preserving, not merely, what remains, but of encouraging such a close study of the language as has been formerly very largely a feature of foreign scholarship alone. The opening up of the Highlands by railways has had its own effect in introducing, as it did, the southern speech, and in the commingling of two languages so wide apart, with a resultant patois which is neither pleasing nor elegant. With this also has come lessened interest in reading the Gaelic language.

The beginning of the period under review ushered in the dawn of the golden age of Gaelic prose. When Campbell published the *Tales of the West Highlands* (1860-62), he

gave us stories of the past with which the dull monotony of life, on the marge of the sighing seas and in the hollows between the sullen hills, was relieved. The stories are written from oral recitation, and are valuable, not merely as records of the distant past, but as preserving for us idioms and phraseology used by the common people, thus affording a mine of immense value to the linguistic folklorist. Earlier than Campbell is Lachlan Maclean's *Adam and Eve* (1837), a book which is of infinitely greater value for its idioms and excellent style than for its conclusions. Maclean was full of delicious humour, and approached the question of deciding the relative antiquity of Gaelic and Hebrew with some knowledge of both languages, and arrived at his conclusion in favour of the seniority of Gaelic by a process of reasoning which need not be described, but which, nevertheless, is presented to the reader in exquisite Gaelic. The Rev. Angus Mackenzie, a probationer of the Free Church, published in 1867 the *History of Scotland*, which is but a translation of Mackenzie's history with the same title. The translation is that of an exact and competent writer with full command of expressive and idiomatic Gaelic. We have later the *Folk Tales and Fairy Tales* of Rev. James Macdougall of Duror (1910), written in easy and flowing diction. But greater than any of these is Mr. Donald MacKechnie (1836-1908), whose book *Am Fear Ciuil*, published in 1904 and 1910, furnishes us with perhaps the most terse and crisp examples of prosody in

the language. He is a master of the mechanism of lucid writing, and has applied the exactitude of modern knowledge of the Gaelic language to the reproduction of common incidents and events in life with a humour that saves exactness from being pedantic or dry. But our great mine of modern prose consists of the following periodicals:—

PERIODICALS.—The Rose of the Field, 1803; The Highland Messenger (24 Nos.), 1829-30; The New Messenger, 1835-6; Cuairtear nan Gleann (40 Nos.), 1840-3; Cuairtear nan Coillte (Ontario), 1840; The Witness (An Fhianuis, 36 Nos.), 1845-50; The Satirist, 1845; Teachdaire nan Gaidheal, 1844; The Mountain Visitor (25 Nos.), 1846-50; Caraid nan Gael (5 Nos.), 1844; Caraid nan Gaidheal (Inverness), 1853; An t-Aoidh Miosail, 1847-8; The Gael, 1871-7; An Cuairtear Og Gaidhealach (Antigonish), 1851; The Celtic Magazine, 1876-88; The Banner of Truth, 1872-4; Free Church of Scotland Quarterly, 1875-93; The Witness, 1893-1906; Free Presbyterian Magazine (bilingual) from 1893; Free Church of Scotland Monthly Record (bilingual) from 1900; Cuairtear na Coillte, 1881; Monthly Visitor, 1858; Gaelic Supplement to Life and Work; The Highlander (6 Nos.), 1881-82; The Highland Monthly (Inverness, 51 Nos.), 1889; and at Oban, 1885; Mac Talla (Sydney C. B.), 1892; Scottish Celtic Review (4 Nos.), 1881; Celtic Review from July 1904; Guth na Bliadhna, 1904; An Deo Greine from Oct. 1905; An Sgeulaiche, 1909; and the short-lived Gaelic newspaper Alba.

Columns of Gaelic matter appear regularly also in the *Oban Times*, *The Northern Chronicle*, *The Highland News*, and occasionally in *The People's Journal*.

Dr. Norman Macleod, who gathered around him valuable coadjutors in many of these periodicals, is looked upon by many as the father of modern prose. Lacking the finished equipment of the present-day writer, Macleod had certainly the faculty, like his contemporary novelists, of transfiguring the life of the common people in all its pathos and joy, in its unsophisticated simplicity, and in its clinging tenacity to the receding past. His dialogues in this connection are inimitable, and while it is necessary to make allowance for the irrepressible enthusiasm of Professor Blackie, the Greek scholar has a right to be listened to when he says that these Dialogues are 'marked by the dramatic grace of Plato and the shrewd humour of Lucian'; and again—'which for graceful simplicity and profound pathos is second to nothing that I know in any language, unless indeed it be the account of the death of Socrates in Plato's *Phaedo*, and some well-known chapters in the Gospel of St. John.'¹

Dr. Mackintosh Mackay (1793-1873) moves with grave and stately majesty, as he discourses in the *Fianuis* on the ecclesiastical problems of his day. Dugald Macphail (1819-1887), better known by his pen name 'Muileach,' was a poet of repute, as well as an elegant prose writer,

¹ *Language and Literature of the Highlands of Scotland*, pp. 315, 329.

whose smooth and flowing sentences appealed to the most fastidious critic. Mrs. M'Kellar (1834-1890), although she lacked spontaneity, could express herself with vigour, and fluently, both in prose and poetry. Rev. James Macdougall, Duror, writes in a smooth and flexible style. Sheriff Nicolson (1827-1893) enriched the literature of the Highlands by his enlarged edition (1881) of that quintessence of Highland wisdom and wit, the *Proverbs*, compiled by Mackintosh. The accurate knowledge of the brilliant Sheriff manifested itself in the pages of a book that has made him the benefactor of all students of Highland character. In the published sermons of the Rev. John Macalister, we have the irritating peculiarities of the dialects and idioms of Arran in unrelieved faithfulness. Among the translators of English prose, none has laboured with more painstaking industry than Alexander Macdougall of Glenurquhart. In the upper reaches of that Strath this teacher spent his evenings, summer and winter alike, in translating the works of Dr. John Owen. The translations are as severely accurate and unbending as the theology of the famous Puritan. The fruit of his industry appears only in part in the three volumes published, viz. *Communion of the Saints* (1876), *The Person of Christ* (1884), and *Psalm 130* (1896), for, alas, an apathetic people have enforced the confinement of the larger portion of his work to the manuscript over which this tireless student toiled unremittingly, and all for love of Gaelic and theology. For the same reason

a splendid translation of a portion of Dr. John Brown's Bible by the Rev. Alexander M'Coll of Lochalsh still remains hidden in the pages of an unpublished manuscript. Among living prose writers and translators of prose there are not a few whose efforts merit praise.

Professor Mackinnon has concluded, and few will venture to differ from him, that the four masters of Gaelic prose style are—Drs. John and Norman Macleod, Lachlan Maclean, and Donald Mackechnie. An example of the prose with translation of the last three of these writers is now given :—

' Bheachdaich mi gu h-araidh air aon duine dall, aosmhor a bha 'n a shuidhe air leth, a's triuir no ceathrar de chloinn ghillean mu'n caiurt da, a sheana ghairdeanan thairis orra, iad a' feuchainn co 'bu dluithe a gheibheadh a stigh r'a uchd, a cheann crom os an ceann, 'fhalt liath agus an cuaileanan dualach donna-san ag amaladh 'n a cheile, agus a dheoir gu trom, frasach a' tuiteam thairia orra, Dluth dha aig a chasaibh bha bean thlachdmhor 'n a suidhe ag osnaich gu trom ann an iomaguin broin ; agus thuig mi gu 'm b'e a fear-posda a bha 'spaisdearachd air ais agus air aghart le ceum goirid agus le lamhan paisgte. Bha sealladh a shul luaineach neo-shuidhichte, agus 'aghaidh bhuarite ag innseadh gu soilleir nach robh sith 'n a inntinn. Tharruing mi dluth do'n t'seann-duine, agus dh' fheoraich mi dheth ann an caoimhneas cainnt, an robh esan ann am feasgar a laithean a' dol a dh-fhagail a dhuthcha ? ' Mise,' deir esan, ' a dol thairis ! cha 'n 'eil ! Air imrich cha teid mis gus an tig an imrich a tha 'feitheamh oirnn air fad ; agus an uair a thig, co an sin a theid fo m' cheann do'n Chill ? Dh 'fhalbh sibh ! dh 'fhalbh sibh ! dh'fhagadh mise 'm aonar an diugh gu dall aosda, bhrathair, gun mhac, gun chultaise ; agus an diugh—la

mo dhunach, Dia 'thoirt maitheanais domh—tha thusa, 'Mhairi, mo nighean, m'aon duine cloinne, le m' oghachan geala, gaolach, a' dol ga m' fhagail.' (Dr. Norman Macleod, *An Gaidheal*, iii. Leabh 294).

Professor Blackie's translation:—

'My attention was specially drawn to one old man, old and blind, who was sitting apart from the rest with three or four little boys round about him, his old arms stretching over them, while they were trying to come as near as possible to his breast, his head bending over their heads, his long grey hair and their curly brown locks loosely mingling together, and the big tears rolling down his cheeks. Near him, close to his feet, was a handsome woman, sitting and sobbing as under some heavy affliction; and I guessed that it was her husband who was walking up and down with a short hurried step and his hands folded. His eye had a wild and unsettled look, and the disturbed expression of his countenance showed plainly how little peace there was in his mind. I drew near to the old man, and asked him in a gentle voice if he, in the evening of his days, was going to leave his native country. "I," he said, "emigrate! Not I. I shall not move from my earthly home till I go to that land to which we must all go some day; and when my hour comes to go who is there now that will put his shoulder under my head and help to carry me to my last resting-place? Ye are gone! Ye are gone! and I am left alone, blind and old, without brother, without son, without stay or support; and to-day—day of my sorrow! God forgive me,—you, Mary, my daughter, my only child, with my dear, beautiful, bright-eyed grandchildren, you are going to leave me!"'

From Lachlan Maclean's *Adam and Eve*:—

'Tha an obair so air do shonsa, a Ghael fhialaidh a chridhe dhirich—thusa aig am bheil eolas air an t-sinnsireachd chliutaich ris am bheil do dhaimh—air na blaraibh a chuir iad—na buaidhibh

a thug iad—agus an cliu a choisinn iad anns na laithibh a dh'fhalbh—air mar chriothnaich rioghachdan an domhain roimh gharbh thairnein an airm, agus a gheill iad le urram do ghliocas an comhairle!—mar chunnaic eirigh na greine greadhnachas an cuirtean rioghail, 'sa rinn Mactalla gairdeachas ri ard chaithream am feachd—tha an obair so air do shonsa.

'Ma bheir i riarachadh dhuitse cha do chaill an t-ughdar a shaothair, agus cha'n'cil e 'g iarraidh ort diog a chreidsinn nach do chreid e fein romhad—oir, theid e gu bas le dearbh-bheachd gu'm b' i Ghaelig a cheud chanain, agus an lan dochas gur h-i bheir buaidh anns an t-saoghall thall.

'Aon fhocal, agus 'se so e: gabh lethsgheil mearachdan a chlo-bhualaidh, tha iad lionmhor: gabh lethsgheil laigse an ughdair, tha i mor; agus O! cuir air an athair cheart i, oir cha robh lamh riamh no corrag m'an obair a leanas ach an lamh so.'

Translation:—

'This work is for you, generous and upright Gael—you who know the illustrious progenitors from whom you have sprung—the battles they fought, the victories they had achieved, and the praises they had won in the days gone by—how the nations of the world disappeared before the thunders of their arms, and how, too, they yielded to the wisdom of their counsel—how the rising sun beheld the excellence of their royal courts, and Echo rejoiced at the resonant tramp of their hosts—this work is for you.

'If it will please you, the author has not laboured in vain, and he does not ask you to believe a syllable which he does not believe himself, for he will die convinced that Gaelic was the first language, and fully persuaded that it will prevail in the other world.

'One word, and it is this—excuse the mistakes of the press, they are many—excuse the defect of the author, for it is great, and oh! father it on the proper person, for no hand nor finger but this touched the work that follows.'

From Donald Mackechnie's *Am Fear-Ciùil*:—

'Latha de na laithean, thainig e (an cat) steach's eun 'na bheul, s' e 'g a leigeil fhaicinn do gach neach a bha mu 'n cuairt. 'Nuair a thainig e far an robh mise rug mi air, 's dh' innis mi dha nach robh mi idir buidheach dheth ; nach b'i sin an seorsa sithinn a bha dhith ormsa ; 's a bharrachd air sin, gu robh Achd Parlamaid an aghaidh a bhi marbhadh eun as eugmhais cead laghail air a shon ; 's na faicinn-sa a leithid so de sheilg a rithist, gu'n cuirinn maoir is madaidh a' bhaile 'na dheigh. "Fhaic thu," arsa mise, 's mi crathadh mo chorraig r'a shroin, "b'fhearr leamsa eisdeachd ri ceilear an eoin bhig sin fad choig mionaidean, na ged bhiodh tusa, 's do chompanaich a' seinn domh fad choig raidhean." Tha amharus agam nach do leig Tomas dheth, uile gu leir, a bhi sealg nan eun, ach thuig e, maith gu leoir, nach robh cliu aige ri fhaotainn air a shon, 's leig e dheth a bhi toirt dachaidh na cairbh.'

Translation:—

'One day he (Thomas, the cat) came in with a bird in his mouth, showing it to all who were about. When he came to me, I caught him and told him that I was not by any means pleased with him ; that such was not the kind of venison I wished for ; and more than that, an Act of Parliament prohibited the killing of birds without legal permission ; and if I should again see such a hunting trophy I would set the town officers and dogs after him. "Observe you," I remarked, shaking my finger before his nose, "I would prefer five minutes of that little bird's singing to a year and a quarter of your caterwauling and that of your companions." I suspect that Thomas did not entirely cease from hunting birds, but he understood perfectly well that he would not curry favour by persisting, so he discontinued carrying home the spoil.'

In the branch of the literature that bears on the scientific study of the language, vast progress has been made during the decades under review. The grammars of James Munro

and Stewart were good. Dr. Maclauchlan's enlargement of Stewart's was an improvement, and later we have a competent grammar by Reid, and helpful guides to the study of the language from L. Macbean and Macbain and Whyte. Dictionaries have also increased. There is one among them which deserves recognition, were it only for the herculean labour involved in its production. Ewen Macdonald, whose real name is Edward Dwelly, an Englishman, has finished, after thirty years of arduous toil, a Dictionary of three volumes, containing one thousand pages and over eighty thousand words—a Dictionary of which he was author, compositor, illustrator, and publisher, and in each department of the work the result reflects the greatest credit on him. The story of this work reads like a romance.

As far back as 1872, Professor William Geddes, afterwards Principal Sir W. Geddes of Aberdeen University, in an address to the Celtic Society of that University, which was published in the same year, on the 'Philologic Uses and Advantages of a Knowledge of the Celtic Tongue,' arraigns the Scottish students for their neglect of the study of the Gaelic language, particularly in the branch of comparative Philology:—

'The Celtic is now duly installed in what may be called the hierarchy of Aryan tongues. Pritchard, in his work on the Eastern origin of the Celtic nations, established the affinity. Pictet, of Geneva, has done much in the same direction; but the work has been fully performed by four Germans—Bopp, Zeuss, Ebel, and

Schleicher. A fifth might be added, Dieffenbach, whose works contain a mine of historic facts as to the Celtic races. To match against these four Germans we have only one, or it may be two, worthy of being conjoined in the same rank, and the French another ; and yet the Germans have not in the Fatherland a single Celtic-speaking village ; while France and Britain have whole provinces of Celtic speech, so that here, as elsewhere, “ the last are first and the first last.” ’

At this time, however, it should not be forgotten, that that Scottish pioneer in Philology, Rev. Alexander Cameron, LL.D. (1827-1888), of Brodick, was already busy in this field. He was a disciple and follower of Professor Windisch of Leipzig, and Dr. Whitley Stokes, though not in a slavish sense. He made precision a feature of his study, and might indeed be looked upon as almost a martyr to accuracy. He would break a lance over a comma, and in a fierce controversy with Drs. Thomas Maclauchlan and Clark, he evinced signs of his unmistakable erudition which, in the light of later scholarship, proved him to be far ahead of his opponents in the linguistic controversy. In the monumental work *Reliquiæ Celticæ* (1892-94), and in the *Scottish Celtic Review*, to which he was himself chief contributor, there are abundant proofs of the industry and scholarship of one who was the first in this country to trace scientifically the origin and history of the language. Following upon him came Dr. Alexander MacBain, a scholar of high repute, whose *Etymological Dictionary of the Gaelic Language* of 1896 (second edition 1911) compressed Conti-

mental and British researches in this field into a Dictionary which is the first of its kind in the language, and which opens up a new era.

Dr. W. J. Watson of the Royal High School, Edinburgh, has applied himself with conspicuous success in the same field of philology, in an effort to elucidate the meanings of place-names in the country. His book, *Place-Names of Ross and Cromarty* (1894), is a valuable contribution, inasmuch as it unfolds not merely the history of the words, but the history of the community, ecclesiastically and socially, that lived around the places that are so named.

At the beginning of the Victorian era the religious poets were still singing on congenial themes. Among the most outstanding poets of the period was unquestionably John Morison, blacksmith, preacher, and poet of Harris. An untutored metaphysician and psychologist, he probed life and conduct with the sharp instrument of a keen intellect, and gave expression to his subtle thoughts in poems of prodigal fulness. There is a remarkable blending of idiom and thought, a wonderful weaving and winding of expression, in all the works of this imaginative genius, that rightly entitle him to a high rank among Gaelic sacred bards. In the 'Ark,' the 'Young and Old Man,' and that gem of Gaelic poetry 'Ionndruinn,' we have presented to us grand movements of the soul and intellect of a man who moved in the mysteries of faith with courage and sincerity. The echoes of pulpit mysticism are found in the written

language of this troubled soul. The 'Ionndruinn' has been compared to Newman's 'Lead, Kindly Light.' Souls very far apart and moving in very different directions, had this at least in common—that yearning and longing for a peace that still lay outwith their religious experience. This is a translation of verses of the 'Ionndruinn,' by the late Dr. George Henderson :—

'When, as I did refrain for long,
 Age smote my bones and sorely ;
 Age smote my song with silent wrong,
 Age smote me long and lowly :
 Not as of yore, in weakness strong,
 Time but prolongs my story—
 Grief and death's bond to me belong,
 Save Heavenly Son restore me.

My heavy heart adds to my smart,
 Like to a hart when wounded ;
 My steps abound, but still I start,
 And fall athwart confounded :
 Though all around I seek the High'st,
 No one is nigh or round me,
 To smite sweet chords upon my lyre
 And so in sighs I'm grounded.

Each hour and hour I weep and grieve,
 And fret in melancholy,
 That sin and folly do deceive
 And oft bereave me wholly
 Of Thee, though lovingly I'd wreathe
 My sins with leaves of holly,
 Till songs I'd weave and sunlight breathe
 The dew beneath the olive.'

Dr. John Macdonald of Ferintosh, the famous Apostle of the North, was also a poet of repute. Meditative, hortative, and didactic, his poetry moves on with easy expression and pleasing melody. Evangelical teachings, of which he was a master, are translated to the people in phrases which have become popular. Perhaps the best known of all his poems is the 'Christian,' whose fine consolatory notes have been often the means of conveying much comfort to Zion's pilgrims. The following examples are from a translation by Rev. Professor John Macleod, M.A., of Edinburgh :—

'Twas their hope and living faith that led them to confess on earth
That they were unwelcome strangers in the world that gave them birth ;
For they sought a better country and a heritage divine,
And with joyful soul they saw from off the hills its glory shine.

Little wonder though the flesh should tremble as it nears the shore
Of the Jordan while the darkness groweth lonesome more and more ;
For before me is the ocean without bank or further side,
Everlasting and unmeasured by the sun or flowing tide.

Close the tie is and mysterious that has ever bound in one
Soul and body : yes, the knot is one that's hard to be undone.
But the time will come when death shall loosen it, and then the tomb
Shall its share have, for the tenant leaves behind his earthly home.'

(The Christian on the Banks of Jordan.)

'But the blessings of the land how can I ever tell them o'er ?
For 'tis full to overflowing with its milk and honey store ;
And the Lord's own kindly eye is on it all throughout the year,
And the folk that live therein are satisfied with endless cheer.

Its inhabitant shall never say that he is sick or sore,
Ne'er complain of desolation or of famine on its shore ;
And the more his heart of evil wearied him his whole life long,
Now the greater is his gladness and the louder is his song.

Loud he'll join with all the ransomed in their song of praise to God,
 Who from everlasting loved them and eternal life bestowed ;
 They shall never more by Babel's waters sit with harp unstrung
 But will join in song of triumph, tuneful harp, unfaltering tongue.'

(*The Christian across Jordan.*)

There were others, too, who were playing upon their harps, such as the deep and mysterious Donald Mackenzie of Assynt ; Rev. Duncan Maclean of Glenorchy, whose rare bardic efforts have not received the meed of appreciation they deserve ; Rev. Duncan Maccallum of Arisaig ; Rev. Duncan Macdougall of Tiree ; Rev. M. Macritchie of Strathy ; and among the laity, poets like John Mackintosh of Strathspey ; James Macbean of Inverness ; George Mackay of Roster, and a number of others, who, though less known, enjoyed deserved popularity among the community where they lived. The most eminent of the elegiac writers of this period was Rev. Dr. Blair of Pictou (1815-1893), a competent linguist and an earnest preacher. His elegies on John Macmaster, Rev. John Kennedy, and Dr. Macdonald are perhaps the best in the language.

The student of religious poetry will find the cream of the sacred poetry of the Highlands during this period in collections such as the *Sacred Poetry of the North*, by John Rose (1851), and the *Collection of Hymns*, by Dr. Archibald Kelly Maccallum (1894). But reflecting an older period than these is the monumental *Carmina Gadelica* of the late indefatigable Celtic enthusiast, Dr. Alexander Carmichael. Here are incantations and hymns of many periods, and if

the lichen-covered ruins that occupy such conspicuous spots in the Highlands are silent witness-bearers to the feuds and internecine wars of a past civilisation, these hymns and incantations, embedded in many instances in archaic expressions, crystallise the beliefs of votaries of successive cults that pursued each other through the long vista of prehistoric and historic times. In this collection the student of philology, of comparative religion, and of ecclesiastical history, will find much to reward a diligent search.

Although it is commonly stated that the noontide glory of Celtic poetry had disappeared before the Victorian era, still this can be accepted only with modification. If the sunset is slow and gradual, so also is the decline of Gaelic poetry, and if in this period the poets have not drunk from the full horn as indiscriminately and unconfined as those of the post-rebellion period, we have nevertheless in the early Victorian era men of outstanding worth in this field of poetry. William Livingstone (1808-1870) was obsessed with hatred for things Saxon, and allowed his poetry to be deeply tinged with this dislike. Yet he was a poet of rare power, and manipulated the idioms of the language and the language itself to fine effect, making free use of consonantal assonance to a jingling melody. He was irritable and passionate, and is the only Gaelic poet of later times who had nothing to say of the tender passion; and he has also the distinction of being the only dramatist in the whole galaxy of Gaelic bards. He could write with moving

pathos as well as with terrible fierceness. Ewen Maccoll (1808-1898), who was born in Lochfyneside, and lived in Liverpool, New York, and Toronto, had, from his varied experiences, a wider outlook on life, which is reflected in his songs. With more fancy and thought than imagination and feeling, he moves with remarkable suddenness among contrasted objects and ideas with a brilliance that is more dazzling than pleasing. Dr. John Maclachlan (1804-1874), the physician poet of Morven, and James Munro (1794-1870) of Fort William, have also contributed to the literature poems which, for their charm, grace, and moving sentiment, are worthy of ranking with those of the former two; and among the poets of the people they are not far behind the greater masters of the previous age. Angus Macdonald of Glenurquhart (1804-1874) was a good poet as well as a magnificent singer.

John Campbell, bard of Ledaig (1823-1897), who was a sweet singer, with ardent love for happy childhood and for nature, sang with verve of the beauties of his Highland home, and Highland scenery, in many verses that are destined to continue popular with those who appreciate the grace of easy diction, and the piquant flavour of humour. Of his home in the Highlands he sang:—

Is tric mi cuimhneach air tir mo dhuthchais,
 Air tir nam beanntan 's nan gleanntan urar
 Air tir nan sgarnaichean arda ruisgte
 Nan creagan corrach 's nan lochan dubhghorm.

Air sruthain chaisleach nan caran lubach
 Ri mire 's gleadhraich feadh bhac is stuean ;
 No ruith gu samhach 's a ghleannan chiuin ud,
 'S an doire challtuinn gu teann 'g an dunadh.

An eidheann dhuslach mar sgail-bhrat uaine
 'S a' gheamhradh 's fuair fo shnuadh a fas,
 'S i dion le 'sgiathan nan ard ehreag liath ud,
 Mar gu'm b'e h-iarrtas an cumail blath.

An tonn ri cronan air cladaich combnard,
 Le morbhan boidheach toirt ceol gu reidh,
 No 'g cirigh suas dhuinn le toirm an uamhais,
 'S an cath 'na chuartaig 'ga sguab do'n speur.

Sud tir a' chairdeis 's an d'fhuair mi m'arach
 'S am bheil a' Ghaidhlig is aillidh fonn ;
 'S i thogadh m'inntinn 'nuair bhithinn tursach,
 'S a dh' fhagadh sunndach mo chridhe trom.

'Dear land of my fathers, my home in the Highlands,
 'Tis oft that I think of thy bonnie green glens,
 Thy far-gleaming lochs and thy sheer-sided corries,
 Thy dark-frowning cliffs and thy glory of Bens !

Thy wild sweeping torrents, with bound and with bicker,
 That toss their white manes down the steep rocky brae ;
 Thy burnies that, babbling o'er beds of the granite,
 Through thick copse of hazel are wimpling their way.

Thy close-clinging ivy, with fresh shining leafage,
 That blooms through the winter and smiles at the storm,
 And spreads its green arms o'er the hoary old castle
 To bind its grey ruin and keep its heart warm.

That sweet-sounding splash of thy light-rippling billows
 As they beat on the sand where the white pebbles lie,
 And their thundering war when, with whirling commotion,
 They lift their white crests in grim face of the sky.

The land I was born in, the land I was bred in
 Where soft-sounding Gaelic falls sweet on the ear ;
 Dear Gaelic, whose accents take sharpness from sorrow
 And fill me despairing with words of good cheer.'

Lieutenant-Colonel John Macgregor, M.D., traveller, physician and zealous Celt, has the happy faculty of breathing his sentiments in verses that rhyme sweetly. But among the later poets, Neil Macleod, the Skye bard, is easily chief. In comparison with the greater masters of poetry in the language, he occupies a place not far behind the best. It is not a paltry fastidiousness that deplores the immoral impurities that stained the achievements of these masters, but from all such Neil Macleod is as free as the clean run salmon is of the parasites of the ocean. He depicts nature with idyllic beauty. A gentleness of spirit suffuses the whole, and gives that touch of indescribable attractiveness to his poetry which always fascinates. His verses have the grace of easy diction, and the charm of forcible simplicity. Whether describing the glen, the wood, or humorously depicting the frailties of the old maid, he is always pure and clear as the limpid waters of the stream, and free from any form of vindictiveness or cruel raillery. Among the poets he is the only one who saw the fourth edition of his published works. This alone sufficiently emphasises the impression he has made upon his race, and future critics of Gaelic poetry will doubtless endorse the judgment of his own generation.

Collectors of Highland poetry have been busy following the example of collectors of a former period, and as far back as 1841 John Mackenzie of Gairloch produced his *Beauties of Gaelic Poetry*. Although it has been alleged, and that correctly, that he gives only eight poems which were not previously published, he nevertheless deserves praise for his success within the limits of his knowledge, and for the amount of light he has thrown upon the lives of the poets with whom he deals. Mr. Archibald Sinclair with *An t-Oranaiche* (1876-7-8-9) places the Highlander under a debt of gratitude for accumulating poems that would probably have disappeared from view. The industrious Canadian historian and genealogist, Rev. A. Maclean Sinclair, has laboured successfully in this field also, and published collections of real value in 1890, 1892, 1896, 1898, and 1900. Mr. M. C. Macleod issued in 1908 his *Collection of Modern Gaelic Bards*. It has a value all its own as having gathered in handy form the verses of the living and recently deceased bards. Revs. A. Macdonald of Kiltarlity and Killearnan in their massive book of *The MacDonald Collection of Gaelic Poetry* have given us the toil of many years of skilful gleaning in the field of Highland poetry. Although the poets here are not all of the Clan Donald, and though we have here many poems already published, still the variants and the numerous meritorious songs of little-known poets invest this collection with special value. A unique contribution to the literature is Miss Frances

Tolmie's collection of Folk Songs in the Journal of the Folk Song Society, December 1911, whose great value is appropriately expressed in the words of the learned editor of that journal: 'It opens a mine of interest and delight to musicians, poets, folklorists and historians, and undoubtedly forms one of the most important contributions yet made towards the preservation of the purely traditional music and poetry of our British Isles in general, and of Scotland in particular.'

Mr. Kenneth Macleod has contributed considerably to the *Celtic Review* and other periodicals and books. To him is largely due, from a literary standpoint, the value of *The Songs of the Hebrides*. He is a true collector and folklorist, and at the same time a writer of original Gaelic prose and verse of great excellence. Of him much is expected.

There have been many translators of Gaelic poetry at work, including Blackie, Shairp, Nicolson, Pattison, Buchanan, MacNeil, White, MacBean, Macfarlane and others; and Dr. Dugald Mitchell's *Book of Highland Verse* (1912) is a splendid anthology of such translations, and of English verses relating to the Highlands.

In 1832 Reid, the bibliographer, wrote: 'Ere half a century elapses, it [the Gaelic] will have shared the fate of the Waldensian and the Cornish and have become subject of history alone.' Three-quarters of a century have passed, and the language is still vigorous and the prophecy false. In 1903, Professor Magnus Maclean¹ saw the near dis-

¹ *The Literature of the Highlands*, p. 205.

appearance of the bards in oblivion, but the efforts of living poets rob these sad forebodings of their immediate realisation. The end is not yet, nor within sight, and the bards will continue interpreting and describing. For, while the north wind sighs in the birch tree as of yore, and the cotton flower jauntily tosses its stainless white head in the moorland breeze that wafts the myrtle's stimulating fragrance, why should not the spirit of poetry continue to express itself in the mournful dirge, in the innocence of happy purity, and in refreshing melody?

The literature reviewed has been issued to the world from centres so far removed as Geelong in Australia, Antigonish and Toronto in Canada, and Aberdeen, Tain and Wick in Scotland, but the greater part was published in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Inverness; yet there is scarcely a publishing centre in the country from which some has not been issued. This literature, although not very large, has a deep interest of its own for students of the language and for patriots. It was produced against many prejudices and in the midst of numerous difficulties—difficulties which cannot be better illustrated than by this translated extract from a prefatory note to the spiritual songs of William Gordon, a soldier in the Reay Fencibles, published in 1802: 'When you are reading the verses that follow, remember that I had no place in which to write or study them, but the barrack and among my fellow-soldiers. The only time I applied to them was the time between parades. I did

not cease from the duties I had to perform as a soldier. No wonder then though there should be mistakes in my work.' In this literature can be found what Matthew Arnold called 'the lineaments of the Celtic genius.' It is the key to the heart of the Highlander, to the mysticism of his life, to his devoutness and religious conservatism, and to those peculiar features of his character which form a phenomenon almost unintelligible to the foreigner. The grand songs of the people's poets, whether secular or sacred, have percolated through all countries where the wandering children of the Gael have pitched their tents. In village and in clachan, on the seaboard at home and the outer extremities of this mighty Empire, in the prairies of America, these songs have cheered the heart of many a pilgrim. On the verandah in an Australian homestead, a Skye man conjures up the scenes of his happy childhood, as he sings :—

'When the simmer bricht returnin'
 Decks each grove and budding tree,
 When the birds amang the branches
 Are a' pipin' loud and free ;
 And the bairnies fu' o' glee
 Pu' the roses in the den,
 O! 'twere delight tae wander
 In my bonnie native glen.

In my bonnie native glen,
 In my bonnie native glen,
 O! 'twere dear delight tae wander
 In my bonnie native glen.

At the early peep o' mornin',
 When the grass was wat wi' dew,
 Amang the woods o' hazel
 Gaily sang the shy cuckoo ;
 An' the calves clean daft wi' joy
 Gaed a' friskin' roun' the pen ;
 Now we've nae sic scenes o' gladness
 In my bonnie native glen.'

I saw a copy of Alexander Macdonald's poetry that did duty at the mines of Ballarat and Johannesburg. An old lady in the sub-tropics of Australia rehearsed in my hearing verse after verse of Dugald Buchanan's poems, transporting herself in the very act to the happy days of childhood, round the peat fire in far-away Lochaber. These songs have been sung by the shepherds on the lonely moors, and by the fishermen on the rolling deep. From lip to lip they have been wafted across hill and dale from one generation to another. The intensity of their feeling has fired the spirit of many a forlorn Gael. This literature deserves to be studied. No student of the language can speak with authority who has not dipped deeply into this treasure ; and the future historian who will portray Highland life or character in its many vicissitudes, in its depression and in its joy, will fail to do so accurately unless he studies diligently the literature of the Scottish Gael.

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