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Third Volume



SONGS



OF THE
BRIDES.

Collected and Arranged
FOR
Voice and Piano-forte

With Gaelic and English Words
BY

MARJORY KENNEDY-FRASER

AND

Kenneth Macleod

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Maryon Kennedy-Fraser

To my SISTER
MARGARET KENNEDY

interpreter of

“LAND OF HEART'S DESIRE”

“KISHMUL'S GALLEY”

“HEART OF FIRE LOVE”

“THE BENBECULA BRIDAL”

“CUCHULLAN'S LAMENT”

“THE HEBRIDEAN MOTHER'S SONG”

“THE HARPER”

and many others.

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THE SONGS OF THE HEBRIDES.

(To M.K.F.)

Do they not sing these songs where Arthur sleeps,
And when Cuchulain came,
Did not that ¹Triumph-song
Over the peacock glory of the sea
Roll like a flame.
Behind the loves of Lancelot and the Queen,
And in far Rimini
Through all such fateful lives
Surely there blew that moaning of the ²Wind
Of Destiny.
And we who dream of other dawns than these
Acclaim the Sacred Fire,
Which by your ardent torch
Reveals to us a vision of the ³Land
Of Heart's Desire.

ALIX EGERTON.

¹ To the Lord of the Isles, Vol. II. ² The Wind on the Moor, Vol. III.
³ Vol. II.

As the lift of the wave to the venturing keel,
As the spark that is stricken from steel upon steel,
As the sea-light that lures in the eyes of the seal.

As the soar and the sweep of the sea-gull in flight,
As the grip of the foe in the thick of the fight,
As the grasp of a friend in the heart of the night.

As a loved sail lost in the gold of the West,
As the laughter of God in a baby's breast,
As the lights of the haven, the end of the quest,

To me, these songs in the Island Tongue,
That reivers and weavers and fishers have sung,
Songs that are old as the earth and as young.

WILFRID WILSON GIBSON.

SOME NOTES AND TUNES.

"An air is more lasting than the voice of birds,
A word is more lasting than the riches of the world."

ELEANOR HULL (*from the Gaelic.*)

"But which is the way to the Western Island ?

.

If the South Wind but knew my thoughts,
It would blow my dreams till they got to the Western Island."

ARTHUR WALEY (*from the Chinese, 4th cent.*)

Long before roads opened up continents, folk who lived in Island groups, like the Greeks and the Hebrideans, were close to the highways of the world. Their boats could carry them where they listed along sea-paths as good then as now, while the great un-charted waste of seas that lay west of the Hebrides made those islands, for the time, the *ultima thule* of the known world. There was caught and held the spiritual drift-thought of the ancient world. And, entering the Hebridean world of poetic legend and song to-day, it is, to quote Yeats, as though the spray of an inexhaustible fountain of beauty was blown into our faces. The very air in the small, remote, southerly isles of the Long Island group seems filled with the symbolism, idealism and hypnotic rhythms of this tradition. Over the jagged rocks, green machair and far-reaching sheen-white sands there broods ever an ineffable, spiritual beauty of space, colour, the infinite. One feels there a fierceness of exultation but rarely attained—in Tagore's words—the "impetus of the infinite energy to be glad."

Possibly to the heaping up of the traditional music-lore of the Isles many races have taken part. For we must think in *milleniums rather than in centuries when we dream of the far away origins of melodic stuff. And no one people surely can claim sole rights in such inherited melodic wealth—wealth of the most precious kind—to be shared by all.

*Sir Arthur Keith, in a paper read to the British Association in September, 1921, (dating back 2,000 years B.C. for his "reliable facts,") said that the late paleolithic races of S. Europe, from whom Scot and Scandinavian were alike descended, had dark hair, eyes and complexion. Fair hair, light eyes and clear complexion were to be regarded as more recently evolved. The darker hair and eyes of the Scot to-day were perhaps due to his retaining more of the characteristics of the common ancestor. On the other hand, apropos the dark Scot, Scotland was, 2,000 years B.C. in free communication with Europe by two portals—the Eastern, open to the North Sea and Central Europe—the Western, a back door to the Mediterranean. At that time, 4,000 years ago, the pulse of the Mediterranean was beating on Scotland along what might be called the Celtic Sea-passage—St. George's Channel, the Irish Sea, the Western Shores as far as Orkney and Norway. "This," comments Sir Leslie Mackenzie, "offers a very direct explanation of the continuity between Mediterranean and Hebridean civilizations. The earlier dark-haired round-heads of the Hebrides may have been partly successors of the common ancestors of Nordic and Southern races, but it is certain that there was a much later invasion of the Western Isles, direct from the Mediterranean peoples. In tracking these races, the skulls have been the chief guide, and types are easily differentiated by the expert. Psychological peculiarities, however, are not so easily or definitely recaptured thus. Size and shape of skull may be correlated with types of character—the round-head with the highly reflective, speculative and designing brain—the long-head with the active, fighting, adventurous brain. But this is at best purely speculative. Among the more stable customs and traditions rather might one look for indications of psychological character."

Now, as musical patterns, or even phrases, may remain constant for hundreds, and tonalities or scale-limitations, for thousands of years, we have surely, in traditional music, a valuable medium for ethnological research.

Commonly this traditionally-preserved music is termed folk-music and set apart. But in truth there is no dividing line between such inspired orally-passed-on music and any other good music. No schools can *make* the poet-musician, although notational facilities can certainly better perpetuate his work.

Of the music thus carried down from generation to generation, perhaps the labour lilt and hypnotic croons are the most ancient. Here is a hypnotic labour lilt of a strange wistful allure, fashioned out of but four notes: a, c, g, d, a fifth note f, being used once only, as a passing note. Because of the fierce economy of the means used—only three notes to begin with—how effective the rise to the “d” when the maiden speaks of her lover. It is a *waulking* duologue between a girl and an older woman—these communal labour lilt were often antiphonal—the girl asking the older woman to give her a sweetheart. The woman names a certain lad, and the girl—be it in earnest or be it in irony—sings loud his praises:

LABOUR CROON—A DUOLOGUE BETWEEN AN OLD WOMAN AND A GIRL.

OLD WIFE.
Con moto.

Bheiream, ho rom bo

GIRL.

Nach

toir thu mir dhomhsa, ho rom bo

OLD WIFE.

Bheiream, ho rom bo.

GIRL.

Co bheir thu

OLD WIFE.

fhein dhomh, ho rom bo? . . .

GIRL.

Bheir mi Coinneach dhuit an dras - da, ho rom bo M'eudail

m'ulaidh a - gus m'aigh ear is mo luaidh, 'Sann tha m'uail a suas ri crann - aibh, Ho rom - bo

OLD WIFE.

aigh-ear - ach dhomh, leannan a - gam, 'se cho òg,

Bheiream, ho rom bo

“If we are to suppose” continues Mackenzie, “as Keith justifies us in doing, that the men of the Mediterranean civilization penetrated into Ireland and the Western Isles over 3,000 years ago, it is not too fanciful to suggest that musical forms of the Ægean Isles and of the north shores of Africa might be recoverable to-day in the Hebrides.”

Such have been recovered † and we are surely not justified in dismissing these as mere coincidences or as recent borrowings. The persistence of musical “motives” finds a parallel in the persistence of the roots common to the Indo-European tongues. At least it is a gratifying confirmation of our speculation to find that the researches of anthropologists along entirely different lines lead to the same conclusions.

† See examples in Introduction, Vol. II., p. xiii.

The words translated run :

Girl. Wilt thou not give me a bit, ho rom bo.
Woman. I will give it, ho rom bo.
Girl. Whom wilt thou give?
Woman. I will give Kenneth for the nonce, ho rom bo.
Girl. My love, my treasure, my joy and my dear one,
 My pride is lifted up to the mast tops,
 Gladness of me, a sweetheart have I,
 And he so young!
Woman. I will give it, ho rom bo.

In strong contrast to this hypnotic chant is the short characteristic sea-chanty that follows. The sudden rousing upward leap to the octave, with the third as an intermediate step—a favourite melodic device in this type of tune*—announces the *pull-ye-all-together* character of the air.

REFRAIN. *exultantly.* VERSE. REFRAIN. *From Eigg. D.C.*

A ho hi! Yo ho i . . . o Hug o rionn an.

Of a totally different character again, this passionate love lament learnt long ago in Skye by Janet Macleod and carried thence by her to Eigg :

Slow and sustained, like a 'Cello Solo. *From SKYE AND EIGG.*

The next two are love songs in a happier vein :—

AN AIR FROM POOLEWE ON THE WEST COAST.
Slowly, wistfully, and sustained.

* See "In Hebridean Seas" in Vol. I.

MO CHRUIÑNEAG BHOIDHEACH.

Sostenuto. *From MARGARET MACDONALD, BERNERA, The "Lews."*

Ho il . . liu ho - ro - u O bu tu mo chruinneag bhoidheach liu ho ro
hu ro . . ho

The words of the latter run :—

Reidhinn leat a dh'Uidhist
Far am buidhicheadh an t-eorna.

Reidhinn leat a dh'Eirinn
Gu feill nam ban oga.

Reidhinn leat a sear 's a siar
Cho fad 's a ghrian a' comhnuidh.

I would go with thee to Uist
Where the barley would yellow.

I would go with thee to Erin
To the festival of the maidens.

I would go with thee East and West
So long as the sun would last.

The air I noted from an old woman carrying peats, a genuine old traditional singer, in the isle of Bernera off the west coast of The Lewes, the *Thule* of William Black's novel. She was one of those rare singers who remember not merely the scaffolding of a tune but all its beautiful curves. As an example of how such a tune may be shorn of its curves, here is a notation of the same song given me as from a singer on the mainland of Lewis:—

"MO CHRUIÑNEAG BHOIDHEACH."

CHORUS. VERSE

In this form the tune is not new to the "Songs of the Hebrides." It is almost identical with an air that Kenneth Macleod and I collected and noted from the singing of a Lewis girl engaged on the herring curing at Eyemouth in 1912, the air to which, in Vol. II., we set the words of "The Smuggler's Song."

A simple little hypnotically rhythmical love tune, noted from the same peat-carrier is :—

A FHLEASGAICH CHIUINN.

REFRAIN. VERSE. *From the LEWES.*

FINE. D.C.

A rare old isleswoman she was, Margaret Macdonald, and I should have liked a longer *ceilidh* with her. But we had just landed from a small boat, on a very dangerous point, and

our boatman was anxious to get away before more dangerous sailing conditions set in, so I had to desist in the middle of one of the most alluringly elusive tunes I have ever tried to note. A playful puff of wind, however, might have turned a difficult situation into an impossible one!

A type of tune familiar to Lowland and Highland Scotland through the well-known and widely sung Jacobite Rising songs of "the '15" and "the '45" is this from Eigg:

JACOBITE "RISING" SONG.

With rousing incitement. *From EIGG.*

Ho co theid cui - de rium Hi ho ro - co . . . dh'fhalbhas! Ho co
Who, who, who will come with me a - cross the moun-tains of Moi - dart? Who, who,

FINE.

co - theid cui - de rium Null thar mon - aidhean Mhui - deart? Grio-saibh oirbh's na dianaibh maille Is
who will come with me a - cross the mountains of Moi - dart? Haste ye, make ye no de - lay . . The

D.C.

Righ nan Dul 'gar stiuradh, Grio-saibh oirbh is dianaibh cabhaig's mo tigh air tir . . am Mui - deart.
*King of Dul will steer ye, Haste ye, haste ye, Haste to corne For our King has landed in Moi - dart.

The poet here has put words into the mouth of young Macdonald of Kinloch-Moidart who, by his enthusiasm for the cause, in the beginning of "the '45," turned the scale in favour of Prince Charlie.

Such *tunes* are likely to be much older than the times and doings commemorated by the *words*—the special Jacobite appeal of the words here having probably ousted the earlier verses.

And yet such tunes may, on the other hand, be ultra-modern airs as compared with such labour lilts as "Ho rom bo" and this somewhat similar one used of old in Skye alike for reaping and for waulking:—

ORAN ARABHAIG.

1ST TUNE. *From SKYE (Reaping Song).*

La Lea-thag, O - ho, Mhairearad chridhe, O - ho, La Lea-thag, O - ho, Nighean nan Leodach,

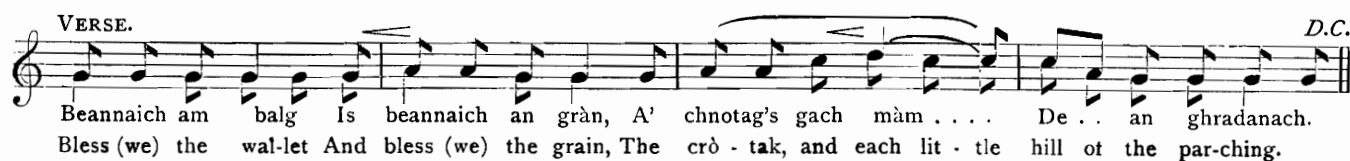
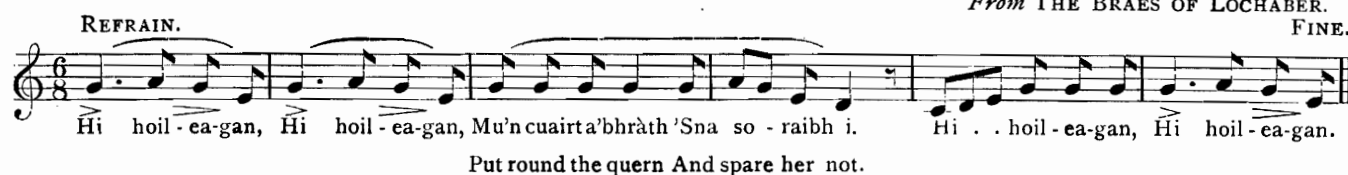
2ND TUNE. *Smoothly.*

O - ho, Eile la ho e ho. Eile la ho e ho, Tha so fuar air o - ho.

The two tunes, the first the main one, the second only an alternate one, are fashioned out of four notes. The following is pentatonic. If reaping be nigh as old as the hills, so surely was the preparing of the grain in the old quern or hand-mill, and here a quern-croon, the words of which are perhaps even more interesting than the air:—

* Righ nan Dul=King of the Elements.

THE BLESSING OF THE QUERN.

From THE BRAES OF LOCHABER.
FINE.*Cronan Brathann = Croon of the Quern.*

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Hi hòileagan
Hi hòileagan
Mu'n cuairt a' bhràth
'S na sòraibh i,
Hi hòileagan
Hi hòileagan. | 1. Hee hòlikan
.
Put round the quern
And spare her not
Hee hòlikan.
Hee hòlikan ! |
| 2. Beannaich am balg,
Is beannaich an gràn,
A' chnotag's gach màin
De'n ghradanadh. | 2. Bless the wallet
And bless the grain,
The 'cròtak and each little hill
Of the parching. |
| 3. Beannaich an t-inneal,
Is beannaich an crann,
A' bheairt is gach ball
A bhuineas di. | 3. Bless the gear
And bless the handle,
The tackle, each part
That belongs to it. |
| 4. Cuir an car deiseal
Am feasda de'n bhrath,
Ma's maith leat min bhàn
Bhi torrach dhuit. | 4. Put sunwise turn
Ever on quern,
If thou dost wish
White meal to be plentiful. |
| 5. Mu'n cuairt i 'na still
Le luinneagan binn,
'S cha toirear do'n t-sithean
Deannag dhi. | 5. Turn her in showers
With sweet liltings and ne'er e'en
A pinch will be ta'en
Away to the sheean! (fairy hill). |

From Macpherson's "DJANAIRE" 1868.

And here a boat-song from the other side of the Minch with the very throb of the oars in its swing:—

HARRIS BOAT SONG.

From MURDOCH MORRISON, N. Uist.¹ A hollow stone for unhusking corn.

(xv.)



“ Nam biodh agam coite bhiorach
Seisear ghilleán air chul ramh
'S mi gun rachadh null thar linne
Fiach an robh mo chruinneag slan.”

Which in English runs :—

If I had a sharp-prowed coracle
And six lads behind the oars,
It is myself that would cross the linn
To see how it fares with my love.

The next, a slow rowing song from Barra, suggests a heavily laden boat :—



To the Johnsons (or Mac Iains) of Barra, I am indebted for many fine tunes, Donald Mac-Iain, father of Malcolm Johnson the elder (there are two cousins of the same name) sang the opening *Blessing* air in the “*Birlinn of Clanranald*” and also the “*Sea Rapture*” tune in “*Sea Moods*” although it was from Malcolm Johnson the younger that I noted the latter. The *Blessing* I noted one morning, sitting in the sun, after service, between the buttresses of the church wall, looking down on old Kishmul Castle. The singer was Calum Mac Iain (Malcolm Johnson the elder) son of Donald, and of him and his like I would say that in many cities there is quite a wrong conception of the traditional singer, at least as he is found among the Gaels. In the Outer Isles, where the tradition is still the strongest, he may be a markedly individual artist, or, as is the case the world over, he may attempt to sing and yet be no artist at all. He may sing like an *ideal* Wagnerian say, as this man invariably did, or he may, if he is the *non*-artist, grind you out a tune like a hurdy-gurdy. But—the inspired *composers* of the finest of these melodies could never have been hurdy-gurdy-ites !

Here are two curious tunes noted from the same two cousins :—



The first in the *re* mode, containing all the notes of the scale and extending in compass to an octave and a fourth.

(xvi.)

LA BLAR NA LEINE=THE DAY OF THE BATTLE OF THE SHIRTS.

A m'hic I - ain'ic Sheumais, Tha do sgeul air . . m 'aire, Air fair al ail . . leo, Air
fair al ail . . leo, La Blar na Leine bha feum air mo lean - abh . . Hi eile he ho hi
ri sa bho ro Ho huo . . Chall eile bho hi ri . . ho ro hi . . Ho ho hi! . .

This again uses all the notes of the scale, and in the second half of the tune gives a fine rousing effect as of modulation.

Another, from Eigg, is perhaps more curious than attractive. Note the alternate use of E^b and E[♯]:

ANCIENT MACDONALD SONG.

From MARION MACLEOD.

Mo nigh - ean dubh, mo nigh - ean dubh Shiubhlainn leat thar m'eol - - as, Mo nigh - ean
dubh, mo nigh - ean dubh. Shiubhlainn fa - da fa - da leat Gu La - gan - aich na Loch - raidh.

My dark maiden,
I would wander with thee beyond my ken,
I would wander far far with thee
To Laggan of Lochry.

The rowing song as an actual labour lilt seems to be dying out in the Isles. There is fortunately as yet no question of need to revive the *waulking* song. In isles where the home-spun wool is still woven and shrunk by the folk, the *waulking* song is still to be heard as an actual communal labour lilt. Here are some we heard in North Bay, Barra, in the summer of 1920. The first expresses the hopeless passionate longing of a woman who had "taken the love of her heart" for the husband of another:—

SLOW WAULKING SONG.

With passionate longing.

VERSE.

FINE.

Ho lo . . lail leo' Ho lo . . lail leo'

(xvii.)



The next is a joyous lilt to be sung as the work approaches completion :—

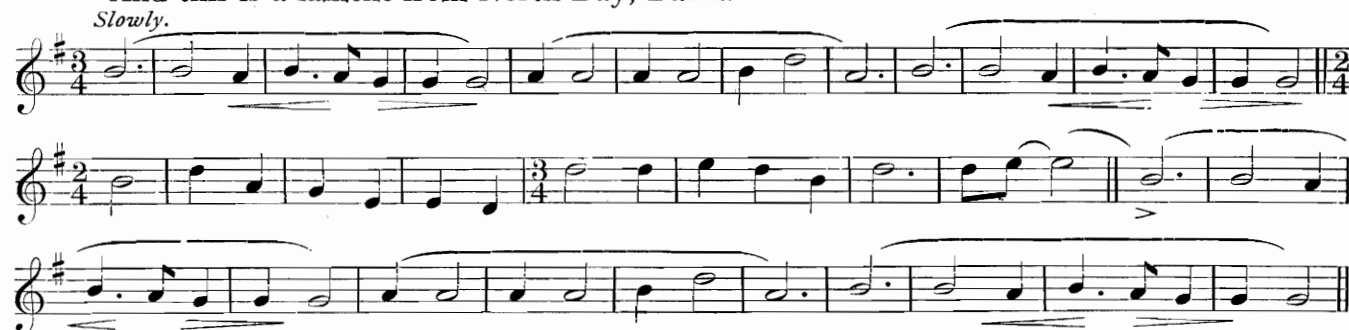
LIVELY WAULKING SONG.



Another such, this tune from Eigg :—



And this is a lament from North Bay, Barra.



The next a little sea-lull-song from Castle Bay, noted by Annie Johnson, my indefatigable collaborator there, from the singing of her brother Malcolm :—

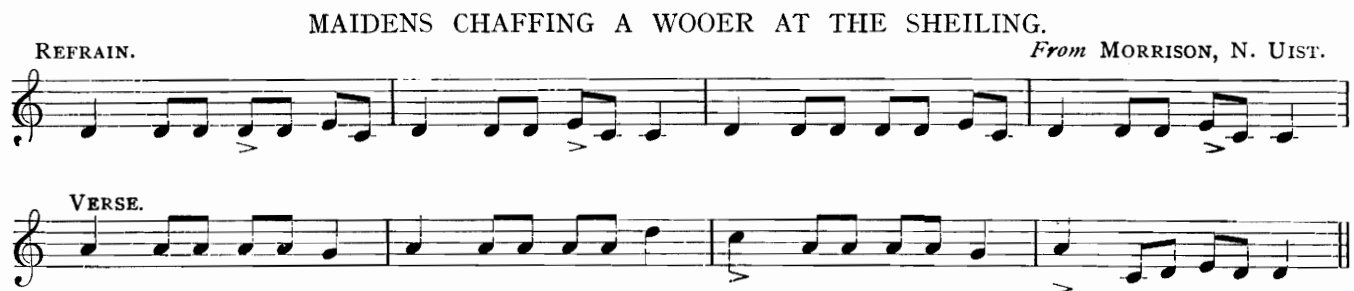
LURE OF THE SEA-MAIDEN.



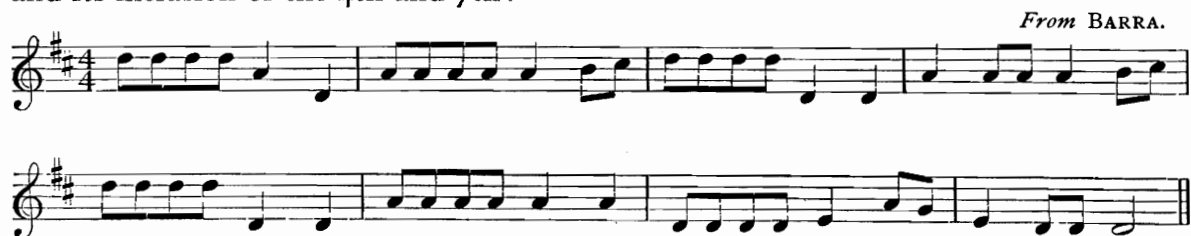
At the end of this volume we have given a fairly full version of a famous old classic Hero-Tale *Bron Binn* or the Melodious Sorrow. Alike in that air and in the following, also from Barra, there is a reminiscence of a Breton idiom—note the recurring cadence between brackets:—



Repeating-note tunes such as follow* have always struck me as rather Scandinavian than Celtic:—



The next is unlike the typical Hebridean airs in its insistence on the 1st and 5th of the scale and its inclusion of the 4th and 7th:—



* See also "Milking" in Vol. I.

Another of the same :

THE LITTLE PEAT—A CHAORAN.



Still another, noted at Inverailort Castle on the mainland, just over against Eigg. It suggests the air of Burns' "Green Grow the Rashes, O," in embryo:—

PORT-A-BIAL "CAORADH RUADH."

From RONALD McISAAC.



Such simpler forms of tunes, now national favourites because of the words the poets have fitted to them, are frequently found. Here are just such earlier and more characteristic forms of two favorite Gaelic songs: "Mo run geal dileas" (and Gur Milis Morag) and "Ged tha mi gun chrodh gun aighean":—



Beauteous Maiden,
When I would be sorrowful
And the others in gladness,
No music would I seek
But the witchery of thy mouth.

REFRAIN.



FINE. VERSE.



The Lament, in the Isles, was frequently also a Boat Song. A case in point, the "Harp of Dunvegan" at p.31 by Mary Macleod, the most famous of the poetess-singers of the Isles! We do not know for certain that she made any of her own tunes. One tradition has it

that another woman made the tunes while Mary made the words and certainly sang them all over the Isles. Another air attributed to her as singer at least, is this:—

LAMENT FOR RAASAY.

BY MARY MACLEOD.



Och nan och, mo leir chradh, Mar dh'ei - - rich do'n ghais-geach, Chan 'eil seal - gair na . .

sith - ne 'Ndiugh am frith . . nam beann ca - sa. Hu a ho hi o ho Hug o - rionn O

Hu a ho hi O he lu - raibh . . . O Ho ro.. hi o ho Hug o - rionn O.

Mary Macleod's poems were first published in 1776, long after her death, in a small volume of Gaelic poetry, an anthology prepared and published by Ronald Macdonald at one time schoolmaster in Eigg. He was a son of the Gaelic sea-poet Alexander Macdonald whose most famous poem, *The Birlinn of Clan-Ranald*, was included in the volume.¹

Of Alexander Macdonald, Dr. George Henderson wrote: With Macdonald the poetry of the age of the chiefs culminates, a master of objective descriptive language, his "Clan-Ranald's Galley" is the most powerful of sea-poems in any language.²

¹ The words selected and adapted for singing, were taken from Alex. Nicholson's translation of the poem. There are translations also by John Stuart Blackie and by Thos. Davidson. The latter gives a fine literary version, following line by line the original. After the Blessing is invoked, the seamen, he says, raised up the sails about the rising of the sun on the day of the Feast of St. Bride and they bore out of Loch Ainneart, in Uist, looking southward:

"The sun had opened golden yellow
From his case,
Though still the sky wore dark and drumly
A scarr'd and frowning face;

Then troubled, tawny, dense dun-bellied,
Scowling and sea blue;
Every dye that's in the tartan
O'er it grew."

Any one, he adds in a note, who has watched a threatening February morning in the Hebrides, will perceive that this vigorous description has been taken from nature.

There are also characteristically fierce lines such as:

Its blue depth opening in huge maws,
Wild and devouring,
Where the horned and clawy wild beast
Short-footed splay;

With great wailing gumless mouths
Huge and wide open lay.
But the whole deep was full of spectres
Loose and sprawling
With the claws and with the tails of monsters
Pawing, squalling."

An ancient *Sailing Rune used at intervals in a Fionn Saga, as told in Barra, runs:

"They hoisted the speckled flapping sails up against the tall, rough, wooden masts. The ropes that were loose they tied, and the ropes that were fast they loosed. They set a pilot on the prow and a helm on the stern—the broad sea, the blue sky, the waves beating hither and thither about her planks!

Their music was the blowing of whales and the snorting of sea-hogs, the biggest beast eating the least and the least doing as best he might; the bent whorled whelk that was at the bottom of the ocean played crack on her great gunwhale and smack on her floor and she would have split a slender grain of oats, so well did they steer her."

*From *Celtic Review*, October 1905.

² Norse influence on Celtic Scotland.

In the preface to the anthology, Ronald Macdonald tells us that "The Clans looked on the chief as their father, whose commands they were bound to obey . . . the very lowest of his dependants was admitted to his hospitable board and rejoiced with him in his hall. Apropos, there is (he continues) a proverbial saying in Gaelic: 'Suidhe thuairn-fhear; Suidhe thail-fhear; Suidhe gach duine mar as deise agus suidhe usa leisd-fhear;'="sit down turner; sit down taylor; sit down every man as is convenient and sit down thou arrow-maker."

Following close on Mary Macleod's song in this volume, we give two lyrics by a new singer of the isles, Agnes Mure Mackenzie, a native of Stornoway, who, in *Aignish on the Machair* voices the home-cry of the dying exiled island Gael and in her *People who have Gardens* seems to re-live the days in her own life when as an Aberdeen University student she must have known what it was to "go up and down" in the city. The tune to which we have mated the little poem was an Eigg *Port-a-bial* wont to be sung to nonsense syllables.

A. E., the Irish writer, has said that the Celt has kept in his heart some affinity with the mighty beings ruling in the unseen—legends and fairy tales unite his soul with the inner lives of air, water and earth. In Islay, where I got the tale and song of *The Lure of the Fairy Hill* (or *Gilbhinn*, as Campbell of Islay calls it in his *Leabhar na Feinne*) driving through the island, and before I knew of its connection with fairy lore, I was strangely attracted by a rock, a rock standing out from the shore and sharply silhouetted against the sea and sky-line. This rock, I was told later, was the fabled fairy camp of the old fairy tale.

Of another little fairy song, *Birds at the Fairy Fulling*, noted by Frances Tolmie, the tale has it that long ago a herd laddie lying on the turf above the old ruined tower of Dun Osdail, near to Haleval Mor and Haleval Beag (Macleod's Tables) in Skye, heard first one voice, as in exultation, then all the fairies as with one accord, take up the refrain of the fairy Waulking Song, and sing, "Ho fire, faire, foirm, Ho faireagan an clo!"

Many of the airs as well as the words of the songs in this volume are of Kenneth Macleod's collecting. In his childhood in Eigg he overheard much and he forgot little. In his boyhood he learned from the other boys the witch-lore that seemed to have been their province; in his teens he became a conscious collector, and much of what has found its way into our volumes, was learned and noted in his High School and College days.

"The race sings its songs" says Ed. Carpenter "through the lips of the poet, beholds its visions through the eyes of the seer the profound experiences of the individual are at one and the same time his own, and the experiences of the race as a whole in him."

No fitter words could be found to express what we owe to Kenneth Macleod alike for what he has gathered and what he has added. Tagore bids us "bring our different products into

the market of humanity." The work of my own later life has been the attempt to bring some of the art-product of my own race, the Scots Gael, into the market of modern music.

The *airs* are faithfully recorded as I found them among the people, and although I re-issue Hebridean song through the medium of my own consciousness, it is the same race-consciousness as that of the original composers. This Hebridean work was the outcome of a great emotional experience—the finding of myself in my own race surrounded still by the conditions which may have been those of my *forebears*, and in which the character of the race was long ago formed. From such an experience, one's life receives a dramatic deflection, finds a new centre of gravity. And I have found an extraordinary response everywhere to the work undertaken, not alone in Scotland, but wherever there were minds akin to that of the Gael—that of the Gael who in all his literature and art links closely poetry and fact, dreams and realities and indeed is ever more concerned with truth than with fact—who follows ever the quest of elusive beauty and, in Kenneth Macleod's words, feels the "Joy of seeking, Joy of ne'er finding" when "Skies to westward shine like sea-tangle" and "Bride (Breedja) is in laughter."

MARJORY KENNEDY-FRASER.

NOTES AS TO THE RENDERING OF THE SONGS.

As to the performance of Hebridean songs, one cannot generalize, they are so varied. They simply must always obey the laws of interpretation, applicable alike to them and to the songs of a Schubert and a Schumann. I stress Schubert, because in him most often a rigorously driving rhythm is exacted (as in so much of the best Hebridean song), and Schumann, because in him a broad rhapsodical *tempo rubato* is essential (as in another type of Hebridean air).

Both classes are to be found in plenty in Celtic music. Of the latter class, the rhapsodical, Patrick Macdonald, in his 18th century collection of "Highland and Island Vocal Airs," writes: "Chiefly occupied with the sentiment and expression of the music, the singers dwell upon the long and pathetic notes, while they hurry over the inferior and connecting notes in such a manner as to render it exceedingly difficult for a hearer to trace the measure of them." How applicable this to the works of the 19th-century-Romantic-School! Of Brahms even, it is said that he played his own compositions so erratically, shall we say, at least so differently from the rigid formalism of his own notation, that Clara Schumann, looking over his shoulder when he was playing his new compositions could not follow him. And yet Patrick Macdonald, accustomed only to the classical school of his time, apologises for this romantic tendency in the music of the Gael!

In many of the lighter lilts of the Isles, there is a subtlety of rhythmical feeling, a subtlety which throws the accents at times out of their regularly recurring places; and the irregularity of barring which one has to adopt occasionally in noting the airs, arises from the

needs of a time when barring was not used in notation, a state of matters which some devoutly hope may return. *A Mhairi Bhan* for instance, to which Shakespeare, (?) tradition has it, wrote the song "Live with me and be my love,"—included in some editions of his "Passionate Pilgrim,"—is quite madrigalesque and Elizabethan in its phrasing. In this the singer must give full value to the syncopation which throws (on its recurrence) the accent off the syllable "Fal" of the refrain on to that of "lay." Shakespeare's first verse by the way (which we have used in our singing version of the song) sounds, to ears accustomed to Celtic songs of love invitation, like a translation from the Gaelic, save that, in old Hebridean love-proposals, the deer of the "craggy hills" and the fish of the rivers figure among the proffered joys.

"Ochoin-a-ri, Nach mi bha thall
Ann an coilltean Mhuile leat,
Is marbhain iasg, Is sithionn fhiadh,
'Sa chiall cha bhiodh Oirnn uireasbhuidh."

The Return from the Fairy Hill I have noted in alternate bars of 3 and of 2-beats—this is simply an attempt to make clear how the 5-beat rhythm should be taken. Feel the swing of such unfamiliar rhythms and they themselves will soon teach you how to render them. Obey these musical subtleties—do not try to *put them right* or to slur them over. Yield to the sing-song swing of rhythm—it is just such swing that gives the needful hypnotic character to poetry and music, and the student must see to it that all mood-characterisation and sense-phrasing is achieved without disturbing this rhythm.

In the light rapid rhythm of such songs as *The Cockle-Gatherer*, *Dance to Your Shadow*, *The Skua Gulls*, *The River Calling* or *People who have Gardens*, the most exquisite discrimination of musical accents is called for, together with a perfect unforced articulation of the words; all underlining of individual words or use of emotional and characteristic colouring being achieved without sensibly breaking the intoxicating onward flow or dance of the rhythm. In rhapsodical or passionate songs, on the other hand, such as *The Bens of Jura*, *Sea-Gull of the Land-under-waves*, *Mull Fisher's Love Song*, *Love Wandering*, from our first volume; *Sea-Longing*, *The Wild Swan*, *Heart of Fire-Love*, *Cairistiona* and *Sea Tangle*, from Vol. II., and *Aignisk on the Machair* and *The Harper* in this volume, a broader *tempo rubato* is required. Here also the law of rhythm, however, must be obeyed—what is elastically taken must, over the whole, be elastically repaid. A song like the **Wind on the Moor* again, while it would seem to drive piteously onward, is yet subject to a fairly broad *tempo rubato*. Its very ruthless sweep is the outcome of a fairly considerable elasticity applied mainly in the form of a *leaning* on the initial "null," and a consequent driving acceleration in order to pay back when due the time robbed by the *leaning* note. The elasticity thus obtained, together with the prolonged moaning sounds of the intoning consonants, (the n's, l's and v's of the original Gaelic), and a steady *crescendo*, from the pianissimo opening to the climax, are all-important factors in the interpretation of the piece.

* The *Wind on the Moor*, like all good songs, may be said to have a *face-meaning* and a *mind-meaning*. The Gael uses the Wind as a symbol of vague desires and hopes—wind and the spirit of vague desire always associated.

Vocal control, again, in slow sustained singing, has always been held the test of the singer. †Ossian's *Day-Dream* = *Sleeps the Noon in the deep blue Sky*. like ‡*Land of Heart's Desire* in Vol. II., must be sung with an ecstatic serenity, the serenity of desire *realized*, and to express this only the most perfectly free tone-production suffices, a perfection of tone-mastery, an ease and transparency of production to attain which is the life long aim of the singer.

Indeed, for the adequate interpretation of these songs, taking all three volumes, the singer will find use for the vocal studies of a life time, with the sole exception of *foriture*.

Like Schubert's songs, as already implied, they are rigorously musical, first and last musical, and piteously exacting as to rhythm. They offer also great variety of mood. The mood and the form, these we must keep ever before us in our quest after true interpretation.

The songs, even the labour songs, are intended to be sung with accompaniment. To quote again from Patrick Macdonald, writing about 150 years ago of conditions in the Isles then and earlier :

"On the Western Coast, benorth Middle Lorn, and in all the Hebrides, *luinigs* are most in request. These are, in general way, short and of a plaintive cast, analagous to their best poetry, and they are sung by the women during almost every kind of work where more than one person is concerned, as milking cows, watching the folds, fulling of cloth, grinding of grain with the quern, haymaking and cutting down corn *The greater number of the luinigs appear to be adapted to the harp, an instrument that was once in great estimation there.*"

The piano, for the time, has replaced the more ancient instrument in daily use, and for the piano the accompaniments have been written. A number of them, however, are almost equally adapted to the harp, and my daughter Patuffa, who ably seconded me in all my research work, has edited these for harp-players.

6, CASTLE STREET

EDINBURGH.

October, 1921.

† The Thos. Davidson version of Ossian from which I have selected and adapted "*Ossian's Day Dream*" = "*Sleeps the Noon in the deep blue sky*," runs :

Sweet are the light winds softly murmuring :
 Sweet are the lonely heron's notes, and sweet
 The cuckoo's—
 Sweet the warm sun which whistling blackbirds greet—
 The sun that brightly shines on Cona's rocky steep.
 Sweet is the eagle with her far-heard cry,
 Sailing above great Morven's mighty sea,
 When sleeps the noonday in the deep blue sky.

 When for the chase his hounds are all on fire,
 Sweet is their deep-mouthed bay—sweet as the bardic choir.

‡ Expressing (to quote Eleanor Hull) the deep religious feeling of the Celtic mind with its far-stretching hands groping towards the mysterious and the infinite.