

The pasture improvement schemes are equally important for their social implications. It is, of course, impossible to assess how much influence they might have in this respect but there is every likelihood that they will, in the long run, do much to promote a spirit of hope and enterprise among the crofters themselves. Pessimism and conservatism tend to be deeply rooted attitudes in the Isles and the creation of a new spirit among the people is just as important as the creation of new pastures on the land. Surface seeding could eventually transform the agricultural economy of the Outer Hebrides but unless the crofters have confidence in themselves and in their future its many potentialities will never be fully realised.

#### NOTE

Some crawler tractors and spreaders have recently been introduced into Lewis. If these can be used successfully they might have far-reaching consequences; the mechanisation of surface seeding processes (especially that of the spreading of shell-sand) could alter the whole situation by making really large-scale reclamation possible.

#### REFERENCES

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#### *Book Reviews:*

*Stories from South Uist told by Angus MacLellan*. Translated by John Lorne Campbell. Routledge & Kegan Paul. London. 1961. xxix+254 pp. 30s.

John Lorne Campbell has once more placed students of Gaelic folklore in his debt by this selection of stories from the wide repertoire of Angus MacLellan, the ninety-year-old storyteller from South Uist. Not so long ago he gave us *Tales of Barra told by the Cuddy*. There the tales were told by the Cuddy himself in English and taken down in shorthand. For this book the editor worked directly from the Gaelic as recorded on tape,

writing down a fairly literal English translation while listening to the original and subsequently re-casting this translation on to the typewriter in idiomatic English. So far as known this is the first time this method has been used for translating Gaelic stories into English. The result is this collection, in readable English,\* of various types of stories, classified by the editor into Fingalian and other Old Stories, Simple Folk-tales, Local Traditions, Ghost Stories, Humorous Stories, and Adventure Stories, as well as the storyteller's own Story. A well-planned editorial apparatus includes Notes on the Stories, the Clanranalds and MacVurichs, the Storyteller's Informants, Old Island Houses, as well as a Glossarial Index and an Index to the Stories.

The long complex heroic tale is not well-represented in Angus MacLellan's repertory and, judging from the citations in the notes, his Gaelic style is (consequently?) not so curial as that, for example, of the late Duncan MacDonald. His periods of residence in the South in early manhood no doubt affected his choice of vocabulary and, though he has obviously a wide Gaelic vocabulary, he frequently uses English words and phrases (by no means all mentioned in the Notes) which add nothing to the atmosphere of the tale, but rather detract from it (e.g. he must know various Gaelic ways of rendering a' *waitseadh* nam boireannach; a' gabhail *wàg* a mach; etc.). On the other hand the Glossarial Index reveals that he has a good command of rare Gaelic words and idioms (e.g. *an teanga thoir* as a' *ghlag*; a' *dol an cois t'fhacail*; *bha i air bàrr an uisg' shuair*). In making this comment on MacLellan's use of English loanwords, I am not, of course, making a plea for their suppression, a practice of which editors in the past have been suspected. I merely regret that in many cases he did not make use of good Gaelic equivalents which were known to him.

The reader will find much to interest him in this volume. *The Three Questions and the Three Burdens* ("The Clever Peasant Girl") includes the ancient riddle of the Sphinx (*τί ἴστί τὸ αὐτὸ τετρίπουν καὶ δίπουν καὶ τρίπουν*). There are interesting local traditions about the Clanranalds and the MacVurichs. In these the Clanranalds appear in a surprisingly sinister

\* One small point of usage may be remarked on. The editor generally uses the preposition *on* with names of islands (on Eriskay, on Canna, on Barra, on Benbecula; but *in* Canna, *in* Skye, p. 133, *in* Lewis, p. 97). As the Gaelic usage confines *on* to very small uninhabited islands, mere rocks and skerries, an Islesman resents, rightly or wrongly, such a usage as "I was living on Skye". If *on* is correct English usage, it may be asked at what size of island it ceases to be correct (on Ireland, on Britain?).

light. The character, for instance, of Domhnall Dubh is in vivid contrast to that attributed to him in the Book of Clanranald. He is called here Donald of the "Cuckoo", after a gun which he had so named. Tradition accords possession of this gun to others also, such as Rìgh Fionnghall and Colla Ciotach. Of Colla Ciotach it is said that he would fire at anyone he suspected of disaffection and when his victim fell he would say that the Gouk had dropped on the poor man (*chac a' chuthag air*). This gives more point to the name of the gun. The impression given by these local traditions is that their historical content is slender. Allan MacDonald of Clanranald, for instance, was not married to the daughter of a duke in France, but to Penelope MacKenzie, daughter of the Governor of Tangiers. Her name is still perpetuated in South Uist. It is scarcely credible that Clanranald, who introduced the Spanish breed of horses into Uist and was "the onlie one who attackt with the foot on horseback" at Sheriffmuir, was met at Lochboisdale by bare-backed ponies. Neil MacVurich, in his elegy, mentions specifically: "It was not fillies for harrowing that were fed in thy stables but shod and bridled horses". *The Story of St. Clair Castle* is an interesting adaptation to Gaelic oral tradition of an early nineteenth-century novel *St. Clair of the Isles, or the Outlaws of Barra, a Scottish Tradition*, by Elizabeth Helme. *Why everyone should be able to tell a story* may be compared with a tale contributed by Rev. John MacRury to the Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness (*Teann sìos, a Dhòmhuill Òig*; Vol. xiv, pp. 101-111). The latter is a good deal longer and differs in incidents, but both tales gloss the proverb: *A' chiad sgial air fear-an-taighe, is sgial gu latha air an aoigh* ("The host must tell the first tale and then the guests must tell tales till daybreak").

Gaelic readers will regret that they cannot read these tales in the original. A translation, however good, is no real substitute. I have only had the opportunity of hearing one of these tales in the original (*How Clanranald built Ormaclate House*) but from this probe I can commend the accuracy and adequacy of the translation. Quite by inadvertence a phrase has dropped out of the translation on p. 90 and perhaps I should record it. After "The eight men I've mentioned were sitting at the table already" the original has: *na glùinean aca os cionn a' bhùird* ("their knees above the table"). This is rather a good touch, I think, and is really necessary to understand why they were "frightful objects" to the visitors—a graphic way of implying their immense size.

Although this book is directed mainly to folklorists, general readers, and, if possible, "governments", it should by no means be overlooked by those who may be more interested in Gaelic philology and lexicography. These will find much to occupy them in the Notes [e.g. *an sgian-ubhail*, perhaps the spike which could be screwed into the boss of a Highland targe; *còta bhairm*, "coat of arms", for *còtaibh-airm*; *hasair*, < *hawser*, with short *a*; *diumlaoch*, "hero", misprint for *diunlaoch* or *diumhlaoch*? (the ending should be *-lach*, even if it were a compound of *laoch*, which it is not); *réid*, "rage": I think I have heard *rùit* for "rage", although it is not in the Dictt.; *Lobhdaidh* (*Loudi*) with the article is unusual; *Bòirnis Shiarach* (p. 221), no matter what the local pronunciation is said to be, is correctly *Bòirnis Iarach*. There is no word *siarach*. Similarly *Bòirnis Uarach* (cf. K.C. Craig, *Òrain Luaidh*, pp. 37, 55, 112, 118)].

ANGUS MATHESON

*The Silver Bough*. By F. Marian McNeill. Vol. III. A Calendar of Scottish National Festivals Hallowe'en to Yule. W. MacLellan. Glasgow. 1961.

The third volume of the *Silver Bough*, a companion volume to the second, passes in review the winter's calendar festivals, and from many sources of every kind, from books, documents and tradition, the author has collected and published a series of interesting and picturesque descriptions of festivals, communal and domestic. As in her two earlier volumes she has a sympathetic, engaging way of presenting her dates, and also of imparting to her readers the charm, one might even call it spell, that she felt herself in these ceremonies of an earlier generation. The illustrations chosen, ancient and modern, are sometimes beautiful and suggestive, like, e.g. MacGeorge's painting "Hallowe'en". Her attitude has made the book not a mere catalogue of dates, but a fine succession of pictures of earlier Scottish life. Compare, e.g. the Goloshans (p. 81) or the description of Christmas in the "big house" in Shetland (p. 135). Similar vestiges of the past can be found in most countries, often agreeing even in particulars, but the general picture differs from country to country, as, e.g. in Scandinavia and Scotland. The communal festivities, fairs, processions, etc., so prominent in Scotland, are almost unknown in Norway, where Christmas, for instance, has become the all important feast in the winter, attracting to itself the rites of Hallowe'en and New Year. . . .

When the book touches upon the problems of significance and origin, and offers a solution, many readers, including the present reviewer, feel more critical, because often problems to be seen against a wider international background are involved. When it is stated (p. 11) that "Since the cult of the dead [Hallowe'en] was based upon the doctrine of the soul . . .", one may ask if a "cult of the dead" is identical with the "fear of the dead" and the protective measures taken. An even more important question is if the doctrine of the dual nature of man, one part being imperishable and removed from human reach, has rather lessened the pressure involved in the ancient belief that the deceased somehow lived on in the mounds and hills, very active and constantly interfering in the activities of the living, a belief illustrated by the sagas, and evidently so deeply ingrained in many so that their emotional attitude is coloured by it. Likewise, a statement may be too emphatic as when Odin the god is said to have been called: Julvater. One of his many names (comp. *Odinsheite* by H. Falk [1927]) was *Jólnir* which hints at some association with Yule, but his name *Iólfr*, denotes him as possessor of some poisonous arrows. It seems also strange when several Norn words from Shetland as e.g. *Tunderman*, do not appear in J. Jakobsen's dictionary.

The Shetland chapter is naturally of special interest to a Norwegian, and he notes with interest that at Christmas "the trows", which are the same as the "hidden people", the fairies, are abroad and active, with the "saining" as a protective measure, which is one of the main characteristics also of Scandinavian Yule. In the main, however, it seems to be Scottish customs that have given the distinctive colour also to Shetland calendar festivals.

All through the book, however, rites and conceptions are mentioned that are equally familiar in other countries, such as carrying lit torches round the fields, the taboo on certain days or evenings against any kind of work that involved a circular movement—spinning, grinding, etc. One might also mention in connection with the hazelnuts on Hallowe'en, that of old *nuts* have somehow been combined with lifegiving and fertility. Did not Loki, when Idun, who had the apples of life, was stolen by the giants, fly in bird's shape to Giantland, and then brought Indun back "in the shape of a nut", that he carried in his claws. . . . As for the *pea*, it was hardly consecrated to Thor, as there is no evidence of its being known in Northern

Europe before the Middle Ages (Hoop's *Reallexicon*, vol. 1, p. 622). . . . From Norway a letter written in the year 1400 is extant, in which the sender asks one of his acquaintances in the South, to send him some peas and beans for sowing. . . . But why does the pea (Lat. *pisum*) figure in Irish and Scottish Gaelic as *piseóg* and *peieag*, both meaning witchcraft and magic practices? In Norway in the year 1325 a woman was convicted of such, and she had put five peas into the bed of a couple in order to sow strife between them.

In a book of this kind it is, of course, a temptation to write a running commentary of comparative notes. To the chapter on Annermass I will still add one, from a paper cutting referring to the St. Andrew's Ball in Stockholm on this saint's day in 1961, with Royal persons present, with Scottish reels and kilts. The range of subjects involved is so vast, the present web of tradition so intricate, that the unravelling of the single threads is too hazardous and too intricate, and in the end it seems more than right to accept thankfully the mass of information referring to Scottish customs connected with the cycle of the year.

REIDAR TH. CHRISTIANSEN

*The Lordship of Strathavon.* By Dr. V. Gaffney, Aberdeen. Printed for the Third Spalding Club. 1960.

As W. D. Simpson argues, most pertinently, in the foreword to this book, it is only when detailed regional studies of the many disparate units which make up Scotland are available, that a truly representative historical synthesis of the country can be attempted. Little of the area north of the central Scottish rift valley has been examined in detail by historians, and until this is done, repetition of nineteenth-century sources must be the profitless order of the day. Dr. Gaffney has brought depth of focus to bear on a small geographical entity—the upper reaches of one of the Spey's major tributaries. On the periphery of the Highlands, in both social and topographical senses, Strathavon is one of those easterly facing straths which provide the entrance for eastern and thus southern influences.

An important area has thus been chosen, and some extremely thorough research done thereon, bearing in mind that this is documentary social history, and virtually confined to the eighteenth century. It is important, because peripheral areas such as this are better documented than the Highland

hinterland and do demonstrate, virtually, statistically, the intercalation of the two cultures; the new eastern, and legalistic ethos of ultimate southern and feudal origin purveyed by the absentee Dukes of Gordon, and the indigenous Gaelic speaking substratum still imbued with the natural impression that use and custom guaranteed occupation and possession. Dr. Gaffney's work is founded, naturally enough, on the relevant portions of the Gordon Castle Papers, and this is augmented by a full use of what must be practically all the available sources. The chronological sequence demonstrated is very interesting. Primarily, a transhumance area, though more in the sense of summering fat stock than increased dairy production, this ambiance becomes very pronounced when "Gaul" or lowland cattle are summered for payment. The value of these hill grazing areas was becoming apparent to the vested interests concerned, and the early part of the eighteenth century saw much destruction of *bothans* and pounding of cattle as those interests sought to extend their authority. The seventeenth-century Scots game laws too were enforced to bring the deer forests under control and yet further circumscribe the independent elements of reivers, "theives and brokin men", who still persisted—relics of an earlier era. The shielings themselves were of the flimsiest nature testifying to the Highlanders' lack of concern for complex habitation, in summer at least. The *sgalan*, *sheal* or *bothan* are described as mere earth scoops covered with a "shield" of branches.

The Gordon Castle machinery was striving throughout the century to bring this portion of the estates into line with lowland development, and like the factors for forfeited estates, sought to dissuade the Highlanders from their "idle and wicked practices" to commerce and trade. Outsiders were brought in to run the Duke's interests; factors and surveyors, and transplanted MacGregors as foresters. The shielings were "improved", developed arable tracts and permanent occupation, and in this connection it would have been interesting to see relative population figures if obtainable. Following similar developments at Grantown, Rothes, Portsoy and Fochabers a "newtown" was projected to further the opening up of the area. Circa 1778 Tomintoul was planned and thenceforward constructed on the site of the old strategically placed clachan. Local industrial development was attempted, flax raising was subsidised, and lint spinning had reached significant proportions by 1770. The trade failed to prosper, a

depression in 1773 further retarding it, and by 1794 Tomintoul still had only 37 families and no manufacture.

All these developments were carried out to the considerable discomfiture of the natives, now tenants, and the social divide between landowner and dependents, already wide in this area, became finally unbridgeable. When the aristocracy naively sought to gain kudos by raising regiments in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, they were rebuffed, not as decisively as the Duke of Sutherland before the Crimea, but sufficiently so to indicate the destruction of the bond of common interest and loyalty which had still operated in the Seven Years' War.

Dr. Gaffney has provided a wealth of detail of agricultural conditions, social change, and a picture in microcosm of legal enactment and industrial influence in an under-developed area in process of being linked to the main economic "grid". The basis of present-day settlement in Strathavon was being laid, the wadsett expires and the tacksett succeeds, and the general domestication of a mountain area of marked Jacobite and Catholic sympathy proceeds. The important secondary factor of personalities, "Glennie", Seumas an Tuim, Willox alias Macgregor, the local Grants, Farquharsons, and Gordons and by inference that remote deity the Duke, is shown to play its necessary part. The appendices are loaded with landholding data, and the work is well indexed. This is a first-rate scholarly production. It is perhaps carping to offer a minor note of criticism but it does seem a pity that Dr. Gaffney has not included a short chapter of general conclusions, or the briefest assessment of the position of Strathavon and Banffshire in the general history of the North East. Perhaps we can look forward to Dr. Gaffney providing us with a more general survey including Strathavon under the Stewarts, a task for which he is so clearly fitted.

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#### CORRIGENDUM

In Vol. 5 (1961), p. 218, the sentence, "The theme of the massacre . . . of the MacLeods of Eigg by the MacDonalds" should read, ". . . of the MacDonalds of Eigg by the MacLeods".

JOHN MACINNES