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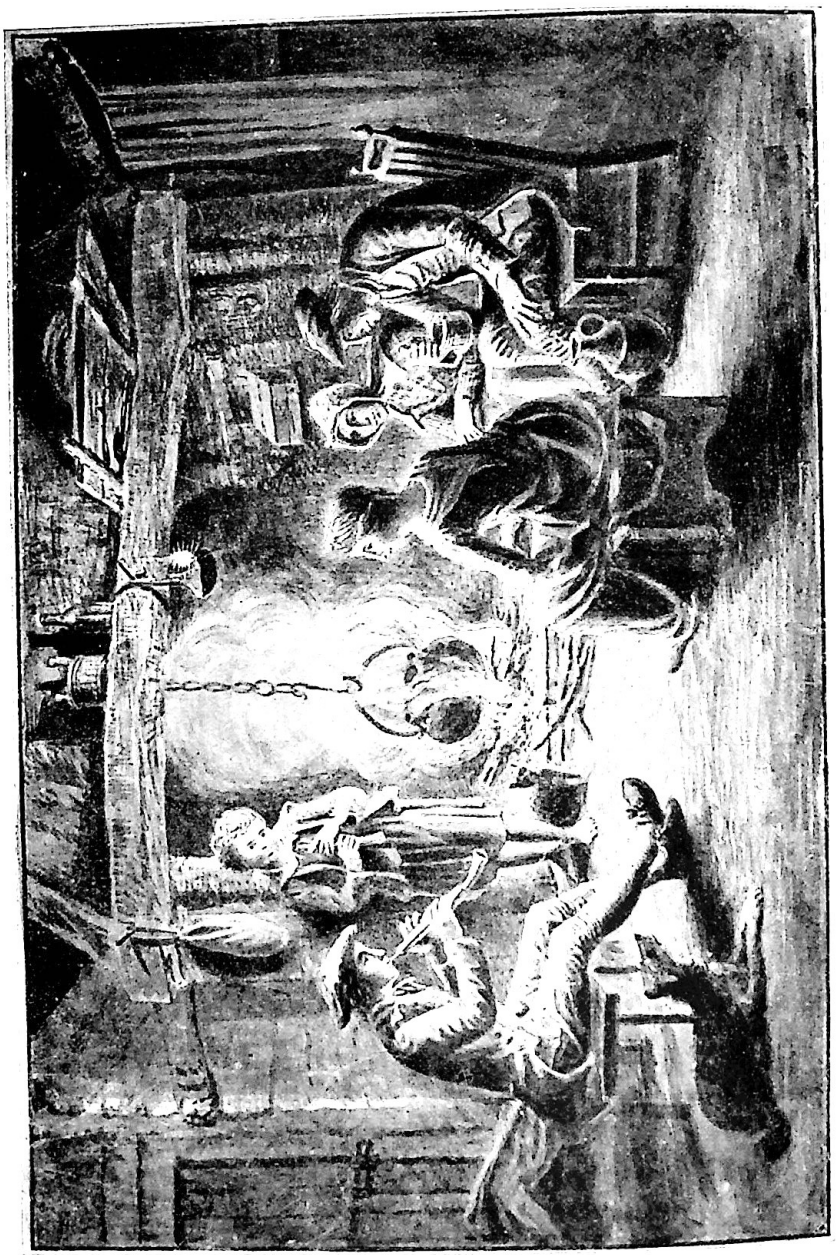
W. F. H. NICOLAISEN

B. COLLECTION AND RESEARCH

"*Evening in a Scots Cottage*"

The unsigned watercolour drawing reproduced on Plate VI is one of the more convincing of early representations of a Lowland interior, a subject which first became popular during the latter part of the eighteenth century, largely owing to the influence of Allan Ramsay and Burns. This example, assigned to Alexander Carse, who worked in this genre in the 1790s and the earlier years of the following century, shows a Lowland family enjoying a tune played on the "stock-and-horn". Carse's subjects were usually drawn from the Lothians and the Border country, and occasionally from Ayrshire. Mr. R. E. Hutchison, Keeper of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery,

PLATE VI



Evening in a Scots Cottage, attributed to Alexander Carse, *c.* 1805
Reproduced by permission of the Trustees of the National Gallery of Scotland. See pp. 106-08.

informs us that "this sort of picture is almost impossible to date closely, owing to the inconsistencies in the fashions shown. The old man is wearing a coat which shows details that indicate a fashion date of 1770, while the boy's coat suggests 1790. The young girl's dress, though crude, has characteristics of the turn of the century. As these are cottage folk, their dress was probably many years out of date fashionwise. Comparing this with other works by Carse, I would suggest a date of 1805-10."

Despite the bare clay floor, the scene is one of modest comfort, with the entrance screened by a boarded partition and inner door. The broad jambs which support the "lum" and flank the open hearth represent an innovation in Scots rural building, known as the "Lodian brace" from its first appearance in south-east Scotland during the eighteenth century. The curtained bed occupies the angle between fireside and rear wall of the house. The "guidman", seated on the only chair, sups ale from a stave-built "luggie". The projecting shelf above his head is for keeping oatcakes and cheeses out of reach of dogs and children. Behind the "guidwife" is the salt-box on the jamb wall, and her work-bag hangs from a peg above the other jamb. An open cruisie-lamp hangs from the centre of the chimney brace, and wood has been thrown on the fire to add to the light and cheerfulness of the occasion.

The stock-and-horn depicted corresponds to that described in a letter of Burns of 19th November 1794, in which he gently criticised David Allan's portrayal of the instrument in his illustrations to Ramsay's *Gentle Shepherd* (1788 edition):

> I have, *at last*, gotten one; but it is a very rude instrument.—It is composed of three parts; the stock, which is the hinder thigh-bone of a sheep, such as you see in a mutton-ham; the horn, which is a common Highland cow's horn, cut off at the smaller end, untill the aperture be large enough to admit the "stock" to be pushed up through the horn, untill it be held by the thicker or hip-end of the thigh-bone; & lastly, an oaten reed exactly cut & notched like that which you see every shepherd-boy have when the corn-stems are green & full-grown.—The reed is not made fast in the bone, but is held by the lips, & plays loose in the smaller end of the "stock"; while the "stock", & the horn hanging on its larger end, is held by the hands in playing.—The "stock" has six, or seven, ventiges on the upper side, & one back-ventige, like the common flute.—This of mine was made by a man from the braes of Athole, & is exactly what the shepherds wont to use in that country (Ferguson 1931:II, 278).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The drawing, Plate VI, is reproduced by permission of the Trustees of the National Galleries of Scotland (D.1875).

We are grateful to Mr. David Murison, editor of the *Scottish National Dictionary*, for drawing our attention to Burns's description of the stock-and-horn.

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B. R. S. MEGAW

A' Ghobhar Ghlas

I recorded this text (S.S.S. R.L. 2105 A.1) of an international animal tale type, listed as No. 123 [1] in the Aarne-Thompson classification, in February 1964 from Hugh MacKinnon, Cleadale, Isle of Eigg, from whom I also recorded the Fox and Wolf tale already published in *Scottish Studies* (MacDonald 1964).

Mr. MacKinnon, now aged 70, learned this version as a boy from his mother who died in 1924.

John F. Campbell published two fragmentary texts in *West Highland Tales III*; noting that "though everybody knows it nobody will tell it" (Campbell 1892:103-4, 114).[2]

The Types of the Irish Folktale lists twenty-nine versions collected in Ireland (Ó Súilleabháin and Christiansen 1963:47).

I myself heard the story as a boy from my grandmother in North Uist.

Well, innsidh mi nis dhut sgialachd na Gobhar Ghlas mar a tha cuimhn' agam orra.

Bha 'Ghobhar Ghlas lath' a' sin, bha i falbh dha'n tràigh a dh' iarraidh maorach air son a teaghlach fhein 's bha . . . dh'fhàg i 'staigh na trì Minneinnean Miona-Ghlas 's am Poca Ceana-Ghlas 's an Gille-Puic. 'S 'n'air a bha i 'falbh thug i dh'earalas orra nach robh chridh' ac' an dorust fhosgladh do neach 'sam bith a thigeadh a dh' ionnsaigh an taighe gos an tilleadh ise. Agus bha i dol a chuir comharradh orra fhéin 'n'air a bha i 'falbh, 's e sin . . . an comharr a bha 'sin bha i dol

a cheanghal dà shnàithlein ma cois, snàithlein dearg is snàithlein gorm; agus neach 'sam bith a thigeadh a dh' ionnsaigh an doruist, bha aca ri iarraidh air a chas a chur a staigh fo'n dorust agus . . . mar a faiceadh 'ad a' snàithlein dearg 's a' snàithlein gorm a bha seo air a chois a thigeadh a staigh fo'n dorust, cha b'e ise bh'ann. 'S canaidh sibh ris a' . . . neach 'sam bith a thig . . :

"O, tha mo mhàthair-sa . . . bha snàithlein dearg is snàithlein gorm ma chas air màthair-ne."

Agus mar a robh seo air cas . . . air a' chois a thigeadh a staigh fo'n dorust chan fhaoidte 'n dorust fhosgladh.

Ach, co-dhiù, thàinig am Madadh-Ruadh. Chuir e staigh a chas fo'n dorust agus dh'iarr e 'n dorust fhosgladh. Thuirt e gu . . :

"Tha air màthair a' seo air tilleadh."

Agus 's ann an uairsin a thuirt 'ad ris:

"Cuir a staigh do chas fo'n dorust agus aithneichidh sinn an e air màthair fhéin a th'ann."

Agus chuir e chas a staigh fo'n dorust 's cha robh snàithlein na rud (? 'sam bith) ma chois. Agus thuirt à-san:

"O chan e air màthair-ne tha sin idir. Bha snàithlein dearg is snàithlein gorm ma chas air màthair-ne."

Co-dhiù, dh'fhalbh am Madadh-Ruadh an uairsin agus chaidh e shitinn an fhigheadair agus fhuair e pìos do shnàithlein dearg agus do shnàithlein gorm agus cheanghail e siod ma chois.

Thill e air n-ais go taigh na Gobhar Ghlas agus bhuail e chòmhla agus dh'iarr . . . chuir e 'chas a staigh . . . dh'iarr e . . . thuirt e gu robh 'm màthair air tilleadh a nis as an tràigh. Agus thuirt 'ad ris . . . thuirt ad:

"Cuir a staigh do chas o'n chòmhlaidh is aithneichidh sinn an e air màthair fhéin a th'ann."

'S chuir e staigh a chas o'n chòmhlaidh 's bha snàithlein dearg is snàithlein gorm (? gu h-eireachdail) ma chois.

Dh'fhosgail na creutairean a bha staigh an dorust agus fhuair am Madadh-Ruadh a staigh agus ann am priobadh na sùil, dh' ith e suas a chuile h-aon ac', na tri Minneinnean Miona-Ghlas 's am Poca Ceana-Ghlas 's an Gille-Puic.

Ach ann an ùine gun a bhith fada thill a' Ghobhar Ghlas bhochd as an tràigh, 's thàinig i dhachaigh 's cha robh sgial air a h-aon dhe h-àl. Agus bha i air a toirt as: cha robh fhios aice dé dhianadh i. Agus dh' fhalbh i 'choimhead air a' son agus chaidh i go taigh na Faoileig an toiseach agus dhìrich i

suas a dh'ionnsaigh an fhàrlais agus . . . agus dh' eubh . . . an Fhaoileag 's i staigh:

"Có tha siod air mullach mo bhothain bhig chrùsgaich, chràsgaich, nach lig a mach smùid mo theallachain fhad's a bhios mi bruich mo bhonnachain?"

"'S mise seo, a' Ghobhar Ghlas, 's mi air mo thoirt as a' sireadh mo chuid mheann."

"Air an talamh a tha fodhad 's air an adhar as do chionn 's air a' ghréin ad seachad sios," ars an Fhaoileag, "chan fhaca mise riamh do chuid mheann."

Dh'fhalbh i sin go taigh na Feannaig 's dhìrich i go . . . dh'ionnsaigh mullach an t-simileir a rithist 's dh'eubh an Fheannag 's i staigh:

"Có tha siod air mullach mo bhothain bhig chrùsgaich, chràsgaich nach lig a mach smùid mo theallachain, fhad's a bhios mi bruich mo bhonnachain?"

"'S mise seo, a' Ghobhar Ghlas, 's mi air mo thuirt as a' sireadh mo chuid mheann."

"Air an talamh a tha fodhad 's air an adhar as do chionn 's air a' ghréin ad seachad sios chan fhaca mise riamh do chuid mheann," ars an Fheannag.

Dh'fhalbh i sin is chaidh i go taigh an Fhithich agus dhìrich i go mullach taigh an Fhithich, a dh'ionnsaigh an t-similear a rithist agus dh' eubh a' Fitheach 's e staigh:

"Rochdada, rochdada," ors a' Fitheach, "Có tha siod air mullach mo bothain bhig chrùsgaich, chràsgaich, nach lig a mach smùid mo theallachain fhad 's a bhios mi bruich mo bhonnachain?"

"'S mise seo, a' Ghobhar Ghlas, 's mi air mo thoirt as a' sireadh mo chuid mheann."

"Air an talamh a tha fodhad 's air an adhar as do chionn 's air a' ghréin ad seachad sios chan fhaca mise riamh do chuid mheann," orsa . . . ors a' Fitheach.

Cha robh fhios aice seo o'n t-saoghal dé 'n taobh a bheireadh i 'h-aghaidh, agus dh'fhalbh i go taigh a' Mhadaidh-Ruaidh. Ach co-dhiù thug a' Madadh-Ruadh a staigh i agus bha teine mór briagh aige air agus bha e 'faireachdainn uamhasach toilichte dhe fhéi' 's bha 'ad uamhasach càirdeil, e fhéi' agus a' Ghobhar Ghlas, agus shìn e e fhéin air beulaibh an teine agus thoìsich ise air cniadachadh a chinn le làimh agus thuit a' Madadh-Ruadh 'na chadal.

Agus chunnaig a' Ghobhar Ghlas, chunnaig i seann mheangan do sgian bheag mheirgeach an àiteiginnich agus

leum i agus rug i air a seo agus sgoilt i 'bhrù aige agus a mach a' broinn a' Mhadaidh-Ruaidh leum na trì Minneinean Mìona-Ghlas 's am Poca Ceana-Ghlas 's an Gille-Puic a cheart cho béo 's a bha 'ad riamh, agus tharruinn i fhéi' 's 'ad fhéin dhachaigh agus bha 'ad . . . bha 'ad beò slàn riamh tuilleadh. Agus dhealaich mise riutha.

The Grey Goat

Well, I will now tell you the story of the Grey Goat as I remember it.

One day the Grey Goat was going to the strand to get shell-fish for her family and . . . she left at home the three Grey-Speckled Kids and the Grey-Headed Buck and the Buck's Lad. And when she was going, she warned them that they must never open the door to anyone who came to the house until she returned. And she was going to put a mark on herself when she went; that is . . . that mark was that she was going to tie two threads around her foot, a red thread and a blue thread, and if anyone came to the door they were to ask him to put his foot in under the door and . . . unless they saw this red thread and blue thread on the foot that came in under the door, it would not be she.

"And you will say to the . . . anyone who comes . . :

"O, my mother is . . . There was a red thread and a blue thread round our mother's foot."

And unless this was on the foot . . . on the foot that came in under the door, the door was not to be opened.

But, anyway, the Fox came. He put his foot in under the door and asked that the door should be opened. He said that . . .

"Here is your mother back again."

And it was then they said to him:

"Put in your foot under the door, and we will know if it is our mother."

And he put his foot in under the door and there was no thread or (? any) thing round his foot. And they said:

"O, that is not our mother at all. There was a red thread and a blue thread round the foot of our mother."

Anyway, the Fox went away and he went to the weaver's midden and he got a bit of red thread and of blue thread and he tied that round his foot.

He went back to the house of the Grey Goat and he knocked at the door and he asked . . . he put in his foot . . . he asked . . .

he said that their mother had now returned from the strand. And they said to him . . . they said:

"Put your foot in under the door and we will know if it is our own mother."

And he put in his foot under the door and there was a red thread and a blue thread (? neatly) round his foot.

The poor creatures who were inside opened the door and the Fox got in and in the twinkling of an eye he ate all of them up, the three Grey-Speckled Kids and the Grey-Headed Buck and the Buck's Lad.

But not long after the poor Grey Goat came back from the strand and came home and there was no sign of any of her family.

And she was overcome: she did not know what to do. And she went to look for them and she went first to the house of the Gull and she climbed up to the chimney vent and . . . and the Gull who was inside called:

"Who is that on the top of my little hut who will not let out the smoke of my little hearth while I am cooking my little bannock?"

"I am here, the Grey Goat, worn out looking for my kids."

"By the earth beneath you and by the sky above you and by yonder sun passing downwards," said the gull, "I never saw your kids."

She went then to the house of the Crow and she climbed to . . . up to the top of the chimney again and the Crow who was inside called:

"Who is that on the top of my little hut who will not let out the smoke of my little hearth while I am cooking my little bannock?"

"I am here, the Grey Goat, worn out looking for my kids."

"By the earth beneath you and by the sky above you and by yonder sun passing downwards, I never saw your kids," said the Crow.

She went away then and went to the house of the Raven and she climbed to the top of the house of the Raven, up to the chimney again, and the Raven who was inside called:

"Rochdada, rochdada," said the Raven, "who is that on the top of my little hut who will not let out the smoke of my little hearth while I am cooking my little bannock?"

"I am here, the Grey Goat, worn out looking for my kids."

"By the earth beneath you and by the sky above you and by yonder sun passing downwards, I never saw your kids."

Now, she did not know on earth which way she should turn, and she went to the house of the Fox. Anyway, the Fox took her inside and he had a great fine fire on and he was feeling very pleased with his lot, and they were very friendly to each other, he and the Grey Goat, and he stretched himself in front of the fire and she began to caress his head with her hand (*sic*) and the Fox fell asleep.

And the Grey Goat saw—she saw an old stump of a little rusty knife somewhere and she jumped up and seized this and she slit open his belly and out of the belly of the Fox leaped the three Grey-Speckled Kids and the Grey-Headed Buck and the Buck's Lad as much alive as they ever were, and she and they made off home and they were . . . they were alive and well ever afterwards. And I parted from them.

NOTES

[1] Distribution as noted by Thompson:
Finnish, Estonian, Livonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Lappish, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Irish, French, Dutch, Flemish, Walloon, German, Hungarian, Slovenian, Serbo-Croatian, Russian, Greek, Turkish, India, Chinese, Franco-American, Spanish American, Cape Verde Islands, West Indies, American-Indian, African (Thompson 1961:50).

[2] In a footnote dated May 1861, Campbell adds that he has received a much better version from Alexander Carmichael and goes on to summarise it briefly (Campbell 1892:105). This text is preserved among Campbell's manuscripts in the National Library of Scotland, being item 70 of Vol. XI.

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D. A. MACDONALD

Alexander MacGregor, a Camserney Poet of the Nineteenth Century: some Biographical Notes

Breadalbane has produced many poets, and numerous local people of comparatively humble origin and sketchy education

have commemorated the once-rich traditions of their countryside in commendable prose and poetry, both Gaelic and English. Many of these unpublished writings have been destroyed, while others, like those of the nineteenth-century Camserney poet, have in part survived, due to the fact that their local importance was recognised by those who inherited them or acquired them.

In September 1964, the writer was presented [1] with a quarto notebook containing ninety-six pages of unpublished Gaelic poems written by Alexander MacGregor of Camserney and dating from 1865 to 1889. The hand is a neat copperplate throughout, and, although the poet had clearly a fine vocabulary and a deep regard for his own language, much of the spelling is phonetic, and many local dialect forms for words are used. This is particularly interesting in a locality where native Gaelic speakers, indigenous to the townships there, have all but disappeared.

There are few people alive to-day who remember, or have even heard of the Camserney poet, yet his many writings which do survive, and the knowledge that by far the greater part of his work has been lost and may have actually been destroyed, show him to have been a remarkable man. His own work illustrates this, and, together with what information is now available in the field, demonstrates that he was, by instinct, a true bard, and that his irrepressible urge to compose persisted throughout his life.

That one can draw very erroneous conclusions from field-questioning is illustrated by the fact that one Loch Tayside man, one of the few old people who thought he knew of the poet, said he was a schoolmaster in Dull in the last century. Bearing this in mind, I went to talk to William Forbes of Camserney, aged 75, a native Gaelic-speaker and a first-rate informant. His father was the meal miller in Camserney, and his forebears were blacksmiths there. He himself works a small farm with his brother Peter, four years younger than himself. Not only had he heard of Alexander MacGregor of Camserney, but he knew him personally when he was a young boy and the poet a very old man, in his eighties. Moreover, he himself possessed two complete notebooks and one fragmentary one, and many loose sheets of poems and letters, all in the poet's own hand. The notebooks are numbered. These are now also in the possession of the writer and will become the property of the School of Scottish Studies. It transpired that Alexander

MacGregor of Dull was also a poet, but he was a schoolmaster and must have been considerably older than the Camserney poet. One of his poems was published in the Gaelic song collection, the *Òranaiche*.[2] Thus there were in the nineteenth century two Alexander MacGregors, both poets, living within a mile or so of each other.

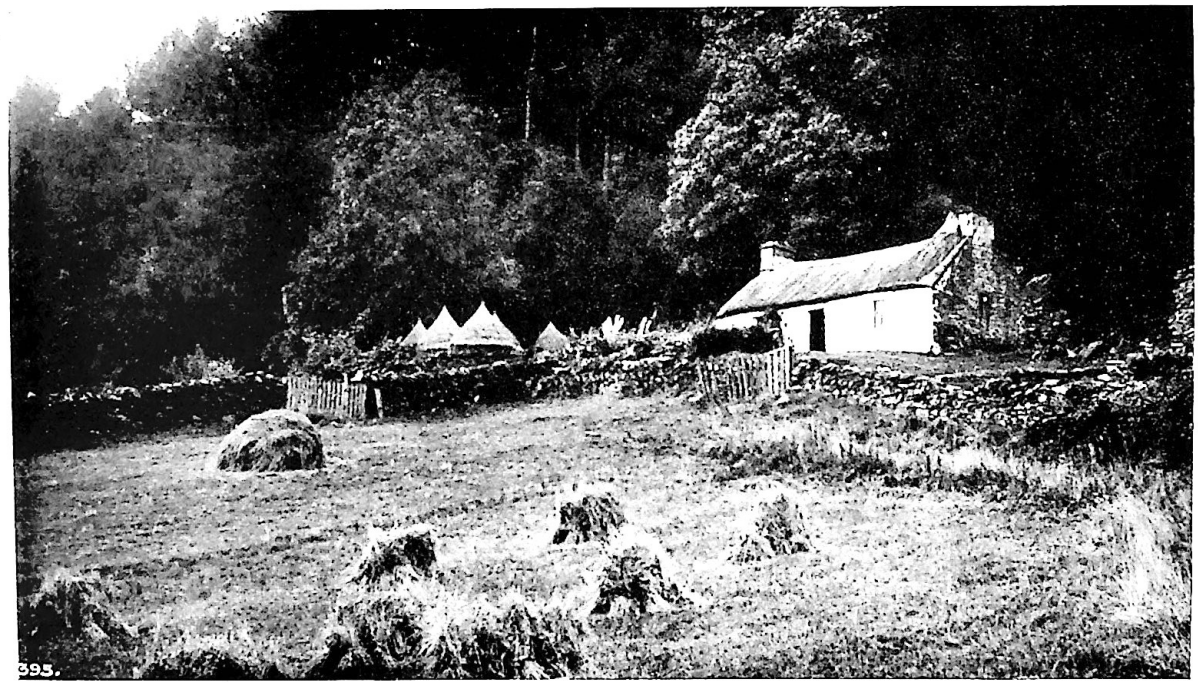
Notebook I, begun in 1865, when the Camserney poet must have been in his late thirties or early forties, contains exclusively Gaelic poems. It is interesting to observe that as the century advances, the poet writes more and more in English, and William Forbes had only one Gaelic poem in his possession. This apparently reflects local conditions at the time for, towards the end of the nineteenth century, Gaelic was dying rapidly in the district. When the Forbes brothers first went to Dull school they were monoglot Gaelic speakers and had to learn English through the medium of English. They were apparently greatly teased by their companions for being unable to speak anything other than Gaelic and were thought to be very backward and old-fashioned. The poems are of varying quality, but are full of interest and local colour. The Gaelic poems contain many references to local places and events, as do the later English compositions, and in true bardic tradition, the poet devotes many to the praise of his patrons, the Menzies of Castle Menzies, and to their offspring and policies. The first poem in Notebook I is in praise of a girl from Rawer, *Maighdean rauar*, Rawer being a farm on the hillside behind Castle Menzies, which has been a ruin for many decades. Another, called *Riflairean thobairfeallidh* contains what appears to be a local form of the name Aberfeldy, one mile from where the poet resided. There is then a long gap, the next notebooks being numbers 7 and 8, 7 dating to 1871 and 8 to 1894. There is no date on the fragmentary notebook. The following biographical material about the Camserney poet is derived from a conversation with William Forbes, farmer, Camserney, recorded on 24th October 1964 (S.S.S. R.L. 2200).

William Forbes remembers the poet when he was an old man in his early eighties before the First World War. He cannot give precise dates, but from what he has said, the poet must have been born about 1835. In English he was called Alexander MacGregor, but in Gaelic he was always known as *Sanndaidh Flèisdeir*, and his family were known as the *Flèisdeirich*. This may perhaps have originated with the proscription of the name MacGregor and the adoption of a different name by members

of the clan. William Forbes, however, is of the opinion that it is related to the fact that some of the poet's family may actually have been arrow-makers. Both Alexander MacGregor himself and his forebears belonged to the district and the poet at one stage lived at Tychraggan, on the east side of Weem Hotel, in a thatched, cruck-framed house, illustrated on Plate VII. Only a few stones of the building now remain. MacGregor had a croft, which he worked, and over and above this, he acted as gardener on the Menzies estate at Castle Menzies. When the Tychraggan house fell into disrepair, the laird, with whom he was a great favourite, gave him an old slated house, the Mid Lodge, on the Camserney side of Weem. The poet was clearly a person of considerable character and attracted numerous stories to himself. He was, as William Forbes put it, "a very pawky man". There was seemingly no family connection with the other poet of the same name, Alexander MacGregor of Dull.

The poet never published any of his works. He was not, seemingly, interested in doing so. He had an overwhelming urge to compose, and that was an end in itself. If he had nothing else to hand, he would write his verses as they came to him on any scraps of paper, including old envelopes, that he could seize. His poems were apparently never sung, but they were recited by local people who knew them. The poet knew a great part of his own repertoire by heart.

William Forbes acquired the English notebooks of the poet at a sale of his effects which were put up for auction some time after his death. He purchased them, together with letters and various jottings, for a few pence. The poems are clearly inspired, in some instances, by Burns and by James Thomson, and in certain less happy examples, by McGonagall, but they all help to document local life in the last century in this area. Their interest and value is greatly increased by the fact that an informant such as William Forbes is able to explain who the various people mentioned in the poems were, where the places are and how the names are pronounced, and to what local events the poet is referring. And it is a pleasing thought that, although a fine Gaelic tradition is at its very end in Camserney, one of the last bearers of it is a true descendant of the old order—a splendid informant and himself a poet. It is hoped that one day we may also acquire the poems of William Forbes to add to the traditional material salvaged from this corner of Breadalbane.



The house of Alexander MacGregor at Tychraggan. See p. 116.

NOTES

[1] Given by Mrs. Lexy Walker, Fortingall, Perthshire, daughter of Alexander Stewart, cobbler, Glen Lyon, the author of *A Highland Parish*. The notebook belonged to her father.

[2] *Buaidh leis na Seòid, An t-Òranaiche*, p. 1 ff. (ed. Archibald Sinclair). Glasgow 1879.

ANNE ROSS

A variant of a poem ascribed to Duncan Ban Macintyre

These two verses are a variant of one of the poems, ascribed to Duncan Ban Macintyre, printed in *Scottish Studies* 6:99-105. They were recorded in June 1963 from Mr. Alasdair Cameron, Strontian, who, as "North Argyll", is widely known as an authoritative writer on the history of the district. Mr. Cameron, however, is equally distinguished as an authentic bearer of oral tradition, and in this role he has contributed some extremely valuable material to the sound archives of the School of Scottish Studies.

Both the poem itself and the story of its composition correspond closely enough to the versions I have already published to make further editorial comment unnecessary. I print them here simply because they furnish corroborative evidence of Duncan Ban's authorship.

Bhiodh Dunnchadh Bàn nan Oran uaireannan a' cleachdadh a bhith dol cuairtean troimh Ghleann Urcha 's a' fuireach aig cìobair d'am b'ainm MacNeacail[1] ann an Airigh Mheadhain.[2] Is chuile h-uair a thigeadh Dunnchadh 's a bhiodh e fuireach oidhche leis a' chìobair bhiodh e cann'n ris gum bu mhath leis adharc boc-gaibhre fhaotainn airson sgian—airson cas a dhèanamh do sgian-dubh. Is bha an cìobair a' gealltainn da sin a dhèanamh. Achd nuair thigeadh Dunnchadh an ath uair cha robh adharc a' bhoc-gaibhre ri fhaicinn. Ma dheireadh bha e fàs car searbh dhe seo is oidhche bha sin thionndaidh e car feargach ris a' . . . MacNeacail . . . is thuirt e ris gu robh an t-am aige nise an adharc . . . "O laochain," thuirt MacNeacail, "Bidh adharc na gaibhre a'ad air do l . . . brat na leabaidh man éirich thu màireach 'sa' mhaduinn."

Dh'éirich e am bristeadh-latha is thug e leis na coin. 'Se . . . airson gum biodh e an Creag nan Cuaran far robh na gobhair a' cuir seachad an oidhche man togadh iad ri ionaltradh. Chuir e na coin riuth is chaidh aig air boc a

bhristeadh. Lean e am boc a staigh do dh'Abhunn Urchaidh agus chaidh aig air a mharbhadh a sin 'san abhunn is an adharc a thoirt dheth, is thug e dhachaigh i is chuir e air brat leapa Dhunnchaidh Bhàin i.

Bha latha fliuch agus cha robh an cìobair dol do'n mhonadh is thuirt Dunnchadh Bàn ris, "Tha mi smaoineachadh fon tha an latha cho fliuch gun déid mi fhìn is du fhéin do'n cheardaich, a Dhail Mhàillidh, is gu faigh mi sgian a dhéanamh airson a chur an adharc na gaibhre."

'Se MacNeacail a bha 'sa' ghobha cuideach. Ràinig iad is rinn an gobha sgian agus chuir e an cas . . . rinn e a adhairc na gaibhre i. Is nuair a bha e deas thuirt am bard ris, "De th'agam ri thoirt dut?" "Chan 'eil," thuirt an gobhainn, "achd rann no dha."

Agus seo mar a chuala mise an rann:

"Fhuair mi mo rogha sgine
Ur as an tine air a deagh bhualadh
'S mo bheannachd air an tì rinn a h-àrach
'S a dh'fhàg gu geur tana cruaidh i.

Tha i dìreach làidir daingeann
'S rinneadh ann an giorag suas i
'S tha i 'n diugh an adharc na gaibhre
Chaidil an raoir an Creag nan Cuaran."

Translation

Duncan Ban of the Songs used to go through Glen Orchy sometimes and stay with a shepherd called MacNicol[1] in Airigh Mheadhain[2]. Every time he came and stayed a night with the shepherd, Duncan used to say to him that he would like to get a male goat's horn to make a handle for a sgian dubh. The shepherd would promise to do that for him. But when Duncan came the next time the buck's horn was not to be seen. At last he was getting a bit irritated with this and one night he turned rather angrily to MacNicol and told him that it was time he (did something about) the horn. "My good fellow," said MacNicol, "the goat's horn will be on the counterpane of your bed before you get up in the morning."

The shepherd rose at daybreak and, taking the dogs with him, set out so that he could be in Creag nan Cuaran, where the goats spent the night, before they should start moving out to graze. He set the dogs on them and he succeeded in separating a buck from the herd. He followed it in to the River Orchy

and there, in the river, he got it killed and took the horn off. He brought the horn home and placed it on Duncan Ban's counterpane.

The day was wet and the shepherd was not going to the moor that day. So Duncan Ban said to him, "Since the day is so wet, I think you and I will go to Dalmally, to the smithy, so that I can get a knife-blade made to put in the goat's horn."

The blacksmith was a MacNicol too. They arrived at the place and the blacksmith made a knife-blade and in the handle he put . . . he made the handle out of the goat's horn. When he had finished, the poet asked, "How much do I have to give you?" "Nothing," replied the blacksmith, "except a verse or two."

And this is how I heard the verse:

"I have got the knife of my choice
Fresh from the fire, well beaten:
My blessing on the man who has shaped it
Who has left it keen and thin and hard.

Firm and straight and strong—
Swiftly was it fashioned—
Today it is in the horn of the goat
That last night slept in Creag nan Cuaran.

NOTE

[1] This MacNicol was one of the MacNicols of Arivean, a family 'celebrated for reciting songs and poems, particularly the songs and histories of the Fingalian race' (*Report of the Highland Society of Scotland appointed to inquire into the Nature and Authenticity of the Poems of Ossian* [*Edinburgh 1801*] *270-73*).

[2] Or *Airigh Bheathain.*

JOHN MACINNES

C. BOOK REVIEWS

The Foals of Epona: A History of British Ponies from the Bronze Age to Yesterday. By A. Dent and D. M. Goodall. London: Galley Press. 1962. Pp. x+305, 52 figs., 6 maps, 78 pls. 45s.

This book, as the title indicates, covers a wider field than Scotland, but there are nevertheless many points of particular interest to Scottish studies. It essays first to review current knowledge on the origin and development of the domesticated horse in the British Isles from the Roman Occupation to the