



"CUCHULAINN."

FROM A DRAWING BY JOHN DUNCAN, A.R.S.A.

109755

Second Volume



SONGS OF THE CEBRIDES.

COLLECTED AND ARRANGED

FOR

Voice AND PIANOFORTE

WITH GAELIC AND ENGLISH WORDS

BY

MARJORIE KENNEDY-FRASER

AND

KENNETH MACLEOD

BOOSEY & CO.

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To SCOTS AND OTHER CELTS
throughout the world,
this racial music,
as faithfully preserved by the
Gaels of the Western Isles.

MARJORY KENNEDY-FRASER.
PATUFFA KENNEDY-FRASER.
KENNETH MACLEOD.

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GAELIC PRONUNCIATION.

SOME GENERAL RULES FOR SINGERS.

VOWELS:—

- A E I O U = mainly the Italian vowel sounds, but "a" more French than Italian.
ia} Italian "i" prolonged, the "a" and "o" mere vanish vowels.
io} Examples: piob = peep, cian = keen.
ua} Italian "u" prolonged, the "a," "ai" (Ital. é), and "i,"
uai} vanish vowels. Examples: uair = uhr (German), luaths
ui} = loose, luib = loop, but with a ghost of the vanish vowel before the final consonant.
eo} "o" and "u" are here prolonged, the initial vowels very
iu} short. Examples: ceol = kyawl, ciurr = cure.
oi} Italian oi, ai; but ai has also other sounds: ai = French à
ai} in Marie = Mairi, and
ai} = Italian é. Examples: air, aig, speur, fein = English, air,
eu} ache, spare, fain.
ei} ea Italian è (and frequently ya). Examples: fear = fer, in ferret;
eala = yala.
ao} agh} French œu in "œur."
English u in "curl."

Final double n and double l affect vowel sounds thus:—

- anns = English "ounce."
thall = " " "howl."
rinn = " " "Rhine" (but cinn = "keen," sinn = "sheen").
tonn = " " "town."
seinn = " " "shine," and
trom = German "traum."

CONSONANTS:—

- r trilled, but on breath only, without tone.
m = English m.
n = " " n (sometimes more liquid).
c final} like German or Lowland Scots chk.
chd " } chd like English k.
c and g = English k.
b " p = " p, but p, t, c slightly more explosive than b, d, g.
d " t = " t, but somewhat softer.
d before or after i or e like English t in "tune."
t " " ch in "cheer."
s = English s in "so." Exceptions: Gaelic so and sud like English "show" and "shoot."
s before or after i or e = sh. Exceptions: is (and), and is (verb) followed by a consonant = iss.
l before e and i like English L, but in certain cases more liquid.
" a, o, u, to be pronounced with a relaxed tongue.
Double n or double l, liquid, like Ital. gn and gl, or English l and n in "million" and in "pinion."
rt = rst.
n after c, g, m, generally pronounced r.
Between the consonants lm, lg, lbh, rm, rg, rbh, rc, and nm a distinct drawl (a vowel sound) is introduced, as falbh = falav.

h like English h.

h associated with other consonants affects them thus:

- bh and mh = v.
th = h, except in "thu," when both consonants are silent.
fh = h, often silent.
dh and gh = German final g; before e and i = English y; final dh and gh, silent.
ph = English f.
sh = h.
ch = German or Scots in "loch."
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Patuffa and Marjory Kennedy-Fraser

FOREWORD.

OF all the fountains of the passions and beliefs of ancient times in Europe, the Celtic alone, says W. B. Yeats, has been for centuries close to the main river of European literature. These fountains of living tradition still flow in the Gaelic-speaking Isles of Scotland, and from them we have filled the pages of this book.

“Skulls are harder than consonants, and races lurk where languages slink away,” wrote William Sharp,¹ and to many of us Celtic Scots the language of our ancestors is a sealed book. Yet still, in the music of our race, we find ourselves; in these racial musical survivals the very character and spirit of our forebears is distilled. “C'est le grand révélateur des forces créatrices d'une nation,” says a French writer. And the perfervid feeling of the Scot, though it smoulder like the dull embers of a peat fire, needs but the breath of an old song to make it leap again into flame. And such surviving fragmentary human documents seem to tend to drift ever westwards before the advancing tide of cosmopolitanism; to the remote Western Isles, therefore, one must go to-day to find still unrecorded types of this racial self-expression. And gladly one goes to the West!

“Who has not felt the glamour of the Western Sea?” says Kenneth Macleod, our island poet collaborator. And wrote Nicolson of Skye:—

“Good is the smell of the brine that laves
Black rock and skerry,
Where the great palm-leaved tangle waves
Down in the green depths.”

The glamour of the Western Sea, the lure of the Isles and the snare of the elusive song-quest—these have drawn us time and again into their charmed circle. And that even although during the long summer days, when we frequent the isles, the winds sometimes blow for weeks together, and the sea shows itself in dangerous moods. The fisher-crofters, who get their living from the sea—“their treasury of Mary”—and, in so doing, have a “life-long struggle with something greater than themselves,” are yet fully alive alike to its seduction and to its cruelty. “The sea,” says Kenneth Macleod, “has cast her spell upon the impressionable Celt—her generosity, her might, her playfulness, her frequent cruelty, are felt, but what really haunts the Celtic mind is her awful mysteriousness.” Yet they love their boats, these Islesmen, and in a seaman’s love song to his boat² this personal temperamental bond between Islesman and Birlinn gives us one of the most beautiful songs in the collection. In the curves and leaps of the tune, indeed, can we not see the vessel, its³ “white fillet of foam under its brows,” “white its shoulders cresting sea-foam.”

The sadness and the restlessness of many of the airs again reflect the sadness and the restlessness of the sea,⁴ that mysterious, rhythmical, relentlessly pulsating sea, which everywhere encompasses the Hebridean Celt. And the wind too, the never-ceasing wind, makes itself heard in the weird, vowel-threaded rising and falling “motives” that link together the chanted phrases of many an old bardic lay. Only those whose ears have been filled for days and weeks together with the moan of the sea, and of the wind round one of those rocky isles, can realise how much there is of their haunting mystery reflected in the music of the race. But, and if there be sea-sorrow, there is also sea-rapture. And “music’s laughter” is ever met with in the love-songs and joy-songs of the Gael. Laughter this that is not mockery nor scorn, not “Le Rire” of Bergson, but the laughter of rapture, Carpenter’s “Exultancy of Resurrection.” “The roadway of excess,” wrote Blake,⁵ “leads to the palace of wisdom.”

¹ The writer who, as *Fiona Macleod*, wrote many original tales of the Hebrides. His *Immortal Hour* has been set to music by Rutland Boughton, music inspired by and largely founded on our first Vol. of Hebridean Songs. Of this work Ernest Newman has written that it contains some of the loveliest music of our day.

² Page 51. “The Birlinn of the White Shoulders.”

³ Conrad’s “Mirror of the Sea.”

⁴ It is lake water, says John Kelman, that sounds the undertone in Yeats’ Irish Poetry, “always night and day I hear lake water lapping.”

⁵ Blake is akin to the Hebridean Gaels, his name was of right O’Neill.

And out in those remote isles, perhaps just because one still finds life on the material side as simple as at the earlier stages of social organisation, one finds a people "hindered by physical conditions from producing a material civilisation, the more free of their emotions and imagination."¹

" Many a poor, black cottage is there
Grimy with peat smoke,
Sending up in the soft evening air
Purest blue incense."²

Incredibly hard are the physical conditions on some of the smaller isles. Into the rocky hollows a little sandy soil is wind-drifted, and here the self-same crops are grown year after year, the drifting sand probably bringing with it afresh each season the needful supply of vital elements. And is it not possible that the physical hard conditions, the small holdings—the only possible allotment of such saucersful of sandy soil—depriving the *men* of the chance to develop constructive and organising faculty, may have contributed to the development of the personality of the *women* and to the creation of a civilisation of the hearth, a social order symbolised in the beautiful figure of Bride,³ the foster-mother of Christ. The ancient social order—"an age-long communism"—which has left us this heritage of song, was held together by ties of blood relationship, and was, in a manner, free from wage labour. Even to-day in the isles, if you cannot cut your own peats, you cannot easily secure *hired* labour to do it. Yet if the sands of that ancient civilisation are fast running out, its tale of folk-art, "folk-art the oldest of the aristocracies of thought, the soil where all great⁴ art is rooted," still yields the flower of its ideals.⁵ Neglect of such racial tradition, says Yeats, makes for spiritual poverty. From our music we Gaels may learn that we are not only "music-makers and dreamers of dreams," not only of those that "take up harp and sorrow and the wandering road," but of those also that "take up spears and die for a name."

There is no diet so life-giving and so life-preserving, says Villiers Stanford, the Irish music-maker, as the natural outpouring of the songs of the soil. And it is in the belief that the material we collect is of genuine value racially that we continue the quest begun in 1905. In the years that have intervened since we published our first volume of "Songs of the Hebrides" and the later album, "Sea Tangle," my daughter and I have worked almost exclusively in collaboration with Kenneth Macleod, and largely in his native island of Eigg. Eigg and Benbecula indeed have furnished two-thirds of the material here presented, the remainder hailing from our earlier hunting grounds, Barra, Eriskay "of the dark nooks," Isla, the Uists, Skye, and the Lewes.

Low-lying, watery Benbecula of the sea-fords and the lochs and the mirage-like illusions yielded us a great crop of labour liltts and some interesting and valuable Ossianic forms of chanting. I had been attracted to the island in 1911 by the fame of Calum Barrach as a singer of sacred songs. I looked for incantations and hymns and tunes, such as those collected, translated, and published by Dr. Alex. Carmichael in his "Carmina Gadelica." What was my astonishment to find that Calum's repertoire, and it was a very large one, consisted entirely of ancient, rhymed, heroic tales of pagan origin, just such Ossianic fragments as Macpherson found here in the 18th century when covering this self-same ground in search of materials for his great epic.

When Macpherson's poems founded on this fugitive, fragmentary, orally transmitted lore appeared, all Europe reverberated to the strains of his Ossian. Macpherson died in 1796, but long before his death the Ossianic poems had become, according to William Sharp, one of the most vital influences in literature.

To reach Benbecula we had to land from the little steamer at Lochboisdale in South Uist and drive northwards the length of the island through bogland, lower at times than sea-level, lit slantwise by the afternoon sun glinting on long chains of water-lily lochs.

In the Isle of Eriskay, where we worked earlier, there are also water-lily lochs. One in an uncanny corner of the isle is said to be the haunt of the water-horse. Its peaty, fern-clad banks are undermined by the dark water which is said to be of unmeasured depth, and the loch itself is closed in by a precipitous horse-shoe of boggy hills which have an awesome air even at noon. But the great white lilies that grow in the loch are

¹ Padraig Colum in "Love Songs of Connaught."

² Alex. Nicolson.

³ The eminent biologist, Prof. Arthur Thomson, remarked of the "Death Croon," in our first volume, that it was "the high water-mark of civilisation."

⁴ Pronounced Breedyā.

⁵ Yeats.

the lovelier for their dark setting, and when you escape from these haunts of the *each-uisge* out to the open shore, the blue gentians, the purple orchids, and great yellow irises of the bright green island-knolls seem refreshingly human again.

The drive to Benbecula ended in the crossing of one of the dangerous sea-fords, which serve to cut off the isle effectively from the outside world. The north ford, which we crossed later, covers five miles of treacherous sand, and on this trackless stretch travellers, at times, overtaken by a mist which obscures distant land-marks, unwittingly and fatally turn toward the swiftly incoming tide.

Fishing is not followed in Benbecula owing to the dangerous shallowness of the waters round its coast. Cattle-tending and weaving occupy the folk—cattle-tending the men, spinning and weaving the women. For 70 years (he was then 87) Calum Macmillan had tended his cattle on the *machar*¹ and chanted his tales of the heroes. He was out in the rain herding when we drove over one day, but he came with us to his cottage and courteously ushered us in to the cheerful kitchen. Carding, spinning, and weaving were going busily forward, but at our entrance the guidwife laid aside her carding brushes, her son's young wife her spinning wheel, and the daughter of the house her weaving shuttle to welcome us. To the priest we owed our introduction here, and, indeed, all the success that followed our song-quest in the isle. Father Ian Macmillan was a daily visitor at Calum's thatched cottage, which stood just beside the presbytery glebe, and on our visits there he drew for us from the old folk the best they had of Hebridean lore.

From the goodman we heard only Ossianic tales and lays. And ancient custom, we found, did not sanction an easy transition from these to lighter liltts. At one seance, indeed, attention might be given only to the stuff of heroic tradition, recited and listened to in reverent mood. These fugitive literary remains of the Gaelic Homer have long been sacred to the Islesman. Pre-medieval, pre-Christian, these feats of Fionn² and the Fayne,³ heroic, romantic, wild, fantastic maybe, held up for imitation as a model, Fionn, "truest, wisest, kindest, gentle to women, generous to men." This chivalry of Celtic myth created, indeed, medieval chivalrous romance, and imposed its ideals on Christendom.

Besides these Ossianic tales proper, the tales of Cuchullan, of the Great Fool (*Parsifal?*) of Deirdre,⁴ tales of suffering, of quest, and of high courage are still recited orally by the folk around the peat fires.

This lore was not spoken, it was chanted, and of the forms of chanting used by Calum Barrach, we give one or two specimens, thus:

I.—LAY OF CAOILTE.⁵

Is mu - lad - ach mi'n deigh Chaoil-te Nach mair - ionn luchd mo chon - traon - aidh, Lion
 mu - lad mi, cradh, is goir - teas, 'N am sgar - ach - duinn dhomh rim' cho - dhal - ta.

II.—LAY OF CONN,⁶ SON OF THE RED.

CHANTED.

Sgeulachd air Conn Mac an Deirg, Air a lionadh le trom fheirg, Dol a dhioladh éiric athair gun
 fheall Air mhaithibh sa' mohr uaisle.

¹ Grassy stretches of sandy shore.

² Pronounced "few"-n.

³ "The comely people of yellow wreathed hair, who were never touched with fear, nor hatred, nor change."

⁴ The Helen of the Gael, her story dramatised by Synge and by Yeats.

⁵ The "Thin," swiftest of the heroes of the Fayne.

⁶ "Who was like a whirlpool, or the ebb of the sea 'gainst strong waves."

and thus, to descending phrases within the compass of a sixth:

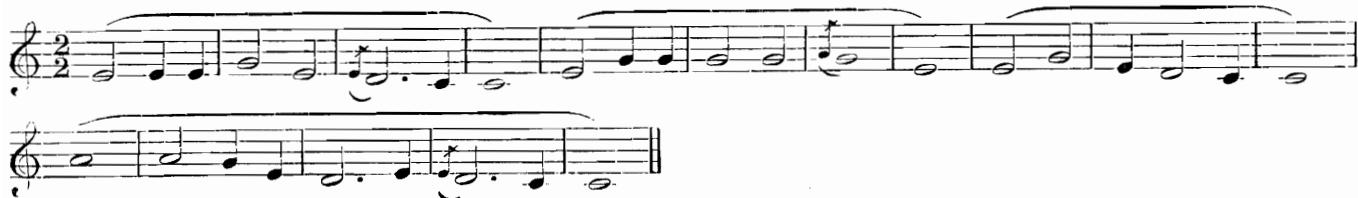
III.—LAY OF THE SMITHY.¹

Not too definitely musical—with a speech inflection.



and these more defined tunes:

IV.—MAC RIGH BOLAIBH.



V.—THE LAY OF AILLTE.²



From the guidwife we got labour lilts *guleor*, with intoxicatingly rhythmic refrains, among them the airs to which we have set the "Benbecula Bridal," the "Grail Galley," and "Ruari, Ruari." These were mostly *waulking* songs, sung at the shrinking of the home-spun web. As this process of fulling the cloth was long and heavy, the songs used for it were correspondingly stimulating. And many ancient airs are still preserved in Benbecula just because the work of weaving still goes busily forward there. A much larger crofter community than that of Eriskay—there were some 1,300 folk in the Isle of Benbecula—hardly a day passes that is not marked by a waulking. And where there are many waulkings there will survive the greater number of varied and complex labour-song refrains. For at these gatherings³ the singing is the attraction, and the tedious work of tossing, dumping, and circulating the moisture laden cloth is completely forgotten in the intoxicating swing of the body to the rhythmic refrain. The refrains are sung by the whole company, but there is interest also in the verse lines, which are given by the leader only, and which may be either old classics or topical improvisations. A simple yet typical example is here given:

REFRAIN.

From BENBECULA.



VERSE (freely recited).

REFRAIN.



¹ The Magic Smith was a Celtic Cyclopean figure, tall, one-legged, with one eye in his forehead, wearing a darksome helmet of skin. Spells put he on the Fayne that they should try to discover his Magic Smithy, where seven smiths were joyfully at work, each with seven hands, seven tongs, and seven hammers, knocking out sparks. For Gaelic words to be chanted to this air, see Campbell's *Waifs and Strays*, Vol. IV., p. 71.

² This lay is found with Gaelic and English words and pianoforte accompaniment at page 81. The story is a love tale of the flight of the Queen of Lochlann with Aillte, a young hero of the Fayne. Sung by Ossian to Patrick, "of the sweet-sounding psalms."

³ Mr. Otto Anderson, a musician from Finland, who paid me a hasty visit in my music room in Edinburgh, told me that the Finns still chant their Kalevala epic to a bodily movement that resembles that of Hebridean waulking. "The Finns are the only other race in modern Europe that has preserved to the present day an heroic epos reaching back into a far-distant past."

⁴ Pronounce as in Italian with the exception of *eile*, which rhymes with *daily*. In syllable *him* prolong the *m*, not the vowel.

To this the workers, seated in opposite rows at a long, improvised table, rhythmically swing the cloth, tossing it on the boards to the pulse of the song.

The stirring vocables of the refrain have here no meaning. This reduction of the text to mere vocalising syllables is not necessarily deterioration. Indeed, a higher level of purely musical sense and homogeneity of mood may thus at times be attained.¹

Presumably women themselves were the authors of most of the labour songs used by them. The Island Greeks, it seems, like the Island Gaels, also owe to women a large share of the most beautiful and touching of their songs, and Greek women, like Hebridean, it is said, improvise in the outburst of grief.

Many songs go to the shrinking of one web, and these vary in character and speed with the progress of the work. Here is a lilt used for the alternate speeding up and relaxation of effort.

WAULKING (TIGHTENING) SONG.

With tempo rubato, alternately accelerating and relaxing.



and here another for the "posting" or washing of the web after the shrinking has been completed :

POSTING TUNE.

From KENNETH MACLEOD.

Gaily.

Sud mar rach-ainn fhein is thu, Null a dh' Eir - inn hu o Sud mar rach-ainn fhein is thu.

Repeat ad lib. *D.C.*

Sud mar rach-ainn, so mar theid mi.

FINE.

The naïve pattern of four repeated notes in this last would seem to be Scandinavian rather than Celtic in character. A dainty example of it is the Milking Song (p. 70 of the first volume of Songs of the Hebrides). Here are two others :

Briskly.

From BENBECULA.

Hu ru ru bhi hu - o, Hu ru ru bhi, Ho leò, Hu ri ri bhi il al Gabh an rathad Fhionnlaidh.

VERSE.

Tha cao-raich a - gam o sheachduin ri fas-gaidh an Sgum-bain.²

Gracefully.



¹ In certain classical Hindu songs, the Alaps for instance, the text consists solely of vocalising sounds.

² A hill in Barra.

Milking songs were of course numerous in a land of cattle-tending.

Very smoothly and cajolingly.

MILKING SONG.

ANN MONK, BENBECULA.

Thoir do bhainne bho dhonn, Thoir do bhainne bho dhonn, Thoir e gu trom a-gus tor-rach,
Clannach - a a tighinn don bhaile, Thoir do bhainne bho dhonn, Mac ic Leoid is Mac ic Ail-ein

Thoir do bhainne bho dhonn.
Thoir do bhainne bho dhonn.

MILKING CROON.

From KIRSTY MACKINNON (Eigg.)

A bho mhaol donn A dir - eadh bheann Tha bho mhaol donn a tear - nadh bheann. Tha
bho mhaol donn a dir - eadh bheann 'S gu bheil i sgith 'S a laogh air chall.
Bho thaobh gach glinn gu bruach nan allt, Bho thaobh gach glinn gu bruach nan allt, Bho
thaobh gach glinn gu bruach nan allt' 'S gu bheil i sgith 'S a laogh air chall.

Herds of cattle in the grazing islands stand for wealth, and in a nursing song from Coll¹ the nurse sings to the little one "Wooers fine will come courtin', but to nane will I gi'e thee, wantin' herds o' cattle."

In the most precipitous of the high-cliffed rocky isles, life was wont to be supported solely by the snaring of wild sea-fowl, and in these isles a rope symbolized wealth. The real need, however, was shown forth in the ordeal through which a young man was required to pass who would take unto himself a wife. Led to the highest pinnacle of rock overhanging the wild sea that surged against it, he was required to balance himself on the extreme edge of the cliff on the heel of his left foot, outstretch the other, and finally throwing out both arms, return safely to surer footing.

But Coll and Benbecula are flat islands, and in craggy Coll and Benbecula of the lochs, herds of cattle, as far as the community had a say in the matter, ensured a young man a wife.

While we were seated in Calum's cottage listening to the songs, Father Macmillan kept watch through the little gable window that gave on the *machar* southwards. He was expecting a bridal party. Suddenly he exclaimed, "Here they come," and straightway carried us all off to his little church, and, after the ceremony, to the little presbytery, where we assisted, in the nine-foot-square vestibule, in a festal reel, the piper and the onlookers craning their necks from the adjacent parlours to take part in the fun. After the reel, the customary gunshots were fired, and the bridal party formed up, with a piper at its head, to recross the *machar*, making straight across country some five miles to the bridegroom's house. And as we drove back in the misty moon-

light, by the high-road, we could follow the track of the bridal procession by the sound of the pipes across the moor, and the signalling gunshots that came from each lamp-lit, low, thatched cottage as the bridal party approached and passed. It was a strange scene. Veils of mist were rising from each little tarn, and the moon hung low from the middle of the sky like a great golden lamp. But there are strange traveller's tales of atmospheric illusions in Benbecula. A grove of trees appeared to one in this treeless isle. Nearer approach suggested a hedgerow, still nearer inspection proved the illusory grove to be a row of potato shaws!

Benbecula is one of the outpost isles and is surrounded by a "shoaling sea, the lovely blue playing into the green." From the sheen-white sands of its western shores, one looks out on an unbroken stretch of the Atlantic, as did the Gaels of yore, sensing a land of heart's desire, *Tir nan og*, and "catching a glimpse against the sunset of its summer isles of Eden lying in dark purple spheres of sea."

The isle of Eigg, which lies close to the mainland geographically, is yet quite remote spiritually. Half Protestant, half Catholic, it is still, in its heroic tales and songs, wholly pagan. In Eigg, indeed, the love of the old heroic lore so overflows that it tides over all minor differences. "God is all the nearer," says Yeats, "because the pagan powers are not far away."

Eigg is a very beautiful little island. Than the outlook from the white curves of Laig¹ Bay westward to the blue altar peaks of Rum,² one could not find anywhere a more impressive scene. Rich in rank green undergrowth and gay with wild flowers in summer, a rivulet running into Laig¹ Bay bears a vivid green border of water-cress that recalls the island love-song, "Like watercress gathered fresh from cool streams, thy kiss, dear love, by the Bens of Jura."³

In Eigg Kenneth Macleod was born, and there cradled in Celtic lore. He had for nurse a singer reputed the best in the island, and his aunt, Janet Macleod from Skye, was one of the hereditary conservers of the traditions of the Macleods. These gifted women found a receptive and retentive mind in young Kenneth, and at the age of thirteen, influenced by MacBain of Inverness, the Celtic scholar, he became a conscious collector, much of what he gathered into the honey cells of his memory being deposited finally in our joint first volume of Hebridean songs. In Eigg with him we had an easy task as collectors—merely to appreciate, phonograph and notate the material he brought to light. The old people, who all knew and loved him, not only gave him freely what they could recall, but from himself they heard so many half-forgotten lines and quaint tunes and refrains that, from the deeply disturbed depths of their lore-laden minds, songs and tales re-emerged that neither they nor their neighbours had thought of for years. And thus, besides the tale and song of Cuchullan (a saga already becoming obsolete, we are told, in the days of Columba), and "The Lay of the Great Fool" (*Amadan Mor*), we got the "Song of St. Donnan of Eigg," "The Wild Swan," "Altar Isle of the Sea," "Heart of Fire-Love," "Heartling of my Heart," "The Fate Croon," the lull song to the Cradle Lord of the Isles, the "Peat-fire Smooring Prayer," and the tales and croons of St. Bride.

The singers from whom in the main we collected in Eigg, were three women—Widow Macdonald (who was over ninety) and two others, also widows, Ishabel Macleod and Kirsty Mackinnon.

"Canals are straight, Rivers twist and turn, Nature is crooked," says Yeats, and this Sea-keening, chanted to us by the oldest dame, meandered freely, nature-wise, yet ever within certain prescribed tonal limits:—

SEA-KEENING.

Ne'er a boat comes, Ho - - ro - i, Round yon head-land, Ho ro ei - le.

Caoineadh-mnara.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Cha'n'eil bata thig o'n rudha
Nach tig rughadh 'nam gruaidh.

2. No long thig bharr a 'chaolais
Nach caochail mo shnuadh.

3. Gur a mise tha fo mhulad
Air an tulaich lom fhuar. | 4. Tha do leaba 'na h-onar
Anns an t-seomar ud shuas.

5. Ciamar theid mi ga caradh
'S tusa ghraidh cho fad uam.

6. Goirt leam diol do chuil stendaich
'S e 'ga reubadh 'sa chuan. |
|--|--|

Literal translation.

1. Never boat comes from the headland
But the blood rushes to my cheek.
2. Never ship comes through the narrows
But my colour will change.
3. I am the woman of sorrow
On the knoll bare and cold.
4. Thy pillow is in loneliness
In the chamber up yonder.
5. How can I go to smooth it
And thou, O love, so far away?
6. Sore on me the hurt to thy ringleted hair
And it being a-torn in the sea.

Singing adaptation.

1. Never boat comes—Round yon headland
But that ever—Flame my pale cheeks.
2. Never ship comes—Thro' the narrows
But sudden—Change I colour.
3. I a woman—Under sorrow
On bare knoll—Bare, cold.
4. Lonely—Thy pillow
In thy chamber—Up yonder.
5. How care I—E'er to smooth it
And thou—Far from me.
6. Ah, my wound—Soft thy brown curls
Sea-tossed—Sea-torn.

One of the simplest forms of crooning or keening, the very short refrain here cuts remorselessly into each verse-line. From Widow Macdonald also we learnt the electrifying "Reiving Ship" (p. 45). Strange that the old women should have sung to us these virile pirate chants! The "A ho hi! Hirm bo!" of its refrain is a rapturously reiving cry, and the ship in her course in Kenneth Macleod's English :

"Grinds beneath her gray-blue limpets,
Crunches curving whelks to sand-drift."

then,

"Speeds she gaily Moola's waters,
Kyles and Moyles, to fair green Isla.
Leaps her way to Isles of daring—
Gleaming Isles of blades and laughter.
A ho hi!"

Of the other two singers, one of the gayest we had met in the Isles was Ishabel Macleod, and it was a pleasure to see her beaming in her doorway as we scrambled up from the shore to greet her. To an uncommonly strong resonant voice she added a good repertoire of songs, and from her we learned the passionately pathetic "Heartling of my Heart." She danced and sang to us also an exhilarating "port-a-beul" (mouth music), used for foot-waulking in the days when blankets were shrunk by dancing on them!

With persistent forward-driving rhythm.



But our main source of supply in Eigg was the cottage where Kirsty Mackinnon lived with her brother. Kirsty had a voice of peculiar charm and a rare memory for the old tunes. Her brother had a like memory, fortunately, in his case, associating itself with the words. I shall never forget my first sight of Mackinnon as he quietly approached from the kitchen end of the cottage to the "ben" room in which we were seated. He carried himself with the unconscious rhythmic bearing and far-away look of one of the heroes of his own ancient tales. Lured by our love of the lore and aided by Kenneth Macleod's skill in stirring the pools of memory, brother and sister re-united for us the floating fragments of a fast-disappearing tradition. Yet, who shall say? Perhaps William Sharp was right when he averred that Celtic paganism lies profound still, beneath the fugitive drift of Christianity and civilisation, as the deep sea beneath the coming and going of the tides. And is it not possible that Kirsty's two boys, rapt listeners to the old lore, may in their turn be of those who are "not divided from images and emotions which carry the memory backward thousands of years."

From Kirsty we got the air used for St. Bride's Cleansing Croon, a croon that recalls that other Celtic cleansing from Uist :—

"I bathe thy palms
In showers of wine,
In the lustral fire,
In the seven elements,
In the juice of the raspberries,
In the milk of honey."¹

Kirsty's contributions to the present volume are too many to catalogue here. Most of them find place in the body of the book, but this ornate little labour lilt, attributed to the 17th century poetess and singer, Mary Macleod, does not appear later :

A MARY MACLEOD WAULKING SONG.

KIRSTY, EIGG.

12

Hi ri ho..... rann o Hi ri ho..... rann o. Ach a Mhairead nan cuir-ead c'uum a chuir thu orm breug.

D.C.

Hi ri ho rann, o Oh i ho rann o. Ach a Mhairead nan cuir-ead c'uum a chuir thu orm breug.

¹ Carmichael's Carmina Gadelica. Song to a young bride.

Kirsty had real skill as a vocalist, and gave the little grace-groups in her songs with the precision of a practised instrumental performer. But not from the women alone did we collect in Eigg. This Milking Song, for example, was sung to us by Piper Macleod:

MILKING CROON.

(THE THREE LOCHS).

E ho m'aghan Ciallaich m'agh donn E ho m'aghan M'aghan a ghaoil. Tha tri loch-an anns a bhail-e
 ' Loch Fi-on, Loch Mil, is Loch Bainne. 'S-ged a gheobhainn mo roghainn a - ca Bannsa an t-aghan sior thoirt bainne.

Translation of "The Three Lochs":—

REFRAIN.

E ho, my heifer,
 Soothe my brown heifer;
 E ho, my heifer,
 My heifer, my love.

VERSE.

There are three lochs in the township :
 Loch Wine, Loch Honey, and Loch Milk;
 Should I get my choice of the three,
 Dearest the heifer, ever flowing the milk.

Eigg has been richly endowed alike by nature and by tradition, and has for some an extraordinarily mystic charm; the charm of¹ “moving waters in their priest-like task of pure ablution round earth's human shore”; the charm of its groves, ²“Enter these enchanted woods, ye who dare”; the charm of its small community ³“bound together by imaginative possessions, stories and poems that have grown out of its own life.”

Did Christina Rossetti know the Eigg legend of St. Bride's Coracle when she wrote:

Three little children on a wide, wide sea,
 Motherless children, safe as safe can be
 With guardian angels.”?

Sure, the mystical and spiritual love of beauty is a central fact in the Celtic genius. The Celt truly feels with R. L. Stevenson, (who strangely enough in his portraits shows the type of the Iberian Hebridean,) “the beauty and terror of the world.” An elderly woman, elderly in 1856, when talking to Miss Frances Tolmie⁴ about the beauty of the world, confessed to having gone down on her knees to a magnificent cloud overhead. “Beauty, like sorrow,” says Ben Jonson, “dwelleth everywhere,” and there seems a large measure of both in the life of the Western Isles.

Celtic lore would seem to have a common mythological groundwork with that of the Hindus and the Greeks, although it is notable that women seem to have taken a higher place in ancient heroic Celtic legend than in the Greek tales from which Homer derived inspiration. The passionate nature of the Hebridean woman's love-songs surely bespeaks at least free scope of choice. Note Deirdre's frank instantaneous expression of love to Naoise at first sight. And yet “no other race,” says Renan, “has carried so much mystery into love. No other has conceived with more delicacy the ideal of woman, nor has been more dominated by her. . . . Woman here appears as a sort of vague vision. . . . No other literature offers anything analogous to this. . . . The ideal of sweetness and beauty set up as the supreme object in life is Celtic.”

Recurrent waves of Celtic inundation seem to have swept into and over Europe, probably from the East, in early days of racial migrations. And partly Oriental in character the Celts remain, in the mountain

¹ Keats.² Meredith.³ Yeats.⁴ See Miss Tolmie's contribution to Hebridean Lore, Vol. IV., No. 16, of Folk Song Society.



Drawn by PATUFFA KENNEDY-FRASER
from a recumbent Celtic cross in the Isle
of Eigg.

fastnesses and remote Isles¹ and peninsulas, where a remnant are still to be found faithful to the old memories and the old tongue. Hindu and Byzantine carving certainly shows affinity with that of Iona, and there are traces also in Celtic airs of kinship with Greek and Arabian.

For me, these sea-chants of the Isles are always accompanied (in the mind's ear) by nature sounds. Conrad speaks of "the deep bass-like chant of the sea," and of the "shrill pipe of the wind played on the sea-tops," and "the occasional punctuating crash of a breaking wave." These are ever behind all the croons we heard in the Isles, and we cannot do full justice to the Hebridean songs if we attempt—away from the sea—to sing them unaccompanied. The accompaniments, therefore, have not been provided merely for the "amusement of a lay public," and although such subjective treatment has been accused of being "more artistic than documentary," yet, on the other hand, the bare statement of a melody in notation does not convey its full significance, and phonograph records even give but a rhythmically emasculated version of many of the finest songs.

To Granville Bantock, the Anglo-Celtic orchestral tone-poet, belong the settings of five songs in this volume: "The Birlinn of the White Shoulders"; "The Smugglers' Song"; "Bloweth the West Wind"; "Sea-Longing," and "A Tiree Tragedy."

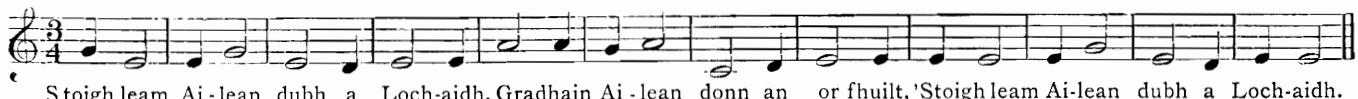
In setting the airs we have in no case altered the melodies. We have tried merely to set them in a harmonic and rhythmic framework of pianoforte wrought-metal, so to speak, as one would set a beautiful stone, a cairngorm or the like, and have tried by such setting to show the tune the more clearly —have tried to bring out its peculiar character.

In the chorus of humanity, it has been said, no race equals the Celtic in penetrative notes that go to the heart. A passionate pungency, a rhythmical *elan* these "penetrative notes" have. And yet these floating fragments of the ancient music-lore of Gaeldom we bring not merely as something quaint, archaic, having peculiar and perhaps fascinating local colour and character, but as racial records that yet strike to the roots of all life, wherever and whenever found. We bring them as an elemental, basic, far-reaching expression of life.

¹ The romantic dark (pre-Celtic?) Iberian type, to which R. L. Stevenson, by his appearance, would seem to have belonged, is in evidence in the Outer Isles, especially in the rocky islets to the south.



OF THE MELODIES.

*Cradle Croon.**From EIGG.*

The particular field of folk-music research here dealt with offers undoubtedly peculiar advantages. Nowhere else in Europe probably can the labour song and the heroic chant be thus studied from the living specimen. And these still living specimens date probably from many widely divergent stages of melodic development, the simplest forms and the most highly developed coming up, so to speak, in the same dredging net. Much of this music, again, is not necessarily unsophisticated. That it was unwritten (dating, probably, from pre-notation days) is no argument against conscious art. The Hebrideans have phenomenal memories—that of Lord Macaulay, whose grandfather was a Hebridean Churchman, is a case in point—and this, with their strong musical sense and their “compelling sense of style,” has enabled them to retain and pass on a rich and varied repertory, alike of words and of airs. The Hebrideans, at one time, under the Lords of the Isles, an independent, powerful, and cultured people, expressing a logical subtlety in the interlaced work of the old sculptured stones of Iona, and missals, such as the Book of Kells (said to have been carried from Iona to Kells in Ireland, in order to save it from the ravages of the Norse invaders), were surely a consciously artistic race. Romilly Allen, the well-known authority, defines Celtic art as “a local variety of the Lombardo-Byzantine style,” but adds that “borrowed materials were so skilfully used in connection with native designs, that the result was an entirely original style, the like of which the world has never seen.” Whatever the sources from which Hebridean melodic art has drawn inspiration, it also is individual, distinct alike from that of the Irish Gaels and that of the Scandinavians. And a perfect melody is in itself a perfect and complete work of art. Yet it is notable that the Island melodic formulæ—component entities, out of which the complete tunes are fashioned—lend themselves with amazing elasticity to the more extended forms of modern polyphonic music, as proved by their consummate use by Granville Bantock, in his Hebrides¹ Symphony.

As I write, I am on a short visit to the American Middle West, and Dvořák's use of negro melodies in his New World Symphony comes to mind. The Celts, alike of Scotland and Ireland, claim no inconsiderable share in the best of the so-called negro melodies of America, Hebridean younger sons, among others, becoming planters in the South two centuries ago, and taking with them Gaelic nurses with Celtic croons. And the negroes learnt not only the croons but also the Gaelic tongue. And a woman of the Isles arriving in the South, it is told, had the fear on her that day, for did she not think that the blackness of the Gaelic-speaking negro was the blackness of the sun on one of her own folk!

Certain critics have contended that the narrow compass of some of these croons reflects the restricted life and emotion of an isolated people! Rather does it show that as artists they economised their means. The extreme compass, for instance, of this passionate 17th century lament, by the famous poetess, Mary Macleod,² is typical of their wider sweeping melodies:—



As to the hypnotic croons, it is in their very nature that they move within a small compass, and that

¹ The themes developed in the four movements of the Symphony are mainly from our first volume. They are “The Sea-gull of the Land-under-Waves,” “Kishmul’s Galley,” “Harris Love Lament,” “Sea-Reiver’s Song,” “Love-Wandering,” “Hebrid Seas,” and “Sea Tangle.”

² Mary Macleod was a fine example of the independent character of the Hebridean woman. As a poet, she was one of the most original, the mother of assonance, and a breaker from tradition.

they "have no ending." Living, moving, rhythmical germs, they have a mesmeric, wheel-like pulsation, which ceases only with the emotional exhaustion of the singer.¹ Monotony is a quality inherent in these, monotony of obsession, of infatuation, of grief, or maybe one born of the "majestic monotony of the sea."

Kinship with the ancient music of other races is traceable in the traditional tone-patterns and phrases which, persisting for generations, yet seem to be freely re-distributed in the order of their setting by the individual singers who receive them and pass them on, "building with stones not of this building, but of an older architecture."²

A case in point is the little soothing croon from Eigg, included in our first volume, the two phrases of which are found in two Arabian airs from Tunis:—

The image contains two musical staves. The top staff is labeled "Eigg Croon." above the staff and "Very slow." below it. It has two measures, each divided into two sections labeled "A" and "B" under curved lines. The bottom staff is labeled "From Arabian Tunes." above the staff. It also has two measures, each divided into two sections labeled "A" and "B" under curved lines.

And, here again, in the next illustration, we find a Hebridean air that has two motives in common with a Greek tune from Ducoudray's collection.

The image shows two musical staves side-by-side. The left staff is labeled "From a Greek air." above the staff. The right staff is labeled "From a Hebridean air." above the staff. Both staves show two measures each, with the second measure being identical in both cases.

⁴ Villiers Stanford, apropos of the supposed Oriental origin of the Celt, points to the similarity between Gaelic and Hungarian music. The favourite Hungarian rhythm is, of course, quite familiar in Scots music, the air to which Burns⁵ wrote his "Whistle o'er the lave o't," being an example. And here is a tune from Barra, which in its last cadence is suggestively Hungarian:—

IUBHRACH BHALLACH A CHUAIN.

The image shows a single musical staff for the tune "IUBHRACH BHALLACH A CHUAIN." It consists of four measures of music, with each measure having a different rhythmic pattern.

But if the Celts came from the East, the Hebridean group were for long closely in touch (or was it in clash) with the "Summer Sailors," the Norse Vikings, and one looks for traces of northern kinship in the tunes. The Norse petty kings, on the assumption by Harold Fairhair, in the 9th century, of sovereignty over the whole of Norway, left their own country, and some of them, settling first in the Hebrides, there married Celtic women. Later, with their Hebridean wives, they wandered Icelandwards. The women must have carried with them Celtic croons. But it is strange to find, on the north-eastern shores of Greenland, an isolated people with a musical idiom strangely reminiscent at times of that of Barra and Mingulay. Although

¹ Singers should note, in this rhythmical music, the need for self-surrender to the curve of the melody, and to the onward sweep of the rhythm.

² Matthew Arnold.

³ Some of the admirers of Bantock's work have thought it strange that he should have turned from the Orientalism, which so strongly attracted him, to work in the field of British (?) folk music. That the Oriental and the Hebridean may be but two sides of the same shield is suggested by the fact that Bantock used the above motive in his *Omar Khayyam*, as a quotation from the East, before he had any acquaintance with our Hebridean collection.

⁴ In the *Musical Quarterly*, Boston Music Co., April, 1915.

⁵ In the geography of the soul, says William Sharp, Burns' natal spot must be sought in the fortunate Isles of Celldom.

be it said that the Barra music is a fully developed melodic art, while that of the Greenlanders is much less advanced.

EAST GREENLAND SEAL HUNTER'S SONG.



Again, if Mingulay musical mannerisms be but survivals of an ancient and widespread northern sea-faring musical idiom, we can easily account for its leavening European music in the 19th century, through the music dramas of Wagner, who proves, by his ballad of the " Flying Dutchman," and his use of the idiom in his later works, how he must have been drenched in it on his well-known three-weeks' stormy voyaging in the North Sea. A ¹characteristic descending pentatonic passage he uses with great fitness in the " Valkyrie," in the music surrounding his Icelandic heroine, Brunhilde. The recurring high note, again, characteristic of Senta's ballad in the " Flying Dutchman," is found in many an old Scots air. Take, for example, the tune collected 100 years ago by Alex. Campbell for his " Albyn's Anthology of Highland and Island Airs," and made famous through Sir Walter Scott's ballad, " Jock o' Hazeldean," and compare this with the music of Senta's ballad. Also note the recurring high notes in " In Hebrid Seas," " The Silver Whistle," and " The Fairy Plaint," in our first volume of Hebridean Songs; " The Reiving Ship," " Sea Tangle," and " Mingulay Sea Rapture," in this volume; and again these :—

A JACOBITE SONG OF 1715.

From NORTH UIST.

Solo. Refrain. *Chorus.* *8* *dal §*

Ho ro i, Ho ro nan, Ho ro i, Ho ro nan. Ho ro chall ei le. A ho ro i, Ho ro nan.
Chun na mi se mo..... lean-nan Is cha d'ainich e'n dé mi. A Ho ro i, Ho ro nan.

Refrain. *dal §*

Ho - ron - yi, Ho - ron - yo, Iu a hi, Iu a ho, Ho . . . ro ei le.....

From NORTH UIST.

ROWING SONG.

From SKYE. From the singing of FRANCES TOLMIE.

Refrain. *Verse.*

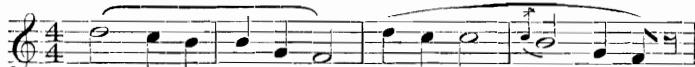
Very smoothly.

Refrain. *Verse.* *D.C.*

Ho - ron - yi, Ho - ron - yo, Iu a hi, Iu a ho, Ho . . . ro ei le.....

In this last air, in the connecting verse portions, the loosening of the reins of the refrain rhythm is characteristic. In this temporary escape from the tyranny of a rhythm, the islefolk show their sensitiveness to its hypnotism.

¹ The oft-recurring descending pentatonic formulæ are found also in North American music, as for example :—



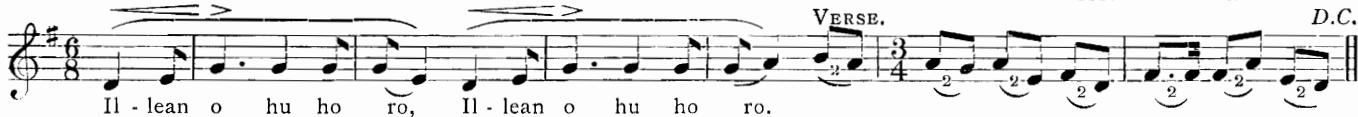
which will be easily recognised as identical with part of the well-known Hebridean (South Uist) tune, " Tha tighinn fo'm," in Albyn's Anthology, and later in the " Songs of the North."

Here is another example of such momentary escape:—

QUERN SONG.

From ISOBEL OF KENTANGAVAL.

Pg. 6



Returning again to Senta's ballad, note the introductory strain. In my earliest collecting in Barra I got so many airs on the phonograph that I misconstrued at first the occasional presence of vocalized *introductory* bars. These appeared sporadically, so to speak, on the phonograph, and I, having concentrated attention on the regularly recurring air, had regarded them as accidental. I now know by experience that they are essential. Here are examples from Barra :—

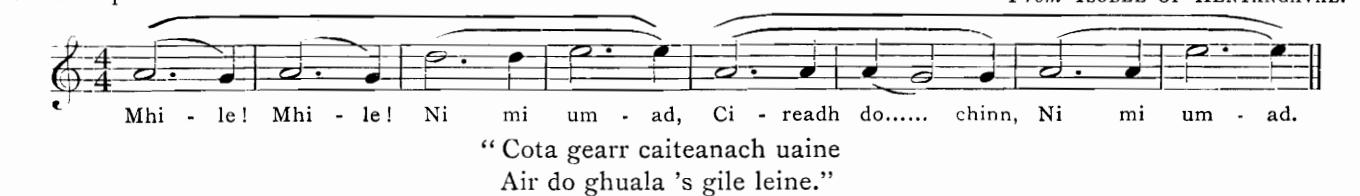


Sailing poem of the Isles, from Eigg :—



The above serves further as an example of a melody built up of repetitions (with slight alterations) of a five-bar sentence.

Another Barra Croon, illustrative of the simplest form, is a fragment of a version of the Dunvegan Cradle Spell:—



This and the "Horned Sea-Creature's Croon":—

From ISOBEL OF KENTANGAYAL.



¹ These two airs are here noted in the original low keys in which they were sung by the women of the outer Isles.

were sung to us in Kentangaval, Barra, by Ishabel Macneil, a direct descendant of the once feared and far-famed pirate chiefs of Barra. Very old, seated in the dark interior of her little cottage, her head bound in a cachemire shawl of ivory and Arab red, she had a far-away look in her eyes and a waxen smoothness, as of death, on her finely chiselled features. Beyond our reach she seemed, but with the crooning of an old song she was recalled to life, and her mind, reawakened, leapt out to the life behind her, and, when we reluctantly bade her good-bye, she was still excitedly crooning to herself.

Shuffling and rearranging the order of the traditional formulæ or "motives" of the tunes seems to have been characteristic of the free improvisation on themes practised by the hereditary singers, as was also melodic variation within a given framework, thus:—

WAULKING SONG (*with variants on verse*).

VERSE. REFRAIN. *From ANNIE JOHNSTON, BARRA.*

VARIATIONS.

In literary form the Gaels were partial to groups of three, and many of their tunes and musical refrains are swung together in phrase-loops of three, thus:—

(1) (2) (3) *From MISS MACTAVISH, ISLAY.*

(1) (2) (3) *From BARRA.*

Such ternary form will be found in evidence also in certain sections of the two following songs, with their gracefully curving phrases:—

A SWEETHEART'S DEFENCE.

Waulking Lilt from Eigg:—

A Macneill Song from Barra :—

A musical score for two staves. The top staff starts with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a 6/8 time signature. It consists of six measures, each ending with a slur over the last note. Measures 1-3 have grace notes before the main notes. Measures 4-6 have grace notes after the main notes. The bottom staff starts with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a 6/8 time signature. It consists of four measures, each ending with a slur over the last note. Measures 1-2 have grace notes before the main notes. Measures 3-4 have grace notes after the main notes. A double bar line with repeat dots is positioned between the end of measure 5 and the start of measure 6 on both staves.

Sometimes the refrains consist of a single forceful recurring motive as in this remarkable air:—

More hauntingly elusive surely these than squarely-built melodies of four or eight lines. Yet there are many beautiful examples of the latter also:—

Love Song.

From NORTH UIST.

A musical score for two staves. The top staff is in common time (indicated by a 'C') and has a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of four measures of music. The bottom staff is also in common time and has a key signature of one sharp (F#). It also consists of four measures of music.

The tunes in this volume were recovered over a wide area, and where several tunes were found associated with the same text, we have used them in succession, as in Sea-Tangle and Seathan. Where again a single air used undergoes modifications in the repetitions, as in the "Peat-Fire Smooring Prayer," these are faithful to the phonographed original.

That the old songmakers could make expressive use of the tonal opportunities of their scales was felt in the Seal-Woman's Croon and others in our first volume. In the present, the Tiree Tragedy calls for comment as exhibiting a poignant use of alternations of the major and the minor third. And in the Sea-Longing,² in the second line of the two-phrase verse portion (which links together the repetitions of the three-phrase refrain), we note the awesome effect of the descent to the F natural.

¹ "Chall," pronounced like English word "bowl."

² For the instrumental framework to these two songs, we are deeply indebted to Granville Bantock, as also for the fine settings of three of the Sea-Rapture Songs.

NOTE.—M. Duhamel, the successor to Ducoudray in the Breton branch of Celtic research work, values very highly our Hebridean material, and has published an interesting brochure on the subject. In the introduction to our first volume we suggested that there may be twelve scales traceable in Hebridean music. M. Duhamel claims that this number should be increased. He classifies them not only as 5-note and 7-note scales, but also definitely as including an ordered series of 6-note scales.

M. Duhamel very ingeniously systematizes the tonality of the Celts on the basis of a certain restricted series of fifths related thus:

Fa, do, sol, re, la.

These taken in close position he ranges thus:

Fa, sol, la, do, re.

and from these five tones he builds five distinct pentatonic scales thus:

His latest suggestion, however, is that it may prove possible to postulate a still earlier system founded on four of these related fifths thus:

Fa do sol re

Over a wide area of research, and through many years, the work of gathering and restoring the Celtic literary material here presented has been skilfully, courageously, and loyally pursued. Valuable texts had to wait years until missing fragments, found here and there, at odd times, by Kenneth Macleod, in Isles that lie remote from one another, were finally pieced together by him; and these, thus restored, form here a unique contribution to Gaelic lore.

Kenneth Macleod has preached to the folk of the Western Sea, by the shores of Mull and Morven, Gigha and Mallaig, Kintyre and Benderloch, Skye, the Uists, and the Lews. And some of the songs and lays, with missing words and lines, lay for years among his papers, until some lucky tide of old lore came carrying, in its wreckage, the very words and lines waited for. Such are the heroic chant to the Lord of the Isles; the Cradle Croon to his heir—the Child of Isla; the Lament of the Druid of Colonsay.¹ Of these, some verses only, from much longer poems, have been here selected, with the needful fierce economy, for singing purposes.

Other famous and typical lays and poems also, each the best of its kind, and also in part restored in the same painstaking fashion, are here given, such as: Cuchullan's Lament for his Son; The Glen of Spells—Amadan Mhor; Seathan, the death-keening of a hero of pagan times; The Lay of Aillte, one of the heroes of the Fayne; The Isle of St. Donnan and the Rune of Columcill; the St. Bride Croons; famous Clan Songs, as the Cradle Spell of Dunvegan; the Raasay Lament; the passionate Clanranald bardic eulogy, "Heart of Fire-Love"; and purely domestic themes and scenes as "Heartling of my Heart," which brings us into touch with the strong sympathetic bond that united the folk and their cattle.

Domestic tragedies there are also, as the Sea-Tangle (in psychology and in objective setting somewhat akin to the tales of the Island Greeks); and the Tiree Tragedy—a pendant to "Helen of Kirkconnel Lea."

Domestic farce is not wanting, as witness the *Bodachan*, the little hungry old man who came home irate at e'en to a supperless house. And Sea-Reiving and Sea-Sorrow songs there are and Labour Lilts galore.

For these, to all the good folks of the Isles who helped us, our warmest thanks are due. And may the collection itself be a memorial of their faithful guardianship of our common racial lore.

MARJORY KENNEDY-FRASER.

6, CASTLE STREET, EDINBURGH,
April 16th, 1917.

¹ Regarded as unique by the late Professor Mackinnon, of the Edinburgh University Celtic chair.

arranged scalewise thus:

- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| (1) Fa sol do re | (3) Do re fa sol |
| (2) Sol do re fa | (+) Re fa sol do |

and proof of this he hopes to find eventually from among our Hebridean *trouvailles*. However that may be, in pursuance of his original thesis, the evolution of the scale stepwise by fifths, he passes from the 5-tone (pentaphonic) to the 6-tone (hexaphonic) scales by annexing the next in order in the upward stepping series of fifths, thus:

Fa do sol re la mi

and from this again derives a series of only five six-toned scales thus:

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| (1) Fa sol la do re mi | (4) Do re mi fa sol la |
| (2) Sol la do re mi fa | (5) Re mi fa sol la do |
| (3) La do re mi fa sol | |

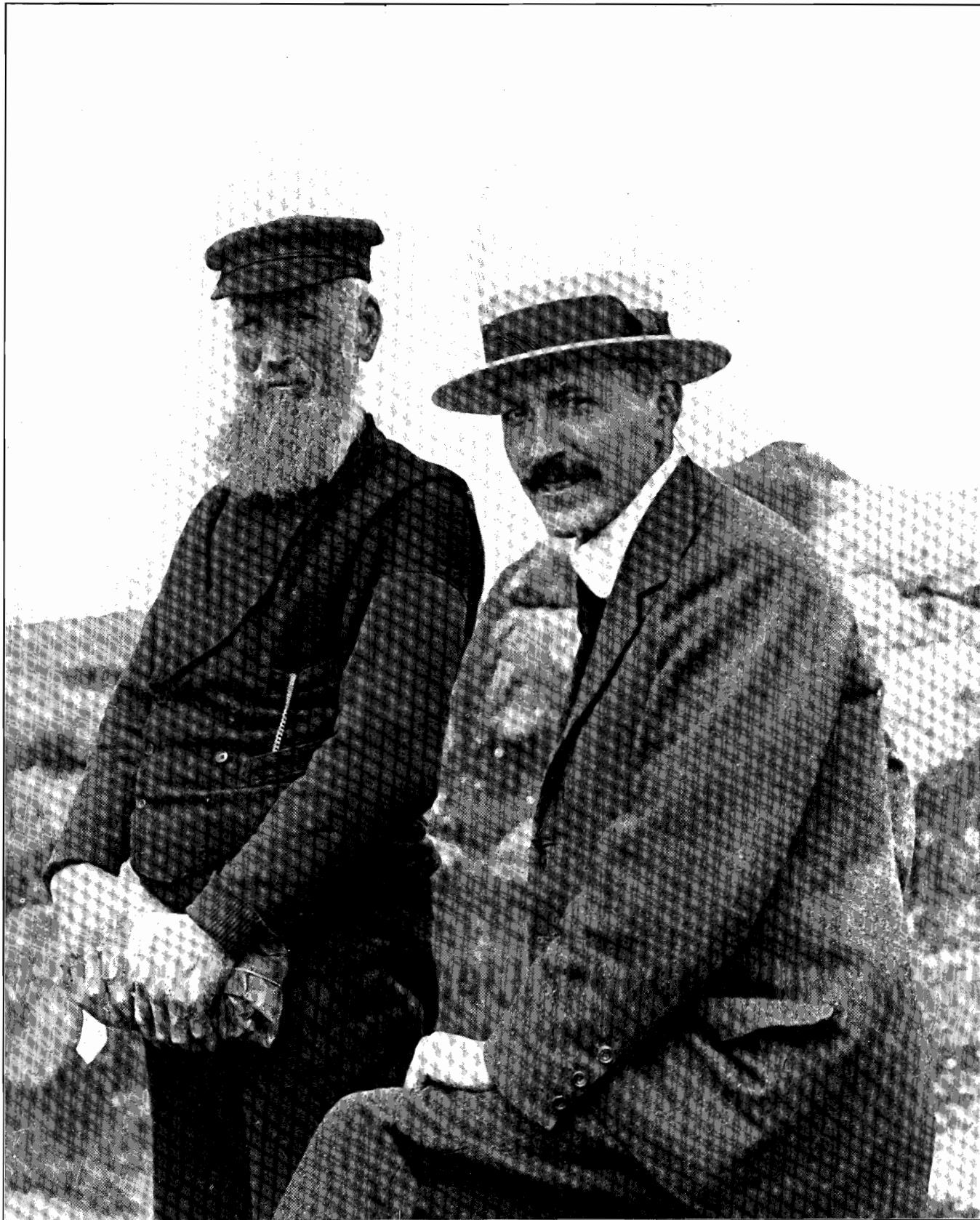
And thus he arrives in due time and by a continuance of the same process at a 7-tone (heptatonic) scale:

Fa do sol re la mi si

ranged in close position thus:

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| (1) Fa sol la si do re mi | (4) Do re mi fa sol la si |
| (2) Sol la si do re mi fa | (5) Re mi fa sol la si do |
| (3) La si do re mi fa sol | |

Note that he still finds the scale tonics only on the original *five* tones, holding that the more recently reclaimed and adopted *mi* and *si* were never promoted by the Gaels to the dignity of tonic or chief of the scale clan! Duhamel's classification is ingenious and helpful, and is based upon an enormous amount of original research work. But when we attempt to apply it and to diagnose the scales from which particular tunes arise, it is not an easy task since the scales are affected by modes. These modes, according to Duhamel, will be found to divide the scales variously by (a) a fifth and fourth, (b) a fourth and fifth, and (c) a sixth and third. These modes complicate the question and launch us into a sea of troubles. M. Duhamel takes safe anchorage on the final note of a tune, from which note he builds his scale upwards. But can this apply in the case of "circular" tunes, whose aim is just exactly *not* to close, never to achieve a satisfactory final note, but ever to lead the expectant ear back to the beginning of the tune?



THE EIGG STEERSMAN AND K.M.

THE SPELL OF THE SINGER.

THERE was a woman in the Isle of Sōa for whose singing the people had great love. It is said that she would be seeing things ; the men and women who had made the songs, and the men and women who had suffered what the songs tell. One day there was great feasting in Dunvegan Castle, and the harpers and the pipers and the bards were all into the music. “ Is it not the beautiful thing to be in Dunvegan Castle ? ” said the listening one. Then it was put to the woman who would be seeing things if she, too, would sing a song. And she sang. “ I must arise now,” said the listening one, with a start, “ sure, there is the long way before me to Dunvegan Castle.”

K. M.

ONE WHO SANG "THE CRADLE SPELL OF DUNVEGAN."



"**W**HAT is yon music which I am hearing, if it is hearing it I am?" said the Lady of Macleod to herself, as she sat in her hall, spinning the wool. And she arose and made for the music, and whither drew it her but, step by step, to the sleep-chamber of her baby son. What saw she there but the Little Woman of the Green Kirtle swathing the child in a silk banner of many colours, and singing over him a cradle spell.

"Ho-ro veel-a-vok, Bone and flesh o' me,
Ho-ro veel-a-vok, Blood and pith o' me.
Skin like falling snow, green thy mail-coat,
Live thy steeds be, dauntless thy following."

"God sain us!" cried out the Lady of Macleod, "It is I who am the mother to yon child." And at the sound of the Good Name she vanished, the Little Woman of the Green Kirtle.

But the Cradle Spell remained; the Banner, likewise; and, together, they made of a clan the something more than a clan. The women nursed the children and crooned the songs and did the day's work, with a thought somewhere in the heart of each that on a day of days she might be called to Dunvegan Castle to sing the Cradle Spell over the young heir. And the men, going forth to battle, fought in the hope that now was the day on which the Banner would appear at their head, putting rout on the enemy. Outwardly, at any rate, the luck was mostly with the women. Baby heirs came often; the Banner came but twice. The end of the tale is not yet, however. "What came twice will come thrice," say the Islesfolk, "and on a day to be, it is the Fairy Flag, going forth for the last time, that will be overcoming the world for us, Gaels." Which may well be, if one remembers that its first burden was a little child, its first victory a song, and its weaving not of the flesh.

There is a bidding to which the Gael is never false, the bidding which puts him under the spells. And an Islesman is under spells both to his heart and to his head to give love to Mary Macleod, the most fascinating figure in Gaelic poetry from the beginning of the seventeenth century to a century on which fate has not yet put a name. A woman not of the schools but of herself, and fond of taking her own way when her own way seemed the best, she broke, for love of her gift, with such of the old metrical conventions as had hitherto hobbled the bard. Judged by the few poems which are known for certain to be hers, she holds, if not the first place among Gaelic poets, a place at any rate among the first, for sheer artistry and for beauty of rhythm. And if all the songs that are said to be hers are really hers, or even a tithe of them, her place, as a Gael would put it, is at the very head of the table. One may think of her, then, whether in her poetry or in her life, as by no means least in the procession of great Celtic women which began with Deirdre and St. Bride and has, perhaps, not ended with Flora Macdonald.

An Isleswoman from Rödel of Harris, Mary Macleod, or Mairi, Daughter of Alastair Rua, as she is better known to the Gaels, was, for the genius of her, chosen out of many gifted ones to sing the Cradle Spell to the baby heir of Dunvegan. But no handed-down lullaby, howsoever strong, could express all that the nurse felt towards the little one, and it was song on the song with her, praise on the praise, and rapture on the

rapture, be the hours canonical or not. Ruairi, the Chief of Dunvegan, shaking his head, flung at her the herdman's saying :

Bheir an t-anabarr molaidh an t-anabarr dosgaidh.

The overmuch praise bringeth the overmuch loss.

And, sure enough, the loss came¹—once, twice, thrice. After which, by every rule and by every thought of the Isles, it had to be exile for Mary Macleod ; the place of her strangerhood, as the Gaelic has it, being the little Island of Sgarba, in the Southern Hebrides. And there the wonder of the Gael came upon her. "Is it not on me the wonder is," cried St. Columba, "to be here in Alba, and to be looking on Moola from Iona." "Great is the wonder on me," said Flora Macdonald, "to be looking on the boiling of the Connel from Dunstaffnage, instead of looking on the Outer Sea from the machair of Uist." And Mary Macleod :

² On the knoll I am sitting,
Sore-thinking in silence,
The wonder upon me
Why gaze I on Islay ;
Little thought I aforetime,
Till yore took its cantrip,
Fate ever should lure me
To gaze on Jura from Sgarba.

In those days, there being no fast mail-boats to cause delay, a whisper travelled from isle to isle, if not in the mouth of the wind, at any rate on its heel ; and in due time Mary Macleod's plaint reached Dunvegan in Skye and Rödel in Harris, and the many places where *Siol Tormaid*, the Seed of Norman, grew. And on a day of days the galley of Macleod cast anchor off Sgarba, having aboard the glad news that Mairi, Daughter of Alastair Rua, was to return home to Dunvegan ; only, she was to make no more songs. Make no more songs ? As if she wanted to make any more ! Sure, her music-of-laughter would henceforth be the croon of the soft Dunvegan voices—and there and then Mary forgot that she was no longer a bard. "Is it a song I am hearing ?" asked the steersman. "It is only a tune, O man of my heart"; but to that same tune went words fresh as the breeze that was even then speeding the galley homeward to Dunvegan. "Is it a song I am hearing ?" asked the Chief himself another time, after the young heir, ³unlike his three elder brothers, had recovered from a serious illness. "By your leave, it is only a croon," said Mary Macleod, "and it comes fresh and warm from a glad heart." She was never again forbidden to make a song. Perhaps *E-fein*, Himself, as the Chief was known among the clansfolk, remembered a story which even the Church had never banned. In the days of long before, as a woman of the Isles lay dying, a young ⁴mavis went into lilting on a rowan-tree in front of the door. "Chase him away," whispered one of the keening women. "Let him alone," said the dying one, "it is my share to find death, it is his share to sing the song, and with the Good Being only is the knowledge of the furthermore."

The tradition of the Isles, as handed down in the ceilidh,⁵ gives a picture of Mairi, Daughter of Alastair Rua, which must surely be her very self.

By the look of her, it is not the creel of peats you would be wishing to put on her back, though, indeed, there was the good marrow, too, in her, whether for the hill or for the sea. It is two tartan plaids she would be having on ; a little one round her head, with the white frill of the mutch showing through ; and a large one, a *tonnag*, draped round her shoulders, and fastened in front by a *braise*, a silver circlet. It is of silk her gown would often be, as befitted one who might go in by the front door of Dunvegan Castle. In her right hand she would have a staff, with a silver head on it, and in her left a silver mull ; and people would be saying that never a foot of her would go on a journey without having in her wallet a silver quaich, out of which folk of name thought it an honour and an obligation to drink. And the eyes of her were so living ! And when they would be in the laughter as well, themselves and her share of wrinkles together, you would never wish but to be looking at them.

¹ See also *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*, Vol. IV., p. 262. [Miss Frances Tolmie.]

² In Gaelic poetry, assonance rather than rhyme is used.

³ See Mary Macleod's *An Cronan*, verse 2.

⁴ Thrush. ⁵ Kay'lee.

One can imagine, then, the thrill in the ceilidh when, on a memorable night, up would go the door latch, and there would appear, not the usual late neighbour, but the very woman whom the Islesfolk would be wishing to look at. There would be the ~~courtsey~~ for her, did she allow it; but already, no doubt, her upraised hand would have put the artist's silence on such as, panting to give her the glad welcome, would thereby interrupt the teller of the tale or the singer of the song. And then it would be, "Man of my heart, do not give the last word to Patrick the cleric. Never was Ossian, the bard, without the ready answer and the sore word. Teller of the tale, we are listening." Or, "Woman over yonder, is it finishing the song thou art? If only thou wert beginning!" But the folks of the ceilidh would know their luck. Patrick and Ossian, what remained of them, lived in the township; Mary Macleod might be in the other township by sunset, to-morrow. So—"Sit ye down, gentles and semples; sit ye down, each as he may; and sit ye down, arrow-maker." And sometime after midnight, the youth who was feeding the fire regardless of the hole in the peat-stack, would, if he saw older eyes upon him, declare as though on oath, "By the soul of me, myself would never be wishing to ¹smoor the fire when Mairi, Daughter of Alastair Rua, is at the ceilidh; but, indeed, myself would be wishing to smoor the sun." Such a night, however, would have put feyness even on a slug, let alone a youth of the Isles.

Mary Macleod, if one may judge by the events she sang and the people she knew, must have gone through nearly fourscore years and ten of ceilidh and song; her full age, according to tradition, being fivescore years and five. In days when people grew old long before their time, she became a pilgrim of song when far beyond middle age, going on foot from clachan to clachan, and by boat from isle to isle, throughout the years. And not even Ruari, the Chief, was wont to meet with a prouder welcome among the Islesfolk than was the little old woman with the lit eyes and the tangle of crowsfeet. Into the various festivities of the various clachans there came in those days a new fascination, the certainty that Mairi, Daughter of Alastair Rua, would be somewhere, and the hope that it would be here rather than there. And if the waulking was here, and the wedding or the harvest-home there, it is here she would be, sure enough, and not there. Only once, it is said, did she hear the laughter of a waulking and pass by. But the fulling women understood; likewise, all who smiled at the quaintness of her blessing upon the little child that was being christened in Rödel of Harris.

Tri beannachdan an t-sagairt,
Seachd beannachdan an t-sluaigh;
Cha'n fhaodar cur ris an tri,
'S mur mìomhadh cur ris an t-seachd,
Mo sheachd fein ri seachd an t-sluaigh.

The three blessings of the priest,
The seven blessings of the people;
One may not put to the three,
And if it be not rude to put to the seven,
My own seven to the seven of the people.

But if Mary Macleod, at the christening, put her own seven blessings to the seven blessings of the people, it was herself she put, blood and bone and heart of her, to the folk life of the Isles, through the waulking of many a clachan. But few realise, perhaps, how much artistry there went to the fulling music of even one web of cloth. Each stage of the work needed its own special kind of song; old words had to be adapted to new tunes, and old tunes to new words; ancient fragments, almost forgotten, had to be eked out by additional verses, while songs not made for labour, such as the heroic ballads, had to be taken to pieces and inserted into a chorus; all of which called for literary and musical skill of a kind which suggests, not so much the folk, as a genius now and again among the folk. In the seventeenth century that genius was Mary Macleod. While the web was still in the loom, a woman, wandering by sea and by land, was busy weaving the songs which in due time would go to the fulling of that same web. The loom, says the Gael, weaves nothing that lasts, save the song which it weaveth not.

Mairi, Daughter of Alastair Rua, sleeps, face downward,² by the Church of St. Clement, in Rödel of Harris, the Iona of her clan. "Not on the clouds would my eyes be, O kinsfolk," said she in the parting, "but on Rödel of Harris." Her thought was, perhaps, the thought of St. Bride, the Foster-mother, even as her blood was the blood: Beautiful the cloud on high, my children, but more beautiful still the shower which falleth, giving growth to the corn and milk to the cattle, for little children.

KENNETH MACLEOD.

¹ A Scots form of *smother*.

² See also Dr. George Henderson's Introduction to *Dain Iain Ghobha*.