

THE
EDINBURGH
Monthly
MAGAZINE.

APRIL—SEPTEMBER, 1817.

EST QUODAM PRODIRE TENUS, SI NON DATUR ULTRA.

Hor.



EDINBURGH:
PRINTED FOR WILLIAM BLACKWOOD,
NO 17, PRINCE'S STREET, EDINBURGH; AND
BALDWIN, CRADOCK, AND JOY,
PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON.

1817.

or vessels, called *treck-schuits* (*treck-schuiten*), some of which start every hour, and in all directions, and convey goods, parcels, and passengers, from place to place. These vessels, of which I have now seen many in this town, may be described as large open boats, containing wooden cottages of about thirty feet long and six feet wide, with flat roofs, on which the passengers may walk in fine weather. They are placed in, and form a part of, the boat itself, and are divided by a partition into two parts. The interior division, which is by much the largest, is called the *ruim*. It contains the goods and baggage, and in it, as it is cheaper, the greater number of passengers take their seats. The smaller apartment, which is next the stern of the vessel, is called the *roef*. It is neatly fitted up, with a table in the centre, and cushions around the sides, and in it the *quality* are usually conveyed. It contains eight people, is furnished with one or two windows on each side, and in some a draft-board is painted on the table. In the event of one or two persons engaging the whole seats in the *roef*, it is only necessary to pay one-half of the price. The *ruim*, I should suppose, may contain upwards of thirty people.

These boats travel at the rate of one league per hour, or rather more; and the expense, including baggage, cannot much exceed a penny a mile. They are drawn by a horse, in the manner of our own canal boats, but the rope is fastened to the top of a small moveable mast, placed near the bow of the vessel. The cottage-shaped building before mentioned, does not extend the entire length of the *treck-schuit*, but both before and behind it there is an open space, in the former of which is placed a person who lowers the mast and unties the rope on passing other vessels, or under bridges; and the latter is appropriated to the helmsman, and such of the passengers as may prefer it to the *roef* or cabin.

Although the feelings of a merchant may no doubt be both acute and delightful in this most mercantile city, yet, upon the whole, there is not much to excite the attention or gratify the curiosity of a lounging.

If the weather is fine, I shall therefore start for Leyden to-morrow.

X. Y. Z.

(To be continued.)

LETTER FROM THE LATE DR M'LAGAN TO THE PRESSES OF THE GAELIC SOCIETY, EDINBURGH, RESPECTING THE COMPILATION OF A GAELIC DICTIONARY.

[The following letter has been handed to us by Mr Campbell, editor of "Albyn's Anthology," in whose possession the original has been for many years, and who has also furnished us with the additional information contained in the notes to the letter. Authentic intelligence respecting the history of Gaelic literature will always be acceptable to us, and at the present moment can scarcely fail to be interesting to many of our readers, who are looking forward with eager anxiety to the publication of the Gaelic Dictionary now compiling under the auspices of the Highland Society of Scotland. The accomplishment of this desirable and often-defeated object, will be one of the many important public services performed by that highly respectable and patriotic body. We regret that our limits will only permit us to give one short extract from the papers they have printed, respecting the plan of the work and the progress that has been made in it. This we subjoin, along with a memorandum on Dr M'Lagan's letter, (Notes A, B,) with which we have been obligingly furnished by a gentleman who has the very best access to authentic information in whatever relates to the history of Gaelic literature.]

In case any of our southern readers should be inclined to regard this subject as one of trifling importance, and our attention to it as a strong trait of nationality, we shall take the liberty to quote the opinion expressed by Dr Samuel Johnson, when the scheme of translating the Scriptures into Gaelic was strongly opposed by some individuals, from political considerations of the disadvantages of keeping up the distinctions between the Highlanders and the other inhabitants of the island. "I am not very willing that any language should be totally extinguished. The similitude and derivation of languages afford the most indubitable proof of the transduction of nations and the genealogy of mankind. They add often physical certainty to historical evidence; and often supply the only evidence of ancient migrations, and of the revolutions of ages which left no written monuments behind them."*]

Belfast, Feb. 27th, 1771.

DEAR SIR,

Your letter of 25th ultimo I was lately honoured with. I am sorry that my knowledge of the Gaelic language does not by any means come up to the notions you seem to entertain of it;

* See Letter to Mr W. Drummond, dated 1766; Boswell's Life, vol. ii. p. 148.

any more than to my own wishes ; and one reason for my rejoicing at your laudable and useful undertaking, of compiling a dictionary and grammar of our mother tongue, was, that it would add to my knowledge of it. I am happy to see in the Messrs Macphersons and you, men who are not ashamed to own their native country or language, like the most of us, who, as soon as we know any thing of any other language or people, endeavour to recommend ourselves to them by denying the knowledge of, or running down, our own ; because, forsooth, some of these strangers are modest and good-natured enough to do it, when, at the same time, their ignorance in these matters renders it impossible, in the nature of things, that they should be capable of judging. I often blushed, when I considered, that none of our learned, two or three excepted, ever had the public spirit to collect the roots of our language into a dictionary, or polish it, any more than our great men to patronise them ; when not only Ireland and Wales, but even Cornwall, Bas-Breton, and Biscay, had several dictionaries of their dialects. Now, however, I hope to see something done to our dialect of the first language of south and west Europe, like what M. Bullet has done to the foreign dialects of it, and that future historians and antiquaries will reap from that original language and its descriptive names, &c. as well as philologists from what other languages now spoke, as well as the Latin, have borrowed from it, a light, pleasure, and advantage, they have as yet no notion of, if they choose it. If this is not done soon, our language will become as great a mystery as the religion of the Druids, particularly the names of places and other things, of which they were descriptions as well as names.

But you have not writ for an encomium upon the language, but for materials ; and I am sorry that my absence from the country where it is spoke puts it out of my power to be of much service to you in that way. Did I indeed reside in it, my zeal would probably prompt me to catch as much as I could ; but in my present situation, I am as like to lose of what I have, as to add any thing to my knowledge of it.

I make no doubt but my keenness

may have led me into indiscretion already, in telling some of your society my mind upon the subject, when it was neither asked nor necessary, perhaps ; but this you must attribute to my love to the subject, and my desire to inflame their zeal. To this too you must ascribe, what I am now to beg of you, namely, that you would make your plan as extensive as possible, and prosecute it with the utmost vigour, while the nation seems to be in some humour for relishing things of this nature, as well as you are to undertake it ; for if any person or consideration whatever induce you to drop it now, as M^r Colm^o did, it is a thousand to one if it is resumed before it is too late, if at all. I wish too you could get some persons of rank and influence to patronise the undertaking, that you may be enabled to procure all the books upon the subject, and more especially to send some of your best hands to every corner of Scotland where that language is spoke, and to the Isle of Man, the language of which is a dialect of the Scots Gaelic, with very little mixture, beyond controversy, and nearest allied to that spoke on the confines of the Lowlands ; which you may see demonstrated by a book, entitled, "The Principles and Duties of Christianity," published by the late bishop of Sodor and Man, Manks and English ; only they have not followed our orthography, I suppose, because they did not know the languages to be almost the same, and they pronounce differently. Books throw light upon the living language, and *vice versa*. But what is already in books, particularly in dictionaries, is not so absolutely necessary, or so much your peculiar province, as the first undertakers of this kind in Scotland, as what never was ; and that is a very great part of the Scots dialect of the Gaelic ; though, at the same time, the performance should be complete, by collecting the whole, though common to us, with others, and published by them. But should the world still retain so much prejudice that you can't have such patrons, I intreat you to persist still ;

* Mr Malcolm, minister of Duddingston, near Edinburgh. He published a small glossary of the Scoto-Gaelic, and made a strenuous attempt to prove that the Latin language is chiefly derived from the Kree. See *Reliquiæ Galicæ*, p. 240, &c.

for I make not the least doubt but the thing will take in general. I beg also (and I think myself sure you will grant my request, and that is), that you will not reject any word that is of Celtic origin, however bad the dialect of the place wherein it is used; for it may be of vast use, as being the branch of a root, or the root of a branch, still retained in other dialects of the Celtic, though lost by us, and throwing light, when the whole is compared, the one word or dialect upon the other. When you compile your English-Gaelic dictionary, you may use what you reckon best first; but the Gaelic-English dictionary should contain every Celtic word that is or ever was used in Scotland, that can be procured, and even any words of other Celtic dialects you can meet with, if forgot by their best glossographers; only let them have the mark of their extraction, or the author from whom they are taken, as indeed they should have it in the different shires of Scotland.

As to the best helps I know in print, I have last year sent a catalogue of them to Mr M'Nicol in Lismore* (who first told me of your design), in order to be sent to you. The greatest part of them I took from *Bullet's* Celtic dictionary, which, if you have it, will save you the trouble of looking for many of the rest. I have added several books he does not mention, but have omitted the book already mentioned here, and Mr Robert Kirk's † version of the Psalms. If Mr M'Nicol refuse to send you it, you shall have another copy, if necessary.

With respect to correspondents, it is absolutely necessary to have them wherever the language is spoke, as no small number of men can know the whole of it; and to this space the circle of my acquaintance is very small. Were I to tell you where the best Gaelic is spoke, I would perhaps men-

tion *Clan-Ranold's* estate; † but to you, all that is real Gaelic must be good. Whether the clergy are all in the use of writing the language, or will choose to undertake any thing, you must try; some, I dare say, will, when properly applied to; and they may be met with at assemblies in Edinburgh from all parts. I have spoke of it to some of them. The abilities of Messrs M'Nicol and Mr Archibald M'Arthur, many of you know as well as I. On my last journey and voyage, I saw the ministers of Campbeltown, Mr Niel M'Leod, Mull, three Mr M'Aulays, brothers, the eldest at Inveraray, and the next in Ardnamorchan, all good hands; also Mr Donald M'Queen in Trotternish, Sky, Mr Charles Stewart (a writer), near Fort William, and heard of M'Intyre of Gleno, † all three excellent hands, as Mr Wodrow in *Isle*, ‡ I suppose, would also be. I forgot also to mention Mr Martin M'Pharson, § who with his own knowledge may have some of his father's lucubrations that have not been published.

All the ministers in the Long Island have a fine opportunity, if they choose to apply. The only one I know in Lewis is Mr Wilson, who learned it grammatically, and is very obliging, as indeed I found also Mr Angus Beaton in Harris, Mr Allan M'Queen, North Uist, in whose neighbourhood is Mr Niel M'Aulay, master of the *Schola Illustris*, the poet M'Codrum, || and a brother of his own writes it

* *Clanranald's* estate comprehends a considerable extent of the Mainland on the north-west part of Argyleshire, besides a large portion of that chain of isles called the Long Island, Isle of Canne, &c. This widely-extended property is said to contain a population of between 11,000 and 12,000 souls, most of whom are Papists.

† Gleno, the late chief of the clan MacIntyre, left behind him a curious collection of Gaelic poems, which, it is believed, is still extant.

‡ Mr Wodrow published, in 1769, some translations, in English verse, of poems from M'Pherson's *Ossian*.

§ Son of the well-known author of the *Dissertation on Gaelic Antiquities*.

* This gentleman died a few years ago. He rendered himself at one time conspicuous by a severe and somewhat rash attack upon the great English lexicographer.

† He was minister of Aberfoyle, and was a man of very considerable learning. He prepared for the press the Irish-Gaelic Bible known by the name of "Bishop Redel's Bible," which was printed in what is called the *Irish character*. A curious tract of Kirk's, on the superstitions of the Gael, has been lately printed from his MS. in the Advocates' Library.

|| The poet M'Codrum was somewhat advanced in life before he discovered his poetic vein. In the report of the committee of the Highland Society of Scotland on the authenticity of *Ossian's* poems, (*Append. p. 96.*) is recorded a satirical reply of his to James M'Pherson, the celebrated translator of *Ossian*.

pretty well. Mr Angus M'Neil, South Uist, is a genteel man, and the language around him is fine: his father too, Mr M'Neil of Watersay, in Barra, knows more of the language, antiquities, manners, and customs of that country, than any man I know; being a very old man, of great reading and sense, and endowed with a very retentive memory. He has also many fragments of the famous family of Mac-Mhuirich's poems,* who were hereditary poets to the family of Clan-Ranold for many generations, were regularly sent to Ireland for their education, and of consequence wrote poems in that dialect; inasmuch, that had not the authors been known, and their names to the pieces, both Scots and Irish would have sworn them to be really Irishmen; and whether this is not really the case with other compositions, I shan't say. Mr M'Aulay, minister of Barra, you may see at next assembly, and offer him my compliments.

The person who told you that I had a Marine Vocabulary, forgot; for I only told him, I begged some of my acquaintances to get me such a thing, as being most wanted of all; wherein if I succeed, you shall have a copy. The few things I collected you shall have in another letter; but they are little to what you must have from that part of the world, and must be strictly examined before inserted. I have got a variety of songs† in different places,

* Mr Campbell, when collecting materials for his interesting work, entitled, "Albyn's Anthology," in autumn 1815, was informed by different persons, that all these "fragments," &c. were left in the possession of Classanald, grandfather of the present chieftain. It is not known what has now become of them.

† Dr M'Lagan was himself both a poetical and musical composer, and is supposed to have left behind him many valuable and curious materials, together with the "variety of songs" above mentioned. These, it is hoped, are still extant, in the possession of his family; and his son, the Rev. James M'Lagan, is well qualified to estimate their value, and to make use of them to the best advantage. Mr Campbell has in his possession one original sheldy, with appropriate verses, composed by Dr M'Lagan in honour of the exploits of the gallant 42d regiment in Egypt, which will appear in the second volume of his Anthology, now printing. At the time he wrote this letter from Belfast, Dr M'Lagan was chaplain to

and of different degrees of merit; but as the expense of time and postage would be great, as I am now situated, you can procure them more easily by means of some of your own members, and others at home. However, if you mention any particular ones which I, and not they, have, I shall send them, with whatever else is in my power; only let me hear now and then what you would have me do; and if you would let me know a little of your success in your laudable undertaking, it would be a spur, if at any time my zeal should flag. With my whole soul I wish you life and health to see your design executed, and to enjoy the satisfaction and advantages of it. And am in sincerity, Dr Sir, your most obedient servant,

JAMES M'LAGAN.

To John M'Naughton, Esq.
Preses of the Gaelic Society, Edin.

Note A.—In reference to the late Dr M'Lagan's letter, it may be mentioned, that the compilation of a Gaelic dictionary and grammar, which was projected by some gentlemen at Edinburgh, who, it would seem, had formed themselves into a society for these and relative objects, does not appear to have been prosecuted at the time: from what cause it was dropped is not known,—probably from want of funds. The design was not, however, relinquished. Some time afterwards, a considerable number of the clergy of Highland parishes, and some other gentlemen conversant in the Gaelic language, resolved upon the publication of a proper dictionary. For this purpose each of them had one, two, or more letters of the alphabet assigned to him, the words under which he was to contribute. Their several contributions were to be afterwards revised, corrected, and enlarged, by a committee of their number, previous to publication.—Among those principally concerned in the undertaking were the Rev. Dr Stewart of Luss; the late Dr Smith of Campbellton; the said Dr M'Lagan, then minister of Blair-Ahol; Dr Stewart of Strachur; the Rev. Mr. M'Niell, Lismore; Mr Campbell, Kilfinichan; Mr M'Queen, and Mr M'Intyre of Glenoe, &c. Several of the contributors to the work made considerable progress in the parts assigned to them; but from want of funds, the death of some of those concerned, or other causes, the desirable object in view was not attained.

When the Highland Society of Scotland came to the resolution to have a dictionary of the Gaelic language upon a comprehen-

the 42d, then commonly called the Black Watch. He was successor in this office to the celebrated Dr Adam Ferguson.

sive and approved plan, compiled and published, among other aids, it directed its attention to the MSS. containing the materials prepared by the contributors to the dictionary formerly in view; but, from various causes, the Society was successful only in some instances.

Referring to the two printed statements published by the Society, respecting the dictionary now compiling, it will be observed, that, besides the Scoto-Celtic, it is to embrace much of the Irish dialect of that language. Rendering the signification of the Gaelic vocables in Latin must add greatly to the general utility and interest of the work.

The principal publications in the Gaelic language, since the date of Dr M'Lagan's letter, it is believed, are, the translation of the Sacred Scriptures into that language, chiefly by Dr Stewart of Luss; the poems ascribed to Ossian, from the Gaelic MS. of them found in the repositories of the well-known Mr James M'Pherson; and two editions of a Gaelic grammar, by the Rev. Mr Stewart of Dingwall. Some school books, catechisms, poems, &c. have also been published in the interval.

June 3d, 1817.

C. G.

Note B.—"The Highland Society of Scotland, impressed with the importance of having a dictionary of this ancient and expressive language, upon such a comprehensive plan as should explain and illustrate it, not only to their own countrymen but to the general scholar and antiquary, after having obtained possession of the most ancient MSS. of various dialects of the Celtic, and other materials for the work, appointed, in 1814, a committee of its members, conversant with the subject, with authority to take immediate and effectual measures for the compilation and publication of such dictionary.

The committee availed itself of the opinions of some of the most eminent Gaelic scholars in this country, in fixing the plan of the work, and afterwards intrusted its execution to two gentlemen whom they have every reason to believe are well qualified for the task.

As the plan of the work, formerly circulated by the committee, appears to have given full satisfaction, it may be mentioned, in reference to that plan, that it embraces all the words of the Gaelic or Scoto-Celtic language that can be collected, either from authentic literary compositions, or from the vernacular dialect of the present inhabitants of the Highlands of Scotland; a principal object being to shew what the language has been, as well as what it now is.—From the intimate connection of the Irish dialect of the Celtic with that of Scotland, and from the consideration that many of the ancient MSS. are written in the former, the dictionary will also embrace much of the Irish

dialect.* The leading signification, and the various derivative and secondary meanings, of each Gaelic word, will be given, not only in English, but also in Latin, in the view of giving more general interest and utility to the work in foreign countries. The etymology of words, as far as can be distinctly traced, is to be briefly indicated, and corresponding words of the same origin in other languages, to which the Gaelic has an affinity, are to be given. It is proposed to prefix to the dictionary a dissertation on the origin, antiquity, relations, and internal structure of the Celtic dialects, with an epitome of Gaelic grammar."

LETTER OF DR VINCENT, THE LATE
DEAN OF WESTMINSTER.

[A correspondent, to whom the subsequent letter was addressed, has sent it to us. "The writer," he observes, "was not more eminent for his great learning and conspicuous station in society, than for the genuine kindness of his nature, and the upright simplicity of his whole conduct. His works, illustrative of ancient navigation and commerce, are of a degree and kind of erudition of which the lettered labours of modern Englishmen have produced few examples. He was pious from principle, and attached to the church, of which he was a dignified member, because he firmly believed its forms to be rational and its tenets scriptural. He was many years at the head of Westminster school. That school has, since the days of Busby, annually sent forth its shoots to expand in all the walks of talent, valour, and high rank. Of Dr Vincent it may be well said, in the words which Mr Horner used when drawing an outline of the character of his late master, Dr Adam, 'The men who were educated in that school, during his time, will long remember how he inspired his boys with an attachment both to himself and to the pursuits in which he instructed them, and will always regard his memory with affection and gratitude.' In this letter your readers will not fail to remark that tone of good sense and right feeling, which, more than sprightliness of manner or variety of remark, distinguishes the epistolary effusions of our countrymen."]

DEAR SIR,

THE correspondence between Dr Adam and myself commenced by my addressing him upon finding that boys, sent from the High School to Westminster, were qualified, by their attainment in Latin, to a high rank,

* An Irish-English Dictionary, by Edward O'Reilly, V. P. of the Gaelic Society of Dublin, was announced in the notices at the beginning of our last number. EDIT.