V. SCOTTISH GAELIC STUDIES

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I. General

In ‘Inis Moccu Chéin’, SGS, 12, Pt 2:267–70, Colm Ó Baoil suggests that Inis Moccu Chéin, the island name which occurs in the Irish story Scéla Cano Meic Gartnáin, represents Raasay, with its prominent hill Dùn Cana. He surmises, very plausibly, that Raasay was Pictish territory, and then acquired the Gaelic name under discussion before its final Norse re-christening. David N. Dumville, ‘A note on the Picts in Orkney’, ib., 266, draws attention to a sentence in a Bern chronicle probably written in England, c. 750–850, which makes the assumption that Orkney was at one time in Pictish control. Colm Ó Baoill, ‘Domhnall MacMharcais’, ib., 183–93, brings together much interesting information about the MacMharcais bardic family which appears in Kintyre records early in the 16th c. He deals in more detail with Domhnall, who flourished late in the 17th c., and discusses an English letter and a Gaelic poem by him. Ó Baoill, ‘Raghnall Dubh and Hector Maclean’, ib., 209–19, studies the connexions between Ranald MacDonald’s verse anthology, the ‘Eigg’ coll. of 1776, and the MS verse anthol. of Dr Hector Maclean (c. 1768), and concludes that five of MacDonald’s poems came from this source. The evidence is highly suggestive rather than conclusive. The current vol. of the Transactions of the Gaelic Soc. of Inverness (vol. 48) is largely devoted to hist. and antiquarian topics. It incl. an interesting account of Colla Ciotaich (Colkitto), c. 1570–1647, by Ronald Black, and a paper on ‘West Highland sea power in the Middle Ages’, by the Rev. Dr John MacInnes. John L. Campbell, ‘Unpublished letters by Edward Lhuyd in the National Library of Scotland’, Ce, 11:34–42, incl. a copy made by Sir Robert Sibbald of a letter which Lhuyd sent him in 1700, in which he makes refs to Rev. John Beaton, one of Lhuyd’s most valuable Gaelic informants.

‘Studies in Carmichael’s Carmina Gadelica’ by Hamish Robertson, SGS, 12, Pt 2:220–65, is an important art. which
subjects to a new scrutiny the aims and methods of one of the most famous of 19th-c. folk collectors in Scotland. Robertson finds significant discrepancies between the early texts publ. by Alexander Carmichael, in the 1880s, and the versions that appeared in Carmina Gadelica in 1900. He draws attention to the curious disappearance of almost all the originals for vols i and ii, and of the major part of vol. iii, and points to instances of partial editing on the part of Carmichael’s grandson, James Carmichael Watson. There follows a more detailed comparison of Carmina texts with surviving MS originals in Carmichael’s handwriting. ‘Of these, in Carmichael’s rough hand, hardly one had not been touched up in some way, sometimes quite drastically. Almost all of them had alternative words added at the end of the lines, and even stacked in threes and fours, a phenomenon which is reproduced in Carmichael Watson’s editions only to a minor degree compared with the original version.’ The evidence of editorial tinkering and downright composition (by Carmichael) is widespread, and extends to vocabulary, morphology, syntax and metrics. Doubt is hereby thrown on many of the archaic linguistic forms and the esoteric vocabulary of some of the items, as on the prominence of certain saints’ names and other matters. The question of the Rev. Kenneth MacLeod’s infl. on Carmichael is touched on. Robertson follows his main discussion with shorter, less developed but interesting sections on ‘Non-biblical saints’ names in Carmina Gadelica’, ‘Angels in Carmina Gadelica’, ‘Crosses and Sanctuaries’, and ‘Relevance of the Bestiaries to Carmina Gadelica’. The opinion may be ventured that this marks the beginning of a long, and possibly acrimonious, controversy which is necessary in the interests of scholarly truth. J. L. Campbell, ib., 290–9, reviews Carmina Gadelica, vol. vi, and after drawing attention to various difficulties which arose over interpretations of words in Carmichael’s own day, suggests that ‘the compilers and editors of the Historical Scottish Gaelic Dictionary will still have some difficulties to face in incorporating rare words from Carmina, especially from the first two volumes’. Campbell also revs (ib., 300–9) the new ed. of An Clàrsair Dall’s poetry (ed. W. Matheson) and of Kirk’s Secret Commonwealth (Il Cappellano delle Fate, ed. M. M. Rossi).

Gàidhlig ann an Albainn: Gaelic in Scotland, ed. Derick Thomson,