ODE TO GAELIC AND THE GREAT PIPE
IN THE YEAR 1784

I will give you a special discourse
on language and on music:
purest, graphic Gaelic
is best for narrative;
'tis the speech that is full versatile
and has the sweetest croon;
'tis appropriate and eloquent,
and high-toned to a degree.

'Twas the language of the kings
who held this realm by right;
'tis the speech of dukes and earls,
which they would wish for table talk;
it is used by the gentlefolk
and by the honest peasantry;
it was, and is, used by herdsmen,
as they round up the kine.

When the languages diverged
at the great tower of babel,
then Gaelic won supremacy
over every kind of speech:
'tis the best for rhetoric
any man alive commands;
'tis witty, clear, cheery, songful
in the chambers of wassail.

Many a striking tribute
Gaelic gained, in all respects;
it provided the first sacrament
for the Pope that was in Rome;

RANN DO 'N GAIDHILG 'S DO 'N PHIOB-MHOIR
'SA' BHLIADHNA 1784

Innisdir mi sgeul araid dhuibh
Air cânain is air ceól,
Roghna na deas Ghàidhlig
'S i as fhèarr gu innsdeadh sgeòil;
A' chaimt a leonmhwr pàirtean,
'S as milse mànran beòil,
Gu freagarrach deas-labhraich,
'S i ardchuisceach gu leòr.

'S i chaimt a bh' aig na righribh
'Gan robh 'n rìoghadh seo 'nan còir;
'S i bruidheann dhìth dhi is iarluachan,
'S i dh' iarradh iad mu 'm bòrd;
'S i bh' aig na daoin'-uaisle,
'S a geobh' aig an tuath chòir;
'S i bhà, 's a thà, aig buachaillean
A' cuartachadh nam bò.

'N uair a sgàil na cainntean
Aig túr a' mhreidh mòr,
Fuair a' Ghàidhlig maighstureachd
'San am sin thar gach seòr's—
Gur i as fhèarr gu teangaireachd
Tha 'n ceann aon neach tha beò,
Geur soilleir leonmhwr óranach
An seòmarraigean an oíl.

'S leonmhwr urram làidir
Fuair a' Ghàidhlig air gach seòl:
'S i rinn a' cheud Sàcràmaid
Do 'n Phàp a bha 'san Roimh;
'S i th' aig clèir an àite seo,
Gach là toirt comhairl' òrnn;
Gaol filidh is luchd-dàna
Chainnt nàdurr a gum ghò.

'S i fhuaire Sinn o na pàranta
A rinn ar n-àrach òg;
'S i bu mhath lein fhàgail
Aig an àl tha teachd òrnn;
Tha h-uile car a dh' innins ciorr
A' cur a prìs am móid,
Gur i caintn as brioghamhoire,
'S i phìob as fhèarr gu ceòl.

A' phìob ùr seo thàinig do 'n bhaile
A dh' fhaothainn urram,
'S i' cleann inneal-cìthil an fhearainn,
'S na 'dùthch' ùile;
Le meòr lùthmhori air a crannaibh,
'S le dùth bhuilean,
'S àrd a chluinnt e, 's binn a langan,
'S grinn a cumachd.

Tha dosan le loibhraidh ballach,
Cochull de 'n t-sioda m' a muineal;
'S osgarra donach a callan
Air thoiseach mhìltean air thurús;
Brosnachadh roghail na carraid
An cabhaig, an strith no 'n cumasg;
Cha bhi sproch 'san tir am fàn i,
'S fortanach an tì dh' am buin i.

'S deò-grèine leis an luchd-ealaidd
Tha 'n Albainn gu leir 's an Lunnainn,
A' phìob as math gleus is gearradh,
Làidir fallain eutrom ullamh;
'S mòr an t-cìbhneas idh' a leanan
Bhith aige 'na sgéith 'ga cumail:
Fonn-cheòl réidh a crè na h-aìnnir,
Beusan glana na treun chulaidh.

'tis used by the clergy of these parts,
who daily counsel us;
darling of poets and minstrels
is the natural, guileless speech.

'Tis it we learned from the parents
who nurtured us in youth;
'tis it we would fain leave to
the rising generation;
each detail I might tell of it
would add to its prestige;
'tis the most expressive language—
and for music the pipe is best.

This new pipe that came to town
to receive homage,
is the chief musical instrument of the region,
and of the whole country;
with sinewy fingers on her drones
in rapid impact,
loud would she sound, sweet is her belling,
and neat her design.

Her drones are inlaid with ivory,
a sheath of silk surrounds her neck;
bold, continuus is her skirling
in front of thousands in procession—
imperious incitement to the combat,
in crisis, strife or contention;
no gloom will be in the land where she stays,
fortunate is the one that owns her.

A sunbeam in the estimation of musicians,
in all Scotland and in London,
is the pipe of truest key and shake,
strong and sound, lightsome, lively;
'tis a great delight to her lover
to have her encased in his arms;
from the daimiel's frame come flowing harmonies,
pure melodies of the mighty instrument.
ORÁIN DHONNCHAILD BHAIN

'S e cheud chèòl a bh' air an talamh
' A' phìob-mhòr as bòidhche guileag;
'S i bh' aig Fìonn, aig Goll's aig Garadh,
Ann an tala nan laoch fulleach;
'S maír a chitheadh air sèòl cala
Caismeachd chaithriseach nan curaidh;
Mhosgladh i le gèid dh' a h-anail,
Gu feum calamh, an Fhèinn uile.

Mu ghibhì phirseil gun a ceannach,
Tha 'n coimh-theanal seo air chumail;
Breitheachan dìleas 'gan tarraing,
A' òl ceart an 'fhìrinn uile;
Gheibh gach fear a réir na h-cèilidh
Ann an bì e fhèin 'na urrainn;
'S tha e saor aig math-an-airidh
A' phìob fhaotainn thar gach duine.

SONGS OF DUNCAN BAN MACINTYRE

The first music that was on the earth is the great pipe of loveliest warble;
she was Fionn's and Goll's and Garadh's in the blood-shedding heroes' hall;
'twere pity if one witnessed the decline of the warriors' stirring tunes;
with a blow of her breath she could waken all the Fiann to speedy exploit.

This gathering is held about a valuable prize, not purchased;
equitable verdicts are pronounced that will express the whole truth fairly;
each will receive the award assigned to the art in which he is a champion;
and 'tis freely open to merit to win the pipe against all comers.

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