

Manual of Modern Scots by William Grant; James Main Dixon

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something elementally human in their aversion from the massed labour and sweated poverty of the factory town, and in their love of roses and children and honest work? At least one can truly say that, in leaving a permanent record of the dialect in the nineteenth century, they have made a valuable contribution to the history of the English tongue; but, unless their literary genius is greater than Dr Brunner seems to believe, the familiar quotation 'what Lancashire thinks to-day, England will think to-morrow' should be reversed in order to make it true.

Only a Lancashire man, himself a poet and critic, can ever do full justice to these realists of provincial life and speech, and although Dr Brunner does not appear to have been bred in Manchester, that is not his fault, and we cannot attach blame to him for lacking the qualities which a reader has a right to expect in a work of this kind. Dr Brunner has assembled an interesting collection of valuable facts about Lancashire authors, which the lovers of Lancashire dialect will prize as a contribution, an introduction, to the history of its literature.

G. H. COWLING.

LEEDS.

Manual of Modern Scots. By WILLIAM GRANT and JAMES MAIN DIXON. Cambridge: University Press. 1921. 8vo. xxii + 500 pp. 20s.

The idea of this work, more or less a pioneer of its kind, occurred to the second named of these authors who felt the need of such in his lectures on Scottish Literature in the University of Southern California.

The idea is not altogether new, for the ancient Indian writers in their study of Phonetics and phonetic symbols had as one of their motives the desire that no jot or tittle of their holy writings should perish. Not only in California but nearer home much of our Scottish literature is in danger of perishing. The schoolmaster—no blame to him—is in large measure responsible.

The main purpose of the manual is found in the third part, which consists of (1) a series of extracts from modern Scots writers and (2) a selection of ballads and songs, with the original spelling on one page and a strictly phonetic spelling, that of the Association Phonétique, on the opposite. The first part of the *Reader* represents not only Scottish authors of repute, Scott, Ramsay, Burns, Galt, etc., but also the most important Scottish dialects from the Shetland Isles to the Cheviot Hills and the Solway Firth. It cannot be claimed that all the works from which extracts are taken can rank as Scottish Classics, but the ballads and songs of the second part of the *Reader* (Part IV) have all won an abiding place in the Scottish heart. Being no longer merely local, they are reproduced phonetically in the Standard Scots dialect. This is descended from the Old Northumbrian dialect and is now represented over a wide area of Scotland in what the authors call the Lothian type of Scottish speech.

Part I treats of the Phonetics of the Scottish dialects and their sounds in a thoroughly scientific manner. The sound-charts and com-

parative tables of the sounds of Old English, of the Standard Scots dialect, and of Modern English as spoken by the best speakers in Scotland and in England, combined with the use made of them in exposition, afford a sound foundation for the scientific study of Scottish speech, past and present. The phonetic descriptions of the individual sounds are reliable, but it may be doubted whether the vowel described as *high-front-lax-lowered* is of such frequent occurrence as the texts suggest. The present writer is of opinion that the symbol for that sound is employed in many words where some variety of the *high-central* is the real sound used in the living speech. But perhaps this may be merely a matter of phonetic interpretation. The glottal stop receives attention. As stated in the *Manual* it is used along with or instead of *p, t, k*. It is also used occasionally with final *l* and *n*. It is probably the most objectionable, i.e. the most cacophonous, of the dialectal sounds and a word of warning might therefore have been given against its imitation.

In Part II the term Grammar is used in the widest sense and here we have what is probably the fullest and most scientific treatment to be found anywhere of the usages of Scottish speech in word and phrase. We note the omission of an idiom found on the East Coast: 'Here it,' 'There it,' for 'Here it is,' 'There it is.' The omission is a little surprising, for the same or a similar idiom occurs in one of the extracts when Wee Macgregor exclaims 'I like potty. Here a bit.' Further there is no mention of an idiom still sometimes heard in fishing communities, the Scandian use of 'at' with the infinitive. In the list of strong verbs it might have been noted that the verb 'to saw' (wood) has in certain parts of Scotland the same form as the past tense of the verb 'to saw' (to sow seed), namely *sju* (= *syoo*). These omissions are referred to not as shortcomings but merely as indications that in spite of the fulness of phonetic and grammatical treatment something still remains to be done in the field of dialectal research. The authors have shown how it is to be done.

Parts I and II have each an Index, full, and, so far as tested, accurate, and the *Reader* is provided with a glossary as complete and thorough as the rest of the work.

The book has been put through the press with the utmost care. In some 150 pages of phonetic print we have found only three or four misprints. There are one or two inconsistencies of statement or of pronunciation which may however be explained as dialectal varieties.

To teachers and students of Scottish literature the book is fitted to be of great help, especially to those who believe that we get nearer to an author's meaning in proportion as we approximate to his original pronunciation. It cannot perhaps be claimed that these phonetic transcripts enable this approach to be made perfectly (there is no attempt to mark intonation), but they do help us to realise more exactly and satisfactorily than any other spelling we have, how the auld Scots tongue was formerly and, in spite of the schoolmaster and the journalist, is still spoken in many parts of the country.

The writer remembers once hearing Robert Fergusson's poem 'Braid Claith' (pp. 340-1) recited in Fifeshire with the pronunciation 'brēd claith' where the vowel of 'brēd' *low-front-tense-long* (almost rhyming with that of 'bread') represents a stage of evolution intermediate between OE. 'brād' and modern 'braid.' The pronunciation, which was probably that of Fergusson's time, gave to the familiar poem a fulness of meaning it had never had before.

The aim of the book is to further the appreciation of Scots literature through the better understanding of the language in which it is enshrined. In view of the efforts of the Vernacular Circle Committee of the Burns Club of London to encourage by every means possible the use of the vernacular language oral and written, the question naturally arises: What would be the attitude of our authors to this proposal? The answer is found in a chapter all too short on 'The Intrusion of English into Scots' given as a preface to the *Reader*. They urge that Scots writers 'ought to know something of the history of their language and of its grammar in so far as it differs from Standard English.' There ought to be 'a systematic study of our old national speech and literature in our Schools and Colleges.' But they admit that 'the Scottish Language can never be national in the same sense as it was' before the Union of the Crowns.

To readers who are not acquainted with the spoken dialect but who can read phonetic texts the transcriptions in the third and fourth parts of the volume must give a new insight into, and a quickened appreciation of, the stories and ballads and songs of the 'north countree.'

The whole work does credit to its authors alike in conception, in scholarship, and in execution. The reliability of the phonetic texts, the fulness and accuracy of the linguistic and grammatical parts provide much to praise, nothing to censure, and only a few details for the expert to disagree with.

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R. JACKSON.

DUNDEE.

Three Studies in Shelley, and an Essay on Nature in Wordsworth and Meredith. By ARCHIBALD T. STRONG. Oxford: University Press. 1921. 8vo. 189 pp. 10s. 6d.

The Professor of English in Adelaide University deserves thanks for these four essays. His method is straightforward, he gives all his documents, he writes easily and with elegance, and he penetrates into the subject. The 'faith of Shelley' is hard to disentangle from its poetic expression and from the poet's shifting and interlacing moods. Dr Strong traces afresh the double strain in his speculation; on one side, negative, necessitarian, anti-Christian, and oppressed with the evil of the world; on the other, aspiring, full of reverence for the man