
An Comunn Gaidhealach

Author(s): M. N. Munro

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An Comunn Gaidhealach

The thirteenth Mod at Greenock has been voted a great success by universal consent and even by acclamation. The movement is yet in an early stage of development, for it has been of slow growth, and perhaps on that account is the more healthy. Those who have been noting its development during the years see a very marked progress during the past three years. Certainly the promise of the future is within it, and it is already a power to be reckoned with in the land. The influence of An Comunn Gaidhealach will doubtless be still further extended by the formation of local branches under the new regulations.

The great attraction of the Mod for the multitude, and indeed its chief motive power, is Gaelic vocal music. The Mod is essentially a great Song Festival. It should not be forgotten, however, that the writing of original Gaelic poetry and prose is encouraged, and also the composition of original music, as well as story-telling, reading, reciting, and conversing in Gaelic. This side of the Mod has been better developed in the past few years, and with good effect, for many persons can tell a *sgeulachd*, or recite, or read who have no voice with which to sing. It is right, too, that we should cultivate all our possibilities.

There is a prize for the advanced student and for the *seanchaidh*; there is also a prize for the little child that can answer simple questions in its native Gaelic, or that can sing a Gaelic song sweetly. But, after all, vocal music is what has made the movement really popular and effective. It has done what the bagpipe and the sword dance and tossing the caber and such feats, useful as they are and worthy of encouragement, could never do. It has touched the heart of the people. Our Gaelic songs, with their charming simplicity, their noble and distinctive quality, hardly ever fail to touch the deeper romantic and poetic feeling. The founders of An Comunn were wise in their generation when they enlisted in the language movement the fairy aid of Music and her twin-sister Poetry. The promoters of the Mod have invoked, and with good effect, the cunning charm of the Gaelic muses to win the indifferent, to kindle enthusiasm, and to disarm prejudice.

Every Highlander who desires to preserve the life of the tongue of his fathers should be a *working* member of An Comunn, and now that the constitution has been remodelled to admit of the formation of branches on favourable conditions, every district and village in the Highlands, and every town in the Lowlands and in England where there are even a few Highlanders, ought to have classes and choirs and local competitions. And in these the children should get special attention, for with them the future of Gaelic lies. In the matter of local Mòid Edinburgh and Oban have set an excellent example. Such classes—which should not stop at teaching the language and the songs, but should teach in Gaelic the literature and the history, as well as everything else connected with the Gael—are of the very

highest intellectual value, and give the young people a taste for higher things than the successive football and cricket matches, and such like pursuits, which at present hold such an undue proportion of the thoughts and energies of our country. Our Highland people have great possibilities did we but take the trouble to put them on the way to develop them. And here let me say that the development must be on native lines, else we only produce useless exotics—neither Gael nor Gall. At present it is too much a case of *morán 'g a radh agus beagan 'g a dheanamh*. Within the ranks of An Comunn Gaidhealach those who do work, work well and nobly, and every year shows progress and extension. In deciding to go to the North Highlands next year An Comunn has taken a step which is sure to have good results, for if Gaelic is to be encouraged anywhere, surely it should be first of all in the land of its heredity. May An Comunn Gaidhealach long flourish—'*Cruaidh mar am fraoch, buan mar an darach e!*'

M. N. MUNRO.

The Pan-Celtic Congress.

Carnarvon, scene of the late Congress, is the one Welsh town best fitted perhaps for a gathering of the kind. There, the ideas for which the Celtic Association has worked, and especially those bearing on the maintenance of a national spirit and a Celtic tongue, have all the while been quietly followed without any external stimulus. The better part of the town, gentle and simple, talks Welsh; and it has its own press, its old-established weekly, monthly, and bi-monthly reviews, and a fine literary tradition, cultivated with true Welsh indifference to the outer world, and for its own sake; and all this, as the irony of history provides, under the shadow of that strong castle which Edward I. intended to be the warder and repressor of everything tribal, Cymric and Celtic. And then, as the Principal of Jesus College pointed out, Dinas Duille is not far away;—Dinas Duille, where the great magician, Gwydion, reared Llew Llawgyffes, and where stood, one may say, the faery centre of a region crammed with traditions, not only Cymric, but Gaelic. Welsh as town and district, *Caer-yn-Arfon* and *Arfon*, are,—they were, as he said, Gaelic too, long ago: and within a term of his saying it, I saw a Welshman, tall and dark, with a Highland face, and of the purest Gwyddel type, pass through the Guildhall archway.

A place, then, full of native reminders; but carrying too, its latent, older Celtic memories; and very natural the town appeared to find this new '*Cymanfa*,' when its remote or closer kinsfolk,—Scottish, Irish, Manx, Breton, Cornish, regathered in its midst. Together they retook the castle of Edward I., set up their cairn in its walls, and in the end formally proclaimed the town the Welsh depository of their common seal and charter. The public pageant, when on the opening day the Celtic host marched through the town from the station to the castle close, was shorn of something of its effect, because the Bretons did not appear in their wonted,