

## PREFACE.

WHEN I published my first book of Piobaireachd, the reviewers, "Loch Duich," Mr. MacInnes, and several others praised it as the best then published. Others, again, said my system was quite new and strange to them; that the time signatures were entirely new, and the bar lines not placed as usual, and the whole an unnecessary interference with established methods. Such is generally the fate of most pioneers. Time, however, has changed this attitude a great deal, and it is gratifying to note that all writers of Pipe Music since then have copied my style more or less; even the Editor of a recently-published book of Pipe Music has done me the honour of copying my system of writing the "Tri-luth," or, as he calls it, "Taor-luath." But of all who wrote favourable and adverse criticisms, that of Dr. Charles Bannatyne is worthy of preservation. He wrote to me, personally, as follows:—

"Salsbury, by Holytown.

"Dear Mr. MacLennan,—I have been studying your music closely, and as the one living man able to read MacCrimmon Canntaireachd, I unhesitatingly aver that you have given the world Ceol Mor as MacCrimmon played . . . . .

"I now see that your *Minim standard pulse* is correct . . . . . I looked up my MSS. containing traditions of Canntaireachd, made after I had thoroughly mastered it, and here is what I found . . . . . I may tell you that I feared my own translation of the 'Crun-ludh' till I saw your music, and then I was delighted to see that my reading of the old MacCrimmon system was fundamentally correct.

"I am trying to get the reviewing of your book. If I do, it will put a flea in the ear of the piping world.

"Yours very sincerely,

"(Signed) CHAS. BANNATYNE."

Three weeks after writing the above letter, Dr. Bannatyne wrote to the *Oban Times*:—

"THE PIOBAIREACHD AS MACCRIMMON PLAYED IT."

"SIR,—This new publication might be designated a pictorial metronome and is in some ways a bit of a puzzle. . . . . On reading Mr. MacLennan's preface, it soon becomes evident that the *Minim* is adopted to exploit an idea that each beat of a pibroch doubling and trebling contains respectively two and three beats of the singling. . . . . Mr. MacLennan thinks the taor-luath and crunluath contains a low A too many . . . . . I have never discarded the low A . . . . . I cannot agree with Mr. MacLennan's style of noting the fogsailte taor-luath, nor the D beat in the crunluath a steach. All his 'beat groups' are wrongly timed and wrongly written. . . . . I stand for the genius of the old MacCrimmons, supported by tradition and old MSS.—I am, etc.,

"(Signed) CHARLES BANNATYNE, M.B., C.M."

The Piobaireachd is now, and has been for many years, in a dilapidated condition, mainly through the introduction of "Sitirichean an Eich—Raoichden as Asail agus geumnaich a Mhairt" (the neighing of the horse, the braying of the ass, and the lowing of the cow),








together with unqualified men writing music they knew little or nothing about, thereby making bagpipe playing a variety of wild and meaningless notes, as if Momus, the god of mockery, was trying his best to show the piper as a full-grown clown.

Pibrochs would have been played to time and tune long ago but for the fact that certain prizes are given for playing written tunes, or rather, conglomerations of notes, which have neither time nor execution. This has

been carried on a system when written pipe music was unknown to and despised by the piper. One great piper writes: "The only infallible guide to selecting what is right and correcting what is wrong is a perfect and thoroughly trained ear." The great Beethoven was totally deaf when he wrote his best works. He had, however, a thorough knowledge of the science of music. In defence of the irregularity of the pibroch this writer tells us: "There is evidence to show that the piobaireachd composers of former times did not insist on the regularity of metre; when the theme required it they could add to or omit." They were the first to practice the maxim, "Art must not be tied by rule." This writer forgot that art must always be subjected by science or it is no art.

In treating of Gaelic poetry the same author writes: "Logan on the Bards says, 'different measures, a style capable of being extremely effective, has been frequently used by both the ancient and modern Gael; the flow of the passions is not restricted by adherence to rules.'" Logan was well educated, lived mostly abroad, and wrote on many subjects. He was born and bred in the city of Aberdeen; he had no knowledge of the Gaelic language, and the writings of the Bards were sealed books to him. Celtic writers (Highland and Irish) say Gaelic melodies have always been exquisitely melodious, in perfect time, and regular measure.

There are now three different standards of time in bagpipe music, viz. — The semibreve , the minim , and the crotchet . The semiquaver is the shortest note used in bagpipe music. The demisemiquaver  is used as a grace note and is not counted in the time of the beats. Therefore the minim is the best suited for piobaireachd. The semibreve  standard allows four crotchets or eight quavers or sixteen semiquavers to one step or beat. The minim standard allows two crotchets, four quavers, or eight semiquavers to one marching step, while the crotchet standard only allows two quavers or four semiquavers to the beat.

Most pipers are of opinion that Ceol Mor cannot be timed and marched to. These are generally men who accepted the easiest and common system and never thought for themselves beyond "which is the system most likely to let me get a prize." The piobaireachd should be played in perfect time, singling, doubling, trebling, and quadrupling, and if this was attended to we would hear Ceol Mor being played to full grand stand benches instead of being played on the most remote corner of the field where the audience is absent.