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PREFACE

There is much controversy about anything to do with the Macrimmon family of pipers, and half a dozen different legends exist about their origin, their type of music "ceol mor, " and its interpretation, the lighter kind of Scottish national music, but which has become so prevalent on the bagpipe of later years, to the **neglect of more serious music** which was the sole delight of the old masters. Their secret method of teaching which modern teacher will agree was their livelihood, and which seems to have been entirely oral in character; human nature being always the same then, as now, who among teachers can blame the for keeping their favourite methods secret? Though at a later date an endeavour was made to write down the chanted vocables and systemize the same. They had many imitators in the various schools of the MacArthur's the Campbell or Lorn style, MacIntyre's, Macdonald's and others.

Causes of Decline and Decay The breaking up of the College of Dunvegan, the Highland disturbances, lack of good teachers to carry on the work, changes in the lives of the people and the parrot-like cry that pibroch is a lost art and a dead art, and non-transmission of Ceol Mor theory for a generation.

Inward evidence of music Hearing around me this cry since a youth, the writer has never been able to understand this cry, when there exists such a wealth of printed tunes in existence, preserved and collected by various collectors and players. However, the greatest of all evidences of the art itself lies in the printed page of music itself. The writer has been encouraged by several of the old and respected worthies, among whom a kind of "pipers' freemasonry" has exited, such as Gen. Thomason, MacDougal Gillies, Alec and Geo. MacKay, Alex. Fettes* Lieut. John MacLennon, J.P. MacLeod and others, of whom several have chanted over the tunes in the pibroch books, and glad I was to have had the help and inspiration given as the tunes were "lilted" over to me in the floating cantaireachd or "pipe jargon." Another reason taken notice of by the superstitions was the work of the "widow's curse" It is remarkable that the family of Macrimmon musical talent still descends, through the Glenlg line of the family and its intermarriages and many ramifications which separated from the Boreraig branch – the later Mr. Simon Frazer, the oldest player in Australia, died 1934, in Melbourne, whose teachers were contemporary with the Bruces and the music of their day, learnt the Macrimmon vocable when very young, and could sing and chant the tunes before he received instruction from them, and with whom he was associated for 20 years. He may have owed his musical talent partly to his being learnt the whole Macrimmon system from the father; his mother, too, like many Highland ladies, being able to sing the tunes, she having sung over him when he lay sick as a child "The Lament for the Children," and on his recovery he asked her explanation of the strange singing, so she taught him on his promising not to divulge the same for a number of years (the bane of secrecy again): -

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* Mr. MacDougal Gilies was at one time in Alex. Fettes' piper band, when young.

Hear me, dear Saviour, hear me now;
All my dear children, but one, are laid low;
Spare him, dear Saviour, spare him to me
To play the lost Pibroch over the sea

These being the composer's words.

Frazer was familiar with Norman MacLeod, and Capt. Neil MacLeod of Gesto, from whose collection of MSS were written the 1826 unpublished book, "The History of the Macrimmons and the Great Pipe," two copies of which were in Australia, one with the Frazers and the other with Norman MacLeod (Mr. S. Frazer kindly corrected the mistakes for me in the 1828 book) along with two copies of Angus MacKay, written in Pat Mor Vocables. Thus Capt. MacLeod of Gesto and Mr. Frazer may be an interesting link with the past (old Frazer's mother was cousin to Gesto, who was a fine pipe and violinist) in preserving the Macrimmon vocables and pibroch. After the MS. were lost, Mr. Frazer rewrote the MS., and these were sold to a non-playing relative of the Macrimmons as a curio and heirloom, and are still in existence (as far as known) with a Canadian. During some 30 years' correspondence, many sidelights have been brought before me which might be interesting to those interested.

The pibroch vocables were an attempt to onopoetically make the chanter speak the notes played by the fingers of the performer, and in this way could be committed to memory. There were 54 tunes in the Gesto MSS., but most of them were in Angus Mackay and MacDonald's pibroch collections, and the purchaser of the MS. Asserts he will not publish same for –

"The Pibroch that we loved to hear
Will soon make room for sheep an deer."

A verse from the "Lament for Ceol Mor," a companion tune to "Lament for the Harp Tree."

Mystery the Bane of Progress Apart from the so-called mystery and secret methods of teaching, a real cause of the decline in pibroch and cause of the final quarrel between the MacLeods and the Macrimmons was: - Ian Dubh was married to a Scandinavian lady of great beauty and MacLeod wanted her for himself in the castle. Ian Dubh told him he could not have her without bloodshed, for, he declared, he would resist even the edge of the sword. So MacLeod lacked fire, and to get even, he taxed the farm, but Ian Dubh would not stand for that, so he closed the Pipe College and the music died. The farm was split up. The father and brothers of the above lady formed the bodyguard to the MacLeod at the Castle of Dunvegan.

Metre Metre is the main thing in pibroch, all the early Macrimmon music being in "threes," three parts of urlar, terniary, triplets, trinity notes, triads; the mystery of triad system of beats and vocables: "Ho, ra, din," "Be, tre in," etc. Perfect time or "tempus perfectus" was the earlier style, Another kind of "time" was Even Time, which made its appearance later.

Time Curious means of explaining the rather slowish time of pibroch have been given the writer by Highlanders, seizing upon local rural means available for the purpose, such as a slowly turning big cart wheel, the slowly swinging to and fro of a farm yard latch gate and the swinging around at arms length of a big walking stick. The beating of the fingers on the chanter and listening to the air current passing through the chanter note holes or likended to breaking of air bubbles in a thick liquid, such as the breaking of air bells in milk in the dairy, or upon the chanter if the fingers are moistened (by one's lips). The explanation of a secret "beat" by insertion of the chanter into a glass vessel of water and watching for the escaping bubble or air bell on a certain note, and so-called redundant note as well.

Many interesting points are observed in tales of olden days among the fraternity and their friends. The pupil who secretly listens to and learns favourite hidden and carefully guarded tunes of his master or teachers; secret pipe beats and fingerings only shown to favourite pupils; tales of jealousy and revenge; punishment of the injury to players' fingers; slashing of the wrist sinews or mutilation occur in old-time yarns. Pat Og's sister gave away a tune and secret beat ("Dra, dir in, Trie") to a sailor, who in consequence got his finger broken.

Universality of the Pipes That the universality of bagpipes of sorts was very general all over Europe is evidenced by the great number of illustrations of same in old books, pictures, stone-masons' art and in tapestries. A very fine example of at 17th century bed valance bought b the nation, showing examples of rural sports, 19 ft. long, including a piper playing, woven by Warwickshire weavers at Barcheston, valued at £1,750, and colours all in their pristine freshness, now in the Victoria and Albert Musuem, 1934. Dalziel, in his book, speaks of pibrochs made by Italians, and the finest coloured picture of a piper I have ever seen is "Angels", by Orcagna, from Italian painters, one singing, one piping, on a shoulder pipe having one big drone, printed by Seeley & co., London, by author of "belt and Spur,"
The Luttrell Psalter contains one of similar type.

"Widow's Curse" To those among whom the hidden forces of nature, seconds sight, telepathy, dreams and tradition hold sway or have an appeal, it may be of interest to mention the sad story of the legend narrated to Fre MacLeod by Wm. Campbell, pensioner of Fasach, Glendale, then 80 years old. Recruits being wanted for the army, MacLeod employed a Macrimmon, a henchman and an outstanding athlete, whom he sent in chase of a widow's only son in Durnish, who secured his victim and brought him to the Castle of Dunvegan. His disconsolate mother implored MacLeod at the castle to take pity on her distress, and asked him to restore to her only means of support, and addressed him as follows: "MacLeod, if you take from the lone widow her only support, and do not release my son captured by John Macrimmon, few will be the days and small the end of Macrimmons the pipers". She thereupon left the castle, and Campbell remarked that within a generation or two, the Macrimmons ceased to be pipers to the MacLeods of Dunvegan, and lost their lands in Boreraig. The Macrimmon who captured the widow's son was afterwards unable to blow his pipes in public for the enjoyment of his chief, although he

could play them when no person was in his company, and matters had to be arranged that, when the chief desired his piper to play to him, the room had to be darkened (medical men who are pipers will understand the reason of this.)

Music and Heredity Musical talent is one of the commonly looked for and expected hereditary traits, especially among musical families. There have always been a few lady pipers in olden days, and now a-days, when there are so many lady pipe bands, one may look forward to the talent being handed down to posterity in an increasing degree and many pipers born in the land. An example of second sight has been mentioned by Buchanan; a German peasant, during the old continental wars, subject to second sight, in a vision observed a party of soldiers marching along to strange strains of music, confirmed later in the passage of Scottish soldiers with bagpipes accompanying them on their march.

Measured Music Joseph Macdonald speaks of music being measured off in fingers; elsewhere we hear of it being "pegged off" by pegs stuck in the ground, so we can imagine the piper's walk as being pegged off for pupils instructions as he saunters to and fro in the measures of the pibroch, but not marching them. When instruction was oral and not written down, but solely working by memory, "vocables" degenerated and became lost, only a limited jargon remaining and still used by many teachers who believe in "speaking the word."

Borrowed Hints from the Pipers That the Macrimmon piper vocables were of use to Dr. Curwen and Mary Glover was told the writer by Simon Frazer. As his father was receiving tuition from John Macrimmon at the same time as a fellow-pupil, John Macgregor, there were letters in the family from these people in 1840 enquiring about and arranging the "tonic solfa," a new system they were making for singing music, and they sought the help of John Macgregor and his Macrimmon methods as a guide to them, and help for their new singing system.

Easily understood to be helpful when we consider the Macrimmon beats as they san the hey to i ti; ho tor it ti; hum bra hili; dra da radin dro, jargon, and so on, and thus the Macrimmon's methods have been of use in present-day music, after all, notwithstanding the ribald remarks of scoffers and those who disparage the poor old piper and his so-called primitive instrument and which in conversations with English and foreign musicians of high standing has been deemed unworthy of notice, or carelessly never thought taking notice of or of enquiring into. But it is pleasant to note that Scotland has now produce a piping and dancing magazine of its own, under Mr. J. Hunter of Ardrossan, and this will be all to the good of the pipe and its music.

Effect of Pipes on Language That pipes have left their mark upon our language is open to observation, for current expressions and sayings have become quite common as proverb; such as: -

"The stately step of a piper."
"No man can so successfully succeed in making himself look as important as twenty men as a piper does."
"It is the unpaid piper who has the right to call the tune."
"The one who pays the piper calls the tune."

A query – "Who is to pay the piper?"
"More power to your elbow"
"The piper that played before Moses"
In a time of extremity sometimes a pied piper is wished for:
"As fou as a piper." [but when is a man fou? Doctors differ.]
"The piping times at peace."
"If you don't call the tune, you need not pay the piper."
"His tuning is better than his piping."
"The quicker the piping, the worse the dancing."
"Once a piper, always a piper."
"Regarding piping, if it is in, it will out."
"Meat and music too, said the fox as he ate the bag of the pipes."
"To the 'make of a piper', seven generations, etc."
"The nearest approach to a young lady's waist, said the piper as his arm encircled the pipe bag."
"The piper, like the bard, has food and shelter; from moon to moon."
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Shakespear mentions pipers of Lincolnshire, and in a versicle, speaks of a village as "Piping Pebworth." In his plays he says: "Strike up pipers." In Henry IV he says: "Rumour is a pipe blown upon," etc. The early companies of various musicians or minstrels on the Continent (in Germany in particular) were called Pipers' Guilds."

Pipe Bands Of late years, army piper bands and bands of military formation have come into existence and have advertised and made popular the bagpipes all over the British Empire, in consequence increasing the numbers of performers more than ever before. After the "45" pipers were few but good, and often played for a lifetime, for whoever heard of a player who understood his instrument giving it up. In the Highlands, many good players joined the Highland and other army regiments. At the time of the Napoleonic, Pennisula and American wards, when the "fife and drums" were done away with, the order went forth for "bagpipes and drums" to be amalgamated, quantity being substituted for quality. Then more and more pipers had of necessity to be trained "from the ranks." The old pibroch calls and signals had to be abolished and simple tunes and airs were used. Tunes were adapted from Lowland songs and airs, which has been played upon pipes; also the Lowland regiments had an enormous influence in carrying on all sorts of "ports" and other music wherever their duties took them. Then the "Quicksteps" were invented, perhaps not earlier than 1830, as far as bagpipes were concerned. The glamour cast upon the gallant deeds performed by the Highland piper in wartime caused Scotland to abandon Lowland pipes and bellows-pipes and appropriate to itself the Highland Piob Mohr as the martial instrument of Scotland, so that its popularity was broadcast by the British army bands and regimental pipers gradually increased. Their value was enhanced and recognized. Improvements took place both in individual and collective playing with disciplinary controlled band units, what with piping officers of both army and navy, competitions and Highland gatherings in India and at home stations, where Highland brigades assemble, the growth of bands among cadet colleges, boys' brigades, boy scouts, and pipers'

societies, even lady players and girls' bands (the future mothers of pipers) and our music, fostered by the gentlemen of Scotland and of Greater Scotland, many Caledonian societies beyond the seas, those seas which do not separate, but really unite us.

The Pibroch Society of Scotland, too, by means of it Edinburgh Castle piper training school, under its own selected teacher, as well as two duly appointed instructors, who periodically tour Highland country districts and the "Isles" for the purpose of instructing the local youth, make certain that the art will improve and never die out.

Pipes from H.M. military forces attending the Castle School of Edinburgh then receive pass-out certificates and diplomas of the grades, holders of which receive preferment to vacant positions of the rank of Pipe Major in H.M. forces. In past days many pipers made a regiment their home, but nowadays, under a short-service system, pipers may be trained rather quickly for military purposes, and young military pipers serving their time may even have several pipe majors over them.

Our music still hold it own, and wherever the Scottish race doth rule as part of the Celtic fringe, it is fortunate that we have such worthy teachers and patrons, even to the highest in the land, of the throne itself. It will be found that soloists will not improve themselves by much band playing, and solitary situated and lonely players have a tendency to slow down their tempo in their playing. But there is a danger in both playing and dancing too quickly at the present day.

Massed band playing has greatly advanced since the day of 'a hundred pipers in a' in a'," and become so universal at tattoos and military displays, etc. that a specially-arranged massed band music book for pipe and drums has become an absolute necessity, owing to differently accented tunes and favourite regimental drumming scores which clashed when bands were massed together.

With many of the general public at large, one mistaken and misleading idea at the present day is increased by so much pipe work, viz.:-That the pipes are only good "for marching to," but there is consolation in the fact that they are the best for that purpose. Dalziel, in his musical memories, gives a picture showing a piper soloist performing before the king and queen and their courtiers in France, and another German one of the 14th century portrays a similar performance. King Henry VIII of England had his pipers at court and King James IV of Scotland was a performer on the noble instrument himself, as is also His Majesty King Edward VIII, present occupant of the throne.