

8th FEBRUARY, 1888.

At this meeting Lord Tweedmouth, Guisachan, was elected an honorary member of the Society, and Mr John Macintyre, Balnacoll, Brora ; Mr Peter Macgregor, 4 Brougham Street, Edinburgh ; Mr John Hood, English and Scottish Law Life Assurance Association, Edinburgh ; and Mr E. Dwelly, piper, Argyle Highlanders, Ballachulish, were elected ordinary members. Thereafter Mr John Whyte read a paper by Mrs Mary Mackellar, on "The Sheiling : its Traditions and Milking Songs," which was very favourably reviewed by the members present. Mrs Mackellar's paper was as follows :—

THE SHEILING : ITS TRADITIONS AND SONGS.

[PART I.]

The rearing of their cows, and caring for their welfare, was a matter of great importance to the Highlanders of the past. Milk, in its different forms, was the food on which they chiefly depended for their existence. Tea had not yet unstrung the nerves of our great-grandmothers, nor given dyspepsia to our healthy and long-lived forefathers. Their only beverages to refresh or strengthen—besides the "eanaraich" of beef and venison—were from the cow ; and their store of butter and cheese largely represented their winter provision. It was therefore of great consequence to them to have their cattle so fed that their yield of milk would not only be increased but enriched. Deer forests or large sheep farms did not then shut them out from the glens of their native hills. The people formed the wealth of the chief, and the stronger and more numerous they were, the greater was his importance as one of the decisive forces of his native land. There was therefore no restriction, only that they arranged among themselves concerning the different places of summer grazing that would belong to each township. This place of pasture was known as the "àiridh," and the cots built thereon for their summer sheilings were known as "bothain àiridh." The houses in which they spent the winter were poor enough, but it mattered much less for these summer sheilings : if they kept the wind and the rain out, that was enough. They spent the most of their time among their herds on the hillside. They had the fresh mountain breezes, and the pure rills of stream and fountain, and beauty and grandeur around them to gladden the eye ; and what if they had no couches of down,

they were no Sybarites. The "cuaran," or old Highland shoe, was only required to keep out a stone or a stick laid crossways. "Tha i gu math ma chumas i 'mach clach, no maide air a tharsuing." And they were as regardless in other things that concerned their personal comfort. Sometimes the summer grazings were within a couple of miles of the homes, and although they shifted the cows there, they did not require to leave their own homes, and they went morning and evening to milk them and feed the calves. This place of pasture was known as "buaile," and the milking-hour that, morning and evening, divided the day was known as "An t-Eadar-adh."* The maidens went there in bands, and carried the milk home in the "milk-nut," or "cnò-bhainne," which was a wooden dish, made in the shape of a nut, and having a hole in the side large enough to let the hand in to wash it. Afterwards the milking-cog, or "cuach-bhleoghain," took the place of the nut, but now the tin pail is oftenest carried, even where the "buaile" is to be seen. It was customary for the milking-maids to offer a drink from their foaming cogs to the passers by, and it was considered mean and inhospitable not to offer a stranger this "deoch-rathaid," or "deoch-ròid."

Flora Macdugald, a daughter of "Ailean Dall," the poet, told me that she spoke often to an old woman who had given a drink of milk from her cog to the beloved but unfortunate Prince Charles Stuart—the "Bonnie Prince Charlie" of song and story. She was a young girl at the time, and in her return from the "buaile" she had to walk over a plank that bridged a foaming burn. The plank was unsteady, and a gallant-looking gentleman, who stood on the opposite bank, jumped into the water and held it firmly until she passed over. He had wet his feet, and she felt ashamed and sorry, and when she got near him, after he came out of the burn, she offered him her cog that he might have a drink. He took it freely, and, having unbonnetted, he shook hands with her, and they parted. She saw him again when he was in hiding, and knew that it was Bonnie Prince Charlie who had stepped into the foaming brook to steady the plank for her. She spoke of it always until her death in old age. She could never forget his kind face and smiling eyes when, regardless of his wet hose, he took off his bonnet and shook hands with her.

It was customary with the gentlemen-farmers, and proprietors of estates even, to go in the morning at milking time to see the cattle, to gladden their hearts by seeing their calves "thrive

*Eadar-thràth.

bonnie," and to get a draught of rich warm milk from the foaming cog. One of the chieftains of the Camerons of Glen-Nevis met his death in a dreadful manner in his "buaile." Some foe, of small dimensions—it is said to have been Iain Beag Mac Aindrea—got himself secreted by his wife in a large burden ("eallach") of heather, and rolled down a hill. The "eallach" rested in a heathy hollow, within arrow-shot of the "buaile," and when the chieftain came and went his rounds among the cattle, and afterwards went to get his drink of milk as usual, he lifted the cog to his lips, and Iain Beag let his arrow fly. The chieftain fell dead, with the cog pinned to his forehead by the too well aimed arrow. The dairymaid screamed when her master fell at her feet, with the milk spilt over him, and the cog so unaccountably pinned to his forehead. Her cries brought the herdsman, and in the commotion Iain Beag escaped, having with his dirk cut the heather rope that bound the burden in which he had lain hidden with his fatal messengers. He fled up the mountain side, and was out of reach ere he was noticed, and the chief was carried home to his family in sorrow, amidst the lamentations and wailings of those who sang the "coronach," or, as it was known in Gaelic, "a' chaoidheanaich."

A dairymaid was the mother of an illegitimate son, who was known as "Donull du Diolain." His patronymic was "Donull du Mac Alasdair," but he continued to be known to posterity as "An gambain maol donn"—"the polled brown stirk"—and his descendants are spoken of still as "Sliochd a Ghamhna," a name which was given to him when, in his early boyhood, he used to go with his mother to his father's "buaile." This branch of the Glen-Nevis family live chiefly in Onich, and the following lullaby and milking song was composed on one of them :—

" Pru dhé Mhic a' Ghamhna,
 Pru dhe Mhic a' Ghamhna chean-fhionn,
 Pru dhe Mhic a' Ghamhna,
 Bhrist' thu 'm braidein, 's dh'òl thu 'm bainne,
 Pru dhe Mhic a' Ghamhna,
 'S dh' fhalbh thu 'n oidhche ris a' ghealaich,
 Pru dhe Mhic a' Ghamhna,
 Ach ma dh' fhalbh 's ann duit nach b' aithreach,
 Pru dhe Mhic a' Ghamhna,
 'S boidheach air lianaig ar n-aighean,
 Pru dhe Mhic a' Ghamhna,
 'S boidheach balg-fhionn ar crodh-bainne,

Pru dhe Mhic a Ghamhna.
 Chuala tu an damh donn ri langan,
 Pru dhe Mhic a' Ghamhna,
 Ach ma chuala fhuair e 'n t-saighead,
 Pru dhe Mhic a' Ghamhna,
 Pru dhe Mhic a' Ghamhna chean-fhionn."

Where the summer grazings were too far away to go to them at milking time, the people flitted to them, with all their herds, flocks, and store of necessaries. This exodus took place generally in June, after the peats were stacked, and the potato fields left in good order, and it was a time of much bustle and excitement and much expectancy, especially for the young people. When Lord Dunmore was a young man, he was out one day deer-stalking in Harris, and when he and his men approached the ruins of a sheiling, his excellent but eccentric henchman, Donald John Mackenzie, exclaimed, pointing to it, "There's where my father courted my mother." Many a Highlander could say the same thing of the "bothan àiridh," and many a young man could sing heartily,

"Thug mi 'n oidhche 'n raoir 's an àiridh,
 Thug mi 'n oidhche 'n raoir 's an àiridh,
 'S bidh mi nochd gu cridheil caoimhneil,
 Mar ri maighdeamnan na h-airidh."

It was a matter of great concern to them to get away without any evil omen, and without meeting an unlucky foot, as they set out. "Codhail mhath dhiubh" was always a welcome salutation, and "droch codhail ort" was dreaded as much as the wildest malediction. They hated a lean, hungry-looking person to meet them, or a covetous man, or any one known to be even distantly related to a witch, or suspected of having any communication with witches or evil-disposed fairies. Those witches could not only kill their cows, but they could make them cast their calves. They could take their milk from them, or take the virtue out of it, so that no butter could be made, and people with the evil eye could injure them in the same way. It is also said that fairies can shoot cows with those flint arrows so frequently found on the hills. They did not like any one to praise a cow without their wetting their eyes with their own saliva, taken up on the point of the finger. Nor did they like any one to count their cattle without invoking a blessing upon them. There were also some animals that they considered a bad omen if they came across them as they set out. A cat was an unlucky creature, as the demon was said to take its shape, and a

hare was sure to be a witch in disguise. The snipe was the most blessed creature that could come across them, because it was believed to have met the Virgin Mary when on her way to her Son's grave on the morning that He had risen from the dead. It was considered very unlucky to lend any one the churn, and a neighbour who would be rude or daring enough to seek the loan of a churn on the first day of any quarter of the year would be regarded with grave suspicion ; and there was a special repugnance to lending it on Beltane Day, for if the borrower had any evil power, she might take the "toradh," or substance, out of the butter for the next quarter, and, of course, it would be more disastrous if that should be done at the beginning of the milk season. I have heard the following rhyme repeated by some of the old people whilst churning :—

"Thig a bhuidheag, thig,
Thig a bhuidheag, thig,
Blathach gu dorn, im gu h-uilinn,
Thig a bhuidheag, thig,
Thigeadh na maoir, thigeadh na saoir ;
Thigeadh fear a' bhata bhuidhe,
Ach thig a bhuidheag, thig,
Thigeadh cach no deanadh iad fuireach,
Thig a bhuidheag, thig a bhathag,
Thig a bhuidheag, thig."

And as this was repeated if splashes of the cream came out through the hole in the lid of the churn as the "lonaid" was worked, it was a sure sign that the evil influences were leaving the cream, and that good butter would come. The more ancient vessel used for making butter in the Highlands was called "imideal." In ordinary cases two women sat on a bed shaking the vessel until butter was produced. It was a long, narrow, wooden keg, made of staves and covered with dressed skins, fastened on it by twelve strings of horse hair. Another keg of the same kind, and shaped narrower at the bottom than at the mouth, was made for the salting of the cheese, and was named "an sailleir caise." The new-made cheeses were laid in it with a sprinkling of salt between them, and they were, after a few days, laid out to dry.

When going to the hill grazing the women took the "imideal" on their backs with their store of cream in it, which, by the warmth of their bodies, was kept at due temperature, and by the time they got to the "airidh," it was turned into butter, and thus

the beginning of a store for housekeeping was provided in butter and buttermilk. The "imideal" was also made to serve another purpose on the journey. The young calves were enticed to follow them by getting the outside of the vessel occasionally to lick, which made them eager to follow in hopes of getting the contents. This was known as "buille imlich, latha imrich, air imideal maol dubh."

They all carried heavy burdens on their way to the sheiling. The men carried the heaviest things, but even the children had their loads, which they carried tightly, veritably wearing the yoke in their youth; and the women went on their way, spinning their distaffs or knitting their stockings, happy in being surrounded by their beloved ones. And what bard would not sing of the Highland maiden voicing her Gaelic lilts, light-hearted and free from care—barefooted, perhaps, treading the heather as if it were a carpet of velvet—

" A bhanarach dhonn a' chruidh,
Chaoin a' chruidh, dhonn a' chruidh,
'ailinn deas donn a' chruidh,
Cuachag na-h-airidh."

After getting to the summer grazing ground, the cattle were turned to the pasture and the calves housed in a "cro," or pen known as "cro-nan-laogh." This "cro" is often spoken of in the old songs of the country. The following is a fragment of one which has a most pathetic and beautiful melody :—

" Tha sior chaoineadh am beinn, am beinn,
Tha sior chaoineadh am beinn a' cheo,
Tha sior chaoineadh am beinn, am beinn,
Gal 'us caoineadh am beinn a' cheo.

" Tha sior chaoineadh am beinn Lurrain,
Tha sior chaoineadh am beinn a' cheo ;
Tha sior chaoineadh am beinn Lurainn,
Gal 'us caoineadh am beinn a' cheo.

" Tha sior chaoineadh am bun am bun,
Tha sior chaoineadh am bun a' chruidh-laogh
Tha sior chaoineadh am bun am bun,
Is eigin cruban an cro nan laogh."

It is also mentioned in another very plaintive song, of which this is a part :—

“Chi mi mo thriuir bhraithrean seachad,
Air an eachabh loma luath,
Sgianan beag aca ri 'n taobh,
'Us fuil mo ghaoil-sa sileadh uap'.

“Cha teid mi do chro nan caorach,
'S cha teid mi do chro nan uan,
'S cha teid mi do chro nan laoighean,
Bho nach 'eil mo ghaoilean buan.”

The cows were not every year put to pass the nights in the same place, for the thrifty owners of the cattle frequently went in the spring to the hills to make small rigs and furrows, and sow corn or barley in them where, the cows had passed the nights of the previous year, as the soil would have been enriched with their droppings, and they had that to take home with them at the end of the season, as well as their stores of dairy produce. With permission, I quote the following from Mr A. A. Carmichael's paper on the grazing and agrestic customs of the Hebrides, written at Lord Napier's request for the report of the Crofter Royal Commission :—

“Having seen to their cattle and sorted their sheilings, the people repair to their removing feast—“Feisd na h-imrich,” or “Feisd na h-airidh.” The feast is simple enough, the chief thing being a cheese, which every housewife is careful to provide for the occasion from last year's produce. The cheese is shared among neighbours and friends, as they wish themselves and cattle luck and prosperity—

“‘Laoigh bhailgfhionn bhoireann air gach fireach
Piseach crodh na h-airidh.’

Every head is uncovered, every knee is bowed, as they dedicate themselves and their flocks to the care of Israel's Shepherd.

“In Barra, South Uist, and Benbecula, the Roman Catholic faith predominates. Here, in their touching dedicatory old hymn, the people invoke, with the aid of the Trinity, that of the angel with the cornered shield and flaming sword, St Michael, the patron saint of their horses ; of St Columba the holy, the guardian over their cattle ; and of the Virgin Shepherdess and mother of the Lamb without spot or blemish.

“‘A Mhicheil mhin ! nan steuda geala,
A choisinn cis air dragon fala ;
Air ghaol Dia 'us Mhic Moire,
Sgaoil do sgiath oirnn, dian sinn uile,
Sgaoil do sgiath oirnn, dian sinn uile.

“ A Mhoire ghradhach ! mhathair uain ghil,
 Cobhair oirnne, oigh na h-uaisle ;
 A rioghainn uai’reach ! a bhuachaille nan treud !
 Cum ar cuallach, cuartaich sinn le cheil’,
 Cum ar cuallach, cuartaich sinn le cheil’.

“ A Chaluum Chille ! chairdeil chaoimh,
 An ainm Athair Mic ’us Spioraid Naoimh,
 Trid na Triathinn ! trid na Triath !
 Comraig sinne, gleidh ar Triall,
 Comraig sinne, gleidh ar Triall.

“ Athair ! a Mhic ! a Spioraid Naoimh !
 Bitheadh an Tri-aon leinn a la ’s a dh’ oidhche,
 ’S air machair lom no air rinn nam beann,
 Biodh an Tri-aon leinn ’s biodh a lamh mu’r ceann,
 Biodh an Tri-aon leinn ’s biodh a lamh mu’r ceann.’

In North Uist, Harris, and Lews, the Protestant faith entirely prevails, and the people confine their invocation to ‘the Shepherd of Israel, who slumbereth not nor sleepeth.’

“ Feuch air fear coimhead Israeil,
 Cadal cha ’n aom no suain.’

As the people sing their dedication, their voices resound from their sheilings here literally in the wilderness ; and as the music floats on the air and echoes among the rocks, hills, and glens, and is wafted over fresh-water lakes and sea lochs, the effect is very striking.”

There was a great deal of importance given to invoking blessings on the herd and singing dedicatory songs, not only when on their removal journey, but at all times, and we give the following “sgeulachd” as illustrative of this, translated closely :—

“There was a king once upon a time, and his wife died, leaving him with one daughter, who was a beautiful little maiden, and, being anxious that she would be well trained, he married again. The second wife had a daughter also, but she was very plain and unattractive, and, as she grew up, was more than jealous of her fair sister. She was also jealous of her being her father’s heiress, and the favourite of all who came near their house. The stepmother was neither loving nor tender to the maiden, although she dared not be harsh to her for fear of her husband, and also for fear of what people would say. One day, however, as she was

pondering over the difference between her own daughter and her stepdaughter, for they had then grown up to be young women, who came in but the 'Eachrais Ulair.*' And she said to her, 'What a pity it is for you to see another woman's daughter heiress of the land when, if you but acted courageously and wisely, your own daughter might have it all.' 'I cannot help things being as they are,' replied the king's wife, 'I am not going to risk my own life and my daughter's by any rash act that they would be sure to find out.'

"'Oh!' cried the 'Eachrais Ulair,' 'if you make it worth my while I will put you on a plan, and you will be sure to get rid of her, and you will never be found out.'

"'What plan will that be?' asked the king's wife, for she was more willing to get rid of her stepdaughter than she wished the other to know.

"'I know a glen,' said the 'Eachrais Ulair,' 'out of which no human being ever returned to tell their tale; a black, dark, desolate glen, and the way leading to it full of holes, and precipices, and quagmires—"Gleann dubh, dorcha, fasail lan tholl 'us chreag 'us shuilean-crithich." Send her there with the cows to the summer grazing, and send a dairyman and herdsmen with her. Send them away when the king is out hunting, and tell him it was her own desire to go for a short time to the sheiling, and you may rest assured, if she goes there, that you will never see herself or any of her companions again.'

"The king's wife promised the 'Eachrais Ulair' a rich reward when her daughter would be heiress to her father; and she got the cows set apart, and the servants appointed that were to go with her to the sheiling that was so far away and so difficult to reach. She gave them directions for the road, and they started when the king was in the hill hunting.

"They travelled on, and at last they came to the glen that was so black, dark, and desolate, full of holes, precipices, and quagmires, and they felt frightened and full of awe as they gazed upon the journey that lay before they would get to the floor of the glen, 'ular a' ghlinne.'

"The king's daughter invoked a blessing on herself and on her companions and on the cattle, and she made the others do the same. They invoked blessings, and sang on every step of the weary way, and with every step they took new courage—'ghlac iad misneach ur'—and, in spite of holes, rocks, and quagmires, they got to the floor of the glen without losing a single creature of

* A very wicked sort of witch.

their herd, and without damage or injury to themselves. Full of thankfulness for their preservation, they got the flocks arranged for the night, and as there was no sheiling bothy ('bothan airidh') to be seen, they looked about them for a house in which they could stay. They saw in the distance one solitary house—a big, long, grey house—and as they saw smoke arising from it, they knew it was occupied; and, taking their milk cogs full with them, they entered the house. There was no person to be seen in the house but one very, very big old man, who was in a bed opposite the fire. They blessed themselves, and then ventured to ask the old man if they could stay there during the time they were to remain in the glen. The 'bodach mòr mòr' was very sulky, and said 'No;' but they told him they would be very good to him, and, instead of injuring him, he would be the better of them. They gave him a large basin of the warm milk to drink, and gave him to eat a large bannock, and then the greater part of a small bannock, and he gave them permission to make beds for themselves on the floor. In the morning again, when they milked the cows, they gave him the same, and, seeing that he was not very tidy, they washed his hands for him before giving him his bread and milk. He was very grateful, and on the second night he proposed that the women would sleep in his bed, and that he would make a shakedown for himself on the floor, near the men. This was done, and before they were long in bed they heard a great noise without, and a heavy foot coming to the door. Then they heard a voice saying, 'Am bheil m' urraball stidein mòr, mòr, a stigh?' 'S tannh leam, 's tannh leam, m' urraball statain," was the reply from the bodach within. Then the voice from the one without cried, "M' urraball stidein mòr, mòr, an tig mise a dh'itheadh ri d' thaobh a' nochd? 'Cha tig, cha tig,' was the reply, 'a nochda no gu brath, a nigheadh mo lamh 's mo bhainne blà mo bhonnach mor mor 's mo leth mhòr de 'n bhonnach bheag,' which may be translated as follows:—'My big, big pussy's tail, are you in? 'I am at rest, my statain's tail.' 'Can I come to eat by your side to-night?' 'No, no, not to-night, nor at any other time. They wash my hands, give me warm milk, a large, large bannock, and the biggest half of the little bannock.'

"They were not molested again during the time they remained, and the old giant was on the best of terms with them, and that protected them from others who might seek their hurt. At the time for returning home they had more butter and cheese than they could carry home, and they had to get assistance to carry it, and, blessing themselves as at the outset, they returned home

safe and well, and the king's daughter was more beautiful than ever, and her fame as a maker of butter and cheese spread far and near, and all admired how she managed the herd so well, and made a friend of the giant, who would otherwise have eaten them, with his brother giants.

“On the following year the king's wife resolved that her own daughter would go to the same glen, and earn the same fame as her sister. So she got her ready, and got the best cows for her, and the ‘Eachrais Ulair’ had to go with her as dairymaid. They set out for the glen grumbling and miserable ; they sang no hymn, nor did they invoke a blessing either on themselves or their herds ; and they lost some of them in the holes and quagmires, and others fell over the rocks. When they got to the floor of the glen with the few cows that were left to them, they saw the same long, large, grey house that the others had stayed in when there. They went in and took everything without asking leave of the ‘bodach mòr mòr,’ who was in his bed opposite the fire. They offered him no milk, nor did they show him any kindness, and after they went to bed at night the same giant came knocking to the door that came when the others were there. When he cried to his brother giant ‘Am bheil m’ earrball stidein mor, mor a stigh ?’ The ready reply was an invitation to enter, and they slew and devoured them all ; and neither the king's youngest daughter, the ‘Eachrais Ular,’ nor the herdsmen, ever returned again from the black, dark, desolate glen full of holes, precipices, and quagmires.”

A Gael's wealth was always, in those old times, represented by the number of cows he could turn to his summer pasture—

“Tha m' fhearann saoi bhir, ho i ho,
I hìu ro bho nam b' aillibh e,
Tha m' fhearann saoi bhir, ho i ho,
Tha m' fhearann saoi bhir air gach taobh dhìom,
'S mo chro dh-laoigh air airidh ann.
Tha m' fhearann, &c.”

A proverb also sayeth thus—“Fear an ime mhoir 's e 's binne gloir.” “The rich owner of cows, or he who has the most butter, has the sweetest voice.” Marriageable maidens were also valued according to the tocher they were to have—not in money, but in cows. Twenty milk cows was considered a good tocher for a tacksman's daughter, and twenty cows, with their calves at their feet, was very good ; and for a crofter's daughter, a cow and her

calf or stirk was a fair tocher, along with her blankets and other paraphernalia, and a girl who had such a tocher in prospect was apt to give herself airs, unless she had very good sense. There is an old story, of the Alnaschar type, that illustrates the importance the possession of a cow gave a woman. It is known as “Cailleach Cath na Cuinneige.” A certain old woman, who still felt young, got a stoup full of milk, which she was going to sell in a town that was some distance from her. She sat down to rest on the way, and began to count the amount she would gain out of the selling of the milk, for which she had paid her only pennies. After that she meant to buy two stoups full, and make a larger profit, and she would go on trading thus until she would buy a calf, and she would feed the calf well, and it would soon be a cow, and it would then have a calf, which would in a year or two be a fine young heifer, and then a man would come the way, and say, “You have a cow, old wife;” and she would reply, “I have a cow and a heifer.” “Tha bō agad air a nasg, a chailleach.” “Tha bo ’us agh agam, their mise.” “He will marry me then, and we will soon get rich, and I’ll have a servant, and I’ll make her do my bidding, and if she would dare refuse I would give her a kick !” The kick was directed by the dreaming woman to her milk stoup, and all her aerial castles came tumbling about her ears. There was no cow, nor heifer, nor husband, nor servant.

The habit of giving cows as a tocher to the daughters of the house made them in the olden time very anxious that they would marry among their own kinsmen, or at least in their own clans, as it would be an enriching of the enemy to give their cows to them, and hence the frequency of elopements in those days. A young man sorely exercised about which was the better thing for him to marry, an old woman who had a tocher, or a young one who had none, went to his father and spoke thus—

“Comhairle iarram oirbh an ceò,
Co i feoil is fhearr a dhuine,
Sean bhò ’s i lan saill,
No atharl’ og am feoil thana ?”

And the reply was the sensible one—

“Cha chuir sean bhò laogh mu chro ;
’S i ’n atharl’ og feoil is fhearr.”

Query—

“ Advice I seek from thee in mist,
Which is the better flesh, oh, father,
An old cow that is full of fat,
Or a young quey that is thin and lean ?”

Answer—

“ An old cow will give no calves to thy fold ;
The young quey is the better flesh.”

Cattle were of so much importance to the Highlanders because they represented, in a special manner, their food supply. Milk, in its different forms, was their chief sustenance. Instead of the morning cups of tea, now indulged in by all classes of the community, they began the day by taking drinks of milk. Among the better classes, the morning drink (“*deoch-maidne*”) was what is known as “old man’s milk,” which was an egg switched into a glass of milk, with a little whisky added ; and even the herd-boy got, if nothing better, a cup of whey to his piece of barley bread before turning out to tend the cows. When milk was scarce, the morning drink of the poorer people was “*sughan*,” which is the juice of oatmeal or bran steeped so long as to become sour, and in very hard times they took it to their porridge. “*Sughan*” was spoken of in song and story as a sign of poverty, as it indicated a scarcity of cows, and certainly it is not very palatable. The bard who spoke of the Fencibles of Oban in a disparaging manner, could not find any thing more contemptuous to say of them than, “*Tha neul an t-sughain air gnuis n’an Latharnuich.*” And some nurse, who seems to have had a grudge at the Stewarts of Appin, said to her nursling—

“*Cha toir mi thu mhac Iain Stiubhart,
'G am bi 'n sughan na dheoch maidne,
'S ann a bheir mi do Lochiall thu,
Aig am bi am fion 'na leabaidh.*”

Milk was taken to the potatoes, porridge, or brose that was their breakfast ; and for a good substantial dinner, milk porridge, or milk brose was frequently given, not only as a luxurious, but as a good, strong, sustaining meal, that kept hunger long at a distance, and for that reason such meals were given to men going on long journeys. Milk, in some instances, was often taken with the potatoes for dinner, and at times butter, cheese, and milk were all on the table, and when taken with good, dry, well-boiled, mealy potatoes, it was a luxurious, as well as a delicious, meal, and con-

sidered by themselves food fit for a king's table. The "Ceapaire Saileach," or "Kintail piece," was butter thickly laid on cheese of equal thickness, and was not only taken with potatoes, but, when meal was scarce, it was taken with milk instead of bread and butter, and sometimes a sprinkling of oatmeal was laid on the butter to make it stronger eating. A careful housewife was much more lavish with her butter and cheese to her household than she would be with either her warm milk or cream, as she took great pride in the quantities of dairy produce in her "cellar" at the end of the season. Yet there were times when even the richest cream would be freely produced, and this was especially at the demands of hospitality. Water was never offered as a drink to the meanest wayfarer. "Deoch fhionna-ghlas" was the most effectual drink for quenching thirst. This "whitey-grey" mixture was milk and water in equal proportions, and the sour thick milk that was under the cream that was kept for butter was churned into a froth, and it made a cooling drink. It was called "sgathach." When strangers had to be entertained, "fuarag" was made plentifully, and curds and cream were laid out with oatcake, butter, cheese, and whisky. They made the yearning, or yeast, that turned the milk into curds, by putting milk and salt into the stomach of a calf. The he-calves were generally killed, and their stomachs supplied them for this purpose. "Fuarag" was made of the sour thick cream, churned into a froth, with a "lonaid" made for the purpose, and some oatmeal stirred in it. The meal made on the quern was considered by far the best for making it. This is a most delicious luxury, and a favourite with all classes. It was the dish that was expected to be given in every house on Hallowe'en, and great was the excitement when all, old and young, sat around the cog, after the goodwife had dropped her ring in it, for whoever found the ring would be the first of the company to marry. The curds given with cream were very different from the ordinary curds that in the present day go to table as a substitute for pudding. The Highland hostess squeezed the curds for her guest, and thus partly freed them from the whey, making them much pleasanter, as well as more substantial. The women were wont to twit the men about their desire for these luxuries, and yet that, though they would get all the cream, they would still expect the usual quantity of butter. The following proverb is a fine piece of sarcasm on this :—

"Na 'm faigheamaid an t-im anns an Earrach,
 Agus uachdar a' bhainne 's an t-Samhradh,
 'S ann an sin a bhiodhmaid fallain,
 'S cha bhiodhmaid falamh a dh' annlan."

“ If we could get the butter in Spring,
And the cream in Summer,
We would then be very healthy,
And never be scarce of kitchen.”

There was another luxury better loved on bread than all the jams and jellies ever made, and that was curd-butter, or “gruth-im”—half butter, half curd, finely mixed. This was very different from the ordinary crowdy, which also is dignified by the same Gaelic name as the other, although there is very little butter in it to make it palatable or nutritious. When the Highlanders dined late, the supper often was a thick gruel, known as “liath-bhrochan.” It was made of milk and oatmeal well boiled, with a piece of butter in it, and of a consistency that they spoke of as, “bu tìugh am balgam e, ’s bu thana an spàin e.” When butter was scarce, a thrifty housewife made a very good substitute with milk and eggs and a little salt stirred together over the fire for a few minutes. This was very pleasant when spread hot on the bread, and it was very useful in the latter end of spring, when the store of butter was exhausted. It was known as “im-eigin.” There was a proverb that said that one teat of a cow was better than a boll of white meal—“Is fearr aon sine bò no bolla dhe ’n mhin bhain.” And the milk was not only their food, but also to a great extent their medicine, and it had a valuable place in their art of healing as butter. For chest complaints, a cog full of butter was melted down, and after the juices of certain herbs were mixed with it, they placed it to cool, and it was administered in small quantities, as cod liver oil is now. This was called “cuach ghorm.” For colds in throat or chest, salt butter, mixed with oatmeal, was laid on wool and applied, and salt butter was considered the most effectual cure for a bruise. It was also applied to a cut, if they feared there was any rust about the weapon that caused the injury. For any eruption on the skin, sulphur mixed with fresh butter was applied, and a little melted butter in its liquid state was taken instead of the castor oil now so common. Fresh butter was melted with bees-wax and the roots of dockens to heal a burn, and this was used freely for chopped hands or lips. In fact, butter was the principal article in a Highland woman’s pharmacopia. If even one of her fowls were ill, it was caught and a piece of fresh butter forced into its bill, which was sure to cure it.

Goat’s milk was considered the best for restoring lost strength to the sick, owing to the herbage they lived on, and it was considered the most nourishing for even the strong, according to the proverb—

“Bainne ghobhar fo chobhar 's e blath,
'S e chuir an spionnadh 's na daoine a bha.”

“It is the milk of the goat, foaming and warm,
That gave the strength to the men that were.”

All the goats' milk was turned into cheese, which was considered a luxury, and particularly good for invalids. Goat's milk must also have been considered a good cosmetic, for a proverb sayeth—

“Sailchuaich 'us bainne ghobhar,
Suath ri d' aghaidh,
'S cha 'n eil mac rìgh air an domhan,
Nach bi na d' dheigheadh.”

“Rub thy face with violets and goat's milk, and there is not a king's son in the world but will be after thee.” The panacea recommended in another proverb is—

“Is leigheas air gach tinn,
“Cneamh 'us im a' Mhaigh,
'Us ol am fochair sid,
Bainne ghobhar ban.”

“Garlick and May butter
Will cure all disease,
And drink along with that
A white goat's milk.”

The milk of the white goat was considered the richest for an invalid, as also the milk of a red cow. Goat milk whey was considered very wholesome, and the milk of a white goat preferable to that of a black or brown one. The tallow of the goat, next to that of the deer, was considered the most efficacious for rubbing to stiff joints, but even for that the best remedy came from the cow, in the neat foot oil. The proverb that said if the oil of the cow, without and within, would not cure the Highlander, there was no cure for him, was one on which they placed perfect faith—“Uilleadh na ba am mach 's a steach mar leighis sin an Gaidheal, cha 'n eil a leigheas ann.” It was a singular habit of the Highlanders to class the cows according to the part of their bodies that happened to be white. The black, red, dun, or grey cow was spoken of as such, but a white-footed cow was “cas-fhionn;” a whitefaced one, “ceann-fhionn;” a white-shouldered one, “gual-fhionn;” white-

backed was "druim-fhionn;" and the white-bellied, "bailg-fhionn," and as such they are frequently spoken of in the old songs, thus—

"Crodh druim-fhionn, crodh gual-fhionn,
Air do bhuaile mar chomhla,
Te eile ga 'n cuallach,
'S do bhean a' fuaigheal na seomar."

And in the bribes that the "great grey hag" offered to Kennedy of Sianachan—"An gille dubh mor Mac Uaraic"—for letting her go free, when he had her bound before him on horseback, threatening to show her to human eyes—she offered him a herd of cattle, giving the different kinds their distinctive names—"buaile de chrodh bailg-fhionn, druim-fhionn, ceann-fhionn, cas-fhionn, agus dubh." And he replied that he had all these already. The term "cas-fhionn" came to be applied latterly to cows that had only the tip of the tail white. I have not found out why the term "cas-fhionn" was applied to the Macintyres, though I often heard them called "Cloinn an t-Saoir chais-fhionn."

The dishes they carried to the hill grazings were—wooden basins, "measraichean;" milking cogs, "cuachan bleoghain," or "cummain;" the churn, "muigh," or "imideal;" the cheese press, "fiodhan;" the sieve, "siolachan;" the cheese salter, "sailleir caise;" and the butter tubs. It was customary when salting the butter to put a cross of rushes here and there, to keep evil influences from spoiling it. The skimmers they had were generally the deeper shell of the scallop, which was also the ancient drinking cup—

"Fair a nall an t-slige chreachainn,
O 'n 's ann aisd is blasd' an dram,
'S math an t-ainm dhi 'n t-slige chreachainn,
'S i 'n t-slige 'chreach sinn a bh' ann."

The shallow shell of the scallop, which was the badge of the pilgrim of old, was the one used to slice the butter, and its lamelli-branchiate formation gave the butter a pretty ribbed appearance on the plate, or on the large scallop shell that served as a plate.

The life at the hill grazing, or shieling, was a free and a jolly one. The change of air was good for man and beast, and although they carried human passions in their breasts, there was very little in the circumstances of their surroundings to develop them. All things tended to calm and gladden; their strongest emotions were called forth by the voices of love, devotion, and sympathy. They were a pious people. They were devoted to their chief, who was

both their father and friend, and they loved their wives and children, and came as near to the loving of their neighbour as themselves, as is possible for frail humanity. The township might almost be said to have a family life at the shieling, for each bore the other's burdens; they rejoiced in each other's joy, and when tears had to be shed, they mingled them in brotherly fashion. As far as the children were concerned, although the schoolmaster was abroad, their winter education at the "ceilidh" was carried on in a most effectual manner. They romped among the calves, the kids, and the lambs, laying in large stores of the health and strength to be required in the future. And as they lay on the hillside, at the feet of their sires, they learned the songs of their country, and listened to the tales of the chase and of love and war. The boys learned to make and repair the milking and dairy utensils, to tend the flocks, shear the sheep, make and mend their own shoes; and to thatch, and make the heather and hair ropes so largely used by them; and perhaps the most desired part of their education was the shooting of a blackcock, the stalking of a deer, and the spearing of a salmon.

The girls learned to emulate their mothers in skill of the dairy work, as well as in spinning wool for future webs on the distaff, and knitting stockings and hose of brilliant hues and rare patterns. They learned to know the herbs that were medicinal for man and beast, and the different plants used in dyeing the colours of their tartans. They learned to become useful wives, following in the footprints of their mothers, as helpmates in the struggle for existence, neither fearing the snows and storms of winter, nor ashamed of the tawning of the summer sun. They danced and flirted and sang their sweet lyrics, and forgot amidst their labour that sorrow had an existence, or that pain was awaiting them.

The old manner of going to the sheilings belongs to the history of the past. Where such summer grazings are had still, as in some parts of the Hebrides, only some of the daughters of the families go with their cows, and in Lewis I have seen them carry the milk home twice a-week, all sour, of course. And I have seen the girls, on their return to the hill, carrying with them creels of seaware for their cows to eat. I have seen in Mr Carmichael's house in Edinburgh a small stool used in one of these sheilings, probably a milking stool, and Prince Charles Stuart sat on it. When wandering about, after Culloden, he entered a sheiling in which three girls were, and sat down, and got a drink of milk. They did not know who he was, and after he left they knew, and then they playfully fought for possession of what they called the throne, "An

righ-chaithir." In the course of the struggle, one of them lost a tooth, and the others generously let her have the stool, as she had suffered most in the cause of their beloved Prince. A descendant of hers gave it to its present appreciative owner, in whose hospitable house it has a place of honour in the drawing-room.

I have given here but little of what I meant to write on this subject, but if it will embalm any of the ancient usages of our noble-hearted and pure-natured forefathers, it will fulfil a good purpose, and make my heart glad.

15th FEBRUARY, 1888.

At this meeting the following gentlemen were elected members of the Society, viz. :—Mr D. H. Macfarlane, 46 Portman Square, London, life member, and Mr A. J. Stewart, grocer, Union Street, Inverness, ordinary member. Thereafter Mr Alex. Macbain, M.A., read a paper contributed by Mr W. J. N. Liddall, advocate, Edinburgh, entitled, "Kinross-shire Place Names." Mr Liddall's paper was as follows :—

KINROSS-SHIRE PLACE NAMES.

The elucidation of the topography of a district where the language which produced the names has ceased for centuries to be spoken, is possible only by an exact comparative study of the earliest forms as ascertained from historical documents. Personal associations led me to attempt such a task for the little county of Kinross, and the following notes—for this paper claims no higher description—will, I would hope, show results not altogether disappointing.

The topography of Kinross-shire is practically entirely Celtic, and purely Goidelic. In view of Skene's remarks in his analysis of the names in the list of Pictish kings,* one might have hoped to find a Brythonic trace, but there is but slight ground for even being suspicious of one or two names belonging to that division of the Celtic dialects. True it is, a tribe termed the *Danmonii* dwelt between the Forth and Tay, as well as in Cornwall, to which a parallel is suggested by the river Devon in the one region, and the county of Devon in the other, but not much more can be said.

* "Celtic Scotland," Vol. I., p. 211.