

Mr. Colin Chisholm opened a brief discussion on the Excise Laws as of old administered in the Highlands,—a subject which it was ultimately agreed to resume at a subsequent meeting.

A committee was appointed to consider the practicability of providing musical entertainments at some of the ordinary meetings of the Society.

20TH FEBRUARY, 1878.

At the meeting on this date the Secretary read a letter from Mr. Fraser-Mackintosh, M.P., intimating that he received the Society's petition anent the teaching of Gaelic in Highland schools, and also that Government had just agreed that a period of time, not less than two hours a week, be devoted to the teaching of Gaelic in Highland schools. Whereupon it was unanimously resolved to record the best thanks of the Society to Mr. Fraser-Mackintosh, for his unwearied and successful efforts in promoting the cause of Gaelic Education in the Highlands in his place in Parliament.

Mr. Charles Fergusson, Raigmore, read the following paper, entitled—

THE GAELIC NAMES OF TREES, SHRUBS, AND PLANTS,

With notices of some of the uses to which they were put by the old Highlanders, and the superstitions connected with them.

He said—The subject of the Gaelic names of the trees and plants that grow around us is a very important and interesting one, but unfortunately, I must say, a very much neglected one by the present race of Highlanders. Our ancestors had a Gaelic name, not only for all the trees and plants that grew in their own country, but also for many foreign plants. Yet there are very few of the present generation who know anything at all about those Gaelic names, except perhaps a few of the very common ones, such as *Darach*, *Beithe*, *Giuthas*, *Calltuinn*, &c.

The principal reason for this is, that the Highlanders of the present day have not to pay so much attention to, or depend so much upon, the plants of their own country as their ancestors did who depended almost entirely on their own vegetable substances for their medicinal, manufacturing, and other purposes. A great many of those Gaelic names are already lost, and many more will be so in a few years if some steps are not taken to preserve them, for though, certainly, we have many of them already in print, scattered through such works as Alex. M'Donald's (Mac Mhaighstir Alastair) Vocabulary, Lightfoot's *Flora Scotica*, the Gaelic Bible, and the Dictionaries, yet the great majority of the Gaelic names

are not in print, but only preserved amongst the old people, and will soon be forgotten unless speedily collected. So far as I am aware there is not yet a single work on this important subject; therefore I have chosen it as the subject of the following paper, in which I will give the Gaelic name, and a short account of the various uses to which our ancestors put each, beginning with a few of our common trees and going down to the smaller plants, trusting it will awaken an interest in the subject, and be the beginning of an effort to collect all the Gaelic names possible ere it be too late. In studying the Gaelic names of plants, even the most careless observer cannot fail being struck with the fine taste and the intimate acquaintance with the various peculiarities and different properties of plants, displayed by our ancestors in giving the Gaelic names to plants. This I think is one of the strongest proofs we have that our ancestors were keen observers of nature—an advanced and cultivated race—and not the rude savages which some people delight to represent them. In reading the works of our best Gaelic bards, from Ossian downwards, we cannot help also being struck with their acquaintance with the names and various peculiarities of plants. Take M'Intyre's description of *Coire-Cheathaich*:—

“’S ann mu’n Ruadh-aisridh ’dh’fhas na cuairteagan,
 Clùthor, cuachanach, cuanar, ard,
 Na h-uile cluaineag ’s a bàrr air luasgadh,
 ’S a’ ghaoth ’g an sguabadh a null ’sa nall :
 Bun na cìoba, is bàrr a’ mhilltich,
 A’ chuisseag dhireach, ’s an fhiteag chám ;
 Muran brioghor, ’s an grunnasg lìonmhor
 Mu ’n chuile dhiomhair am bi na suinn !

Do leacan caoimhneil, gu dearcach, braoileagach,
 Breac le faoireagan is cruinn dearg ceann ;
 An creamh ’na chathraichean, am bac nan staidhrichean,
 Stacan fraoidhneasach nach bu ghann :
 Am bearnan-brìde, ’s a’ pheighinn rioghail,
 ’S an canach min-gheal, ’s am mìslean ann ;
 ’S a h-uile mìr dheth, o’n bhun is ìsle.
 Gu h-ionad cìrean na crìch is aird’.”

Again, in his *Moladh Beinn-Dorain*, we have—

Tha ’n eilid anns an fhrith,
 Mar bu choir dh’i bhi,
 Far am faigh i mìlteach
 Glan, feoireanach :

Bruchairachd a's ciob,
 Lusan am bi brigh,
 Chuireadh sult a's ìgh
 Air a loineanaibh.
 Fuaran anns am bi'dh
 Biolaire gun dith,
 'S millse lea' na 'm fion
 'S e gu'n oladh i ;
 Cuiseagan a's riasg,
 Chinneas air an t-sliabh,
 B'annsa lea' mar bhiadh
 Na na fòghlaichean.
 'S ann do'n teachd-an-tir
 A bha soghar lea',
 Sobhrach 's eala-bhi
 'S barra neoineagan ;
 Dobhrach, bhallach, mhin,
 Ghobhlach, bharrach, shliom,
 Lointean far an cinn i
 'Na moraichean ;
 Sud am pòrsann bidh
 Mheudaicheadh an cli,
 Bheireadh iad a nios
 Ri am do-licheinn
 Chuireadh air an druim
 Brat an saille cruinn
 Air an carcais luim
 Nach bu lodail.

Without further remarks in the way of introduction, I will proceed with giving you an account of some of our Highland Trees, Shrubs, and Plants.

ALDER.—Latin, *Alnus Glutinosa* — Gaelic, *Fearna*. — This well-known tree is a native of the Highlands, where it grows to perfection all over the country by the side of streams, and in wet marshy places. It seems in former times to have grown even more abundantly, and that in places where now not a tree of this or any other kind is to be found. This is proved by the many names of places derived from this tree, such as Glen Fernate—*Gleann Fearn-aite*—in Athole ; *Fearnan* in Breadalbane ; *Fearn* in Ross-shire ; *Fernaig* in Lochalsh, &c. In a suitable situation the alder will grow to a great size. There is mention made in the account of the parish of Kenmore, in the “New Statistical Account of

Scotland", of an alder tree growing in the park of Taymouth Castle, the circumference of which, in 1844, was 12 feet 8 inches. The wood of this tree resembles mahogany so much that it is generally known as "Scotch Mahogany." It is very red and rather brittle, but very durable, especially under water. Lightfoot, the learned author of the "Flora Scotica," mentions that, when he accompanied Pennant on his famous "Tour" in 1772, the Highlanders then used alder very much for making chairs and other articles of furniture, which were very handsome and of the colour of mahogany. He mentions that it was much used by them for carving into bowls, spoons, &c., and also for the very curious use of making heels for women's shoes. It was once very much used, and in some parts of the Highlands it is still commonly used, for dyeing a beautiful black colour. By boiling the bark or young twigs with coppers it gives a very durable colour, and supplies the black stripes in home-made tartan. A decoction of the leaves was counted an excellent remedy for burnings and inflammations, and the fresh leaves laid upon swellings are said to dissolve them and stay the inflammation. The old Highlanders used to put fresh alder leaves to the soles of their feet when they were much fatigued with long journeys or in hot weather, as they allayed the heat and refreshed them very much. Our ancestors were sharp enough to discover the curious fact that the alder wood splits best from the root, whereas all other trees split best from the top, which gave rise to the old Gaelic saying, "Gach fiodh o na bharr, 's an fhearna o' na bhun."

APPLE AND CRAB APPLE.—Latin, *Pyrus Málus*—Gaelic, *Ubhal, Ubhal-fiadhach*.—The crab apple is a native of the Highlands, where it grows in woods and by riversides, to a height of about 20 feet. Of course the cultivated apple of gardens and orchards is just an improved variety of the same, which by ages of care and cultivation has been brought to its present perfection. The fruit of the crab is small and very bitter, but its juice is much used for rubbing to sprains, cramps, &c., and the bark is used by the Highlanders for dying wool of a light yellowish colour. The apple was cultivated at a very early date in Britain, as it is often mentioned by our earliest writers. Logan says that from a passage in Ossian it is clear that the ancient Highlanders were well acquainted with the apple. Pliny says that the apple trees of Britain bore excellent fruit, and Solinus writes that Moray and the north-eastern part of Scotland abounded with apples in the third century. Buchanan says that Moray, which of course in his day included Inverness-shire, surpassed all the other parts of Scotland for excellent fruit

trees. The monks paid great attention to the cultivation of the apple, and they always had gardens and orchards attached to their monasteries, near the ruins of which some very old apple trees are still found growing and bearing good crops of fruit, for instance, the old apple tree a few yards north from Beaully Priory. We read that the monks of Iona had very fine orchards in the ninth century, but they were destroyed and the trees cut down by the Norwegian invaders. King David I., about 1140, spent much of his spare time in training and grafting fruit trees. It is a very great mistake indeed that the apple is not cultivated more now in the Highlands, for from the suitable soil in many places, and also from the great shelter afforded by the hills and woods, in many of the glens and straths, it would grow to perfection where at present there is not a single tree. Indeed it is entirely neglected except in gentlemen's gardens. The present Highlanders have not such a high opinion of the apple as Solomon had—"Mar chrann-ubhall am measg chrann ua coille, is amhuill mo rùnsa am measg nan òganach; fo sgàile mhainnaich mi, agus shuidh mi sìos agus bha a thoradh milis do m' bhlas" (Song of Solomon ii. 3). Almost all the Gaelic bards in singing the praises of their lady-loves compare them to the sweet-smelling apple:—

"Bu tu m' ubhall, a's m' ùbhlan,
'S bu tu m'ùr ròs an gàradh."

"Iseabail òg
An òr-fhuilte bhuidhe—
Do ghruaidh mar ròs
'S do phòg mar ubhal."

"Tha do phog mar ùbhlan gàraidh,
'S tha do bhràighe mar an neòninean."

The well-known fact that the largest and finest apples always grow on the young wood at the top of the tree gave rise to the old Gaelic proverb—"Bithidh 'n t-ubhal is fearr, air a mheangan is airde." The crab apple is the badge of the Clan Lamond.

APRICOTE.—Latin, *Armeniaca Vulgaris*—Gaelic, *Apricoc*.—The apricote is a native of the Levant, but was introduced into Britain in 1548. This excellent fruit, which was once much grown by the monks, is very seldom to be found now in the Highlands, though common enough in gardens in the Lowlands of Scotland. Alexander M'Donald (*Mac Mhaighstir Alastair*) mentions it in his Gaelic list of fruit trees, and Logan, in his "Scottish Gael," says

that it thrives very well as far north as Dunrobin. By giving it the shelter of a wall facing the south, it will thrive and ripen its fruit in most of the low straths of the Highlands.

ASH.—Latin, *Fraxinus Excelsior*—Gaelic, *Uinnseann*.—The ash is a native of the Highlands, where, in a suitable situation, it will grow to a height of nearly 100 feet. This useful tree, so well-known to everybody, is noted for its smooth silvery bark when young, and for its graceful fern-like leaves, which come out late in spring, and are the first to fall in autumn, and of which horses and sheep are very fond. The ash will adapt itself to any situation, and will flourish according to the richness of the soil, and the amount of shelter it receives, wherever it happens to spring up, from a seed carried by the wind or by birds. We have it in the Highlands in every stage—from the stunted bush of a few feet high, which grows in the cleft of some high rock, or by the side of some burn high up amongst the hills, to the noble tree of a hundred feet high, which grows in our straths, and of which I may give the following example from my native district of Athole. It is described by the Rev. Thos. Buchanan in his account of the parish of Logierait, in “the New Statistical Account of Scotland” (1844). He says—“There is a remarkable ash tree in the innkeeper’s garden, near the village of Logierait. It measures at the ground $53\frac{1}{2}$ feet in circumference; at three feet from the ground 40 feet; and at eleven feet from the ground, 22 feet. The height is 60 feet; but the upper part of the stem appears to have been carried away. The height is said to have been at one time nearly 90 feet. The trunk is hollow from the base, and can contain a large party. This venerable stem is surmounted by a profusion of foliage, which, even at the advanced age of the tree, attracts the eye at a distance to its uncommon proportions. An old man of the age of one hundred is at present in the habit of taking his seat daily within the hollow formed by its three surviving sides—no unsuitable companion to the venerable relic.” In the same work, in the accounts of the parishes of Kenmore and Weem, mention is made of an ash in the park of Taymouth Castle, 18 feet in circumference, and other two on the lawn at Castle Menzies, 16 feet. The wood of the ash, which is hard and very tough, was much used by the old Highlanders for making agricultural implements, handles for axes, &c. Besides those peaceful uses to which they put the ash, they also used it for warlike purposes, by making bows of it when yew could not be had, and also for making handles for their spears and long Lochaber axes. The Highlanders have many curious old super-

stitutions about the ash, one of which is also common in some parts of the Lowlands, viz. :—That the oak and the ash fortell whether it is to be a wet or a dry season, by whichever of them comes first into leaf,—if the ash comes first into leaf, it is to be a very wet summer ; but very dry if the oak comes first. Another curious old superstition is still lingering in some parts of the Highlands about the virtue of the sap for newly-born children, and as Lightfoot mentions it as common in the Highlands and Islands when he travelled there with Pennant, in 1772, I may give it in his words. He says :—“In many parts of the Highlands, at the birth of a child, the nurse or midwife, from what motive I know not, puts the end of a green stick of ash into the fire, and, while it is burning, receives into a spoon the sap or juice which oozes out at the other end, and administers this as the first spoonful of liquors to the new-born babe.” Another old Highland belief is that a decoction of the tender tops or leaves of the ash taken inwardly, and rubbed outwardly to the wound, is a certain cure for the bite of an adder or serpent, and that an adder has such an antipathy to the ash that if it is encompassed with ash leaves and twigs, it will rather go through fire than through the ash.

“Theid an nathair troimh an teine dhearg,
Mu'n teid i troimh dhuilleach an ùinnsinn.”

In fact, the adders were supposed to regard the ash amongst the forest trees as they did the M'Ivors amongst the Highland clans ! Every Highlander knows the old saying about the M'Ivors and the adders—

Latha na Feill'-Bride
Their an nathair anns an tom—
“Cha bhi mise ri Nic-Iomhair
'S cha bhi Nic-Iomhair rium !
Mhionnaich mise do Chlann Iomhair
'S mhionnaich Clann Iomhair dhomhsa ;
Nach bean mise do Chlann Iomhair,
'S nach bean Clann Iomhair dhomhsa !”

As a proof of the many uses to which the wood of the ash may be put, I may quote Isaiah xlv. 14—“Suidhichidh e crann-uinnsinn, agus altruimidh an t' uisge e. An sinn bithidh e aig duine chum a losgadh ; agus gabhaidh e dheth, agus garaidh se e féin : seadh cuiridh e teine ris, agus deasaichidh e aran. Cuid dheth loisgidh e 'san teine, le cuid eile dheth deasaichidh agus ithidh e feoil ; röstaidh e biadh agus sasuichear e : an sin garaidh se a féin agus their

e—Aha rinn mi mo gharadh, dh' aithnich mi an teine. Agus do 'n chuid eile dheth ni e dia eadhon dealbh snaidhte dha fein ; cromaidh e sios dha agus bheir e aoradh dha ; agus ni e urnuigh ris agus their e—Teasaing mi, oir is tu mo dhia.” The ash is the badge of the Clan Menzies.

ASPEN.—Latin, *Populus Tremula*—Gaelic, *Critheann*.—The aspen, which grows to a height of about fifty feet, is a native of the Highlands, where it grows in great abundance all over the country, in moist places or on the banks of streams. It is very rapid in the growth, consequently its wood is not of much value, being very soft, but white and smooth. This wood was much used by the Highlanders for making pack-saddles, wood cans, milk pails, &c. The great peculiarity about the aspen, and which has made it the object of many curious old superstitions, is the ever trembling motion of its leaves, which gave rise to its Gaelic name, “Critheann,” or “trembling.” The cause of this is that leaves which are round or slightly heart-shaped, have very long slender stalks, so that they quiver and shake with every breath of wind, and the leaves being hard and dry, give a peculiar rustling sound. There is a common belief among the Highlanders that the Saviour's cross was made of the wood of the aspen, and that ever since then the leaves of this tree cannot rest, but are for ever trembling! In the Bible, wherever we find the poplar mentioned in the English, it is always translated Critheann or Crithich in Gaelic, as in Genesis xxx. 27, and Hosea iv. 13. As the aspen is a variety of the poplar, it may be correct enough to translate poplar “critheann,” but Alex. M'Donald (*Mac Mhaighstir Alastair*), gives us another name for the poplar, *Crann Pobhuill*.

BAY, OR LAUREL BAY.—Latin, *Laxrus noblis*—Gaelic, *Laibhreas*.—This beautiful evergreen tree, the emblem of victory amongst the ancients, is a native of Italy, but was introduced into Britain in 1561. It would likely be some time after that however, before it was much planted in the Highlands, where it grows and thrives very well now in all the low straths and glens. *Laibhreas* is the Gaelic name I have found for it in over a dozen different books, but in the Bible, where it is only once mentioned (Psalms xxxvii. 35), it is translated *Ur-chraobh-uaine*. There are a great many old superstitions connected with the bay, only one of which I will give in the words of an old writer—“that neither witch nor devil, thunder nor lightning, will hurt a man where a bay tree is!” If such be the case it is truly a valuable tree. The laurel bay is the badge of the Clan M'Laren, and from it they take the motto which they bear

above their crest—" *Bi se Mac an t' slaurie,*" meaning that they are the sons of victory, of which the laurel is the emblem.

BEECH.—Latin, *Fagus Sylvatica*—Gaelic, *Faidh-bhile*.—This tall and graceful tree needs no description, as it is well-known to everybody. It is a native of the Highlands, and grows to a height of about eighty feet. It is a very hardy tree, and grows in the glens all over the Highlands, where in favourable situations it attains an immense size. Very large beech trees are found at Dunkeld and in the pass of Killiecrankie, where, to judge from their size, some of those beeches probably afforded shelter to many a wounded soldier on the 17th July, 1689, when "Bonnie Dundee" fought and fell on the field of Raonruarie. Mention is also made in the New Statistical Account of two beech trees at Castle Menzies, one 17 and the other 19 feet in circumference, also one at Taymouth Castle, 22 feet. Of the beech an old writer says:—"The mast or seeds of this tree will yield a good oil for lamps; they are a food for mice and squirrels, and swine are very fond of them, but the fat of those which feed on them is soft and boils away, unless hardened before they are killed by other food. The wood is brittle, very fissile, durable under water, but not in the open air. It is the best of all woods for fuel, and it is sometimes used for making axles, bowls, sword scabbards," &c. As the leaves of the beech are very cooling, they were used by the Highlanders as a poultice, to be applied to any swellings to lessen and allay the heat. They were also used in some parts when dry for stuffing mattresses instead of straw, to which they are much superior for that purpose, as they will continue fresh for many years, and not get musty and hard as straw does.

BLACK BEECH.—Latin, *Fagus sylvatica atro-rubens*—Gaelic, *Faidh-bhile dubh*.—This sombre and mournful-looking tree is just a variety of the common beech, and has mostly the same nature, only that it does not grow quite so tall. The black beech is to be found with foliage of every shade, from a brownish-green to a blood-red, and almost even to jet black—the two latter forming a very fine contrast to the light green of the common beech, or the white flowers of the hawthorn or the mountain ash, and is therefore a very striking object in a landscape. There are some very large trees of this kind in the Highlands, such as at Guisachan, in Strathglass, where they have a very rich dark colour.

BIRCH.—Latin, *Betula alba*—Gaelic, *Beithe*.—I need not say that the birch is a native of the Highlands, where it is the most

common of all our forest trees, and its graceful habit adds to the beauty of almost every glen and strath in the land of the Gael. It is still much used in many ways, but was much more so by the old Highlanders, who turned it into almost endless uses. The wood was once much used by them for making arrows for the men and spinning wheels for the women—both being articles once indispensable in the Highlands, although now things of the past. The wood is still much used in the Highlands by turners, as it is the best possible wood for their work, and it is also much used for making bobbins. As Lightfoot mentions many of the uses to which the Highlanders put the birch, I may give them in his words :—“ Various are the economical uses,” he says, “ of this tree. The Highlanders use the bark to tan their leather and to make ropes. The outer rind, which they call ‘ *Mèilleag*,’ they sometimes burn instead of candles. The inner bark, before the invention of paper was used to write upon. The wood was formerly used by the Highlanders for making their arrows, but is now converted to better purposes, being used by the wheelwrights for ploughs, carts, and most of the rustic implements ; by the turners for trenchers, ladles, &c., the knotty excrecences affording a beautiful veined wood ; and by the cooper for hoops. The leaves are a fodder for sheep and goats, and are used by the Highlanders for dyeing a yellow colour. The catkins are a favourite food of small birds, especially the siskin, and the pliant twigs are well known to answer the purposes of cleanliness and *correction* ! There is yet another use to which this tree is applicable, and which I will beg leave strongly to recommend to my Highland friends. The vernal sap is well known to have a saccharine quality capable of making sugar, and a wholesome diuretic wine. This tree is always at hand, and the method of making the wine is simple and easy. I shall subjoin the receipt—‘ In the beginning of March when the sap is rising, and before the leaves shoot out, bore holes in the bodies of the larger trees and put fossets therein, made of elder sticks with the pith taken out, and then put any vessels under to receive the liquor. If the tree be large you may tap it in four or five places at a time without hurting it, and thus from several trees you may gain several gallons of juice in a day. If you have not enough in one day bottle up close what you have till you get a sufficient quantity for your purpose, but the sooner it is used the better. Boil the sap as long as any scum rises, skimming it all the time. To every gallon of liquor put four pounds of sugar, and boil it afterwards half-an-hour, skimming it well ; then put it into an open tub to cool, and when cold run it into your cask ; when it

has done working bung it up close, and keep it three months. Then either bottle it off or draw it out of the cask after it is a year old. This is a generous and agreeable liquor, and would be a happy substitute in the room of the poisonous whisky." So says Light-foot. Another writer says—"In those parts of the Highlands of Scotland where pine is not to be had, the birch is a timber for all uses. The stronger stems are the rafters of the cabin, wattles of the boughs are the walls and the doors, even the chests and boxes are of this rude basket work. To the Highlander it forms his spade, his plough, and if he have one, his cart, and his harness; and when other materials are used the cordage is still withies of twisted birch. These ropes are far more durable than ropes of hemp, and the only preparation is to bark the twig and twist it while green."

WARTY OR KNOTTY BIRCH.—Latin, *Betula Verrucosa*—Gaelic, *Beithe Carraigeach*, *Beithe Dubh-chasach*.—This tree, though very much resembling the common birch, is quite a distinct variety, and was always treated as such by the old Highlanders, which is another strong proof of how keenly our ancestors studied nature, and how quick they were to discover even the slightest peculiarity or difference in the habit or nature of any tree or plant, and the nicety and taste with which they gave the Gaelic name descriptive of any such peculiarity. It is a native of the Highlands, where it generally grows larger and stronger than the common birch. It was always used by the old Highlanders for any particular work where extra strength or durability was required. Owing to its dark bark and its gnarled and knotty stem it is not such a graceful tree as the common birch, but the wood is of a better quality.

WEEPING BIRCH.—Latin, *Betula Pendula*—Gaelic, *Beithe Dubh-ach*.—The weeping birch is the most graceful and beautiful of all our native Highland trees, and where it grows to perfection, as it does in Strathglass, Lochness-side, and in many other parts of the Highlands, there is nothing that can add more to the beauty of the landscape than its tall silvery stem, with its graceful drooping branches which, though 20 or 30 feet long, are no thicker than a common pack thread. Well might Coleridge call the weeping birch—"The Lady of the Woods."

DWARF BIRCH.—Latin, *Betula Nana*—Gaelic, *Beithe Beag*.—The dwarf birch, the hardiest of all trees or shrubs, grows abundantly on some of the higher ranges in the Highlands, though unknown south of the Highland border, or even in our own low straths. It grows in Corry-challin, in Glenlyon, in Strathardle, on Ben Lawers, Ben-

y-gloe, and on several of the other Perthshire Grampians, also in the wilds of Strathglass, and on the moors near Loch Glass, in Ross-shire. It is of an erect habit, but seldom reaches a height of over three feet. The bark is of a shining red or dark purple colour, and the fertile catkins which grow at the extremity of the branches are a favourite food of grouse and ptarmigan. As the leaves and twigs of this variety yield a much brighter yellow dye than any of the other varieties of birch, it used to be much sought after by the Highland housewives, and through their cutting it all when found growing near their houses, it is now unknown in many places where it was once common. Another, and perhaps a stronger reason for its disappearance is that it never grows high enough to be beyond the reach of sheep, which are now all over the country, and as they are very fond of the young twigs and leaves, they constantly nip off the young wood, and so never allow it to seed, and very soon kill the parent shrub itself. In the Arctic regions the dwarf birch is found growing on the borders of the eternal snow, where it is the only variety of tree known, and its catkins and seeds afford the only food for the large flocks of ptarmigan and other birds found in those high northern latitudes.

BIRDS' CHERRY.—Latin, *Cerasus padus*—Gaelic, *Fiodhag*.—This tree is a native of the Highlands, where it grows on the banks of streams, and produces large crops of its black berries. These berries are very sour, but birds are very fond of them, which, of course, gave rise to its name. Lightfoot informs us that the berries were used by way of infusion in brandy in the Highlands, when he was there.

BLACK THORN.—Latin, *Prunus spinosa*—Gaelic, *Sgitheach dubh*; *Preas nan airneag*.—This is a well-known native shrub, and grows very common all over the country. The bark was much used by our ancestors for dyeing a bright red colour. Lightfoot mentions that the fruit will make a very fragrant and grateful wine, a fact which the great botanist never forgets to mention of any fruit or plant out of which it is possible to extract anything drinkable!

Box.—Latin, *Buxus sempervirens*—Gaelic, *Buca*.—The box is a native of England, but seems to have been introduced very early into the Highlands, where it thrives very well in the low glens. The wood, which is very hard and close-grained, was used by the old Highlanders for carving ornamental dirk and *sgian dubh* handles, *cuachs*, &c. From the great resemblance of the box to the red whortleberry, or *Lus nam Braoileag*, the real badge of the

Clan Chattan, the box was often used by that Clan instead of the whortleberry, as it was generally easier procured, which gave rise to the mistaken idea that the box is the badge of the Clan Chattan.

BRIER ROSE.—Latin, *Rosa canina*—Gaelic, *Dris*; *An fhearr-dhris*; *Preas nam mucag*.—This prickly shrub grows all over the Highlands, where its fruit—*mucagan*—is often eaten by children, and also sometimes used for preserves. The strong prickles with which it is armed gave rise to the old Gaelic proverb, “Cho crodara ris an dris.” The Highlanders used the bark of the brier, with copperas, for dyeing a beautiful black colour.

BROOM.—Latin, *Spartium Scoparium*—Gaelic, *Bealaidh*.—The “bonny, bonny broom” needs no description, as it is known to everybody, and its bright green branches and golden blossoms add to the beauty of most Highland landscapes. The old Highlanders used the broom for almost endless purposes, some of which I may mention here. The twigs and branches were used to thatch houses and stacks, to make brooms, and to weave in their fences to exclude sheep and hares from their gardens, and also to tan leather, for which purpose it is equal to oak bark. A decoction of this shrub was much recommended for the dropsy, and half an ounce of the flowers or seeds was considered a strong vomit by the old Highland housewives. During snow, sheep and deer are very fond of browsing on it, but if sheep not accustomed to it are allowed too much of it at first it makes them giddy, or as the shepherds say drunk. The broom is the badge of the Clans Forbes and M'Kay.

CHERRY.—Latin, *Prunus Cerasus*—Gaelic, *Siris* or *Sirist*.—Of course this tree is just the wild cherry or gean, brought to its present perfection by long cultivation. It seems to have been well known to the old Highlanders, as the bards often in singing the praises of their sweethearts, compare the colour of their cheeks to the cherry—“*Do ghruaidh mar an t-siris*.”

CHESTNUT.—Latin, *Fagus castanea*—Gaelic, *Geanm-chno*.—This tree is said to be a native of England, but not of Scotland. This, however, is doubtful, for if it is not a native, it must have been introduced into this country very early, from the immense size of some of the chestnut trees found growing in many parts of the Highlands. One growing in the garden of Castle Leod, in Ross-shire, in 1820, measured 15 feet in circumference; and mention is made, in the New Statistical Account, of three chestnuts measured at Castle Menzies in 1844, whose respective girths were 16, 18½, and 21 feet. The wood is very hard and durable, and

that its value was known to our ancestors is proved by the fact that it is found along with oak in the roofs and woodwork of some of our oldest Highland castles and mansion houses.

ELDER.—Latin, *Sambucus niger*—Gaelic, *Droman*; *Craobh an dromain*.—This is a native of the Highlands, and was used by the Highlanders in many ways. They used its berries for dyeing a brown colour, and of course everybody who has heard of the “Laird of Cockpen” knows that a wine is made of the flowers—

“Mistress Jean she was makin’ the elder flower wine,
Says, ‘What taks the Laird here at sic an ill time?’”

The berries also were fermented into a wine, which was usually drunk warm. The medicinal virtues of the elder were well known to our ancestors, for indeed it was one of their principal remedies for many diseases; and as a proof that they were correct in this, and also that its virtues were known in other countries, I may mention that the great physician Boerhaave regarded the elder with such reverence for its medicinal virtues, that he always took off his hat when passing an elder tree!

FIR, (SCOTCH).—Latin, *Pinus sylvestris*—Gaelic, *Giuthas*.—The Scotch Fir is the “most Highland” of all our trees, and there is no tree that looks nobler than it does towering amongst our bens and glens. In our earliest records we find mention of our great Caledonian fir forest, which extended from Glenlyon and Rannoch, to Strathspey and Strathglass, and from Glencoe eastward to the Braes of Mar. This great forest has mostly disappeared ages ago, caused principally by being cut, or set fire to wilfully, or accidentally, by the different clans, during their continual wars, or by foreign invaders. A large portion of the ground which once formed part of this great forest is now converted into peat bogs, in which are found embedded huge trunks of fir, some of which still show traces of fire, or lying close to their roots or stocks, which are firmly fixed by the roots in the underlying firm soil. The largest portions of the ancient Caledonian forest left are in Rannoch, Perthshire; in Braemar, Aberdeenshire; in Badenoch, Strathspey, Glenmore, Rothiemurchus, Glenmoriston, and Strathglass, in Inverness-shire; near Loch Maree, in Ross-shire; and at Cogeach, Strathnaver, and Dirry-Monach, in Sutherland. The wood of this tree is very valuable, being easily wrought, resinous, and very durable, a proof of which is mentioned by Smith, in his “View of the Agriculture of Argyle.” He says:—“The roof of Kilchurn Castle, Argyleshire,

was made of natural fir, and when taken down, after having stood over 300 years, was found as fresh and full of sap as newly imported Memel." Besides using it for roofs, the old Highlanders also used this wood for floors, and for making chests, beds, tables, and endless other domestic purposes. The resinous roots dug out of the earth, not only supplied the best of fuel, but was used for light, being split up into small splinters, which from the quantity of rosin contained in them burnt with the brightness of gas. They were burnt either on a flat stone or an iron brander placed near the fire, under the large open chimneys in old Highland cottages; and it was the nightly duty either of the old grandfather or of the young herd boy, to sit by the light and replenish it by fresh splinters as they burned down, whilst the other members of the family attended to their domestic duties, or sat and listened to the songs or traditions of by-gone days. Lightfoot mentions that Pennant and himself observed the fishermen of Lochbroom, in Ross-shire, make ropes of the inner bark of the fir. He also mentions another curious fact about the fir. He says:—"The farina, or yellow powder, of the male flowers, is sometimes in spring carried away by the winds, in such quantities where the trees abound, as to alarm the ignorant with the notion of its raining brimstone." The fir is very often mentioned by Ossian, and no doubt in his day many of the large tracts, which are now barren peat mosses, were covered with luxuriant pine forests. To explain how this great change came about I may give the following extract from an able work, "A Description and History of Vegetable Substances used in the Arts and Domestic Economy." In the article on the Scotch fir, it says, page 26:—"One of the most singular changes to which any country can be subjected, is that which arises from the formation of extensive masses of peat-earth. They are common in most of the colder parts of the world, and are known in Scotland by the name of peat mosses. These accumulations of a peculiar vegetable matter are a sort of natural chronicle of the countries in which they are found. In the northern parts of Britain they point out that the soil and climate were once far superior to what the country now, in those situations, enjoys. The era of the first commencement of these bogs is not known; but as in many of them, both in Ireland and Scotland, are found the horns and skulls of animals of which no living specimens now exist in the country, and have not been since the commencement of recorded history, their history must be referred to very remote periods. Notwithstanding this, the formation of a peat bog under favourable circumstances does not appear to be a very lengthened process, for George, Earl of Cromarty, mentions (*Philosophical Transactions*,

No. 330) that near Loch Braon (Loch Broom), on the west of Ross-shire, a considerable portion of ground had, between the years of 1651 and 1699, been changed from a forest of barked and leafless pines to a peat moss or bog, in which the people were cutting turf for fuel. The process, according to the Earl's description, which has been verified by the observations of others, is this :—The pines, after having stood for some time deprived of their bark and bleaching in the rains, which in that country are both heavy and frequent, are gradually rotted near their roots, and fall. After they have been soaked by the rains, they are soon covered by various species of *fungi*. When these begin to decay the rain washes the adhesive matter into which they are reduced between the tree and the ground, and a dam is thus formed, which collects and retains the water. Whenever this takes place, the surface of the stagnant pool, or moist earth, becomes covered with mosses, and these mosses further retain the water. It is a property of those species of moss which grow most readily in cold or moist districts, to keep decomposing at the roots while they continue to grow vigorously at the tops. Cold and humidity, as has been said, are the circumstances in which the mosses that rot and consolidate into peat are formed ; and when the mosses begin to grow they have the power of augmenting those causes of their production. The mossy surface, from its spongy nature, and from the moisture with which it is covered, is one of the very worst conductors of heat ; and thus, even in the warmest summers, the surface of moss is always comparatively cold. Beside the spongy part of the moss, which retains its fibrous texture for many years, there is a portion of it, especially of the small *fungi* and *lichens* with which it is mixed, that is every year reduced to the consistency of a very tough and retentive mould. That subsides, closes up the openings of the spongy roots of the moss, and renders the whole water tight. The retention of the water is further favourable to the growth of the moss, both in itself and by means of the additional cold which it produces in the summer." A very good story is told in Strathardle of a boy's opinion of a group of noble firs, when he saw them for the first time. His father was many years keeper to the Duke of Athole, at Falar Lodge, which is many miles away from any other habitation, and surrounded by huge mountains, and at which not a tree is to be seen, though it was once the very centre of the great Caledonian forest. The boy had been born and brought up in that secluded place, and had never been from home, till one day when he was well on in his teens he was allowed to accompany his father to Strathardle. Having never seen a tree of any description, no doubt

the stunted birch and alder trees he saw when going down Glenfergane astonished him not a little, but when they reached Strathloch, and coming round the corner of the hill the group of fine firs behind the farm houses there burst on the wondering youth's view, within a few hundred yards of him. He stood still with astonishment, wondering what those huge stems with the tuft of green on the top could be, till at last a happy idea struck him, and turning to his father, he exclaimed—"Ubh, ubh, nach e am blaths gu isal an seo, a ni am muth, seallaibh cho mor 'sa dlí fhas an càl."—"Ubh, ubh, does not the warmth down here make a wonderful difference; see how big the kale has grown." The poor boy had never seen anything resembling those trees except the curly kale or German greens in his father's garden, and so came to the conclusion that owing to the warmth of the valley the kale had grown to the size of the fir trees.

FIR, SILVER.—Latin, *Pinus Picea*—Gaelic, *Giuthas Geal*.—This tree is a native of Germany, and was introduced into England in 1603; and into Scotland in 1682, where it was first planted at Inveraray Castle. One specimen of this tree measured 15 feet in circumference at Castle Menzies, in 1844.

FIR, SPRUCE.—Latin, *Pinus Abies*—Gaelic, *Giuthas Lochlanach*.—The spruce is a native of Norway, but was introduced in 1548. It thrives to perfection in the moist boggy parts of the Highlands, where immense trees of it are found in many part of the country, many of them over 100 feet high.

GEAN, OR WILD CHERRY.—Latin, *Cerasus Sylvestris*—Gaelic, *Geanais*.—This is one of our native wild fruit trees, where it thrives very well in the low straths, many trees of it being 15 to 18 feet in circumference. The wood is very hard and beautifully veined, and was much used for making articles of furniture. Lightfoot says that the fruit of the Gean, by fermentation, makes a very agreeable wine, and by distillation, bruised together with the stones, a strong spirit.

HAZEL.—Latin, *Corylus Avellana*—Gaelic, *Calltuinn*.—This native tree is very common in most parts of the Highlands yet, though, within the memory of the present generation it has disappeared from many a glen, where it once grew in thickets. This is caused to some extent by the increase of sheep and rabbits in the Highlands, especially the latter, who in time of snow peel the bark off as high as they can reach, killing it of course very soon. From the great quantity of hazel trees and nuts dug up from great

depths in peat bogs, it is evident that the hazel was very common all over the country before the destruction of the great Caledonian forest. It was always a favourite wood for making walking sticks, and was also used for making baskets and hoops for barrels. Our ancestors had many curious old superstitions regarding the hazel, and always considered it a very unlucky tree, though they were fond enough of the nuts. Of the nuts they made bread sometimes, which they considered excellent for keeping away hunger on long and fatiguing journeys. They had also many superstitions regarding the nuts, such as burning them on Hallowe'en night to see if certain couples would get married; and they counted nothing so lucky as to get two nuts naturally joined together, which they called "*Cnò-chòmhlaidh*," and which they considered a certain charm against all witchcraft.

HORSE-CHESTNUT.—Latin, *Æsculus hippocastanum*—Gaelic, '*Gheanm-chno fhiadhaich*.—This tree is a native of Asia, and was introduced into England in 1629, but not into Scotland till 1709. Very large trees of it are quite common in the Highlands now. The wood is worthless, but its handsome foliage and sweet-smelling flowers render it very useful for ornamental purposes.

JUNIPER.—Latin, *Juniperis communis*—Gaelic, *Aiteann*.—Next to the broom and the whin, the juniper is the most common of all our native shrubs, and it has the advantage over those of producing berries. Those berries, which have the peculiarity of taking two years to ripen, once formed no small part of the foreign commerce of the Gael, as we read that shiploads of juniper berries used to be annually sent from the port of Inverness to Holland, where they were used for making the famous Geneva or gin. That trade in the juniper berries continued long, and might have done so still if the modern art of the chemist had not discovered a cheaper, but, as is generally the case, an inferior substitute for the juniper berries in the distillation of Geneva, this will be seen by the following extract from an old work:—"The true Geneva or gin is a malt spirit distilled a second time with the addition of juniper berries. Originally the berries were added to the malt in the grinding, so that the spirit thus obtained was flavoured with the berries from the first, and exceeded all that could be made by any other method. But now they leave out the berries entirely, and give their spirits a flavour by distilling them with a proper quantity of oil of turpentine, which, though it nearly resembles the flavour of juniper berries, has none of their valuable virtues." The old Highlanders had very great faith in juniper berries as a medicine for almost every disease

known amongst them, and also as a cure for the bite of any serpent or venomous beast. In cases of the pestilence, fever, or any infectious disease, fires of juniper bushes were always lighted in or near their houses, as they believed that the smoke and smell of burning juniper purified the air and carried off all infection. The juniper is the badge of the Athole Highlanders, and also of the Gunns, Rosses, and M'Leods.

LABURNUM. — Latin, *Cytisus Alpinus* — Gaelic, *Bealaidh Sasunach*.—This tree is a native of Switzerland, and was introduced in 1596. Some of the largest trees of it in Britain are in Athole, by the roadside between Blair-Athole and Dunkeld. The old Highlanders used this wood for making bagpipes, for which use it is very suitable, being very hard, fine grained, and capable of taking a very fine polish. Many very old bagpipes are made of this wood.

LARCH.—Latin, *Pinus Larix*—Gaelic, *Laireag*.—Though not a native of the Highlands, the larch is now one of our commonest trees, and it thrives as well here as any of our native trees, as both the soil and the climate are admirably suited to it. Linnæus says that its botanical name “*Larix*” comes from the Celtic word “*Lar*,” fat; producing abundance of resin, of course the Gaelic name comes from the same. In the Statistical Account of the parish of Dunkeld we read:—“Within the pleasure-grounds to the north east of the cathedral, are the two noted larches, the first that were introduced into Britain. They were brought from the Tyrol, by Menzies of Culdares, in 1738, and were at first treated as greenhouse plants. They were planted only one day later than the larches in the Monzie gardens, near Crieff. The two Dunkeld larches are still (1844) in perfect vigour, and far from maturity. The height of the highest is nearly 90 feet, with girth in proportion.” Again, in the account of the parish of Monzie we have:—“In the garden of Monzie are five larches remarkable for their age, growth, and symmetry. They are coeval with the celebrated larches of Dunkeld, having been brought along with them from the same place, and are now superior to them in beauty and size. The tallest measures 102 feet in perpendicular height; another is 22 feet in circumference, and at a distance of $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet from the ground 16 feet, and throws out branches to the extraordinary distance of 48 and 55 feet from the trunk. The late Duke of Athole, it would appear, evinced a more than ordinary interest in the progress of these five trees, sending his gardener annually thither to observe their growth. When this functionary returned and made his

wonted report, that the larches of Monzie were leaving those of Dunkeld behind in the race, his Grace would jocularly allege, that his servant had permitted General Campbell's good cheer to impair his powers of observation." The larch is now very commonly planted in the Highlands, and there are many extensive plantations of it which have already attained a great size and value, especially in the district of Athole, where, about the beginning of the present century, Duke John planted some millions of it on the hills north of Dunkeld and Logierait.

LIME.—Latin, *Tilia communes*—Gaelic, *Teile*.—This beautiful tree is a native of Asia, and was introduced into Scotland in 1664, where it was first planted at Taymouth Castle, where there are now trees of it nearly 20 feet in circumference. The wood, which though very soft, is close-grained and very white, was much used by the old Highlanders for carved work. They also believed the sweet-smelling flowers of this tree to be the best cure for palpitation of the heart.

MAPLE.—Latin, *Acer campestre*—Gaelic, *Malpais*.—This tree is a native of the southern Highlands of Perthshire and Argyle. It very much resembles the plane, but does not grow to such a size. The Highlanders made a wine of the sap of this tree as they did of the birch.

OAK.—Latin, *Quercus robur*—Gaelic, *Darach*.—This monarch of the forest is certainly a native of the Highlands, though some writers, of the class who grudge to see anything good either in the Highlands or in the Highlanders, try to maintain that it was not anciently found north of Perthshire. This, however, is clearly settled by the great quantity of huge oak trees found embedded at great depths below the surface in peat mosses all over the Highlands and Islands. All our earliest bards and writers also mention the oak, and Ossian, who is believed to have flourished in the third century, sings of hoary oak trees dying of old age in his day :—

“ Sàmhach 'us mòr a bha 'n triath
 Mar dharaig 's i liath air Lùbar,
 A chaill a dlu-gheug o shean
 Le dealan glan nan spéur ;
 Tha 'h-aomadh thar sruth o shliabh,
 A còinneach mar chiabh a fuaim.”

“ Silent and great was the prince,
 Like an oak tree hoary, on Lubar,
 Stripped of its thick and aged boughs
 By the keen lightning of the skies ;
 It bends across the stream from the hill ;
 Its moss sounds in the wind like hair.”

There are many huge oak trees in different parts of the Highlands, which are certainly several hundred years old, such as at Castle Menzies, where there are oaks about 20 feet in circumference. Those trees must be very old, as it is proved that the oak on an average grows only to about from 14 to 20 inches in diameter in 80 years. The wood of the oak, being hard, strong, and durable, was used by the Highlanders for almost every purpose possible—from building their birlinns and roofing their castles, down to making a cudgel for the herdsman or shepherd, who believed the old superstition that his flock would not thrive unless his staff was of oak. And after the Highlanders had laid aside their claymores, many an old clan feud was kept up, and many a quarrel between the men of different glens or clans was settled, by the end of a “cuilair math daraich.” The bark was of course much used for tanning leather, and also for dyeing a brown colour, or, by adding copperas, a black colour. The veneration which the Druids had for the oak is too well known to need mentioning here; and it seems also to have been the custom in early times to bury their great heroes under aged oak trees, for the bard Ullin, who was somewhat prior to Ossian, says in “Dan an Deirg,” singing of Comhal, Ossian’s grandfather—

“Tha leaba fo chos nan clach
 Am fagadh an daraig aosda.”

“His bed is below the stones
 Under the shade of the aged oak.”

The Highlanders used a decoction of oak bark for stopping vomiting, and they also believed that a decoction of the bark and acorns was the best possible antidote for all kinds of poison or the bite of serpents. They also believed that it was the only tree that a wedge of itself was the best to split it, which gave rise to the old Gaelic proverb — “Geinn dheth fein a sgoilteas an darach” — “A wedge made of the self-same oak cleaves it.” The Gaelic bard, Donnachadh Ban, refers to this belief in one of his beautiful songs—

“’S chuala mi mar shean-fhacal
 Mu’n darach, gur fiodh còrr e,
 ‘S-gur géinn’ dheth fhéin ‘ga theannachadh
 A spealtadh e ‘na òrdaibh.”

PINE (WEYMOUTH).—Latin, *Pinus Strobus*—Gaelic, *Giuthas Sasunach*.—This beautiful tree was first introduced from England to Dunkeld, where the first trees of it were planted in 1725.

PLANE.—Latin, *Acer Pseudo-plantanus*—Gaelic, *Pleintri*, or *Plintrin*.—The first of those Gaelic names, which sounds so very like the English, is that given by Alex. M'Donald (Mac Mhaighstir Alastair) in his Gaelic list of trees already referred to. The second is that given by Lightfoot, as the Gaelic name in use for this tree when he travelled in the Highlands in 1772. The plane is a native of the Highlands where it grows to an immense size, as may be seen by the following extract from the New Statistical Account of the dimensions of plane trees growing at Castle Menzies, parish of Weem—"solid contents of a plane, 1132 $\frac{1}{4}$ feet; extreme height, 77 $\frac{1}{2}$; girth at ground, 23; at four feet, 16. Of a second plane, girth at four feet from ground, 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ feet; and of a third at four feet, 20 $\frac{1}{2}$ feet." The wood of this tree, which is white and soft, was much used by the Highlanders for turning; and Lightfoot mentions that they made a very agreeable wine of the sap of the plane, as they did of the birch and maple.

RASPBERRY.—Latin, *Rubus Idæus*—Gaelic, *Subhag*, or *Soidheag*.—The wild raspberry is one of our native wild fruits, and grows very commonly all over the Highlands, where it also grows very well in a cultivated state in gardens. The distilled juice of this fruit was once very much used by the old Highlander in cases of fever, as it is very cooling. Lightfoot says that the juice of this fruit was used in the Isle of Skye, when he was there, as an agreeable acid for making punch instead of lemons.

ROWAN, or MOUNTAIN ASH.—Latin, *Pyrus Aucuparia*—Gaelic, *Caorunn*.—This beautiful and hardy tree is a native of the Highlands, where the wood of it was once much used by wheelwrights and coopers; but the great use the Highlanders made of the rowan tree, since the days of the Druids, was for their superstitious charms against witchcraft. I may give Lightfoot's account of what the Highlanders did with the rowan in 1772—"The rowan-berries have an astringent quality, but in no hurtful degree. In the island of Jura they use the juice of them as an acid for punch; and the Highlanders often eat them when thoroughly ripe, and in some places distil a very good spirit from them. It is probable that this tree was in high favour with the Druids, for it may to this day be observed to grow, more frequently than any other tree, in the neighbourhood of those Druidical circles of stones so often seen in

North Britain; and the superstitious still continue to retain a great veneration for it, which was undoubtedly handed down to them from early antiquity. They believe that any small part of this tree, carried about with them, will prove a sovereign charm against all the dire effects of enchantment or witchcraft. Their cattle also, as well as themselves, are supposed to be preserved by it from evil, for the dairymaid will not forget to drive them to the shealings or summer pastures with a rod of this tree, which she carefully lays up over the door of the *sheal bothy*, and drives them home again with the same. In Strathspey they make, for the same purpose, on the first day of May, a hoop of rowan wood, and in the morning and evening cause all the sheep and lambs to pass through it."

WILLOW. — Latin, *Salix* — Gaelic, *Seileach*. — Lightfoot mentions sixteen, and Linnæus twenty varieties of the willow, natives of the Highlands, and many more have been discovered since their day. The willow was a very valuable tree indeed for the old Highlanders, and they converted it into almost endless purposes. The wood, which is soft and pliable, they used in many ways, and the young twigs, of course, for basket work, and even ropes. The bark was used for tanning leather, and the bark of most of the varieties was also used to dye a black colour, while that of the white willow gave a dye of a cinnamon colour. The following extract from "Walker's Hebrides" describes the uses made of the willow in the Isles:—"The willows in the Highlands even supply the place of ropes. A traveller there has rode during the day with a bridle made of them, and been at anchor in a vessel at night, whose tackle and cable were made of twisted willows, and these, indeed, not of the best kind for the purpose; yet, in both cases, they were formed with a great deal of art and industry, considering the materials. In the islands of Colonsay, Coll, and Tyree, the people tan the hides of their black cattle with the bark of the grey willow, and the barks of all the willows are capable of dyeing black. The foliage of the willow is a most acceptable food for cattle, and is accordingly browsed on with avidity both by black cattle and horses, especially in autumn. In the Hebrides, where there is so great a scarcity of everything of the tree kind, there is not a twig, even of the meanest willow, but what is turned by the inhabitants to some useful purpose."

YEW. — Latin, *Taxus Baccata* — Gaelic, *Iuthar*. — This valuable tree is a native of the Highlands, where the remains of some very old woods of it are to be found, as at Glenure, in Lorn, which of course takes its name from the yew. There are also single trees of

it of immense size, and of unknown antiquity in the Highlands, such as the famous old yew in the churchyard of Fortingall, in Perthshire, described by Pennant, as he saw it in 1772. He gives the circumference of it as $56\frac{1}{2}$ feet, and it was then wasted away to the outside shell. Some writers calculate that this tree must have taken 4000 years to grow that size, it is impossible now to tell its age with any certainty. But when we consider its immense size, and the slow growing nature of the yew, it is certainly one of the oldest vegetable relics in the world. When writing out this paper I wrote to the minister of Fortingall to enquire what state the old yew was in now, and was glad to hear from that gentleman that part of it is still fresh, and sprouting out anew, and likely to live a long time yet. We read of another very large yew tree, which grew on a cliff by the sea side in the island of Bernera, near the Sound of Mull, which when cut, loaded a six-oared boat, and afforded timber enough when cut up, to form a very fine staircase in the house of Lochnell. The wood of the yew is very hard, elastic, and beautifully veined, and was much prized by the old Highlanders for many purposes, but the great use to which they put it was to make bows. So highly was the yew esteemed for this purpose that it was reckoned a consecrated tree, and was planted in every churchyard so as to afford a ready supply of bows at all times. And in fact, so commonly were the bows made of yew, that we find in Ossian and in the early bards, the bow always alluded to as "the yew," or "my yew," as in "Dan an Deirg," we have,

"Mar shaighead o ghlaicibh an iughair,
Bha chasan a' siubhal nam barra-thonn."

And also in Diarmaid, when that hero heard the sound of his comrades hunting on Beinn Ghuilbeinn he could remain quiet no longer, but exclaimed—

"A chraosnach dhearg cà bheil thu?
'S cà bheil m' iughar 's mo dhorlach?"

Smith, in his "Sean Dana," in a note to "Dan an Deirg," says:—Everybody knows the bow to have been made of yew. Among the Highlanders of later times, that which grew in the wood of Easragan, in Lorn, was esteemed the best. The feathers most in vogue for the arrows were furnished by the eagles of Loch Treig; the wax for the string by Baile-na-gailbhinn; and the arrow-heads by the smiths of the race of Mac Pheidearain. This piece of instruction, like all the other knowledge of the Highlanders, was couched in verse—

“ Bogha dh' iughar Easragain,
Is ite firein Loch-a-Trèig ;
Cèir bhuidhe Bhaile-na-gailbhinn,
'S ceann o 'n cheard Mac Pheidearain.”

That the Highlanders in the early days of Ossian used the yew for other uses than making bows is proved by the passage in Fingal, describing Cuchullin's war chariot—

“ 'Dh' iuthar faileasach an crann,
Suidhear ann air enamhau caoin.”

“ Of shiuing yew is its pole ;
Of well-smoothed bone the seat.”

And that our ancestors, in the third century, overshadowed their graves with yew trees, as we do still, is proved by the passage in Fingal, where, after Crimor and Cairbar fought for the white bull, when Crimor fell, and Brasolis, Cairbar's sister, being in love with him, on hearing of his death rushed to the hill and died beside him, and yew trees shaded their graves—

“ Bhuail cridhe 'bu tla ri 'taobh,
Dh' fhalbh a snuagh 'us bhris i tro' 'n fhraoch,
Fhuair e marbh ; 'us dh' eug i 's an t-sliabh ;
'N so fein, a Chuchullin, tha' n 'ùir,
'S caoin iuthar 'tha 'fas o'n uaigh.”

“ Throbbed a tender heart against her side,
Her colour went ; and through the heath she rushed ;
She found him dead ; she died upon the hill.
In this same spot, Cuchullin, is their dust,
And fresh the yew-tree grows upon their grave.”

ARSSMART (SPOTTED).—Latin, *Polygonum persicaria*—Gaelic, *Am Boinne-fola*.—This is a very common plant in the glens and low grounds of the Highlands. It is easily known by the red spot on the centre of every leaf, about which the Highlanders have a curious old superstition, viz. :—That this plant grew at the foot of our Saviour's cross, and that a drop of blood fell on each leaf, the stain of which it bears ever since. A decoction of it was used with alum to dye a bright yellow colour.

BEAR-BERRY.—Latin, *Arbulus uva-ursi*—Gaelic, *Braoileagan-nan-con*.—The berries of this plant are not eaten, but the old Highlanders used the plant for tanning leather, and its leaves were used as a cure for the stone or gravel. It is the badge of the Colquhouns.

BILBERRY or **BLAEBERRY**.—Latin, *Vaccinium uliginosum*—Gaelic, *Lus-nan-dearcag*, or *Dearcag Monaidh*.—I need give no description of this well-known plant, but may mention that its berries were used in olden times for dyeing a violet or purple colour. Of this plant Lightfoot says :—“The berries, when ripe, are of a bluish black colour, but a singular variety, with white berries, was discovered by His Grace the Duke of Athole, growing in the woods midway between his two seats of Blair Athole and Dunkeld. [I may add that this is now known to be a distinct species—the *Vaccinninn myrtillus fructu-albo* of botanists.] The berries have an astringent quality. In Arran and the Western Isles they are given in cases of diarrhoea and dysentery with good effect. The Highlanders frequently eat them in milk, which is a cooling agreeable food, and sometimes they make them into tarts and jellies, which they mix with whisky, to give it a relish to strangers.” The blaeberry is the badge of the Buchanans.

BIRD'S-FOOT TREFOIL.—Latin, *Lotus corniculatus*—Gaelic, *Bàra'-mhilsein*.—This beautiful bright yellow flower grows all over the Highlands. It is very much relished by sheep and cattle as food, and was used by our ancestors for dyeing yellow.

COLT'S-FOOT (COMMON).—Latin, *Tussilago farfara*—Gaelic, *An gallan gainmhich*; '*Chluas-Liath*.—This plant, with its broad greyish leaves, grows very common in the Highlands, by the side of streams, and in boggy places. A decoction of it was used for bad coughs or sore breasts.

CROTAL, or **LICHEN (PURPLE DYERS)**.—Latin, *Lichen emphalodes*—Gaelic, *Crotal*.—This small plant, which grows all over stones and old dykes in the Highlands, is still very much used by Highlanders for dyeing a reddish brown colour. It was formerly much more used, particularly for dyeing yarn for making hose, and so much did the Highlanders believe in the virtues of the crotal that, when they were to start on a long journey, they sprinkled some of the crotal, reduced to a powder, on the soles of their hose, as it saved their feet from getting inflamed with the heat when travelling far.

ELEGAMPANE.—Latin, *Inula helenium*—Gaelic, *Ailleann*.—This is one of the largest of our herbaceous plants, as it grows to the height of several feet. It gives a very bright blue colour, and it was much used for such by the Highlanders, who added some whortle berries to it to improve the colour.

HEATHER.—Latin, *Erica cinerea*—Gaelic, *Fraoch*.—The

heather, the badge of the Clan Donald, needs no description, but I may give Lightfoot's account of what the Highlander made of it in his day :—"The heather is applied to many economical uses by the Highlanders. They frequently cover their houses with it instead of thatch, or else twist it into ropes and bind down the thatch with them in a kind of lattice work ; in most of the Western Isles they dye their yarn of a yellow colour, by boiling it in water with the green tops and flowers of this plant. In Rum, Skye, and the Long Island, they frequently tan their leather with a strong decoction of it. Formerly the young tops of it are said to have been used alone to brew a kind of ale, and even now, I was informed (1772), that the inhabitants of Isla and Jura still continue to brew a very potable liquor by mixing two-thirds of the tops with one-third of malt. This is not the only refreshment that the heather affords. The hardy Highlanders frequently make their beds with it, laying the roots downwards and the tops upwards, which, though not quite so soft and luxurious as beds of down, are altogether as refreshing to those who sleep on them, and perhaps much more healthy."

HONEYSUCKLE (DWARF).—Latin, *Cornus succica*—Gaelic, *Lus-a'-chraois*.—This elegant little plant grows very common in Athole, and, I believe, in many parts of the Northern Highlands, especially Lochbroom. It has a white flower, followed by red berries, which have a sweet taste. The old Highlanders believed that if those berries were eaten they gave an extraordinary appetite, from which it took its Gaelic name, which I find in an old work translated "Plant of Gluttony."

LADIES' MANTLE.—Latin, *Alchemilla vulgaris*—Gaelic, *Copan-an-driuchd*, or *Cota-preasach nighean an Rìgh*.—This pretty little plant grows in dry pastures and on hill-sides all over the country, and there are endless superstitions connected with it, and virtues ascribed to it by the Highlanders, which, if the half only were true, would make it one of the most valuable plants growing. Both its Gaelic names are very descriptive of the leaf of the plant, the first—"Cup of the dew," refers to the cup-shaped leaf in which the dew lies in large drops every morning ; and the second—"The King's daughter's plaited petticoat," refers to the well-known likeness of the leaf, when turned upside down, to a plaited petticoat, which might indeed be a pattern for a king's daughter.

MOTHER OF THYME.—Latin, *Thymus serpyllum*—Gaelic, *Lus Mac-Rìgh-Bhreathuinn*.—This sweet-scented little plant was be-

lieved by the Highlanders to be a preventive or cure for people troubled with disagreeable dreams or the nightmare, by using an infusion of it like tea.

MUGWORT.—Latin, *Artemisia vulgaris*—Gaelic, *An Liath-lus*.—Till very lately, or perhaps yet, in some of the out-of-the-way glens, this plant was very much used by the Highlanders as a pot herb, as also was the young shoots of the nettle, just as they use kale or cabbage now.

SHEPHERD'S PURSE.—Latin, *Thlaspi Bursa-pastoris*—Gaelic, *Sporan-buachail*.—This plant is still very much used in the Highlands for applying to cuts or wounds to stop the bleeding, and it was much more so in olden times, when such were more common.

SEA WARE.—Latin, *Fucus Vesiculosus*—Gaelic, *Feamainn*.—This plant is very much used still in the maritime parts of the Highlands in many ways. It makes an excellent manure for the land, and in some of the isles it forms part of the winter fodder of cattle, and even deer in hard winters sometimes feed on it, at the recess of the tide. Lightfoot says that in Jura, and some of the other Isles, the inhabitants used to salt their cheeses by covering them with the ashes of this plant, which abounds with salt. But the great use of the sea ware was for making kelp, which used to be very much made in the Isles, and in fact gave employment to the most of the inhabitants there. The way in which it was made was:—The sea ware was collected and dried, then a pit about six feet wide and three deep was dug, and lined with stones, in which a small fire was lighted with sticks, and the dried plant laid on by degrees and burnt, when it was nearly reduced to ashes the workman stirs it with an iron rake till it began to congeal, when it was left to cool, after which it was broken up and sent to the market. The average price of kelp in the Isles was about £3 10s. per ton, but of course when extra care was taken, and skill shown in the preparation of it, it was worth more.

SILVER WEED OF WILD TANSY.—Latin, *Potentilla Anserina*—Gaelic, *Bar-a'-bhrisgein*.—Of this plant Lightfoot says:—“The roots taste like parsnips, and are frequently eaten by the common people either boiled or roasted. In the islands of Tyree and Coll they are much esteemed as answering the purposes of bread in some measure, they having been known to have supported the inhabitants for months together during scarcity of other provisions. They put a yoke on their ploughs and often tear up their pasture grounds

with a view to eradicate the roots for their use, and as they abound most in barren and impoverished soils, and in seasons that succeed the worst for other crops, so they never fail to afford the most seasonable relief to the inhabitants in times of the greatest scarcity. A singular instance this of the bounty of Providence to those islands."

TORMENTIL.—Latin, *Tormentilla Erecta*—Gaelic, *Bàr-braonan-nan-con*.—This little plant may be said to grow almost everywhere in the Highlands, where it was once much used for tanning leather, for which purpose it is far superior even to oak bark. We read that in Coll the inhabitants turned over so much of the pasture to procure the roots of this plant that they were forbidden to use it at all by the laird.

ST. JOHN'S WORT. — Latin, *Hypericum Perforatum*—Gaelic, *Achlasan Challum-Chille*.—The old Highlanders ascribed many virtues to this well-known plant, and used it in many ways. Boiled with alum in water it was used to dye yarn yellow, and the flowers put in whisky gave it a dark purple tinge, almost like port wine. Superstitious Highlanders always carried about a part of this plant with them to protect them from the evil effects of witchcraft. They also believed that it improved the quality and increased the quantity of their cows' milk, especially if the cows were under the evil effects of witchcraft, by putting this plant into the pail with some milk, and then milking afresh on it. Another Gaelic term for this herb is *an ealbhuidhe*, and is thus alluded to in *Miann a' Bhaird Aosda* :—

Biodh sòbhrach bhàn a's àillidh snuadh
 Mu'n cuairt dom' thulaich 's uain' fo dhriùchd,
 'S an neòinean beag 's mo làmh air cluain
 'S an ealbhuidh' aig mo chluais gu h-ùr.

VIOLET (SWEET).—Latin, *Viola Oederata*—Gaelic, *Sail-chuaich*.—This fragrant little flower grows all over the Highlands, and it was much used by the Highland ladies formerly, in the following way :—

"Sail-chuach 's bainne ghabhar,
 Suadh ri t' aghaidh ;
 'S cha'n eil mac Rìgh ar an domhain
 Nach bi air do dheidh."

WHORTLE-BERRY.—Latin, *Vaccinium vitis-idaea*—Gaelic, *Lusnam-braoileag*.—This plant, known to every Highlander, grows on the hills all over the Highlands. The berries were much used by our ancestors as a fruit, and in cases of fever they made a cooling drink of them to quench the thirst. This is the true badge of the Clan Chattan.

WOOD PEASE.—Latin, *Orobis tuberosus*—Gaelic, *Cor., Cor-meille,* or *Peasar-nan-Luch*.—The roots of this plant were very much prized by the old Highlanders, as they are yet by most Highland herds or schoolboys. They used to dig them up and dry them and chew them like tobacco, and sometimes added them to their liquor to give it a strong flavour. They also use it on long journeys, as it keeps both hunger and thirst away for a long time; and in times of scarcity it has been used as a substitute for bread.

YARROW, OR MILFOIL.—Latin, *Achillea millifolium*—Gaelic, *A' chaithir-thalmhain*.—This plant, so well known to every old Highland housewife, was reckoned the best of all known herbs for stopping the bleeding of cuts or wounds and for healing them, and it is even yet made into an ointment in some out of the way glens in summer, that it may be at hand in winter, when the plant cannot be procured. They also believed that it was the best cure for a headache to thrust a leaf of this plant up the nostrils till the nose bled.

With these remarks I will conclude, hoping that other members of the Society may take the matter up, and add to our knowledge of this interesting subject.

27th FEBRUARY, 1878.

Mr. John Cran, Kirkton, and Mr. James Mackintosh, merchant, Buenos Ayres, Argentine Republic, were elected ordinary members at the meeting on this date. Mr. Alex. Mackenzie, Editor of the *Celtic Magazine*, presented the Society with a copy of the "Prophecies of *Coinneach Odhar*;" and Mr. Charles Fergusson, Raigmore, presented copies of the Valuation Rolls of Inverness and Ross. Mr. John Macdonald, the Exchange, Inverness, read a paper on "The Old Smuggling Days in the Highlands," which, however, he declines to publish.