

# PIOBAIREACHD

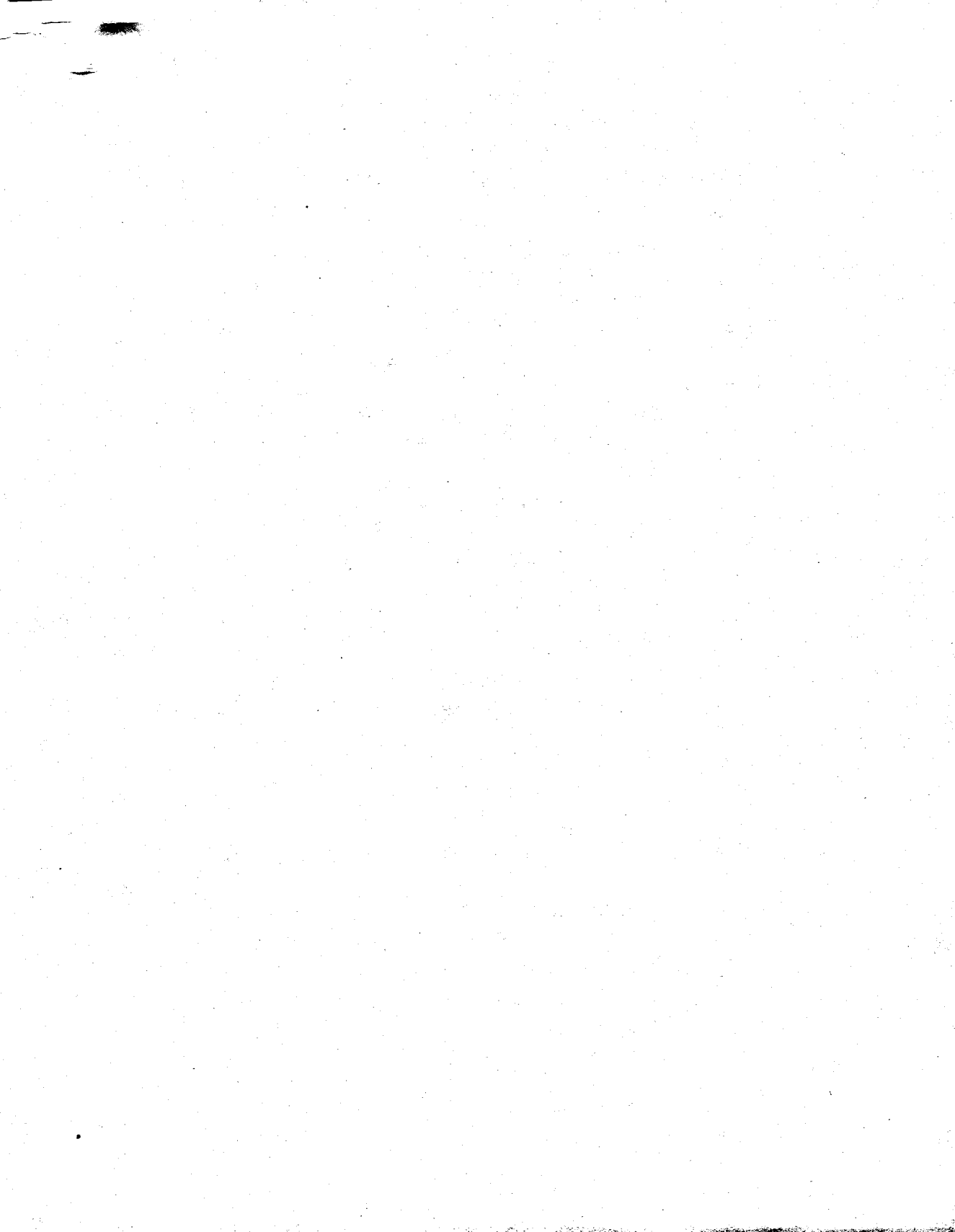
ITS

ORIGIN

AND

CONSTRUCTION







"THE PIBROCH"

*(From the painting by Lockhart-Bogle)*

*Tus is Alt a' Chiuil-Mhoir*

# PIOBAIREACHD



ITS ORIGIN AND  
CONSTRUCTION



BY

JOHN GRANT

*Author of*  
*"The Royal Collection*  
*of Piobaireachd"*



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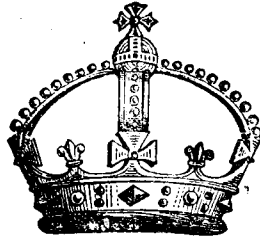
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WITH THE HIGHEST RESPECT AND GRATITUDE,  
BY THEIR HUMBLE  
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IAIN GRANND







# Piobaireachd: its Origin and Construction

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## PREFACE

It will be readily admitted by all lovers of the Great Highland Bagpipe that the definition of Ceòl Mòr has been passed over and neglected, not only in the earliest stages of its infancy, but by the present enlightened age.

Although we have many printed volumes of piobaireachd, yet there is not a book in existence that solves the many difficulties which lie before the student.

It has been the great desire of my life to prepare a work that will in some degree make piobaireachd as clear to the youth of twelve years of age as to the student of mature years, and if the present work will be of any assistance to those who wish to study this ancient art, in my own heart I will rejoice.

Piobaireachd is an art which stands in a very high position. It influences the thoughts, and has a power over the emotions of the Highland heart that no other type of music can equal.

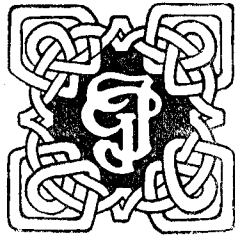
The birth of the Chief is heralded by this peculiar music, and, strange to say, the notes of the heart-rending Lament lull him to sleep while he closes his eyes in death.

The volume is dedicated by permission to the Noblemen and Gentlemen of The Highland Society of London, by whose patronage the art of Ancient Piobaireachd has been rescued from being lost and forgotten, at a time when its performance was practically looked upon as illegal, after the rising of '45.

I take this opportunity of thanking the Patrons, Patronesses, and Subscribers who have shown their practical interest in the classical music of the Great Highland Bagpipe, which it is earnestly hoped will no longer be proclaimed a lost art, or its construction declared to be a mystery.

JOHN GRANT.

EDINBURGH, 1st July, 1915.



## INTRODUCTION

SEVERAL volumes have already appeared on the history and origin of the bagpipe. The development and evolution of the instrument itself have been traced with more or less success ; but the art of piobaireachd, apart altogether from the instrument, has never yet been dealt with. This is the first attempt ever made to place the classical music of the Great Highland Bagpipe on a scientific basis ; to define its nature and construction ; and to raise it to the high position which it undoubtedly deserves.

It is said that unless one can speak Gaelic one can never understand or hope to play piobaireachd. I would not like to go as far as to say that, but before anyone could describe this ancient and powerful form of Highland bagpipe-music, he must necessarily be born in the Highlands. Happily I was born there, where my home was surrounded by thousands of acres of moorland and lofty mountains. I have traversed hundreds of miles on the lonely moors, and sat in the corry listening to the dimpling stream. I have reached the summit of many of Scotland's majestic bens, and wandered in the green dells where the zephyrs moan, and the Chief lies cold beneath the sod. I have lived in the glen where the peat fire burns brightly in the humble shieling ; where the true Highlanders, both men and maidens fair, dance merrily to the piper's magic notes ; and where the thundering torrents of the angry Spey rush on to the sea. I have played my piob-mhor on the banks of this great river till the notes of " Craigellachie " echoed and re-echoed from the surrounding hills. By perseverance and earnest study I have been able to understand and cultivate ancient piobaireachd, which has been handed down by the masters of old who lived in the dim and distant ages of the past. The best way to understand piobaireachdan properly is not merely to look over or learn to play them by heart, but to copy them out. A piper may play every piobaireachd that he can lay hands on and still be quite ignorant of their construction. A knowledge of the theory of music is also necessary in order to be able to write tunes according to the time-signatures and tie the notes properly. I have copied almost one thousand full pages of piobaireachd in twelve years in my spare time. By doing so, and spending hour after hour studying, revising, and re-revising them, I have served my apprenticeship and gained my experience in the art of piobaireachd.

Scattered references are to be found in the works of various writers regarding the history of several tunes, but there is not a book of any description that has ever described or defined Ceòl Mòr. The only help procurable is from collections of ancient piobaireachd in old MSS. and print, and a minute study of them alone. One of the reasons for the decay of the composition of piobaireachd may be that many who have the knowledge have not got time. Hence their opportunity is lost. Others do compose to some extent, but their compositions never come to light for various reasons. Again we have the professional class who spend the whole of their energies on performance alone. Thus we may say that the future of piobaireachd is doomed, and that its construction, or internal form, is in danger of being lost and forgotten for ever. For hundreds of years the composition of piobaireachd has been neglected, and it has not only been whispered, but, may I venture to say, that it has been proclaimed to be a lost art.

If such be the truth, is it a time for us, the descendants of a great piping race, to remain content with a name as performers only, while we allow the construction of piobaireachd to remain a mystery and fall into oblivion ?

Let us remember that Scotland is the home of the Great Highland Bagpipe, and that it is our duty to cultivate its music. We should strive to produce a work that will make it clear and simple to all ; remove the stumbling-blocks that have been hindrances in the past ; and stir up the piping world to perfection in theory, as well as to excellence in practice.

The recent revival which has taken place in the Gaelic language is now beginning to show signs of fruitfulness, and if we put our thoughts into action, in the near future we shall see piobaireachd flourish as it has never done before.





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## CHAPTER I

### THE ORIGIN OF PIOBAIREACHD

**P**IOBAIREACHD is said to be a wild and barbarous music, which is very difficult to describe. The meaning of the word piobaireachd is pipe-music. It is generally known by the genuine Highlander, and particularly by pipers, as a special type of music. Perhaps piobaireachd might be better defined as "Ceòl Mòr," or "The Great Music of the Celt." Bagpipe music is divided into two classes, viz. : "Ceòl Mòr" and "Ceol Aotrom." Ceòl Mòr means the Great Music, which is piobaireachd, and Ceol Aotrom means the Lighter Music, or Marches, Strathspeys, and Reels. It is Ceòl Mòr only, the classical music of the Great Highland Bagpipe, that I intend to deal with in this work.

The origin of piobaireachd may be as difficult to trace as the Great Highland Bagpipe itself. The pipe is familiar to most of the European nations, but the Great Highland Bagpipe is without doubt purely of Celtic or Scottish origin. Its use in the Highlands of Scotland has been traced as far back as the year 100 A.D. This is as far back as traditional or Highland history takes us, but we have good reason to believe that the Great Highland Bagpipe existed in the Highlands hundreds of years prior to the year 100 A.D., although it was not recorded in history in the very earliest years of its infancy. It was quite impossible for it to grow momentarily, or to have been handed to the Highlander as a fairy gift, with all its charm and power of moving the Highland heart to joy, sorrow, or even the frenzy of battle.

Piobaireachd being the classical, or real music of the Great Highland Bagpipe, the music must therefore be of as great antiquity as the instrument itself, although no attempt has ever been made to trace the origin of piobaireachd, or to define its construction. We have never heard of any particular race of Highland pipers who claimed, or could claim, to be the originators of piobaireachd, and doubtless this point will remain a mystery for ever. Those who are imbued with Highland fervour for our ancient customs will understand that it is not to be wondered at, that such a great music as piobaireachd was gifted to the Highlander alone, by Nature herself. There is little or no doubt that the Highlander got his "Ceòl Mòr" from the original sound, the echo, its doubling, its trebling, and its quadrupling. Piobaireachd and its variations might also have been derived from the birds twittering in the surrounding

trees ; the wind whistling in the glens, and over the mountain tops ; the waves dashing against the rocks on the shores of our Highland home ; or the stream, with its gentle murmur, which sounds in the sensitive ear of the Highlander in a musical form. The great river dashing down the precipice supplies material for a Theme and suitable variations. The chime of the church bells, the roar of battle, and the clatter of steel, all suggest Themes or foundations for this species of great music.

Piobaireachd is a class of music second to none as regards its power of moving the Highland heart. It may be compared to wireless telegraphy, in that it is the unseen communication between the very inner soul of the Highlander and the outward world. The power to create piobaireachd is a gift as important as the magic touch of the artist who can paint his subject on the canvas ; or of the sculptor who carves out of stone the image of a human body, perfect in form and appearance. When the painter and sculptor are finished with their achievement, they are still conscious of the lack of one thing, and if they were to make the true exclamation on the completion of their work, would it not be the most important thing of all, viz. : " Alas ! it is void of life." Therefore the artist and sculptor can impart everything to their new creation except life. The composer of piobaireachd has special gifts in this peculiar art, just the same as his fellow-craftsmen have in painting and sculpture. He also transmits his compositions to paper, as the artist paints his subject on the canvas. He hews his original Theme or Ground-work out of the material which he gets from nature, as the sculptor carves his image out of stone. The artist first of all gets his canvas, his brush, and paints, then he draws a rough outline of the subject he is about to paint. This may be termed the Theme or Ground of his work just begun. He then gives it the first coat of paint, being the second step, or variation in the production of his picture. He still paints on, with more life-like colours, step by step, until he has completed his task. The sculptor gets the stone which he has chosen suitable for his purpose. He marks it off roughly, and carves away the largest pieces round about it, giving him then the Theme or Ground-work of his image. He uses finer chisels, and carves on until it appears in better shape. This resembles the First Variation of his work of art. He, like the painter, goes on with his work, using still finer instruments until it is finished.

The composer of piobaireachd gets his chanter and prepares the Theme or *Urlar*, which has been for some time developing in his mind. He transmits it to paper. Then he prepares his First Variation, and its Doubling, the Taorluath and its Doubling, and the Crunluath and its Doubling, which completes his tune. When he looks at it as the artist or sculptor looks at his painting and image, there seems to be no

life in it either. But when the performer of piobaireachd lifts his great Highland warpipe, and fills the bag under the arm with his warm breath, and plays the tune just created, he is unlike the painter or sculptor. The creator of piobaireachd can claim that his production has got life, which theirs lack; life, that can touch the finer emotions of the Highland heart to a more extreme degree than either painting or image.

We have on record to this day in the annals of our Scottish history the names of several great composers and performers of piobaireachd. The MacCrimmons, MacArthurs, MacIntyres, MacKays, and MacKenzies were all famous for their accomplishments in the ancient art. The first race of pipers that we can trace in the Highlands of Scotland was the MacCrimmon. Although they lay no claim to be the originators of piobaireachd, nevertheless the oldest compositions can be traced back to them. We have no authentic proof at what date the first of the MacCrimmons became hereditary piper to the MacLeods of Dunvegan, Skye. It must, however, be admitted that it was at a very early period, because some of their compositions are said to date as far back as the thirteenth century, if not further. From this great race of pipers all the succeeding performers already mentioned have descended. The MacArthurs, MacIntyres, MacKays, and MacKenzies were all more or less taught by the MacCrimmons. The Boreraig school or college of piobaireachd was instituted by the MacCrimmons themselves. It is situated some eight miles from Dunvegan Castle, the hereditary Seat of the MacLeods of MacLeod. The MacCrimmons were a well-educated race, and the greatest composers of piobaireachd that have ever lived. They invented and perfected a system of sol-fa, or verbal notation, called "Canntaireachd." This style of notation can only be attributed to the MacCrimmons themselves. Even their pupils did not seem to have understood a great deal about such a mysterious system of writing and teaching piobaireachd. The MacCrimmons were a more artful race than they got credit for, because their scale never seems to have been given away by any of them. It is almost an absolute fact that their real secrets regarding the construction of canntaireachd must have died with them. The MacArthurs, who were taught at Boreraig, were the next in superiority to the MacCrimmons in the art of piobaireachd. They afterwards established a school of piping of their own. It is said that the MacArthurs wrote their piobaireachd in a similar manner to that of the MacCrimmon canntaireachd, but that they used different vocables.

This raises the question in our minds to-day—Did the MacArthurs, who were taught by the MacCrimmons, thoroughly understand the Boreraig system of

canntaireachd notation? It seems to us that they did not. The MacCrimmons, who were the originators of canntaireachd, must have perfected this system of syllabic notation, and also the rules which guided them in its formation. In this we have proof and good reason to believe that canntaireachd was a secret to the MacCrimmons alone. The various teachers who succeeded the MacArthurs did not seem to have used the verbal notation to a great extent, or at least we have no definite record of it. Many pipers are fully aware that in our time teachers of piobaireachd, as a rule, sing or chant the tunes to their pupils while they are being taught, but they have the tune before them in the staff notation at the same time. The staff notation is now universal. Some pipers say that piobaireachd would be enhanced if the old system of verbal notation were brought back to use. On the other hand, our present-day teachers maintain that the verbal notation can never take the place of the staff notation for accuracy in writing and teaching piobaireachd. The staff notation gives the time and everything pertaining to music in minute detail, and is most accurate; whereas the verbal notation does not give the time clearly, nor is the duration of the notes as clear to the eye as in staff notation. The pupil took the duration of the notes from the chanter, or chanting of the teacher, and not from the tune written in the sol-fa notation before him. Although those who have a love for the old verbal notation would be inclined to study and bring it back to use, it would be almost needless to do so if the great majority of pipers were to condemn its appearance. Nowadays, as a rule, the piper has to pay for his own tuition, and no one can compel him to use any system of notation other than that selected by himself.

As far as we can trace back to the olden days, the "verbal notation" seems to be the first system of musical notation used in recording piobaireachd. There is no scale or vestige of this notation to be found in print, or MS. written by the hand of a MacCrimmon. The Borerraig verbal notation is entirely dead, for no man living can prove that he understands it. No one can produce the actual MacCrimmon scale or key, or say that they have even seen it. Captain Neil MacLeod of Gesto published a small book in the year 1828, containing some twenty-one tunes. He says it is an example of the MacCrimmon canntaireachd. This booklet is known as the "Gesto Collection of Canntaireachd." It is quite obvious that Captain MacLeod was not a piper, as is proved by the statements of men who lived in his time. Such being the case, it is not to be wondered at that he did not thoroughly understand the mysteries of the MacCrimmon verbal notation, because the tunes published in the Gesto collection are void of uniformity. That is to say, the same note is not

always represented by the same syllable. This proves that Gesto's system of writing canntaireachd is not based upon a scientific foundation. Before a system of musical notation can be perfect, each note must be expressed by a different syllable. The same applies to grace-notes also. Captain MacLeod did not know or possess the MacCrimmon scale, or he would have published it along with his examples of canntaireachd. Some pipers say that Captain MacLeod of Gesto published his book from the old Borerraig notation. It is supposed to be more difficult to understand than the new and corrected system, which the MacCrimmons perfected at a later date. We know that the mysterious hieroglyphics of the Far East were read from the inscription on the "Rosetta Stone," but no such inscription has as yet been unearthed to enable us to read the real MacCrimmon verbal system of notation. The question is—Where did the pipers who profess to know, get the scale or key to enable them to read or understand any of the systems? This question remains unanswered. Although the MacCrimmon canntaireachd is not understood, it cannot be condemned as being imperfect or irregular. From the MacCrimmon compositions in piobaireachd which have been handed down to us, it can be seen that they are perfect in form. This proves that their verbal system of musical notation must have been perfect also, otherwise their tunes would be irregular in construction. The staff notation settings of the MacCrimmon compositions in piobaireachd which we possess to-day, were originally taken from the instrumental renderings. They were taught and handed down from generation to generation until they were recorded in staff notation. It was impossible for the MacCrimmons to have been able to produce their compositions perfect in form without a scale. That goes without saying. Therefore, I have no hesitation in maintaining that the real MacCrimmon verbal notation of Borerraig was based on a scientific foundation, and fulfilled its purpose in the olden days as the staff notation does now. The method of transmitting music to paper can only be looked upon as a notation. The instrumental rendering should always be the same. That is to say, if "MacCrimmon's Sweetheart" were written in the verbal notation and in staff notation also, and they were both recorded exactly from the same instrumental rendering, then they should both agree with each other on comparison, note for note.

Our thanks are due to Donald MacDonald, bagpipe maker, Edinburgh, who claimed to be the first to transmit piobaireachd to regular staff notation. Whether this is true or not, Donald MacDonald's book was the first and most extensive collection of ancient piobaireachd alone, ever published in the staff notation of that time. It was printed about the year 1822. MacDonald was one of the old school,

and was a son of John MacDonald, Glenhinisdale, Skye. He was taught piping by the MacArthurs, hereditary pipers to Lord MacDonald of the Isles, and was a very fine performer on the Great Highland Bagpipe. Donald was appointed piper and bagpipe maker to the Highland Society of London. His workshop was in the Lawn Market, Edinburgh. The Highland Society of London presented MacDonald with a special prize for having produced the greatest number of piobaireachdan set in staff notation by himself. At the same time they recommended MacDonald to continue his work in the direction of rescuing piobaireachd from being lost and forgotten, and to give instructions to any pipers who might desire tuition. Donald MacDonald's collection of ancient piobaireachd was re-published by Messrs. J. & R. Glen, bagpipe makers, The Mound, Edinburgh, in the year 1855, and is still procurable from them. It is dedicated to the Noblemen and Gentlemen of the Highland Society of London. The volume is handsomely got up. The titles of the tunes are given in Gaelic and English, and beautifully engraved in old English, and other suitable letters. This style of printing was very costly, and becomes an ancient music far better than the ordinary type used at the present day. The stave is narrower, which necessitates the notes being a little smaller than is usual, but they are quite legible. MacDonald's style of recording the tunes is somewhat different from that of other publishers. There are a great many superfluous grace-notes in the Urlars given by him in his book. In almost every bar he begins with the G E D cadence or grace-notes. Those grace-notes are quite unnecessary, and should not occur so often, because they spoil the melody. Of course, MacDonald had many difficulties in his way as regards collecting and putting the tunes into shape, which alone occupied his spare moments for some fifteen years. This collection was only a small portion of the piobaireachd which MacDonald had in his possession. He intended to publish the remainder of the tunes which he collected, along with the historical notes in connection with them, should his first efforts be appreciated and encouraged by performers and lovers of "Ceòl Mòr." His second volume never reached the printer, as he died before he was able to accomplish the task. Such a valuable collection was not lost sight of, however. He sent it to Mr. J. W. Grant of Elchies, then in India, and begged Mr. Grant to accept the book. This second part, which was in manuscript, was bequeathed to the late Major-General C. S. Thomason by one of his aunts. The historical notes pertaining to the tunes were also in General Thomason's possession. Donald MacDonald does not mention in his book whether he understood the MacCrimmon verbal notation or not. He writes many of the variations in his tunes in a different manner from that in which they are actually



played, more especially the Taorluaths and Crunluaths. At the same time he uses some very fine specimens of grace-notes, and that alone is of great interest to those who study piobaireachd.

The next collection of piobaireachd which appeared was Angus MacKay's. Angus MacKay was a son of John MacKay, piper to MacLeod of Raasay. He was born about the year 1813, and in due season was taught to play on the Great Highland Bagpipe by his father, and also by MacCrimmon at Boreraig, Skye. Angus MacKay having come of a very fine old race of pipers, his musical talent and skill in the art of piobaireachd encouraged him to collect and preserve for future generations many good specimens of the ancient music of Caledonia. Angus MacKay's collection of piobaireachd was published at Edinburgh in the year 1838, and re-published in 1899 by Messrs. Logan & Company, Inverness. It is dedicated to the Noblemen and Gentlemen of the Highland Society of London. Previous to the year 1899 MacKay's book of piobaireachd was very scarce, and as much as five pounds were paid for a copy. I have known of an instance where ten pounds were paid for a perfect copy. The first edition was printed with the fine old engraved headings. The best copy I have ever seen was in the library at Altyre House, Forres. It belonged to Roualeyn Gordon Cumming, the great explorer and big-game hunter. It was perfect and well preserved. In fact, some of the pages were never cut. Messrs. Logan & Company's edition is printed in excellent style, but the titles of the tunes are given in ordinary type. Although they do not look quite so well, yet they are very bold and clear. The compiler gives an historical account of all the tunes in the volume, and also a description of the various schools of piping established by the MacCrimmons, MacKays, and others. To Angus MacKay we are indebted for the records of the Highland Society of London's competitions since 1781. Pipers cannot fail to find interest in the results of the piping contests of those earlier times. The bagpipe competitions of that period were carried on in a far wider and more enthusiastic scale than they are now. With a few exceptions the tunes in Angus MacKay's book are in good form, although several critics have condemned most of them. MacKay was quite conscious of the defects contained in his work, and he hoped that the public would treat them with leniency. He did not despise the work of other composers and compilers, but prepared and presented to us what was then the largest and most superior collection of piobaireachd. Many pipers wrangle over the correctness of his tunes, while they forget to ask themselves the question—Could we have produced such a magnificent work as this at the time that MacKay presented his book to the public, or could we do so even now? I honestly believe that Angus

MacKay noted down many of the tunes as he got them when collecting in the Highlands. Although they do not appear to us to be perfect, I do not hesitate to say that he had not the presumption to change, or put them into complete form. He was the compiler, not the composer, and could not tell what notes should take the place of the missing ones. It must be borne in mind that if MacKay had wished he could have altered as many of the tunes in his book as he liked, if he wanted to spoil them. Fortunately he was a patriotic Highlander who possessed too great a love for piobaireachd to perform such an act of injustice. There are errors in his work that might have been avoided, but the same occur in every collection of bagpipe music. Very few, if any, are perfect. Angus MacKay does away with the superfluous grace-notes in the Urlars and variations that appear in MacDonald's book. This is a great improvement, and makes piobaireachd more intelligible. MacKay's tunes are altogether in much better form than MacDonald's. It only stands to reason that they would, because MacKay lived in a more enlightened age. At the same time, there is no reason why we should despise MacDonald, who came first. They both did their best, and no man can do more. They sacrificed time, which meant money to them both, as well as the labour and worry attached to their hobby. With a few exceptions, such as grace-notes, MacDonald and MacKay both write their Taorluaths and Crunluaths in a similar manner, but neither of them writes those variations exactly as they are played. Perhaps the best written Crunluath in MacKay's book will be found in the "MacLeod's Controversy," page 84, where he gives the first note in the movement as a dotted quaver, and the three following notes semi-quavers. In many of MacDonald's piobaireachdan he gives the Taorluath Fosgailte Variation in common time, with two movements to the bar, thus giving each note the same value. Whereas MacKay gives the same variation in common time also, but the first three notes are quavers played in the time of two, and the final note in the movement is a crotchet, with two movements to the bar. MacKay's is the better style of the two, but neither is exactly correct. In the Crunluath Variation MacDonald gives four notes in each movement, and two movements to the bar of six-eight time. MacKay gives the same number of notes in the movement, and the same number of movements to the bar as MacDonald in six-eight time. The only difference is that MacDonald's movement is E E F E, with G D G A grace-notes between the first two E's, an A grace-note between the second E and F, and an A grace-note between the F and the last E. Angus MacKay gives E A E E in his movement, with G D G grace-notes between the first E and A, no grace-note between the A and second E, and A F A grace-notes between the last two E's. MacDonald

writes some of his Crunluath movements differently, with five large notes to the group or movement, but the majority of his tunes are written as described. Both give the first notes in the Crunluath movements as quavers, the second and third semi-quavers, and the last quavers. Neither method is entirely correct as played. Angus MacKay also had a second volume of piobaireachd in manuscript, but he did not get the length of publishing it. This MS. found its way into the possession of the late Major-General C. S. Thomason, author of "Ceòl Mòr."

There is also in print at the present day Donald MacPhee's collection of piobaireachd, owned by Messrs. Logan & Company, Inverness. There are two parts in the publication, and in all thirty-seven tunes. MacPhee was a bagpipe maker in Glasgow, and his business is still carried on by Peter Henderson, 24 Renfrew Street, Glasgow. It is said that MacPhee spent much of his time in the collection and study of piobaireachd, and some of the best pipers of that day gathered and played in turn in his shop in the evenings. He gives a good variety of piobaireachd in his published work, and many of them do not appear in either MacDonald's or MacKay's. MacPhee writes his tunes similar to those of MacKay, but his book does not meet with such a ready sale as the latter's.

Other collections of piobaireachd have appeared at more recent dates. Perhaps the two most worthy of description are the late Major-General Thomason's "Ceòl Mòr," and the Piobaireachd Society's collection.

"Ceòl Mòr" is the largest and most comprehensive collection of piobaireachd ever published. It contains some two hundred and seventy-five tunes. Here we have piobaireachd reduced or abbreviated to such an extent that in some instances the entire tune can be seen at a glance. Many of the pages in "Ceòl Mòr" contain a complete piobaireachd. The author of "Ceòl Mòr" was employed for a whole lifetime in the preparation of this work. It may well be said that he alone knew the experience and labour that it had cost him. The Urlar of each piobaireachd is given in full, with the exception of such movements as occur on E, F, D, B, and A. In the variations, only the leading notes are given in each movement, which can be quite easily understood by anyone who has a fair knowledge of piobaireachd. Failing that, the volume includes a key to the abbreviations. Although the book contains nearly three hundred tunes, it can be carried in the pocket with perfect ease and comfort, thus affording the teacher, the student, or the judge of piobaireachd the most valuable assistance. It may be considered as ingenious a system of notation in modern times as the verbal notation of the MacCrimmons was in the olden days. One thing that may be said to the credit of "Ceòl Mòr," is that it is

reduced and abbreviated in a manner quite impossible in canntaireachd. The reason is that there is very little difference in the length of a tune in the verbal notation, when transmitted to paper, and piobaireachd written in the full staff notation at present in use. To mark the appreciation of his fellow-pipers and Highlanders in general, and in order that Major-General Thomason might receive personally an expression of their heart-felt gratitude for such an undertaking, he was presented with an album containing an illuminated address, and hundreds of signatures of his admirers, both at home and abroad. A complimentary dinner was organised in June, 1909, in Edinburgh, for that special purpose. This gathering consisted of many prominent pipers and enthusiastic Highlanders, and there the late General gave an able description of his colossal task. He related how he wrote and re-wrote, revised and re-revised the pages of "Ceòl Mòr," in order that it might be perfect. We may rest assured that those ancient pieces will never be lost or forgotten so long as there is a copy of "Ceòl Mòr" to be found. The memory of the grand old piobaireachd hero will be ever fresh in our minds while we scan the pages of his magnificent work. Lovers of the ancient and noble art of piobaireachd cannot but feel grateful to the author of this volume for his untiring efforts to rescue so many fine tunes from being lost in oblivion.

The Piobaireachd Society was instituted some eleven years ago, for the sole purpose of cultivating and promulgating the art of piobaireachd alone. They adopted the "Ceòl Mòr" notation for their first test tunes, but as it is not a popular system of recording piobaireachd, the following year they returned to the full staff notation. This Society has done more for piobaireachd than any body of enthusiasts that ever existed. They were fully aware of how the playing of piobaireachd stood for generations back. Professional pipers, as a rule, attended competition after competition, year after year, and played the same old tunes. One is quite safe in saying that our very best performers did not go outside of twelve to twenty different pieces. This might be considered a wide range, as some competitors never played more than half-a-dozen different tunes. In fact, instances have been known where pipers have gone the round of the games and did not play three different tunes, year in and year out. Their energetic secretary, the late Major William Stewart of Ensay, edited the first collection of test tunes in full staff notation in the year 1904. Since then some thirty-six tunes have been published in five parts. By adopting this method of publishing fresh tunes every year, many beautiful piobaireachdan have been played at Oban, Inverness, and other places, that were seldom or never heard before at competitions. The

Piobaireachd Society have created a new lease of life for this Great Music. They offer handsome prizes, and their yearly competitions are always a success. The new secretary of the Society is Captain Colin MacRae, of Feoirinn, Argyll, himself a piper and Highland dancer. He takes a deep interest in the work of the Society, which is of great service in popularising "Ceòl Mòr." Captain MacRae possesses several valuable piobaireachd MSS., as well as every published work known. He is an excellent piobaireachd player, a sound judge, and qualified in every way for the important position which he now holds. It was by the recognition and patronage of Kings and Princes, and Highland Chieftains that piobaireachd flourished in the olden days, and it is by the renewed enthusiasm of our Scottish nobles that we hope to see this ancient art attain the high position that it has held in the past. The Piobaireachd Society give lessons in piobaireachd as well as prizes for competition, and they have instructors in Inverness, Oban, Glasgow, and other suitable places. The War Office has also established, through the Piobaireachd Society, a school of piping for military pipers at Edinburgh, under the tuition of Pipe-Major John MacDonald, who is perhaps the world's greatest piobaireachd player.



## CHAPTER II

### THE TEACHING AND STUDY OF PIOBAIREACHD

**P**IOBAIREACHD, as I have already said, is distinguished from the March, Strathspey, and Reel by being termed the "Great Music." The MacCrimmons would never permit their pupils to play such primitive music as "Ceol Aotrom" within their hearing. They thus signified their superiority in the ancient art of which they were masters, and proved their ability to judge both classes of music. It seems as if that great race of pipers took it for granted that anyone could play bagpipe-music of the lighter type, while, on the other hand, the intending pupil had to be taught to play piobaireachd. No piper can ever hope to excel in the art of piobaireachd playing unless he undergoes a considerable period of instruction by a good master. When the MacCrimmon School at Boreraig was at its best, each pupil had to study from seven to twelve years in piobaireachd exclusively, and his master defrayed the entire expense of his tuition. In this way many good performers were fostered at Boreraig after undergoing such a long time of study and practice. In many cases, if not every case, when a Highland Chieftain first heard his piper play on returning to his castle, he expressed himself as highly pleased with the progress which the pupil had made while at Boreraig, Skye. In some cases it is related that the pupil excelled the master in the performance of piobaireachd, but this is very doubtful. The great MacCrimmons had a style of playing piobaireachd peculiar to themselves, so it is hardly possible that this tale could be true. To illustrate the truth of this, perhaps it may not be out of place to relate here an incident, appearing in the traditional portion of Angus MacKay's book of piobaireachd.

Sir Alexander MacDonald of the Isles, being at Dunvegan on a visit to the laird of MacLeod, he heard the performance of Patrick O'g with great delight; and desirous if possible to have a piper of equal merit, he said to MacCrimmon one day, that there was a young man whom he was anxious to place under his tuition, upon condition that he should not be allowed to return until such time as he could play equal to his master. "When this is the case," said MacDonald, "you will bring him home, and I will give you ample satisfaction for your trouble." "Sir Alexander," says Patrick, "if you will be pleased to send him to me, I will do all that I am able

to do for him." Charles MacArthur was accordingly sent to Boreraig, where he remained for eleven years, when MacCrimmon, considering him as perfect as he could be made, proceeded to Mugstad, to deliver his charge to Sir Alexander, who was then residing there, and where Eain Dall MacKay, Gairloch's blind piper, happened also to be. MacDonald, hearing of their arrival, thought it a good opportunity to determine the merit of his own piper by the judgment of the blind man, whose knowledge of pipe-music was exceptional. He therefore enjoined Patrick Og and MacArthur not to speak a word to betray who they were, and addressing MacKay, he told him that he had a young man learning the pipes for some years, and was glad he was present to say whether he thought him worth the money which his instruction had cost. MacKay said if he heard him play he would give his opinion freely; but requested to be informed previously with whom the piper had been studying. Sir Alexander told him that he had been with Patrick Og MacCrimmon. "Then," exclaimed MacKay, "he could never have found a better master." The young man was ordered to play, and when he had finished Sir Alexander asked MacKay for his opinion. "I think a great deal of him," replied Eain; "he is a good piper; he gives the notes correctly, and if he takes care he will excel in his profession." Sir Alexander was pleased with so flattering an opinion, and observed that he had been at the trouble of sending two persons to the college that he might retain the best, so he said that the second one should also play, that an opinion of his merit might also be given. MacKay observed that he must be a very excellent performer, if he could surpass the first, or even compare with him. When Patrick Og, who acted as the second pupil, had finished playing, Sir Alexander asked the umpire what he thought of his performance. "Indeed, sir, no one need try me in that manner," returned the blind man, "for though I have lost the eyes of my human body, I have not lost the eyes of my understanding; and if all the pipers in Scotland were present, I would not find it a difficult task to distinguish the last player from them all." "You surprise me, MacKay; and who is he?" "Who but Patrick Og MacCrimmon!" promptly rejoined MacKay; and, turning to where Patrick Og was sitting, he observed, "It was quite needless, my good sir, to think that you could deceive me in that way, for you could not but know that I should have recognised your performance among a thousand." Sir Alexander then asked MacKay to play, and afterwards he called for a bottle of whisky, drank to their healths, and remarked that he had that night under his roof the three best pipers in Britain.

From the foregoing narrative it can be clearly seen that the MacCrimmons had characteristics even in their performances of piobaireachd peculiarly their own, as

well as their method of transmitting their tunes to paper. We are informed that one of MacCrimmon's daughters used to steal out with a favourite set of her father's pipes in order that she might indulge in a quiet tune. This daughter was also able to superintend the instructions of the students in her father's absence. Those facts prove that even the fair sex of the olden days had a yearning for this ancient pastime.

Piobaireachd was never marched to at any time, as pipers do in the case of an ordinary March of two or more parts; nor was it ever intended to be, as can be seen on studying its construction. Although the MacCrimmons were not partial to Marches, Strathspeys, and Reels, we are not told that upon fitting occasions the masters of Boreraig College did not play such tunes themselves. "Ceol Aotrom," or the Lighter Music, must have been common in the MacCrimmons' time, otherwise they would not have disliked them. The very fact that the March, Strathspey, and Reel were forbidden at Boreraig is ample proof that they were composed and played in the Highlands of Scotland in the earliest MacCrimmon era. If we believe in our ancient Highland traditions, it must be taken as an accepted fact that the common two to four-part March was played in the time of war by the old clan pipers, just the same as our regimental pipers do at the present day. Piobaireachd is never played on the march by the pipers of our Highland regiments. It is only played at Mess in the evening. Although all lovers of "Ceòl Mòr" maintain that piobaireachd is the classical music of the Great Highland Bagpipe, yet they have no desire to despise "Ceol Aotrom," *i.e.*, the March, Strathspey, and Reel. At the same time both species of bagpipe-music must be kept in their proper place, and played in the manner and on the occasion for which they were intended.

The question may now be asked—For what purpose was piobaireachd intended? Or on what occasion or place ought it to be played? Piobaireachd may be divided into various grades signifying the different events that give rise to the Salute, the Welcome, the Lament, the Farewell, the Gathering, the March or Challenge, the Battle Tune, or the Warning. This is the purpose for which "Ceòl Mòr" was intended. Piobaireachd was performed in the halls of joy; to gather the clansmen in the time of war; when the fiery cross went round; as a challenge for the enemy to fight; in the midst of the battle; and to warn the Chief and his clansmen of the coming foe. These were the occasions and places where the classical music of the Great Highland Bagpipe was played in the olden days. Although piobaireachd is not played exactly on the same occasions at the present day, as it was in the time when the Chief had full power over his clan, yet we hear it played in the castle during meal hours, and at Highland gatherings to prove the performer's skill in the art. Whatever may



be said for the composition of piobaireachd in the olden days, it is true that very little credit is due to pipers for their contributions to "Ceòl Mòr" for the past century and a half or more. In several instances, however, it will be noticed that the composition of original piobaireachd has assumed a more energetic aspect, as several good piobaireachdan have been composed within recent years. By earnest study and renewed efforts we still hope to bring it back to its grand old state of perfection in the Highlands of Scotland. This classical music, being of very little importance to Scotsmen in general, has been passed over almost unheeded. But to the genuine Highlander who loves his native country, its music, its language, its poetry, and its history, it means a great deal to be able to rejoice at the resuscitation of an ancient and noble art, instead of saying, "Alas! ancient piobaireachd has passed for ever!"

When the Highland Chiefs had power over their clans they had their pipers also, but after the rising of '45 they lost the power which they exercised before that period, and many of them lost or discarded their pipers. The wearing of the Highland garb was forbidden, and in many cases a great number of fine clan piobaireachdan were mislaid or destroyed. Between the fatal results of '45, and the clergy, bagpipe-playing received a severe check in the Highlands for many years. In several districts, however, where it was deeply rooted, piping very soon revived again, and became more popular than ever. In the good old days when the Chief kept his piper, the mystic minstrel held a very dignified position in the retinue of his master. It was in those bygone years that piobaireachd flourished. The Highland Chiefs, or what are termed nowadays, the landed proprietors in the Highlands of Scotland, although not altogether to blame, are still greatly responsible for the decay of the composition and practice of piobaireachd. On going back to the traditional history of the great MacCrimmons, it can be seen that the Chief maintained his piper and sent him to school at Boreraig, or the college of piobaireachd in Skye. There the pupil studied from seven to twelve years in the art, under professors or masters of this classical music alone. During their long period of tuition pipers had every opportunity of understanding the theory and construction of piobaireachd, as well as of becoming good players. By this means many pipers became good composers, and added to the stock of piobaireachd already on record. Now and in recent years the Highland landed proprietors have ceased to keep pipers in many instances, and the piper has to pay for his own instruction. He usually hurries through this much quicker than in the olden times, to save expense. This means that the pupil has not acquired the necessary knowledge in the theory of music or the construction of piobaireachd to be able to play correctly or compose original pieces. In fact, I

have never known of a teacher who gives his pupils instruction in the theory of mus.c, or the construction of piobaireachd. This is left to pipers themselves, and only those who have a desire to master the art go the length of following it to the very root. The date on which her late Majesty Queen Victoria visited the Highlands of Scotland (1843) may be taken as the date of the first real traces of the revival of the ancient custom of having the piper restored to his former exalted position.

When Queen Victoria visited Taymouth Castle she admired the performances of Breadalbane's piper, and expressed a wish to possess one such as John Bàn MacKenzie. John Bàn was offered the high position of piper to the Queen, but refused, saying, "If your lordship is tired of my services, I am willing to go, but I do not wish a better master than yourself." John was a piper in the very highest sense of the word, for we find that Lord Breadalbane would say :—

"Carry this fishing basket, John."

"I cannot, my lord."

"Will you take the oars for a little?"

"I cannot, my lord."

"How that, John?"

"I would spoil my fingers for the pipes, my lord."

"Other pipers play the pipes and work also," remarked his lordship.

"These men are workmen, my lord, and pipe when they are not working; but I am your lordship's piper."

Lord Breadalbane, as can be seen, was one of the very few Highland lairds who kept a *piper*. Queen Victoria had several pipers in the royal household, viz. : Angus MacKay, William Ross, and William Campbell. This was the means of encouraging many noblemen and gentlemen to bring back their pipers. Some time elapsed, however, before the bagpipe resumed its normal position in the Highlands. The formation of clan societies in our large cities and also throughout the country, was the means of reviving many of the customs prevalent in the Highlands in olden times. Those customs included bagpipe playing, teaching of the Gaelic language, singing Gaelic songs, Highland folk-lore, and violin playing. Bagpipe playing seemed to be an outstanding feature by itself, and was greatly encouraged by the Highland Society of London, who gave very handsome prizes for the cultivation of piobaireachd. About twenty years ago, a greater re-awakening took place in the art of piping, and there are now about twenty pipers for every one that was to be found before that period. We find good proof of this from the statistics of bagpipes made yearly by the leading bagpipe-makers in Scotland.

Bagpipe-making is no longer a forgotten and neglected pastime. It has now developed into a great industry. If the production of new sets of bagpipes amount to hundreds yearly, it only stands to reason that there must be thousands of pipers not only in Scotland, but throughout the known world to-day. Of those thousands of performers, few have ambitions to rise above the practice of the common March, Strathspey, and Reel. They either do not know or perhaps forget that piobaireachd is the essence of bagpipe-music, and no piper is considered a master of the piob mhor until he can play and understand "Ceòl Mòr." Being stirred up by the efforts of the Piobaireachd Society, and other means of encouragement, many pipers are becoming desirous of being able to play piobaireachd, and understand its construction. In the olden times, and even within recent years, it was said that teachers of bagpipe-music only imparted a portion of their knowledge to their pupils. In my time I am pleased to say that I have never met with such men. The time has now arrived when there are no secrets in the writing, teaching, or performance of piobaireachd. We live in an age when almost every mystery can be solved, and one thing that can be said with safety is, that every passage in piobaireachd, and bagpipe-music in general, is in print. Therefore the pupil as well as the teacher have everything written clearly before them, and both can study alike. By this means many of the secrets in writing and performing piobaireachd are revealed with good results—thanks to the pioneers of piobaireachd who have come before us, and laboured with untiring zeal to pave the way for us their descendants. They have given us "Ceòl Mòr," with its Theme and variations clearly and simply enough to be followed and understood by those Highlanders who wish to study it minutely. But still the piper who has no knowledge in this ancient art, asks the question—"How can I understand the mysteries of the construction or building up of a piobaireachd?" The answer to this question is, that all difficulties, however great, are meant to be overcome. Before a man can acquire a perfect knowledge of any difficult subject, he must not be daunted with its first appearance. Although it may seem mysterious, patience and perseverance will sweep away all obstacles. There are very few things in the known world too difficult to be understood by the intelligent, who mean to follow a subject to the root at all costs. Therefore a knowledge of the construction of piobaireachd can only be acquired by hard work and untiring efforts on the part of the student. We have no books, nor ever had any to guide us in this respect. For this reason we have to use our own intellect, talent, or ability to fathom the form of this ancient art from the tunes which we have had handed down to us from the MacCrimmons, MacArthurs, and MacKays. When the compositions of the

earlier times are studied it can be seen that the piobaireachdan composed by the MacCrimmons are by far the best as regards form and melody. There are no hard and fast rules laid down regarding the construction of piobaireachd, so that in the case of composing a new tune a great deal is left to the taste and ability of the author himself. New productions are the best means of testing the skill and knowledge of the master of piobaireachd. Although this classical music is not governed by hard and fast rules, nevertheless it must be in proper form, with the variations in accordance with the Theme. It is surprising, when we think of it, that piobaireachd has been passed over generation after generation unheeded or unchallenged regarding its correctness, and that within recent years so much controversy has been carried on about it. In the face of it, it cannot be possible that there is anyone living who can explain any more than what has been handed down to us by our forefathers regarding the construction and performance of piobaireachd. It is perfect in form, and has been for hundreds of years. The old tunes will not permit interfering with, although some of the variations might be written in better time than we find them in the majority of collections. There are some tunes in printed collections with variations that do not agree with their Themes, but, on the other hand, there are hundreds in perfect form. All that can be said about tunes with variations that do not agree with the Urlars is, that the composers had bad taste, or were void of a proper knowledge of the construction of piobaireachd. There is still another solution of the problem regarding irregular variations, and that is: when a tune was taken down from the fingering of some piper who did not know the setting properly, he and the collector were to blame, but not the composer. If all pipers and collectors in the olden days had been piobaireachd scholars like the MacCrimmons, many errors that now appear in "Ceòl Mòr" could have been avoided.

Before going into the construction of the various tunes, it may not be considered out of place to give here an explanation of how piobaireachd ought to be performed on the part of the piper. If the student of piobaireachd goes under the tuition of a good master, he usually gets some instructions in discipline, or how to pose or carry himself while playing on the bagpipe. If not, one can see from pipers who have received a military training, that they stand perfectly straight. To apply the old saying, he stands "as stately as a piper." That is to say, the body must be kept straight, head erect, and eyes fixed on some object their own height, neither turning the head to the right nor left, no matter who or what is near. A piper who performs on the Great Highland Bagpipe, and is adorned by his native garb, must carry himself altogether in a "princely" manner, which becomes this trait of Scottish character. If the piper does so he is admired by all who see him; but if otherwise, he takes

away all the charm and appearance that belong to this class of musician. There should be no movement of the body above the thighs, and the feet ought to be laid down, when marching, just the same, and as gracefully, as if the performer were walking. Particular care must be taken to blow perfectly steadily, and use the arm gently when pressing the bag, in order to have an equal pressure of wind on the reeds to keep the pipes in tune. Some pipers have what is called a "swagger" about them when playing. This means that the body is turned into unbecoming shapes, and the one foot is often placed in front of the other when marching. In some instances, when playing a Strathspey and Reel, the piper swerves and jumps up and down like a piece of cork in rough water. There is no need for this extra performance. The performer ought to remember that it is the Great Highland Bagpipe he is playing, and uphold his dignified position. As an example, if a piper were to play a piobaireachd that takes from fifteen to twenty minutes to perform, and he were to conduct himself in the manner already described, his pipes would never keep in tune. If he were playing in a competition this would disqualify him. When the bagpipe is in perfect order and played properly it ought to keep in tune for half an hour, or even longer. This gives ample time to play the longest piobaireachd right through without tuning. When playing the Urlar and its Doubling, the piper paces the floor or ground in a slow and graceful manner, but not keeping time to his music with the feet as in the case of an ordinary March. The same is the case with the First Variation, but he stands perfectly still when playing its Doubling. He then plays the Taorluath, which usually follows the Doubling of the First Variation, and moves off at the same pace, and in the same manner as in the Urlar. This is always followed by the Doubling of the Taorluath, at which he stands up and plays in the same manner as the Doubling of the First Variation. Finally he comes to the Crunluath, and again he moves off as in the Singlings already described. To the Doubling of the Crunluath, which finishes the tune, except where a Crunluath-a-mach occurs, the piper again stands still. Before he stops it is usual to play a few bars of the Theme, pacing off as he did to begin with. In some cases at the end of the Taorluath, its Doubling, or any of the previous variations, the sign D.C. Thema is observed. D.C. Thema means to repeat the Theme at that point, but as this lengthens the tune to a considerable extent and becomes monotonous, it is never carried out now. This style of performance of piobaireachd is a symbol of the power that the Great Music has on the emotions of the Highland heart. When piobaireachd, or "Ceòl Mòr," is reduced to a level with the common March, Strathspey, and Reel, then it would be no longer the classical music which we have the privilege of claiming to be peculiar to the genuine Celt alone.

## CHAPTER III

### THE CONSTRUCTION AND CLASSIFICATION OF PIOBAIREACHD

**P**IOBAIREACHD may be classified into eight different forms, or species of tunes, viz. : the Salute, the Welcome, the Lament, the Farewell, the Gathering, the March or Challenge, the Battle Tune, and the Warning. Having already described the manner that piobaireachd ought to be performed, which does not apply to any class of tune in particular, but to everyone in the form of piobaireachd, it can be seen that the following explanation or definition of " Ceòl Mòr " bears this out. It must be understood to begin with, that piobaireachd is a story, which the piper is telling his hearers, through the medium of the Great Highland Bagpipe, in prose, not poetry. At the same time piobaireachd must possess time and rhythm just the same as any other class of music.

There is no rule laid down as to what form any of the different species of piobaireachd may take, or what notes or grace-notes may be used when composing them. The piper may play a Lament, Salute, or Gathering, but if he is not a Highlander, or has not studied piobaireachd, he knows no difference between the one and the other. On the other hand, the piper may think that some particular Salute sounds to him more like a Lament, or that some Lament has more of the nature of a Salute. Regarding the tunes which have been handed down to us, we have no say in the matter. They must remain in the form that they were composed. Every composer or performer of piobaireachd is not of the same temperament. Therefore no two composers or performers are alike in this respect, *e.g.*, the piper who composed " Chisholm's Salute," created in it a melody that gave expression to his joy on some particular event, but we have no record of what gave rise to this tune. In " Chisholm's Salute " we have what appealed to its composer as a fitting Theme for joy, or it might have been appreciation, and there is no doubt that in the composer's own heart he rejoiced in its creation. When we turn our attention to this Salute, and play it now, we may find some piper who thinks that it is more like a Lament. This proves or suggests that the composer of " Chisholm's Salute " and the piper who plays it after him, are not of the same temperament. That is to say, the notes or melody that touch the heart of one man with joy, might move another to sorrow, even to tears. The Salute is generally known by its lively nature, the Lament by its

doleful or mournful sound, and the Gathering is recognised by its hurried notes. Thus all the various types of tunes are recorded in the "Ceòl Mòr" of the Celt in different melodies or strains according to the temperament of their composers.

I will now deal with the various forms of piobaireachdan in the same order as I have already classified them.

The occasion which called forth the "Salute" was the birth of an heir to the Chief, his succession to the estates, or headship of his tribe or clan, or in some instances where we find that the piper wished to pay a compliment to his master for some act of kindness. There were various other reasons for the Salute being composed in olden times, but these are several of the chief instances, and I will confine my attention to the minute description of piobaireachdan composed to commemorate such events. It is an unwritten law, and strictly in accordance with the ancient custom peculiar to the Celtic people of the stern and wild regions of Caledonia, that no Chief or individual would have more than one Salute dedicated to him, *e.g.*, if a Salute were composed on the birth of a Chief, his coming of age, or his marriage, the same Chief never had another Salute dedicated to him at any time. One of the main reasons for this was to save confusion. We have "King James VI.'s Salute," for instance. If it had been composed on his birth, and another Salute composed on his marriage, or any other important stage of his life, there would have been two Salutes to King James VI. The one would have had to be distinguished from the other such as "King James VI.'s Birthday Salute" and "King James VI.'s Marriage Salute," which tends to lessen the value or greatness of this type of music, and the creators of piobaireachd must have been aware of that fact. Hence we find only once within the compass of "Ceòl Mòr" a tune entitled "King James VI.'s Salute," which sounds much stronger and more effective than if there had been two piobaireachdan of the same name.

**"Fàilte Mhic Ghille Chaluim Rathasaidh,"**  
**"MacLeod of Raasay's Salute"**

is the first piobaireachd about to be defined, and it will be found in Angus MacKay's "Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd," page 9. It was composed by the family piper on the birth of James MacLeod of Raasay. Six daughters having come before him, there was good reason for rejoicings of more than the usual nature. The most important part of a piobaireachd is the Urlar, which means the floor, or Theme. Perhaps a more accurate meaning would be the foundation. In fact, it is the root of the whole tune. As the tree has a root, a trunk, and branches, the

same may be said of a piobaireachd. It has its Urlar, the root ; its First Variation, its trunk or body ; and its Taorluath and Crunluath, its branches. Here we have this beautiful Theme as it was given us by its author many years ago. It shows how peculiarly firm and clear was his grasp of the structural form of this special type of piobaireachd. It is a delightful melody, and an indication of the Salute can be found here by all on account of the construction of the Urlar. The composer begins on the lower notes of the chanter, and rises to the high hand, which is a sign of joy on his part. The whole tune from beginning to end is in perfect form, and each variation can be traced from the Urlar with one exception. The Urlar consists of sixteen bars, in three strains or parts of six, six, and four bars, and written in common time. Tradition says that there should be no break in the Urlar of any piobaireachd, and that the first double bar line should appear at the end of the Theme. It is said that the MacCrimmons marked off the Urlars and variations at certain places, to make a break in the length of the piece for the convenience of their pupils. By doing so the pupil had only six bars to remember at a time, and then committed the rest of the Urlar or variation to memory by degrees. Whether or not there is any truth in this, it can be seen that piobaireachd is unlike any other class of music. In the Urlar and variations of every tune there is a complete close at certain points. Here the strains terminate as indicated by the two sloped lines, or double bar lines at the end of the sixth, twelfth, and sixteenth bars. The irregular length of the strains, and the change that takes place in the structure of the variations, go a long way to prove that piobaireachd is not poetry, but prose set to music. As I hear this beautiful Theme, in imagination, I can see the composer's stately form pacing the grounds of the Seat of the Chief, and hear him telling his story through the medium of the Great Highland Bagpipe. His heart is so touched with joy that he plays his new tune for the first time, a few days after the birth. The Chief himself hears the strange melody, and at once recognizes it as that of rejoicing, not having heard the piper play it on any previous occasion. The piper moves to and fro, or perhaps round the castle, overcome with joy of a two-fold nature : because of the birth of an heir to his master, and the successful creation of his tune. In this way he tells the clansmen in the neighbourhood what has happened, and they gather round the festive board of their Chief to congratulate him upon this happy occasion. The melody has a peculiar strain or mingling of emotion. It seems as if it tells of the anxiety of the Chief, whose yearning desire for an heir to his estates had been fulfilled. That this little stranger who had appeared was to be his father's pride, and the joy of his mother's heart. The Thumb



Variation is also written in common time, and the only variance from the Urlar is in the third and fifth bars of the first part, the first and fifth of the second part, and the first, third, and fourth of the last part, where high A takes the place of the F. In this variation the piper repeats his Theme, or story, with still greater joy as he reaches at intervals the very highest notes of the chanter. The First Variation in this Salute is the Taorluath. The word Taorluath has no English equivalent. It is entirely a word applied to a variation in piobaireachd. In order to put the Taorluath Variation into vocal musical form, or chant it over, each movement must have three syllables. We find this can be played on every note of the chanter. That is to say it can be played off the low G and every other note right up to high A. From low A to high A all the movements come from the initial note on which they are performed, down to low G, closing the chanter, opening it with a D grace-note on the first A, and putting in an E grace-note on the last A. The movement on the low G is slightly different, being G A A with a single D grace-note on the first A, and an E grace-note on the last A, but all movements in the different variations will be more fully described at a later stage. Taor does not mean two, as tri means three. Luath means fast, quick, or speedy. Therefore, to a certain extent, the word Taorluath derives its name from the quick or speedy nature of that movement in piobaireachd, just the same as the water in its natural course makes a sound which suggests the word trickling. The Taorluath here is written in twelve-eight time, with four groups of notes or movements to the bar, whereas it should be written in common time the same as the Urlar. Twelve-eight time has a dotted quaver, a semi-quaver, and a quaver to the movement, or group of notes. To write this variation as near as is possible to the manner in which it is actually performed, there should be a dotted quaver and two demi-semi-quavers to the movement, making the variation work out in perfect keeping with the Urlar. The part "luath" of the word Taorluath—meaning fast or speedy—indicates that this is a quicker and more lively movement than the Urlar. The Taorluath is composed of the notes of most value in the Urlar. The first note in the group always varies, and gets most time. The remaining portion of the movement is played as quick as it is possible for the performer to bring out the notes clearly and distinctly. If this variation were written as will be found in the second edition of "The Royal Collection of Piobaireachd," the whole tune could be written in common time from beginning to end, and each movement would stand on itself as being of the value of one crotchet. Although there is no rule, one can see that the Urlar and the time in which it is written have a regulating power or effect upon the whole tune. Therefore, where it is possible, and a tune

is found written in the same time from beginning to end, then it is a perfect piobaireachd. This fact has apparently escaped the attention of students of "Ceòl Mòr," but nevertheless it is correct. By adhering to such a rule piobaireachd would be made clear and simple, the same melodic accent and rhythm would be carried right through the tune, and the variations would be more attractive and less monotonous than they usually are. The Taorluath as given here is note for note in keeping with the Urlar, except in the fourth bar of the second part, where the composer gives A C E C instead of A E C C as is in the Ground. This departure from the Urlar is for variety, and in most cases for better melody, which is allowed in piobaireachd, according to the taste and discretion of the composer. It is quite wrong to put notes in the variations that do not appear in the Ground. From the lively performance of this variation it seems as if the composer were inspired with fresh enthusiasm as he paces to and fro gracefully, continuing his story and telling his hearers of the great future that lies before the young Chief. Then comes the Doubling of Taorluath. Because the word Doubling is used it does not mean to play this variation twice as fast as the Taorluath, or what is usually known as the Singling of Taorluath. The Doubling must be played at the same rate of speed as the Singling. The word Doubling means that the Taorluath is played over again, all in the same movement. The long or Themal notes, such as C A and B A, take the Taorluath form in the Doubling. It is written in twelve-eight time as in the Singling, but should be written in common time. The piper stands perfectly still when playing this variation, as if he were quite unconscious of his surroundings, or of those who were listening to him. It seems as if he had excluded all other thoughts from his mind, so that he might put full life and vigour into his imaginative story of the young Chief's future life.

We come now to the Crunluath, which is entirely a piobaireachd expression. It may be said to have derived its name partly from the sound of the movement, as the crooning of a dove, and partly from its warbling nature. The Crunluath is written in twelve-eight time, but should be written in common time. This variation is quicker and more lively than the Taorluath, and one can imagine seeing the piper pacing off again slowly as he plays, enraptured with his final outburst of joy, to which he gives vent in this the finest of all movements in piobaireachd. The Crunluath always begins with the same starting notes as the Taorluath, and the first half of the movement is also the same as the Taorluath. The last part of the movement is performed by coming up to E, putting in the A F A grace-note passage, and finishing again on the E.

Finally, we come to the Doubling of Crunluath, which is also written in twelve-

eight time, but should be common time. In this variation as in the Taorluath the rate of speed is the same in the Doubling as in the Singling. If the Doubling of the Crunluath were played twice as fast as the Singling, no man's fingers could ever bring out the notes clearly and distinctly. In the Doubling of the Crunluath the piper's joy and his tune are both complete, as he stands still, performing the last strains of his inspiring melody. Before he lays his instrument aside he returns to his Urlar and plays it over again in order that he may assure his hearers as well as himself that his tune is real. It was not merely a passing fancy, or a Theme that varied every time he played it, but a tune that has developed into perfect form, and is rooted in his mind never to be forgotten.

The next tune which I will describe in this class is

**"Fàilte Fir Bhaosdail,"**  
**"Boisdale's Salute,"**

which will be found in "Ceòl Mòr," page 25. The author of this piobaireachd is unknown. It was composed on the occasion of Alasdair Mòr MacDonald, First of Boisdale, taking possession of the estates. In the Theme of this fine piobaireachd we have an entirely different melody. Again it can be seen as an indication of the Salute, that the Urlar begins on the low hand and rises to the higher notes of the chanter, which produces a very effective melody. The composer had good material to work upon in the creation of his new Theme, and being inspired with the exalted position which Boisdale attained, he made the best of it. The Urlar is written in three-four time, and consists of three sections, and in all sixteen bars of four bars, two of which are bisected, making six, six, and four bars. Here we find a strange mingling of joy and sorrow. The first note of most value being A and rising to D, with a throw or grace-note group G D C which denotes sorrow, then the E takes away the sympathetic touch, joy, because the composer along with his fellow-clansmen rejoice on the occasion of their new Chief taking possession of the estates. The notes in the Urlar which suggest sorrow are because of the loss of their beloved Chieftain who has left them for ever. Through the ear of imagination I can hear the composer play his new Theme for the first time, and in reality when I play it I can follow the story told by the Highland minstrel through his great warpipe. He heralds the ascent of his new Chief to his dignified position, and in the pleasing sound of his notes of salutation he assures his new master, as he might have been, that his clansmen will ever be true to his standard in war or peace. At the same time, the notes of sorrow occurring at intervals in his newly-created tune indicate the great loss which they have sustained through the departure of their late Chief

to "the Land o' the Leal." The Urlar is followed by its Doubling, or Thumb Variation. The E movement is deleted and is replaced by high A, with a high A grace-note. The high A in the Doubling creates a greater expression of joy as the performer repeats his Theme. It must not be imagined that the Thumb Variation with its high A occurs in a Salute alone. Any piobaireachd may have a Thumb Variation, though it is rarely, if ever, found in the Gathering. While the high A in the Thumb Variation of a Salute indicates greater joy, in the Lament it is an expression of deeper sorrow. It all depends upon the note or melody that precedes and follows the high A, and also the temperament of the composer and performer. This Salute differs from "MacLeod of Raasay's Salute," which has just been described, because it has a variation and its Doubling before the Taorluath, known as the First Variation. It has no particular name in Gaelic, although sometimes known as the Siubhal. The First Variation is written in six-eight time, and carries with it the same melody as the Theme, but in an entirely different form. It is in perfect keeping with the Urlar. The first half of each bar is of the Taorluath movement, and the second half is of a wavering movement, rising and falling as it goes on. Beginning on D, falling to the low A, and rising again to E, which might be described as a semi-circle, or round movement. The Singling follows the Ground in the second half of the second, fourth, and sixth bars of the first strain; the second half of the second and sixth bars of the second strain; and the second half of the second and fourth bars of the last strain, in a sloping movement, beginning on D, falling to low G, and F D falling to B alternately. In this variation it seems as if the author were telling of how changes took place as years rolled on. As his notes rise and fall it seems as real as life. The coming and going of Chief after Chief, generation after generation, the one following in the other's footsteps. In the Doubling the movement is carried out systematically right through from beginning to end, and also written in six-eight time. The movement which follows the Ground is replaced by the same movement as the rest of the variation. This signifies the desire of the composer, as he stands motionless, to express with more vigour and earnestness the part of the story which he has just related to his hearers. Then we come to the Taorluath, the meaning of which has already been given. It is written in six-eight time, but would be nearer to the manner in which it is actually played if written in two-four time. The alteration in the time-signature cannot be avoided in certain cases. This is an instance, and the Themal melody is still preserved. The Taorluath is different from that of "MacLeod of Raasay's Salute," which has four movements in each bar, because the Urlar is written in common time. Here we have only two movements in each bar, although,

according to the Urlar, which is written in three-four time, there might have been three movements in each bar if the composer had wished. The reason for this may be explained that sometimes to prevent the tune from being too long and wearisome, one of the notes which forms the movement is left out. In other instances one movement is omitted for better melody, according to the taste and discretion of the composer. It does not follow that because there are only two movements or groups of notes to the bar in the First Variation and its Doubling that there should only be two movements to the bar in the Taorluath. The Taorluath here could easily have been written with three movements in each bar. If the composer had desired, he could have given A D E, A D D bised, B D E, and B F D, and still be in perfect form and good melody, as can be seen on consulting the Ground. This is an example of how composers' and performers' tastes differ. We must be content, however, to abide by the tune as the composer wrote it. The Taorluath here is of a lively nature as described in the tune already dealt with. The first note of each movement always varies and comes down to low G, and finally finishes on the low A, except where the variation follows the Theme, and as in the Singling of the First Variation. At this point it seems as if the composer were going deeper into his discourse of how the clansmen had fought in the past and how many victories they had won, also that they were prepared to uphold their honour and traditions in the future as they had done in the past. Now we come to the Doubling of Taorluath, also written in six-eight time, but according to the way that it is played it should be written in two-four time. This is a repetition of the Taorluath, only that there is no movement resembling the Ground. The Doubling is performed in the Taorluath movement throughout. One can imagine seeing the performer come to a dead halt and repeating his tale in the hope that his notes might be carried away in the western breeze and heard by the clansmen in the far distance. The next variation is the Crunluath, still written in six-eight time, but performed in two-four time. The movement is the same as that already described in "MacLeod of Raasay's Salute." The first note in each movement always varies, coming down to the low G and finally finishing on the E, except where the variation follows the Urlar in the long Thernal notes. We have now followed the author's story to its closing stage, in which it would seem as if he were conscious of his performance coming to an end. He expresses a desire on his own part and that of his fellow-clansmen that their new Chief might see many long and prosperous years. Finally we come to the Doubling of Crunluath, which should be written in two-four time. It is entirely of the Crunluath movement throughout. The long Thernal notes in the Singling are converted into the Crunluath movement.

Here the piper is performing his last notes in a standing position, clear and distinct. Before he lays his instrument aside in silence, he moves off in stately form with firm step, returning to his Theme. He repeats it as a double vow of fidelity to his new master, and it dies away in the silence of the cool evening atmosphere that surrounds him. The neighbouring hills echo a joyful response to the shrill cry of the great instrument.

The last tune in this series for description is

**“ Fàilte Uilleam Dhuibh Mhic Coinnich,”**

**“ The Earl of Seaforth's Salute.”**

It will be found in Angus MacKay's "Collection of Piobaireachd," page 116. This piobaireachd was composed by Finlay Dubh MacRae, Seaforth's piper, when his master was in exile in the year 1715. It expressed a wish that Seaforth might return to his Highland home safe and sound.

The Earl of Seaforth fled to France after the Battle of Sheriffmuir. On this fatal field the MacKenzies and MacRaes both distinguished themselves. The MacKenzies were the first clan called upon by General Wade to deliver up their arms, which they did at Brachan Castle in the year 1725. Although the clan had lost their Chief, they were still loyal to him while he was in exile. His estates were forfeited, but the rents were collected regularly and remitted to France. Eight hundred men escorted the money as far as Edinburgh. One would have thought that there was more need to compose a Lament than a Salute under such circumstances. Such, at all events, was not the case, for we find Findlay Dubh MacRae composing this beautiful and inspiring piobaireachd as a compliment to his master in order that he might fill his heart with fresh courage when far from his native home. I have chosen this tune for two reasons, viz.: Because it is entirely different in construction from the two already dealt with, and it expresses a wish on the part of the composer, or, as I have already illustrated, it tells us a story. Here we have proof that it is not entirely imagination to say that piobaireachd is the medium through which the Highlander relates his tale. The Ground of the Earl of Seaforth's Salute is written in common time, and has sixteen bars in three strains of six, six, and four bars. It is from beginning to end a series of runs, commencing on the low G, rising to the high G, and so on. There are two sets of runs in each bar, except the second half of the fourth and sixth bars of the first part, the second and sixth bars of the second part, and the second and fourth bars of the third part, where they all descend. This piobaireachd may be described as being peculiarly grand, and a Theme with its variations which are always pleasing to the ear no matter how often one hears it.

In those pleasing notes of salutation, the piper cheers and encourages his master, who had fled from his clan and country. He assures him that although he is in exile his clansmen are still loyal to him. They collect his rents and send them to him at the risk of their lives, ungrudgingly, and hope that soon he will return to them again in safety. The First Variation, which may be termed the Doubling of the Ground, is also written in common time. It is in perfect keeping with the Ground, and so are all the following variations. The First Variation differs from the Ground in that the second half of the bars already mentioned rise instead of descending, with the result that a very pleasing melody is produced. In this variation it seems as if the piper were endeavouring to brighten his master's hopes of being able to return to them when the awful conflict of Sheriffmuir was forgotten. The Doubling of Variation First is still written in common time, and is even of a more pleasing melody than the Singling. It rises and falls alternately twice in each bar right through the variation, and is of a soothing or quietening nature. It seems as if the minstrel meant to lull the Chieftain in his distress, and bid him cast aside all fear and anxiety, because all is well with his clansmen and his estates at home.

Now we come to the Taorluath Breabach. The word Taorluath has already been described, and Breabach means leaping. Thus, after the Taorluath movement is performed, the fingers, or movement, always rise from the low A to a higher note, which is in accordance with the interpretation of the word Breabach. The Taorluath Breabach is entirely different from any variation already described. It has four notes to each movement, and four syllables to each group of notes. It might have been derived from some natural sounds, or the quadrupling of a sound by echoes. This variation is written in common time, and the accent is on the first and third notes of each group. That is to say, the first note of the movement is a dotted quaver, the second a semi-quaver, the third a dotted quaver, and the last a semi-quaver. This is carried right through the variation. The first note in each movement always varies, and the middle portion is the usual Taorluath movement, except where D B B and D B A notes occur. The movement preceding the notes referred to is slightly different from the others. The first note is a dotted quaver, the second and third are semi-quavers, and the last a dotted quaver. In this instance the first and last note in the group have the strongest accent, because they are followed by a different movement, and so timed as to produce a better melody. We find this variation timed the same in "The Lament for the Harp Tree," "The Marquis of Argyll's Salute," and "The MacRae's March." In "The Red Hand in the MacDonald's Arms," the accent is on the first and last note in the movement right

through the variation. In "Struan Robertson's Salute" it is still different. The accent is on the first note only, being a dotted quaver, the second a semi-quaver, and the third and fourth quavers right through the variation. In "Isabel MacKay" this variation does not agree with any of them. The fourth note is detached from the group, which still gives common time. The Taorluath movement and the additional notes which complete the Taorluath Breabach group are given separately. The first three only are joined together, being a quaver and two semi-quavers, and the fourth note standing by itself is a crotchet. It is very difficult to lay down the law in this species of variation, as the different styles quoted all sound very well, even when performed as timed. The plain Taorluath has a fixed system of accent, but the Taorluath Breabach could perhaps hardly be tied down to a fixed mode of accent. Still, opinions differ very widely: "many men, many minds." A great deal would depend upon the accent in the Urlar, which always regulates the apportionment of the time in all variations, no matter what form they take, but much more in variations that have got no fixed form. Returning to the variation which I have first described, it has beauty and pathos. The minstrel gives expression to his own and his fellow-clansmen's love and loyal devotion to their Chief, whom they have not forgotten or forsaken during his period of exile. The Doubling of Taorluath Breabach is also written in common time, and the accent is on the first and third note of the group in every case. The performer stands motionless as he repeats his wireless message to his Chief. All his energies are put into the music that he is pouring forth, as he turns his ear slightly to the wind in the hope of catching an answer to his pealing notes.

Now we come to the Crunluath Breabach, a movement similar to that of the Crunluath, with two additional notes in the group. There are seven syllables in each movement, and this is the longest of all movements in piobaireachd. It has a resemblance to thunder in the distance. When thunderstorms occur in the Highlands they are sometimes so severe that they shake the very foundations of the houses, and the peals roar along the glens with terrific magnitude, dying away among the mountain solitudes in a low rumbling noise. As the thunder has a very powerful effect on the mind of the Highlander, so has the Crunluath Breabach movement in piobaireachd. It shakes the air around the Celtic minstrel, and rolls down the glen, dying away like the mighty thunder over the distant hilltops. There are six notes in each movement, as for instance, E, A E E A, E, with two groups to the bar of common time. The accent is on the first and last note of each group, except where the long or Themal notes appear as in the Ground. One can follow the