GAELIC PROVERBS
Maclachlan & Stewart

GAELIC PROVERBS.

A COLLECTION
OF
GAELIC PROVERBS
AND
FAMILIAR PHRASES.
BASED ON
MACINTOSH’S COLLECTION.
EDITED BY
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ADVOCATE.

<eng>An sean-fhacal gu fada fior,
Cha bhiagai chear an sean-fhacal.<eng>

EDINBURGH:
MACLACHLAN AND STEWART.
LONDON: SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, & CO.
1881.

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED
TO THE MEMORY OF
THE REV. NORMAN MAC LEOD, D.D.,
MINISTER OF ST. COLUMBA CHURCH, GLASGOW;
A MAN WORTHY TO BE REMEMBERED
WITH AFFECTIONATE VENERATION
BY ALL LOVERS OF THE SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS,
THEIR PEOPLE, AND THEIR LANGUAGE;
WHOSE PERFECT KNOWLEDGE OF GAELIC PROVERBS,
AND HAPPY USE OF THEM,
GAVE A SPECIAL CHARM TO
HIS HIGHLAND DIALOGUES,
WHICH IN WISDOM, HUMOUR, TENDERNESS,
IN HEIGHT OF AIM, PURENESS OF SPIRIT,
AND SIMPLE BEAUTY OF STYLE,
HAVE NOT BEEN SURPASSED
IN THE LITERATURE OF ANY COUNTRY.

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PREFACE.

The collection of Gaelic Proverbs and Phrases, on which the present
collection is based, was first published at Edinburgh in 1785. Some
account of the compiler and the publication will be found at the end of
this volume. Though small in bulk, and in several respects defective,
Macintosh’s collection was a valuable contribution to Celtic Literature.
It was at that time, and has continued to be, the only collection of
Celtic Proverbs gathered into a book, and translated for the benefit of
the world. It had the still greater merit of being a genuine product of
the past, the editor’s share in the compilation of which consisted in
simply giving as correctly as he could the words of sayings familiar to
the people among whom he lived, rendering them into English, and
occasionally illustrating them by an explanation, an anecdote, or a
parallel.

Macintosh contemplated a new edition some time before his death, which
took place in 1808, and a new dedication, to Sir John Macgregor Murray of
Lanrick, was found among his papers. But the second edition, which did
not appear till 1819, shows no other mark of his hand. The additions to
the collection were probably found among his papers, but the new editor,
Alexander Campbell (author of ‘The Grampians Deso-

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late,’ and other works), says nothing on the subject. A short memoir of
Macintosh forms the Preface, and may fairly be characterised as a
curiosity in Biography. The title-page says that the collection is
‘Englished anew,’ and the claim is well founded, much of the English
being of a very novel kind. The ignorance of the elements of Gaelic
displayed in some of the new translations is still more extraordinary,
often so ludicrous, as to make it matter of wonder and regret that
Campbell ventured on the task. (1) Macintosh’s translations are on the
whole creditable, sometimes happy; the new ones substituted for them are
rarely changes for the better; much oftener they give nonsense for sense,
and turgid commonplace for pithiness. A few specimens are given below.
(2) The spelling in the new

(1) It is with compunction that one speaks thus of a man for whom both
Burns and Scott had some regard, and to whom we are in that respect
indebted not a little. Several of Scott’s best songs, ‘Jock of
Hazeldean,’ ‘Pibroch of Donald Dhu,’ ‘MacGregor’s Gathering,’
‘MacCrimmon’s Lament,’ ‘Donald Caird’s come again,’ were written for

(2) 'A lion beagan ’us beagan,'<eng> is rendered Fill little and little; <gai>"B’e sin seangan toirt greim a gearran,'<eng> That were the emmet’s bite bewailing; <gai>"Cha ghille mur umhailt,'<eng> He is not a disobedient man-servant; <gai>"Léintibh farsuin,'<eng> Narrow shirts; <gai>"Cha d’ ith na coin an aimsir,'<eng> The dogs did not worry the wether; <gai>"Dalt arain-eòrna Mhic Philip,'<eng> MacGillip’s oat-cake foster-child; <gai>"Gheibh bean bhaoth dlùth gun cheannach, ’s cha ’n fháigh i inneach,'<eng> A wizard’s wife will get retribution without buying it, and she will not get a cure; <gai>"Leigheas air leth a’ losgadh,<eng> Burning is half cure; <gai>"Leann dubh air mo chridhe,<eng> Black-beer at my heart; <gai>"Trod nam ban mu ’n scarbh,'<eng> The wife's scolding about the heron (This is one of the comparatively few mistranslations of Macintosh);

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edition is far worse than in the old, which, for the period when it appeared, may be considered very respectable.

A more remarkable defect in both editions is the omission of many of the most familiar and popular proverbs and phrases, such as, <gai>"An là a chì ’s nach fhaic, Am fear a bhios air dheireadh beiridh a’ bhliast air, An gad air an robh ’n t-iag. Am fear a bhios gun mhodh, saoilidh e, &c., Aisling caillich, &c., Gach dileas gu deireadh, Is treasa tuath na tighearna, Saolildh am fear a bhios ’n a thàmh, &c., Tarruing am bleidir’ ort, &c., &c.<eng>

These various defects in both editions, and the comparative rarity of the book, suggested the present edition. The whole original collection has been translated anew, so far as that seemed necessary, and the additions to it, through the kind assistance of numerous friends, have trebled the number of proverbs and phrases given by Macintosh. The number in the first edition was 1305; in the second, 1538; in this edition it exceeds 3900.

The coming in of fresh materials from time to time, and the desire to make the collection as complete and correct as possible, have delayed the publication to a degree requiring some apology. <gai>Cha bhi luathas agus grinneas,<eng> a very Celtic sentiment, has perhaps been too

<gai>"Tha ’n uail an aghaidh an tairbh,'<eng> Pride is in the bull’s front. One specimen of Campbell’s grandiloquence may suffice. <gai>"Cha ’n ann do ’n ghuin an gàire,'<eng> is fairly rendered by Macintosh, Smiles are not companions of pain. Campbell’s improved version is, The laugh is not excited by the sharp lancinating pain of a stitch.

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influential. But the alphabetical arrangement was decided on from the beginning, as the most useful and feasible; and some of the best additions came at the very last. (1)

It is fair also to state, that the most of these valuable new materials were received without translations, in most cases without note or comment, and not always in the most legible handwriting. Nor will it be new to any one who has meddled with Proverbs to hear, that the most
diverse interpretations of the same saying are sometimes given, by persons of the most competent qualifications as judges of Folk-Lore. This fact consoles one somewhat under the certainty that all the translations and explanations will not please everybody.

We have as yet no absolute standard of Gaelic orthography, and it is no disgrace, considering that William Shakespeare spelled his own great name in several ways, and that even Samuel Johnson’s English spellings are not all followed now. Our Gaelic version of the Bible is generally accepted by all reasonable persons as our grammatical standard, but being a human production it cannot claim infallibility, and it was from the beginning too much regulated by deference to the practice of Irish grammarians, and a slight dread of anything too vernacular and simple. The latest edition of it, an admirable one, (2) proves that it is possible to get three Gaelic scholars to agree in orthography. But

(1) There are still a good many Gaelic sayings which have never got into print. The present Editor will be glad to get any such.

(2) Published for the Edinburgh National Bible Society, 1880.

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Mr. J. F. Campbell does not exaggerate when he questions, whether “there are ten men now living who would write a hundred lines of Gaelic offhand, and spell them in the same way”. I have been very desirous to make this book in that respect as correct as possible, and in general accordance with the best authorities. But an occasional divergence from the canonical norm, and even varied spellings of the same word, have seemed to me not only excusable but desirable. The phrases in which these words occur belong to the simplest vernacular forms of speech, and ought to be so given as to represent faithfully the varieties of phrase and pronunciation found among Gaelic-speaking people. The greater part of the two thousand three hundred sayings here first collected were received in MS., mostly from good Gaelic scholars, who spelled sometimes in different ways.

Among these varieties of spelling are béul and bial, bréug and briag, féur and fiar, sgéul and sgial, ris and rithist, &c. To adhere uniformly to any of these would sometimes spoil the rhyme or rhythm on which the charm of a proverb often depends. The only positive innovation in this volume, so far as I know, is a very small one, seo for so, chosen because it more correctly represents the sound sho, the common pronunciation of the word in the Highlands. For the same reason I have invariably substituted sid for sud, and dhaibh for dhoibh, the former being the pronunciation of Inverness-shire, which I naturally preferred to that of Argyllshire. The addition of the acute accent to such words as béul and lóm is not an innovation, having the sanction of such a

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Gaelic scholar as James Munro. It is difficult to see why féin and mór should be always accented, and béul and lóm left without it. The use of accents might well be limited to ambiguous words, such as lon, lón, and lòn, all of different sound and meaning. Except for this purpose, they are useless alike to those who know the language, and to those who do not. They are all the more confusing, when it is found that the Irish use of them entirely differs from ours, and that, with us, some people write mór, and others mòr, the one sounding like mould, the other like more.
Having adhered to the use of accents in this book, I have chosen the former of these, as representing what I consider the better pronunciation; and following the example of Munro, I have given the same accent to lóm, dön, tóm, &c. The words ceard, feàrr, &c., I have purposely left without accent, because there are two pronunciations of them, equally correct. Some say kyard and fyarr, accented ceàrd and feàrr; others say kyaird and fare, spelled cèard and fèarr. For the same reason the accent is omitted over feìn, when preceded by the first personal or possessive pronoun. It is a singular peculiarity of speech, in a part of the North Western Highlands and most of the Islands, that they say ay-hain (e-fhéin), himself, but mee-heen (mi-fhein), myself. This curious variety may not be defensible, but the fact has been taken into consideration.

In many cases the vowel in a word is sounded long or short, according to the apposition of the word, and, as in Greek, the presence or absence of the accent should mark this, e.g., Féill, where the e is long, Feill-Brìghde

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where it is short. This has generally been kept in view, but occasional slips will be found.

In addition to some misplacements or omissions of accents, there are a few omissions of apostrophes, chiefly after the article a, contracted for an. Probably they will never be noticed, except by some very critical eyes.

As to the matter of the book, I have followed, and I hope improved upon, the example of Macintosh, in giving such illustrative notes and comments as seemed necessary or suitable. In this respect my original intention, merely to give an improved translation, with a few additions, has been greatly changed, and I found at last that the collection could no more be called 'Macintosh's Collection'. He rightly included Familiar Phrases as well as Proverbs, and I have followed the example, giving a large number of vernacular phrases, which, though not proverbs, are household Highland words, all the more worthy to be preserved, that the use of the Gaelic language in its native land is slowly but surely passing away. The venerable creature dies hard, (1) but the process is going on, some of her heartless children doing their little best to hasten her end. I have included phrases and sayings which may seem of small value, but if that be an error, it is on the safe side. Good Macintosh was not afraid to give some specimens of Gaelic maledictions, and a considerable number has been added in this volume. To very strait-laced people this may seem

(1) <gai>‘S e ’m bial a dh’ obas mu dheireadh<eng>—The mouth gives in last.

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objectionable; but it is an interesting peculiarity of these Gaelic imprecations, that they are neither coarse nor blasphemous. They never take the divine name in vain; and though not commonplace, there is not one of them to be compared for a moment in malignity with the dreadful ingenuity of Ernulphus.

I have taken all due pains to translate correctly, and, so far as possible, to preserve the pith of the original, which is sometimes as difficult with Proverbs as it is with Poetry. A good many sayings are
given of which the meaning is ambiguous or obscure. I have not excluded them on that account, as it sometimes happens that an old saying may have some recondite meaning, or local reference, which the words do not convey on the surface. That the interpretations I have given are always correct is too much to assume. In the case of some of the <gai>dubh-fhacail<eng> or dark sayings, I have thought it better to give no comment, than to offer an unsatisfactory guess. Comments or illustrations have been necessarily limited to such sayings as seemed most to require them, or to invite them. They might have been multiplied indefinitely; but the line had to be drawn somewhere; and it seemed not too much to take for granted, that the readers of this book would be of a class not requiring explanations of things comparatively obvious.

The only improvement in the second edition of Macintosh, excepting in paper and print, was the increased number of parallel proverbs given in the notes, which greatly added to the interest of the book. That practice, of which Erasmus showed such a wonderful example in his Adagia, has been followed in this volume to an extent which to some may seem excessive, to others inadequate. It has added seriously to the labour and time spent on the work, but the labour has been a pleasant one, and the time has not been wasted, if the result be found to have increased the value of the collection, from the point of view of what may be called 'Comparative Parœmiography'. Lest the array of languages sometimes cited might suggest an ostentation of learning, it is right to mention that my acquaintance with some of them is of a very slender kind, but that I have used all available means, and got help from more competent persons, to give the words in these languages correctly. (1) A few errors will be found, but none of them, I believe, of importance.

(1) The principal works that have been used in citing these parallel proverbs are, Erasmi Adagia, 1646; Corpus Parœmiographorum Grœcorum, Ed. Leutsch et Schneidewin, 1839-51; Ray’s English Proverbs, Ed. 1813; Fuller’s Gnomologia, 1817; Hazlitt’s English Prov., 1869; Kelly’s Scottish Pro,v., 1721; Ramsay’s Scot. Prov. (Works, Oliver & Co., N.D., Vol. III.); Henderson’s Scot. Prov. (Ed. Donald), 1876; Hislop’s Scot. Prov., 1862; Cregeen’s Manks Dict., 1835; Kelly’s Manx Dict., 1866; Bourke’s Irish Grammar, 1867; R. McAdam’s Irish Prov. in Ulster Arch. Journ., Vols. VI. and VII.; Pughe’s Welsh Dict., (Ed. Pryse), 1866; Myvirian Archaiology, Vol. III., 1807; Prov. et Dictons de la Basse-Bretagne, par L. F. Sauvé, Revue Celtique, Vols. I., II., III.; Pineda’s Spanish Dict, 1740; Burke’s Spanish Salt, 1877; Roux de Lincy’s Prov. François, 1859; Méry’s Hist. Generale des Prov. 1829; Giusti’s Prov. Toscani, 1871; Castagna’s Prov. Italiani, 1869; Bonifacio’s Prov. Lombardi, 1860; Dict. of Danish Proverbs (Danish and French), 1759; Sandvoss’s So Spricht das Volk, 1860; Sprichwörter und Spruchreden von Deutschen, Leipzig, N.D.; Bohn’s Polyglot of Prov., 1857; Bohn’s Handbook of Prov., 1855; Kelly’s

The value of Proverbs, as condensed lessons of wisdom, ‘abridgements of knowledge,’ as Mr. Disraeli calls them, has been recognised by the wisest of men, from Solomon to Aristotle, from Aristotle to Bacon, from Bacon to Benjamin Franklin. The interest attaching to them as an index of the character of a nation is equally great. They are an unintentional, and
all the more truthful, revelation of a people’s peculiarities, habits and ideas. In both these respects the proverbs embraced in this collection are entitled to a high place in the unwritten Philosophy of nations. Some of them are common to various countries; others of them are borrowed, gaining oftener than losing in their new form. But a large proportion of them is of native growth, as certainly as is the heather on Ben Nevis, or the lichen on Cape Wrath; and as a reflex of the ways of thinking and feeling, the life and manners, the wisdom or superstition, the wit or nonsense of the Celtic race in Scotland, they are interesting alike to the historian, the philologist, and the student of human nature.

In speaking of them as a representation of the sentiments of a nation or people, it must be borne in mind that, though the Gaelic-speaking population of Scotland is now but a small part of the whole, their mother-tongue was up to the time of Malcolm III. (1057-1093) the vernacular speech of the greater part of the people of North Britain, not excepting their native king,

Prov. of all Nations, 1859; Burckhardt’s Arabic Proverbs, 1830; Negris’ Mod. Greek Prov., 1831; Disraeli’s Philos. of Prov., in Cur. of Eng. Lit.; Trench on Proverbs, 3rd ed., 1854.

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whose name alone would have bewrayed him as such. (1) These Gaelic proverbs, therefore, so far as they are truly ancient, must be regarded as not merely Highland but Scottish. Where they are found in identical terms in Gaelic and Broad Scotch or English, the presumption is, unless they are on the face of them modern, that the Gaelic is the original, instead of being a translation, that language having been the common speech, not only of the Scotia of the time, but of the Western Coast and Isles, and of Galloway, centuries before either of the other two had come into existence. To some people this statement may be surprising, but to all competent scholars it is the mere expression of a now well-established fact in our Scottish history. (2)

The growth of Proverbs, like that of Ballad Poetry, is one of the most singular phenomena in the history of Literature. They are universally admitted to embody a great deal of wit and wisdom, artistically expressed. They must have been composed by persons of no ordinary ability; and yet, with the exception of a small fraction out of many thousands, their authorship is utterly unknown. This undoubtedly has added to their influence, for the same reason that anonymous leading articles are so much more powerful than if they were signed. When to this are added the sanctions of antiquity and association, these old sayings seem to address us like impersonal oracles, the voices, not of individuals, but of many generations, like the ‘ancestral

(1) ‘Calum Ceann-mór,’ generally rendered ‘Canmore,’ Big-head Malcolm. See Note on ‘Ceann mór air duine glic,’ p. 78.

(2) See Skene’s Celtic Scotland, Vol. I.

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voices’ heard by Kubla Khan. And yet it seems very probable that a great many of the best of them were composed by persons in humble life, poor in position and in culture, rich only in mother-wit. Many of them,
doubtless, were composed by gentlemen and scholars, some by persons of high degree, at a time when Gaelic was familiar to all the Highland nobility, and when the intercourse between high and low was constant, free, and kindly. Among the aristocracy of intellect, the name of one may be specially mentioned, as a Celt by birth, to whom Gaelic was his mother-tongue, our greatest scholar, George Buchanan. The most of these proverbs, however, so far as native, came from thatched cottages, and not from baronial or academic halls. They expressed the thoughts and feelings of hardy, frugal, healthy-minded and healthy-bodied men, who spent most of their time in the fields, in the woods, on the moors, and on the sea. So considered, they do great credit to the people whose thoughts and manners they represent, proving that there was and is a civilisation in Celtic Scotland, much beyond the imagination even of such a brilliant Celt as Lord Macaulay. The Irish Book of Kells, and the Scottish Hunterston Brooch, reveal to the eye of the artist and the archaeologist a degree of artistic taste and skill among our Celtic ancestors, which modern art can imitate, but scarcely equal. Not less plainly do these old Gaelic sayings reflect a high moral standard, an intelligence shrewd and searching, a singular sense of propriety and grace, and, what may be considered one of the tests of intellectual rank and culture, a distinct sense of humour, never found among savages or clod-hoppers.

The special relations of Scotland to some of the continental nations will account for the close similarity of some of these proverbs to foreign ones. A few of the Hebridean ones have a strong resemblance to some of the sayings of our Norse ancestors. Our old and intimate connection with France is well known. For many generations we sent soldiers and students to that country. Some Scottish priests are still educated at Douay, as in days of yore, and a Scots College was long maintained for their special benefit at Paris. From a very remote date they were in the habit of finding their way to Rome, as a verse by one of our oldest Gaelic poets, Murdoch the Scot, bears record (see Supplement, p. 391). There is still a Scottish College at Rome, and some Scottish students are regularly trained in the Propaganda College. A Scottish College was founded at Madrid in 1627, translated to Valladolid in 1771, where a considerable proportion of our Roman Catholic clergy now complete their education. These facts will help to account for the similarity of many Gaelic Proverbs to French, Italian, and Spanish ones. Our old military connection with Denmark and the Netherlands will help in like manner to account for any borrowed from these countries and from Germany. The few survivors of our much-prized contribution to the ranks of Gustavus Adolphus very probably carried back with them to Sutherland more proverbs than dollars.

The resemblance of our Gaelic proverbs to Irish ones, especially Ulster ones, is what might be expected. The

only wonder is that the number of Irish ones hitherto given to the world is so small, and that those given are so remarkably deficient in that unpremeditated airy wit for which our Hibernian cousins are specially distinguished. The resemblance to Manx sayings is more remarkable. In that interesting island, with which our Celtic connection has for centuries been very slight, sayings are still found in words almost identical with ours, which must have originated in a prehistoric period, when the Isle of Man, the north of Ireland, the south-west of Scotland,
and the Hebrides, spoke the same Gaelic tongue, and had constant intercourse. The resemblance between Gaelic and Welsh proverbs, as between the two languages, is very remote. Of the latter, unfortunately, the outside world has never been able to judge, our Cymric relatives not having thought it worth their while to give the benefit of their ancestral wisdom to anybody who did not understand their own beautiful language. A great deal of it is embodied in proverbs remarkable for brevity.

These Gaelic proverbs give very little indication of those ferocious traits which ignorance or prejudice is apt to regard as specially characteristic of our Celtic ancestors. They express very few sentiments of which any muscular English Christian can disapprove. Burckhardt makes a melancholy note on one of the Egyptian Proverbs, of which he has rendered several hundreds into English. He says it is the only one of them known to him expressing any faith in human nature. What a comment on the history of that people! Of these Gaelic sayings, on the contrary, almost the very op-

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posite can be said. Their view of human nature is keen but kindly, critical, but not contemptuous. The number of them that can be condemned, on the score of morals or of taste, is singularly small, more than can be said of the Proverbs of several great nations. They represent very much the character that is still found among our unadulterated Highland people, which undoubtedly they contributed much to form. That character is a mixture of diverse qualities, some admirable, some not so, but on the whole very respectable, seldom repulsive, oftener attractive, most rarely of all indicating selfishness, stupidity, heartlessness, or treachery. These special faults have ever been regarded among Highlanders with antipathy, pity, contempt, and abhorrence.

In these Gaelic Proverbs there is plain and consistent inculcation of the virtues of Truthfulness, Honesty, Fidelity, Self-restraint, Self-esteem, Sense of Honour, Courage, Caution, in word and deed, Generosity, Hospitality, Courtesy, Peaceableness, Love of Kindred, Patience, Promptness, Industry, Providence. There are none to be found excusing or recommending Selfishness, Cunning, Time-serving, or any other form of vice or meanness. A salmon from the stream, a deer from the forest, a wand from the wood, three thefts that no man ever blushed for, is the only saying expressive of any looseness of sentiment in regard to the rights of property, and it is not a very shocking one, coming as it does from times when the lifting of cattle was not considered disgraceful even to men of high degree. I would give him a night’s quarters, though he had a man’s head under his arm, may sound ferocious, but it might still be used, simply as an emphatic expression of regard, by a person quite incapable of aiding or abetting a homicide.

The specimens now to be given are selected almost exclusively from the purely native proverbs.

RELIGION.—The Scottish Celts are naturally disposed to be religious, but not to speak much or familiarly of sacred things. There is a religion of old date indicated in some of these proverbs, the creed of which is very short and simple, but good so far as it goes. It combines the chief
articles of the primitive Hebrew and Greek religion. It is distinctly a Necessitarian system, implying a fixed belief that there is a Fate or Providence that shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will. Here are some examples:—

The fated will happen. For whom ill is fated, him it will strike. No man can avoid the spot, where birth or death is his lot. Where folk’s fate is to go, ford or hill won’t prevent. You can’t give luck to a luckless man. Who is born to be hanged cannot be drowned. The man of long life will escape danger. He whose destiny is cast sits on a sharp cope. His hour was pursuing him.

This belief in Fate is associated, as in the Augustinian and Calvinistic theology, with belief in an almighty and just God. The number of proverbs in which the divine name is mentioned is small, but they are good. Here are a few:—

All will be as God wills. What God has promised man cannot baulk. What God bestowed not won’t be long enjoyed. Short-lived is all rule but the rule of God. All things have an end but the goodness of God. When God teaches not man cannot. God comes in distress, and distress goes. Not less in God’s sight is the end of the day than the beginning. Two days alike ill God to poor men doth not will.

The certainty that evil has its reward is distinctly taught in these proverbs:—

Do evil and wait the end. There is no hiding of evil but not to do it. Wrong cannot rest, nor ill deed stand. Though there be delay, the evil-doer is not forgotten. As a man makes his bed, so must he lie. What’s got at the Devil’s head will be lost at his tail. Repentance won’t cure mischief. Death-bed repentance is sowing seed at Martinmas.

With much natural reverence for religion, our Celts have combined a wholesome spirit of inquiry and a freedom of criticism on the ministers of religion:—

God has not said all thou hast said. It is not the priest’s first story that should be believed. It is his own child the priest baptizes first. The priest drank only what he had. The justice of the clergy to each other. The friendship of the clergy, scraping and scratching one another. Hard as is the factor’s rule, no better is the minister’s. It’s a fine day when the fox preaches.

There is no Gaelic proverb making any worse reflection on the clerical character than the above. The proverbs of Italy and France specially abound in insinuations against priests and women. In both respects, the Gaelic ones form a contrast to them, which testifies equally to the character of the people, their priests, and their women.

The Gaelic idea of the Devil is very different from Milton’s. One of the commonest terms for that personage is Muisean, literally, the mean rascal.

MORALS—General.
Avoid the evil, and it will avoid thee. Love the good, and forgive the bad. Do good against the ill. Every creature but man can bear

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well-being. He gets no ease who suffers not. Better wear than rust. A bad man makes his own fate. Pity him who makes a bad habit. Do what becomes you, and you'll see what pleases you. Going to ruin is silent work. Better the long clean road than the short dirty road. He thinks no evil who means no evil. Better the little bannock with a blessing than the big one with a curse. Good is not got without grief. A good name is sooner lost than won. It's easier to go down than to climb. One should salute with a clean hand. Good comes from sadness, and happiness from quietness.

SELF-RESPECT and SENSE OF HONOUR.

As thou valuest thyself, others will esteem thee. He who lies in the mud will rise dirty. Pity him whose birthright is to eat dirt. A man’s will is his kingdom. A man is king in his own house. Dead is the dependent. The dependent is timid. When a man goes down, his own back is his support. A king’s son is no nobler than his company. Were the wealth of the world yours, weigh it not against your shame. A man may survive distress, but not disgrace. A man will die to save his honour. Honour is a tender thing. Honour can’t bear patching. Honour is nobler than gold. Remember those you came from. Follow close the fame of your fathers. (This is Ossianic—Fingal to Oscar.)

TRUTH, JUSTICE, FIDELITY.

Truth is pleasing to God. Truth is better than gold. Better be poor than a liar. Whose word is no word, his luck is no luck. Woe to him that fears not to lie. Blister on the lying tongue, padlock on the hemless mouth! A lie has but one leg. A lie needs a prop. A lie can’t last long. None lied that would not steal. The lying mouth will be shut.

Counsel of the bell of Scone, touch not what is not thine own. Ill for him whose goods are another man’s. The reaver’s goods are ill to keep. The thief is brother to the hound. A mouthful of meat and a townful of shame. He that hides the thief is worse. Put not your sickle without leave into another’s corn. Don’t put your spoon into kail that’s not yours. The wrongful should not be litigious. Don’t lend the loan. The loan should be sent laughing home.

He that promises must pay. A promise is a debt. Willing pays no debt. There is no greater fraud than promise unfulfilled.

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The betrayer is the murderer. Let the knave be kept down! Forsake not a friend in the fray.

COURAGE.

The weak shall not win. Assurance is two-thirds of success. The bashful won’t be brave. Fear is worse than fighting. He that flees not will be fled from. Weak is the grasp of the downcast. Neither seek nor shun the fight. (This admirable saying is Ossianic.) Swift goes the rear that’s pricked by fear.

TEMPERANCE.
A man may live though not full. One may live on little, though not on nothing. Tighten your belt till you get food. Eat less and buy it. Only dogs eat to surfeit. Hunger is a good cook. Hungry birds fight best. Big belly was never bountiful. A sweet mouth will send you to beggary. Take your thirst to the stream, as the dog does. I like not the drinking fellowship. The uneasy seat in the ale-house is best. Leave the fag-end of a fair.

INDUSTRY, PUNCTUALITY, PROMPTNESS, EARLY RISING.

Better knot straws than do nothing. Will is a good worker. Better try than hope. Long sleeping makes hot rowing. Lazy is the hand that ploughs not. Who won’t plough when it is cold shall not reap when it is hot. He who neither works nor pushes, won’t get food among the bushes. The diligent weak will beat the lazy strong. The silly body builds the dyke when the corn is eaten. Take the good day early. Get bait while the tide is out. Dry shoes won’t get fish. The sea won’t wait for a load. Keep the fair on its day. You can’t to-day recall yesterday. Time won’t wait, nor tide show mercy. The late watcher never overtook the early riser. Lively is the early riser. He that lies long in bed, will be all day hard bestead. Give your ‘thank you’ to the cock.

COURTESY, HOSPITALITY.—Highland courtesy and hospitality are so well known that a very few out of many sayings will suffice under these heads.

He that is courteous will be courteous to all. The goodman’s advice ought to be taken. Forwardness spoils manners. A dog goes before his company. Courtesy never broke man’s crown. The rude jester is brother to the fool.

He’s a bad guest whom the house is the worse of. House with closed door can’t be kept. Happy is that which is shared—pity him who fares alone. A thing is the bigger of being shared. The scarcer the food, the more bounty to share it. Welcome the coming, speed the parting guest. A feast is nothing without its conversation. The first story from the host, and tales till morning from the guest.

BENEVOLENCE.

Sense hides shame. Love hides ugliness. Woe to him who won’t maintain his own poor one. Woe to him who vexes the weak. None ever did violence but suffered violence. Woe to him who would wish a ruined home to any one.

PATIENCE.

Better weary foot than weary spirit. The day is longer than the brae, we’ll be at the top yet. Patience overcomes trouble. Patience never hurt a man. Patience wins victory. Patience wears out stones.

HUMILITY.

The heaviest ear of corn bends its head lowest. Sit lowly, and pay nobly.

SILENCE, CAUTION, WORDS AND DEEDS, APPEARANCES.
It’s a big word that the mouth can’t hold. A word is big when it’s lessened. It’s good manners to be silent. Choose thy speech. Say little and say well. It’s well that the teeth are before the tongue. Shut mouth incurs no debt. If you tell all you see, you’ll tell what will shame you. If you hear a hueless tale, don’t repeat it. Believe not the bad report till proved. A man’s smile is not his own. Not words prove, but deeds. The worst cow lows loudest. Puffing won’t make piping. Fulsome talk won’t make kelp. The nodding of heads doesn’t row the boat. A rotten stick is often nice to look at. The Devil is often attractive. A rich heart may be under a poor coat. Good sword has often been in poor scabbard.

FOOLS.

It’s difficult to give sense to a fool. Who won’t take advice is worthless, who takes every advice is so. It’s bad flesh that won’t take salt, worse is the body that won’t take warning. As crooked as the fool’s furrow.

BOORS.

The clown is known at morning—he breaks his shoe-tie. If you hit a dog or a clown, hit him well. Give the impudent fellow an inch and he’ll take an ell. He that is rude thinks his rudeness good manners. Don’t provoke a barbarian.

WOMEN, MARRIAGE.—I don’t know any other Proverbs that speak of women so respectfully as the Gaelic ones do. They are not wanting in humour, but they never regard women as inferior creatures and mere causes of mischief, which is the point of view of the Proverbs of several great nations.

Meal is finer than grain, women are finer than men. There was never good or ill, but women had to do with. Modesty is the beauty of women. I like not pullets becoming cocks. Take no woman for a wife in whom you cannot find a flaw. Choose your wife as you wish your children to be. Take a bird from a clean nest. Choose the good mother’s daughter, were the Devil her father. If you take a wife from Hell, she’ll bring you home there. When you see a well-bred woman, catch her, catch her; if you don’t do it, another will match her. Their own will to all men, all their will to women. What a woman knows not she’ll conceal. Harsh is the praise that cannot be listened to; dark are the dames that cannot be dallied with. Where a cow is, a woman will be, where a woman is, temptation will be (This is attributed to St. Columba). A man’s wife is his blessing or bane. If you wish to be praised, die; if you wish to be decried, marry. You are too merry, you ought to marry. Who speaks ill of his wife dishonours himself. True or false, it will injure a woman. Warm is the mother’s breath.

CHILDREN.

Pity those who have them, pity more those who haven’t. Better no children than luckless children. The crow likes her greedy blue chick. A house without dog or cat or child, a house without mirth or smile. The motherless child has many faults.
EDUCATION.

Better be unborn than untaught. When the twig is tender, it is easiest bent. The child you teach not at your knee, you won’t teach at your ear (i.e., when grown up). The early learning is the pretty learning. A child is known by his manners. The child that’s left to himself will put his mother to shame. Ignorance is a heavy burden. Blind is the ignorant. He that knows is strong.

KINDRED, FOSTERHOOD, CLANNISHNESS.

Blood is hotter than water. Blood is stronger than breeding. Blood will withstand the rocks. Flesh will warm to kin against a man’s will. All the water in the sea won’t wash out our kindred. Bare is shoulder without brother, bare hearth without sister. Pity him who turns his back on his people. Trews like to be among clothes, I like to be among my people. Throw reproach on your kinsman, it will rest on your family. The Clans of the Gael shoulder to shoulder! Dear is a kinsman, but the pith of the heart is a foster-brother. Pity him who has few foster-friends.

FRIENDSHIP.

Friendship is as it’s kept. Friends are lost by calling often, and by calling seldom. It’s poor friendship that needs to be constantly bought. Two crossing the ford are best near each other. A friend’s eye is a good looking-glass. Better coldness of a friend than warmth of an enemy. A silly friend is more troublesome than a wise enemy. A friend can’t be helped without trouble. He is not my friend that hurts me. Pity him who has weak friends. Don’t say you know a man till you divide a spoil with him.

LANDLORD AND TENANT.—Some of these sayings are remarkable, and worthy of attention, all the more, that the people whose thoughts they express are naturally contented, quiet, tractable, averse to innovation, agitation, or violence.

Tenanty are stronger than laird. (In its original sense this would be, Tribe is stronger than Chief. See Skene’s Celtic Scotland, Vol. III., chap. iv. and vi.) A farmer on his feet is taller than a gentleman on his knees. Woe to him that for-

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sakes the tenanty without winning the laird. An alder lord will twist an oak tenant. Ill for them that have a weak lord. He that quarrels with the gentry is a miserable man. It’s easy to put him out whose own the house is not. Slippery is the flagstone at the great house door. The yield of the land is according to the laird. But for fear of double rent, Tiree would yield a double crop. It’s little we complain, though we suffer much. One teat of a cow is better than a quarter of oats. Tenant after tenant makes the lands dear. The sheep’s jaw will put the plough on the shelf. Where there are no boys in arms, there will be no armed men.

HUSBANDRY—FOOD.—There are a great many sayings under these heads. They belong to a time when the cultivation of the soil, though of a rude and primitive kind, supplied the chief source of living to the population, and was done with ploughs and not with spades, when the great majority of the peasantry had horses, cows, and sheep, of their own. Their food consisted chiefly of oatmeal cakes, porridge, and gruel, butter and cheese, occasionally fish, very rarely meat. One Gaelic word peculiarly
indicates the dependence of the Gael on the soil—'Teachd-an-tìr,' the yield of the land, the most common term for living, sustenance. Scarcity of food, sometimes dearth, was not confined to the Highlands two centuries ago, but it was naturally more common in the remoter and least cultivated parts. One of the sayings very exactly expresses the Highland character in reference to food. A man can live on little, but not on nothing. Moderation in meat and drink has always been a Highland characteristic. The use of whisky is comparatively modern. Among the sayings here collected it is only once mentioned by name, while references to ale and wine are numerous.

[SAYINGS THAT REFER TO PREHISTORIC TIMES.]

The number of sayings that refer to Fionn or Fingal, and the people of whom he was head, the Feinne, whom we prefer not to call 'Fenians' (see Note on 'Cha d’ thug Fionn,’ p. 100), is considerable; and there is no class of sayings more frequently quoted in the Highlands and referred to, since time immemorial. The Fingalian fairyplay, As strong as Cuchullin, Like Ossian after the Feinne, Conan’s life among the devils, and many others, are still among the familiar phrases in every Celtic household in Scotland. Very curiously, not one of them is included in the Irish Proverbs hitherto published. This does not of course imply that they are unknown in Ireland. It would be inexplicable if they were not; and Canon Bourke (who, it is to be hoped, will yet publish the collection of Irish Proverbs of which he gave a specimen in his Grammar,) informs me that he has been familiar with some of them from his childhood. But it strengthens the belief that the whole story and poetry of Fionn and the Feinne have been more deeply implanted, and better preserved, whatever the reason be, among the Scottish than among the Irish Gael.

Of Druidism, which some excessively knowing and critical writers, far in advance of the Venerable Bede, and even of Julius Caesar, have treated as a mere myth, there are at least two curious relics among these Gaelic sayings:—As clever as Coivi the Druid. Though near the stone be to the ground, nearer is the help of Coivi (see Note, p. 143). Such sayings as 'Deiseal air gach nì' belong to the same period.

[HUMOROUS SAYINGS.—The notion of most Sassenachs anent 'Scotch Wut' is derived at second-hand from our dear Elia and Sydney Smith, both of whom, though exquisitely clever and delightful, were quite fallible men. Any one who thinks the Scottish people inferior in humour to the English had better contrast the Proverbs of the one nation with those of the other. At the risk of being considered partial or parochial, the present editor has no hesitation in saying, that the Sassenach is incarnate prose compared with the Scot, that the Northern sayings greatly surpass the Southern in humour, felicity, and love of artistic form. He cannot claim for the Scottish Celts a greater sense of humour than is found among the Lowlanders, but he does claim for them a very delicate edge, with a cut not less severe. As for their being a melancholy people, there could be nothing more absurd imagined. One can be thoughtful, even pensive, and yet very fond of fun, in loco. Irony and satire, more than humour strictly so called, are characteristic of the Scottish Gael.

Here follow some specimens:—
Twenty-one captains over twenty soldiers. The birds live, though not all hawks. It’s the bigger of that, as the wren said, when it dropped something in the sea. Big egg never came from wren. ‘Where art thou, wren?’ said the eagle: ‘Far above thee,’ said the wren (on the eagle’s back). Howling is natural to dogs. He’s a fine man if you don’t ask of him. The wren spreads his feet wide in his own house. The highway is wide, and may be trod. Better a lobster than no husband. Better peace with a hen than strife. You would be a good messenger to send for death. The longest lay will end at last. The old woman is the better of being warmed, but not of being burned. It would be thick water that would wash his face. Bold is the puppy in the lap of strength. He sat very awry when he did that. You were born far from the house of good manners. You were not in

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when sense was being shared. Your grandmother’s death is long in your memory. Better ‘Heyday!’ than ‘Alas!’ Pity him who would put you in the ship’s bow! It’s a big beast that there isn’t room for outside. An inch off a man’s nose is a great deal. He is lucky to whom you would promise the gallows. Geese understand each other. ‘There’s meat and music here,’ as the fox said when he ran away with the bagpipe. The fish in the sea like us mortals be. You spoiled a dwarf, and didn’t make a man. Even a haggis will run down hill. Two will have peace to-night, myself and the white horse, as the wife said when her husband died. Like the white horse at the mill-door, thinking more than he said. Like the the old cow’s tail, always last. It’s not easy to put trews on a cat. You may be a good man, as Neil of the Mountain said to the cat, but you haven’t the face of one. Pity your sweet mouth should ever go under ground. Women’s patience—up to three. The sod is a good mother-in-law. The sea will settle when it marries.

POETICAL SAYINGS.—Among purely poetical and pretty sayings, the Gaelic ones take a high place. Here are a few examples, in addition to some already given.

Blue are the hills that are far from us. Night is a good herdman; she brings all creatures home. The three prettiest dead, a child, a salmon, and a black-cock. The sea likes to be visited. Thy heart’s desire to thy pulse! There is no smoke in the lark’s house. Black is the berry but sweet; black is my lassie but bonnie. ‘I will keep to my sweetheart,’ said the girl, ‘a mouth of silk, and a heart of hemp.’ High is the stag’s head on the mountain crags. Pretty is the mouse in the corn-plat. The ocean hides much. Like stone sent uphill is the long Spring evening, like stone running down glen is soft Autumn evening.

It now becomes me to mention those to whom I have been most indebted for their contributions to this collection, and their help in other ways. The largest and best collections were received from the Rev. J. G. Campbell of Tiree, and Mr. A. A. Carmichael, North Uist. Both came unasked, and were supplemented, as

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occasion required, by illustrations out of the rich stores of Gaelic Folk-lore, Poetry, and Tradition, which both these gentlemen are ever ready generously to communicate to those interested in them. Mr. Archibald Sinclair, Glasgow, gave me a valuable collection made by his worthy father, a great part of which had been got from Mr. Carmichael. He also lent me a copy of the second edition of Macintosh, which had
belonged to the late Mr. Ewen MacLean, a good Gaelic scholar, who had contemplated a new edition, to be dedicated to his friend James Munro. I am indebted to it for several emendations, and two or three very good additional proverbs. To the Rev. J. W. MacIntyre, Kilmodan, I am indebted for a copy of a good collection dated so long ago as 1769 by a certain Ewen MacDiarmaid, which came into the possession of Mr. John Shaw, Kinloch Rannoch. From the Rev. M. MacPhail, Kilmartin, I received an excellent collection, made by himself in his native island, Lewis. To my dear old friend, the Rev. A. MacGregor, Inverness, I am indebted for several interesting illustrations, and some good sayings, recovered from memory, out of a large collection made by him long ago in the Isle of Skye, the MS. of which had unfortunately been lost.

To the late Donald C. MacPherson, of the Advocates’ Library, a special tribute is due. He was a Lochaber man, steeped in Gaelic lore and sentiment, a scholar, chiefly self-taught, and a genius. He supplied me with a considerable number of proverbs found among the Gaelic MSS. of the Library, besides many fresh additions and illustrations from his own remarkable memory. Some of his contributions to the Gael (1) are such as no other man could have given. Much as I have been assisted in this work by other friends, I received most help from him, and of a constant and ever ready kind. By his early death Gaelic Literature has sustained a great loss, and no one has more cause to lament it than I have.

Of others to whom I have been indebted for contributions of Proverbs are Mr. Donald McLaren, Loch Earn, Mrs. Mary MacKellar, Mr. Alex. Mackay, and Mr. Murdo MacLeod, of Edinburgh, both from Sutherland.

Mr. Donald Mackinnon, M.A., Edinburgh, whose papers on Gaelic Proverbs in the Gael showed exceptional knowledge of the subject, and power to deal with it, has given me valuable assistance in many ways. To the Rev. Dr. Clerk of Kilmallie, and the Rev. Mr. Stewart of `Nether Lochaber,’ I am much bound for kind help and suggestions. Of friends who helped me in regard to foreign proverbs, I have specially to thank Mr. A. L. Finlay, Dumfries, and Mr. J. A. Hjaltalin, Iceland.

In addition to the various sources above acknowledged, I found a considerable number of proverbs in the interesting columns of the Highlander, some in the Gael, and a few in the Dictionaries of Armstrong, the Highland Society, and MacAlpine. I carefully searched, and not in vain, in the pages of the Teachdaire Gaelach

(1) A well conducted Gaelic Magazine, which lasted longer than any of its predecessors—six years. Its stoppage in December 1877 was much to be regretted.
moving laughter or tears. His Gaelic Dialogues, ‘Comhradh nan Cnoc,’ and his answers to correspondents, are spiced with proverbial phrases and allusions, of which no one else could make such happy, sometimes such crushing use. His command of them seemed inexhaustible; his quiver never was emptied, and his arrows never missed.

One other friend I must mention, who has given me neither proverbs nor explanations, but whose assistance, in the shape of stimulus and example, has been quite unique—Professor Blackie. His appreciation of Gaelic proverbs is as great and natural as his love of the Highlands; and if any living man specially deserved to have this book dedicated to him, as a mark of gratitude from a Highlander, on behalf of the people and language for whom he has done so much, that man is he. Buaidh ’us piseach air a cheann!

KIRKCUDBRIGHT, December, 1880.

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ACCENTS.

(1) As the use of accents in this book differs a little from that found in the Gaelic Bible and Dictionaries, the following explanations seem necessary—

A. The grave accent alone is used over this vowel, and indicates (1) the sound of the English words far, call;—e.g., bàs, clàr; or (2) a diphthong (äu) not recognized in English (except in the pronunciation sometimes heard of such words as Gow, as if it were Gauw,) nor in any Gaelic Grammar;—e.g. càm.

E. The acute accent over E marks the sound of rein, tale;—e.g. féin, sgéul.
The grave accent over E marks the sound of maid, save;—e.g., mèud, sèimh.

I. The grave accent alone is used over I, and marks the sound of tear, mere;—e.g., tir, mir.

O. The acute accent over O marks (1) the sound of bold, mould;—e.g., bó, mór.

(2) As in the case of the diphthongal A, this accent is also used to mark a somewhat similar combination of O and U, in such words as lóm, dónn. The vowel in these words is pronounced in some parts of the Highlands the same as in bó, bold, in other parts, with a diphthongal sound, the same as down. The names of Iain Lóm and Rob Dónn are pronounced in Skye as if written Lowm and Down.

(3) The grave accent over O marks the sound of more, door, e.g., òg, sròn. According to all the Dictionaries and the Gaelic Bible, the words bó and mór, so far as accents indicate pronunciation, are sounded the same as òg and sròn. That is certainly not the general pronunciation of Inverness-shire and the Hebrides.

U. The grave accent alone is used over U, and marks the sound of cure, poor, e.g., ciùrr, sùil.
GAELIC PROVERBS
AND PHRASES.

A.

<gai>A’ bheairt sin nach fhaighear ach cearr, ’s e foighidinn a’s fhéarr a dheanamh rithe.<eng>
The loom that’s awry is best handled patiently.
The word <gai>’beairt’<eng> has various meanings, but in its primary use seems to have been equivalent to the word ‘loom,’ which meant other tools or engines, as well as weaving looms. In the above proverb, however, the weaving loom seems to have been in view, and the meaning to be, that if it be found to be out of gear, it is better to handle it patiently than to try to put it right, at the risk of breaking the threads. ‘What can’t be cured must be endured’ expresses nearly the same idea, but not exactly.

<gai>A’ bheinn a ’s àirde tha’s an tìr, ’s ann oirre ’s trice ’chì thu ’n ceò.<eng>
The highest hill is oftenest covered with clouds.
So it is with those who tower above the common level of mankind.

<gai>A’ bhéist a ’s mò ag ithe’ na béist’ a ’s lugha,’s a’ bhéist a ’s lugha ’deanamh mar a dh’fhaodas i.<eng>
The bigger beast eating the lesser one, and the lesser one doing as it may.
It is interesting to find Modern Science anticipated in an old Gaelic story. This graphic expression of a great physical and moral truth occurs in a description of ocean life, common to several of those West Highland Tales, on the collection and editing of which Mr. J. F. Campbell has bestowed so much generous care. See Vol. II., pp. 201, 210.

<gai>A bhi gu dàna modhail, sin lagh na cúirte.<eng>
To be bold and courteous is the court rule.
This is a good description of the manner best suited for securing attention in courts of all kinds.

[TD 2]

<gai>A’ bhó a ’s mios’ a th’ anns a’ bhuaile, ’s i ’s cruaidhe géum.<eng>
The worst cow in the fold lows the loudest.
Al.—<gai>A’ bhó a ’s lugha féum, ’s i ’s mò géum.<eng>
See also <gai>’Cha ’n i ’bhó’,<eng> and <gai>’Géum mór’.

A’ buain nan àirneagan searbha, ’s a’ saltairt air na cìrean-meala.<eng>
Plucking the bitter sloes, and trampling on the honey-comb.

<gai>A’ call làn na lèidhe air imlich a màis.<eng>
Losing the ladle-full licking its outside.

<gai>A’call nam boitín a’cruinneachadh nan sop.<eng>
Losing the bundles gathering the wisps.
See <gai>’A’ sgaoileadh nan squb.’

A’ caoidh nam bulideal falamh.<eng>
Bewailing the empty casks.

<gai>A chailleach, an gabh thu ’n righ? Cha ghabh, ’s nach gabh e mi.<eng>
Crone, will you have the king? I won’t as he won’t have me.
There is a humorous philosophy in this.

There is a humorous philosophy in this.

"A' chaor' a théid anns a' chreig cha 'n 'eil aic' ach tighinn aisdè mar a dh' fhaodas i."
The sheep that gets into the rock must get out as best she can.

"A' chiad sgéul air fear an tighe, 's gach sgéul gu lath' air an aoidh."
The first story from the host, and tales till morning from the guest.
This is one of the sayings most purely characteristic of the old manners and customs of the Highlands, carrying one back without difficulty to the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, traces of which survive in some of the Gaelic Tales.

"A' chlach nach tachair ri m' chois cha chiùrr i mi."
The stone that doesn't meet my foot won't hurt me.
See "An rud nach laidh". The stane that lies not in yir gait breaks not yir taes.—Scot. P.

"A' chuir' an iòdan a' chuinnseir."
The knife in the place of the sword.

[TD 3]

"A' chuid de Phàras da!"
His share of Paradise to him!
Al. "de Phlaiteanas," of Heaven. The word F., still in common use as the Gaelic for Heaven, has been interpreted by good authorities (Armstrong, Highl. Soc. Dict., &c.) as "Flath-innis," the Isle of Heroes, an etymology which is both poetical and probable. A simpler and more scientific etymology (Ebel's Celt. Stud., p. 116) makes it "Flaithemnas," or "Flaitheamhnas," sovereignty, dignity, glory. In Bedell's Irish Bible, 'Flaitheamhnas',' and 'Flaithesa' are used in the Old Test. to denote Heaven and Heavens; but 'Neamh' and 'Neamhdha' more commonly. In the New Test. 'Neamh' only is used for the singular. In our Gaelic Bible the latter alone is used in both sing. and plur.

"A' chuid nach gabh na leanaban gabhaidh an t-sean-bhean fhéin."
What the children won't take the old woman will.

"A' chuill a bhios fosgailte théid na coin innte."
The dogs will go into the corner that’s open.

"A' chuirm a's luaithe 'bhios ullamh, suidheamaid uile g'a ghabail."
The feast that’s soonest ready let us all sit down to.

"A' chuiseag ruadh a dh' fhàsas 's an òtraich, 's i 's àirde 'thogas a ceann."
The red weed from the dunghill lifts its head the highest. The proudest nettle grows on a midden.—Scot.

"A chur a ruith na cubhaig."
Sending him to chase the cuckoo. Literally a 'gowk's errand'.

"A' cromadh air na beaga."
Stooping to the little.
Counting yards without cloth.

Putting the old man out of his own house.

Urging on the sweating horse.

Putting the needle on the coulter.

Knotting straws.

Making a great ocean of a narrow strait.

Gainsay who dare!
The Clanranald motto.

Going among the hindmost horses.
Said of persons when their failing powers disqualify them for leading places, as in a team of horses.

The wind seeking harbours.
Said of an unsteady wind.

All the dogs down on the strange dog.
Al. Each olc’ an tòin a’ choimhich.

A’ h-uile fear a théid a dholaidh, gheabh e dolar o Mhac-Aoidh.
Every man that’s down in luck will get a dollar from Mackay.
This refers to the enlisting for the Highland regiment raised by Lord Reay for service under the King of Denmark (1626-29), and Gustavus Adolphus (1629-32), in which the Scots so greatly distinguished themselves.

Every day goodluck to thee,
And no day of sorrow be!

Everything to the mouth.
This is primarily true of infants, but has a much wider application.

All is fish that goes into the net.

It’s theirs to excuse that.

[TD 5]
A lion beagan ‘us beagan, mar a dh’ ith an cat an sgadan.<eng>
Little by little, as the cat ate the herring.
Little and little the cat eats the stickle.—Eng. P.

A réir do mheas ort fhéin, measaidh càch thu.<eng>
As thou valuest thyself others will esteem thee.
Autant vaut l’homme comme il s’estime.—Fr.
Him who makes chaff of himself the cows will eat.—Arab.
Wer nichts aus sich macht, ist nichts.—Germ.

A’ ruith fear an-tighe ’n a thigh fhéin.<eng>
Taking the goodman’s right in his own house.

A’ ruith na seiche air a bruach.<eng>
Keeping to the edge of the hide.
Applied to persons in straitened circumstances. A man with plenty of hides would help himself out of the best part; a poor man would need to begin at the outside.

A’ sgaoileadh nan squb ‘s a’ trusadh nan siobhag.<eng>
Scattering the sheaves and gathering the straws.

A shalachar fhéin leis gach rudha.<eng>
To every headland it’s own foul ground.

A’s t-Earrach ’n uair a bhios a’ chaora caol, bidh am maorach reamhar.<eng>
In Spring when the sheep is lean the shellfish is fat.

A thoil fhéin do gach duine, ’s an toil uile do na mnathan.<eng>
Their will to all men, and all their will to the women.
Nought’s to be had at woman’s hand,
Unless ye gie her a’ the plea.—Scot. Song.
Ce que femme veut Dieu le veut.—Fr. P.

Abair rium mu’n abair mi riut.<eng>
Speak to me ere I speak to thee.

Abhsadh a’ chromain-luch.<eng>
Shortening sail kite-fashion.
A Hebridean phrase, applied to awkward handling of a sail—letting it down too suddenly, like the descent of a kite.

Adharc na bá maolice ’s duilich a toirt dith.<eng>
It’s hard to take the horn off the hornless cow.

[TD 6]

Adharc ’n a chliathaich!<eng>
A horn in his side!
Al. <gai>An dunaidh a’ d’ chliathaich!<eng> The mischief in your side!
These are forms of malediction, undoubtedly of native origin. Those which are so are generally less offensive in expression than those of more ‘civilised’ nations.

Ag itheadh na cruachie fo ’n t-sioman.<eng>
Eating the stack under the rope.
The old wife’s denial of the penny—it was not a penny but two half-pence.

At weddings and at funerals relatives and friends are known.
At marriages and burials, friends and kinsfolk be known.—The Booke of Merry Riddles, 1629.

At the end of the game the winner is seen.
Al fin del giuoco si vede chi guadagna.—Ital.

For his own hand, as the smith was in the fight.
This seems to be the original of the Scottish proverb, ‘For his ain hand, as Henry Wynd fought,’ referred to by Sir Walter Scott in the Fair Maid of Perth, ch. xxxiv. The word ‘ceard,’ now applied only to tinkers, was originally applied to artificers in all kinds of metals, gold, silver, iron, &c.; and the word <gai>‘ceardach’<eng> still means a smithy.

Where doubt comes in love goes out.
Hvor Mistanke gaaer ind, gaaer Kjærlighed ud.—Dan.

Very barely and with difficulty.

Here’s thy health my new gossip, farewell the old one!
‘Sop air sùil’ is a curious expression, literally ‘a wisp on the eye’.
The meaning is that the old friend is to be hidden away, out of sight, out of mind.

However far you go abroad, bring home no ill tale of yourself.

The nurse is kissed for the sake of the child.
‘Kissing the child for the sake of the nurse’ is the more common English phrase, but there is a German saying identical with the above.

Be the fountain e’er so clean, some dirt in it will be seen.

For all the world can say, not words but deeds are proof.
Al. <gai>Bial a labhras, ach gnolmha a dhearbhhas.<eng>
Gwell es eun oberer evit kant laverar.—Breton.
I fatti son maschi, le parole femmine.—Ital.
Obras son amores, que no buenas razon.—Span.
Worte sind gut, wenn Werke folgen.—Germ.
The more you find of good, the less you’ll get of ill.

For my share of the grain, the kiln may go on fire.
For my peck of malt, set the kiln on fire.—Cheshire, &c.

Friday’s numbering on the neighbouring sheep!
On the supposed unluckiness of Friday, see App. I.

Sweethearting brings the tocher.

An old wife’s dream as her desire.

For my share of the grain, the kiln may go on fire.
For my peck of malt, set the kiln on fire.

The big Lewis man’s recognition of the other Lewis man.
The big man is supposed to say, ‘Tha aithne gun chuimhn’ agam ort,’ I recognise, but don’t remember you.

A cow knows her own stall, which makes good sense. But the noun ‘badhail’ is Irish;
our word for stall.

From the little may be seen what the big might have been.

The clown is known at morning—he breaks his shoe-tie.
This is a curious illustration of the general amenity of manners characteristic of the Celts. The ‘balach’ is a combination of ‘bully’ and ‘snob,’ and it is meant that he is so rude and impatient that he can’t even tie his shoe without showing his roughness.
Curiously enough, a word expressing much the same thing in modern Greek is βλάχος.

The lion is known by a scratch of his claw.

The slattern’s husband can be known afar.

The Ulster version is, ‘Aithnichear air na cuaròige air fàithche a measg chàich’.
A South Uist saying is, ‘Is luath fear na droch
mhna air a’ mhachair Uibhistich—Swift goes the bad wife’s husband on the Uist plain.

[TD 9]

A child is known by his manners.
Even a child is known by his doings.—PROV. xx. 11.

A child is known by his manners.

Aithnichear searrach sean làire ann an greigh.
An old mare’s foal is known in a herd.
Supposed, whether truly or not, to be more lively than others. See ‘Mac bantraich’.

Aithnichean an truaigh a daoine fhéin.
Misery knows its own people.

Aithnichean na leth-chiallaich a chéile.
Half-wits recognise each other.
This is a touching fact, of which observant persons must have seen many instances.

Albainn bheadarrach!
Beloved Scotland!
‘Beadarrach’ is perhaps oftener used to mean playful, but the above appears to be an expression of simple affection.

Am biadh a dh’ ithear anns a’ chùil, thig e thun an teine.
The food that’s eaten in the corner will come to the hearth.

Am biadh a theachdas os cionn gach bidh—snaoisein.
The food that can go on the top of all food—snuff.
The once general use of snuff has given place, in the Highlands as elsewhere, to smoking. A snuff-mull is now rarely to be seen.

‘Am bial a’ phoca tha ’n caomhnadh.
The saving is at the mouth of the bag.
See ‘Am fear nach dean bail.’

Am bolla air an sgillinn, ’s gun an sgillinn ann.
The boll at a penny, and no penny to buy it.
The Scotch boll is a measure of grain, sixteen pecks. There is a Danish saying, ‘When it rains porridge, the beggar has no spoon’.

Am bréid ’g a thomhas air an tóll.
Measuring the patch on the hole.

[TD 10]

Am brògach beag ’s an cuaranach mór.
The boy with shoes, the man with socks.
Brought up to wear shoes, and reduced when grown to wearing the
‘cuaran,’ (Welsh, ‘cwaran’) a kind of sock, made of untanned leather—the ancient foot-gear, which every man made for himself.

Am bronnach Geamhraidh, ’s an seang Earraich.
Squabby in Winter, and skinny in Spring.
The reference is to young cattle.

Am fac thu rud ’s a chul riut?
Saw you aught with its back to you?
This was reckoned a bad omen. See <gai>‘Chuala mi ‘chubhag’.

Am facal a thig á Ifrinn ’s e gheabh, ma ’s e ’s mò ’bheir.<eng>
The word that comes from Hell, will get if it bid well.
The howlet was screamín’, while Johnnie cried, ’Women
Wad marry auld Nick, if he’d keep them aye braw!’
H. M’Neill.

Am fear a bhios a bharra-mhanadh a mach, suidhidh e air fail
chorraich.<eng>
He whose destiny is cast sits on a sharp cope.
There is something very awful in this saying, reminding of that of the
Psalmist, ‘Their foot shall slide in due time’. The belief in Fate,
expressed by such words as <gai>dàn, manadh, sona,<eng> &c., was as
strong in the Celts, as many of these proverbs show, as in any ancient
Greek, or modern Islamite.
The word <gai>fàl<eng> is found in the Scottish ‘fail dyke’.

Am fear a bhios a’ riarachadh na maraig’ bidh an ceann reamhar aige
fhéin.<eng>
The man that divides the pudding will have the thick end to himself.
Puddings, in the sense familiar to John Bull, were not known to the hardy
Celts. But several kinds of pudding, more akin to the sausage, in which
oatmeal and suet, blood, and various other savoury ingredients, formed
the chief elements, were, and still are, well known, both in the
Highlands and Lowlands of Scotland. To such dainties reference is made in
the well-known song, ‘The barrin’ o’ the door’—
‘An’ first they ate the white puddin’s,
An’ then they ate the black.’

[TD 11]

Am fear a bhios air deireadh bidh na coin comaidh ris.<eng>
He that comes last will have the dogs as messmates.
Chi tardi arriva mal allogia.—Ital.

Am fear a bhios air dheireadh beiridh a’ bhiast air.<eng>
Him that’s last the beast will catch.
This saying seems to have originated in a children’s game, but like many
such things it has a serious moral.
‘Deil tak the hinmost’ conveys the same idea.

Am fear a bhios air thoiseach théid a stobadh anns an fhéith.<eng>
He that goes first will get stuck in the mud.

Am fear a bhios an diugh ‘an uachdar, car mu char a nuas e
’màireach.<eng>
He that’s uppermost to day, turn over turn he’s down to-morrow.
This refers, of course, to the wheel of Fortune.

Am fear a bhitheas ann, nitear clann ris.<eng>
Such a man as there is, children will be got by.
This is susceptible of more than one interpretation. See <gai>‘Am fear
nach téid’.

Am fear a bhios béudach e fhéin cha sguir e ’dh’ éigneachadh chàich.<eng>
He that is guilty himself will always he urging others.
See <gai>‘Miann an droch dhuine’.
He who is tricky in this farm will be tricky yonder.

He that waits long at the ferry will get over some time.
Chi aspettar puote, ha ciò che vuole.—Ital.

He who is always angry is of nature like the bramble.

He who lies long in bed will be all day hard bestead.
Uomo lento non ha mai tempo.—Ital.

He who has neither horse nor boat must go on foot.

He that is rude thinks his rudeness good manners.

This shows a knowledge of true courtesy, and of the highest breeding.

The idle man will put the cat in the fire.

Every foot will tread on him who is in the mud.
Wer am Boden liegt, über den läuft Jedermann.—Germ.

He that’s often in the mill will be dusty.
Chi va al mulino, s’ infarina.—Ital.

He that betrays is the murderer.

He that ties best travels best.
Quien bien ata, bien desata.—Span.

He that buys an old hack will have to buy another horse.
Al. Ceannaich sean rud, ’s bí gun aon rud.—Buy an old thing, and have nothing.
Who would put his finger in my eye, I would put my knee on his chest. This looks as if the Trans-Atlantic practice of ‘gouging’ had been at one time known in the Highlands. If it were so, it must have been very long ago.

He who went round the globe couldn’t tell which was best, speed or slowness; but he gave the palm to the early riser.

He that eats his grandmother may sup her broth. When Farquhar the Leech had tasted the ‘bree’ of the serpent, his master, who knew that his apprentice now had his eyes opened to see the secrets of nature, and his ears to understand the language of birds, threw the pan at him in wrath, crying, ‘Ma dh’ ól thu an sùgh, ith an fhéoil;’ If you have supped the juice, eat the flesh! See Campbell’s W. H. Tales, II., 262.

He that eats the butter, let him build the walls. The meaning here is, that the man who is to reap the profit should erect the necessary buildings. Butter appears, from several of the old sayings, to have been one of the chief products of the primitive Highlands. A keg of butter, containing about 2 cwt., in good preservation, found in May, 1879, at some depth in a peat-moss, in Kingairloch, is now preserved in the Museum of the Scot. Soc. of Antiquaries. The keg was hollowed out of a solid piece of tree. Several such have been found in Irish bogs. See Ulster Journ. of Arch., Vol. VII., p. 288.

He that eats the (sheep’s) head let him singe it himself.

He that gets the name of early rising may lie in bed late. Acquista buona fama, e mettiti à dormire.—Ital.
Cobra buena fama, y échate á dormir.—Span.
Get the word o’ soon risin’, an’ ye may lie in bed a’ day.—Scot.

He that promises must pay.
Promise is debt.—Engl.
Zusagen macht Schuld.—Germ.
Belofte maakt schuld, en schuld maakt belofte.—Dutch.
Quien promete, en deuda se mete.—Span.

He that eats a chuid gleidhidh e ’chàirdean.
He that keeps his means will keep his friends.  
See Timon of Athens.

<gai>Am fear a ghleidheas a theanga, gleidhidh e 'charaid.<eng> 
Who keeps his tongue will keep his friend.  
Better lose a jest than a friend.—Engl.  
Better tine joke than friend.—Scot.  
Gjem din Mund og gjem din Ven.—Dan.

<gai>Am fear a ghoideadh an t-ubh-circe, ghoideadh e 'n t-ubh-
geòidh.<eng>  
Who would steal the hen egg would steal the goose egg.

<gai>Am fear a ghoideas an t-snàthad bheag, goididh e 'n t-snàthad
mhór.<eng>  
He that steals the little needle will steal the big one.

<gai>Am fear a ghoideadh an t-snàthad, ghoideadh e 'm miaran.<eng>  
He who steals the needle would steal the thimble.  
He that steals a preen will steal a better thing.—Scot.  
He who steals an egg would steal an ox.—Engl.

[TD 15]

<gai>Am fear a labhras olc mu 'mhnaoi, tha e 'cur ml-chliù air
fhéin.<eng>  
Who speaks ill of his wife dishonours himself.  
Quien á su muger no honra, á si mismo deshonra.—Span.

<gai>Am fear a laidheas 's a'pholl togaidh e 'n làthach.<eng>  
He who lies in the mud will rise dirty.  
Gin ye fa' doon i' the dub, ye'll rise up fylt wi' glaur.—Scot.

<gai>Am fear a mharbhadh a mhàthair a chianamh, bheireadh e beò a nis
i.<eng>  
The man that would have killed his mother a little ago would bring her
alive now.  
Said when a good day appears after a heavy storm, or in any similar
circumstances.

<gai>Am fear a ni dìorras, is iomadh a ni dìorras ris.<eng>  
He that is obstinate will often meet his match.

<gai>Am fear a ni 'obair 'n a thràth, bidh e 'n a leth thàmh.<eng>  
He that does his turn in time sits half idle.—Scot.

<gai>Am fear a phòsas air son earrais tha e 'reic a shaorsa.<eng>  
Who wives for dower resigns his power.  
Argentum accepi, dote imperium vendidi.—Plautus.  
Qui prend une femme pour sa dot,  
A la liberté tourne le dos.—Fr.

<gai>Am fear a phòsas bean pòsaidh e dragh.<eng>  
He that marries a wife marries trouble.  
Have wife, have strife.—Engl.  
Qui femme a, noise a.—Fr.

I have found no Gaelic proverb expressing anything more unfavourable to
marriage and to women than this one; which is more than can be said for
any of the greater nations of Europe.
He that sails a foul-bottomed boat will some day run on a rock. This saying smells strongly of the Hebridean sea.

He who lived longest died at last.

To him that farthest went away the sweetest music he ever heard was 'come home'.

East or West, home (hame) is best.—Engl. and Scot.
Oost und West, daheìm das Best.—Germ.
These are all characteristically brief and plain. More tender and poetical are the Italian, 'Casa mia, casa mia, per piccina que tu sia, tu mi sembri una badia,' and 'Casa mia, mamma mia'.

The man that went farthest from home had as far to come back.

He that lives longest sees most.

He who sows best reaps best.

Quickest hand gets biggest share.

The man of least sense makes most noise.

Let us lay aside every weight, ... and run with patience the race that is set before us.—HEB. xii. 1.

He that promises most will perform least.
The strongest above, and the swiftest in front.

He that’s in the corner let him watch the fire. This is a pleasant reminiscence of the old Highland life, calling up a picture of a cosy gathering round the central peat fire, when stories were told, riddles proposed, or songs sung. The person in the corner, where a heap of peats was piled, was bound to keep his eye on the fire, and throw on peats when required.

He that goes a-borrowing goes a-sorrowing. –Eng.
Argent emprunté porte tristesse. –Fr.
Borgen maakt zorgen. –Dutch.
Debts make the cheeks black. –Arab.

He that goes out regularly with his net will get fish sometime. The word in Macintosh was <gai>‘eun’<eng> not <gai>‘iasg,’<eng> but the latter is the more common form of the saying, the use of nets for catching birds having long ago ceased in the Highlands.

He that quarrels with the gentry is a miserable man. A very Celtic sentiment, and painfully true.

He that goes without business to the great house will get something there to do. Al., <gai>‘Am fear nach toir gnothach a mach, bheir e gnothach dhachaidh’,<eng> and <gai>‘Am fear nach toir gnothach do’n bhaile mhór bheir e gnothach as’.

Am fear a théid ’s an dris, fimridh e tighinn aisde mar a dh’fhaodas e.<eng>
He that goes among the briers must come out as best he can.

Who goes through the thorns for me, I’ll go through the briers for him.

Who comes late on Saturday night, And early on Monday goes away, For any help I get from him, I’d rather like him at home to stay.

He that comes unbidden will sit down unasked.
He that conquers himself conquers an enemy.
He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city.—PROV. xvi. 32.
Iracundiam qui vincit hostem superat maximum.—P. Syrus.
Wer seinen Zorn bezwingt, hat einen Feind besiegt.—Germ.

He who has, let him hold, he who wants let him pull.
The good old rule, the simple plan,
That they should take who have the power,
And they should keep who can.—Wordsworth.

He that has Rome must keep Rome up.

He that has butter will get more.
He that hath, to him shall be given.—MARK v. 25.

He that has a master will know it.
The man that wants must take the trouble.

For whom ill is fated him it strikes.

Who is born to be hanged will never be drowned.
Al. <gai>Cha mheall an t-uisg’ a chroich.<eng> The water will never waur the widdie.—Scot.
I have great comfort from this fellow: methinks he hath no drowning mark upon him: his complexion is perfect gallows.—The Tempest, Act I., sc. 1.
Chi è nato per la forca mai s’ annegherà.—Ital.
Wer hängen soll ersäust nicht.—Germ.
Die geboren is om te hangen, behoeft geen vrees te hebben van verdrinken.—Dutch.
Han drukner ikke der hænges skal, uden Vandet gaaer over Galgen.—Dan.

For whom ill is fated him it strikes.
He that is poor and bare
Must not sit his betters near;
Be his virtues e’er so rare,
Many will his faults appear.
Al. <gai>‘Suidheadh e’<eng> in line 2, and <gai>‘na céille’<eng> in line 3.
See JAMES ii. 2, 3.

<gai>Am fear leis am fuar, fuaignheadh e.<eng>
He that’s cold let him sew (make clothes).

<gai>Am fear leis nach léir a leas, ’s mór’ de chéill a chailleas e.<eng>
He that does not see his good loses much the use of sense.

<gai>Am fear nach bi ’n acdann na creige, cha bhi eagal air gu’n tuit e.<eng>
He that is not in the face of the rock will not be afraid of falling.

[TD 20]

<gai>Am fear nach bi olc ’n a aire, cha smaoinich e olc fir eile.<eng>
He who means no evil thinks no evil.

<gai>Am fear nach biath a chè cha stuig.<eng>
Who does not feed his dog will not set him on.

<gai>Am fear nach cluinn gu math, cha toir e freagairt mhath.<eng>
He that hears badly will answer badly.
Al. <gai>‘freagraidh e gu mìmhail.’<eng>
En döv Hörer giör en galen Svarer.—Dan.

<gai>Am fear nach cluinn ceart cha’n innis ach cearbach.<eng>
He that does not hear well will report badly.

<gai>Am fear nach cuir a chuid ’an cunnart, cha dean e call no buinnig.<eng>
He who hazards not will neither lose nor win.
Naught venture naught have.—Engl.
Chi non s’ arrischia non guadagna.—Ital.
Quien no se aventura, no ha ventura.—Span.

<gai>Am fear nach cuir a shnaim, caillidh e ’chiad ghreim.<eng>
He that doesn’t knot his thread will lose his first stitch.
Said to have been communicated for a consideration by a tailor to his apprentice, as the most valuable secret in the trade.
There is a legend that the Devil once took to learning the trade of tailor, but quite failed, because he could never put a knot on his thread. This may have suggested the title of the popular air, ’The Deil amang the Tailors’.

<gai>Am fear nach cuir ’s a Mhàrt cha buain e a’ s’ t-Fhoghar.<eng>
He that doesn’t sow in March will not reap in Autumn.

<gai>Am fear nach cuir ri latha fuar, cha buain ri latha teth.<eng>
Who won’t sow when it is cold shall not reap when it is hot.
Per con. <gai>’S fhearr curachd amnoch na ’bhli gun churachd idir.<eng>
Better sow late than not sow at all.

<gai>Am fear nach cúm cuireadh e mach.<eng>
He that cannot keep let him deliver.
I’ll keep no reckoning with him that keeps no reckoning with me.

The saying of the Gobha Crom, Harry Wynd, at the combat on the Inch of Perth. The story goes that Harry, having killed his man, sat down to rest. The chief of the Clan Chattan came up, and demanded the reason. Harry said he had fulfilled his bargain, and earned his money. 'Him that serves me without counting his hours,' said the chief, 'I reward without reckoning wages'. Whereupon Harry made the above reply, rose up, and resumed the fight.—See Fair Maid of Perth, ch. xxxiv.

If you don’t spare the mouth of the bag, the bottom will spare itself. Better spare at brim than at bottom.—Engl. and Scot. Bedre at spare paa Bredden, end paa Bunden.—Dan.

He who won’t keep Christmas must keep Easter. The Church of Rome requires communion at least once a year, and that at Easter. He who omits it at Christmas can’t avoid it then. Another proverb, however, throws a different light on this one: He who hasn’t a merry Christmas will have a sad and tearful Easter, i.e., he whose family circumstances prevent him from enjoying Christmas will have greater grief before Easter.

He that neither works nor pushes, Won’t find food among the bushes.

He that won’t obey the Pope, let him leave Rome. Qui veut vivre à Rome ne doit pas se quereller avec le Pape.—Fr.

He that’s not used to the sword will leave it where he sat.

He that did not get at his bow got at his sword. This alludes to a sudden attack followed by confusion, and probable panic, as is suggested by another saying,

He who wouldn’t wait for his bow wouldn’t wait for his sword.

A still deeper stage of cowardice is indicated in the saying, He that couldn’t find a hole sought a door.

He that is not good at giving a bed is good at showing the road. See ‘Easgaidh mu’n rathad mhór’.
He that’s ill o’ his harboury is guid at the way-kenning.—Scot.

Am fear nach éisd ris na ’s olc leis, cha’n fhaic e na ’s ait leis.<eng>
He who won’t listen to what he dislikes won’t see what he likes.

Am fear nach fhosgail a sporan fosglaidh e ’bhial.<eng>
The man who won’t open his purse will open his mouth.
Words cost nothing.—See JAMES ii. 15.

Am fear nach freagair ’athair no ’mhàthair, freagraidh e ni ’s taire, craicinn an laoigh.<eng>
He that won’t listen to father or mother will listen to a meaner thing, the calf’s skin. Macintosh interprets this as referring to ‘ne’er-do-weels’ who enlist and follow the drum. But drum-heads are not made of calf-skin.

Am fear nach gabh comhairle gabhaidh e cam-lorg.<eng>
He who won’t take counsel will take a round-about way.
The Irish version of this substitutes ‘cômhraq’ for ‘cam-lorg,’ which makes good sense. ‘Cam-lorg’<eng> also means a crooked stick, and the proverb may be rendered accordingly.

Am fear nach gabh ’n uair a gheabh, cha’n fhaigh ’n uair is òill.<eng>
He that will not when he may, when he wills he shall have nay.—Eng.

Am fear nach gléidh na h-àirm ’s an t-sìth, cha bh iad aig ’an àm a’ chogaidh.<eng>
He that keeps not his arms in time of peace will have none in time of war.
This is a sound maxim of State policy.
Weapons bode peace.—Scot.
One sword keeps another in the sheath.—Engl., Germ., Dan.
L’armi portan pace.—Ital.

[TD 23]

Am fear nach guth a ghuth, cha rath a rath.<eng>
Whose word is no word his luck is no luck.
This is one of the testimonies to the value of truthfulness, in which these Gaelic proverbs are not wanting.

Am fear nach marcaich ach anmoch caillidh e a spuir.<eng>
He who rides but late will lose his spurs.
Seldom ride, tine the spurs.—Scot.

Am fear nach mèudaich an càrn, gu mèudaich e ’chro ich!<eng>
Who won’t add to the cairn, may he add to the gibbet!
It was an ancient Celtic custom to erect a cairn, or pile of stones, as a memorial of the good fame or infamy of the person buried beneath it. In either case it was considered the duty of every passer-by to add a stone to the cairn. The above proverb seems to refer specially to the case of a criminal’s cairn. The term <gai>’fear air chàrn,’<eng> a man on a cairn, is still known in Gaelic as signifying an outlaw, or person whose life is forfeited to public justice. Sayings having a similar reference are, <gai>’B’fhhearr leam e ’bhi fo chàrn chlach,’<eng> I should rather he were under a cairn of stones; <gai>’S oil leam nach robh do luath fo chàrn,’<eng> I’m sorry your ashes are not under a cairn; and the Welsh, ’Carn ar dy ben!’ (or ’wyneb’).—A cairn on thy head (or face)!
A common saying, on the other hand, referring to cairns erected in testimony of respect, is '<gai>‘Cuiridh mi clach ’ad chàrn.’<eng> I’ll add a stone to your cairn.

<gai>Am fear nach misnich cha bhuannaich.<eng> Who won’t venture shall not win.
Fortuna favet fortibus.—Lat.
Faint heart never won fair lady.—Eng. and Scot.
Le couard n’aura belle amie.—Fr.
A los osados ayuda la fortuna.—Span.

<gai>Am fear nach seall roimhe seallaidh e na ’dhéigh.<eng> He that won’t look before him must look behind him.

<gai>Am fear nach teagaisg Dia cha teagaisg duine.<eng> Whom God teaches not man cannot.

<gai>Am fear nach teich teichear roimhe.<eng> He that flees not will be fled from.

<gai>Am fear nach téid e fhéin gu ’mhnaoi, tuigeadh e gu’n téid fear eile.<eng> He that visits not his wife, wot he that another will.

[TD 24]

<gai>Am fear nach toir an air’ air a’ bheagan, cha’n airidh air a’ mhóran.<eng> He that is not careful of the little is not worthy of much.
He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much.—LUKE xvii. 10.
Die ’t klein versmaad, is ’t groot niet waard.—Dutch.

<gai>Am fear nach toir an aire dha fhéin, bidh cách a’ fanaid air.<eng> He that cares not for himself will be made a mock of.

<gai>Am fear nach treabh aig a’ bhaile cha treabh e as.<eng> He that won’t plough at home won’t plough abroad.

<gai>Am fear nach treabh air muir cha treabh e air tir.<eng> He that will not plough at sea, neither will he plough on land.
This does not bear out the opinion of some who have represented the Highlander as essentially averse to sea-faring.

<gai>Am fear ’tha grad gu gealladh, ’s tric leis mealladh.<eng> Quick to promise often deceives.

<gai>Am fiar a thig a mach ’s a’ Mhàrt, théid e ’s tigh ’s a’ Ghiblean.<eng> The grass that comes out in March shrinks away in April.
Cito maturum, cito putridum.—Lat.
Presto maturo, presto marzo.—Ital.
Soon ripe, soon rotten.—Eng.

<gai>Am fitheach a’ cur a mach a theanga leis an teas.<eng> The raven putting out his tongue for heat.
The raven that rises early gets the eye of the beast in the bog.

Wart on palm is luck to lad,
Wart on in-step luck to lass.

The son on the roost and the father unborn.
This is one of many ingenious Gaelic riddles, and means the smoke of a fire which has not yet kindled. It is applied as a proverb to the case of anything loudly heralded before it has come into existence.

The yellow month—July.

The black month—November.

The dead month—December to January.

The best tune Rory ever played might tire one.
Al. Fàsar sgith de’n cheòl a ’s binne.<eng>
Roderick Morrison, called Ruairidh Dall, Blind Rory, a celebrated harper, and bard to MacLeod of MacLeod. See App. II.

Quien á veinte no es galan, ni á treinta tiene fuerza, ni á quarenta riqueza, ni á cincuenta experiencia, ni será galan, ni fuerte, ni rico, ni prudente.—Span.

A wise look may secure a fool, if he talk not.—Eng.
Nichts sieht einem gescheidten Mann ähnllicher, als ein Narr der das Maul hält.—Germ.
El bobo, si es callado, por sesudo es reputado.—Span.
Narren er andre Folk liig saa længe han tier.—Dan.

The blind can hit his mouth.

Chance choice.
Look before you leap.

The thief’s suspicion of honest Allan.

The rude absurd play of the MacKillops. The word "Amhlaireachd" is very difficult to translate, and probably nobody will be satisfied with the translation, least of all the MacKillops. The saying is given for what it is worth, which is perhaps little. Other clans, still more notable than the MacKillops, are characterised in sayings which the editor has thought proper to give, such as they are.

The twist of the mother is natural to the daughter.

The crook in the old stick is ill to take out.

What is done unwillingly will be done with a twist or roughly.

The head and trotters are the easiest shared; the head to the goodman, the trotters to the bairns.

First day south wind,
Second day west wind,
Third day north wind,
East wind always.

This is meant to indicate the order in which the wind generally goes round the compass on the West coast in Summer, when it blows oftenest from the East.

Other proverbs, such as "Cuir do shìol 's a Mhàrt,' indicate that the month of March was formerly considered the right time for sowing in the Highlands. The third week of March, Old Style, would be the first week of April, New Style, which would now be considered too early. The reason for naming Tuesday seems to be, that Monday was considered an unlucky day for beginning any work of importance.
The habit Neil had he always stuck to.
Iann eo, Iann e vo—John he is, John he will be.—Breton.

"An cleachdadh a bhios aig duin’ a’s tigh, bidh e aig’ air chéilidh."<eng>
As his habits are at home, so they are with strangers.

"'An cnocan, an cnocan,' ars’ a’ chaileach gu leòdach, ‘far an do chaill mi mo Ghàidhlig, ‘s nach d’ fhuair mi mo Bhéurla’."<eng>
'The hillock, the hillock,’ said the old woman, lisping, ‘where I lost my Gaelic, and did not find my English.’
This is given as a known saying in one of Dr. Macleod’s racy contributions to the Teachdaire Gaidhealach. No man had a keener appreciation of the absurd conceit which leads some weak-minded Celts to affect ignorance of their mother-tongue after a few months’ absence in the Lowlands, from which they bring home a kind of English so fine as to be unintelligible.

"An co’dhalta nach dearbh ‘àite, ‘s maig a dh’ àraich duine riamh."<eng>
The foster-child that proves it not, pity him that reared.
The closeness of relationship established by fosterage among the Celts is almost without parallel; and the sayings and stories illustrative of this are numerous. "Comh-dhaltas gu ciad, ‘us câirdeas gu fichead.’<eng>
Fostership to a hundred, blood-relation to twenty degrees, is perhaps the strongest expression of Highland feeling on this point.

"An coinneamh roghainn."<eng>
Facing choice.
Prepared for any alternative.

[TD 28]

"An crann roimh ‘n damh."<eng>
The plough before the ox.
The cart before the horse.

"An cron a bhios ’s an aodann cha’n fhaodar a chleith."<eng>
The fault that’s in the face cannot be concealed.

"An dall air muin a’ chrùbaich."<eng>
The blind on the back of the cripple.

"An déigh cogaidh thig sìth."<eng>
After war comes peace.

"An déigh gaoithe thig uisge."<eng>
After wind comes rain.

"An deireadh an latha is math na h-eòlaich."<eng>
At the close of the day acquaintances are good.
At the end of a day’s journey, or of life, it is good to get among friends.

"An dubhan an aghaidh a’ chròcain."<eng>
The hook against the crook.

"An duine ’s miosa càradh, an duine gun chinneadh ‘thaobh athar no màthar."<eng>
The man of worst condition, he who has no kin by father or mother.
The ‘Feinn’ (i.e., Fionn or Fingal and his men) were laid spell-bound, in a cave which no man knew of. At the mouth of the cave hung a horn, which if any man ever should come and blow three times, the spell would be broken, and the Feinn would rise alive and well. A hunter one day, wandering in the mist, came on this cave, saw the horn, and knew what it meant. He looked in and saw the Feinn lying asleep all round the cave. He lifted the horn and blew one blast. He looked in again, and saw that the Feinn had wakened, but lay still with their eyes staring, like those of dead men. He took the horn again, blew another blast, and instantly the Feinn all moved, each resting on his elbow. Terrified at their aspect, the hunter turned and fled homewards. He told what he had seen, and accompanied by friends, went to search for the cave. They could not find it, it has never again been found; and so, there still sit, each resting on his elbow, waiting for the final blast to rouse them into life, the spell-bound heroes of the old Celtic world!—See Gael, Vol II., p. 241.

Another version of this fine legend lays the scene in the heart of that beautiful hill called Tomnahiurich near Inverness. A man found himself one evening at the entrance of a cave leading into the bowels of the hill. He entered, and saw the Feinn lying all around. From the roof of the cave hung a chain that would ring when shaken—audience-chain. He shook it, and it sounded a ringing peal, at which the sleeping heroes awoke, and turned their great cold eyes on the man. The poor creature instantly took to his heels, and rushed out of the cave and down the hill, hearing behind him, amid the howling of wakened deerhounds, a voice that cried, Thou wretched foolish man, that worse left than thou foundest!

The withe on which the fish was.

The withe next the windpipe should be cut first.

Before hemp was used in this country the commonest kind of rope was made of twisted twigs of osier or birch, as it was in the days of Samson and the Philistines. When a criminal was hanged with one of these rude ropes (whence the Scottish term ‘widdie,’ = ‘withy’), any one wishing to save his life would cut the withe round his throat, or if a horse fell and was in danger of being strangled by his harness, the same rule would follow.—See Note by R. MacAdam, on Irish proverb—Ulster Journal of Archæol., Vol VI., p. 178. Lord Bacon, in his Essays (‘Of Custom’) says he remembers that “an Irish rebel condemned put up a petition to the deputy that he might be hanged in a wyth, and not in an halter, because it had been so used with former rebels.”

Loud cackle, little egg. 
Great cry and little wool.—Eng.
Grand vanteur, petit faiseur.—Fr.
The grain that soonest goes to mill, will come soonest out.

Ante molam primus qui venit non molat imus.—Lat.
Chi primo arriva al molino primo macina.—Ital.
Quien primero viene primero muele.—Span.
Hvo der kommer først til Mölle faer først malet.—Dan.
Qui premier arrive au moulin premier doit moudre.—Fr.

Shrove-tide, the first Tuesday of the Spring moon.

The forward Shrove-tide, day comes before the night.
This means that the Feast comes before the Vigil.

The reproach getting spread, and its root at home.

Every day—present or absent.
This is one of the most frequently used of familiar sayings—usually added to a farewell, e.g. <gai>'Beannachd leat, an là 'chì 's nach fhaic,'<eng> or <gai>'a h-uile latha'.<eng> Curiously enough, this favourite phrase was not included in either edition of Macintosh.

Solomon should suffer by his own law.

When we are after gold, let us be at it; but when we are after shell-fish, let us be at it. The chiefs of the Macleods and of the Macdonalds each kept a fool, and laid a bet which of the two was the greater fool. Both were ordered to go to the shore and gather shell-fish. A piece of gold was placed where it would attract their notice. “Look here,” said the Macdonald fool to his companion, “here’s gold”. “Yes, yes,” said the other, “when we are after gold, let us be,” &c. It is a question, from the point of view of the highest wisdom, which of the two was the greater fool.

The hand that gives is the hand that gets.
The liberal soul shall be made fat.—PROV. vi. 25.

On the spot.
Literally ‘in the print of the soles’.

The child that’s left to himself will put his mother to shame.

The child whom you teach not at your knee, you won’t teach at your ear.

Betwixt three and thirteen throw the woodie while it’s green.
This wise Scottish maxim is now substantially embodied in
an Act of Parliament (35 & 36 Vict, c. 62), Sect. 69 of which enacts that
"It shall be the duty of every parent to provide elementary education in
reading, writing, and arithmetic, for his children between five and
thirteen years of age”.

"An lionn a ni duine dha fhéin, óladh e a leòr dheth."<eng>
The ale a man makes for himself let him have his fill of.
The use and brewing of ale in the Highlands in former times, before any
stronger drink was common, is indicated by several proverbs. The
application of this proverb, and of the next, is very much the same as
that in reference to a man’s choice of a bed to lie on.

"An lionn a rinn thu a d’ dhéoin, ólaídh tu a d’ dhaindeoin
deth."<eng>
The ale you made willingly you’ll drink against your will.

"An lon-dubh, an lon-dubh spàgach! thug mise dha coille fhasgach
fheurach, ’s thug esan dhomh an monadh dubh fásach."<eng>
The blackbird! the sprawling blackbird! I gave him a sheltered grassy
wood, and he gave me the black desolate moor.
Supposed by some (Note in the second edition of Macintosh) to refer
either to the Roman or to the Scandinavian invader. It seems more
applicable to some recent invaders, but the meaning is obscure.

"An luibh nach fhaighear, cha’n i ’choibhreas."<eng>
The herb that can’t be found can never heal a wound.

"An naigheachd a ’s mò am bliadhna ’s i ’s lugha an ath-
bhliadhna."<eng>
The greatest news this year will be least the next.

"An neach a ghéilleas do ghiseagan géilleadh giseagan da."<eng>
Him that yields to spells, let spells yield to.
Al.—"Na géill do ghis, ’s cha ghéill gis dhut."<eng>
He that follows freets, freets will follow him.—Scot.

"An neach a shineas a làmh sìneadh e ’chas."<eng>
He that stretches his hand must stretch his foot.
There are two interpretations of this: the one is, that he that ‘lifts’
had better run; the other, that the too liberal may some day need to go
dunning or begging.

"An neach a’s tàire ’bhios a’ s ’tigh, ’s ann leis a’s àirde
’mhuinntir."<eng>
The meanest person in the house brags most of his kindred.
’We hounds slew the hare,’ quo’ the blear-eyed messan.—Scot.

"An neach nach cinn ’n a chadal, cha chin’ e ’n a fhaireachadh."<eng>
He that grows not in his sleep will not grow when he’s awake.

"An ni ’chi na big ’s e ’ni na big."<eng>
What the little ones see, the little ones do.

"An ni ’chluinneas na big, ’s e ’chanas na big."<eng>
What the little ones hear, the little ones say.
As the old cock crows, so crows the young.—Eng.
Wie die Alten singen, so zwitschern auch die Jungen.—Germ.
Som de Gamle syng, saa tvïddre de Unge.—Dan.

What sent the officers to hell, asking what they knew full well.
The Maoir (a name generally applied to bailiffs and other inferior civil officers) was, and perhaps still is, a person inveterately disagreeable to the Celtic mind.

What kept the goats from the ivy.
The inaccessibility of the rock or wall. Goats are said to be very fond of ivy.

What God has promised man cannot baulk.
What God will, no frost can kill.—Eng.
Wham God will help nane can hender.—Scot.
L’homme propose, et Dieu dispose.—Fr.
El hombre propone, y Dios dispone.—Span.
Mennesket spaer, Gud raæ’er.—Dan.

The fated will happen.
Che sarà, sarà.—Ital.
Det kommer vel der skee skal.—Dan.

What comes with the wind will go with the rain.
Lightly come, lightly go.—Eng.

Come wi’ the wind and gang wi’ the water.—Scot.
Ligt gekomen, ligt gegaan.—Dutch.
Cha daink lesh y gheay, nach ragh lesh yn ushte.—Manx.

What you do not hear to-day, you will not report to-morrow.
Al. <gai>Mur cuinneadh tu sin, cha’n abradh tu e.
An ni nach ‘eil caillte gheabhar e.<eng>
What is not lost can be got.

What the women don’t know they’ll conceal.
Women conceal all that they know not.—Eng.
I well believe
Thou wilt not utter what thou dost not know,—
And so far will I trust thee, gentle Kate.
Henry IV., Part I.

What will not wash will not wring.

What makes one abbot glad, makes another abbot sad.
Ce qui nuit à l’un, duit à l’autre.—Fr.
Non pianse mai uno che non ridesse un altro.—Ital.

An obair a thòisicheas Diluain, bidh i luath no bidh i mall.<eng>
The work that begins on Monday will be either quick or slow.
Monday, being the first free day of the week, gives a good chance for
getting on with work, but if one relies too much on having abundance of
time, the work will probably be put off.

An oidhch’ a mharbhar am mult, agus an oidhch’ a theirigeas e.<eng>
The night the wedder is killed, and the night it’s finished.
The suggestion is that the repast should be liberal on both occasions.

An órdag ‘an aghaidh na glaice.<eng>
The thumb against the palm.

An ràmh a’s faisg’ iomair.<eng>
Pull the oar that’s nearest.

[TD 34]

An ràn mór agus an gal tioram.<eng>
Great cry and weeping dry.

An rathad fada glan, ’s an rathad goirid salach.<eng>
The long clean road, and the short dirty road.
Short cuts often lead into mire. So is it also with those who hasten to
‘get on’ in the world.

An rud a bhios ’n ad bhroinn, cha bhí e ’n ad thiomnadh.<eng>
What’s in yir wame’s no in yir testament.—Scot.
Fat housekeepers make lean executors.—Eng.
Fette Küche, magere Erbschaft.—Germ.
Grand chère, petit testament.—Fr.
Grassa cucina, magro testamento.—Ital.

An rud a bhios ’s a’ chnàimh cha tig e as an fheòil.<eng>
What’s bred in the bane will bide in the flesh.—Scot.

An rud fhasas ’s a chnàimh, ni feadar a dhìbirt as a bh-
fheòil.<eng>—Ir.
Wat in ’t gebeente gegroeid is, wil uit het vleesch niet.—Dutch.

An rud a chuir an earb air an loch—an éigin.<eng>
What made the roe take the loch—necessity.

An rud a chuireas duine ’s e ’bhuaimeas e, mar a thuirt an Óinseach
a bh’ cur na mine.<eng>
What man sows that will he reap, as the silly woman said when she sowed
meal.

An rud a chuireas e ’n a cheann cuiridh e ’n a chasan e.<eng>
What he puts into his head goes to his feet.

An rud a dh’fhalbhas cha’n e a dh’fhóghnas.<eng>
That which goes won’t suffice.

An rud a gheabhar aig ceann an Deamhain, cailleir e aig
‘earball.<eng>
What is got at the Devil’s head will be lost at his tail.
What’s gotten ower the Deil’s back is spent below his belly.—Scot.
Male partum, male disperit.—Plaut. Ill gotten, ill spent.—Eng.
Hvad man med Synd faaer, det med Sorg gaaer.—Dan.

An rud a ni e le ’chrògan, millidh e le ’spògan, coltach ri d’ sheana-bhrògan Gàidhealach.<eng> What he does with his hands he spoils with his feet, like your old Highland brogues.

[TD 35]

An rud a ni math do bhàillidh Dhiùra, cha dean e cron do’n Rùsgan Mac-Phàil.<eng> What’s good for the Jura factor will do no harm to Fleecy M’Phail. There was a small Jura farmer of the name of M’Phail, nick-named ‘Rùsgan,’ whom the factor liked, but took pleasure in chaffing. One day when R. came to pay his rent, the factor helped himself from the bottle which always stood on the table, and said to R.: ‘I think you are better without this,’ to which R. replied as above, and proceeded to help himself. This saying, trivial as was its origin, has survived for two centuries.

An rud a nìtear gu math chitear a bhuil.<eng> What is done well, its effect will tell.

An rud a nìtear ’s a’chùil, thig e dh’ionnsuidh an teine.<eng> What’s done in the corner will come to the hearth.

An rud a’s éudar ’s éudar e.<eng> What must be must.

An rud a their a h-uile duine bithidh e fior.<eng> What everybody says must be true. There is no proverb of such general acceptance as this with so little truth in it.

An rud anns an téid dàil théid dearmad.<eng> Delay brings neglect.

An rud nach bi air an t-slinnein bidh e air an t-sliasaid.<eng> What is not on the shoulder will be on the loin.

An rud nach binn le duine cha chluinn duine.<eng> What is not pleasant to his ear a man will not hear.

An rud nach cluinn cluas cha ghluais cridhe.<eng> What the ear hears not, the heart moves not. Faith cometh by hearing.—ST. PAUL.

An rud nach do bhuilich Dia cha’n fhad a mheallar e.<eng> What God bestowed not won’t be long enjoyed. Ill-won gear winna enrich the third heir.—Scot. Unrecht Gut thut nicht gut.—Germ.

An rud nach laidh ann ad ròd, cha bhrist e do lurg.<eng> What doesn’t lie in your way won’t break your leg.

[TD 36]

An rud nach tig ’s nach d’thàinig dhachaidh, grùthan na h-earba gun bhrachadh.<eng> What never came nor will come home, the roe’s liver untainted.
The chase retreating, and the rout running.

At daggers’ drawing.

The world going upside down, the horse mounted on the horseman.

The old saying long proved true shall never be belied.

Paréceme, Sancho, que no hay refrain que no sea verdadero.—Don Quixote.

Said of an over-presumptuous youth.

The foal that should have been in the mare grew into a gelding.

An sneachd nach tig mu Shamhuinn thig gu reamhar mu Fheill-Brìghde.

The snow that comes not at Hallowmass will come thick at Candlemas.

The new moon with her back downwards.

The name without the profit.

Where folk’s fate is to go, ford or hill won’t prevent.

Fram eru feigs götur—The ‘fey’ man’s road is straight—Icel.

The prettiest side of the door.

The outside of a maindoor is meant, but not in a metaphorical sense. The outside was usually planed, and sometimes painted, the inside left rough.

The baler bigger than the boat.

The horse that is struck in the head will be full of fear.

He will start at every movement of his master, anticipating another stroke. This extreme sensitiveness, painful to see, as the result of brutal treatment, is still more painful to see among school children, as it sometimes, though happily not often, is.

The fire one makes for himself he has a right to be warmed at.
The one that asks of every acquaintance.

The fish that bites every worm (i.e., bait) will be caught some time.

The illness that's better than health. This is a euphemistic Celtic form of describing childbirth.

The land that's come to will be taken.

The fountain that dries not up. This is one of the 'dubh-fhacail' or 'dark sayings,' the meaning of which can only be conjectured. It probably refers to the goodness of God.

In the mouth of the sack is the measure.

The three that won't bear caressing, an old woman, a hen, and a sheep.

The pack-saddle in place of the saddle.

The sturdy wooing. This means, of course, what is called 'Scotch wooing'.

The axe after the adze, and the adze after the plane.

The gentleman of Clan MacLean, and the warrior of Clan Ranald. The MacLeans have generally got credit for a certain high-bred polish, on which they rather plume themselves. 'An cinne mór, 's am pòr mi-shealbhach,'—The great race, and the unfortunate seed, is one of their sayings of themselves. Another is, 'Ged 'tha mi bochd, tha mi uasal,-buildeachas do Dhi, 's ann de Chlann Illeathain mi!'-Though I am poor, I am well-born—God be thanked, I am a MacLean! The Macdonalds, on the other hand, bear the character of manliness and force, with a tendency to swagger. 'Spagadaglioig Chlann Dònuill agus leòm Leathaineach'—The Macdonald ostentation, and the MacLean affectation, is a saying of this import.

Guessing the egg from the cackle.

When the belly is full, then the eye waxes dull. 'An uair' is always pronounced colloquially, and is generally so written. It is sometimes even degraded into 'dar'. 
An uair a bhios a’ ghaoth air chall, iarr á deas i.<eng>
When there is no wind, seek it in the south.
Yn chiuney smoo erbee, geay jiass sniessy j’ee.—Manx.

An uair a bhios a’ mhuc sàthach, cinnidh an drabh goirt.<eng>
As the sow fills the draff sours.—Eng., Scot.

[TD 39]

An uair a bhios am pobull dall, ni an gille càm ministear.<eng>
When the congregation’s blind, the one-eyed lad will suit their mind.
‘The one-eyed is king among the blind.’ See <gai>‘Is righ an càm’.

An uair a bhios am port a’ fàs fada, bidh e ’fas searbh.<eng>
When the tune gets tiresome it gets harsh.

An uair a bhios an cupan lán, cuiridh e thairis.<eng>
When the cup is full it will overflow.

An uair a’s làin’ an cupan, ’s ann a ’s dorr’ a ghiùlan.<eng>
When the cup is fullest it is most difficult to carry.
Al. <gai>Is duilich cupan lân a ghiulan.<eng>
A fu’ cup is ill to carry. When the cup is fu’ carry it even.—Scot.
Plenitude of power or wealth is difficult to bear without overbearing.
The saying is meant to correct that tendency, specially developed in upstarts.

An uair a bhios an deoch a ’s tigh, bidh an ciall a mach.<eng>
When drink’s in wit’s oot.—Scot.
Vino dentro, senno fuora.—Ital.
Do entra beber, sale saber.—Span.
Als de wijn ingaat, gaat de wijsheid uit. Wanneer de wijn is in de man, dan is de wijsheid in de kan.—Dutch.
Naar Öllet gaaer ind, da gaaer Viddet ud.—Dan.

An uair a bhios cànach air an eathar, bidh siubhal nan tighean aig Loiream.<eng>
While the rest are with the boat, Trifler goes from house to house.
This is a Lewis saying, applied to contemptible fellows who stay at home, while proper men go hazarding their lives at sea. Similar is, <gai>‘Bog-a-loireag, math air tir, ’us dìblidh air muir’.

An uair a bhios gill’ agad, tarruing a chluas.<eng>
When you have a servant pull his ear.

An uair a bhios mise thall, gerr an drochaid.<eng>
When I am over, cut down the bridge.

An uair a bhios Murchadh ’n a thàmh, bidh e ’ruamhar.<eng>
When Murdoch takes rest he delves.
This is said to have been spoken by a farmer’s wife in Jura of her husband, who was of a type rather rare in the Highlands. When in to dinner from ploughing in the fields, he would say to his men, <gai>‘Nach toir sinn lâmh air a’ chäl, fhad ’s a bhios sinn ’na ar tàmh’<eng>—Let us take a turn at planting the kale while we are idle.

[TD 40]

An uair a bhios an sgadan mu thuath, bidh Murchadh ruadh mu dheas.<eng>
When the herring is in the north, red Murdoch is in the south.
Red Murdoch is the restless, unlucky man, always out of the way when
something good is to be got.

*An uair a bhios nì aig a’ chat, ni e crònan.*
When the cat has something she purrs.
‘Applied to such mean persons as are too noisy and insufferable when they
once become rich.’—Note by Macintosh.

*An uair a bhios rud a dhlith air Dònull, gheabh e fhéin e.*
When Donald wants anything, he’ll get it himself.
Donald represents the pushing man who will not be over-nice in helping
himself to what he wants. *Dònull da fhéin,* Donald for
himself, is a somewhat similar phrase.

*An uair a bhuaileas tu cù buail gu math e.*
When you strike a dog, strike him well.

*An uair a uair a chailleas an saor a riaghailt, claonaidh na clàir.*
When the carpenter loses his rule the boards will go awry.

*An uair a chailleas duin’ a stòras, cha’n fhìù a sheòladh no
‘chomhairle.*
When a man loses his means, his direction and advice go for nothing.
Ffol pob tlawd—Foolish is every poor one.—Welsh.
Arme lui wijsheid gaat meest verloren.—Dutch.
In armer Leute Mund verdirt viel Weisheit.—Germ.

*An uair a chi thu bean oileanach, beir oirre, beir oirre; mur beir
thus’ oirre, beiridh fear elle oirre.*
When you see a well-bred woman, catch her, catch her; if you don’t do it,
another will match her.

*An uair a dh’éireas Iain dubh, laidhidh am ministear.*
When black John rises, the minister lies down.
The “minister’s man”—an important functionary in Scotland.
See Dean Ramsay’s Reminiscences.

*An uair a dh’ithear an t-arbhar is ann a thogas an bodach an
gàradh.*
When the corn is eaten, the silly body builds the dyke.

An uair a gheabh an leibidean a’s tigh, ’s e fear an tighe ’n
truaghan.
When the triflier gets in, pity the goodman of the house.

An uair a lasas sin, ni e teine.
When that lights it will make a fire.
Fire, quoth the fox, when he—on the ice.—Eng.
The Gaelic proverb is connected with the same parable as the English one,
course but comical.

An uair a gheabh sinn biadh gheabh sinn poit.
When we get food we’ll get a pot.
A good maxim for young couples, intent upon furnishing a house. Be sure
of your living first.
When Candlemas is past, the fox won’t trust his tail to the ice. There may be hard frost at that season, but it cannot be depended on.

No weather’s ill, if the wind be still.—Eng., Scot.

When the Spring is past a month, it’s up and down thenceforth. The husbandman after that can go on steadily with his work.

When Hallowmass falls on Wednesday, all men are uneasy. Supposed, no one knows why, to portend a severe winter.

Least news most peace.

A friend in need is a friend indeed.

When the rain is heaviest ’t will be soonest over.

When a man is most in straits, his head is his best support. Literally, ‘his head is his real neck,’ i.e., he must rely on his own brains to hold up his head. See ‘An uair a théid duine’.

When the rope is tightest it is nearest breaking.

When the finger ceases to distil, the mouth ceases to praise.

When the dung-beetle flies highest, it’s in the dirt it falls.

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When the dung-beetle flies highest, it’s in the dirt it falls.

When the dung-beetle flies highest, it’s in the dirt it falls.

When the dung-beetle flies highest, it’s in the dirt it falls.
When you thought you were on the sow’s back, you were beside her in the puddle.

When it came to one and two.

When every man draws his share, pity him who has none at all.

When every man draws his share, pity him who has none at all.

Selbst ist der Mann.—Germ.

When the old wife runs she runs with a vengeance.

When a man goes down, his own back is his support.

When thieves fall out, honest men come to their own.

When thieves reckon, leal folk come to their gear.—Scot., Eng.

Wanneer dieven kijven bekomen, vrome lieden hare goederen.—Dutch.

When thieves reckon, honest men come to their own.

When they come upon the man, they come upon all.

When all fruit is done, hips are good.

When coal is done work ceases.

The work referred to is the smith’s, the coal a kind of charcoal or coke, called eala-ghual, which used to be made of peat.

When Summer comes, we’ll build a house; Summer comes, and house or no house, it’s better to be out than in.

When anything comes on a man, everything comes.

When anything comes on a man, everything comes.

Misfortunes seldom come alone. It never rains but it pours.—Eng. Ill comes upon waur’s back.—Scot.

Een ongeluk komt zelden alleen.—Dutch.

Malheur ne vient jamais seul.—Fr.

Le disgrazie non vengon mai sole.—Ital.

Adonde vas, mal? Adonde mas hay.—Span.
With day counsel will come.
That night counsel will come.
— Manx.
La nuit porte conseil.—Fr.
La notte è la madre di pensieri.—Ital.
Dormiréis sobre ello, y tomaréis acuerdo.—Span.

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Guter Rath kommt über Nacht.—Germ.
Take counsel of your pillow.—Eng.

When the change of season comes, each bird returns to his flock.

When the natives forsake Islay, farewell the peace of Scotland! The population of Islay has decreased much by emigration, but it is to be hoped the peace of Scotland is safe notwithstanding.

When he thatches his head, he will thatch his house.

Keeping up gentility in spite of everything.

A man down on his back, after a wrestle with a spectre, 'if this was the worst plight he ever was in?' 'Not at all,' said he. 'What then?' said the ghost. 'The worst plight I ever was in, was when I was between Hospitality and Want, and keeping up gentility in spite of all'. 'That was hard work,' said the ghost, 'but get up, you’l never encounter these two again'; and so let him go.
The conflict between Hospitality and Want is prettily illustrated in one of Fingal’s questions to the daughter of King Cormac. ‘What is hotter than fire?’ said F. ‘A good man’s cheek,’ said the lady, ‘to whom visitors come, and no food to give them—gnúis dhuine mhath do ’n tig aoidhean, gun bhiadh aige dhaibh’. Fingal’s greatest strait was when he was between Want and Denial, ‘eadar an t-euradh ’us aimbeairt,’ q.v.

Late to the loch, early to the river, and about noon to the burns. This is an angler’s advice.

At the top of the heights. At the height of quarrel.

In the eddy of the stream. Applied to persons in extreme difficulty.
One asking and twelve drinking, or the sheep's thirst.

One cow breaks the dyke, and a dozen leap it.

An old woman's only son, and a miller's one cow.

The unfortunate little only son, 'tis natural for him to go to the dogs.

The old wife's only daughter, the one hearth-chicken.

The thief's assent to the liar, and the liar's to the thief.

Ask Jock Thief if I be a leear.—Scot.

Domanda al mio caro se sono ladro.—It.

Our house thatched, and our hall nailed.

All ready for occupation.

Dry bread and eggs would be the death of a savage; He whose wife wishes him short life can't be in good health.

This refers to one of the Highland notions about certain food which are often fanciful. See <gai>'Ubh gun ìm'.<eng> An English saying, 'After an egg drink as much as after an ox,' is to the same effect. <gai>'Mac-Samhain'<eng> is the name for a kind of mythical savage.

The pride of the little pot won't go beyond the ashes.

As a' choire anns an teine.<eng>
Out of the kettle into the fire.

Out of the briers into the thorns.

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Out of the fire into the embers.

[Greugais]—Lucian. De fumo in flammam.—Lat.
Cader dalla padella nelle bragie.—Ital.
Andar de zocos en colodros.—Span.
Fugir do fumo, e cahir no fogo.—Port.
Sauter de la poêle sur la braise.—Fr.
Out of the frying-pan into the fire.—Eng.

The swelling of the heel, and the death of the only son.
Said by a Lewis woman who suffered under both pains at once.

“Lochadh buinn-duibh lochadh gu cnàimh,” is another saying expressive of the agony caused by a sore heel.

Atach seann seòladair, an t-atch a’s miosa ‘th’ann.<

An old sailor’s cast-off things, worst of all cast-offs.
This is equally applicable to an old sailor’s garments or his used-up craft. ‘Atach’ = Ath-aodach.

Athair na Dìlinn!
Father of the Flood!
An interjection not unnatural in a rainy climate.

Ataigh is an darna cuir air a’ char eile.<
The reproach of the one twist against the other.
Al. ‘An darna curra,’ the one heron, &c.

Ataigh an fhìdhleir dhuibh o’n taobh tuath.<
The black fiddler’s short cut from the north.
A round-about way. Al. ‘Ataigh an tàilleir dhuibh do Ghleann Cuaich, mu’n cuairt an saoghal—The black tailor’s short cut to Glen Quoich—round the world.

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B.

Bagair ‘s na buail.<
Threaten and strike not.
There is something of the Bombastes character in this advice, but its discretion cannot be denied.

Baile Dhuthaich bhòidheach, ‘s Dornach na gorta,
Skibo for apples, and Beil for oat cakes.
Eribol for haddocks, Dunrobin for kail,
Golspie for black shells, Drumuie for brine.
All these places, with the exception of Tain, are on the coast of Sutherlandshire.

B’ainmig leis a’ chirc aghartan a bhi aice.<
It is not common for hens to have pillows.
Applied to persons affecting luxuries unsuitable to them.

Balach ‘us balgaire tighearna,
A Laird’s flunkey and his dog,
These are two one should not spare;
Slap the flunkey on the cheek,
Hit the hound upon the nose.

This verse is said to have been composed by John Morrison of Bragar in Lewis, who lived during the latter half of the 17th century, and was held in high repute for his administrative talent and ready wit. Having come on one occasion to Seaforth Lodge at Stornoway, to explain his refusal to pay an overcharge made by the factor, he was assailed at the door by a big dog, which barked furiously at him. Morrison hit him on the nose with
his stick, and sent him away howling. Next came out a flunkey, who addressed himself to Morrison in no polite terms, and got in reply a good whack on the jaw. More noise followed, which at last brought out Seaforth himself. Morrison explained the whole

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thing to the laird’s satisfaction, and finished his story, it is said, with the above verse. For an account of him and his family, see Captain Thomas’s ‘Traditions of the Morrisons,’ Proc. of Scot. Soc. of Ant., Vol. XII., pp. 526-531.

B’ àluinn a’ ghnùis, na ‘m b’ iùlmhor am béus.<eng>
The face were lovely were the ‘haviour good.

B’amhuil mur a b’fhìlor.<eng>
Probable if it were not true.
This resembles, but wants the point of ‘Se non è vero è ben trovato’.

Bàs an fhithich ort!<eng> The raven’s death to you!
This is much the same as B’ Droch bhàs ort!’—a very common phrase. It was a popular belief among the Gaël that the young raven kills the old one. Not less emphatic is Bàs gun sagart ort!’—Death without priest to you!

Bata ‘s treasa na’n cuaille, gille’s uaisle na ‘mhaighstir.<eng>
Cane stronger than club, servant finer than master.

Bàthadh mór aig oirthir.<eng>
A great drowning near the land.
Margr druknar nerri landi.—Iceland.

Bàthaidh uisge teth teine.<eng>
Hot water will quench fire.
Foul water will sloken fire.—Scot.

Bàthaidh toll beag lóng mhór.<eng>
A little hole will sink a big ship.

B’e sin a bhi ‘cur icomchoir’ ‘an deaghaidh Chaluim.<eng>
That were blaming Malcolm after he’s away.

B’e sin a bhi cur na caora air theadhair làmh ri tigh a’ mhèirlich.<eng>
That were tethering the sheep near the thief’s house.

B’e sin a bhi ‘dol eadar a’ chraobh ’s a rùsg.<eng>
That were to go between the tree and its bark.
Il ne faut mettre le doigt entre l’arbre et l’écorce.—Fr.

B’e sin a bhi ‘tàladh seangain air crios.<eng>
That were hushing an ant to sleep on a girdle.
Trying to do an absurd thing. Somewhat to the same effect is Cala seangain air crios,’<eng> An ant’s harbour on a girdle.

B’e sin a’ chearc a’ gairm roimh ‘n choileach.<eng>
That were the hen crowing before the cock.
Triste es la casa, donde la gallina canta, y el gallo calla.—Span.
That were to name a cow on a herd, and take her from him at evening.
It was usual, and still is, to allot one of the cows of a herd to the
cow-herd for his own supply of milk.

That were the heap above the sack.

That were the change of days.
It is common to hear 'S ann air a thàinig an dà latha' said of
a person who has suffered a change of circumstances. See 'Cha robh
duine gun dà latha'.

That were asking a drop from the cat, and the cat mewing clamorously.

That were the black usage of the white curds.
Unnatural treatment of a thing or person.

That was the skill without luck.
Many of the proverbs inculcate the dangerous doctrine that luck is better
than skill or effort. There is a story about two carpenters, who got
their choice from a certain witch or 'glaistig' between
'ealain gun rath' and 'rath gun ealain'. The one
chose the former, became a perfect artificer, and yet never prospered.
The other chose the latter, never rose above being a botcher, and yet
'got on' in the world. So much for luck! See a story of the same sort in
Campbell's W. H. T., II. 86, where 'rath' is mistaken for 'ràdh'—
'speech'.

Putting the servant in place of the gentleman..

That was the hasty love and the quick hate.
Al. Soon hot, soon cold.—Engl.

That was the star in the dark night.
Al. Often said ironically of a pretentious person.

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Putting salt into the sea.
Bwrw heli yn y môr.—Welsh.

That were sending wood to Lochaber.

That were sending butter to a dairyman's house.
Sending owls to Athens.—Gr. Sending pines to Norway.—Dan. Carrying coals
to Newcastle.—Engl. Ca’in saut to Dysart, and puddin’s to Tranent.—Scot.
Taking blades to Damascus—Arab. Pepper to Hindostan.—Pers. Cockles to St.
Michel—Fr.

That were the ant biting the gelding.

That were to take the axe out of the carpenter’s hand.

That were hitting the head, and avoiding the neck.

That were asking leave to lift a limpet. Literally, ‘to strike a hammer on a limpet’. Limpets, which are much used
as bait in the Highlands and Islands, are naturally considered free to
all mankind. The tool used for detaching them is called <gai>’òrd-
bàirnich,’<eng> though generally it is a chisel rather than a hammer. A
huge block of trap, which has slipped from the face of a cliff in one of
the islands of Loch Bracadale in Skye, is called <gai>’Ord-bàirnich
Fhinn,’<eng> Fingal’s limpet-hammer.

That were the kite’s watch over the hens. Such protection as vultures give to lambs.—Pizarro.

That were taking the eel by the tail.

That were a call far from the cows. Out of place, or before the time.

That were the Devil’s loan to the mill. Bleùd an Diaoul—the Devil’s meal.—Breton. There are proverbs of various nations, implying a disbelief in the
honesty of millers, and this seems to be one of them.

That was the day for lifting your sacks, but not to the mill. This refers either to a <gai>creach,<eng> or “lifting” of property
against the owner’s will, or to a flitting.

That were trusting a pudding to the black dog.

That were the bramble-berries in February. Said of anything out of season.

That were absolving the thievish dog.

That were the security without substance, were I to warrant thee.
Beag agus beag éisg so, ach tuilleadh agus tuilleadh as an t-seilbh chiadna.<eng>
Little fish this, but there’s more and more in the same store.
Said when one gets a small fish to begin with. Somewhat similar is,
<gai>‘Fuil air iasg! mharbh mi sgiollag’.

Beag àidh ort!<eng>
Small luck to you!
Al. <gai>Beagan pisich.

Bean á tigh-mór ‘us bó á baile, cha fhreagair an duine bochd.<eng>
A wife from the big house, and a cow from a farm, won’t suit the poor man.
The wife accustomed to the style of a gentleman’s house might probably be ill to please in a poor thatched cottage; and a fine Ayrshire cow would be more difficult to keep than a hardy Highland one.

<gai>Bean fhada, chaol, dhìreach, miann Dhònuill amadain.<eng>
The fool Donald’s fancy, a tall, slender, straight wife.
Probably the fancy of the wise man who invented this saying was a stout, strong, and what is called in the Lowlands a ‘wise-like’ woman.

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<gai>Bean ’g a bhuain, dall ’g a mheangadh, curaidh ’g a shniomh; ’s figh an reamhar air a’ chaol, ma ’s math leat an taod a bhi buan.<eng>
A woman to pluck it, a blind man to pop it, a strong man to twist it; and weave the thick on the thin, if you wish your rope to last.
This refers to the making of a rope of birch or willow twigs. A woman would choose nice twigs, and a blind man would use his knife cautiously.

<gai>Bean ’g a thréigsinn, ’us stiùir ’g a dhiùltadh.<eng>
Wife forsaking him, and helm disobeying.
A very sad predicament.

<gai>Bean ruadh dhubh-shuileach, cù lachdunn las-shuileach, fear an fhuilt dhubh ’s na fiasaige ruaidh,–na tri còmhlaichean a ’s mios’ air bith.<eng>
A red-haired black-eyed woman, a dun fiery-eyed dog, a black-haired red-bearded man,—the three unluckiest to meet.
Another Gaelic saying about the red beard and the black head is,
<gai>‘Fear a’chinn duibh ’s na fiasaige ruaidh, co ’thug riabh a nàdur?’<eng>
Still more emphatic are <gai>‘Fear a’ chinn duibh, &c., na teirig eadar e ’s a chreag,’<eng> and the old English rhyme,
A red beard and a black head,
Catch him with a good trick and take him dead.

<gai>Beannachd a shaoid ’s a shiubhail leis! bitheadh e ’nochd far an robh e ’n raoir.<eng>
The blessing of his state and his journey be with him! Let him be tonight where he was last night.
This is like an Oriental expression of hospitality.

<gai>Beannachd Chaluim ghobha—’mo thogair ged nach till’.<eng>
Smith Malcolm’s blessing—I care not if he come not back.

<gai>Beannachd dhut fhéin, ach mollachd do d’ oid’-ionnsachaidh!<eng>
Blessing to thyself, but a curse on thy teacher!
Blessing on their going and way! This is Friday, they won’t hear us. A charm against Fairies. Friday was the day on which they were believed to visit Fairyland.

Conan’s life among the demons: If bad for me, for them no better. Conan is one of the principal characters celebrated in the Fenian Legends, and the only disagreeable one. He is called ‘aimlisg na Fèinne,’ the mischief of the Fenians, and is described as rash, quarrelsome, and meddlesome. He visited Ifrinn (Hell) in search of some of his departed friends, and gave as good as he got there to the fiends. Sir Walter Scott picked up this story, and made use of it in Waverley, where Mrs. Flockhart asks, “And will ye face thae tearing chields, the dragoons, Ensign Maccombich?” “Claw for claw, as Conan said to Satan, Mrs. Flockhart, and the deevil tak’ the shortest nails.” “Is olc do bheatha ‘Chonain!” is another saying in reference to this legend.

Feed thou me to-day, and I’ll feed thee to-morrow.

Great Ben Nevis crying in travail, and nothing came of it but a field-mouse. This, no doubt, is a mere version of “Parturiunt montes,” but it has the merit of local colouring.

The short quick will overtake the long slow.

A woman may bear a son, but God makes the heir. Hæredem Deus facit, non homo.—Coke.

You will be a good one by the time your heard grows. Said ironically to forward young people.

Poor living without money, as the Scot of old had.

The manners of the folk one lives among will be followed. Thy neighbour is thy teacher. Live with him who prays, and thou prayest. Live with the singer, and thou singest.—Arab.

He who herds with the wolves will howl.—Fr., Ital., Span., Germ., Dan. When you are at Rome, do as Rome does.—Eng.

Far apart were the milk-cows of their grandfathers.
Said of persons whose ancestors were far removed from each other in place or position; e.g., marrying out of one’s sphere.

A shrew’s ill nature would be longer out of her than I would be about that.
In other words, I should do it “in no time”.

'Twere easier to put Ewen on horseback.
In A. Campbell’s note on this, he says it alludes to M’Neill of Barra, but that is doubtful. Macintosh, in his note on another proverb, says, “There is an ingenious sarcastical description of setting MacNeil on horseback, in Gaelic, in my hands, setting forth the grandeur, antiquity, and valour of MacNeil of Barra.” A version of that curious composition, got in 1859 from the recitation of a man in Blair Athol, is given in Mr. J. F. Campbell’s Leabhar na Feinne, pp. 210, 211. After an elaborate description of the dressing and arming of Ewen, the extraordinary virtues of his steed, and the splendour of his harness, the ignominious fiasco is thus briefly told—He went three times round the dunghill, took a great fright, and returned!

Another version, called ‘Cliù Eobhain,’ curiously differing from the above, is given by Mr. D. C. Macpherson in the Gael, Vol. IV., pp. 112, 113. It was copied from a MS. in the Irish character, apparently about a century old.

Better unborn than untaught.
The English is that of Heywood, given in Hazlitt’s English Proverbs, with this old rhyme—
A chyld were better to be unbore,
Than to be untaught, and so be lore.

Better no ring than a rush ring.
This proverb is both English and Scotch.

Better be silent than sing a bad song.
Macintosh translates the three last words, ‘receive an affront’.

Better foray coming to the land than mild morning in the cold month of storms.

Better foray coming to the land than mild morning in the cold month of storms.
But if it be white it’s the better to like.
The hind had as lief see his wife on the bier,
As that Candlemas Day should be pleasant and clear.
A’ the months o’ the year
Curse a fair Februeer.

Better the half yesterday than the whole to-day.
[Bis dat qui cito dat.-Lat.]
The best generosity is the quick.-Arab.
One to-day is worth two to-morrow.-Eng.
En Skilling er i Tide saa god som en Daler.-Dan.
Mas vale un ‘toma’ que dos ‘te daré’.–Span.

Better keep out than put out.

Better for him were a cake and a hole to bake it in.
‘Than think of such a thing’ is understood.

Better were it for MacDonald to have as much as would cover himself.
I have not been able to ascertain the origin of this saying.

Better not begin than stop without finishing.

I would rather see it than hear it.
‘Seeing is believing.’–Arab., Eng., Scot.
Chi con l’ occhio vede, col cuor crede.–Ital.
Hooren zeggen is half gelogen.–Dutch.

Better sit next a madman than next a naked man.
‘Naked’ here means needy. It may be intended to signify that a destitute
man is apt to be dangerous, as another proverb indicates, and
the Latin, ‘Esurienti ne occurras’.

There were various wools in Malcolm’s cloth.
Said of persons whose character or works are inconsistent or
heterogeneous.
Fingal's door was free to the needy.

In the ballad called ‘Urnuigh Oisein’ (Leabhar na Feinne, pp. 41-46, Gael, I. 83), consisting of a dialogue between Ossian and St. Patrick, Patrick says—

> Ge bheag a’ chuil chrònanaich,
> ‘Us mònaran na gréine,
> Gun fhios do ‘n Righ mhòralach,
> Cha têid fo bhil’ a sgéithe.

Small as is the humming gnat,
And the mote in sunbeam,
Unknown to the majestic King,
They pass not ‘neath his wing.

To this Ossian replies—

> N saoil thu ‘m b’ ionann e ’s Mac Cúaile, An righ ‘bh’ againg air na Fiannaibh; Dh’ fhaodadh gach neach ‘bha air thalamh Teachd ’n a thalla-san gun iarraidh.

Think’st thou then to equal him
To our King, the son of Cúaile?
All the world might enter in
To his hall unbidden.

He was both warp and woof to it.
He was the body and soul of the thing.

‘Dluth glic agus inneach gòrach’ is said of a person who seems foolish, but is really wise.

There were great doings at Eriskey.
Eriskey is a small island in Loch Crerar. The story goes, that the wife of the laird of Airds (long ago) kept a paramour on this island, whom she treated luxuriously. The family fool got wind of it, and went on repeating, “Great doings at Eriskey,” till his master inquired into the matter.

Borrowing and lending were always in fashion.

The maltman had other days.

Said of people in reduced circumstances. See ‘Bu là eile.’

I have been in a smithy before now.
The allusion is probably to the common practice of testing men’s strength and agility, in a smithy, with the big hammer, and the meaning is something equivalent to “I am no greenhorn”.

Bha ’n t-àm ann.<eng>
It was high time.

Bha slneadh saoghail aige.<eng>
He had a new lease of life.

Bha ’n uair ’g a ruith.<eng>
His hour was pursuing him.
There is something impressive in the picture this suggests, of a man pursued by the ‘shadow feared of man’.

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Bha rud-eigin de dh’ uisge far ’na bhàthadh an gamhainn.<eng>
There’s aye some water whaur the stirkie droons.—Scot.

Bha sid ’an dàn da.<eng>
That was fated for him.

Bha thu ’d’ shlàint’ an uair a chaidh do chòta ’dheanamh.<eng>
You were in good health when your coat was made. Said to one whose coat is too wide.

Bheir a h-uile Didòmhnuich seachdain leis.<eng>
Every Sunday brings a week with it.

Bheir aon duine triùir bhàrr an rathaid.<eng>
One man will lead three off the road.

Bheir aon fhear each gu uisge, ach cha toir dha fhear dhiag air ’òl.<eng>
One man may lead a horse to water, but twelve won’t make him drink. A man may lead a horse to the water, but four-and-twenty winna gar him drink.—Scot.

Bheir duine beath’ air éigin, ach cha toir e rath air éigin.<eng>
A man may force a livelihood, but cannot force fortune. Here again appears the belief in Fate, as a power superior to human will.

Bheir ao-dòchas misneach do ghealtair.<eng>
Desperation drives on cowards. Put a coward to his metal, and he’ll fight the Deil.—Scot. A man who would like to run away sometimes fights like a lion when escape is impossible.

Bheir duine glic breith-bliadhna air fear na h-aon oidhche.<eng>
A wise man will from one night’s knowledge judge another for a year. He can judge in a night from a man’s conversation and manners, as much as a person less sagacious could do in a year.

Bheir fear na moch-eirigh buaidh air fear na fionnairidh.<eng>
The early riser will beat the late watcher.

Bheir fóid a bhreith ’s a bhàis fear gu ’àit’ air éigin.<eng>
No man can avoid the spot, where birth or death is his lot.
I’ll make you so that you can’t drink milk from a spoon. This forcible form of threat comes from the Hebrides.

Little people will bring things from the sky as soon as big ones. A hint to big people that they need not aim at things too high even for them. A similar saying is, 'Thoir thusa rionnag as an spéur, 's bheir mise nuas t’ elle'.—Bring you a star down from the sky, and I’ll bring another.

That will take the tongue out of the hell.

He would make the rocks re-echo. Said of a loud-voiced person.

It would wrench the heart of a stone.

A good bee could get honey out of that.

You would take as long to tune your pipe as another would to play a tune. Ye’re as lang tuning yir pipes as anither wad play a spring.—Scot.

Counsel can be given, but not conduct.

I would give him a night’s quarters, though he had a man’s head under his arm. Nothing could be more expressive than this of the Highland virtues of hospitality and clannishness in excess.

I would cut my hair on Thursday. And pare my nails on Monday; Then I’d sail from sea to sea. Friday being an unlucky day, a man going on a voyage, for which Saturday or Sunday would be preferred, would get his hair cut on Thursday. Why Monday should be preferred for paring nails it is hard to see, except that doing it on Sunday was unlucky.

As kindling a fire on a loch,
As drying a stone in the ocean,
Like stroke of hammer on cold iron,
Is counsel to a shrewish woman.

An Irish version of this is slightly different:

Coigilt teine le loch,
No cathamh cloch le cuan,
Comhairle thabhairt do mnaoi bhoirb,
No buille de ribe air iarran fuar.

This verse was given as part of a song picked up in S. Qist by Mr. Camichael, which appeared in the Nether Lochaber column of the Inverness Courier. It has also been ascribed, but without sufficient warrant, to John Morrison of Bragar. He may have said it to his wife, but it does not follow that he composed it.

To obey his master is the servant’s duty.

The spendthrift were happy, could he get as he scatters.

From high shoes to low shoes, and from low shoes to half-soles.

As I have made the inch, I’ll make the span.

Give him an inch, and he’ll take an ell—

Give him an inch, and he’ll take an ell—

Since the property of the MacNeills consists of pebbles, let them take to them.

Probably said on the occasion of a fight between the M’Neills and some other clan. The beach at Castle Bay, in Barra, where the chief resided, abounds in sea-worn stones, piled up by the Atlantic waves.

Since you have ridden the horse, shoe him.

From hand to mouth, the best of all portions.

This saying, inconsistent with modern wisdom, but not with primitive Christianity, is neutralised by the following one.

From hand to mouth will never make a worthy man.

As I am not a dairymaid, I won’t quarrel about the grass.

I won’t dispute about what is not in my province.
As I cannot touch the big goose, I’ll pound the goslings.
If I canna kep guse, I’ll kep gaislin.—Scot. Very probably said first by a fool, who got bitten by a gander.—See Lover’s Essay on Fools, in ‘Legends of Ireland’. But there is much of human nature in the sentiment. Even kings and statesmen have exemplified it.

<gai>Bho’n nach leam, cha tarruing.<eng>
Since it is not mine I won’t draw it.
This, if referring to a rope, is selfish. But it is susceptible of a better interpretation, as a caution to mind one’s own business.

<gai>Bhuail iad a ceann air an àmraidh.<eng>
They struck her head against the ambry.
Said of a servant who looks like her food. “Ambry,” or “amry,” old English and Scotch for cupboard, originally “almerie,” or place for keeping alms in. ‘He has broken his face on the ambry,’ says Kelly, ‘is spoken of bluff, fat-cheek’d boys.’

<gai>Bhuail thu ’n tarrung air a ceann.<eng>
You have hit the nail on the head.

<gai>Bhuain e maorach an uair a bha ‘n tràigh ann.<eng>
He gathered shell-fish while the tide was out.
Same as making hay while the sun shone.

[TD 62]

<gai>Bi ’d thosd ’s ’ad chuimhne.<eng>
Be silent and mindful.
In the storv of Fingal’s enchantment in the house of the Blàr Buidhe (Celt. Rev., Vol. I., p. 197, Gael, IV. 10), it is said of him, <gai>’Bha Fionn ’n a thosd ’s na chuimhne,’<eng> while he was undergoing dreadful torture.

<gai>Bi ’d thosd ’s bi ’d chomaidh.<eng>
Be silent, and take your share.
Ask no questions for conscience’ sake.

<gai>Bi gu subhach, geamnaidh,
Moch-thràthach a’s t-Samhradh;
Bi gu curraiceach, brógach,
Brochanach ’s a’ Gheamhradh.<eng>
In Summer time be cheerful, chaste,
And early out of bed;
In Winter be well-capped, well-shod,
And well on porridge fed.

Dr. John Smith, in his Galic Antiquities, attributes the first half of this excellent advice to the Druids. A more probable opinion ascribes it to the <gai>“Ollamh Muileach,”<eng> Dr. John Beaton, one of a family famous in the Highlands for medical skill. He was family physician to the MacLeans, and died in 1657, as a Latin inscription on his tomb in Iona still bears.

<gai>“Brochan”<eng> means both “porridge” and “gruel”. In most parts of the Highlands it is or was applied equally to both, while in some parts, such as Skye, porridge is always called <gai>“lite,”<eng> and gruel alone <gai>“brochan”.<eng> Gruel undoubtedly is more for winter than for summer, while porridge is equally for all the year round.

<gai>Bi thusa ’bruidheann, ’s bidh na h-uibhean agamsa.<eng>
You talk away, and I’ll have the eggs.
Biadh a thoirt do’n fhearann mu ’n tig an t-acras air; fois a thoirt da mu’um fás e sgìth; a ghart-ghlanadh mu’um fás e salach,—comharran an deagh thuathanaich.<eng>To feed the land before it get hungry; to give it rest before it grow weary; to weed it well before it get dirty—the marks of a good husbandman.

Biadh-gràineachaidh aig seana-chù.<eng>Food of loathing to an old dog.

Biadh math monaidh maragan-dubha.<eng>Black puddings are good food for the moors.

[TD 63]

Bial a labhras, ach gniomh a dhearbhais.<eng>The mouth speaks, but the deed proves.
See <gai>‘Air mhèud ’s a their.’<eng>Bial gun fhàitheam.<eng>A mouth without hem.
Al. <gai>A bhial air a ghualainn.<eng>—His mouth on his shoulder = his heart on his sleeve.

Bial-sios air na mnathan, mur faighear ’s gach àit’ iad!<eng>Confound the women, if they are not found everywhere!
Women’s work is never done.—Eng. and Scot.
The phrase <gai>‘Bial-sios ort!’<eng>—Down mouth to you! probably means, May you be laid upside down, i.e., dead. <gai>‘Bial seachad ort!’<eng> is sometimes used instead.

Bidh a’ chuid a ’s miosa aig a’ bhus a ’s taise.<eng>The modest mouth gets the smallest share.
Bidh nidh aig an sàrachan, ’n uair a bhios an nàireachan falamh.<eng>—Ir.
A modest beggar’s bag is empty.—Hungar.

Bidh adhaircean fad’ air a’ chrodh ’tha fada uainn.<eng>Far off cows have long horns.
Omne ignotum pro magnifico.—Lat.
Al. <gai>Adhaircean fad air a’ chrodh ’tha ’n Eirinn, or ’a th’ anns a’ cheò’.<eng>The same idea is more prettily expressed in the saying, <gai>‘Is gorm na cnuic tha fada uainn’<eng> (Scot. and Ir.,—’glas’ for ‘gorm,’ Ir.), of which Campbell’s beautiful lines are a paraphrase—’Tis distance lends enchantment to the view, And robes the mountain in its azure hue.

Bidh an coileach-circe ’g obair fad an latha, ach cha bhi ni ’n a sgròban ’am bial na h-oidhche.<eng>The barn-door cock works all day, but his crop is empty at night.
Gallo bom nimco foi gordo—Good cock was never fat.—Port.

Bidh an duine foghainteach beò, ge b’e ’n clobh’ a chòir.<eng>The able man will make a living, had he but the tongs to start with. The tongs are mentioned as belonging specially to the wife’s province, and not an implement likely to be chosen by the man.

Bidh an iall ruighinn gu leòir gus am brist i.<eng>The thong is tough enough till it breaks.
The blame will follow the loss.

The child that grovels in the ashes will be a jaunty lad.

The last sigh will he grievous.

Mishap follows upon misadventure.

The best apple is on the highest bough. 
"Happy would that nation be" says Macintosh, in the Dedication of his collection to the Earl of Buchan, "where every person of distinguished rank would endeavour to distinguish himself still more essentially, by being beneficial to the public, and thereby confirm our old Gaelic saying 'Bithidh meas is fearr,' &c."

The crow has a maid-servant in Autumn. 
Said of people who keep more servants than they need.

The empty hand will smell like the dead 
This is one of the most emphatic sayings on the evils of poverty.

A hasty judgment will he hurtful. 
Al. Cha tug breith luath nach tug da uair. 
He who judges hastily must judge twice. 
De fol juge brève sentence. 

The silly bird’s foot will go into the snare. 

John will have nuts yet: If he has, let him crack them, said the mean devil. 

The fool’s share is in the mouth of his bag. 

Friday will be contrary to the week. 
Selde is the Friday all the weke y-like.—Chaucer.
This groundless fancy is perhaps connected with the supposed unluckiness of Friday.


The interposer will get struck.

There is hope of the man at sea, but none of the man in the churchyard.

The man of war may return, but not the buried man.

Al. Bidh dùil ri bial cuain, ach cha bhi ri bial uhagh.
Biann sùil le muir, acht cha bhiann sùil le cill.—Ir.

It will be white when it dries, as the bad washerwoman said.

The deceitful will be down.

The man of one cow will sometimes want milk.

The volatile youth’s desire—all that’s new is best.

Changes are lichtsome, and fules are fond of them.—Scot.

Each draws water to his own mill.

Ognun tira l’ acqua al suo molino.—It.

All will be as God wills.

Far awa’ folks have fine feathers.—Scot.

A day will requite, and a day repay.

The good is esteemed when lost.

[TD 66]

The smart lad’s share is on every dish.

The goats are deaf in Harvest.

Harvest ears thick of hearing.—Eng.

The big dog’s nature will be in the pup.

[TD 66]
The man of wet foot will get something. 
This refers to fishing. See <gai> ‘Cha dean brògan tioram’.

**Bidh rud uime nach robh mu’n chül-chàise.**<eng>
Something will come of it more than of the cheese-back.

Three parties of the Macdonalds of Glencoe went in different directions on a <gai> ‘Faoigh-Nollaig,’<eng> or ‘gentle begging’ expedition for the Christmas of 1543. They met by appointment at the Black Mount, and proceeded to divide the proceeds, when it was found, after everything else had been divided, that the remnant of a cheese was still to be disposed of. From words on the subject the claimants came to blows—not with fists, alas! but with dirks; and, if the story be true, only one man out of eighteen was left to tell the tale! A small loch at the spot where this happened is still known as <gai> ‘Lochan-na-fala,’<eng> the bloody tarn.—Cuairtear, Vol. I., p. 211.

**<gai>Bidh sannt naoinear air aon mhnaoi gun sliochd.**<eng>
A childless woman has the greed of nine.
Al. **<gai>Bidh sannt nan seachd sagart anns a mhnaoi gun laogh gun luran.**<eng>—A childless woman has the greed of seven priests.

**<gai>Bidh sonas ’an lorg na caithimh.**<eng>
Luck follows spending.
This is doubtful doctrine, unless in the sense of Solomon’s proverb, ‘There is that scattereth, and increaseth’.

**<gai>Bidh sùilean ghobhar aig na mnathan a’ gleidheadh am fear dhaibh fhéin.**<eng>
Wives have goats’ eyes in keeping their husbands to themselves.
Al. **<gai>‘Ag iarraidh fir.’**<eng> Goats are very sharp-sighted.

**<gai>Bigh teine math ’an sin ’n uair a ghabhas e.**<eng>
That will be a good fire when it kindles.
See **<gai>‘An uair a lasas’.**

[TD 67]

**Bidh tu beò am bliadhna.**<eng>
You will survive this year.
Said to a person who suddenly appears when being spoken of.

**<gai>Bidh uan dubh aig caora bhàin, ’s uan bàn aig caora dhuibh.**<eng>
A white sheep may have a black lamb, and a black sheep a white one.

**<gai>Biodh aice an rudha a bheir i ’mach.**<eng>
Let her take the point she can clear.
Said of a boat, and applicable to human beings.

**<gai>Biodh e dubh no odhar no dónn, ’s toigh leis a’ ghobhair a meann.**<eng>
Be it black or dun or brown, the goat likes her own kid.
Every craw thinks her ain bird white.—Scot.
Jeder Mutter Kind ist schön.—Germ.

**<gai>Biodh e reamhar no caol, ’s mairg nach beathaicheadh laogh dha fhéin.**<eng>
Be it fat or lean, pity the man that won’t rear a calf for himself.
This was said of a fairy changeling, which turned out such a miserable object that some one seriously proposed that it should be thrown into the burn. The father made the above answer.
Be cautious with every one as if with a thief, but make a thief of no one. The doctrine of suspicion here inculcated is not to be admired.

Let every man take scarts out of rocks for himself. Alleged to have been said by a St. Kilda man to his comrade, who was holding the rope above, and asked if he had secured birds for them both. On hearing the answer above quoted, the holder of the rope is said to have replied, “Let every man hold the rope for himself”—and let him go! The story is probably a fiction. Scarts are certainly not the birds sought after by these bold cragsmen.

Oor ain fish-guts to oor ain sea-maws.—Scot.

The looks of drops before the flood.

The cow of the end-stall. The saying in Lochaber is, ‘Am mart a bhios ’s a’ bhuabhaill-thulchainn, is toigh’ leath’ e’—The cow in the end-stall likes it. The original meaning of the word ‘tulchann’ is simply ‘gable,’ ‘end,’ ‘stern’. The ‘buaabhall-thulchainn,’ ‘end’ or end-stall was the innermost in the row, and was used for the accommodation of a cow that had lost her calf, in place of which a stuffed imitation-calf was brought in whenever she was to be milked. Hence came the application of the word ‘tulchann’ to the imaginary calf, and of the term ‘tulchan-bishop’ to persons appointed to that office in Scotland after the Reformation, simply as receivers-general of the temporalities, for the benefit of the baron or his creatures. ‘The Bishop had the title, but my Lord got the milk or commoditie.’—Calderwood’s Hist. of the Ch. of Scotland, cited in Jamieson’s Dict. s. v. Tulchane.

A hornless cow in a strange fold.

A polled dun cow, and a dun polled cow. Six and half-a-dozen.

A big cow all liver. An old woman in Lewis, living with her married son, went out to look at the weather on a snowy night. Her son asked her, when she came in, what sort of night it was. "Tha," ars ise, "oidhche rionnagach, rueulach, gun turadh, gun gaolth, gun uisge." "Seadh, gu dearbh!" ars esan, "’s iongantach da riradh an oidhch’ i." "Seadh," ars ise, "ach ’s iongantaiche na sin bò mhòr a bhi ’n a h-aon atha-gruthain." Her daughter-in-law had been for days serving up the liver of a lately killed cow, and nothing else, till the old woman could stand it no longer. A similar story is told, in Lochaber, of a dead and dumb girl and her stepmother. The girl spoke for the first and last time on being asked what sort of night it was: "Tha oidhche ghaothar, ghaothar, ’s i gu
fiathail, fiathail, i gu soilleir, soilleir, ’s i gu doilleir dorcha; a’ ghaoth á shios ’s an t-uisg’ á shuas.”<eng> Her stepmother said it was strange. <gai>“Seadh,” ars ise, “ach ’s iongantaiche na sin gur h-áinean uil’ am mart!”<eng>—Yes, but more strange is it that the cow is all liver! And she spoke never more.

<gai>Bochd ’s rud agam, bochd ’s mi falamh; bidh mi bochd ri m’ bheò.<eng>
Poor when I have, poor when I haven’t, poor I’ll ever be.
Boght, boght dy bràgh.—Manx.

[TD 69]

<gai>Bodach eadar dha cheathairne.<eng>
An old man between two bands.
An odd man in a game, such as shinty, who, after each leader has chosen his side, gets the unenviable position of assisting the losing side.
<gai>“Bodach leth-bharrach”<eng> is another term of the same meaning.

<gai>Bogha dh’iughar Esragain,
Ite firein Locha-Tréig,
Céir bhuidhe Bhaile-na-Gailbhinn,
’S ceann bho’n cheard Mac Pheidearain.<eng>
Bow from yew of Esragin,
Eagle feather from Loch Treig,
Yellow wax from Galway town,
Arrow-head by Mac-Phederan.
This verse, descriptive of the best kind of bow and arrows, is quoted by Dr. Smith in his “Sean Dana,” p. 4. Esragin is on the N. side of Loch Etive, Loch Treig to the E. of Ben Nevis. The MacPhederans were celebrated smiths.

<gai>Bóid a’ bhàird ris a’ chaisteal, ’s an caisteal ’g a thrèigsinn.<eng>
The bard’s vow to the castle, when the castle turned its back on him.
Al. <gai>Mionnan a bhàird, &c.—‘cha téid mi fhéin do ’n chaisteal bhreún,—cha téid, cha leig iad ann mi!<eng>—I won’t go to the vile castle—no they won’t let me!’

<gai>Bóid ciaraig ris na fearaibh, ’s bóid nam fear ri ciaraig.<eng>
The swarthy maid’s vow against the men, and the men’s vow against her.
Never to marry one of them! See <gai>‘Is dubh’.

Boinn’ ’am bial na gaoithe.<eng>
A drop in the wind’s mouth.
Al. <gai>Uisg’ ’am bun an t-soirbhgis<eng>—a wind prophesying rain. A counter-saying is, <gai>‘Cha ’n e fead a’ bhainn’ a th’ ann,’<eng>—It is not the milk-whistle, i.e., the sound of the wind does not prognosticate rain, which makes the grass to grow and the milk to flow.

<gai>Boinne snithe ’n ceann na leapach.<eng>
A drop from the roof at the bed-head.
One of the ideals of discomfort.

<gai>Bonnach a mhealladh cloinne—oir thiugh ’us cridhe tana.<eng>
A cake to cozen children—thick edge and thin heart.

[TD 70]

<gai>Bonnach air bois, cha bhruich ’s cha loisg.<eng>
A cake on the palm won’t toast or burn.

‘Twere a pity that dry weather should do harm.
It’s a pity fair weather should e’er do harm—Scot.

The free doctrine of this old saying is still held in the Highlands, but there is very little poaching, notwithstanding,

Dirty and Rubbishy going together.
A Lewis proverb, taken from a verse by John Morrison of Bragar, on having sent two servants to pull heather:

I sent B. and F. to pull heather together: B. brought home the weight, and F. brought home the boughs.

The essence of a game is at the end.
First break my skull, then hurt my finger.

The anchor-rope will break in the dragging.

The smooth tongue breaks the bone.
By long forbearing is a prince persuaded, and a soft tongue breaketh the bone.—PROV. xxv. 15.
A tongue breaketh bone, and itself hath none.—Eng.
This figure is applied in the opposite sense by the son of Sirach (xxviii. 17)—The stroke of the whip maketh marks in the flesh, but the stroke of the tongue breaketh the bones.

A horse without warrant will break bones.

The horse big-bellied, the mare slim.
This is meant as an advice to buyers.

Low speaking and sound of fists.

Your egg is dear for so much cackling.
As well go fishing without bait as to court without purse.

The loan should be sent laughing home. A loan (or len') should come laughing home.—Eng. and Scot.

This pretty saying may be taken to apply both to the giving of the loan and the returning of it. To lend freely is to send the borrower home smiling; to send the loan back laughing is to repay liberally.

That was his birthright. This is one of the most familiar and characteristic sayings in the Highlands, where the belief in blood and hereditary tendencies and claims is very strong. It is difficult to translate it literally. It might be paraphrased, 'That is what you might expect of his father and mother’s son'. The four following proverbs have the same import.

The young seal takes naturally to the sea.

It is natural for the fawn to be swift of foot.

It’s natural that buttermilk should smell of butter.

It’s natural for the kid to bleat.

It would be a clever dog that would take the tail from him.

It is change of days for him who is cutting peats. Once well to do, now a Gibeonite.

You would be a good messenger to send for Death. Egli è buono a mandarlo per la morte.—Ital.

The loan were good but for the repaying.

The young saithe is in some parts of Scotland called 'cuddy,' in others 'podly,' in Shetland 'sillock'. It is alleged of the inhabitants of a certain island near Skye, that they go even further than this proverb, and say, 'S math a' sgadan 'n uair nach fhaighear an saoidhean'.—The herring is good, &c. But they now resent this as a weak invention of the enemy.

Well pleaded the cook for corn to the hens.

Well pleaded the cook for corn to the hens.
'Twere pity thy sweet mouth should ever go under ground. Said ironically of bad singers.

<Bu tiugh an t-uisge ’nigheadh ’aodann.<eng> It would he thick water that would wash his face.

<Bu tu ’chuir craicionn do thòin air d' aghaidh!<eng> It’s you that put your buttock-skin on your face! Said to shameless people.

<Bu tu gille mór leth an tighe!<eng> What a great half-the-house lad you are! Said of a man-servant assuming too much authority in the house.

<Buail an t-iarann ’fhad ’s a tha e teth.<eng> Strike the iron while it’s hot.

<Buail an t-iarann fad a ’s ta se teith.<eng>—Ir. Bwoailill choud (cho fad) as ta ’n yiarn cheh.—Manx. So in Eng., Scot., Fr., Ital., Germ., &c.

<Buail do chuilean, agus ’s ann h-ugad a ruiteas e.<eng> Beat your puppy, and it’s to you he’ll run.

<Buailidh e bròg ort fhéin fhathasd.<eng> It will hurt yourself hereafter. Lit. ‘strike a shoe on you’. Hitting one with a shoe was a mark of humiliation, as in the East—‘Over Edom will I cast out my shoe’.—Ps. lx. 8.

<Buainidh aon fhacal ciad.<eng> One word will set loose a hundred.

[TD 73]

<Builgean air teanga nam briag, ’s brangas air bial gun fhàitheam!<eng> Blister on the lying tongue, and padlock for the hemless mouth!

<Buill’ air gach craoibh, ’s gun chraobh ’g a leagail.<eng> A stroke at every tree, without felling any.—Eng.

<Buille do chù mo charaide, ’s mir do chù mo nàmhaid.<eng> A blow to my friend’s dog, a bite to my enemy’s.

<Buille gach fir air ceann an fhir charraich.<eng> Every man’s blow on the scabby man’s head. A scald head is soon broken.—Engl.

<Buille mu seach, mar a bha bàta nan each.<eng> Stroke about, like the horse-boat. A boat with horses in it is not easily rowed.

<Buill’ o’n taod, ’us cead dol dachaidh.<eng> A stroke of the rope, and leave to go home.

<Buille ’s a’ cheann, no dhà ’s an amhaich.<eng> A blow on the head, or two on the neck. This applies to the killing of hares and rabbits.
A blow in the eye, a blow on the knee, a blow on the elbow, the three hardest blows to bear.

Patience wins victory.

Black water on you!

Hot water for the wilk, a boil and a half for the mussel.

Patience wins victory.

Black water on you!

Hot water for the wilk, a boil and a half for the mussel.

The harper’s sleep: seven-quarters of a year without wakening.

The miller asleep, and the water running by.

Hot water for the wilk, a boil and a half for the mussel.

The harper’s sleep: seven-quarters of a year without wakening.

The miller asleep, and the water running by.

The shepherd’s sleep to you!

The sleep of the flee on the gridiron to you!

The sleep of dogs in the mill while the women are sifting.

He sleeps as dogs do when wives sift meal.—Eng.

i.e., wide awake, but eyes shut—‘dog-watch’.

High wind and long sleep.

The alewife’s whisper.

Ironical—the whisper apt to become loud. The <gai>‘ban-ghrùdair’<eng> has long ago died out in the Highlands. In old times most of the ale drunk in Scotland was brewed by women.

A man can sleep on every hurt but his own.

Let er den Byrde som en anden bær.—Dan.

The cow of the bad herdman is lost seven years too soon.

A herdman’s cow may be lost.
Conan’s friendship for the devils.
‘Cuff for cuff.’ See ‘Beatha Chonain’.

The friendship of the clergy—scraping and scratching each other.

Where art thou, wren? said the eagle. I am here, above thee, said the wren.
The wren and eagle had a trial which would soar highest. After a considerable ascent, the eagle could see the wren nowhere, and made the above inquiry. The wren was all the time perched on the eagle’s back!

Where would the tunes be the harpers could not find?

Spend as you get, and you’ll get as you spend.
There is that scattereth and yet increaseth.—Prov. xi. 24.

The scrub’s spending of her little faggot.

Cows wear with milking, and horses with ploughing.

The world wears out man.

Friends are lost by calling often, and by calling seldom.
Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour’s house, lest he be weary of thee, and hate thee.—Prov. xxvi. 17.
A casa de tu hermano no irás cada serano.—Span.

Starving little Malcolm to fatten big Murdoch.
Robbing Peter to pay Paul.

The soft buttery Camerons.
This, like most similar sayings about clans, originated, of course, among enemies. The Camerons were said to be very fond of butter; but who could deny that they were brave?

Save and for whom? remember death.
It is said in the Teachd. Gael, Vol. I., p. 282, that this excellent saying was found engraved on a stone at the top of Ben Lawers, but no authority is given for the statement.

The saving of the crooked gurnet, worse than spending.
Applied to mean gruff persons.
Be sparing of the little English, with the whole Lowlands in front of us! Said by an old man to his son on their way to the Falkirk market when the son, who had a little more English than the old man, began to air it at Dumbarton.

The ragged sheep that goes into the briers will leave her wool there.

Turn against twist. Diamond cut diamond.

The left about unlucky turn to you! This is founded on the old idea, that motion in the course of the sun was lucky, and in the opposite direction unlucky. 'Car tuathal' literally means 'northward turn'. See 'Deiseal'.

Lent for want is worst of Lent. Fasting for sheer want of food. Carghus, Ir. Carghios, Manx, Cargys, Welsh, Garawys, = Quadragesima.

Foot to cradle, hand to distaff, mark the good housewife. The foot at the cradle, the hand at the reel, is a sign that a woman means to do weel. — Scot.

A hen’s foot in a sieve. A bad or unpleasant fit.

The dry feet of the Macintoshes. This refers to some occasion when the Macintoshes were supposed by their enemies to have been unduly averse to wetting their feet. 'Fadal Chlann-an-Tòisich' is of the same sort.

The small-headed cat, the big -headed woman. Supposed to be best of their kind.

Food will tame the mountain deer.

The fireside battle. Al. 'Cath ceann an teallaich.' The mythical founder of the Errol family. The story is, that being asked by Kenneth III. after the battle of Loncarty, in which he decided the day, if he had ever been in a harder fight, he replied that he had a harder battle every day at home, a scolding wife, crying children, and little to give them.

The old wife’s leave to the frisky calf.
When she could hold it no longer.

<gai>Ceangail teann, ’us faigh tearuinte.<eng>
Fast bind, fast find.—Eng., Scot., Fr., &c.
Kiangle myr noid (màmhaid), as giol (gheabh) myr carrey (charaid).—Manx.
Shut doors after you: fast bind, fast find,
A proverb never stale in thrifty mind.
Merch. of Ven. II. 5.

<gai>Ceangal nighean an rìgh air a leannan.<eng>
The king’s daughter’s tie to her lover.
Easily broken.

<gai>Ceann nòdain, ’s ceann sgadain, ’s ceann goibhr’ air dhroch fheannadh,—tri cinn nach fhiach itheadh.<eng>
A gurnet’s head, a herring’s head, and an ill-flayed goat’s head,—three heads not fit to eat.

<gai>Ceann dearg air na bheil a muigh!<eng>
Red head on all that’s out!
Said for luck when the first fish is caught.

[TD 78]

<gai>Ceann guin air madainn Earraich,
’S maig a chailleadh a chaomh charaid.<eng>
A Spring morning with a stinging head.
Who would lose his well-loved friend?
The connection of the two ideas here is far from being obvious. The meaning seems to be, that as a bitter Spring morning is often followed by a fine day, so is the displeasure of a friend not to be taken as a ground for serious quarrel.

<gai>Ceann mòr air duine glic, ’s ceann-circ’ air amadan.<eng>
Big head on wise man, hen’s head on fool.
This is more correct as a general observation than the Scotch ‘Muckle head and little wit,’ the German ‘Dickkopf, Dummkopf,’ the French ‘Grosse tete, peu de sens,’ the Irish <gai>’Cionn mòr air bheagan cèille,’<eng> and the Manks, ‘Kione mooar er y beggan cheilly’.

<gai>Ceann mòr ’us muineal caol, aogas an droch ghamhna.<eng>
Big head and slender neck mark the bad stirk.
Al. <gai>’Casan caol.’

Ceann nathrach ’us earball pèucaig air an Earrach.<eng>
Spring with a serpent’s head and a peacock’s tail.
March comes in with an adder’s head, and goes out with a peacock’s tail.—Eng.
Biting cold, followed by sunny weather.

<gai>Ceannach geal ’n uair a thig an sneachd.<eng>
White bargains when the snow comes.
Snow brings the markets down.

<gai>Ceannaich mar d’ fhéum ’us reic mar d’ àilgheas.<eng>
Buy as you must, and sell as you can.
Oportet patremfamilias esse vendacam, non emacem.—Cato.

<gai>Ceannard air fhichead air an fhichead saighdeir.<eng>
Twenty-one captains over twenty soldiers.
With four and twenty men,  
And five and thirty pipers.—Aytoun.

Every man can rule a shrew save he that hath her.—Eng.

A hen going in quest of a goose.  
Al. <gai>Ubh na circe, &c.  
The hen’s egg goes to the ha’, to bring the goose’s egg awa’.—Scot.

Fat hen and lean cock.

A country-side smithy, a parish mill, and a public-house, the three best  
places for news.

The justice of the clergy to each other.  
Impressively illustrated in many decisions of Presbyteries, Synods,  
Assemblies, and General Councils.

Sense hides shame.  
Love hides deformity.  
Love hides blemishes.  
Love shall cover a multitude of sins.  
Love is blind—Love sees no faults—Love makes a good eye squint.—Eng. Love  
overlooks mony fauts.—Scot.  
Falaigheann gradh gràin, agus chi fuath a làn.—Ir.

The visiting of the Sleat women.  
Sleat is the southermost parish in the Isle of Skye. Whether the women  
there are more given now to spending their time in afternoon calls than  
is the fashion elsewhere, it would be hard to say. The insinuation was, I  
believe, that their visits were sometimes prolonged till next morning!  
Jealousy probably had something to do with this saying. See  
'Sléibhte riabhach nan ban bòidheach’.

The raven’s question to the crow.  
The sort of question sometimes asked by a ‘Great Power’ of another, or  
perhaps smaller Power, in cases of annexation, oppression, &c.

The question of the thief to the liar.  
Asking for a certificate of character. See <gai>‘Aontachadh’.

Twenty-four “buses” in Islay, and twenty-four “Ards” in Mull.
A common termination of names of places in Islay is 'bus' or 'bos' (generally 'bost' in Skye and Lewis), from the Norse 'bolstað' or 'bustaðr,' a dwelling-place. The Gaelic prefix 'àrd' or 'àird,' a height or promontory, is common in Mull and elsewhere.

Ceò Foghair, sneachd Earraich. Autumn fog, Spring snow.

Céum air do chéum, a chailleach, 's an céum barrachd aig Eòghan. Step for step to thee, old woman, and the odd step to Ewen. The story is that Sir Ewen Cameron of Lochiel, coming once from Inverness, was overtaken by a witch, who tried hard to pass him. Céum ann, Eóghain,' said she. He answered as above, keeping one step ahead of her, which he maintained all the way till they reached Ballachulish ferry, when he hailed the boat, and got in. The ferryman wouldn't allow the witch to come in, on which she took leave of Sir E., saying, 'Dùrachd mo chrìdh dhut, a ghaoil Eòghain!'—My heart's desire to thee, dear Ewen! Sir E. knew what was what, and replied 'Dùrachd do chrìdh do'n chloich ghrais ud thall'.—Thy heart's desire to that gray stone yonder. And at that moment the gray stone split in two! (See Gael, Vol. IV., p. 113.) That split stone is still pointed out on the spot where it happened.

Cha b'ann air brochan lóm dubh, 's bainne 'chrùidh mhialaich a’s t-Earrach, a chaidh d’ àrach. It was not on thin black gruel and milk of lousy Spring cows you were reared.

Cha b'ann 'an uchd a mhàthar a bhà e. Said of one roughly handled.

Cha b'ann as do bhogha fhéin a thilg thu 'n t-saighead. It was not from your own bow you sent that arrow.

Cha b’ann de na h-eóin thu mur bitheadh am bad ort. You wouldn’t be of the birds, if you hadn’t the tuft.

Cha b’ann mar a fhuair Mac-Rùs lain na mnathan. Not as MacRuslan got the women. This person, a kind of Celtic Eulenspiegel, figures in several stories under the various names of MacRùsgail, MacCrùislig, MacRùslaig, and MacRùslan. The above saying is founded on an apocryphal story of his having found his way, disguised as a woman, into a nunnery on an island in Loch Tay, or, according to another version, in Iona. (See Campbell’s W. H. T., Vol. II., pp. 304-27. See also Boswell’s Tour to the Hebrides, Carruthers’ Ed. p. 129.)

Cha b’e 'cheannach a rinn e. It was not by purchase he got it. It comes by kind, it costs him nothing.
It was not the mill that wouldn’t grind, but the water that wouldn’t run.

The day will come, come who may.

The windy day is not the day for thatch-wattles. The ‘sgolb’ is a wattle, generally of willow, used for fastening the thatch, and the meaning is that the fastening of the thatch must not be left till the wind comes and lifts it. Ulster proverb in same words.

It’s not the dark home-made cloth that deserves not fulling. This may be held to allude to the change of cloth, as well as of dress, which came into fashion after the despicable prohibition of tartan by Act of Parliament in 1746.

He was no dog over his bone.

That was not the stuff on his distaff. I hae ither tow on my rock.—Scot. She hath other tow on her distaff.—Eng. Same as having other fish to fry.

That was no cheap salt. In 1669 Charles II. “appropriated an exclusive right to make salt, though only to hand it over to a courtier—the salt was consequently bad and dear. In some districts, as Galloway, the West, and the Highlands, to which the native article could not be carried, salt was wholly wanting, and the people used salt-water instead, ‘by which many of them died as of plague; others being forced to buy at intolerable rates, as 16s. the boll, though they formerly had it for 4s.’”—Chambers’s Dom. Ann. II., 332. So late at 1800, “Salt was taxed to the extent of forty times its cost.”—Mackenzie’s 19th Century, p. 76.

That was no indoor journey.

That were not the bitterest morning call to him. This may refer to bagpipes or ‘bitters,’ both of which were at one time familiar morning heralds in Highland gentlemen’s houses. If the latter, the play on words may be considered a very fair one.

That was no big drink of bad bargain. This seems to allude to the old practice, fortunately falling into disuse, of sealing every bargain with a good big drink.

That was no going to the mill and returning
A withe won’t catch repentance.

'Cha leighis aithreachas breamas.'—Repentance won’t cure mischief.

A withe won’t catch repentance.

Law can’t overtake necessity.

See ‘Cha ’n ’eil heart’.

Angen a dydd deddf—Need will break law.—Welsh.

Nede hath no lawe.—Eng. Necessity has nae law.—Scot.

Nød bryder alle Love.—Dan.

La nécessité n’a pas de loi.—Fr.

The luxurious poor will not be rich.

There is not a wise man among a thousand fools.

Bad news is never bettered.

No sparing of baked bread or of thrashed straw.

A man’s cow won’t yield milk, nor a woman’s horse ploughing.

This is an exaggeration of the idea that women are the best managers of cows, and men of horses.

There is no partnership in women or in land.

Love and lordship like no fellowship.—Eng.

Amour et seigneurie ne veulent point de compagnie.—Fr.

Amore e signoria non soffron compagnia.—It.

The good that was is forgotten, the good to come is ever in mind.

Eaten bread is forgotten.—Eng.

Eaten food is forgotten.—Manx.

Rien ne viellit plus vite qu’un bienfait.—Fr.

Val più un piacere da farsi, che cento di quelli fatti.—It.

Bad won’t be bountiful.

Women and priests have no birth-tie.

The woman that marries takes her husband’s settlement, the priest’s must be where the Church bids.

A borrowed horse never tires.

'Tw, farc bendyg!—Gee on, hired horse.—Welsh.

Fremdes Pferd und eigene Sporen, haben bald den Wind verloren.—Germ.
Laant Hest og egne Sporer giör korte Miile.—Dan.

Pain is not known, till it come.

The first served will not be empty.

Bad meat won’t get market.

The worth of the well is not known till it dries up.

What’s in the scabbard is not known till it’s drawn.

The childless woman will be helpless.

The Celtic philoprogenitiveness, especially as regards male offspring, is like that of the Hebrews.

The fop feels no cold, however cold the day.

Al. <gai>Cha laidh fuachd.<eng>

Pride never knew cold.—Manx. Pride feels no cold.—Eng. Pride finds nae cauld.—Scot.

Grants are not gracious till they get their porridge.

This is merely an alliterative version of the general observation, that a man is not in such good humour before meat as after it. The same thing is said of the Campbells, the Gunns, and the M'Kenzie, substituting 'diota' for 'bìdh' for 'lite'.

Quick and fine don’t combine.

Good and quickly seldom meet.—Eng.

Presto e bene non si conviene.—It.

Two men’s desire won’t be on the same dish.

One man’s meat is another man’s poison.—Eng., Scot.

My desire (or secret) won’t consume me.

The starving man won’t be bashful.

The bashful won’t be brave, and he’ll fare ill that doesn’t eat his share.
We won’t tell it to the crows.

Pride is not without trouble, so we won’t be troubled with it.

That butter won’t be so divided.

The early wise soonest dies.

Wrong cannot rest, nor ill deed stand.

There won’t be a tuned string in the fiddle.

You’ll never be younger to learn.

There shall never be a Macintosh of Tirinie, nor shall Tirinie be without a Macintosh.

Macintosh, in a note on this, calls it ‘a ridiculous prophecy concerning an ancient family in Perthshire, now extinct’; apropos of which he gives the story of their being killed by the Cummings. Tirinie is near Blair Atholl, and it is pleasant to know that a Macintosh still (1880) farms there.

The double tongue I love it not,
I would not be now cold now hot;
Nor put my love upon the rack,
Nor bite my friend behind his back.
Gillies is no old man to everybody. This was said by an old man at Duntulm, in Skye, to Iain Garbh, a celebrated MacLeod, who kept his galley there, where the groove is still shown, worn in the rock of the beach, up and down which she was launched or drawn up. The great John wished, against the old man’s advice, to set out on an expedition to Harris, and planting himself against the stem of the galley, exerted all his famed strength to shove her down, while old Gillies, with his back to the stern, resisted his efforts, and with success. When Iain Garbh gave the thing up, calling the other a ‘bodach,’ the old man made the above remark.

He is no pigmy on the battle-field,

Cursing breaks no bones.
See ‘Cha tuit guidhe’.

The weak shall not win.
See ‘Am fear nach misnich,’ and ‘Cha dean tùirse’.

The nearest is not always dearest; pity him whose trust is in one kinsman.
A little more than kin, and less than kind.—Hamlet, i. 2.

Wooing is a costly dame.

O’Brien and the Gael were not alike.
That O’Brien was an Irishman is all that we know of him.

That was no useless pride.

That were no yearling’s lamb.
Al. ‘laogh air bial-thaobh maciseig’—a calf before a heifer.
Said of those who do something, rather behind than before the time, such as marrying late.

He that shakes at stalks should not sleep in the field.

That were no legacy to an enemy.

His lying down and rising up were not his own.
Said of one in a state of bondage, or much worried. Somewhat similar is
Their life were life to them no more.

It was no unwarranted warning.

I would jump at it, not run.

You are not I, and I am no cur.

A polite Celtic form of telling a man that he is a hound.

A’s no’ tint that’s in hazard.—Scot.
All is not lost that is in peril.—Eng.
No se pierde todo lo que está en peligro.—Span.

It’s not a lost cause that’s adjourned.

It’s no’ tint what a freend gets.—Scot.

Black never changes hue.

Every colour will take black, but black takes none.

Every colour will take black, but black takes none.

It’s not a lost cause that’s adjourned.

It’s not a lost cause that’s adjourned.

Black never changes hue.

Black never changes hue.

A man laments not what he does not see.

When the eye sees not, the heart grieves not.—Arab.
What the eye sees not, the heart rues not.—Eng., Scot.
Wat het oog niet en ziet, dat begeert het herte niet.—Dutch.
Ojos que no ven, corazon que no quiebra.—Span.

The friend in need is the only friend.

Í þörf skal vinar neyta.—Icel.
Een vriend in nood is een vriend in der daad.—Dutch.
Amicus certus in re incerta cernitur.—Ennius.
Au besoin l’ on connait l’ ami.—Fr.
A friend cannot be known in prosperity.—Eccl. (Jes.)
Câr cynwir, yn yr ing y gwelir.—Welsh.

I am not a cat that doesn’t know buttermilk.

A fool can’t hide his thought.

Ni chêl ynfyd e feddwl.—Welsh.
A fool uttereth all his mind.—PROV. xxix. 11.
The fool’s heart is in his mouth.—Eccl. (Jes.) Arab.
A fool’s bolt is soon shot.—Eng.
Narren Bolzen ist bald verschossen.—Germ.
He can't hide what he sees or hears.

A gamester won't conceal his dice.

The cheek hides not a hurt heart.

'Tis no music for a man to tell all his grief.

Supposing is not sense, nor is talk love.

The cat's milk makes no cream.

The gathering of moss is a useful and meritorious function for a stone, and that the stone which innocently rolls when set in motion is not so well employed as the one that sits still and gathers moss!

The usual application of it shows that a very popular saying may be founded on a very superficial analogy. It implies that the gathering of moss is a useful and meritorious function for a stone, and that the stone which innocently rolls when set in motion is not so well employed as the one that sits still and gathers moss!

The philosophy of the German proverb, 'Ein Mühlstein wird nicht moosig,' A millstone gets not mossy, is much better.

Moss grows not on the oft-turned stone.

This saying is found in almost every European language, ancient or modern. The usual application of it shows that a very popular saying may be founded on a very superficial analogy. It implies that the gathering of moss is a useful and meritorious function for a stone, and that the stone which innocently rolls when set in motion is not so well employed as the one that sits still and gathers moss!

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You would drown the battle-cry. 
Said to very noisy people.

I am not a cock to he caught with chaff. 
An old bird is not caught with chaff. —Eng.

The willing horse ought not to be urged. 
A good horse should be seldom spurred. —Eng. 
A gentle horse sud be sindle spurred. —Scot. 
Williges Pferd soll man nicht treiben. —Germ.
Buon cavallo non ha bisogno de’ sproni. —It.
Cavallo que buala, no quiere espuela. —Span.
Cavallo que voa, não quer espóra. —Port.

One should not set his love and friendship all on one side.

The wrongful should not be litigious.

A snare should not be laid in the way of the blind.

A barren sow was never good to pigs. —Eng.

A dumby won’t win a mantle, nor a fool get an inheritance. 
A dumb man never gets land. —Eng.

The use of the word ‘earrasaid’ here is peculiar, the article of dress it denotes being known to us only as feminine. The second half of the proverb seems to contradict the law of primogeniture, but it means that no fool can win a fortune.

He won’t ruin a country-side. 
An expression of hospitality in reference to a guest.

Youth can’t believe that age will come, nor age that death will.

You won’t believe in Death till you see the burial.

Truth is not believed from a lying mouth. 
Cha bee breagery credit, ga dy ninsh eh y n’irriney. —Manx.
Al bugiardo non si crede la ventà. —It.

The liberal man is not believed till his purse is drained.
Lit. ‘till his back is reached’. His difficulties are not believed so long as he has anything to give.

<gai>Cha chudthrom air loch an lach, 
Cha chudthrom air each a shrian, 
Cha chudthrom air caor’ a h-olann, 
’S cha chudthrom air colainn ciall.<eng>
The wild-duck burdens not the loch, 
The bridle burdens not the horse, 
Her wool burdens not the sheep, 
And sense burdens not the body.
Al. <gai>Cha truimid an loch, and, Cha trom leis an loch.<eng> 
This fine verse is among the ‘Sean Phocal’ of Duncan Loudin. It was given as part of the song referred to in note to <gai>‘Bhi fadadh teine fa loch,’<eng>–ante, p. 60.

<gai>Chachuimhnicheadhachùach, gus am bi a bhrù làn.<eng> 
The empty man doesn’t remember his dog till he fills his belly.

[TD 91]

<gai>Cha chuir duine ’chall ’n a sporan.<eng> 
A man can’t put his loss into his purse.

<gai>Cha chuir e ’bhuinig air a bhrògan.<eng> 
His gain won’t sole his shoes.

<gai>Cha chuir e’n luath mu ’n spàrr.<eng> 
He won’t send the ashes to the cross-beam. 
i.e., he won’t raise a great dust.

<gai>Cha chuireadh e gad ’s an t-srathaír.<eng> 
He couldn’t fix a withe in the pack-saddle. 
Good for nothing.

<gai>Cha chuirear gad air gealladh.<eng> 
You can’t put withes on promises.

<gai>Cha chuirinn mo thuagh bhearnach ’n ad choille chròinaich.<eng> 
I wouldn’t put my notched axe into your withered wood. 
Al. <gai>’n ad fhiodh carraigneach’.

Cha chuirinn mo noigean air a’ chial do ’n fhear nach cuireadh diar ann.<eng> 
I wouldn’t incline my noggin to him that wouldn’t put a drop in it. 
Al. <gai>Na cuir do shoitheach air a’ chliathaich do ’n fhear nach leasaich e.<eng>

<gai>Cha chùm an soitheach ach a làn.<eng> 
The vessel holds but its fill. 
Al. <gai>an soitheach Gàidhealach. 
Nì choinnighéann an soitheach acht a làn.<eng>–Ir.

<gai>Cha chùm freiteach ach deamhan.<eng> 
None but devils keep rash vows.

<gai>Cha chumar tìgh le bial dùinte.<eng> 
House with closed door can’t be kept. 
A very hospitable saying.
Food is not dear, if it can be got.

The goose is no dearer than his salting.

None died or flitted without praise, none married without blame.
For a more terse version, see <gai>‘Ma ’s math leat’.

For a more terse version, see <gai>‘Ma ’s math leat’.

Cha deachaidh car do theadhreach mu phreas.
Your tether didn’t get round a bush.
Said to one who doesn’t look starved.

Almost never went over a rock.
Almost was never hanged.—Eng.
Amaist was ne’er a man’s life.—Scot.
Nærved slaer ingen Mand ihiel—Almost kills no man.—Dan.

Fine talk wont fill the fool.
Fair words butter no parsnips.—Eng.
Mony words dinna fill the firlot.—Scot.
Schöne Worte füllen den Sack nicht.—Germ.
Belle parole non pascon i gatti.—It.

Dumbie winna lee.—Scot.
Cha deannan balbhan brèug.—Ir.

Puffing won’t make piping.

The churl wont tell lies before his children.
They might innocently convict him by saying, ‘O Papa’!

He only drinks who can.

One dose will not cure, nor one feed make fat

One mavis makes not summer.

Cha dean a’ phluic a’ phiobaireachd.
Puffing won’t make piping.

Cha dean a’ ghlóir bhòidheach an t-amadan sàthach.
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I. Una hirundo non facit ver.—Lat.
Una golondrina no hace verano.—Span.
Une hirondelle ne fait pas le printemps.—Fr.
Una rondine non fa primavero.—It.
Eine Schwalbe macht keinen Frühling.—Germ.
Eene zwaluw maakt geen zomer.—Du.
Een Svale giör ingen Sommer.—Dan.
One swallow makes not Summer.—Eng.

[TD 93]

<gai>Cha dean brògan tioram iasgach.<eng>
Dry shoes won’t get fish.
No se toman truchas á bragas enjutas.—Span.
Naô se tomaô trutas a bragas enxutato.—Port.
Trouts are not taken with dry breeches.

<gai>Cha dean cas làidir nach ith brù mhór.<eng>
What strong foot earns big belly eats.
Ce que gantelet gagne, le gorgerin le mange.—Fr. Saying of Bayard.
(Disraeli’s Curios. of Lit. Philosophy of Proverbs.)

<gai>Cha dean cas luath maorach.<eng>
Hasty foot won’t get shellfish.

<gai>Cha dean cat miotagach sealg.<eng>
Cat with mittens won’t catch mice.
The muffled cat is never good mouser.—Eng.
Gatta inguantata non presa mai topo.—It.

<gai>Cha dean corag mhilis im, no glaimsear câise.<eng>
Sweet finger won’t make butter, nor a glutton cheese.

<gai>Cha dean cridhe misgeach briag.<eng>
A drunken heart won’t lie.
Al. <gai>Cha tig briag bho chridhe misgeach.<eng>
[Greugais]—Gr.
In vino veritas.—Lat.
What soberness conceals drunkenness reveals.—Eng.
A fu’ man ’s a true man.—Scot.

<gai>Cha dean cù sàthach sealg.<eng>
A full dog won’t hunt.

<gai>Cha dean duine don’ ach a dhichioll.<eng>
A poor fellow can do but his best.
Ní eill neb namyn ei allu—None can do but what he can.—Welsh.

<gai>Cha dean fear a’ sporain fhalaimh ach beag farum ’s an tigh-ôsda.<eng>
The man of empty purse will make but little noise in the inn.

<gai>Cha dean fuar bliochd.<eng>
Cold will not make milk.
The use of the adjective as a noun here is worthy of notice.

<gai>Cha dean goile acrach casaid air a’ bhiadh.<eng>
A hungry stomach won’t decry the food.

[TD 94]

<gai>Cha dean mi dà chliamhuinn do m’aon nighinn.<eng>
I won’t make two sons-in-law for my one daughter.
Eigi má göra tvá mága at einni dóttaur.—Iceland.

<gai>Cha dean minnein meann, ’s cha dean giullan clann.<eng>
A kid begets not kids, nor a boy bairns.

We won’t make a harp of it.
Al. We won’t make a song of it.

'Cruit,' Scot. and Ir. Gael., a harp or fiddle; 'Crwth,' Welsh; 'Crowd,' Engl., a fiddle.

We won’t make a song of it.—Spenser.

Harp, the tabor, and the trembling croud.

You won’t make a hole that I won’t put a peg in.

Autant de trous, autant de chevilles.—Fr.

You won’t pay the fiddler.

None but the pitiful pine, and weak heart will never win wise wife.

Faint heart never won fair lady.—Eng., Scot.

Faint heart never won fair lady.—Eng.

Verzagt' Herz freit nimmer ein schön' Weib.—Germ.

Bange Hierte vandt aldrig fager Mö.—Dan.

House-keeping can’t be done with empty shelves.

A toom pantry makes a thriftless guidwife.—Scot.

Bare walls make giddy housewives.—Eng.

Vides chambres font femmes folles.—Fr.

No profit without loss.

One gets wisdom at his own cost.

None but the pitiful pine, and weak heart will never win wise wife.

Faint heart never won fair lady.—Eng.

Jaime honteux eut belle amie.—Fr.

'Thank you' won’t pay the fiddler.

None but the pitiful pine, and weak heart will never win wise wife.

Faint heart never won fair lady.—Eng.

Verzagt' Herz freit nimmer ein schön' Weib.—Germ.

Bange Hierte vandt aldrig fager Mö.—Dan.

House-keeping can’t be done with empty shelves.

A toom pantry makes a thriftless guidwife.—Scot.

Bare walls make giddy housewives.—Eng.

Vides chambres font femmes folles.—Fr.

Good is not done without grief.

A priest should be learned, but learning won’t make a priest.

Salt is not made without brine, nor brother’s help without loss.

You cannot make hawks of kites.
A carrion kite will never make a good hawk.—Eng.
On ne saurait faire d’une buse un épervier.—Fr.

<gai>Cha deanar tréine gun triùir, ’s bidh iad crùbach gun cheathrar.<eng>
Three go to make strength, and they’ll be lame without four.

<gai>Cha deic luas na h-earba gun na coin a chur rithe.<eng>
The swiftness of the roe is known without the loosing of the hounds.

<gai>Cha deoch-slàint’ i gun a tràghadh.<eng>
It is no health if not drained.
‘No heel-taps’!

<gai>Cha d’ éug duine beairteach riamh gun dileabach.<eng>
No rich man ever died without an heir.

<gai>Cha d’ fhàg e clach gun tionndadh.<eng>
He left no stone unturned.
<gai>Char fhàg se cloch gan tiona.<eng>—Ir.

<gai>Cha d’ fhàg claidheamh Fhinn riamh fuigheall béuma.<eng>
Fingal’s sword never had to cut twice.

<gai>Cha d’fhuair am mada-ruadh riamh teachdaire ’b’ fhéarr na e fhéin.<eng>
The fox never got a better messenger than himself.

[TD 96]

<gai>Cha d’ fhuair Conan riamh dòrn gun dòrn a thoirt g’ a cheann.<eng>
Conan never got a blow without returning it.
See <gai>‘Càirdeas Chonain’.

Cha d’ fhuair droch bhuanaische riamh deadh chorran.<eng>
Bad reaper never got good sickle.
<gai>Chañ fhuair droch bhuanaidhe a riamh corran maith.<eng>—Ir.
Cha door rieuo drogh veaynee corran mie.—Manx.
Never had ill workman good tools.—Eng.
Per con. <gai>Cha d’ fhuair bhuanaise math droch corran riamh.<eng>
Ni ddiffygion arf ar was gwych.—Weapon to the brave won’t be wanting.—Welsh.

<gai>Cha d’ fhuair droch iomramhaiche ràmh math riamh.<eng>
Bad rower never got good oar.

<gai>Cha d’ fhuair duine riamh a thuarasdal gus an do choisinn e e.<eng>
No man wages ever got, until for them he had wrought.

<gai>Cha d’ fhuair sgathadh nach d’ fhuiling nàire.<eng>
Scorn comes commonly wi’ skaith.—Scot.
Eshyn yiow skeilley (sgéileadh), yiow e craid (cnead).—Manx.

<gai>Cha d’ fhuair sruth lels, nach d’ fhuair sruth ’n a aghaidh.<eng>
None ever got tide with him, that did not get against him.

<gai>Cha d’ fhuair sùil ghionach riamh cunnradh math.<eng>
Greedy eye never got good bargain.

<gai>Cha d’ fhuaradh an Donas riamh marbh air cùl gàraidh.<eng>
The Devil was never found dead behind a dyke.  
Seldom lies the Devil dead in a ditch.—Eng.  
It's lang ere the De'il dee by the dyke-side.—Scot.  
This well expresses the vitality of the Father of Lies.

The early riser was never overcome.

A harrow was never found on a shore.

None suffered cold but got heat.

Sun won’t blacken nor water bleach it.

The translation of this in the 2nd Ed. of Macintosh is, ‘The dogs did not worry the wether’!

The time was not devoured by the dogs.  
And yet it was wasted.’

You haven’t eaten seven corn-stacks with him yet.

You haven’t burnt seven peat-stacks with him.

A pen won’t refuse to lie.

Penny’s right is not rest.

Chi vince prima, perde il sacco e la farina.—Ital.

The Devil was never found dead behind a dyke.
Seldom lies the Devil dead in a ditch.—Eng.
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A pen won’t refuse to lie.

Penny’s right is not rest.

Chi vince prima, perde il sacco e la farina.—Ital.
Lose at first, win at last.

The old man was not used to a dirk.

You haven’t harrowed yet what I have ploughed.

[TD 98]

Two never agreed at the kindling of a fire.

See “Cha robh dithis’.

Char fhadaigh dis teine gan troid.—Ir.

None trusted Him that did not thrive.

None ever set his shoulder to, that did not what he sought to do.

God never sent the mouth but the meat with it.—Scot. Eng.

Char órduigh Dia bèul gan biadh.—Ir.

Guð gefr björg með barni.—Icel.

Fingal never climbed a brae, and he left no brae unclimbed.

This is a puzzle more than a proverb. It means that F., being a wise man, zig-zagged up hills.

No door ever shut but another opened.

Al. “Ged dhùinear dorus, fosglar dorus.”

This proverb is the one quoted by Don Quixote, when he made the interesting reflection on Proverbs, already cited under “An sean-fhacal’.

He tricked but those who trusted him.

Good patience never hurt a man.

The priest drank only what he had.

Two days alike ill, God to poor men doth not will.

[TD 99]
You weren’t made of sugar or salt.
This proverb cannot claim great age.

None ever did violence but suffered violence.
All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.—MATTH. xxvi. 52.

‘Almost’ never got game.
See <gai>‘Cha deach Theab’.

Pure water never made good ale.
This may be classed among ‘vulgar errors’.

No wind ever blew that did not fill some sail.

No two ever prospered on the same hill.
Comp. with <gai>‘Cha bhi bràithreachas’.

No one ever sat on stone that didn’t sigh before he rose.

No man ever held helm that did not some time lose his hold.

Clean bird never came out of kite’s nest.

There’s as guid fish in the sea as ever cam’ oot o’t.—Scot.
Al. <gai>Tha iasg cho math anns a mhuir ‘s a thàinig riabh aisde.
Ta iasg ’s a bh-fairge ni ’s fèarr nà gabhadh a riabh.—Ir.

There never was ebb without flood following.
See <gai>‘Cha ’n ’eil tuil’.

Large egg never came from the wren.
Al. <gai>‘Cha tig.’<eng>
The Scottish version of this is applied, says Kelly, to insignificant gifts from niggardly persons.

[TD 100]

Nought was ever laid by that was not needed.
Keep a thing seven years, and ye’ll find a use for’t.—Scot.

None threw away with one hand that did not gather with both.
Chi butta via oro con le mani, lo cerca co’ piedi.—It.

You haven’t ploughed the ridge before you yet.
Al. <gai>Treabh an t-imir a tha romhad an toiseach.
Said the young horse in the morning, 'We’ll plough that ridge and the other one'. Said the old horse, 'Plough the one before you now, and we’ll plough the rest after'. And the old horse ploughed, but the young one gave over.

Fingal never forsook his right hand friend.

Fingal never fought a fight without offering terms. This very old proverb, and the still oftener quoted one, 'Cothrom na Fèinne' (q.v.), indicate a sense of justice and generosity, of which the most civilised nations of the 19th century exhibit too little in the conduct of war. Fionn or Fingal, the ideal hero-king of the Scoto-Irish race, corresponds in character, and in domestic misfortune, to King Arthur, faithful to his friends, generous to his enemies, mighty in war, gentle and wise in peace. The name Fingal, and the adjective Fingalian, being now so generally used, are preferable, for that and other reasons, to Finn and Fenian, though the latter are more strictly correct. The name Fingal is not an invention of Macpherson’s, as some have imagined. It was used by Barbour in the 14th century, as the name by which the Celtic hero was then known in Scotland—

He said, Mee thinke Martheokes sonne, Right as Golmakmorne was wonne, To have from Fyngall his menylie. The Bruce, Ed. 1620, p. 40.

Hasty love and sudden hate. Love me little, love me long.—Eng. Aime-moi un peu, mais continue.—Fr.

[TD 101]

Amamí poco, ma continuau.—It. Elsk mig lidt, og elsk mig længe.—Dan.

None gave with the scabbard but got with the sword.

You gave but a slight kick to the emhers.

Yon haven’t brought your own ship to port yet.

You haven’t plucked a hair out of his beard.

God hath not said all thou hast said. Applicable to much theology, and other things claiming divine authority. Considering that the Celts are by nature reverential, this saying does them great credit.
The step-child of a scrub has a bad lot.

<gai>Cha duine duine ’n a aonar.<eng>
A man alone is no man.
See note to <gai>’Bi ’d thosd’.<eng>
Al. <gai>Cha’n fhiach duine ’n a aonar.<eng>
It is not good that the man should be alone.—GEN. ii. 18.
[Greugais]—Gr. Un homme nul homme.—Fr.
One and none is all one.—Eng.
Compagnia d’ uno, compagnia di nullo.—It.

<gai>Cha duine glic a dh’ innseas tric ’an-shocair.<eng>
He is not wise who often tells his trouble.

<gai>Cha duine glic a théid tric do ’n bhaile mhór.<eng>
He is not a wise man who goes often to the city.

<gai>Cha ghabh fiadh gointe gaoth.<eng>
A wounded deer won’t take the wind.
A wounded deer always takes to the nearest water, instead of going, as usual, against the wind.

<gai>Cha ghabh i coisiche, ’s cha tig marcaiche ’g a h-iarraidh.<eng>
She won’t take a walker, and a rider won’t come for her.
She wadna hae the walkers, and the riders gaed by.—Scot.
Dean Ramsay, in his Reminiscences, gives this proverb as quoted by Miss Becky Monteith, on being asked how she hadn’t made a good marriage.

[TD 102]

<gai>Cha ghabhar greim air uisge no air teine.<eng>
No hold can be got of water or of fire.

<gai>Cha ghille mur h-umhailt e.<eng>
He is no servant unless he obeys.

<gai>Cha ghlac dòrn dùinte seobhag.<eng>
Closed fist won’t catch hawk.
<gai>Cha ghabhann an dorn druidte seabhac.<eng>—Ir.
With empty hands men may no hawkes lure.—Chaucer.
Det er ondt at lokke Høge med tomme Hænder.—Dan.
Met ledige handen is het kwaad havikken vangen.—Dutch.

<gai>Cha ghléidh an dall an rathad mór.<eng>
The blind can’t keep the highway.
This is true only in a metaphorical sense.

<gai>Cha ghleidheadh tu clach ’s a’ chladach.<eng>
You wouldn’t find a stone on the shore.

<gai>Cha ghluais bròg no bruidheann an droch bhean-thighe.<eng>
Tramping or talking won’t rouse the bad housewife.
Ascribed to Eóghan a chinn bhig. See App. III.

<gai>Cha ghrulaicchean gu léir air am bi am falt fhéin.<eng>
All are not maidens that wear their own hair.
A’ are na maidens that wear bare hair.—Scot.
To drop the snood, or fillet, and cover the head, was formerly, both in the Highlands and Lowlands of Scotland, the sign of marriage or maternity. The old Highland head-dress of women, called <gai>bréid,
was a square of fine linen, pinned round the head, with part hanging down behind, like some of the head-dresses in Normandy and Brittany.—Armstr. Dict. s.v. Bréid.

<eng>Cha le duine fhéin a ghàire.<gai>
A man’s smile is not his own.
I have been told by a wise counsellor, that an old man advised him always to have his consulting chair set with its back to the window.

<eng>Cha leannan òinsich e.<gai>
He is no foolish girl’s fancy.
This and the next are generally said ironically of old or unprepossessing ‘parties’.

<eng>Cha leannan baothair i.<gai>
She is no sweetheart for a fool.

<eng>Cha leithne Loch Obha null na nall.<gai>
Loch Awe is no broader across than back.
Al. <eng>Cha lugh’ an uchdach’ na ’n leathad.<gai>
The ascent is no less than the declivity. ‘It’s as broad as it’s long.’

[TD 103]

<eng>Cha leig an leisg d’ a deòin, duin’ air slighe chòir am feasd.<gai>
If laziness but have its will, it keeps a man from virtue still.
For the credit of humanity, there are many proverbs of all nations directed against the vice of sloth.

<eng>Cha leig duine d’ a dheòin a chòir-bhreith le duine beò.<gai>
No man willingly parts with his birthright.

<eng>Cha leigear a leas pòg a thabhairt do làimh an iasgair.<gai>
The hand of the fisher need not be kissed.

<eng>Cha leighis aithreachas breamas.<gai>
Repentance won’t cure mischief.

<eng>Cha léir dhut a’ choill leis na craobhan.<gai>
You can’t see the wood for trees.—Eng.

<eng>Cha lion beannachd brù.<gai>
Fair words fill not the belly.—Eng.
<eng>Cha lionnan beannacht bolg.<gai>—Ir.
Muckle crack fills nae sack.—Scot.
Schoone worden vullen den zak niet.—Dutch.
See <gai>’Cha dean a’ ghlòir.’

Cha loisg seana chat e fhéin.<gai>
An old cat won’t burn himself.

<eng>Cha luaithe a sguireas an tinneas diot na thòisicheas an tachas ort.<gai>
No sooner does your sickness go than the itch attacks you.

<eng>Cha luaithe duine gu ’leas na gu ’aimhleas.<gai>
Man goes not faster to his good than to his ruin.

<eng>Cha lugha air Dia deireadh an latha na ’thoiseach.<gai>
Not less in God’s sight is the end of the day than the beginning.
This is a fine sentiment, from every point of view.

*<gai>* Cha lugha an fhoill na ’m freiceadan.<eng>* The treachery is not less than the guard.  

*<gai>* Cha lugha ceann na céill.<eng>* As mony heads so mony wits.—Scot.  
Quot homines, tot sententiae.—Ter.  

[TD 104]

Tante teste, tanti cervelli.—It.  
Autant de têtes, autant d’avis.—Fr.  
So many men, so many minds.—Eng.  
Viele Köpfe, viele Sinne.—Germ.  
Zoo veel hoofden, zoo veel zinnen.—Dutch.  
Saa mange Hoveder, saa mange Sind.—Dan.  

*<gai>* Cha laidh na siantan anns na spéuran.<eng>* The storms rest not in the skies.  
Ne caldo ne gelo resta mai in cielo.—It.  

*<gai>* Cha mhair a’ bhréug ach ré seal.<eng>* No lie lives long.  
A lying tongue is but for a moment.—PROV. xii. 19.  
The liar is short-lived.—Arab.  
Lügen zerschmelzen wie Schnee.—Germ.  

*<gai>* Cha mhair an sionnach air a shior-ruith.<eng>* Reynard can’t run for ever.  

*<gai>* Cha mheallar am fear glic ach aon uair.<eng>* The wise man is deceived but once.  
Twice bitten, shy.—Eng.  

*<gai>* Cha mhilllear math ri olc dhiubh.<eng>* The good of them won’t be thrown away on the bad.  
Not much to choose between them.  

*<gai>* Cha mhinig a bha móll aig sabhal piobaire.<eng>* Seldom is there chaff at a piper’s barn.  
Pipers and poets are generally not very good husbandmen.  

*<gai>* Cha mhisd’ a’ ghealach na coin a bhi ’comhartaich rithe.<eng>* The moon is none the worse of the dogs’ barking at her.  
Al. *<gai>* Cha dean e coire do’n ghealaich na coin a bhi deileann rithe.<eng>* The moon heeds not the barking of dogs.—Eng.  
La luna non cura l’ abbaier de’ cani.—It.  
Was kümmert ’s den Mond wenn ihn die Hunde anbellen?—Germ.  

*<gai>* Cha mhisde cùil ghlan a rannsachadh.<eng>* A clean corner is not the worse of being searched.  

*<gai>* Cha mhisde gnìomh math a dheanamh da uair.<eng>* A good deed is not the worse of being done again.
A good tale is none the worse for being twice told.—Eng.

He cares no more for him than an old horse for his sire.

A man doesn’t praise his jewel while he has it. Probably not till he loses it.

The mouse is not crushed under the hay-stack. A wee mouse will creep under a muckle corn-stack.—Scot.

I will not say brother but to my mother’s son. None is sister or brother whom the mother bore not.
This looks like a relic of a time when birthrights and blood-ties were calculated from the maternal rather than the paternal side, of which Mr. Skene has found traces in the early history of our country.—Celtic Scotland, Vol. I., p. 252. See also M’Lennan’s Primitive Marriage, 2d Ed., p. 129.

You cannot mount your horse without going over.

The thickest coat of mail won’t keep out the cold.

He couldn’t tell his shoe from his stocking. Very incapable, even beyond pronunciation of ‘Bri’sh const-t’-sh’n’.

War is no time for sleep.

It is not every day that Macintosh holds a court. "Toschach or Macintosh of Monyvaird, chamberlain to the Earl of Perth, held a regality court at Monyvaird: it is commonly reported that he caused one to be hanged each court day, in order to make himself famous, and to strike terror into the thieves, which severity occasioned the above saying."—Note by Macintosh on this proverb, 1st Ed., p. 13. The word <gai>mòd,<eng> the same as the Saxon and Scottish mote, sig-

nifies a meeting, assembly, court of justice. The Celtic courts of justice were held on hills or mounds made for the purpose, of which several, called moats, or mutes, are still to be seen in Kirkcudbrightshire, and elsewhere. Skene, De verb. signif., 1681, p. 93, says, “Quhen King Malcolme the Second gave all his landes to the barrones of this realme; he reteined to himself ‘montem placiti de Scona,’ the
mute hill of Scone, quhair he might hald his courtes, and do justice to his subjects, in deciding their pleyes and controversies.”—See Jamieson’s Dict. s. v. Mote.

Cha ‘n ann a’ h-uile latha thèid Mac-Nèill air ’each.<eng> It is not every day that MacNeill mounts his horse. This refers to MacNeill of Barra, whose rocky island territory was more suited for boating than for riding.

Cha ‘n ann ag éigheach as do dheaghaidh, ach—C’àit am bheil thu doil?<eng> Not calling after you, but—Where are you going?

Cha ‘n ann air chnothan falamh a fhuaradh sid uile.<eng> It was not for empty nuts all that was got.

Cha ‘n ann ’am Bòid uile ’tha’n t-oic,—tha cuid deth ’s a’ Chumradh bheag lámh ris.<eng> The mischief is not all in Bute,—there’s some in the little Cumbrae near it. The use of ‘uile’ here as an adverb is peculiar.

Cha’n ann as an adhar a tha e’ toirt a chodach.<eng> It’s not out of the air he gets his living.

Cha ‘n ann de ’n ghuin an gàire.<eng> Smiles do not suit with pain.
Al. <gai>Gàire mu aobhar a’ ghuin.
Cha’n ann de shiolachadh a’ phoca-shalainn thu.<eng> You are not of the seed of the salt-pock. Sometimes said to boys sent out in the rain, = You won’t melt.

Cha’n ann gun fhios c’ arson a bheireas a’ chearc ubh.<eng> It’s not for nothing the hen lays an egg. The husband knows this to his cost, but the wife also knows the value of an egg.

Cha ‘n ann gun fhios c’ arson a ni an clamhan fead.<eng> It’s no for nought that the gled whustles.—Scot.

Cha’n ann leis a’ chiad bhuille ’thuiterateas a’ chraobh.<eng> The tree fa’s na at the first strake.—Scot. One stroke fells not an oak.—Eng.

[TD 107]
Es fällt keine Eiche vom ersten Streiche.—Germ.
Al primo colpo non cade l’albero.—It.
Au premier coup ne chet pas l’arbre.—Fr.
[Greugais]—Mod. Gr.

Cha’n atharaich caraid gnùis caraid.<eng> A friend won’t change a friend’s countenance.

Cha’n aotruim’ òr na ’chudthrom.<eng> Gold is no lighter than its weight.

Cha’n e ’m beagan an gràn-lagain, ma ghabhas e togail.<eng> The grain that falls is not trifling if it can be lifted.
The <gai>‘gràn-lagain’<eng> is the grain that falls through the straw when it is put on the kiln.

<gai>Cha ‘n e ‘m bórd a theirig dhut, ach am beagan fearainn.<eng>
Not your mould-board was done, but your little land.
The mould-board of the old plough was made of wood, like all the rest of it, except the share. But the failing of the plough was a small matter, compared with want of land to plough.

<gai>Cha’n e an ro chabhag a’s fhearr.<eng>
Great haste is not best.
The more haste, the worse speed.—Eng., Scot.
Hoe meerder haast, hoe minder spoed.—Dutch.
Qui nimis propere minus prospere.—Lat.
Plus on se hâte, moins on avance.—Fr.
Chi va piano, va sano, e va lontano.—Ital.
Quien mas corre, menos vuelta.—Span.

<gai>Cha ‘n e ciad sgéul an t-sagairt bu chòir a chreidsinn.<eng>
It is not the priest’s first story that should be believed.
This is probably a very old saying, and it quite accords with the strain of the Ossianic ballads narrating St. Patrick’s attempts to convert Ossian. The Celt is not easily convinced of anything new, or opposed to his old beliefs, but once he believes, he believes intensely.

<gai>Cha’n e cruadhachadh na h-àtha sealltainn foipe.<eng>
Looking under the kiln won’t dry the grain.

<gai>Cha’n e dubh a dh’fuathaicheas, ’s cha’n e geal a ghràdhaicheas.<eng>
Hate comes not of black, nor love of white.

<gai>Cha ‘n e faighinn na féudalach a ’s miosa, ach a cumail ’an deaghaidh a faotainn.<eng>
The getting of the cattle is not so hard, as the keeping after getting.

[TD 108]

<gai>Cha ‘n e gogadh nan ceann a ni an t-iomradh.<eng>
It is not the nodding of heads that does the rowing.

<gai>Cha ‘n e ’mhèud a bhòidhicheas na ‘ghil’ a ghràdhaicheas.<eng>
Bulk makes not beauty, nor white loveliness.

<gai>Cha ‘n e mo charaid a ni m’ aimhleas.<eng>
He is not my friend that hurts me.
‘Candid’ friends are sometimes the worst of enemies.

<gai>Cha’n e ’n latha math nach tigeadh, ach an duine dona nach fanadh.<eng>
It is not that the good day came not, but that the unlucky man would not wait.

<gai>Cha ‘n e na chosnar a ni saibhir ach na chaomhnar.<eng>
Not what’s gained but what’s saved makes rich.
A penny hained ’s a penny gained.—Scot.
Magnum est vectigal parcimonia.—Cic.

<gai>Cha ‘n e na dh’ ithear a ni làidir, ach na chnàmhar.<eng>
Not what’s eaten but what’s chewed makes strong.
Not what’s read but what’s remembered makes learned.

It is not the pick of the swine that the beggar gets. This saying suggests an Irish origin, pigs having never been very common in the Highlands. The practice of going ‘air faighe’ (or ‘faoighe,’ Ir. ‘foighe,’) was, however, common to parts of Ireland and of the Highlands, and was known also in the Lowlands of Scotland. See Jamieson’s Dict., sub voce ‘Thig.’ In the ‘good old times,’ when dearth was as common as a bad season, it was not considered degrading for respectable people to go foraging among their friends for grain, wool, &c. See ‘Bidh rud uime.’ This kind of begging was also practised by or for young couples about to marry, or newly married, to help them in setting up house. The Highl. Soc. Dict. (1828) says this custom “is still practised in many parts of the Highlands and Islands”. MacLeod and Dewar’s Dict. (1830) also says that it is “still partially practised”. I think it may now (1880) be said to be obsolete. The practice, however, of giving useful presents to young couples is encouraged in the very highest ranks of modern society.

The finding of a thing is not the owning of it. This is good law as well as good sense.

'Tis not the big dowry that makes the wealthy will. The greatest tochers mak' not the greatest testaments.—Scot.

He has but a half-side to it.

The dream of the night is but a warning unsolved. A dream is no revelation. In the multitude of dreams and many words there are also diverse vanities.—ECCL. v. 7.

The cow is only a good deal bigger than the midge. A midge is as big as a mountain.—Scot.

His horn is not so hard as his roar is loud. His bark is waur nor his bite.—Scot.

You have got but the ducking, and no thanks.

I have but short hose of it, and you have long trews of it.

Eating needs but a beginning.
Taste, you will eat.—Arab.
Mangiando viene l’appetito.—It.
En mangeant l’appetit vient.—Fr.
Eten is een goed begin.—Du.

There’s nothing for a shameless man but his match to meet him.

There is no distress like that of the destitute.
See ‘Eadar an t-euradh ’us aimbeairt’.

Wherever a height is, there is shelter below.

The little bannock is not toasted yet.
This is a phrase used at hide-and-seek, or blind-man’s-buff, to announce that the players are not ready yet.

Threatening does not always follow mischief.
It depends on who does it!

They haven’t kept their goods and honour.

These very calumnious estimates are, of course, to be taken cum grano.
Other similar sayings are—

A Mull man, an Islay man, and a devil,
The three worst in creation,
The Mull man is worse than the Islay man,
The Islay man worse than the devil.

What the Mull man sees
he covets; what the Mull man covets the Coll man steals; and what the 
Coll man steals the Tiree man hides.

Slìob am Muileach, ’us sgròbaidh e thu; sgròb am Muileach, ’us 
slòbaidh e thu.—Stroke the Mull man, and he’ll scratch you: scratch 
him, and he’ll stroke you.

Ged a bhiodh tu cho carach ris a Mhuileach, gheabhar a mach 
thu.—Were you as tricky as the Mull man, you’ll be found out.

All these dreadful imputations remind one of an Eastern saying, ‘The 
Koords are worse than the Arabs, the Arabs are worse than the Yezidees, 
and the Yezidees are worse than Eblis’.

It’s merely the lamb blacker than its dam.

One man needs but to be born, another to be born and bred. 
This is an acute observation on the advantages of hereditary aristocracy 
and primogeniture.

One man needs but to be born, another to be born and bred. 
This is an acute observation on the advantages of hereditary aristocracy 
and primogeniture.

Cha ‘n ’eil ann ach an t-uain na ’s duibhe na ’mhàthair.<eng>
It’s merely the lamb blacker than its dam.

Cha ‘n ’eil ann ach an dara duine ‘bhreith, ’s an duine eile 
‘bhreith ‘us árach.<eng>
One man needs but to be born, another to be born and bred.
This is an acute observation on the advantages of hereditary aristocracy 
and primogeniture.

Cha ‘n ’eil ann ach fear ri caomhnadh ‘s fear ri caitheamh.<eng>
One man needs but to be born, another to be born and bred.
This is an acute observation on the advantages of hereditary aristocracy 
and primogeniture.

Cha ‘n ’eil ann ach leith-pblaide gun fhuaghal.<eng>
He is but an unhemmed half-blanket.

Cha ‘n ’eil ann ach mogan gun cheann.<eng>
He is a stocking without head or foot.

Cha ‘n ’eil ann do ’n t-seann amadan.<eng>
No fool to the old fool.—Eng.

Chan ‘uil amadan air bith is measa nà sean-amadan<eng>—Ir.
Nae fules like the auld fules.—Scot.
The head grey, and no brains yet?—Eng.
Je älter der Geck, je schlimmer.—Germ.

Cha ‘n ’eil beart an aghaidh na h-éigin.<eng>
There is no contrivance against necessity.
[Greugais]—Gr.
Ingens telum necessitas.—Cic.

Cha ‘n ’eil carraig air nach caochail sruth.<eng>
There is no rock that the stream won’t change.
Gutta cavat lapidem.—Ovid.

Cha’n ’eil Clann Mhic Neacail dioghaltach.<eng>
The Nicolsons (or MacNicols) are not revengeful.

Cha ‘n ’eil cleith air an olc ach gun a dheanamh.<eng>
There’s no hiding of evil but not to do it.

There is not a dog between him and the gallows.

There’s nothing in dress to be proud of but the power of buying it.

The cat’s leavings are fit only for himself. Applied to men who would palm the dregs on others, after they have drunk the cream.

There is no proof without trial. Experto crede. —Virgil. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. —Eng.

There is no smoke in the lark’s house. This is a pretty saying. The bird of most aspiring and happy song has untainted air in its lowly home.

There is no refuse worse than that of oats. ‘Said of mean gentry.’—Note by Macintosh. ‘Corruptio optimi,’ oats being the staff of life, and men the ‘crown of things’.

The finest forgetfulness, forgetting what was kept.

The lucky man needs but to be born, the unlucky runs ever bare. Nid rhaid i ddedwydd namyn ei eni. —Welsh. The unlucky man never lost his means (because he had none!) —Ir.

[TD 113]

The happy man canna be harried. —Scot. Give a man luck, and throw him into the sea. —Eng.

There’s a dub at every door, some hae twa. —Scot.

A man is not ruined while he has his ship.

He is no conjurer.

‘Twixt the wise man and the fool, all the difference is this, that the wise man keeps his counsel, and the fool revealeth his.
The fool’s heart is in his mouth, the wise man’s tongue is in his heart.—Arab.

All the difference between the fool and the wise man is in taking a good offer.
Eptir koma ósvinnum ráð í hug.—After all is done, the unwise thinks of a plan.—Icel.
Quando el necio es acordado, el mercado es ya pasado.—Span.
O que faz o duro a derradeira, faz o sesudo á primeira.—Port.

Nothing keeps from getting more, but the spending of your store.

There’s no sickness without salve, but for Death no check.
Para todo hay remedio sino para la muerte.—Span.

There’s no holiday for nails but Friday and Sunday.
Paring the nails on these particular days was held unlucky.—See Sir T. Browne’s Vulgar Errors, v. 10, and Chambers’ Book of Days, I. 526, II. 322.

There’s no holiday nor fair, but Mulrony will be there.
M. a nickname for a foolish woman who frequents fairs and other diversions too much.—Note by Macintosh.

Nobody knows where the white horses and the bad wives come from.
A’ are guid lasses, but where do a’ the ill wives come frae?—Scot.

None can tell which is better, haste or tardiness, and marriage is a very whirligig.
See <gai>‘Am fear a dh’ imich’.

The hour (of Death) is as unknown as the minute.

All the keys in the land do not hang from one girdle.
Tutte le chiavi non pendono a una cintura.—It.
Toutes les clefs ne pendent pas à une ceinture.—Fr.
Die Schlüssel hängen nicht alle an einem Gürtel.—Germ.

The fool’s heart is in his mouth, the wise man’s tongue is in his heart.—Arab.

Cha’n ‘eil feasailte gun iocshlaint’, ach cha’n ‘eil tilleadh air an Aog.<eng>
There’s no sickness without salve, but for Death no check.
Contra vim mortis non est medicamen in hortis.—Med. Lat.

Cha’n ‘eil féill air na h-ínean ach Dihaoine ’s Didòmhnuich.<eng>
There’s no holiday for nails but Friday and Sunday.

[TD 114]

Cha’n ‘eil féill no faidhir, air nach faighear Maol-Ruainidh.<eng>
There’s no holiday nor fair, but Mulrony will be there.
M. a nickname for a foolish woman who frequents fairs and other diversions too much.—Note by Macintosh.

Cha’n ‘eil fhios co as a thàinig na h-eich bhàna ’s na droch mhnathan.<eng>
Nobody knows where the white horses and the bad wives come from.
Al. <gai>Tha ’h-uíle nighean gu math, ach co as ’tha na droch mhnathan a tighinn?<eng>
All are good maids, but whence come the bad wives?—Eng.
A’ are guid lasses, but where do a’ the ill wives come frae?—Scot.

<gai>Cha’n ‘eil fhios co dhiubh ’s fhear luathas no maille, ’s b’ e ’n gille-mirein am pòsadh.<eng>
None can tell which is better, haste or tardiness, and marriage is a very whirligig.
See <gai>‘Am fear a dh’ imich’.

Cha’n ‘eil ’fhios air an uair seach a’ mhionaid.<eng>
The hour (of Death) is as unknown as the minute.

Cha’n ‘eil gach iuchair ’s an tir an crochadh ri aon chríos.<eng>
All the keys in the land do not hang from one girdle.
A’ the keys o’ the country hang na on ae belt.—Scot.
Tutte le chiavi non pendono a una cintura.—It.
Toutes les clefs ne pendent pas à une ceinture.—Fr.
Die Schlüssel hängen nicht alle an einem Gürtel.—Germ.

Cha’n ‘eil i beag bòidheach, no mór grànda.<eng>
She is neither small and bonnie, nor big and ugly.
<gai>Chan ’uil si beag deas, no mòr grana.<eng>--Ir.

There is no bird in the wood, but is at times in widowhood.
<gai>Cha’n ’eil maide càm no direach nach fhaigh féum ’n Ròag.<eng>
There is no stick, straight or crooked, but will find use in Roag. Trees are still comparatively scarce in the Hebrides, and this saying reminds one of Dr Johnson’s reply to Boswell, on being [TD 115]

consoled with the hope that his oak stick, which he had lost, would be recovered. 'No, no, my friend,' said the Doctor, 'it is not to be expected that any man in Mull, who has got it, will part with it. Consider, sir, the value of such a piece of timber here!'

There is no good but may be marred.

There is no greater fraud than the promise unfulfilled.
Cas a addawo bob peth ac ni chywiro ddin.—Hateful is he that promises everything and performs nothing.—Welsh.

I'm not a scholar, and don’t wish to be, as the fox said to the wolf. The fox and the wolf, walking together, came upon an ass quietly grazing. The fox pointed out an inscription on one of his hind hooves, and said to his companion, 'Go you and read that; you are a scholar, and I am not'. The wolf, flattered by the request, went proudly forward, and coming too close to the ass, got knocked on the head, leaving the fox to enjoy their common spoil!
A different version of this fable is given in Campbell’s West Highl. Tales, I. 278.

My tail is not under his foot.

My tongue is not under your belt,—worse for me if it were.

There is no tune for nothing; Queensferry itself costs a shilling.
This is a mild attempt at a pun. 'Port' means both 'tune' and 'harbour'.

There is no greater fraud than the promise unfulfilled.
For every song the mavis sings in February, she’ll lament ere Spring be over.
As lang as the bird sings before Candlemas, he greets after it.—Scot.
Choud as hig y scell greinneay stiagh Laa’l Breeshey, hig y snaightey my jig laa Boayldyn. As far as the sun shines on St. Bride’s day, the snow will come before Beltane.—Manx.

The one thing in making of verse is sweetly to order the words.

Every thing has two days, and the Ewes have three.
Three days in the third week of April, Old Style.—See App. IV.

No hero is proof against wound.

You are not skilled in looking after horses.

There is no knoll nor mound,
Nor hillock dight with flowers,
That sometimes is not bright,
And sometimes dark with showers.

The brave will be tried.

Every flood will have an ebb.
Every tide (flood) hath its ebb.—Eng., Scot.
Alle vloed heeft zijne ebbe.—Dutch.

You saw no cow of your own to-day.
Said of one who seems in deshabille and out of humour.—Note by Macintosh.

The tree tops are never seen on a level.

I haven’t seen the like since a yard made my coat.

The sow was never seen but in a hurry.

A beggar was never seen without tobacco.

You haven’t removed the reproach very far from you.
A starving dog gets no bone.

A stammerer won’t get respect.
So much for the wickedness of human nature.

You should as soon get the knife that cut your navel as that.

You should not get this were the king your mother’s brother.

You can’t to-day recall yesterday.

Good is not got without trouble.
Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life.—MATTH. vii. 14. [Greugais]—Gr. (Solon).

A man can’t get rich unless his wife allow him.
A man that would thrive must ask his wife’s leave.—Scot.

Ye canna sell the coo and sup the milk.—Scot.
I cannot eat my cake and have my cake.—Eng.

The jewel is no better than its worth.
The value, sure, of anything
Is as much money as ’twill bring.—Hudibras.

The security is no better than the principal.

Sheriff is no better than Shariff.
This is one of the jingling sayings, of which the Gael were rather fond, caring sometimes more for sound than for sense. Here, indeed, there is an obvious meaning, if I have rightly rendered it, indicating that aversion to the Saxon office of Sheriff, which Chalmers, in his Caledonia, several times refers to.
Similar jingling sayings are, <gai>‘Cha ’n fhearr singeas na sangas,’<eng> and <gai>‘Cha ’n fhearr an gille siar na ’n gille sear’.<eng> They are not wholly meaningless, however, being much of the same import as Pope’s now classic comparison ’twixt Tweedledum and Tweedledee’.

Lights are not meat, nor buttermilk milk.
Liver is not meat, nor bran-juice sowens.
He that would enjoy the fruit must not spoil the blossom.

Sorrow always is not good, nor is mirth always. To everything there is a season . . . a time to weep, and a time to laugh, a time to mourn, and a time to dance.—ECCL. iii. 1, 4.

A feast is worth nothing without its conversation. It is creditable to our Celtic ancestors that in their view eating and drinking were not the chief charms of a dinner.

A man with neither strength nor art is worth nothing.

It’s not worth making two days of it.

A man that’s very watchful doesn’t deserve a harvest. This does not seem good doctrine, but it is meant that he should be too busy to have time for spying about anxiously.

A priest is nothing without a clerk.

(Sunday without mass).—Ir.

A tale unvouched is worth nothing.

A great house without noise is worth nothing. The Celtic idea of a Chief’s house of the right sort is thus expressed by Mary MacLeod in 'An Talla bu ghnàth le MacLeòid,'—Tigh mòr macnusach, meaghrach, Nam macan 's nam maighdean, Far ‘m bu tartarach gleadhraich nan còrn.<eng>Great house gay and cheery, With young men and maidens, Where loud was the clatter of horns.

Nothing ask, nothing learn. Fróðr er hverr fregnvíss. Who asks will become learned.—Icel.

The badger in his hole no company can thole.

Honour can’t bear patching.

A scabby head can’t bear cold or heat. Een schurft hoofd ontziet de kam (fears the comb).—Dutch.
The sea won’t wait for a load.

See ‘Cha stad’.

The loudest lowing cow is not the best milker.

The very learned are not the best.

Merus grammaticus, merus asinus.—Med. Lat.

A mere scholar is a mere ass.—Eng.

The greatest clerks be not the wisest men.—Chaucer.

Les grands clercs ne sont pas le plus fins.—Fr.

De geleerden zijn de wijsten niet.—Du.

I pity not my stepmother’s sigh.

No wonder if the kite take a blind hen’s only chicken.

It’s no wonder that the herring vessel smells of herring.

It’s but kindly (i.e., natural) that the pock savour of the herring.—Scot.

La caque sent toujours le hareng.—Fr.

Soon after Henry of Navarre had joined the Church of Rome, he was one day out hunting, and, leaving his attendants behind, came to an inn, and sat down to dinner with a company of merchants, to whom he was unknown. Their talk naturally turned on the king’s conversion. ‘Ne parlons pas de cela,’ said one, a dealer in pigs, ‘la caque sent toujours le hareng.’ The king said nothing, till his retinue came in, when the unfortunate merchant discovered his bêtise. ‘Bon homme,’ said the king, clapping him on the shoulder, ‘la caque sent toujours le hareng, mais c’est en votre endroit, et non pas au mien. Je suis, Dieu merci, bon Catholique, mais vous gardez encore du vieux levain de la Ligue.’ Mery’s Hist. des Proverbes, II. 322. The translation of the above in the 2d Ed. of Macintosh is, ‘No wonder that the cask smells of the herring in which they are’.

Two days don’t suit equally for market.
It’s different with the man of the boil, and the man that squeezes it.

The drunk man and the water-drinker differ.
The only merit of this truism is the clink of the words.

Two men will take diverse roads, and three will go different ways.
Where two go there is choice, where three go there is picking.—Manx.

It’s a different story, going to town, and coming back.
See ‘Cha duine glic,’ and ‘Am fear a thèid do ’n tigh mhór.’

The foray and the pursuit have different tales to tell.

This and the next but one are purely Highland.

Very different is a man’s desire, going for his wife and sending her home.

It’s not a bad foray where the half is kept.

All that’s yellow is not gold, and all white things are not eggs.
The second half of this proverb is tacked on for the sake of assonance and alliteration. The first half is nearly in the same words in all European languages. The only difference in the Gaelic version is the use of the phrase ‘the yellow,’ instead of ‘what glitters’ or ‘shines,’ which occurs in all the rest. The Gaelic phrase seems the more descriptive.

A bailiff’s staff is not an order.
This is an expression of the Celtic aversion to mere display of authority without the recognised right.

No man is above his trade.
He that thinks his business below him will always be above it.—Eng.
Schäme dich deines Handwerks nicht.—Germ.

A king’s son is no nobler than his company.
An Ulster chief of the O’Neills was found by a bard in the act of toasting a cake. He looked rather ashamed, on which the bard addressed him—

Is tu-sa an tighearna O’Neill,
A’s mise mac t-sèin Mhic Cuirc,
Tiontamaois a t-sudog air aon,
Cha ’n uaisle mac righ na a chuid.

A’s mise mac t-sèin Mhic Cuirc,
Tiontamaois a t-sudog air aon,
Thou art the chief O'Neill,
And I, son of old MacCork,
In turning the cake we are one,
No king's son's above his food.

<eng>Cha’n uisge ach á tuath, ’s cha turadh buan ach á deas.<br />
No rain but from the north, no long dry weather but from the south.
This saying, which comes from Tiree, is contrary to the experience of most other places.

<eng>Cha ‘n urrainn domh a’ mhin itheadh, ’s an teine ’shéideadh.<br />
I cannot eat the meal and blow the fire.
Al. <eng>Cha dean mi itheadh na mine, ’us séideadh an teine.
Cha d-tig le duine a bheith ag ithe mine, a’s a feedalaigh air a bhall<eng> (whistling at the same time).—Ir.
He canna haud meal in his mouth and blaw.—Scot.
Niemand kann zugleich blasen und schlucken.—Germ.
Met vollen mond is ’t kwaad blazen.—Dutch.
Soplar y sorber no puede junto ser.—Span.

<eng>Cha ‘n urrainn domh ’h-éigheach agus a h-iomradh.<br />
I cannot raise the boat-song and row her.
The <eng>‘iorram,’ or boat-song, was generally raised by the man at the helm, if able, and chanted or shouted with great vigour, the rowers joining in the chorus. <eng>‘Suidheam air stiùir, ’s éigheam Creagag<eng>—Let me sit at the helm, and shout Creagag.’ <eng>‘Creagag Mhic-Iain-Ic-Shéumais’<eng> was a favourite iorram.

[TD 123]

<eng>Cha nàr do dhuine bean ’g a dhiùltadh, bàta ’g a fhágail, no làir ’g a thlgeadh.<br />
It is no shame to a man to be refused by a woman, left by a boat, or thrown by a mare.

<eng>Cha nigh na tha dh’ uisge ’s a’ mhuir ar càirdeas.<br />
All the water in the sea won’t wash out our kinship.
This is intensely Highland, as is the use of the same word, <eng>‘càirdeas,’ for ‘friendship’ and ‘kinship’.

<eng>Cha phàigheadh a’ chàin a bh’aig Pàdruig air Eirinn e.<br />
St. Patrick’s tribute from Ireland would not pay it.
<eng>‘Dh ‘itheadh <eng>(or<eng> ‘dh ‘òladh’) e ’chàin a bh’ aig Pàdruig air Eirinn’<eng>—He would eat (or drink) Patrick’s tribute from Ireland, is another saying in reference to this tax, applied to a great eater or drinker. According to Keating (O’Connor’s tr., p. 333), Aengus of Ulster obliged himself and his successors to deliver 500 cows, 500 bars of iron, 500 shirts, 500 mantles, and 500 sheep, to the convents and religious houses founded by St. Patrick in Ulster, instead of three pennies per head for every person baptized. This, probably, was the <eng>‘Càin’ referred to in the above sayings.

<eng>Cha rachadh tu cho deas air mo ghnothach-sa.<br />
You wouldn't go so fast on my business.

<eng>Cha reic e ‘chearc ris an latha fhliuch.<br />
He’ll no sell his hen on a rainy day.—Scot.
<eng>Cha n-diolaidh si a cearc a riamh sa là fhliuch.—Ir.
Words will not satisfy death.

None was ever last that was not first, except the ill-mated man; and he too would be first going to the mill. Because his house would be ill-kept.

Empty bag was never satisfied.

Macintosh translates this in the sense of PROV. xxx. 16.

There never was a clown of the Macgregors, nor a hussy of the Macnabs. The Macgregors trace their descent from King Alpin, and their motto is `'S rioghail mo dhream,' My line is royal. The Macnabs are a branch of that great clan. The above saying, unlike most of those referring to clans, was not invented by an enemy.

One man’s death is grace to another. See `'An nì ’ni subhach.'

Ill comes not to one, without good to another.—Welsh.

One dog’s death, another dog’s grace.—Manx.

None lied that would not steal. Very shrewd Ethics. He that can confound Yea and Nay cannot be trusted to respect Meum and Tuum. Truthfulness has, in fact, been laid down by some writers as the basis of all Virtue, and its opposite of all Vice.

Big belly was never good mate. Greedy gut never had large hand.

There was never great loss without a little gain.

The one-eyed was ever cross.

The poor are ever friendless. The poor is hated even of his own neighbour.—PROV. xiv. 20. In contradiction to this, those who have had any experience among our poor know that their kindness to one another is often very great, and much beyond that of the rich.

Never was wood without dry brushwood, nor brood without addle-egg.
Al. <gai>Cha robh gur gun ghoirein.
Chan ’uil coill air bith gan a losgadh fein de chrionnlach innti<eng>—(as much dry wood as would burn it).—Ir.

<gai>Cha robh coimheart mór gun choimheart beag.<eng>
Great was never without small comparison.

[TD 125]
<gai>Cha robh cùil an amharuis riamh glan.<eng>
The suspicious corner was never clean.

<gai>Cha robh dìthis riamh a’ fadadh teine, nach do las eatorra.<eng>
Two were never making a fire, that didn’t light between them.
See <gai>’Cha do chòrd’.<eng>
There is a neat double meaning here, the suggestion being that the two would quarrel about it. Two seldom agree as to the best way of making a fire.

<gai>Cha robh do chuid riamh air chall.<eng>
Your portion was never amissing.

<gai>Cha robh duine riamh gun dà latha, ach am fear gun lath’ idir.<eng>
No man was ever without two days but the man who had none at all.
No man ever lived without some vicissitude.

<gai>Cha robh duine riamh gun lochd.<eng>
Man was never without fault.
Al. <gai>Tha ’chron fhéin aig a h-uile fear<eng>—Every man has his own fault.
Odid ddyn teg dianaf—Scarcely a comely man faultless.—Welsh.
Man is the son of imperfection.—Arab.
Humanum est errare.—Lat.
Fàr er vamma vaur.—Icel.

<gai>Cha robh gaoth mhór riamh gun bheagan uisge.<eng>
There never was a high wind without some rain.

<gai>Cha robh math no olc riamh gun mhnathan uime.<eng>
There was never good or ill but women had to do with.
Few of the proverbs in other languages attribute any influence to women except for mischief. This is not only more chivalrous, but more true.

<gai>Cha robh meadhail mhór riamh, gun dubh-bhròn ’n a déigh.<eng>
There never was a burst of joy, that deep grief did not follow.
Al. <gai>Cha’n fhacas riamh meaghar mór nach robh ’n a dhéigh dubh-bhròn.<eng>
After joy comes annoy.—Scot.
Sadness and gladness succeed each other.—Eng.
These violent delights have violent ends.—Rom. and Jul., II. 6.
Extrema gaudii luctus occupat.—Lat.
Æ koma mein eptir munuð.—Icel.

[TD 126]
<gai>Cha robh reithe leathann liath riabh reamhar.<eng>
A broad gray ram was never fat.

<gai>Cha robh reothairt riamh ’n a h-àirde, ach Dimàirt ’s Dihaoine.<eng>
Spring-tide never was at height, save on Tuesday or on Friday.
I can neither confirm nor contradict this.
Cha robh Samhradh riamh gun ghrian;
Cha robh Geamhradh riamh gun sneachd;
Cha robh Nollaig mhór gun fheòil;
No bean òg le ’deòin gun fhear.
Summer ne’er was without sun;
Winter never without snow;
Christmas never without flesh;
Nor willing woman without man.

Peerless hero never was.
'Take it’ was never without grudge; but better grudged than not at all.
Slips and slovens go together.
See ‘Bidh na tubaistean,’ and ‘Is tróm na tubaistean.’

You were not in when sense was being shared.
You were never at any other fair.
You were never without your food in the mill.

[TD 127]

The scanty hair won’t cover the back and front.
Some men try it, notwithstanding!

Gaming-money won’t get cold.
Gaming for money was never much practised in the Highlands, one reason
being that money was scarce in days of old. One of our historians has
even attributed the noble contempt shown for the price offered for Prince
Charley’s head to simple ignorance of the value of cash, and incapacity
to understand the meaning of £30,000! But, though among the class of
people who produced most of our Gaelic proverbs, coin of any kind was
seldom seen, there is sufficient evidence that not only was gaming with
dice and cards practised in the Highlands very long ago, but that so
intellectual a game as chess was well known to the Scoto-Irish Celts so
far back as the time of Fingal and Cuchullin, whencesoever that may have
been. Even that game was sometimes played for high stakes, not in money,
but in horses, mantles, and armlets of silver. The Norsemen also were
very much given to gaming.


Bairn’s mother bursts never.—Scot.
’Because,’ says Kelly, ‘she will keep meat out of her own mouth to put into theirs.’

A dog won’t howl at a bone.
A dog winna yowl if ye fell him wi’ a bane.—Scot.
Non si offende mai cane gettandogli le ossa.—It.

Bread’s house skailed never.—Scot.
The identity of ‘sgaoil’ and ‘skail’ will be noted here. Kelly interprets this proverb as meaning that, while people have the staff of life, they need not give over housekeeping. Hislop, on the other hand, explains it as meaning that a hospitable house never wants visitors.

Wise creatures won’t quarrel with their bread and butter.

It’s no secret, if three know it.
Al. ’S triùir ‘g a chluaintinn—If three hear it. <gai>An rud ‘bhios eadar triùir, cha’n fhìugh e ‘chleith—What three know is not worth concealing.
<Ni sgèul rùin e, o chluinneas triuir e.—Ir.

No man will trample on his luck.

Your labour is not that of a calving cow, nor of a good farrow cow.

You are not an old one of my old ones, nor a young one of my youth.

A lie stands on but one leg.
Al. Cha ’n ’eil casan aig briagan, ach tha sgiathan aig tuailleas.—Scot.
A lie has no legs, but a scandal has wings.—Eng.
Truth stands aye without a prop.—Scot.
Buglie hanno corte le gambe.—It. La mentira tiene cortas las piernas.—Span. Lügen haben kurze Beine.—Germ.—Lies have short legs.
These sayings are true enough, in the sense that lies have no stability, and are easily overtaken. But not less true is the Welsh saying, Goreu cerddedydd, gau—The best traveller is a lie.

<gai>Cha sheas poca falamh.<eng>  
An empty bag cannot stand upright.—Eng.  
<gai>Cha seasann sac falamh.<eng>—Ir.  
Sacco vuoto non sta ritto.—It.  
Ein leerer Sack steht nicht aufrecht.—Germ.  

<gai>Cha shin duine 'chas ach mar a ruigeas 'aodach.<eng>  
A man will stretch his foot no farther than his clothes allow.  
[Greugais]—According to the blanket must the feet stretch.—Mod. Gr.  

<gai>Cha shoibh triubhas a chur air cat.<eng>  
It is not easy to put trews on a cat.  

[TD 129]  
<gai>Cha shuaicheantas córr air cladach.<eng>  
A heron on the shore is not peculiar.  
Lit. Not an ensign, or escutcheon.  

<gai>Cha stad na tràithean, 's cha 'n 'eil bàigh aig seòl-mara.<eng>  
Time won’t wait, nor tide show mercy.  
Time and tide tarry for no man.—Eng.  
Zeit Ebbe und Fluth warten auf Niemand.—Germ.  
Tiempo ni hora no se ata con soga.—Span.  

<gai>Cha teich ach cladhaire, 's cha'n fhuirich ach sèapaire.<eng>  
None but a craven will fly, and none but a sneak will stay.  

<gai>Cha teich an earba gus am faic.<eng>  
The roe won’t fly till she sees you.  

<gai>Cha téid a’ bhriag na ‘s fhaide na ‘n craicionn.<eng>  
A lie won’t pierce beyond the skin.  

<gai>Cha téid an sionnach na ‘s fhaide na bheir a chasan e.<eng>  
The fox will go no farther than his feet will carry him.  

<gai>Cha téid anam á mac bodaich le múiseig.<eng>  
Threats won’t drive the life out of a churl’s son.  
Ni lladd gogydaw—Threats won’t kill.—Welsh.  
Threatened folks live long.—Eng., Scot.  

<gai>Cha téid àrdan nam ban fo ‘n ùir.<eng>  
The pride of women will never be laid in the dust.  

<gai>Cha téid bòidhchead na ‘s doimhne nan craicionn.<eng>  
Beauty is but skin deep.—Eng.  

<gai>Cha téid dad ‘s an dòrn dùinte: ‘Mur téid, cha tig as,’ arsa moisean.<eng>  
Nothing gets into the closed fist: ‘Nor out of it’, said the scrub.  

<gai>Cha téid e timchioll a’ phris leis.<eng>  
He won’t go about the bush with it.
—He didn’t go behind the bush with it.—Ir.

Shut mouth incurs no debt, and dumb men give no evidence.

—The dumb don’t get into Court.

—Arab.

Nulli tacuisse nocet, nocet esse locutum.—Dion. Cato.

Be checked for silence, but never taxed for speech.—All’s Well that ends Well, I. 1.

A threat needs no plaster.

Marriage goes not beyond sea.

I understand this saying is meant to be jocular, in allusion probably to the fact that sailors have been known to have wives in more than one port.

You no more pause than the waterfall.

Nothing can come down that is not up.

A vessel with a cock lets out no liquor but what’s in.

Nothing comes on the body that can’t be borne.

Death comes not without excuse.

—Without knowing why.

Cha daink rieau yn baase gyn lestal.—Manx.

—Ir.

Addfed angeu i hen—Death is ripe for the old.—Welsh.

Death comes not till the time comes.

—Eng.

De dood kent geen’ almanak—Death keeps no almanack.—Dutch. Eng.

The penurious spending suits only the mean sort.

This saying must have been uttered by a person of the ‘superior’ sort.

The gray coat becomes not every man alike.

Macintosh says, ‘King James the V’s wearing a gray coat when in disguise might probably give rise to this saying.’

—Ir.

—the long coat.

Luthers Schuhe sind nicht jedem Dorfpfarrer gerecht—Luther’s shoes don’t fit every country parson.—Germ.
All the cows don’t come equally well to the fold.

St. Andrew’s Day won’t come to us for another year. Christmas comes but once a year. St. Andrew’s Day, 30th Nov., is the festival of the patron saint of Scotland, and as such, holds its proper place in the esteem of Scotchmen and in the ecclesiastical calendar. It regulates, in fact, the beginning and end of the ecclesiastical year. See Chambers’s Book of Days, II. 636.

The day will never come, nor the evening darken, when you’ll see that.

Too much never comes.

Nothing comes out of the pot but the smoke that’s in it.

Till Easter come no tree will bloom.

You can’t take off the kiln but the grain that’s on it.

You’ll get no more teeth than you have.

Cold comes not until Spring, Hardship and bad marketing.

Cold comes not until Spring North wind and tempest bring.

Winter comes not till after New Year, nor Spring till after St. Patrick’s Day. St. Patrick’s day is 17th March.

As the day lengthens, the cold strengthens.—Eng.—Scot. Wenn die Tage beginnen zu langen, Dann kommet erst der Winter gegangen.—Germ. Jours croissants, froids cuisants.—Fr.

A great sea comes not through a narrow strait.

Nothing evil will come out of the fire but the crow’s gray egg. Al. ‘Ach feòil na glas fheannaig’—the gray crow’s flesh. There is a strange story in Rannoch about the great Michael Scott, to account for this saying. It is, that fearing his wife, to whom he had taught the Black Art, would excel him in it, he killed her by means of
crows’ eggs heated in the fire and put into her arm-pits, as the only thing against which no counter-enchantment could prevail!

From the sow comes but a little pig.

He will have no luck who takes a cat across a stream.

No luck comes of idle talk, nor good of spoiling.

Clean thoughts come not from a foul heart.

How can ye, being evil, speak good things?—MATTH. xii. 34.

My wife’s thread won’t match your wife’s.

Jeopardy is not often escaped from.

Asking merits not reproof.

The cow can give her calf only what she has.

Beauty won’t boil the pot.

Beauty will buy no beef.—Eng.

Send yir gentle bluid to the market, and see what it will bring.—Scot.

The raven won’t give the eye to his own chicken.

The wind won’t strip you, though it blow hard.

This seems to be founded on the old story of the traveller and his cloak.

No man gives his friend his loss.

A man cannot force his lot, and without stress it may be got.

Neither main nor moor can make the lucky poor; but the unlucky man can’t keep to the burn.

You won’t take heed till the prick is in the eye.
You can take nothing from the cat but its skin.

Man faer ei meer af Raven end Bælgen—One can’t take more off the fox than his skin—Dan.

Each year’s ploughing is for itself.

The sayings of all nations about mothers-in-law are of the same wicked kind. See '<i>Is mat a mhàthair-céil’ an fhóid,’<i>' and '<i>Mar dhobhran.’<i> One of the liveliest is an Ulster rhyme quoted by Mr Kelly (Walter K.) in his admirable little book, Proverbs of all Nations (London, 1859):—

Of all the ould women that ever I saw,
Sweet bad luck to my mother-in-law!

I don’t pity a dog with a pudding round his neck.

The devil couldn’t cheat him.

The parish of Kilmacheallag is as difficult to find out as the town of Weissnichtwo. The story is that a man was tried there by a jury of women, for stealing a horse, and was acquitted, while the horse was condemned to be hanged! The man had been tried before for stealing the same horse, and got off, and the poor horse liked him so well, that he ran away from his proper master and came back to the thief.

This story is referred to by the bard Iain Lóm, as an illustration of his own iniquitous treatment by the murderer of young Keppoch. In his 'Oran do Shiol Dughail' he says,

... the people of old, in the parish of Kilmacheallag, who sentenced the horse at the court; as bad law as ever was in Britain, which upheld the thief, and saved him from the mangling of ropes.’

See MacKenzie’s Sar Obair nam Bàrd Gaelach, p. 38, and Campbell’s West H. Tales, II. 372, 381.

She wouldn’t give alms to the blind on the cripple’s back.

The horses couldn’t take their feet out of it. Said of very thick porridge, &c.

Don’t pity a dog with a pudding round his neck.

No worse judgment was given in Kilmacheallag.
The full man understands not the empty: ill for him who is the slave of his belly.
Al. <gai>'Cha 'n fhidir'<eng>--considers not.
<gai>Ni thuigeann an sàthach an seang.<eng>--Ir.
Cha dennee rieau yn soogh y shang.--Manx.
It’s ill speaking 'twixt a fu’ man and a fastin'--Scot.
Corpo satollo non crede al digluno.--It.
[Greugais]--Mod. Gr.

<gai>Cha tuig an t-òg aimbeart, 's cha tuig amadan 'aimhleas.<eng>
Youth foresees not poverty, nor the fool his mischief.

[TD 135]

#gai>Cha tuit a' h-uile rud air an tig crathadh.<eng>
Everything falls not that is shaken.
Every wind bloweth not down the corn.--Eng.
Ogni vento non scuote il noce.--It.

#gai>Cha tuit caoran á cliabh falamh.<eng>
Peats don’t fall from empty creels.

#gai>Cha tuit guidhe air cloich no air crann.<eng>
Curse won’t fall on stock or stone.
The curse causeless shall not come.--PROV. xxvi. 2.
Le bestemmie fanno come le processioni; ritornano donde partirono--Curses, like processions, return whence they came.--It.

#gai>Chaidh a phronndadh ’n a shùgh féin.<eng>
He was pounded in his own juice.

#gai>Chaidh an ceòl air feadh na fìdhle.<eng>
The music went through the fiddle.
All went into confusion.

#gai>Chaidh an taoim os ceann nan totaichean.<eng>
The bilge-water was over the thwarts.

#gai>Chaidh an tòn gun dìreadh air.<eng>
The wave went over him without climbing.

#gai>Chaidh e do ’n choille ’ghearradh bata gu gabhail air fhéin.<eng>
He went to the wood for a stick to beat himself.

#gai>Chaidh mi thar lus.<eng>
I went over a plant.
In Macintosh the translation is ‘I stepped over a weed,’ with this note in the 2d Ed., ‘Said when a person is seized suddenly with sickness’. I have not been able to find any trace of the idea that stepping over a plant causes sickness; but it is suggested that it refers to women in an interesting condition, when they have curious fancies. <gai>’Lus’<eng> might be a misreading of <gai>’lùths,’<eng> pith, in which case the proper rendering would be, ‘I went beyond my pith’. ‘She gaed by hersel’ and fell ower’ expresses the same thing.

#gai>Chaill e ’m baile thall, ’s cha do bhuinnig e ’m baile bhos.<eng>
He lost yonder farm, and didn’t get this one.
Al. <gai>Chaill e Dall a bha thall, ’s cha do bhuinnig e Dall a tha bhos,<eng>--in reference to two farms in the parish of Barvas, Lewis.
He lost the tide.

This singular saying is founded on the transaction thus mentioned in an old MS.,—

“Sir E. Cameron was bound by alliance, money, and solemn oath to the MacLeans, but renounced all on Argyll’s quitting to him a debt of 40,000 merks.”—McFarlane’s Genealog. Coll. MSS. Adv. Lib. II. 191.

You would lose your ears were they not fastened to you.

The hungry man sees far.—Scot.

Two see more than one.

A brave tailor in the little town of Beauly wagered that he would sew a pair of hose at midnight in the old church of Kilchrist, which was known to be haunted by a very dreadful ghost. He was duly escorted to the place, and left in a seat near the door, with his cloth and thread and candles, about eleven o’clock. He set manfully to work, and sewed away undisturbed for about an hour. At length the clock struck the witching hour of twelve, and as the last stroke vibrated through the dead silence, the tailor with a beating heart became aware of a fearful head bending towards him, and a hoarse voice addressed him, "Fhaic thu ’n ceann mór liath, ’s e gun bhiadh, a thàilleir?—’See’st thou the big gray head, without food, O tailor?’ That I see,’ said the tailor, ’but this I sew, and went bravely on. Then the horrid thing drew nearer, and again the voice was heard, "Fhaic thu ’n sgòrnan fada riabhach,’ &c.?—’See’st thou the long grizzled throat,’ &c.? The tailor answered as before, sewing with all his might. Still the thing drew nearer, and the voice said, "Fhaic thu ’cholunn fhada riabhach,’ &c.?—’See’st thou the long grizzled trunk?’ The tailor answered as before. Still nearer and nearer it came, and asked, "Fhaic thu ’n t-sliasaid fhada riabhach,’ &c.?—’See’st thou the long grizzled thigh?’ and again, "Fhaic thu ’n gairdean fada riabhach,’ &c.?—’See’st thou the long grizzled arm?’ and as it spoke, the horrid bony hand was stretched towards him. Still the tailor sewed away, having now but two or three stitches to do. The spectre was now close to him, its eyeless sockets glaring, its fleshless mouth grinning, the long brown arm and fingers menacing him, and for the last time the voice was heard, "Fhaic thu chròg mhór fhada riabhach, ‘s i gun bhiadh, a thàihlearr?’—’See’st thou the great grizzled paw, without
food, O tailor?' At that moment the tailor had finished his last stitch; he
cattered the skeleton, and just as he got out at the door, he felt the
bony fingers like hot pincers grazing his buttock. They left their mark
there, but the tailor escaped alive, and heard the bony hand rattling
against the cheek of the church door, knocking a dint there, in the
stone, which may be seen to this day, to testify to the truth of the
brave tailor's story!

We'll see on which side the paunch comes out of the cow.
This is suggestive of something like the Roman divination from
intestines; but it really means nothing more than a joke sometimes played
on young people present on the great occasion of killing a winter cow.
They would be asked to guess on which side of the animal the paunch would
appear, which was of course a matter of mere accident.

We'll see, as the blind man said.
Nous verrons, dit l'aveugle.—Fr.

You’ll see it coming to you, and you’ll be none the better.

The gruel he drank not trembled.
Intended to indicate great trepidation.

He would play his very knuckles off.
A desperate gamester.

The mice of the lintel heard it.
A supposed secret.

He would hear the grass growing.

As lovely as Snow-face.
This is the ‘Agandecca’ of Macpherson, known in Highland story long
before his time.

As merciless as the Turk.
The fame of Turkish corsairs found its way to the remotest Hebrides.

As tuneful as a mavis on a bough.

As quiet as a mouse.
—Eng.

As quiet as a mouse.

As poor as a hen.
As deaf as a stone.
As deaf as a goose in Autumn.
As lying as the dog is thievish.
As proud as the son of perdition.
As crooked as the fool’s furrow.
As tricky as Mac Cruslick.
As wily as a fox.
As wise as a hill.
The alliteration is the chief thing here. The sense, such as it is, is better than the English ‘As wise as a wisp’.
As unsteady as an egg on a stick.
As cross as a bramble.
As hard as Rory’s hide—it sounds, and when it’s struck, it resounds.
As unerring of hand as Connlaoch.

Connlaoch was one of the Ossianic heroes, son of Cuchullin, and brought up at Dùn-sgàthaich in Skye, of which the ruins still remain. There are several ballads on the tragic story of Connlaoch, to be found in Campbell’s Leabhar na Feinne, pp. 9-15. It forms the subject also of one of the finest pieces in Macpherson’s Ossian. The name Connlaoch cannot, unfortunately, be represented, as pronounced, by any English letters, the diphthong ao in particular (something like the French œu and the German ö) having no place in the English language.

As blind as the sole of your foot.
As blind as a dog-fish.
As blind as an ox in mist.
As dear as salt.
See ‘Cha b’ e sin an salann saor’.
Cho disgeir ri cat.<eng> As nimble as a cat.

As ill off as the blacksmith’s mare.
The smith’s mear and the soutar’s wife are aye warst shod.—Scot.

As thin-skinned as a hen.

As well acquainted as the oyster-catcher is with the shore.

As intimate as the ladle and the pot.

As long as a black cow gives white milk.
This is said to have been once the term of lease of a farm in Uist.

As long as trees are in the wood, the Cumming will be treacherous.
This is one out of several similar sayings, which, it is hoped, will give
no offence now to any members of the clans so characterized. The Cumming
one is selected as a leading specimen, because it is perhaps the oldest,
having probably originated in the time of King Robert the Bruce, who
punished the treachery of his cousin the Red Cumyn in such a memorable
way at Dumfries.

As long as sea beats on stone.

bestows the same character on the great Campbell clan, a saying probably
dating from the massacre of Glencoe.

As long as there are moors in Kintail, Mackenzie won’t want cattle in the pen.
This referred to the ancient lords of Kintail, the last of whom died in
1815. The word <eng>’crò’<eng> has a double meaning here, being the name
of a part of Kintail, so called from the river Croe.
As long in the head as Fingal was in the legs.
In some of the Ossianic legends, Fingal figures as a man of gigantic dimensions, and that is the general tradition about him and his followers.

As healthy as a salmon.
It is a sad fact that the immunity from disease of this noble fish can be claimed for it no longer, after the evidence of 1879.

As cold as the beadle’s mother.
The beadle’s mother was in the habit, where this proverb originated (Tiree, apparently,) of doing duty for her son occasionally, and, in the collection of dues or taxes, she was as coldly severe as any head of a Financial Department could desire.

As white as the one night’s snow.

As wise as a priest with a load of books.

As greedy as a dog.

As grippy as a badger.

As thoughtless as the birds. Often said of children by nice old women.

As noisy as the wind.

As strong as Cuchullin.
Cuchullin is one of the principal characters in Scoto-Irish legendary poetry and history, and is represented as not only a prodigy of strength, but gifted with every manly grace, a Celtic Achilles, and something more. In the wonderful old Irish legend of the ‘Tain Bo Cuailgne,’ he figures as the hero of the great struggle, in which he perished fighting against fearful odds, simply through his magnificent sense of honour and chivalry, knowing perfectly what he risked. This strange weird story is embodied by Mr. O’Grady in his History of Ireland.
The description of Cuchullin in his chariot, in the 1st Book of Macpherson’s Fingal is one of the passages in that poem of which there can be no doubt that he at least was not the author, and that the original was Gaelic, and old. It contains one amusing example of Macpherson’s inaccuracy, or imperfect knowledge of his native tongue. The two lines, describing one of the horses,
Bu shoilleir a dhreach, ‘s bu luath
‘Shiubhal: Sithfada b’e ainnm,
are well translated by Dr Clerk,
Shining his coat, and speedy
His pace–Si-fadda his name.
Macpherson’s translation is, ‘Bright are the sides of the steed! His name is Sulin-Sifadda!’ The word ‘Sith-fada’ means ‘Long-pace,’ an admirable name for a horse. Macpherson, misreading and mistranslating
"shiubhal," 'his going,' imagined that it was part of the horse's name, and tacked it on accordingly. Cuchullin’s name is still associated in Skye with the old vitrified fort of Dùn Sgàthaich at Ord (painted more than once by M'Culloch), where his son Connlaoch was supposed to have been born and brought up by his mother, whom Cuchullin in Fingal, B. I., speaks of as,

Deò-ghréine Dhùn Sgàthaich nan stuadh,
Ainnir bhràigh-gheal nan rosg mall,
Ise 'dh 'fhàg mi 'n Innis an t-slòigh.<eng>
The sunbeam of Dunscaich of waves,
White-bosomed fair of gentle eye,
Whom I left in the Isle of hosts.

The fashion introduced by writers of guide-books and others, of calling the Coolin Hills in Skye 'Cuchullin Hills,' is without any local or historical warrant. They were never known in Skye by any other name than the <gai>Cuilfhion,<eng> pronounced Coolyun. <gai>Cuilfhinn,<eng> fair, lovely, suggests a fit etymology, but I believe the name was derived from the fact that the Holly, <gai>Cuilionn,<eng> was found in unusual abundance among the ravines of these mountains. It still flourishes on the rocky banks of several of the streams, and on the most conspicuous of the islets in Coiruisk. The sweet-scented 'Queen of the Meadow' is named in Gaelic <gai>'Crios-Chuchulinn'<eng>—Cuchullin’s belt, of which Alexander MacDonald in his 'Song of Summer' sweetly sings,

'S cùraidh fàileadh do mhuineil,
A Chrios-Chomhchuluinn nan càrn.<eng>
Sweet is the scent of thy neck,
Thou Belt of Cuchullin of cairns.

As strong as Garv the son of Starn.

"An Garbh'<eng> is simply 'the strong,' a Celtic name bestowed on a Scandinavian champion, who figures largely in the old Gaelic ballads. In Macpherson’s Ossian he is Swaran, son of Starno, and brother of Agandecca, whom Cuchullin overcame.

As full as an egg is of meat.

As lazy as an old dog.

As numerous as Finlay’s people.
This is a Lewis name for the Fairies, of unknown origin.

As numerous as the black darts.
This is variously interpreted, and may be held descriptive of midges darting to and fro in myriads, or of the black spikes of small oats.

As swift as the fancy of foolish women.
A sharp, but not censorious, saying.

As swift as the elks.
Al. <gai>Cho luath ris na luinn<eng>—As swift as the wavetops.
The primary rendering of this goes back to a prehistoric period. The other is very descriptive, and applies equally to the waving of corn or grass.

As dead as a herring.
No other fish dies so quickly on being taken out of the water.

As well as the thief deserves the gallows.
As well worth it as a thief is worth a rope.—Eng.

As merry as the head of a straw-rope on a windy day.
Trivial, but graphic.

As thick as two horse heads.
Al. As well-agreed as merchants.
This version looks like a pun = As ceann-eich.

As mean as the locks.
Lock-fast places are still comparatively uncommon among the Highland peasantry. As for locking a main-door at night, that is never thought of.

As venomous as a serpent.

As fat as a seal.

As tired as the toad was of the harrow.
Many masters, quoth the toad to the harrow, when every tine (tooth) turned her over.—Eng.
Mony maisters, quo’ the puddock, when ilka tynd o’ the harrow took him a toit.—Scot.

As tired as a dog.
No animal wearies himself so unsparingly as a dog; none is so ready, when most weary, to obey his master’s call.

As tired as the smith was of his mother, when he buried her seven times.
I don’t know the origin of this ridiculous saying.

As hearty as the stag.

As clever as Coivi the Druid.
Dr. John Smith, in his Galic Antiquities (p. 8, note) says that this was the Gaelic name for the Arch-Druid; and in Bede’s interesting account of the conversion of King Aedwín of Northumbria (Eccl. Hist., Lib. II., cap. 13), the high-priest is called Coifi. In Mr. Moberly’s note on this (Ed. of Bede, 1869) he says—‘This name has been derived from Coibhi, the Kymric for ‘helpful,’ and thus it has been argued that the Angle hierarchy was British. But see Kemble, Archæol. Soc. Proc., 1845, p. 83. Coifi is only an Anglo-Saxon nickname of easy translation. * * *
The word is equivalent to Coefig or Cêfig, just as Coinræd in the Northumbrian dialect represents Cênraed in West-Saxon. It is an adjective formed from côf, 'strenuus' and merely denotes the 'bold or active one'.

I cannot find the word 'coibhi,' or anything like it, in any Cymric dictionary, but whatever its origin, the name has been handed down in Scottish Gaelic for an unknown length of time as that of an important Druid. The above saying might well be applied to King Aedwin’s high-priest, who behaved with remarkable wisdom on the occasion above mentioned.

For another saying in reference to Coibhi, see <gai>‘Ge fagus clach’.

Cho teth ri gaol seòladair.<eng>
As hot as a sailor’s love.
Al. <gai>‘Gaol tàilleir’—a tailor’s love. Both sailors and tailors are accused of being apt to change their affections easily.

<gai>Cho tric ’s a tha fiacail ’ad cheann.<eng>
As often as there’s a tooth in your head.

Chuala mi ’chubhag gun bhiadh ’am bhroinn,
Chunnaic mi ’n searrach ’s a chûlaobh rium,
Chunnaic mi ’n t-seilcheag air an lic luim,
’S dh’ aithnich mi nach rachadh a’ bhliadh’n’ ud leam.<eng>
I heard the cuckoo while fasting,
I saw the foal with his back to me,
I saw the snail on the flag-stone bare,
And I knew the year would be bad for me.
Attributed to the ‘Cailleach Bhéurra,’ a distinguished Sybil.

Chuir am maor do thigh an rùnair’ e<eng>
The bailiff sent him to the secretary.
Al. <gai>‘An righ’ for ‘am maor’.<eng>
The ‘Circumlocution Office’ on a small scale.

Chuir Brighd’ a lâmh ’s a’ bhóla.<eng>
Bridget put her hand into the bowl.
This seems to refer to St. Bridget’s miraculous power of turning water into ale. The following curious old rhyme is among the Gaelic MSS. of the Advocates’ Library. (G. MS. LXII.)

TUIREADH BRIGHID.
Gairim is guidhim tu chlach,
Na leig Brighid a mach.
0 ’s i géurachadh an deoch,
Is ioma saoidh gun lochd
Dh’an d’ thug i bàs.
Do thart a nis o chaithd to thart,
Tart slorruidh ort, a Bhrighid.

Chuir e ’bhàt’ air acair.<eng>
He set his boat at anchor.

Chuir e ’chliath-chaisg air.<eng>
He put the harrow-check on him.
He put a stopper on him, or a spoke in his wheel.
He sent his cattle to the hill pasture. This is an inland saying, as the one about the boat is maritime.

He quite out-did him. This is a Lochaber phrase of unknown origin. It used to be the practice at weddings to have a pleasant competition in singing between 'Dà thaobh an t-sabhail,' the two sides of the barn—often the bride’s friends against the bridegroom’s. The side that held out longest would then say to the others, 'An dubh-chapaill oirbh!'

He put the soles and half-soles on. He used all expedition, and finished the job.

They put the sleeping-bag under his head. Applied, says Macintosh, to a person who sleeps too much, in allusion to the bag or cocoon in which the caterpillar sleeps.

You have put a tow-head on it at last. Al. 'Ceann gràineil,' a vile end. Said, says Macintosh, of those who destroy all the good they have done by an ill deed. Desinit in piscem mulier formosa superne.—Hor.

He would make the birds go into trees. With the sweetness of his voice. Duncan MacIntyre, describing the Glen Etive women waulking cloth, says 'Nuair a sheinneas iad na h-òrain, Cuiridh iad na h-eòin 'an crannaibh.'

It would sicken a bear.

It would put the foals from sucking. So bitter or disgusting.

They would send the deer out of a wilderness. Said of very noisy people.

You would frighten the savages. This is an Islay saying. Al. 'Mharbhadh e na Samhanaich—It would kill the savages; said of something very overpowering or unwholesome. See 'Aran'.

It was fitted for him before trews were made for him. It was predestined for him.

I have seen two Mackenzies before you!
Two Mackenzie factors. Factors have rarely been popular in the Highlands. The above was said by an indignant farmer to a disagreeable factor in Lewis, when the Mackenzies of Seaforth were lords of that island. At the burial of a Lewis factor, amid dry eyes, the following verse was made:—

"Cuiribh air! Cuiribh air! 'S e chuireadh òirnne; 'S ma dh'èireas e rithist, Cuiridh e 'n còrr oirnn!"<eng>

Heap on him! Heap on him! It's he that would put on us; And if he rise again, He'll just put more on us!

I have heard of even a stronger sentiment expressed in another island at the burial of a factor who had taken in a great number of confiding people, left lamenting, not for him, but for their hardly earned money. One of these victims, a sturdy old man, stood by the grave when all was over, and shaking his fist at it, said, "Na’m bu tig a’ là a dh’èireas tu-sa as a sin!'"<eng>—May the day never come when you’ll rise out of that!

The Celts of Scotland have never, in modern times, so far as I know, maltreated, much less killed, a factor, steward, or magistrate. They have often been treated unjustly; but they are neither so quick of tongue, nor so unsparing of hand, as their Irish brethren.

"Ciall a dh'fhadai's teine; Rian a chumas baile; Cha mhair sliochd fir foille; No iochd ri 'chuid cloinne."<eng>

Sense builds up a fire; Order keeps a city; False man’s seed endures not; Nor will they get pity.

Al. "Tùr a thogas teine; ciall a chuireas as e"<eng>—Wit to make a fire; sense to put it out.

"Cinnidh a’ chriontaichd, ’s théid an ro-chriontaichd a dholaidh."<eng> Saving getteth store, over-saving mischief.

"Cinnidh Clann-Phearchair gus an deicheamh linn."<eng> The Farquharsons shall flourish to the tenth generation. The Farquharsons, says Macintosh, in a long note on this, are also called Clann Fhionnlaidh, i.e., the children of Finlay, "from Finlay More, one of their tall chieftains, who bore the royal standard at the battle of Pinkie; hence the surnames, Finlay, MacKinlay, and Finlayson. The Farquharsons," he adds, "are descended of Parchard Shaw, son of Shaw of Dalnavert; the present Farquharson of Invercauld, their chief, seems to deny this, and pretends that they are descended of Macduff, Thane, and afterwards Earl of Fife, for which assertion neither he nor any other can show vouchers."

"Cinnidh mac o mhi-altrum, ach cha chinn e o ’n Aog."<eng> A child may survive bad nursing, but he can’t escape Death.
The Scottish race shall flourish free,
Unless false the prophecie,
Where the sacred stone is found,
There shall sovereignty have ground.

This saying is undoubtedly Irish, and not Scottish, in the modern sense of the latter word. As given by Keating (Ed. 1811, p. 198) it is,

Keating gives this as his rendering of the Latin of Hector Boece, which must therefore be regarded as the first known version of this saying. Boece’s couplet, which he says is engraved on the stone, ‘Suprascriptio lapidi insculpta’ (Ed. 1574, fol. 2), is—

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Ni fallat fatum, Scoti, quocunque locatum,
Invenient lapidem, regnare tenentur ibidem,
thus translated into English,
The Scots shall brook that realm as native ground,
If weirds fail not, where’er this chair is found.

Keating, however, though indebted to Boece for this verse, quotes a still older one in reference to the stone ‘Lia Fàil,’ from the poet Cinaeth O’Hartigan, who died, according to Tighernach, in 975—

An cloch a tá fám dhá sháil,
Uaithe ráidhtear Inis Fáil.

The stone that is beneath my feet
From it is styled the Isle of Fáil.

Keating’s Hist., Ed. 1811, p. 118.

The stone in question, so far as Scotland is concerned, was undoubtedly carried away from Scone by that prince of robbers, Edward I., and deposited in Westminster Abbey, in the coronation chair, where every British sovereign has been crowned ever since, down to our dearly beloved Queen Victoria. So much faith has the sturdy Saxon ever had, in spite of all his protests and prose, in Celtic sentiment and prophecy! Why, else, should he have made so much of a rough piece of what Professor Geikie has assured Mr. Skene to be simply a bit of Perthshire sandstone? (See Skene’s ‘Coronation Stone’). Archæology and Geology combined make sad havoc of traditional faith, for we are assured by Hector Boece that the precious stone in question was the royal chair of King Gathelus in Brigantia, and was carried from Spain to Ireland, and from Ireland to Scotland. Keating, on the other hand, tells us that it was brought by the Tuath de Dannan from Lochlann (Scandinava) and sent over from Ireland to Scotland by Murtogh Mac Earc, that his brother, Fergus the Great, ‘the first of our kings, I suppose,’ might be crowned on it (A.D. 503). Some imaginative Saxons, fired by Irish poetry, go a great deal further than this, and believe, or try to make believe, that this sufficiently venerable stone is the very stone on which Jacob pillow his head on that memorable night when he slept and dreamed at Bethel; and that our possession of it in Westminster Abbey is one among a hundred clear proofs that we are the real Children of Israel—the remnant of the lost Ten Tribes!

Apart from all absurdity, that stone is very venerable, and ought, to every British person, English, Scottish, or Irish, to be really sacred. The above rhyme is interesting philologically and historically, whatever be thought of the legend. ‘Lia’ = Liag = Leac, a flat stone, and ‘Fál’ = prerogative, privilege, privileged person, King, whence the old name of Ireland, ‘Innis-fáil’,
Another Irish name for the <gai>'Lia-fàil'<eng> is <gai>'Cloch-na-Cinneamha,'<eng> the Stone of Destiny. There is a Lochaber saying that possibly refers to the Irish origin of this sacred stone. It is said, when darning or patching a hole on a boy’s jacket or trousers while on him—<gai>‘Fuaigheam

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seo mu chloich ghlas an t-sagairt,—a’ chlach ghlas a bha ’n Eirinn.’<eng>—Let me sew this round the priest’s gray stone—the gray stone that was in Ireland.

<gai>Ciod a b’ aíll leat fhaighinn ’an nead an fhithich ach am fitheach fhéin?<eng> What would you expect in the raven’s nest but the raven itself?

<gai>Ciod a dh’ iarradh tu air bó ach gnòsd?<eng> What would you expect from a cow but a groan? The word ‘groan’ does not quite represent the sound in question. Neither does ‘moan’ nor ‘low’ . It is that subdued noise which a cow utters as her ordinary expression of feeling.

<gai>Ciod a’s fhéarr a dh’ innseas an cladh na ’n eaglais?<eng> What better guide to the churchyard than the church?

<gai>Ciod a’s misde duine ’chreach, mur lughaid a phòr e?<eng> What is a man the worse of being plundered if it does’nt diminish his produce? A very philosophical view of the matter.

<gai>Cìrean a’ choillich air a’ chirc.<eng> The cock’s comb on the hen. The woman wearing the breeks.

<gai>Clach ’an ionad càbaig, ’s corc ’an ionad cuinnseir.<eng> A stone instead of a cheese, and a knife instead of a sword.

<gai>’S Mac Eóghainn ’th’ ann an dràsda, Mar chloich an ionad càbaig, ’An àite na bh’ ann.<eng> Macintyre’s ‘Cumha Choire-Cheathaich’.

<gai>Clach air muin cloich Mhic-Lèoid.<eng> A stone on the top of Mac Leod’s stone. A MacDonald saying, doubtless, these two clans having been always the great rivals for power in Skye.

<gai>Clachag ’n am bhròig, deargan ’n am mhuilchinn, càilein ’n am fhiacail, ’s mo leannan ’g am fhâgail.<eng> A pebble in my shoe, a flee in my sleeve, a husk in my teeth, and my sweetheart leaving me. A combination of annoyances.

<gai>Clachan an t-Srath, ’us mnathan Shléibhte.<eng> The stones of Strath, and the women of Sleat. Strath and Sleat are neighbouring parishes in Skye; the one possessing, among other distinctions, a vein of gray marble, of

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which the road-side dykes are to a large extent built,—the other noted, or claiming to be, for the beauty of its women.

The little stones going down, and the big ones coming to the top. A physical fact, and a human experience also.

Black stones against the stream.

Sometimes the case still, but seldom compared with old times.

A sword in a fool’s hand, a beetle in an idiot’s. Ne’er put a sword in a wud man’s hand.—Scot.

[Greugais]—Don’t give a sword to a child.—Gr.

A physical fact, and a human experience also.

The little stones going down, and the big ones coming to the top. A physical fact, and a human experience also.

The <gai>Clàr<eng> was a big wooden dish, and I suppose is not yet obsolete in the Highlands.
Affinity near, sponsorship far off.

The porters’ trick,—a little load and frequent.
Al. <gai>Cuallach a’ mhic-leis<eng>—The lazy lad’s herding.
Al. <gai>Tarruing chailleach<eng>—Old wives’ drawing.

The waddling stone-chat, the frog’s grand-child.
A Lismore saying, suggestive of the development theory.

Play the foot, my comrade.
Giving one’s companion leg bail.

The play of the pup with the old dog,
Al. <gai>Mir’ a’ chuilein ris a’ mhial-chu.

The deaf can hear the silver clink.

The country will hear it, and Rob Tinker’s dog too.

You’ll hear it on your dearest ear.

He’ll be heard where he is not seen.

The fat hen’s refuse.

A great bane to a greedy man.—Scot.

A big bone and flesh on it, a mason’s leavings.
See <gai>’Fuighleach tàilleir’.

Donald Martin’s cold.
A Lochaber saying. Donald was said to take a cold once a quarter, which lasted three months. The Mac Martins in that country are Camerons.

Hills and water and MacAlpines, but when did the MacArthurs come?
Al. <gai>’Cnoic ’us uilt,’<eng> Hills and streams. <gai>’Cnoic ’us uilc,’<eng> Hills and ills.
‘Meaning,’ says Macintosh, ‘that the MacGregors are as old as the hills.’
As already noted, under <gai>’Cha robh balach,’<eng> they trace their
descend from Alpin, King of Scots in the first half of the 9th century, and Macintosh quotes an old verse in reference to their descent:—

Sliochd nan rìghribh dùthchasach,
'Bha shios 'an Dùn-s-dà-innis,
Aig an robh crùn na h-Alb' o thús,
'S aig am beil dùthchas fhathasd ris.<eng>

Children of the native kings, Who reigned down at Dunstaffnage, Who first the crown of Alba owned, And still have native claim to it. The MacArthurs, as the above saying implies, claim a still older lineage, from a King Art, or Arthur, of prehistoric times. In Cormac’s Glossary, the word ‘Art’ has three meanings given,—

Cnuasach uircein, buain 'us itheadh.<eng>
The pig’s contemplation, pluck and eat.

Cnuasachd na gràineig.<eng>
The hedgehog’s hoard.

This, says Armstrong, is ‘expressive of the folly of worldly-minded people, who part with all at the grave, as the hedgehog is compelled to drop its burden of crab-apples at the narrow entrance of its hole.’ Lightfoot says (Flora Scotica, 2nd Ed., 1792, p. 13) the hedgehog is “not found beyond the Tay, perhaps not beyond the Forth”. It is found at this day as far north as Lochaber.

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Co air a rinn thu sid?—Ort fhéin, a ghràidh.<eng>
On whom did you do that?—On yourself, my dear.

Co dhà a b’ fhearr a b’ aithne an cat a thoirt as a’ mhuighe, na do ’n fhear a chuir ann e?<eng>
Who knows best to take the cat out of the churn but he that put her in? Ye served me as the wife did the cat,—coost me in the kirn, and syne harled me oot again.—Scot.

Co dha bhios Mac-Mhathain gu math, mur bi dha fhéin?<eng>
To whom will Matheson be good, if not to himself?

Co dhìúbh ’s ann air srath no ’n gleann, ’s ann as a ceann a bhliughter a’ bhò.<eng>
Whether on strath or in glen, ’tis from her head the cow’s milk comes.

As a cionn a bhlichtear an bhò.<eng—Ir.
Godróid buwch o’ i phen.—Welsh.
It’s by the head that the coo gi’es milk.—Scot.
As the coo feeds, so she bleeds.—Do.
Die Kuh milcht durchs Maul.—Germ.

Co dhìúbh ’s fhusa bata dheanamh de ’n ghuaire mu ghuairn, no cuaille de ’n ghùrume mu ghiùrn?<eng>
Whether is it easier to make a stick of the quill-pith, or a stake of the auger-dust?
This is another version of Tweedledum and Tweedledee, the phrases used having reference to the use of a turning-lathe.

Có ni ’n t-olc ach na mnathan!<eng>
Who can do ill but the women!
This is but another form of ‘Corruptio optimi est pessima’. ‘All wickedness,’ says the son of Sirach (xxv. 19), ‘is but little to the wickedness of a woman.’

To whom can I make my complaint, and no Clanranald in Moidart? This natural gush of Celtic feeling refers to the Clanranald who was killed at Sheriff Muir, a chief who was the idol of his clan.

Said of a person to be relied on as an Òdipus, or Hercules, in cases of difficulty, to solve riddles, or break spells.

The comparison of the gray goose to his mother.

Next door neighbour.

Moss to his house, brush-wood for his fuel, warm milk from the cow, heat from the fire.

Attributed to the ‘Ollamh Ileach’ as an advice for old people.

Men may meet, but mountains never.—Eng.

Cysts y cwrdd dau ddyn na dau lan—Sooner will two men meet than two banks.—Scot.

Deux hommes se rencontrent bien, mais jamais deux montagnes.—Fr.

Men may meet, but mountains never greet.—Eng.

We’ll meet ere hills meet.—Scot.

Mountain doesn’t meet mountain.—Mod. Gr.

Like the old cow’s tail, always last.

Like MacCormack’s wives, very strong in the neck.

Who M’Cormack was, and where he lived, we know not; but it may be assumed that he was sadly henpecked.

Like my old shoes, ever getting worse.

A friend’s advice unasked never got due esteem.

Ulster saying in same words.

Ergyd yn llwyn cysul heb erchi—Advice unasked is like a shot into the wood.—Welsh.

A friend’s advice unasked is well worth keeping.
Counsel for the wise man, for the fool’s back a rod.

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A wink to the wise, a kick to the fool.—Arab.
A nod for a wise man, a rod for a fool.—Eng.
A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool’s back.—PROV. xxvi. 3.

Counsel of the bell of Scone,
Touch not what is not thine own.
The voice of the Bell of Scone, the ancient seat of Scottish royalty, was taken to represent the voice of Law and Justice, of which the fundamental maxim is ‘Suum cuique’.

Fostership to a hundred, kindred to twenty.
See <gai>‘An co’-dhalta’.

The bad man’s consolation—that there’s as bad as he.

The company I love—the tinkers.
One very distinguished literary man, Mr. George Borrow, would not repudiate this sentiment.

The bailiff’s brotherhood.
See <gai>‘Mo chomain’.

Bad luck to you!

Concord (or compromise) that bereaves the law.
Ammod a dyr ddefod.—Welsh.
Law’s costly; tak’ a pint and gree.—Scot.
Meglio un magro accordo, che una grassa sentenza.—Ital.
So Fr., Span., Germ., Dutch, Dan.

Two to one is odds enough.—Eng.
Ne Hercules quidem contra duos.—Lat.

The Fingalian fair-play to them.
The Fingalian idea of fair-play was that of the previous saying, one to one, <gai>‘Gaisgeach air ghaisgeach, ’us laoch ri laoch’—Champion on champion, hero to hero.

A hen’s heart in the beak of want.

The cross between me and mishap!
The cross be between us!
The cock bows his head at the great house door.
See "Ged is losal".

Hard as the heather, lasting as the pine.
The heather is the badge of the MacDonals, the pine of the MacGregors.

Hard about the penny, soft about the merk.
Penny wise and pound foolish.—Eng., Scot.

A dog's limping, a woman's excuse, a merchant's oath—they are like each other.
Woman's tears and dog's limping are not real.—Span.

The father scraping and the son scattering.

Where the carcase is, the ravens will gather.
Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.—MATTH. xxiv. 28.

The dog of two deer has often lost his deer.
He that chases two hares catches neither.—Gr.

The smith's share—the head.
The smith's perquisite for killing a cow, which he was generally employed to do. That great event generally took place once a year, at Martinmas, whence possibly the word 'mart' = cow.

The foal's share of the harrow.

Help thyself, and God will help thee.
Help u zelven, da hielper dig Gud.—Dutch.
Aide-toi, le ciel t-aidera.—Fr.

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Quien se guarda, Dios le guarda.—Span.
Chi s’ aiuta, Dio l’ aiuta.—Ital.
[Greugais]—Mod. Gr.

<gai>Cuigeal don-sniomhaich.<eng> Bad spinning distaff.
Said of an unthrifty or untidy woman.

<gai>Cuimhnich air na daoine bho ’n d’tháinig thu.<eng>
Remember those you came from.
A very Highland sentiment. Sometimes it is <gai>’Cuimhnich air cruadal nan daoine,’<eng> &c.—Think of the fortitude of your forefathers; a sentiment which has proved strong on many a battlefield.

<gai>Cuir a mach an Sasunnach, ’s thoir a stigh an cú.<eng>
Put out the Englishman, and take in the dog.
This is a Lochaber saying, supposed to date from the time of Cromwell, whose soldiers scourged that country severely.

<gai>Cuir an tuagh air an t-samhaich cheart.<eng>
Put the axe on the right helve.
Put the saddle on the right horse.

<gai>Cuir ceann na muice ri earr an uircein.<eng>
Set the sow’s head to the little pig’s tail.
Bring the head o’ the sow to the tail o’ the grice.—Scot.
This looks like a case of hysteron proteron, but Kelly interprets it, ‘balance your loss with your gain’.

<gai>Cuir do làmh ’s a’ chliabh, ’s thoir do rogha liabaig as.<eng>
Put your hand into the creel, and take your choice of flounders.
If this be a version of the Scottish rhyme on matrimony, it is certainly improved—
Put yir hand in the creel,
And draw an adder or an eel.

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<gai>Cuir do mhuinghinn ’s an talamh, cha d’ fhâg e falamh riamh thu.<eng>
Put thy trust in the earth, it never left thee empty.
A good motto for farmers.

<gai>Cuir innte, ’s cuiridh an saoghal uimpe.<eng>
Give her food, and the world will clothe her.
Macintosh’s note on this is, ’The back will trust, but the belly will still be craving’.

<gai>Cuir manadh math air do mhanadh, ’s bidh tu sona.<eng>
Interpret good from thy omen, and thou shalt be lucky.
As Cæsar did, when he fell on the British shore.

<gai>Cuireadh cùl na coise.<eng> The back-leg invitation.
Al. <gai>Fiaadhachadh cùl na h-iosgaid.<eng>
That of a person who gives a faint invitation, and escorts one out of the house, saying, ’I am sorry you couldn’t stay’.

<gai>Cuireadh Mhic-Philip—’gabh no fàg’.<eng>
M’Killop’s invitation—’take or leave’.

<gai>Cuiridh an teanga snaim nach fuasgall an fhiacail.<eng>
The tongue will tie a knot which the tooth can’t unloose.

The English and Scottish versions are nearly in the same words. Matrimony is referred to.

One deed may a man undo,
When his reason ruleth not;
And a step may set him up,
If but taken in due time.

One meal if it lack, calf or child will go back.

A wise wife will set a man up, but a foolish one will bring him down with both hands.

A sweet mouth will send you to beggary.

He will set the wells on fire.
This looks like setting the Thames on fire.

The sheep’s jaw will put the plough on the hen-roost.
This prediction is attributed to a famous Highland seer of the 17th century, Coinneach Odhar, but it was made long before that by no less a person than Thomas the Rhymier. His saying, ‘The teeth of the sheep shall lay the plough on the shelf,’ is quoted by Dr. Chambers in his Popular Rhymes of Scotland, with special reference to the changes of tenantry in the Highlands, in some parts of which sheep-farming has entirely supplanted agriculture. Rushes and heather may be seen now in fields that once yielded fair crops, and sheep in place of the men that tilled them.

I’ll add a stone to your cairn.
See ‘Am fear nach mèudaich’.

Back of wind and face of sun.
A phrase in the old stories, descriptive of a pleasant retreat.

Keep the ill man on your side; the good man you’ll always have.
Keep the fair on its day.
Keep the boat from the lee-shore, and she’ll keep herself from the wind-shore.

Hold your dog till the starting-time. Don’t loose your hound where there is nothing to hunt.—Arab.

Keep your tongue in hand. The mouth is the tongue’s prison.—Arab. [Greugais]—Speech is silversn, silence golden.—Mod. Gr.

A full finger-length to the small; Eleven nails to the leg; Seven nails to the band; There are few whom that won’t suffice; Let it be shaped straight; And three nails to the fork. This quaint rhyme is called ‘Cumadh an Triubhais,’ The shaping of Trews. A ‘nail’ is 2¼ inches, and Macintosh says ‘perhaps some of these nails should be doubled’.

Even the sow will keep her own stye clean. The tod keeps aye his ain hole clean.—Scot.

The little bag holds as much as the big bag.

I will keep to my sweetheart, said the girl, a mouth of silk and a heart of hemp. A mouth of ivy, and a heart of holly.—Ir.

Power to the friend, and thraldom to the enemy of his country! This is what used to be called a ‘sentiment’ for a toast

A good bargain far away.

Kibe and crack and burning heel, pity the foot they come on. All these ailments are known only to people that go barefooted. The second one gives rise to another saying, ‘Céum air gàig,’ applied to persons who walk reluctantly, as if they had a sore foot, or delicately, like King Agag.
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D.

Twelve strokes for straw, and no stroke for seed.
Great cry and little wool. See "Buill’air gach craoibh'.

Both ends of the rope, and leave to pull it.

At the battle of Inverlochy, 1645, Alexander MacDonell, son of Coll (Colkitto) having made prisoner of Campbell of Achnabreac, said he would honour him by giving him his choice, whether to be beheaded or hanged. Campbell answered in the above words, and MacDonell struck off his head with his own hand.—Teachd. Gael., Vol. II., p. 135.

Assurance is two-thirds of success.

Delay to the day of the shovel.
The day of burial.

The rutting of the wood.
Applied, according to Armstrong (Dict.), to the first night of the New Year, when the wind blows from the west.

Like Mac Killop’s barley bread, getting better and better.
I have been unable to ascertain anything about the M’Killop who gave rise to the various proverbs in which he is named.
The word "dallta' is not common, and is not given in any of our dictionaries, except Shaw’s and MacAlpine’s; and in O’Reilly’s Ir. Dict. Shaw is given as authority for the word. It means ‘like, likeness, in manner of’. It is not surprising that it was in the 2d Ed. of Macintosh confounded with ‘dallta,’ foster-child, and translated accordingly in this and the next proverb.

Like the scabby head that can’t endure cold or heat.

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The harper’s second wife—the harp itself.
See "Eud bean a’ chrui tear’.
Neil Gow’s fiddle was said to be his second wife; and there is a tune so called.

What’s the good of the pipe if it’s not played on?

Make a will of necessity.
Make a virtue of necessity.—Eng.
Take it easy, you’ll speed better.

See ‘Cha ‘n i ‘chabhag’.
Festina lente exactly expresses this.

Do the ill and wait the end.
The grave irony of this is very good.

Do the ill and wait the end.

Make a big cake at Shrove-tide, and another at Easter; and as long as you have anything, you’ll never be wanting.

Make a big cake at Shrove-tide, and another at Easter; and as long as you have anything, you’ll never be wanting.

Warm yourself where you got cold.

Complain to a merciless man, and he’ll say, ‘You are poor’.
Probably he will say, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled’.

Sain thyself frae the Deil and the laird’s bairns—Scot.

This was probably addressed first by a father to his daughters.

Don’t throw out the dirty water till you get in the clean.

Get bait while the tide is out.

Do good against the ill.

Do good to a worthy man,
And worthy will he be,
Do good to a worthless man,
And selfish still is he.
The Ulster version is nearly identical,—
<gai>Dean maith air dheagh-dhuine,
A’s gheabhaidh tu d’ a reir;
Acht ma ghnidhir maith air dhròch-dhuine,
Beidh an dhròch-dhuine dò fèin.

Dean na thig dhut, ’s chi thu na ’s ait leat.<eng>
Do what becomes you, and you’ll see what pleases you.
A neat statement of the doctrine of the πȡȑπον.

<gai>Deanadh do bhean fhéin brochan dhut.<eng>
Let your own wife make gruel for you.

<gai>’Deanamh gad de ’n ghainnimh.<eng>
Making a rope of sand.
Ex arena funiculum nectis.—Lat.
According to tradition, this was a task imposed on his familiar spirit by
Michael Scott, the result of which is still to be seen on the sands
between Leith and Portobello. Another tradition is that it was imposed on
the Fairies by Sir Duncan Campbell of Glenorchy, Black Duncan of the
Cowl.

<gai>Deireadh féille fàg.<eng> Leave the fag-end of a fair.
An excellent advice.

[TD 164]

<gai>Deireadh gach luing’ a bàthadh,
Deireadh gach àth a losgadh,
Deireadh flaith a chàineadh.
Deireadh slàinte osna.<eng>
The end of each ship her drowning.
The end of each kiln its burning,
The end of a prince, reviling,
The end of health a sigh.
Al. <gai>Deireadh gach comuinn sgaoileadh,
Deireadh gach bàta ’bristeadh,
Deireadh gach àth a losgadh,
Deireadh gach cogaidh sìth.<eng>
The end of all meetings to part,
The end of all boats to be broken,
The end of all kilns to be burnt,
The end of all wars peace.
The Ulster version is,
<gai>Deireadh gach luinge, bàthadh,
Deireadh gach àiche, losgadh,
Deireadh gach cuirme, caitheamh,
A’s deireadh gach gàire osna.

Deireadh mo sgeòil mo sguidseadh, dol h-ugam air mo dhruim.<eng>
The end of my story a switching on my back.
The identity of <gai>’sguidseadh’<eng> and ‘switching’ is obvious.

<gai>Deireadh nan seachd Sathurn’ ort!<eng>
The end of the seven Saturdays to you!
No satisfactory explanation can be got of this very familiar saying. It
has been ingeniously interpreted as referring to the end of the seven
weeks of Lent, when mutual congratulations are given in some Christian
countries, in remembrance of the Resurrection-day. But unfortunately for
this explanation, the saying with us has always conveyed a bad wish instead of a good one. It is, in fact, an emphatic form of malediction. The word  
"seachd," seven, is used, in Gaelic as in Hebrew, to express completeness; e.g.,  
"tha mi seachd sgìth"—I am utterly tired. In this sense, 'the end of the seven Saturdays to you' might be meant to express the wish that the mere fag-end of time might be all one would have to enjoy. But the more probable interpretation is, that it refers to the Crucifixion and the end of Judas.

Deiseal air gach nì.<eng>
The sunward course with everything.

Deas<eng> = South, right-hand, ready, dexterous, proper, handsome.

Deiseil = Deis-iùil,<eng> south course, right direction.

The belief, and the customs associated with it, on this point, are very natural, and common to all the principal races of the world.

Deoch a’ phathadh nach d’ thàinig.<eng>
Drink for the thirst that came not.
Too common an indulgence.

Deoch-an-doruis.<eng> The door-drink.
The door-drink, or stirrup-cup, is one of the oldest of institutions. The following pretty verses were composed by a very good man, Duncan Lothian:

Slàn do d’ mhnaoi ghil, slàn do d’ mhacaibh,
Slàn do d’ theach o ’m binne ceòl;
Slàn do d’ shràidibh geala gainmhich,
Slàn do d’ bheanntaibh o ’m bi ceò.
Bho ’n a thàrladh dhuinn ’bhi sona,
‘Us beairt dhona nach tig ruinn,
Air ghaol sìth, ’s air eagal conais,
Thugar Deoch an Doruis dhuinn!

Deoch Chlann-Donnchaidh.<eng>
The Robertsons’ stirrup-cup.

Deoch mhór do Bhrian, ’s b’e sin a mhiann.<eng>
A big drink to Brian, and that’s his desire.
Brian’s habits would not be considered so singular now as to become proverbial.

I knew it would be a kid the goat would bear.

I would know your gift by your graciousness.

You lighted on your luck.
Literally,  "tapadh"<eng> means activity, cleverness, manliness; secondarily, the luck which follows. The only vernacular equivalent of 'Thank you' in the Gaelic language is  "Tapadh leat".

'Dheanadh e rud-eigin do dh-aon duine, ach is beag a’ chuid dithis e,’
mar a thuirt Alastair Uaibhreach mu’n t-saoghail.<eng>
It would be something to one man, but it’s a small thing for two, as Alexander the Proud said about the world.
Alexander the Great is always called <gai>'Uaibhreach'<eng> in Gaelic.

<!--gai-->Dheanadh e teadhair de 'n ròinneig.<eng>
He would make a tether of a hair.

[TD 166]

<!--gai-->Dheanadh Niall clàrsaichean, na 'n cuireadh càch ceòl annta.<eng>
Neil would make harps, if others would put music into them.

"Dheanadh sin e," mu 'n dubhairt an cù mu 'n chè.<eng>
'That would do it,' as the dog said about the cream.
When the dog was desired to lick cream, he asked, 'Why?' 'Because it is spilt,' replied his mistress. 'That would do it,' said the dog.—Note by Macintosh.

<!--gai-->Dheanadh tu caonnag ri d' dhà lurgainn.<eng>
You would quarrel with your own two shins.
Al. <gai>Bheireadh tu conas á d' leth-lurga<eng>—You would get a quarrel out of one of your legs.

<!--gai-->Dh' fhalbh 'b' fhearr leam,' 's cha b' fhearr beò e.<eng>
'Would that' is gone, and it's no loss.

<!--gai-->Dh' fhalbh e 'n a phrìneachan 's na shnàthadan.<eng>
It went away in pins and needles.

<!--gai-->Dh' fhalbh Peairt, thuit an drochaid!<eng>
Perth is gone, the bridge is down!
This is said on the occasion of some great catastrophe. The fall of the bridge of Perth in 1621, probably originated the saying. The old bridge, described by Cant as "a stately building, and a great ornament of the town," was carried away by successive inundations in 1573, 1582, and 1589. On 14th Oct., 1621, says Calderwood (cited by Cant in Muse's Threnodie, 1774, pp. 80-82) "the stately bridge of Perth, newly completed, consisting of 10 arches, was destroyed by the high swelling of the river Tay". The destruction and alarm caused on this occasion appear to have been very great. Another saying in reference to that calamity is, <gai>'An uair a thuiteas drochaid Pheairt, ni i glag'<eng>—When the bridge of Perth falls, it will make a noise.

<!--gai-->Dh' fhan do mhàthair ri d' bhreith.<eng>
Your mother waited for your birth.
Said ironically to one in an excessive hurry.

<!--gai-->Dh' fhaodadh dà chailleach a chur an dàrna taobh, gun dol thaobh an teine.<eng>
Two old women could dispose of it, without leaving the fireside.

<!--gai-->Dh'iarr a' mhuir a bhi 'g a taghal.<eng>
The sea wished to be resorted to.
A poetical idea, suggested by the daily return of the tide, which seems to invite acquaintance.

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<!--gai-->Dh' ith e 'chuid de 'n bhonnach-shodail.<eng>
He eat his share of the flattery-bannock.
Said of sycophantic people.
He ate the food before saying grace.

He would eat St. Patrick’s tribute from Ireland. See note to ‘Cha phàigheadh’. In a story about Ossian, given in Campbell’s West Highland Tales, II. 105 (also in Smith’s Summer in Skye), it is said of him, ‘Bha e dall, bodhar, bacach, ’s bha naoidh dealgan daraich ’n a bhroinn; ’s e ’g itheadh na càin a bh’ aig Pàdruig air Eirinn’—He was blind, deaf, lame, and had nine oaken skewers in his belly; and was eating the tribute Patrick had over Ireland. This story was found in Barra and in Skye.

The sheep might eat through it. Said of thinly woven cloth.

He would drink Loch Slapin. A Skye loch between Strath and Sleat.

He would drink the penny he hadn’t seen,

He would drink his luck-penny. Even if he had the ‘penny of Pases,’ he would drink it.

You would wish my ashes borne off on the waters.

Great growth of hair, small growth of body.

On Palm Sunday is my stir; on crooked black Sunday I’ll peel the egg. This saying is obscure. ‘Crom-dubh,’ apparently for ‘crom-dubh,’ is known in Ireland as the title of the first Sunday of August, but in Lochaber it is applied to Easter.

Monday of chastisement, the terror of boys.—H. Soc. Dict. A day after the fair.—Eng.

Forgetting the marriage, from the wretchedness of the wedding. I had nae mind I was married, my bridal was sae feckless.—Scot. The tardy man’s revenge.

Industry pays debt.
A fold’s reproach, a yeld cow.

<gai>Dìongam fear ma dh’ fhuiricheas mi, agus fuilingeam teicheadh.<eng> I’ll match a man if I stay, and I can suffer a retreat.

<gai>Dìrdaoín’ a’ bhrochain mhóir.<eng> Great gruel Thursday.
It was at one time a custom in the Long Island, if the usual drift of seaweed were behind time, to go on Maunday Thursday and pour an oblation of gruel on a promontory, accompanying the ceremony with the repetition of a certain rhyme.

<gai>Dìrdaoín là Chaluim-Chille chaoimh,
Là ’bu chóir a bhi deilbh,
Là ‘chur chaorach air seilbh.<eng> When Thursday is dear Columba’s day, the warp should be prepared, and sheep sent to pasture.
St. Columba’s day is 9th June. The epithet applied to the Saint is interesting.

<gai>Dìreachadh na cailliche air a lurga.<eng> The old woman’s straightening of her leg (breaking it).

<gai>Dìthis a chur cuideachd agus am buadaladh ri ’chéile.<eng> To put two together, and knock them against each other.

<gai>Dìthis leis nach toigh a chéile,
Bean a’ mhic ’s a múthair-chéile.<eng> Two that love not one another,
The son’s wife and his mother.

<gai>Diù na comhairle, a toirt far nach gabhar i.<eng> The worst advice, given and not taken.

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<gai>Diù rath an domhain, ’us diù dath an domhain ann; buidhe, dubh, ’us riabhach.<eng> Worst lot in the world, and worst colours on earth are there, yellow, black, and brindled.
A punning satire on Jura, by a discontented poetess—Campbell’s W. H. Tales, II. 353.

<gai>Diùthaidh nam beathaichean firionn.<eng> The refuse of male creatures.
Said of a very contemptible man.

<gai>Dìleasaidh airm urram.<eng> Arms merit honour.

<gai>Dìlùthas nan càirdean ri chéile.<eng> The nearness of kindred to each other.

<gai>Do rogha leannain, ’s do theann–shadh spréidh’ ort!<eng> Thy choice of sweet-heart, and full store of cattle to thee!

<gai>Do spuir fhéin ‘an each fir elle.<eng> Your own spurs in another man’s horse.
Al. <gai>‘Mo shlat fhéin’<eng>—My own switch. See <gai>‘Cha bhi each’.

Dona uime, dona aige.<eng> Ill with it, ill with him.
This means that a curmudgeon gets little good of that which he so grudges to part with.

>Dònull da fhéin.<eng> Donald for himself.

>Dorcha, doirionnta, dubh, 'Chiad tri làithean de ’n Gheamhradh; Ge b’e bheir géill do ’n spréidh, Cha tugainn fhéin gu Samhradh.<eng> Dark, sullen, and black, The three first days of Winter; Whoever depends on the cattle, I would not till Summer. It was considered a good sign to have Winter beginning with dark weather; but the reference to the cattle seems to imply, that one ought not to be sanguine about them, notwithstanding.

>Droch bhàs ort!<eng> A bad death to you! Al. <gai>'Droch dhìol’<eng>--bad usage; <gai>'droch sgiorram’<eng>--bad stumbling.

>Droch cómhdhail ort!<eng> Bad meeting to you! The wish conveyed is, that one may meet a person or animal whom it was considered unlucky to meet.

>Druidear bial nam briag.<eng> The lying mouth will be shut.

>Druididh gach ian ri ’ealtainn.<eng> Each bird draws to his flock.

[D 170]

>Eunlaith an aon eite a n-èinfheacht ag eitiollaigh.<eng>--Ir. The birds will resort unto their like.—Son of Sirach. [Greugais]—Gr. Simile appetit simile.—Lat. Pares cum paribus faciillime congregantur.—Cic. Birds of a feather flock together.—Eng., Scot. Vögel von gleichen Federn fliegen gern beisammen.—Germ. Elk zijns gelijk, ’t zij arm of rijk.—Dutch. Qui se ressemble s’ assemble.—Fr. Simili con simili vanno.—Ital. Cada oveja con su pareja.—Span.

>Druim a’ sgadain, tàrr a’ bhradain, ’s cùl-cinn a’ bhric-dhuibh.<eng> The herring’s back, the salmon’s belly, and back of head of black trout. The choice parts.

>Duais fir dhathaidh a’ chinn.<eng> The reward of the man that singes the head.

>Duine còir an rathaid mhóir ’s béisd mhór a’s tigh.<eng> A fine man abroad, and a great beast at home. Angel penfford, a diawl pentan.—Welsh. A causey saint, and a house dell.—Scot. See <gai>’Euchdach,’<eng> and <gai>’Olc mu ’n’. Duine dùr, duine gun tûr.<eng> A stubborn man, a senseless man.
A man with no luck or shift should he hanged; and so should a man with too much.
Hang him that has nae shift, and hang him that has ower mony.—Scot.

The muck-midden is the mither o’ the meal-kist.—Scot.

The land of thistles, and fountains, of brogues, and of mountains!
This is a toast.

—Scot.

It was a superstitious fancy that if a man got struck by the
he would thenceforth be childless!

he would thenceforth be childless!

Between the stone and its bark.

Between the bow and the string.

Between the hay and the straw.

Between the new ship and the old headland.

is a less common form of ‘nuadh’.

Between the sap and the sapling.

Between denial and want.

This was said by Fingal to be the worst plight he ever was in.—See
‘An uaisle’.

Between the thatch and the bracken.

Between two seats one comes down.

Between two stools the tail goeth to ground.—Eng.
Entre deux selles, le cul à terre.—Fr.

Lit. ‘Between two liquids,’ i.e., the upper and lower water.
By the way. Lit. ‘Between two stories.’ Al. ‘dhà naigheachd.’

Eadar dhà theine.<eng> Betwixt two fires.

Eadar lóng ’us làimhrig.<eng> Betwixt ship and landing-place.

Eadar fheala-dhà ’s a rìreadh.<eng> Betwixt fun and earnest.

Eadar làmh ’us taobh.<eng> Betwixt hand and side.

Eadar leóir ’us eatorras.<eng> Betwixt plenty and mediocrity.

Eadar na sruthaibh.<eng> Betwixt the currents.

Eadraiginn nan ceard.<eng> Going between tinkers. Those who in quarrels interpose Must often wipe a bloody nose.—Gay. See <gai>‘Bidh dòrn’.

Eallach mhór an duine leisg.<eng> The lazy man’s great burden. “Who more busy than they that have least to do?—Eng., Scot. Uomo lento non ha mai tempo.—Ital.

Earbsa á claidheamh briste.<eng> Trusting to a broken sword.

Earrach fad’ ’an déigh Càsga, fàgaidh e na saibhlean fàs.<eng> Long Spring after Easter makes empty barns.

Earrag-chéilidh.<eng> A visiting stroke. Said of one hurt when on a visit.

Easgaidh mu’n rathad mhòr seach a dhorus fhéin.<eng> More quick to show the high road than his own door. See <gai>‘Am fear nach ’eil math’.

Eibheall air gruaidh—mnathan—luaidh ’us tàilleirean.<eng> Live-coal on cheek—waulking-women and tailors. The good-wife who had to provide for a company of vigorous women coming to assist her in waulking cloth, or tailors coming to work in the house for days, and expecting, of course, to be well treated, might be supposed to have no sinecure.

Eirigh tónn air uisge balbh.<eng> Wave will rise on silent water. And calm people when stirred may astonish.
Listen to the mountain wind, till the streams abate.

Sending birds to the wood.
Sending owls to Athens, &c.

Distinguished abroad, disgusting at home.
See 'Olc mu’n’.

The harper’s wife’s jealousy.
See 'Dàrna bean,’ and 'Cha dean sinn’.

Treasure of all men of the field!
Al. 'de dh’ fhearraibh na dìle.

Treasure of all women of the world!
These emphatic phrases are sometimes used jocosely, sometimes in real earnest.

Death and flitting are hard on housekeeping.

The live-long day.
Al. Fad fionna-fuaireach.
Leave the share of two for him that is away.

"Fàg, fàg! thuirt an fheannag, 's i mo nighean a' gharrag dhóinn."<eng> Go, go! said the crow, that brown chick is my child. This is an imitation of the cry of the bird. Of the same kind are the following expressive nursery rhymes:

The Gull.—"Gliag, gliag," ars an fhaoileag, "'s e mo mhac-s' an daobh-gheal dónn."<eng>
The Crow.—"Gòrach, gòrach," ars an fheannag, "'s e mo mhac-s' an garrach gorm."<eng>
The Raven.—"Gròc, gròc," ars an fitheach, "'s e mo mhac-s' a chrimeas na h-uain."<eng>
The Eagle.—"Glig, glig," ars an iulair, "'s e mo mhac-s' a's tighearn oirbh.'

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Fàgaidh sloda, sròl, 'us sgàrlaid,
Gun teine gun tuar an fhàrdach.<eng>
Silk and satin and scarlet leave the hearth cold and colourless.
Silks and satins put out the fire in the kitchen.—Eng.
Sammt und Seide löschen das Feuer in der Küche aus.—Germ.

"Fàgaidh tu e mar gu 'm fàgadh bó a buachar."<eng> You leave it as a cow her dung.

"Fàgar an t-inneach gu deireadh."<eng>
The woof is left to the last.

"Faicill a' chuain-mhóir air a' chaol chumhang."<eng>
The wide ocean's watch o'er the narrow strait.

"Faicill gach duine dha fhéin, 'an sabhal, no 'n ceardaich, air lath' an Fhoghair."<eng>
Every man for himself in barn or smithy on a harvest day.

"Fàilte na circe mu 'n àrd-dorus."<eng>
The hen's salute at the lintel.

"Fàinne mu 'n mhiar, 's gun snàithne mu 'n mhàs."<eng>
Ringed finger and bare buttock.

"Fàl fa'n mear, 's gan ribe fa'n tòin."<eng>—Ir.
Of empty stomach, yet he chews incense.—Arab.

"Falach a' chait air a shalachar."<eng>
The cat's hiding of the nasty.
Trying to hush up an offence after it has been exposed.

"Falbhaidh mis' am màireach,' ars an righ.
'Fanaidh tu riumsa,' ars a' ghaoth."<eng>
'I shall go to-morrow,' said the king.
'You shall wait for me,' said the wind.
'Sail,' quoth the king; 'Hold,' quoth the wind.—Eng., Scot.

"Fanaidh duine sona ri sith, 'us bheir duine dona duibh-lèum."<eng>
The fortunate man waits for peace, and the unlucky man takes a leap in the dark.

"Fanann duine sona le sèun (for luck)<gai> agus bheir duine dona dubh-lèum."<eng>—Ir.
Once upon a time a great man was getting a sword made. The smith’s advice for the perfect tempering of the blade was that it should be thrust red hot through the body of a living man. A messenger was to be sent for the sword, on whom it was agreed

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that this experiment should be performed. The lad sent was overtaken by a thunder-storm, and took refuge till it had passed. Meantime the chief sent another messenger for the sword, who duly went and asked for it, and was served as had been arranged. Presently the first messenger came in, got the sword from the smith, and took it to his master. The great man was not a little astonished to see him, and asked where he had been. He told him how he had done, on which the great man uttered the above saying.

For another version, see Campbell’s W. H. Tales, III. 110, 394, where the story is connected with the making of Fingal’s famous sword, Mac-an-Luinn.

"Fanaidh Moisean ri ’latha." The Devil waits his day.
"Moisean’ or ‘Muisein,’ means literally ‘the mean fellow,’ and it is very commonly applied to the Devil by old Highlanders.

"Fannan de ghaoith near, leannan an t-sealgair." A gentle easterly breeze, the hunter’s delight.

"Faodaidh a’ chaora dol bàn, a’ feitheamh ris an fhiar úr." The sheep may die, waiting for the new grass.
"Faghann na heich bán, fhad a’s bhios a fèur a fàs."—Ir. Live, ass, till the clover sprout.—Arab. Live, my donkey, till you eat trefoil.—Mod. Gr. Mentre l’erba cresce, muore il cavallo.—It. Indessen das Gras wächst, werhungert der Gaul.—Germ. Ne meurs, cheval, herbe te vient.—Fr. While the grass groweth, the seely horse starveth.—Eng. The coo may dee ere the grass grow.—Scot.

"Faodaidh cat sealltainn air righ." A cat may look on a king.—Eng. Al. "Faodaidh luach sgìllinn de cat sealltainn ’am bathais an righ"—A twalpenny cat may look at a king.—Scot. Sieht doch wohl die Katze den Kaiser an.—Germ. Een kat kijkt wel een’ keizer an.—Dutch.

"Faodaidh duine dol air muin eich gun dol thairis air." A man may mount a horse without tumbling over.

"Faodaidh duine ‘chuid itheadh, gun a chluasan a shalachadh." A man may take his food without daubing his ears.

"Faodaidh duine sa bith gàir’ a dheanamh air cnoc." Any man may laugh on a hill side.

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"Faodaidh e ’bhi gur duine math thu, ach cha ’n ’eil gnùis deadh dhuin” agad, mu’n dubhairt Niall nam beann ris a’ chat." You may be a good man, but you have’nt the face of one, as Neil of the mountain said to the cat.
He that runs may leap.

Anger may look in on a wise man’s heart, but it abides in the heart of a fool. 
Anger resteth in the bosom of fools. — ECCL. vii. 9.

A straight sapling may have a crooked root.

The king’s business may come in the way of the henwife. The king may come in the cadger’s gait. — Scot.

Big ships may sail to distant strand, But little boats must hug the land.

An old horse may neigh.

We may cut a notch in the doorpost. Said on the occasion of a long expected or unexpected visit, = marking the day with a white stone. Macintosh’s version is—<gai>'Feudaidh sinn crois a choir ’s an tuire; crois an tuire, crois an sguirre,'<eng> translated, ‘We may strike a hack in the post. Nay, ’tis unlucky, replies the guest.’

Eag,’<eng> or <gai>'crois, 's a' chlodha,'<eng> a notch, or cross in the tongs, or <gai>'s a' ghobhal,'<eng> in the supporting-beam, are variations.

Gold itself may be bought too dear.

Gowd may be dear cost.—Scot.
Aurum irrepertum, et sic melius situm.—Hor.

The prudent begging.
Begging for assistance in setting up house. See note to <gai>'Cha ’n e rogha’.

The contribution of a man without sheep. Al. <gai>'Fir falaimh.'<eng> A contribution of wool from a man without sheep would be suspicious.

The sea-gull of a had shore. Applied to poor creatures, still preferring their wretched home.

The sea-gull of one stone.
February cold and keen,
Welcome hath it ever been;
Sheep and cattle running hot,
Sorrow that will bring, I wot.

Al. <gai>Faoilleach, Faoilleach, crodh air theas,
Gal 'us gaoir nitear ris,
Faoilleach, Faoilleach, crodh 'am preas,
Fàilt' 'us faoilte nitear ris.<eng>
February, cows in heat,
Sorrow will the season greet;
February, cows in wood,
Welcome is the weather good.

<gai>Faoillachadh gille 'ghobha; bho na h-ùird gus na builg.<eng>
The relief of the smith's lad, from the hammer to the bellows.
<gai>Sgiste ghiolla an ghobha, ó na builg chum na h-inneoin.<eng>--Ir.

[gai]Far am bi a’ mhuc, bidh fail.<eng>
Where the sow is a styte will be.

[gai]Far am bi an deadh-dhuine, is duin’ e ‘n cuideachd ‘s ‘n a aonar.<eng>
Where a good man is, he is a man, whether in company or alone.

[gai]Far am bi an t-iasg, ’s ann a bhios na h-eòin.<eng>
Where the fish is, the birds will be.

[TD 179]
[gai]Far am bi bó bidh bean, ’s far am bi bean bidh buaireadh.<eng>
Where a cow is, a woman will be, and where a woman is will be temptation.
Al. For <gai>‘buaireadh,’ ‘mollachd,’ ‘dragh,’ ‘aimhreit,’<eng> mischief, trouble, strife.
This saying is attributed to St. Columba, who for the time must have forgotten that he and his brethren needed mothers.

[gai]Far am bi cearcan bidh gràcan.<eng>
Where hens are will be cackling.

[gai]Far am bi cnocan bidh fasqadh.<eng>
Where a hillock is will be shelter.

[gai]Far am bi do chràdh bidh do làmh; far am bi do ghràdh bidh do thathaich.<eng>
Where your pain is your hand will be; where your love is your haunting will be.
Al. <gai>Far am bi mo ghaol, bidh mo thathaich.

Far am bi geòidh, bidh iseanan.<eng>
Where geese are will goslings be.

[gai]Far am bi mi fhein, bidh mo thuagh.<eng>
Where I am myself, my axe will be.
Said by a smith who always carried an axe, on being asked to leave it behind him. He added, <gai>‘Gach ni riamh ge ‘n d’fhuair, ’s ann air mo thuagh a bhuidheachas’<eng>—Whatever I have got, thanks to my axe for it. The axe looks very Icelandic.
Far am bi saoir, bidh sliseagan,
Where carpenters are, will be shavings,
Far am bi mnài, bi giseagan.<eng>
Where women are, will be spells.
Al. <gai>‘Far am bi callleachan’<eng>—Where old wives are.

Come will come deed.
Where there’s a will there’s a way.—Eng.

Far an caill duin’ a sporan is ann a ’s cóir dha ’iarraidh.<eng>
Where a man loses his purse, he should look for it.
Donde perdiste la capa (cape), ay la cata.—Span.

Far am faic thu tóll cuir do chorag ann.<eng>
Where you see a hole put your finger in.

Far am bi toil bidh gniomh.<eng>
Come will come deed.
Where there’s a will there’s a way.—Eng.

Far an caill duin’ a sporan is ann a ’s cóir dha ’iarraidh.<eng>
Where a man loses his purse, he should look for it.
Donde perdiste la capa (cape), ay la cata.—Span.

Far an laidh na fir, ’s ann a dh’ éireas iad.<eng>
Where men lie down they will get up.
Al. <gai>‘Far an suidh’<eng>—Where they sit.

Is ciún aghs sostach sruth na linnte lána,
Where water is stillest it is deepest.
Ni h-é sin do ’n t-sruth eádtrom, si bhagras go dåña.<eng>—Ir.
Altissima quæque flumina minimo sono labuntur.—Curtius.
Dove il fiume ha più fondo, fa minor strepito.—It.
Do va mas hondo el rio, hace menos ruido.—Span.
Stille Wasser sind tief.—Germ. Stille waters hebben diepe gronden.—Dutch.
Det stille Vand har den dybe Grund.—Dan.
Deepest waters stillest go.—Eng. Smooth waters rin deep.—Scot.

Far an taine ’n amhuinn, ’s ann a’s mò a fuaim.<eng>
Where the stream is shallowest, greatest is its noise.
S e an-tuisge is éadomhuiine is mò tormàn.<eng>—Ir.
Basaf yw’r dwfr yn yd lefair.—Welsh.

Far nach bi am beag, cha bhi am móir.<eng>
Where no little is no big will be.

Far nach bi na coin, cha leigear iad.<eng>
Where dogs are not they can’t be started.

Far nach bi na féidh, cha réidh an toirt as.<eng>
From the place where deer are not, they’re not easy to be got.

Far nach bi na fireinich, cha bhi na fir mhóra.<eng>
Where there are no mannikins, there will be no big men.

Far nach bi na mic-uchd, cha bhi na fir-fheachd.<eng>
Where there are no boys in arms, there will be no armed men.
So long as Britain keeps an army, this saying ought not to be forgotten,
especially in the Highlands.

Far nach bi na failleanan, cha bhi na cnothan.<eng>
Where no suckers are, there will be no nuts.
Where no cattle are, the king will lose his due.
Where there is naething, the king tines his right.—Scot.

Where the hen-roost thrives not, neither will what’s better.

Where a man is not beloved, it is easiest to overcome him.

Give me, but let me not give—the MacDonald fashion.
Ye come o’ the Mac Taks, and no’ o’ the Mac Gies.—Scot.

Asking what one knows, the worst kind of asking.
See <gai>‘An rud a chuir na Maoir’.

Ask a man what his ailment is.
Every one will ask, ‘who made it?’ but they won’t ask, ‘how long was it in making?’

The yield of the ground is according to the landlord.
This is an important truth in Political Economy.

The flesh will grow while the marrow lives.
See <gai>‘Gleidhidh cnàimh’.

Whistling on cold track.
A wild-goose chase—no scent.

Whistling of women and crowing of hens, two forbidden things.
A whistling wife, and a crowing hen,
Will call the old gentleman out of his den.—Eng.
See <gai>‘B’ e sin a’ chearc’.

Whistling round the empty fold, and wall round the refuse corn.
Flaying the tetter for its tallow.
<gai>Fear a’ chinn duibh ’s na fiasaige ruaidhe, na teirig eadar e ’s a’ chreag.<eng> Black head, red beard—don’t go between him and the rock.

<gai>Fear a chuirear a dh-aindeoin do ’n allt, bristidh e na soithichean.<eng> He that goes unwillingly for water will break the pitcher.

<gai>Fear a’ ghearain-ghnà, cha ’n fhaigh e truas ’n a chàs.<eng> He that always complains is never pitied.—Eng.

<gai>Fear ’am baile ’s aire as, ’s fhearr as na ann e.<eng> A man in a farm and his thoughts away is better out of it than in it.

<gai>Fear ’an àite fir ’s e ’dh fhàgas am fearann daor.<eng> Tenant after tenant makes the land dear.

<gai>Fear an ime mhóir, ’s e ’s binne glòir.<eng> The man of great wealth has the sweetest voice.
Lit. ‘Of great butter.’

<gai>Fear an t-saoghail fhada, cha bhi baoghal h-uige.<eng> The man of long life will escape danger.
He can’t die before his time. See <gai>‘Cha tig am bàs’.

Fear cléite gun bhogsa, ’us bleidire gun amharus.<eng> A quill-driver without a box, and a beggar without suspicion.
Extraordinary things.

<gai>Fear dubh dàna; fear bàn bleideil; Fear dönnt dualach; ’s fear ruadh sgeigeil.<eng> Black man bold; fair man officious;
Brown man curly; red man scornful.
<gai>Fear dubh dàna; fear fionn glideamhul, <eng> (timid);
<gai>Fear donn dualach; fear ruadh sgligeamhul.<eng>—Ir.
Fair and foolish; black and proud;
Long and lazy; little and loud.—Eng., Scot.

<gai>Fear faire na h-aon sùla.<eng> The one-eyed watcher.
This is a legendary character—Argus, but one-eyed.

<gai>Fear gealtach ’s an aoir.<eng> A timid man at the main-sheet.
The wrong man for the place.

[TD 183]

<gai>Fear gu aois, ’us bean gu bàs.<eng> A man to full age, a woman till death.
A son must be maintained till of age, a daughter, if unmarried, for life.
My son is my son, till he’s got him a wife,
My daughter’s my daughter all the days of her life.—Eng., Scot.

<gai>Fear na bà fhéin ’s a’ phóll ’an toiseach.<eng> Let the cow’s owner go first into the mire.
He that ows the coo gaes nearest her tail.—Scot.
Fear na foill’ ‘an iochdar!  
Let the knave be kept under!

Fear nach cuir cùl ri ’charaid no ri ’nàmhaid.  
A man that won’t turn his back on friend or foe.

Fear nach reic ’s nach ceannaich a’ chòir.  
A man who will neither sell nor buy the right.

Fear nach tréig a chaileag, no ’chompanach.  
A man that won’t forsake his lass nor his comrade.

Fear sa bith a dh’òlas bainne capaill le spàin chriothuinn, cha’ ghabh e ’n triuthach ach aotrom.  
He that drinks mare’s milk with an aspen spoon will take hooping-cough lightly.  
The first part of this prescription is rational; the virtue of the spoon was supposed to be derived from the sacred character of the aspen tree.

Fear sa bith a loisgeas a mhàs, ’s e fhéin a dh’fhéumas suidhe air.  
Whoever burns his bottom must himself sit on it.

Fear uiread fuighill rium, ag iarraidh fuighill orm.  
A man with leavings as big as mine asking leavings of me.

Fèath Faoillich ’us gaoth Iuchair, cha mhair iad fada.  
February calm and Dog-days’ wind won’t last long.  
Al.  <gai>F. F. ’us trod chàirdean, cha ’n fhad a mhaireas—F. calm and friends’ quarrels.  
Al.  <gai>F. F. ’us gaol seòladair—F. calm and sailor’s love.  
Al.  <gai>F. F.’us gaol guanaig, dà nì air bheagan buanais—F. calm and flirt’s love, two things of short endurance.

Feith ri ’dheireadh.  
Await the end.  
Respice finem.—Lat.  
This is the Kennedy motto: Avisez la fin—Consider the end.  

Feitheamh an t-sionnaich ri sithionn an tairbh.  
The fox’s waiting for the bull’s flesh.

Feitheamh fada ri eòrna na gainmhich.  
Long waiting for the sandy barley.  
Barley sown in sand comes to nothing.

Féuch an laogh blàr buidhe dhomh, ’s na feuch a chuid domh.  
Show me the white-faced yellow calf, and not what he is fed on.  
Taisbean an laogh biadhta, acht na taisbean an nìdh a bhuaidh e.—Ir.  
Dangos y llo, ac na ddangos y llaeth—Show the calf, and not the milk.—Welsh.  
Ne’er shaw me the meat but the man.—Scot.

Féuch gu bheil do theallach fhéin squabte, mu ’n tog thu luath do choimhearsnaich.  
See that your own hearth is swept, before you lift your neighbour’s ashes.
Sweep before your own door.—Eng. Veeg eerst voor uwe eigene deur, en dan voor die uws buurmans.—Dutch.

See that your eye doesn’t rest on it. Alluding to the dreaded gift of the Evil Eye.

He that’s in straits must make a shift to clothe himself.

The earth must have its portion. This means the Grave, = All must die.

A liberal spender needs cattle or substance.

The man of one cow must twist her tail round his fist. He must look well after her. This is an Uist saying.

The man of the sock must rise an hour before the wearer of shoes. The lacing on of the ‘cuan’ was a tedious affair.

Every living thing must have a living.

The ravens themselves must live.

As long as he has an eye to sojourning in this world.

As long as a dog is bent, or a man straight.

He got a turn through the smoke. It was the custom to put a newly christened child into a basket, and hand it across the fire, in order to counteract the power of evil spirits.—Note in 2nd Ed. of Macintosh.

You have learned what fear is. Said when one has had a narrow escape.

Hospitality to the exile, and broken bones to the oppressor! A generous and good sentiment.

True or false, it will injure a woman. Alas! for the rarity Of Christian charity Under the sun!—Hood.

Said when one has had a narrow escape.
The ravens boding of a feast.

Fir a’ chladaich ’us bodaich Nis; daoin-uaisle Uige.
The shore men and bodies of Ness; the gentlemen of Uig.
Ness is a district in the north of Lewis; Uig a parish in the west of the island. The above saying must have originated in the latter, the Ness men being generally regarded as fine specimens of mixed Scandinavian and Celtic blood.

Fitheach dubh air an tigh, fios gu nighean an dathadair.
A black raven on the roof, warning to the dyer’s daughter.
Probably a death omen.

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Fliuch do shùil mu ’n gabh i air.
Wet your eye lest it light on him.
Al. ‘Mu’n cronach thu e’—Lest you hurt him.
This again alludes to the Evil Eye, against which wetting the eye acted like a counter-spell.

Po mhaide na poite.
Under the pot-stick.
Said of a henpecked man.

Foghar an àigh–ial ’us fras.
Finest autumn, sun and shower.

Foghar fada ’s beagan buana.
Long harvest and little reaping.

Foghar gu Nollaig,
’Us Geamhradh gu Feill–Pàdruig;
Earrach gu Feill–Peadair;
Samhradh gu Feill–Màrtainn.
Autumn to Christmas; Winter to St. Patrick’s Day;
Spring to St. Peter’s Day; Summer to Martinmas.
St. Patrick’s Day, 17th March; St. Peter’s Day, 29th June.

Foghar nam ban bréid-gheal.
The harvest of young widows.
A prophecy of a time when all the men would be slain in battle.

Póghnadh ’us fuigheal.
Enough and to spare.

Póghnaidh salann salach air im ròinneagach.
Dirty salt will do for hairy butter.

Poighidinn nam ban–a tri.
Women’s patience—till you count three.

Fois luchaig ’am balg, ’s fois deargainn ’an osan.
A mouse’s rest in a bag, and a flee’s in a stocking.

Fois radain ’an cònlaich.
A rat’s rest among straw.

Freagraidh a’ bhriogais do’n mhàs.
The trousers will suit the seat.
Al. Is coltach an triubhas ris, &c.
This is a Cowal saying.

<Gai>Fuachd caraid’, ’s fuachd anairt, cha do mhair e fada riamh.<Eng>
The coldness of a friend and of linen never lasted long.

[TD 187]

<Gai>Fuaim mór air bheagan leòin.<Eng>
Great noise and little hurt.
This might apply to platoons of musketry, before arms of precision were known.

<Gai>Fuath giullain, a chiad leannan.<Eng>
A boy’s hate, his first love.

<Gai> Fuighleach an tâilleir shàthaich, lân spàine ’chabhruiich.<Eng>
The leavings of the full tailor, a spoonful of sowens.
Al. <Gai> Fuighleach tâilleir, dà bhuntâta<Eng>—A tailor’s leavings, two potatoes.

<Gai>Fuil bhàn, ’us craicionn slàn.<Eng>
White blood, and whole skin.
Said to children who fancy they have been hurt.

<Gai>Fuilingidh gach beathach a bhi gu math ach mac an duine.<Eng>
Every creature but the son of man can bear well-being.

<Gai>Fuine bean a’ mhuilleir, làidir, tiugh.<Eng>
The miller’s wife’s kneading, strong and thick.

<Gai>Fuirich thus’ ’an sin gus an tig féum ort, mar a thuirt am fear a thiodhlaic a bhean.<Eng>
Stay you there till you are wanted, as the man said who buried his wife.

<Gai>Furain an t-aoidh a thig, greas an t-aoidh ’tha ’falbh.<Eng>
Welcome the coming, speed the parting guest.
Foster the guest that stays, further him that maun gang.—Scot.

[TD 188]

G.

<Gai>Gabh an dileag leis a’ chriomaig.<Eng>
Take the drop with the sop.

<Gai>Gabh an latha math ’fhad ’s a gheabh thu e.<Eng>
Take the good day while you may.

<Gai>Gabh an toil ’an àit’ a’ ghniomh.<Eng>
Take the will for the deed.

<Gai>Gabhadh iad air mo chrodh ’s a’ chladach; an uair a bhios mo bhreacan air mo ghualaina, bidh mo bhuaile-chruidh ann.<Eng>
Let them pelt my cattle on the beach; when my plaid is over my shoulder, it’s my cattle-fold.
Said by one who has nothing to lose, = Omnia mea mecum porto.

<Gai>Gabhaidh biadh na cnò roinn.<Eng>
The kernel of a nut can be divided.
Al. <Gai>Gabhaidh dà leth deanamh air an éitein.<Eng>
Wet fuel will burn, but stones won’t.

Fresh fuel will burn if blown.
All. <gai>Gabhaidh fraoch nobha—New heather will burn.

The big-nosed man takes everything to himself
He that has a muckle nose thinks ilka ane speaks o’t.—Scot.

Every stream runs into the river, and every river into the sea.
All the rivers run into the sea.—ECCL. i. 7.

A shy filly will take corn out of a bonnet.

Every old woman to her own corner.

All songs up to the Song of the Red One;
All lays up to the Lay of the Great Fool;
All tales up to the Tale of Connal;
All fame up to the Fame of Ewen;
All praise up to the praise of Loch Key.
Each of these was regarded as a masterpiece or ne plus ultra in its own kind.—See App. V.

The best loved last.
Lit., the faithful, but the above is the sense in which the phrase is generally used.
All. <gai>Gach roghainn air thoiseach, ’s gach dileas gu deireadh.<eng>
The choice to the front, the faithful to the last.

Let the blame of every ill be on the stranger.
This is clannishness in its worst aspect.

The worst to the last.

Every man in his place.
Lit. ‘His hold’; = ‘All hands upon deck!’.

All wood from the top, but alder from the root.
This is a maxim as to the splitting of wood.

Let the blame of every ill be on the stranger.
This is clannishness in its worst aspect.
Each bird to its nest, with its straw in its beak.

*Gach ian mar a dh’ oileanar.*
Bird is as his bringing up.

*Gach eun mur oiltear e.*—Ir.

*Gabhaidh sinn an rathad mór,*
Olc no math le càch e!
We will take the high road,
Let them take it ill or well!
This is the chorus of a song set to one of the most popular of Highland ‘quick-steps’. It was composed on the occasion of a

body of MacGregors, MacNabs, and Stewarts, commanded by Major Patrick MacGregor of Glengyle, marching boldly through hostile territory to join Montrose at the battle of Inverlochy. See Gael, Vol. I., p. 288, where the words are given, with a translation by the Rev. Mr. Stewart of Nether Lochaber.

*Gad riabhhach Samhraidh, gad geal Geamhraidh.*
Summer with the brindled, Winter with the white.
The bark would be left on the twigs cut in Summer.

*Gàdag ‘s a dà cheann sgaoilte.*
A straw-rope with both ends loose.
Applied to a slovenly woman.

*Gàire mu aobhar a’ ghuil.*
Laughing at the cause of weeping.
Al. *Gal ’us gàire, craos gun nàire*—Weeping, laughing, shameless mouth.

*Gàire Mhàrtainn ris an lite.*
Martin’s smile at his porridge.

*Gàire na caillich ’s a’ chùil dhìonaich.*
The old woman’s smile in the snug corner.

*Gairm Mhic-Mhannain air na gobhair*—’Ma thig, thig, ’s mur tig fan.’
The Manxman’s call to the goats, ‘If you are coming, come, if not, stay’.

*Galar a ’s truime na ’n luaidhe, galar a ’s buaine na ’n darach.*
Disease more heavy than lead, more lasting than oak.
This is a *dubh-fhacal,* or dark saying.

*Galar fada ’s éug ’n a bhun.*
A long disease and death at its root.

*Tinneas fàda, a’s éug ann a bhun.*—Ir. Bod yn hir yn glaf, a marw eisys—To be long sick, and die besides.—Welsh.

*Gall glas.* A sallow Lowlander.
This epithet was formerly applied to the Gael, as is seen in Mr. M’Lean of Kilninian’s verses to Lhuyd of the Archaeologia (1707), where *Sliochd an Gháoidhil ghrais,* is contrasted with the *Dúbhghall,* or black Lowlander. The term *glas* is never applied to the *Sassenach* or Englishman.
The raven's love for the bone.
Al. <gai>Suirdhe air son a bhronn—Pot-wooing.

[TD 191]

Paramours' love, like the sea's flowing tide;
Wayfarers' love, like north wind from rock;
Married men's love, like ship sailing to harbour.

South wind, heat and plenty;
West wind, fish and milk;
North wind, cold and tempest;
East wind, fruit on branches.

This weather-prophecy is said to have specially referred to the direction of the wind on the last night of the year.

Wind before thaw, wind through hole, wind of ship when hoisting sail; the three coldest Fingal ever felt.

Wind before thaw, wind through hole, wind of ship when hoisting sail; the three coldest Fingal ever felt.

[TD 192]

Wind before thaw, wind through hole, wind of ship when hoisting sail; the three coldest Fingal ever felt.

Wind before thaw, wind through hole, wind of ship when hoisting sail; the three coldest Fingal ever felt.
Ny three geavghyn a’ feayrey dennee Fion M’Cooil; geay hennew, as geay huill, as geay fo ny shiauill.—Manx.

“Wind under a sail, and a dog’s nose, are two of the coldest things.”

“The big telling of stories.”

“Whatever your meat and drink be, it’s very clear on your face that your hands and your mouth are good friends. This was said by a master to a servant, who protested that she ate nothing but bread and milk.”

“Whoever is good to me, I’ll be often with him.”

“Whoever is servant to the fox must bear up his tail.”

“He that spareth his rod hateth his son.—PROV. xiii. 24.”

“Whoever is innocent or not, wind won’t make pregnant.”

“Whoever is lost or not, the good swimmer will be drowned.”

“Whatever you see or hear, keep the cat turning.”

“Give the bran to him to whom you gave the meal.”

Sorcery, called the <gai>Taghairm, <eng> was performed by two men in Mull. It was said to be one of the most effectual means of raising the Devil, and getting unlawful wishes gratified. The performance consisted in roasting cats alive, one after another, for four days, without tasting food; which if duly persisted in, summoned a a legion of devils, in the guise of black cats, with their master at their head, all screeching in a way terrifying to any person of ordinary nerves. On the occasion in question, the chief performer was Allan M’Lean, a man of boundless daring, who adopted this means of securing additional power and wealth. His companion, Lachlan M’Lean, was equally greedy, and not less brave, but as the house began to get filled with yelling demons, he cried out to Allan, who made the above answer to him. The performance, as the story goes, was successfully accomplished, and the result was that both men got a great accession of all worldly goods. See L. M’Lean’s History of the Celtic Language, p. 264.
He that is of quickest hand will get the white hound and the deer.

Al. He that is of quickest hand will get the white hound and the deer.

This occurs in "Laoidh an Amadain Mhóir". See Campbell’s W. H. T., Vol. III. 163.

Pity him who has his choice, and chooses the worse.

He that keeps his ship will get a day.

He that keeps his ship will get a day.

He that keeps his ship will get a day.

Whate’er the weather be, sow your seed in March.

Whate’er the weather be, sow your seed in March.

Whoever is to blame, I am the sufferer.

He that doesn’t do his work as quickly as his mate must do it at a less convenient time.

Whoso comes first gets the best of the banquet.

The worst, if strongest, will be uppermost.

First come first served.—Eng., Scot.

Though the egg be small, a bird will come out of it.
Were the wealth of the world yours, weigh it not against your shame.

Hard as is the Factor’s rule, no better is the Minister’s. See "Gléidh do mhaor". The Factor and the Minister are naturally the most influential persons in rural parishes, and the most popular, or unpopular, as the case may be. The above saying is given by Dr. MacLeod in one of his delightful Gaelic Dialogues. A somewhat profane saying, attributed to a satirical person in one of the Western Islands, described the three chief powers as "Fear a —, Ni Math, agus Maighstir —". The Chamberlain, Providence, and the Rev. —.

[TD 195]

Though separation be hard, two never met but had to part.

Though there be delay, the evil-doer is not forgotten. Al. "Ge fada ré fear an uilc, cha teid e gun dioghailt bho Dhia"—Though the time of the wicked be long, he won’t go unpunished of God. Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished.—PROV. xi. 21.

"The mills of the gods grind late, but grind fine."—Gr.

Though near be a man’s coat, nearer is his shirt. Al. "Ma ’s fogus damh mo chòta, is foisge na sin mo lèine."—Ir. Near’s my sark, but nearer’s my skin.—Scot. Near is my kirtle, but nearer is my smock.—Eng. Het hemd is nader dan de rok.—Dutch. Più mi tocca la camicia che la gonnella.—Ital.

Though bad the bird, the chicken is worse. Al. "Ge dona mise, ’s miosa Iain òg"—Bad though I be, young John is worse.

Though black his head, his heart is fair.

Black as is the raven, he thinks his chicken fair. Every crow thinks his ain bird whitest.—Scot.

Black is the berry but sweet; black is my lassie but bonnie. Al. "Ge geal an sneachd, is fuar e"—Though white the snow, ’tis cold.

Though black the carpenter, white are his chips. Al. "Ge dubh an dearcaig, ’s milis i; ge dubh mo chaileag, ’s bòidheach i." Black is the berry but sweet; black is my lassie but bonnie. Al. "Ge geal an sneachd, is fuar e"—Though white the snow, ’tis cold.

Though black the carpenter, white are his chips. Al. "Ge h-olc an saor, is math a shliseag." Più mi tocca la camicia che la gonnella.—Ital.
The longest chant has an end.

Though near the stone be to the ground, closer is the help of Coivi. This saying is a very old one. See "Cho teoma ri Coibhi".

Though to us be near, upon us is nearer.

Though cold be the shore, the corrie is warm.

Though gray the grass it will grow.

Bad as is the poor bothie, worst is without bad or good.

This appears to be a protest against certain modes of speech common in some parts of the Highlands, but regarded in other parts as affected.

Plague of my heart on thee, bothie! 'Tis thou, that art always in confusion; But one nice little virtue there's in thee, Late or early that I come, It's in thee I can easiest stretch my legs!

Though bad be the servant's servant, worse is the substitute's servant.

This appears to be a protest against certain modes of speech common in some parts of the Highlands, but regarded in other parts as affected.

Whistling may be good music, but a little of it will do for us.

Hunting is a good help, but a bad living.

Whistling may be good music, but a little of it will do for us.

Good though the one-eyed servant be, he cannot attend here and there. Al. "Ge beadaidh," 'Ge èasgaidh'—'cha fhreagair e.' 'Ge math an cù cam.'

Sweet as is the honey, who would lick it off the brier?
Ma ’s milis a mhil, na ligh-sa de ’n dreàsoig i.—Ir.

Dear bought is the honey that’s licked from the thorn.—Eng.

Trop achète le miel qui le lèche sur les épines.—Fr.
Theurer Honig den man auf Dornen muss lecken.—Germ.

Hij koopt den honig wel duur, die ze van de doornen moet lekken.—Dutch.

Ge milis am fìon, tha e searbh ri dhìol.—Ir.

Though sweet the wine, ’tis bitter to pay.

Al. Ge milis ri ’òl, is goirt ri pháigheadh e.
Is milis fìon, is searbh a ioc.—Ir.

Millish dy ghoaill, ach sharroo dy eek.—Manx.

Ge mór árdan na h-easaich, cha tig i seach an luath.—Eng.

Great as is the gruel’s rage, it won’t go beyond the ashes.

Al. Ge mór aintheas na poite bige, cha tig e, &c.

Though fist be near, elbow is nearer.

Snessey yn uillin na yn doarn.—Manx.

Nesoc’h eo ilin evit dorn.—Breton.

Nes penelin nag arddwrn.—Welsh.

Gealach bhuidhe na Feill-Mhìcheil.—Eng.
The yellow moon of Michaelmas.
The Harvest moon.

Al. Gealach an abuchaidh—The ripening moon.

Gealladh bog socharach ’ni duine air sgàth nàire; gealladh gun a choimhgealladh ’s miosa sid na diùltadh.—Eng.
The soft yielding promise, made for shame’s sake; promise unfulfilled, worse than refusal.

[TD 198]

Gealladh math ’us droch pháigheadh.—Eng.

Good promise and bad payment.

Geallaidh am fear féumach an ni bréugach nach faigh; saoilidh am fear sanntach, gach ni a gheall gu’m faigh.—Eng.
The needy man will promise what he cannot give; the greedy man will hope to get everything that’s promised.

Geallar faoigh do cheann-cinnidh, ’s leigear dha fhéin tighin g’ a shireadh.—Eng.

A gift will be promised to the chief, and it will be left to him to come for it.

Al. Geallar faoigh do Mhac-Griogair, ’s biodh eadar e fhéin ’s a togail.—Eng.

A gift will be promised to MacGregor, and the lifting will be left to him.

The old practice of taking presents of corn, cattle, &c., was not confined to the poor. Chiefs expected them on certain occasions as well
as humbler people: they were, in fact, not so much gifts as taxes. See<br>\(<gai>\)\('Cha bhi rogha'.\)

Geamhradh reòdhtanach, Earrach ceòthanach, Samhradh breac-riabhach, \('us\)
Foghar geal grianach, cha d'fhàg gorta riamh \('an Alba.<eng>\)
Frosty Winter, misty Spring, checquered Summer, and sunny Autumn, never
left dearth in Scotland.
Arragh chayeeagh, Sourey onyragh (cloudy),
Fouyr ghriangh, as Geurey rioeeagh.—Manx.

\(<gai>\)Gean a’ bhodaich, as a bhroinn.<eng>
The churl’s suavity, from off the stomach.

\(<gai>\)Ged a bhiodh bean an tighe lachdunn,—na’m biodh i miseach mu’n
bhiadh!<eng>
Were the housewife ever so plain—if she were only fair with the food!

\(<gai>\)Ged a bhiodh do phoca làn, bu mhiann leat màm ’chuir air a
mhuin.<eng>
Were your bag full, you would wish to heap it over.

\(<gai>\)Ged a chual’ iad an ceòl, cha do thuig iad am port.<eng>
They heard the music, but understood not the tune.

\(<gai>\)Ged ’bheir thu ’n t-anam as, cha toir thu an aghaidh dhuineil
as.<eng>
You may take the life from him, but not the manly look from him.

[TD 199]

\(<gai>\)Ged ’bhiodh na tri gill ’s an aon mhaide.<eng>
If I had engagements three, I would fly to succour thee.
Lit. 'Were there three wagers on one stick,' in allusion to the old style
of keeping a score, by those who couldn’t write.

\(<gai>\)Ged ’bhrist thu ’n cnàimh, cha d’ dheoghail thu ’n smior.<eng>
Though you broke the bone, you didn’t suck the marrow.

\(<gai>\)Ged ’chaochail e ’innis, cha do chaochail e ’àbhaist.<eng>
He changed his haunt, but not his habit.
Cœlum non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt.—Hor.

\(<gai>\)Ged ’chitheadh tu do mhàthair a’ dol cearr, dh’ innseadh tu e.<eng>
If you saw your mother going wrong, you would tell it.
He was scant of news who told that his father was hanged.—Eng., Scot.

\(<gai>\)Ged ’chluinn thu sgéul gun dreach na h-aithris e.<eng>
If you hear a hueless tale, don’t repeat it.

\(<gai>\)Ged ’chuirinn falt mo chinn fo ’chasan.<eng>
Though I should lay the hair of my head under his feet.

\(<gai>\)Ged éignichear an sean-fhacal, cha bhréugaichear e.<eng>
Though the old saying be strained, it cannot be belied.
Al. \(<gai>\)Ged shàruichear.<eng> See \(<gai>\)‘An sean-fhacal’.<eng>
Plant gwirionedd yw hen diarhebion—Old proverbs are children of truth.—
Welsh.

\(<gai>\)Ged imich thu an cruinne, cha ’n fhaigh thu duine gun choire.<eng>
You may go round the world, but you’ll not meet a man without fault.
Escaped from the spit, but not from the caldron.

The man is the farmer, but the horse is the labourer.

Said when an old house is tenanted by new people, a common thing in the Highlands.

Though Barra be far out, it can be reached. Said by Mac Iain Ghearr, one of the Mac Ians of Ardnamurchan, to M’Neill of Barra, who had been very hard on him at a Court of Justice.

The old woman is the better of being warmed, but not of being burned. This has been supposed to refer to the atrocious practice of burning women for witchcraft, which was the statutory punishment in this country from 1563 to 1736.

Though the cock be humble, he bends his head.

Though you knock me down, there’s not a man in Ness but can knock you down. Said by one of two pigmies, belonging to the parish of Ness in Lewis, to the other.

Should never a cow be calved in Ireland.

Though I won’t be talking, I’ll be shy and mindful. See ‘Bi ’d’ thosd’.

Were there but two half-pence in the purse, they’ll come together. Al. ‘da thurn-odhar’—two mites. ‘Turn-odhar’ is uncommon, but is found in MacAlpine’s Dictionary. Pfennig ist Pfennigs Bruder.—Germ.

If you had but an egg, I should get but the shell.

Were there but two half-pence in the purse, they’ll come together. Al. ‘da thurn-odhar’—two mites. ‘Turn-odhar’ is uncommon, but is found in MacAlpine’s Dictionary. Pfennig ist Pfennigs Bruder.—Germ.
Were nobody by but a king and his man, one might miss his own.

The clothes are not the man, but he’s no man without them.

For the apparel oft proclaims the man.—Hamlet I, iii.

Society is founded upon Cloth.—Sartor Resartus.

Lives the man that can figure a naked Duke of Windlestraw, addressing a naked House of Lords?—Id.

Though it be not up and down, it is back and forward.

Though there be no fat, there is blood.

Though Cromarty should go with the tide.

Though without peats, he won’t want fire.

Though poor, I’m not a parasite.

Though to-day a farm-dog, I was once a moor-dog.

Though I be young, I have old ears.

Though you were called a dog, you would be the very marrow of a hound.

If you tilled a country side, you would spend its produce.

Though you gave him a taunt, but never a morsel.

The death-bandage on thee!

A wedge of itself splits the oak.

A cow’s low on known ground.

The soursness of small beer.

You gave him a taunt, but never a morsel.
Mac Phie would take it for warning. A Mull saying. Mac Phie, chief of Colonsay, went to a feast at Duart Castle, Mull, where his hospitable friend MacLean intended to kill him. The door-keeper, being of friendly mind, asked him if he had come down Glen Connal? He said he had. “S am faca tu m’ eich-sa, ’s d’ eich fhéin?” Did you see my horses and your own there? Mac Phie took the hint, and escaped with all speed.

We would take the big stacks, and the little ones would do. Contented wi’ little, and canty wi’ mair.—Burns.

Need will find means of moving. Need makes the naked man run.—Eng., Scot.

A wicked woman will get her wish, though her soul get no mercy.

A silly woman will get the warp withoid paying, but won’t get the woof.

The liberal will get as he spends, but the niggard will get mere wretchedness.

The word “bronn” = give, distribute, is now obsolete in vernacular Gaelic, but occurs in Ossianic ballads.

A blockhead can find more fault than a wise man can mend.

Un matto sa più domandare, che sette savi respondere.—Ital.

A fool may ask more questions in an hour than a wise man can answer in seven years.—Eng.

The scraping hen will get something, but the crouching hen will get nothing.

Helper will get loan of strength.

Patience will get help, and filthy fellows get wives.
Patience and perséverance
Got a wife for his Reverence.—Ir.

Kings will find armies, and the world men.

Peace will get peace, but heat will get contention.

You’ll get it for a song.

You’ll find him where you leave him.

You’ll get it when you find the cuckoo’s nest.

You would find the forest-crows.

Said to persons who boast of doing impracticable things.

[TD 204]

A dear-wife may be got, but a love-wife is rare.

This is a nice distinction. <gai>’Mo ghaol’<eng> is a warmer expression than <gai>’mo chagar’.

The end of a tale is got for nothing.

A spotted calf will be found in every cowherd’s house on St. Patrick’s day in Spring.

Rowing could be got from the oar without breaking it.

He was caught in his own net.

The thief stole it from the pilferer.

Wet-foot lad.

A servant that carried his master across streams, fetched water, and made himself generally useful.

A growing boy will eat as fast as a quern can grind.

A servant without food or wages won’t be long without a master.

A boy-servant of all work without food or wages.—Arab.
Glac am mèirleach mu’n glac am mèirleach thu.<eng>
Catch the thief before the thief catch you.
Take the thief before he take thee.–Arab.

Glac thusa foighidinn, ’s glacaídh tu iasg.<eng>
Get you patience, and you’ll get fish.

Glanadh mosaig air a mòráir-chéile.<eng>
The slattern’s cleaning of her mother-in-law.

Glas air an tigh an deigh na gadachd.<eng>
Locking the house after the theft.
Locking the stable door when the steed is stolen.–Eng.

[Glas-labhraidh air nighinn, gun fhios, teang’ an abhra ‘dh ‘iomraicheas.<eng>
When a maid is tongue-tied, her eyelids tell a tale.
A thief sae pawkie is my Jean,
To steal a blink, by a’ unseen;
But gleg as light are lover’s een,
When kind love is in the ee.–Burns.

Gleac nam fear fanna.<eng> The wrestling of faint men.

Gléidh do mhaor ‘s do mhinisbear, ‘s cha’n eagal dut.<eng>
Keep your bailiff and your minister, and there s no fear of you.

Gleidheadh a’ chlamhain air na cearcan.<eng>
The kite’s guarding of the hens.
See <gai>’B’e sin faire’.

Gleidheadh an t-sionnaich air na caoraich.<eng>
The fox’s keeping of the sheep.

Gleidhear cuirm an déigh Càisge.<eng>
A feast will be kept after Easter.

Gleidh airc inneachd, ged nach gléidh i oighreachd.<eng>
Need will make a shift, though it keep not an inheritance.

Gleidh dhcnáimh feóil, fhad ’s is beò smior.<eng>
Bone will keep flesh, while marrow lives.
Al. <gai>Gheabh feóil cnáimh, ’s gheabh cnáimh feóil–Flesh will get bone, and bone flesh.

Gleidh dh sùil seilbh.<eng> Eye keeps property.
The eye of the master does more than both his hands.–Eng.

Glèus ùr air seana mhaide.<eng> A new lock to an old stock.

Glóir fhuar bharr uachdar goile.<eng>
Cold talk from stomach surface.

Glóir mhór ’an colainn bhig.<eng> Great talk in small body.
Al. <gai>Glaodh móir à colainn bhig.

Glóir nan càirdean a ’s milse na ’mhil.<eng>
The praise of friends is sweeter than honey.
Glòir mhilis a mheallas an t-amadan.
Sweet words beguile fools.
Fair words make fools fain.—Eng.
Fair hechts (promises) will mak’ fulis fain.—The Cherrie and the Slae.
Fagre Ord fryde en Daare.—Dan.

Gnè firionn falbh.
The male’s nature is to move.
The man to go abroad, the woman to stay at home.

Gnothach duine gun chéill, ’dol gu féill gun airgiod.
A fool’s errand, going to market without money.

Gnothaichean móra fo thuinn.
Great things under the waves.
Said of those who boast of things they neither have nor can have.

Gob a’ chalmain-chàthaidh, bidh tu slàn mu’m pòs thu.
Beak of the moulding dove, you’ll be well before you marry.
The word ‘calmain-càthaidh’ is not in any of the dictionaries, except A. M’Donald’s Vocabulary, where it is rendered ‘Hoop’.
The saying is applied to sick children.

Goirteas a chinn fhéin a dh’ fhairicheas a h-uile fear.
Every man feels his own headache.
‘S i a chneadh fèin is luaithe mhothiugheas gach duine—A man feels his own hurt soonest.—Ir.

Gramachadh bàrr òrdaig.
Holding by a thumb-top.

Greadan feasgair, ’s cead dol dachaidh.
Evening spurt, and leave to go home.

Greim cruaidh aig curaidh.
A champion’s hard grip.

Greim cúbair.
A cooper’s grip.
A firm hold.

Greim fad’ an tàilleir leisg.
The lazy tailor’s long stitch.
Snaithe fada an taillear fhallsa.—Ir.
Costurera mala, la hebra de a braza—Bad seamstress’ thread, a fathom long.—Span.

Greis mu seach, an t-each air muin a’ mharcaiche.
Time about, the horse on the back of the rider.

Gu dòmhail doimh, mar a bhios màthair fhir-an-tighe, ’an solus na cloinne, no ’n rathad nan ian.
Crowding, cumbersome, like the goodman’s mother, in the children’s light, or in the way of the fowls.

Gu dona dubh, mar a bha cas Aoidh.
Bad and black, as Hugh’s foot was.
Hugh was on a visit to the laird of Coll, and got his foot accidentally wounded. He was so well taken care of that he was in no hurry to get out of hospital, and continued to describe the state of his foot as ‘bad and black’.
Bad within, and badly clad.

[TD 207]

That he would yet be the end of him.
This was one of the sayings attributed to James Stewart of Acharn, ‘Séumas a’ Ghlinne,’ on the strength of which, chiefly, he was most iniquitously executed in 1752 for the murder of Colin Campbell of Glenure. Stewart’s brother had forfeited his lands of Ardsheil for taking part in the Rebellion of 1745, and Campbell, judicial factor on the estate, was proceeding to eject a number of tenants, when he was shot dead. Stewart was not accused of having committed the deed, but of having instigated Allan Breac, a kinsman of his. The presiding judge was the Duke of Argyll, Lord Justice-General, and eleven of the jury were Campbells.

Bad dregs to you!

Long may you live, and smoke rise from your roof!

This is a very favourite and kindly saying.

Perish the prophet, ere the prophecy come true!

The great grizzled one catch thee!
One of the epithets applied to the Devil.

May it be late to thee!

Ill befall thee!

May you enjoy your news!

Said to a person who is to be congratulated.

Blowing cold coals.

‘Coo, coo,’ says the cuckoo, on yellow May-day. The cuckoo is seldom heard so early now.

Without ceasing of the quern, and not a grain at the end of the day. Labour like that of the Danaids,—the fruit of the grinding being carried away by a Fairy as fast as it was made.

Poverty take thee!

Without esteem or honour, like Magnus.
This refers to a Scandinavian king, whom Fingal overcame and slew.—See Dr. Smith’s Sean Dàna, p. 113, and Campbell’s Leabhar na Feinne, pp. 71, &c.

Gonnaiche mór gun srad fhùdair.<eng>
A great gunner without a grain of powder.

Gus am bi Mac-Cailein na ’rìgh, bidh I mar ’bhà.<eng>
Till Argyll be a King, Iona will be as she was.
This saying was familiar in Kingairloch more than 60 years ago to the person from whom it was got. The repair of the ruins of Iona by the Duke of Argyll, soon after the marriage of the Marquis of Lorne to the Princess Louise, was noted by some old people in connection with this saying.
An older saying, attributed to St. Columba, is—

An I mo chridhe, I mo ghràidh,
In dearest Iona, the isle of my love,
Ach mu ’n tig an saoghal gu crìch,
But ere ever the world shall come to an end,
Bithidh I mar a bha.<eng>
As once was Iona, Iona shall be.

Gus am faigh thu deoch a’s fhеarr na ’m fion, cha ’n fhaigh thu biadh a’s fhеarr na ’n fheòil.<eng>
Till you find better drink than wine, you’ll find no better food than flesh.
The Binny fish said, ‘If you can find a better fish, don’t eat me’.—Arab.

Gus an gabh a’ mhuir teine, cha ‘n fhaigh duine clann duine eile.<eng>
Till the sea takes fire, you can’t be the sire of another man’s children.

Gus an tròighir a’ mhuir le cliabh, cha bhi fear fial falamh.<eng>
Till the sea is drained with a creel, the generous man won’t want.
A good sentiment, but unfortunately not a fact.

Guth na cubhaig ’am bial na cathaig, ’s Guth na faoileig ’am bial na sgaireig.<eng>
The cuckoo’s voice in the jackdaw’s mouth, and the sea-gull’s in the young scart’s.

I.

I nam ban bòidheach.<eng> Iona of pretty women.

Iallan fad’ á leathair chàich.<eng>
Long thongs of other men’s leather.
Iarr gach nì air Camaronach, ach na iarr im air.<eng>
Ask anything of a Cameron but butter.
See <gai>‘Camaronaich’.

Iarraidh Mhic Chrùislig air na h-eich.<eng>
Mac Cruslick’s search for the horses.
M.’s master sent him to search for his horses. ‘Where shall I look for them?’ said M. ‘Look for them wherever they are or are not likely to be,’ said his master. Presently M. was seen on the roof of the house scraping away with a sickle. On being asked what he was about, he replied that he was searching for the horses where they were not likely to be.—Campbell’s W. H. Tales, II. 309.

<i>IASG</i> a’ chaibe gun a chur ‘s an talamh.<eng>
The loan of the spade without using it.

<i>IASG</i> caillich gun diasan, iasad a ‘s fhas’ fhaotainn.<eng>
An old wife’s loan without ears of corn, the easiest loan to get.
I.e., loan from one who has nothing to give.

<i>IASG</i> muinntir Bharbhais.<eng>
The Barvas folk’s fishing.
Barvas is a parish in Lewis. It was alleged of the natives that they delayed going to fish till they heard of their neighbours’ having got fish. The coast of Barvas strictly so called is peculiarly unsuited for boating, which might well excuse the natives for being slow to go to sea. Ness, on the other hand, which is part of the ‘civil’ parish of B. has a port, and is inhabited by a very dauntless fishing population.

[TD 210]

<i>IASG</i> no sithionn, âth no muileann.<eng>
Fish or venison, kiln or mill.

<i>IASG</i> amadain, corr bheothach mór.<eng>
A fool’s fishing, an occasional big fish.
The meaning is, that only fools despise littles.

<i>IASG</i> na curra.<eng>
The crane’s fishing.
A model of patience.

<i>IM</i> ri im cha bhiadh ‘s cha ’n annlann e.<eng>
Butter to butter is neither food nor kitchen.

<i>IM</i> Shathurna mu thuath,
Imrich Luain mu dheas;
Ged nach biodh agam ach an t-uan,
’S ann Diluain a dh’fhalbhainn leis.<eng>
Saturday’s flitting by north, Monday’s flitting by south; had I but a lamb to move, ’tis on Monday I would go.
In other words, Saturday is an unlucky day for removing, Monday a lucky day. See <gai>‘Deiseal’.

Imridh briag gobhal.<eng>
A lie needs a prop.
See <gai>‘Cha sheas a bhriag’.

Imridh fear nam briag cuimhne mhath a bhi aige.<eng>
Liars should have good memories.—Eng., Scot.
Be of good memory, if you become a liar.—Arab.
Mendacem memorem esse oportet.—Quintil.
Il bugiardo deve aver buona memoria.—Ital.
Lügner muss ein gut Gedächtniss haben.—Germ.
Een leugenaar moet een goede memorie hebben.—Dutch.

Innleachd Shasunn agus neart Alba.<eng>
England’s art and Scotland’s force.
The truth of this saying still holds good.

Innsidh a’ chruinneag, có ’dh’ith a’ chriormag.<eng>
The tidy lass will tell who ate the tid-bit.

Innsidh na geòidh a ’s Fhoghar e.<eng>
The geese will tell it in Autumn.

Innsidh ùine ‘h-uile rud.<eng> Time tells everything.
Poillsightear gach nídh re h-aimsir.<eng>—Ir.
Tempus omnia revelat. Veritas temporis filia.—Lat.

Iomairt ‘coma leam’. <eng> The ‘I don’t care’ play.

Iongantas muinntir Mhuc-Càirn.<eng>
The queerness of the Muckairn people.
M. is a parish in Argyllshire, the inhabitants of which somehow

have the reputation of being uncommonly shy, unwilling to partake even of
the simplest hospitality from strangers.

Foul water will wash hands.

Tonnsaich do d’ sheanmhair brochan a dheanamh.<eng>
Teach your granny to make gruel.
Al. <gai>‘lit’ ól’<eng>—to sup porridge.
Seòl do shean-mhathair lachanaidh a bhleaghan<eng> (to milk ducks).—Ir.
Teach your grandam to suck eggs—to spin—to grope her duck—to sup sour
milk.—Eng.
Learn yir gudewife to mak milk kail.—Scot.
Dysgu gradd i hen farch—To teach a pace to an old horse.—Welsh.
‘Gradd’ is possibly a ‘family’ edition of what in a similar Gaelic saying
is ‘bram’.

Is adhaiseach cuid an fhir nach toir an dorus air.<eng>
His share is slow who doesn’t take to the door.
The best interpretation of this is, that he who doesn’t go out for his
living will be ill off.
N.B.—In most of the sayings commencing here with ‘Is,’ the ‘I’ is in
pronunciation entirely omitted. ’S ann, ’S e, and ’S fearr, are the
vernacular phrases, and not ‘Is ann,’ Is e,’ &c.

Is aimhleasach gach nochd.<eng>
Nakedness is hurtful.
This is a very Celtic sentiment. The chief idea conveyed is, that the
destitute are liable to injury.

Is àirde ’n géum na ’m bleoghann.<eng>
The low is greater than the milking.
See <gai>‘A ’bhó’.
Is àirde ceann na gualainn.<eng>
Head is higher than shoulder.
Uwch pen na dwy ysgwydd.—Welsh.

A farmer on his feet is taller than a gentleman on his knees.
Al. <gai>Is fhearr—<eng>—is better.
This is a very suggestive saying.—See <gai>'Is treasa tuath'.

Is aithne do’n chú a choire fhéin.<eng>
A dog knows his own fault.
Al. <gai>Tuigidh cù a chionta.

[TD 212]
Is amaideach a bhi ‘cur a mach airgid a cheannach aightreachais.<eng>
'Tis folly to spend money in buying repentance.

Is anfhann a thig, ‘s làidir a théid.<eng>
Weak they come, and strong depart.
Al. <gai>Is lag na thig.<eng> This refers to infants.

Is ann a bhios a’ chois mar a chumar i.<eng>
The right will be as it’s kept.
Al. <gai>Bidh a chois mar a chumar i, ’s bidh an t-suiridhe mar a nitear i<eng>—The right, &c., and the wooing will be according as it’s done.
Possession is nine points of the law.—Eng.
See <gai>'Am fear aig am beil'.

Is ann a cheart-eigin ’s a dh-aindeoin, a dh’aitheachdneas bean a ciad leanabh; mar a thuirt Iain Mac-Mhurchaidh-Mhic-Ailein.<eng>
It’s barely and in spite of everything, that a woman knows her first child, as John, son of Murdoch, son of Allan, said.

Is ann a dh fhasas an sìol mar a chuirear e.<eng>
The seed grows as it’s sown.

Is ann a tha ’n càirdeas mar a chumar e.<eng>
Friendship is as it’s kept.
A very true and good sentiment.

Is ann a tha ’n sgoileam air an sgoileir.<eng>
It’s the scholar that’s the talker.

Is ann agad ’tha ’bhathais!<eng> What a front you have!
Said to impudent people.

Is ann aig duine fhéin is fhearr a tha fios c’àiite am beil a bhòg ’g a ghoirteachadh.<eng>
Every man knows best where his shoe hurts him.
The wearer best knows where the shoe wrings him.—Eng.
Every man kens best where his ain shoe binds him.—Scot.
Chacun sent le mieux où le soulier le blesse.—Fr.
Ognuno sa dove la scarpa lo stringe.—Ital.
Cada uno sabe donde le aprieta el zapato.—Span.
Jeder weiss es am Besten, wo ihn der Schuh drückt.—Germ.
The first use of this saying is attributed by Plutarch to Æmilius Paulus, who being remonstrated with for divorcing his wife, an honourable and
irreproachable matron, pointed to one of his shoes, and asked his friends 
‘what they thought of it?’ They

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all thought it a handsome, well-fitting shoe. ‘But none of you knows,’ he said, ‘where it pinches me.’ This is now called ‘incompatibility’.

<gai>Is ann aige-san a’s mò 'their a’s lugha 'tha ri 'ràdh.<eng>He that says most has least to tell. Words are like leaves, and where they most abound, Much fruit of sense beneath is rarely found.

<gai>Is ann air a’ bheagan a dh’aithnichear am mónra.<eng>From the little the much is known.

<gai>Is ann air a dh’ éirich a’ ghrían!<eng>It is on him that the sun hath risen!

<gai>Is ann air a’ mhuic reamhair a theid an t-im.<eng>It’s on the fat pig the butter goes. This applies metaphorically to some living animals. See <gai>‘Am fear aig am bi im’. Sin tòn na muice meithe do ghrèisiughadh.<eng>—Ir. Al puerco gordo untarle el rabo.—Span.

<gai>Is ann air an tràghadh a rugadh e.<eng>He was born when the tide was ebbing. Unlucky man, or born out of date.

<gai>Is ann air a shon fhéin a ni ’n cat an crònain.<eng>It’s for itself the cat croons.
<gai>Is mur gheall air fein a ghnidheas a cat crònain.<eng>—Ir. E ŵyr y gath pa farf a lyf—Cat knows what beard he licks.—Welsh. The cat is a thoroughly selfish animal, and there are human beings, aimed at in this proverb, of the same nice, soft, selfish sort.

<gai>Is ann air gnús a bheirear breith.<eng>It is by the face we judge. Vultus est index animi.—Lat. In the forehead and the eye, The lecture of the mind doth lie.—Eng.

<gai>Is ann air deireadh an latha ’s feàrr na Dònullaich.<eng>The MacDonalds are best at the end of the day. This is a very complimentary saying. See <gai>‘Is ann feasgar’.

Is ann an àm a chruadail a dh’ aithnichear na càirdean.<eng>When fortune frowns then friends are known.

<gai>Is ann ’an ceann bliadhna a dh’ innseas iasgair a thuiteamas.<eng>It’s at the year’s end the fisher can tell his luck. Al. <gai>‘amhaltas’—his trouble. <gai>Is a g-cionn na bliadhna innsidheas iasgaire a thàbhachd.<eng>—Ir.

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<gai>Is ann an sin a thathas ‘g a chaithcheamh, eadar an t-srathair ‘s am plàta.<eng>So is it worn, ’twixt the pack-saddle and the straw-cloth.
Said of people assuming airs beyond their position.

"Tis when food is scarcest it should be divided.

From the little comes the much.
Many littles mak a muckle.—Scot.
The proverbe saith that many a smale makith a grete.—Chaucer.

From the little comes the much.

—Scot.
The proverbe saith that many a smale makith a grete.—Chaucer.

It's to himself it will be told.
It's his own affair.

Till two days before he die, man should not speak his weightiest word.
There is much wisdom in this saying.

The tartan is all of one stuff.

The tools are part of the trade.

The tools are half the trade.—Ir.

The haft belongs to the axe.

One should, salute (or say grace) with a clean hand.
See "Cuir an tuagh".

Best to bend while it is a twig.—Eng.
Piega l'albero quando è giovane.—Ital.
Den Baum muss man biegen, weil er jung ist.—Germ.

It is near your mouth you would praise him.

It is near his end you would praise him.

It's at evening the men are known.

When the twig is tender it is easiest bent.

Am meangan nach sniomh thu,
Cha spion thu 'n a chraoiobh e.—Dug. Buchanan.

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By turns the bellows are blown.

<gai>Is ann mu seach a thogar an dùn.<eng>
It is by degrees the fort is built.
Al. <gai>"S ann uidh air uidh a thogar na caisteil.<eng>
Rome was not built in a day.—Ital., Fr., Germ., Eng.

<gai>Is ann mar a bhios neach e fhéin a dh’ fhidireas e ‘choimhearsnach.<eng>
As a man is himself he thinks of his neighbour.

<gai>Is ann oidhche roimh a bhàs bu chòir do dhuine athais a thilgeadh.<eng>
A man should not vent his reproach till the night before his death.
Macintosh’s gloss on this is, ‘make a satire or proverb’.

<gai>Is ann oidhche Shamhna ’chnagadh tu cnò.<eng>
On Halloween you would crack a nut.
One of the favourite Halloween pastimes was burning of nuts.

<gai>Is ann ort a chaidh uisge nan uibhean.<eng>
You had the egg-water spilt on you.
Macintosh says, ‘water in which eggs are boiled is reckoned destructive to the constitution,’ and that ‘this proverb is applied to those that are seized with a fit of illness’.

<gai>Is ann ort a thàinig an ceal.<eng>
What a stupor has come over thee.

<gai>Is ann romhad a dh’ éirich an naosg.<eng>
It’s before you the snipe rose.
This was reckoned a good omen.

<gai>Is aobhach duine ’an taice ri ’chuid.<eng>
A man is cheerful near his own.

<gai>Is aotrom air do dhruim an t-iomradh.<eng>
The rowing is light on your back.

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<gai>Is aotrom gach saoghalach sona.<eng>
Light is the lucky long-liver.

<gai>Is àrd ceann an fhéidh ‘s a’ chreachann.<eng>
High is the stag’s head on the mountain crags.

<gai>Is bàighceil duine ris an anam.<eng>
A man is tender of his life.
All that a man hath will he give for his life.—JOB. ii. 4.
Life is sweet.—Eng.
In one of the West Highland Tales (Campbell, II. 355), Brian, son of the King of Greece, is asked by a Giant, whether he would rather lose his head, or go to steal the White Sword of Light in the realm of Big Women. <gai>"S bàighceil duine ri ’bheatha<eng>—kind is a man to his life,’ said Brian, and chose the latter alternative.

<gai>Is balbh gach sian ach a’ ghaoth.<eng>
Dumb is all weather but the wind.
See <gai>‘An uair a laidheas’.
Is beadarrach an ni an onoir.<eng>
Honour is a tender thing.
This is very Celtic. ‘Take my honour, take my life.’

Little would a groat do for him who drinks a crown.
This probably refers to a soldier’s pay, which was 4d. a day at no very
ancient date.

Little we complain, though we suffer much.
This saying is given by Macintosh without any note. Whenever it may have
originated, it expressed with native gentleness a very sad truth in
reference to a considerable part of our Highland population. It was true
a century ago, and it is true still.

Your crying and laughing are not far removed.

Small is the alms that is not better than a refusal.
—Ir.

It’s a faint rumour that two won’t hear.

It’s a little excuse that brings the old woman to the churchyard. 
Excuse = cause, and churchyard = death.
Al. <gai>Is faoin an gnothach.<eng> It’s a slight thing.

It’s a small thing that brings a man to the churchyard, when his
sweetheart is there.

It’s no wonder to see a fool courting an idiot.

The rainy day’s share of it is small.
Meaning that little has been saved.

It’s a little thing that doesn’t hinder in Autumn.

The household man knows little of the seaman’s hardship.

There is little and much betwixt right and wrong.
—Ir. ‘S mooar ta eddyr y chair as yn aggair.—Manx.

Eadar eucoir agus cóir,
Cha ‘n eòl domh âite seasaimh,
Gun a chos air aon diubh dhò.—Rob Dónn.
I like not what I find not sweet.

I like not the old man’s backward step.
Al. I like not what I find not sweet.

Said by young Ronald MacDonell of Strontian, at the battle of Kin-Loch-Lochy, ‘Blàr nan Léine’ (1544), on seeing his father give way after receiving a wound in the head from ‘Raonull Gallda’. The remark was suggested by that of his father, on seeing his son for the first time for several years, after having been deserted by him in the hour of need.

Young Ronald is said to have added to the above remark, ‘Seo mar bu choir a bhi, am mac a dhol ‘an ionad an athar—This is as it ought to be—the son in the place of the father’; and rushed upon the enemy, whom he overcame. There is something wildly noble, though unpleasant in this. See Cuairtear, Dec. 1841, pp. 282-3.

Some grave and reverend Bank Directors have illustrated this shockingly in modern times.

The little mouse is mistress in her own house.

A man may survive distress, but not disgrace.
Al. A man may survive distress, but not disgrace.

The Ultra version is identical with the latter. The sentiment is very Celtic and honourable, but common to all the higher races. ‘Death before dishonour’ has been the motto of all heroes and martyrs of every nation.

El hombre sin honra peor es que un muerto.—Span.

One can live on little, but not on nothing.
A good motto for Parochial Boards.

The birds live, though not all hawks.
A fine quiet suggestion for statesmen and conquerors.

A man may live though not full.
This is nowhere more illustrated than in the Highlands; what phrenologists call ‘Alimentiveness’ is at a very low figure there.

The meals are frequent.
This saying must have originated with a very abstemious and probably miserly person.
'Tis the less for that, the less for that, as the wren said, when he sipped a bill-full out of the sea.

Sweet sings each bird in his own grove.

Al. 'S binn guth an eòin far am beirear e.—Sweet is a bird’s voice where he was born.

Sweet is the talk of the wealthy man, 
Like honey is his prattling;
Harsh is the right from the poor man’s mouth, 
Far is his talk from wisdom.

Sweet is the talk of the wealthy man, 
Like honey is his prattling;
Harsh is the right from the poor man’s mouth, 
Far is his talk from wisdom.

Blood is warm, though it be but in a dog’s skin.

Cat’s blood is warm in their own skin.

Warm is the mother’s breath. 
The mither’s breath is aye sweet.—Scot.
A beautiful saying.

Warm is the pool in the shoe. 
Said to youngsters complaining of leaky shoes.

He’s a poor man who won’t get his fill in Autumn.

It’s a poor marriage that is not better than hard service. 
This seems a foolish sentiment, but the ‘dubh-chosnadh,’ literally ‘black-service’ refers to out-door work, seldom desirable for women.

Truly poor is the naked needy.

It’s a poor thing that’s not worth asking.
Pretty is the mouse in the corn-plot.
This sentiment is worthy of Robert Burns.

Is bràthair do’n amadan an t-amhlair.
The rude jester is brother to the fool.

Is bràthair do’n chadal ceann ri lår.
Head laid down is brother to sleep.

Is bràthair do’n chuthach an òige.
Youth is the brother of madness.
Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child.—PROV. xxii. 15.

The turner is brother to the dish.

The thief is brother to the hound.
A very respectable sentiment.

Malcolm is brother to Neil.
‘Par nobile fratrum,’ no doubt.

One refusal is longer remembered than a dozen offers.
AL. <gai>Millidh aon diùltadh,<eng> &c.—One refusal spoils, &c.

The twig that yields will outlive the great tree that bends.

The twig that yields will outlive the great tree that bends.

Renown is more lasting than life.
See <gai>‘Is beò duine’.

Year lasts longer than Christmas.

Blood is stronger than breeding.

Naturam expellas furca, tamen usque recurret.—Hor.

Back lasts longer than front.
A cheese, a stack of hay, peats, &c., would be more freely used at first than at last. The moral meaning may be, that feuds last longer than friendship.
Shame is more lasting than anything. 
This is very Celtic. 
Schande duurt langer dan armoede—Shame lasts longer than poverty.—Dutch.

A gem lasts longer than its value.

All change of weather is due to the wind.

Long lasts the rod whose root sprang from blood. 
Al. <gai>Is buan cuimhne,<eng> &c.—Long is the memory, &c. 
A proverb worthy of Iceland or Corsica.

Evil lives long. 
’S beayn dagh olk.—Manx. 
Onde Urter voxe mest, og forgaae senest—Ill weeds grow best and last longest.—Dan.

Fules are aye fond o’ flittin’.—Scot. 
Al. <gai>Is miann. Is toigh. 
Is miann le amadan imirce.—Ir.

A poor man is glad of a little. 
‘S booiagh yn voght er yn vegga.—Manx.

The poor are glad of broth, though it be not well boiled. 
Poor folks are glad of pottage.—Eng.

The dog is friendly to the wedding.

Is call do chaillich a poca, ‘s gun tuille aice.—Eng. 
The loss of the old wife’s poke is heavy, when it is her all.

Is càm ‘s is direach a thig an lagh.—Eng. 
The law comes crooked and straight. 
See <gai>‘Is beag ‘s is mór’. 
It’s a slender string he can’t take a tune from.

Dear is a kinsman, but the pith of the heart is a foster-brother.
This is the strongest of all the sayings on this subject.

Is càraid sin, mar a thuirt an fheannag ri 'casan.<eng>
That's a pair, as the crow said to her feet.
Al. <gai>Is dithis dhuinn sin.<eng>
They're a bonnie pair, as the craw said o' his legs.—Scot.

Is ceannach an t-omhan air a' bhainne-theth.<eng>
The froth is scarcely worth the hot milk.
<gai>Omhan'<eng> is the switched-up froth of warmed milk or whey.

Is ceannach air a mhireanan a bhèumanan.<eng>
The morsels are scarcely worth the cuts.

Is cliùtich' an onoir na 'n t-òr.<eng>
Honour is nobler than gold.
<gai>Is ùaisle onoir nà òr.<eng>—Ir.
Beter arm met eere (poor with honour) dan rijk met schande (rich with shame).—Dutch.

Is co domhain an t-àth 's an linne.<eng>
The ford is as deep as the pool.

Is co fad' oidhch' 'us latha, Là Fheill Pàdruig.<eng>
Night and day are equal on St. Patrick's Day.
This is nearly correct.

Is co lionmhor osna aig an righ 's aig an duin' a 's isle staid.<eng>
The king sighs as often as the meanest man.
This occurs verbatim in D. Buchanan's 'Bruadar'.
Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.—H. IV., P. II., iii. 1.

Is co math dhomh mo chorrag a ghabhail do 'n chloich.<eng>
I might as well try my finger against a stone.
Al. <gai>Bu cho math, &c., a thumadh 's a' luath<eng>—as well dip my finger in the ashes.

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Is co math na 's leòr 'us iomadaidh.<eng>
Enough is as good as abundance.
Al. <gai>Tha gu leòr cho math ri cuilm<eng>—Enough is as good as a feast.

Is co math peighinn a chaomhnadh 'us peighinn a chosnadh.<eng>
A penny hained is a penny gained.—Scot.

Is coimheach an tóm ùire.<eng>
Strange is the earthy mound.
This seems to refer to the grave.

Is cóir comhairle fhir-an-tighe a ghabhail.<eng>
The goodman's advice should be taken.
A polite and sensible suggestion.

Is cóir ni a thasgadh fa chomhair na coise goirte.<eng>
It's well to lay something by for a sore foot.
Is cóir nidh a thaisgidh le h-aghaidh na coise galair.<eng>—Ir.
Keep something for a sair fit.—Scot.
Lay by something for a rainy day.—Eng.
Every business ought first to be thought over.

The gun is like the pipe. Like it as a means of living, somewhat precarious.

The gun is like the shot. This would apply to many speeches of persons in and out of Parliament.

The fool and the dwarf are alike.

The word ‘trù’ is not found in any Dictionary, and is not now in use. But it is given by Macintosh, with the translation of the above proverb—‘It is all alike, whether the great man’s fool or his dwarf’. I have therefore retained this saying as Macintosh gave it. The word ‘tnù’ means ‘envy,’ ‘wrath,’ &c., and the Irish word ‘tru’ means ‘face,’ ‘gaunt,’ &c.

I like not pullets becoming cocks.

This is wittier than most of the oratory against Female Medical Education and other Women’s Rights.

[TD 224]

I care not for the drinking fellowship.

This saying illustrates the fact that the Celts, in Scotland or elsewhere, are not prone to excess either in meat or in drink.

I like not the tallow lad’s company; however good at first, very bad at last.

This is a Lewis and Long Island saying, of which no explanation has been given.

I don’t like a stranger who talks loud and volubly.

This is a very Highland sentiment.

The King doesn’t care for Ewen; and Ewen cares not whether or no. Who Ewen was, is not said, but he was perhaps the independent miller that lived on the banks of Dee.

Wealth cares not where it falls.

There is a rich truth in this observation.

A boat is unsteady on one roller.
Unsteady is the point of the hook.

An egg on bread is slippery.

It’s a small corner from which no cry can come. The propagation of the Penny Press and Telegraph illustrates this beautifully.

It’s a hard fight from which one man doesn’t come. It’s a hard-fought field, where no man escapes unkilléd.—Eng. It’s a sair field where a’s slain.—Scot.

The child is sadly hurt that doesn’t tell his illness. The bairn is sair dung (beaten) that maunna complain.—Scot.

’Tis hard to soothe the child that cannot tell his ailment.

It’s a hard Spring when the wilks are counted. It’s a bare shore, &c. This is a painfully graphic illustration of the extent to which dearth in the ‘good old times’ often prevailed in the Highlands; when wilks were resorted to as the last resource from starvation.

What’s needed is hard.

Narrow is the mouth of your purse.

There is more food than room for it. Said of a hospitable house.

Begun is two-thirds done. Is trian oibre, &c. Is trian de ’n obair tús a chur.—Ir. [Greugais]—Beginning is half of the whole.—Hesiod. Dimidium facti qui câpit habet.—Hor. So Fr., Ital., Span., Port., Germ., Dutch, Dan.

A man is blind in another man’s corner. Where he is not acquainted.

Blind is the unacquainted. Dall pob anghyfarwydd.—Welsh. Dall fyddar pob trwch—Blind and deaf is the blockhead.—Do.
Is damh thu, 's gu'm meal thu d' ainm.<eng>
You are an ox, and may you enjoy the name.

Is dàna cù air a dhùnan fhéin.<eng>
A dog is bold on his own dunghill.
Al. <gai>aig a dhorus fhéin<eng>—at his own door.
<gai>Is teann gach madadh air a charnann fein.<eng>—Ir.
Every dog is valiant at his own door.—Eng.
Chien sur son fumier est hardi.—Fr.
Al. <gai>Is ladarna coilleach air òtrach fhéin<eng>—A cock is bold, &c.

Every cock is proud on his own dunghill.—Eng.
Every cock craws crousest on his ain midden.—Scot.
Gallus in suo sterquillinio plurimum potest.—Seneca.
Cada gaillo canta en su muladar.—Span.
Een haan is stout op zijn eigen erf.—Dutch.

Is dàna cuilean 'an uchd trèoir.<eng>
Bold is the puppy in the lap of strength.
Al. <gai>Is láidir an lag<eng>—Bold is the weak, &c.
This is finely illustrated sometimes in cases of the Cives Romanus; at
other times more amusingly, or offensively, by puppies 'dressed in a
little brief authority,’ or representing a ‘great party’.

Is dàna duine 'n a chúil fhéin.<eng>
A man is bold in his own corner.
Diau cynnadl taig o'i dŷ—Bold talks the boor at home.—Welsh.

Is dàna 'theid duine air a chuid fhéin.<eng>
A man is bold with what’s his own.
Al. <gai>Is leomhan gach duine, &c.<eng>—Every man is a lion, &c.
A man’s aye crouse in his ain cause.—Scot.
Men’s belief in their right to do what they like with ‘their own’
sometimes makes them forget entirely that ‘The earth is the Lord’s, and
the fulness thereof’.

Is deacair a’ chaora ’ghoid lāmh ri tigh a’ mhèirlich.<eng>
It’s difficult to steal the sheep near the thief’s house.

Is diblidh ciochran gun mhàthair.<eng>
Helpless is the motherless suckling.

Is dichiollach duine air a shon fhéin,<eng>
A man is diligent for himself.

Is dileas duine dha fhéin.<eng>
A man is faithful to himself.

Is diombuan an tóm ’us teine ris.<eng>
Soon burns the hillock on fire.
The allusion is to the burning of heather, called in the Lowlands
'Muirburn’.—See Professor Veitch’s Hillside Rhymes, p. 14.

Is diombuan gach cas air tir gun eòlas.<eng>
Fleeting is the foot in a strange land.
Very characteristic of Celts, in whom the love of home, however far they
may wander, is quite indestructible.
It's a poor trade that is not learned.
A very sensible saying. Men of half-learned trades or professions are among the most useless of people.

Worst of human, malice keen;
Worst of drink, wine without life;
Worst of all things, a bad wife.
The literal meaning of ‘fion sean’ is ‘old wine,’ but I think the old Celts knew what was what in wine as well as in other things.

Who won’t take advice is worthless; who takes all advice is the same.

Al. <gai>Is truagh— is pitiful.

The dependent is timid.

Hunger is a violent companion.

The flesh that won’t take salt is bad; worse are they that won’t take counsel.

It’s an unhappy generosity that drives a man to his shifts.
This is true of many a good Highland family.

It’s a bad thing to load a ship on a tidal rock.

Drunkenness is a bad excuse.
This saying is worthy of the wisest of judges, before whom intoxication has often been pleaded in mitigation. Lord Hermand’s saying is specially memorable.—See Cockburn’s Memorials.

Drunkenness is better than no excuse.

It’s a bad mount that’s not better than constant walking.

The sheepish wooing is contemptible.

A silly friend is more troublesome than a wise enemy.
Better a wise enemy than a foolish friend.—Arab.

Save me from my friends!—Eng.
Is dù do chù donnalaich. Howling is proper to a dog.

It’s natural for the bard to tell of his father.

That is black (sad) for himself.

The hand hardly gives up its habit.

It’s hard to beat the skilled hand.

The hand loves what it has practised.

It is hard to waken him who is not asleep.

It is difficult to keep the black-cock from the heather.

It’s difficult to get shame where it is not.

A cow won’t take to a calf, when her darling is a stirk.

It’s difficult to draw pure water from a dirty well.

It’s hard to take the twist out of the oak, that grew in the sapling.

See ‘An car a bhios’.

You can’t put luck on a worthless man.

The fey one cannot be saved.

’Tis hard to choose the best of worst.

It’s hard to give sense to a fool.

This is the same as Dr. Johnson’s saying, about giving understanding to his hearer.

Is duilich cupan làn a ghiùlan. A full cup is hard to carry.

It is difficult to track a man through a river. Our greatest Scottish king, Robert the Bruce, once proved the truth of this, when followed by blood-hounds in Galloway, set on by less respectable creatures. See Barbour’s Bruce, B.V., ll. 300-50.

You can’t put luck on a worthless man.

The fey one cannot be saved.—Icel.

’Tis hard to choose the best of worst.

Is duilich triubhas a thoirt de mhàs lóm.
It’s ill to take the trews off a bare buttock.

He’s a fine man, if you don’t ask of him.
There is a delicate Celtic irony in this.

The two-cow man is a worthy man; very worthy is the man of three; and the man of five or six can do nothing against the man of nine.

He is a pitiful fellow who would invite me and leave me to pay.

He’s a man every inch.

It’s the mouth that gives in last.
When the cracking begins the grain gets dried.

The badger is the first to smell himself.
Grief is easiest to get.

[TD 230]

The bad thrashing makes the brisk cows.
Careless thrashing leaves ears of corn on the straw, which makes the cows all the more lively.

Your quest always is, what you can get.

The windy Autumn makes the chaffy oats.
Long sleep makes hot rowing.
Giddy head makes gadding feet.

The Winter mist makes the Spring snow-drift.

Bought wit is best.—Eng.
Al. <gai>Is fhéarr aon ghiocas ceannaich na dithis<eng> (or <gai>dhà dhiag) a nasgaidh<eng>—Better one wisdom bought, than two (or a dozen) got for nought.
Keeayl chionnit yn cheeayl share, mannagh vel ee kionnit ro gheyx—Bought
wit is best, if not bought too dear.—Manx.

<gai>Is i an chiall cheannaight’ is fearr.<eng>—Ir.

[Greugais]—Herod. Nocumenta documenta.—Lat.

Wit bought mak’s wise folk.—Scot.

An ounce of wit that’s bought is worth a pound that’s taught.—Eng.

Per con. <gai>Is fhéarr acn chiall-caisg na dá chiall-diaq  
ionnnaich<eng>—Better one mother-wit than twelve taught.

An ounce o’ mither-wit is worth a pund o’ clergy.—Scot.

Is e an ciad thaom de ’n taigeis a ’s teotha dh’ i.<eng>
The first squirt of the haggis is the hottest.
The first fuff o’ a fat haggis is aye the bauldest.—Scot.

Is e ’n cleachdadh a nì teoma.<eng>
Practice makes expert.
Usus promptum facit.—Lat. Practice makes perfect.—Eng.

Is e an cúntas ceart a dh’ fhàgas na càirdean buidheach.<eng>
Correct counting keeps good friends.
Cuntas glan fhàgas càirde buidheach.<eng>—Ir.

Be brothers, and keep between you the accounts of merchants.—Arab.

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Count like Jews, and ’gree like Christians.—Scot.
Short reckonings make long friends.—Eng.
Kurze rechnung, lange Freundschaft.—Germ.
Effene rekeningen maken goede vrienden.—Dutch.
Les bons comptes font les bons amis.—Fr.
Conta de perto, amigo de lange.—Port.

Is e ’n dealachadh-beò a nì ’n leòn goirt.<eng>
Parting with the living makes the sore wound.
There is much truth in this. Parting with the dead is irremediable, and 
therefore tolerable,—separation from the living is all the sorer, when 
re-union is possible, yet hopeless.

Is e ’n duine dìomhain a ’s fhaide mhaireas.<eng>
The idle man lives longest.
See MacIntyre’s <gai>’Oran do ’n Mhusg’.<eng> This is generally true, 
though many of the hardest workers have attained great age.

Is e ’n Geamhradh luath an Geamhradh buan.<eng>
Early winter lasts long.

Is e ’n gille ’n t-aodach, ach ’s e ’n laochan am biadh.<eng>
The clothes are the boy, but the food beats all.

Is e ’n saor gobhlach ’ni ’n gogan dionach.<eng>
It’s the squatting joiner that makes the tight cog.

Is e ’n seasamh a ’s mò, ach ’s e ’n suidhe ’s ciallaiche.<eng>
Standing is bigger, but sitting is wiser.

Is e ’n suidhe bochd a nì ’n garadh beairteach.<eng>
The poor seat makes the rich warming.
Al. For <gai>bochd ’losal,’<eng> and for <gai>beairteach ’uasal’.
Ghnidh suidh isiol goradh àrd.<eng>—Ir.
The lowest seat is nearest the fire.
The uneasy seat in the alehouse is the best.
Another testimony to the sober habits of Highlanders.

Good denial is the second best point in law.
'Denied' and 'Quoad ultra denied' are stereotyped forms of expression in our Scottish law suits.

The early learning is the pretty learning.
Al. <gai>a ni foghlum gun taing<eng>—makes the sure learning.
Al. <gai>a ni ealanta<eng>—makes expert.

The dirty water makes the clean washing.

The return of the reavers is worst.
Because they would carry off what they spared before.
Ceatharn’<eng> = troop, fighting band, banditti—whence ‘cateran’ and ‘kern’.
Ceathairne’<eng> = peasantry, males fit to bear arms.

Thwarting a young man is his mischief.

The end of each war is peace.

The end of merchants is twisting straw-ropes.
A Lewis modern saying. The ‘merchants’ referred to are the small dealers in country places, who often come to grief through ignorance of business and bad debts.

Monday is the key of the week.
A good, sensible maxim.

Your ‘gab’ was not hidden under ground the day you were born.
Said to forward talkative young people.

Your first repute is your renown.
Al. <gai>Is e cliù duin’ a chiaid iomradh.<eng>
Al. <gai>Is e cliù duin’ a chiaid iarraidh duin’ a chliù.
Is e do shùil do cheannaiche.<eng>
Thine eye is thy merchant.
To thine eye, O merchant.—Arab. Caveat emptor.—Lat.

He’s a man who does; he’s a dog who tells.
Manly men may do things, which to go and speak of is not manly. To boast of things never done is worse still.
Emulation makes ploughing.
In letters of gold, put up in the Logic Class-room of Edinburgh University by Sir William Hamilton, are these words of Hesiod, stirring to young minds,

[Greugais]
[TD 233]

Emulation makes ploughing.

A man’s wife is his fortune or misfortune.

Sickness only would keep goats from eating ivy.
See <gai>‘An rud a chùm’.

Is e innleachd seilge a slòr leannmhuinn.
The art of hunting is ever pursuing it.

Many hands make light work.—Eng., Scot.
Al. <gai>lionmhorachd nan làmh.

Is e ‘leanabh fhéin a’s luithe ‘bhaisteas an sagart.
The priest christens his ain bairn first.—Scot.
<gai>’S e a leanabh fein a bhaisteas a sagart air tùs.—Eng.—Ir.
This saying must be held, by all who respect priests, to have originated before marriage was forbidden to them.

Delay makes causes dwine.
Al. <gai>a bhi ’g a sineadh—adjourning.

The cat desires to be caressed.

The duck’s desire is the water where she’s not.

My friend is the friend in straits.

My choice is uppermost.

The Monday early-rising makes the Tuesday sleep.

The good shoemaker is the greatest of liars.

Trials make proof.

It’s a lucky story that would please Paul.
Who Paul was we can’t say—doubtless a critic of the ‘nil admirari’ school.
<gai>Is e sgéul an duine bheadaidh na gheabh e ’n tigh a choimhearsnaich.<eng> The mannerless man tells what he gets at his neighbour’s.

<gai>Is e sin an tóll a mhill an t-seiche.<eng> That’s the hole that spoiled the hide.

<gai>Is e sin cnag an sgeòil.<eng> That’s the peg of the story.

<gai>Is e sin maide ’g an stad e.<eng> That’s the stick where he’ll stop.
Al. <gai>mu’m beil e ’g icmairt<eng>–which he’s playing at = He’ll come to that. The reference is to a game played at sticks or pegs, fixed at certain distances.

<gai>Is e sùil a ni sealbh.<eng> The eye makes wealth.
Das Auge des Herrn schafft mehr als seine beiden Hände—The master’s eye does more than both his hands.—Germ.

<gai>Is e ’thòn a bha trasda ’n uair a rinn e e.<eng> He sat very awry when he did it.

<gai>Is èasgaidh an droch ghille air chuairt.<eng> The bad servant is brisk abroad.
Al. <gai>‘an tigh a’ choimhearsnaich<eng>—in the neighbour’s house. Esugud drygfab yn nhŷ arall.—Welsh.

<gai>Is èasgaidhe nòin na madainn.<eng> Noon is more lively than morning.
<gai>Is èasgaidhe nòin nà maidin.<eng>—Ir.
<gai>‘Nòin,’<eng> derived doubtless like ‘noon’ from ‘nona,’ = 3 P.M., means both noon and afternoon in our Gaelic. In Irish and Welsh it means the former, in Manx, ’traa nonney’ = evening. Most people are more lively in the evening than in the morning.

<gai>Is éibhinn an obair an t-sealg.<eng> Hunting is delightful work.
This saying occurs in our oldest hunting song, known as <gai>‘A Chomhachag,’<eng> The Owl, by Donald MacDonald.
Nid difyrwch ond milgi—ond gwalch—No diversion like a greyhound—like a hawk.—Welsh.
Every run in the desert exhilarates.—Arab.

<gai>Is éigin dol far am bi ’n fhòid.<eng> One must go where his grave awaits him.
See <gai>‘Bheir fòid’.

Is éigin do ’n fhéumach a bhi falbhanach.<eng> The needy must keep moving.
This is a recognised maxim of Metropolitan Policemen.

<gai>Is éudar do chàirdean dealachadh.<eng> Friends must part.

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<gai>Is éudar gabhail le each mall, o ’n nach faighear na ’s fhhearr.<eng> The slow horse must be taken if no better can be got.
Is fad an amhainn air nach fhaighear ceann.<br>It’s a long river whose head can’t be found.<br>Al. <gai>an rathad—<eng>the road.<br><br>Is fad an dàil o ’n oidhirp.<br>Long is the delay from the attempt.<br><br>Is fad an éubh o Loch-Obha, ’us cobhair o Chlann O’Duibhne.<br>Far’s the cry from Loch Awe, and help from the race of O’Duine.<br>The Campbells claim descent from Diarmad O’Duibhne, Dermid, grandson of Duine, the Launcelot of the Fingalian tragedy. The above saying is supposed to have originated at the time of a great defeat of the Campbells under the Earl of Argyll, by the Gordons under the Earl of Huntly, at Allt-Chuailleachain in Glenlivet, in 1594; where Campbell of Lochnoll proved signally treacherous to his chief.—See Gregory’s West. Highl., &c., p. 256.<br><br>Is fad’ an oidhche gu latha do fhear na droch mhnatha.<br>It’s a long night till morning for the husband of the bad wife.<br>See Mrs. Caudle’s Lectures.<br><br>Is fad’ an oidhche gu latha, arsa casan loisgte.<br>Long is night till day, said the burned feet.<br><br>Is fad an timchioll nach tachair.<br>It’s a long round that meets not.<br><br>Is fada cobhair o mhnaoi ’s a muintir ’an Eirinn.<br>Far is aid from her whose folk are in Ireland.<br><br>Is fada làmh an fhéumaich.<br>Long is the arm of the needy.<br>Al. <gai>Is fada làmh an airc, ach ma ’s fhada, cha reamhar—<eng>The hand of poverty is long and lean.<br><br>Is fada slíos na bliadhna.<br>The year’s length is long.<br>Lit. The year’s ‘slope’ or ‘side’.<br><br>Is faolaidhe duine a chuid a thairgse, ged is fhéaird’ e aige fhéin e.<br>He is the more generous who offers his own, though he would be the better of keeping it.<br>The Moral Philosophy of this is excellent, and is just that of the Saviour about the widow’s mite. The virtue of donations implying no sacrifice is very small indeed.<br><br>[TD 236]<br><br>Is farsuing an rathad mór, agus faodar fhalbh.<br>The highway is wide, and may be trod.<br><br>Is farsuing a sgaoileas an dreachann a chasan ’n a thighe fhéin.<br>The wren spreads his feet wide in his own house.<br>Al. <gai>Is farsuing tigh an dreachainn—<eng>The wren’s house is wide. There is something felicitous in the idea of a wren spreading his legs like a potentate at his own hearth.<br><br>Is farsuing bial a’ bhothain.<br>A wee house has a wide mouth.—Scot.<br>Ulster proverb in same words.
Is fàs a’ choill as nach goirear.<eng>
It’s a desert wood whence no voice is heard.

Is fhad a bhà thu, ’s luath a thàinig thu.<eng>
You are long of coming, and have come full soon.

Is fhad’ a chaideach an Liùnasdail annad.<eng>
The Lammas went far into you.
I.e. You are far gone; Lammas being the time of year when things had reached the verge of dearth before harvest, in olden times.

Is fhad’ a dh’ fals cas bheò.<eng>
A living foot will go far.

Is fhada bho’n dà latha sin, ’s bho bhliadhna ’n Earraich dhuibh.<eng>
It’s long since these two days, and the year of the black Spring.
The ‘two days’ mean ‘changed times’; the ‘black Spring,’ a peculiarly bad year.

Is fhada bho’n uair sin, bho’n a bha cluas air ròn.<eng>
It’s long since the time when the seal had ears.
The seal’s ears are hardly visible. The common phrase, on meeting an old acquaintance is, <gai>’S fhad o ’n uair sin<eng>—It’s long since that time’.

Is fhad’ o thigh a’ mhodh a rugadh tu.<eng>
You were born far from the house of good manners.

Is fhada tha bàs do sheana-mhair ’n ad chuimhne.<eng>
Your grandmother’s death is long in your memory.
Said to over-sentimental people, or to those who keep up too long the remembrance of anything.

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Is fhaid’ an latha na ’m bruthach; bidh sinn uiread uair-eigin.<eng>
The day is longer than the brae; we’ll be at the top yet.
A very cheery and plucky sentiment.

Is fhaide d’ fhiacail na d’ fhiasag.<eng>
Your teeth are longer than your beard.
Tak a piece; yir teeth’s langer than yir beard.—Scot.

Is fhaide gu bràth na gu Bealltainn.<eng>
It’s longer to Doomsday than to Whitsunday.
Ulster proverb in same words.

Is fhaide gu Nollaig na gu Feill-Màrtainn.<eng>
It’s longer to Christmas than to Martinmas.

Is fhasa cumail na tarruing.<eng>
Better to haud than draw.—Scot.
Possession is nine points of the law.—Eng.

Is fhasa deadh ainm a chall na ’chosnadh.<eng>
A guid name is surer tint than won.—Scot.

Is fhasa sgapadh na tional.<eng>
It’s easier to scatter than to gather.

Is fusa sgapadh nà cruinneagadh.—Ir.

Is fheairrd’ an càl an cat a chur ann.—Eng.
The kail will be the better of putting the cat in.
Better a mouse i’ the pat as nae flesh.—Scot.

Is fheirrd’ an luch sàmhchair, mar a thuirt luch a’ mhonaidh ri luch a’ bhaile.—Eng.
The mouse is the better of quietness, as the moor-mouse said to the town-mouse.
This seems to be taken from the well-known fable of the Town mouse and Country mouse.

Is fheairrde briagadair fianuis.—Eng.
A liar is the better of a voucher.
Is fearrde a dhearcas brèug fiadhnuise.—Ir.
See ’Imridh briag gobhal’.

Is fheairrde bràdh a breacadh gun a bristeadh.—Eng.
A quern is the better of being picked without being broken.
Is fheairrde do ’n m-brò a bhreacadh gun a bhraiseadh.—Ir.
Picking the quern consisted in refreshing the roughness of the stone, which required to be cautiously done. The use of hand-

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mills was prohibited by the Scottish Parliament as far back as 1284, but continued privately notwithstanding, and is probably not entirely obsolete yet. The above saying is supposed to refer to the orders given by the lairds to have all the querns broken.

Is fheairrde cù cù a chrochadh.—Eng.
A dog is the better of another dog being hanged.

Is fheairrde cù sgaiteach cnàimh a chur ’n a bhial.—Eng.
A biting dog is the better of a bone.
Gwell cariad y ci na’i gas—A dog’s friendship is better than his hate.—Welsh.

Is fheairrde cuideachd cuis-bhùrd.—Eng.
A company is the better of a laughing-stock.
Al. cuailidh-ghàire.

Is fheairrde gach cneadh a ceasnachadh.—Eng.
A wound is the better of being probed.

Is fheairrde gach math a mhèudachadh.—Eng.
Every good is the better of being increased.

Is fheairrde h-uile cù a dhion a chin a dhranndan.—Eng.
A dog’s snarl defends his head.

Is fhearr a bhi bochd na ’bhi briagach.—Eng.
Better be poor than a liar.

Is fhearr a bhi cinnteach na ’bhi caillteach.—Eng.
Better be sure than lose.
Better thinking of the good that has been, than of that which is not, and never will be.

A thoroughly Celtic and respectable Conservative sentiment.

Better want the head than want the fashion.

A very human and especially feminine sentiment.

Better be black than fair;
Better be fair than red;

Better scabby than no head.

Better be red than scabby;
Better scabby than no head.

Better no children than children without luck.

Better have no cow than have no son.

Better be slow to buy than stiff to pay.

Better be happy (or lucky) than laborious.

Both these sentiments are very Celtic; and yet the wise Englishman, the cautious Lowland Scot, and the astute Italian, say the very same thing in the same words—'Tis better to be happy than wise'—'Better be sonsy than soon up'; 'E meglio esser fortunato che savio'. So much faith is there in luck, even among the wisest people.

He's better fed than bred.—Scot.

Mieux nourrit qu' instruit.—Fr.

Better fed than bred. — Scot.

He's better fed than bred. — Scot.

Mieux nourrit qu' instruit. — Fr.
Better the rough stone which yields something, than the smooth stone that yields nothing.
This, of course, has a moral meaning, but the physical reference is to the species of Lichen called respectively Corcur and Crotal, which grow on rocks, and were used extensively for dyes in the Highlands, the one a shade of crimson, the other a reddish brown. See Lightfoot's Flora Scotica, 2nd ed., Vol. II., pp. 812, 818.

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Better stones than no manure.
Instances have been told of stones having been gathered off a field so carefully as to do the land more harm than good, and even to lead to their being replaced!

Better measure short of seven, than spoil all at once.
This seems to refer to the measure for a kilt, for which seven yards are required for a well-grown man.
Measure twice, cut once.—Scot.

Luck is better than skill.
Al. Luck is better than early rising.
See 'Is fhéarr a bhi sona' and 'Ealain gun rath'.

Better repent for staying than for going.
Al. for sitting than for running.

A quarter’s nursing is better than a year’s.

Better the sturdy passionate man, than the smooth-deceiving and very mild.

Better the dog that fawns than the dog that bites.
Better a dog fawn on you than bite you.—Eng.
Al. The dog that wags his tail than the dog that grins.

Better is the dog that runs than he that gives in.

Better the weak diligence than the lazy strength.

Truth is better than gold.

[TD 241]
Better a lobster than no husband.
Al. *am portan tuathal*—the awkward crab.
Two women lived together, one of whom stole the other’s meal out of her bag. The sufferer then put a live lobster into the bag, and the next time the thief put her hand in she was caught. She cried out *‘Tha’n Donas ‘na do phoca!*—The Devil’s in your bag!’ ‘Tha,’ said the other, *‘n uair ‘tha thus’ ann*—Yes, when you are there.’ Hence the origin of this proverb.

Sease velado, y sease un palo—Let it be a husband, though it be but a hedge-stick.—Span.

This luck is better where it is, than that where it was.

Better the long clean road than the short dirty one.

Better teach (or learn) the world than shun it. A very wise saying.

Better snow than no rain-storm, when the seed is in the ground. 
Al. *Is fhearr an sneachd na ‘bhi gun sian, ’an déigh an siol a chur ’s an talamh.*

Better snow than no rain in May.

Better a little fire to warm us than a great one to burn us.—Eng., Scot. 

The smoke is better than the north wind.

Better the ill ken’d than the guid unken’d.—Scot.

The little bannock with a blessing is better than the big one with a curse.
This saying occurs in some of the old Gaelic tales, when a son is going from home, and is asked by his mother which he prefers. See Dr. M'Leod’s Caraid nan Gaidheal, p. 273.

Al. <gai>Is fhearr aon ian ’s an làimh, na ’dhà dhiag air iteig.<eng> A bird in the hand is worth a dozen on wing.

<gai>Is fhearr aon laogh na dà chraicionn.<eng> One calf is better than two skins.

<gai>Is fhearr aon taisgeach na seachd teagraidh.<eng> Better one secure than seven to be gathered.

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<gai>Is fhearr aon tigh air a nighe’ na dhà dhiag air an sguabadh.<eng> Better one house washed than twelve swept.

<gai>Is fhearr aon tòrradh na dà dhiag air an sguabadh.<eng> One funeral is worth twelve communions.

<gai>Is fhearr aon taisgeach na seachd teagraidh.<eng> Better one secure than seven to be gathered.

<gai>Is fhearr aon ian ’s an làimh, na ’dhà dhiag air iteig.<eng> A bird in the hand is worth a dozen on wing.

<gai>Is fhearr aon laogh na dà chraicionn.<eng> One calf is better than two skins.

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<gai>Is fhearr aon taisgeach na seachd teagraidh.<eng> Better one secure than seven to be gathered.
A patch is better than a hole, but a hole is more genteel.

The sentiment of this is very Celtic, and the Spanish saying is similar, ‘Hidalgo honrado antes roto que remendado’—A true gentleman would prefer his clothes ragged than patched.

Better a clout than a hole out.—Eng.
Besser ein Flick als ein Loch.—Germ.

Patch by patch is good housewifery, but patch upon patch is plain beggary.—Eng. Clout upon a hole is guid gentry, clout upon a clout is guid yeomanry, but clout upon a clouted clout is downright beggary.—Scot.

A blow is better than gossip.
The meaning is that corporal punishment is less painful than being made a subject of disagreeable remark.

A fine saying.
Perséverance, dear my lord,
Keeps honour bright; to have done is to hang
Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail
In monumental mockery.—Troil. and Cress., III., 3.

[TD 244]

A friend in the court is better than a crown in the purse.

A friend at (or in) court is worth a penny in purse.—Eng., Scot.

One of the best illustrations of the want of judicial purity in olden times, which gave rise to this maxim, is Lord President Gilmour’s remark on hearing Cromwell’s judges praised for their impartiality—‘Deil thank them! they had neither kith nor kin’. Even in 1737, the advice given in a law-suit in regard to the management of the Bench was as follows:—‘By Lord St. Clair’s advice, Mrs. Kinloch is to wait on Lady Cairnie tomorrow, to cause her to ask the favour of Lady St. Clair to solicit Lady Betty Elphinston and Lady Dun’. The ladies last mentioned were the wives of two of the judges. Lord St. Clair’s exquisite caution, in leaving the management of Lady St. Clair to other people, is interesting. See Chambers’ Dom. Ann., III., 291.

Better a neighbour at hand than a brother far away.

Al. Is fhearr coimhearsnach ‘am fagus na bràthair fad o làimh.

Better a good neighbour in this town than a kinsman in yon town.

Eun amezek mad (math) a zo gwell,
Evit na e kerent (na caraid) a-bhell.—Breton.

God Nabo er bedre end Broder i anden By.—Dan.
E meglio un prossimo vicino che un lontano cugino.—Ital.
The shaking of canvass is better than the shaking of a rag.
The meaning of this is not apparent.

Better a living dog than a dead lion.
This is a translation of ECCLES. ix. 4.

Better a dog swift of foot than loud of tongue.

The first night’s fare is better than the last night’s.
The first and last night of the winter beef.

Better back of friend than face of stranger.
Gwell gwegil cár na gwyneb estron.—Welsh.

Better go to bed supperless than rise in debt.—Eng.

The good speech of an ass is better than the bad word of a prophet.
This of course refers to Balaam. It is the only Gaelic saying in which
the ass is mentioned. The animal was unknown in the Highlands until
modern times.

Full trust is better than impatience.

Better the smoke of heather than the wind of frost.

Better the end o’ a feast than the beginning o’ a fray.—Scot.

Better a good end than a bad beginning.
Macintosh translates this, ‘The refuse of the good is preferable to the
best of the ill’.

Better leave your goods with an enemy, than go to extremes with your
friend.
Lit., than go into the bowels of.

Better be envied than pitied.—Eng., Scot.

Better ‘Hey day!’ than ‘Alas!’
There is more wit in this version.

Better go to bed supperless than rise in debt.—Eng.
Better be born in good time than a good father.
One of the questionable sayings on the importance of luck.

Better knot straws than sit idle.
The Scotch saying is the opposite—‘Better be idle than ill employed’.

One man is better than many men.
Gwell gwâr nà gwŷr—(‘S fhearr fear na fir).—Welsh.

Better than he looks.
She’s better than she’s bonnie.—Scot.

Better rise early than sit late.
Guid watch hinders harm.—Scot.

Good acquaintance is better than bad relationship. See <gai>‘Theid an t-èolas’.

It’s better to try than to hope.
Very good doctrine.

Better caution than danger.

A shaken sheaf this year is better than the standing sheaf of last year.

A sheaf of this year is better than a shock (twelve sheaves) of last year.

Better the coldness of a friend than the warmth of an enemy. An excellent saying.

The remains of ridicule are better than the dregs of envy.

The residue of theft is better than that of scorn.
Macintosh’s translation is, ‘The thief may have some profit, but the scorner none’.
The doctrine is dubious.
Better leavings than want.
"Is fearr fuigheall na bheith air easbhuidh."—Ir.

"Is fhearr fuine than na 'bhi uile falamh."—Eng.
Thin kneading is better than no bread.
Bannocks are better than nae bread.—Scot.
Half a loaf is better than no bread.—Eng.

"Is fhearr greim caillich na tarruing laoich."—Scot.
An old woman's grip is better than a hero's pull.
Al. "Is fhearr cumail caillich na tarruing tighearna."—Eng.
Better to hound than draw.—Scot.

"Is fhearr guth na meidh."—Eng.
A word is better than a balance.
This is a "dubh-fhacal". The meaning probably is, that the voice of a powerful friend is of more value than strict impartiality. In his first edition, Macintosh gives the word 'mèithe,' and his translation is, 'Better speak than lose right'.

"Is fhearr iarunn hactainn na airgid a chall."—Scot.
Better find iron than tine siller.

"Is fhearr iasg beag na 'bhi gun iasg idir."—Scot.
Sma' fish is better than nane.

"Is fhearr iomall a phailteis na teis meadhoin na gainne."—Eng.
Better the border of plenty than the centre of want.
Al. "na h-airce.

"Is fhearr leisgeul salach na 'bhi gun leisgeul idir."—Eng.
Better a bad excuse than none.

"Is fhèarr léum-iochd a's t-Fhoghar na sguab a bharrachd."—Eng.
A balk in Autumn is better than a sheaf the more.
The "léum-iochd," or "bailc," (Scotch 'baik," is a strip of a corn-field left fallow. The fear of being left with the last sheaf of the harvest, called the "cailleach," or "gobhar bhacach," always led to an exciting competition among the reapers in the last field. The reaper who came on a "léum-iochd" would of course be glad to have so much the less to cut.—See App. VI.

"Is fhearr lùbadh na bristeadh."—Eng.
Better bow than break.—Eng., Scot.
So Fr., Ital., Span., Port., Germ.

"Is fhearr màthair phocanach na athair claidheach."—Eng.
A begging mother is better than a sworded father.
This saying is borrowed from the south. The sworded and riding father means a freebooter.
Better a thigging mither than a riding faither.—Scot.

Is fearr mathair phòcain na athair seìstrigh<eng> (ploughing).—Ir.
The sentiment of this is not so respectable.

Is fhearr meomhair luchd an tagraidh na cuimhne luchd nam fiach.<eng> The memory of creditors is better than of debtors.

Is fhearr na ’n t-òr, sgéul innse air chóir.<eng> Better than gold is a tale rightly told. This applies to the telling of stories, but still more to the telling of truth.

Is fhearr na toimhsean na na tuairmis.<eng> Measures are better than guesses.
Measure twice, cut but ance.—Scot.
Measure thrice what thou buyest, and cut but once.—Eng.

Is fhearr òirleach de dh-each, na troidh de chapull.<eng> An inch of a horse is better than a foot of a mare.

Is fhearr ónrachd na droch cuideachd.<eng> Better be alone than in bad company.—Eng.
Better alane than in ill company.—Scot.
Besser allein als in schlechter Gesellschaft.—Germ.
Mas vale solo que mal acompañado.—Span.

Is fhearr peighinn an fhortain, na ’n rosad ’us cóig ciad.<eng> The lucky penny is better than misfortune and five hundred.
Hap and a ha’penny is world’s gear eneuch.—Scot.

Is fhearr piseach anmoch na ’bhi gun phiseach.<eng> Better late luck than no luck.

Is fhearr rogha coimhearsnaich na rogha fuine.<eng> Better choice of neighbour than choice of baking.

Is fhearr rud fhàgail aig nàmhaid na rud iarraidh air caraide.<eng> Better leave a thing with an enemy than ask of a friend.

Is fhearr sean-fhiachan na sean-fhalachd.<eng> Better old debts than old feuds.
Al. <gai>na seana-ghamhlas.

Is fhearr seòladh na obair thróm.<eng> Directing is better them heavy work.
Better direct well than work hard.—Eng.
Better guide weel than work fair.—Scot.

Is fhearr sgios chas na sgios meamna.<eng> Better weary foot than weary spirit.

Is fhearr sgur na sgàineadh.<eng> Better cease than burst.
A facetious addition to this is, <gai>‘ach ’s e sgàineadh a ’s lomraitiche<eng>—but bursting is more notable. The supposed reply, <gai>”S fhearr sgàineadh na ’m biadh math a mhilleadh,’<eng> is merely a translation of the Saxon saying, Better belly burst than good meat spoil.
Better small oats than nothing, out of bad land.

This is a characteristic Hebridean saying. Small black oats are the chief corn crop.

Better steady work than severe work.

Better steady running than full speed.

Better peace from the wood than from under lock.

The identity of these sayings is curious.

Better peace with a hen than strife.

This shows the hand of a hen-pecked philosopher.

Better short sitting than long standing.

Better rest than work for nothing.

A Miso-Celt might point to this as illustrative of Celtic laziness, but for the Scottish saying, ‘Better sit idle than work for nought,’ and the English one, ‘As good to play for nought as work for nought’.

Per con. Better useless work than be idle.

Better a good retreat than to stay to suffer.

He that fights and runs away,
May live to fight another day,
is the common form of what in Hudibras is,
For those that fly may fight again,
Which he can never do that’s slain.

Older still, however, is the Greek saying, quoted in self-defence by Demosthenes, when twitted for leaving his shield on the field of Cheronæa, [Greugais], thus translated by Udall (1542), from the Adagia of Erasmus,

That same man that runnith awaie
Male again fight another daie.

Better turn mid-ford than be drowned.

Better wade back mid-water than gang forat and droon.—Scot.

Better turn mid-ford than be drowned.

Better make terms in the bush than in prison.—Dan.

Better use less work than be idle.
An old wife’s gift is better than a king’s promise.
There is a democratic sharpness in this, very uncommon in Gaelic sayings.

Better late ploughing than none at all.

Better an hour of the mistress than a day’s work of the servant.

[TD 251]

An ounce of sense is better than a pound of pride.
An ounce of wisdom is worth a pound of wit.

A good horse may be forgiven a kick.

The simpleton may be deceived, without being robbed.

’Tis easy to put out a man, whose own the house is not.
The ejecting of a troublesome visitor may sometimes be a commendable
process, but that is not the whole meaning of this saying. It is
interpreted, not unreasonably, in the note of A. Campbell, as referring
to the ejection of poor tenants in the Highlands. The ease with which
that process has generally been accomplished is remarkable, pleasing in
one point of view, sad and shameful in another.

It’s easy to avenge the blow that’s not struck.

The mighty man’s stroke is easily known.
The fox found the wren one day thrashing corn with his twelve sons, and
wishing to find out the father, made the above flattering remark.
Whereupon the old wren turned round, and leaning on his flail, said, with
a smile of gratification, ‘Bha latha dhà sin—That day was,’
adding, with a nod, ‘Cha tuig iadsan, na garrach, sin—They
little know that, these chickens’. What the fox did thereupon is painful
to contemplate.

It’s easy to keep a castle that’s not besieged.

It is easy to keep a castle that was never assaulted.—Eng.
This was probably first said to a censorious old maid.

Facilmente si trova un bastone per dar ad un cane.—Ital.
The ancient proverb will be well effected, A staff is quickly found to
beat a dog.—Henry VI., P. II., iii., 1.

It’s easy to find fault with half-finished work.

To usurp is easy, to keep is another thing.
A shameless man is easily fed.
He that has no modesty has all the town for his own.—Eng.

It’s easy to get a match for a fatherless maid.

It’s easy to draw blood from a scabby head, and cry from a wry mouth.
A scald head is soon broken.—Eng.

It’s easy to bake near meal.
It’s guild baking beside the meal.—Scot.
Anhawdd pobi heb flawd—Hard to bake without flour.—Welsh.

It’s easy to kindle a fire at the foot of a tree.

It’s easier to turn the tongue than a big ship.
This seems meant for an emendation on JAMES iii., 4, 5.
It’s easier to subdue the first desire than to satisfy its followers.
A good statement of one of the most important principles of Moral Philosophy.

’Tis easier to give advice than take it.
Do as I say, and not as I do.—Eng.

It’s easier to build two hearths than to keep a fire on one.
It’s easier to keep a man out than to put him out when in.
Better haud oot than put oot.—Scot.

It’s easier to scatter than to gather.

It’s easier to go down than to climb.
Haws dringo na disgyn—Easier to climb than to descend.—Welsh.
The Gaelic saying is true both literally and metaphorically. The Welsh saying is true only of climbing in very steep or rocky places.
A man’s promise is a debt.  
Dyled ar pob ei addaw.—Welsh.  
See <gai>‘Am fear a gheallas’.  

Is fiamhach an t-sùil a lotar.<eng>  
The hurt eye is timorous.  

<gai>Is follaiseach fuil air cù bàn.<eng>  
Blood is noticeable on a white dog.  

<gai>Is fuar an coimir’ an fhòid.<eng>  
The turf is a cold companion.  
There is some pathos in this; and yet the saying may have been invented 
by a bereaved person, on the look out for a new companion.  

<gai>Is fuar an innis an càrn<eng>  
The cairn is a cold shelter.  

<gai>Is fuar an goile nach teòdh deoch.<eng>  
It’s a cold stomach that drink won’t warm,.  
It’s a cauld stomach that naething hets on.—Scot.  

<gai>Is fuar comunn an ath-chleamhnaí.<eng>  
Cold is the society of a second affinity.  
Macintosh’s translation gives the meaning, which is not obvious—‘Cold is 
the connection with a first alliance, when a second is formed’.  

<gai>Is fuar don’-chleamhnas.<eng>  
Cold is ill-sorted affinity.  

<gai>Is fuar gaoth nan coimheach.<eng>  
Cold is the wind that brings strangers.  
Possibly applied first to the wind that brought Norsemen, afterwards to 
the coming of Southrons.  

<gai>Is fuar leaba gun choimh-leapeach.<eng>  
Cold is the bed without bedfellow.  

<gai>Is gann a’ ghaoth nach seòladh tu.<eng>  
Light would the breeze be that you couldn’t sail in.  
Al. <gai>Is fann a ghaoth ris nach,<eng> &c. 
Applied to trimmers and time-servers.  

[TD 254]  

<gai>Is geal an airidh air an aran sgalagan a’ chliathaidh.<eng>  
Well worthy of the bread are the farm-servants of the harrow.  

<gai>Is geal an cùnradh a thig fad as.<eng>  
Fair is the bargain that comes from afar.  
Far sought and dear bought ‘s guid for ladies.—Scot.  

<gai>Is geal gach nodha, gu ruig snodhach an fhearna.<eng>  
Everything new is white, even to the sap of the alder.  
See <gai>‘Is odhar’.  

Is geal-làmhach bean iasgair, ’s is geal-fhiacslach bean sealgair.<eng>  
The fisher’s wife has white hands, the hunter’s wife white teeth.  
This is a Hebridean saying. The meaning is ambiguous.
Short-lived is all rule but the rule of God.

The Lowlander is the shorter of losing his head. This, no doubt, has been said more than once, with the action suited to the word.

He is a wise man that takes care of himself.

Better understand the world than condemn it. A philosophical and Christian sentiment.

Wise is he who keeps a look-out.

He is wise who is never deceived, he is not wise who often is. See 'Cha mheallar'.

Crouching is a shameful thing. This would be rendered in Scotch, 'Sitting on one's hunkers'. The practice of 'hunkering' at prayer in church, instead of standing, has been seriously denounced by some of our divines, as a shameful thing.

The farm (or town) is the cleaner of that clearing out. Said when any nuisance is got rid of.

Lent is short to them who have money to pay at Whitsunday.

Green are the hills that are far from us. See 'Bidh adhaircean'. The word 'gorm' means both blue and green, and the former is really the more true description of distant hills. What the saying means, however, is that the distant is most admired, and green grass was considered the best thing that could be on a hill.

Modesty is the beauty of women. For this beautiful saying we are indebted to Armstrong (Dict.), who translated it 'Delicacy is the ornament of females'. The word 'àilleantachd,' translated by him and M'Leod and Dewar, 'Personal beauty, delicacy, bashfulness, modest reserve,' is unaccountably omitted in the Highl. Soc. Dict. 'Maise' means both beauty and ornament. The meaning here is not unlike that of St. Peter, 'the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit'.

The threatening Friday makes the weeping Saturday.
It was supposing that destroyed the lady.
The wife of the Laird of Keppoch (1650-80) ventured to cross the river Roy when in full flood.<gai>'Tha barail agam,'<eng> she said, <gai>'nach bàth Ruaidh bhochd mise co dhiùbh'<eng>—I think poor Roy won’t drown me at any rate. But the merciless river did.
There is another more amusing account given of the origin of this saying, with the variation of <gai>'dùil'<eng> for <gai>'barail'.<eng> The story is that the poor lady allowed some liberty to be taken with her, and on being taxed by her husband, replied, <gai>'Bha mis’ 'an dùil gur sibh fhèin a bh’ ann'<eng>—I thought it was yourself.

The cocked bonnet makes the smart lad.
The truth of this saying has been practically recognised in the British Army, and even in some foreign navies, in the adoption of the Glengarry bonnet, for undress or dress uniform.

The first vice is to get into debt; the next is to go telling lies.

[TD 256]

It’s his own hurt a man complains of first.
A man sleeps sound on another’s wound.—Ir.
The yellow dung-fly makes the loudest hum.

The heaviest ear of corn bends its head lowest.
Ulster saying in same words.
The empty stalk holds its head up.—Hungar.

Patience overcomes trouble.
Al. <gai>a bhristeas cridh’ an anrath<eng>—breaks the heart of distress.
Patience with poverty is all a poor man’s remedy.—Scot.

It’s the north wind that drives away mist.
The dirty hand makes the clean shoulder.
Al. <gai>a ni a’ mhuilichean ghluinn<eng>—makes the clean sleeve.
Dirty hands make clean money.—Eng.

The active mother makes the lazy daughter.
Al. <gai>Is minig a thainig nighean leisg o mhàthair èasgaidh.<eng>—Ir.
A light-heeled mother makes a heavy-heeled daughter.—Eng.
An olight mither maks a sweir dochter.—Scot.
Madre ardida hace hija tullida.—Span.
Mãi aguçosa, filha perguiçosa.—Port.
Per con. <gai>Is i ‘nighean èasgaidh a ni ‘mhàthair leisg.<eng> The active daughter makes the lazy mother. 
Al. <gai>Is minig a thainig nighean èasgaidh o mhàthair leisg. 

Is i ‘mhuc shàmhach a dh’iteas an drabh.<eng> It’s the silent sow that eats the draff. 
Yr hwch a daw a fwyty’r scoe.—Welsh. 
Still swine eat all the draff.—Eng. 
De lumske Sviin æde Masken—The cunning swine eat the mash.—Dan. 

[gai]Is i ‘n Nollaig dhubh a dh’fhàgas an cladh miath.<eng> A black Christmas makes a fat churchyard. 
A green Yule makes a fat kirkyard.—Scot. 
En grön Juul giver en fed Kirkegaard.—Dan. 
A green winter makes a fat churchyard.—Eng. 

[gai]Is i ‘n oidhche ‘n oidhche, na’m b’iad na fir na fir!<eng> The night is the night, were the men the men! 
A watch-word in view of a foray. 

[gai]Is i an taois bhog a ni am màs rag.<eng> The soft dough makes the stiff buttock. 
Raw dads make fat lads.—Scot. 

[gai]Is i ‘bhó fhein a’s luaithe a mhothaicheas d’ a laogh.<eng> The cow is the first to notice her own calf. 

[gai]Is i nämhaid duine a’ cheaird nach cleachd e.<eng> The tirade which he practises not is a man’s enemy. 
[gai]Is namhaid an cheir gan a foghlaim<eng> (unless learned).—Ir. 

[gai]Is iad na h-eìin acrach a’s fhearr a ghleacas.<eng> The hungry birds fight best. 

[gai]Is ioma bó fhada reamhar, nach deachaidh riamh air theadhair.<eng> Many a long fat cow was never tethered. 
Applied to women who never marry.—Macintosh. 

[gai]Is ioma caochla ’thig air an t-saoghal fo cheann bliadhna.<eng> Many changes come over the world in a year. 

[gai]Is ioma car a’ tha ’n saoghal a’ cur dheth.<eng> Many a turn the world takes. 
[<gai>Gur mairog a bheir géill Do ’n t-saoghal gu léir, ’S tric a chaochail e ’chéum gàbhaidh.<eng>—Mary MacLeod. 

[gai]Is ioma car a thig air an oidhch’ fhad Phoghair.<eng> Many a turn comes in the long Autumn night. 
[gai]Is iomad taod<eng> (change) <gai>a thig ann a là Earraigh<eng> (Spring).—Ir. 
Hverb er Haust-grima—Unstable is the Autumn night.—Iceland. 

[gai]Is ioma múthadh a thig air an oidhc’ fhada Gheamhraidh.<eng> Many a change comes in the long Winter night. 
This is said to have been uttered as a warning to his host by one of the murderers of Glencoe.
Many a head will go into a cap before that happens. The cap meant is the 'currag-bàis,' the death-cap.

The poor man will have many faults. The motherless child will have many faults.

Many a good deed would be done but for miscarriage.

There are many ways of killing a dog, without choking him with butter.

Many troubles come on age.

Spring has many reasons for being cold.

Another version, with the merit of assonance is, 'S ioma leisgeul, fada, salach, 'th' aig an Earrach gu 'bhi fuar—Many a weary, foul excuse Spring has, &c.

Many one has been ruined by getting a good bargain.

Many a man has gone to the wood for a stick to beat himself.

Many a man has walled a garden, who never tasted of its fruit.

Many a one has stolen a sheep, that didn't lead her in to Stornoway. It is hardly necessary to say that this is a Lewis proverb.

Many a one is proud of his pot-hanger, though his grandfather had but a crook.

The slabhraidh is an iron chain suspended over the fire-place, with a hook at the end, on which pots are hung for cooking. The maide-cróm (al. cròcan) was simply a wooden crook.

Old age has many followers.
Is ioma lóng cho briste 'thainig gu tìr.\<\> Many a ship as broken has come to land.

\<\> Is ioma mir a thug thu do 'n bhial a mhol thu.\<\> Many a morsel you have put in the mouth that praised you.

\<\> Is ioma ni a chailleas fear na h-imrich.\<\> Many a thing is lost in flitting.
Three removes are as bad as a fire.—Eng., Fr., Germ.
\<\> Cha bhiann imirce gan chaill.\<\>—Ir.

\<\> Is ioma ni 'thig air an laogh nach do shaoil a mhàthair.\<\> More things befall the calf than his dam dreamed of.

\<\> Is ioma rud a dh'fhéumas an euslaint nach fhéum an t-slàinte.\<\> Sickness needs many things which health requires not.

\<\> Is ioma rud 'tha 'm bùth a' cheannaiche nach leis fhéin.\<\> Much is in the merchant’s shop which is not his own.

\<\> Is ioma rud a th' eadar creathall agus uaigh.\<\> The ocean hides much.
Wedges of gold, great anchors, heaps of pearl,
Inestimable stones, unvalued jewels,
All scattered in the bottom of the sea.—Richard III., I., 4.

Earth shall reclaim her precious things from thee!
Restore the dead, thou sea!—Mrs. Hemans.

\<\> Is ioma rud a th' eadar dhaith chioch do cheile.\<\> Much lies between cradle and grave.

\<\> Is ioma rud a th' eadar creathall agus uaigh.\<\> Many are the things he puts under his tail.
Said of shifty people.

\[TD 260\]

\<\> Is ioma rud a thachras ris an fhear a bhios a muigh.\<\> Many things happen to him who goes abroad.

\<\> Is ioma té 'bhios cearbheach aig a' bhaile, 'theid gu riomhach thun na féille.\<\> Many a home-dowdy goes gay to the fair.

\<\> Is ioma té 'chuir cáil 'n a dhiosg.\<\> Many a she has put kail into his dish.

\<\> Is ioma teine beag a bheothaichear.\<\> Many a small fire is kindled.

\<\> Is ioma teine mór a chaidh as.\<\> Many a great fire has gone out.

\<\> Is ioma tónn a th' eadar thu 's tir.\<\> There is many a wave between thee and land.

\<\> Is ioma tónn a thig air a' chladach mu'n thachar sin.\<\> Many a wave will come on the shore ere that happens.
Many a shot goes into the heather. Donald can tell many a tale of Messrs Briggs & Co.

It’s wonderful how curt you are, not being a poet’s son.

Everyone likes his like. Adar o’r unlliw a hedant i’r unlle—Birds of one colour fly together. Pob byw wrth ei ryw yr aeth—Every living joins its kind.—Welsh.

Is ionann aithreachas-criche ‘s a bhi ‘cur sil mu Fheill-Màrtainn.<eng> Death-bed repentance is sowing seed at Martinmas.

A mouthful of poison is as good as a draught.

A needy man is even as a madman. See <gai>’B’ fhearr suidhe’.

Silence is often an answer.—Arab.

Silence is consent.


Noisy are the empty bags.

Macintosh’s translation is, ‘Loud is the bouncing of the blown-up bladder,’ which is free but felicitous. The bag, to make a noise, must have been made of skin of some sort.

Weak is the grasp of the downcast.

Weak is shoulder without brother, When men are meeting one another. Berr er hverr á baki, nema sér bróður eigi—Bare is one’s back, unless he have a brother.—Iceland. (Saga of Burnt Njal.) See <gai>’Clanna nan Gàidheal,’<eng> and <gai>’Is maol’.

Is làdir òglach deadh thighearna.<eng> A good master’s servant is strong.
Al. <gai>Is math gille deadh thighearna.<eng>
Corn him weel, he’ll work the better.—Scot.

<gai>Is làidir tathunn coin ’s a shàth ’n a bhroinn.<eng>
A dog barks loud with his belly full.

<gai>Is le duine an greim a shluigeas e, ach cha leis an greim a chagnas e.<eng>
What one swallows is his own, but not what he is chewing.
This is going further even than the ’Twixt cup and lip’ saying.

<gai>Is leam fhein an gleann, ’s gach ni ’ta ann.<eng>
The glen is mine, and all that’s in it.
These words have given its name to one of our favourite pibrochs, certain to be heard at any Highland gathering. The saying seems to be a curious parody on the well-known verse,
The earth belongs unto the Lord,
And all that it contains.

<gai>Is léigh fear an ath-chneidh.<eng>
A man is surgeon for his second wound.

[TD 262]

<gai>Is leigheas air gach tìnn
Cneamh ’us im a’ Mhàigh;
Ol ‘an fhochair sid
Bainne-ghobhar bán.<eng>
Garlick with May butter
Cureth all disease;
Drink of goats’ white milk
At same time with these.
The garlick here mentioned is the wild kind, commonly called ‘ramsons’ in England, which is found in most parts of Scotland. Its medicinal virtues are well known; but, like many other plants, once valued and used by our Highland ancestors, it is now quite superseded by pills and doses prepared by licensed practitioners. May butter is always the finest, the pastures then being in their most delicate and fresh condition. Goats’ milk also has always been supposed to have some special virtues. Goat-milk whey is now run after in some parts of Switzerland as a specific cure for certain affections of the chest.

<gai>Is leis a’ Ghobha fuigheall éibhle;
Is leis an Léigh salach a làmh;
Is leis a’ Bhàrd a theanga fhéin;
Is leis an t-Saor a shliseag bhàn.<eng>
To the Smith belong the embers;
To the Leech soiled hands;
To the Bard belongs his tongue;
To the Carpenter white chips.

<gai>Is leis a’ mhèirleach mhath na cheileas e, ach cha leis na ghoideas e.<eng>
What the clever thief conceals is his, but not all he steals.

<gai>Is leis an fhitheach a’s moiche ’dh’éireas sùil a’ bheothaich anns an fhéith.<eng>
The raven that rises first will get the eye of the beast in the bog.
See <gai>’Am fitheach’.<eng> This version is more rhythmical. It is not so pleasant as the ‘early bird’ proverb, but it is more forcible.
Lazy is the hand that ploughs not.

'Must' is a lazy thing.
Muss ist ein harte Nuss—Must is a hard nut.—Germ.

Loath is the lazy to go to bed, seven times loather to rise.
Litcheragh goll dy lhie, litcheragh dy irree, as litcheragh dy gholl dys y cheeill Jedoonee.—Manx.
Ever sick of the slothful guise,
Loth to bed and loth to rise.—Eng.

The roe is swift enough without setting the dogs at her.
See 'Cha deic'.

The blind can see his mouth, though blind his eye.

The hammer-less woman sees many limpets.

The milking of cows is a small matter, compared with the making of butter and cheese, and the whole management of a dairy, which requires brains as well as hands.

'Itis a bare beach where the wilks can be counted.
See 'Is cruaidh an t-Earrach'.

It’s a bare stone from which he can pick nothing.
Al. <gai>air nach buaineadh tu bAIRNEACH—on which you wouldn’t get a limpet.
In other words, he is a skinflint.

Bare is the eye without eyelash.

The tongue of the balance is bare.
Mjótt er mundangs hófit—Narrow is the mean of the balance.—Icel.

Quicker is drink than story.
Al. <gai>Is gjorra deoch, &c. Shorter is drink.
'S girrey jough na skéal.—Manx.
A drink is shorter than a tale.—Scot.
This saying appears to be of purely Gaelic origin, though it found its way into the Lowlands, and from thence was duly translated into English. The very word ‘tale,’ in the Scottish and English version, shows it to be a translation, and does not fully represent its meaning, which includes news and information of any kind. There is no saying more characteristic of Highland ideas of hospitality, of which one of the first laws is to offer a drink of some kind, the best in the house, whatever it be, to a visitor. Mr. Hislop with all his sagacity and knowledge of Proverbs, seems to have misunderstood this one. He calls it ‘an excuse for drinking during the telling of a story’. I have heard the saying hundreds of times in the Highlands, but never once in that sense. The proverb first appeared in print, so far as I can trace, in Allan Ramsay’s collection of Scottish Proverbs, 1736. That was long before Macintosh’s collection of Gaelic ones, but it does not follow that it was not a translation from the Gaelic. It first appears, so far as I know, as an English proverb, in Mr. Hazlitt’s valuable compilation (1869), along with a large number not only of Scottish, but even of Latin, proverbs, which Mr. H. thinks it proper to call “English Proverbs”. Being of opinion, apparently, that no good thing can grow in Scotland, Mr. H. ventures to say that “the Scots appear to have as few proverbs of their own as they have ballads,” a statement which sufficiently shows that his knowledge is not quite equal to his pretensions.

Canon Bourke says (Ir. Gr., 289) this proverb is “suggested by the ancient practice of giving story tellers a drink before they began to rehearse their tales”.

Is luaithe féum na sìde; faodaidh a’ chaora, &c.<eng>
Need is quicker than weather: the sheep may die, &c.
See Is faodaidh a’ chaora.<eng> A worthy Lochaber man had a flock of goats, which he went to look after one day in Spring, after a very severe Winter. He found them lying here and there, dead or dying. Thig side mhath fhathasd,’<eng> said he, U thig! ach an Diabhol mìr dhìbhse ’chì e!<eng>—Good weather will come yet, O yes! but Devil a bit of you will see it!

Is luaithe gniomh na tuarasdal.<eng>
Work is before wages.
See Cha d’ fhuair duine.

Is luaithe ròn na rionnach, is luaithe giumach na ròn.<eng>
Seal is swifter than mackerel, lobster swifter than seal.
Al. Sitheadh giumaich, sitheadh rionnaich, sitheadh ròn, na tri sithean a ’s luaithe ’s a’ chuan mhòr—Rush of lobster, &c., the three swiftest in the great ocean. The swiftness with which the lobster props himself by his powerful tail is not generally known; as a Scottish proverb shows, ‘Ye look like a rinner, quo’ the Deil to the lobster’.

Is luaithe a’ chas a bristeadh, mar a thuirt am fear a chunnaic gas rainich a’ faibh leis a’ ghaoith.<eng>
The leg that breaks is all the quicker, as the man said who saw a stalk of bracken going before the wind. There is something comical in this, though trivial.

Is luath agus mall comhairle an duine.<eng>
Swift and slow is man’s counsel.
This way and that dividing the swift mind.—Tennyson.

<gai>Is luath an tòn ’s an teid an t-eagal.<eng> He is swift on whom fear comes.

<gai>Is luath fear doimeig air fàire, latha fuar Earraich.<eng> Swift goes the slattern’s husband over the brae, on a cold Spring day. See <gai>’Aithnicheur fear doimeig’.

Is lugha na frìde màthair a’ chonnsachaidh.<eng> The mother of dissension is smaller than a mite.
The mother of mischief is no bigger than a midge’s wing.—Eng.

<gai>Is luibh-chridhe leam fhein e.<eng> It is heart’s-ease to myself.

<gai>Is maireann gus an crìon.<eng> Lasting till it wither.

<gai>Is mairg a bheireadh as a’ chlachan thu!<eng> Pity him who would bring you back from the church!
Said of ineligible young women—a saying belonging to the time when Highland marriages were performed in church.

<gai>Is mairg a bhiodh a’ biathadh nan each agus gun phris orra.<eng> Pity him who would keep up horses when there is no price for them.

<gai>Is mairg a bhiodh a’ breith dhaoine,’s na h-eich chogann!<eng> Pity them who would bring forth men, when horses are so scarce!
That is, useless men.

<gai>Is mairg a bhiodh ’n a chrann air dorus duin’ eile.<eng> Pity him who is a bar on another’s door.
The <gai>’crann’<eng> is a wooden bar fastened across the door when the inmates go out—the ordinary way of closing a Highland cottage. A person who helps to keep other people’s doors closed as well as his own, is not to be envied.

<gai>Is mairg a chailleadh a’s t-Earrach e.<eng> Pity him who would lose him in Spring.
Said of a good workman or horse.

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<gai>Is mairg a chaillear ’s an an-uair!<eng> Alas for him who is lost in the storm!

<gai>Is mairg a chitheadh adhaircean fad’ air a’ chrodh ghuineideach.<eng> Pity him who would see long horns on the butting cow.
Al. <gai>Is math nach ‘eil adhaircean fad’ air na bà luinneanach<eng>—It’s well that the frisky cows haven’t long horns.
The puttin’ coo should be aye a doddy (hornless).—Song by Sir A. Boswell.

<gai>Is mairg a chuireadh a lâmh gun aobhar ’am bial a’ mhadaidh.<eng> Pity him who would put his hand without cause into a dog’s mouth.

<gai>Is mairg a chuireadh ’an toiseach na luing’ thu.<eng> Pity him who would put you in the ship’s bow.
As pilot, or look-out man.

<gai>Is mairg a chuireadh an ùir air sùil a charaide.<eng>
Pity him who would put the earth on the eye of his friend.
Who would do him to death.

Woe to him that puts all his trust in any mortal sprung from dust.

Pity him who puts his means where he cannot get it out.

Pity him who turns his back on his own people.

Woe to him who vexes the weak.

Pity him who would pamper his calf, and sharp disease following.
Applied to spoiled children.

Pity him that makes a byre of his belly.

Woe to him that would rejoice at another’s grief.

Pity him that would trust the long Autumn night to him.
This was said, no doubt, of a notorious reaver or thief.

Woe to him who would wish a ruined home to any one.

Pity him who would burn his house before the sack.

Pity him who would burn his harp for you!
This alludes to the story of a Hebridean harper, who having nothing else
to make a fire with to warm his wife, broke his harp in pieces and burned
it. His wife’s heart, it seems, was colder than her body, as she ran away
with another man before morning! This story forms the subject of one of
Hector McNeill’s poems.
The word ‘tiompan,’ tympanum, is used in the Scottish and Irish
Gaelic Bible as the translation of timbrel, but the Dictionaries give it
as a term for ‘any musical instrument’.

Woe to him that does as much ill as he can.

Woe to him who makes a bad habit.

Pity him that despises his food.
'Twere pitiful to go begging bannocks, with plenty of one’s own. The bannock here referred to is the 'Bannag-Challuinn' or New-Year cake, called in Brittany 'Calanna,' or 'Calannat,' in Wales 'Calenig,' given as a New-Year gift to those who came on New-Year’s night, chanting certain rhymes. The Highland and Breton customs in this matter are very similar.

Alas for tender infant’s mother, when Beltane falls on Thursday. This is one of the superstitious fancies of which no explanation can be given.

Pity him that stretches the needy hand to the hen-hearted.

Pity the one who comes to the land where a partition won’t spin a distaff. This absurd saying was uttered by a half-witted young woman, who had a good and too kind mother. The young woman was fond of going out ‘air chéilidh,’ to make long calls, and she would leave her distaff with its wool on it resting against the partition-wall, that divided the ‘but’ and ‘ben’. Her worthy mother would take it herself, spin the wool, and leave the distaff where her daughter left it; and the foolish creature believed that the spinning was done for her by some supernatural means. At length her mother died, and the poor girl went for some time to friends at a distance, where she tried the old trick with her distaff, and, to her disappointment, found it on her return just as she left it. Then she made the above remarkable observation. It is applied to lazy or silly people, who expect to have their work done for them.

Pity him who goes to the shore, when its own birds are forsaking it. Who goes in search of shellfish.

Pity to him that would forsake his dear friend.

Woe to her who would forsake her constant love, for the stranger of one night.

Pity those who have them; pity those who haven’t them. This refers to children, and reminds of the advice about marriage, ‘You’ll repent if you marry, and you’ll repent if you don’t!’ The Lowland Scottish saying, though kindly, is rather too frugal—Waly, waly! bairns are bonnie;
Ane’s eneuch, and twa’s ower mony.

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Is mairg aig am bi ’n tighearna fann;
Is mairg aig am bi clann gun rath;
Is mairg aig am bi ’m bothan gann;
Ach ’s miosa ’bhí gun olc no ’mhath.
’Tis ill to have a pithless lord;
To have children without luck;
Ill to dwell in bothy poor;
But worst is, neither ill nor good.

Is mairg air an tig na dh’fhuilingeas.
Pity him on whom comes all that he can suffer.

Is mairg air nach bi eagal na bréige.
Woe to him that fears not to lie.

Is mairg do ’m bial-iochd sùil a’ choimhich.
Pity him who is an object of pity to the stranger.

Is mairg do ’n cuid cuid duin’ eile.
Pity him to whose goods belong to another man.
Al. Is mairg do ’m faodail, &c. The meaning is that it is ill for him who has nothing but what he picks up of another man’s property.

Is mairg do ’n dual am póll itheadh.
Pity him whose birthright is to eat dirt.
This is a forcible way of expressing the disadvantage of being born of bad blood.

Is mairg do ’n dùthchas droch ghalar.
Sad is the inheritance of a bad disease.

Is mairg do ’n sguaban-stòthadh bó mhaol odhar Mhic-Ghill-Eoinidh.
Pity him whose resource is MacGillony’s hornless dun cow.
Macintosh says that MacGillony was a famous hunter in the Grampians, and that several vestiges of his temporary huts are still to be seen (1785) in the mountains of Atholl. His dun cow was the wild mountain doe. The text of this proverb in Macintosh is puzzling and unintelligible. ’Is mairg g’a ’n scuab bun staghail bo mhaol odhar Mhicalonabhaidh,’ translated, ‘Woe to him whose main support is the white cow of Macgilony’. The word ’staghail’ is unknown, and the assonance required a word in which ’o’ is the first vowel, which supplies. ’Stòthadh’ means the cutting of corn short, as would be done for a hasty supply. The MacGillonies belonged to the Clan Cameron, but
originally, as the name implies, were allied to the MacLeans. See Gregory’s Hist. of the W. Islands, p. 77.

<gai>Is mairg ’g am bi càirdean fann.<eng>Pity him who has weak friends.

<gai>Is mairg ’g am bi comhaltas gann, ’us clann gun rath.<eng>Pity him who has few foster-friends, and luckless children.

<gai>Is mairg nach beathaich a thruaghan.<eng>Woe to him who won’t maintain his own poor creature.
This good old sentiment sometimes receives sad illustration in our Courts, in Poor Law and Filiation cases.

<gai>Is mall a mharcaicheas am fear a bheachdaicheas.<eng>He rides slowly who observes.

<gai>Is mall adhart na leisge.<eng>Slow is the progress of the lazy.

<gai>Is mall céum nan dall.<eng>Slow is the step of the blind.

<gai>Is maol guala gun bhràthair; is lóm an làrach gun phiuthair.<eng>Bare is shoulder without brother; bare is home without sister.
See <gai>’Is lóm’.

Is marbh fear na h-eisimeileach.<eng>Dead is the dependent.

<gai>Is math a bhean-tighe ’bheir a nuas an rud nach ’eil shuas.<eng>She’s a clever housewife that can bring down what’s not up.
Al. <gai>a braigh an tighe rud nach bidh ann—<eng>—from the inner room what’s not there.

<gai>Is math a bhiodh na cait, gus an d’ thugadh na luchain na cluasan dhiubh.<eng>The cats would do well, till the mice would take their ears off.
This saying must have been invented by a man of the world.

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<gai>Is math a’ chobhair e, ach ’s bochd an sabhal e.<eng>It’s a good assistance, but a bad barn.
Said of such occupations as fishing, hunting, &c.

<gai>Is math a’ chuirt ’s am faighhear rud ri iarraidh.<eng>It’s a good court where a thing can be got for the asking.

<gai>Is math a dh’ fhimireadh an dàn a dheanamh, ’s a liuthad fear-millidh a th’ aige.<eng>The poem would need to be well made, since it has so many spoilers.
Bad reciters and carping critics.

<gai>Is math a dh’ fhóghnas fir odhar do mhnathan riabhach.<eng>Sallow lads suit swarthy lasses.
<gai>Fòiridh fear odhar do bhean riabhach.—Ir.

<gai>Is math a ghabh e tomhas mo choise.<eng>Well did he take the measure of my foot.
I have got the length of his foot.—Eng.
It’s a good market that satisfies the merchant.

The goods are good that please the merchant.

A green turf is a guid guid-mither.—Scot.

Die beste Schwieger, auf der die Gänse weiden—The best mother-in-law, on whom the geese pasture.—Germ.

It’s good manners to be silent.

It a good town (or farm) where food can be got for the asking.

Night is a good herdman: she brings all creatures home.

Al. gleidhidh i crodh ‘us caoraich ‘us cearcan—she keeps cattle and sheep and hens.

The e’ening brings a’ hame.—Scot.

This is a pretty and poetical saying; the Scottish version has perhaps a deeper meaning.

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A good housewife is a good under-hoop.

The lowest hoop on a cask is the most important of any. So long as it holds, the vessel will hold something.

It’s good sport that fills the belly.

Is math an cluich a lìonas a’ bhrù. An fheala-dhà—an spùirt.

Is math an cócair an t-acras. Hunger is a good cook.

Maith an t-anlan an t-o crus.—Ir.

Fames est optimus coqns.—Lat. Optimum cibi condimentum fames, sitis, potus.—Cic. Buon appetito non vuol salsa.—It. Il n’ y a sauce que d’appétit.—Fr.

Hunger ist der beste Koch.—Germ. Hunger er det bedste Suul.—Dan. Hunger is de beste saus.—Dutch. Hunger is the best sauce.—Eng. Hunger’s guid kitchen.—Scot.

Alexander Stewart, Earl of Mar, son of Robert III., after being defeated at Inverlochy (1431) by Donald Balloch, suffered great hardships, wandering through Lochaber. One day in Glen Roy he met a poor woman, and asked her for some food. ‘I have nothing,’ she said, ‘but a handful of barley meal, to which you are welcome.’ The Earl took it thankfully, and sitting down by the side of a burn, Alit Acha-na-beithich, took off one of his shoes, and mixed the meal in it with water from the stream. Thereupon he is said to have made this verse,—
Hunger is a cook right good,
Woe to him who sneers at food,
Barley crowdie in my shoe,
The sweetest food I ever knew.

<gai>Is math an ealag a’ chlach gus an ruigear i.<eng>
The stone is a good chopping-block till it’s reached.

<gai>Is math an fhiacal a bhi roimh ’n teanga.<eng>
It is well that the teeth are before the tongue.
Da daint rhag tafod—Good are teeth before tongue.—Welsh.
The mouth is the tongue’s prison.—Arab.

<gai>Is math an gléus toil.<eng>
Will is a good putter-in-trim.
See <gai>‘Far am bi toil’.

[TD 273]
Is math an latha ‘ni a’ madadh-ruadh searmoin.<eng>
It’s a fine day when the fox turns preacher.
Quando la volpe predica, guardatevi, galline!—Ital.
See Reynard the Fox.

<gai>Is math an naigheachd a bhi gun naigheachd.<eng>
No news is good news.

<gai>Is math an rud a thig ri ’mhithich.<eng>
It’s a good thing that comes in season.

<gai>Is math an rud air an tig piseach.<eng>
It’s a good thing which luck follows.

<gai>Is math an saoghal seo ma mhairas e.<eng>
This is a good life if it would last.
<gai>Is maith a saoghal è, ma mhairteann se a bh-fhad.<eng>—Ir.
It’s a guid eneuch warld, if it haud.—Scot.

<gai>Is math an sgàthan sùil caraide.<eng>
A friend’s eye is a good looking-glass.
<gai>Is maith an sgathan sùil charad.<eng>—Ir. Drŷch i bawb ei gymmydog—
One’s neighbour is his mirror.—Welsh.
The best mirror is an old friend.—Eng.
The image of friendship is truth.—Arab.
No ay mejor espejo que el amigo viejo.—Span.

<gai>Is math an t-aighear a bhi glic.<eng>
To be wise is good cheer.
Understanding is a well-spring of life.—PROV. xvi. 22.

<gai>Is math an t-aoidh a thig sonas ri ’linn.<eng>
He is a good guest who brings good luck.
Al. <gai>Is olc an t-aoidh a ’s misd’ an tigh.

Is math an t-each a thoilicheas am marcaiche.<eng>
He’s a good horse that pleases his rider.
<gai>Is maith a t-each a shàsuigheas gach marcach.<eng>—Ir.

<gai>Is math an t-each nach tuislich céum.<eng>
He’s a good horse that never stumbles.
Is maith an gearran nach m-bainneann tuisleadh ùair èigin dò.<eng>
Ir. See <gai>'Tuislichidh’.

Is math an tóm air am bi sealbh.<eng>
It’s a good hillock on which cattle are.

Is math an tràth a dh’fhóghnas da fhéin.<eng>
It’s a good season (or meal) that suffices for its time.
Al. <gai>Is math an là a bheir e fhéin as.

Ir. See <gai>‘Tuislichidh’.

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Is math an t-uairreadair a’ bhrù, an t-sùil, ’s an coileach.<eng>
The belly, the eye, and the cock, are good timepieces.
Men of old could guess the time of day very nearly by the sun. Their
sensations informed them when it was breakfast or supper-time. The
crowing of the cock was their morning-call.

Is math an urra fear mulain.<eng>
A man with some corn is a good security.

Is math bean an deadh fhir, ach is fhearr dha a faotainn math.<eng>
The good man’s wife is good, but it is best if he find her good.
That is, find her good, instead of making her good.

Is math conach.<eng> Wealth is good.
<gai>'Conach’<eng> is a word obsolete in our vernacular.

Is math cruinneachadh na pille farsuinn.<eng>
Good is the gathering of the wide winnowing-cloth.

Is math cuid na ciad oidhche roimh ‘n ath-oidhch’.<eng>
The first night’s stock is good for the second night.
It is good to have so much that the first night’s provisions may be
spared for next night.

Is math dhuts’ an t-sùil nach fhaca.<eng>
Good for you the eye that saw it not.
A curious form of expression, meaning, ‘It’s well for you that So-and-so
didn’t see you’.

Is math do chù nan gobhar nach robh cù nan caorach ann.<eng>
Good for the goat-dog that the sheep-dog was not there.
The sheep dog would be the superior officer.

Is math esan a bhi ann gus a’ chas a chur air.<eng>
Good that he was there to get the foot set on him.
Al. <gai>gus a’ choire ’chur air<eng>—to get the blame.

Is math far an saoilear.<eng>
It’s well to be well thought of.
Lit. It’s well where it’s supposed. The meaning is, that there is an
advantage in getting credit, however erroneously, for more than is
possessed.

Is math gach fliuch air a’ phathadh.<eng>
Whatever is wet is good for thirst.
Al. <gai>Lag no láidir, ’s math gach fliuch,<eng> &c.—Weak or strong,
what’s wet, &c.
Every fruit is good of its own taste.

Every shot is good that hits the mark.
Lit. goes through the board.

Dun butter does for sowens.
Like to like.

A blacksmith’s daughter is a good match for a tinker’s grandson.

The more hands the better, except round this dish.
Lit. goes through the board.

Said to have been a warning given by an attendant who brought in a poisoned dish.

Well if it last.

Fire, Wind, and Water, are good servants, but bad masters.

Said to have been a warning given by an attendant who brought in a poisoned dish.

Lively is the early riser.

Trews like to be among clothes; I like to be among my people.

A fat dish to the priest is the clerk’s wish.

A bad friend has often had a glib tongue.

One spotty-legged lad has more appetite that seven pregnant women.

Sweet is a hot finger, but not to be desired.

Meal is finer than grain, women are finer than men.

A bad friend has often had a glib tongue.
A quick judgment is often wordy.

Good sword has often been in poor scabbard.

The calf’s skin often goes to market before his mother’s.

As soon comes the lamb’s skin to the market as the auld tup’s.—Scot. So Eng., Germ., Port.

A rotten stick is often nice to look at.

Often has a shoemaker’s wife had bad shoes.

Many a good cow hath an evil calf.—Eng.

[Greugais]-Gr. Heroum fillii noxii—Lat.

A skittering cow has often had a good calf.

The slender-legged cow has oftenest a large udder.

A man without a dog or gun has often got a chance at game.

‘Well-deserved’ has often been empty-handed, and ‘Little matter’ well-off.

A great sea has often run in a narrow strait.

The Devil is often attractive.

The Prince of Darkness is a gentleman.—K. Lear, III., 4.
A silly has often been lucky.
Al. <gai>air mall-thriallair<eng>—a slow traveller.

<gai>Is minig a bhà sùil-chruthaich air liana bhòidheach.<eng>
A fair meadow has often had a quagmire.

<gai>Is minig a chaifth a’ màs á soitheach dìonach.<eng>
The bottom has often gone out of a tight vessel.

<gai>Is minig a chaibh bodach làir, agus a rinn e treabhadh.<eng>
An old man has often lost a mare, and done his ploughing.

<gai>Is minig a dh’ éirich muir gharbh a plumanach.<eng>
Rough sea has often followed noise of surge.
A muffled roar from the sea at night in calm weather often precedes a
storm. The word <gai>‘plumanach’<eng> is also applied to a chopping
sea, which, when seen in a calm, is a sure sign of coming storm.

<gai>Is minig a dh’ fhàg lamhan luath cluasan goirid.<eng>
Quick hands have often made short ears.
Alluding to the old punishment of cropping the ears.

<gai>Is minig a dhìomoil an ceannaiche ’n rud ’bu mhath leis ’n a
mhàileid.<eng>

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The merchant has often dispraised what he would like to have in his pack.
Al. <gai>Is minig a chàin am marsant' am bathar,<eng> &c.
It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer.—PROV. xx. 14.
The ‘merchant’ generally referred to in these proverbs was simply a
packman or pedlar, an important person in the Highlands before shops were
common; of whom Wordsworth chose one as the hero of the Excursion.

<gai>Is minig a fhúair fear na h-eadraiginn buille.<eng>
The interposer has often got a blow.
See <gai>‘Bidh dòrn’.

Is minig an fhìrin searbh ri h-ìnnse.<eng>
Truth is often harsh to tell.
Al. <gai>Tha ’n fhìrin fhéin searbh air uairean.

Is minig a thainig boganach á blàthaich.<eng>
Butter-milk has often made a bumpkin.

<gai>Is minig a thainig air laogh mear, galair nach do shaoil a
mhàthair.<eng>
A merry calf has often taken a disease which his dam never dreamed of.

<gai>Is minig a thainig flor á fanaid.<eng>
Mockery has often turned to earnest.
See <gai>‘Is tric a chaìdh’.

Is minig a thainig gnothach na bain-tighearana gu bothan cailleach nan
cearn.<eng>
The lady’s affairs have often found their way to the hen-wife’s bothy.
See <gai>‘Faodaidh gnothach’.

Is minig a thainig meathadh o mhathadh.<eng>
Forgiveness has often caused degeneracy.
A good mill has often wanted water.

A chooser has often taken the worse.

What was got with importunity has often been given away with swagger. Rhoi ‘r dorth a gofyn y dafell—To give the loaf and ask for the slice.—Welsh.

The folly of age is worse than the folly of youth. See ‘Cha ‘n ’eil amadan’.

The whistle is worse than the cry. The whistle of a thief or cateran.

Fear is worse than fighting. A wise and manly sentiment.

Carelessness is worse than theft. More loss is caused by the one than by the other.

Too much is worse than want. Per con. ‘S mios’ an t-uireasbhuidh na tuille ‘s a chòir—Want is worse than too much. There is some truth in both these, combined in the prayer of Agur, ‘Give me neither poverty nor riches’.

The security is worse than the principal.

Ill-placed trust is worse than none.

He that cloaks the thief is worse than him.

The wee man is worse than a Frenchman. This is said to have been spoken of a little Strathspey man called John MacAndrew, a noted Bowman, who shot down his enemies one after another, as they appeared at the door of his house, which they had invaded. See Cuairtear, 1842, p. 131.

This is worse than the alum! A Highland minister once ordered some ‘sugar-candy’ from Glasgow by a little ‘merchant,’ one of his parishioners. When the sugar was tried, it turned out to be alum. The minister was naturally displeased, and to soothe him, the shop-keeper, on the advice of a knowing brother of the
minister, determined to bring a peace-offering to the manse, in the shape of a small 'pig' of Ferintosh. Not feeling sure of his reception, however, he hid the

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jar outside, while he went in to make his call. The worthy minister was easily appeased, and Donald hastened out for the great reconciler, and proceeded at once to fill out a glass. To his astonishment, the minister had no sooner tasted than he spat it out again, exclaiming, with a strong interjection, <gai>"'S miosa so na 'n t-alum!'"<eng> The parson's wicked brother had emptied the jar, and filled it with salt water.

<gai>Is misde na bochdan a bhi lionmhor.<eng>
The poor are the worse of being numerous.

<gai>Is mis' a bha thall 's a chunnaic e, 's a thàinig a nall 's a dh'innis e.<eng>
'Tis I that was over and saw it, and came back and told it.

<gai>Is mithich a bhi 'bogadh nan gad.<eng>
It's time to be steeping the withes.
This native Gaelic saying, meaning 'It's time to be going,' belongs to the time when withes of birch or osier were used for halters and all the fastenings of horse harness (See note to 'An gad'). These withes would become stiff and brittle, if laid by for some time, and would therefore be steeped for a while before taking to horse. There is an Ulster saying in the same words.

<gai>Is mò am fuaim na 'bhuil.<eng>
The noise is greater than the effect.
Nid cymmaint Bleddyn a’ i drwst—Bleddyn is not so great as his noise.—Welsh.
Plús sonat quam valet.—Seneca.
See <gai>'Fuaim mór'.
Is mò an-t-sùil na ’bhrù.<eng>
The eye is bigger than the belly.
Al. <gai>Is mò ùn do shùla na lùn do bhroinn<eng>—The fill of your eye is more, &c.
His eye is bigger than his belly.—Eng.
Die Augen sind weiter denn der Bauch.—Germ.
De oogen zijn groter dan de buik.—Dutch.
The eye is not satisfied with seeing.—ECCL. i. 8.
The dust alone can fill man’s eye.—Arab.
He’ll hae eneuch some day when his mouth’s fu’ o’ mools.—Scot.

<gai>Is mò do mhóll na do shìol.<eng>
Your chaff is more than your grain.

<gai>Is moch a dh’ éireas am fear a bheir an car as.<eng>
He will rise early that outwits him.

<gai>Is moch a dh’ éireas am fear nach laidh.<eng>
He rises early who goes not to bed.

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<gai>Is mòid a’ mhuir Löchaidh.<eng>
The sea is the bigger of Lochy.
The Lochy, a fine river flowing out of a lake of the same name, falls into the sea near the base of Ben Nevis.

It's the bigger of that, as the wren said when he added a drop to the sea.

Scottish Proverb to same effect.

A thing is the bigger of being shared.
A generous sentiment.

Much may be done under a good man’s hand.

Meikle maun a guid heart thole.—Scot.
Were na my heart licht I wad dee.—Burns.

The irony of this is delicate. It is applied to persons so mighty that no house or hall seems big enough for them.

There is a wise irony in this also. For the word <gai>‘tiochd’<eng> or <gai>‘teachd’<eng> the word <gai>‘toill’<eng> is used in Skye.

You made much refuse to so little grain.
See <gai>‘Is mò do mhòll’.

A sound head will come through much.

A word is big when it is lessened.
Qui s’ excuse s’ accuse.—Fr.

Of great price is patience;
Wrath declines with waiting;
Not the evil is so great,
As impatience to wait.

Great appearance and little value.

Great appearance and little value.
The slattern’s spinning-stuff looks great to her; not the bulk, but the bother.
Defnyddfawr pob anghelydd—Unskilful requires much stuff.—Welsh.

Is mór òirleach bharr sròin duine.<br>An inch off a man’s nose is a great deal.
Possibly this Celtic saying may have been known to M. About when he composed his ‘Nez d’un avocat’.

Is mór stà na h-Airde do Mhac-Shimidh.<br>The Aird is a farm belonging to the Lovat family.

Is mór toirm culce gun dol troimhe.<br>The storm of reeds is loud till you go through them.
More formidable in sound than in reality.

Is ní air leth cè dòirte.<br>Spilt cream is a thing by itself.
An irretrievable loss.

Is niarachd do’n gealladh tu ’chroich.<br>Lucky for him to whom you would promise the gallows.
Said to people whose word does not go for much.

Is obair latha duine thiodhlaiceadh.<br>To bury a man is a day’s work.
So it used to be, and not in the Highlands only. Lord Brougham’s account of the funeral of his grandmother gives an amusing illustration of this.

Is obair-latha tòiseachadh.<br>Beginning is a day’s work.
Deuparth gwaith ei ddechreu—Two parts of a work is beginning.—Welsh. See ‘Is dà thrian’.

Is odhar gach sean, ‘s is geal gach nobha, gu ruig snodhach an fhearna.<br>Every old thing is dun, every new thing white, even to the sap of the alder.
The alder when stripped of its bark is very white, but very soon the colour changes to reddish brown and dun.

Is òg an Nollaig a’ chiad oidhche.<br>Christmas is young the first night.

Is olc a bhi slaodadh cait air ’earball.<br>It’s ill to drag a cat by the tail.

Is olc a bhó-laoigh a' chreag, oidhch' air mhòr, 'us oidhch' air bheag.<br>The rock is a bad milch-cow, one night fertile, another night barren.
Al. Is corrach gob an dubhain,
Is maig do 'm bó-laoigh a' chreag,
Oidhch' air bheagan, 's oidhch' air mhóran,
'S oidhche gun a' mhòr no 'bheag.
Uncertain is the point of the hook;
Ill for him whose milch-cow is the rock;
One night little, another plenty;
Some nights neither much nor little.

<gai>Is olc a’ chliath fhearna nach toir bliadhna ’s an ursainn.<eng>
It’s a poor alder hurdle that won’t hang for a year to the post.
Al. <gai>Is olc an cabar fearna nach dean ràidhl’ air tigh<eng>—It’s a bad stick of alder that won’t make a rafter.
Alder is one of the poorest kinds of timber.

<gai>Is olc a’ chreag a thréigeas a h-eòin fhéin.<eng>
It’s a bad rock which its own birds forsake.

<gai>Is olc a fhreagradh tu ’n iochdar Thròtainnis.<eng>
You wouldn’t suit well in the lower end of Troternish.
Troternish (Trodda-ness) is a general name applied to the northern part of Skye. The climate and soil there are somewhat colder than in the rest of the Island, so that a lazy or delicate person would not do well there.

<gai>Is olc a’ ghaoth leis nach seòl cuid-eòin.<eng>
It’s an ill wind with which no one can sail.
Al. <gai> Nach séid ann an seòl fir-eòin<eng>—that doesn’t blow in some man’s sail.
It is an ill wind that blows no man to good.—Eng.
It’s an ill wund that blaws naebody guid.—Scot.

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<gai>Is olc a’ muileann a chuireas a chuid a dh ’aon taobh.<eng>
It’s a bad mill that sends all its meal one way.

<gai>Is olc a’ sgrìoban nach lìon a’ sgròban.<eng>
It’s poor scraping that won’t fill the crop.

<gai>Is olc a thig muc-saille air sóbhraichean na coille.<eng>
The fat sow is ill-fed on the primroses of the wood.

<gai>Is olc a thig saor sàr-bhuilleach, gobha crith-lamhach, agus léigh tiom-chridheach.<eng>
A heavy-handed joiner, a trembling-handed smith, and a soft-hearted leech, do not suit.
A good surgeon must have an eagle’s eye, a lady’s hand, and a lion’s heart.—Eng.
The use of <gai>’thig’<eng> = fit, without a preposition, is peculiar, and not according to present usage.

<gai>Is olc am bodach nach fheairrde cailleach eadar i ’s an dorus.<eng>
He’s a wretched old man that an old wife is not the better of having between her and the door.

<gai>Is olc am pàisd’ nach cuir sop air dóigh.<eng>
It’s a bad child that can’t arrange a wisp.

<gai>Is olc an cócair nach imlich a mhiar.<eng>
He’s a poor cook that doesn’t lick his finger.
Sá er brytinn vestr er sjalfan sik tælir.—It is the worst cook that stints himself.—Icel.

<gai>Is olc an comunn dheth ’m bi dithis diomachb.<eng>
It’s bad company with which two are displeased.
Al. <gai>an càmhuradh<eng>—the colloquy; <gai>an cluich<eng>—the game;
<gai>an gnothach<eng>—the business.
It’s a poor pair that are no match for one.

It’s bad meat that won’t take salt; worse is the body that won’t take warning.

It’s a bad stomach that its food won’t warm.

It’s a bad thing to have nothing. Proverbs of this kind must have suggested ‘Proverbial Philosophy’.

It’s a bad day’s work that won’t bring a man to port for the night.

It’s a bad oar that won’t row round a point.

The king is a bad un-friend.

He is a bad guest whom the house is the worse of. A kindly and hospitable sentiment.

He’s a bad horse that’s not worth shoeing.

It’s a poor horse that can’t carry his harness. He’s a weak baist that downa bear the saiddle.—Scot. Al. <gai>Is don’ an t-each nach giùlain a shìol—He’s a wretched horse that can’t carry his corn. Superbo è quel cavallo che non si vuol portar la biada—He’s a proud horse that won’t carry his oats.—Ital.

Bad is the tongue that’s swifter than fire.

It’s ill for the ship when the steersman sings out. To ‘sing out’ is the duty of the man at the bow; if he fail in his duty, then the ship is in great danger.

The reaver’s goods are ill to keep.

Bad is property that gets no addition. The moral is that of the Parable of the Talents.

Precious is the foot on shore. Loda il mar, e tienti alla terra.—Ital.
Now would I give a thousand furlongs of sea for an acre of barren ground!—Tempest, I. 1.

The blind of an eye is king among the blind.
In the kingdom of blind men the one-eyed is king.—Eng.
Au pays des aveugles les borgnes sons rois.—Fr.

Unter den Blinden ist der Einäugige König.—Germ.
In het land der blinden is een-oog koning.—Dutch.
En tierra de ciegos el tuerto es rey.—Span.
The one-eyed is a beauty in the country of the blind.—Arab.
In terra di ciechi beato chi ha un occhio.—Ital.

A man is king in his own house.
Hair er heima hverr—Every one is somebody at home.—Icel.
An Englishman’s house is his castle. This saying, singularly enough, is not in Mr. Hazlitt’s collection.

A man’s will is his kingdom.
My mind to me a kingdom is.—Byrd’s Psalms.
Lord of himself, though not of lands.—Wotton.
Mens regnum bona possidet:
Rex est qui metuit nihil;
Rex est qui cupit nihil;
Hoc regnum sibi quisque dat.—Seneca.

Going to ruin is silent work.
Al. <gai>Is fàs a bhi dol a dholaidh.

He is a good sportsman who kills wild-goose, and heron, and curlew.
Three particularly wary birds.

He is an old man that can tell his fortune.

Harsh is the praise that cannot be listened to; dark are the dames that none can flirt with.

Harsh is the harper of one tune.
Al. <gai>pìobair’ an aon phuirt, &c. Still harping on my daughter.—Hamlet, II., 2.

The hen is snug and quiet on her own roost.

That is spitting on your own mantle.
Wie tegen wind spuwt, maakt zijn baard vuil—Who spits against the wind fyles his beard.—Dutch.
Quien al cielo escupe, en la cara le cae—Who spits above him will get it on his face.—Span.

Is sgéul eile sin.<eng> That’s another story.
Is sleamhain an laogh a dh’imlicheas a mhàthair.<eng> Smooth is the calf that his mother licks.

Is sleamhain leac dorus an tigh-mhóir.<eng> Slippery is the flag-stone of the mansion-house door.
There’s a sliddery stane at the ha’ door.—Scot.
Ha’ binks (benches) are sliddery.—Do.

John Morrison of Bragar is said to have illustrated this saying once in a lively manner, by taking some sand out of his pocket at the door of Brahan Castle, and carefully sprinkling it on the flagstones. Being asked what he meant, he quoted the above proverb.

Is soilleir cù dubh air liana bhàin;
Is soilleir cù bànn air liana dhuibh;
Na ’m bithinn ri fiadhach nam beann,
B’e ’n cù riabhach mo roghainn.<eng> The bright field shows the sable hound;
The white is seen on dusky ground;
Were I chasing the deer in forest free,
The brindled hound my choice should be.

Is soilleir mir á bonnach slàn.<eng> Bit from a whole cake is soon seen.

Is soimeach fear-fearainn, is sona fear-ceairde.<eng> Easy lives the man of land, happy is the tradesman.
This is modern.

Is sona a chailleach a thig ri lìnn an fhaothachaidh.<eng> Lucky is the old wife that comes at the turn of the disease.
She would get credit for the cure.

Is sona am fear a thig an ceann a chodach.<eng> He is lucky who comes in time for his share.

Is sona gach cuid an comaidh; is mairg a chromadh ’n a aonar.<eng> Happy is that which is shared; pity him who fares alone.
Lit. who stoops, or bends. A good social sentiment.

Is stuama duine làimh ri ’chuid.<eng> A man is moderate near what’s his own.

Is suarach an càirdeas a dh’ fhéumas a shior cheannach.<eng> It’s poor friendship that must be constantly bought.

Is suarach uisge teth a shireadh fo chloich fhuair.<eng> It’s silly to seek hot water under a cold stone.
To seik het water beneith cauld ice,
Surely it is a greit folie;
I have asked grace at a graceless face,
But there is nane for my men and me!
Ballad of Johnie Armstrang.

Hunting is distracting, fishing is envious.

Seldom will a horse refuse his mane.

Seldom is smooth tongue without sting behind.

Belle parole, ma guarda la borsa.

Blood is hotter than water.

Blood is thicker than water.

Blood is thicker than water.

Blood is thicker than water.

Blood is hotter than water.

Blood is thicker than water.

Blood is thicker than water.

Blood is thicker than water.

Blood is hotter than water.

Blood is thicker than water.

Blood is hotter than water.

Blood is hotter than water.

Blood is hotter than water.

Blood boils without fire, is similar, but not so good.

The mantle is the thicker of being doubled.

Applied to the marriage of relatives. Here the Irish version is better.

I like the old man’s bread, but not his breath.

Most proverbs have been composed by men; this seems to be an exception, and not a pleasant one.

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The crow likes her greedy blue chick.

Two weak old women are stronger than one strong one.

Good nurture overcomes disease.

God is stronger than Doideag; Doideag is stronger than MacLean.

MacLean of Duart, the Chief of that great Clan, was of course paramount in Mull. See MacLeod’s Rem. of a Highl. Parish (2d ed.), p. 247.

Two crossing the ford are best near each other.
A rod is stronger than a club.
This is perhaps a hyperbolical way of saying that due chastisement is more effectual than extreme measures.

Tenantry are stronger than Laird.
Stroshey yn Theay na yn Chiarn.—Manx.
This is a remarkable saying, to have originated among a race distinguished by their subordination and fidelity to their natural chiefs and lords. It belongs to a time when the rights of the Clan or Tenantry were real, and believed in by themselves.

The man that knows is powerful.
Knowledge is power.—Bacon.

To be ‘evened’ is a third of courtship.
The Scotch phrase ‘even,’ to couple a man and woman in conversation as a likely match, is the only word that expresses here the meaning of ‘samhladh’.

The little are often brave.

The little is often of little account.

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A carpenter’s wife has often wanted a distaff, and a shoemaker’s wife shoes.

Fine at the fair may be mean at the fireside.

A long sword has often been in a coward’s hand.

Diligence has often been behind.
And luck in front.
Per con. <gai>Cha bhi dichioll air dheireadh.

Slatterns have often had luck, and dirty fellows got wives. See <gai>‘Gheabh foighidinn’.

Often has flaw been in a fair apple.

The big is often stupid.
Giants are always so represented in the old stories.

Hugh’s neighbour has often had the same disease as he.
This is true both physically and morally.

The rivers are often dry, while the brooks are running. Before a flood.

Often have large ships been rotting, while the little pots are floating.

Is tric a bha loingis mhóir a’ crionadh, ’s na h-amair-mhùin a’ seòladh.<eng>

Macintosh’s rendering is, ‘Oft has the object of scorn arrived at honour, and that of envy fallen into contempt’. 

Is tric a bha slaodaire beairteach, ’us caonnag air duine tapaidh.<eng>

Many a lout is wealthy, and clever man hard put-to.

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Is tric a bha sonas air bial mór.<eng>

Large mouth is often lucky. Muckle-mou’d folk has aye hap to their meat.—Scot.

Is tric a bha suaib-chuthaich air leanabh bodaich.<eng>

An old man’s child has often had a touch of madness.

Is tric a bha urrainn gun nì, agus nì gun urrainn.<eng>

The worthy has often lacked means, and means been enjoyed without merit.

Is tric a chaidh an fheala-dhà gu feala-rireamh.<eng>

Joke has often come to earnest. Mows may come to earnest.—Scot.

Is tric a chaillear fear na mór-mhisnich.<eng>

Daring often leads to death. ’S mie ve daaney, ach s’olk ve ro ghaaney—It is good to be bold, but bad to be too bold.—Manx.
Be bold, but not too bold.—Eng.

Is tric a chinn an cneadach, ’s a dh’ fhalbh an sodarnach.<eng>

The delicate often survive, while the vigorous go.

Is tric a chinn fuigheall fochaid, ’s a mheath fuigheall farmaid.<eng>

The refuse of mockery has often waxed, and that of envy waned. Macintosh’s rendering is, ‘Oft has the object of scorn arrived at honour, and that of envy fallen into contempt’. 

Is tric a bha na h-aimhnichean a’ dèabhadh, ’us na h-uillt a’ ruith.<eng>

Before a flood.
'Poor fellow' has often been crossed. Lit. 'Ill-deserved' has often got a turn.

The man with choice has often got the worse.

A gun has often got a loan-shot. It was sometimes believed that an unloaded gun might go off notwithstanding, and kill, if incautiously handled—an exaggeration of the proper horror of a reckless handling of fire-arms.

Often has one failed his fellow, who promised to be true to him.

A favour often costs more than what's hard-bought. Spesso i doni sono danni—Gifts are often losses.—Ital.

Often has great quarrel sprung from little cause.

The man of first visit has often judged truly. Glöggt es gestz augat—Sharp (gleg) is the eye of a guest.—Icel.

Bad news is often true.

Ill news is not often contradicted.

There has often been but little snow on the roof of the thief. He would probably be out at night, and have a fire kept on while honest people were in bed, which would melt the snow in the thatch.

A shameless house has its burden.

The cat is heavy if carried constantly. Children are fond of carrying cats; but even a grown-up person would tire in time of a light burden.

Ignorance is a heavy burden. Al. <gai>Is cruaidh cuing an aineolaich<eng>—Hard is the yoke of the ignorant. <gai>Is trom an t-uallach aineolas.<eng>—Ir.

'Tis heavy to chant and row. See <gai>'Cha 'n urrainn domh 'h-éigheach'.
Is tróm an uallach an aois.<eng> Age is a heavy load. 
Grave senectus est hominibus pondus.—Lat.

<gai>Is tróm buill’ an t-sean laoich.<eng> 
Heavy is the old hero’s blow. 
See <gai>‘Is fhurasda buill’”.

Is tróm dithis air aon duine.<eng> 
Two to one are heavy odds. 
See <gai>‘Cothrom’.

Is tróm dithis air an aon mhèis, gun ac’ ach an t-aon ghléus.<eng> 
Two are heavy on one dish, when there is but one ration.

<gai>Is tróm eallach gun iris.<eng> 
Heavy is the load without a rope to hold by. 
None of the Dictionaries give this meaning of the word <gai>‘iris,’<eng> 
which in the Hebrides is the common term for the rope with which a creel 
or a bundle of any kind is carried.

<gai>Is tróm gèum bó air a h-aineol.<eng> 
Heavy is the cow’s low in a strange fold. 
<gai>Is àrd gèum bó air a h-ainèolas.<eng>—Ir.

<gai>Is tróm na tubaistean air na slibistean.<eng> 
Mishaps many fall on slovens.

<gai>Is tróm snithe air tigh gun tubhadh.<eng> 
Rain-drops come heavy on a house unthatched.

<gai>Is truagh a’ bhantrach a’ phìob.<eng> 
The bagpipe is a miserable widow. 
Pipers have generally been very improvident.

<gai>Is truagh nach bu cheaird sinn gu léir an diugh.<eng> 
‘Tis a pity we were not all tinkers to-day. 
Said by Alexander MacDonell, son of Colla Ciotach (Colkitto), after 
having received great help in a fight from an Atholl tinker named Stewart.

<gai>Is truime ‘chnead na ’n eallach.<eng> 
The groan is heavier than the load.

<gai>Is tu fhéin a thòisich an toiseach, mar ’thuirt an t-amadan ris an tarbh.<eng> 
You began it yourself, as the fool said to the bull. 
The story is that a fool was passing through a field where a

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bull was pasturing, and hearing him growling, began to mimic him, which 
naturally excited the bull to give him chase, bellowing furiously. The 
fool was clever enough to get over a dyke just in time, and then, safe 
behind the wall, he addressed the bull as above. The Lowland version, 
which I have heard told in Galloway of a baronet, is, ‘Boo to yirsell’! 
Who begoo’d it?’

<gai>Is tu thilg a’ chlach air a’ chaisteal!<eng> 
What a stone you threw at the castle!
Said ironically, when some small person hits his superior.

\[\text{<gai>Is uaine fiar na faiche a \text{'}s f\text{\'}asaiche.<eng>}\]
\text{Green is the grass of the least trodden field.}

\[\text{<gai>Is uaisle t\text{\'}oll na tuthag.<eng>}\]
\text{Hole is genteeler than patch.}
\text{Per con. <gai>Is mios\text{'} an cl\text{\'}ud na \text{'}n t\text{\'}oll<eng>=The clout is worse than the hole. See <gai>'Is fh\text{\'}are br\text{\'}eid'.}\]

\text{Is uasal a bhi \text{'}n ad shuidhe, \text{'}n ad ruith.<eng>}
\text{It\text{'}s noble to be sitting and running.}
\text{Said of driving in a carriage.}

\[\text{<gai>Is uasal mac an an-uasail an tir nam m\text{\'}eirleach; is an-uasal mac an uasail, mur bi e tr\text{\'}eubhach.<eng>}\]
\text{The lowly-born is a gentleman among thieves; the gentleman\text{'}s son is no gentleman, if he be not brave.}
\text{A very characteristic sentiment.}

\[\text{<gai>Is \text{\'}urachadh atharrachadh.<eng>}\]
\text{Change is refreshing.}
\text{Caghlaa obbyr aash—Change of work is ease.—Manx.}

\[\text{<gai>Isean deiridh linne, cinnidh e no theid e dholaidh.<eng>}\]
\text{The last chicken of a brood comes to either grief or good.}
\text{In the case of the more prolific lower animals, the last of a brood or litter is generally the weakest. It is not so, however, with the youngest offspring of the higher animals, especially of human beings. But the youngest is sometimes spoiled by petting.}

\[\text{<gai>Ith do le\text{\'}or, \text{'}s na p\text{\'}oc dad.<eng>}\]
\text{Eat your fill, and pocket nothing.}
\text{Eat yir fill, but pouch nane, is gairdener\text{'}s law.—Scot.}

\[\text{<gai>Ith na \text{'}s lugha, \text{'}s ceannaich e.<eng>}\]
\text{Eat less, and buy it.}
\text{Lay yir wame to yir winnin’.—Scot.}

\[\text{<gai>Itheadh na goibhre air an nathair.<eng>}\]
\text{The goat\text{'}s eating of the serpent.}
\text{It is believed, in some parts of the Highlands, that goats eat}
\text{serpents, and that they eat them tail foremost, first stamping on the head. It is said that while the goat is thus engaged, it utters a querulous noise, not liking the wriggling of the adder. A verse in reference to this is,}
\[\text{<gai>Cleas na goibhre \text{'}g ith na nathrach, \text{'}G a slor-itheadh, \text{'}s a\text{'} slor-thalach.<eng>}\]
\text{The goat\text{'}s trick with the serpent,}
\text{Eating away, and still complaining.}
\text{Be this as it may, it is positively affirmed by persons of experience, that serpents disappear where goats pasture.}

\[\text{<gai>Itheadh nan con air a\text{'} bhlianaich.<eng>}\]
\text{The dogs\text{'} eating of the bad flesh.}
\text{For want of any better.}
Let me eat, let me drink, let me sleep. Quite a Carlylean saying, supposed to be uttered by one of the ‘fruges consumere nati’.

A stack can be eaten in cakes.

The little stacks will do when the big ones are eaten. By that time the new corn will be nearly ripe.

His head will eat his feet off. This is like the common saying about an idle horse eating his head off. It might refer also to human beings.

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Friends are good on the day of battle.

To-day drunk, to-morrow on water. La er meshtey, as la er ushtey.—Manx.

The day of lint-reaping. Nevermas, lint being never cut, but plucked up.

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The day of lint-reaping. Nevermas, lint being never cut, but plucked up.

On fair St. Bride’s day the cats will bring home the brush-wood. Another saying, apparently better founded, associates this with St. Patrick’s day, about which time (17th March) the weather is generally dry, compared with Candlemas. The Manx ‘Laa ’l Breeshy bane’ corresponds with the above.

On St. Bride’s day the nymph will come out of the hole: I won’t touch the nymph, and she won’t touch me. Al. <gai>Seachdain roimh Fheill-Brìghde, Thig nigh’n Iomhair as an tòm; Cha bhi mise ri nigh’n Iomhair, ’S cha mhò ’bhios nigh’n Iomhair riùm.<eng>

A week before St. Bride’s Day Ivor’s daughter will come out of the knoll; I won’t molest her, and she won’t hurt me. The <gai>’ribhinn’<eng> and <gai>’nigh’n Iomhair’<eng> are both euphemistic or deprecatory names for the adder; the one known in Skye, the other in Rannoch. A lady called <gai>’Nighean Iomhair,’<eng> wife of John M’Kenzie, constable of Eilean-Donnain Castle, was suspected of having poisoned there (1550) John Glassich of Gairloch, who claimed the Kintail estates. This may possibly have given rise to the application of her name to the serpent. Another version is <gai>’an niomhair,’<eng> the venomous one.
On St. John’s day in Summer, the cuckoo goes to her winter home. St. John’s day, 24th June.

On St. John’s day they call the stirks heifers. St. John’s day is ordinarily called Feill-Eathain, as the M’Leans are called Clann-’Ill-Eathain, a mere phonetic spelling of Eòin, or Iain, John, or Ian.

On St. Kessock’s day, every eel is pregnant. St. Kessock’s day is 21st March. Fairs named after this saint are still held at Callander and at Cumbrae, on or about that date. Kessock Ferry at Inverness is also named after him.

In the MS. Collection of Ewen MacDiarmid, mentioned in the Preface, of which the present editor has had the benefit, the word ‘easan,’ little waterfall, is substituted for ‘easgann’. This is intelligible, though the use of the word ‘torrach’ as applied to water is anomalous. The reference to eels is more singular, that fish being of ill-repute in the Highlands. The fresh-water eel, in particular, is never eaten in Scotland, though at one time it appears to have been largely used as an article of diet. See Innes’s Scotland in the Mid. Ages, p. 124. I have been unable to get any scientific information as to the spawning time of eels.

The moon-day. Another version of Nevermas, or the Greek Kalends.

The day of the year to be avoided. Armstrong (Dict.) says this term was applied to the 3rd of May; others say the 2nd, others the 5th. It was held unlucky to begin any important work, and unpardonable to commit any crime, on that day; for the extraordinary reason that on that day the fallen angels were believed to have been expelled from Heaven.

Goat-Latin I can understand, but speak not. Al. aig na gadhraibh—Dog-Latin. Said of people who pretend to know and say more than the hearer understands. It may possibly have been first applied to priests.

Lying long in another man’s house.

Lie still with a (sore) eye, and move about with a (sore) knee.

Black will lie on any colour, but none other will lie on black. See ‘Cha chaochail’. It appears now that this old belief is not correct, and that black will take more than one other dye, such as brown and green.
A slender-legged mare, and a stout-legged horse.

Holding the pledge by the tail.

Holding a hornless cow by the head.

By the hand of your father and grandfather! Properly, ‘Air làmh,’ &c. Martin in his Western Islands (2d Ed., p. 120), says this form of adjuration was considered very insulting. It would be more correct to say that it was an insult to be thought capable of disregarding it. Another form, ‘Làmh d’ athar ’s do sheanar ort!’ is used as a threat; and a story is told of its application by a blacksmith, who strongly suspected that his wife’s baby was a changeling, and satisfactorily proved it. He came in one day exclaiming, ‘An sithean ri ‘theine!’ The Fairy is on fire! on which the little imp, thrown off his guard, cried out, ‘O m’ òrd ’s m’ innean!’ O my hammer and anvil! The smith now saw that the creature was not only a Fairy, but a fellow-craftsman; and taking him out to the smithy, placed him on the anvil, and swinging his big hammer, said, ‘Gobha mi fhein, gobha m’ athair, gobha mo sheanair; ’s làmh d’ athar ’s do sheanar ort! an t-òrd mòr!’—Smith am I, smith was my father, smith my grandfather; thy father’s and grandfather’s hand on thee! the big hammer! Before the hammer could descend the little sprite vanished, and when the smith returned home, he found his own true and pretty child sitting cosily at the fireside!

Another version of this saying is, ‘Làmh a thart, tart do sheanar dhut!’

A long arm, and leave to stretch it.

The hands of a child, and an old man’s stomach.

A mouthful of meat, and a town-(or farm-)ful of shame.

A mouthfu’ o’ meat may be a tounfu’ o’ shame.—Scot.

Supposed to allude to a stolen egg.

The calf of the door-stall. Likely to be first attended to.

Brushwood flame, and the cry of an old woman. Both easily excited, and soon over.

Breaking the neck of his yoke will encourage the man in distress.
Stone and earth divide us!
Said of those whom one would wish to be separate from, even in the grave.

Justice melts in the mouth of the feeble.

Sorrow melts the miserable.

Follow close the fame of your fathers.
This is supposed to be Ossianic,—said by Fingal to Oscar.

Bad flesh sticks to straws.
Applied, says Macintosh, to mean or worthless people who cleave to each other.

Al. Bad flesh sticks to straws. The sap will stick to the wood, and the straw to the skate.

Broad to broad, and small to small.

This is an old rule of Gaelic orthography, devised by Irish grammarians, and in modern times upheld by some as of absolute authority, by others denounced as inconvenient and vicious. The broad vowels are a, o, u, the slender e, i, and the rule is, that where a consonant intervenes, a broad or narrow vowel must be followed by one of the same kind; e.g., 'leathan,' instead of 'leathin,' which would better represent our pronunciation; while the comparative degree of the same word is written, not 'leathne' nor 'leithna,' but 'leithne.' For an explanation and discussion of this rule, see Stewart's Gaelic Grammar, Part I., sect. 3; and for citation of the authorities on both sides, see Bourke's Irish Grammar, pp. 16-20.

Let the tail go with the hide.
The horns must be taken with the hide.—Manx.
Let the tail follow the skin. Let the horns gang wi' the hide.—Scot.

Lay your head where you’ll find it in the morning.

Let him have his tether’s length.
Give him rope enough.

Let it through the fingers.

The weight of the yard will be on the sheet.

Burning is a singular cure.
Whether this refers to the actual cautery, or to accidental burning, may be left to conjecture.

<gai>Leigheas air sùilean goirt.<eng>
A cure for sore eyes.

<gai>Léintean farsainn do na leanban òga.<eng>
Wide shirts to young bairns.
Barnið vex, en brókin ekki—Bairns wax, but the breeks don’t.—Icel.
The moral significance of this, in favour of freedom of thought to new generations, is remarkable.

<gai>Leisgeul arain gu ith’ ime.<eng>
The excuse of bread for eating butter.

<gai>Leisgeul duine ’s e air dram.<eng>
The excuse of a tipsy man.

<gai>Leth na Galldachd ort!<eng>
Half the Lowlands be upon thee!
Al. <gai>dhut<eng>—to thee.

[TD 301]

<gai>Leúm an gàradh far an isl’ e.<eng>
Leap the dyke where it is lowest.
Every ane loups the dyke where it’s laighest.—Scot.
Where the hedge is lowest, men may soonest over.—Eng.
Waar de hegge het laagste is, wil elk er over.—Dutch.
Ou la haie est plus basse on saute dessus.—Fr.

<gai>Leúm chasa tioram.<eng> A dry foot jump.

<gai>Lianar bearn mhór le clachan beaga.<eng>
Great gaps may be filled with small stones

<gai>Lianar lóng le sligean.<eng>
A ship may be loaded with shells.

<gai>Lionn-dubh air mo chridhe.<eng> Melancholy on my heart.
Lit. Black humour.

<gai>Loisgídh sinn na cruachan móra, ’s fóghnайдh na cruachan beaga.<eng>
We shall burn the big stacks, and the little ones will suffice.
This refers to peat-stacks.

<gai>Lón tuathair, ’us sguabach dheisear.<eng>
Meadow facing north, corn facing south.
The best exposure for each crop.

<gai>Losgadh do chridhe ort!<eng> Heart-burning to thee!

<gai>Losgadh sona, ’us losgadh dona.<eng>
Lucky burning and unlucky burning.

<gai>Luath no mall g’an tig am Màigh, thig a’ chubhag.<eng>
Late or early as May comes, so comes the cuckoo.

<gai>Luathas a ’s fhaisge air a’ mhaille.<eng>
Speed that’s nearest to slowness.
Raw haste, half sister to delay.—Tennyson.

Bend the twig, and the tree won't defy you.

Crowned heads go to the sod, and tillers of the soil to crowns. See I. SAM., ii. 7, 8; and LUKE, i. 52.

Lowlanders.

The way of the ghost, going round the bridge. Macintosh's translation of this saying, which Armstrong also gives, is, 'Go about the bridge as the ghost did'. The superstition here referred to is illustrated in Tam o’ Shater, where the infernal pursuers have no power to go beyond the keystone of the bridge. Another saying is, 'I came round about, the ghost’s trick; in reference to which the following story is told. A certain man was haunted by a ghost, which met him wherever he went, so that he became known in the country-side as 'Dònull Mór a’ bhòchdain'.—Big Donald of the ghost. Weary of his life, he went away to America, hoping there to be rid of his tormentor—but in vain. The very night of his arrival, the first person he met in the streets was his old friend. He cried out in amazement, 'How did you come here? '—How did you come here? ' said the imperturbable ghost. Donald in disgust returned home.

The way of the snow, coming unsought, unasked. As the storm came in Autumn, unsought, &c. Said by children on unexpectedly finding this flower, called in English St. John’s wort.

Grey St. Patrick’s wort (grundsel) will drive pain from the bone

You may take Mull from me, but you can’t take sea and land from me.

If you give me a heather pin without black or flaw in it, I’ll give you a fold of white hornless cows.
Ma bhios taod agad, gheabh thu each.

If you have a halter, you’ll get a horse.

Ma bhristeas bun-feann, bidh fios aig do cheann, co dhorchaich an tóll.

If the tail breaks, your head will know who darkened the hole.

The story is that two men went to a wolf’s den, when wolves still flourished in Scotland, for the purpose of carrying off the whelps. The den was in a cairn with a narrow entrance, through which one of the men crept in while the other stood on guard outside. Presently the yelping of the young ones called their mother to the rescue, and she bolted past the man outside, who was dexterous enough, however, to seize her by the tail while she was disappearing. So they stood, the she-wolf blocking the entrance and darkening the den, while the man outside held on like grim death. The man within finding the light suddenly obscured, called out to his companion, ‘What’s that darkening the hole’? To which the reply was made as above. See Campbell’s W. H. T., Vol. I., 273, for a Sutherland version of this story.

Ma bhuaileas tu cù no balach, buail gu math e.

If you strike a dog or a clown, hit him well.

See ‘Balach’.

Ma chaidh i do ’n allt, cha b’ ann le clùd nan soithichean.

If she went to the burn, it was not with the dish-clout.

[TD 304]

Ma chuidaith si chun a srotha, ni leis a clis-cleàd.

In a note on this in 2nd Ed. of Macintosh, it is said to be used as an apology for a woman’s going astray with a gentleman. Mr. MacAdam in his note on the Ulster version, says it is applied to such women, when they make a good marriage unexpectedly.

Ma cheannaicheas tu feòil, ceannaich feòil laoigh, ’s ma cheannaicheas tu iasg, ceannaich iasg sgait.

If you buy meat, buy veal, and if you buy fish, buy skate.

This is said to mean that you will get a good bargain in weight, as the bone in veal is soft, and that of skate is eatable.

Al. Ma tha iasg a dhìth orm, cha ’n iasg leam sgat—If I want fish, skate is no fish to me.

The Highland prejudices against certain meat and fish are sometimes very absurd. The skate is most unjustly undervalued by the natives of the western coasts of Scotland.

Ma cheannaicheas tu rud air nach ’eil féum agad, ’s éudar dhut ’an ùine ghoirid do ghoireas a reic.

If you buy what you don’t need, you’ll soon have to sell what you do need.

Ma chuireas tu do làmh ’am bial a’ mhadaidh, féumadh tu ’toirt as mar a dh’ fhaodas tu.

If you put your hand in the hound’s mouth, you must take it out as best you can.

Ma chumas tu do dhubhan fliuch ’an còmhnaidh, gheabh thu iasg uair-eigin.

If you keep your hook always wet, you’ll get a fish some time.

Ma dh’ éir’eas dut a bhi air d’ aineol,
If you chance on foreign parts,
Do not trust in female talk;
The longer after them you follow,
The more you'll be cheated hollow.

If you kindled the fire in your breast, nurse it, though you like it not.

If anybody can get anything, it's the man that keeps moving.

If you kill a beast on Friday, the Friday fate will follow you for ever.

If you pipe to MacLeod of Raasay, you will pipe to me.

This is apparently a Skye saying, but its origin has not been ascertained.

If the fox rush into the hound's embrace, who is to blame?

If you wish to live long, drink quickly after an egg.

If you deem it little, shake luck on it.

If small my foot, my sock is no bigger.

A broken bannock is as good as eaten.

See 'Cha bhi bail'.

This is a favourite expression, when one has something to tell which is not well vouched.
If fiddling be music, we have enough of it.
This was said by the famous harper, Rory Morrison (See App. II.), after having had to endure the performance of all his favourite airs by a fiddler, whose instrument he naturally looked on as a contemptible squeaking thing. 'Fidileireachd' expresses more contempt than the ordinary 'fìdhleireachd'.

Be it black, or dun, or brown, the goat loves her kid.

If this be human, its light, as the water-horse said. The story is that the water-horse came in the shape of a young man (riochd fleasgaich) out of his native element, and sat down beside a girl who was herding cattle on the banks of the loch. After some pleasant conversation, he laid his head in her lap, in a fashion not unusual in old times, and fell asleep. She began to examine his head, and to her alarm, found that his hair was full of sand and mud. She at once knew that it was none other than the 'Each-Uisge,' who would certainly conclude his attentions by carrying her on his back into the depths of the loch. She accordingly proceeded, as dexterously as she could, to get rid of her skirt, leaving it under the head of the monster. No sooner did he awaken than he jumped up and shook the skirt, crying out several times, 'Ma's duine 'tha 'n seo,' &c., then rushed down the brae, and plunged into the lake.

If you are manly, don’t be gloomy.
A very good sentiment.

If the messenger be worthy, the business is.
Al. If the embassy is judged of by the quality of the ambassador.

If it’s porridge to you, it’s not much to you.
This is one of the few specimens of Gaelic puns, and a fair one. A young man in Lochaber went to woo a young girl called Mór, Marion. The father entertained him hospitably, and after dinner proposed a smoke, saying, 'Gabhaidh sinn a nis am biadh a ghabhas os cionn gach bìdh—We’ll now have the food that goes above all food'. The stupid young man—'Do you mean porridge?' The father, disgusted by his stupidity, made the above reply, indicating that Marion was not for him.

If the horse be good, his colour is good.
A good horse cannot be of a bad colour.—Eng.
If you wish to be praised, die; if you wish to be decried, marry. This is a shrewd saying, neatly expressed.

If you wish peace, friendship, and quietness, listen, look, and be silent.

If the piping be bad, the pay is no better.

If bad be the raven, his company is no better.

If the child be bad, his rocking is no better.

If a woman but look on her left knee, she will find an excuse.

If there be a God, and no one knows whether there be, leave it between ourselves and the dirks!

The fervent prayer for fairplay of an old Highland heathen on the eve of a fight.

If I am miserable, woe’s me for Mackay!

If my money is in the mare, it will come home some day.

If you don’t care, go and share with the sow.

If you are a man of skill, let us hear your master-piece.

Whoever goes or does not go, the man of long disease will.
If the ship be broken, the rock is not whole.

If I say 'Get out!' to my dog, everybody will say it.

If a stone fall down the glen, it's in the cairn it will stop. Another case of 'like to like'.

Mac Artair Srath-churra o bhun an stoc fhearna.
Mac Arthur of Strachur, from the root of the alder.
Strachur, on Loch Fyne, is said to have been the original seat of the Mac Arthurs.

Mac bantraich aig am bi crodh,
Searrach seann-làrach 'an greigh
Madadh muilleir aig am bi min,
Triùir a ‘s meanmnaich’ air bith.
The son of a widow rich in cows,
The foal of an old mare in a herd,
The dog of a miller rich in meal,
Three of the merriest things alive.

Mac Illeathain Loch-a-Buidhe, ceann-uidhe nam mèirleach.
MacLaine of Loch Buy, the chieftain of thieves.
This epithet is shared with another great Highland chief, Camaronach bhog an ime, ceann-cinnidh nam mèirleach.

Mac-Leòid no 'n t-airgiod.
MacLeod or the money.
MacLeod of MacLeod was once on a visit to Edinburgh, and was suddenly called away, leaving his servant behind him, without any money. The servant now found that nothing but MacLeod's note, or hard cash, would avail him anywhere.

Mac mar an t-athair.
Like father like son.
Al. Mac an daidein—Dad's son.
Mab diouc'h tad (Mac an déigh daidein).—Breton.
Sic faither, sic son.—Scot.

Mac màthaireil 's nighean athaireil.
A son like the mother, and a daughter like the father.
Al. Mac ri 'mhàthair, 's nighean ri h-athair.

Maighdeann Sàbaid, 'us capull Liùnasdail.
A Sabbath maiden, and a Lammas mare.
Al. Each Samhna, 's bean Dòmhnuich—A Hallow-Fair horse, and a Sunday wife.
More showy at those times, and therefore not to be hastily chosen.
Choose your wife on Saturday, rather than on Sunday.—Scot., Eng.
Si quieres hembra, escogela el Sabado y no el Domingo.—Span.

Maise nam bonnach a bhi faisg air an teallaich.
The beauty of bannocks is to be near the fire.
The handful heaped on the sack, where it is not needed.

The omen of your hanging to you!

A bailiff acquainted with the stock, the worst to send among the flock.

Old Mrs. MacArthur’s shellfish, a crab and two wilks.

Like the old woman upon Ewen, will he, nill he.

See 'Céum air do chéum'.

Like the great windy lad—he won’t stay there or here.

Like the white horse at the mill-door, thinking more than he said.

Like the stirk at the door, waiting and listening.

As foreseen, so has been.

As you make your bed, so you must lie.

As a man makes his bed, so he must lie.

As a man leads his life, so he judges his neighbour.

Like honey on the top of the stalks.

The higher the dove goes, the likelier is the hawk to catch it.

The longer we are well, the shorter will our illness be.

The better they are, they live not the longer.

The scarcer the food, the more bounty to share it.
The swifter the storm, the stronger it is.

The least said, the soonest mended.

The more the dog gets, the more he desires.

The older the buck, the harder his horn.

The heavier the load, the tighter the shoulder-strap; the tighter the shoulder-strap, the nearer to breaking.

As the bird goes from leaf to leaf, the yawn goes from man to man.

As the tree falls, so shall it lie.

As the cattle going to the fold, some before me, some behind me.

Like blind man going through a wood,
Or walking on rough rocky slopes,
Or bark of hound in desert glen,
Is teaching to the ignorant.

I’ll make a spoon, or spoil a horn.
He’ll mak’ a spune, or spoil a horn.

For mirth to the company, as the slattern went to dance.

I’ll make a spoon, or spoil a horn.
He’ll mak’ a spune, or spoil a horn.
Like dog to cat, like cat to mouse,
The son’s wife is to his mother.

*Mar faigh fear d’ a dhùthaich, ’s math leis a bhi ma ’còinneamh.*
If a man can’t get to his country, it’s good to be in sight of it.

*Mar fhear air chàrn.*
Like a man on a cairn.
An outlaw. See *’Am fear nach mèudaich’.*

Mar Fionn nam buadh, na hhasgadh do shluagh na Fèinne.
Like peerless Fingal, a shelter to the Feinne.

*Mar gu’m biodh cearc air tòir nid.*
Like a hen in search of a nest.

*Mar gu’m biodh an teine air do chraicionn.*
As if the fire were on your skin.
*Dean sin mur a bheidheadh teine air do chraicionn.*—Ir.

*Mar gu’m biodh e air a leagadh, mar ’bha caman Neacail.*
As if it had been cast in a mould, like Nicol’s club.

*Mar is miann le broinn, bruichear bonnach.*
As the belly craves, bannock will be baked.

*Mar is toigh leis na gobhair na coin.*
As goats like dogs.

*Mar itheadh na goibhre air an dris.*
Like the goat’s eating of the brier.

[TD 313]

*Mar lus an Dòmhnuich, gun mhath, gun dolaidh.*
Like the herb plucked on Sunday, it does neither good nor ill.

*Mar mhart caol a tigh’n gu baile, tha cabhanach na maidne Earraich.*
Like a lean cow coming to a farm, is the dawn of a Spring morning.

*Mar Oisean an déigh na Fèinne.*
Like Ossian after the Feinne.
The last of his race.

*Mar thathunn coin ris an ré.*
Like dog’s barking at the moon.

*Mur madadh a’ tathfun an-aqhaidh na gealaighe.*—Ir.

*Mar thig triubhas do ’n mhuic.*
As trews become a sow.
Like a sow playing on a trump.—Scot.

*Marbhaidh droch ainm na coin.*
A bad name kills dogs.
Give a dog an ill name and hang him.—Eng., Scot.

*Marbh-phaisg ort!* Death-wrapping be on thee!
If it be you, you are sadly changed.
Quantum mutatus ab illo Hectore!—Virgil.
If thou beest he, but O how fallen, how changed!—Milton.

Good done to an old man, good to a worthless man, good to a little child, three goods thrown away.
One of the few objectionable sentiments found in these proverbs; partly true, but unchristian.

Enjoy and wear it!

Food will lure the raven from the tree.
The fool may pass for wise if he hold his tongue.
Weaken the word before you utter it, and it won’t trouble yourself or any other.

The soft brose Menzieses.
'Bruthaist' is the original of the 'kale brose o' auld Scotland,'—oatmeal with boiling water poured on it, much used formerly in the Menzies district in Perthshire, 'Apunn nam Mèinearach'. A childish Fortingall rhyme is,

He would cheat the heron of her egg, though her two eyes were fixed on him.
Said of a very greedy person.

Son of the moonless night!
The dark or interlunar time.
Son of the sun!
He spoiled a dwarf and didn’t make a man.
My wife and I at the quern.
An old man’s yawn on a hill-pasture after meat.

Yawning, wishing and not getting.

The cat’s desire is on the shore, but she won’t go for it.

The cat would eat fish, and would not wet her feet.

Letting ‘I dare not’ wait upon ‘I would,’ like the poor cat in the adage.

The wicked man’s desire, mischief to all others.

The wish above wishes of the covetous, a great share of the little.

A woman’s desire a son, a man’s desire a host;
A horse’s desire a heath, a dog’s desire snow;
A cow’s desire a shower, a sheep’s desire heat;
A goat’s desire wind, and climbing up a crag.

Rhyme is more considered than reason in some of these.

The maiden’s desire in the old woman.

Underground honey, Spring carrots.

Waste of song, reciting where not understood.

Poverty destroys lending.

The twenty-first game may spoil the twenty.

The pack-saddle will spoil the horse.

Poverty destroys lending.
One little mishap will destroy the pail.

One scabby ewe will spoil the flock.
See <gai>‘Salachaidh’.

[TD 316]

One nail will spoil the horse, and one horse spoil the team.
Al. <gai>‘crann’<eng> for <gai>‘seisreach’.<eng>
For want of a nail the shoe is lost; for want of a shoe the horse is lost; for want of a horse the rider is lost.—Eng.
Por un punto se pierde un zapato.—Span.

One cow will spoil a fold, and one woman will lead astray a town.

Forwardness spoils manners.
Al. <gai>Thig dànadas gu droch oilean.

Evil company corrupts good manners.
This is a translation of Menander’s [Greugais], quoted by St. Paul in I. Cor. xv. 33.
Truaillidh’<eng> for <gai>‘millidh’<eng> is the word in the authorised Gaelic version.

Lent meal, eating the stack under the rope.
Consuming things before the time.

A wooden minister.

The entrails of the blunter (hornless) beast on the horns of the sharper one.

A month from the first ear to the full ear, and a month from the full ear to the withered ear.

The dog-hanging month—July.

For explanation of these terms see App. IV.

[TD 317]

A month before each season, its appearance comes.
Apparently this is a correct observation.
Mìr am bial na béiste. A bite for the monster’s mouth.
Cast a bane i’ the deil’s teeth.—Scot.
This saying is probably founded on the story of the traveller and the wolves, whom he temporarily stopped by throwing out one thing after another.

Mir a chur am bial na h-éisge. A morsel for the lampooner’s mouth.

Mir’ a chuílean ris an t-seana-chu. The play of the pup with the old dog.
Al. ris an aois—with the aged.
Chwarae hen gi a chenaw.—Welsh.

Mire ri cuilean, cha squir e gus an sgal e. Play with a puppy, it ends in a howl.

Mire gach struidhear ris an t-struidhear mhór. The sport of every spendthrift with the big spendthrift.

Misg gun lionn a ’s miosa ‘th’ ann. Intoxication without ale is the worst of all.
Al. Misg an leanna nach d’ól e—The intoxication of the ale he drank not.
The meaning seems to be that stupid or disorderly conduct, without the excuse of drink, is much worse. Ale, and not whisky, was the common stimulant when this saying arose.

Mo chomain–sa ’s comain a’ mhaoir, Do mo thaobh–sa bhiodh e gann;
Is math leis comain a null,
Ach cha mhath leis comain a null ’s a nall.
The bailiff’s favours and mine would be all on one side; he likes to get, but not to give and take.
This is attributed to John Morrison of Bragar (See note to ‘Balach’), with great probability. Another version, with ‘comunn’ for ‘comain’ is,—

Cha ’n ionann ’us comunn nam maor,
Air an taobh–san nach bi fann;
’S e ’n comunn–sa tarruing a null,
’S cha chomunn ach a null ’s a nall.
Very unlike the bailiff’s fellowship,
On their own side never weak;
Draw all one way is their rule,
And ‘giff–gaff’ is the only fellowship.
Still another version is given in Duncan Lothian’s ‘Sean Fhocal’ q. v.

Mo chuid fhein, mo bhean fhein, ’us ‘tiugainn dachaidh,’ tri faclan a ’s blaisde ’th’ ann.
My own property, my own wife, and ‘come home’, three of the sweetest of words.
Al. Na tri rudan a’s mlise ’th’ ann—mo chuid fhein, &c.
Al. Mo uaildh, m’ uaildh! mo chuid fhein.
My treasure, my treasure! my own goods.

Mo chuideachda fhein, coin Thròtairnis!
My own friends, the dogs of Troternish!
See ‘Is olc a fhreagradh tu’.
Mo nàire ‘s mo leaghadh!<eng>  
My shame and my melting!

<gai>Mo thuaigne fear gun fhear-cronachaidh!<eng>  
Alas for him that has no reprover!

<gai>Mo thurus dubh a thug mi ’dh-Eirinn.<eng>  
My sad journey that took me to Ireland.  
Said in a story by a king’s daughter, transformed into a swan.

<gai>Modh na circe, gabhail ealla rithe.<eng>  
Hen politeness, letting her alone.

<gai>Mol an latha math mu oidhche.<eng>  
Praise the good day at night.  
Moyle y laa mie fastyr (mu fheasgar).–Manx.  
Ruse the fair day at night.–Scot.  
Praise day at night, and life at the end.–Eng.  
La vita il fine e ’l di loda la sera.–Ital.  
Schönen Tag soll man loben, wenn es Nacht ist.–Germ.

<gai>Mol am monadh, ’s na ruig e; diomoil a’ choille ’s na fàg i.<eng>  
Praise the moor and avoid it, dispraise the wood, and keep to it.  
Al. <gai>Mol a’ mhachair, ’s na treabh; diomoil a choille ’s na tréig<eng>–Praise the plain, and plough it not, &c.  
Al. <gai>’lombair,’<eng> for <gai>’monadh’.<eng>  
Praise the hill, but keep below.–Eng.  
Loda il mare e tienti alla terra.–It.  
Il faut louer la mer et se tenir en terre.–Fr.  
Different, but creditable, is the Welsh saying, ’Canmol dy fro, a thrig yno’–Praise thy country and tarry there.

<gai>Moladh gach fear an t-àth mar a gheabh.<eng>  
Let every one praise the ford as he finds it.  
<gai>Moladh gach duine an t-ath mur gheabhaidh se e.<eng>–Ir.  
Moyll y droghad myr hen harrish.–Manx.  
Canmoled pob y bont a’ i dycs drawo–Welsh.  
Praise the bridge as you get over.  
Ruse the ford as ye find it.–Scot.

[TD 319]

<gai>Moladh na maraig a fiachainn.<eng>  
The praise of the pudding is tasting it.  
<gai>Cruthughadh na putoige a h-ithe<eng>–The proof of the pudding is eating it.–Ir.  
The pruif o’ a puddin’ ’s the preein’ o’t.–Scot.

<gai>Moladh mairbh.<eng> The praise of the dead.  
De mortuis nil nisi bonum.–Lat.

<gai>Moladh na daoideachd.<eng> Praise from the worthless.

<gai>Molaidh an t-each math e fhéin.<eng>  
The good horse commends himself.

<gai>Mollachd an fhir a ghoid air an fhear a dh’ ionndrain–’An làmh a rinn gun dean a rithis!’<eng>  
The curse of the thief against the man that missed his own–‘The hand that did it will do it again!’
Great abroad, small at home.

Much thought of until got.

Mighty to me, but little esteemed. Said of an offensively patronizing but not superior person.

Much talk and little done.

Great cry and little wool, as the Devil said when he sheared the sow. Great cry and little wool, quoth the Devil when he sheared his hogs.-Eng.

Many shells and little meat.

In the turning of the hand the mishap will come.

The wedder of a woman without sheep is difficult to catch.
Al. <i>'s e 's saoire gheabhteadh' would be cheapest got.
Al. <i>'s e 's faoilidhe 'th' ann—is the most freely given.

The wise bird would take to swimming before he lost the power of flying.

The top of your baptism. The forehead.

But for the frost, all lands might be tilled.

But for fear of double rent, Tiree would yield a double crop. Very suggestive, and not confined to Tiree.

But for 'Were it not,' no man would be alive. Si ce n' etait le 'Si' et 'Mais,' nous serions tous riches à jamais.—Fr. If 'Ifs' an' 'Ans' were pots and pans, where wud be the tinklers?—Scot.

But for the roof-supports, the houses would fall. This is used as a retort when some stupid 'If it weren't' is mentioned.

If you are not doing ill, don’t look like it. Abstain from all appearance of evil.—ST. PAUL.

Mighty to me, but little esteemed.

Great abroad, small at home.
If ‘Were it not’ were not dead, he would have come long ago.

If you are not coming to steal my kail, don’t come for the sake of my garden.

Stealing kail-stocks out of a neighbour’s garden was part of the recognised usages on Old New Year’s Night.

If the brier were not in the way, the sheep would not go into it.

If there were none about the pot but Jock’s son and the ladle—
An aposiopesis. The omitted conclusion is, ‘I should fare better then’.

This reminds one of Posthumus and Iachimo in Cymbeline.

If you hadn’t been in my chamber you wouldn’t have seen my goods. This seems a truism, but needs to be kept in mind.

If he can’t make ale, he’ll spoil malt.
Same as making a spoon or spoiling a horn.

If he doesn’t please you, he is not married to you.

If none come but Paul, Paul will be taken; but if better come, Paul won’t be worth a piece of eight.
A piece of eight was less than a halfpenny.

If you don’t give the poor man his due, at any rate don’t mock him.

Na abair ach beag ’s abair gu math e.<eng>
Say but little, and say it well.

Na abair ’diug’ ris an ian gus an tig e as an ubh.<eng>
Don’t say ‘chuck’ to the chick till it be out of the egg.
Al. Na abair big.<eng>
Count not your chickens before they be hatched.—Eng.
Non far conto dell’ uovo non ancor nato.—Ital.

Na abair do shean-fhacal gus an toir thu do lóng gu caladh.<eng>
Don’t quote your proverb till you bring your ship to port.

Na àireamh a chaoidh an t-iasg gus an tig e as a’ mhuir.<eng>
Never count the fish till they come out of the sea.
Na beannuigh an t-iasg go d-tiocaidh se a d-tir.<eng>—Ir.

Na bi ’bogadh do liob ’s an lite nach òl thu.<eng>
Don’t be dipping your lip in the porridge you sup not.

Na bi ’g a shireadh ’s ’g a sheachnadh.<eng>
Don’t be seeking and shunning it.
An excellent advice to shilly-shallying people, of either sex.

Na bi teann orm, ’s na bi fada bhuam.<eng>
Don’t be near me, and don’t be far from me.
This was said by a Highland Catechist, the prototype of <gai>Lachunn-nan-Ceistean<eng> of Dr. MacLeod’s Dialogues. On one occasion he went to Inverness, accompanied by his wife, whom he did not think sufficiently presentable in ‘society’. The above was the characteristic direction given to her.

Na biodh do theanga ann ad sporan.<eng>
Let not your tongue be in your purse.
The meaning of this is not obvious at first, but it is good advice.

Na buail ach mar a bhiadhas tu.<eng>
Don’t strike but as you feed.
Strike as ye feed, and that’s but soberly.—Scot.
‘A reproof,’ says Kelly, ‘to them that correct those over whom they have no power.’

Na caill am màgh air a’ chluain.<eng>
Lose not the field for the meadow.

Na creid an droch sgéul gus an dearbhair i.<eng>
Believe not the bad report till it be proved.

Na creid gu’r h-aithne dhut duine, gus an roinn sibh creach.<eng>
Don’t suppose that you know a man till you come to divide a spoil with him.
A very shrewd observation, applicable equally in the 19th century, whether to potentates or private persons.
Don’t throw the dirty water out till you bring in the clean.

Put not your sickle without leave into another man’s corn-patch. | Another man’s standing corn.
--- | ---

Don’t put your hand ’twixt the stone and the turf.

Don’t put your spoon in kail that’s not yours. | Other folk’s kail.
--- | ---

Don’t make me run down a decline, | Excellent advice from a horse to his rider or driver.
Don’t urge me going up a hill, | Let me not drink when I’m hot.
But spare me not on level ground. | Lit. What is not your own will not be sufficient for you.

The little cogs sailing and the big ships sinking.

Despise not what is your own; nothing else will suffice you.

Boast not of another’s means.

Let no man despond of hitting the mark.

Forsake not a friend in the fray.
Don’t spill it; the hens won’t pick it up.
Said of the spilling of drink.

Don’t trust the rabble.
The ‘many-headed beast’. The maker of this Proverb may have read Plato, but it is not very likely.

Don’t go upon Monday,
Stir not upon Tuesday,
Wednesday is nervous,
Thursday is dilatory,
Friday is not fortunate,
And it is not right for thee to go to-morrow.
This is called ‘Trial a’ bhodaich as a thigh,’ a wife’s reasons for not letting her husband go away. Another version of the first part is—

Siubhal Dòmhnuich na toir bhuat,
Diluain na éirich moch,
Tom-sgaradh Dimàirt,
Leig seachad na trì làithean sin.

Don’t skin the deer till you get it.
First catch your hare.—Mrs. Meg Dods.

Take no woman for a wife in whom you cannot find a flaw.
Take no faultless wife.—Ir.
This is an admirable saying, which I have not found in any other language. The Irish version is more laconic.
He is lifeless that is faultless.—Eng.

Cut not thy throat with thine own tongue.
Take heed that thy tongue strike not thy neck.—Arab.

Don’t give in to spells—they won’t give in to you.

Tell not thy mind to thy foolish friend, nor to thy wise enemy.
Tell not all your mind to your wife or your companion.
Al. Trust ye not in a friend; . . keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom.—MICAH vii. 6.
He is master of himself who keeps his secret from his friend.—Arab.
Open not thine heart to every man.—Sirach, VIII., 19.
Que ta chemise ne sache ta guise.—Fr.
Di’ all’ amico il tuo segreto, e ti terrà il piè sul collo.—Ital.
A quien dices tu puridad, a ese das tu libertad.—Span.

Don’t eat the broken bannock, nor break the whole one.
A story is told of a hungry servant-maid to whom her mistress gave the
above order, when the girl told her, in the harvest field, that she was
fainting for hunger. The mistress said,

Go home, and eat your fill,
Eat not the bannock that’s broken, &c.
The girl thought she was justified in evading this prohibition, by taking
enough to appease her hunger out of the centre of the whole bannock.

Neither eat nor refuse the child’s bit.
Very good manners.

Were I an Islander I should be an Islay man; and were I an Islay man, I
should be a Rinns man.
This should compensate for the ill opinion of Islay men expressed in
‘Cha ‘n ‘eil ‘an cùil,’ &c. The Rinns of Islay, like the Rinns
of Galloway, is a low-lying and fertile tract of land, compared with the
upper country. The Gaelic is ‘Roinnean,’ n. pl. of
of which gen. is ‘ranna,’ whence
‘Rannach’.

If you laid an egg, you would cackle.

If the right had been maintained, King George had not in London reigned.
This is comparatively modern, but has the proper ring of a popular
saying, now harmless.

Had the tail been tougher, the tale would have been longer.
This is the abrupt wind-up of a story, of which there are various
versions, where the whole depends on the strength of the animal’s tail,
which gave way at the critical moment. See Campbell’s West Highl. Tales,
II. 477. The English admits of a play on words, which is not in the
Gaelic.
If the cat had standing milk, she would often go to try it.

If my dog were as ill-bred as you, the first thing I should do would be to hang him.

If I had a dog as daft, I wud shoot him.—Scot.

If the dogs had eaten your dinner, and run off with your supper, you would not be so merry.

If alive, 'twas high time. Said of one who appears, or does a thing, after long expectation and delay.

Good if it lasted.

If you liked me you would like my voice.

If another man had done it, it’s I that would avenge it! Said by a Giant, on being told by his son that Myself had hurt him, that being the name which the person gave him who inflicted the punishment on the innocent, and (as usual) stupid young Giant. For another version of the story, see Campbell’s W. H. T., II. 189.

If a son, ‘twas high time. Applied to the birth of an heir long looked for.

If you liked myself, you would not strike my dog. See ‘Am fear a bhuaileadh’. Love me, love my dog.—Eng. He that strikes my dog wud strike mysel’, if he daur’d.—Scot. Qui aime Bertrand, aime son chien.—Fr. Chi ama me, ama il mio cano.—Ital.

If you liked me, you would not think me heavy.

Were you Brian, you would cry out loudly.

If we could get butter in Spring, and cream in Summer, it’s then we should be healthy, and well off for kitchen.
A Highland housewife’s sarcasm on unreasonable men.

<gai>Na’m faighteadh ciad sagart gun ’bhi sanntach;
Ciad tâilllear gun ’bhi sunntach;
Ciad griasaich’ gun ’bhi briagach;
Ciad figheadair gun ’bhi bradach;
Ciad gobha gun ’bhi pâiteach;
’Us ciad cailleach nach robh riamh air chéilidh;
Chuireadh iad an crùn air an righ gun aon bhuille.<eng>
Were a hundred priests got, not greedy;
A hundred tailors, not cheery;
A hundred shoemakers, not lying;
A hundred weavers, not thievish;
A hundred blacksmiths, not thirsty;
And a hundred old women that never went gossiping;
They would crown the king without a blow.

<gai>Ceathrar sagart gan a bheith sanntach,
Ceathrar Frangach gan a bheith buidhe,
Ceathrar grèusaiche gan a bheith breùgach.
Sin da fhéar dheug nach b-fhuil ’s a tir.<eng>--Ir.
A hundred tailors, a hundred weavers, and a hundred millers, make three hundred thieves.—Eng.
Cien sastres, cien molineros, y cien texederos son trecentos ladrones.—Span.
Honderd bakkers, honderd molenaars, en honderd kleêrmakers, zijn drie honderd dieven.—Dutch.

[TD 329]

<gai>Na mheallam mo shlàinte!<eng>
May I forfeit my health (or salvation)!
A form of abjuration.

<gai>Na ’n deanadh mo làmh mar a dh’ iarradh mo shùil!<eng>
If my hand could do as my eye would desire!
This might be the utterance of grasping ambition, but a better interpretation makes it the yearning of a true artist towards his ideal.

<gai>Na ’n ruigeadh an daingeann an ceart.<eng>
If the strong could attain the just.
Which it seldom does.

<gai>Na ’n sealladh cù air comain.<eng>
If a dog could see his obligation.
Al. <gai>Cha sheall cù air comain. Cha chuimhnic cù comain.<eng>
None of these sayings do justice to the dog, which is a grateful animal.

<gai>Na ’n tugadh aithreachas air ais, cha deanadh neach na b’ aithreach leis.<eng>
If repentance could restore, none would make his own heart sore.

<gai>Na nì am bodach le ’chrògan, millidh e le ’spògan.<eng>
What the carl does with his hands he spoils with his feet.
See <gai>’An rud a n’.

Na phiuthair-màthar do’n t-sluagh.<eng>
A mother’s sister to the people.
A warm saying, applied to a very kind friend of the peasantry.

<gai>Na pòs a’s t-Fhoghar,
‘S dean foighidinn ’s a’ Cheamhradh,
Bidh tu cabhagach a’s t-Earrach,
‘S bidh gainn’ air aran a’s t-Samhradh.<eng>
Marry not in Autumn,
And have patience in Winter,
In Spring thou wilt be busy,
And in Summer bread will be scarce.
A bachelor’s excuses for delaying marriage.

Play, Coilt’s hard running, and Conan’s planning of the battle.

Kindle not a fire which you can’t put out.
Lit. a wisp.

Stretch not your feet further than the clothes will go.
See ‘Cha shin duine’.
Stretch your legs according to your coverlet.—Eng.
Man muss sich strecken nach den Decken.—Germ.
Steek uw voeten niet verder dan uw bed reikt.—Dutch.
Cada uno estiende la pierna como tiene la cubierta.—Span.

Nor seek nor shun the fight.
Neither shun the strife nor seek it.

This resembles, but expresses more pithily the sentiment of ‘Defence not 
Defiance’. It is an Ossianic line.

Don’t pluck a man’s beard whom you don’t know.

This is supposed to be an old man’s advice to his son about choosing a 
wife, ‘Comhairle Charmaic do ’m hac’—Cormac’s advice to his son;
and there are several versions, all with words which it is impossible to 
translate, being mostly fanciful inventions, not to be found in any 
Dictionary, but not meaningless.
Al. Na tagh Cinnebheag, ’s na tagh Ainnebheag, ’s na tagh piobaire 
nach dhath, na sir ’s na seachain i.
Na pòs Ginnebheag, ’s na pòs Innebheag; na pòs maoltach thràghadh; na pòs 
glag-air-gàrdadh; ’s na pòs maighdean Shàbaid; ach pòs bean bheag odhar, 
’n a seasamh ’an dorus a sabhail fhéin, fuath aic air fir an domhain, ’s 
gràdh aic air a fear fhéin.<eng>
The conclusion is in favour of a sallow little woman, with charms more 
substantial than birth or beauty. The son is supposed to reply— 

Na tarruing mi gun aobhar, 's na pill mi gun chliù.<eng> 
Draw me not without cause, nor return me without honour. 
An inscription for a sword.

Na tilg dhiot an sean aodach gus am faigh thu 'n t-aodach úr.<eng> 
Cast not the old clothes till you get the new.

Na tog mi gus an tuit mi.<eng> 
Don’t lift me till I fall.

Na tog mi go d-tuitidh me.<eng>-Ir. 
Dinna lift me before I fa’.-Scot.

Na tog trògbhail air an aineol.<eng> 
Don’t quarrel with a stranger.

Na toilich do mhiann gus am fiach thu do sporan.<eng> 
Try your purse before you please yourself. 
Ask yir purse what ye sud buy.-Scot.

Na toir bean á tigh mór no bó bho ghàradair.<eng> 
Don’t take a wife from a big house, nor a cow from a gardener. 
See <nasal>’Bean á tigh mór’

Na toir bó á Paibeall, ’s na toir bean á Bororaidh.<eng> 
Don’t take a cow from Paible, or a wife from Borerary. 
Paible is a farm and village in N. Uist, Boreray another island near it.

Na toir breith a réir coltais; faodaidh cridhe beairteach ’bhi fo chòta bochd.<eng> 
Judge not by appearance: a rich heart may be under a poor coat.

Na toir breith chabhagach air mac luideagach, no air loth pheallagaich.<eng> 
Don’t judge hastily of a ragged boy, or a shaggy colt. 
A raggit cowte may prove a noble aiver.-Scot. 
A ragged colt may make a good horse.-Eng. 
Méchant poulain peut devenir bon cheval.-Fr. 
Cavallo formoso de potro sarnoso.-Port. 
Aus Klattrigen Fohlen werden die schönsten Hengste.-Germ.

Na toir isad air an isad.<eng> 
Don’t lend the loan.

[TD 332]

Na tri rudan a’s daoire ‘th’ ann: uibhean chearc, feòil mhuc, glòir chailleach.<eng> 
The three dearest of things: hen-eggs, pork, and old women’s praise.

Na triùr mharbh a ’s bòidh’che air bith, leanamh beag, breac geal, ’us coileach-dubh.<eng> 
The three prettiest dead: a little child, a salmon, and a black-cock.
The nature of a hen, of a sow, and of a woman—they take their own way.
Swine, women, and bees, cannot be turned.—Eng.
Donne, asini, e noci, voglion le mani atroci.—Women, asses and nuts, need strong hands.—Ital.

Maidens' modesty in old women's shanks.

The strength of fire, the strength of sea, and the strength of a mad fellow.

The strength of sea and of fire, and a bad wife—the three most dreadful of things.

No thanks to the king of France, I don't need his sugar.
This is modern, and probably originated in the time of the Napoleonic war.

Fules mak feasts and wise men eat them.—Scot., Eng.
So Ital., Fr., Span., Dutch.
This is undoubtedly an importation from the South, but worth giving, if only for the sake of the happy repartee made by the Duke of Lauderdale, when at a great entertainment given by him

in London, he heard this proverb maliciously cited by one of his guests. 'Ay,' said he, 'and wise men mak proverbs, and fules repeat them.'

Frequent flitting bares the furnishing.
See <gai>'Eug 'us imrich'.

Necessity devises.
Necessity is the mother of invention.—Eng.
De armoede is de moeder van alle Kunsten.—Dutch.
Necessité est mère d'invention.—Fr.
Need maks a man o' craft.—Scot.
Noth lehrt Künste.—Germ.

Empty purse makes slow purchase.
A toom purse maks a blate merchant.—Scot.

A husk between the teeth disturbs the mind.
See <gai>'Càilean'.
Ni Carcair càise ’n uair theid crodh chàich ’an dìosg.<eng> Carcar will make cheese when other people’s cows run dry. A Lewis version of this is, <gai>’N uair a theid crodh a’ bhaile dìosg, ’s ann a ni catalach càise’.<eng> The interpretation of this must be left to conjecture. <gai>’Carcar’<eng> is an unknown name, and <gai>’Catalach’<eng> a rare word, unless it be simply a corruption of <gai>’cadalach’.

Ní cridhe subhach gnús shuibh. <eng> A glad heart makes a cheerful face.

<Ni droch dhuine dàn da fhéin.<eng> A bad man makes his own destiny. An exceedingly wise saying, especially among a people believing so firmly in Fate.

<Ni droch thaisgeach móran mhèirleach.<eng> Bad keeping makes many thieves. Opportunity makes the thief. L’ occasion fait le larron.—Fr. La commodità fa l’uomo ladro.—Ital. La ocasion hace el ladron.—Span. Gelegenheit macht den Dieb.—Germ. Leilighed gör Tyve.—Dan. De gelegenheid maakt den dief.—Dutch.

<Ni dubh-bhreac a’ loch suain; bidh sàr-bhreac srutha a’ sior léum. <eng> The loch-trout sleeps; the prime stream salmon ever leaps.

<Ni e dhìotsa féumannach, ’s ni e dhiomsa bréugadair.<eng> He will make of you a tool, and of me a liar.

[TD 334]

<Ni óigear leisg bodach brisg. <eng> A lazy youth will make a brisk old man.

<Ni robh còta dubh air cealgaire, no còta dearg air cladhaire! <eng> No black coat cover hypocrite, nor red coat a coward! A toast for Clergy and Army.

<Ni sid féum, ’n uair a ni am poca dubh a chaidh leis an amhainn.<eng> That will be of use, when the black bag is that went with the stream.

<Ni thu gaire ’n uair a gheabhb thu min. <eng> You’ll smile when you get meal. This is said to be part of a verse composed by John Morrison of Bragar to his wife, who was somewhat shrewish—

<Ni thu gaire ’n uair ’gheibh thu min; Is misde do ghean a bhì gun bhiaadh; ’Us b’ fhearr leam fhein na ’n t-each dearg, Nach tigeadh fearg ort-sa riamh.<eng> See Proc. of Scot. Soc. of Ant., Vol. XII., p. 530.

<Nigh’ a’ mhadaidh air a mhàthair. <eng> The dog’s washing of his dam.

<Nighean an droch mhairt, ’s ogha ’mhairt mhath. <eng> The daughter of the bad cow, the grand-child of the good one. The meaning probably is, that a good ancestry is more important than a good mother.
Girls whistling and hens crowing.
Two things considered unnatural. See 'Feadaireachd'.

Nimh gun neart, nimh na cuileig, a bheir fuil air a’ chraicionn.
The Arabic saying is wiser, 'Despise not a weak man in his conversation, for the gnat pierces the lion’s eye'.

A big cairn is made of little stones.

Christmas to-day and May-day to-morrow.
This is the result of an ingenious calculation, showing, e.g., that if Christmas-day falls on Monday, May-day will be Tuesday. It is generally, but not absolutely, correct.

[TD 335]

0.

The work of the blind.

Profitless work, sowing in unmanured ground.

Work unasked, I would not do for son-in-law or relative.

Work unasked, the better the worse.

Work hastily or ill done.

In to-night, out to-morrow,
Good for sheep, but horse’s sorrow.

A windy night was considered a good sign of the season.
Murdoch and Farquhar’s drinking; two to Murdoch, one to Farquhar.

Bad at home, good abroad.

Leave the disagreeable part of the case to the last.

Be my breeches good or bad, my own are the best for me.

Let it please a man or no, after rain from west ‘twill blow.
See ‘Gaoth niar’.

Onfhadh na poite bige.
The raging of the little pot.
When the pat’s fu’ it will boil ower.—Scot.

The song of the hornless cow—‘I am done with you.’

The song of the pert hen.

[TD 337]
P.

It will be paid on tardy Monday.
Same as Nevermas.

The west wind will pay the east wind yet this year.

The tail will pay the grazing.
Each beast will pay for its feeding with the manure it leaves.

Put by my spade, get my rope, I heard the bird’s cry out at sea.
This is an Uist or Harris invention, supposed to be spoken by a St. Kilda man, on hearing the first indication of the coming of the birds on which his living chiefly depends.

The sheep’s thirst to thee!
This is a bad wish, = death to thee! The sheep can exist without drink, man cannot.

An old wife’s pet, a village magpie, and a scrub’s stepdaughter, three to be avoided.
The bullet of the little gun put into the big gun.

I married a trull for her gold so fine,
The gold is gone, but the trull is mine.

The latter is a very favourite expression of good wishes.

It appears that at one time there were professing pipers so miserably furnished that they could play only the first bar of a tune, the repetition of which was too much for the most patient human ears. When the ancient order of Bards fell into disrepute, they used to go about the country in bands, living as best they could. Once a band of them came to a farmer’s house in Islay, where they were hospitably entertained for a week, got plenty of dry bread, and a piper to play to them his one tune. He happened to be of the one-bar species, and when the bardic company departed, their leader made the following impromptu:

Piping and dry bread to me
Are worse than agony of death:
Thou man who hast deafened me,
Never, never pipe again!

N.B.—The word here is noticeable, as now quite obsolete in the sense of dry. The word = dry weather, is derived from it.

Kissing the child for the sake of the nurse.

A new tune on the old fiddle.

Marriage o’er the midden, sponsorship o’er sea.
Better marry ower the midden than ower the muir.—Scot.
Better wed over the mixen than over the moor.—Cheshire.
I would go to drain the sea for him, if he asked me.

A roundabout way to the castle.

The way to the mill of Dron.

There was no made road.

He sold his luck-penny.

The freezing of the full pool.

The Spring-tide of Lady-day; the fury of St. Patrick’s day.

High tides and winds occur about these times.

You’ll know when you try.

For New Year cold good is woollen cloth;
For Candlemas cold mixed stuff will do.

Divide the plenty well, and the scarce will divide itself.
When there is much, it requires to be carefully distributed, to prevent waste or inequality; where there is little, the division is more easy, and there is no danger of waste.

The toughness of the bull-calf.

He made a fool of him.

He made a black-cock of him.

He shot him dead.
This suggests the saying of the bard Iain Lóm, when he was shown a quantity of black-cocks’ heads at Inveraray, and asked, if he had ever seen so many? ‘Yes,’ he said, ‘I saw more of them at Inverlochy’; alluding to the slaughter of the Campbells at the battle there.

He made birds’ food of him.

He doubled him up like a bagpipe.

He made a plug of the plug-driver.
Driving out a plug with another, and that other sticking in its place.

I would go to drain the sea for him, if he asked me.

A roundabout way to the castle.

The way to the mill of Dron.

There was no made road.

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Driving out a plug with another, and that other sticking in its place.
He made ashes and fleas there.  
I.e., he staid there long enough.  

Rinneadh air son toil na cuideachd e, mar 'chaidh an tàillear do Pheairt.<eng>  
It was done to please the company, as the tailor went to Perth.  

Roghainn de 'n chuid a’s miosa.<eng>  
Choice of the worse part.  

Roghainn de 'n chuid nach fhaigh e.<eng>  
Choice of what he will not get.  

Roinn a’ mhic ri ’mhàthair.<eng>  
The son’s sharing with his mother.  

Roinn mic ’us athar.<eng>  
The sharing of father and son.  

Roinn Mhic Crùislig air na crùbain.<eng>  
MacCruslick’s dividing of the crabs.  
He put the contents of the best-looking ones into the worst-looking ones, which he afterwards got for himself.  

Roinn na màthar ris a nighinn.<eng>  
The mother’s sharing with her daughter.  

[RD 341]  

Ruaig coilich air dùnan.<eng>  
Putting a cock on a dunghill to flight.  

Rud-eigin ’an àit an earchaill.<eng>  
Something in place of loss.  

Rug bó laogh dha.<eng> A cow has borne him a calf.  

Rug iasg orm.<eng> A fish has caught me.  
Said by a person when seized with a fit of sickness.—Note by Macintosh.  
This saying is unintelligible, and not in use.  

Rughadh an leinibh Ilich, rughadh an teine.<eng>  
The bloom of the Islay child, the bloom of the fire.  
The <gai>'leanabh Ileach'<eng> was a remarkable boy, with a hard stepmother, who fed him badly, and heated his face at the fire, when she wished to pass him off as a well-fed ruddy child.—See Cuairtear, 1842, p. 79.  

Rughadh shuas an àm laidhe,  
Dh’ éireadh Fionn moch ’s a’ mhaduinn;  
Rughadh shuas ’s a’mhoch mhaduinn,  
Dheanadh Fionn an ath-chadal.<eng>  
With a rosy sky at bed-time,  
Fingal would rise early,  
With a rosy sky at dawn,  
He would take another sleep.  
My ta ’n ghrian jiarg tra giree teh, foddee shin jerkal rish fliaghey—If the sun rises hot and red, we may look for a wetting.—Manx.
When it is evening ye say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,' 
and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather to-day, for the sky is red 
and lowring'.—MATTH. xvi., 2, 3.
Evening red and morning gray
Are sure signs of a fair day;
Evening gray and morning red,
Sends the poor shepherd home wet to his bed.—Eng.
E’ening red and morning gray,
The taikens o’ a bonny day;
E’ening gray and morning red,
Put on yir hat or ye’ll weet yir head.—Scot.

The best of nursing may overcome the worst disease.

Delay will arrive at the door.

[TD 342]

A slow horse will reach the mill, but the horse that breaks his leg must 
lie still.
Al. <gai>ach bristidh each tuisleach a chas<eng>—but a stumbling horse 
will break his leg.

The back and the belly hauds ilka ane busy.—Scot.

He would strip his own house to thatch his neighbour’s.

The runny of the dog that chases two deer. 
Losing both. See <gai>’Cù an dà fhéidh’.

Rhuthr enderig o’r allt—The run of the steer from the hill.—Welsh.

Even a haggis will run down-hill.
Strange to say, this does not occur in any of the collections of Scottish 
Proverbs; but it is usual wonderful felicity, by Sir 
Walter Scott. On the eve of Prestonpans, Evan Dhu M’Combich (Waverley, 
ch. XLVI.) is made to say, 'Even a haggis, God bless her! could charge 
down-hill'.

I would run on the water for him.

A crone’s secret (or delight) is to scold.

When it is evening ye say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,' 
and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather to-day, for the sky is red 
and lowring'.—MATTH. xvi., 2, 3.
May your pulse beat as your heart would wish!
This is a very pretty saying.

[TD 343]

S.

A heavy load on the slender leg.
A burden imposed on a child.

The tongs soldiers.
A term contemptuously applied to holiday soldiers.

A term contemptuously applied to holiday soldiers.

This is a solitary specimen of Highland skill in cosmetics.

One scabbled sheep’s enough to spoil a flock.

An old woman’s greed at the peat-stack.

Length of good life to thee!

[TD 344]

The looker-on thinks himself the best steersman.

The thief of the braes thinks all others thieves.

Piensa el ladron que todos son de su condicion.
O ladraõ cuida que todos taes sao.—Port.

<gai>Sàr-dhubh do ghonaidh ort!<eng> 
The worst of bewitchment to thee!  
Al. <gai>Seun do ghonaidh ort!

Sàth mór ainmig do na leanaban firionn, sàth beag minig do na leanaban boirionn.<eng>  
A large feed seldom for the male child, a small feed often for the female child.

<gai>Seach gun d’thug mi ’n réis, bheir mi ’n òirleach.<eng>  
As I have given the span, I’ll give the inch.

<gai>Seachain an t-àth far an do bhàthadh do charaid.<eng>  
Shun the ford where your friend was drowned.

<gai>Seachain an t-olc ’us seachnaidh an t-olc thu.<eng>  
Avoid evil and it will avoid thee.  
Shaghyn dagh olk.—Manx.

<gai>Seachain mo chluas, ’s cha bhuail m’adharc.<eng>  
Avoid my ear, and my horn will not hit.

<gai>Seachd bliadhna ’an cuimhne na bà, ’s gu là a bhàis ’an cuimhn’ an eich.<eng>  
Seven years will the cow keep in mind, all his life the horse.  
The horse remembers his stable longer than the cow her byre.

<gai>Seachd bliadhna saoghal a’ chait;  
Sin gu h-éibhinn agus ait;  
Seach sin cadal agus tur-chadal.<eng>  
Seven years lives the cat,  
Joyfully and cheerfully,  
All the rest is sleep, sound sleep.

[TD 345]

<gai>Seachd bolla ‘shneachda Gearrain,  
’Dol a’ s tigh throimh aon tóll torra.<eng>  
Seven bolls of February snow,  
Through an auger-hole to go.  
Considered seasonable weather. See <gai>’Theid cathadh’.

Seachd seachdainean bho acis gu bàs eadar Càisg ’us Inid.<eng>  
Seven weeks always between Pasch and Shrove-tide.  
Al. <gai>eadar Càisg ’us Nollaig<eng>—between Pasch and Christmas.

<gai>Seachd sgadain, sàth bradain; seachd bradain, sàth ròin.<eng>  
Seven herring, a salmon’s feed; seven salmon, a seal’s feed.  
This saying is interesting, as showing that our ancestors were well acquainted with the fact that the salmon eats herring, which has in modern times been a matter of question and inquiry among ichthyologists.

<gai>Seachdain an t-sionnaich, ’s bu mhath nach bu bhliadhn’ i.<eng>  
The fox’s week, and ’tis well that it is not a year.  
Wythnos y llwynog.—Welsh.  
The first week in lambing-time;—end of April.
A man may do without a brother, but not without a neighbour. Lit. may avoid. See <gai>'Is fhearr coimhearsnach'.

Sealladh àrd na seana mhaighdinn.<eng> The high look of the old maid.
Ye breed o’ auld maids, ye look heich!—Scot.

Seann sgial Earraich.<eng> An old Spring story.
Told in the long nights.

Searrach na seann làrach cha bhi tighinn-a-mach ann.<eng> An old mare’s foal will never come to much.
See <gai>'Mac bàntraich’.

Searrach seann òigich cha robh e riabh sgairteil.<eng> The foal of an old stallion was never vigorous.

Seasadh gach soitheach air a mhàs fhéin.<eng> Let every vessel stand on its own bottom.
Let every tub stand on its own bottom.—Eng., Scot.

[TD 346]

Séid agus séid an gual, ach séid gu ruighinn cruaidh an sop; sin mar theid an teín’ a lasadh.<eng> Blow and blow again the coal, but a long, hard blow to the wisp; so the fire will lighted be.

Séididh aon sròn shalach an clachan.<eng> One snotty nose will set a whole church a-blowing.

Seileach allt, calltainn chreag, fearna bhog, beithe lag, uinnseann an deiseir.<eng> Willow of the brook, hazel of the rock, alder of the bog, birch of the hollow, ash of the sunny slope.
Al. <gai>beithe a’ chnuic—<eng>—the birch of the knoll.

Sé do mo chuid-sa, ’s do chuid fhéin; sid cuid Dhònullain.<eng> This my share and yours; that for little Donald.
Once upon a time, when crofters lived at Druim-Uachdair, in Badenoch, a poor widow at the end of a severe Spring was in great straits. She went to a neighbour, and begged her, for the love of God, to give her as much meal as would make porridge for herself and her children. 'The Devil a grain have I,' said the other woman. ‘God bless my share, mother,’ said her little boy, who was sitting at the hearth. The poor woman went away sore-hearted; and presently there came in to the house she had left no less a visitor than the <gai>Fear Mór,<eng> whose name had just been mentioned. He immediately went to the meal-chest, and proceeded to take it out in handfuls, two for himself and the mistress of the house, one for little Donald. The former he put into a sack, the latter he left; and having finished the work, went out, emptied the sack into the burn, and disappeared in a cloud of smoke!

Sgadan gearr gun mhealag gun iuchair, ’s mairg brù a ’n téid e.<eng> Short herring without milt or roe, pity him that eats.

Sgal créathaich, ’us éubh cailllich—dà nì nach mair fada.<eng>
The noise of burning brushwood, and the cry of an old woman, don’t last long.

Poortith pairts guid company.—Scot.
Poverty parteth fellowship.—Eng.

This man’s knife in that man’s sheath.

Poortith pairts guid company.

Poverty parteth fellowship.

This man’s knife in that man’s sheath.

—Scot.
—Eng.

Sgiobair tòn-ri-craig, math air tir ’s diblidh air muir.
Shore-skipper, good on land, craven at sea.
A long-shore skipper makes a lubberly sailor.—Eng.

Sgian an fhir ud shìos ’an truaill an fhir ud shuas.
This man’s knife in that man’s sheath.

Sgian an fhir ud shìos ’an truaill an fhir ud shuas.

Sgoiltidh farmad na creagan.
Envy will split rocks.

Sgoiltidh farmad na creagan.

Sgoiltidh sùil a’ chlach.
An eye can split a stone.
The evil eye. See note to <gai>'Céum air do chéum'.

Sonach na muice a’ dol do ’n iolainn.
The screech of the sow on her way to the stackyard.

Sgoiltidh sùil a’ chlach.

Sgriach na muice a’ dol do ’n iolainn.
The screech of the sow on her way to the stackyard.

Sgriob liath an Earraich.
The gray track of Spring.

Al. <gai>Bheir sgrìob ghlas Earraich cairt bharrach Foghair—A green Spring will fill the cart in Autumn.

Shaoil leis gu’m bu leis fhéin an cuan fo gheasaibh.
He thought the ocean his own under his spells.
Applied to persons with an overweening or insane idea of their own importance.

Shaoil leis gu’m bu leis fhéin an cuan fo gheasaibh.

Shuidh mosag air a sasaig.
The scrub sat on her easy chair.

'Sasag,' or <gai>'sunnag,' an easy chair made of wicker-work and straw.

'Sasag,' or <gai>'sunnag,' an easy chair made of wicker-work and straw.

'Sian fala mu d’ shùilean!
A shower of blood round thine eyes!

Sid a’ bhuiille aig an stadadh m’athair, arsa nighean a’ chòbair.
That’s the blow where my father would stop, said the cooper’s daughter.
A blow too many would set the hoop flying, instead of fixing it.

Sid a’ bhuiille aig an stadadh m’athair, arsa nighean a’ chòbair.

Sid a’ bhuiille aig an stadadh m’athair, arsa nighean a’ chòbair.

Sid mar ’thaghadh Fionn a chù, Sùil mar àirneig, cluas mar dhuilleig,
Cheth mar ghearran, speir mar chorrnan, ‘S an t-alt-lùthaidd fad’ o’n cheann.
Thus would Fingal choose his hound,
Eye like sloe, ear like leaf,
Chest like horse, hough like sickle,
And the pith-joint far from head.

Al. <gai>Gnos mar chuaille, Cluas mar dhuilleach, Earball mu ’n speir, ’S an speir mar chorrnan.
Muzzle like club, ear like leaf, tail to the hough, and hough like sickle.
This refers to the old Scottish deerhound. The English greyhound is thus described in a rhyme given by Ray:
A head like a snake, a neck like a drake,
A back like a beam, a belly like a bream,
A foot like a cat, a tail like a rat.

<gai>Sìod’ air cabar, ’s bidh e breagh.<eng> Put silk on a stick, and it will look fine.

<gai>Sìol nam pudharan.<eng> The seed of injuries.

<gai>Sìonnach ag iarraidh a ruagaidh.<eng> A fox asking to be chased.

<gai>Sìreadh caimein ’an còinlach,
Sanas a thoirt do chuaille,
Duine ’toirt a chomhairle,
Far nach ghabhar uaidh i.<eng>
Searching for a mote in straw,
Hinting to a fool,
Is the giving of advice
Where it is not taken.

<gai>Sìreadh sop ’an connalaich.<eng>
Searching for a wisp in stubble.

<gai>Sith do d’ anam, ‘us clach air do chàrn!<eng> Peace to thy soul, and a stone on thy cairn!

<gai>Siubhal a’ chait a chaidh do ’n eas dhut!<eng> The way of the cat that went to the waterfall to you!

<gai>Siubhal Artair ort!<eng> Arthur’s journey to you!

<gai>Siubhal Mhurchaidh bho ’n bhothan ort!<eng> Murdoch’s way from the bothy to you!

<gai>Siubhal na Samhna dha!<eng> Let him go like Hallowmas!
Never to come back. The two preceding sayings have the same meaning. Can Arthur mean the king?

<gai>Slàn far an innsear e!<eng> May it be well where it is told!
The word <gai>’slàn,’<eng> healthy, whole, is here used elliptically, without a verb.

<gai>Slaodadh an arain anns a’ bhrochan.<eng> Trailing the bread in the gruel.

Russet Sleat of pretty women.
See <gai>’Clachan an t-Srath’.
Sliochd nan sionnach, Clann Mhàrtainn.<eng> The race of the foxes, Clan Martin.
The fox is sometimes called <gai>‘An gille-Màrtainn’.

Slìog am bodach ’us sgròbaidh e thu, buail am bodach ’s thig e gu d’làimh.<eng> Stroke the churl, and he will scratch you, strike him, and he will come to your hand.
If you gently touch a nettle,
It will sting you for your pains;
Grasp it like a man of mettle,
It as soft as silk remains.

Smìaran dubha ’s an Phaoilleach, ’us uibhean fhaoileag a’s t-Earrach.<eng> Bramble-berries in February, and sea-gull eggs in Spring.
Things out of season.

Sniomhaidh tigearna fearna tuathanach daraich.<eng> An alder lord will twist an oak tenant.
Al. <gai>Toinnidh an t-uachdaran fearna an t-ìochdaran daraich.<eng> Alder is soft wood, of comparatively small value. The story of the man who was encouraged by his wife to ‘gang up and be hangit, to please the laird,’ may be taken as an illustration of this saying from the 'good old times'. Somewhat similar pressure is still exercised occasionally in modern times.

Socraichidh am pòsadh an gaol.<eng> Marrying sobers love.

Sonas a chodach air a’ bhial fharsuinn.<eng> The wide mouth’s happiness in its food.

Sop as gach seid.<eng> A wisp from every truss.
Applied to any miscellaneous collection or farrago.

Soraidh leat fhéin, ach mollachd aig bial d’ ionnsachaidh!<eng> Blessing on yourself, but curse be on your teacher!

Spagadaglog Chlann-Dònuill agus leòm Leathaineach.<eng> MacDonald swagger and MacLean airs.
Al. <gai>Spagadaglog Chlann-Illeathain.<eng> See <gai>‘An t-uasal’.

Sradag a’ ghabha, tha i duilich a bàthadh.<eng> The smith’s spark is hard to quench.
The smith has aye a spark in his throat.—Scot.

Sròn cho biorach ’s gun tugadh i biadh á faochag.<eng> A nose so sharp that it would pick a periwinkle.

Sròn ri monadh.<eng> Nose hill-ward.
’Nez retroussé’. Applied to persons easily offended,—‘nosey’.

Stiùbhartaich, cinne nan rìgh ’s nan ceard.<eng> The Stewarts, the race of kings and of tinkers.
Stewart is a very common name among tinkers, often adopted for the sake of the supposed respectability it conferred.

A wooer’s block. In Lochaber a block of old bog-pine was sometimes kept, as a test of skill and patience in chopping wood, for young men coming a-courting.

Up with the load! the dress is the man.
See ‘Ged nach e ’n duine’.

Up with the loaded distaff! there’s many a long day till May-day. Supposed to be the language of procrastination.

Sit lowly, and pay nobly.

The sitting of the goose at the fox’s door.

A poor seat in the house of want.

A cat’s gaze at a straw-ropo. This is applied to the bestowal of much attention on trifles.

Eye to nose. This is the [Greugais] of Homer, describing a haughty disdainful look, eye downward to nose.

On St. Bride’s eve supper with daylight, On St. Patrick’s, bed by daylight.
Al. ‘Supeir ’an soillse là, mach o là Fheill-Brighde. Laidhe ’n soillse là, mach o là Fheill-Pàdruig.

Courting far from home, and marrying next door.
Al. ‘Suiridhe air na h-aonaichean, ’us pòsadh aig a’ bhaile. Woeing o’er the moor, and marrying at home.
See ‘Pòsadh’.

The solan-geese of Uy, and the hospitable folks of Lochs. Two neighbouring parishes in the island of Lewis, the former of which is now called Stornoway, a great station for herring-fishery and fish-curing—hence the allusion to solan-geese.

A foal’s fat is on his quarter.
Stir thee, Sunart! Ardnamurchan is done for. Two neighbouring districts in Argyllshire. The saying is used as a spur to emulation in work.

[TD 352]

T.

Your own deer will come in your way.

Choose your wife as you wish your children to be.

Choose your wife with her night-cap on.

Choose your speech. (Be civil.)

Choose your company before you choose your drink. Choose your companion before you sit down. Choose thy company before thy drink.—Eng.

Choose the good mother’s daughter, were the devil her father.

A cow will re-visit her fold, if the pasture be not bad.

Set a tailor to check a tailor.

Thunder in the afternoon, the thunder of plenty; Thunder in the forenoon, the thunder of want and cold.

Like draws to like.

Save a coin and spend a coin, and you’ll be happy; save a coin and spend none, and you’ll be wretched.

[TD 353]

The wise lad’s grumbling—eating it and abusing it. The wise lad’s grumbling—take what you get, and ask for more.

Complaining of the greatness of his portion.
Al. <gai>Talach ‘uallaich<eng>—Complaining of his load.  
Not uncommon among people bloated with wealth.

Food will entice the mountain deer.  
Al. <gai>an t-ian athair<eng>—the bird from the sky.  
See <gai>‘Càtaichidh’<eng> and <gai>‘Meallaidh’.

‘Taomadh na mara làine.<eng> Baling out the full tide.

The silly one’s tuft of wool on the thrifty one’s distaff.

Encourage the sorner, and you’ll have a night of him.  
Al. <gai>Taghladh am bleidire, ’s bidh an oidhch’ ann.<eng>  
The beggar takes care to call at evening.

Great billowy Tay will sweep Perth bare.  
This was an old prophecy, fulfilled more than once.  
See <gai>‘Dh’ fhalbh Peairt’.

The short welding of the smith; the long joining of the carpenter.

A fair one goes from man to man; a dun one stands at her own barn door.  
This is a suggestion that the plain woman will make a better wife. See <gai>‘Na tagh’.

Teanga fhada ’n ceann Dhònuill fhidhleir.<eng>  
A long tongue in Donald fiddler’s head.

A tongue as sharp as a razor.

Tighten your belt till you get food.  
This is a known practice of American Indians.

Fire of peats and love of boys.  
Not of long endurance.

Ben Cruachan will waste away, if nothing be added to it.  
Al. <gai>Theirigeadh Cruachan Beann, le ’bhi sìor thoirt as, gun dad idir ’g a chur ann.

Everything will end with wasting.

A neighbour’s testimony is the test of everybody.  
Al. <gai>Teist a nàbaidh.

Teodhaidh feòil ri fine, ged nach deòin le duine.<eng>
Flesh will warm to kin, against a man’s will.
Al. <gai>Teodhaidh an fhuil ris an fhuil<eng>—Blood warms to blood. 
See <gai>‘Is tighe’.<eng>
The sentiment and the double rhyme here are equally pretty.

<gai>Tha àm air an achmhasan, a’s tràth air a’ chéilidh.<eng>
There’s a time for rebuke, and a time for gossiping. 
To everything there is a season.—ECCL. iii. 1. 
Amser i fwyd, amser i olychwyd—A time for meat, and a time for prayer. 
Pob peth yn ei amser—Everything in its time.—Welsh.

<gai>Tha aon chas na ’s leòr do ’n fhirinn, ach tuitidh a’ bhriag le ’tri.<eng>
One foot is enough for truth, but a lie falls with three. 
See <gai>‘Imridh briag’.

Tha aon saighead as a bhalg.<eng> 
There is one arrow out of his quiver.

<gai>Tha bial gun fhàitheam draghail.<eng> 
A hemless mouth is troublesome.

<gai>Tha ‘bhial air a ghualainn.<eng>
His tongue is on his shoulder. 
Wearing his heart upon his sleeve; the opposite of <gai>‘teanga fo ’chrios,’<eng> tongue under belt.

<gai>Tha ‘bhioran air a bharran daonnan.<eng>
His stick is always on its point. 
Always on the move, and fidgetting about.

<gai>Tha blàth do chodach ort.<eng> 
You look like your food.

[TD 355]

<gai>Tha ‘bhlàth ort nach ’eil dad agad air.<eng> 
You look as if he owed you nothing.

<gai>Tha ’bhuil,’ ars’ am breaBADAIR, ’s a bhean air a mhuin.<eng> 
‘The effect is seen,’ said the weaver, with his wife on the top of him. 
He had apparently given in rather too much to his better half.

<gai>‘Tha biadh ’us ceòl ’an seo,’ mu’n dubhairt a’ madadh-ruadh, ’s e ’ruith air falbh leis a’ phiob.<eng> 
‘There’s meat and music here’, as the fox said, when he ran away with the bagpipe. 
If there were nothing else to show the humour of our Celtic ancestors, 
this saying would.

<gai>Tha caitheamh ann ’us caomhnadh, ’s tha caomhnadh ann ’us caitheamh.<eng> 
There is a spending and a saviny; a saving and a spending. 
There is that scattereth and yet increaseth.—PROV. xi. 24. 
Al. <gai>Tha caitheamh sona agus caitheamh dona ann.<eng> 
There is a happy spending and an unhappy spending.

<gai>Tha car eil’ air ruidhl’ a’ bhodaich.<eng> 
There’s another turn in the old man’s reel.
There are many turns in the marriage tune.—Manx.

There’s another twist in the ox’s horn. An imaginative traveller gave an account of a wonderful ox, whose horns reached the sky when he lay down. On being asked ‘What became of the horns when the ox stood up?’ he gave this answer.

His head is between the door and the side-post. ‘In Chancery.’ ‘In a fix.’

The owl is mourning, rain is coming.

His counsel is in his own head.

His heart is merry-making.

He has the scab of my own sheep.

There’s a measure for everything—to the drinking of gruel. Al. of kail.

When moderately used it our lives does prolong.

The mountain has a cap on; that’s the rain coming. When Cheviot ye see put on his cap Of rain ye’ll have a wee bit drap.—Eng., Scot.

The haddock has two black spots, and the whiting a long tail.

The farmer’s wife has two sides. Al. The factor’s wife has two sides, and so has the ferry-boat. Al. The headland has two sides. Al. He has a soft and a hard side.

He has a flea in his stocking. A flea in the ear.—Eng.

He has wise warp, but foolish woof. Said of one who is wiser than he seems.

Your two lots are on your palm.
He is on his flighty horse.
Said of a restless person.

He is as fluent as a bard.

He is well, but don’t pull his beard.

He is like Mackay’s cat—still in the flesh.

He is pledged for what he’s worth.
Said of one in great danger.

He is now on the sod of truth.
He is dead.

He is now on the way of truth.
He is now in the state of truth, and we of falsehood.—Ir.
He is dying.

He is running on what he’ll get.
Al. air ‘aimhleas—on his hurt; air salachar—on foul ground.

He is John all over the world, as he ever was.
Iann eo, Iann e vo—John he is, John he will be.—Breton.

There is one that lets his wood go with the stream.

Everyone has his fate.
Lit. his abandonment—left to himself.

MacQuarrie has his own luck, whether it be hard or soft.
This refers to the ancient chiefs of Ulva’s isle.

Well knows the mouse that the cat’s not in the house.
Pei y gath fyddai gartref, gwaeth ‘d fyddai—Were the cat at home, it were worse for you.—Welsh.

When the cat is away, the mice may play.—Eng.
Absant le chat, les souris dansent.—Fr.
Quando la gatta non è in casa, i topi ballano.—Ital.
Vanse los gatos, y estienderse los ratos.—Span.
Wenn die Katze ausser dem Hause ist, tanzen die Mäuse.—Germ.
Als de kat slaapt, spelen de muizen.—Dutch.
Naar Katten er borte, löbe Musene paa Bœnken.—Dan.

[TD 358]

<gai>Tha fios aige c’ àite ‘bheil na muca-mara ‘breith.<eng>
He knows where the whales breed.
Said of one who pretends to knowledge of everything.

<gai>Tha fios aige cia mèud a ni cóig.<eng>
He knows how many make five.
<gai>Ta fios aige ca mhèud gràinne pònair a ghnídh cúig<eng>—He knows how many beans make five.—Ir.

<gai>Tha fios fithich agad.<eng>
You have a raven’s knowledge.
That is, knowledge more than is natural. The raven was believed to possess supernatural knowledge, and of coming events in particular. This was also the Norse belief. Odin was said to have two ravens, which communicated everything to him.

<gai>Tha fuasgladh a cheiste aige fhéin.<eng>
He has the solving of his own question.

<gai>Tha fuil féidh ort, ’s cha tu fhéin a mharbh e.<eng>
There is deer’s blood on you, and you did not kill it yourself.

<gai>Tha fuil ghointe ’n a cheann.<eng>
He has bewitched blood in his head.
Said of a person who seems infatuated.
Al. <gai>sùil ghointe<eng>—a bewitched eye.

<gai>Tha fuil mo mhuic-sa cheart cho mèith ri fuil do mhuic-sa.<eng>
The blood of my pig is just as rich as the blood of yours.

<gai>Tha gu leòr cho math ri cuilm.<eng>
Enough is as good as a feast.—Eng., Scot.
Ni helaethwydd heb ddigon—No abundance without enough.—Welsh.
Genoeg is even zoo goed als een feest.—Dutch.

<gai>Tha ‘h-uile duine cóir gun ‘fheuchainn.<eng>
Every man is good till he’s tried.
This was the ground taken on a remarkable occasion by the Enemy of Mankind.—See JOB I.

<gai>Tha h-uile fear ’n a leomhan air a chuid fhéin.<eng>
Every man is a lion over what’s his own.
See <gai>‘Is dàna’.<eng>
The word in Macintosh is not <gai>‘a chuid,’<eng> but <gai>‘a cheaird,’<eng> which was probably a mistake.

[TD 359]

<gai>Tha i cho math air snlomhadh ris a’ bhana-Ghréugaich.<eng>
She is as good at spinning as the Greek woman.
This seems to refer to Penelope.

<gai>Tha iad air bhòrdaibh móra, ’s air thubhailtean geala.<eng>
They are at big tables, with white table-cloths.
Al. <gai>air bhòrd mór, ’s air àrd onoir, ’am broilleacha bùtha<eng>--at big table and high honour, in the very centre of the booth.
Said of 'upsetting' little people, getting among good company.

They are as thick as two horse heads.

They are far behind that cannot pursue.
<eng> is an old phrase, equivalent to <gai>‘air deireadh,’<eng> generally obsolete, but still used in Tiree.

There are two little birds in yonder wood, and the one says to the other, ‘I like you, I like you’; and the other says, ‘Prove it, prove it’.
This is an imitation of the chirping of birds, but with a moral meaning.

There’s the mark of turf-clearing in the sky, ‘twill be fine to-morrow.
This is a graphic description of a break among cirro-stratus clouds.

He remembers the burning of his finger.

There are coarser English and Scottish versions of this saying.

His fingers are after the skate.
Said of a bad piper. The saying originated with a young piper, who was being instructed at the Piper’s College, at Boreraig in Skye. Having got skate to dinner one day, which he did not approve of, and playing afterwards indifferently, he was asked what was wrong with him. ‘The skate sticks to my fingers,’ was his reply.

I am more accustomed to a wood than to be afraid of an owl.
I have lived too near a wood to be frightened by owls.—Eng.

I am as proud of my poke as he is of his bag.

He bears the skailth and the scorn.

The cat’s in the ashes, it’s going to rain.

The fork-tailed kite is among them.

The leech is swimming; warm showers will come ere evening.
The upright is upright from head to foot.

The cry is in my ear; God keep all who are dear to me!
A plaintive sound ringing in one’s ear was considered a presage of death or calamity.

The bee keeps close; a storm is at hand.

It is time to put (motion) into the sticks, i.e., the oars. This is a Tiree phrase.

The fish in the sea like us mortals be.
Easily taken with bait, and generally going in shoals.

The house is dark, but the heart is bright.

Butter is scarce in Holland.
Said when anything is scarce where usually abundant. This saying probably originated with some Dugald Dalgetty.

Lit. It is time to put (motion) into the sticks, i.e., the oars. This is a Tiree phrase.

The mad fellow is in a creel (strait-jacket).
M’Alpine (Dict.) says this is applied to people who have bad Gaelic!

The shamrock is folding its garments before heavy rain.

Pride is opposed to profit.
The translation of this in the 2nd Ed. of Macintosh is ‘Pride is in the bull’s front’!

Pride is as importunate as poverty, and much more arrogant.

Nobility is as it’s kept up.

The brae is short, though the load be heavy.

The shoes are in the far end of the peat-house.
When the peats are done, people must put on their shoes, as they can’t warm their feet any more at the fire.

The mad fellow is in a creel (strait-jacket).
M’Alpine (Dict.) says this is applied to people who have bad Gaelic!
There’s another road near the highway.

There’s a mackerel-sky, ’twill be fine to-morrow.

The town (or farm) dogs know that.

Aeth hyny ar gyrn a phabau—That is gone upon horns and pipes.—Welsh. It has become the talk of the town.

That’s written in the cat’s forehead.

We are as best we may, and the king himself is not as he would wish to be.

[TD 362]

Every peat-end has its own smoke.

Is dòruinn ceangailt ris gach math.—D. Buchanan.

Ys id ar bawb ei bryder—To every one is his care.—Welsh.

He is in the company, like the tinker’s shaggy dog.

He has a white side and a black side, like the boat of Short John’s son. His proper name was Archibald MacDonell. See ‘Ged is fada’. He was a noted reaver, and followed a known practice of pirates in having his boat and sails of different colours on each side. See Teachdaire Ùr, Jan., 1836, p. 52.

The heat of the fire is in his legs.

Said of a ‘cat griosaich,’ one too fond of the fireside.

Said of people going hastily from the hearth on business.

The Irishman’s wit is on his tongue, but the Gael is wise after the time. The Manxman is never wise till the day after the fair.—Manx.

A Scotsman is aye wise ahint the hand.—Scot.

You are as sly as the little fox.

You are as happy as if your cheese weighed a stone.

You are too merry—you ought to marry.
The alliteration in English was too good to be avoided, but it is right

to say, that <gai>‘mear’<eng> in the original may mean more than

merriness.

<gai>Tha thusa ’sin fhathast, ’s do bhial fo do shròin.<eng>
You are still there, with your mouth under your nose.

[TD 363]

<gai>Tha thusa mar bha thu ’n uiridh, ’s ged bhiodh tu na b’fhhearr, cha
b’uilear.<eng>
You are as you were last year, and if you were better, it would be no
more than was needed.

<gai>Tha togail do bhothain fhéin ort.<eng>
You have the up-bringing of your bothy.

Said to an ill-mannered person.

<gai>Tha tri ò纩 faobhair air lurga caillich, ’us bòrd-urchair air a
taobh.<eng>
An old woman’s leg has three edges, and her side a gunwale.

<gai>Tha tri là Iuchair ’s an Fhaoilleach, ’s tri là Faoillich ’s an
Iuchar.<eng>
There are three of the Dog-days in February, and three February days in
the Dog-days.

<gai>Tha tuille ’s a phaidir aige.<eng>
He knows more than his paternoster.

<gai>Ta nios mó nà phaidireacha aige.<eng>—Ir.
Al. <gai>Tha ’chreidimh catharra ( = cathedra) aige.<eng> He has his
pater and creed. It has been heard as an objection to a man’s evidence
being allowed, that he hadn’t his <gai>‘creidimh catharra’.

Tha uaisle fo thuinn ’an Clann Lachain.<eng>
There is a hidden nobleness in the MacLachlans.

<gai>Tha uiread de ainmeann air ris an naosg.<eng>
He has as many names as the snipe.
The snipe is known under many names, e.g., <gai>Naosg, gobhar-adhair,
meannan-adhair, croman-lòin, butagochd, eun-ghurag.

Thachair a bhràthair mór ris.<eng>
He has met his big brother.

<gai>Thachair an cat riut air bàrr na stairsnich.<eng>
You met the cat on the threshold.
The cat was considered an ill-omened creature.

<gai>Thachair cleas tuath an droch thighearna dhaibh.<eng>
The trick of the bad landlord’s tenants befell them.

<gai>Thachair ludh an uinnsinn fhiadhaich dha; cinnidh e gu math, ach
millidh e ’chraboib a bhios an taice ris.<eng>
The way of the wild ash befell him; it grows well, but kills the tree
that’s near it.

<gai>Thàinig gille gu Mac-a-leisg.<eng>
Mac-Lazy has got a servant.
Said when a lazy messenger is saved the trouble of going on an errand, by the coming of another messenger.

[TD 364]

The Guernsey sheep came last night and ate it. Said of anything that has mysteriously disappeared, or that never existed. ‘Caoraich Gheansaidh’ is applied to any imaginary creatures. The saying is Hebridean, but the origin of it is unknown. Guernsey potatoes used to be known in Skye.

A bat has come in, it’s going to rain.

Perhaps your cow may come to my fold yet. Wha wats wha may keep sheep anither day.—Scot.

The joke may end in earnest. See 'Is tric a chaidh'.

Between his nurse and his mother, the child will be spoiled.

Greed will overcome acquaintanceship.

The diligent weak will beat the lazy strong.

Acquaintance goes beyond relationship. See 'Is fhearr caraid'.

The wise man’s opinion will go near the truth.

The swarthy girl takes after her blood. The swarthy girl considers herself better than anyone else. This might be rendered, ‘Blood against everything,’ an intensely Highland sentiment, expressive of the feeling known as ‘clannishness’.

Nature will withstand the rocks.
The sleepy man will lose a wedder, the gad-about a cow. The loss of the lazy man is small compared with that of the trifler.

Might will prevail over right.

Cunning beats strength. Oni byddi gryf, bydd gyfrwys — If thou art not strong, be cunning. — Welsh.

A third of fostership goes to sponsorship. This means that the bond to a foster-father is three times as strong as that to a godfather.

Every one cries ‘Alas for me!’

Riding comes naturally to full-grown horses. Applied to hereditary tendencies.

Truth comes out by accident.

Eating comes of licking.

Hunger comes oftener than once.


[TD 366]


God comes in distress, and distress goes when he comes. Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity.

Exigencies come on kings.
The man of long life will come out of every trouble. See *Fear an t-saoghail fhada*.

The man that wants comes unasked; the man that owes comes not at all.

Every ill comes with age—silliness, raving, death. See *Is ioma leannan*.

Want breeds ingenuity. Want breeds ingenuity. Gr. (Heliodorus). Necessity is the mother of invention.—Eng. Nécessité est mère d’invention.—Fr. Need makes a man o’ craft.—Scot. Noth lehrt Künste.—Germ. De armoede is de moeder van alle kunsten.—Dutch.

Many ills flow from one. Litem parit lis, noxa item noxam serit.—Lat.

The black dog’s day will yet come. The black dog’s day will yet come. In olden times, MacPhie of Colonsay had a great black hound, of which it was predicted that it would never do but one day’s good service. It grew up an idle useless animal, but its master resisted all proposals to have it given away or killed. The day came when it did noble service for its master, though it could not save his life.

Christmas-day will come. Said of persons long of coming.

It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting.—ECCL. vii. 2.

That will come out of your nose, and pain will go into it. These are threats or predictions of chastisement.

Destruction shall come on the cursed brood. The seed of the wicked shall be cut off.—PSALM xxxvii. 28.
It would well become him to be an heir, who begs from everybody.

I would come to see you, though you lived in a rock-cave.

He has cast the bottom-hoop. He has thrown off all restraint.

If you take a wife from Hell, she'll take you home with her.

—she'll bring you back there.

Let me share your food.

Give your thanks to the cock.

A recommendation of early rising. good be with you (= thank you), is the ordinary addition to a reply to ‘How do you do?’

Quench your thirst from the stream, as the dog does. An excellent motto for Temperance Societies.

Choose a wife of good parents. See ‘Pòs nighean’.

Take the cow to the castle, and she'll go home to the byre.

An ox remains an ox, even when driven to Vienna.—Hungar.

Give the impudent fellow an inch, and he'll take an ell.

Give a carl yir finger, and he’ll tak' yir haill hand.—Scot.

Throw reproach on your kinsman; it will rest on your family. A very good and wise advice: clannishness in its commendable phase.

Bring you down that star, and I’ll bring down another, as the little man said to the big man.

He kicked in the shackles.

= cow-fetter.

He betook him to the wood.

A common thing in olden times for outlaws or men in peril.
They turned all their force against him.
Lit. turned their balls and shinty clubs on him.

My grandmother could understand that, and she was two generations behind.

[TD 369]

Both his hands fell at his sides.
A case of total collapse.

The forest-bull fell on them.
Macintosh says this means, that a misfortune befell them. The
'tarbh-coill' was a dark cloud, which, if seen on New Year’s
eve, portended a dark and stormy season. The ideas connected with this
'Tarbh-coille' and the 'Dàir na coille' (q.v.) remind of the 'genitabilis aura' of Lucretius.

This saying applies to more than one of the great house of Douglas, as
may be seen by those who read Home of Godscroft’s delightful history.

Thatching a house without roping it, vain labour.

Your grandfather’s dwelling to you!

The house of Ewen son of yellow John to you!

A house without dog, without cat, without child, a house without
cheerfulness or laughter.
Al. 'gun cheòl-gaire.' This pretty proverb appears to be purely native.

An inn, a mill, and a smithy, the three best places for news.

Sickness on the day of battle, = cowardice.

Armstrong (Dict., p. 297) says this was a kind of pulmonary affection
called 'glacach.' It is said that the family of the Lords of
the Isles received a charm from some shipwrecked foreigner to whom they
showed kindness, by which they could heal this complaint. A
'duan' was repeated over the patient, who was then
touched with the right hand. In the following rhyme this healing gift is
alluded to:
Mór Dhònullaich Shléibhte,
D’ an géilleadh an galar,
Teichidh Glacach an éig,
’S théid as da gu h-ealamh.

Tìodhlac na cloinne bige, ’g a thoirt ’s ’g a ghrad-iarraidh.
The little children’s gift, given and soon asked back.
O’ bairns’ gifts ne’er be fain; nae suner they gie but they seek it again.—Scot.

Tabhartas Ui-Nèill, ’s a dhà shùil ’n a dhèigh—O’Neill’s gift,
and his two eyes after it.—Ir.

Tìonailidh maoin maoin; agus tìonailidh fiachan fiachan.
Wealth draws wealth, and debt draws debt.

Tir nam Beann, ’s nan Gleann, ’s nan Gaisgeach.
The land of Mountains, Glens, and Heroes.
This is a favourite motto and toast. Another version is,
Tir nan gleann, ’s nam beann, ’s nam breacan.
The land of glens, and bens, and tartans.

Tiugainn, ars’ an Rìgh; Fuirich, gus am faod, ars’ a’ Ghaoth.
Come away, said the King; Wait till you may, said the Wind.

Tiugh no tana, ’s math teth e.
Thick or thin, it’s good hot.

Togaidh an obair an fhianais.
The work will bear witness.

Togar càrn mór de chlachan beaga.
A big cairn may be raised of small stones.

Toiseach agus deireadh na sine, clachan mine meallain.
The beginning and end of the rain-storm, small hailstones.

Toiseach na coille, ’us deireadh na féithe.
Go first through the wood, and last through the bog.
Tosach coille a’s deire móna.—Ir.
A wise practical advice.

Toiseach teachd ’us deireadh falbh.
First to come, and last to go.
The motto of Gaul Mac Morn. See Gillies’s ‘Sean Dàna,’ p. 311.

[TD 371]

Toradh math ’s a’ chuid eile!
I wish you good of the remainder!
An expression of thanks, when one has received part of anything.

Toradh na féudalach gun am faicinn.
The fruit of the cattle that have not been seen.

Tràth bhios tuar a’ dol as air na gobhair, cha bheir iad ach buic.
When the goats die out, they bring forth only bucks.

Treabhaidh na daoidean, ’s cha dean na saoidhean ach treabhadh.
The wicked till, and the good can but till.
He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust.—MATTH. v. 45.

The good ploughman will plough the land of the fool.
The wise and able will, in the natural course of things, take the place of the incapable.

The third vice of the message-lad, to be long away and bring back nothing.

The third good-luck of the farmer’s son, a daughter for his eldest child.

Brave abroad, and cheery at home.
The Highland type of a man of the right sort.

The small man’s valour, a whistle and a noise.

Thrice deer’s age, age of eagle;
Thrice eagle’s age, age of oak.
There are stories told of deer attributing ante-diluvian age to them; but that here said of the eagle has not even such authority.

The tenant’s three curses, the Tutor of Kintail, May frost, and July fog. This is a Kintail saying, referring presumably to Sir Roderick Mackenzie, Tutor of Kintail during the minority of his nephew, the first Earl of Seaforth. He ruled with a rod of iron, and made himself detestable to the tenantry.

Three of the worst things man ever did—to rise from food without grace; to rise from his own wife to another man’s; to rise from Mass without listening.

Three of the coldest things, a man’s knee, a cow’s horn, and a dog’s nose.
Three gifts of the Bard—the dog’s hunger for a feed; a raven’s bidding to a feast; an impatient man’s thirst for his dram.

This is not very ancient, nor very true. But it did apply, and does, to some men calling themselves Bards, and passing for such with the ignorant.

Three that come unbidden—Love, Jealousy, and Fear.

The old man’s scolding of the caterans.

Very ineffectual—like some protests that have been seen in modern times against military invasions and grand spoliations.

The barking of the lap-dog with his back to a wall.

Ye’re like the dowgs o’ Dunragit, ye winna bark unless ye hae yir hinner end to the wa’.—Scot. See <gai>‘Is dàna cuilean’.

The scolding of friends, and the peace of enemies, two things not to be regarded.

The scolding of the wives about the scart, and the scart out on the loch.

Like disposing of the hare before it’s caught.

Empty bladders make a noise.

See <gai>‘Is labhar’.

A trump without a tongue.

‘Trump’ is Scotch for ‘Jew’s harp’.

The tinker’s wages—paid beforehand.

In other words, money thrown away.

The hen’s wages, her crop-full.

The thatch of the kiln on the mill.

Tir the kiln to thack the mill.—Scot.

Robbing Peter to pay Paul.

Understand the boat, and the boat will understand you.

An excellent Hebridean saying. A boat, a horse, a man or woman, can be managed only by one who understands them, and whom they will understand accordingly.

One woman understands another woman.

They generally do so better than men.
Tuigidh cù a chionta.<eng> A dog knows when he does wrong.

Tuigidh e rud 'am broinn suip.<eng> He’ll understand a thing hid in a wisp. He’ll understand a hint conveyed in some trivial shape.

Tuigidh fear-leughaidh leth-fhacal.<eng> A reading man will understand half a word. One word is enough for the wise.—Arab. Verbum sat sapienti.—Lat.

[TD 374]

Tuigidh na bailbh a chéile.<eng> The dumb understand each other.

Tuigidh na geòidh fhéin a chéile.<eng> Even the geese understand each other.

Tuilleadh air a’ chàrnan.<eng> More upon the little cairn.

Tuireadh a réir an fhuinn.<eng> Lament according to the tune.

Tuislichidh an t-each ceithir-chasach.<eng> The four-footed horse may stumble.

Cheibh beàthach cheithre g-cos tuisleadh.<eng>—Ir. A horse wi’ four feet may snapper by a time.—Scot. A horse stumbles that hath four legs.—Eng. Anco il cavallo si stanca, sebben ha quattro piedi.—Ital. Een paard met vier pooten struikelt wel.—Dutch. Il n ’y a cheval si bon qui ne bronche.—Fr.

Tuiteit head lóng ’us làimhrig.<eng> Falling between ship and landing-place.

Tuiteithead a’ chraobh a’ bhithear a’ sior shnaidheadh.<eng> The tree that is constantly hewed at will fall.

Tuiteithead cliabh gun iris, ’s theid a’ bhrig do h-ionad fhéin.<eng> A ropeless creel will fall, and the lie will go to its own place.

Tuiteithead tòn eadar dha chaithair, agus tigheadas eadar dha mhuinntir.<eng> Seat comes down between two chairs, and housekeeping between two families.

Tuiriseam air a’ bhaistidh.<eng> The wives’ journey to the christening.

[TD 375]

U.

A young hen with an egg, and a farm-servant with a wife. Creatures with a sense of their superior importance, in respect of what they have achieved.

An addition sometimes given is, 'Bréid air sean-nighinn, 's i 'g a shior-chàradh—An old maid with a head-dress, continually getting mended.

An egg without butter or salt will breed a disease after seven years. See 'Aran 'us uibhean'.

The hen-egg going to seek the goose-egg. The hen's egg goes to the ha' to bring the guse's egg awa.—Scot.
'Spoken when poor people give small gifts to be doubly repaid.'—Kelly.
Al. Ubh na circe 'dol do'n tigh-mhór, gun ubh a' gheòidh a thoir as.
The brown hen's egg going to the big house, without bringing back the goose-egg.

By degrees comes health, but in great waves comes sickness. Al. Muin air mhuin thig an easlainte, ach uidh air n-uidh thig an t-sláinte.

The oil of the cow, without and within, if that won't heal the Gael, there's no cure for him.
Al. Uraireachd na bà—The fat of the cow. Milk, cream, butter, neat-foot oil, are all included.

Earth, earth on Oran's eye! lest he talk more. The story to which this saying is supposed to refer is, that at the time of founding his religious establishment at Iona, St. Columba received divine intimation that one of his companions must be buried alive, as a sacrifice necessary to the success of the undertaking, and that St. Oran offered himself, and was duly interred. On the third day St. Columba went and opened the grave, to see how his friend fared. Presently Oran raised his eyes, and uttered these words, Cha 'n 'eil am bàs 'n a iongantas, No Ifrinn mar a dh' aithrisear.

Death is no wonder, nor is Hell as it is said. The story goes that St. Columba, shocked by such sentiments, exclaimed in the words above given, and covered up St. Oran again as fast as possible. The above is the substance of a quotation given by Macintosh, in a note on this saying, but without naming the author. A better version of Oran's words, got from Tiree, is

Cha 'n 'eil an t-Eug 'n a annas, 'S cha 'n 'eil Ifrinn mar a dubhrar; Cha teid math am mugh, 'S cha bhi olc gun dioladh.

Death is nothing strange,
Nor Hell as has been said;
Good will not perish,
Nor evil be unpunished.
It was part of this tradition, that Oran used to dispute with Columba
about the torments of the future, and entertained laxer views.
The story of St. Oran’s burial appears first in the old Irish life of St.
Columba, of which Mr. Skene gives a translation by Mr. W. M. Hennessey at
the end of Vol. II. of his Celtic Scotland, and of which the original was
printed for the first time by Mr. Whitley Stokes in his Three Middle Irish
Homilies. It is as follows,—‘Colum Cille then said to his people, ’It is
well for us that our roots should go under ground here’; and he said to
them, ’It is permitted to you that some one of you go under the earth of
this island to consecrate it’. Odran rose up readily, and thus he said,

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‘If thou wouldst accept me,’ he said, ‘I am ready for that’. ’O Odran,’
said Colum Cille, ‘thereof thou shalt have the reward, viz., to none
shall his request be granted at my grave unless from thee he seek it
first.’ Odran then went to heaven. He then founded the church of Hii.’
There is no mention here, or in any other writing, of the strange event
of the third day.
Oran is not even named by Adamnan; nor is he included in the oldest list
of the twelve companions of Columba. The Oran after whom Réilig Odhrain,
Oran’s burial-place, is named, is designated ‘Abbot’ by Angus the Culdee,
and his death is recorded in the Annals of the Four Masters in the year
548, i.e., fifteen years before Columba came to Scotland. The result is,
that the above curious story and saying are left without a particle of
historical foundation. As an invention, however, they are both
interesting and instructive.

<gai>Uisge beatha ‘bhalaich mhóir, ólamaid gun taing e.<eng>
The great churl’s whisky, let us drink it, and no thanks to him.
This is the only proverb in all the present collection in which whisky is
mentioned; and it is not an old one.

<gai>Uisge dónn na duilleig; uisge dubh nam friamh, ’s uisge glas a’
Chéitein, trí uisgeachan a’s mios’ a th’ ann.<eng>
The brown rain at the fall of the leaf; the black rain at the springing
of roots; and the gray rain of May; the three worst of waters.
Of a quite different import is another similar saying, <gai>Uisge dónn na
duillich, tha e ro-mhath do na fearaibh òg<eng>—The brown rain of the
foliage is very good for young men.

<gai>Uisge mór a sgaoiles ceò.<eng>
Heavy rain scatters mist.
See <gai>’Gaoth tuath’.

Uisge teth bhò’n bhuain, ’s uisge fuar bho ’n àr.<eng>
Hot water after reaping, cold water after ploughing.
Al. <gai>bho ’n chrann.<eng>
For washing; hot water in warm weather, cold water in Spring; very
sensible advice.

<gai>Urchair a’ mhaodail air a’ bhrochan.<eng>
The paunch’s hit at the porridge.

<gai>Urchair an doill mu’n dabhaich.<eng>
The blind man’s shot at the tub.
As the blind man threw his cudgel.
Mai dall yn tawlu eiffon.—Welsh.

According to a certain story, Dabhach was the name of Ossian’s wife, and the blind old bard one day, provoked by something, threw a deer’s bone at her, and missed.—See Campbell’s Leabhar na Feinne, p. 38.

Prayers to-day, and lies to-morrow.
A sailor’s prayer in a storm.
Passato il pericolo, gabbato il santo.—Ital.
See Rabelais, B. IV., c. 19, Of Panurge and Friar John in the storm.

The sneak’s deference to the swaggerer.

OUT of a number of proverbs and phrases, got too late for insertion in their alphabetical places, or omitted, the following have been selected:

Kicking badgers out of his heels.
Said of one in a great rage.

Making a noise about a trifle.
This is a specimen of unmeaning words used to express something.

Son of the cat, born to drink milk!
On that footing, be it so.

The man who often is in danger will be some day drowned.
This is undoubtedly Hebridean.

Let him that picks wash.
He that soils his fingers must clean himself.

He that gets most will ask most.
The spleen the fool’s part, the lights the silly woman’s.

What is silent the mice won’t hear.

What goes into the belly sends its sap to the feet.

Where you turn your back, may you never turn your face!

When a new king comes, new laws come.

The Gael’s breathing-place—on the the summit.
Right up Ben Lomond could he press,
And not a sob his toil confess.—Scott.

One day in Spring, nine in Autumn.

Goat milk foaming and warm, that gave their strength to our fathers.

When a wicked woman curses, where the love is hottest, there the blow is heaviest.

The badger’s opinion of his own claws, a poor opinion.

It would make a stirk laugh.

You have broken the priest’s wall.
Said to children when they lose teeth in their seventh year, at which time they are supposed in the Roman Church to become responsible.

A little old body at the side of his wife’s house.

A dappled sky to-day; a good day to-morrow.

Iron on or off, keep your foot on the peg.
The 'caib' of the old crooked spade, 'cas-chróm,' was the iron with which it was pointed; the 'sgonnan' was the peg on which the right foot was pressed. The meaning is, ‘Keep working, even with a defective implement’.
Pat's rock under pigmies.
This is a Tiree saying, probably of Irish origin, applied to anything venerable under foot of the unworthy. The Rev. Mr. Campbell, from whom I got it, says that Carraig Phàidein is the diminutive of Pàdruig and = Pat or Paddy, whence MacFadyen. But he knows no place of the name of Carraig Phàidein, neither do I. Can it possibly refer to Creag-Phàdruig near Inverness? Another version, however, makes it Carrraig-Fhearguis, Carrickfergus, a well-known place.

The spoil by which it was got was no better.
Said when a tenant comes to grief in land taken unmercifully from another.

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The bread is forgot that passes the throat.

Only their clothes will quarrel.

A table sans bread is no table, but bread is a table itself.

The King himself couldn't keep the wind in snuff.

Living legs can't be kept in bags.
This 'dubh-fhalach' seems to refer to the same thing as 'Cha do chuir thu do dha chois fhathast 's an aon osan'—You haven't yet put both your legs in one hose, = shroud.

Clean hand won't make barley.

A boat was never lost that carried her sail.

None ever burnt his house before the foray but one, and he repented. The anticipated foray never came!

The night-watcher never overtook the early-riser.

It's no mending of a bad day's work to be long of beginning.
Al. without stopping.

The morning sun won't last all day.
I shouldn't know him if I met him in my gruel.
You are not of my flock, not of my flock, said the dove.
This is a pretty imitation of the cooing of a dove.

There's no salmon without peer.
Anglers sometimes need to be reminded of this.

There is no trust to be put in the Islanders.
A Lorn saying, originating probably in the difficulty of Islanders, who had to depend on the weather, in keeping their engagements.

None can say which is wiser, he that saves or he that spends.

Night orders are not good.
This is of the same sense as 'Day will bring counsel'. There are old legends of hunters and others, who wished for their loves at night, and were visited by Fairy women or vampires, and killed.

No good oats ever were without refuse.

He had no fault but that of Fingal.
Fingal’s one fault was that he was only 8 feet high, while all the rest of his comrades were taller.

None was hairy but was happy.
See 'Cha bhi sonas air bus lóm'.

Friendship won’t stand on one leg.

A tail-less dog wouldn’t take his tail from you.
Said of very sharp people.

You went to the extreme with me.
Lit. to Dunvegan. A Lochaber saying.

As tuneful as a fiddler’s elbow.

The black-mouthed MacDiarmids, go at them and catch them.
This probably refers to the MacDiarmids of Glen Lyon.

The Mackinnons of wilks.
A common nickname in Skye. This surname is usually written ‘Mac Ionmhuin,’ founded on a pretty but fanciful etymology, A more probable derivation traces the clan to one called Fingan.

The pillor-head gnawing.
A curtain lecture.

Stray dogs and other people’s children.

Like yellow red John’s coat, without shape or elegance.

A mast to suit the boat.

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Three sequestered and uncultivated spots in Kingairloch. The saying points to a state of things common in olden times, but which now, happily, need not be feared.

Sit down, tailor; sit down, turner; let the rest sit as is best; I’ll sit beside the arrow-maker.

In the Preface to Ronald Macdonald’s Collection of Songs, a more imperfect version of this proverb is given, as an illustration of the fatherly hospitality of Highland lairds to their dependents.

People could eat the big stacks, but they could do with the little ones.

Two that will have peace to-night, myself and the white horse, as the woman said when she heard of her husband’s death.

A man in whose dunghill the fork would stand.
A man of substance.

The elegance of the Loch Awe women, turning the dun clout inside out. A Lorn saying.

Get on, Mr. John, the channel is filling.

The Rev. John McLean was minister of Kilninian (see p. 190) in Mull, including Ulva and Gometra. These islands are separated by a narrow channel called the ‘Brugh,’ which is passable on foot except at high water. Mr. M. was preaching at Gometra, and the beadle reminded him...
in the above words, proverbial in Mull, that it was time to be winding up.

Far am bi cairbhean cruinnichidh coin.<eng> Where carcases are dogs will gather.

Fear eil’ air son Eachainn!<eng> Another for Hector!
Said at the battle of Inverkeithing, 1652, in reference to the chief of the Macleans, Hector Roy of Duart, who was killed there, with hundreds of his clan.—Cuairtear, 1842, pp. 96-7. Sir Walter uses this saying in his description of the Clan fight in the Fair Maid of Perth.

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Fear farumach, ‘s e cothromach; ceann ’us casan math aige; ’us gun a mhàthair beò.<eng> A man of energy, and well-to-do; with good head and good legs; and his mother not alive.
The Locharber ‘beau-ideal’ of an ‘eligible’ man.

‘Farumach’ expresses the cheerful stir made by a man whose foot will have ‘music in’t as he gaes up the stair’.

Póghnaidh feur nach d’ fhàs do ’n laogh nach d’ rugadh.<eng> Grass that hasn’t grown will suit the unborn calf.

Gabh an latha math as a thoiseach.<eng> Take the good day early.

Gabh eòlas Rudh-a’-bhàird air.<eng> Take it like the Bard’s Point.
Avoid it. This is a Lewis saying.

Gàire ri do mhi-chiatadh.<eng> Laughing at your shame.

Ge b’e ghoideadh an t-ubh ghoideadh e ’chearc, nam faodadh e.<eng> Who would steal the egg would steal the hen.

Ge b’ oil leis a’ mhnaoi, tha ’n côta saobhir.<eng> In spite of the wife, the coat is unstinted.
A Lochaber saying. The goodwife, who made the cloth, wished to scrimp the measure, in the spirit of ’Tak yir auld cloak aboot ye.’

Ge bu don’ an saor bu mhath a shliseag, mu’n dubhairyt bean an t-saoir ’n uair a choachail e.<eng> Though bad was the carpenter, good was his chip, as his wife said when he died.

Ged a gheabhteadh duin air chóir, cha bu chóir a shàruchadh.<eng> A good man should not be overtaxed.
If thy friend be honey, do not eat him all.—Arab.

Ged is don’ an Donas, their a chothrom fhéin da.<eng> Give the Devil his due.
Al. <gai>Thoir a dhlighe fhéin do ’n Donas, ged is don’ a chóir air.

Is ann ’an casan coin a bhios ’earal.<eng> A dog’s caution is in his legs.
The jeweller’s part of her is fine. Said of a woman more adorned without than within.

It’s a hard hill where he couldn’t get picking.

The justice of the unjust is twisted.

He will eat much who gets little.

The clothes are the man, not the lying body.

Emulation ploughs and rivalry reaps.

A man goes slowly where he doesn’t wish.

Edinburgh is far from the man who rises at Stoer. Stoer is a parish in the west of Sutherland.

The maker is better than the critic.

One living teat is better than two dead cows. The axe was the weapon with which the cow was killed.

Many are the ‘on dits’ in the cottage.

One dog fleeing is swifter than twelve pursuing.

A dog goes before his company. Said of forward ill-mannered persons.

Woe to him that would forsake the tenantry, without winning the laird.

The bad boy is good when the gentle ones go. When the good children die, the worst child becomes more valued.

The union of sticks is helpful. This is the old Roman parable.
The men are good, but for what they see.
This is a feminine saying, meaning that men who stick at home and pry too much into domestic matters, are out of place.

The birds are good in their native place.
A very Highland sentiment, deeply felt even in St. Kilda.

It is bad ware which the merchant praises not.

He’s a sorry thief who eats and tells.

He’s a bad fellow that won’t take or give.

I think the horse’s dung too near the corn.
Said to aggressive or presuming people.

Cats will eat the refuse of small guts.

A McLean without boast; a McDonald without cleverness; a Campbell without pride.
Three rarities.

The names of a gathering of witches. See Dr. MacLeod’s Rem. of a Highl. Par., p. 249.

If you eat the bird’s heart, your heart will palpitate for ever.
This and the next are meant for children.

If you eat the sheep’s tongue, you will bleat for ever.

If they stopped at Gott, they did stop there.
A Tiree saying, applied to people who stop halfway. Gott is a hamlet a little way from the port of Scarinish.

The son of Lun, Fingal’s sword,
That left no remnant of men’s flesh.
From the ‘Ceardach,’ Gillies, p. 236; Campbell’s Leabhar na Feinne, p. 65. See ‘Cha d’ fhàg claimheadh Fhinn,’ ante, p. 95.
Ma ’s tuath a ghoireas an cù cain, ’s gearr gu bàs fear dhe ’mhuinnir.<eng> If the dear dog bark to the north, soon shall one of his household die.

Mac Cuaraig an lóin, ’chuir a’ chuag air a bhroig.<eng> Kennedy of the meadow, who put his shoe out of shape.

Mar chlach a’ dol ’an aghaidh bruthaich, feasgar righinn Earraich; mar chlach a’ ruith le gleann, feasgar fann Foghair.<eng> Like stone sent uphill is the long Spring evening; like stone running down glen is soft Autumn evening.

Millidh smugaid cuideachd.<eng> A spittle will spoil a company. This is an extreme but not extravagant illustration of the Celtic sense of propriety. Our Celts require to cross the Atlantic to get rid of this objection to careless spitting.

Na ith sùil, no ùth, no àra, ’s cha bhi galar cìch gu bràth ort.<eng> Eat not eye, or udder, or liver, and thy breasts shall ail thee never.

Rathad Mhórinis do Chill-Fhinichein.<eng> Going by Morinish to Kilfinichen. A round-about way. This is a Mull saying. A Tiree saying is, <gai>‘Rathad Hogh do Holghnis’;<eng> a Coll saying, <gai>‘Rathad Peall do dh’America’;<eng> An Ardnamurchan saying is, <gai>‘Rathad nam Mealla Ruadh thun na Ranna’;<eng> or <gai>‘Cuartachadh Iain Ruaidh thun na Ranna’;<eng> the Ranna being on the north of Ardnamurchan, and the <gai>‘Mealla Ruadh’<eng> the precipitous red rocks on the south side.

’S e do bheatha fuireach, ach ’s e do bhuidheann falbh; chi thu dorus do thighe fhéin bho dhorus mo thighe-sa.<eng> You are welcome to stay, but you had better go; you can see your own door from mine.

Sgéul ’g a innse do’n ghearran, ’s an gearran a’ cur bhram as.<eng> Telling a story to the gelding, and the gelding breaking wind.

Sgugairneach de dh’ ian deireadh Foghair, ’s mairg a dh’ fheith ri d’ bhreith ’s a’ Mhàrt.<eng> Useless bird at Harvest end, pity those who waited for your birth in March.

Thàillear a’ ghogan ime, ’s figheadair na fuaraig.<eng> The tailor of the butter cog, the weaver of the crowdie.

Tha e mar chù an déigh seilg.<eng> He is like a dog after the chase.

Thoir tlachd do’n mhath, ’us math an t-olc.<eng> Love the good and forgive the bad.

Tri coileachadh na Fèinne, bàrr gheal chrann, côinneach, ’us ùr luachair.<eng> The three Fenian bed-stuffs, fresh tree-tops, moss, and fresh rushes.
Here follow some sayings in verse, which, for various reasons, were not included in the body of this collection. Some of them can hardly be reckoned as proverbs, but are worth preserving. Translations of these, and of the didactic verses that follow, must be dispensed with.

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A mhic a’ bhodachain lachduinn,
A bun Lochabar nan craobh,
Cleas a’ chait dh’òl an t-uachdar,
Theid a’ chluas ‘thoir dhiot mu’n mhaoil.

This is one of the most complete versions of that already given at p. 330.

An Srath-’Ion’ineach geal,
’S an grinne béus gun smal;
An Srath ‘s an cruaidhe clach,
’S an sgaitich cú ‘us bean!
This refers to the parish of Strath in Skye, the old territory of the MacKinnons.

C’arson a bhithinn mar chroman-lóin,
A’ tional lóin air bhàrr gach pris?
C’arson nach caithinn
’S gur cinnt’ gu’n caith an saoghal mis’?

Gaoth an iar air rudh’ na Feiste,
Oidhche dhorcha, ceò ‘us uisge,
Clann Dònuill air bhórdibh briste,
Leam cha mhisde!
Birlinn chaol chorrach,
Siùil árd bhinneach,
Sgioba fhann fheargach,
Gun urram aon d’ a chéile.

This expresses the bad wish of a MacLeod for the MacDonalds, when these two great clans were at deadly feud, and nothing could be more terribly graphic. There is genius in the imagination of the accumulated horrors. The <gai>‘Feiste’<eng> is a wild black rocky point on the west of Skye, near the grand cliff of Vaterstein, a place of dread for any distressed bark, in a dark night with west wind. The description of the galley, as ‘slender and crank, with high peaked sails,’ and that of the crew as ‘weak, angry, none respecting his fellow,’ is the beau-ideal of nautical risk and of anarchy.

A version somewhat similar was given to me as a MacDonald prayer for the MacLeods, but this is the better one.

Is fearr beagan na ’bhi gun ní,
Is fearr caraid’ na con-amhir.
Is fearr a bhi sona na ‘bhi glic,
Ach coisnidh an t-aithneach an t-anam.<eng>
This is given by Macintosh, and the word ‘con-amhìr’ is translated
‘enemy,’ but it is to be found nowhere else.

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<gai>Is ioma fear buidhe,
‘N a shuidh ann an Uibhist,
Nach itheadh na h-uibhean ’s a’ Charghus;
A rachadh do ’n aonach,
‘S a ghoideadh na caoraich,
Ged chroichte’ le taod no le cainb e.<eng>
This is a good specimen of Gaelic satire.

<gai>Ma bhios mi beò, beiridh mi mac;
Gheabh mi fear ged nach coi-dheas;
Bho’n is i mo mhàthair nach beir mac,
Is e mo bhràthair mo roghainn.<eng>
This is said to have been the answer of a matron, whose husband, son, and
only brother had been captured, and who got her choice, which of the
three to have released. It is pleasant to know, on the authority of
Macintosh’s note, that the whole three were restored to the spirited
matron.

<gai>Mar an iadh-shlat ri balla,
No mac-talla ri creig,
Leanaidh amhludh gu daingeann
Ri fear-tgraidh nam bréug.<eng>
Good sentiment, but bad rhyme.

<gai>Mèirle ‘dheanamh air a’ mhèirleach,
Gu’m b’e sin a’ mhèirle bhorb;
Cha ’n ’eil taobh a theid a’ mèirleach,
Nach ’eil mèirleach air a lorg.

Mèirle salainn ’s mèirle frois,
Mèirl’ o nach haigh anam clos;
Gus an teid an t-iasg air tir,
Cha ’n haigh mèirleach an lin clos.<eng>
This illustrates the great value attached to salt and lint-seed,
especially among a fishing population, at a time when the duty on salt
was excessive, and lint was cultivated in the Hebrides. Another version is—

<gai>Mèirleach salainn ’us mèirleach lin,
Dà mèirleach nach haigh fois;
Ge b’e thig no nach tig a nios,
Cha tig mèirleach a’ lin ghlaist.

Mi ’m shuidhe air cnocan nan déur,
Gun chraicionn air mèur no air bòn;
A Righ, ’s a Pheadair, ’s a Phòil,
Is fada an Ròimh bho Loch-Lòng!<eng>
This deep-felt utterance is ascribed to Muireadhach Albanach, (circa
1180-1220), the first distinguished representative of a great Clan,
Clann
Mhuirich, commonly called Macpherson, as he sat down at the head of Loch Long in Argyleshire, on his return from a pilgrimage to Rome, having walked the whole way, save the ferries.

This is a pleasant imitation of the sound of a mill-happer. The two mills mentioned are or were in Lochaber, the one at Moy, the other at Cuirachollit.

This is from one of Dr M'Leod’s papers in the Cuairtear, Jan., 1842, p. 311. These words were said to have been heard by a man sitting at midnight on his wife’s grave.

This refers to three remarkable stacks of rock, called MacLeod’s Maidens, off the coast of Idrigill, on the west of Skye, compared by Sir Walter Scott to the Norse ‘Choosers of the slain,’ or ‘Riders of the Storm’. One of the three smaller rocks, and the (fuller) have disappeared; and the ‘beait-fhidhe’ (weaving-loom) is now scarcely visible.

An elegant but periphrastic translation of this by Dr. John Smith is given in his Life of St. Columba.

This seems to be a paraphrase of MATTH. vii. 24-27.

Seinn-féin riamh ni mholamar,
Tha’m balbh mar na lìnnte làna,
An sruthan a’s eudoimhne
Is e labhras gu dàna.<eng>
This is given in the first ed. of Macintosh, but not in the second.

Seachd bliadhna roimh ‘n bhràth,
Thig muir air Eirinn ré aon tràth,
’S thar Ile ghuirn ghlaist,
Ach snàmhaidh I Choluim Chléirich.<eng>
An elegant but periphrastic translation of this by Dr. John Smith is given in his Life of St. Columba.

Seasaidh an fhìrinn,
Gu direach, daingeann, réidh,
Cha ’n ann air a’ ghainneamh,
Ach air creig mar stéigh.<eng>
This seems to be a paraphrase of MATTH. vii. 24-27.

’S e ’m buileachadh ’ni ’n cruinneachadh,
’S e ’n cruinneachadh ’nì sguaban,
Na sguaban ’ni na mulanan,
’S na mulanan na cruachan.

Seinn-féin riamh ni mholamar,
Tha’m balbh mar na lìnnte làna,
An sruthan a’s eudoimhne
Is e labhras gu dàna.<eng>
This is given in the first ed. of Macintosh, but not in the second.

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Siadair sin ’us Siadair,
Cha do chinnich duine riamh ann,
’S ged is lionmhor do chnocan,
Leaghaidh do chuid mar am fiar ann.<eng>
This saying, in reference to a farm near Uig in Skye, is attributed to Coinneach Odhar, the Brahan Seer.

[gai]‘S mór an dearmad mearachd focail,
‘S ann a’ tha ‘n t-olc anns a’ mhi-rùn;
‘S fearr fear foghainteach feargach
Na fear min cealgach ‘us e ciùin.

Tha ‘n uaisle ‘n a h-éire thróm,
Air an fhònn nach faighhear nì,
‘S mo chreach! ma gheabhar an crodh ‘s a’ bhuaile,
Cha ‘n fhaighhear an uaisle leis a’ mhnaoi.<eng>
Al. <gai>Far am faighbear an crodh cha ‘n fhaighbear am modh.<eng>
This is part of the son’s reply to the father’s advice on marriage (p. 330) in one of the versions.

[gai]Teirgidh gach ni ri ‘chaitheamh,
‘S a bhi ‘g a chaitheamh gu minig;
‘S an nì sin nach caithear,
Ged nach caithear gu ‘n teirig;

Bho ‘n a theirgeas gach ni gun chaitheamh,
Grathunn mu ‘n tig am bràth;
Is còir gach ni a chaitheamh,
Mu ‘n caith e fhéin as a thàmh.

Tri miosan cú,
Còig caogad cat;
Is ionann bean ‘us bò,
’S bliadhna mhòr do’n làir.<eng>
This refers to the time of going with young. The usual meaning of the word <gai>‘Caogad’<eng> is fifty, but here it is used to signify nine days.

[gai]Triuighas air na luirgne loma,
Bonnaid air na maolanaich,
Féileadh air na daoine tapaidh,
Casag air na slaodairean.

Tùs mi-rath nam bheachd,
Ge b’e aca neach ‘g a foirm,
An ‘coileach a bhi ‘n a thàmh,
Us a’ chearc a bhi dha ’gairm.

[TD 394]

COMHAIRLEAN DUINE GHLIC DO ‘MHAC.<eng>

The following verses are from John Gillies’s Collection of Gaelic Poetry, published at Perth in 1786, now a rare book. In the Cuairtear of June, 1842, five verses are given, entitled <gai>‘Comhairlean an t-sean Duine,’<eng> substantially the same as some of these, but with variations. Among the MSS. of a Kintail poet, Duncan MacRa, dated 1688, in the possession of Mr. Donald Mackinnon, Edinburgh, in a piece called <gai>‘Pairt de Chomhairle Mhic Eachain ‘Ic Fhearachair do Mhac an Toisich a Dhalta,’<eng> two verses occur which correspond nearly verbatim with two verses of Gillies’s edition. Other two are in Macintosh’s collection.
In the collection of Irish Proverbs appended to Canon Bourke’s Grammar are still other two verses, headed <gai>‘Comhairle an t-Seanduine,’<eng> somewhat different, but apparently part of the same poem. An additional verse, appended to the ironical advice, was got by Mr. A. A. Carmichael, in Uist. It is evidently a part of the same poem. All these fragmentary relics illustrate how rhymed compositions are preserved, in whole or in part, from generation to generation. A few emendations of Gillies’s text are given, the more important of which are noted. His grammar and spelling are not of the best. The wisdom, good feeling, humour, and pithiness of these verses are remarkable.

<gai>Comhairle ’thug ormsa Brian;  
Gùn mo chiall a bhi gu tais,  
Gùn dol ’an cogadh no ’n sgleò,  
Mùr saoilinn teachd béò as.

Thug e orm comhairl’ eile,  
’S ar leamsa nach i bu taire,  
Ge bu leam earras an domhain,  
Gùn a chur ’an coimheart ri m’ nàire.

Cuimhnich sìor-thathaich an teampaill,  
’S na cuir do theann-gheall ’s an éucoir;  
’S na tugadh ort òr no beatha  
Mìonnan eithich a thòirt air féudail. (1)

Ma chluinn thu faoin-sgeul air fann,  
Na cuir do leth-làmh ’n a luib;  
Na bì ’nad urrainn anns a’ bhréig,  
Leig an sgéul ud seachad uait.

Bì ciatach macant’ air d’eòlas,  
’S na tog trògbhail air d’aineol;  
Na abair gu’n diùlt thu ’chòir,  
Na ob ’us na iarr onoir. (2)

[TD 395]

Bìor ’nad dhearn fhéin na fàisg;  
D’ easbhuidh ri d’ nàmhaid na rùisg;  
Ròinn (3) sgeine ri d’ fhéoil na éisd;  
Béist nimh ri d’ bheò (4) na dùisg.

Na bì gu sraganta borb;  
Na taghail gun lorg an sruth;  
’S na tigeadh a mach as do bhéulu  
Aon nì ’thoìlleas duit féin guth. (5)

Na dean tàir air buirbe fir;  
Na òl balgum garbh á goil; (6)  
N’ tra ’chì thu ’n ealtuinn ghlan ghèur,  
Saltair gu sèimh seach a saidh. (7)

Na bì ro mhòr ’us na bi beag;  
Air fàl-ni (8) na caith do chuid;  
Air ghradh h-òinich na tog trod,  
’S na h-ob i ma ’s h-éiginn duit.

Na bì caithriseach air sràbh;  
Na dean cnàid air duine bochd;
Na mol ’s na dimoil an daoi,
Na gu ’m faighear saoi gun lochd.

A laoigh, o ’s leòr d’ òige,
Na còmhdaich cùis chònnspaid;
Na rùisg le ràbhladh do bhladh; (9)
’S na tog aobhar gun ùghdair.<eng>

(1) <gai>’eadail’<eng> in Gillies. (2) Al. <gai>urrram.<eng> (3)
<gai>faobhar<eng> in G. text in Macintosh.
(4) <gai>do d’ dheoin<eng> in G. text in M. (5) which will earn you
reproach.
(6) Al. <gai>Na cuir fearg air fuirbidh fir,
’S na toir balgum á dian-ghoil.<eng>
Al. <gai>Na buail dòrn, &c.<eng>
(7) Tread softly by its edge. (8) a trifle. The ‘Cuairtear’ version of
the second and third lines of this verse is,
<gai>’S ’an co-òil na cosd do chuid;
A tigh milidh na tog greigh.<eng>
(9) Don’t expose your character by coarse jesting.

<gai>COMHAIRLEAN CHORMAIC DO ’MHAC.<eng>

These verses follow those above in Gillies’s Collection; the first three
ironical, the rest serious.

<gai>’An tus, ’g a fheuchainn, thubhairt e.

’N uair a théid thu ’thigh an òil,
Tionndaith a’ chòir bun os cionn;
Suidh gu somalt’ air cuid chàich;
Dimoil ’us na pàidh an leann.

[TD 396]

Smachdaich d’ athair ’n a àm,
Tuig nach fhearr e na thu féin;
Aon fhacal air am bi blas
Na leig a mach as a’ bhéul.

Bi neo-shiobhalta ri mnaoi,
’S bi gu garbh ri duine bochd;
Bi gu dhuìmhneach air d’ arm,
’S bi gu tlàth ri dol ’an troid.<eng>

The following verse, got in Uist by Mr. Carmichael, plainly belongs to
this composition, and may take the place of an omitted verse, coming
second in Gillies’s version, which is coarse, without any special merit.

<gai>’N uair a theid a’ chòis mu’n cuairt,
Seal mu’n togar duais a bhùird,
Fear dha ‘n fhhearr is lèir a chòir,
Buail do dhòrn air anns an t-súil.

An Cormaig ceudna da rìreadh.

Seachain caonnag dhiomhanach, (1)
’Us ni e ciall a ghleidheadh dhuit.
Seachain a’ mhuinntir mí-runach,
D’ am bidh (2) an teanga bhaoth-radach,
Leis an annsa (3) bréug na fireantachd,
Mu ’n toill e nàire saoghail (4) duit.

Na bi struidheil friotalach, (5)
“An tigh an óil ma thuiteas tu;
Gléidh teanga shàmhach (6) shicir ann,
Nach toill nàir ’an cuideachd dhuit.

Dean taghal beag nan companach,
O ’s òl ’tha costail (7) millteach dhoibh;
Bi ceart air cùl gach aon duine,
’S cha ’n fhaod iad aon lochd innseadh ort.

Na innis-sa do d’ chompanach,
‘An uaigneas d’ uile inntinn,
Air eagal ‘s ma thig âmghar air,
‘Am feirg gu ’n dean e inns’ ort. (8)

Thoir gaoil do d’ mhnaoi a rithistich; (9)
Ma ’s állt leat gràdh (10) mu chomhair sín,
’S aon fhuil ’us fheòil ’n ur díthis sibh,
An fhad ’s is beò air domhain sibh.

Na bi bruidhneach ‘an tigh mór,
’S na bi sòradh (11) air sean-fhear.

[TD 397]

An onoir nach fhaigh thu do ghnàth
Na bi ’g a h-iarraidh aon tràth;
An fhàilt bruidhneach gun ’bhi buan,
Mar rionnach ‘an cuan a’ snàmh.

Beannachd ort ‘s na cúm an fhèarg,
’S na dean cealg air duine bochd,
Na bi dian ge d’ robh ort dìth,
Oir ’s e Dia a bheir nì dhuit.

Thoir do chomhairle mu seach,
Air gach neach a bhios ’n a féum;
An rud a dhimolas tu ’chàch
A shamhuil gu bràth na dean féin.

Comhairle de chomhairle Phòil,
Na teirig ’an spàirn le d’ dheòin;
Na dean sùgradh riutha sud,
O ’s tric friogh air an fhlor bhrùid.<eng>

The words in Gillies altered above are here given:—

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This collection forms part of a tract of 36 pp., being the 2nd edition, ‘Edinburgh, Menzies, Lawnmarket, 1834’. It contains 1. a Dialogue in verse, ‘Deasbaireachd eadar am Papa agus an t-Athleasacha,’ a Discussion between the Pope and the Reformation; 2. ‘Proverbs and Similitudes;’ 3. ‘Deoch an Doruis,’ The Door-Drink, already given on p. 165; 4. David Mackellar's Hymn to the Creator; 5. an anonymous Hymn; 6. the Christian on the Brink of Jordan, a Hymn by the Rev. John Macdonald of Urquhart, afterwards Dr. Macdonald of Perintosh. The first three are by Lothian, a brief memoir of whom forms the Preface, signed by John McLachlan, Elder in Fincastle. It states that Lothian, was a native of Glen Lyon; served for a time as a turner under Dugald Buchanan at Kinloch Rannoch; came thence to Struan; and finally to Fincastle, where he died about the age of 80. The first edition of these verses was published at Edinburgh in 1797; the third at Edinburgh in 1844. McLachlan says he had great difficulty in finding a copy. In Reid's Bibliotheca Celtica, p. 76, this entry occurs—"COMH CHRUINNEACHHIDH Orainnigh Gaedhelaich agus Bearla le Donacha Loudin. Seria mixta jocis, Ovid. Aberrain Clo-bhualit ann le Sheumais Chalmers Airson Wm. Sharp, ann 'n Inverness. 1780. 12°, 6d." It is difficult to believe that there were two Duncan Loudins; and yet the above title is very unlike the character of this Duncan’s muse; and the publication it refers to was evidently unknown to MacLachlan or his publisher. He was intimately acquainted with Duncan, of whom he says, ‘bha eolas cridhe agam air’; characterising him as a sober godly man, a good speaker, deeply earnest in exhorting others, who spent his life in great esteem, shunning every appearance of evil. The influence of Buchanan is apparent in these verses, the composition of which was probably suggested by his ‘Bruadar’. They are very good, and deserve to be known and kept in mind wherever Gaelic is spoken.

SEAN PHOCHAIL AGUS COMHADAN

LE DONNCHA LOUDIN.

‘N uair a chailleas neach a mhaoin,
‘S gnothach faoin ‘bhi ’g iarraidh meas;
Ge do labhair e le céill,
‘S beag a gheibh e ’dh’éisdeas ris.

‘S beag sgoinn de mhóintich am monadh;
‘S beag sgoinn de choirle am fásach;
‘S lugha meas tha ’dhuine falamh,
‘N uair ’tha ’earras an déigh fhàgail.

‘S ioma caraid ’th’ aig fear saibhir,
Tha daoine bochda gun phrís;
‘S gann a dh'aídicheas an cáirdean
Gu ’m bùin lad dhaibh, ’us iad ’bhi ’n dith.

‘S fearr a bhi bochd na ’bhi breugach,
‘S fearr fheuchainn na ’bhi ’s an dùil;
‘S fearr am fear a chostas beagan
Na ’m fear a theicheas ann an cùil.
Tha ’n fhirinn gu cliùteach sona,
Cha chron air duine ’bhi fial;
S fearr beagan anns an onoir
Na ’n donas ’us ceithir chiad.

Is ainmig a dh’ éir’eas fortan
Le fear crosta ’bhios gun chéill;
’S fearr do dhuine fuireach sàmhach,
Na droch dhàan a chur an céill.

[TD 399]

Eiridh tòn air uisge balbh;
Gheibhear cearb air duine glic;
Eiridh gnothach le fear mall;
Bristidh am fear ’tha call gu tric.

Tha ’ghaineamh fhéin anns gach sruthan;
Cha ’n ’eil tuil air nach tig tràghadh;
’S don’ an cáirdeas gun a chumail,
’S cha ’n fhaghear duine gun fháiling.

Is coltach fear ’tha ris an fhoill,
’S nach ’eil sgoinn aige de ’n chòir,
Ris an duin’ a thaísg an luaidhe,
Agus a thilg uaithe an t-òr.

’S dona thig maighdean gun ’bhi beusach;
Cha dean fear gun ghéire dàin;
Cha dean fear gun fhoghluim leughadh,
’S cha tig léig gu duine slàn.

’S math ’bhi slothchail anns gach ball;
Caillidh duine dall an t-iùl;
Is sona neach a bhios gun bheud,
Ach caillidh luchd nam breug an cliù.

Smuainich mu ’n dean thu labhairt,
Ma ’s áll leat do ghnothach ’bhi réidh;
’S fearr dhut sealltuinn beagan romhad,
Na sealltuinn fad’ air do dhéigh.

Is tróm snith air tigh gun tubhadh;
’S tróm tubaist air na dràichdean;
’S duilich do mhnaoi beanas-tighe
Dheanamh air na fraighean fàsa.

Cha tróm leis an loch an lach,
Cha tróm leis an each an t-srian,
Cha tróm leis a’ chaor’ a h-olainn,
’S cha truimid a’ choluinn a ciall.

Cha tróm leis an fhiadh a chabar,
Cha tróm leis a’ choleach a chrein;
Nì ’mheasas aon neach mar leth-trom,
Chì neach eile mar thoilinntinn.

Tha ’n neach ’tha ‘gleidheadh seanchais dhiomhain,
’S a leigeas diadhaidheachd fo ’bhónn,
Mar a bhà 'n té a thog a chàth,
'S a dh' fhàg an cruineachd air an tóm.

[TD 400]

Caillear mart an droch mhuthaich
Seachd bliadhna roimh a mithich;
Tha sud a’ feuchainn ’s a’ dearbhadh
Gu ’n tig an t-earchall le mi-fheairt.

Cha ’n fhuirich muir ri uallach,
’S cha dean bean luath macrach;
Cha dean bean gun näire cugann, (1)
’S cha dean bean gun fhuras aodach.

Far am bi bó bidh bean,
’S far am bi bean bidh buaireadh;
Far am bi fearg bidh bruidheann,
’Us as a’ bhruidhinn thig tuasaíd.

Am fear a bhrathas ’s e ’mharbhas;
Cha deanar dearbhadh gun deuchainn;
’S gann a dh’ aithn’eas tu do charaid,
Gus an tachair dhut ’bhi ’d’ éigin.

Cha ’n ’eil saoi gun choimeas,
Cha ’n ’eil coille gun chrionaich;
’S fearr beagan a mhathadh
Na sean fhaladh a dhioladh.

’S math caraid anns a’ chuirt,
Ma thig neach gu trioblaid;
Ach ’s fearr aon ian (2) ’s an làimh,
Na dhà dhig air iteig.

Leig d’ eallach air làr mu ’n lag thu,
Ma dh’ aithn’eas tu d’ eallach tróm;
Is móir gur fearr an cù a ruitheas
Na ’n cù a shuidheas air tóm.

Bean thlachdmhor, gun ghniomh, gun ghleidheadh,
Ge do thaitinn i ri d’ shùil,—
Cioid am feum a ta ’an lann,
Mur bi làmh air a cùl?

Pigheid chaileig air bheag céill,
Ged ’robh feudail aic ’us stòr,
Cha ’n fhaod a fear a bhi sona,
Ma bhios i gnogach anns an t-sròin.

Bean gun näire gun ghliocas,
Bean mhìsgeach, gun bheusaibh,
B’ fhéarr dhut cù a chur mu d’ amhuich
Na do cheangal ri té dheubh.

[TD 401]

Bean ardanach labhar,
Bean ghabhannach (3) chéilidheach,
Is tús trioblaid ’us aimbeait
Dol gu d’ cheangal ri té dhiubh.

Am fear a gheallas ’s e ’dh’ iocas,
’S e ’m fear a dh’ iarras a phàidheas;
Cha chòir do neach a bhi ullaigh
Gu dol ’an cunnart no ’n gàbhadh.

Am fear nach dean àr ri latha fuar,
Cha dean e buain ri latha teth;
Am fear nach dean obair no gniomh
Cha’n fhaigh e biadh feadh nam preas.

’S fearr sìth á preas na stri ri glais;
Bi faicilleach mu d’ ghiùlan,
’S furas seasamh ’an gnothach ceart,
Ged ‘theid gach cùis gu dúbhlan.

Is tùs a’ ghliocais eagal Dé;
Cha dean eucoir do chur suas;
Co dhiubh is math no ’s olc ’ad chré,
’S ann do réir a gheibh thu duais.

’S fearr an ceartas glan na ’n t-òr;
Is beag air duine côir an fhoill;
An neach a mheallas tu o d’ chùl,
Chuir e ’dhùil ’an cuid an doill.

Is ciàtach gnothach follaiseach,
Ach ’s dona comunn cealgach;
An rud a gheibhear aig ceann an Deamhain,
Cailllear e aig ’earball.

Is olc an toiseach cogaidh geilt;
Cha ’n ionann sgeul do ’n chreich ’s do ’n tòir;
Is searbh glòir an fir a theich,
’S am fear a dh’ hfuirich ni e bòsd.

Is fearr ’bhi tais na ’bhi ro bhras,
0 ’n ’s e a’ s lugha cúram;
Is fearr suidh’ ’an tigh a’ bhróin,
Na ’n tigh a cheòil ’s an t-sùgraidh.

Cha toir neach air éigin beairteas;
’S duilich droch chleachd a chuir fàs;
Bheir gach Dòmhnuch leis an t-seachduin,
’S bheir am peacadh leis am bàs.

[TD 402]

Na bi ealamh air trodadh,
’S na bi toilreach air tuasaíd;
Ach ma ’s toigh leat do leanabh,
Na bi leisg air a bhuiladh.

Bi ’n còmhnuidh air taobh na slochaint, (4)
’S na bi di-chaisg (5) air bheag aobhar;
’S fearr dhut amadan a bhreugadh,
Na dol g’ a fheuchainn ann an caonnaig.

Na bi talach air do chuibhrinn,
Ge do robh i baileach (6) sòmhail, (7)
'S fhearr greim tioram le sìochaint,
Na tigh lân iobairt le còmhstri.

Dol a stri ri rud gun choslas,
Cha 'n 'eil ann ach gnothach faoin;
Cha tig feur tre na clochan,
'S cha tig foll tre chlaigionn aods'.

Tha e cruaidh air duine lag
Dol ri bruthach cas 'n a steud;
'S tha e tearc am measg an t-sluaigh
An neach sin a gheibh buaidh air fhèin.

Na bi 'cuir na ciont' air càch,
Ma tha 'n fhàiling agad fhèin;
Is duilich neach a rib' 'an slaod, (8)
'Us ceann an taoid aige fhéin.

Néach 'tha gu math is cóir dha fuireach,
Gun 'bhí 'stri ri rud nach iomchuidh;
Is tric 'bha call an déigh an turuis,
Ach 's buidhe le amadan imrich.

Is fearr cù beò na leomhan marbh;
'S fhearr min gharbh na 'bhi gun bhleth;
An rud a chì thu 'thogas fearg,
Na dean dearmad air a chleth.

Thoir aire cia mar 'ghluaiseas tu;
Cha toir thu buaidh le farmad;
Is tric le gnothach mirunach
Gu 'n crlochnaich e neo-shealbhar.

Bi eòlach mu dhuine an tús,
Mu 'ninnis thu do rùn g' a cheann;
Na cuir do chlàr air a thaobh
Do neach nach saoil thu 'chuireadh (9) ann.

[TD 403]

Na gabh farmad ri neach idir,
Ged 'shaoil thu a staid 'bhi mór;
A' bheann a 's àirde 'tha 's an tir
'S an oirre 's trice 'chi thu 'n ceò.

'S math an gille greasaidh 'n t-eagal;
Tha rud air theagamh duilich 'innseadh;
'S fhearr dhut teicheadh le onoir,
Na dol 'thoirt oidhirp neo-chinnteach.

'N uair a theid thu do 'n tigh-leanna,
Na iarr a bhi 'g amailt na páirti; (10)
'S mithich druideadh chòir an doruis,
'N uair a theannas an sporan ri àicheadh.

Is diomhain dut a bhi 'toirt teagaisg
Do neach a chuir cùl ri eòlas;
Mar 'thionnda's a' chòmhnl' air a bannaibh,
Pillidh an t-amadan ri 'ghòraich.
Ge do robh thu dripeil,
'S cóir dhut a bhi air d' fhaicill;
'S iad na toimhsean trice
'Ni na toimhsean cearta.

Tha ar n-ùine 'ruith gun stad,
Ceart co luath 's 'thig clach le gleann;
Ni i stad 'n uair ruigear (11) lag,
'S bidh a h-astar aig a cheann.

Ceart mar a thig gaillionn na sian,
'N uair nach miann leat a bhi ann,
Is amhluidh sin a thig an t-aog,
Ge do shaoil thu nach b'e 'n t-ám.

Ceart mar a sgoileas an ceò,
'N uair a thig teasa ar o 'n ghréin,
Is amhluidh sin a shiubhlas glòir,
'Us ioma dòchas air bheag feum.

Cha b' e comunn an dà ghamhna
A bha shannt orm 'dheanamh riut,
Ach rud 'bhiodh agad 'ghabhail uat,
'S an rud 'bhiodh uat a thoirt dhut.

Nach b' e sud an comunn saor?
'S cha b' e comunn nam macr mu 'n chlår;
B'e 'n comunn-sa 'bhi 'toirt a null,
'S cha chomunn ach a null 's a nall.

Ma 's flor gach sean fhocal,
A labhradh le luchd géire,
Bheir fòid breithe agus bàis
Duine air athadh 's air éigin.<eng>

(1) <gai>'cugann,'<eng> milk set for cream. (2) <gai>'aon'<eng> and <gai>'dhiaig'<eng> are supplied here for better version and metre. (3) <gai>'gabhannach,'<eng> flattering. (4) <gai>'siothchaint,'<eng> subst. for <gai>'siothchaidh'.<eng> (5) <gai>'dì-chaisg,'<eng> uncontrollable; not a dictionary word. (6) <gai>'baileach'<eng> more commonly <gai>'buileach'.<eng> (7) <gai>'sòmhail,'<eng> small, opposite of <gai>'dòmhail,'<eng> bulky; more generally <gai>'sùmhail,'<eng> and <gai>'dùmhail'.<eng> (8) <gai>'rib' 'an slaod,'<eng> to entangle in a coil. (9) Subst. for <gai>'chuir rud ann'.<eng> (10) Don't interrupt the party. (11) <gai>'ruigear,'<eng> subst. for <gai>'thig i 'n,'<eng> as preferable.

APPENDIX.
APPENDIX.

I.

<gae>'Aireamh na h-Aoine,'<eng> &c., p. 7.

Counting cattle on Friday was considered peculiarly unlucky. <gae>Ruith na h-Aoine,<eng> The Friday fate, was sure to follow. See to the same effect, <gae>'Ma mharbhas tu beathach Dihaoine,'<eng> p. 305.

<gae>Eòlas na h-Aoine,<eng> the Friday spell, was a name applied to the evil eye. If one possessing this unfortunate <gae>eòlas<eng> saw another bathing, the bather was sure to get drowned.

Friday has long been held an unlucky day in various Christian countries. This is generally supposed to be founded on the fact that it was the day of our Lord's Crucifixion. Accordingly, it is a fast day in the Church of Rome, whence the Gaelic name <gae>'Di-h-Aoine,'<eng> literally 'Fast-Day'. The belief in the unluckiness of Friday is not confined, however, to Christian countries. It prevails also among the Brahmins, who hold that no business of any importance should be commenced on Friday. Asiat. Res., Vol. VI., p. 172; Chambers's Book of Days, Vol. I., p. 42.

The Scottish proverb 'Friday flit, short time sit,' and the English 'Friday's hair and Sunday's horn, goes to the dool on Monday morn,' illustrate this superstition.

II.

<gae>'Am port a's fhearr,'<eng> &c., p. 25.

Roderick Morrison, the most famed of Highland harpers, and a poet of no mean powers, was son of John Morrison of Bragar (see Note ante, p. 47), and born according to MacKenzie (Beauties of Gaelic Poetry, p. 85) in 1646. His father, who was a man of some mark, and of varied ability, had five sons, of whom three became clergymen. Rory was sent as a boy with two of his brothers to be educated at Inverness, and there he lost his eye-sight from small-pox. Instead of theology music became thenceforth his study, and his father is said to have declared that the education of Rory as a musician cost him more trouble and expense than that of the three ministers. On his return from a visit to Ireland, Rory met in Edinburgh the Chief of the MacLeods, Iain Breac, described by MacKenzie as "that sterling model of a Highland Chieftain," and said to have been one of the last that had in his retinue 'a Bard, a Harper, a Piper, and a Fool—all of them excellently and well provided for'. This spirited Chief engaged Rory in the double capacity of Bard and Harper, in both which offices he earned a reputation that still lives. His Lament for his beloved patron, <gae>Creach na Ciadain,<eng> and his <gae>Oran Mór Mhic Leòid,<eng> full of praise of the dead, combined with plain but dignified strictures addressed to the young Chief, are very creditable, and still worthy of remembrance in that ancient and hospitable house. Few families anywhere can boast of having had two such bards in their service as Mary MacLeod and Roderick Morrison; and no sentiment more appropriate could be addressed to a MacLeod Chief than this of Roderick:—
Bi gu fiúghantach smachdail, 
Rianail, reachdmhor, ’n Triath Leòdach, 
Na faic frìd ’an sùil brìdean, 
Cha chuis dìon do Mhac Leòid e!

Cha chùis dìon do Mhac Leòid 
A bhi dòlum ’s rud aige, 
Lean an dùthchas bu chòir dhut, 
’S biodh mòr-chuis ’n ad aigne!

After the death of Iain Breac, change of days came to Dunvegan and to Rory: in his own pathetic words,

Chaidh a’ chuidhle mu’n cuairt, 
Gu ’n do thionndaidh gu fuachd am blàths.

The Chief had given him the farm of Totamór in Glenelg rent free, from which he appears to have been ejected by the new laird, Roderick, of whom he says:—

Dheadh mhic athar mo ghràidh, 
Bu tu m’ aighear, ’us m’ àdh, ’us m’ olc.

After this he returned to Lewis, where he died at a good old age, and was buried in the old churchyard of Uy, near Stornoway.

The above facts are taken chiefly from MacKenzie’s sketch, in which a few mistakes occur. The poet’s father is said to have been an Episcopal clergyman; he was a farmer. At the time of Rory’s visit to Edinburgh it is said that the Scotch nobility and gentry were at the Court of King James in Holyrood House. James VII. never was in Scotland after he became king. Macintosh says Rory was harper to MacLeod in the reign of Queen Anne, which is probable enough.

Sir Walter Scott thus alludes to Roderick in Waverley (ch. xvii.), “Two paces back stood Cathleen holding a small Scottish harp, the use of which had been taught to Flora by Rory Dall, one of the last harpers of the Western Highlands”.

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Macintosh in a note on the above proverb (2nd Ed., p. 199), gives the following interesting reminiscence:—

“Harps were in use in the Highlands and Isles of Scotland time immemorial, till the beginning of last century, and even later; for Mr. Robertson of Lude, General Robertson’s great-grandfather, the gentleman whom the elegant poet Struan immortalises in his poems, was a famous performer upon that instrument, and I have heard my father relate the following anecdote of him:—

“One night my father said to Lude that he would be happy to hear him play upon the harp, which at that time began to give place to the violin. After supper Lude and he retired to another room, in which there were a couple of harps, one of which belonged to Queen Mary. ‘James,’ says Lude, ‘here are two harps, the largest one is the loudest, but the small one is the sweetest; which do you wish to hear played?’ James answered, ‘the small one,’ which Lude took up, and played upon it till daylight.
“Upon a visit to my native country of Athole, about five years ago, I had the curiosity to enquire of General Robertson if the harps were still in the family. The General told me they were, and brought them upon the table, at the sight of which I was quite overjoyed in viewing the musical instruments of our ancestors, as well as those of the renowned heroes of Ossian.

“After my return to Edinburgh, I immediately gave notice of the harps to the Highland Society of Scotland, who wrote to General Robertson requesting a sight of the harps, which he was so obliging as to grant.

“Mr. Gunn, teacher of music in Edinburgh, has since published an Essay upon the Harp, with representations taken from these very harps. I have the vanity to think the bringing these harps before the eyes of the public to be one of the most pleasant actions of my life, as in all probability they must either have been lost or destroyed by time, without ever having been known to the world; and those fastidious gentlemen who take pleasure in opposing everything respecting the antiquity of the Caledonians, would have persisted in denying the use of the harp among these people, as they do many other things.”

The two harps above mentioned are now in the Museum of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, to which they have been kindly lent by the owner, Mr. Steuart of Dalguise.

Campbell, Macintosh’s editor, adds to the above, that when visiting the Western Highlands and Islands in 1815 collecting melodies for his ‘Albyn’s Anthology,’ he visited the grave of Rory Dall’s pupil, the last of our Hebridean harpers, Murdoch MacDonald; and that Mrs. MacKenzie of Dervaig in Mull remembered his playing on his harp in her father’s house. This Mrs. MacKenzie was the Miss MacLean specially mentioned by Boswell in his ’Tour through the Hebrides’. She was the daughter of a Dr. MacLean who lived near Tobermory at that time, 1773. Dr. Johnson said of her, ‘She is the most accomplished lady that I have found in the Highlands. She knows French, Music and Drawing, sews neatly, makes shell-work, and can milk cows; in short, she can do everything. She talks sensibly, and is the first person I have found that can translate Erse poetry literally.’ She accompanied her singing on a spinnet, which Boswell said was well-toned, though made in 1667.—Carruthers’ ed., p. 249.

III.

<gai>‘Cha ghluais bròg,’<eng> &c., p. 102.

<gai>‘Eòghan a’ chinn bhig,’<eng> Ewen of the little head, was the eldest son of one of the first lairds of Loch Buy in Mull, and married a daughter of MacDougall of Lorn, a very ill-tempered and niggardly woman, who got the nickname of <gai>Gortag.<eng> He quarrelled violently with his father, and is said to have struck him. The old man complained to his relation MacLean of Duart, who was glad of a pretext for invading Loch Buy, and came down with an armed force against Ewen. On the evening before the battle, Ewen consulted a witch, of whom he asked whether he was to win the fight. She said he would win, if on the morrow his wife would give him butter without asking for it, <gai>‘ìm gun iarraidh’.<eng> Next morning Ewen sat and waited long for the butter, rubbing his hands
and stamping with his feet. At last his wife said, 'Cha ’n fhàg breabadair na seana bhròig craicionn air dearnaibh,'<eng> The kicker of the old shoe won’t leave skin on palm; on which Ewen responded as above, Neither shoe nor speech will move the bad housewife. He went away in a rage, leaving his food untasted, turned his dogs into the milk-house, and hastened to the fight, from which he never returned alive. It took place in Glen Cainnir near Loch Buy, where a stroke from a broadsword swept off Ewen’s little head. The horse then rushed from the fight with his rider on his back, and was so seen again for days, careering wildly through these glens, up and down passes and precipices fit only for goats or birds. For many generations thereafter this headless rider, still in full armour, continued to be seen or heard, a well-known and dreaded object, and always appearing when any important member of the Loch Buy family was in danger or near death. The name of Ewen of the little head is still a power to frighten children in Mull and the neighbouring islands. In the Teachdaire Gaelach of August, 1830, there is a slightly different version of this legend, written with the usual vivid power of the Editor, Dr. Norman MacLeod. He gives it as if told at Iona, where a tombstone with the figure of a horseman in full armour was said to be that of Eóghan a’ chinn bhig;<eng> and the last vision of him, racyly described, was

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said to have been only ‘twelve years ago’. The reason given for the restless activity of Ewen’s spirit is admirable—’thuit e ’n a thrasg’<eng>—he fell fasting!

IV.

The season of Spring was more specially a matter of observation and interest to our ancestors than any of the other seasons, on account of its importance as the time of year on the character of which their existence and comfort so much depended. Accordingly we find it divided into various periods, with fanciful names, founded, so far as their meaning can be guessed, on the imaginary causes of the various changes of weather. The longest of these is the <gai>Faoilleach,<eng> or <gai>Faoilleach,<eng> on the etymology of which Armstrong says, ‘The original meaning was perhaps the wolf month (<gai>faol,<eng> a wolf), from the circumstance that wolves, with which the Highlands once abounded, became more daring and dangerous in the depth of winter. <gai>Faoilleach<eng> may also be derived from <gai>faole,<eng> welcome, joy. The Highlanders regard stormy weather, towards the end of January as prognostic of a fruitful season to follow, and vice versa.’ The former of these etymologies is supported by the word ‘Wulfes-Mónað,’ said to have been the Anglo-Saxon name given to the month of January, Old Style, for the reason above mentioned. The other etymology is supported by the rhyme given at p. 178, ante,

<gai>Faoilleach, Faoilleach, làmh’an crios,
Faoilte mhór bu chòir ’bhi ris.<eng>

The <gai>Faoilleach<eng> corresponded roughly to the present month of February, embracing the last two weeks of Winter, O.S., and the first two of Spring. Sometimes the first half was called the <gai>’Faoilleach Geamhraídh,’<eng> and the other half the <gai>’Faoilleach Earraich’.<eng>

Some time in this month three Summer days were supposed to come in exchange for three cold days lent to July, and the saying is, <gai>’Tha...
The occurrence of such mild days early in February is still a matter of common observation, and is never considered seasonable. —See <gai>'Cha 'n 'eil port,'<eng> &c., ante, p. 116.

After this came a week called the Feadag, the Plover or Whistle, so called probably because of the piping winds then prevalent. The following rhyme refers to it:—

=gai=Thuirt an Fheadag ris an Fhaoilleach,
=C’aìt’ an d’fhàg thu ‘n laoighsein bochd?’
=Dh’fhàg mis’ e aig cùl a’ ghàraidh,
=S a dhà shùil ‘n a cheann ‘nam ploc’.<eng>

Said the Plover to the Stormy,  
‘Where did’st leave the poor wee calf?’

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=eng=I left him behind the wall,  
With his eyes like lumps of turf’.  

Another rhyme makes the <gai>Feadag<eng> the mother of the <gai>Faoilleach<eng> and of course preceding it,

=gai=Feadag, Feadag, màthair Faoillich fhuair.<eng>

For this, however, there is no other authority.

After the <gai>Feadag<eng> came the <gai>Gearran,<eng> the Horse or Gelding, a period as to the duration of which authorities differ very considerably. The Highland Society’s Dictionary, MacLeod and Dewar, and MacAlpine, all make it ‘the days from March 15th to April 11th inclusive,’ four weeks. Armstrong says, more vaguely than usual, that it is ‘the latter end of February,’ and no more. The saying given on p. 316, ante, <gai>‘Mios Faoillich,’<eng> &c., makes it two weeks, while several living authorities make it one week. The presumption is in favour of a short period, which is supported by the only suggested meaning of the name <gai>Gearran (gearr-shian<eng>—H. S. Dict., McLeod and Dewar), and the words <gai>‘an gearran gearr’<eng> in the rhyme given below.

The <gai>Feadag<eng> is severe, but the <gai>Gearran<eng> is no better, as the rhyme says,

=gai=Is mis’ an Fheadag lóm, luirgneach, luath,  
Marbham caora, marbham uan;  
Is mis an Gearran bacach bán,  
‘Us cha mhi aon bhonn a ’s fhéarr;  
Cuiream a’ bhó anns an tóll,  
Gus an tig an tóinn thar a ceann.<eng>

I’m the bare swift leggy Plover,  
I can kill both sheep and lamb; (1)  
I’m the white lame Gelding,  
And not one one bit better;  
I’ll put the cow into the hole,  
Till the wave comes o’er her head.

or otherwise,
An sin thuirt an Gerrran gearn,
Ni mi farran ort nach fhearr,
Cuiridh mi 'bho mhör 's a' phóll, &c.<

After the <gai>Gearran<eng> came the <gai>Cailleach<eng> or Old Woman, which lasted a week,—12th to 18th April. The grass has by this time begun to grow, and the Cailleach, representing a hostile and withering influence, sits down and tries hard with her <gai>'slachdan'<eng> (2) to beat down

(1) If this is to be taken as with any approximate accuracy characterising the Seasons, it follows that lambing was earlier in those days than now. There are various indications in these old sayings that Spring and warm weather came sooner in former days than now.

(2) A <gai>'slachdan'<eng> is a beetle; but a more poetical version makes it <gai>'slachdan-druidheachd,'<eng> magic wand.

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the grass, and keep it from growing. Finding her efforts vain, she flings away her mallet in wrath, and vanishes with a shriek into the realm of Night, exclaiming,

<Dh’ fhàg e shios mi, dh’ fhàg e shuas mi,
Dh’ fhàg e eadar mo dhà chluais mi;
Dh’ fhàg e thall mi, dh’fhàg e bhos mi,
Dh’ fhàg e eadar mo dhà chois mi;
Tilgeam seo ’am bun preas cuilinn,
Far nach fas fiar no duilleach!<eng>

It escapes me up and down,
’Twixt my very ears has flown;
It escapes me here and there,
’Twixt my feet and everywhere;
This ’neath holly tree I’ll throw,
Where no grass nor leaf shall grow!

This is a lively description, and the selection of the holly in particular shows felicitous accuracy.

After the abortive attempt of the <gai>Cailleach,<eng> the time came to sow, and that quamprimum:—

<gai>Ge b’e ’r bith mar bhios an t-sian,
Cuir do shiol anns a’ Mhàrt.<eng>

The <gai>‘Màrt’<eng> corresponded probably to the month of March, but it was used as a term for the sowing-season, more than for any definite period. The term <gai>‘Gibleann,’<eng> in like manner was applied to the month of April. See <gai>‘Am fiar,’<eng> &c., p. 24.

Another period not so commonly mentioned is the <gai>‘Gobag,’<eng> Little-Gab, or Dog-fish, sometimes called a week, sometimes three days, and coming in apparently between the <gai>Feadag<eng> and the <gai>Gearran.<eng> A saying that refers to it is,

<gai>Feadagan ’us Gobagan e, tuilleadh gu Feill-Pàruig,<eng>
which may be rendered,
Whistling and biting winds on to St. Patrick’s day,
i.e., 30th March, O.S., when the equinoctial gales and worst weather should have passed.

appearance of the dark clouds of Easter, came in the fourth week of March, followed by the
appearance of the cuckoo’s greening, or preparation time.

The three days of the Ewes, or the day of the three Ewes, were three days immediately following the appearance of the Cailleach, which would bring them into the third week of April, O.S. The name suggests the “three borrowing days” of the Lowlands, but the period and character of the appearance of the Oisgean is quite different. According to the Lowland tradition (Chambers’ Pop. Rhymes of Scotland, pp. 143, 4; Book of Days, I., 448) these three days were the last of March, and said to be borrowed from April. According to the

English version, referred to by Sir Thomas Browne, and thus given by Ray, April borrows three days from March, and they are ill.

The Stirlingshire version quoted by Chambers gives, as he says, the most dramatic account of this tradition, and seems to throw light on the Gaelic name, substituting ‘hogs’ for ‘ewes,’ though otherwise not satisfactory:

March said to Averill,
‘I see three hogs on yonder hill,
And if you’ll lend me dayis three,
I’ll find a way to gar them dee’!
The first o’ them was wind and weet,
The second o’ them was snow and sleet,
The third o’ them was sic a freeze,
It froze the birds’ feet to the trees;
When the three days were past and gane,
The silly poor hogs cam’ hirplin’ hame.

In point of fact the few days in March that might with any propriety be called ‘borrowed’ are warm and summery, and not the opposite. The idea of April lending cold days to March seems rather absurd.

Be that as it may, the three days of the appearance of the Oisgean are more probably to be considered mild days borrowed from Summer than killing days borrowed from April. There is a Highland tradition to that effect, which ascribes the origin of the borrowing to the three days allowed to the children of Israel for their journey into the wilderness to eat the Passover. That the name was derived from the idea that a few mild days are given in lambing time, for the sake of the ewes and lambs, is at once more probable and more pleasant than the opposite version.

After the withering appearance of the Cailleach comes the lively appearance of the GuaBag, the Brushlet or Little Blast, and thenceforth the Spring goes on merrily—Up with the Spring! Last of all came the pleasant appearance of Céitein, foretaste of Summer,
supposed to include the three weeks up to 12th May; followed by the cheery note of the Cuckoo on yellow May-day, <gai>‘Là buidhe Bealltainn,’<eng> when the powers of Cold and Darkness have been overcome once more, and the world is gladdened by the returning reign of Light and Warmth.

V.

<gai>‘Gach dàn gu Dàn an Deirg,’<eng> &c., p. 190.

(1) <gai>Dàn an Deirg<eng> has always been one of the most popular of Ossianic Ballads, though, in the various forms in which it has been handed down to us, its merits seem scarcely equal to its reputation. One verse, in one of the shorter versions, is singularly beautiful. The wife of the <gai>Dearg,<eng> whose love for her husband had been so silent and restrained that he felt doubtful of it, was thus expressed when the concocted story was brought to her of his having been killed, which killed her,—

<gai>Chì mi ’n t-sheobhag, chì mi ’n cù,
Leis an deanadh mo rùn an ’t-sealg,
’S o na b’ ionnmhuinn leis an triùir,
Càirear sinn ’s an ùir le Dearg.<eng>

I see the hawk, I see the hound,
With which my love was wont to chase;
And as the three to him were dear,
Let us with Dearg be laid in earth.

See Campbell’s Leabhar na Feinne, pp. 107-113, for the various versions, in which, however, the above will not be found verbatim.

(2) <gai>Laoidh an Amadain Mhóir<eng> has always been held in great esteem as a suitable piece for recitation, the story being interesting. Mr. Campbell, in his West Highland Tales, III., 154, gives the best version of it hitherto printed, the text of which, however, is in some places very unsatisfactory.

(3) <gai>‘Sgeul Chonnail,’<eng> the Tale of Connal. There are several tales of this name: the most elaborate is the story of Conall Gulban, given by Mr. Campbell in Vol. III., p. 188.

(4) <gai>‘Cliù Eóghain,’<eng> For an account of this poem see Note to <gai>‘B’fhasa Eóghan a chur air each,’<eng> ante p. 54.

(5) <gai>‘Loch Cé,’<eng> Lough Key, is described by Dr. O’Donovan, in his Notes to O’Daly’s Tribes of Ireland (p. 38) as “a beautiful lake, with several islands, in the barony of Boyle, County of Roscommon, near the margin of which stands Rockingham, the magnificent residence of Lord Lorton”.

VI.

<gai>‘Is fhearr léum-iochd,’<eng> &c., p. 248.
A different interpretation of this saying has been received from Aberdeenshire, viz., that in lands allotted on the 'run-rig' system, the crofter who got a 'balk' attached to his rig was considered luckier than his neighbour with a somewhat larger rig, but without the balk, the grass of which was of more than compensating value. The Rev. Mr. Michie of Dinnet has heard the above saying used in the Highlands of Aberdeenshire in this sense.

The customs as to the <gai>'Cailleach'</eng> and <gai>'Maighdean-bhuana'</eng> seem to have varied somewhat. Two reapers were usually set to each rig, and according to one account, the man who was first done got the <gai>'Maighdean-Bhuana,'</eng> or 'Reaping-Maiden,' while the man who was last got the <gai>'Cailleach,'</eng> or 'old woman'. The latter term [TD 416] is used in Argyleshire; the term <gai>'Gobhar-bhacach,'</eng> the lame goat, is used in Skye.

According to what appears to be the better version, the competition to avoid the <gai>'Cailleach'</eng> was not between reapers but between neighbouring crofters, and the man who got his harvest done first sent a handful of corn called the <gai>'Cailleach'</eng> to his neighbour, who passed it on, till it landed with him who was latest. That man's penalty was to provide for the dearth of the township, <gai>gort a' bhaille,</eng> in the ensuing season.

The <gai>'Maighdean-Bhuana,'</eng> again, was the last cut handful of oats, on a croft or farm, and was an object of lively competition among the reapers. It was tastefully tied up with ribbons, generally dressed like a doll, and then hung up on a nail till Spring. On the first day of ploughing, it was solemnly taken down, and given as a <gai>'Sainnseal'</eng> or 'handsel for luck to the horses. It was meant as a symbol that the harvest had been secured, and to ward off the Fairies, representatives of the ethereal and unsubstantial, till the time came to provide for a new crop.

Jamieson in his Scot. Dict. s.v. 'Maiden,' 'Carlin,' Rapegyrne,' 'Kirn,' and 'Claaick,' gives some interesting information regarding this ancient custom, which was not peculiar to Scotland. He says the harvest-home, when early finished, was called in Aberdeenshire the Maiden Claack, when as late as Hallowmas, the Carlin Claack (= <gai>'Cailleach'</eng>). Additional particulars regarding the Aberdeenshire customs will be found in Mr. Walter Gregor's forthcoming work on the Folk-lore of the North-East of Scotland.

VII.

THE REV. DONALD MACINTOSH.

The good man to whom we are indebted for the first collection of Celtic Proverbs ever made was born in 1743, at Orchilmore, near Killiecrankie, on the north side of the Garry. His father was originally a cooper, married early in life, retired to his native Orchilmore, and there spent the rest of his days as a small farmer or crofter. According to Campbell, he was "descended from the ancient Thanes of Glentilt," a claim which need not be called in question. These Thanes, formerly Stewarts, and before that Macdonalds, appear to have used the name of 'Toshach' (sounded long, <gai>Tòiseach</eng> = First), as a surname, in 1501
and Campbell says he remembers seeing him in 1774 or 1775, as one of Peter Williamson’s Penny Post men, “with his bell in his hand, and uniform cap on his head, on which were painted in gilt letters ‘WILLIAMSON’S PENNY POST,’ alternately collecting and delivering letters in his useful though humble vocation”. He next found employment as a copying clerk, and after that for some time as tutor in the family of Stewart of Gairntrully. There was at that time some wakening of literary activity in the direction of Gaelic poetry and antiquities, stimulated no doubt by the success of Macpherson’s Ossianic labours. Macintosh appears to have done something in the way of collecting old poetry, but being of a very modest disposition, he preferred to assist others than to attempt anything in that line on his own responsibility. One piece got by him in Lochaber in 1784 from a namesake of his own, John Macintosh, ‘Ceardach Mhic Luin,’ appears in Gillies’s Sean Dana, p. 233. The idea of making a collection of Proverbs and old sayings was a happy one, and the merit of it appears to be entirely due to Macintosh himself. His design, as expressed in the ‘Advertisement’ prefixed to his collection, was “to preserve the language, and a few remains of the ancient customs of Scotland, by bringing so many of the proverbial sayings of the people into one point of view”. In this laudable undertaking he received sufficient encouragement and assistance. He returns special thanks to Sir James Foulis of Colinton, for the use of “some valuable Gaelic MSS.,” to Professor Ferguson, “a gentleman to whom this country is much indebted,” and to Neil Ferguson, Esq. of Pitcullo. Others to whom he renders his thanks are the Rev. John Stewart of Luss, Rev. James Maclagan, Blair Atholl, Rev. Joseph Macgregor, Edinburgh, Mr. William Morrison, writer in Edinburgh, and Mr. Robert Macfarlane, schoolmaster, “all of whom were particularly obliging, having procured him the perusal of many curious manuscripts, which considerably augmented this collection”. Nor does he omit a special paragraph of thanks “to John Macintosh from Lochaber, formerly a tenant under Macdonald of Keppoch, a worthy, honest man, well versed in old Gaelic sayings”. Campbell says that a considerable proportion of the collection was got from this man in 1784, and that previous to this the collector had got a valuable and extensive portion of his materials from John Wallace, residing at Lettoch, near Moulin.

In addition to those above-mentioned as having assisted the collector, Campbell mentions the venerable Henry Mackenzie, the ‘Man of Feeling,’ as one of those who gave him the benefit of their literary judgment and advice.

The following is the Title page of the book—

A COLLECTION OF GAELIC PROVERBS and FAMILIAR PHRASES; Accompanied with an ENGLISH TRANSLATION, Intended to facilitate the Study of the LANGUAGE; illustrated with NOTES. To which is added, the WAY TO WEALTH, by DR. FRANKLIN, trans-
lated into GAELIC. By DONALD MACINTOSH. &c.<eng> Edinburgh: Printed for the Author, and sold by Messrs. DONALDSON, CREECH, ELLIOT, and SIBBALD, Booksellers, Edinburgh; JOHN GILLIES, Perth; JAMES GILLIES, Glasgow, and by all the Booksellers in Town and Country. MDCCCLXXXV.

The modest little book was dedicated “to the Right Honourable David, Earl of Buchan, Lord Cardross, Founder and President of the Society of Scots Antiquaries,” &c., in appropriately warm and complimentary terms. The Proverbs, with translation on the opposite page, occupied 142 pp. The translation of Franklin’s ‘Way to Wealth’ was done by R. Macfarlane above-mentioned, by desire of the Earl of Buchan. In a short address in Gaelic prefixed to it, from the Earl to the Highlanders of Scotland, he says he was the first man who donned their manly dress in the Lowlands, after the prohibition of it was revoked, and that in time of snow and storm.

Soon after the publication of the book, Macintosh obtained employment in the office of Mr. Davidson, Deputy-Keeper of the Signet and Crown-Agent, in which he continued for several years. A more distinguished but less substantial acknowledgment of his merits was his appointment on 30th Nov., 1785, as ‘Clerk for the Gaelic Language’ to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. There was no salary attached to the office, which Macintosh held till 1789, when it was reported that there was a vacancy in it “by the removal from Edinburgh of Mr. Donald Mackintosh,” and the Rev. Joseph Robertson Macgregor was chosen “Secretary for the Gaelic Language”. The office was abolished long ago. Macintosh presented a number of things, chiefly coins, to the Society. Among others were “A piece of Prince Charles Edward’s brogues, which he left with Mr. M’Donald of Kingsburgh in 1746, now in the possession of Mr. Oliphant of Gask,” and “A parcel of that Prince’s hair”.

The death of Prince Charles Edward in 1788 led to a curious result in the Scottish Episcopal Church, and an important change in the career of Donald Macintosh. In the lofty language of his biographer, it “paved the way for a more exalted station in society,” that, viz., of a priest of the Scottish Episcopal Church.

“Well do I remember,” says Campbell, “the day on which the name of GEORGE was mentioned in the morning service for the first time—such blowing of noses—such significant hems—such half-suppressed sighs—such smothered groans, and universal confusion, can hardly be conceived! But the deed was done—and those who had participated could not retract.” Some staunch Jacobites, however, who held that the person to be prayed for, as King of Great Britain and Ireland, was not GEORGE but HENRY (Cardinal York), protested against what they called a ‘schism’ on the part of their weaker brethren, and forthwith formed themselves into a separate body, claiming to be the true old Scots Episcopal Church as by law established after the Restoration. How many clergymen remained true to the White Cockade cannot be ascertained. The number must have been very small, but it included one prelate, Bishop Rose, now far advanced in life, and described by Campbell, himself a warm Jacobite, as “almost in his dotage”. He resided at Doune (called by Campbell ‘Down’), and there a Mr. Brown, of the same persuasion, was consecrated as his coadjutor and successor. On the death of Bishop Rose,
Bishop Brown, says Campbell, “had to look about him for a successor, and who should fall in his way but the subject of this memoir”. From this it would appear that Brown was now the sole representative of the nonjurant Episcopal clergy of Scotland, as Macintosh became after his death. In June, 1789, Macintosh was ordained Deacon by Bishop Brown, and thereafter, in due time, Priest. This, doubtless, was the cause of his removal from Edinburgh in 1789. “Here then,” says Campbell, “we hail our worthy countryman placed in a relatively higher position in society than even his predecessors the Thanes of Glentilt.” In touching contrast with this elevation is Macintosh’s simple statement in his Petition to the Court of Session, that he officiated at first with a salary of £5, thereafter £8, from a Fund raised in 1739 for the relief of poor Scottish Episcopal clergymen, with the addition of £1 from the interest of £100 bequeathed by a Mrs. Buntine to that Fund. Campbell gives no information as to Macintosh’s residence from 1789 to 1794. The probability is that he had no fixed residence, but moved from place to place, as a missionary or untitled bishop of Jacobite Episcopacy, till he finally settled in Edinburgh. Even after that it appears, so far as anything definite can be gathered from Campbell, that he made an annual tour through the Perthshire Highlands, by Loch Katrine and Glenfinlas, on to Glen Tilt, up to Glenshee, and as far north as Banff, administering the sacraments and religious instruction among the scattered remnant who owned his pastoral authority. Campbell, with characteristic grandeur, says, “The destinies willed it not that he should enjoy his exalted station long with dignified ease and honour; for his reverend brethren, who had ‘bowed the knee to Baal,’ questioned the validity of his ordination, which embittered his life in secret, and caused other embarrassments, particularly to those well-meaning individuals who considered him as the only spiritual pastor left of the true Church, against which ‘the gates of hell should not prevail’. Meanwhile our compiler pursued his path of duty as a clergyman, but did not forget those secular pursuits which went hand in hand with his more serious avocations.” In 1794 Macintosh distinguished himself by raising an action in the Court of Session against the Managers of the Fund above-mentioned, to which he claimed sole right, as the only representative of the true Scottish Episcopal Church. In the Petition he is described as ‘Episcopal Minister in Bailie Fyfe’s Close’. The action was dismissed with a some-

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what unnecessary display of wit and loyalty on the part of the Court, the Lord President, Sir Ilay Campbell, remarking that he was “at a loss whether to frown at the audaciousness of the pursuer, or to smile at the high pitch of folly of his witless advisers, in wantonly thrusting a plea of so extraordinary a nature into his Majesty’s Supreme Court of Justice. What! a person claiming a right in virtue of his refractory adherence to obsolete opinion, long since exploded—nay, glorying in his disloyalty to the best of kings and existing governments.”

From the ‘Session Papers’ (Campbell’s Coll., 103) containing some of the Prints in this case, the following additional facts have been got. The Petition, with which the case commenced, sets forth that the Petitioner is “a minister of the Scots Episcopal Church, and pastor of a congregation of that persuasion, which, though respectable, is far from being numerous; that the income he derives from them is, and always has been, altogether insufficient to raise him above indigence, from which he was for many years saved almost entirely by a small pension of £9 a-year, paid him from a fund held by Trustees for the relief of Scots Episcopal Clergymen in his situation; that of this salary he has been deprived by the present defenders,” &c. The prayer of the petition was to ordain the
defenders to pay him this £9 per annum from 1795 onwards, “or such salary as to the Court seems proper”. The ground for refusing the petition seems to have been, that the Petitioner declined to take the oaths to the existing government, and to pray by name for King George, which an Act passed in 1792, repealing all penal statutes against the Episcopal Clergy, and restoring the privileges formerly conferred on them, prescribed as a condition of such restoration.

In 1801 Macintosh was appointed Gaelic Translator and Keeper of Gaelic Records to the Highland Society of Scotland, in succession to Mr. Robert Macfarlane, which office he held till his death. A salary of £10 a-year was attached to it. That it was not a sinecure is indicated by the Catalogues of Gaelic MSS. belonging to the Highland Society and others, given in Vol. III. of the London Highland Society’s Ossian, pp. 566-573. These were compiled by Macintosh, who also transcribed some of the MSS. The office of Gaelic Translator and Keeper of MSS. to the Highland Society was conferred after Macintosh’s death on the Rev. John Campbell, who held it till 1814, after which it was not again filled up.

Macintosh’s circumstances were somewhat improved in his later years, though his income was but small. Campbell mentions two legacies left to him by kindly members of his scattered but faithful flock, one of £100, by Mrs. Eagle, Edinburgh, another of £150 by Mrs. Paterson, Banff. “These sums,” says Campbell, “together with his annual savings, enabled him to leave behind him a property, which he apportioned in several small legacies, as specified in his will.” In that will, which Campbell had before him, but of which, with all his other MSS., no other trace can be found, he thus designated himself: “I, the Reverend Donald Macintosh, a priest of the Old Scots Episcopal Church, and last of the non-jurant clergy in Scotland.”

In 1808 his health rapidly failed; he was unable to undertake his annual journey to the Highlands; he made his will, set his house in order, called in the Rev. Mr. Adam, of Blackfriars’ Wynd Episcopal Chapel, received the Sacrament from his hands, and soon after, on 22d November 1808, breathed his last. He was respectably buried in the Greyfriars’ Churchyard, but no stone marks the spot where he was laid.

Macintosh never married. “He had a taste,” says Campbell, “for his native melodies, and performed them not unskilfully on the violin.” He even extended his musical accomplishments so far as to play upon the spinet. He purchased an old one for a few shillings, took lessons from a lady, and in less than two months “he could thrum nicely ‘I’ll mak’ ye fain to follow me’.”

The chief part of the “property” above-mentioned consisted of his library, which, considering the smallness of his income, did much credit to his literary taste. This collection, numbering about 2000 volumes, he bequeathed, after the worthy example of a greater man, the saintly Leighton, “for the purpose of establishing a library in the town of Dunkeld, under such regulations for the preservation of my books and manuscripts, and for promoting the access of the public thereto, as to the said trustees shall seem good”. The books were chiefly connected with Scottish history, political and ecclesiastical, and included a considerable collection of pamphlets, about 60 vols. The bequest was accepted and carried out, and the library is still maintained in Dunkeld,
under the name of “The Mackintosh Library,” to which numerous additions have from time to time been made. None of Macintosh’s MSS., however, appear to have found their way to Dunkeld. At any rate, they are not there now, nor can they be traced to any other quarter, with the exception of some unimportant documents, believed to be in his handwriting, among the Gaelic MSS. in the Advocates’ Library. Their value may not have been great, but it is to be regretted that the wish of the estimable testator in regard to them was not respected. In the Edinburgh University Library what appears to be his handwriting will be found, in a copy of the Gaelic ‘Blessing of the Ship,’ appended to the old copy of Carsewell’s Prayer-Book.

There is no authority for spelling the name of ‘Donald Macintosh’ otherwise than as it appears in the only authentic specimen of it under his own hand, in the first edition of his book. In the second edition, and in various other notices of him, the ‘k’ is introduced, which some people think of importance. The ‘k’ is harmless, but quite superfluous, as much so to Mac Intosh as to Mac Indoe, Mac Inroy, or Mac Intyre. Its omission has the authority, so far as any is required, of two such Celtic scholars and historians as Gregory and Skene.

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