

## BAGPIPES AND PIPERS.

The bagpipe and the harp are the most ancient of musical instruments. Representations of the bagpipe are to be found on the painted walls of the palaces, temples, and tombs of Egypt; on the sculptured monuments of Nineveh; on the frescoes of Herculaneum and Pompeii; and in the rude carvings of the rock-temples of India.

The bagpipe is mentioned by the most ancient poets and historians. Homer sings of it in his Iliad and Odyssey, and Herodotus refers to it in his books of travel.

The bagpipe was known in northern and western Europe long before civilization had extended thither, for we find it frequently portrayed on the fantastically sculptured Runic crosses and monumental stones, of which many perfect specimens still remain. Bagpipes are frequently met with in the decorations of Gothic architecture, and in the illuminations of missals which date back many centuries.

The bagpipe in its rudest and most ancient form is still in use among the peasantry of Italy, some of whom—poor wandering *pifferari* (pipers)—are occasionally seen and heard in our streets. The bagpipe is still a popular instrument in many lands, its most perfected form being that of the great Highland bagpipe.

In times not very remote pipers were to be found in every English and Scottish village and town, holding a position equal in importance to the bell-man or town-crier. Their duty was to play at civic festivals and other public merry-makings and they were frequently called upon to assist and encourage by their lively strains the reapers and the woodcutters in their arduous labours. No harvest-home could be celebrated without their presence.

A piper was formerly attached to the household of each Highland chief or head of a clan, whose services were required alike at festivals and funerals, and who was also bound to accompany his master to the foray and the fight. Some Highland chiefs still include a piper among their retainers, who performs on the terrace or lawn outside the dining-hall during the hour of dinner, and in the evening tunes his pipes a second time to plaintive pibrochs and lightsome reels and strathspeys for the delectation of his master and his master's guests. A piper has for many years been attached to the Royal Household.

The bagpipe in the hands of the unskilful performers who perambulate our streets sounds most discordantly, but when played by a skilful musician among the echoing hills and valleys, its notes, sometimes of triumph, sometimes of lament, fall with a plaintive sweetness on the ear.

About two hundred years ago a school for instruction in pipe music was opened and conducted in Skye by McRimmon, a native of the island, at that time the most musical district in the Highlands. "McRimmon's Lament" is a well-known air throughout the Highlands. It was written by him whose name it bears, and played by him as he strode down the mountain-side to the Bay of Uig, where the ship lay that was to bear him to the shores of America, never again to revisit "the island of the misty mountains."

Farwell to Dunvegan, its rock and its river;  
McLeod may return, but McRimmon shall never.

Twenty years ago when sailing along the coast of Skye, I was driven by a press of weather into a rock-sheltered cove not far from the rugged headland of Ru-na-braddan. I was cordially welcomed by the fishermen,

who invited me to their plentiful and humble meal of salt fish and potatoes. After the repast John Bruce, the eldest of the party, brought from a smoke-blackened sea-chest a sorely battered bagpipe which once belonged to his late brother, who had been piper to Sir Walter Scott. John played many tunes, and told many stories of pipes and pipers, the well-worn anecdote of the piper who had never learned to play a "retreat" not being omitted. John was present at the last funeral in which pipe-music formed part of the ceremony. It was the funeral of a Mrs. Campbell, who was buried in the old churchyard of Duntulm, the most northerly hamlet of the island. The effect of the pipe-music was very impressive. While the long procession of mourners wound round the bases of the hills, the wild, wailing strains of the Campbell's Pibroch floated out over the grey waters of the Northern Sea.

John was well acquainted with the piper who was wounded by a spent ball during the decisive charge at Waterloo.

"Aha! Johnnie lad," said the wounded man in relating the adventure on his return home, "though I couldna steer my legs, I could steer my pipes, and when the kilties and the red-coats were runnin' past me I struck up 'the braes o' Glenorchy,' and I can tell ye I ne'er blew wi' siccan birr nor saw sodgers rin at siccan a rate."

The piper in the following story was distantly related to John Bruce. A detachment of Highland troops was encamped near Allahabad, in India. The regiment to which the detachment belonged had been absent from home for many years, yet war and sickness had but slightly diminished its numbers. Scarcely, however, had the detachment been encamped for a week when a disease broke out among the men, the symptoms of which greatly puzzled the doctor and his staff. No deaths occurred, but those attacked were completely prostrated, and day by day the sickness spread. One evening, when the doctor was returning from the town, he heard the notes of a bagpipe at a distant part of the encampment, to which he at once proceeded. He there found a number of the men seated in a circle, listening to the strains of the piper, who with consummate taste and feeling was playing the old and plaintive melody "We'll may be return to Lochaber no more." The doctor in an instant became aware of the nature of the disease and its cause. The men were suffering from home sickness, known among medical men as *nostalgia*. On the strains of this melody, which the piper had been night after night, their thoughts were borne away from the burning plains of India to the heathery hills and the blue lochs and the firesides of their Scottish homes. On the following morning the doctor sent for the piper, and told him that he must no longer play "Lochaber," but substitute in its place the liveliest tunes in his repertory. The piper did as he was ordered, and the disease speedily disappeared.

About fifty years ago, before the great tide of emigration began to flow westwards, Lachlan McDonald left his home at Garviesmore, in Strathspey, and "settled" on the shores of Lake Winnipeg, in the Far West. While clearing his land he was wont in the intervals of labour to amuse himself with a tune on his bagpipe, which he always took to the woods with him. One day, while merrily swinging his axe, he was suddenly surrounded by a party of Indians, who gesticulated in a most threatening manner. He seized his bagpipe and "blew a blast so loud and shrill" that the Red Men took to their heels and were soon lost to sight in the

forest gloom. After this McDonald was known among the Indians of the district as "Great Screamer of the Palo Faces."

These are a few of the pipe-stories of good old John Bruce, whose bones are laid near the rocky shore he loved so well, and whose memory is revered by all the dwellers in the "East Side" of Skye.—*British Workman*.

## ANCIENT MOABITISH INSCRIPTION.

A few months ago Captain Warren, the agent of the Palestine Exploration Fund, heard of a stone covered with writing which was said to be existing at Dhiban, the ancient Dibon, on the east side of the Dead Sea, in the heart of the old country of Moab. The stone was then whole, but on finding that the Franks were inquiring for it the Arabs broke it up into several fragments, which they hid in the granaries of the neighbouring villages. By the tact and perseverance of Captain Warren and M. Ganneau, of the French Consulate, the whole of these pieces appear to have been recovered. Captain Warren is in possession of two of them; others are in M. Ganneau's hands. The larger of the two, 22 in. by 14 in., belongs to the centre of the lower part of the stone, and the smaller, 12 in. by 9 in., to the right hand top corner. The stone itself appears from Captain Warren's sketch to be 3 ft. 5 in. high by 1 ft. 9 in. wide. Its sides taper very slightly from the bottom upwards, and the top is rounded to nearly a semi-circle. The writing runs across the stone in straight lines about  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch apart.

Mr. Emmanuel Deutsch, of the British Museum, who has examined the tracings of the inscription writes to the Secretary of the Fund as follows:—

"The Moabite inscription, of parts of which you have forwarded me tracings is of very great importance indeed. Being at present in possession of about a third of the whole only—this third being copy of squeezes taken from two mutilated fragments of the upper and lower portions of the monument in question—I refrain from dwelling on its apparent general purport. The 26 lines before me (eight and 18 respectively), averaging from seven to 24 letters to a line, are incomplete in every single instance. A few exceptions, a part of both the beginning and the end are wanting. About another third of the letters thus extant are marked by the hand of the copyist, Captain Warren, as doubtful. Finally, certain gaps seven inches wide, occur at times in the very midst of these mutilated characters. And yet, even in this piteous state, the document reveals things of the utmost moment. Leaving what conjectures I have formed till such a time when the sight of the (promised) fuller text shall confirm them or cause me to reject them; I shall content myself with a few items, which are absolutely incontestable even now.

"The document starts with the words 'I, Mesha, son of Ch . . . .'. Whether this be the Mesha who, driven at bay by the three allied armies of Judah, Israel and Edom, sacrificed his son to save his country, or not, I cannot yet determine; but there is no special reason against the assumption. A king of Mesha's prowess might have spoken of his doings as proudly as is done on this monument. And, what is of much greater weight, the character of the writing, which, in default of a better word, we must still call "Phœnician," looks even older than that of many of the Assyrian (Mesopotamian) bilingual cylinders in the British Museum, the date of which is, at the very least, as old as the ninth century B. C., the time of the