

betrayal of his dishonesty. Dr. Blair, who knew MacPherson well, thus speaks of him: "Of all the men I ever knew, MacPherson was the most unlikely and unfit to contrive and carry on such an imposture as some people in England ascribed to him. He had none of the versatility, the art and dissimulation, which such a character and such an undertaking would have required." * One of MacPherson's coadjutors in the arranging of Ossian's poems remarks: "He could as well compose the prophecies of Isaiah, or create the Island of Skye, as compose a poem like one of Ossian's." There is a well authenticated story, which in itself goes far to show that MacPherson was unable to compose the poems which he translated. Having landed on one of the Hebrides, he submitted this very ambiguous question to one who chanced to be a poet of no common excellence: "*Am bheil dad agad air an Fheinn?*" MacPherson intended to ask the question as to whether his friend had any information respecting the Fingalians. This inquiry, when strictly interpreted, means, whether the Fingalians were in any way pecuniarily indebted to him of whom the question was asked. It may be stated that no one possessing an accurate knowledge of Gaelic would ever use so ambiguous an interrogation. No further evidence is needed to show that MacPherson did not and could not forge the poems which he translated. It cannot be maintained that his rendering is always accurate. He frequently misunderstood the meaning of the original. Still, in spite of every shortcoming, his translation is so elegant and attractive as to merit the commendation of Dr. Blair: "I confess I cannot avoid considering the discovery of the works of Ossian as an important era in the annals of taste and literature; and the share which I have had in contributing towards it, as a part of my life, by which I have deserved well both of this age and posterity."

* Report, Appendix, p. 60; and *ibid.*, p. 177.
