

zealous worker in the interests of literature, and himself a man of no mean literary attainments, collected in the year 1745, a number of Gaelic poems which he designated by the name of Ossian, and the manuscript of which he consigned for safe-keeping, in the Scotch College at Douay. Here it remained and had well nigh been forgotten, until the year 1756 when Mr. Farquharson, having chanced upon a copy of Macpherson's *alleged* translation of Ossian, was immediately impressed by the perfect agreement of the newly published volume, with the old manuscript he had years before prepared. Upon comparing the two, he was enabled to go through, in the original, the entire poems of Fingal and Temora. The foregoing is established upon the testimony of correspondents of Sir John Sinclair's, and as Mr. Farquharson's distinctive trait of character was sincerity, we may infer that had he lived he could have furnished much valuable information on this engaging topic. The fact however that the manuscript of the poems, in the pure native language of the Highlands, was in his possession for a considerable time previous to the appearance of Macpherson's translation, combined with the knowledge that such manuscript was prepared in Scotland, should go far in counteracting the statements of those who would have us believe that the poems in question were evolved from the plastic brain of Macpherson.

Nor is the existence of the above mentioned manuscript based upon any shifting foundation. A few lines taken from one of Sir John Sinclair's letters are of material service, in establishing this particular point. "I have an hundred times" so the letter says "seen him (Mr. Farquharson) turning over his folio, when he read the translation, and comparing it with the Erse, and I can positively assert, that I saw him in this way go through the whole poems of Fingal and Temora." It is recorded, that in the appreciation of Mr. Farquharson, Macpherson's translation, did not come up to the strength of the original. That this should be the case, is however little cause for surprise, for the names of men and of places are significant to a degree found only in an original language, and Ossian's expressions are so peculiarly and wonderfully happy, that no man can translate them, without

losing the aptness, substance, melody, and perfect beauty, which distinguish the pure Gaelic of Ossian through all his works.

Nevertheless the appearance of Macpherson's Ossian, was greeted with outbursts of genuine admiration, in England and in Ireland and in almost every portion of the European continent, and to-day they can be read not only in English but in French or Italian, Danish or Polish. To the Highlanders they served as a resuscitation of all their ancient melodies, one writer alluding to them as the "revival of fragmentary ballads he had heard among his countrymen, long before Macpherson knew his right hand from his left."

The poems of Ossian have been assailed from another quarter. Irish scholars have been vigorous in their denunciation of Macpherson and in their asseveration that the poems in question are Irish and that the principal characters in them, as well as the venerable bard himself, are Irish and not Scottish Celts. Dr. Young, the respected Bishop of Clonfert, travelling in the Highlands about the year 1784, found no difficulty, as the report hath it, in assuring himself that any poems that existed were Irish and that upon these it was, that Macpherson founded his translation, retrenching, adding and altering as he himself saw fit. It is difficult to conceive of the possibility of more genuine abuse being heaped upon the head of a single mortal, than fell to the lot of Macpherson, at the hands of Irish scholars. The transactions of the Gaelic Society of Dublin, contained, in the year 1808, an article from the pen of Theophilus O'Flanagan, which expresses in no ambiguous terms the sentiments which, at that time, prevailed in respect to the translator of the Ossianic verses. Apparently incensed at the publication of the poems in the native Gaelic, he writes as follows: "Let us now return to the consideration of the imposture of the late pompous publication purporting to be the originals of Mr. Macpherson's pretended translations. His poems of Ossian, never existed in the form which he has given them, before they appeared from the framing of his plastic powers.... In the execution of his schemes Macpherson has been totally regardless of epochs, and with fastidious insolence he rejects the very source of his reputation—Irish History." The same